Rural and City Life

Or, The Fortunes of the Stubble Family

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Chapter I.

A domestic episode.—Love at first sight; a simple matter, which had a weighty influence on the subsequent career of the Stubble family.

MR JOSEPH STUBBLE was sitting on a stump in front of his homestead one evening in autumn; the sun had dipped below the horizon, and a flock of “laughing Jackasses” (*Ducelo gigantea*), perched on a blue gum-tree, were making the bush resound with their merry cachinnations, as they invariably do at sunset and sunrise. Mr Stubble was wishing that his heart were as free from care for the morrow as those chattering birds were, and was sighing over some unseen trouble, when he felt one of his grizzly locks pulled by a playful hand behind him, and on turning round he beheld his wife, her ruddy face looking as pleasant as the moon, which was just showing its full orb, and turning the ripples of the distant river into quicksilver.

“Hey, Peggy lass, arn't thee done with skittish tricks?” said Mr Stubble, smiling affectionately at his wife; then drawing her towards him by her apron-string, he gave her a kiss, so lovingly loud that it seemed to excite the birds in the gumtree, for they began to chuckle again in that peculiar way which no naturalist has ever been able adequately to describe or imitate. “What's up now, Peg? I know there be's summat comical coming, by the way thee lips twiddle.”

“What do you think, Joe?”

“Why, I think thee art the buxomest old 'ooman in Daisybank. Give us another buss, lass?”

“Get out with your nonsense, master; there's Biddy yonder grinning at us. I am going to tell you something about our Mag as will astonish you a bit.”

“Well, I'd like to know summat nice about her, for to tell'ee the truth, Peg, I've been sitting on this stump for an hour or more trying to guess what ails the maid, and I can't come at it for the life of me,” replied Joe, with a sigh.

“I thought you were bothering your head about something or other, by the way you were biting your beard and pulling at your whiskers. But you needn't look so suart, master, there's nothing shocking the matter.”

“I be glad to hear that, lass; for what's all the world to a man if his family be's miserable around him. My old dad used to say, ‘The horse-shoe that clatters wants a nail,’ and I be sartain sure there is summat uncommon the matter with Mag, for her looks as paky as a bush parrot caged in an old tea-
chest, and a bit agone her used to be giggling all day long at nothing at all, or singing songs by the dozen. I hope her hasn't cotched the measles from Giles' young uns.”

“Measles! not at all. Don't you remember she had 'em when we were up at Luckyboy? But she has cotched something else, Joe. Ha, ha, ha! how you do stare.”

“It bean't dangerous, I hope; but out with it at once, Peggy, for I be a bit nervous to-night.”

“Why, where is all your wit gone to, Joe? Ha, ha, ha! Can't you see the maid is in love?”

“Oh, ho! Love is it? Well, well, I forgot to think of that; and it's a likely complaint for a young lass to catch too. But bather it all, missis, thee didn't look mopey when thee wast in love wi' me; and when I was over head and ears in love wi' thee, I never went paking about with my chin down to my waistcoat pockets, and my eyes looking as dull as boiled horse-beans. Not at all.”

“You forget how you used to look, Joe,” said Peggy, laughing.

“Not I, lass; I don't forget those merry days, nor never shall. But it's my notion, Peg, that love bean't such a real genuine thing out in this country as it used to be at whoam. Perhaps the hot winds have summat to do with the change; 'em do shrivel up the hearts of the cabbages in our garden, you know. At any odds, I don't think young folks are so steady in their love affairs as 'em used to be in our time; there is too much gallivantation about 'em, especially the gals.”

“What is that, Joe?”

“Why, talking nonsense, and whirling about like giddy butterflies, that is what I mean. Some folks call it flirting, and think there bean't much harm in it; but I think t'other way, for I've seen lasses gad ab out till 'em flutter into the nets of them poaching fellows who are always on the look-out for soft nawnies.”

“I hope you don't mean to say that our girl is a soft nawny, master?”

“No, no, I didn't say that at all, Peg; still I'll say this— her bean't half as spirited as her mother was at her age. I don't like the way her has been dilly-dallying with Sam Rafter this while back, because it isn't fair and square according to my notion. If her doesn't mean to have the lad, why don't her tell 'en so honestly, and let him go and look out for some gal who will like him better?”

“Well, Mag doesn't mean to have him, father; at any rate she won't if things go on as straight as we expect, and she can get a better man.”

“Her is getting plaguey crooked herself.”

“Crooked! What are you talking about, Stubble? There isn't a better
shaped girl in”—

"Stop, stop, Peggy! it was her temper I was talking about, not her limbs. I don't know what sort of a man her wants if Sam can't please her."

"That is a matter of fancy you know, master. When John Duff asked me to marry him, I said, nay, though he had a bakery of his own at Winkleigh: I preferred you, Joe."

"I should think so, indeed! Duff had got a wooden leg. Now Sam Rafter is a big-fisted, manly-looking young fellow as there is in the district, and a first-rate hand at his trade. He'll mount up in the world by-and-bye, never fear, for he has lots of book-larning in his head, though he doesn't talk so much as some chaps do who know precious little. My word! Sam is worth a dray-load of Jack-o'-dandies, who would starve their grannies for a bottle of scent or a bundle of cigars."

"Sam is sober, and steady, and good-looking enough; I don't deny all that, Joe; but you know he has only got his bare wages to depend on, and what is that to begin the world with and keep a wife? Mag likes him a bit I daresay, but she thinks she ought to look a little higher in life, and no blame to her neither, for she is as fine a maid as can be found on the three rivers, though I am her mother."

"That is right enough, Peggy. Her is a real strapping wench, and I be her feyther: still for all that, I don't think her is a bit too good for Sam. It's true he is only a journeyman at present, but I don't care about seeing young fellows their own masters before they have learnt experience. Sam will have a shop of his own by and bye, never fear."

"Suppose he does get a shop of his own, father, what will that be after all? Mag is worthy of a gentleman."

"Well, Sam is a gentleman to my thinking, though he does wear a paper cap sometimes, and carries a two-foot rule in his breeches pocket. I don't believe he would do a shabby thing if it would make his fortune. I never heard him speak a slang word, much less curse and swear as some of the lads in the neighbourhood do. He hasn't got any bad habits that I know of; he is kind to his feeble old mother, and he is as religious as the parson himself. If all that beant gentility, I be out in my reckoning, that's all. I wish thee thought of the lad as I do, Peggy, then Mag would not see many objections, I'll warrant, for thee can manage her like churning."

"But you haven't let me tell you who she is in love with, Joe," said Peggy, with a knowing look.

"I ax pardon for stopping you, lass. Speak up now; I'll listen."

"Of course you saw that young gentleman who was out 'possum shooting with Bob the moonlight nights last week."

"Hi, hi! what! that long dandy chap with a glass eye, who's been stopping
at the Major's?"
  "With an eye-glass, you mean, Joe."
  "It's all the same, Peggy."
  "It isn't all the same though; a glass eye is"——
  "Yes, yes, I know; what 'em put in a stuffed head or a dark lantern; but
do 'ee tell me who the chap is, and where he comes from, and what his
name is, and all that."
  "He is a regular gentleman. Mr Benjamin Goldstone, that is his name.
His father is one of the richest men in Sydney, and his grandfather was"——

  "Stop a bit, Peg, never mind his grandmother; tell me how Mag came to
get in love with a man her knows naught about, and whom I suppose her
has never spoken to. That doesn't look sensible, missis?"
  "Ah, but she has spoken to him several times, I can tell you. The first
afternoon he called here for Bob to go round the swamps with him to shoot
ducks, I was certain sure he was struck comical at Mag all of a sudden, for
I was peeping through the chinks of the dairy, and I saw how he looked.
And when she went into the orchard to pull some ripe figs, he walked after
her as polite as could be, and said a pretty deal to her, in a loving way too,
I'll be bound; for she came back blushing like a royal red-streak apple."
  "Well, her might blush I think," said Joe, testily. "To go gallivanting
under a fig-tree with a young fellow as her never seed afore."
  "You are woful sharp, master. You'll cut my head off, in a minute."
  "Not I, lass. I wouldn't cut thee little finger nail. I love thee too well to
hurt thee; I love my girl too, and that's why I be cautious that nobody hurts
her."
  "Nobody has tried to hurt her the least bit in life, so you needn't get
fightable, Stubble. I am sure Mr Goldstone is as nice a gentleman as ever
entered a house, and no more pride in him than our Bob has. He sat down
in your old chair t'other day, and sipped a mug of milk, and talked to me
and Mag for an hour or more as pleasantly as if he had known us all our
days."
  "If I had guessed he wor going to stay here so long, I wouldn't have gone
into the township that afternoon," said Joe, drily. "As far as I can make out
this Coldstone"——
  "Goldstone, I told you; not Coldstone, master," interrupted Peggy.
  "Well, it's all the same to me; I don't believe he is much good."
  "How can you say such spiteful things behind a gentleman's back,
Stubble?"
  "Doan't 'ee get angry, Peggy, for that won't make him a bit better. I know
what I be talking about. It's only fair to judge of a man by his companions,
and I seed him riding with a precious lot of Tom-and-Jerry boys only last Sunday morning. They were going kangaroo-hunting, I think. I don't want such visitors as them in my humble home, and I won't have 'em in it either, and that's all about it.”

“Hoity-toity! I've helped to make your home, Mr Stubble, and I hope I have enough pride in me to keep it decent,” retorted Peggy, while her colour heightened with excitement.

“Thee has quite enow pride, missis,—a little bit too much in some ways; and I've naught to say against your keeping the house tidy and decent; but if thee can't see the danger of encouraging that Will-o'-the-wisp customer, thee must let me look out, and I'll do't a bit sharper than thee, I'll warrant.”

“Yes, you are wonderfully sharp, no doubt. Didn't Jock, the dealer, do you out of the price of twenty dozen of pumpkins the week before last?”

“I don't care twopence about the pumpkins, Peggy; but let any caterwauling fellow try to do me out of my darter, and he'll see what stuff I be made of. If I'd seed that long chap in the orchard 'other day, sky-larking with Mag, I'd soon a telled him to morris out, and go and shoot his wild-ducks, and it would have been good for his bones to have gone off pretty quick. I know what that sort of courting means with the like of him, and I wonder thee hadn't more wit than to encourage the gal to think he meant anything more than nonsense, if he didn't plot mischief.”

“I can't think what ails you, father. You get so touchy all in a minute, as if the gentleman was coming here to burn us all out of house and home, and you snap me up before I can tell you what he said to Mag.”

“I don't want to know what he said, Peggy; but I'll take care he doesn't say any more to her, if I be at home the next time he calls, except he comes to me first and foremost, and gives me better reasons for it than I think he's got in his head. It bean't honest courting with him, according to my notion, or he would set about it in a more modest, straightforward way. And if it be honest, it bean't common sense for us to match Mag with a man who seemingly doesn't know better than to go sky-larking about Sundays as well as Mondays, with Dick Swallow and other young reprobates.”

“Why, you know very well, Stubble, that the Swallow family is as high as any in the district; old Mr Swallow is”—

“I bean't saying aught disrespectful of old Mr Swallow, Peggy; but it's plain enow that his son Dick is a low scamp; and high up as his family is, I bean't going to let our boy associate with him, or with any of his companions either. Bob is now as sober and steady as your old daddy was; but there bean't no saying how soon he might be spoilt if us let him get too thick with this dandy chap that you and Mag are going crazy about.”

“He isn't a chap, Stubble: and I am shocked at your bad manners for
calling him such a vulgar name.”

“Hush, Peggy! keep thee temper, lass. Soft words, if us have hard arguments. I can't see how thee can be a good judge of a man on so short an acquaintance, though you be a cleverish sort of 'ooman.”

“I am thankful to say I am not of such a dreadfully suspicious nature as you are, Stubble; one would fancy you had been an er—I dont-know-what, to think so wickedly of others as you do.”

“Never mind; if the biggest rogues make the best fathers, as the saying is, I be a good hand for looking after my gal. But thee hast know'd me all my life, Peggy, and if I'd done much in the flirting way, thee'd have tell'd me of it afore to-day, I reckon. Thee bean't too modest for that, lass.”

“I don't notice all that some people do, or I should be wretched.”

“Come, come, doan't'ee pout so Peggy. Thee was looking as glad as a singing bird when thee first pulled my wig a few minutes agone. Brighten up again, lass! There bean't a bit of common sense in being cross with one another; at any odds, us ought to be agreed about what concerns the life and happiness of our only darter.”

“How can we agree if you say one thing and I say another, if you pull backwards while I pull forward? I am trying to rear our children up respectably, and you always go dead against me.”

“Thee art mistaken there, Peggy, lass! I love my children as much as thee dost, and I want to see 'em grow up industrious, sober, honest, and all that sort of thing, which will make 'em respectable.”

“I have never said aught against their being sober and honest and industrious; you know that very well, Stubble. Of course I have objected to Bob driving bullocks, or Mag milking cows, since we have made our fortune, and that is reasonable enough.”

“Thee hast had thee own way there, Peg, though I think a little work of that sort wouldn't do the young uns any harm. Us did plenty of it, you know, and it didn't stint our growth.”

“I don't suppose it would stint their growth, Mr Stubble, but it would stop 'em from mixing in good society, and that is what I am anxious for 'em to do, though you set your face against it.”

“Thee never heard me object to good society for 'em Peg— quite t'other way; for haven't I always stood up for Sophy Rowley, and”——

“Faugh! Sophy Rowley, indeed! The mealy-mouthed, countryfied—er—er—slap-cabbage!” vociferated Mrs Stubble, whose contempt was bubbling over.

“That bean't pretty talk, mother; I guess good society wouldn't stand much of it,” said Joe, getting off the stump and walking towards the house, closely followed by his wife, who was talking loudly. “Doan't 'ee be so
cross, Peg; I tell'ee that bean't the way to agree together.”

“It is you that makes me cross, Stubble, with your contrary ways. It is the greatest anxiety of my life to see my children grow up genteel, but you always spoil all I do. Here is a fine chance for Mag to marry into high life, and perhaps be the making of Bob, besides raising us all up in the world; and as soon as I tell you about it, you upset all I have been planning and doing for the last fortnight, with your common remarks. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Stubble, for calling a gentleman a *chap*, as if he were a coarse vulgar fellow coming to do, I don't know what, to us all.”

“I bean't afeard of what he'll do to thee, Peg, but thee must be a precious old goosey not to see what the fellow be's up to, with his city blarney and his impudent winks at Mag through his glass eye. I am 'mazed that thee hasn't got more gumption, mother!”

“Ugh! you wicked man!” sobbed Peggy, beginning to cry with vexation and wounded pride. “If Mr Goldstone comes here again, I'll tell him you said I was to order him off the place.”

“Very well, Peg, tell 'en so; and thee'd better advise him, as he is such a friend of yours, to march off pretty quick, for if I cotch 'en here again talking soft nonsense to my gal, barn me if I doan't pitch 'en head and heels into the lagoon, his gun and all. That's the way to say it, and I mean it too.”

Mr Stubble delivered that forcible ultimatum with a calmly determined air, like a jack-tar aiming a swivel gun at a piratical junk. He then put on his coat and went for a stroll in his bush paddock, in order to avoid the circle of a connubial storm. He knew from past experience that his wife would not be pacified with anything short of absolute submission to her views, which he was not prepared to yield, from a conviction that Goldstone had not an honest motive in his visits to Buttercup Glen.
Chapter II.

A glance at the earlier history of Mr and Mrs Stubble.—Their arrival in Australia and settlement at Luckyboy station.

JOSEPH STUBBLE and Peggy Budd were born in the village of Chumleigh in Devonshire. Their parents being too poor to keep them, they were apprenticed to neighbouring farmers by the parochial authorities, and received such a breaking in as few young Australians can experimentally comprehend. To turn out of their beds before daylight in frosty mornings, and go into the fields to pull turnips or herd cows, was not the severest part of their discipline, for they often got their duty to their masters drilled into them with a stick, and were made to toil like slaves for coarse fare, a scanty allowance of clothing, and sixpence a week. It was fun to hear Mr Stubble, in after years, tell his listening children (when mother was absent), how fortunate he fancied himself when his wages were raised to two shillings a week; and how proud his dear Peggy felt when she had saved enough money to buy a Dunstable bonnet and a plaid shawl, in which smart attire she had captivated his susceptible heart.

After their terms of apprenticeship expired, Joe hired with his old master as ploughman for eight shillings a week without board, and Peggy went to Farmer Fursells as dairymaid, and got three shillings a week and her keep. Out of their meagre wages, however, they managed to save a little, and after four years' courtship they were married, Peggy being then about twenty-one years of age, and Joe a few years older. They took a little thatched cottage in their native village, and though they had not much furniture in it, they were happy and contented, for they were both of cheerful disposition, and loved each other fondly. Joe had constant employment, and Peggy sometimes got a day's work from her old mistress, which was a help to their income; besides, they had a small plot of garden ground, with a sty for a pig in one corner of it.

Fortunately for them, about that time a gentleman who had lived many years in Australia, paid a visit for a few days to their village, and meeting by chance with Joe, he explained to him how much better he might get on in this great country, than he could hope to do at home, and so excited his ambition that all his prejudices against foreign lands vanished, and his born fondness for old England began to waver, inasmuch as he resolved that if he could manage it, he would be off, bag and baggage, and try his fortune on the other side of the world, for he had no better prospect than hard fare and hard toil all his lifetime on his native side of it. The gentleman used his
influence to get Joe and his wife a free passage, and two months afterwards they were on board a fine ship bound for Sydney.

They had hard struggling to tear themselves from kith and kin in the village where they were born, and from which they had never been fifty miles away, but the bright pictures of the land of plenty which their Australian friend had drawn were most alluring when contrasted with the realities of their hard everyday life, and especially as there was a prospect of a family to add to their expenses. So they bade a tearful adieu to their native land, and in less than four months afterwards they arrived at their destination.

Of course there were a few hardships to brave on the voyage—no reasonable person expects wholly to avoid discomfort on shipboard; but Joe and his wife were thoroughly healthy and as hardy as gipsies: so, little things which would have been made into great trials by some people, did not affect them at all.

Their friend, the Australian gentleman, had given them a good deal of advice, and had especially warned them against the danger of contracting idle habits during the many weeks they would be at sea. Joe had wisdom enough to attend to that practical hint. He was a handy man with tools of almost every sort; and as his uncle Dan, the cobbler, had died a few months before, Joe bought his kit cheap, and he not only soled and heeled several pairs of old boots for himself and Peggy, but he got odd jobs in the cobbling way from the sailors and passengers. Thus he was not only kept usefully employed, and spared the ennui which idleness always produces, but he made money, for at the end of the voyage he had five pounds in his pocket, which was more ready cash than he had ever before possessed.

They arrived in Port Jackson one bright summer's morning, a few days after Christmas. That was a glorious day in their history, a day of new emotions, which were fresh in their memories twenty years afterwards. How their hearts throbbed with delight and gratitude as they gazed around them, and tried to express their admiration of the scenic beauties which might inspire the dullest soul with poetic rapture!

"I say, Peggy, we never seed anything half so grand as this afore, lass!" said Joe with an enthusiasm which he had never before manifested.

"It is an uncommon pretty place, sure enough!" replied Peggy, while tears started to her eyes as she thought of her dear old father and mother, and wished they could see the bright land of promise which seemed to smile such a gladdening welcome to the poverty-stricken wanderers from the old country.

The next day they landed in Sydney, and were very soon engaged by an up-country settler at the astounding wages of £65 a year and rations. Their
exultation at their good fortune was highly amusing to some of the old colonists, who were reminded of their own exuberant feelings when they first landed long ago, with very light baggage, and with still lighter pockets. Never did any poor mortals feel themselves more thoroughly independent than Joe and Peggy did, as they rambled arm in arm through the dusty streets that day in their heavy boots, and puffed and perspired with the heat till their smiling faces grew deepest blush colour. How amazed they were at the grand shops, showing English wares in profusion, and ticketed as temptingly as could possibly be done even in London itself! How Peggy laughed when she first saw a mosquito; and thought it was a Devonshire gnat that had slyly secured a passage inside her bonnet box, for she had previously imagined that mosquitoes were formidable creatures, of proportions somewhere between a dragon-fly and a lobster. How highly honoured they looked when some waggish “old hand” told them that all “new chums” were invited to dine with the Governor off a king parrot roasted whole, on the first Sunday after their arrival, and how vexed Peggy got with Joe because he said “he would not go to the Governor's house to dine if he were paid for it!”

How proud they were to tell any one who would patiently listen, that they had just arrived in the *Flying Buck*, and with what innocent hyperbole they eulogised that good ship, which had carried them in safety over so many miles of rolling ocean! Never was such another clipper for speed or seaworthiness! Such a brave captain too! He was never scared a bit even when “the white squall came over the surging wave,” and took the ship aback. What a lark they had when crossing the line! What a terrible fright they got one night in a storm! What a tremendous shark they caught one day in a calm! What a funny man the second mate was; how kind the steward was to Peggy; and what an awful fellow the cook was to curse and chew tobacco! Those and a hundred other reflections on their long voyage, were related with the simple earnestness so peculiar to new arrivals just off their first sea-voyage, and they seemed wholly unconscious that their quizzical listeners were slyly laughing at them. They were detained three weeks in Sydney, waiting for their master, who was going up with them to their distant location. In the interval of leisure Joe wrote a very long letter to friends at home, giving his first ideas of the new land, with a graphic description of everything which struck his fancy, and also a general price current of domestic necessaries and luxuries, especially noting the price of peaches, which he said were as cheap as apples were in Devonshire. Though Peggy could not write, she could handle a pen; so she ornamented the margins of the letter with little ink stars to represent kisses. The letter also enclosed a draft for £2 as a Christmas-box for dear father and mother,
and doubtless the poor old folks shed tears of joy over it, a few months afterwards.

Most new emigrants have a veneration for the ship which brought them across the sea, especially if the voyage have been an ordinarily pleasant one. Nor does the feeling soon die out, for the subsequent career of the “good old ship” is watched with a peculiar interest, and any serious mishap befalling it is heard of with a sorrow akin to what we might feel on hearing of the burning of our childhood’s home, or the downfall of the bell tower of our old village church.

That feeling was particularly strong in Joe and Peggy, for never had they fared so well as they did on board the *Flying Buck*. Meat every day, and “plum duff” twice a week, were luxuries worthy of remembrance, to say nothing of the peasoup, and the lob-skouse, or the frequent “tit-bits” from the cabin table which the steward gave to Peggy. But it was higher sentiments than reminiscences of good victuals which influenced them, on the afternoon before they left Sydney, to stroll down to the grassy knoll near Dawes Battery, to take a farewell look at the dear old ship, which was lying at anchor off Sydney Cove, taking in ballast for her voyage to India.

The sailors were hoisting in the long-boat, and singing “Hey O! cheerily, man!” The noisy chorus thrilled Peggy's sensitive system like the parting words of old friends, and Joe himself was almost affected to tears.

“It seems funny to me that only four months ago that ship was in Plymouth Sound, and here she is at Sydney looking just the same as ever. Doesn't it seem funny to you, Joe?”

“It does so, lass. And bean't it queer, when us call to mind the old ship dashing, and foaming, and tossing, and wobbling about in them great big waves off the Cape, to see her floating yonder as quietly as a dead duck? Eh, Peggy?”

With many such colloquial recollections of their memorable voyage, they beguiled the hours of the afternoon, while they feasted on ripe fruit, with which they had filled their pockets. When four bells struck, the boatswain's whistle piped all hands to “knock off work and go to supper.” Peggy and Joe then arose from their grassy seat, and after a last fond look at the ship, they said “Good-bye, old *Flying Buck!*” and walked away to their lodgings.

A few weeks afterwards they were settled in their new home in the far bush. It was a little stringy-bark hut, and though far from comfortable at first, it soon underwent a transformation. Joe had stopped up all the squanches or gaps between the slabs, so as to keep out snakes or other noxious vermin, and had given the whole edifice, both inside and outside, two coats of thick lime-wash. He made many other improvements in the outside arrangement of his homestead; while Peggy was equally energetic
in securing convenience and comfort inside. And when their master brought his wife over to see them, that lady was highly pleased with the skill and industry of Joe and Peggy, which had turned a ruinous old slab hut into a home comfortable enough for any humble couple to live in.

I cannot relate all Joe's early “colonial experience.” Of course he had difficulties at times—who in the world has not? —but a cheerful courage helped him to endure even the worst trials that he met with, and which his energy could not surmount or his sagacity avoid. At the expiration of two years, he “totted” up his reckoning, as he called it, while his wife sat beside him nursing a chubby little boy. His arithmetic showed a wonderful improvement in their circumstances, and they again blessed the day that they landed on the shores of Australia; while their hearts glowed with gratitude to the good friend who had induced them to leave their native land and poverty. Joe had deposited ninety pounds in the savings-bank, and had sent ten pounds each year to “the old folks at home,” besides buying many little things which were necessary for the comfort of his own household. His master was so much pleased with him that he had made him overseer, and advanced his wages. He often earned a little money in his own time too, for he was a good practical horse-doctor, and could put on a shoe with any farrier in the bush. On the whole, Joe's financial statement was most cheering; and Peggy's glistening eyes showed as much thorough approval as was ever testified by a forest of upraised hands at an annual meeting of joint-stockholders in the act of carrying unanimously a satisfactory report.
Chapter III.


JOE STUBBLE arrived in New South Wales shortly before that welcome era in its history when transportation of convicts from Great Britain to Sydney was abolished. The best friends of the colony had long sought for that boon from the Imperial Government, and it was at length granted, to the delight of many honest hearts, who hailed it as the dawn of brighter days, when the jarring distinctions of class, which were so fruitful of animosity, should cease in this land for ever.

About the same time the privilege of representative government was ceded to us. Municipal institutions were also inaugurated in Sydney, and a steady current of free immigration was setting towards our shores. It was a rather curious coincidence, but that time was also remarkable for perhaps the most disastrous monetary panic that has ever distressed our community. It was the opinion of some casuists that the reaction of reckless speculation and extravagance caused that crisis; others blamed the ruling Governor and his new land regulations; some traced the cause direct to an unparalleled season of drought, when for a short time flour rose to £90 a ton, and other provisions were proportionately dear. It is needless to further enumerate the opinions on the causes of the wide-spread disaster and ruin; not many persons, however, were willing to blame themselves for folly or mismanagement. But whatever was the cause, it did not effectually admonish against subsequent commercial panics, for they have occurred in the Colony with almost septenary punctuality, though never with such severity as marked the one in question.

In order to remove the appearance of romance which my next chapter may present, I adduce the following startling incident, which is as true as history, of those exciting times when property changed hands so abruptly.

The Bank of Australia broke, as many old colonists have cause to remember. The principal assets of the bank were an accumulation of property, which had fallen into its hands through the failure of certain customers, to whom the old adage, that “they were better known than trusted,” did not apply.

In order to dispose of the said property, which it was not possible to do in an ordinary way, the trustees of the bank got permission from the government to have a lottery, or “partition,” as they ingeniously called it.
Many thousands of tickets or shares were sold at four pounds each; and each one represented something tangible, if it were only a town allotment in a remote swamp. “All prizes and no blanks” was the enticing motto which drew the price of a ticket from many a hardly-earned hoard in the savings-bank. Several houses in Sydney and in country towns were placed on the programme in most attractive colours, to show that there was no mistake about it; and the bank agents throughout the colony were as innocently persuasive as ladies collecting for a fancy bazaar. The “Grand Prize,” which headed the list in fanciful type, was a very desirable homestead called “Underbank,” a significant name, by the way, for the former owner of it had been under bank pressure for some time before he became bankrupt. That fine estate, together with a station higher up the country, and all the stock upon it, was included in one lot, and every allottee naturally wished he might get it. For three months preceding the important day of decision, much excitement was manifested by the hundreds of persons who had invested their money in this novel speculation; and doubtless Underbank house and station often marred the nocturnal repose of many who were longing for the prize with an eagerness peculiar to great gamblers.

The much-envied winner of the grand lot was an honest Highlandman who rented a small farm on the Hunter River. He was induced to buy the ticket by a storekeeper in Maitland, and after paying for it, he went on with his usual work, and perhaps bestowed no more after-thought on his purchase than he would have done after planting an orange-pip in his orchard, for there was very little restless ambition discernible in poor Mack's nature. One day, as he was ploughing for his potato crop, the merchant aforesaid rode up and told him that “he had won the great Underbank prize, and was a rich man.”

He could not believe the news at first, but when his informant offered a large sum on the bargain, Mack began to feel glad. So he let go his plough and unyoked his bullocks, and then went to his house, where a host of friends had assembled to congratulate him. A few days afterwards the superintendent of the station, who had learned the whereabouts of the lucky allottee, got on his horse and rode down to see his new master, taking with him another horse for Mack to ride back with him and see his property. The next day Mack set out from his home, accompanied by several friends, to proceed to Underbank, and, sad to say, he had not ridden quite five miles from his own fence when he fell from his horse and broke his neck. His wife and family took possession of the property which had so strangely cost him his life.

The result of that “partition” was, in a pecuniary sense, very comforting
to the bank trustees, and doubtless a few of the ticket-holders were highly gratified, but the majority of them were not uncommonly pleased with their prizes, for they were positive blanks, from a marketable point of view, although they certainly looked pretty on the surveyor's map.

How far we might have advanced as a community in the art of wholesale gambling is only to be surmised, for we were not permitted to indulge our bent. Other “partitions” were projected by enterprising colonists, who wanted to “clear out and go home,” but the Government solemnly demurred, so the schemes were abandoned. The gambling spirit was thus damped down, but even judicial opposition could not extinguish it; and though it has never since been so glaringly manifest as it was during the exciting months, when all the dead walls in the city were dressed in flaring placards inviting everybody to try his luck in a lawful lottery, it has never ceased to develop itself in various other forms which the law does not effectually check. We have had no more public partitions—the one alluded to was considered enough for us; but the gambling spark is still alive, and little circumstances occasionally show that it only requires a stimulating puff or two to kindle a flame, which fact will be borne out by many curious examples in the course of my story.

The “bad times,” which I have cursorily alluded to, proved good times for Joe Stubble and many others of his class—the “flood-tide in their affairs, which drifted them on to fortune.”
Chapter IV.

The brief Colonial career of Mr Drydun, and his downfall.—Joe Stubble becomes owner of Luckyboy station, on the Big River.

THE name of Joe Stubble's new master was Drydun. His history has not much to do with my story; still I must glance at it, for reasons which will be apparent.

Mr Drydun had taken a degree at Cambridge, and studied a short time for the bar. During a vacation he went to Scotland for a few weeks' shooting, and whilst there he fell in love with an accomplished young lady, the daughter of his host, a retired merchant in Aberdeenshire. The result was, that Mr Drydun gave up his profession, and went to live with a farmer in that county, for the purpose of gaining a practical knowledge of farming, of grazing especially. It is very likely the idea of being within a few hours' ride of the young lady who had captivated his heart had something to do with the change of his pursuits; but that is mere hypothesis. Soon after the death of his father he married the object of his choice, and a few months afterwards they sailed for Sydney, taking with them a capital of £8000, and some valuable breeding stock, including a very fine blood horse.

Mr Drydun was about thirty years of age, of prepossessing exterior; and his frankness and affability won him a good many new friends as soon as he landed in Sydney. His choice stock was even more attractive than himself to the sporting fraternity, and introduced him to more society than he found profitable to him; so he resolved to settle himself on a station as soon as possible, for he felt in danger of being drawn into fashionable extravagances, for which he had not yet acquired a taste. He had brought with him many letters of introduction, some of which were of less value than a “ticket for soup,” for they did not induce even a single invitation to dinner: others were addressed to persons in remote parts of the colony, and as Mr Drydun did not feel encouraged to incur expense and trouble in delivering the letters in person, he put them into the post-office box, with his card of address enclosed in each.

By return of post he received a very kind note from a Mr Rashleigh, an old schoolfellow of his late uncle's, acknowledging receipt of letter of introduction, and inviting him and his wife to spend a week or two at his house. That was something like the correct thing, thought Mr Drydun; and he was glad he had posted the letters instead of throwing them into the fire, as he had been almost tempted to do one day, after a freezing interview with the Honourable Mr Ball, his mother's cousin. A few days afterwards
he and his wife were honoured guests at Folidom, near Maitland.

Mr Rashleigh was a gentleman of cultivated taste, which was evidenced by numberless silent witnesses about his mansion and grounds, and he was the centre ornament of an élite circle. He had the reputation of being very wealthy, and his wisdom was supposed to be proportionate to his riches by the honest rustics around.

There were some enterprising spirits in Maitland in those frolicsome days—men with “hearts of oak,” or iron-bark, which is more colonial, and faces like brass-panns or anchor buttons. All they lacked, as men of mettle, was money; but that was merely a temporary inconvenience, and by no means a disqualification for great designs. Mr Rashleigh had always taken a sort of paternal interest in most of the popular movements in the district; so he was easily induced to encourage with his influential name some of the patriotic schemes which were projected by those fertile heads, including the Grand Riverside Railway, the Mutton-ham Company, and the Pure Portable Soup Association. Other influential men followed Mr Rashleigh's example, and very soon the share market was as lively as the old market-wharf in Sydney used to be, when the fishing boats arrived.

Perhaps the most promising local institution was the “Hunter River Auction Company.” It is still a disputed question whether Maitland or Sydney heads first concocted that scheme, which was quite new in mercantile economy; at any rate, there was a rival auction company in Sydney about the same time. But the latter was a mere hum-drum commercial concern, with an ordinary staff of clerks, who were not distinguishable from mercantile employés in general; whereas the “officers” of the former company were “thorough bricks,” and all wore top-boots, from Mr Thomas Tosser, the head auctioneer, down to the junior sales clerk.

Stock and stations, shares and estates, were the items which these sporting auctioneers glorled in manipulating. They also liked wool and well-cured hides, or even sheep-skins, but mere merchandise was below the ideas of the white-fingered staff. It is true they did not decline it (though Mr Tosser would rather have knocked down a hundred fat bullocks than a single bale of shirting or a crate of cups and saucers); and they gradually relaxed their lofty bearing until they declined nothing at all, except payment to consigners and creditors in general. But I am anticipating their undignified finale.

The flourishing prospectus of the Hunter River Auction Company concluded with the announcement, in effect, that the earliest applicants for shares would have the preference, but some of the sage old Hunter men looked at that encouraging sentence with one eye partially closed, like sly
birds peeping into a brick trap, until it was publicly rumoured that Mr Rashleigh had taken a hundred shares. Then there was quite a rush at the office door, in which many persons got their toes injured, and a few of the up-countrymen had their pockets picked, before they got inside.

Mr Rashleigh was honest above an average, and at one time he had a very humble opinion of himself, which was quite right; but the popular voice had actually persuaded him that he was endowed with wonderful financial forethought and sagacity, and in exercising his talents he had learned to believe that he was doing good double-handed; that is to say, benefiting the colonists in general, and himself as well. It was no wonder, then, that Mr Drydun sought counsel from his experienced friend, nor is it surprising that, after the purchase of a cattle station on the Big River, he should confidently invest the balance of his capital in Auction Company's shares.

After a month's sojourn in Maitland, Mr Drydun found himself almost fascinated by the gay society to which he had been introduced. His daily routine in prospective was slow indeed compared with his present life of fun. To console himself under the approaching trial of parting with his jovial friends, he reflected that the merry days and convivial nights he had spent in Maitland would furnish a multitude of reminiscences when on his distant squattage, and serve to enliven his wife when she was dreary, though of course he would not tell her of all his frolickings—that would never do. His losses at the card table or on the grand stand had exceeded his gains by what sporting men call “long odds,” still he had formed friendships of a refined solidity which he had scarcely hoped to meet with in this then unpopular part of the world. So he had a quid pro quo for his money; and after all, what is money to a man without friends to enjoy it with him?

But all sublunary joys have an end, and it usually comes too soon for us. Domestic reasons, which could not be slighted, urged Mr Drydun to depart; so he bade adieu to merry Maitland with all its attractions, and hied to his new homestead in the distant wilds, as fast as a bullock dray would carry him and his appurtenances. I shall not trouble the reader with a description of the early difficulties of this young pair in their new life. The pioneers of the bush did not enjoy the privileges of select society, which are procurable now that numberless highly respectable families have settled on their pastoral estates, and towns and hamlets have sprung up in many places which were formerly the haunts of the aborigine and the kangaroo. Mr Drydun was well adapted for the vocation which he had chosen; and his wife was a helpmeet indeed, a lady endowed with “graceful ease and sweetness, void of pride.” Trials of a minor kind they patiently endured,
and they enjoyed their nomadic life with its freedom and healthful excitement.

But before two years had passed, they were overtaken by disasters which, with all their resources, they could not surmount, for the “great panic” came, and, along with scores of other trading concerns, the Hunter River Auction Company failed, and involved every one connected with it who had anything to lose. To be brief, Mr Drydun was hopelessly bankrupt; for in addition to his liability as a shareholder in that company, he had “lent his name” to a few of his luxurious friends in Maitland, “merely as a matter of form;” and as a preliminary matter of legal form he was served with “writs” for the payment of every bill which bore his endorsement.

Joe Stubble was much grieved when he heard of his master's downfall. Peggy was grieved too, for Mrs Drydun had been very kind to her; indeed, they were employers of a sort that always secure the affection of their servants. After a consultation with his wife, and again totting up his assets, which had considerably increased in the last twelve months, Joe went straightway to the house with his savings'-bank book and his purse in his pocket, and without a word he handed them over to his master.

Mr Drydun, with tears in his eyes, declined to take the money, and candidly stated that he was embarrassed beyond hope of recovery, and all he possessed must be sold. “But I don't see why you should not buy the whole concern, Joe; as you have some ready money,” added Mr Drydun, brightening up a little. “You have been a trustworthy servant, and perhaps, if the place gets into strange hands, the next owner of it might not appreciate your honest services. Take my advice, Joe; go to Sydney and buy the station; it must be sold, and it will go for a mere song, as Brown's station did the week before last.

It would be tedious to tell all Joe's proceedings; but he acted throughout in an upright way, and according to his master's counsel. In a short time he went to Sydney, and with the ready money which he had saved in three years, he bought “Luckyboy station” and all the stock upon it, including horses and working bullocks, also drays, stores, &c.; and after getting his title-deeds, he returned home to tell Peggy that she was for the first time in her life her own mistress.

When she heard the news, Peggy sat down and cried, partly for joy at her own good fortune, and partly for sorrow at the misfortunes of her mistress, whom she loved very much. “I tell you what it is, Joe, I will never take the master's property; so you had best go and give it back to him,” said Peggy, sobbing.

“I've offered it to 'en already, lass, and he woan't have it, 'cos he says it bean't no good at all to him. Somebody 'ud pounce upon it agin directly, for
he owes a lot of money; or, any odds, he's got to pay it, whether he owes it rightly or not, and I suppose it be's much about the same to them chaps as have got to receive it. Howsoever, I'll let 'en take what he likes, and stop here as long as he likes, as master too, and I can't say any fairer than that, as I see."

Some men are mean enough, when they have risen in the world, to look with selfish indifference upon the friends who have helped them up, especially if those friends happen to have grown poor in purse. But it was not so with honest Joe Stubble. He was really sorry for his master's mishaps, though he had profited by them in so unexpected a manner; and he gave him substantial help as well as sympathy.

“Doan't 'ee fret, sir!” said Joe one day, when Mr Drydun was looking very dispirited. “A good name keeps its shine in the dark, and it is worth heaps of money to a man. Though you have been unlucky, sir, thee hast not been tricky, I'll warrant; and that's a thought as wud help to soothe a man to sleep if he went to bed hungry. Help theeself, sir, to anything on the station thee hast a mind to, and doan't 'ee say thank'ee to me for it neither, for it be's more yourn than mine, though I've bought it fair and square.”

But Mr Drydun was not the sort of man to encroach upon any one's generosity. He soon removed to Sydney, in the hope of getting a government situation, but found, on his arrival in the metropolis, that there were scores of needy persons there before him on the look-out for “billets.” He also discovered that his personal qualities did not counterbalance his poverty, in the estimation of his former friends. In dread that he would want to borrow money from them, and always owe it, after the habit of broken-down men in general, they showed him the “cold shoulder,” which chilled his sensitive spirit more than the loss of his station had done.

Yielding to his wife's wishes, he shortly afterwards returned to England, after undergoing the liquidating process, waggishly yclept “Burton's Purge”
Chapter V.

Mr Stubble's early struggles to keep his station.—The boiling-pot reaction.—Gold discovery.—Mr Stubble sells his station, and buys a dairy farm near Daisybank.

ALTHOUGH Mr Stubble was for a time highly elated at his fortunate purchase, he soon found himself surrounded by difficulties which he had not foreseen. He required some ready money to carry on his large establishment; and it was not easy to borrow from bankers or merchants in that season of general mistrust; at any rate, Joe did not know the right way to apply for a loan, or it is possible he might have obtained it. To sell cattle was to sacrifice them. Some of his neighbours had driven fat bullocks to Maitland—the nearest market—and sold them for twenty-five shillings a-head. At that juncture, when graziers were foreboding total ruin, though their runs were overrun with fat stock, some wise-headed colonist propounded the expedient of “boiling down,” and demonstrated by figures—the result of experiments—that it would pay. That project, barbarous as it may seem, burst like sunshine on the squatter's gloomy prospects, and showed clearly that their flocks and herds possessed a tangible value; for the most unmercantile head knew that tallow, and hides, and sheepskins would fetch ready money all the world over. Some of the bankers began to look gracious, and merchants were glad—in fact, the great slaughter throughout the land had an enlivening influence on the whole community; things in general began to look up, and everybody grew hopeful.

Joe Stubble saw through the “boiling down scheme” the moment it was explained to him, and only wondered that he had not first thought of it himself. A large draft of his fat stock “went to pot” forthwith, and that expedient saved him from utter ruin with a plethora of wealth around him.

Think of that, ye horse-eating antipodeans! Tens of thousands of sheep and cattle were boiled down for their fat and skins; and hundreds of tons of wholesome edible matter were thrown to pigs, or cast on to the land as refuse, utterly wasted. It is a saddening reflection too, that perhaps at the same time thousands of poor persons in our fatherland were suffering from hunger. Legs of mutton, prime enough for the shambles of Leadenhall or Whitechapel, were sold for sixpence each, and prime rounds of beef at one penny a pound. Tails and shins for soup, or kidneys, hearts, livers, or heads, might have been had for nothing, as they were not fat enough for the pots.
The “boiling pot” is necessarily resorted to to a limited extent at the present time, for stock increases much faster than our population can consume it. But, thanks to the scientific skill and enterprise of some of our leading colonists, it is probable that before these pages are issued from the press that “the million” of Great Britain may feast upon fresh mutton and beef from Australia, and thus the almost sinful waste of boiling down will be avoided. I would here say to my British readers, Do not let continental purveyors of horseflesh, or any other interested persons, prejudice you against Australian mutton and beef, before you have tasted it; at any rate, give it a fair trial for your own sakes. If some of the experiments of preserving carcases by chemical process which are now being made prove successful, and I believe they will, we shall be able to supply you with an unlimited quantity of wholesome meat, at a moderate price. My impartial advice to you, friends, is to let those persons eat horses whose tastes incline thereto, but do you eat Australian beef and mutton, and be grateful for it.

Joe's struggles for the next seven years were severe; and it was often a grave consideration with him whether, after all, he would not have been better off had he remained in service, and saved his wages, rather than to encumber himself with an extensive property and its concomitant liabilities, which caused him much anxiety as well as bodily exertion. Many men who have hastened to become masters have felt similar anxieties to those which often weighed down Mr Stubble's spirits, and helped to prematurely wrinkle his honest face. A succession of troubles and disasters proved to him that wealth was not the unmixed good which he had at one time supposed it to be. A long season of drought thinned his herds, and stopped his recourse to the boiling pots, for there was no fat in his cattle. A lawsuit too, with a litigious neighbour, over the disputed right of a dry water hole, lightened Joe's purse considerably, and made him confess to the old truism, “That in a thousand pounds of law there is not an ounce of love.”

Nevertheless, he did not cease to hope for better times; though Peggy was very desponding, and could not derive any comfort from the little distich which Joe often quoted—

“This truth of old was sorrow's friend,
Times at the worst will soonest mend.”

She was certain sure it was an unlucky change when he became his own master, for he had never been the same man since then. As for times mending, she did not believe in it at all; and she saw no better prospect
than to be buried in the bush all her life, and then to leave her bones there for ever.

Poor Joe was even more perplexed with his wife's repining than with all his other difficulties; and he was seriously thinking of re-selling his station for what it would bring, and going into service again, when the news of the discovery of gold in the colony electrified the whole population. For a time Joe's troubles seemed to be overwhelming, and he fancied himself totally ruined by the discovery of the precious metal, for nearly all his men ran off to the diggings, and there was a prospect of his cattle running wild for want of proper herding. In a very short time, however, a wonderful reaction took place, and livestock rose to an unprecedented price. Urged on by Peggy's entreaties, Joe at once took advantage of the sudden turn, and sold his station, with all the stock upon it, for a large sum of money; part of which was paid down, and the balance was secured to him by legal instrument. He then started down the country with his wife and three children, in the hope of living quietly in some rural nook, where he could recruit his somewhat impaired energies, and educate his children; for they were growing up almost as untutored as the little blacks in the bush. Joe knew the value of education from the lack of it, and it had often caused him uneasiness that he had no means of getting his children instructed, for there was not a school within many miles of his homestead. If he had never read the following remark of a wise writer, his opinion was in harmony with the sentiment,—viz., “That if the spring put forth no blossoms, there will be no beauty in summer, and in autumn no fruit; so if youth be trifled away without improvement, riper years will be contemptible, and old age miserable.”

After looking about him for some time, Mr Stubble bought a small dairy farm a few miles from the pleasant village of Daisybank, on the lower Hunter River; and there he went to reside. The farm was prettily situated, and had been tolerably well taken care of by its previous owner. The house was comfortable and roomy, though by no means stylish; but Joe cared very little for fashion. The sudden improvement in his financial position made no perceptible difference in him, and he continued to work nearly as hard as he had wrought all his lifetime—in fact, he used to say that it was penance for him to be idle. His wife, however, did not retain her original humility, and Joe often laughed aside, to see how she tried to ape the lady-like grace of Mrs Drydun; which, he said, “her managed about as nicely as a working bullock wuld imitate the paces of his blood horse, Brutus.”

It was plain that Peggy could not bear the change of fortune with the calm thankfulness of her more philosophical spouse; and many petty sources of annoyance made her dissatisfied with her lot. For instance, if
any of the genteel neighbours around their new home called to see them in accordance with fashionable etiquette, Peggy's heart would throb with pride, and her face sometimes blushed with vexation at the bad manners of Joe, who would perhaps thoughtlessly walk into the parlour without his coat. At other times he would begin to talk about the five pounds he earned at cobbling when coming out in the *Flying Buck*. All the private tuition which Peggy volunteered to him on social etiquette (and which she had learnt when living in service) was thrown away, and her patience was often upset in the midst of a lesson on manners, by his making some dry remark about her antecedents; or saying, “What a lark it was that his Peg should live to be a fine lady!”

As their children grew up, they imbibed the spirit of their mother, which is often the case in families; and after many long and fruitless arguments, Joe was obliged to own to himself that he was powerless to wholly arrest the growing ambition of his family; so for the sake of peace and quietness, he yielded up his rule in minor matters, and seldom interfered with their doings, except where there was some flagrant attempt to set aside his authority altogether. He had an affectionate disposition, and loved his wife and children as he loved his life, and their frequent little acts of opposition gave him more pain than they were aware of, for he usually bore his troubles patiently and without complaining. Peggy was affectionate too, but she had not much strength of mind, and, yielding to little encroachments of ill-humour, had gradually changed her disposition; and purse-pride, at the same time, growing up unchecked, had spoiled her wonted smooth temper, and made her at times disposed to murmur at the best of everything in life—and to be as unreasonably pettish as she appeared to the reader at the close of my first chapter.
Chapter VI.

Introduces Mr Stubble's children, Dick, Bob, and Maggie; and his eccentric little domestic, Biddy Flynn.

DICK STUBBLE, Joe's eldest son, was what is sometimes called “a ne'er-do-weel;” or a “black sheep.” His education had been totally neglected, for there was not a school within thirty miles of his father's station; and as he grew up a stout, tall lad, he was as mischievous as a “native dingo,” and caused his parents endless trouble. Soon after they removed to Daisybank, all their children were sent to school, and Joe's mind was relieved of one great source of anxiety. But Dick had been too long accustomed to the freedom of the bush, and the unrestrained exercise of his own strong will, to patiently bear the discipline of the schoolmaster; and he often expressed his abhorrence of learning.

Archbishop Whately says, “Labourers who are employed in driving wedges into a block of wood are careful to use blows of no greater force than is just sufficient. If they strike too hard, the elasticity of the wood will throw out the wedge.”

Perhaps Dick's schoolmaster had not studied Whately's works. Whether or no, he did not practically endorse the principle embodied in the above homely figure, when imparting instruction to the stubborn mind of the neglected youth. He believed in the efficacy of hard blows in driving learning into dull or obstinate heads, and he beat Dick without either mercy or judgment; and the result was, that the boy became viciously inclined to revolt.

One morning Dick decamped with his father's favourite thorough-bred horse and his mother's purse; and from that day no tidings had been heard of the runaway, beyond a rumour that he had gone to the new diggings at Bendigo. It was a sad trial to his parents to part with their eldest son in that way, and deeply they lamented their folly in omitting to provide in some shape for his early mental and moral culture. All their wealth failed to assuage the sorrow which resulted to them from that neglect of parental duty.

Bob Stubble was a fine specimen of an Australian youth, tall, broad-shouldered, and apparently as hardy as one of the iron-bark saplings of the forest. His well-formed face, bronzed with exposure to the sun, indexed honest good nature; and his whole mien betokened an independence and fear-naught self-reliance, which is so characteristic of “currency lads,” and of bush-bred lads especially. To quote Bob's own expression, “He had
never seen a horse that he was afraid to mount, or a cow that he could not break into bail.” To have seen him mounted on his spirited hack, dashing through some of the formidable gullies of his rugged district, after a herd of young heifers or a straying colt, would have made an English fox-hunter shudder. He was as thorough a bushman as ever made “quart pot tea,” and could push his way across a new country with the intuitive tact of a black-fellow. Bob was very expert too with the rifle or fowling-piece. His stock of opossum and platypus skins and stuffed parrots was a little fortune. He had also a variety of snakes and other reptiles in his curiosity shop, as he called it—all of which he had killed and cured himself; and he was very proud when any intelligent visitor would look over his collection and tell him the name of any new object which had baffled his scientific research.

Bob was twenty-one years of age, and had lived under his parental roof nearly all his days. He went to Sydney once for a treat; but he missed his horse so much, and used to get so tired and foot-sore with walking about the dusty streets and dodging from the crowds of busy pedestrians, that long before his holiday term expired he “rolled up his swag,” and took steamer for home; and felt as rejoiced as a freed slave, when he once again beheld the old house on the green slope, encircled with orange trees and clustering vines, and heard the neighing of his frisky cob, “Cherrystone,” as he galloped across the clover paddock to welcome his master back again, and get his nose rubbed by Bob's fondling hand.

Bob had always been his mother's pet; but he had a spirit above the effeminacy which is usually the characteristic of those social pests, called spoilt boys. For all that, he was not the most dutiful youth in the land; he had a will of his own and a temper too, which was sometimes manifested in a way not at all encouraging to his parents. I do not notice the shady side of Master Bob's character in a fault-finding spirit. I am very proud of our Australian youths, and honestly believe them to be both physically and intellectually equal to the youth of any other nation on the earth. Of course they have failings; and perhaps the most distinguishable of their weaknesses (I speak of native lads in general) is a disposition to have their own way in spite of obstacles, moral or otherwise—in fact, some of them are as difficult to manage as their hardy bush horses. However, I do not mourn so much as some folks do over that indication of spirit; for now that the “schoolmaster is abroad,” and the ministers of the Gospel are abroad too, their influence will be mighty in training the indomitable energies of the “currency lads and lasses” into right directions; and then Australia will rapidly advance towards its destined status as the great Empire of the South. On this very morning I read, in the *Sydney Herald*, a most pleasing history (epitomised into six lines) of an Australian lad, one of the “Sydney
A humane captain of a ship picked up a boy from the streets, and took him as apprentice. He was apt to learn, and his benefactor was willing to teach him. He rose rapidly in his profession, and he is now captain of a clipper ship in the China trade. I hope he will have the heart to throw “a tow-line” to many a poor friendless boy, whom he may fall in with on life's ocean, in grateful remembrance of his own kind helper.

I drop my pen for a few minutes to gaze from my window upon our lovely harbour. Its blue rippling waters are sparkling in the sunshine of this bracing winter's morning. Yonder lies the *Vernon* training ship, quietly anchored in the little bay before me. On board of that ship there are more than a hundred boys, who have been reclaimed from vagrancy, and are not only receiving a solid education, but are being taught a useful trade or calling. My heart swells with emotion as I reflect that many of those lads have been rescued from squalid poverty and vice; some perhaps from a prison life, or a felon's awful fate. And I feel grateful, too, to those kind philanthropists who have, at so much personal effort, established the “Training Ship.” It does not stretch my fancy overmuch to picture some of those bright boys, a few years hence, as captains or owners of ships sailing out of this port,—ay, possibly one of those striplings, whom I see nimbly mounting to the fore-top-sail yard of the *Vernon*, may fill the distinguished post which his friend and patron now occupies, as Premier of New South Wales! Who knows? Thanks for our glorious constitution! there is no positive barrier to check the ambition of any bright lad, even for that exalted office.

The following little incident will show Bob Stubble's wayward proclivities. It will also indicate the diverse opinions of his parents on the matter of discipline, and at the same time show the difficulties which beset Mr Stubble in the moral training of his family.

One day, when Bob was about fourteen years of age, Mrs Stubble saw him about to tear up his silk neck-tie to make a cracker for his stock-whip, and in a not very silvery key she shouted, “Hey, Bob! Drabbit the lad! If you rip up that neckerchief, I'll scat the ears off you, I will!”

“No fear!” replied Bob, in real currency slang; and forthwith he slit the neck-tie into three pieces, and began to twist them up, while his eyes flashed defiance.

“Barn 'ee! I heerd thee, young brat!” ejaculated his father, as he turned the corner of the cow-shed just in time to witness Bob's flagrant act of disobedience, and to deal him a backhanded slap on the head. “Take that now, and larn better manners; or I'll skin thee in half a minute.”

But timely as was that punishment, and richly as it was deserved too, Mr Stubble got no honour for its administration. Of course Bob objected to it,
and howled as loudly as if his father were actually skinning him in the summary manner he had threatened. In a few seconds his sister Mag and Biddy the maid were on the spot, sympathising with him; while his mother, instead of seconding her husband's motion, began to scold him for hitting the boy too hard. To escape from the general grumble, Joe retired, as was his usual custom, and quietly smoked his pipe under the green wattle trees by the cow-bails. Bob, seeing that he had such a powerful majority with him, imagined, not only that he was right, but that he was greatly wronged by his sire; and his feelings were so deeply wounded, that more than a week elapsed before he could return even a monosyllabic answer when his father spoke to him.

Margaret Stubble, or Mag as she was familiarly called, was a tall, well-proportioned girl, with pleasing features, sunny hair, and laughing blue eyes—that is to say, her features were pleasing, and her eyes laughed lovingly, when she was in a good humour; but she sometimes disfigured her handsome face by pouting, which was a pity. She was about two years younger than her brother Bob, and had been educated with him at Daisybank, or she had been taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, which was all that was usually taught in country schools in those days. She was very fond of Bob, and always took his part whether he was right or wrong, and no matter who was in the opposition. She often accompanied him in his bush excursions, for she could ride a horse, kill a snake, or play a jew's harp with any lass in the district; she had also some little skill in skinning birds, and was useful to Bob in his ornithological experiments.

She had been tolerably well disciplined in domestic matters by her mother, who was a very tidy housewife. Mag could make a damper as light as a baker's loaf, and her pumpkin pasties were wonders in their way; but her sponge-cakes were almost perfection itself. She also knew how to salt a pig, to make candles, ketchup, jam, ginger-beer, and many other nice things. She was not a bad dairy-maid, and could milk a cow; but she had not done anything of the kind since she had been promoted to long frocks and was supposed to be “grown up.” Like Bob, she was petted by her mother, and could always ensure safe shelter under the maternal wing if her father scolded, as he sometimes did when his patience was over-tried by the exhibition of some act of extravagance or trumpery pride, or when his wife encroached too much on his right of rule.

The only female servant they kept in their establishment was Biddy Flynn; indeed, it was only since Mag had matured into a fine young lady that they had seen the necessity for an in-door servant. Biddy, though nearly fifty years of age, was as active as a girl; and was, as Joe remarked, “a rare hand to make work scarce.” She had lived for many years with a
respectable family in the district, who, much to Biddy's regret, went to England, "lavin' her all alone in the worrld." Gladly would she have accompanied them, but circumstances which she did not like to talk about prevented her; and being well known to Mr and Mrs Stubble, she hired with them as maid-of-all-work; "and indeed she found it all work and no play in that house," as she sometimes grumblingly apostrophised.

Biddy was a native of the "Green Isle," and quite an original in her small way. Though of diminutive stature, she was very strong and healthy.

"Shure thin I niver was sick in me life; and I don't want to be naythir," was her usual reply if asked by strangers as to the state of her health. Though by no means handsome, there was something attractive in her sun-freckled face; and at times there was a comical twist about her mouth, and a twinkle in her little gray eyes, which no kindly person could help smiling at.

Biddy had been nearly thirty years in the Colony, and when she was in a communicative mood, she showed that she had been pretty observant of passing events; indeed, her remarks occasionally evinced more than ordinary acuteness, "seeing as how she niver had a hap'orth of schoolin' in her life-time." Her attire was in keeping with her character, and was odd enough. She usually wore a blue dungaree petticoat, and a "shower-of-hail" jacket, a coarse Holland sun-bonnet, or a cabbage-tree hat, and thick leather shoes. She always wore stockings on Sundays and holidays. When she went into the neighbouring township, which was not often, she wore her green merino gown, a crape shawl dyed brown (the gift of her late mistress), and her little rugged face inside a large Leghorn bonnet looked like a rock melon in a market basket.

Biddy was, in general, very reticent respecting her early history; and if asked by any inquisitive person how she came to the Colony, she would reply, while her mouth twitched comically, "Ah, thin, it was the King himself as sint me, so he did, bekase he knowed there was a lot ov haythins out here as wanted to be tached manners." At another time she would say in reply to a similar impertinent question, "Well, ye see, as the ould song says, 'some love to roam,' an' thim sort ov folks don't often shtop at home, an make their minds aisy. Troth! an' if I'd done that same thing, I wudn't be here now, in this blazin' hot countrhy, bothered intirely wid moskatees an' other varmint, all a-thryin to suck me as dhry as a back log. But niver mind. Sorra a hair I care for nothin'. I've got contintment in me heart; an' dear knows that's a blessin as many rich crathers 'ud like to buy if they cud, poor sowls!"

"I've sane a thing or two in me time, that I wudn't wish the likes o' you to see, Miss Maggie," she once remarked when in one of her softest moods.
“Ah! may God Almighty help all the poor little childers as are cast adrift on the world widout faathers an' mothers as I was! An' it's no wonnder at all that I rin inta mischief an' got 'lagged for life;' not a bit. Och, musha musha! I've had hapes ov throble since thin, so I have; an' some o' these days I'll tell ye a lot as I've gone through, Miss; 'cos I knows ye won't go blatherin' it agin to all the counthry—and maybe it'll do ye good to hear it: any way it won't do ye no harm I'll ingage, for I wudn't sphake half a wورد as 'ud make ye blush, honey! no, not if all the fools in the land wud larf at it, an' shout, Bravo, Biddy!”

Biddy could never be induced to tell the fault for which she was transported, but it was generally supposed that it was for some hasty act of revenge upon a faithless lover. She had never been married; and when once asked why she had not, she replied, “Fegs thin, men are jist like young cows in the bail, niver to be depinde d on, unless ye've got a rope on their leg.” She was thoroughly trustworthy, and affectionate to a degree, and never felt it a trouble to do anything either by day or by night for those who were kind to her. She was not averse to a little playful banter, and was seldom put out of temper by anything that was said to her in a good-natured way; but if she saw a design to insult her, her sharp little eyes would flash fire, and her active tongue would put any ordinary opponent to the rout.

She was not actually extravagant in her department of the household; still, having had the command of unlimited stores in the service of Squire Bligh, she felt a disagreeable restraint in Mrs Stubble's more homely establishment, and was conscious of the overlooking eyes of her mistress, perhaps oftener than was necessary. It was some time before she could appreciate the economy of her new mistress, and she often manifested pettishness, or resorted to expedients to evade the rules and by-laws which Mrs Stubble was over-fond of enacting, in the first overflow of her pride at having a maid-servant of her own to order about, and conscious that she was the first in her family who had had that honour.

“I have told you half a dozen times, Biddy, that I can't allow more than one candle alight at once out here,” said Mrs Stibble, suddenly entering the kitchen one night where Biddy was sitting darning worsted stockings with two lights on the table beside her.

“Shure, I've ony got one candle, missis!”

“Patience me! Do you mean to say I'm blind? what's this, and what's that? Don't they make two?”

“'To be shure they don't, an' that's plain enough, for didn't I cut one candle in half? Here ye can see where I did it, soh,” exclaimed Biddy, at the same time taking the pieces out of the sockets and holding them up exultingly
before the eyes of her irate mistress.

“Ha, ha, ha! the ould crather!” chuckled Biddy, as Mrs Stubble walked back to her sitting-room, grumbling all the way she went. “She'd betther be aisy wid Biddy Flynn, or she'll get her match, an' half as much agin. Dash it all! I don't want to waste her candles, not I; but I'd like to know what ould woman in the worrld can thuddle a worsted needle in the dark an' widout spectacles too? Poogh! there. I'll shtop till th e moon gets up; nobody 'ull grudge me a bit ov moonshine, I'm thinkin,” she added, as she blew the lights out. Then drawing her stool near to the fire, she began to sing, “Erin go bragh,” to “kape herself from gittin' downright crass.”
Chapter VII.

Colloquy between Bob Stubble and his sister, which clearly proved that she was in love with Ben Goldstone, the son and heir of a rich citizen of Sydney.

WHILE their parents were having the jarring colloquy described in my opening chapter, Bob Stubble and Maggie were jogging homeward on their horses. They had been to Daisybank to get the letters and newspapers at the post-office, and also to do a little shopping. Bob had a large parcel strapped before him on his saddle; and his sister carried a band-box, containing a new bonnet, and sundry other delicate articles, which she was unwilling to entrust to other hands.

“Come, Mag! brighten up a bit, and talk to a fellow. What is the use of sighing?” said Bob, after a rather long silence. “Don't be so moody, Mag.”

“I can't always be laughing and talking, you know, Bob; and I don't know why you and father think me moody because I am a little quieter than usual. I am not very well, so don't you make me worse.”

“Ah! you look poorly!” said Bob, with a merry glance at his sister's rosy face. “I'll be your doctor for once, Mag, and I'll cure you without physic. Here is a prescription. Sing this bit of old song as if you meant it:—

‘Men, I'm sure, were born to please us,
Such their words and looks imply;
And we're dolts to let them tease us—
If you would, so would not I.’

Ha, ha, ha! why, you are looking better already, Mag. But, joking aside, tell me, sissy: when you get a grand lady, and ride in your town carriage with a flunky behind you, will you be too proud to notice your big awkward brother Bob from the country, in his strapped Colonial tweed trousers, and cabbage-tree hat?”

“What a queer boy you are, Bob! You think of such out-of-the-way things. But I hope and trust you will not say anything to me about Mr Goldstone when any one else is by. I don't so much mind what you say when we are by ourselves; though of course it is silly of you to make such remarks as you have just made.”

“I didn't mention Goldstone's name at all; so that shows what your quiet thoughts are about. But I won't tease you, Mag. I am sure he is in love with you, and that's all about it.”
“What nonsense you talk, Bob! He has been riding about every day this week with Miss Hawkins, and hasn't been near our place since last Friday.”

“Oh, ho! that's what is the matter with you, is it? Jealousy! Now I understand it all. But you need not let that spoil your rest, for you have bewitched Ben's heart as certainly as I trapped the ‘dingo’ last night. I'll bet a guinea that neither Miss Hawkins nor any other miss in the district will cut you out, Mag; so, cheer up.”

“I should like to know how you can tell the state of his heart, clever as you think yourself.”

“Well, I'll tell you. When Ben has been out shooting with me lately, he has praised you up to the moon. ‘Where there is smoke there is always fire,’ as father says; and Ben is ‘sweet’ on you, or he wouldn't say so much in your favour.”

“He is a great spony,” said Mag, with a short sigh.

“Well, if I don't tell him what you say, may I never burst my gun! By the by, Mag, I forgot to tell you Goldstone has given me his double-barrelled ‘Joe Manton,’ and such a stunning shot-belt.”

“I am sure he is very liberal. But where does he get all the money that you say he sports about with in such grand style?”

“Where! Why his father is as rich as a banker, and Ben says he will come in for all the property by and by; and there is nobody to share it with him, for he has neither brother nor sister, nor a single relative to claim the worth of a bullet.”

“He is very fortunate indeed. But I can't make him out exactly—he is so poetically flighty. What trade is he, Bob?”

“Trade, eh!” exclaimed Bob, with a shrug. “What is the use of a trade to a young fellow with half a city-full of houses all his own? He wouldn't like it, Mag, if he heard you ask that question. I think he has been in the navy a little while, for he talks sea lingo sometimes; but he knows no more about trade or business, in the common way, than my cob does.”

“How ever came he to fall in love with me, Bob—that is to say, if he has really done so?” said Mag, with a coquettish toss of her sunny ringlets. “I am sure there are hosts of handsome girls in Sydney; and if he is so very rich, I suppose he may almost pick where he chooses.”

“Well, I will tell you one thing that he said to me, Mag; I could tell you fifty more if you wish to hear them. Says he to me, ‘Bob, I never saw any one sit a horse as your sister does.’ He saw you riding across the moors after that Wallaby that gave us the double at old Cobbera's cross-fence ‘She looks just like Dinah, the goddess of the chase,’ says he.”

“Diana, you goose!” suggested Maggie, laughing.

“Very well, anything you like, sissy. Ben is right enough anyhow, for I'd
back you against all the Dianas that ever sat in a saddle; and I do believe
that, if you were not my sister, I should tumble in love with you, head over
heels, if I only saw you canter half a mile.”

“I should like to know how Sophy Rowley would feel if she heard you
say that there was even a possibility of your loving any one on earth but
herself, if it were only your sister Mag.”

“And I should like to know what Sam Rafter will say, when he finds you
have cut him all to chips,” rejoined Bob, laughing.

“Faugh! gluepot! what do I care for him,” said Mag; “don't mention him
to me again, Bob.”

“Ah, you didn't call him gluepot a month ago, Mag; and I don't like to
hear you nickname him now, though you have almost caged a goldfinch.
Sam is a better looking chap than Ben, nobody can deny that; still if you
can get a rich man for a husband, you would be a simpleton to have one
who has only his trade to depend on, and his old mother to keep besides.
But give him up civilly, Mag; that's all I have got to say.”

“I never was engaged to Sam Rafter,” said Mag, in a tone of
remonstrance. “He has thought proper to follow me home now and then,
and to bring me nosegays and wooden money-boxes, and other trumpery;
but I never even thanked him for anything, let alone told him that I loved
him. Indeed I think it is very presumptuous of him to imagine such a
thing.”

“Oh, ho, Mag! Come, now. Fair play is my motto. Didn't you encourage
him to follow you home? Of course you did. You drew him after you with
your eyes, if your tongue had nothing to do with it. All girls know how to
bewitch the boys in that way. Take my word for it, Mag, Sam would not
follow a girl about if she did not look sweet at him; for he is a manly,
straight-up-and-down sort of fellow, though he is poor. I don't say that you
were actually engaged to him, but you liked him above a bit, and you let
him see it too, until Goldstone began to wheedle. Mind, I don't blame you
for preferring Ben, but don't show contempt for poor Sam, or I'll stand up
for him in a minute.”

“Why, I declare you are almost as warm about Sam as father is,” said
Mag. “You are surprisingly fond of him all at once. I don't want to say
anything against him—not I, indeed. He is a nice young man in his way, I
daresay; but if I don't choose to have him for a husband, you can't make
me, you know.”

“I have sometimes tried to knock down two birds at a shot, and have
missed them both,” said Bob, dryly. “Take care you don't miss both your
men, Mag, while trying to make a double smite.”

“By the by, Bob, when are you going out duck-shooting again?” asked
Maggie, as though she were desirous of changing the conversation.

“Why don't you ask me when I am going to see Goldstone again? for that's what you mean, Mag. I can see what is in the corners of your eyes, as plainly as I see my horse's ears.”

“You are a provoking boy,” said Mag, giving him a playful flick on the shoulder with her little riding whip. “Well then, tell me when you are going to see Mr Goldstone again, if you will have it so.”

“I have promised to go with him on Wednesday, to have a pop at the Nankeen birds on Barnacle Island; but don't say anything about it at home. I shall have to take the cart in with a keg of butter in time to meet the morning's steamer to Sydney; and I want to get Jogger shod, and a few other odd jobs done at the blacksmith's; and in the meantime, I can go and have a little sport. I don't want father to know that I am going shooting, for he is as particular about my wasting time as if he were dependent upon my earnings. But do you want me to say anything to Ben for you, Mag?”

“Of course not, you silly fellow! I only wanted to know how much longer he is going to stay at the Major's.”

“Ah, yes, I understand. I'll find out for you, Mag. Don't you fret your little heart any more about Annie Hawkins, for you have caught Ben fast enough, never fear. But touch up your mare, Mag; and let us get over the boggy road at the end of the fences before dark.” Mag thereupon said, “Gee up, Jenny,” to her spirited little palfrey, and away she cantered, while Bob kept beside her with his cob at full trot.

The foregoing colloquy will indicate the state of Miss Stubble's heart, and a few words will explain the cause of the unusual moodiness which her father had observed with so much concern. The fact is, that Mag had been instigated by her mother to “set her cap” at Mr Goldstone; for the reputation of his immense wealth had quite fascinated the latter lady, and had indeed blinded them both to defects of character, which were too glaring to escape the most casual observer. For many nights, after Mr Stubble had retired to rest, unconscious that anything unusual was going on in his household, Mag and her mother were sitting up till a late hour “building castles in the air” with Goldstone's money, and devising plans of operation to draw him into a formal declaration of love; for though his manner had been very familiar, considering their short acquaintance, he had not actually “come to the point,” as Peggy called it.

“You do exactly as I have told you, my dear, and you've got him as safe as a cooped turkey-cock,” said Peggy, with a peculiar ogle of her little black eyes, which in her youthful days was probably a rather killing expression. “And mind, Mag, when he says snip, you say snap, directly minute.”
“Ah, but perhaps he won't say snip, mother,” sighed Mag.
“Never you fear, girl; he'll pretty soon out with what he feels, I'll warrant. If he bean't in love with you, Mag, I never knew what love is, that's all.”

Mag thought so too, and encouraged the idea, and a hundred other ideas springing therefrom, all favourable to herself as the bride elect of a wealthy man who had preferred her to the pick of the rank and fashion of the metropolis. But, alas! her bright hopes had lately given way to misgivings which saddened her pretty face, for Goldstone had absented himself from Buttercup-glen for nearly a week, and had been seen riding out every day with a niece of Major Hawkins. It is true that Miss Hawkins was quite a fright compared with Maggie—or so Maggie thought; but that fact could not chase away her fears that she had lost him, though she was unwilling that even her mother should know she felt so deeply on the subject.
Chapter VIII.

A sulky trio.—Arrival of letter-bag containing letter from Ben Goldstone, asking permission to pay his addresses to Miss Maggie.

WHEN Bob and his sister reached home they found their mother sitting in the front verandah with visible signs of her recent excitement in her face; and it was not long before they knew the cause, for Peggy was never remarkable for a prudent reticence respecting her domestic troubles. She had often suffered for her lack of judgment in that way, and had good reason to regret that she had not thought a little more and spoken less about her real or imaginary grievances. But experience did not make her very wise.

After hearing her dolorous version of the disagreement between herself and her husband (in which she owned to a very small share of blame), Bob and Mag strongly sympathised with her, as usual; and when their father returned home about ten o'clock, there were three sulky faces for him to look at, which were enough to depress any ordinary man's spirits. But Joe was a philosopher in his way, as I have before shown; and his example is worthy of note by other unhappy sires in divided households. He had often seen those faces sullen, and had proved by repeated trials that gentle arguments were as powerless to cure ill-humour in its first stage, as they would be to draw cattle from a bog; so to avoid a domestic brawl, which even soft words would be sure to raise, he used to keep silent and try to show a cheerful face, even though his heart were aching with sadness.

Accordingly he opened the post-office bag, which Bob had carelessly thrown into a corner, and sat down at a side-table to read his correspondence. There were three letters in the bag. The first one Joe opened was from his agent in Sydney, advising him of a brisk demand for prime dairy-fed porkers, and of a fall of three pence a pound in butter. It also contained a pathetic refutation of a charge of neglect in returning empty butter kegs, and some other little differences of opinion respecting the weight of certain consignments. But those were controversial matters of too common occurrence to yield even the attraction which novelty sometimes lends even to disagreeable subjects, and Joe yawned over every sentence. The second letter was from a speculative friend in town, asking for the loan of twenty pounds, for only three weeks; but as Joe had not forgotten a former loan to the same person, which had extended over three years, he coolly threw the missive into the fire, and then opened the third letter, of which the following is a copy:—
“HAWKEVILLE, April 1.

“Mr JOSEPH STUBBLE,—

“DEAR SIR,—I take the liberty of writing to inform you that I have formed a strong attachment to your daughter; and to request your permission to pay my addresses to that young lady with a view to marriage. Though I have not the honour of an intimate acquaintance with you, I presume that you know me sufficiently well to grant me the preliminary interview which I solicit. My father must be well known to you by name, if not otherwise; and I flatter myself there will be no objection to my suit on the ground of doubtful respectability. I may also state, that being my father's only son, I am heir-at-law to his property; besides having a present competency, derived under the will of my late grandfather, whom you doubtless knew by repute. I am at present staying with Major Hawkins, but shall probably return to Sydney next week. If you will in the meantime favour me with an intimation when it will be agreeable to you for me to wait on you personally, I shall be much obliged.—I remain, dear sir, yours respectfully, BENJAMIN GOLDSTONE.”

Joe's dubious looks as he read and re-read the latter document could not escape the notice of his family, who were sitting in the room, silently nursing their ill-humour, or occasionally interchanging short sentences in tones just above a whisper. It was Joe's usual custom to read all his correspondence aloud for the general edification; but he knew that at the present time his company were too sullen to be interested in the rise of pork or the fall of butter, and that the letter of the needy town friend would not call forth even an ironical “wish he may get it” from his wife, or a sly joke from Bob, which it would certainly have done in a peaceful season; so Joe ruminated in silence, while his family were secretly vexed that they were not made acquainted with his solemn thoughts. They could not but opine that the letter which father had last opened was on an exciting subject, for his winks and blinks, and his occasional interjections showed that plainly enough; but they were all too sulky to ask him any questions, and he did not volunteer a word of explanation, for he rightly judged that such an important subject should be discussed in a calmer temper than either of them just then evidenced. After a while, Joe folded up Goldstone's letter and put it into his pocket, and went into the garden for a walk, as he was accustomed to do when he had anything uncommon to cogitate.

“There was something queer in that last letter which father read, I'll bet twopence,” said Bob, looking sorry he could not guess what it was. “It made him twist his mouth about as if he were eating native currant-jam. I wonder what it is about?”

“Don't know, I'm sure,” replied his mother. “But I'll pretty soon find out
after father's gone to sleep. I seed what pocket he put it into.”

“Perhaps it is a letter from the lawyer, wanting father to have another new trial with old Groodle for putting his corner post half a rod the wrong way,” suggested Bob.

“Not it, boy. The lawyer knows father won't have any more law about that twopenny-halfpenny corner post. He has had two trials, as they call 'em, and pretty dearly he has paid for the fun.”

“But didn't you teach me to sing ‘Try, try again,’ mother?” said Bob, laughing. “I wonder if it was a lawyer who made that little song?”

“Ah, well, it's no odds to me who made it; father won't try to move that old post again while I'm alive, that's certain,” said Peggy, positively. “The letter isn't about that concern, I know, or we should have heard father whistle directly he opened it.”

“Perhaps it's a letter from brother Dick,” whispered Mag, tenderly conscious that she was opening up a painful subject.

“Ah, poor dear boy! I'm 'feard we shall never hear from him again,” sighed Peggy. “It bean't from him neither, because he can't write—more's the pity.”

“Well, I don't see what is the use of trying to guess what the letter is about. We shall know when father chooses to tell us, and that will be quite soon enough for us if it is full of bad news; and if it's got good news in it, it won't spoil with keeping,” said Bob, who was anxious to stop a lamentation over his lost brother, which he saw was forthcoming. He then kissed his mother and sister, and they all retired for the night.

Long after midnight Mr Stubble might have been seen walking slowly up and down the centre path of his garden with his hands behind him, and his head bent downwards in the attitude of deep abstraction. Goldstone's letter had set him thinking, until, as he quaintly muttered, he was as dazed as though his brains were turned to cream cheese. He had sense enough left, however, to know that the letter was written in a civil style, and required a suitable reply; but what to say to it he could not make up his mind. He was certainly relieved from the exasperating belief that the young man was flirting with his daughter with dishonourable motives, for the letter plainly alluded to marriage. If his mind were equally free from misgivings respecting Goldstone's reputable habits, Joe would have felt some of his difficulties removed; though there would still be posing objections to the connexion. It was an unequal match, he thought; and notwithstanding the young man was rolling in riches, he would rather give Mag to Sam Rafter whose sole wealth were his tools and a small sum in the savings-bank. But then Sam had a thorough knowledge of his trade, and was both able and willing to work; he had a well-stored mind too, which Joe, humble as he
was, highly appreciated; in short, “Sam was a real man,” as Joe tritely remarked. And he had troublesome doubts about the manly principles of Goldstone, simply on account of the companions with whom he was frequently associated, some of whom were well known to Joe as idle, dissolute young men, although of respectable parentage.

All these and other perplexing matters occupied the mind of Mr Stubble, as he perambulated the garden path till the moon began to dip low in the western sky, and the morning dew-drops on his whiskers warned him that he had better go in-doors, if he did not want to provoke a return of his old rheumatic pains; so he hastened in to bed.
Chapter IX.

Discussion between Mr and Mrs Stubble respecting Goldstone's letter. —Maggie's joy and her mother's pride.

The next morning, to the joy of Mr Stubble, his wife and daughter appeared at the breakfast-table with smiling faces. Such a brief season of sulkiness was unusual; but he was too much delighted with the change to speculate upon the cause of it. Perhaps he hopefully thought that they had seen the folly of showing ill-temper, and had resolved to act like sensible women in future; at any rate, he was not aware of the fact that they had had a private conference soon after sunrise, and resolved “to wheedle out of father” the purport of the mysterious letter, which Peggy had failed to discover by searching his pockets while he was asleep. They well knew father's susceptibility to kind words, for they had often proved it when they wanted to get something from him out of the common way. An endearing expression was as gladdening to his heart as bird music; and a pleasant look, or the touch of a gentle hand, would make his face brighten up with joy, even when he had lumbago or the earache. But it soon became evident, from his wary answers to their interrogations, that whatever was in the letter, father was not inclined to disclose it just then; and they were half sorry that they had debarred themselves the satisfaction of a moderate sulk without the anticipated result. Joe's experienced eyes could discover certain little physiognomical changes, like murky streaks on the horizon, which sailors know are signs of “dirty weather;” so, after breakfast, he quietly intimated to his wife that if she could spare half an hour he would like to have a private chat with her. She accordingly followed him into the best parlour, closed the door, and politely waited for him to speak first.

“'I be bothered to tell'ee what's in my head, Peg,'” began Joe, after sitting for some time silently fingering his whiskers. “But first and foremost, I want to get rid of summat as is making my conscience uneasy. I own that I be real sorry for what I said as 'wont right yesterday. No honest man ought to be ashamed to say that much. Anybody may make a mistake and do what's wrong—that is human nature—and only rogues or fools refuse to own when they've gone astray. I told 'ee that I'd pitch young Master Goldstone head and heels into the lago on if I catched 'en here again; and I be sorry I said that, Peg, because I have reason to think he wasn't coming here on purpose to play mischief with our gal. I thought he wor when I said it; and, by Job, I'd punish any mortal fellow on two legs who was coolly plotting to cast shame and sorrow into my house. But I ought to have
know'd, Peg, if I'd a gived it a thought, that them heart-breaking rogues seldom or never meddle with a lass who has got a brother six feet high, or a feyther who knows how to handle a flail. I doan't want to say any more about what's gone and past, so give us a buss, Peg, and let us forgive and forget. Hearts should allers agree, though heads differ. There, now, thee 'st looking like my own loving Peggy long ago. I got a letter last night,”

continued Joe, taking the missive from under the lining of his hat.

“Oh, yes, ah, that is the letter! In your hat, was it?” exclaimed Peggy, excitedly. “What is it all about? Read it out, will you, father?”

“Yes, yes, thee shall hear it all in a minute,” said Joe, putting on his spectacles; and then he slowly read the epistle which I have already transcribed, while Peggy's glistening eyes betokened her high appreciation of the composition as a whole.

“What does that mean, father?” asked Peggy, stopping Joe while he was spelling over the puzzling words—“preliminary interview.”

“I dunnow dezackly what 'en means, Peg, but 'tain't nothing uncommon, I don't think. Perhaps he wants to know if us have got any ready money to give away with Mag. Shouldn't wonder, for it's often axed for on wedding-days by gentlefolks; though it seems queer enough to me that a man should expect to be paid for marrying a good wife. It ought to be t'other way, to my thinking.”

“But Master Goldstone has got loads and loads of money, father. I heard all about that before I let him say a word to Mag. Ha, ha! I knowed what I was about.”

“That is the very reason why he may want a little more money, Peggy: any odds, it's the way of the world now-a-days, and us bean't much unlike other folks neither, when you come to think of it. Don't thee remember, lass, when us first went into Dab cottage at Chumleigh, with just fifty shilling's worth of furniture in it, how proud us was of our home, and that all the traps in it wor paid for honestly? Jingo! if anybody had a told us then that us 'ud have more than two thousand head of cattle of our own in a few years time, us wud have capered wi' joy, like chummies on May-day; and, sure enough, us 'ud have fancied we'd be contented with that too, to all the days of our lives. Well, thee know'st, Peg, that us worn't satisfied when us had got all that and more too; no r us worn't easy when us had more sovereigns than both of us could have carried on our backs and could have afforded a golden knocker to our door, and a silver shoe-scraper too, if us had a mind to be over-grand. Us wanted summat that us couldn't get then, and that just shows that it bean't in the nature of human creatures to have enough. Though Master Goldstone has got such heaps of money as thee talks about, Peg, I'll be bound he wants a little bit more. But never mind,
it's no good talking; us can't stop the world from going round, and if a little money is all that is wanted to help our girl's happiness, I'll pretty soon hand it out, for barn it all, I don't want to hoard up my gold like a miser. Not I. What dost thee think about the letter, Peg? Thee hasn't said a word about that yet."

"Oh, my! it's the best letter I ever heard in all my born days. I knowed he was a regular gentleman: I told you that, you know, father."

"He be's a bit of a scholar, and no mistake, for he knows some nationlong words. But to my thinking, Peggy, Mag isn't the sort of gal for him. Her wud make a prime wife for a plain honest young fellow with enough common sense in his head to find out her value, and make her respect him; but her bean't fit for a lady,—to live in a grand house and manage a squad of servants; the poor wench ain't been used to it, and her wud be as awkward at it as I should be speechifying to a judge and jury with lawyer Windmore's wig and gown on. Then again, I'm afeard that this young fellow has tumbled in love too suddenly to be much in earnest; he hasn't had time to find out half Mag's goodness, and if it is her pretty face only that has smitten him, why, his love will soon go out like the fizz of a squib, for her won't allers be young and blooming, you know, and the first show of a wrinkle will scare him away from her. It is likely enough too that he'll soon be ashamed of her before his rich friends; I've seen that sort of thing before to-day, Peg. He'll find out that her bean't scholar enough to confab with them, and"——

"But she is a scholar, father," interrupted Peggy. "I am sure Mag can read and write with any girl ever so far round about; and as for her ciphering, she bean't far out in that, I'll warrant, though I'm no judge."

"Bless thee innocent heart, missis; doan't 'ee know that ladies must be able to fiddle on the pianney, and polly-voo French to their company, and work all sorts of fal-re-rals with beads and coloured worsted; and Mag knows no more about them things than Biddy Flynn does. Her can churn, and make a cheese, or do any other clever thing about a farm-house; but what's the good of all that sort of learning to her, if her marries Goldstone and goes to live among tip-top folks in Sydney? I tell thee what it is, Peggy, Mag won't be happy, and her had a hundred times better have Sam Rafter; that's my notion."

"There now, I was certain sure you were going to talk about Sam Rafter before you had done. I tell you again, father, Mag doesn't like him, and her won't have him; and no blame to her neither. A girl has only one heart, you know, and surely she may have her say about it as well as her dad; and she would be a goof to give it away to a man that she doesn't like."

"I doan't want her to have a man her don't like. Not I, missis. But her
liked Sam well enough afore this grand gentleman turned up, and that makes me think it's money that her's in love with more than the man; for, barn it all, Sam's a nation sight better looking fellow than t'other, any day in the week, and Sundays especially, when he is figged out in his superfine church-going clothes.”

“But what does Bob think about it? I'll warrant he won't say half a word against Sam.”

“Why, Bob thinks as I think, of course, that Mag ought to look up in the world; and to marry a journeyman joiner would be looking exactly t'other way.”

“If that is all about it, I tell thee, Peg, Sam shan't be a journeyman another month. I'll start 'en in busi ness for himself; and I'll lay any money he'll make a fortune by and bye, for he's just the chap as is likely to do't, and what's more, I'll engage he'll make good use of his money when he has earned it.”

“Mag can get a man with a great fortune, all ready made, Joe; and surely that is better than to scrape and toil for ever so many years to earn it, bean't it now?”

“Noa, I doan't believe it, missis; except Mr Goldstone had got more than twice as much gumption as I think he's got in his head. Even then Mag's ready-made fortune wouldn't be half so sweet to her as if her had scraped and toiled, as thee calls it, and helped to make it. Us never know the worth of water till the hole is dry. Dost thee think that a fellow who never lets his appetite rest long enough to grow hungry, would enjoy a grand feast half as much as a thrasher would relish a squab-pie or a figgy puddin'? Not he, indeed! And suppose when us lived in Dab cottage somebody had druved up in a cart, and tilted ten thousand golden sovereigns inside our front door, and said to us, ‘There, Joe and Peggy, there's a fortune for'ee; go and enjoy it.’ Dost thee think it wad have been as relishable to us as the fortune us have made for ourselves, after long years' hard labour?”

“I don't know, I'm sure, Joe, because I have never been tried in no such way as that; but I somehow think I should have liked it better than working hard; at any rate, I should like to have tried it. Scalls of money never would have scared me, master, nor, I don't believe it, would have scared you neither, for all your talk.”

“Ah, well, I see it bean't no good of me argufying any more with thee, Peggy,” said Joe, laughing. “If thee and Bob and Mag be all agreed about Goldstone, I won't stand out against him; that's all about it. Get me a good pen, and tell me how to answer his letter, and I'll do't in a crack. Let us hope it will turn out all right.”

“Don't you think I had better go and talk to Mag about it first of all,
father. It is only natural for her to wish to have a voice in the thing, you know.”

“Yes, yes, of course; I forgot that, Peg. Go and talk to Mag, and I'll take a walk and try if I can get my think back again, for I seem to have been almost be-wattled for the last day or two.”

“Didn't I tell you, girl, that it was a letter from Mr Goldstone?” said Mrs Stubble exultingly as she entered Maggie's bed-room to acquaint her with the stimulating news.

“Never, mother! It can't be, surely!”

“It is, I tell you, Mag. It's an offer of marriage. Here is the letter itself in a wrapper, smelling like roses and lavender water.”

Maggie took the letter, and blushed deeply as she read it through; then laughingly exclaimed “O mother, what shall I do? What shall I say about it?”

“Isn't it a beautiful letter, Mag? I knew very well I wasn't mistaken the very first time I saw Benjamin looking at you. I knew he was in love, safe as eggs. You mustn't try to deceive me in them things.”

“How ever could you tell, mother?”

“Tell, girl? why, easily enough; though I can't explain it rightly. He looked queer, you know, as if he'd die if he didn't get you. Can't ye understand?”

“Ha, ha, ha! how funny!” said Maggie. “That is exactly as I feel myself, mother.”

“You are a lucky lass, sure enough, Mag.”

“It will be a help to all the family, you know, mother. But what does father say to it?”

“He prefers Sam Rafter, of course; but after a long argification, he has promised to write a letter to Benjamin, and say he may come to see you if he likes.”

“How kind of him!” sighed Maggie. “Won't Bob be pleased?”

“I mean to say we have managed this job cleverly, Mag, and all in a fortnight too. Ha, ha, ha! Won't old Dame Rowley be savage? And Sam will be jealous enough to saw his own head off.”

“I was afraid something was the matter, as Benjamin stayed away so long, mother.”

“Nonsense, girl. I told you all along that Annie Hawkins wouldn't catch him, though she tried hard enough to do it, no doubt. You need not have been so miserable about it, Mag; but never mind, that's all over. Now we must set to work a little faster with the improvements to our dowdy old house, and get some new furniture in it before Sunday. The very sight of those rickety cedar chairs always makes me feel uneasy: they are not fit for
a gentleman to sit upon: and that donkey sofa looks horridly common.”

“I don't like to see that picture of grandfather in a fustian coat, hanging right over the clock, mother. Couldn't you manage to hang it up in your bedroom?”

“If we take that thing down, Mag, father will be woefully cross. We must keep him in good humour; then we'll get all we want. I'll settle the picture, never fear; but don't you say anything about it.”

Writing a letter to Mr Goldstone was an arduous task to Joe, and he perspired over it as though he were bursting a cross-grained log. Peggy lent important aid in the composition, but Mag had to be summoned into the room on several occasions to arbitrate on disputed questions of orthography. After a while, however, the epistle was finished and despatched to the post-office, and then Maggie's heart began to flutter with anticipations too tender to be described in plain prose.
Chapter X.

Bob Stubble and Biddy Flynn's disastrous ride to Daisybank.—
Bob's humiliation before his grand young friends.—A sample of Biddy's philosophy.

BOB STUBBLE took no part in the discussion related in the preceding chapter. He had risen from his bed that morning before the magpies began to make the bush vocal with their matutinal melody, or the cockatoos and king-parrots awoke up for their customary gabbling conference as to what unlucky farmer they should lay under contribution for a breakfast of milky young maize. With a lighted lantern in his hand, Bob hastened to the stable, and gave old Jogger, the cart-horse, a feed of corn and a comforting rub down with a wisp of straw. He then tapped at Biddy Flynn's bedroom window, and bade her get up directly if she wished to go to Daisybank with him.

“Botheration! What for did ye wake me up when it 'aint nigh daylight? Yawgh! I don't want to go to town in the dark, an' ma ybe break me bones among the stumps, or git bogged in a mud-hole,” grumbled Biddy.

“Hold your cackle, can't you? I don't want father to see us start. It will be sunrise before we can get away, for I want my breakfast first. Come, get up, Biddy; there's a good old soul.”

“Och! an' ye're allers gettin' over owld Biddy wid yer blarney, so ye are. Jist go an' stir up the back log, and sling the tay-kettle over it, an' I'll be out wid yer in a jiffy, if I don't fall asleep agin while I'm wakin' up.”

Away went Bob, and soon he had charred the iron-bark log in the huge kitchen chimney, and made a blazing fire. Before the kettle had begun to sing, out came Biddy from her bedroom in simple morning attire, and busied herself in preparing breakfast for her young master and herself.

“Ye'll ate yer male in the kitchen this mornin', won't ye, Masther Bob?”

“Yes, of course; and don't you begin fizzing away with your frying-pan, or you'll wake up everybody in the house. What have you got cold in the cupboard, Biddy?”

“There's a peach-pie, an' a damper an' butther; nothin' more, barrin' a knuckle bone ov pork, what's polished pretty nigh as clane as the handle ov a knife.”

“Hand it all out, Biddy, and then go and polish yourself, for I want to be off at the first streak of daylight.”

“An' what for are ye in sich a mortal hurry-skurry this mornin', Masther Bob?” asked Biddy, as she placed the viands on the table.
“Never you mind; that's my business. Hand up the teapot, Biddy, and then go and get ready. I won't wait a minute after I get Jogger in the cart.”

“Save us all! what a flustration ye're in, an' nobody knows a ha'porth about it. But ye'd betther take care ye don't scalt yer teeth out wid this bilin' hot tay, or choke yerself wid a peach-stone.” Biddy then shuffled back to her chamber to put on her best gear while Bob ate his breakfast. Meanwhile I will explain the cause of his haste, which was so very unusual that Biddy “cudn't make it out at all, at all.”

During the last few weeks a fulsome pride had sprung up in Bob's breast, to which he had heretofore been a stranger. His reputation as a sportsman, such a crack shot with his long duck gun, and one who knew the haunts of all the game in the bush, had attracted Mr Goldstone, who, as I before stated, was on a visit to a gentleman residing not far from Daisybank. The result was, that in visiting Buttercup Glen, Goldstone saw and was smitten with Maggie at first sight; and Bob became so fascinated with his new friend's jaunty address and demeanour, that, although scarcely conscious of the fact, he began to imitate him in many ways, and to ignore his own natural free and easy manner for the assumed airs of a city dandy. He was highly elated, too, at the companionship of a gentleman who was generally believed to be very wealthy, and with whom all the young “nobs” in the neighbourhood associated.

Among the first indications of the unhealthy ambition which inflated Bob's heart was dissatisfaction with his lot and station in life, a growing disrespect for his unpolished parents, his father especially, and a distaste for his humble home. His contempt for the tip cart in which he had so often whistled on his way to the village, or home again, was increased every time he heard his fashionable friend speak of his “turn out” in Sydney, which Bob imagined was a very stylish one. He would almost have suffered scalping sooner than allow Goldstone to see him driving old Jogger in the “lumbering rattletrap,” which he began to think was hardly smart enough for a city greengrocer.

Bob had agreed to meet Goldstone at Daisybank that morning, and was most anxious not to do so until he had delivered his dairy produce to the steamboat agent, and had got rid of the loathsome cart, and the objectionable companionship of Biddy Flynn. It had been arranged by his mother and Mag the previous night that Biddy should go with him to Daisybank to buy a few new kitchen utensils, and to do a little shopping on her own account. She undertook to walk home again after she had completed her purchases, and Bob was to bring the things home in the cart when he returned in the evening. Bob had another reason for starting at such an early hour, which was a desire to avoid his father, knowing that he
was going shooting for the day, or he would have grumbled at so much time being wasted in sport, when there was plenty of work to do on the farm. Bob's conscience was rather tender on that point, for he was aware that he had done little else but sport about with Goldstone for the last fortnight or more.

By the time the horse was harnessed Biddy was ready to start, though she was not in her most amiable humour, and her outward appearance was unusually rugged through dressing “in such a red-hot hurry as if the house was on fire.” The sun was just rising as Biddy scrambled into the cart by the near wheel, after putting up the slip-rails; and before she could comfortably seat herself on a box of eggs, Bob had whipped Jogger into a trot, which turned the little woman over in a second, and further ruffled her disposition and slightly damaged her bonnet.

“Bad manners to yez, Masther Bob! did ye want to kill a crather out an' out? What for are yez in sich a mortal hurry that ye can't give a body time to sit down, nor to take a morsel ov breath without chokin' herself intirely. Troth, if I'd know'd ye'd be afther drivin away like a fire ingin, be dash'd iv I'd a got in the cart at all. Not I. Aisy, sir, aisy! I tell yez! Shure as death the wheels wull be off in a minute an' we shall be knocked into dead corpses. Shtop the baste, an' let me git out I say, iv ye won't drive along dacently. Fegs, I'd rather walk all the way there, iv I crawle d on me knees, thin be boxed about in this haythinish way an' git me clothes spoilt, an' all me bones cracked, forby the life bein' scared clane out ov me.”

“Hold your noise, and sit still Biddy. You'll frighten the horse directly,” shouted Bob.

“Howld me noise, is it? Faix, then, I won't, an' that's plain enow, anyhow. If ye don't shtop the baste this blessed minute I'll scrache murther, so I will,” said Biddy, growing quite red with wrath and fear combined.

Bob could see that Biddy's temper was up, and he knew it would not be wise to trifle with her under such circumstances; so he very reluctantly reined Jogger into a more sober pace. But it was too much to expect that Biddy's ire would soften down as speedily as Jogger's paces; and there she sat on the egg-box, grumbling out her dissatisfaction at being “trated worser nor a fat calf goin' to markit,” and wishing that she had “shtopped in her bed comfitably instead of gittin' up in the middle ov the night to have all the sinse bumped out ov her in a dhirty owld cart.”

They jogged along tolerably easy for some time, when Bob, who had begun to grow impatient of their slow progress, broke out with wrathful emphasis,—“I can't go crawling along at this rate any longer, Biddy; I want to get to the township early; so hold tight, I am going to trot again.”

Slash went the whip, and off went the horse at a brisk trot, which soon
freshened into a canter, and as the cart had no springs and the road was rough, Biddy was soon jolted off her seat again, notwithstanding her attention to Bob's hint to “hold tight.”

“Bedad, thin, do ye think I'm goin' to sit still an' be damaged for iver widout havin' a squeak for it?” said the little woman, in a rage, at the same time getting up and snatching the reins from Bob's hands. “I'll soon shtop the brute meself—woa! woa! woo!”

“Sit down, you old gingerbread-nut!” roared Bob, giving her a push which seated her on the bottom of the cart; but unluckily she clutched one rein in her hand, which she pulled with all her might. The consequence was, that the horse swerved aside, when the off-wheel came in contact with a stump, and in a twinkling the cart was upset, and Biddy and her master were lying on the road beside the overturned box of eggs and the keg of butter.

Biddy's loud shrieks as she fell from the cart vibrated through the clear morning air, and reached the ears of a knot of loungers on the steamboat wharf a mile away, and soon they were hurrying to the rescue. It happened that Mr Goldstone had that morning ridden in to the post-office with letters for Sydney, and on the way thither met Dick Swallow and his brother Fred. Seeing a crowd running in the direction of Biddy's cries, and being always ready for a little excitement of any sort, the three young gentlemen, who were well mounted, put spurs to their horses, and arrived first at the scene of disaster.

“Hullo, Stubble! I am sorry to see you have had a spill,” said Goldstone, jumping off his horse and going up to Bob to shake hands. At the same time, the young Swallows briefly expressed their sympathy.

“Oh, it is nothing,” stammered Bob, trying to laugh, but colouring intensely with wounded pride and confusion at being seen by his aristocratic friends in such a humiliating position.

“Ugh! nothin', do ye call it? Bad luck to yez for a cranky young spalpeen!” roared Biddy, who was by no means improved in appearance by the mud with which she was begrimed. “Here's a lovely keg o'butther all sprawlin' in the dirrt, an' a big box of eggs knocked into flip; forbye dashin' the brains out of meself pretty nigh; an' ye call that nothin', do ye, yer haythin'?”

“Well, it can't be helped; so hold your noise, Biddy,” said Bob, picking up his gun, and preparing to leave the spot. “You had better go on to Daisybank, and I'll get one of these men that's coming to take charge of the horse and cart.”

“An' did yez want me to lave the butther lyin' in the road?” asked Biddy, with a sneer, while she began to roll up her sleeves for action.
“Yes, yes; it is dirty. Let it lie where it is; the man will pick up the keg. Here, my man, I'll give you a crown if you will take charge of this—aw—horse and concern; leave them at the blacksmith's yonder, and—aw”——

“Be the powers, I'll niver lave this beautiful lock ov butther to waste, whiles I've got two fists on me. Not I; so yez naydn't be tellin' the man to take away the impty keg till I fill it. Shure the missis wud brawl the ears aff o' me, if I did that same, soh!” said Biddy, beginning to gather up the butter with her hands, and putting it into the keg, to the extreme annoyance of Bob, who could not but observe that his three fashionable friends were unable to restrain their mirth at his comical predicament.

“You are an obstinate old creature!” exclaimed Bob, in an affected tone of voice.

“Bad scran to yez, Bob Stubble! what do ye mane at all?” vociferated Biddy, thoroughly aroused, and standing up with a defiant air, and her hands covered with butter. “An' am I to be tumbled upside down, an' me neck a'most broke, an' thin to be called ugly names by the likes o' you. Ugh! git out widge yer! Don't ye be comin' the boss over Biddy Flynn, or ye'll only be showin' them grinnin' gossoons there that I don't care a ha'porth for yez.”

“How dare you presume to speak to me in that style, you saucy old bush-cat?” shouted Bob, forgetting his assumed haughty air for an instant; at the same time he gave Biddy an unceremonious push out of his way.

“What do ye mane at all by pushing me? Yah! be off wid ye!” she yelled, with her face at white heat, as Bob was about to give her a second push; at the same time she shook the dirty butter off her hands at his head, and immediately prepared to administer a larger doze, if necessary to do so in self-defence.

It is hard to say what summary vengeance Bob would have taken in the savageness of his soul; and it is probable that Biddy would have found her head inside the butter-tub, had not Goldstone seized the arm of the bespattered youth, and led him to a cottage near at hand; while the crowd were laughing loudly at his expense, and at the same time were lauding Biddy for her pluck in basting her domineering master.

Never before had Bob's sensitive feelings received such a shock as they did on that unlucky morning, though he had experienced above an average share of casualties in the course of his lifelong residence in the bush. He had been horned by a wild heifer, speared by a hostile black fellow, and half-drowned on two occasions when crossing swollen rivers. He had been lost in the bush for three days, and subsisted on a kangaroo rat and fern-root. He had been fired at when galloping away from bushrangers, and had had numerous minor disasters from bolting or back-jumping horses, and
was once upset in a mailcoach. But the whole of those mishaps combined did not cause him so much mental discomfiture as the upset in the cart that morning, together with the unprecedented abuse from Biddy. The reason for his chagrin I have before hinted at; and it will be judged that it was not the mere tumble out of the vehicle, or even the eccentric behaviour of Biddy. Those occurrences would not have troubled him over much had there been no quizzical spectators at hand; but to be thus debased in the presence of Goldstone and the young Swallows, to be called “Bob Stubble,” and to be bespattered with butter before those friends whom he was most anxious to impress with a sense of his importance, and in the midst of a laughing street crowd, was more than his fortitude could bear, and wrath was beginning to master his prudence and all his other virtues too.

“Never mind, Stubble; don't bother yourself any more about it, old fellow! I understand it all; the woman is mad,” said Goldstone, consolingly, as Bob was giving a stammering explanation of the mishap, and cleansing his face at the same time. Bob was especially anxious for his friends to know that it was a very uncommon event for Biddy to ride in a cart with him, and that her rude familiarity in addressing him was an unlicensed liberty which she had never before taken. Goldstone and the Swallows appeared to sympathise with him, and warmly expressed their opinion that Biddy was an old savage who deserved to be ducked to death in a swill-tub. Still Bob could not but suspect from their smirky looks that they were longing to laugh out their suppressed merriment.

In order to show his young sporting friends how indifferent he was to such common trifles as a horse and cart, and a few pounds' worth of dairy produce, Bob, after washing his face, accompanied his friends to the Daisybank Inn for refreshments, leaving Biddy to repair damages in any way she chose. Some of the bystanders had righted the cart and rubbed the dust off the horse; others separated the sound eggs from the broken ones; while Biddy gathered up the butter and gradually regained her good temper.

“Troth, thin, it won't be wasted a'fter all,” quoth Biddy, as she dabbed the last handful into the tub. “And if there shud be a little tint or two ov clane mud in it, it won't pison nobody, I'll warrant; an' may be it'll all shake to the bottom ov the keg. There aint a morsel of home dirt in it anyhow, an' that's more nor some ov the slap-dash butther-makers on this side ov the countrhy can say—more shame for 'em.”

“What are you going to do with it, Biddy?” asked the man whom Bob had hired to take charge of the horse and cart.

“Do wid it? Why, sind it to markit, to be shure. So be a'fter puttin' the
tub in the curr, an' let's be off out ov this pritty quick, or we'll miss the 
shtamer, an' thin I'll be bothered. Everybody in Sydney won't know that the 
butther has been scraped up out of the mud, and it wull be harrd if 
somebody won't ate it. By the same token, it's a good job for a lot of us 
poor unfortinate mortials, that all the worrld don't know the scrapes we've 
bin in, or don't see the little bits ov dirt there are sticking to our characters; 
an' maybe that's the very rayson why the worst ov us will find a friend 
sometimes. Here, honies! ye may suck all thim cracked eggs, if ye like; an' 
look out for chicks!” she added, addressing a lot of young urchins, who had 
gathered round to see the fun, or to share the spoil.

“Arrah, Judy! me darlint! let me lift you into your chariot,” said Mr 
Snubby, the pompous little district constable (a man of immense 
importance in his own way); at the same time he took hold of Biddy's arms, 
with mock gallantry.

“Kape yer slippery paws off me, iv ye plase, Misther Trap! I've got 
money in me pocket,” exclaimed Biddy, who saw that he was trying to 
make fun of her.

“You are an ugly old woman!” said Mr Snubby, standing back with 
offended dignity.

“It's a good job for me I'm not an ugly ould man, for that 'ud be a mighty 
dale worse,” replied Biddy, with a significant look at the sour-faced 
functionary. She then climbed into the cart beside her new driver, and 
away they jogged, while the crowd were laughing at the discomfited Mr 
Snubby.
Chapter XI.

Efforts of Mrs Stubble to make their old house look stylish.—Bob's sport on Barnacle Island.—Biddy and the bear.—Bob's reflections on practical joking.

AFTER doing her business in the township, Biddy Flynn walked home again, with her shoes tucked under her arm, for, being new, they galled her feet, and made her “onaisy.” On her arrival at the Glen, she found “the ould house close up turned into rubbidge intirely, an' sorra a tidy place in it where she could sit down in pace, and rist her bruised bones.”

It is necessary to explain the movement which had so marred Biddy's comfort, and drawn forth the above impatient remark. Mrs Stubble and Maggie had put their heads together to effect certain alterations in the interior of their house. They were doubtful if father would favour their plans, but they resolved to try their persuasive influence with him, and they knew that they would have a better chance of success if Biddy were out of the way, for upon such an important matter she would most certainly obtrude her opinion; and her judgment often influenced Mr Stubble, for the simple reason that she usually displayed a good deal of practical wisdom, although she had a quaint way of expressing it. Their house contained a good many rooms, but they were all small; and Maggie had suggested that, by merely knocking down a lath-and-plaster partition, they could make two apartments into one, which would do nicely for a drawing-room. Her mother was delighted at the idea, and said she knew no reason why they should not have a little bit of style about their house as well as other folks, who had not half as much money as themselves, consequently had less cause to be proud.

“Humph! drawing-room, indeed! I don't see the good of it, Peg; for none of us knows how to draw, if us had time to spare for it,” said Joe, after his wife had explained the plan in her most persuasive manner.

“You don't exactly understand the thing, master,” said Peggy. “A drawing-room is a sort of bettermost room, you know, to put visitors in when they come to see us; the same as Mrs Drydun had at Luckyboy.”

“Well, it's my notion, Peg, that us have got plenty of rooms, good enough for anybody who isn't too proud for such homely folks as us be; and any room in the house is plenty big enough to hold all the friends us have got hereabouts.”

“But you know, Joe, that you have written to Mr Goldstone, and told him that he may court Mag.”
“Ees, that's right enough, missis; but surely thee doan't want to knock two rooms into one on purpose for two young uns to coart in. Us didn't want so much room as all that in days agone. Mr Goldstone bean't such a mighty big chap in size, and Mag isn't nigh hand as fat as her mother.”

“You are very provoking, father,” said Peggy, in a rather petulant tone. “You know what I mean well enough. I don't see why we should live in this plain pauperish way, when we have ever so much more money than some of our neighbours who live in style, and enjoy themselves. It is high time for us to get out of this beggarly way of living.”

“Oh, aye! now I begin to see what thee means, Peggy. Thee wants to be grand-like; that's it, is it? I be afeard I shall spoil thee, though; for it bean't in my grain to take a high polish. But please thee'self, lass; knock down the partition, if that will make thee happy. I doan't care what thee dost, so long as thee looks sweet.”

Barney, their handy-man, was called in forthwith; and in a short time the partition was down, and the comfort of the house was annihilated. Myriads of white ants were exposed to view at the same time; and when Biddy returned, the house was in the state of confusion which she graphically described in her own vernacular:—

“Save us all! and what an ugly mess ye are making here!” said Biddy, addressing Barney, but intending her remarks to reach other ears too. “What on aird are ye doin' at all? Thryin' to cotch all the varmin at onst? or are ye ony jist scaring away the rats by makin' 'em belave the owld house is goin' to tumble down althegether? Troth, it looks likely enough to do it; so ye'd betther take care ov yer cobbera, Barney.”

“We are going to make a drawing-room,” replied Barney, with a quiet chuckle at the astounded looks of Biddy.

“Och Mike! a drawin'-room is it they want? It'ull be as handy to 'em as a four-post bed 'ud be to owld Polly out in the stock-yard yinder. Ha, ha, ha! Dash'd, if I can help laughin', though I'm rale crass. Poogh! what a dhirty dust ye're kickin' up, Barney. Can't ye strike aisy? But never mind, sorra a hair I care; hit out how ye like, and ye'll clone yer muck up affer ye too, for niver a broom or a brush will I fist this blissed day to plase anybody alive, and ye may take my worrd for thate same.” Biddy then trotted to the kitchen, grumbling, as she went, about the pride of some folks, “who were allers breakin' their backs to appear grander nor nature meant 'em to be, and makin' every poor body under 'em as miserable as a sick beggar.”

Biddy did not mention the disasters of the morning to any one in the house; for, indignant as she had been with her young master, she liked him too well to get him into trouble, and when her anger had subsided, she was more inclined to blame herself than him. Kindness of heart was one of her
prominent characteristics: and though she was quick in her temper and sharp enough in her denunciation of wrong-doing, she was always more ready to praise than to blame; and, in her own words, “she wudn't hurt a hair ov a rat's tail if she know'd it, especially if the varmint didn't come anigh her at all.”

A short distance from Daisybank is a very picturesque little island, overgrown with mangrove bushes and swamp oak-trees. Bob Stubble had had many dainty meals of teal, plover, black ducks and other game from Barnacle Island. Occasionally he shot a black swan, which is not a particularly tender bird, and requires more curry-powder to disguise its carrion flavour than is agreeable to delicate stomachs; consequently it is not regarded as a very desirable dish for the table. But if nothing better was to be met with (which rarely happened), the sportsman could always count upon bagging plenty of nankeen crane (night-heron), if he were not fastidious about the quality of his game. Hundreds of those nocturnal birds were to be seen any day dosing among the branches of the oak-trees, and might be knocked down by the most ordinary marksman.

After leaving the inn that morning, Bob started in a small boat for Barnacle Island, in company with his three friends and two blackfellows, who were very expert boatmen as well as keen sportsmen. Each man carried a double-barrelled gun with plenty of ammunition. As the tide was low, the boat could not get within a hundred yards of the island; so the gentlemen were carried on shore by the blacks, who sank so deeply in the mud at times that it was doubtful if they would not have to drop their heavy burdens in order to extricate themselves; however, they struggled manfully onward, laughing merrily all the while, and at length landed their passengers dry-shod.

A flock of black ducks took wing at their approach, and flew away far down the river; but the disappointment at not being able to have a pop at them was soon forgotten in the excitement of seeing hundreds of night-heron opening their drowsy eyes to see who were invading their little island home, and disturbing their morning slumbers. Bang! bang! bang! went the guns, and down fell the birds almost as fast as the delighted blackfellows could pick them up; and every one seemed pleased at the sport except Bob, who had missed his first bird, and in his chagrin and over-anxiety to hit the second one, he missed that also. He could not reasonably blame his gun, for he had previously praised it beyond its due; and he could not excuse his blundering by accusing the birds of coyness, for the poor sleepy-headed creatures had not sense enough to fly even beyond pistol-shot; so while he muttered out some half-intelligible excuse to his laughing friends, he mentally blamed Biddy Flynn for unsettling his
nerves, and thus spoiling his reputation as a crack shot in the eyes of the young Swallows, who did not forget to twit him for his awkwardness. It is very probable that his unusual libation at the inn that morning had more to do with his failure than poor Biddy had; but Bob forgot that in his excitement, while he secretly resolved to be revenged on the unsuspecting old woman the first opportunity he had. It is no wonder, then, that he was sullen when he reached home soon after dusk that evening.

Biddy ran out with a lantern when she heard him drive up to the slip-rails; and by way of showing that she had forgotten or forgiven his disagreeable behaviour in the morning, she said in a cheerful tone, “I'm rale glad to see ye home agin safe an' sound, Masther Bob. An' have yez had any shport to-day, sir?”

“Yes; I knocked down an old cackling goose,” said Bob, sharply.

“’Deed, fegs! An'ye don't call that shport for a gentleman what any ould 'ooman cud do wid a broomstick?” replied Biddy, who knew very well what Bob meant.

“Don't talk to me. Put down the lantern, and go and mind your pots and pans,” growled Bob.

“Ah, ma bougha! thin me pots an' pans are purtie r things to look at nor your surly face, anyhow; so take the lantern an' light yerself; an' ye can let me know whin ye want me nixt time,” retorted Biddy; and forthwith she trotted back to her kitchen in a ruffled mood.

I have not thought it necessary to follow Bob and his companions through all their exploits that day. They had no lack of sport, however; for when they grew tired of knocking down nankeen birds, they left the island for a thick brush on the river-bank, where wallabi and other wild animals abounded. Amongst their captures was a full-grown native bear (koala). One of the blacks cut his way to the top of a tall gum-tree, and brought down the bear alive. Bob had secured that as his share of the day's spoil, and had taken it home with him in the cart, intending to stuff it for his curiosity shop.

Bob's anger was aroused at Biddy's last retort; so, without pausing for reflection, he dragged the bear from the cart, and pushed it quietly into the kitchen, the door of which was invitingly ajar. “See if that is a purtier thing to look at than my surly face,” he muttered to himself as he walked away.

But it is only fair to say that Bob had too much good sense to delight in mischievous practical jokes; and he had no sooner put the bear inside the door than he regretted doing so, for he knew that Biddy had been very timid of bush animals ever since the day she was clawed by an “old man” kangaroo. He stood for a minute or two, irresolute whether to go into the kitchen and drag the bear out again; but he reasoned that if he did so,
Biddy would certainly scold him for putting it in, and he thought it would very likely run out of its own accord. So he put his horse into the stable, and then went into the house, and soon forgot Biddy and the bear in the excitement of listening to his mother's animated account of the honour that was about to fall upon the family, and in hearing his sister read Goldstone's letter aloud for the seventh time that day.

Soon afterwards he retired to bed, but it was some time before he could compose himself to sleep, for his conscience troubled him. He felt grieved for his unmanly attempt to frighten a poor old woman, who was always ready to do a kind act for him when he treated her properly. Heartily he hoped that the bear had escaped to the bush, though he wanted it for his museum. He was just dozing off when loud shrieks from Biddy aroused him, and every one else in the house besides. In another second he heard his father's voice asking, “What's the matter now?”

“Whaa-a! hurry, masther! hurry! an' bring a gun or a pishtle widge yer! Some ugly rascal is under me bed, so he is! Whaa-a! make haste, masther dear!”

“Hallo! hallo! What's up?” asked Bob, who had hastily donned part of his clothing, and run to Biddy's room door before any other person could get there.

“Oh, macree aisthig! I'm skeer'd to death intirely. Come in, Masther Bob; for the dear life o'ye, come in, an' cotch this great big fellow under me bed.”

“What is it, Biddy?” asked Bob again, entering the room, his face drawn into a most unnatural shape with his efforts to suppress his laughter, although he really felt ashamed of himself. “Where is it? What is it?”

“Dear knows what it is at all; but it's under me bed, shure. For the love ov marcy, don't let it come anigh me agin, Masther Bob,” whined Biddy, who was coiled up under the bed-clothes.

“Here he is! here he is! don't be afraid, Biddy. I've got him tightly enough,” shouted Bob, as he seized the bear by the nape of the neck, and dragged him from his corner.

“Arrah! blissings on ye, Masther Bob. I'm iverlastinly obliged to yez, so I am. Pull him out, sir, iv ye plase. Who is he, sir?”

“It's only a bear,” said Bob.

“A bear! Och, murther! It's a marcy the dhirty baste didn't bite the legs clane off me. How in the worrld did the crathur come to git in here, I'd like to know? Thankee kindly, Masther Bob; plase to shut the door tight, sir. Dear life, what a fright I'm afther gittin'!”

The next morning Biddy was overflowing with gratitude to Bob for his timely help in her distress, and at the same time she humbly begged his
pardon for her shocking bad manners on the previous morning. Bob felt his conscience twinge, while a blush of shame covered his honest face, and he was about to confess that her thanks were undeserved, when the dirty butter rose to his memory; so he mentally cried “quits.”

“The boy who threw a stone at a dog, which missed the dog and struck his cruel stepmother, thought that, though he otherwise intended it, the stone was not thrown away.” So Bob, with his bear, did not mean to frighten Biddy so thoroughly, yet he consoled himself with the thought that she was not wholly undeserving of punishment. But notwithstanding that reflection, he could not acquit himself for his thoughtless trick; and he resolved that he would in future eschew practical jokes, from a conviction that they usually began in mischief and ended in disaster. His manly resolution is worthy of imitation by all young folks; and both young and old would do well to remember the motto of Cicero the sage—“Moderation should be used in joking.”

The letter which had been despatched to Mr Goldstone shortly led to an interview, and to his acceptance as the affianced lover of Miss Stubble. In view of the forthcoming alliance, the importance of every member of the household, save Joe and Biddy, was enhanced a hundredfold in their own estimation, if not in the eyes of their gossiping neighbours, some of whom enviously declared, “the match was all for money on one side, but what it was for on the other side they could not imagine, for Mag had nothing to commend her to the notice of a rich gentleman, except it was her pride; and as for her connexions, the less said about low people the better!”
Chapter XII.

Mr Peter Rowley's model farm.—Mrs Rowley's domestic economy.—Mrs Stubble's disdainful remarks on her thrifty neighbour.—Biddy Flynn's reflections on the growing pride of the family.

ADJACENT to Buttercup Glen lived Mr Peter Rowley, who owned a section which he had bought many years before, when the upset price of land was only five shillings an acre. Half of his lot was swampy, but the remainder was rich brush land, which, to quote a saying of a celebrated wit, “only required to be tickled with a plough to laugh into a harvest.” Mr Rowley, however, was not so much a poet as he was a practical farmer; so he did not believe in merely tickling the ground with a plough and harrow, and then sitting down till harvest began to laugh, and let the grubs and weeds laugh at him in the meantime. He knew that the Divine edict which, in creation's infancy, decreed that “man should eat bread in the sweat of his face,” had never been rescinded, and he cheerfully submitted to it, believing it to be a part of the infinitely wise economy of the great Creator.

Mr Rowley farmed his ground well; and though he did not make what a squatter would consider a satisfactory income out of it, he made a comfortable living, and could save a little money besides. It is rare to meet with a man in New South Wales who has grown rich by merely cultivating his land; indeed, farmers, as a class, are poor at the present time. Various calamities have befallen them for several successive years, such as floods, droughts, rust, &c.; and some of them are well-nigh disheartened. But I believe that better times are already dawning on them; and there is no doubt in my mind that eventually this colony will be as great in agriculture as it is in pastoral and mineral resources.

I need not minutely explain how carefully Mr Rowley drained his land, nor the attention he paid to the alternation of crops; but those matters were important parts of his system which puzzled some of his farming neighbours, who had long been wedded to the practice, so common in the colony, of enforcing two crops a year off their land without any variation, and in most cases with mere surface-ploughing. His economical arrangements, too, for saving every atom of manure, liquid or otherwise, was a joke to many around him, who did not believe that what they called virgin soil would need such artificial help in their time. But results may be seen this day, and they clearly testify to the advantage of skilful method. Mr Rowley's farm is in a high state of cultivation, and yields a good return
for his industry, while many of the adjacent farms are so impoverished and overgrown with noxious weeds, that they are scarcely fit for grazing draught-cattle; and some of the late occupants have been literally starved out.

The storekeepers in Daisybank were glad to buy wheat or maize the produce of Mr Rowley's farm, for they knew it was always well cleaned and free from rye-grass seeds or broken cobs and damaged grains. His dairy produce, too, commanded the highest market prices, and the butchers almost raced after his fat calves and porkers. Peter had planted a lot of rose-cuttings behind a three-rail fence, which enclosed about two acres of ground adjacent to his house; and in a few years he had a splendid hedge, which defied the ingress of boys or cattle, besides being ornamental and delightfully fragrant. He was also saved the expense of a new fence, for by the time the old posts were rotted in the ground the hedge had become impenetrable.

Within that enclosure was a variety of fruit-trees, including orange, lemon, citron, and banana; and as Peter had been careful to plant the best of the respective kinds of trees, his fruit was of superior quality, and would always sell when the produce of other orchards would not. He planted a few hundred vines, and usually made two casks of wine and a cask of vinegar each year, besides sending a good many grapes to market. He was as careful in the choice of his breeding-stock as he had been in the selection of trees for his orchard; his maxim being, that a bad tree will occupy as much space as a good one, and an ill-bred beast will eat as much, or sometimes more, than a well-bred one; and his horses and cattle usually met with ready buyers when he had any to sell. In short, Mr Rowley was a sensible, far-seeing man, who, having chosen farming as his calling, devoted his best energies to acquire a knowledge of it, and he had been amply repaid for his trouble. Similar results will generally follow an intelligent perseverance in any other occupation in life, of which abundant testimony is to be seen in this land and elsewhere.

Mrs Rowley was a quiet, inoffensive woman, and the grateful aspiration of her heart each day was—

“Oh may I still contented be
With what kind Heaven has given me:
And though I may not seem so blest
As others, think my lot the best.”

She was scrupulously cleanly, and economical almost to a fault. She could not bear to see anything wasted, and that feeling had nearly grown
into a disposition to hoard before she was aware of it. Still, she was not mean in any way. If sudden disaster affected either the health or the circumstances of any of her neighbours, no one was more ready to run to their relief than Mrs Rowley, and her help was given ungrudgingly, though with a calm judgment which was not always appreciated; and while she was ever ready to help the helpless, she set her face like a flint against idleness or extravagance of any kind. Gossiping housewives often ridiculed her “cheese-paring economy;” but it would have been better for them had they profited by her thrifty example; their homes would have been rendered more comfortable, and perhaps their husbands would have been less often seen wasting their time and money in public-house taprooms.

Those of my readers who have visited some of the rural homesteads in the interior of this colony have doubtless observed an abundance of empty bottles and jars which had contained delicacies of various kinds, imported from distant lands. A few years ago, during the height of the extravagance which was so general after the grand discovery of gold, those discarded bottles and jars were more particularly noticeable. Not only in the vicinity of rural homes, but also in towns, those empty trophies of bygone luxuries were to be seen, and heaps of bottles and jars were as common in backyards as dust-bins. Perhaps there is not much to be said against the consumption of imported pickles, fruits, jams, and the like, by persons living in the city, because few of them have the advantage of garden grounds attached to their dwellings; consequently they are dependent upon the shopkeeper for everything they consume, down to the simple pot-herbs with which they season their broth. But in the majority of homes in the country, there can be very little excuse for spending money for such articles as can be easily produced by careful housewives—

“Dainties unbought, the produce of the farm.”

When the writer was on a visit to London, in 1854, he heard a manufacturer of oilman's stores remark, “that the Australians must be amazingly fond of pickles and preserves.” His whole staff of employés had been busy day and night, for many weeks, executing orders for thousands of cases of those luxuries for the Sydney market.

Well the London oilman might wonder, and, doubtless, some of the American exporters wonder, and perhaps laugh too, while they are coopering up barrels of their dried apples for our market. In the name of common thrift, it may be asked, Why not dry our own apples, if we want such leathery edibles? Surely our summer sun is warm enough for the operation, and there is no scarcity of pippins. It is a fact, which a glance at our commercial statistics will reveal, that even in these comparatively hard
times we colonists expend a large sum of money annually for foreign vegetables and fruits, when our own rich land is capable of producing all that we can reasonably wish for in that way. I am not going to give an essay on protection, nor on free-trade, but I would gladly recommend the study of domestic economy in general.

Mrs Rowley's store-room was a nice, cool, brick-paved apartment, adjoining the dairy, with a simple arrangement for excluding flies and dust, but admitting a current of air. The sun could seldom get a peep at the shingles through the thick branches of acacia which overshadowed the roof. Her shelves were not very showy, but they were strong, as they had need to be, for they held many jars and bottles of pickles, jams, honey, ketchup, marmalade, vinegar, wine, lemon-syrup, and other home-made delicacies. From the beams of the ceiling were suspended bladders of lard, hams, chops, and flitches of bacon, in tempting profusion; also, ropes of onions, and bunches of herbs. In the coolest corner was a keg of ginger-beer on tap. In another corner was a boxful of home-made candles, and beside it was a harness-cask filled with prime pickled pork.

After showing any intelligent visitor through her store-room, Mrs Rowley would usually say, with modest pride, “I'll warrant all those things are good and wholesome, for I made or preserved them with my own hands; and if they don't look quite so tempting, or are not bottled up so smartly, as the shop wares, I can be sure they are free from adulteration. And another recommendation is, that they don't cost me much ready money, for they are nearly all produced on our own farm, except the bottles and jars.”

Mr Rowley was a kind man, ever ready to oblige in any way in his power, and quite free from petty querulous notions, which so often make near neighbours enemies to each other. If Mr Stubble's troublesome bull broke down a weak panel in their dividing fence, and committed a trespass, Peter would merely drive the beast out again, and send a good-natured message to his friend Joe to mend the fence; or, if any of Peter's cattle wandered into Joe's enclosures, he would act in a similar neighbourly way. There never were any disagreeable words between them, or threats of impounding, or Court of Request suits for damages. In short, they were sensible, peace-loving men, and were better disposed than to cause each other loss or annoyance about trifling matters, which are common enough in the country, and are sometimes unavoidable.

Mrs Stubble and Mrs Rowley did not agree so well as their husbands. Though they never actually quarrelled, they held such opposite views on many domestic subjects that their pleasant intercourse was thereby marred. Peggy often expressed uncomplimentary opinions of her neighbour's
general management; and she was more particularly eloquent if Joe innocently lauded anything that had struck his fancy when paying a visit to the house of an evening, to smoke a friendly pipe with Peter and chat over the affairs of the world.

“Pooh! I don't believe in stewing snakes to buy soap with the fat,” exclaimed Peggy one day, when her husband had explained some little economical arrangement which he had observed that morning in Mrs Rowley's store-room.

“If her ever stewed down a snake, I'll warrant her didn't put the fat in with her kitchen-stuff, mother,” said Joe, smiling. “Her put it away safe enough in a gallipot. The blackfellows' scroggies (doctors) say it's a real good remedy for sprains or bruises. But who told thee about her stewed snakes?”

“Never mind; I shall not tell you who told me. She is too much of a nipper for me to copy, I can tell you that. I know how to manage my house without going to her for advice; and it isn't very nice for me to hear you everlastingly praising up all you see her do. There is no butter like Mrs Rowley's make, and as for her bacon, one would think she fattened her pigs on raspberries and cream.”

“Come, come, lass; doan't 'ee be so captious. Mrs Rowley be's always axing kindly after thee, and bothering me to take thee over to see her.”

“I don't care if I never darken her doors again; for go when I will, she is sure to begin prating to me about a new way of making some trumpery old mess or other, or about religion, or something else that isn't agreeable. If she likes to live in the linny to save dirtling the floor of her house, I don't and won't; so that's plain. I mean to have comfort so long as I can pay for it. But don't say any more to me about her, Stubble, or we shall have words.”

“I don't want to say any more about her if thee don't like it, Peg; but barn it all! doan't'ee say her house bean't comfortable, for that is wrong, anyway; and I don't like to hear folks spoken ill of, no matter who 'em be.”

“Well, I mean to say that our house is comfortable, and, what's more, it is fit for any respectable friend to come into, and no brass kettles on the best parlour sideboard,” said Peggy, warmly.

“Our house was a plaguey deal more comfortable to my mind, Peggy, afore thee turned it upside down, and stuffed it full of fashionable jimcrackery, what's not half so useful as brass kettles and such like. I can't go and take a nap on the sofa, on a warm afternoon, without being hooshed at like a cat in a bonnet-box. Bang'd if I can see the good of having rooms that are too grand to be used.”

“That's just exactly what ould Andy Blake sed whin his new wife wudn't
let the donkey sleep in the skillion,” muttered Biddy, who had entered the room unnoticed. She was always ready to have her say on the current topic of conversation.

“How many times have I told you to keep your tongue still when you come into this room, Biddy?” asked Mrs Stubble, sharply.

“Dear knows how many times, missis; but shure ye're allers tellin' me somethin' or other that I forgit to remember. I ax yer pardin’; but it's true enough ye've spoilt the convanience ov this ould house, tryin' to make it look jintale, an' ye'll niver do that same, no more nor ye cud make a baker's cart into a doctor's gig.”

“I will not allow you to pass your remarks on what I do. Well I'm sure! How dare you? Go into your kitchen this instant, and mind your work.”

“I'm just goin', ma'am. Troth, an' there's nothin' else to mind in this place but work, work; an' I knows who it is as makes most of it too,” soliloquised Biddy, as she re-entered the kitchen. “Dash it all! I mustn't shpake at all now but missis ruffles up as if I was goin' to rob her. She thinks she's mighty like a lady all the while, no doubt; but she's no more like a lady nor I'm like a jintleman, not a bit. Ayah! the pride of the craythers puts me in mind ov King Calabash, the black-fellow in Colonel Bullrush's ould red jacket, an' nothin' else on him at all, barrin' a brass plate slung round his neck wid all his dignity printed on it. Ha, ha, ha! This is a rum worrld, so it is; an' dear knows, there's mighty little ov the fun that's in it that poor craythers like myself wud git, if upstart folks cud have everything their own way, an' iv slavery was lawful.”

“Whatever are you muttering about, Biddy?” asked Mrs Stubble, imperatively, as she followed her maid to the kitchen.

“I was jist shpakin' to meself a bit, ma'am, that's all.”

“You have no business to speak to yourself in my hearing.”

“Save us all, missis! wud ye be afther tyin' me tongue down, like the cork in a bottle ov ginger-pop? Shure, I niver heard ov the like, even in Norfolk Island itself.”

“I will not be spoken to, Biddy.”

“Well ma'am, wid respect to yez, iv ye can shtop a tongue in a live head, ye'll be more cleverer nor all the mimbres ov Parliament in the worrld, an' the Emperor of Roosher forbye; manin' no offince.”

“I tell you again I will not allow you to answer me in my own house,” vociferated Mrs Stubble, at the same time stamping her foot.

“Thin I won't shpake another worrld, ma'am, good or bad; anythin' for pace and quietness,” said Biddy; and then she softly whispered, as her mistress returned to the parlour, “shure, thin, ye can't shtop me from thinkin', any way; an' iv ye know’d what I am afther thinkin' about yerself
jist now, ye'd be ropeable, so ye wud. Ha, ha! I can't help laughin', but I suppose I'll be gagged for doin' that same, by an' bye. Ha, ha! It's a free counthry now, so it is; an' it's a pity that old 'ooooan didn't come here awhile agone, for she wud have made a rale out-an'-out matron for the Parramatta factory.”
Chapter XIII.

Introduces Sophy Rowley and Sam Rafter, the journeyman joiner.—Remarks on local influences.—Bob Stubble's complacency at his defeat in love matters.

SOPHY ROWLEY, the only daughter of the honest old pair just introduced, was a pretty-looking girl of about nineteen years of age; of artless, unpretending manners, and thoroughly domesticated habits. She was born at Briarburn (the name of her father's farm), and had been carefully trained by her devoted parents. Of course she liked a little bit of fun now and then, but she did not dislike work, and rarely or never neglected important duties for pastime of any sort. She had received a useful education at a day-school at Daisybank, and had been a scholar in a Sunday-school there, until she grew old enough to be a teacher. Since then she had been most diligent in studying to qualify herself for the duties of her office. She felt a real interest in the welfare of her pupils, and received their love and confidence in return.

Maggie Stubble and Sophy had been schoolfellows, and were at one time warmly attached to each other, but of late Maggie had slighted her unpretending friend in a way which she could not fail to notice; and though she did not resent the treatment in an ill-natured way, she had too much honest pride to obtrude her friendship upon one who had so plainly shown that she did not value it.

Bob Stubble had long shown a partiality for Sophy, which was observed by her watchful parents. It is true he had never consulted them, or made to their daughter what could be properly called a declaration of love; but that they attributed to his natural shyness, for they could have no doubt as to the object of his frequent visits to their house. Mr and Mrs Rowley had often talked the matter over, but were strangely perplexed when trying to decide what answer to give to Bob if he “popped the question,” which they daily expected him to do.

“Bob is a smart fellow,” remarked Mr Rowley, as he and his wife were one day discussing the merits and demerits of the youth. “There is not a lad in the district that knows more about cattle than he does, and he is pretty knowing in many other things; still, I do not think he is exactly the one to make our girl happy for life, and I cannot make up my mind that it would be a safe match for her.”

“He is very steady, and a well-spoken young fellow, Peter,” said Mrs Rowley, with a sort of inquiring glance at her spouse.
“Yes, he is all that, my dear, and more too; but I take it that a man who totally disregards the divine command to keep the Sabbath-day holy has not much religion; consequently it would be an unequal yoke for Sophy, and we could not expect their union to be a happy one.

“That is just what I have been thinking, Peter; and I believe it is the very thing that stops us from making up our minds to say yes, if he should ask us to let him have Sophy. Every day since she has been born we have asked God to teach us to train her in the right way, and it seems to me to be going in the face of Providence to give her to a man who does not ‘fear God and keep His commandments.’ But Bob is an honest, good-natured lad, and he has got sense enough in his head to know what is lawful and right. He may get religion, you know, Peter.”

“Yes, mother, he may get it easily enough, if he will only seek it in the right way, and I believe he knows the way too; but he must show proofs to us that he really does possess it, before we can safely give our girl to him. I do not believe in the notion I have heard some people propound, that a good woman can always influence her husband. It is flattering to womankind I daresay, but I have no faith in it. It may be possible for her to do it to some extent, but it is a dangerous experiment for any young girl to make. She had better try to reform a man before marriage, for if she has not influence over him then, it is ten to one if she will ever have it, and she will run a terrible risk of being influenced by him to her own ruin. That is my opinion, mother; and if you agree, I think it will be well for one of us to tell Sophy our mind, and advise her how to act with Bob in future. I am sure she will dutifully accede to our wishes, for she knows that we have her best interests at heart.”

Mr and Mrs Rowley saw eye to eye in most things, especially in the important matter of training their only daughter; and they never had any of those jarring arguments which so often mar the happiness of man and wife. After tea that evening, Peter rode into a Church meeting at Daisybank; and while he was away, Mrs Rowley had a long conversation with Sophy, and learned from her the exact state of her mind towards Bob. She admitted that she had liked him very well a year or two ago, but that the feeling had not strengthened upon a longer acquaintance; and lately she fancied that he had been influenced by his sister to slight her, for there had been a marked alteration in his demeanour towards her, inasmuch as she had resolved before her mother spoke to her to discontinue her intimacy with him, as soon as she could do so without disturbing the neighbourly feelings of the two families. Moreover, Sophy confessed, after some hesitation, that she had a growing regard for another young man, who had shown her respectful attention, though he had never even whispered a word of love in
her hearing. That young man, she blushingly stated, was Samuel Rafter, the young joiner of Daisybank.

Sophy might with good reason have admired Sam for his handsome face and manly figure; but there were other attractions which had more influence over the sedate young maiden's heart; and Mrs Rowley's eyes glistened with tears of joy and pride as she heard her daughter declare that she never would marry any one, however high his social position might be, if he did not possess true religion, which is the spring source of all good qualities, and without which she could not hope to be happy with any husband. “God bless you, my dear child!” said Mrs Rowley, kissing her affectionately; “you have filled my heart with gladness, and I am sure your dear father will rejoice too, when I tell him what you have said to me. It will be a gloomy day for us when you leave our home for one of your own, and I have no wish to hasten the time. Solicitude for your happiness has induced me to learn your feelings for young Stubble, and now I know how to act towards him.”

Samuel Rafter was a bustling young man, about twenty-four years of age. He was born in the neighbourhood of Daisybank, and had served his apprenticeship to Mr Clamp, the master-builder. I have already alluded to Sam's handsome face and athletic frame. His head was a study for a phrenologist, but, above all, his heart was sound.

Sam's widowed mother lived in a neat little cottage of her own, on the outskirts of Daisybank; and during the term of his apprenticeship, she had a hard struggle to keep a comfortable home for herself and her only son. Her poor old back often ached very much with sitting many hours every day of the week, making cabbage-tree hats for their mutual support; but when Sam was out of his time, he would not suffer her to work at hat-making, and he hired a woman for a day in each week to do the domestic drudgery. When most of the working-men of Daisybank rushed to the diggings, leaving their families to shift for themselves, Sam nobly resolved that he would not leave his poor old mother alone for all the gold in the land. He kept to his trade, and in consequence of the scarcity of workmen and abundance of money, he could readily earn from twenty-five to thirty shillings a-day; so he made the most of the good times, and often worked a quarter of a day overtime, or did odd jobs in his own little workshop at home, for which he got well paid.

It is a remarkable fact, that out of the many persons of the working-class with whom I was acquainted in those exciting days of high prices, I could name but very few indeed who carefully husbanded their earnings, and who could say, when the excitement had somewhat subsided, that they were really better off for the unprecedentedly high wages which they had
received. Sam Rafter, however, was one of the rare exceptions. His early-formed habits of frugality and industry were never vitiated, or even influenced, by the examples of extravagance and idleness which surrounded him. He made money fast, but he saved it; and not one of his fellow-workmen who had rushed to the diggings was so well off as himself at the year's end; while many of them returned penniless, and with their health broken down by severe bodily exertion, and the privations and hardships which were inseparable from a digger's life in those early days of gold-seeking.

Another strong reason which Sam had for not going to the diggings was, that he was a teacher in the Sunday-school, and leader of the little choir in the church; and he knew that there was no one who would fill his offices if he vacated them just then. Conscience told him that it was his duty to remain; so that decided it, and all the tempting reports from the gold-fields did not induce him to swerve.

The Great Teacher himself said, “A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country.” It is very likely that Sam might have improved his social position had he removed from the neighbourhood where he was bred and born, for, in addition to a fine manly figure, he had a strong intellect. His early education had been neglected, but he diligently applied himself to self-culture, in which he was greatly assisted by a little book, written by Rev. J. Paxton Hood, called “Self-education.” Sam has often recommended the same useful work to young men of his acquaintance. There were no mutual-improvement classes or reading or lecture rooms at Daisybank in those days, and it occurred to Sam that something of the kind might be inaugurated: so he took great pains to prepare a lecture to young men, and got the use of the court-house to deliver it in. He had no pedantic motive in coming out as a lecturer, but simply a desire to induce some thoughtless lads in the village to read and study, instead of wasting their evenings in riotous games, to the annoyance of quiet folk.

It is likely enough that, had any pretentious stranger announced a lecture, he would have had an approving audience; but poor Sam's first attempt to enlighten his friends in that way was a failure, for the very reason which should have ensured its success—he was well known to them all. The old gentleman who was asked to preside at the lecture said, “Pooh, pooh! What does that lad know about lecturing? He had better stick to his tool-basket.” It was urged that Sam's boldness might incite others in the district “to come out” in the same way, but the old gentleman still declined to countenance presumption by taking the chair. An old woman said reproachfully, “Why, I knew him when he used to run about the streets without shoes or stockings; so I'm sure I shall not go to hear him.” The lads for whose
benefit Sam had taken all the pains, ridiculed the whole affair, and only went for the avowed purpose of “making a fool of Chips;” thus showing that they were fools themselves.

Many young lecturers or preachers, and young authors too, have winced under the lashings of critics; and some sensitive minds have been permanently weakened by such onslaughts, like a tree bowed to the ground by the fury of a hurricane without elasticity enough to rise again. Sam Rafter was naturally annoyed for a while at the treatment his first literary effort had received; but he had too much energy of character to be disheartened by the remarks of a few prejudiced persons, who had condemned his lecture without hearing it, or at any rate without understanding it. He locked the manuscript in his desk, remarking to himself, as he did so, “Perhaps this snubbing is all for the best. If I had been applauded, it might have made me too self-confident, and I might have come out as a Mentor before I had the necessary qualification; and then of course I should have merited the contempt of sensible folks. I will diligently strive to increase my little stock of knowledge; and when I next appear as a lecturer perhaps I shall be better appreciated, for I will take care that it shall be in some place where there are not so many old fogies present who knew me when I was a little boy, and who seem to regard me as a boy still, despite the evidence of my whiskers. Ah, well! it is all right, I am sure,” he continued, “and it will doubtless conduce in some way to my good, though I cannot see the working of it just at present. ‘If God be for us, who can be against us?’ ”

That was the way Sam usually derived comfort under trials or difficulties which he could not exactly see through. Opposition only “put him on his mettle,” as he called it, and brought out qualities which he otherwise would not have known that he possessed.

I was present at a dinner given by a rejected candidate for the representation of an electorate in one of the northern districts of this colony to a few of his supporters. In the course of his speech, after his health was drunk, the gentleman jocosely remarked: “The main reason my opponents have given for rejecting me as their representative is—‘That I was once a boy about their town.’ Now, most of us have been boys about some place or other; but it is plain that a boy does not always get most appreciated in his native place.”

Thus a ridiculous prejudice lost that electorate one of the wisest and best men that ever sat in our legislative halls. He was returned for another constituency, and he afterwards filled a seat in the “Upper House” until his death. It is true that he was a “boy about N——,” a poor boy too; but he left that town while in his boyhood, and in course of time he rose by his
own energy and talent to be a wealthy and highly influential man. Foremost in every useful work, he lived respected and died regretted, and his memory is revered by thousands who knew his sterling worth. Though I have not given his name, doubtless some of my readers will recognise the picture of one of their warmest friends.

It is my deliberate opinion that where there are no inseparable family ties, or other important considerations or influences, it is advisable for young men who have their way to work up in life, to leave their native home—especially if it be situate in a small country town; for in general they will have a better chance of distinguishing themselves where they were not known as poor boys.

It is likely that the local influences alluded to lowered Sam Rafter in the estimation of Miss Stubble, and steeled her heart to the softer influence of love. There was certainly nothing in his personal appearance for her to object to; on the contrary, there was everything which most women would think attractive; besides, his character was unblemished, and his habits steady in the extreme. But all those excellencies were overlooked or slighted by purse-proud Maggie; and she treated the modest advances of Sam first with flirting indifference, then with a disdain which he could not misunderstand. So, with a proper manly spirit, he ceased his attentions to her, and after a time begun to look tenderly at Sophy Rowley, and I have before stated that she regarded him with growing affection. It was not long before Sam proposed in due form, and was accepted by Sophy with the unhesitating assent of her parents.

Bob Stubble soon heard of the engagement, and doubtless felt a little chagrined, for he really liked Sophy. However, he consoled himself by saying that she was too prosy to suit him, altogether too sedate for a young girl of her age. The new companionship of Goldstone perhaps helped to keep Bob from thinking of his defeat, and it was not apparent to any one that he grieved much about it. Maggie and her mother were glad that there was now no probability of a close connexion with such a disagreeably strait-laced family as the Rowleys, and tried to make Bob believe that he ought to look for a wife in a much more elevated circle of society.

“All right! I am not in a hurry to wed. Who knows that I may not smite some fine girl with plenty of money? Many worse-looking fellows than I have made a fortune in that way.” As Bob gave expression to those half-jocular sentiments, he fondled his young beard, and looked as striking as if he were standing for his photograph.
Chapter XIV.

Introduces Simon Goldston e, the city capitalist, and Ben Goldstone, his son.—A glance at the early history of that fast youth.—His school-days, and his travels.

MR GOLDSTONE, senior, lived in an old-fashioned house on the Parramatta Road, whither he had gone, after retiring from business, a short time before the date of my story. There was a lugubrious look about the dwelling, and its grounds around were as barren as a sea-beach; but it suited its owner, who had always manifested a contempt for fashion; and though he liked flowers, he had never tried to cultivate any.

Mr Goldstone (or old Simon, as he was generally styled) was a man of spare proportions, approaching to seventy years of age. From his every-day dress, which looked almost as aged as himself, he might have been mistaken for a respectable beggar; but a mere glance at his countenance would dispel the illusion, for it bore unmistakable marks of superior intellect; and his abstracted air proved that he was not on the alert for the alms of the philanthropic, nor for objects whereupon to exercise his own dwarfed charity. He was not often seen walking in company with any person, but he seemed to make up for the lack of society by talking to himself. If all the citizens were of his mind, cab and omnibus owners would have been starved into some other calling, for he never patronised them. His gait was quick for his age, and he usually chose the most secluded streets to walk in. He apparently took very little notice of passing objects, and seldom accosted any person he met; but if he were spoken to he would reply with gentlemanly courtesy, and if he could be drawn into a conversation upon books, his extensive knowledge was a marvellous contrast to his insignificant externals. Indeed, Simon was a learned man, but he was niggardly even of his wisdom, and no one was enlightened by it.

Mr Goldstone had been in the colony nearly half-a-century, and was as well known in Sydney as the obelisk in Macquarie Place. At one time he held an office of distinction under Government, in which he laid the foundation of his fortune. Rumour said he had dabbled a good deal in commissariat contracts. I have no evidence of that, however; in fact, legal proofs of such jobbery were not often procurable, though there can be no moral doubt that jobs were done on an extensive scale. For many years Simon lived in Slumm Street, in a large house of his own, the frowsy exterior of which was more than matched by its internal odours; but he
seldom went out of it for sanitary purposes, though his appearance showed that he needed fresh air.

The nature of his vocation was not intimated by any visible sign about his dwelling; still he did business to a considerable extent, and many needy tradesmen and luxurious young sparks found their way to Simon's house, and he was always glad to see them, though he seldom asked any one to eat or drink with him.

If he were not worth the “mint of money” which public opinion credited him with, he certainly owned a good many houses, which had fallen into his possession through the inability of mortgagers to redeem them. At one time, this accumulation of real property caused him more restless tossing about in his bed than some of his humble neighbours would have felt at the loss of all they owned. His extreme caution had prevented his lending, in any case, more than half the current value of the houses and tenements which were given as security; but when bad times came, the majority of his clients were unable to redeem their properties, and Simon found himself the unwilling owner of houses in almost every street in Sydney. That circumstance preyed on his mind, and induced an obstinate attack of dyspepsia, which nearly shrivelled him to death. To insure all his property against fire cost him an aggravating amount of ready money—and not one of his houses had ever been burned down, to encourage him a bit; but he could not insure at all against the over-reaching of mercenary assessors or tricky tenants. A hard shower in the night would give him a cold sweat, for he was certain to have visits at day-dawn from drenched-out tenants, with exaggerated reports of leaky roofs and fallen plaster, or blocked-up drains, and cause a further drain on his funds. A heavy hail-storm one day smashed all his sky-lights and his north-west windows; and a glazier, who tried to look sorry for the mishap, asked forty-five pounds to repair the damage. His tenants sometimes ran away without paying little matters of rent due; and when the houses were untenanted, petty thieves usually stole the fixtures, and “Tom and Jerry boys” wrenched his knockers off. Those additional trials might have been obviated by employing an agent to look after his property; but he was afraid the agent might run away, or otherwise rob him—he had heard of such unlawful doings. Altogether, Simon looked upon himself as the most unfortunate of men, for during a season of severe commercial distress, when he ought to have been rejoicing—for he might have got almost anything he liked to ask for his ready coin—to know that so much of it was locked up in unsaleable houses was grievous in the extreme; and it was cynically remarked by one of his prejudiced clients, that “Old Simon would have poisoned himself, only that drugs were dear.”

But a good time was coming, though he could not see it beforehand any
clearer than his neighbours did. The gold, which had slumbered undisturbed for ages in the bed of Summerhill Creek, suddenly aroused from its long nap, and set all the New South Welshmen dancing “the perfect cure.” Up went the price of everything like magic, and Simon went halfcrazy with joy, for his despised houses began to let at fabulous rentals, and he became as rich as a nabob. In his first transport of delight at such unlooked-for good luck, he resolved to retire from business, which had in a great measure retired from him since he had parted with his ready money. He removed into his house on the Parramatta Road, which had been untenanted for a long time; and there he hoped to enjoy himself for life, over the thousands of volumes which he had accumulated, or in watching the increasing value of his houses, and totting up his daily income.

Many years before, when suitable wives were not so easy to find as they are at present, Simon married a young woman who had been his servant. The union was not a happy one; for as Sarah Farden was uneducated, she was not a companion for her husband, and her sullen intractable temper made her particularly disagreeable to him, insomuch that before he had been a month married, he wished himself single again. In addition to other infirmities of character and habit, she had a fondness for stimulants, which all the sober reasoning of her husband failed to check, and at length he was reluctantly compelled to publicly caution “all persons not to give credit to any one on his account without his written authority.” After that ominous announcement, some of the busy-body neighbours stepped in, for the ostensible purpose of making peace between the jarring pair, and of course made matters worse by their interference. Mrs Farden, his wife’s mother, came out strongly on her daughter’s side, and used to tell Simon her mind with a candour that was sometimes quite startling. So, between wife, and mother-in-law, and gossiping neighbours, the poor man’s life was made thoroughly miserable; and he was seriously planning a separation when death stepped in and cancelled the conjugal bond which had been so galling to both parties.

Mrs Goldstone died soon after giving birth to a child, which was taken charge of by her mother, who lived near Pennant Hills. Simon loved his little son, but he did not reverence the grandmother; and though he punctually remitted a stipulated sum for the maintenance of the infant, he did not see it very often, because he must needs have seen its nurse at the same time, and, as I have before intimated, he had already seen too much of her.

At ten years old, Master Benjamin was as perfect a specimen of a spoiled boy as ever was seen on Pennant Hills or elsewhere; and he became at length such a nuisance in the homestead, that his peace-loving old
grandsire vowed he would go shepherd ing if his wife did not either get rid of the boy or teach him manners. A smart argument followed that declaration, in which grandfather got the worst of it, and the result was, that Benny became more obstreperous than before, and teased the poor old man to such an extent, that, finding soft words and hard arguments were alike inoperative, he had recourse to a stick, and that brought about a climacteric which was not anticipated by any one. The following brief account of the incident will show the boy Ben's playful proclivities, and his taste for thrilling amusement.

One day his grandfather was pruning the topmost shoots of a pear-tree in his orchard, when a neighbour fortunately walked up just as Master Ben had begun to saw off the limb of the tree upon which his unconscious old relative was standing. In another minute or two grandfather would have fallen like a blighted bergamot, and perhaps have been seriously injured.

“Oh, such fun!” exclaimed the urchin, running to his grandmother in high glee, after the neighbour had taken the saw from him. From his funny report, granny was of opinion that it was only a childish freak, not worth making a fuss about, but grandfather took a different view of it, and, with unprecedented firmness, declared that it was a piece of premeditated mischief which called for a solemn recognition, and he forthwith gave Ben what is commonly called “a good hiding” with a pear-tree switch. Being the first hiding Ben had ever felt, it was strange to him, and he did not like it; he wriggled about like a hooked eel, and roared for mercy, while grandfather held him tightly by the arm; but as soon as he was let free, he flung a tomahawk at the old gentleman's head, and then ran away as fast as he could, without stopping to see if he had committed murder.

Grandmother's grief at the flight of her precocious pet was deep and noisy; but we must not stay to sympathise with her and lose sight of Ben, who started for Sydney direct, riding behind a coach, and poured into his father's ears a detail of the painful affair from his own point of view, which showed that he had been brutally punished merely for his desire to acquire a practical knowledge of pruning trees. Simon's parental feelings were all aroused by a sight of grandfather's marks, which Ben had not been able to rub out; and he at once decided that it was expedient to take his son under his own guardianship. But in a very short time he found that the presence of his heir was ruinous to his own quietude, and that to live in the same house with him was wholly impracticable. If Mr Goldstone's moral responsibilities to his son were ever considered, there was no tangible evidence of the fact. What he might have done if the boy had been tractable, of course nobody knows; but his rollicking tendencies hastened his sire's decision that a thorough training away from home was essential to
cure his bad habits, and break him into good ones. Accordingly he was sent to a boarding-school about seven miles from Sydney, but he usually spent his holidays at home with his father, who always rejoiced when the holidays were over, for Ben was still a noisy boy, after all the pains that had been taken to improve him.

At sixteen years of age, Ben was expelled the school for kicking the master; and being too bashful to face his father directly after his disgrace, he went to his grandparents, who gladly received him, and “asked no questions.” Their circumstances had very much improved since Ben had last seen them, for lucky diggers were as free with their money as “Jack tars” just off a cruise. It mattered not to them how much plums were a pint, or apples were a dozen; they liked them, and were able and willing to pay for what they liked; so Mr Farden, in common with other fruiterers, found his orchard very profitable, and he made money apace. Ben was glad at his grandfather's good luck; and the doting old gentleman, who still carried the graze of the tomahawk on his bald head, was lavish in supplying the lad with pocket-money, perhaps to show him that he was a better friend than his father, who never gave him sixpence without grumbling.

“Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.”

That proposition, which, alas! was true thousands of years before Dr Watts' penned it, was exemplified in Ben Goldstone, who was a thorough idler, and an adept in mischief of all sorts. Satan had a lot of choice young friends in the neighbourhood of Parramatta, rare rollicking blades, who were ready for anything in the sporting way, from chuck-farthing to horse-stealing, or from picking their mother's pockets to bushranging. Ben soon found some of these “jolly dogs;” and for the next twelve months, under their tuition he devoted his energies to the study of sport in general, including the mysterious art of gambling, card-trickery, and other devilry of the times.

About this period, owing to an occurrence which I had better not mention, Ben was induced to try a sea-voyage; and such was the urgency of the case that he could not wait to pick and choose a vessel, but embarked in the first one that was ready for sea, which was a whaler bound for a cruise in the South Seas. I shall not trouble myself about his proceedings on that voyage. I may state, however, that he did not catch many whales, though he often caught the rope's end from the chief mate, who soon discovered that Ben was a skulker; indeed, his messmates used
to say that the only work he was good at was working his jaws.

In a little less than four years he returned to Sydney, a fullgrown man, looking a sort of composite of sailor, jockey, and city dandy. His grandparents had died during his absence, and left him the whole of their property, which yielded an income of about £400 a year. This he regarded as a most lucky occurrence, as it saved him from the hardships of a sailor's life, which he loathed, or of going to work at some other calling, which was also objectionable. He had no hope of receiving the smallest voluntary help from his father; and it was not easy to rob the “old man,” for he kept nothing portable in his house that would fetch ready money. Forgery, Ben knew, was not allowed by law. But he was spared the risk of carrying into execution any of the schemes which his fertile brain had concocted while rolling about in his greasy bunk in the forecastle of the Juno, by the “lucky windfall,” the death of his grandparents.

Some of my readers may fancy that £400 a year is a tolerably good income, and wish they could get it. Ben Goldstone thought it was “not so bad,” when he had just come off a long voyage, with the prospect of having to work hard either on sea or on shore for a livelihood; but in less than twelve months of a sporting life, he found that it was quite inadequate to his wants, and he was obliged to mortgage his late grandfather's estate, to meet pressing liabilities at Tattersall's, and enable him to carry on a little longer in the fast style which his taste induced.

It was about this time that he paid a visit to Major Hawkins, at Daisybank, for a few weeks' shooting with his old school-fellow, Ned Hawkins. I have already told how he first saw and admired Maggie Stubble, and that he was accepted as her affianced lover. It may seem improbable that any parents who were not insane should give their ready assent to the engagement of their daughter with a man of whom they knew so little; but a look round at every-day life will show many parallel cases, where the glitter of wealth has blinded the judgment, bedazzled common sense, and gagged the mouth of principle. Ben's father was known to be very rich, and the hasty conclusion was, that Ben must be rich also. That was enough for silly Mrs Stubble, who, as I have shown, was the managing partner. Then the fact of his being a visitor at Hawkville highly excited her veneration, and she never once thought of inquiring into his antecedents, or questioning his moral character for a moment. Major Hawkins was a most respectable man, but he was by no means careful of his family, or he would not have allowed Ben to associate with his son, much less to ride about with his niece. All he knew about the youth he had learned from his son, who knew but little of Ben's career since he left school.

In surrendering his heart so promptly, Ben was not influenced altogether
by love; other considerations had weight with him, for he was a calculating youth in his way. He certainly had to some extent the desire, which has always been common to young men, to get married, and he was not insensible to the charms of the fair sex; but he had a sort of “fast man's” dread of buying connubial joys at the price of liberty. Several young ladies in Sydney had slightly smitten him, and he had been twice refused by discerning mammas; at any rate, no girl had ever impressed his heart so deeply as Maggie Stubble had done. When first he saw her, she was riding a spirited horse—a position, by the way, in which most ladies show to the best advantage; and he thought her the most dashing-looking girl he had ever seen—a splendid match for a sporting man! one who would astonish his friends at Homebush, and stagger the citizens as he drove tandem through the streets of Sydney in his new dog-cart.

His inquiries in the neighbourhood gained him the encouraging information that Maggie was an only daughter, “with lots of tin.” He judged from the description he had heard of her parents that he should easily gain their favour, or, as he pleasantly expressed it, “walk round the old folks.” His father had long ago threatened to cut him off with a shilling, and Ben would have taken eighteenpence for his chance at one time, but he had begun to hope that his irascible sire might be brought to reason through Maggie's tender influence. She was likely to please him, if any woman could do it, on account of her domesticated habits, and her innocence of fashionable foibles. But if luck deserted him, and his father should bequeath all his money to found an asylum for idiots, as he had solemnly vowed to do, Ben reasoned that Mag's father had money (thirty thousand pounds he was told), and that was almost as good as having half of it in his own pocket. It will be observed that Ben was a sanguine youth. He had great confidence in his own skill in “working the oracle,” as it is called by fast men and conjurers; and he used to boast that his cool blarney was equal to any emergency.

He began operations by getting acquainted with Bob Stubble, and hailing him as a brother sportsman. Bob's vanity was inflated by the polite attention and familiarity of a gentleman from Sydney, a friend of the Major's, and, by general repute, a rich man. Bob was very sensitive to a little flattery; he liked the encomiums which his new friend bestowed on his skill as a shot; and he liked the presents which Ben made him, with a show of off-hand liberality which was very fascinating. Mrs Stubble was as susceptible to soft attention as her son; and Ben's happy allusion to her juvenility, one day, was as operative as “tip” to a wicked exciseman. Thus it may be seen that his course to the heart of Maggie was as smooth as he could wish, and the result has been briefly told before.
After Ben's formal acceptance as a member-elect of the family, he was a daily visitor at Buttercup Glen; and at such times he put on his very best manners, and succeeded in removing the strong prejudice which Mr Stubble had at first conceived against him; in fact, Joe could not see that there was so much amiss in the young chap when he came to know him better. This he was honest enough to confess to Peggy, who, instead of applauding her husband's candour and love of fair-play, half-tauntingly told him she hoped it would be a warning to him in future not to be so ready to say wicked things of people behind their backs, and teach him to pay a little more respect to her judgment of character.

In about ten days Goldstone took a loving farewell of Mag and her mother, shook hands with Bob and his father, and with Biddy Flynn too, and departed for Sydney, taking with him half a cart-load of wallabi and wild ducks as presents for his numerous friends in town.
Chapter XV.

Mr Stubble consults his friend Rowley on his project of going to Sydney to live.—A few remarks on electioneering matters.—Mr and Mrs Rowley's colloquy after Joe's departure.

“How are you, Master Stubble? Glad to see you,” said Mr Rowley, accosting his neighbour, who had just walked up to the front door, and was carefully scraping his boots prior to entering the house.

“I'm hearty, thank'ee, Peter. How be you and the missis? I've popped over to have a little bit of talk, if thee bean't busy this evening,” replied Joe.

“Come in, come in; your boots are clean enough, neighbour. I was just going to light my pipe; so draw that arm-chair up to the fire, and have a smoke. I am very glad you are come, Joe, for I feel too uneasy this evening to enjoy my books. These westerly winds always make my bones ache.”

“Us used to grumble at the easterly winds for blowing aches and pains in the ould country,” said Joe, smiling. “There are many things as go contrary-like in this land besides the wind; but I can tell'ee a famous cure for your rheumatism, Peter, and you can get it in no time, for thee hast lots of lemon-trees. Take and squeeze the juice of a lemon into a glass, add some water to it, and sugar too, if thee likes it, and drink'en up. Repeat the dose two or three times a day, and I'll engage your rheumatism will soon leave off bothering thee. I got that notion from a great man in Sydney, and afterwards from one of the best doctors in the land; and what's better reason than all to me, I've tried'en myself, and found that it made my pains go away like sorrow at the sound of a fiddle. I only wish all the poor mortals in the world who are suffering from that cruel ailment knew where they might find such a safe and cheap remedy.”

“It is remarkable that I never heard of it before, Joe, though I have been growing lemons for many years. But I'll try it to-night before I go to bed, and I thank you for telling me of it. It cannot do me any harm, if it doesn't do me good, that is one thing certain; and I have no notion of despising a remedy because it is simple and easy to be obtained. Why, the best cure us poor mortals ever heard of is beautifully simple, and, what is more, it is as free for everybody as the light of the sun. You know what I mean, Joe, my boy, don't you? You remember what we were talking about the last time you were over here?”

Mr Stubble sighed, and replied, after a pause, “Ah, Peter, I know a vast deal better than I practise, I be sorry to say. But doan't'ee talk to me about religion just now, for I bean't able to argify with thee, and it makes me feel
uncommon sad when I begin to think what a careless life I've led all along. There, doan't ee say any more now, Peter,—lend me a knife to cut up some tobacco.”

“Very well, Joe. I'll talk about something else; so fill your pipe. I never obtrude religious topics upon any one; but I thought perhaps you had come over on purpose to have a talk on that very subject, and that is why I said those few words by way of starting you off. Don't you see, Joe? But tell me who you are going to vote for next Friday, and that will change the subject.”

“Blamed if I know, Peter, and I don't much care neither. I don't bother my head a great deal about 'lectioneering consarns. I know more about cows than I do about candidates.”

“That is pretty much the case with many of our neighbours,” said Peter. “But let me tell you, you ought to think a little more on the subject, Joe, for you have a large stake in the colony, and you have children growing up. I believe it is the bounden duty of every man to use all the sense he has got in choosing fit and proper men to make laws for us; and if we neglect to do that, we have no right to grumble when we are misgoverned.”

“That's right enough, old man; but there are plenty of folks as like that sort of fun, so I lets'em look after it. I've got lots of things of my own to attend to. Besides, I doan't want to get my head put in a flour-sack, same as old Captain Kinks was served the last 'lection but one at Daisybank, because he voted against the pop'lar candidate, as they called 'en.”

“I remember that affair, for I saw it take place,” said Peter, with a severe look. “But Captain Kinks had too much of the British sailor in his make to be put in a sack without having a kick for it; and the popular party had to pay pretty smartly for their savage fun. To my mind, Joe, that very occurrence is a strong reason why we should not be lazy in looking after our privilege, the freedom of election; otherwise we shall soon be under mob government altogether. Are you sure that your name is on the electoral roll, Joe?”

“Not I, Peter, for I never see'd the roll in my life as I know of; but I suppose it be's there right enough, for I've got a freehold in the district, everybody knows that.”

“But your name may nevertheless be omitted from the list; and if so, it is too late to remedy it now, and you cannot vote at all. Mistakes often occur in making up the electoral lists, and sometimes nobody knows how to account for the omissions.”

“Well, well, it's no odds, Peter; one vote won't make much difference either way.”

“Excuse my bluntness, Joe; but that is what many lazy folks say, and
often enough those very ones are the first to cry out and grumble if they see anything that is not exactly right in our rulers. Your negligence may influence others to follow your example; so on that score it is wrong to show such carelessness about a matter in which every man ought to feel a pride, while exercising his best judgment. There is a special reason why we should be up and doing at the present time, for there are certain persons canvassing with all their might for old Jemmy Bung of Sydney."

"Get out! Nonsense! Thee don't mean to say that, Peter? Why, bang it all, he knows no more about Parliament consarns than ould Biddy Flynn does; not a bit."

"Well, then you should bestir yourself, Joe; and help to elect a fit and proper man, otherwise you will have no right to complain if Bung is returned.

'A politician should (as I have read)
Be furnish'd in the first place with a head.'

Jemmy has a head big enough, certainly; but there is nothing in it worth mentioning, and he is a mere tool in the hands of the men who are bringing him forward. You had better ride in to Daisybank with me on Friday, Joe, and poll your vote like a man who is not afraid to do what is right."

"All right; I'll go in with thee, Peter; and I be glad thee named it to me. My head bean't much good to think about these things, and yet I know it's right enough to look sharp, for supposing a lot of chaps like old Jemmy got into Parliament, they'd pretty soon make a muddle of the whole consarn, and the country would be ruined out and out. Yes, yes, thee be'st right, Peter. Wellman is the man for us, and I'll go in with thee on Friday, and vote for him. He be's a gentleman, anyhow, with lots of superior gumption in his head, and he's got plenty of property in the district, that's another thing in his favour, and t'other fellow is——; but it ain't fair to speak agin a man behind his back; though he won't go into Parliament if I can keep'en out by fair and honest means, that's all about it. And now that consarn's settled, I want to ax your advice about another thing, Peter; and I be come over on purpose for it. Thee be'st a knowledgable sort of man, as I can depend on, and I bean't got many neighbours that I can talk to as I can to thee."

"If I can do anything for you, Joe, either by word or act, I will do it willingly. You have always been a good neighbour to me; but whether or no, it is right to help one another all we can. It would be a much worse world than it is, if we all neglected that duty. Tell me what I can do for you, Joe."

"This is it, Peter. I be thinking of going to live in Sydney, and I don't
know exactly whether it would be best to sell my farm right out, or to let' en

to somebody. I want thee to tell me what thee thinks about it.”

“Going to live in Sydney!” exclaimed Peter, while his wife, who was

sitting near, dropped her knitting-needle, and stared with astonishment.

“Why, Joe, you have taken me all aback, as the sailors say. I never dreamt

that you had such an idea in your head. It is a very sudden notion of yours,

is it not?”

“I haven't thought very long about it, Peter; still, for all that, I think it's a

settled consarn; but I may as well tell'ee all the ins and outs of it, then

thee'll know how to advise me. My gal is going to be married to young Mr

Goldstone. I suppose thee heard that news afore, for them sort of things

amers get talked about.”

“No, I certainly have not heard it before, Joe, for I make it a rule never to

pry into my neighbours' private affairs; and as it is pretty generally known

that I do not encourage gossiping, I seldom or never hear news of the sort

until it is as current as our agents' market prices. Gossiping often leads to

scandalising; and I always suspect that a person who tells me of the faults

of others intends to tell others of my faults. But may I ask you, first of all,

Joe, how long you have known Mr Goldstone, and whether you think he is

the sort of man to make your girl happy for life?”

“I haven't known him above a few weeks, and to tell'ee the truth, Peter, I
doan't know much about'een; but my wife and Mag have settled it between

themselves that he is the right man; so it's no good of me saying aught

against it,” said Joe, with a look that evidenced perplexity and a forced

resignation.

“I have no right to dictate to you, Joe, on the management of your family

affairs; so I shall not give any opinion on that matter unless you ask for it.

You want to know whether I think it best for you to sell your farm or to let

it. At the present time, it would fetch a good price if it were offered for

sale, and as the buildings are old, and will want repairs pretty often, it's a

chance if you get a tenant who will satisfy you; so perhaps you had better

sell. But I'll turn the thing over in my mind for a day or so. By the bye,

would it not suit your son Bob?”

“It would be no good offering the place to him at any price, for he says

he is sick and tired of a country life; and he be's going to Sydney too.”

“I am very sorry indeed to hear this news, Joe,” said Peter, after a few

minutes' reflection. “We have always got along well together as

neighbours, and I am loth to lose you; but apart from that selfish

consideration, I feel a real concern for you, Joe, because I cannot help

thinking that you are going astray, and that you will regret the step before

long. Tell me what you are going to do with yourself in Sydney, if it is not
wrong for me to ask the question.”

“Banged if I know, no more than a fool; and to tell'ee truth, I doan't want to go to Sydney at all. But this is it, Peter: for some weeks past my wife has been trying might and main to make our old house look grand and fashionable, and her can't manage it nohow. Ha, ha, ha! Such life as they've been carrying on there nobody never seed afore in these parts. Her pulled down a partition, and made a fine big drawing-room, as her called it; and t'other night, after I'd a gone to bed, they were having a dance with Mr Goldstone and young Swallows, with Bob and Mag, and the old woman too; all the lot of'em were hoppin' about like kangaroos, when down went the floor crash into the cellar, and scared'em all above a bit, and smashed a heap of jimcrack things that they had bought to make the room look smart. I couldn't get out of me bed for laughin', so I lay still and let 'em think I know'd naught about it. But they have found out that the house is eaten to the skin with white ants, and 'em can't make it safe to dance in, though I told them that afore. As fast as they patch up one part of the house, it breaks down in another part; so the long and short of it is, they have all made up their minds to go to live in Sydney. It bean't a morsel of good of me trying to stop 'em I know, and I can't live up here all alone; so I be going to Sydney with 'em.”

“But you have been used to an active life in the country, Joe, and I cannot think what you will find to do in the city to occupy your time. You are still strong and vigorous; and if you have not some employment, if only for the sake of exercise, you will soon fall into bad health, and possibly into bad habits. You see I am speaking plainly, but I know you like honest dealing. Many persons fancy that freedom from toil and plenty of money will ensure a life of ease and comfort; but this is a great mistake, which I don't want you to pay for making, and so I caution you in time. It matters not how rich a man may be; he cannot do without work of some sort or other, without endangering his health and his pocket too. That is a doctrine as old as Adam, and is nothing new; that I have found out myself, though I can attest its truth by my own early experience. And pray, what is Bob going to do in Sydney, may I ask?”

“I can't exactly tell'ee that, Peter, for I don't think he knows himself yet awhile; but it will be summat in the horse-dealing way, I guess. Goldstone has put the notion into Bob's head to go; and I believe he has had a hand in coaxing the ould woman into it. They be all plaguey fond of him sure enough, and think every word he says is true as a new almanac; and it ain't a mite of good of my saying aught against the lot of 'em; so, for the sake of peace and quietness, I lets 'em do just as they like. Mag is to be married in a few weeks' time, and they be all agreed that it can't be done in our old
house, 'cos they be going to invite a lot of Goldstone's grand friends, and it won't hold 'em all; besides, they be afeard it will tumble about their ears if they have a jig, and of course they won't do without that. There bean't time to build a new house, so us must find one elsewhere; and us may as well go to Sydney as to any other place for aught I know.”

“But I say, Joe, have you taken into account that it will cost you twice as much to live in Sydney as it costs you in the country? Let you live as carefully as possible, there are ways and means, in a great city, of spending money, of which you at present have but a faint idea. You will not be able to cart in your own firewood, or to grow your own bread-stuff; and very likely you will not have enough garden-ground to grow a cabbage: you will have to put your hand into your pocket for a score of things which you now get off your own farm for nothing, or next thing to it. Then there is the important matters of rent and taxes, and an additional cost of clothing —for I don't suppose you will wear worsted corduroys and kip boots in Sydney. Have you thought of these things, Joe?”

“Well, as to all that, I am pretty easy about money matters you know, Peter; they never did trouble me very much. I don't mind telling thee just how I stand, though I never told anybody else, for I don't boast of my money, as I have heard some sappy-headed fellows do. I've got a little over nine thousand pounds out at interest, and the farm and stock upon it ought to bring about three thousand more: so thee see'st I be pretty snug, as the saying is, and I ought to be able to afford to live anywhere with that toto. Don't thee think so, old man?”

“Yes, I do indeed think so. You are a fortunate man, Joe, for you have ample means for supplying all your own wants; and you can well afford the luxury of lending a helping hand to any deserving person you may meet with, who is struggling against abject poverty. But there is more art in taking care of money, Joe, than most folks think who have not learnt the lesson. I have heard men say, without joking too, that they have found it much harder to keep money than to make it.”

“Ha, ha! The fellow must be a greenhorn who said that. I don't believe it a bit, Peter,” said Joe, slapping his side pocket. “I never get drunk, thee knows, mate; and when I be out of bed, I be as wide awake as most old chaps: anyhow, a fellow as robs me must get up afore daylight.”

“Yes, you are pretty knowing, Joe, and I don't think any one could sell you a screwed horse; but there is no harm in my warning you to keep all your wits about you. You know, I have had three years' experience in Sydney, and rubbing up against hard customers has tended to make me look sharp. By the bye, you have not told me how you are going to occupy your time in the city, Joe.”
“Well, that's what I be a bit bothered about, Peter; for I can't bear to be idle. Master Goldstone was saying t'other night, that I should find lots of amusement when the trials are going on at the court-house, and”——

“Bah! If that is his taste, save me from—from the like, that's all,” said Peter, hastily. “I have no patience with men who can take pleasure in sitting day after day in a criminal court, gloating over horrible cases, anxiously watching how it will go with thieves and murderers, while the interests of numberless poor, honest, half-starved folks outside are totally neglected by them. But I beg pardon, Joe, for interrupting you so warmly. I am very sure that sort of **amusement** will not suit you.”

“No fear, as the boys say. I was going to tell'ee what I said to Goldstone about 'en. Ha, ha! I made 'en look as shamed as if he'd bin cotched beating his aunt. But, my wig, Peter, there's the moon getting up: I must be off home, or my ould woman will think I be lost in the bush again. I'll come over in a night or two, and have another talk.”

“No, Joe; and in the meantime, I will think over the matter that you have asked my advice upon, and give you the best of my judgment.”

After Joe had departed, Mr and Mrs Rowley had a long chat about the recent discussion, and they were both decidedly of opinion that their honest old neighbour was about to make a move in the wrong direction. Mrs Rowley kindly proposed to go over the next day, and have a serious talk with Mrs Stubble on the subject; but on further consideration, it was thought better not to do so, for their motives would probably be misconstrued, and it might even be suspected that they were desirous of renewing the intimacy between Bob and their daughter.

“I am very much afraid friend Stubble will soon lose all his money,” remarked Mr Rowley, after he had sat for some time in silent cogitation.

“He seems very confident of being able to take care of it, Peter,” responded Mrs Rowley.

“Poor fellow! He thinks that the only thieves he will have to guard against are pickpockets and burglars. That class are by no means scarce; but they are not the most dangerous thieves in the community. Joe will no doubt see that his back-doors are bolted and barred securely, and will keep a sharp lookout for the cash in his pockets; but he has no idea of the necessity for guarding against oily-tongued rogues in superfine clothes. There lies his greatest danger, and he cannot see it.”

“No, poor man! he is too honest himself to suspect others of duplicity, if they speak fair words.”

“Then, again,” continued Peter, “there are many really good-meaning people in Sydney who usually pay court to men who are supposed to be wealthy; not with a selfish purpose of benefiting themselves personally,
but, as they say, ‘to bring the stranger out, and make him take an active part in social and religious organisations.’ You know how poor old Mr Doddle was lionised at public meetings soon after he went to live in Sydney.”

“I have heard Mrs Doddle say, that she had very little of her husband's society; for his time was so much occupied in making speeches, and attending meetings to deliver them.”

“Just so; and Doddle told me himself, that he was almost persuaded he was an orator, in spite of his natural diffidence; and at one time he used to think that those persons who shouted ‘hear, hear!’ to him really believed there was something in him. I do not say anything against making people useful, you know, mother; far from it, and to induce them to give freely of their abundance to the support of public charities is very commendable; but I think extreme caution should be used in bringing men out to take a leading part in great social movements. It is essential that they have mental and educational qualifications for such important offices, and not be mere men of money, otherwise they may do more harm than good to the cause they wish to serve, and perhaps do themselves harm too. Many honest, simple-hearted men have been spoiled by being prematurely ‘brought out,’ and being made too much of, their ordinary heads could not bear so much honour all at once.”

“There is not much fear of Mr Stubble being spoiled in that way, Peter. He is too diffident to be led out into public life.”

“I don't know that, mother. Joe is pretty easily persuaded to anything that looks straightforward and honest. There is a certain share of vanity lurking in every heart, you know, dear; and it is very apt to grow mischievous where it is not controlled by superior sense or cultivated judgment. Then, again, Joe will have no end of calls upon him for money, which he has now no conception of. His reputed wealth will draw a host of professional beggars after him, and he will be fair game for them. His personal friends and neighbours, too, will solicit his help towards their various pet private charities, and poor Joe is too liberal to refuse such appeals as those; so altogether his income is likely to be overtaxed, perhaps before he is aware of it too. All these calls and claims are the natural appendages or penalties of wealth or popularity.”

“Well, as you have had a good deal of experience of city life, Peter, it would only be kind of you to caution Mr Stubble a little before he goes to Sydney.”

“I will certainly do that, as well as I can, mother; but it is not easy to convince such a man as he of his danger, and my experimental wisdom, though costly to me, may not be even thankfully received. In general, there
is not much heed paid to the warnings of men who have been victimised, and their precepts are more likely to provoke ridicule than respect."

“I wonder if this Mr Goldstone is a sensible man, Peter. If so, he will be a sort of safeguard to Joe.”

“I have never spoken to him, mother; but the few glances I have had at his face have not impressed me in his favour. I would not allow him to court our girl, but I did not like to say as much to Joe.”

“It is as well that you did not, Peter, for Mrs Stubble would say it was envy that actuated you. Poor Maggie would have made a nice character if she had been properly trained. Her disposition is kind and gentle, and she used to be an industrious girl before she grew so proud. I doubt if she is a fit wife for a gay city man; she has lived all her days in the bush.”

“It is my opinion that this ill-judged movement will be disastrous to the whole family,” said Peter. “I would gladly stop it if I could, but I do not think it is possible to do it. I will, however, give Joe a few useful hints before he goes; and you know, mother, we can remember them when we are asking for daily blessings for ourselves.”
Chapter XVI.

Arrival of a letter from Sydney.—Mr Stubble goes to Sydney and hires a furnished cottage for his family.—His visit to Museum and Botanical Gardens.

“THIS bean't for me, I be sartain sure!” exclaimed Mr Stubble, as he closely examined a letter which had just arrived express from the post-office, addressed “——Stubble, Esquire, Daisybank.”

“What is it, master? Let me see it,” said Mrs Stubble, peeping over her husband's shoulder, while Bob and Mag looked as interested as if their father had just discovered a new species of bird.

“I bean't a squire; Joe Stubble is my name, and that was my feyther's name too. My grandfeyther was a groom to a squire's uncle, and that's about as nigh as I can get to the honour. It's a lagging matter to open a letter as doan't belong to us, so thee'd best send it back to the postmaster, Peggy, then us'll be safe from the law.”

“Stuff and nonsense, Joe! I'd open it as soon as crack an egg, for it's ours, sure enough. There is no other Stubble hereabouts as I ever heerd tell on. Give me the letter, I'll read it; then if there is any lagging to be got, I'll be in for it; I bean't skeered a bit. There now, didn't I tell you so? Of course, it is for us. It is from the gentleman that Benjamin said he would ask to look out for a house for us,” added Peggy, when she had opened the letter and glanced at its purport.

“Well read 'en out loud for the benefit of the company,” said Joe, smirking under the peculiar stimulus which the new title had given to his latent vanity. Peggy thereupon read as follows, with strong emphasis on the first line:——

“——STUBBLE, Esq.

“DEAR SIR,—At the kind recommendation of Mr Goldstone, jun., I take the liberty of sending you herewith a list of suburban family residences which I have at present in my hands for sale, or to let; and I shall be happy to treat with you on the most liberal terms for the purchase or lease of either of the properties specified.—Awaiting your esteemed commands, I have the honour to be, your most obedient servant,

“HIRAM CLINCH.”

“What do you think of that, now?” asked Peggy, with her eyes full of glee.

“It's a nation civil letter, sure enough,” replied Joe.

“Civil! Is that all? Did you ever see such a one afore in all your days,
Stubble? I mean to say, it's a beautiful letter, that we all ought to be proud of."

"You had better get it framed and hung up in the best parlour, like old Mark Browny did the big blue electioneering placard of the candidate who bought all his measly pigs. "Bluster for ever!" suggested Bob, with an ironical grin; whereupon his father frowned, and his mother said she was astonished at him.

"Well, what had we best do about it?" asked Peggy, after they had all given the subject several minutes' silent consideration. "There is a fine lot of houses in the list, but I wish he had sent pictures of 'em. I don't see how we can choose the best without seeing them all. What do you say, father?"

"Blamed, if I know dezackly what to say about it, Peggy. If I were going to choose a cart, or anything in that line, I'd know how to go about it as well as here and there a one; but it's mortal little I know about fine houses. One thing, us don't want a great big house to hold our bits o' traps."

"Traps! You don't mean to say you are going to take our old rickety furniture to Sydney? Surely, you don't intend to do that, Joe? Why, old Dame Rowley would giggle her wig off, if she see'd us carting away all our combustibles. That would be a joke!"

"Well, well, doan't 'ee get cross, Peg. I doan't care a s hot what thee dost so long as thee 'rt happy and quiet. Have a survey of the old things, and buy new ones in Sydney with the money if thee likes."

"Of course; that is the proper way, father," chimed in Mag, with a pleasant smile; and Bob said "certainly;" so that matter was decided. The next consideration was, who should go to Sydney to select the house; and after many propositions had been rejected, it was resolved that father should go himself. Peggy strongly urged her right to go with him; but as she was not supported by her son and daughter, she, for once, was outvoted, so obliged to yield her point and stay at home. After tea that evening the discussion on the choice of the new house was resumed, and continued until a late hour. Joe began to fancy that a new and happy era was dawning upon him, for his wife and children were so uncommonly amiable and kind. Maggy actually said "dear" to him once, but she coughed after it, and Bob winked at his mother, to show that he had noticed Mag's mistake.

When Joe retired to bed that night he had so many warnings, injunctions, and pleadings from his wife and daughter echoing in his ears, that he could not sleep a wink until about an hour before it was time to get up; so he naturally felt rather drowsy while the instructions were being repeated in the morning. After dressing himself in his best colonial tweed suit and cabbage-tree hat, his son drove him to Daisybank, and saw him safely on
board the steamer for Sydney.

“Sarvant, sir!” said Joe, with a humble bow, as he entered the little office of Mr Hiram Clinch, on the following morning.

“Well, mister! what can I do for you?” asked Mr Clinch in a brusque tone, for he thought he was speaking to a poor man.

“I be called to see thee about a house,” said Joe, producing from his pocket the list which the agent had forwarded to him.

“Oh, ah, yes! Beg pardon, sir. You are Mr Stubble, I presume: very happy to see you, sir. Please to take a seat, Mr Stubble.”

Joe seated himself, placed his hat under the chair, and began to wipe his dusty face with his handkerchief; he then remarked that it was “uncommon warm in Sydney.”

“Very sultry, sir. When did you come to town, Mr Stubble?”

“I come down by the Colloroy last night; and it war rough weather sure enough. I thought us was all going to the bottom, and I felt as if I'd be glad to go there too, for I was so mortal sea-sick. I would never sell my farm to buy a ship to sail in myself, anyway.”

“Ha, ha, ha! Curious sensation sea-sickness, isn't it? Hum—ah—yes; about the house, Mr Stubble. Have you decided which one on my list is likely to suit you?” said Mr Clinch, in a manner which nicely blended sympathy and humour with business push.

“Noa, sir; can't say as I have dezackly. My missis wanted to come down with me, and I wish her had done it too, for my head be's so dazed with the confounded racket of the town, and the dust to boot, that whipped if I know what I be about rightly. I only wish her 'ud bide easy in the house us have got; her 'ud be a plaguey deal more comfortable up there than her'll be in Sydney, that's my notion. What rent might ye ax for this house now, mister—the one on top of yer bill?”

“Yes, a beautiful house that, Mr Stubble, and I should say it will just suit you. Nice convenient distance from town, good neighbourhood, first-rate roads, and only one turnpike. The rent of that one, sir, if you will take it for a term, will be £300 a year; it was let for £450, but the tenant went insolvent, and”——

“Whew-w!” whistled Joe, while his eyebrows touched his forelock. “Three hundred pound a year! I can't afford no such rent, and thee must look me out summat a mighty deal cheaper than that, mister, or else I shall toddle back and titivate the old house up.”

Mr Clinch smiled at the simple bluntness of his new client; at the same time he mentally resolved not to let him go home again until he had earned a commission out of him in some way or other. After describing several other enticing properties, to all of which, however, Joe shook his head and
said “he couldn't afford it,” the agent seemed to be suddenly struck with a new idea, and he exclaimed, “By the bye, Mr Stubble, I have just the very thing that will suit you. I think you said that you were going to sell off your furniture?”

“Ees, sure, every stick of it, if anybody will buy it.”

“Well, sir, I can let you a snug five-roomed cottage at Redfern, all ready furnished to hand, and nothing to do but walk in and sit down comfortably. You can buy all the furniture if you like, and save yourself no end of trouble and expense.”

“The very 'dentical thing to my mind, sir,” said Joe, with a sigh of relief. “It'll save a heap of bother. What's the price of that consarn, mister?”

“Only twenty pounds a month, or say £240, if you take it for a year certain.”

“All right, sir. I'll have it; it's just the ticket. My missis will be pretty soon glad to get out of Sydney again; and then us won't have the trouble of selling our traps afore us start, nor of buying new ones when us come down neither. We'll all be into it this day fortnight, if that'll suit 'ee, sir?”

“Oh, yes, Mr Stubble, I'll study your convenience; but perhaps you will not object to leave me a deposit—a matter of form, you know—or suppose we say you pay a month's rent in advance?”

“It's no odds to me when I pay, so long as I doan't pay twice,” said Joe, drawing out his leathern pouch, and depositing a twenty-pound note with the agent, who gave him a receipt, and made a few pleasant remarks on Joe's prompt way of doing business. After a short chat on the state of the crops in the country and the price of farm produce in town, Joe said “good-day” to Mr Clinch, and walked away for the purpose of finding Ben Goldstone to tell him of his lucky bargain. He had not gone far from the office, however, when it suddenly occurred to him that it would have been more business-like if he had inspected the said cottage and furniture before closing for it; so back he hastened to the office, but found it closed, and a ticket on the door, “Gone to lunch.”

“Never mind, it can't be helped,” soliloquised Joe, as he walked away again. “I daresay everything is right enough; at any odds, it wouldn't be much good of me looking at a houseful of furniture. Peggy will be the best hand for that, and I'll warrant her'll soon find out what's missing, and let Mr Thingamee know it. Put me in a stable, and I know a thing or two; but, bang it all, I bean't up to managing consarns of this sort, and I'll take good care they don't catch me out foraging like this agin. Now I'll go and find Benjamin, and mayhap he'll go with me to see the monkeys in the Gardens and to some of the other grand sights in town that he was always talking about.” Away he trudged to Ben's address at Wooloomooloo, but was told
that Mr Goldstone had gone to Botany Bay on a fishing excursion, and
would not be back for three days.

“Whipped if I'd stay in Sydney three days without my old woman to see
all the monkeys in the world,” muttered Joe, as he made his way to a
pastry-cook's shop in William Street, where he refreshed himself with
sausage-rolls and lemonade. After that he walked slowly up the hill to the
Museum, and having entered his name in the visitors' book, he began to
gaze with wonder and awe at the varied and well-arranged specimens of
natural history which that vast building contains.

“My wig! this be's a place worth looking at, and no mistake,” said Joe to
himself, as he stood in the middle of the great hall, wiping his perspiring
face and trying to stare at everything at once. “There be's more rum things
here than I ever seed afore in my life; and all to be seen for nothing too. It's
queer to me how they do it so cheap. My word, won't Bob be pleased to
come and see them stuffed snakes and what-you-call-'ems, and them
whopping big sharks up in the glass case yonder, with their bellies full of
straw. I be glad I come in, for it's fine and cool, and I be better in here than
trudging about the warm streets in these plaguey tight boots. I reckon I
may as well sit down and rest my legs a bit, for I be nation tired.”

But it is not easy to find a seat in the Museum (or it was not in those
days; it is to be hoped that these are better days in that respect), and Joe
searched first down-stairs and then up-stairs without seeing a single chair,
eXcept the one with which the doorkeeper was accommodated; and his
relish for those accumulated wonders of the physical world was spoiled by
his pettish reflections on “the bad manners and stinginess of the Museum
men, for not getting a few stools or chairs for country folks to sit down and
rest their limbs when they come to see what's to be seen.”

“I'll fetch down a few iron-bark fillets for our folks to sit on. They'll let
me roll 'em in here, I guess, for they bean't very partiklar what they keep in
this shop. Bang it all! look at that!” he added in an audible murmur. “If
there bean't two 'spectable old ladies sitting down on the door-step in yon
gallery! Well, well; what a shame of the Museum keepers not to give 'em
chairs! 'Em don't deserve to have people come to look at their
whizamagigs. But I'd better go and sit down on t'other door-step, afore
some other tired chap comes up to take a rest.”

When Joe had seen enough of the Museum, he walked to the Botanical
Gardens, where he could not reasonably complain of want of seats, or want
of anything else which thoughtfulness, taste, and scientific skill could
provide or accomplish for the edification and enjoyment of the visitor.
There he sat under the shade of a gigantic pine-tree, and gratefully sniffed
the fragrance which was wafted from ten thousand flowers on the drowsy
afternoon air; while the birds in the adjacent aviary sung sweet soothing lullabies, until he gradually dozed off into forgetfulness of his weariness and his chafed feet. He dreamt that he was lolling in his old chair at Buttercup Glen, with his feet in his carpet slippers, and his family were sitting around smiling joyfully at his acute bargaining with Mr Clinch, when their happiness was interrupted by Biddy Flynn entering the room and shouting in his ear that Mr Goldstone's bull terrier had killed the turkey-cock.

Joe started up in a pet, and became conscious that one of the gardeners was shaking him by the shoulder. “Hallo, master! wake up, if you please,” said the man. “It is past sundown, and I am just going to shut the gates.” Joe woke up accordingly, and again a twinge of conscience reminded him that he had better take a look at his cottage and furniture, in order to be able to delight his family with a description from personal survey, but when he reached Mr Clinch's office again he found it was closed for the day. “Well, never mind, it's no good fretting or fidgeting myself. I've hired a house, that's sartin, for I've got the receipt in my pouch. That's the very thing I came to Sydney to do, and if they don't like it when they see it, why, let 'em go and look for another one; that's all about it.” Joe then limped along to the inn where he had slept the previous night, with his eyes full of dust.

That night he embarked in the smart steamer *Jimalong Josey*; and soon after breakfast next morning he was again sitting in his easy-chair by the chimney-corner, relating with characteristic deliberation the particulars of his journey to his family, who were grouped around him, impatient to hear all about their future habitation in the gay city of Sydney.
Chapter XVII.

Excitement of Mrs Stubble and her children over the furnished cottage.—Sale of household effects, and final departure of the rustic family to Sydney.

“WELL done, master! I didn't think you could have managed it half so cleverly,” said Peggy, after Mr Stubble had informed his family circle that he had taken a house containing everything they wanted, from a wardrobe to a nutmeggrater, and that “they had nothing to do but walk in and make themselves at home, and not say thank'ee to anybody.”

“But you haven't told us where the house is, father,” said Maggie, who had been listening with breathless interest. “What part of Sydney is it in? I hope it is in a nice genteel neighbourhood.”

“It's at Redfern, lass; and a real pretty place 'tis, no doubt.”

“Redfern! Redfern! Where is that, Joe? I never heard tell of it afore, as I know,” said Peggy, who had begun to look rather dubious.

“Why, it's up Parramatta River a bit, I think,” replied Joe, looking dubious too.

“Not it, father,” remarked Bob, whose local knowledge was superior to all the rest, as he had stayed a whole week in Sydney. “I remember the place very well, because one dark night I walked right into a big ditch that runs across a paddock at Redfern. It is out beyond the railway terminus.”

“Yes, yes; Parramatta Railway I meant, of course. Thee be'st right, Bob, my boy; it's out there somewhere, sure enough.”

“But haven't you been to the house, father?” asked Maggie.

“Noa, I can't say as I've been inside 'en dezackly. I've been outside of 'en, thee knows, and”——

“And what does it look like, father?” interrupted Mag.

“Well, that's more than I can tell'ee just at present, lass, for I haven't seen 'en yet; but I'll warrant it looks right enough.”

“What! been to Sydney and hired a house full of furniture, and never so much as looked at it first?” said Peggy, excitedly.

“Ha, ha, ha! That's jist like Barney M’Gee, the blind piper, who wint and got married widout seein' his wife a bit in the worrld,” chuckled Biddy Flynn, who had trotted into the room with “the masther's clane boots,” but purposely to hear what was going on. She might have stayed there unnoticed by any one in the general excitement; but she could no more restrain her tongue when her fancy was tickled than a well-bred cat could resist catching a bird if it came within reach.
“Go into the kitchen this instant moment, and cut up the pumpkin, you saucy old thing!” shrieked Mrs Stubble; whereupon Biddy went out again at full trot, muttering her own private opinions as she went.

“But it never can be possible, Stubble, that you have been such a—a—a—so very thoughtless as to take a house without looking at it. No, no, I won't believe that of you anyway,” said Peggy, in softened tones, and evidently trying to persuade herself that Joe was joking. “Come now, be serious, master; tell us what is the size of the house, and whether there is an up-stairs and down-stairs, and cupboards and all the rest, you know.”

“Here, missis; this'll tell'ee all I know about it,” said Joe, pulling the receipt from his pocket, and handing it to his wife, who glanced at it hastily, and then exclaimed, with stately emphasis, while wrath was simmering in her eyes, “A furnished cottage of five rooms! the whole about as big as our hen-house, I s uppose! And you actually mean to poke your family into such a hole as that, do you? Thank'ee, Mr Stubble—much obliged to you. May I ask you if you broke your pledge while you were in Sydney?”

“Oh, doan't 'ee talk to me in that style, Peggy, lass! It makes my marrow twiddle like cutting my corns with a rusty old razor. Thee know'st well enough I'll do anything in the world te make thee and the children happy. I'll get thee the biggest house in the bill, if thee'll only look sweet and speak cheerily to me. But I be sartain sure thee'll like the cottage uncommon. Didn't thee like Dab Cot”—

“There, stop, stop, Stubble! For patience sake, don't be always bringing that dowdy old Dab Cottage to my memory.”

“All right, lass! I woa'n't say another word about 'en. But I was going to tell'ee that five rooms be quite as many as us want, and it's likely enough they be great big rooms.”

“How do you know that, Stubble? and how do you know that all the furniture is not dingy rubbish, overrun with vermin?”

A slight shudder was observable in Joe's frame at that last terribly suggestive question, but he gave no audible reply. Various other important inquiries as to the kitchen accommodation, water, drainage, smoky chimneys, &c., were alike unanswerable; neither could he inform Mag whether the neighbourhood was noisy or genteel. There he sat during his cross-examination, looking as humble as an old rogue in the dock. He had some faint hope of exciting their pity, for they could not but see that he was weary after his late tossing about in the steamer; at any rate, he knew that the best plea he could offer would not help him a bit, but would only prolong an argument in which he was sure to be beaten. He was conscious that he had managed his important commission very clumsily,
notwithstanding the encomiums of Mr Clinch. I have shown that he had
mentally owned to his omissions before he left Sydney, and the nearer he
got to his home the stronger became the conviction that “he had made a
pretty mess of it, and was sartain to get a wiggin' from his wife.”

That he was willing to endure a moderate “wigging” is, I think, evident
from the colloquial extracts which I have already given; but a man is not
always most disposed to bear reproof when he knows it is most deserved,
and though patience was one of Joe's prominent virtues, it was not
inexhaustible. Perhaps, growing hopeless of exciting their sympathy by
silence and sea-sick looks, he had resolved to try the ruse so often resorted
to by politicians and learned counsel when their cause is too bad to be
helped by solid arguments. Joe knew a good many of the ways of the
world, and it is clear that he knew that old-fashioned trick too, for to the
surprise of his wife, long before he had heard all the sharp things she meant
to say, he seemed to be in a terrible rage, and vociferously declared that
“not one of them should go to Sydney at all till they had larned better
manners.”

“Bang it all! what dost thee mean by scolding my ears off?” he
exclaimed, starting up and kicking his slippers off. “This be's my house,
and I'll be master in it too; I'll keep my standing if I doan't sell a ha'porth,
as Sam the pieman said. Sure as death, if any one of thee say half a word
more to me about the cottage, I'll make thee stay in the bush all thee days.”
He then pulled on his boots and went into the garden to cool down, leaving
his family all aghast at his unusually wrathful ebullition.

It has been remarked that, “in troubled families, there often arises some
servant or gentle friend, powerful with both sides, who may moderate or
compound the differences of the family, to whom, in that respect, the
whole house, and the master himself, are beholden. This mediator, if he
aim only at his own ends, cherishes and aggravates the divisions of a
family, but if he be sincere, faithful, and upright, he is indeed invaluable.”
Biddy Flynn's incurable bluntness often led her into disfavour, and she
seldom got credit for the good motives which prompted her to interfere in
the occasional domestic strife at Buttercup Glen; still, she was a faithful
friend of the family—of the master especially—and it would have been
well for them all had they paid more heed to her quaintly-expressed advice.

On hearing Mr Stubble's vehement ultimatum on the occasion just
alluded to, Biddy, who had again entered the room on some trifling errand,
pulled her mistress by the sleeve, and whispered, “I want to shpake to ye,
ma'am, iv ye plase. Arrah, what's the good ov tazing the masther any more
about the cottage as he's taken, missis?” said Biddy, appealingly, when Mrs
Stubble had been led into the kitchen. “Shure, iv it has only got five rooms
in it, all the talking in life won't make 'em into six. Can't ye see that the 
mas'ther's say-sick an' tired too, poor crayther? an' it'ud be aisy enough to 
take my honest worrd for it, missis, iv 
ye'll ony lave him alone till he's shmoked his pipe, an' maybe had a nap 
too, he'll look as plisant as a sunshiny Sunday mornin', for he niver sulks a 
ha'porth—God bless him! Then iv ye'll ony look swate, all ov yez, an' give 
him a kind worrd or two—for that's what ivery man wants his family to do 
to him—an' it's only raisinable,—if ye'll do that same, I'll ingage he'll git ye 
a house wid tin rooms in it, in harf a jiffy, if that's what yer wantin'. But, be 
the hokey! let me tell ye, missis, iv yez go rowing wid him agin, same as 
yer jist aftber doin', he'll kick out like a donkey wid a hornet on his tail— 
an' no blame till him nayther. Axin' ye pardin, ma'am, for shpakin' out 
what's in me mind.”

Mrs Stubble seldom acknowledged the value of Biddy's hints, though she 
often scolded her for presuming to speak at all. On the present occasion she 
merely said “hum” to the faithful counsel. But there had been such a 
decided meaning in her husband's last threat, that she deemed it prudent not 
to say any more about the furnished cottage, but to devote her energies to 
getting rid of the furniture in their present home, prior to leaving it for 
good. In that opinion Bob and Mag moodily acquiesced, for they did not 
want to stay in the bush for life.

After a few turns up and down the garden path, Joe was sufficiently 
composed to light his pipe, and by the time he had smoked it out, his anger 
had vanished with his last whiff, and he laughingly congratulated himself 
that he had got out of his difficulty without a severe domestic brawl, which 
he dreaded more than he did the “American blight” in his orchard.

Those of my readers who have experienced the perplexity of selling off 
their household effects will sympathise with the Stubble family during the 
few days of preparation for the auction sale, when the accumulated odds 
and ends had to be hunted up and put into the catalogue of lots, and all the 
furniture rubbed up and arranged with its smartest sides in the best light. At 
any rate, had any of my quiet readers been at Buttercup Glen just then, it is 
probable they would have felt moved by the excessive fidgetiness of Mrs 
Stubble to get out of her company as soon as possible. Mr Stubble would 
gladly have done so, but special reasons influenced him to stay and see the 
sale over, though he took very little part in the general cleansing 
operations, being under the impression that it was superfluous work.

“What's the good of fagging theeself into a bad temper to polish up them 
traps, Peggy? They will be mauled about by scores of dirty hands to-
morrow, and 'em woan't fetch a penny more for all thee labour,” said Joe 
one day as he entered the drawing-room, where his wife and daughter,
scented strongly with bees'-wax and turpentine, were rubbing away at the tables and chairs like French polishers working by the job.

“Well, never you mind, Stubble; if we like to do it, you needn't interfere. It is precious little you do to help us; so don't hinder us, if you please. I don't want all the people in the district to come and see dirty things in my house; and I won't let 'em neither, while I have any strength left in my arms. Hand me that hard brush, if you have done with it, Mag. Now just be off, Stubble, and don't worrit me, or we shall have words.”

“All right, missis, rub away; I don't care. But thee needn't be bees'-waxing my old arm-chair.”

“I'm quite sure it will look all the brighter for a good rub, father,” said Mag, appealingly; “and it will fetch ever so much more, I'll be bound.”

“I bean't going to sell that for no price,” said Joe; “and I doan't want 'ee to rub 'en up, and make 'en smell like horse physic.”

“No! Not sell it!” exclaimed Peggy, pausing in her work. “What on earth are you going to do with it, then? You are never going to take that lumbering old thing to Sydney, sure-ly? I shall be ashamed to see it carried into my house.”

“Well, then, it sha'n't go into thee house, if thee be'st 'shamed of 'en; but I woon't sell 'en for all that, missis. I have had many a comfortable snooze in that old chair, and I like 'en forty times better than that gingerbread thing in the corner yonder, what thee be'st always skeered to see me sit in. Master Drydun gave 'en to me up at Luckyboy; so I mean to keep 'en for his sake, and I'll ax neighbour Rowley to take care of 'en for me. I may as well take 'en out of thee way directly.” Joe then put the chair on his head and walked away with it to Briarburn, being glad of a good excuse for getting out of his house, which was full of confusion and disagreeable odours.

But the day of the sale was the most trying time for poor Mrs Stubble. She could not be persuaded to go over to Mrs Rowley's, which would have spared her the mortification of seeing her nice clean house invaded by a host of bargain-hunters in dirty boots, and the more serious annoyance of hearing her shiny chattels scandalously run down by competing bidders before they were knocked down by the auctioneer.

A petulant mother has sometimes been heard to call her lively little boy, “a tormenting young monkey,” or her infant girl, “a good-for-nothing little cat,” and at the same time look cross enough to mean all she said; but had even an intimate friend of the family merely insinuated that the said children were only half as bad as their mother had emphatically declared them to be, it is almost certain that she would be permanently offended. Mrs Stubble had, but a few days before, called her household furniture “old rickety combustibles,” in order to induce her husband to sell it off; but it
touched her to the heart to hear Jack Truckle, the dealer, and others who had come to buy bargains, abuse her goods in similar language, and she would have gone into her bedroom, and “had a good cry,” only that it was, like all the other rooms in the house, full of troublesome customers.

The excitement of Biddy Flynn at seeing so many handy kitchen utensils “knocked down for nothin' at all,” was a comical contrast to the smiling composure of Mr Stubble, and his apparent indifference whether the things were cheap or dear to the noisy buyers. Maggie was several times almost melted to tears, when some venerated household article was put up to be subjected to the rude jokes of the motley company, and finally to become the property of Blowsy the blacksmith, or Nick Shanks the butcher; and her mother nearly fainted away at hearing old Jerry Whacks the cobbler grossly insinuate that there were insects in her best four-post bedstead. Bob Stubble was not free from grievance on that day either; and he received an unpleasant knock on the nose from a travelling hawker for plainly contradicting the atrocious assertion that their favourite eight-day “Frodsham” clock was full of wooden wheels.

But the exciting day ended, about the same time as the sale; and by the light of the moon Bob drove his mother and sister and Biddy, with their personal baggage, to Daisybank, and safely lodged them at the inn for the night. Mr Stubble was left behind to lock up the house, and to attend the sale of his cattle and farming implements; and to finally settle all his business before he joined his loving family in the great metropolis.

As the departing ones waited on the wharf next morning for the arrival of the steamer which was to carry them to Sydney, their feelings were again highly excited; not that they regretted leaving, but they did not like the fraternal demonstrations of the villagers, who had assembled to say good-bye, according to the general custom in New South Wales when any person is leaving a locality where he has long resided. Maggie was particularly fidgety lest any of Mr Goldstone's grand acquaintance should happen to be on board the steamer and see her shaking hands with so many rustics, who, with genuine friendliness, had crowded round her; and Bob was almost ready to fight when old Mrs Carney, the baker's wife, in the warmth of her heart, actually kissed him, because she was his nurse when he was a little baby.

But those trials were soon over, and the travellers began to feel more easy in their minds when they embarked, and the steamer had pushed off and was paddling away; the only drawback just then was the vexing discovery that Biddy had left a basketful of eggs and butter, and other housekeeping comforts, on the wharf in the excitement of parting with her friends, who were more numerous than Mrs Stubble's.
The day turned out stormy, and the steamer tossed about, as Bob remarked, “like a kicking colt with the tackle about its heels.” It being the first time that Maggie had been at sea, she did not like the sensation which the violent motion of the ship aroused. Bob did not enjoy his experience either, but he was silent over it. Mrs Stubble thought she would have died, though her loud expressions of feeling, especially when the vessel gave an extra pitch into the head sea, might have encouraged any one to hope that she would not die on that day. Biddy, who was as lively as a sea-gull, did her utmost to soothe them all. Her assurance that the ship would be as steady as a barn when she got inside of Sydney harbour produced no outward sign of consolation in Bob or Maggie; and Mrs Stubble said that such talk as that made her worse; in fact, she refused to be comforted in any way. Biddy at length grew pettish, and muttered to herself “that her mistress's gwarks were beyont all raisin intirely; an' shure it was no wonder that the other lady passenger had axed the stewardess to make up a bed for her on the sky-light.”

After a prolonged passage, the steamer reached the wharf at Sydney a little before midnight.
Book II.
Chapter I.

The entry of Mrs Stubble and her son and daughter to city life.—
Their early disasters in the furnished cottage.—Bravery of Bob and Biddy.

MOST persons who have travelled by steamers know something about the hubbub that usually prevails at the termination of a voyage; so it is not necessary to describe the scene on board the *Wallaby*, in order to excite enough sympathy for Mrs Stubble and her children on the night of their arrival in Darling harbour. Whatever it might be to persons who were used to it, Mrs Stubble felt that voyaging by steamer on a windy day was by no means pleasurable to her; and the cheese-coloured faces of her son and daughter were palpable evidences of similar feeling; in fact, none of them were used to the sea, nor did they seem as if they wished to be.

Though Bob acknowledged that he was ever so much better “since the steamer had left off back-jumping,” he shook his head sideways when the steward kindly offered to make up a berth for him for the night, and laconically replied, “No, thank'ee;” adding, *sotto voce*, as he collected his luggage, “Catch me in a berth again, if you can, now that I have the option of stepping on to dry land.”

Mrs Stubble declined a similar offer from the stewardess, and shruggingly declared that the whirligig motion and the horrible noises on board the steamer, when at sea, were worse than anything she could think of, except the smell of the cabin, which beat all the world; and she further declared that she would go on shore for change of air, even if it were raining rag-stones. The stewardess, in order to obviate the suspicion that there was a lack of cleanliness in her department, explained that the peculiar scent at which Mrs Stubble had so often turned up her nose was merely the fragrance of the lucerne hay with which the steamer was laden; whereupon Biddy Flynn remarked “that she liked the smell of new hay a dale betther whin it wasn't mixed up wid shtinks from the shteam-engine, and the dhirty wather in the bottom of the ship, to say nothin' of the green hides and the pigs on deck. Shure, ye'll be a mighty sight aisier on the land, missis dear; so be aither puttin' on yer bonnet an' cloak while I rin for a car. I'll find one, niver fear, for cabmen niver go to bed at all, poor mortials!”

Biddy's advice was for once unhesitatingly adopted by her mistress, who languidly said, “Yes, I think your plan is best, Biddy.” On any other occasion Mrs Stubble would have argued more or less before acting upon any suggestion of her shrewd little domestic, no matter how valuable it
might be; but at that time she was as helpless as a patient in a hydropathic pack, for the brief season of sea-sickness had made her very weak, and she was proportionately humble. Moreover she mentally admitted that her knowledge of the city was inferior to Biddy's, who had lived several years in Sydney, and boasted that she knew all the ins and outs of it as well as she knew the holes and corners in Buttercup Cottage.

Maggie, too, was almost as subdued as her mother; and as she gazed at herself in a mirror while arranging her tousled ringlets, she decided that nobody should ever persuade her to take a short sea-trip with a view of improving her complexion; and she was thankful that there was no probability of meeting with her lover that night, for he did not know she was in Sydney.

In a short time a cab was procured, and the whole party drove off, with Biddy on the box beside the driver. After stopping a good many times to make inquiries—for their direction-card was not very explicit—the cab finally drew up before two snug-looking little houses in Bullanaming Street, Redfern.

“Here you are, ma'am,” said the cabman, opening the door of the vehicle. “Found it out at last.”

“This can't be the place, surely” whined Mrs Stubble. “Father said it was a cottage, and this is an up-stairs house.”

“Yes, this is it, ma'am. Number two; all right,” replied the cabman, knocking loudly at the door, after he had scrutinised the number and the name of the house, written against a side wall, “I know the house well enough now, ma'am; Old Towser, the barber, used to live here.

“Well, I never!” muttered Maggie, as she alighted from the cab. “I can't think what could have possessed father to take such a miserable little poking place for us. But I wish we could get inside it, for I am cold as ice-cream, and tired to death too. Knock again, Bob.”

Bob knocked again and again, but there was no other response than dull echoes. Biddy looked through the keyhole, but could see “nothin' but blackness like a coal-cellar, widout a single tint of light at all.”

“Pay me my fare, and let me be off, ma'am, if you please,” said the cabman, as he placed the last trunk on the pavement before the door; “my horses are catching cold, and it's no good of my stopping here.”

“Well, but what are we to do if we can't get into the house?” asked Mrs Stubble. To which query the cabman said he didn't know, “but he would drive them to some other place if they liked, only they must look sharp about it.”

“It is terribly provoking,” said Mrs Stubble, talking aloud to herself. “Stubble told me that he had left a woman in charge of the house, and that
everything would be all ready for us, snug and comfortable. I expected to see a good fire, and the kettle on the hob. I am dying for a cup of tea and something to eat, for I have tasted nothing all day but lemonade. Mercy me! I wish we had stayed on board the steamer; or I wish a hundred times that we had never thought of coming to town at all. Knock again, Biddy, can't you? Keep on knocking. Perhaps the lazy woman inside has gone to sleep—drat her! I'll give her a talking to when I catch her."

Biddy did knock with a vengeance, for she was getting as cold and cross as her mistress. Presently an upper window in the next house was thrown open, and a gruff voice asked, “What's all that row about?” Mrs Stubble explained, in the mildest manner she could assume, that she was the new tenant come to take possession of her house, but she could not get in.

“Oh, I suppose, Mrs Grumm has gone home to see after her old man; he tumbled off his dray yesterday. But she'll be back soon, I daresay. She told me she expected some folks from the country one night this week. You need not keep on hammering at the door, missis. I tell you there is nobody at home, and you are waking all my young 'uns up.”

“I wonder if you have a key that will open the door, mister,” said Mrs Stubble, appealingly.

“I don't know. Perhaps my front-door key will do it, but I never tried it.”

“Well, hand it out here, an' we'll thry it for ye z,” said Biddy. “The doors look as much alike as twin brothers, an' maybe they've both got the same kayhole. Good luck to ye, mister. Look alive an' pitch down the kay; thin ye can go to bed agin. If we can't get intil the house, we'd betther get into the cab agin, an' drive to the ‘Day and Duck.’ I know'd ould Jerry, the landlord, years ago, an' he'll let us in in a jiffy, I'll ingage.”

The man flung down the key; and to the great relief of them all, when Biddy turned it, she declared it was the identical thing itself, for it opened the door at once.

“That's lucky,” said Bob. “What is your fare, cabman?”

“Say six half-crowns, sir. That won't hurt you.”

“What! fifteen shillings! That's too much by half;” said Bob, with the warmth of a thorough native, who was not going to be silently cheated. “Come, come; you mustn't fancy we are ‘new chums.’ ”

“Why, I've been kept standing here for close up an hour; and look at the time o'night, sir. Besides, there is half-a-ton of luggage,” appealed cabby. “You can't grumble at fifteen bob, sir; I'm a poor man, sir.”

“Give it him, give it him, Bob. Don't stand there argufying, and catch your death o' cold. Let us get the boxes into the house,” said Mrs Stubble, who was more disposed for indoor comforts than for saving shillings just then. Bob thereupon paid the demand, and the cabman drove off, laughing,
no doubt, at the victims of his extortion.

Bob was too much of a bushman to be without a matchbox in his pocket; so a light was soon procured, and the luggage was deposited in a front room, which they supposed to be the best parlour. Maggie was beginning to break out into another grumble, but was checked by her mother, who proposed that they should go to bed, before they saw anything to spoil their sleep; adding, that “they would have plenty of time in the morning for finding fault, and no doubt there were plenty of faults in the house for them to find.” The up-stairs rooms were bed-rooms; so it was arranged that Maggie and her mother should occupy the front one, and Biddy the back one; Bob agreed to make up “a shake-down” on the table in the back-room down-stairs. Accordingly, they bade each other good-night, and retired to their several apartments, hungry, and not very high-spirited.

Bob had scarcely got himself comfortably spread on the table, when he heard a loud whisper from Biddy on the stairs, warning him of danger in the rear. “Arrah, for the dear life o' yez, Masther Bob; kape yerself quiet, an' don't show yer nose at the windee. There's thieves in the back-yard, an' we'll all be kilt an' murdered, for the Sydney robbers are the biggest blaggards in the worrld. Whisht, honey! don't be skeered. Blow yer light out, an' thin they won't see to shoot yez. I'll get yer somethin' to hit 'em wid.”

Bob extinguished the light instantly, and peered through a hole in the blind, when, to his great dismay, he saw three men armed with something, but whether bludgeons or carbines, he could not distinguish. In another minute Biddy was beside him with a poker in her hand. “Here take this, Masther Bob,” she whispered; “I'll go and get the tongs, an' iv they put their heads in here, we'll slaughter 'em in a crack. Hisht! don't make a bit o' noise, or the missis wull be skeered to death, poor soul. Save us! here come the vaggibins right up to the windee.”

Presently the sash was hastily lifted, and a man's head and shoulders were thrust into the room, but were as quickly withdrawn, for Bob's poker descended with a force which might have cracked the intruding skull, had it not struck a glazed hat, which fell off into the room.

“Burst open the door, Jenkins. We'll have 'em;” said an excited voice, and the next moment the back-door was forced open, and two policemen rushed into the room.

“Owshugh! This is a mistake althegether!” cried Biddy, dropping the tongs when she saw that the supposed robbers were honest constables.

“No mistake about our catching you, old nutcracker,” said one of the men, who seized her, while his comrade caught Bob and united him to Biddy by means of a handcuff.
“Look after them, Jenkins, while I grab the other fellows. I think there are more in the house yet.”

“Och, murcy on yez, good man, don't go up-stairs at all,” shouted Biddy, who was peremptorily ordered to hold her tongue under pain of being choked with a constable's staff.

The hubbub down-stairs aroused Mrs Stubble, who was just beginning to doze, and she immediately nudged Maggie, who was soundly asleep. The surprise of Mrs Stubble was extreme, when, on descending the stairs in the dark to learn what Bob and Biddy were quarreling about, she was grasped by a pair of muscular arms clad in rough cloth. Of course she shrieked, which it was only natural for her to do, and Maggie fainted away; so she could not comfort her mother. Bob and Biddy were pinioned in a corner of the kitchen, and were not even permitted to speak. How this highly exciting affair would have ended, it is hard to say, had not the man next door, who was awakened by the shrieking and scuffling, hastened in to see what was the matter with his new neighbours; and his timely arrival saved the besieged family from a forced march to the watch-house.

A few words will suffice to explain the mysterious occurrence which had so unexpectedly marred the quiet repose of the weary travellers. It appeared that Mrs Grumm had not been apprised of the exact day on which the Stubble family intended to take possession of the house, and it was very reasonable for her to suppose that they would not come after eleven o'clock at night; so about that time she locked up the house and started homeward to see her husband, who had met with an accident on the previous day. She had not been at home long before her son-in-law ran in with the alarming news, that in passing the furnished house he had observed lights flitting about in the rooms both up-stairs and down-stairs. Mrs Grumm immediately opined that thieves had watched her away, and broken into the house; so she procured the assistance of two policemen, and with her son-in-law hastened to the house, in the hope of catching the burglars, as they supposed the inmates of the house to be. The constables and the son-in-law climbed over the back palings and approached the house, while Mrs Grumm waited at the front door to give the alarm if the thieves should attempt to escape that way. I have already shown the reception they met with from the poker and tongs of Bob and Biddy, who were afterwards complimented for their tact and courage by the police serjeant, whose hat they had fractured.

The neighbour next door soon made Mrs Grumm understand the mistake she had committed; and the honest old woman was almost demented at the idea of having caused so much annoyance to her new mistress and family through her own lapse of duty in leaving the house. While she was humbly
begging pardon from the ladies, a policeman was disuniting Bob and Biddy. The son-in-law also penitently expressed his regret that he had made such an unlucky mistake, and having been freely pardoned, he asked to be allowed to supply the family with milk from the cow at tenpence a quart.

Right heartily did Mrs Grumm go to work to make a fire and put the kettle on. She then knocked up the pork butcher and got some chops for supper. Mrs Stubble declared that her appetite was completely scared away; however, it returned with full vigour about the time that Mrs Grumm had placed the edibles on the table, and a little while afterwards all the family were laughing at their late alarm. Biddy said it was “a rale lucky rowdedow after all, for it saved her from going to bed hungry, which was the most ill-convenient thing in life, barrin' the want of a bed to go to, whin a poor sowl was hungry, and didn't want to kape awake, frittin' bekase there was nothin' to ate.”
Chapter II.

Reflections on the wandering disposition of humanity.—Mrs Stubble's and Maggie's dissatisfaction with their new city home.—More of Biddy Flynn's philosophy.

CRISPIN WELTER, the journeyman shoemaker, as he sat in his dingy off Kirri-billi Point, fishing for bream, could not imagine what induced Mr Luckieman to leave that palatial dwelling of his in Honeysuckle Bay, to face the icy blasts off Cape Horn, and to endure the general discomforts of a life on ship-board for three tedious months.

“There is no accounting for taste,” said Mr Welter, soliloquisingly. “But if I had Luckieman's princely habitation, and only half as much money as he owns, I should prefer to stay here, and go out schnapper-fishing or parrot-shooting every day, or to enjoy myself in some other rational way, instead of roving to the frosty side of the world to be shrivelled up like a stale carrot by cold easterly winds. Ugh! Go home, indeed! Not I. I'd stay here where I can see sunshine and hear bird-music every day in the year—where I can live warm and die straight. Catch me hurrying off to a region where, I am told, for half the year there is nothing to be seen but snow-balls, yellow fog, and dead trees, and where a poor unlucky bachelor like myself could not even go to bed without a warming-pan at my back, a water-bottle at my feet, and my knees coiled up to my nose. Luckieman may search the world over, and not find a more enchanting spot to locate himself than the one he has left, yonder; I wonder he was not content to stay there.”

It is plain that Mr Welter is not a philosopher, though he is a shoemaker; at any rate, he has not studied human nature very closely, or he would not wonder so much at the migratory whim of Mr Luckieman, neither would he be so sure that he himself would be contented, even if he had yonder grand house and its owner's fortune as well.

It is very likely that a few years ago, when Luckieman was a struggling man, he looked at that mansion as the *ultimatum* of his earthly ambition; but encompassed as it is with all that is lovely and enticing, he grew weary of it after he had possessed it for a while. He doubtless expects to be happier in England, whither he has gone; but when he gets there, he will not be wholly satisfied, and probably he will wish he were back in his fine house in Honeysuckle Bay, with its sunny aspect, its evergreen gardens, and sloping lawn; and in this genial climate too, where hard frosts and withering winter storms are unknown.
But the solution of what appears enigmatical to Crispin Welter is simply the inherent desire in the human heart for something more than it at present possesses. The following short extract from “Central Truths” will better explain it. “Give! give! is the ceaseless cry of the spirit. Is the child happy? He will be when he is a man. Is the peasant satisfied? He will be when he is rich. Is the rich man satisfied? He will be when he is ennobled. Is the nobleman satisfied? He will be when he is king. Is the king satisfied? Listen, for one is speaking—‘Oh, that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest.’ ”

If Mrs Stubble, when she first came to the colony, had had such a home to call her own as the one she had just entered upon, she would have thought herself more fortunate than any of her ancestors, for not one of them had ever had such a dwelling; indeed, any person of moderate desires would have considered it a snug little house, and tolerably well-furnished. It was small certainly, and not at all stylish either internally or externally, and the little tenements opposite did not add to its gentility of position; but if it had been directly opposite to Mrs Burdekin's town mansion, it would not have saved it from condemnation in the judgment of Mrs Stubble and her equally dissatisfied daughter. They wanted a grander house, and that craving marred their appreciation of present conveniences, which were threefold more than they would have presumed to hope for at one period of their lives.

No sooner did they open their eyes on the morning after their unpleasant entry, before described, than, instead of saying their prayers, they began to notify all the faults they could see without raising their heads from their pillows. Maggie opined that the sheets had been rinsed in a tan-pit, while her mother picked holes in the moth-eaten blankets, and called the dimity curtains dowdy rags. The bed they unanimously declared was stuffed with old millet brooms and peach-stones, and they were surprised that they had not awakened to that fact in the middle of the night. They suspected, too, that they had been visited in their sleep by certain nocturnal creatures that poets seldom refer to, and which often haunt town-beds, even in dwellings where the chamber-maids are as vigilant as detective officers, and for which a hammer, or some such instrument, is the only effectual exterminator.

“It's no good lying here shuckening any longer; let us get up, Mag,” said Mrs Stubble. So they got up, and while performing their toilet duties they each moment discovered some new source of discontent. Mrs Stubble found that the ewer was minus a handle, and the towel-horse was unscrewed in its legs, for it tumbled down directly she touched it. Maggie, about the same time, loudly condemned the looking-glass, which was of a
cheap sort, and not a truthful article, for it made her mouth seem as wide as the breast-pocket of Bob's shooting-coat; or, to quote her own words, "turned her into a perfect fright," which was certainly not fair, for Mag was a pretty girl, as I have before explained. After a general exploration of the two up-stairs rooms, and discovering many more things to grumble at than I shall mention, they descended to the back-parlour, where Bob was sitting before the fire taking his first lesson on the bellows, and laughing like a savage at an automaton drummer, while Biddy explained the philosophy of that domestic wind-instrument, which Bob had never before handled.

Mrs Stubble could not fail to notice that the room was full of smoke; but Biddy explained "that the flue was choke-full of soot, and that was the rayson why the smoke cudn't find its way up to the chimbley-pot; but she'd soon cure that complaint wid the first shweep she cud cotch goin' by.” Mrs Stubble thought that the people who let the house ought to have seen that the chimneys were all swept, and that the house was clean and tidy in every other part, including the windows, which looked as if they had been last dusted with a greasy mop. A shriek from the kitchen interrupted Mrs Stubble's tirade against the rusty fire-irons, and almost simultaneously Maggie rushed into the parlour in great trepidation, having seen a rat on the dresser eating a candle.

"Shure, that's nothin', darlint. Iv ye'd jist sed 'hoosh' to the crayther, it'ud ha' bolted off like a runaway horse,” said Biddy, soothingly. “There's allers lots o' rats in Sydney, an' it's a good job too, I'm thinkin', or we'd pritty soon be pisoned intirely wid the hapes ov rubbridge that they ate up, poor wretches. Tut, don't say that agin, Miss Maggie, bekase it's nonsense. The landlord isn't a ha'porth to blame for the rats anyhow, for the varmint won't take a civil notice to quit. My word for it, ye'll rin a long way afore ye'll find a house in town widout rats in it, unless ther's a good sharp cat to scare 'em away, or bite their heads off. Afther all, the rats ain't nigh hand so bad as the shnakes in the bush; 'an shure, didn't I find one great long varmint coiled up in me best bonnet last Good Friday, forbye the big ugly bear under me hed, and no end ov triantilopes an' centipees, that ye may allers find iv ye go lookin' for 'em.”

While Biddy prepared breakfast, Mrs Stubble and Maggie continued their investigation of the house in general, and the best parlour in particular; and the result was, that they became thoroughly dissatisfied with their dwelling, and decided that they would not stay in it a day longer than they were absolutely obliged to do. It was fortunate for Mr Stubble's peace that he remained behind at Buttercup Glen to sell the cows, and perhaps well for the character of the whole family, for his wife and daughter were, by their own confession, downright cross; and as they regarded “father” as the
immediate cause of their perplexities, he would doubtless have received a scolding severe enough to have made the lion within him roar, and thus let their family dissension be known to all the listening gossips in the locality. But as Joe was beyond reach, Biddy came in for the full explosive force of their ill-humour; and the poverty-stricken appearance of the breakfast-table having reminded her mistress of the lost basket of edibles, that served as a pretext for scolding Biddy for her carelessness in leaving the basket on the wharf at Daisy-bank.

“Och, missis, darlint! be aisy, can't yez? an' let a poor body have a morsel of pace an' quietness. Shure it's little enough of that same I'm affer gettin' for a week or more, forbye what I cotched last night itself,” exclaimed Biddy supplicatingly, after her mistress had “blown her up” till she was short of breath herself.

“Don't tell me, indeed!” quoth Mrs Stubble. “I'll let you know that if I pay you wages, I have a right to say what I please to you.”

“I don't care at all what ye say to me in rayson, missis; but what on aird is the good ov kickin' up a rumpus about an ould basket that's a hundred miles, or more, away from us? Dear knows, that won't fetch it a ha'porth nigher ta yez.”

“That's the way you always try to excuse your blundring, Biddy,” said Mrs Stubble, seating herself with the air of a deeply-injured woman resigning herself to circumstances.

“Well, dash it all, missis, it's betther to say somethin' sensible than to be blatherin' away in your style, axin' yer pardin. An', good luck ta yez, ma'am, don't be affer frittin' an' fumin' any more about this old house, or, be gawnies! I'll rin right straight away back to Daisybank, an' hire meself for life to Mrs Rowley. I will so: an' she'll be plased enough for me to do it, I'll bet a penny. Whisht a bit now, missis dear!” she added, as she saw that Mrs Stubble was about to reply, “hear me shpake a word or two ov common sinse. This isn't the house for yez, that's plain enough; for it's too little altogether, an' there isn't a room for me to sleep in, barrin' the crib jist over the kitchin, about half as big as a baker's oven, and pritty nigh as warm too; but that's naythir here nor there, for I'm nobody at all. The house is ill convanient for yerself; an' it's my belief, if the masther had seed it afore he hired it, he wouldn't have had any truck wid it at no price. Still an' all, ma'am, frettin' an' grumblin' won't alter it the laste bit in life. All the tears in the worl'd wouldn't mend a cracked mug; any fool cud see the rayson in that bit ov sinse. Aisy another minute, ma'am. Don't shpake yit. I haven't quite done. I'm goin' to tell yez a thrue fact to show what I mane. Listen now.

“There was two Irish bhoys as lived nixt door neighbours on a bit o'
ground up Cockadingy Creek,” continued Biddy, “and a flood came an' ruined their young crops ov early corn out an' out. Troth it did no end ov mischief forbye that; but niver mind shpakin' about that at presint. ‘Och, Pat, me jewel, how mortal thin ye're lookin',’ said Mike to his unlucky neighbour, a week or two aftherwards. ‘An' what's up widge yer, honey? Shure ye're lookin' as bony as a bullock's tail, so ye are.'

“ ‘I've bin frittin' about me corn what the flood spiled on me, till I'm close up broken-hearted, and Judy's worser nor myself, poor sowl!’ said Pat. ‘But I say Mike,’ ses he, ‘yer cornn is sproutin' up agin green as young leeks, so it is; an' I thought it was drowned entirely, same as me own was. How's that now, will ye tell me?’ ses he.

“ ‘Why,’ said Mike, ‘this is it, me bhoy. As soon as iver the flood wather rin off me ground, I sets to work an' put in some ninety day corn, an' I was jist in time ye see, for it's comin' up illigantly, an' I'll have a good crop afther all, plase God.’

“ ‘Troth!’ sed Pat, ‘I wisht I'd bin puttin' in ninety-day corn too, 'stead ov sittin' down an' frittin' over me bad luck; but I never onst thought of it, an' now it's too late to do it, soh! What a great guffy I've bin, to be shure.'

“Now ye see, missis,” added Biddy, “if ye'll take my advice, ye'll jist give over botherin' yerself about this little crib, wid its dhirty windees, an' shmoky chimneys, an' bad drain under the parlour floor, an' all them other nasty things what ye're allers tryin' to smell. Niver say another worrd about 'em at all, good or bad, but go out and look for another house to-morrow. Thin, whin the masther comes home, iv ye'll put a swate face on yez, an' ax him tenderly, I'll ingage he'll let you move out of this one in harf a jiffy. That's all I've got to say, ma'am.”

Mrs Stubble was about to tell her faithful servant to mind her own business; but she was interrupted by Bob, who laughingly declared “that Biddy talked like a Christmas-book;” whereupon Maggie laughed, and Mrs Stubble was obliged to laugh too, because she could not help it. They then sat down to breakfast, looking quite pleasant, while Biddy shuffled to the kitchen, as happy as a prime minister who had just signed a treaty of peace.

After a long discussion, it was unanimously resolved to follow Biddy's counsel, to do their utmost to get father into the humour to move them into a better house.
Chapter III.

Mr Peter Rowley's experienced opinions upon sundry important social and commercial matters.—Mr Stubble sells his estate at Buttercup Glen, and takes his departure for Sydney with a pocket full of money.

IT had been decided that Mr Stubble should stay at the Glen for a few days to watch the sale of the livestock and farming implements, and also to find either a tenant or a purchaser for the farm itself. He most willingly acquiesced in that plan, for he wished to give his family the privilege of discussing the merits of their new city home, unembarrassed by his presence: he had a shrewd idea, too, that his own personal quietude would be enhanced by that arrangement. After Bob had departed in the cart with his mother and sister and their appurtenances, Mr Stubble locked up his lonely dwelling, put up all the slip rails, and then walked slowly over to Mr Rowley's house, where he had been invited to stay until his final departure from the district.

He was unusually dull that evening; and though Mrs Rowley had provided a nice hot supper, and everything else she could think of to make him comfortable, even to a pair of sheepskin slippers and the easiest arm-chair in the house, he still looked dispirited, and tears stood in his eyes as he remarked, “that he felt awfully sorry at leaving the old house, and wished with all his heart that his folks could have made themselves contented in it, instead of moving away into a noisy, dusty city, where he was certain they would have less comfort, if they had more style.”

“Somehow or other, I can't feel easy about this change that I be making, Peter; I never felt so uncertain before in anything I took in hand, for I can't see any good luck ahead of me. Howsoever, the job's done now, and it's no good crying over dead chicks. My folks be all gone, and I must follow 'em pretty soon; for whipped if I'd live away from my wife and young 'uns, if anybody would give me a big castle choke-full of marble figures and other fashionable ornaments. But I want to know what thee'st got to say about my selling the farm, Peter,” continued Joe, trying to brighten up a little. “Since I seed 'ee last, Sam Plodder has offered a middlinish rent for 'en; but my missis says her won't come back here agen long as her lives, so I doan't see the good of keeping it. Mr Wiseman's estate, over the river beyond, sold like gold nuggets t'other day, when it wor cut up into little farms, and no doubt mine would sell fast enough; in fact, Mr Knox, the auctioneer, tould me he'd get a customer for me in a crack, if I only said the
word. Now is the time to get shut of it, if I want to, for buyers are as eager for sellers as gals are for sodgers. What dost thee think I ought to do, neighbour?"

After a few minutes' silent cogitation, Mr Rowley replied, "I daresay the farm would sell now, and fetch its full value, Joe; but I don't see how you could invest the money to bring you in better interest than you can get in the shape of a rental. Money is wonderfully plentiful at present, and there is as sharp competition going on in Sydney between the colonial and the English banks as there is among the Daisy-bank dealers when there is a sudden rise in the price of eggs. Some of the banks have reduced the rate of discount to three per cent. per annum, which is lower than I ever knew it to be before in the colony; and if you have any bank stock, you will probably find your next dividend smaller than usual. I think Sam Plodder is a man who will take care of your property, Joe, and pay his rent regularly; but you might have some trouble in investing the money safely and profitably."

"I forgot to tell'ee, Peter, Master Goldstone says he will show me how to 'vest my money first-rate, and get a deal more interest than my steam shares fetch."

"Many persons will undertake to show you that trick, Joe," said Mr Rowley, smiling. "But I have often heard of money-jobbers making investments for country clients which have never returned either interest or principal. I don't mean to insinuate any such scheming to Mr Goldstone, for I do not know much about that gentleman; but I would have you be very careful whose advice you take in such matters, and to look well to your security, rather than to the temptation of a high rate of interest, which is often held out as a bait to catch the unwary. Consult a respectable solicitor before you decide upon an investment; then you will be pretty safe. As a rule, I begin to suspect that something is wrong with the security when I hear of more than current rates of interest being offered for money. Mr Goldstone is but a young man, you know, Joe, and he cannot have had much experience in investing money in the way that you would like to place your capital; so you had better be cautious in taking his advice. Remember that money is like a man's fair reputation, not always an easy matter to regain after it is parted with."

"That is just what my ould measter, Mr Drydun, used to say. 'Joe,' says he to me one day, 'if I had all my money in my pocket now, I'll warrant I'd hold it tighter than I did before.'"

"Yes, most people say that when they have lost their money, Joe. I have been thinking a good deal over the matter since I last saw you, and if you were not so fully bent upon selling your farm, I would advise you to settle
it on your wife by a legal instrument. Then you will secure a comfortable
home for yourselves, if things should go wrong in your new mode of life,
and reverses overtake you, as they have done many wiser men than you or
me. It would only be an act of justice to your wife to see that she is
provided for, for you know she worked to help you to make your fortune;
and it would be hard upon her if you should be unlucky enough to lose it,
and thus compel her to go to work again when she is getting up in years. I
suppose you are not in debt, Joe? Excuse my bluntness.”

“Debt! not I, indeed; thank God. I be as free from debt as I be from
disease. Leastwise, I tell a story; I owe Master Raspin, the farrier, a pound
or two, and eighteenpence to the puntman,—that's all as I know of; but it
bean't much to be scared at, anyhow.”

“I knew you were the wrong mark to run far into debt, Joe, or I should
not have been so free with my advice. It would be wrong—nay, positively
fraudulent—for you to convey the farm to your wife, to the prejudice of
your creditors, or if you intended to trade on the reputation of being the
owner of the property which you had thus legally parted with. But as you
can do it with a clear conscience in the sight of God and man, I would
strongly urge you to consult with your lawyer on the subject as soon as you
get to Sydney, and in the meantime leave the farm alone. It will not run
away, you know; but I am not so sure about the money that you might get
by the sale of it.”

“Hast thee made this farm over to the missis, Peter?” asked Joe, with a
knowing look.

“No, I have not done so, Joe; and I am not in a position to do it now, if I
would. When I foolishly went to Sydney a few years ago to begin a
business that I did not understand, I had more than two thousand pounds
cash, and this farm to the good, and I did not owe a shilling. Then I might
honestly have made the farm over to my wife, and traded to the extent of
my ready money. That would have been all fair and square, and I ought to
have done it, but I did not give it a thought. A year or two afterwards, I got
into difficulties, as you have heard me explain, and I was in some danger
of being sold off altogether, only I had one good friend who knew I was an
honest man, and he stood by me. At that time I deeply regretted that I had
not secured my poor wife from poverty, but it was too late to remedy my
omission. Many men in my position would have done it even then, and
taken the chance of their creditors not looking sharply into the transaction.
That sort of thing is very often done, I am sorry to say; but I knew it was
best to do what was right, and then I could ask Almighty God to help me. I
struggled on, and after a while I weathered the storm; but I am not quite
clear of debt yet.”
“When thee gets all straight, will thee give the farm to the missis then, Peter?”

“There is not the same necessity for my doing it now, Joe, for I shall probably never move from here again while I live; certainly, I shall not be tempted to meddle with business matters that I know nothing about; nor is it likely that I shall be persuaded to back bills for any of my needy friends, and ruin myself in that way, as our old neighbour Roslyn has done. But I tell you what I did a few years ago, Joe. I invested in what is called a deferred annuity; so, after I am sixty years old I shall receive two pounds a week for life, and if I should die in the meantime, all the money that I have paid to the assurance society will be paid back to my wife. That provision is quite secure from the claims of creditors.”

“That is what my ould dad would call ‘preparing for a rainy day,’ ” said Joe; “nation good sort of overcoat that, Peter.”

“It is so, friend, for none of us knows in this uncertain world what reverses may overtake us. I was induced to take that step by the example of one of the richest men in Sydney. I heard him tell at a public meeting how he had provided against future poverty by a deferred annuity. So thinks I to myself, there are not many safer men in the land than that gentleman is in every way, for he is as wise as he is rich, and if he thinks it is prudent to make such a provision for himself, surely there must be more reason for me to look out. So I took out a policy the very next day, and I endowed my girl at the same time.”

“What did thee do to her, Peter?” asked Joe, with a look of amazement.

“Why, made an endowment for her in the same office that I took out my annuity policy. I will try to explain it to you, as you don't seem to understand it. Sophy was at that time about thirteen years of age; and by paying a little over thirty pounds a year, I secure £300 to be paid to her when she is twenty-one years old, and a good lump sum besides in the shape of bonus; and if she should die in the meantime, I shall receive back all the money I have paid into the assurance office. So you see that is a good deal better provision than putting money by in the savings-bank for her, which would only bear simple interest.”

“My word, it be'est, Peter. I ne ver heard tell of that scheme afore. Howsomever, I've got lots of money for my young 'uns, so I doan't see as I want to do anything in that line; besides, I shouldn't fret much if 'em were forced to work for their living. I've taken care to give 'em a good bit of schooling, and that's better than money for boys and girls any day. But as for giving the farm to the missis, I don't dezackly like the notion, governor; and I'll tell'ee for why. Doan't 'ee think I be going to say aught against my ould woman; I'll never do that, Peter. Her be's as honest a wife as ever
wore a gown; but her might fancy her had a right to wear the other concerns as belong to the master if her was owner of the property and could do as her liked with it. It's human nature, you know, to make others knuckle down, as the saying is. I knowed an easy-going old chap up the country, named Sam Hoony, who made his property over to his wife, every stick he had, and banged if her didn't stick to it all like wax. Her wouldn't let poor Sam have a shilling to buy 'baccy, without grumbling like as if he wor pinching her; and their boys and girls used to treat their old dad as if he wor a reg'lar cadger.”

“But that is an extraordinary case, Joe; and you need not apprehend similar treatment from your family.”

“Noa, I don't expect I should, Peter, for my wife and children are very good all of 'em; and though 'em be a bit contrary now and again, not one of 'em would be cruel to a horse, let alone to me. But there's such lots of roguery in that way that I be reg'larly set against it. I've heard tell of fellows making over property to their wives, when 'em hadn't an honest shilling to call their own, and were over head and ears in debt besides. Now, afore I'd let any one say that Joe Stubble was a rogue of that sort, I'd run the risk of being as poor as old Mutton, the blackfellow. That's the way to say it, Peter.”

“If I were sure I was planning what is lawful and right, I should not be turned aside by dread of what ill-natured persons might say or think, Joe; for scandal never yet broke a man's bones. You would only be using a prudent precaution in a straightforward way; and I don't think you ought to be deterred from it by dread of backbiters, who will say anything but their prayers. All good measures are liable to be abused; nevertheless, a good thing is good for all that. It is true enough that unprincipled persons have often made away with property which belonged to their creditors, and I have seen many glaring examples of the sort; but in most cases the creditors themselves were to blame for not looking sharper after their own rights, and at the same time protecting society in general from the dangerous influence which must result if such frauds are allowed to be perpetrated with impunity.”

“Thee seems to know a thing or two about schemers, Peter.”

“I don't think you have heard me say so much about them before, Joe, though I might say ten times more; but all I could say would not cure them, and it would only harass my own mind. There is a day of reckoning coming for them, and I should like to see them all squaring up for it. I lost a lot of money during that commercial crisis when folks were going insolvent, half-a-dozen every day. I daresay you remember the time; Mr-r-r—I forget his name (he is dead now, poor man) was commissioner.
Debtors of the “happy-go-lucky” sort used to walk up King Street as jauntily as if they were going to a levee, and a month or two afterwards you might have seen them starting in business again, brisker than ever.”

“I don't see how 'em managed that rightly, Peter.”

“Of course you don't, Joe; but many persons did it legally, and scores of small creditors like myself had to suffer loss. By some sort of conjuration, only known to the initiated, an insolvent of the happy sort usually managed to get a few of the large creditors on his side, and then it was useless for any of the small fry to interfere; at any rate, very few of them had the presumption to do so. The larger the amount failed for, the better chance the debtor had of getting off easily, and of course his pickings were proportionate. The man who “burst up” for a “plum” or so, was usually treated with marked deference by all the officials concerned, and the learned commissioner himself used to look as sympathetic as a good old lady doctoring a scalded limb. Few, if any, of the small creditors had the pluck to say a word to such an important insolvent, for they knew he would soon be in an influential commercial position again, and he might remember their opposition, and pay them off in the wrong coin.”

“That looks nation queer, Peter.”

“I could tell you of still queerer things,” continued Peter. “But I was going to remark, on the other hand, only just let a poor honest struggling man break for a few hundred pounds, and ten to one, if he would not be nearly worried to death by opposing creditors. In the first place, the fat insolvent would most likely be allowed his costly household effects without a dissentient voice being heard; and in the latter case, the humble debtor's application for a similar allowance would perhaps be stoutly opposed by a merciless money-lender, or by some unlucky tradesman, whose patience had been over tried by repeated losses, and who had resolved to make an example of the next insolvent who ‘let him in.’ I must say, however, that the commissioner was a kind man, and it was not often that he allowed a poor man to be deprived of all his furniture. Creditors who lived out of the colony seldom troubled themselves about an insolvent's affairs, being indisposed to incur expense or to throw good money after bad; they usually left the management of an estate to the local creditors, and took whatever dividend they could get, as so much salvage from a wreck, and were joyful over it. The local creditors, too, were in general careless about looking after ‘dead horses,’ and that duty often devolved upon one or two of the more pushing creditors, who usually effected an amicable wind-up by selling the assets to the insolvent. Of course he got his release at the same time, and off he would go again with full sail and flying colours.”
“But, blow it all! folks wouldn't trust these shavers again in a hurry, I reckon!” said honest Joe, looking quite pugilistic.

“Bless your innocence, Joe, my boy! some traders would trust old Bozy himself if he came to them in his best clothes. There are many keen commercial men who would trust Jerry Wrackem almost to any amount he liked to ask for at his first start off on the new, for they know he is too shrewd a manoeuvrer to go to pot again within a reasonable time; at any rate, they consider his bills at four and five months safe enough. Well, you see, after it becomes known that the great firm of Murry, Carbonn, and Co. trust him largely, the”——

“I say, Peter, excuse me, dear, for interrupting you, but I think you have chatted quite enough for the present,” softly chimed in Mrs Rowley. “I am afraid you will lie awake all night, as you usually do after talking on these exciting subjects. Suppose we prepare for bed, dear; I am sure Mr Stubble is weary.”

“You are right, mother, and I thank you for your gentle hints. I don't often let my tongue run so fast about other people's doings; but as our old neighbour is going to Sydney with his pockets full of money, it is but right to give him a little friendly caution, for he does not know half as much of city life as we do.”

“I fancy 'em be all rogues together in Sydney, Peter, sure enough.”

“Don't you go away with any such idea in your head, Joe, my boy; far be it from me to make you think so. I believe that the morality of Sydney, viewed either commercially, socially, or in any other way, would compare favourably with that of any capital in the world. You do not incur any more risk in going to Sydney than you would in going to London; perhaps not so much. Men from the country are always considered fair game for town sharers, everywhere.”

“No fear about me, Peter, if that is all,” said Joe, nodding his head very knowingly. “Sharers will have to look double sharp to catch me, I'll warrant. It's my old clothes as make me look like a yokel; but I mean to shine up a bit—as Peggy says—when I get to town. I bean't afeard of being robbed.”

“Pray, don't misunderstand me, my friend,” said Peter. “I don't think you are lacking in common sense—quite the contrary; but you are too apt to think that men whom you meet with are all as honest as yourself. That is what I meant by warning you, Joe. But I will say no more on the subject, lest I tire you out. Hand me the Bible, mother, and call in the maid to prayers.”

Mr Stubble pondered over the advice of his good friend, and had almost resolved to let his farm to Sam Plodder, and convey it to his wife as soon
as he went to Sydney. But the next day, after the sale of the cattle and farming implements, Mr Knox, the auctioneer, with the persuasive eloquence peculiar to his calling, quite altered Mr Stubble's views on the subject; and before he started for Daisybank that night he had received instructions from his client to sell Buttercup Glen if he could get anything like £3000 for it. A day or two afterwards, Mr Knox brought a purchaser for £300 over the reserve price; and on that day week Joe started for Sydney, highly elated at having sold every item of his property in the district, and for ready money too,—for the buyer of his farm preferred paying cash down even to allowing two-thirds of the money to remain on mortgage at five per cent interest.

* To the Insolvent Court.
Mr Stubble's arrival in Sydney.—More domestic disasters.—
Social qualities of Ben Goldstone, and pride of the family at the
prospect of Ben soon becoming an M.L.A.

As Mr Stubble proceeded towards the hired home of his family on the
evening that he landed in Sydney from the Daisybank steamer, he had a
foreboding of domestic disagreements, and the nearer he got to Redfern,
the farther he seemed to be from that quietude which he needed after his
late excitement. He had some difficulty in finding the house; for though he
had the address written plainly enough on a card, “No. 2 Bullanaming
Street,” he made so many queer blunders in pronouncing that very
uncommon name, that some of the persons of whom he inquired thought he
was rather tipsy, while others insinuated that he was “chaffing” them, and
answered him accordingly. At length he stood before the identical house,
trying to summon resolution enough to knock, like a little boy preparing to
plunge into a cold bath on a frosty morning.

“I shall cotch it, sure enough, when I get inside, for this bean't the sort of
house I reckoned it wor, nor nothing like it,” he muttered. “I was a gorby
that I didn't come and take a look at 'en afore I let that agent-chap wheedle
me to pay a month's rent. I be a good mind to run away and come again to-
morrow. No, no, bang it! that woan't do neither. They be expecting me
whoam; and 'em 'll be skeer'd if I stay away, and think I be drownded in the
sea, or sick'd to death in the steamer. Ha, ha, ha! what a rusty old knocker!
Mag has had a grumble at this, I'll warrant.” He then rapped at the door in a
very modest manner. Presently he heard light tripping footsteps in the
passage, and in another minute the door was opened, and his daughter's
arms were about his neck, embracing him with an affectionate warmth
such as he had not experienced from her for years, and it is not easy to tell
whether surprise or delight was the strongest emotion of his throbbing
heart.

“O mamma! here's papa come home!” cried Maggie, which further
astonished Joe, for he had never before heard the parental names in his
family thus classically expressed. “I am so glad you are come, dear papa!
Come in to our snug little parlour,” added Maggie, leading her passive sire
by the hand.

“Hallo, measter! welcome home!” said Mrs Stubble, who ran up the
passage to meet him, and kissed him very fondly. Bob's salutation was
equally cordial, and the greeting of Biddy was as warm as her own kind
heart. Such a general display of affection, and such happy-looking faces were almost as overpowering to Joe's sensitive feelings as the sight of a lifeboat would be to the captain of a sinking ship, and two tears of joy trickled down his honest old face.

“Get father's new slippers, Mag. Biddy, bring in the tea-pot, and the hot muffins, and crumpets,” said Peggy. “You are hungry, Joe, I am sure. Was the sea very rough to-day, measter?”

“Noa, it wor as smooth as our lucerne paddock at the Glen:—but what be I talking about? I forgot it bean't our paddock now, Peggy. I've sould all the consarn right out, rump and stump, as thee tould 'en to do.”

“Have you, now? Well done, measter!” said Peggy, giving Joe another kiss, which made his eyes glisten with enjoyment. “And have you got the money for it, Joe? That's the main thing, you know.”

“I have so, lass,” said Joe, slapping his pocket. “Here it be, all right as ninepence, though it bean't in pound notes, dezackly; but it is just as good, and I'll get the ready cash for 'en to-morrow. An' I got three hundred pounds more for the consarn than I expected to get; ha, ha, ha! Doan't 'ee say I bean't a good 'un at a bargain after that.” The whole family here united in a laughing chorus, aided by Biddy, who for once was allowed to have her laugh out unrebuked by her mistress.

“How did the cows sell, father?” asked Bob.

“First-rate, boy. Fetched more 'en they cost us by a long way. The farmers up there have got heaps of money, sure enough.”

“So they ought to have,” said Bob. “For this while back they have been getting thirteen shillings a bushel for wheat, and nine shillings for maize, and ten pounds a ton for potatoes; and almost anything they liked to ask for dairy produce and fruit. Who bought Cherry-stone, father?”

“Sam Rafter bought 'en; and proud enough he looked over his bargain too.”

“Ha, ha, ha! I'll bet a threepenny-bit that Sam gets a burster the first time he mounts Cherry,” said Bob, looking quite merry at the idea of his rival being turned heels over head. “Well, Sam will take care of Cherry, that's one comfort; I shouldn't like to have heard that the poor little cob had fallen into savage hands. After he knows his rider a bit, he is not so likely to buck him off. How much did you get for the old cart, father?”

“Ten pounds odd,” replied Joe, whereupon they all laughed again, like members of a goose club. Well they might laugh at the simplicity of the buyer, for the cart was not worth half the money; but the fact is, that auction sales of farming effects were not very frequent at that time, and some of the people in the neighbourhood had more money than they knew how to spend prudently.
“An’ who bought all thim ould tubs out in the back skillion, masther?” asked Biddy, who was as much interested as any one in the result of the sale.

“Let me see—who was it bought them?” said Joe, reflectively. “Oh, old boss-eyed Billy, so it was. He bought the lot for forty shillings.”

“Oh, good luck to yez, masther!” shrieked Biddy; “they worn't worth forty fardens; for the bottoms of ’em was as tender as stewed tripe, so they wor. Ho, ho, ho! what a billy looney he must be to give that money for a hape ov ould rubbidge! Ha, ha, ha! his wife wud give him beans when he took the tubs home, I'll ingage.”

“There, there, that'll do, Biddy. You have laughed quite enough. Go to your kitchen and make a good fire up; we'll roast that little pig for supper. I expect Benjamin will be here by and bye,” said Mrs Stubble.

“Oh, aye, yes, to be sure: I forgot to ax about him afore. How be'est he, Mag? All right and toight, I hope.”

“Very well, thank you, father. He was here last night. Oh, I have such lots of news to tell you, papa, when you have rested yourself a bit,” said Maggie.

“How dost thee loike this little crib, Peggy?” asked Joe, with a trembling consciousness that he was tapping a spring whence troubled waters would speedily issue.

“Well, measter, we have all made up our minds that if you like it, we will put up with inconvenience, and say naught about it,” replied Peggy, looking uncommonly amiable.

“Bless the bright eyes of thee, Peggy!” exclaimed Joe, kissing his wife rapturously. “Thee shan't do nought of the sort, lass. Whipped if thee shall be put out a hair's-breadth. That's the way to say it. This bean't the sort of house to suit 'ee. I could have tell'd that in a crack, if I'd only see'd it afore Mr Clinch nailed me on my bargain. Thee shall have a smarter house than this one, Peggy, for thee hast wrought hard with me to make our fortune, and it's only fair-play that thee should enjoy it a bit. I'll give thee the price of what the old traps at whoam fetched, and the odd three hundred pounds what I got for the farm. Thee shall have the money, and lay it out any way thee likest best, and I won't say nay to nothing. I'll give Bob and Mag a fifty-pund note apiece too, and let 'em spend it anyhow they like. Barn it! what's the good of money if us can't make ourselves comfortable wi' it? Get out of this ould crib as soon as thee likest, Peggy, and take a house to thee mind.”

Peggy and her children seemed quite melted down by Joe's generosity, and they were about to embrace him again, when they were startled by loud shouts from Biddy, who had forgotten that she had a town grate
instead of a huge bush chimney, and in making a roaring big fire to roast the little pig she had set the flue in a blaze.

“Mercy 'pon us! What shall we do?” whined Mrs Stubble. “We shall be burnt out of house and home in a minute. Oh dear, dear, dear!”

“What's the use of going on at that rate, mother?” said Bob. “The house isn't ours, you know.”

“Ugh, you stupid boy!” exclaimed Maggie, “haven't we got all our good clothes and lots of things in it? Let us carry them out into the street before they catch fire.”

“Stop a bit! stop a bit! The house bean't burning yet awhile. It's only the soot in the lum, I reckon,” said Joe; and then he hastened to the help of Biddy, who was busy ramming a wet mop up the chimney and shouting like the foreman of a fire brigade, while showers of sparks fell around her.

“Och, murther! Haven't I bin thryin ' to catch a chimbley shweep all this blissed day long, bekase I knewed this flue was choke-full ov soot. Bad luck ta these little scrimpin' holes of chimbleys, not bigger nor a pop-gun. Git me another bucket ov wather, Masther Bob! Hurry, now, hurry! Poogh! I'll be smothered intirely!”

Just then a loud knocking at the front door further startled them, and on Maggie opening it, two constables rushed in; at the same time a crowd of boys and street loungers scaled the back fence. Several volunteers also mounted to the roof of the kitchen, and nearly drowned Biddy below, by pouring a torrent of water down the flue. In the height of the confusion, and while Mr Stubble was warmly disputing the right of constables or anybody else to interfere with him if he chose to burn his own flue clean, Mr Ben Goldstone came in, and soon made Joe understand that he was liable, under one of the city bye-laws, to a fine of five pounds for allowing his chimney to catch fire; of which fact he was practically assured in a day or two. After a while the fire was extinguished, and the mob went away grumbling that it was only a smoky chimney after all, and not a regular flare-up for the engines to play with; so there was no prospect of beer, or salvage-plunder either.

Biddy's kitchen was in a sad state of smut, so was her countenance; and the poor little woman was half inclined to sit down and cry when the climax of her excitement was past. “Ah, shure, cryin' won't clane up this muck, nor roast the pig nayther,” quoth Biddy, while she began to repair damages. Presently she exclaimed in an excited tone, “Where is the pig at all? True as death, one ov thin young rips ov fire-boys has walked it off, so he has; an' the knife-box too, an' the new broom, what missis bought this mornin'. Ochone! what a dreadful mob of dishonest thieves there is in Sydney! I wisht I'd stopped at Daisybank, or I wisht I'd niver left it.”
Of course Mrs Stubble could not bear the loss of a sucking pig and sundry useful chattels with perfect calmness, but the presence of Benjamin in the house had a more pacifying influence than all Biddy's explanations or her threats of running away either. After a while Mrs Stubble decided to send for something hot from the cook's shop for the family supper when Benjamin had departed, and invite him to a befitting repast on some future evening.

When the confusion, caused by the before-mentioned domestic incidents, had subsided, Mr Goldstone began to make himself one with the Stubbles, and to enter into their discussions about household matters with as much interest as if he were already a member of the family. Mrs Stubble never before felt so gratified as she did while listening to Benjamin's mild suggestions to her husband upon important financial matters. She felt her position elevated ever so many degrees by the happy alliance with Ben; and withal she felt it to be so much safer now that father had some one whom he could look up to, to advise with him, and teach him what he did not know.

Bob Stubble's veneration for his future brother-in-law's conversational talents grew greater every minute, for Goldstone had a glib tongue and effrontery enough to sustain him amidst a more scrutinising audience than he then had. Maggie sat silently listening, but her gushing looks ever and anon told of the pleasing mingle of love, reverence, and pride which was glowing in her maiden heart, while the man of her choice was expatiating on his happiness at feeling himself an honoured member of a family for whom he entertained so much affection and respect.

"Henceforth I shall consider my honour inseparably identified with yours," said Ben, with a look at each which touched them all in their tenderest feeling. "Anything that affects you as a family or individually, I shall feel proportionately, whether it be joy or sorrow, good fortune or misfortune. You will very shortly be my dear mother," he added, rising and kissing Peggy, who was shedding tears of glory. "And you, sir, will be my father" (taking Joe's horny hand), "a warmer-souled friend than my own lawful sire. And you will be my worthy brother" (seizing Bob's hand and shaking it vehemently); "and let me now say that I have felt an attachment for you ever since the day we first met. My admiration for you as a sportsman was kindled by the first flash of your long gun, which knocked down four ducks; but the feeling has grown into a strong affection since I have known your qualities as a man and a brother. And what shall I say to you?" he added, turning to Maggie, who softly yielded to his chaste embrace. "My charmer! my life's fond idol!—would that I could say my wife! Hours will seem like weeks, and days like months, until the happy
morn arrives when we shall be united in the flowery bonds of Hymen: when I shall, in sight of all in the church, proclaim you Mrs Goldstone, junior; and I trust I may then have the honour to add M.L.A. to that name.”

The concluding part of the last sentence had as marked an effect upon the whole family as if Ben had confidentially informed them that he was a royal prince in disguise. Mr Stubble was just going to propose a smoke out in the backyard; but the sudden idea of Benjamin being a member of Parliament elect was enough to check Joe's craving for tobacco in a twinkling, and he quietly restored his little black pipe to his waistcoat pocket, and secretly hoped his honourable guest would not smell it, and grow disgusted. Bob, too, looked overawed, and was ashamed of himself for presumptuously calling him Ben a few minutes before, in utter ignorance of his prospective high rank. Bob looked nervous for the remainder of the evening, and always coughed slightly before he spoke to his new brother, whom he was very careful to call Mr Goldstone. Mrs Stubble felt glad and sorry alternately. She was overflowing with family pride at the idea of her girl marrying a “member;” but her triumph would grow dim as she began to dread that he would see something in some of them to be shocked at, or lest he should find out that Mag was not so good as he thought she was, and give her up, and thus upset all her hopes for life. Maggie was troubled with similar feelings; and though she loved the honour and glory of owning an M.L.A., she wished that she were safely married before her Ben took such a tremendous rise above her social level; and her poor little heart began to ache at the bare suspicion of losing such a chance of settling herself, and of astounding Sophy Rowley, and all the rest of her old school-fellows up the country.

Goldstone could not fail to observe those marks of increased respect, but he tried to make them all feel that his approaching honours would be the joint possession of the family. To prove to them that he was not lofty-minded, although he was about to soar to a legislative pinnacle, when Biddy blundered into the room and asked Mrs Stubble if she should “rin for the hot saveloys now,” Ben spared that lady's confusion, and saved Biddy a dreadful scolding, by saying, with the plainness of a mere common man, “My word, that's the sort of grub to get when you don't want to cook in your own caboose. Get some red-hot polonies, and a drop of Tooth's swizzle, and I'll stop to supper. If we can't have sucking pig, let us have saveloys; only see that you don't get stale ones boiled up afresh, Biddy.”

The confidence of the family in some measure returned while partaking of their homely meal together; and when Ben rose to depart, a little after midnight, his cordial salutations reassured them all, that although he was on the point of becoming such a great man, he was not a whit prouder than
he was the first day he called to see them at Buttercup Glen, when he drunk new milk out of a yellow colonial-made mug.

"Ha, ha, ha! They are a jolly rustic lot! green as cabbages!" soliloquised Ben, as he walked to his lodgings under the genial influence of the “pot of swizzle.” “It was a pity I was out of the way when old Stubble came to town to look for a house. If I had been at home, Clinch would not have had the chance of swindling him into taking that detestable little doghole that I am ashamed to go near by daylight. Never mind, it can't be helped now. If I can manage to let them our old house in Slumm Street, I shall get on the right side of father again, and if I coax Joe to buy the house out and out, the governor may perhaps lend me the money for a term, and that will allow me to sail along with a flowing sheet. At any rate, my honoured friends must come out of that little crib; it will never do for them to stop there. If Slumm Street is a dirty neighbourhood, our old house is a fine large one, and that is the main thing. Nobody is thought much of in Sydney if he does not live in a big house.”

“All right!” continued Ben, after a little silent consideration. “I can see my way clear to do two strokes at once; that will be helpful to me in various ways, and be serving others as well. I shall get the Stubbles into a genteel residence, and make up matters with my sulky old daddy, for he will be glad to get a good tenant. All serene! I think I can work it without any trouble. Ha, ha, ha! my mother-in-law is a fussy old judy, but she is nuts on me, and as proud of the forthcoming match as if I were the young lord who has been cutting capers in Sydney lately.”
Chapter V.

A family argument.—Mr Stubble and Bob go to a fashionable tailor.—Ben Goldstone's presents.—Philosophy of a pipe.—Search for a genteel residence.

FOR some time after Goldstone had gone, the Stubbles sat in cheerful conference on the subject of Maggie's coming grandeur, and the correlative exaltation of the whole family. Honest Joe smiled pleasantly while Peggy reminded him of the summer afternoon in their courting days, when they met the gipsy woman at the “Northern Burrows,” and she told her (Peggy) that she would ride in her carriage and have gentle-folk related to her. It was clear to Peggy that the prediction was coming true to a tittle. She was not aware, however, that fortunetellers usually tell all their silly customers the same flattering story,—that it was a mere trick of their trade.

“But when be thee going to be married, Mag?” asked Joe, who had been for some time nodding a drowsy assent to every proposition. “I forgot to ax Mr Goldstone that when he wor saying such a lot of sweet things about thee, as if thee wast made of barley-sugar.”

“Oh, my patience, father! You surely would not be so sil—so—so—unwise as to ask him such a terrible question!” said Maggie, very excitedly. “For pity's sake, don't make such a mistake as that, papa, or I shall die with shame. Benjamin has not yet asked me to name the day, but I can understand his reason for not doing so. He knows that we have not yet got a suitable house; he is aware, too, that we have many preparations to make; and he is anxious to spare us all the embarrassment he can. Any one can see his delicate consideration. I am quite sure it is not because he is apathetic—far from it—for, of course, I know what he has said to me in private, and no poet in the colony could more beautifully express affectionate longing than you all heard him utter here to-night. For you to ask him bluntly when he is going to marry me, would be shocking bad manners, father; and I hope and trust you will not fo rget yourself so much, or I don't know how I shall feel; but I am sure I shall faint.”

“All right, Mag! All right! I'll twist my words twice over in my mouth, and bite the rough edges off 'em, afore I speak 'em out, when Ben comes here again. I won't say naught to make 'ee 'shamed; so doan't 'ee look so skeered—

“Taint every man can be a poet,
Nor more nor sheep can be a go-at.'

But I shouldn't wonder a bit if us all get slangy, for its natural to copy any one who is high above us, and us be all ready to worship your grand man, and to think all he says is first-rate talk. My word! didn't'ee hear 'en call our victuals "grub," and let out a lot of poetry of that sort, as nice as our stockman, Jack Slash, could do't? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, yes; but that was only humoursome talk, you know, master," said Peggy, in an apologetic tone. "I've heard lots of gents up-country say them sort of funny things, and laugh like pixies at the wit of it."

"I bet a penny thee never heard Mr Drydun talk that lingo, nor his wife neither," said Joe. "He never called me ‘Old Flick,’ or ‘Old Blowhard,’ same as Ben did to-night, after he had drained his pot of swizzle. Howsomer ver, I won't grumble, for I bean't over-nice myself; only when Mag is so mighty 'feard of my not talking foine enough afore her shiny sweetheart, it's time to let 'en see that I know what's what as well as her does, if her has larnt grammar. I can tell a carrion crow from a cock pheasant, if I only hear 'en open his mouth once. Though I bean't much of a scholar, I've lived a-nigh fifty years in the world with my eyes and my ears open; and if I haven't larnt a thing or two about men and manners in all that time, I must be a born fool,—that's all about it. But it is the fashion now-a-days for bumptious youngsters to think that an ould chap knows naught, if he hadn't the good luck to be sent to school for a year or two when he was a boy, and if he bean't quite up to the mark in his spelling."

"I am very sorry indeed that I have grieved you, papa," said Maggie, kissing her ruffled sire. "You did not understand me exactly. I only meant to tell you that it is not usual for a young lady's papa to ask a young gentleman when he is going to marry his daughter. You know it would look as if we were in a hurry, father; and that would not be proper at all. Nobody is supposed to be in a hurry about such a thing; at least, genteel people are not."

"I bean't in a hurry, so I tell'ee, whether I be genteel or t'other thing; and what's more than that, I doan't care a snap if Goldstone won't have 'ee at all. Thee wouldn't have far to run to find a better man than he—that's my notion, though he be's such a mighty big chap, and can gabble like a sea-lawyer."

"Come, come, measter! You are tired and rather sleepy too; so we had better go to bed, all of us," said Mrs Stubble, rising from her seat, for she saw that Bob's temper was rising, and he was clearing his throat to speak up for his absent friend. She foresaw a noisy scene, for Joe was too weary to reason calmly, and Bob would have fought, if necessary, for the honour
of his brother sportsman; so she told yawning Biddy to bolt up the doors, and "mind she did not set fire to the house again;" and then they all retired for the night.

After seven hours' slumber, Mr Stubble's system was so much invigorated that, to use his own figure, he felt as fresh as a cart-horse after a fortnight's spell in a clover paddock, and there was not a shadow of last night's pettishness on his smiling face when he sat down to the breakfast-table.

"What be us all going to do to-day?" he asked, looking round at his family. "There be's no cows to milk, nor pigs to feed, nor bullocks to yoke up, and nothing at all to do but play with one another. I'll take the lot of thee to see the house that the governor lives in, if thee be'st a-mind. What dost say, mother?"

"You will let me speak out what I think is best to be done, Joe, won't you?" asked Peggy, deferentially.

"Ees, to be sure, lass. Haven't thee allers done it ever since the day after us was first married? Doan't 'ee think I've brought 'ee to Sydney on purpose to gag thee. Say what thee lik'st, all of thee, but doan't'ee talk slang, because it ain't pretty."

"Well, I think we ought to go out and look for a house; but, first and foremost, Bob wants to go to the tailor's to get some new clothes, and you had better go with him, Joe. Your best colonial tweed suit is shrunk up ever so much too tight for you since that stupid thing Biddy boiled it all night with the blankets in the washing-copper. Mag and I think you will look much better in a nice black cloth suit, and we will go with you to be measured, if you like; then we can see that you are well fitted."

"Very well, missis; so be it. Thee shall rig me out how thee lik'st; but I bean't sure that thee'll fancy the look of me afterwards, for I never wear'd a black coat in all me life. To my fancy, colonial tweed beats all that fine stuff, for it's good and cheap; besides, you haven't got to be allers rubbin' yerself down with the dandy-brush, for it doan't show the dust. I'm thinking the main thing that tailors have got to find fault with it for is, that everybody knows the price of it; so the tailors can't bamboozle ye with long bills, same as they can when they sell broad-cloth, and such like stuff, that nobody knows the value of 'cept the snip himself. Ha, ha! everybody likes to have a little mystery in his trade, else how could he live and make money? Howsomever, thee shall have thee own way, Peggy, as I tell'd thee before. Rig me out as black as a parson, if thee likes it; I doan't care how ugly I look."

An hour or two afterwards the Stubble family alighted from an omnibus, and entered the shop of a fashionable tailor in George Street, whose card of
address they had received from Benjamin.

“Mister Goldstone tould 'en that yours was the best shop to go to, to get a first-rate rig-out,” said Joe, addressing the primly-dressed master of the establishment, who had looked rather dubiously at his customers on their entry, as if he fancied they had come to the wrong shop.

“Very happy to serve you, sir. Would you like to look over these fashions?” said the tailor, bowing politely.

Joe glanced over the book of fashions, while a quizzical smile played over his face. Fearing he might say something which would lessen the respect which the tailor seemed to feel for them all, Mrs Stubble came to the relief, and explained, in mincing accents, that Mr Stubble wanted a suit of the very best superfine black cloth clothes.

“Certainly, ma'am: shall be very happy. Will you do me the favour to step this way, sir, and I will take your measure? Forward, Mr Serge!”

The latter short sentence was addressed to an assistant in a back-shop, who speedily came to the front-shop.

“Ready, Mr Serge?”

The assistant replied that he was quite ready, and his master then applied the tape to Joe, and took his length and breadth from neck to heel, meanwhile expressing (parenthetically) the usual compliments on the shape and make of his customer. He then smilingly said, “That will do, sir; thank you,” whereupon Joe slipped into his country-cut coat again, and felt as much relieved as a sailor just let out of irons.

“What'll be the price of this 'ere new suit as you are going to make, mister?” asked Joe, in his simplicity.

“Oh, sir!” said the tailor, rubbing his hands and looking slightly wounded; “gentlemen never ask the price of an article at my establishment.”

“It's all right, father,” whispered Peggy, with a reverential side-glance at the tailor. “Benjamin said he knows the gentleman, and we could put down all we bought to his account, and he'd settle it for us.”

“I be satisfied, Peggy. Thee could allers drive a better shop bargain than I could,” said Joe, who was highly amused at the change which city life had wrought upon his wife in so short a time. Had she been buying a garment from a Daisybank storekeeper, she would have haggled over the price for ten minutes at least: but she was too much over-awed in the presence of a town tailor even to ask what she had to pay for a suit, much less try to abate the price a single shilling.

“I think I ought to have a smart hat of some sort to match these new consarns, Peggy,” whispered Joe. “This old cabbage-tree tile looks rather greasy.”
“Of course, dear, I am going to get you a new one. Do you sell black hats, sir?” she asked of the tailor, who politely assured her that he did sell hats of the very best London and Paris makers, and forthwith he began to exhibit some of the latest fashions.

“Whew! Thee bean't going to put my head in a long-faced hat, Peggy, surely? Nobody belonging to me ever wear'd one of them consarns,—ho, ho, ho!”

“Hush, Joe. Doan't 'ee laugh so loud. You must have a black hat with superfine clothes. Leave it to me; I know what I'm about.” Maggie at the same time said, “Of course, father.” So Joe waived his objections, and tried on a new glossy Gibus; but on looking at himself in the cheval glass, he burst into such a roar of laughter that his wife and daughter were quite shocked at him, and Mr Serge giggled himself purple behind his desk, while Bob beat his own leg with his riding-whip to chasten his mortified pride, and mentally vowed that he would never go tailoring again with his father and mother.

“Had you not better let me make you two suits of clothes, sir?” asked the tailor, who began to apprehend that his customer was rich, although not so refined as he hoped to make him look in a few days.

“I doan't know naught about it; ax the missis,” replied Joe. Whereupon Mrs Stubble told the tailor that he might make two suits if he pleased, but she hoped he would make them well, and not fail to send home one suit on Saturday night. Some neck-ties and gloves were next selected for Joe, and then Peggy said she thought he was furnished all but his boots, which she must buy at Mr Lobb's shop.

The task of suiting Bob was not quite so simple as it had been to fit out his sire, for Bob was extremely fastidious in the selection of material, and positively tiresome with his instructions to the tailor to make his clothes of the newest cut. After a while he appeared to be satisfied that justice would be done to his symmetrical figure; and when Mr Serge had written down their address “No. 2 Bull-in-a-ring Street,” the tailor bowed his customers out.

“I say, Peggy, I wish I'd a-thought of it to ax the tailor if he knows where there be's a house that'll suit us,” said Joe, after he had got a little way from the shop.

“I'll go back and ask him,” said Peggy; “I daresay he'll tell us in a minute, for he is a very civil man. Not a bit like old Deedle the tailor at Daisybank.”

“Quite a gentleman,” said Maggie. “Did you see him offer me a chair, ma? I daresay Benjamin has told him who I am, and that is the reason why he was so respectful to us all.”
“Hold hard, Peggy, I'll run back. Stop 'ee here all of thee, aside this apple-stall,” said Joe; and away he trotted back to the shop. On entering, he found the tailor and his assistant with very red faces and their eyes moist with emotion of some sort, but Joe did not suspect that they had been laughing at him till they were tickled to tears. “I say, mister, can 'ee tell 'en where I can get a good house to rent?”

“Let me see,” said the tailor, after coughing away his smirks. “I don't know of one myself just at present, but you can't do better than go to Mr Craig the house-agent,—a very honest man, sir,—came out in the same ship with me. His office is just round the corner. He'll suit you, if it is to be done.”

“thank'ee, sir. Good-day.”

A few minutes afterwards, Joe entered Mr Craig's office, followed by his family. He opened his business by giving the agent a running account of his recent visit to Sydney, and the bad bargain he had made with Mr Clinch, while Mr Craig listened attentively, and seemed much grieved at the greedy anxiety of his brother agent to secure a commission rather than to see his client comfortably housed.

“Ah, I am very sorry you did not come to me, sir, in the first instance, instead of going to Clinch,” said Mr Craig, with a virtuous shrug. “I don't like to say anything against a person in the same line as myself; but I may simply remark, sir, that if you had consulted me first of all, you might have saved yourself a good deal of trouble and expense. However, I think I can satisfy you now,” he added, opening a big book, and beginning to look more cheerful.

“It's a thousand pities you did not think of this gentleman before, Stubble, instead of going to t'other tricky fellow,” whispered Peggy.

“How could I think of 'en, thee silly goose!” said Joe, tartly. “Didn't Goldstone himself tell t'other chap to write to us?”

“Oh, to be sure! I forgot that, Joe. Yes, it ain't your fault after all, measter. I daresay you did your best, and it can't be helped. This gentleman will find us a house, I'll warrant.”

Mr Craig said that family residences were very scarce just then; still, after scrutinising his register, he found that he had not less than five eligible houses to let, either of which he thought would suit his new clients nicely. So they got cards to view, and then hired a cab and drove to see the tenements in the order in which the agent had numbered them.

The first one they stopped at was a large house certainly, but it looked so dilapidated that Peggy was afraid it was haunted, and would not even get out of the cab to take a peep through the grimy windows at the inside of it. The next house on their list was a commodious one too, but its back part
overlooked a burial-ground, and that was a decided objection in Maggie's
eyes, for superstitious reasons which I need not explain. Other two of the
family houses to let were in elevated sites of "the rocks;" but Peggy said
she preferred Macquarie Street North to that locality, and Bob positively
refused to live on the rocks "at any price." The last house they viewed,
which was near Fort Street, was a very good one, and cheap for its size. It
was in a cool situation, under a rock, or rather it had a precipitous cliff in
its rear, with a trickling stream of water falling from it into the back-yard.
Mag thought that was very romantic, and her mother suggested that they
might grow their own water-cress; but Bob damped their poetical ideas in a
minute by asserting that the tiny cataract was wholly dependent, in dry
weather, upon the liquid contributions of the denizens of the alley above.
There was a perceptible savour of alley refuse, not only in the back-yard,
but in the back-rooms of the house itself, which unmistakably proved the
correctness of Bob's observations.

It was also observed that a brass band of musicians occupied a little
cottage on the top of the cliff, and they happened just then to be practising
several new tunes all at once, which made Peggy desire to hasten away lest
she should get sick headache; but Joe smiled, and said he rather liked the
row, as it put him in mind of his old stock-yard at branding time. After a
little discussion, they resolved to wait till to-morrow before seeing Mr
Craig again; and having grown rather hungry with their long morning's
work, they drove straight homeward to dine.

"Hey, day! what are all these things, Biddy?" asked Mrs Stubble, as she
entered the front parlour and found the table covered with paper parcels.

"Troth, I can't tell ye what they are, missis; for I never looked into 'em. It
ain't pepper anyhow, for I took a smell at every one of 'em. A man brought
'em wid a cart an' horse, an' here 's a letter he left too."

The letter was addressed to Miss Stubble, and explained that the parcels
contained trifling presents for each member of the family, with Benjamin's
devoted love and respect. Of course they were all extremely anxious to see
what the presents were; so the largest one, addressed to Maggie, was
opened first, and proved to be a very handsome dressing-case, which they
all declared to be the loveliest thing they had ever seen. The next parcel
contained a beautiful work-box for Peggy, which was also rapturously
admired. Joe's present was a pound packet of cut tobacco, and a silver-
mounted meerschaum pipe. Bob's parcel contained a pair of solid silver
spurs, a pocket-pistol (or dram-bottle), and a massive gold breast-pin. The
head of the pin represented a horse's ear, quite a new design by a colonial
jeweller of a sporting turn of mind. It was much admired by Mag and her
mother, and Bob was proud of it too. Father thought that a donkey's head
would look more natural, but he was too considerate to say a word that would damp their exultation, or raise a noisy argument.

“Hey! here's another parcel. Who is this for? Oh, it's for Biddy, to be sure. Where is she?”

“Here am I, miss,” said Biddy, who had been behind the door all the while. “Shure, an' didn't he forget me naythir, the dear man!”

Biddy's present was a white crape shawl and a delaine dress, striped something like a barber's pole. In a postscript to the letter, Benjamin expressed a hope that they had not decided about a house, as he thought his father had one to let that was “just the thing.” He intended to see the old gentleman about it, and would call upon them that evening, and let them know the result of his interview.

While his family and servant were examining their treasures, and loudly expatiating on the merits of each article, Mr Stubble, who had been longing for a smoke all the morning, filled his new pipe with the fragrant mixture of negrohead and pigtail, and went into the back-yard to blow a cloud, and at the same time to ponder over certain anomalies in Mr Goldstone's character which were puzzling to Joe's mental philosophy.

The flavour of the tobacco was rich and rare, and though the pipe had that peculiar bran-new taste which old smokers always object to, it was a very smart pipe, a real meerschaum, and not a sham article made of mere clay. Moreover, it had a large capacity, and bore twenty minutes' hard puffing before it began to splutter, or to give any other unpleasant signs of exhaustion, such as sending a draw of hot ashes up its amber tube. A few hours' abstinence had also tended to heighten Joe's relish; for even a pipe ceases to be a luxury if it be indulged in too often.

After writing the last sentence, I felt at a loss how to express Joe's sublimated feelings in words of my own; so I sought counsel in a volume which was sent to me two days ago by my courteous friend, Francis Campbell, M.A., M.D. It is entitled “A Commentary on the influence which the use of Tobacco exerts on the Human Constitution.” The name of its learned author is a guarantee that the book is well worth reading, but I have not yet had time to read it through. The first page that I opened a few minutes ago contains a quotation from a work written by a no less exalted personage than King James I. I thought I need not search the book for a higher authority, so I copied the extract. Here it is verbatim:

“Tobacco being a common herb which (though under diverse names) grows almost everywhere, was first found out by some of the barbarous Indians to be a preservative or antidote against a filthy disease whereunto these barbarous people are, as all men know, very much subject, what through the uncleanly and adust constitution of their bodies, and what
through the intemperate heat of the climate. So that as from them was first brought into Christendom that most detestable disease, so from them likewise was brought this use of tobacco as a stinking and unsavoury antidote for so corrupted and execrable a malady, the stinking suffumigation whereof they yet use against that disease, making so one canker or vermine to eat out another.”

If that is not enough to put out the finest pipe that was ever lighted, I know not what is. I dare not presume to controvert the registered opinion of a great monarch by saying much on the other side of this subject at present; still, I must be truthful in recording the influence which Mr Goldstone's present, on the whole, had upon his unsophisticated old friend. It proved, in that instance, to be the pipe of peace, for it dulled Joe's brain to the remembrance of various little acts which had excited his suspicion of Ben's honesty, and before the pipe was restored to its morocco case, all prejudice was puffed away, and Goldstone had regained thorough possession of Joe's susceptible heart.

The little indefinable misgivings which Biddy had harboured against Ben had also been removed by the crape shawl and the striped dress: in short, there remained not the shadow of a doubt in the mind of one of that household that Benjamin's friendship was pure as filtered water.
“WHO are you, sir?” asked Mr Goldstone, senior, as his son entered the dusky room where he was sitting on the afternoon alluded to in the preceding chapter.

“I am Benjamin Goldstone, sir,” replied Ben, bowing politely, and without showing any sign of annoyance at his sire's abrupt address.

“Oh, Ben Goldstone, are you? Humph! I was not sure about it. You have so horribly altered in appearance since I last saw you.”

Mr Goldstone meant this as a cutting reproof to his son for allowing his beard and moustache to grow. Mr Goldstone had shaved his face bare twice a week ever since he was nineteen years of age, and although his hands had got very shaky, and he often cut little corners off his wrinkles, he still persisted in the use of his razor, and, like many other old fogies who want all the world to copy them in everything, he professed the utmost contempt for any man who chose to let those gifts of nature go unclipped. Ben knew his father's humour too well to reason with him on the philosophy of beard culture; and though there might have been some little excuse for Ben if he had been ruffled, he did not look in the least degree unamiable. It is very difficult to raise a dispute where there is only one person inclined thereto, and Ben was not going to quarrel with his father about a few bristles. Moreover, he had a premeditated design of conciliating his neglected sire; so he smiled as if he thought the caustic remark were pleasantly witty, and said, as he took a seat, “How are you, father?”

“It is a matter of small concern to you how I am, sir, or you would have come to see me when I was ill.”

“I am very sorry to hear you have been ill, father,” said Ben, rising and taking the old man's tremulous hand. “I did not know it, I assure you, sir. What has been the matter with you, father?”

“I was laid up with typhoid fear—at death's door, you may say—for six weeks, but not a soul came near me except old Mrs Smith.”

“Ben thought it was not at all unlikely that his father might have typhoid again, and Mrs Smith also, for the atmosphere of the room was as foetid as if it had not had a change for a week. Throwing all the pathos he could into his expression, he said, “Dear me! I am very sorry, father. I wish you had
sent a special messenger for me. The fact is, I have been out of town for the last three months looking after my tenants on the Hunter River.”

“Tenants on the Hunter! I was not aware that you had any tenants in that direction,” said Simon, in a milder tone, for he was suddenly relieved of the idea that his son had come to ask for money. Ben marked the effect of that one little “white lie,” and was prepared to back it up by a hundred more, if necessary, but in order to divert the old man from the subject, he said, “I have called this afternoon, father, to speak to you on several matters of importance, and in the first place, let me tell you before I forget it, that I can get you a first-rate tenant for the old house in Slumm Street that has been so long empty.”

“I shall be very glad to let it at a reduced rent, Benjamin. It is a trouble to me. The last tenant left without paying any rent, and I did not know he was gone until a policeman came to tell me that all the lead had been stolen off the roof, and everything else that could be moved, including the knocker on the front door, and the bell-handle at the back gate.”

“What a shame!” exclaimed Ben, trying to look grieved. “But what was your agent about to let the tenant bolt, and then to leave the house to the mercy of petty thieves. Let me go and talk Greek to him, father!”

Simon calmly thanked his son for his readiness to turn his classics to practical account, but explained that he had no agent, for he managed his business himself, and saved commission. Ben thought it was an equivocal method of saving, but he knew that to argue the point with his sire would be useless; so he said in a sympathising tone, “I wish you had sent for me, father, when you were taken ill. I would have looked after your affairs for you.”

“But you know, Ben, that I like punctuality in business, and that is a quality which you have not evidenced whenever I have entrusted you with the collection of rents for me.”

“I am sorry to say I have not acted right, father—in fact, I have been tempted to do wrong; but I have turned over a new leaf lately. I am happy to say my pecuniary circumstances have improved very much, and I am in a position to pay all my just debts. The money that I have misappropriated shall all be refunded to you in a few weeks. By the bye, let me tell you another important fact, father; I am going to be married!”

“Married! married, did you say, boy?”

“Yes, father. I am going to be married to a young lady possessing wealth, beauty, and intellect. She is of a good family too—descended from a Sax”——

“I don't care whether she is descended from Saxon, Celt, or Gael,” interrupted Simon. “There are honest people in every country. Tell me if
she knows how to keep a house tidy, and if she has common sense, and if
she is likely to be a suitable companion for you through life.”

“I was going to tell you, father. She is quite domesticated, can make a
loaf with Bones the baker any day, and do scores of useful things besides.
The only failing that I have seen in her yet is, that she is inclined to be
stingy; she has learnt that from her mother; but I can break her off it.”

“She will soon get over that failing if she follows your example. If you
have really found a girl with wealth, beauty, intellect, and of economical
habits as well, you are a fortunate fellow, Ben, and the sooner you get
married the better, lest she should change her mind, and marry some one
more like herself.”

“I am glad to know that you are so favourable to my union, father. It was
my duty to consult you before I decided. Would you like to see Miss
Stubble, sir?”

“I cannot go out of doors at present. You can give my compliments to
her, of course.”

“She would very much like to see you, father,” said Ben, in his most
insinuating tone.

“Yes, yes; so would the blind man under the post-office portico. You
know I am an invalid. ‘When Æschylus was sitting under the walls of his
house, an eagle, hovering over his bald head, mistook it for a stone, and let
fall his oyster, hoping thus to break the shell, but pierced the poor man's
skull.’ If the poor man had kept within the walls of his house, the eagle
would not have seen him,” added Simon, who had a habit of quoting from
classic authors, without any apparent relevancy to the subject of
conversation.

“When is this wealthy, handsome, and intellectual young lady going to
give herself away?”

Ben felt much annoyed at his father's irony, but he mastered his feelings,
and replied softly, “I presume you mean to ask when we are to be married,
father. Not for a month or more, for I have some very important matters to
attend to in the interim. The fact is, I am putting up as member for
Muddleton.”

“Peck of nonsense!” exclaimed Simon, looking thoroughly amazed.
“Member for Muddleton, indeed! A pretty muddle you would make of it.
What do you know about political science, boy?”

“I could soon tell you all that, father; but it is no matter, as times go. I
suppose I can learn, as everybody else is obliged to do.”

“Pooh! get out with you. I have no patience left.”

“Don't be so touchy, father, Let me explain matters to you,” said Ben,
looking rather abashed, for he had expected his father would have been
highly pleased at the idea of his son getting into Parliament. He was surprised, too, at his father's patriotism, for he had never before expressed so much interest in the institutions of the land in the presence of his son. “I assure you, sir, I have not sought for this honour. It has been thrust upon me. The idea was first suggested to me by an honourable member, and I recoiled from the grave responsibility. But a week or two afterwards, I received a powerfully-signed requisition from the electors of Muddleton, to which I could not but accede; so I sent a modest reply, which I will read to you, sir, if you will allow me.” Ben thereupon took a paper from his pocket, and boldly read as follows, while his father sat in silence, with his eyebrows raised as high as they would go, and the angles of his mouth drawn down to the folds of his neckcloth, expressive of surprise, chagrin, and unmitigated contempt:—

“To the Independent Electors of Muddleton.

“GENTLEMEN,—To say that I was astounded at your most respectably-signed requisition, would be but to express my feelings in the faintest language; but my sense of the honour you have conferred on me exceeds every other feeling except a consciousness of my own inability to reciprocate the weighty obligation under which your confidence has laid me.

“We are obliged to act so far as our power reacheth towards the good of the whole community; and he who doth not perform the part assigned him towards advancing the benefit of the whole, in proportion to his opportunities and abilities, is not only a useless, but a very mischievous, member of the public, because he takes his share of the profit, and yet leaves his share of the burden to be borne by others, which is the true principal cause of most miseries and misfortunes in life.

“Deeply impressed with”——

“Stop, stop! Where did you get that last paragraph?”

“Where, father? why out of my own head, to be sure. You shall hear some more.”

“I have heard more than I wanted to hear; and you must not try to befool me by declaring that the windy bunkum at the beginning of your address and the next paragraph are out of the same head. Tell me where you stole that little bit of common sense, or I will see if I can find out,” said Simon, rising and hobbling towards his book-shelves.

“Sit down, father,” said Ben, trying to laugh; “I cribbed that little bit from Swift, but all the rest is my own composition, I'll swear.”

“Don't swear in my house, or I will call a constable; you prating, brain-
stealing”——

“Pray don't be so cross, father, I will explain”——

“Cross, indeed! Perhaps it was Dean Swift who said that children would not cross their parents so much when they grow up, if they crossed their knees oftener when they were young,” growled Simon. “Whoever it was that said it, I can feelingly endorse the sentiment; and I am cross with myself for sparing the rod to you when I ought to have used it.”

“I can tell you a remedy for a cross temper, father, which the Dean did not invent,” said Ben, who, though he was much annoyed at his father's sharp rebukes, felt nevertheless determined to keep his own temper, for reasons of his own. So, in the hope of making the old gentleman smile, he told him when he felt inclined to say angry words he was to run to the pump, fill his mouth with cold water, and keep it there for ten minutes before he spoke. But Simon still looked as sour as if his mouth were full of pickles, and Ben thought he had better change his tactics, as stale jokes would not tickle his father in the least degree. So he put on a perplexed look, and said, “If I had had an idea that you would object to my going into the House, father, I certainly should not have accepted the invitation from the electors of Muddleton; but now my honour is at stake, you know.”

“And my honour is at stake also. It would not only disgrace my reputation, but it would worry me into a fever again, to see my son in Parliament. You confess that you are ignorant of the duties required of you.”

“But I am willing to learn them, father.”

“Benjamin, I am sorry to say I do not believe you have ability to fill the post of a junior clerk,—at any rate, you have not industry enough for it; and it pains me to see you presume to set yourself up for a legislator, to make laws for the good government of nearly half-a-million of people! Any one of common sense will admit that it is necessary to serve years to learn any handicraft; and to master any of the arts or sciences requires long and diligent application; but it is a curious fact that many men suppose they have an intuitive knowledge of political economy, which is the most difficult study that I know of. A member of Parliament has moral responsibilities which he should not lightly estimate nor undertake without necessary qualification.”

“Do you think, then, that a man should not go into the House unless he is a thorough statesman?”

“I did not say that, Benjamin; but I do certainly say that he should not go in if he is thoroughly ignorant of statesmanship. Where a man has a full share of common sense, and that experience of the world which only years can give him, and provided he is able to express his ideas in a tolerably
clear manner, he may be excused for going into the House, if there be no more eligible candidate for the seat; but then he must work hard, and study hard afterwards, otherwise he is negligent of his solemn trust, and will merit public contempt.”

“I begin to see that I have been precipitate in putting up as a ruler before I am qualified. I am sorry I did not consult you before, father, but I do not see how I can honourably retract. It would look so foolish to back out of it now.”

“Alexander Pope says, ‘A man should never be ashamed to own he has been in the wrong’; which is but saying in other words that he is wiser to-day than he was yesterday,” said Simon. “You are an Australian, Ben, and if you have any ambition to see the land of your birth advance, do all you can to secure wise legislators for it. And the best thing you can do in that way at present is to stand aside and let a wiser man than yourself stand for Muddleton; and surely the constituents would not have far to go to find one.”

“Excuse me, sir; but how is it that you have lived so long in the land and have never tried to advance it through means of the superior knowledge that you possess? I think there is more credit due to me, and to other young men of comparatively small experience, in being willing to come forward and do what we can for the country, than there is in all the wise old Solons who will do nothing but sit in their libraries and grumble at things they never try to mend. But I beg pardon, father, I don't want to vex you; I will think over your good advice. Please to tell me what rent you want for the house in Slumm Street, for I must be off.”

Simon's features relaxed into a sickly smile, and he said, “Ah, yes—the house: it is a very convenient one for a family. I want £150 a year for it, Ben. The last tenant was to have paid me £200 a year, but he paid me nothing at all, the shabby rogue.”

“You will put it into good tenantable order, I presume, father?”

“I certainly will not spend any more money upon the house, Benjamin. Previous to the last tenant going in I put it in thorough order, and he ran away without paying me a shilling.”

“You should employ a good sharp agent, father; then your tenants are not likely to run away in your debt,” said Ben, with an insinuating look, which seemed to imply that he himself would be just the man for the post.

“The agent himself might run away you know, Ben; and it would be a strong incentive for him to do so, seeing that I could not run after him. I once heard of a man who had exhausted himself in chasing a thief who had stolen his hat. He was leaning against a post, when a sympathising lounger came up and asked him why he did not pursue the robber and recover his
‘I cannot possibly run another yard,’ said the poor man, panting for breath. ‘If that be the case, I may as well take your wig,’ replied the sympathising rascal. He then snatched the periuke from the helpless man's head, and ran off in another direction.”

“Ha, ha! that was a good joke,” said Ben. “But I say, father, suppose I can get you a cash customer for the house, what will you take for it?”

“I will take £2000 for it, Ben.”

“All right, sir; I will see what I can do. In the meantime I will let the house for you, and guarantee the rent, if you like. If I get you £2000 for it, will you have any objection to lend me the money on security of my estate in Cumberland?”

“I happen to know that your estate, as you call it, is already mortgaged, Benjamin,” said Simon, with a reproving look at his spendthrift son.

“I supposed you knew it, sir; but of course I intend to pay off that trifling incumbrance, and give you security on the whole estate.”

“Yes, that is the proper way, Benjamin; and when you have paid it off, you can let me know, and then we may talk about a fresh loan. But I must say, it is not very creditable to a young man like yourself to want a loan at all.”

After a little more conversation on the subject, Ben took an affectionate leave of his mollified sire, and departed.

“After all, I believe old daddy's surliness of manner proceeds more from bad digestion than from lack of paternal affection for his dutiful son,” soliloquised Ben, as he walked towards Redfern. “With respect to my parliamentary project, I must say his counsel is worth thinking about; but if I shy off from this constituency, I shall get awfully abused in certain quarters, and shall perhaps be driven to pen and ink in self-defence. My wig! I wonder if any of the Muddletonians have ever read Dean Swift's works. If any of them should detect that little bit of cribbage, I shall be nicely roasted. Never mind, I'll swear Swift stole it from me. Stop, that will not do, though, for he has been dead I don't know how long. Ah, well, I'll chance it!”
Chapter VII.

How Ben Goldstone was induced to stand for Muddleton.—His touching interest in the financial affairs of the Stubbles.—Becomes their banker.

I WILL now briefly tell how Ben Goldstone got the money of which he boasted so much to his father and to others; and also explain how and why he was induced to offer himself as member for Muddleton.

Mr Joshua Samms was an old colonist, and a very honest plodding man, whom anybody would trust. From small beginnings in the slop trade, he gradually acquired wealth. He owned a good deal of house property, and a large stock-in-trade besides. He was sanguine of being able to make “twice as much” in a few years, and then he intended to settle down comfortably and enjoy himself for life. One day, while he was busy in his warehouse, death touched his heart, and in a moment he was gone from the world and from all his hardly-earned substance. Two days afterwards a cortège (a quarter of a mile in length) of friends and neighbours followed the late Mr Samms to the cemetery at the customary mournful pace. They saw his mortal remains deposited in the grave, and sighed “Poor fellow!” as they heard the earth fall on the coffin, when the solemn words “dust to dust” were pronounced; then away they hastened to their respective homes or houses of business as fast as their horses could trot.

Mr Samms had been so much engrossed with his mercantile concerns, and in “adding house to house, and field to field,” that he neglected several matters of lasting consequence to himself and to his family, including the important duty of making a will. He fully intended to do it, for he was too shrewd a business man not to foresee the difficulties which would beset his wife and daughters if he happened to die intestate. He was also aware that no person knew so much about his affairs as he himself did, and that he was the fittest person to partition his own estate to his family, and thereby guard as far as he could do against litigation and disputing amongst them after he was in his grave. Mr Samms knew all that. He was aware, too, that the mere act of making a will would not expedite his death one moment. No man could be more scrupulously careful than Mr Samms was to insure his houses against fire risks, and to cover by open policies all his merchandise afloat against loss by perils of the sea; still, strange to say, he neglected to make his will, forgot to insure his beloved family against future trouble, which he might have done by a few hours' serious thought and the outlay of a trifling sum to his solicitor. If he had been asked why he
did not make a will, he perhaps could have given no better reason than thousands of persons who are alive at this moment can give for putting off that serious duty; still he deferred it from day to day—put it off till tomorrow, until it was too late. He died suddenly, and a large portion of his real property fell into the uncontrolled possession of his only son, a lively youth about twenty-two years of age, who had always loved play much better than he loved work.

Young Nabal Samms had been educated at the same school with Ben Goldstone. They had often played truant together, and had spent many hungry days picking “geebungs” and “five-corners” in Botany scrub, or “bogging” on the beach at “Little Coogee,” or catching crabs and cray-fish off the rocks at “Bondi.” A strong fraternal bond unites school-fellows and ship-mates. That fact is particularly noticeable in Australia, as witness the convivialities of the “Blues” (Christ Church scholars) in Sydney, and the marked partiality which most voyagers from distant lands manifest for anybody who came out in the same ship with them. It is likely enough that Nabal's sudden accession to wealth (he had always been short of cash before), had a revivifying influence on Goldstone's dulled friendship for his young schoolfellow; at any rate, Ben was amongst the foremost of the crowd of rollicking blades who hastened to congratulate Nabal on his fortune, and help him to spend it.

I shall not try to explain the process by which Ben effected a transfer of about £500 from Nabal's pocket to his own in the short space of ten days. Ben could doubtless have satisfied a good many of the initiated that it was all “fair-play,” and Nabal did not dispute it for an instant, much less did he fret over his loss. He admired Ben's skill as a billiard-player, and hoped in time to become almost as expert, and he was quite content to pay for his practice. He had “oceans of money,” which his industrious sire had toiled to the last minute of his life in making, and Nabal's adopted motto was, “Eat, drink, and be merry;” in short, he did not value money beyond the price of dumps or stony marbles.

Although Ben Goldstone never took a prize at school for mathematics, he had a turn for figures, inasmuch as he could always contrive to make his cash on hand appear five times as much as the sum was in reality, or to swell it to any amount that suited his purpose. He made such a jingle with the £500 which he had won from Nabal, that it was soon currently believed he had coaxed £5000, at least, from his father. The speedy result was, that Ben found himself raised quite beyond his common sphere, which was especially gratifying to him at that time, as he was wishful to make a telling impression on the simple minds of his friends, the Stubbles, on their first arrival in Sydney.
An old and highly respectable resident of Muddleton was the only candidate for that constituency at the forthcoming general election, and it was inferred by some of the Radical leaders that Mr Morrison would not be on their side of the House if he got into it, so they resolved by all means to keep him out, and a fit and proper person was sought for to oppose him. Goldstone was the man selected, principally because he was morally supple enough to be bent in any direction his patrons were inclined to; but he had other qualities which they hoped to turn to useful account. For instance, he could talk for an hour, or more if need be, on any simple subject in the world, and he was thoroughly blush-proof against solemn rebukes, satirical shafts, rasping banter, or downright abuse. His general physique, too, was favourable to his party, and awe-striking to all opponents. He was exactly a fathom in height, nautical measure; and he boasted that he could knock down a cab-horse with his fist. He had broken the nose of the second mate on board of the *Juno* whaler at one knock, and had seriously damaged the ribs of a Samoan chief, who had shown his disapproval of Ben's attentions to his daughter by tapping him on the head with the paddle of his own canoe. In one of Ben's most frisky moods, he had carried a new cast-iron lamp-post from Exchange corner, and dropped it over the Circular Quay into a waterman's boat; thus showing his great strength as well as his taste for pure fun. Altogether, he was, as Biddy Flynn remarked, “a rale building of a man.” Moreover, he was a gentleman by virtue of his cash in hand, as well as in view of what he would get when his father had done with it. Taking him for all in all, the Radical leaders thought they might go far without finding a more fit and proper man for the Muddletonians; so one of their party was deputed to “bring Ben up to the scratch.”

It did not cost Mr Wheedle much argumentation to induce Ben to stand for Muddleton. He looked upon it in the light of a “lark.” Besides, he knew it would glorify him in the eyes of the Stubbles, and astonish other weak minds in town; and he hoped it would help his dutiful designs upon his father's good-nature. In the latter calculation, however, he was somewhat mistaken in the offset, as I have shown. It was an easy matter to get a strong requisition from Muddleton, for there were seventy-five independent electors in that town who liked beer; there were a few men there, too, who had had long experience in measuring out liquids, and who also took an active part in other public measures which bore directly on their own interests. A requisition was duly signed and sent from Muddleton, couched in the usual complimentary terms, and Ben replied to it in a touching address, part of which I have already transcribed. It was advertised in the leading newspapers, of course, and then Ben's concern
ended for the present. He had nothing to do with the fighting and brawling which were practised at Muddleton during the active canvassing season. That was not his business; and if the electors chose to break one another's bones about him, more fools they. All he was answerable for was the beer, and sundry other luxuries in that line. He cunningly judged that he would stand a better chance of being triumphantly returned if he stayed away from the electorate until the day of nomination, having in mind the axiom that “familiarity breeds contempt.” His braggart assurance was as helpful to him in general as pipe-clay moulds are to “professional smashers,” and might serve him to answer any random questions put to him when on the hustings, or to make a long speech when the material was immaterial, but he knew it would not stand the test of ten minutes' private analysis by some of the matter-of-fact Muddletonians. So, after satisfying the local committee that his absence from the country was unavoidable, on account of the pressing necessity for looking after his property in town, he began to turn his attention to various other matters, and notwithstanding his bedazzling prospect, he kept as cool as a sailor lashed to the helm in a snow-storm.

After his interview with his father, he went straightway to Redfern, and reached No. 2 Bullanaming Street as the Stubbles were sitting down to tea. He was not expected till supper-time; so Mrs Stubble was indulging her taste for eschalots, contrary to Maggie's expressed wish, for she said, as Benjamin always kissed her mother at meeting and parting, he would be sure to smell them, and most gentlemen of taste hated onions, especially as an article of diet for ladies.

Mrs Stubble blushingly apologised for the presence of the vulgar vegetables on her table, but Ben put her at ease directly by assuring her that he did not object to them—in fact, that he liked them even better than garlic. He said, too, that when he was on his travels, he dined one day with a prince, and that noble personage ate a large raw Spanish onion without salt. Ben omitted to explain that the exalted personage was Prince Jabberaway of the Solomon Islands, whose best dining-table was a mat spread on the ground, without knives and forks or plates upon it, and whose state-costume was a simple waistband of coloured flax, and a chaste collaret made of sharks' teeth.

After tea a pleasant discussion took place respecting the house in Slumm Street, and both Maggie and her mother felt so sure that it would suit them if Benjamin could recommend it, that a bargain would have been concluded for it at once; but Ben suggested that it would be more satisfactory to him if father and Robert would go and inspect it, and then, if they liked it, he would set men to work to put it in good order. “If you will
come and dine with me to-morrow,” said Ben, addressing Mr Stubble and Bob, “I will drive you to the house in the afternoon; or stay—let me see—meet me at Entwistle's hotel at one o'clock. You will get a first-rate dinner there, and see something of real life in Sydney at the same time. You know where it is, I suppose?”

“Noa, sir. I doan't know where it be at all. It's a rum name; but I'll find 'en out I daresay.”

“It is in York Street. Anybody will show you the place, or you can smell the dinner nearly half-a-mile off at one o'clock.”

“I'll scent 'en out, then, I'll warrant; for my nose is allers nation sharp about that time o' day. I remember when I was at whoam, in the ould country”——

“A-hem—hem, if it's all the same to you, Benjamin, I think father had better meet you on Monday at one o'clock,” said Peggy, purposely interrupting Joe's reminiscences of the old country, which were too much associated with poverty to please her, or her children either. “To tell you the truth, Benjamin, the tailor will not have father's and Bob's new clothes ready till to-morrow night, and their country suits look shabby—hem.”

“Oh, that is no matter. 'A man's a man for a' that.' However, please yourself, mother; let us say Monday at one o'clock, sharp. That is all settled, then. And now I hope you will excuse me for what I am going to say next,” added Ben, looking very affectionately at them all round. “You know we are all one family now, as it were, and there ought not to be any shyness between us. Our interests are identical; all one and the same thing in fact. I have been thinking that as you have just come from the country, you might want some change. Pray, don't be offended now; I have plenty of money by me that I have no use for at present. Do you want any? Say the word, and don't mince matters. You can have any sum you like from five pounds to five thousand.”

“Noa, thank'ee kindly,” said Joe, smiling. “I've got a heap of money in my pocket here; leastways, 'taint money dezackly, but it's all as one when I goes to the bank. Much obliged to thee all the same, sir.”

“I am glad you are not vexed with me for making you such an offer. But I say, mother, you ought not to let father carry a lot of money about in his pocket in that way,” added Ben, shaking his head despondingly. “It really is not safe, for there are scoundrels in Sydney who would pick a man's pocket as soon as they'd pick a bone.”

“That's right, Benjamin, speak to him,” said Peggy, looking proudly at her sagacious son-in-law elect. It's no good of me talking to him; if I've told him once, I've told him a dozen times about that very thing, and he always winks his eye, and says, ‘No fear.’ I have no patience with such
bravado, and I shouldn't wonder if he gets murdered. But he thinks, because he never gets tipsy, that he is as safe as if he was fitted with a full suit of brass—er—er—thingemees."

"Armour! Yes—ha, ha! You are too unsuspecting, daddy; too nobly credulous for common life. Where do you bank, old man?" said Ben; at the same time he slapped Joe on the back, which additional mark of familiarity and filial interest sent a thrill of reverence through Maggie and her mother, and made Bob feel that they had found in Ben a friend indeed.

"I never kept much ready money by me," said Joe. "I allers got Mr Knox to buy shares of some sort for me; and I had a bank of my own under a heap of slabs in the garden at the Glen. Nobody ever found out that bank, 'cept perhaps the snakes; but they never steal a man's money."

"You had better open an account with a bank in Sydney, for you will want some ready money now, of course. But I tell you what, daddy; if it is any advantage to you, you can lodge your money in my bank till you decide what you will do with it, and I can easily give you a cheque when you want it, you know. It won't inconvenience me the least in life if you like to do it; but please yourself, you know."

"Ah, you had better do that, father; then you will know it is all right. It is very kind of Benjamin to think of it," said Peggy. Maggie and Bob immediately indorsed their mother's sentiments; whereupon Joe said he didn't care so long as it was all safe; then drew out his pouch, and produced a bank-draft at three days' sight for £3300, the purchase-money of the farm, and Mr Knox's cheque for £425, the proceeds of sale of furniture and farming stock.

"I see these drafts are on the Bank of Australasia," said Ben, affecting to scrutinise the documents closely, to see that Joe had not been duped. "They are all right I have no doubt. I will pay them into my bank to-morrow, and I can give you a cheque when you want one. We will see by and bye when we all get to rights how we can invest the money to bring in interest. Do you want any loose cash now, mother?"

"No, thank'e, Benjamin. We don't want any till we begin to furnish our new house. I am sure we are very much obliged to you for the trouble you are taking, Benjamin."

"Pray, don't mention it, dear mother! It is my duty to do what is in my power for you all, and that duty is a pleasure. When we are united by the golden chain of wedlock," added Ben, passing his arm tenderly round Maggie's waist; "then the link of love which now holds us together as a family will be firmly riveted, and nothing but the sledge-hammer of Death can knock the rivet out again."

Soon after that touching delivery Ben took an affectionate leave of them.
all, and departed.

Mr Rogers, in his admirable work, “The Eclipse of Faith,” tells a story of a soldier-sentinel and the prisoner whom he was guarding holding an animated dialogue on the subject of the threatened invasion of England by Bonaparte. The prisoner, in lamenting the probability of the French forces marching into London, remarked, “that it would be a sad blow to their liberties.” “Ah!” said the soldier, with a profane oath; “it is the injury to our religion that I am most afraid of.”

Ben Goldstone's zeal for the safety of Mr Stubble's money was as anomalous as the anxiety of the cursing soldier for his religion, or the fettered prisoner for his liberty; but honest Joe and simple Peggy felt as full of confidence as if they had invested their cash in city debentures.
Chapter VIII.

How the Stubble family spent their first Sabbath in Sydney.—Mr Stubble's remarks on Sunday trading.

“DEAR is the hallowed morn to me,
When village bells awake the day,
And by their sacred minstrelsy,
Call me from earthly cares away.

“And dear to me the winged hour,
Spent in Thy holy court, O Lord,
To feel devotion's soothing power,
And catch the manna of thy word.

*         *         *         *         *

“Oft when the world with iron hands
Has bound me in its six days' chain,
Thou bursts them like the strong man's bands,
And lets my spirit loose again.

“Then dear to me the Sabbath morn,
The village bells, the shepherd's voice;
These oft have found my heart forlorn,
And always bid that heart rejoice.

“Go, man of pleasure, strike the lyre,
Of broken Sabbaths sing the charms;
Ours be the prophet's car of fire,
Which bears us to a Father's arms.”

—ALLAN CUNNINGHAM

DING-DONG! went the bells from a dozen church turrets as the Stubble family emerged from their temporary home, and walked slowly towards the church, where they had previously decided to attend divine service.

It was a lovely mid-winter morning, and the sun shone out unobscurred by a single cloud. A fresh breeze direct from the frosty summits of the western mountains was blowing sufficiently keen to remind old colonists of their overcoats, though new-comers, with healthy British blood in their veins, would have said, “It is rather warm walking.”

Ding-dong dingle! went the bells, and their solemn chiming carried Mr
Stubble's memory away to the other side of the earth and back again; to the early days of his life, when he walked across the meadows and through the copse beside his dear old father and mother to their village church. Many years had passed away since then; his parents had gone to the grave, and his humble family name, he supposed, was forgotten in his native place; but every old association seemed to flit before his mind as fresh as yesterday, and tears rolled down his rough face, despite his efforts to restrain them—tears of awakened feelings which had long been dulled by the monotony of his isolated life in the bush, and a total neglect of holy Sabbath duties.

“What ails you, master? Arn't you well?” asked Peggy, with more tenderness than usual in her tones.

“Yes, lass, thank'ee, I be very well; but somehow, I feel down-hearted a bit, and yet I bean't down neither, if thee can see what I mean. I loike this fine morning; it minds me of May-day at whoam; and it is nice to look at the harbour yonder, for it calls back the sunshiny day long ago when us first come to this land. Then them bells make me think of our old parish church, where us used to go when us was little, and where us were married, Peggy; and then I think about our dear old folks who used to sit on the form, just inside the porch. It is over twenty years since I heard church bells chiming till to-day, and 'em stir up lots of old thoughts in my head that I had clean forgotten. But come along, all of you. Step out, or us'll be too late for the first of the service, and mayhap us won't get a seat.”

Soon afterwards they entered a place of worship, the excellent pastor of which had often been spoken of in affectionate terms by Mr Rowley, and Joe had resolved that the first Sunday he spent in Sydney he would go and hear that minister preach. It happened, however, that he had gone to preach a special sermon at some other church in the city on that morning, and his place was supplied by a younger man who was beginning to be renowned for his talents in the pulpit.

Joe and his family were accommodated with seats in the body of the church, and a gentleman in an adjoining pew, seeing that they were strangers, and were unprovided with books, politely supplied them. Joe was somewhat surprised, on glancing round the church, to notice that it was not much more than two-thirds filled with worshippers, and he thought how glad many poor fellows who were far away in the bush would be to have the opportunity of attending such a church.

The service soon began, and as the organ pealed forth its thrilling melody, tears again stood in Joe's eyes, and his wife looked touched also, for neither of them had heard church-music since they left England, and it recalled the time when they were more mindful of their Christian duties. It
is true they might have enjoyed the privilege of attending divine service while they lived near Daisybank, but they had some frivolous pique against the minister, the nature of which I shall not explain; but for that lame reason they had slighted their Maker by disregarding even the mere outward form of their religion. When they lived far in the interior, they had no religious advantages beyond an occasional visit from the pastor of a church seventy miles distant.

Joe reverentially joined in the first part of that morning's service, and he enjoyed the psalmody very much, for they were plain old-fashioned tunes that he had often sung when he was a boy; but he made his wife and children blush several times, during the delivery of a lengthy sermon, at seeing that he showed nodding symptoms of drowsiness. Maggie was much interested in the florid oratory of the youthful preacher. She, by the bye, had often attended the church at Daisybank; so she knew more about pulpit power than any other member of the family. She mentally wished that Benjamin were by her side, for he was so passionately fond of poetical imagery and bold thought; besides, she fancied that her father would not have presumed to go to sleep if Benjamin were sitting in the same pew with him to excite his veneration.

Many of the young minister's sentences were rounded off as smoothly as duck-stones on a sea-beach, while others were rich and rugged as lumps of auriferous quartz. The figures, too, were thrown in with an eye to the surprise influence of striking contrast, for while some of them were as classical as Grecian sculpture, others were as homely as three-legged stools, and their profusion was almost astounding; indeed

“He could not ope
His mouth, but out there flew a trope.”

His perfect *sang froid* showed that he knew what he was going to say before he began; and his whole mien betokened strong confidence in himself, and that even in his loftiest flights he had no more dread of tripping than Mr Blondin, the tight-rope man, had when wheeling his wife across the Niagara falls in a barrow. His varied action, too, was highly exciting to hearers of a poetic turn, though it is not likely they would care for his emphatic thumps. When he figuratively spoke of flying away somewhere, Maggie thought that his elbows worked very like the wings of a black swan just taking flight; but when his white fingers twiddled demi-semi-quavers in the air to represent bird melody, she felt—she could not tell how—and fondly imagined for a moment that she heard the twittering of young swallows in their old chimney at the Glen. The graceful style in which he used his cambric handkerchief Maggie thought indicated high
breeding; and the easy, natural way he referred to his gold watch before he began “the application,” was a nice contrast to the spasmodic excitement which some less fluent speakers assume when they suddenly look up at the clock and try to imply that they had no idea it was so late. Whilst affectionately warning the “little ones” of his flock against “the mundane allurements and the apostatising hallucinations of this sublunary sphere,” his reverence gave his head such a lugubrious shake that Maggie thought the smooth enunciation of that impressive sentence was injured, and that his face was rather too emotional to seriously affect infantile minds. But he made up for that little mistake when dilating upon some of the privileges of the men of the present age; then his manner was hopeful and exhilarating to a degree that many of his hearers were observed to stroke their beards in sympathy with the action of their hirsute preceptor.

After preaching fifty-five minutes, he prepared to stop. So he half closed the large Bible and held it with one hand, while his fine eyes rolled first round the gallery, then through the free seats down-stairs, and with his left fore-finger solemnly shaking, he said something arousing to the sinners in each of those places; then shutting up the book with a loud clap, which made Joe jump, he looked languidly at the ceiling, and sighed out “Amen” so softly that nobody heard it.

The choir then stood up and sung a psalm, and as they had chosen a new tune only known to themselves, they were not annoyed by the voices of the congregation. When the singers stopped, the youthful pastor spread out his hands, and everybody bent humbly to receive his benediction; after which there was a general feeling for hats, and while the organ played a nice stirring voluntary, the whole company moved out much faster than they had moved in.

Mrs Stubble grew cross as soon as she left her pew, in consequence of having her fashionable skirt trodden upon by the occupant of the next pew, who seemed in a hurry to get home to his dinner; and Mr Stubble did not appease her anger by whispering in her ear, “that it warn't likely the gentleman would guess that an old 'ooman would have such a long train draggling behind her.” Bob was rather excited too, for he had forgotten his silver-topped cane, and the task of forcing his way back to the pew, against the powerful human current that was setting towards the door, was almost as difficult as pulling a ship's dingy against a spring-tide.

As the Stubbles were strangers, they were not detained outside to shake hands and discuss the signs of the times, as were some of the regular worshippers, who blocked up the doorways; in fact, no person spoke a word to the Stubbles—not even to invite them to come to church again. On their way homeward, Maggie and her mother exchanged opinions
respecting bonnets, and were unanimous in condemning their own milliner's taste; for their head-gear looked quite dowdy compared with some that they had seen in the body of the church, and they were almost certain their feathers were old ones dyed new. Bob and his sister then had a spirited discussion on the merits and demerits of the sermon, until their father remarked, “that it did not look nice to see people talking and laughing after they came out of the house of God, and they had better walk along decently, and try to think of some of the things the minister had been saying.” As Joe could not remember much of the sermon himself, it was natural that he should think of something else; so he began to make his own quiet observations on stirring affairs around him. He could not fail to notice that there were many persons in the city who paid no outward respect to the sanctity of the day, although there were so many churches open to receive them.

He pitied the poor horses in cabs and omnibuses, and he pitied their drivers, many of whom he knew were not their own masters, so were obliged to supply the demands of Sunday travellers, or seek other employment, which might not be easy for them to find. Joe also sympathised with the engineers and stokers, and others employed on the railway, for the screaming engines every now and then reminded him that Sunday was not a day of rest for them. From the savoury steam which issued from some of the bake-houses, he judged, too, that Sunday was a hard-working day for many journey-men bakers; and scores of small shops, displaying sweetmeats and fruit, seemed to be doing a brisk business with the street arabs, and were, perhaps, tempting many Sunday-school scholars to trade. Publicans were taking money, of course; so were tobacconists; and some steamboat owners were not strict Sabbatarians, as was manifested by occasional clouds of black smoke which rose up in the face of the sun. Altogether, Joe thought he had seen an awful amount of Sunday traffic in the great metropolis of the colony in half-an-hour's walk; and he innocently resolved to speak to Goldstone about it, so that, when he got into Parliament, he might immediately put a stop to all unnecessary Sunday labour.

“How did you like the service this morning, Joe?” asked Mrs Stubble, as Biddy was clearing away the dinner things.

“I liked the singing uncommon, Peggy; and I liked the part the parson read from the book about ‘the man with ten talents;’ I've heard it afore. It's somewhere in the Bible, I think.”

“To be sure it is in the Bible, measter; I knew that when the parson was reading it.”

“Well, lass, doan't 'ee be captious: I said I thought it wor. If I live till to-
morrow, I'll buy a Bible, Peggy. Us had one in the house years ago, but I don't know what come of it.”

Peggy blushed at that remark, for she remembered what had become of it, but she did not shock her husband's feelings by telling him that it had been used as waste paper when they lived at Luckyboy.

“How did you like the sermon, father?” asked Maggie.

“I can't say as I understood much about it, girl, and that's the truth. The parson had such a plaguy lot of hard words that 'em bothered me mazingly. But I daresay 'twas very good to them as knowed the meaning of it, though it worn't a bit like what our good old parson at whoam used to say to us when us went to his church.”

“I thought it was like one of Biddy's white puddings; altogether too rich for me,” said Bob, laughing. “But I saw you going to sleep, father.”

“Faith, thin, yerself had better have gone to sleep, than to kape awake to make game of what's good,” chimed in Biddy, with a severe look at Bob. “Biddy's puddin's, indeed! Och, how nasty they are! ain't they now? But I mane to say it's mortal bad manners, Masther Bob, to go to church an' thin come home agin, an' pull an' haul the parson to pieces, an' laugh at all yez heard, as iv ye'd been to the play-house, 'stead ov the house of God. Take my word for it, ye'll have no luck at all in Sydney iv ye 're goin' to begin that game. Arrah, ye may grin, but it's a thue fact that I'm sayin', an' shure many a bhoy that's bin hanged took the fisht step to the gallows whin he began to make shport ov the sarmonts he heard in church.”

“There, now, go into the kitchen and get your dinner, Biddy,” said Mrs Stubble. “Speak when you are spoken to; that's what I am always telling you to do. What do you know about the sermon, I should like to know?”

“If I didn't know half as much agin about sarmonts as yerself knows, I shud be pritty nigh as dark as ould Wingle the blackfellow,” muttered Biddy, as she walked into the kitchen.

That evening the Stubble family went again to church, and the reverend incumbent himself delivered an impressive discourse to which Joe listened with close attention. As a literary composition it was not to be compared with the sermon of the morning; but Joe understood it all, for it was put in plain Saxon words, and there were no hard sylogistical abstractions to puzzle his simple brain, nor Greek roots for him to stumble over. The demeanour of the minister was calm and solemnly dignified, not statuesque, but with no more action than was befitting his purpose to impress the grave truths he was uttering upon the hearts of his hearers; in short, his manner was natural, without a shade of acting in it, and his earnestness could not be doubted.

Biddy Flynn sat up in a corner on one of the free seats, and listened
attentively to every word. She remarked with unusual seriousness to her mistress, after the service was over, “Shure, thin, ma'am, that sarmont was as plain as a finger-post wid the road to Dublin marked on it. Nobody in the worrld cud make a mishtake about that, I'm thinking, unless it wor a poor idiot sowl wid no sinse at all in his head; an' it's my belief that God Almighty will take care that none o' them are lost. It's a wondher to me, so it is, that everybody can't see the straight way to heaven; but I s'pose it's the devil's fault, for coaxin' 'em not to belave it. Shure, and he is allers tryin' to do that same to meself, the Lord help me!”

When an artist showed the celebrated Mr Pepys his wife's picture, which was just completed, he remarked, “It is excellent in every way, save that it isn't like Mrs Pepys.”

The oration of that morning was perhaps excellent in its way, especially in the charming quality of variety. It evidenced a liking for hard hits at controversial knots, with a decided turn for confuting commentators in general, and for sifting the abstract opinion of learned men in all ages; showing that the orator differed from them in a striking degree. It also displayed philological lore which was, at times, as bedazzling as sparks from a razor-grinder's wheel, with a volubility of utterance that was almost wonderful; in short, it was what the young preacher himself modestly called “a thoughtful sermon.” It doubtless pleased some of the hearers, who were more satisfied with misty abstractions, mixed up with metaphysical poetry, which they called an “intellectual treat,” than they would have been with “a gospel feast;” but it was lost upon poor Joe Stubble, and perhaps upon other hearers of his simple cast of mind. It was lacking in the main desiderata of every sermon—namely, a plain, concise exposition of God's full and free grace to sinners; of pardon for sin, and adoption into Divine favour through faith in the Redeemer. The important message, “Repent, and believe the gospel!” was omitted; or, if not wholly left out of the discourse, it was put in such ambiguous, grandiloquent verbiage, that uncultured minds could not comprehend it.

But the preacher of the evening gave out no uncertain sound from his gospel trumpet, and only those whose ears and hearts were stubbornly closed to the truth could have failed to be impressed by it. To any poor miserable wanderer, weary of the treacherous ways of sin, and longing for “that peace which the world cannot give,” the sermon of the morning would have been as tantalising as an ice-cream or a glass of syllabub to a hungry sailor; but the sermon of the evening showed, in plain intelligible words, God's own appointed way to save seeking outcasts. It told of a Father of infinite mercy, of a Saviour from the guilt and dominion of sin; of the Comforter, who would abide with the believer for ever; and of a
home beyond the grave “where the weary are at rest.” It enunciated, also, the encouraging doctrine, that the believer “is present to God's thoughts, not as one leaf in the forest, one wave in the sea, or one poor human unit in the aggregate of life, may be present to the generalising and indiscriminate thoughts of man, but as a child is present to the thought of his father.”

That was the substance of the evening message, which was powerfully impressed upon Joe Stubble's awakened conscience; and it kindled a living fire in poor Biddy Flynn's heart which influenced her whole after life.
Chapter IX.

Dinner hour at “Entwistle's,” in the “golden time.”

“Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And days o’ auld lang syne?”

ROBERT BURNS.

IT was three-quarters past noon on Monday when Mr Stubble and his son Bob walked into the lofty dining-hall at Entwistle's hotel, according to previous appointment with Ben Goldstone.

On the long centre table were laid knives and forks for forty, and sundry small side-tables were similarly prepared for the gustatory action of a host of men mighty to eat. Nimble waiters were gyrating about in soft slippers, like skaters on a pond. The courteous landlady and her two handsome sisters were behind the bar, quite prepared for the active duties which they would shortly have to perform at the beer-engine and the spirit-taps. The portly Entwistle himself was scarcely up to the mark that morning, and looked as if something had ruffled his temper; probably one of the cooks had got tipsy, and neglected to baste the loin of pork, for there was a suspicious odour of over-done crackling distinguishable in the savoury vapour which escaped from the culinary region behind the screen. Such annoying things did sometimes happen at hotels in those golden days, when good cooks were as independent as theatrical stars, and did not care a copper for their masters or for his customers either.

After easing off his choler on a dozy-looking waiter, who was not worth his salt, the host stepped into the bar, took a little sedative fluid from a quart bottle, then returned to the head of the table, and began to sharpen the main carving-knife. Presently, he shouted in a nautical tone of command, “Dish up!” and a general stir among the waiters ensued, which showed that they were the men who could dish up in style. Meanwhile, the host walked up and down beside the long table to see that everything was all correct, and no cinders in the gravy, or soot on the edges of the dishes. Now and then, he would shift a cover which was not exactly straight, or scrutinise the contents of a side-dish, for Entwistle was a particular man, and there were no eyes left in his potatoes, and no flies about his curries.

When the last cover was properly squared, the host stood in solemn attitude, gazing at the dial, for it was his glory to have dinner ready by one
o'clock sharp, to match the appetites of his clients. As the pendulum gave the last tick to the past hour, Entwistle took off his white hat, seized a sham club, and struck a mighty blow on a Chinese gong, which made Bob Stubble jump, and his father to exclaim, “By gum! that be's a banger; summat loike old Tom of Exeter Cathedral.” Before they had half recovered from the stunning effect of the gong, a company of earnest-looking gentlemen entered the hall and took seats sans cérémonie. Soon the long table was occupied, and most of the side-tables also, and the waiters were hurrying about with their hands full of steaming soup plates, chanting “giblet or vermicelli, sir?” behind each guest; while a general buzz of conversation, as harmonious as the tuning of a monster band of musicians, filled the hall up to the sky-lights.

Mr Stubble and his son had turned out that morning as sleek as town-kept hackneys. The tailor had certainly done all that mechanical skill could do to make them look genteel, and they were not a single mail behind the London fashion. Peggy remarked, with a prideful smile, that “they never were so smart afore in all their days,” and Mag declared that Bob looked a regular buck in his glossy paletôt, railway-stripe trousers, screaming satin waistcoat, and his Paris hat. She further opined that anybody might take father for a city gentleman, if he would keep his hands in his trousers' pockets, according to the fashion, turn his toes out, and not waddle so much when he walked. It occupied the joint exertions of Mag and her mother for seven minutes to wheedle Joe's stubborn fingers into a pair of French kid gloves, and he was solemnly cautioned not to take them off till he returned home, because his hands were so horribly freckled. A hundred times that morning did he wish his gloves back to France; still, he dared not pull them off, for he knew he had not skill enough to put them on again; and as he walked along, his swollen fingers stuck out like bunches of young parsnips. The street dust had somewhat marred the lustre of their apparel; still, as they stood up in a corner of the dining-hall, toying with their hats, nobody could doubt they were fresh from the country, and foolishly bashful too, or they would have secured seats for themselves.

There they stood, modestly gazing about for Goldstone, uncertain whether or not it were polite to begin to dine before he came. They were too shy to sit down at the long table, and all the seats were speedily filled by persons who were not shy, and to whom Joe and his son had given place, in their simple endeavours to make their manners match their fine clothes. Presently, they were escorted by Jem, the coloured waiter, to a little table near-the entrance to the kitchen, and where they had the advantage of a strong draught from the back-gate, opening on to the romantic lane called “Irwin's,” where brawling neighbours are more
numerous than singing birds.

“Burn these 'ere consarns!” said Joe, looking at his tight gloves. “How be I to eat my dinner with these things on?”

“Peel 'em off, father,” whispered Bob. Joe thereupon applied his teeth to the finger-ends of his kids, and pulled them off, remarking as he threw them into his hat, “that he would never have them put on to his hands again unless he should be struck silly and couldn't help it.”

“Vermicelli or giblet sir?” asked a waiter.

“Ay, let us have a giblet pie, mate, and look sharp about it too,” said Joe, who had begun to fancy that he was not properly attended to. The waiter said, “Yes, sir;” and as there happened to be a giblet pie on the long table, he helped Joe and Bob to a plateful each, and left them quite satisfied, and apparently unaware that they had been cheated of their due shares of soup.

As Joe glanced down the long table from time to time in search of Goldstone, he could not but notice the unanimity and zeal with which those forty gentlemen attended to the duties of the board. Men of differing creeds and of various shades of political opinions were there, but not a single dispute was heard about the exciting object which had attracted them together. Rival tradesmen, too, might have been seen sitting close together, absorbed in matters foreign to the concerns of their shops; and though they often “troubled each other for salt,” or even for pepper, they had no hot words over it; thus clearly disproving the correctness of the old axiom that “two of a trade never agree.”

There were three persons at the principal table who sat with their hats on, which quite shocked Bob's rustic ideas of propriety, and he whispered to his father that “it would be a good lark if somebody would rivet tin pot-handles to the hats of those vulgar chaps, by way of quietly admonishing them to uncover their heads the next time they sat down in civilised company.” Joe softly reproved his son's fondness for practical joking, and added that “it was nonsense to think them big, full-dressed gentlemen didn't know manners; and most likely the reason why they were ashamed to take their hats off was because they had mangy heads, poor fellows!”

Joe was ludicrously excited at observing the clumsy efforts of some of the gentlemen who had the honour of carving assigned to them, or who had dropped into the honorary post by accident. The person behind the boiled leg of mutton was evidently impatient to be getting on with his own diet, or Joe supposed that he would not hack the joint up into such awkward junks, as if he were feeding hounds, instead of cutting nice thin slices; and he would have been more careful about a fair distribution of the fat and the sauce in the dish, if he had studied to discharge his honorary duties with becoming etiquette.
“My word, that be's a greedy old codger!” said Joe, nudging Bob and nodding towards a stout gentleman who had just helped himself to a triangular cut out of the middle of a fine smoked tongue. “I should not like to have him for a mate out in the bush.” Whereupon Bob frowned, and whispered to his chuckling sire that he shouldn't wonder if they both got kicked out into York Street directly. Bob's premonition was not very effective, however, for Joe laughed outright at the idea of the thing, and one of the waiters laughed at Joe, under the impression that he was getting tipsy.

But the person who tickled Joe's fancy most was a clerical-looking gentleman, who was attempting to carve a pair of fowls which were not tender. “Ha, ha, ha! Look at that chap, Bob. Doan't he mind thee of Biddy Flynn sawin' up firewood? If I had had 'en up at Buttercup for a day or two, I'd teach'd 'en to cut up a chucky, I bet a guinea. Look at 'en now, raspin' away at the wrong side of that leg, a mile away from the joint! Why, bang it, if he'd only got gumption enough to slip his knife underneath 'en, and give 'en a smartish jerk, it 'ud come off as easy as skinning a banana. Ho, ho, ho! he be's gettin' savage 'cos that black chap behind 'en is grinning.”

“Hush, father!” said Bob, reprovingly. “That is a parson you know, and it's dead against the catechism to speak disrespectfully of him.”

“I bean't saying ought that's bad of 'en, boy. Not at all. I never say nothing wicked against anybody, black, white, or gray. But I doan't think he be's a bony fidy parson, Bob, or he'd know better than to keep haggling away at that knuckle. There bean't much algebra in that chap's head, I guess. Ho, ho, ho! look at 'en splashing the gravy all over his button-up waistcoat.”

Just then Joe noticed a tall personage having a little soft conversation with a damsel behind the bar, and in another minute his future son-in-law entered the hall with his hat inclined to the right side, and a hammer-headed whip sticking out of his coat pocket.

“Hallo, Goldstone! How are you, Goldstone?” said half-a-dozen voices at once, and as many hands were at the same time held out to give the first friendly grasp, as Ben marched down the hall as majestically as a conquering hero, and shaking each outstretched hand as he passed with lofty affability.

“I'm afraid the soup is cold, Mr Goldstone,” said the host, looking very sorry it was not hot.

“Never mind soup; I want something solid. What have you got in your dish, Entwistle? Oh, aye, calf's head, so it is; that's the tack. Let me have a cut of that, and some brains with it. I expected to have met two gentlemen here, friends from the country,” said Ben, looking round, “but I don't see
them. Have any strangers been here asking for me, Jem? Hallo! here they are, to be sure!” he added, turning round and grasping the hands of Joe and Bob. “But, I say, what were you doing in that out-of-the-way corner? Hey, Jem! Why did you put these gentlemen up against the kitchen door, eh? Confound you!”

“Because there were no other seats empty,” said Jem, the head waiter, with a characteristic grin. Jem, by the way, was an authority in that establishment, and though he was of a jet black colour, he was one of the most expert men of his class, and a general favourite with all visitors to that hotel.

“It bean't a morsel of odds,” said Joe, seeing that Ben was inclined to be angry at the lack of attention to his friends. “Us have had a good dinner, and I'd as soon eat it up agin the kitchen door as in the middle of this long bench every bit; so doan't 'ee blow up the waiter.”

All eyes were turned towards the two rustic strangers who were on such intimate terms with the wealthy Ben Goldstone. Joe stood the general stare pretty well, though he did not care for so much popularity; but Bob blushed intensely, and wished himself in the bush, or anywhere else away from the gaze of so many sharp-eyed gentlemen.

After Ben had finished his dinner, he said to Joe with pleasant familiarity, “Have you got your pipe in your pocket, old man?”

Joe replied that he had not, but he did not explain that his wife had emphatically cautioned him against ever carrying a dirty pipe in the pockets of his superfine clothes, on account of the perfume it created.

“Never mind, I'll get you a cheroot. Come into the smoking crib.”

The said crib was a small room off the dining-hall, where about a dozen gentlemen were luxuriating in an atmosphere of aromatic smoke. “Who has got any weeds?” asked Ben, as he took up a position for himself and his two friends on a sofa behind the door.

“Here you are, Goldstone!” said a smart young corn merchant, producing his cigar-case, which Ben took without demur or thanks either. Joe thought he would rather buy “baccy” for himself, but he did not like to say so, lest Ben might not like it. He soon perceived that young Duncan's cigar-case was considered common property by nearly all the smokers in the room, and as the owner looked quite happy over it, Joe's scruples dulled down, and he puffed away at a Manilla cigar, holding it tightly all the while, lest he should suck it down his throat, for he was not used to smoking anything more refined than a clay pipe.

“Whose turn is it to stand nobblers to-day?” asked a gray-haired portly gentleman, who, in addition to a fair commercial credit, had the credit of inaugurating the first joint-stock gold-mining company in New South
Wales, and which did not turn out a lucky spec for the shareholders in general, whatever it might have done for the spirited projectors.

“I stod Som yesterday!” replied a rubicund gentleman, manager of another joint-stock company in a drooping condition, who stood six feet one in his top-boots on race days, and who was rather proud of his figure. A cannie chiel was Jock; and in addition to other private virtues, which many ladies acknowledged, he could play a rubber at whist, tell a crack, or brew a bowl of whisky toddy, “wi ony mon in toon.” “I stod Som yesterday; so it's some ither body's turn the day,” said Jock, in his usual sonorous tones.

“It's Duncan's day,” said a sharp little man, an importer of hardware; and for confirmation of his opinion, he appealed to a sedate-looking gentleman in the leather line, who was quietly smoking his own cigar with his eyes closed, and his nose pointed to the ceiling, in rapt enjoyment; but before that person had emptied his mouth to reply, Mr Duncan had given the company the benefit of the doubt by calling for nobblers round, and ginger-beer for Joe and his son. The whole party then began to puff away like craters, except Bob, who had never learnt to smoke, but he made up for it by sneezing incessantly.

* * * * *

Dr Johnson said “that the man who would be cheerful at all times was a fool, but he who would be cheerful at no time was a humbug.” If the word “liberal” were substituted for “cheerful,” the proposition would be equally in accordance with public opinion. Those persons who called young Duncan a fool (and there were many who did so after his money was all wasted) were ungrateful fools themselves, or something worse. He was an open-handed, soft-natured man, who could never say nay if he were asked a favour which it was in his power to grant. He was as free with his money as he was with his cigars and nobblers. His horse, which was usually hooked up at the post in front of Entwistle's door every day at dinner-time, was often borrowed without first asking the owner's permission, for it was well known that Duncan never grumbled. Of course, the animal did not back-jump, or he would have been safe from the raids of these bold borrowers; the poor hack was as easy-going as his owner; so, to use a sporting phrase, his cockney riders “rode his tail off.”

Duncan's friends were considerate enough not to borrow his name as unceremoniously as they borrowed his horse; they were mindful of a poetical implication somewhere in the statute-book, that to write another man's name for commercial purposes is forgery. However, they begged his name, which is much the same thing in a moral sense, and they used it, too,
until the bright polish was worn off it, and then they facetiously owned that Duncan was “done up,” and his bill was as useless as a dead turkey's beak. One of the fast friends of his palmy days, who had often made free with his horse and with his purse also, on being told of Duncan's pecuniary reverses, and of his serious illness, exclaimed, in a tone which was meant to be very tender, “Poor d——l!” Think of that, all ye young heirs who have just come in for your paternal estates! That is the sort of sympathy you will get if you fool away your money.

A dozen crops of summer grass have withered on poor Duncan's grave, and nearly all his jovial companions are laid low too. Entwistle's jolly face is missing at the head of that long table, and his comely wife will never more be seen in the bar-parlour. The hotel still exists, under another name; but though the dinners may be as sumptuous and as cheap as ever, few, very few, of the old faces “of days lang syne” assemble now in that lofty hall at the sound of the one o'clock gong, for death has summoned them away “to that bourne whence no traveller returns.”
Chapter X.

Ben accompanies Mr Stubble and Bob on a visit of inspection to the house in Slumm Street.—Rejoicing of the ladies over the big house.—Suggestions for a carriage.—Joe's objection thereto.

AFTER leaving Entwistle's hotel, Mr Goldstone and his two friends went straightway to inspect the house which he had recommended for the occupancy of the family.

If Mr Stubble had ever read Tom Hood's "Haunted House," he might have been forcibly reminded of it on entering the dreary domicile in Slumm Street. It had been built in the days of forced labour, and was perhaps designed by a turnkey, for it had a decidedly jailish look, especially about its rear. The front-window sashes were small, and had outside wooden shutters with diamond-shaped clusters of auger holes in them to admit some of the morning rays. The back-windows were protected by massive iron bars, evidently showing that the original owner or his gloomy architect had a strong suspicion that there were robbers in the land. The yard was badly paved, and an unsavoury odour indicated imperfect sewerage, untidy neighbours, and rats. A tall mouldy wall, several degrees out of the perpendicular, separated the property from a cow-shed, which was on somewhat higher ground, as was shown by a perpetual ooze of liquid through some fissures in the brickwork, which kept the yard disagreeably moist.

Mr Stubble's facial twists and involuntary shrugs from time to time were anything but favouring symptoms, but his modesty kept him from expressing the disapproval which his nose suggested. He was glad his wife and daughter were not there, or they would have condemned the place in a minute, and Ben's feelings might have been hurt by their blunt depreciation of his father's property.

Goldstone took a more cheerful view of each grimy nook and corner, and explained, with the decisive utterance of an auctioneer praising damaged goods, that a dash of whitewash here, a dab of paint there, and a barrowful of bricks and mortar in another place, would make a wondrous improvement. In his opinion, a painter or two, a couple of carpenters, a mason, and a good scavenger, would, in a fortnight's time, make the place smart enough for the Prime Minister to live in. The adjoining cow-yard, he considered, was a double advantage to an incoming tenant, inasmuch as almost everybody who knew anything about natural philosophy admitted that the scent of cattle was wholesome; and the family might see their own
milk drawn from the cow every day by merely peeping over the wall—a privilege which they would learn to prize when they became more alive to the wily ways of town dairymen in general.

“Blamed if I know what to say about it, and that's the truth. What do you think, Bob?” said Mr Stubble, who was anxious to keep the responsibility from resting entirely on his own shoulders this time. “Why don't you speak up, boy?”

“I think, as Mr Goldstone thinks, that the place will look very different after it has had a regular cleaning out,” said Bob. “There is a good stable and coach-house, which we shall find handy. I don't exactly see what we want with so many rooms; but mother and Mag are always singing out for a big house, so it will suit them in that respect. I expect the rent will be tremendously high though, as houses go in Sydney.”

“Not at all: and that is a strong reason why I recommend it,” said Ben. “I can let you have it for £100 a year less than you could get a house of its size elsewhere in the city, and I don't think it will cost more than £50 to put it in order. But please yourselves, and don't let me persuade you against your own judgment; for though the house belongs to my father, and my mother died in it, I would not allow you to take it if I thought it would not suit you. It is no pecuniary interest of mine, you will understand; at any rate, I shall not be benefited by it while the old man is alive. If he should happen to pop off, you shall live in the house for nothing.”

“I'm sure you be very kind, Benjamin. I'd take the place in a minute if I warn't afeard of missis and Mag grumbling at me.”

“Well, as I said before, I think it can be made to look first-rate at very little expense. It is not in a fashionable neighbourhood, but you don't care for that I know; comfort and convenience is what you think most about. I have no doubt that the ladies will be pleased with the place after it is put to rights; in fact, I am willing to take the responsibility upon myself, and if they don't like it they may blame me.”

“That will do, mate,” said Mr Stubble, excitedly. “I'll have the house then, and thee may set men to work as soon as thee likes. I'll tell the missis and Mag just what you say.”

“All right, it's a bargain,” said Goldstone. “£150 a year and taxes—lease for a year, with the option of taking it for a longer term—rent payable quarterly—all serene. I'll settle the thing for you with the governor, and the house shall be all in order—as smart as a new sentry-box—in three weeks from to-day.”

After a little more conversation, the friends separated; Joe and his son going home to tell mother and Mag the particulars of their new bargain, and Ben going straightway to his father's house to acquaint him with the
prompt way in which he had procured him a first-rate tenant, and to renew
his efforts to ingratiate himself into the favour of his eccentric sire.

“I've got a house as will suit'ee now, Peggy, I'll warrant,” said Joe when
he returned to Redfern.

“Have you now? That's right, measter! I know'd you could do it if you set
about the job in earnest. Have you seen the house, Bob?”

“I have so—been all over it from the coal-hole to the top of the shingles,
mother. There is a prime place for a pigeon-coot in the front attic, and a
long pole for a monkey or a native bear in the back-yard.”

“Is it a good big house, Bob?” asked Maggie.

“My word, it is. There are a dozen rooms in it, without counting the
cellar: and some of them are real smart rooms too, with whigmaleeries in
the centre of the ceilings, and crinkem-crankems all round the edges. I
reckon it will cost above a trifle to fill it with furniture, and Biddy will
have to brush up to keep it tidy.”

“But what, in the name of Fortune, did you go and take such an out-of-
the-way big house as that for, father?” asked Peggy, with frowns forming
on her brow.

“There, now; at it again, lass! Beginning to grumble afore thee hast seed
the consarn. Goldstone persuaded me to take 'en, and he said, if thee didn't
like 'en, he'd be 'sponsible, and thee needn't have it at all.”

“Oh—ay—well—yes; that's fair enough, Joe. It is all correct, I daresay; I
am not going to grumble at you. But what is it like at all? Tell us about it.”

“Thee knew Squire Bangham's house at Barnstaple? Well, it's bigger nor
that a pretty deal. Then there is a coach-house and stable, with brick muck-
hole and an iron pump, and all the rest of 'en, quite grand I can tell'ee.”

“Do you mean to treat us to a carriage, father?” asked Maggie; at the
same time she cast a significant glance at her brother, who winked in
return.

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Joe. “Carriage, eh? Doant 'ee want a footman in
velvet breeches to ride behind? Ho, ho, ho! What would my poor old
granny say if she wor alive, and could hear us talk so big?”

“Joking aside, father, I don't see why we should not have a vehicle of
some sort,” said Bob. “We have a place to keep it, and a good three-stall
stable. It wouldn't cost much to keep a couple of horses, and one man to
look after them. We could get our hay and corn down from Daisybank you
know.”

“But us would have to pay for it, boy, get it where us would. Doan't 'ee
be going ahead too fast altogether. Us don't want a coach, and I bean't
going to buy one neither; so that's all about it,” said Joe, who was
beginning to lose his patience at the extravagant notions of his children.
Peggy said nothing, for though she would have had no objection to a coach of her own to ride in, she thought it would be launching too much into expense.

“By Jericho! it's a rale pity ye should jogger on the ould cart, Masther Bob, so it is; for thin ye might have guv us all a trot now an' agin, for a trate, same as ye guv me whin ye dhrove me to Daisybank an' smashed all the eggs an' butther,” said Biddy, who had just entered the room to hear what was going on. She was peremptorily ordered to leave the room instantly: but her remarks stopped the discussion on the carriage question, and turned the conversation to the subject of her incorrigible habit of speaking without being spoken to. After all the family except Joe had expressed their opinion on Biddy's demerits, Mrs Stubble finally remarked that, as she should always sit on thorns when they had company in the house, lest that vulgar old thing should open her mouth, she had resolved to get rid of her as soon as it could be done quietly.

In somewhat less than a fortnight, the house in Slumm Street looked decidedly better. Ben Goldstone had been very assiduous in looking after his workmen and in directing their efforts. As he had predicted, a wonderful improvement had been wrought through the skilful application of whitewash, paint, plaster, paper-hangings, &c. The cost of the work was double what he had estimated, but that was no consequence; estimates always did exceed expectations. Mr Stubble and Bob had paid daily visits to the house while the renovating process was going on, and their report at night was eagerly listened to by the ladies, who were impatient to see their new home, but had been requested by Ben not to go near it until he had got it into apple-pie order. It was with difficulty that Joe could be restrained from going to work when at the house; indeed he had one day stripped off his coat to help a labourer to load his cart with rubbish from the back-yard, when Bob came up in time to stop the undignified proceeding, and, as he afterwards explained to his sister, he made the old man drop his shovel as hastily as if there were a centipede on the handle, by merely telling him that “Ben was coming round the corner.”

At length the house was finished, and Bob went home with the key in his pocket. The next day the whole family paid a visit of inspection, and Ben had the gratification of receiving the approving smiles and encomiums of the ladies, who expressed themselves thoroughly pleased with the dwelling from bottom to top. Mrs Stubble ventured to remark that she would have preferred having a nice view of the harbour and the lovely Domain from the front windows, instead of the pawnbroker's shop and the green-grocery over the way, but when Ben explained to her the high prices that people have to pay for such fine views from their fronts, Peggy was satisfied.
“After all, it did not matter,” she remarked, “for they could see a little bit of Cockle Bay from their attic window, and they might easily walk to the Domain in twenty minutes any day.”

“Yes, but you will have a carriage, mother; so you can ride there in ten minutes. It is quite a fashionable afternoon drive round Lady Macquarie's chair.”

“I don't know about our driving, Benjamin,” said Peggy, with a modest simper; “father doesn't see as how he can afford us a vehicle, and I don't wish to be extravagant.”

“Nonsense! not afford it, indeed! I say, old man, you'll treat them to a trap, surely?” said Ben, slapping Joe's shoulder facetiously. “I know where there is one which will suit you to a T. Bob and I were looking at it the day before yesterday.” But the old man shook his head so decisively, that Ben thought he had better not press the matter, for he could plainly see that Mr Stubble did not mean to yield that point.

“Now, the next thing to be thought of is the furniture. Excuse me for asking the question, but have you decided who you will engage to furnish the house for you?” said Ben. “I don't wish to interfere, you know, but I thought I might be able to offer you a useful hint or two.”

“I was thinking that the missis and I could take a walk round about them cheap shops in Pitt Street, or attend some of them Monday morning auctions. I seed a fine strong cedar bedstead, mattress and all, knocked down t'other morning for five and twenty shillings, and it worn't much worse for wear neither.”

“Faugh! you won't persuade me to have any second-hand wooden bedsteads in my house, Stubble; so you needn't boast about your bargains in that way,” said Mrs Stubble, firmly. “I remember old Johnny Doddle bought a wooden bedstead for his wife a bit ago, and thought he was doing wonders. It was warranted bran-new, though I think it must have been pretty stale, judging by the scent of it; anyway it was a grand-looking concern, with great big polished legs as thick as a donkey's thigh, and heaps of carved things on 'em. It had great heavy cornices too, like the top of a church organ, and shiny poles and monhogony rings for curtains, quite out of the common way. But by and bye, when the warm weather set in, they found they couldn't sleep a wink till sunrise of a morning; so they hired a strong man to take the bedstead down again, and rub its joints with camphor and turpentine. Still that was no good; it only made a wicked smell for nothing; there were things in the wood that wouldn't come out by daylight, whatever the man did to coax 'em, but they would come out lively enough at night, and Johnny did not like 'em at all. Mrs Doddle was very proud of her bedstead's fine polished legs, but her old man said he was
tired of lying awake at night looking at 'em; so he got cross one day and sent the whole concern away to a sale-room, where it was knocked down for next to nothing, same as the bedstead was that father talks about.”

“Just so. I have heard of such things before; in fact, I have seen unpleasant bedsteads in the course of my travels,” said Ben, with a shrug. “It would be a pity to bring any old furniture into this house, now it has been done up so nicely. If you will allow me to make a suggestion, mother, I would say that you had better go to Lenehan's, or Hill's, or Hunt's, or Moore's. But stay, you are a stranger to them; so I will take that little job upon myself, if you like, and will see that the house is furnished respectably. What do you say, mother?”

“Hem, I'm afraid it is giving you too much trouble, Benjamin. You have been very kind in seeing after the doing up of the house, we couldn't think of asking you to furnish it for us.”

“Don't say a syllable about that, mother. The trouble is a pleasure. If you like to entrust me with that duty, I'll see that the house is furnished, all ready for you to come into on Friday week, or say Saturday week—Friday is an unlucky day you know.”

“I am sure we are all very much obliged to you, Benjamin. What do you think about it, father?”

“It will cost a mighty lot of money, that is what I be thinking of, and I be getting skeered, Peggy; so I tell'ee.”

“But didn't you say that mother was to take a house and furnish it as she liked, and you would not say a word against it, father?” whispered Maggie; at the same time she passed her arm coaxingly round father's neck.

“All right, girl, I forgot that. Go to work; only doan't 'ee ruin me out and out—that's all I've got to say,” replied Joe, trying to force a smile, though he was really concerned at the prospect of having to pay so much money for living in a grand style, which was thoroughly opposed to his own humble taste. Gladly would he have seconded a proposition to return at once to the old house at Buttercup Glen, even if he had to buy it back again at double the price that he had sold it for. But there was no such proposition thought of by any of his family; they had one and all become fascinated by the prospect of grandeur before them, and Joe felt his utter inability to alter their views; so he sighed, but said nothing further.

“Perhaps you would like to go with me to choose the carpets and oil-cloth, and to select the drawing-room suite?” said Ben, appealing to Mrs and Miss Stubble, who replied that they should very much like to do so; whereupon Ben promised to bring his trap for them on the following afternoon and drive them to the upholsterer's.

Throughout the ensuing week, the topic of conversation at every meal
was the new house and the new furniture. Ben was a nightly visitor, and each time he reported progress, which was always regarded as satisfactory by the ladies. Poor Joe was the only one who did not seem joyful; even Biddy was always laughing; but whether it was an ebullition of gladsome feeling at the prospect of her change, or a derisive laugh at the fulsome pride of the family, I will not stay to consider.
Chapter XI.

Mr Stubble buys a bargain.—Dissatisfaction of his family.—He gets wroth, and damages his toe.—Applies to Mr Gobble, an advertising quack, for a cure.

“WELL, well! look at that now! Anybody in the worrld who cud bate that for a blunder, I'd like to see 'em do it, soh. Iv ould Biddy Flynn had done half sich a crack-brained trick as that, wudn't they have said, ‘Arrah, that's Paddy all over.’ They wud so, an' no wondher nayther. Shough! only think of that comical consarn stuck straight up in the doorway like a conjurer's tool-chest, or a harlequin's coffin. Ha, ha, ha! I can't help laughing, though it's crass I am to see the like.”

Biddy was standing opposite to a tall antique cabinet pianoforte in the drawing-room of the new house in Slumm Street, as she gave vent to the above ebullition of mingled mirth and vexation. She had been sent to clean the grates and to give the drawing-room a final sweep out for the reception of the new suite, which was to come the next day. The instrument in question was one of Joe's bargains; indeed, it was the only household article he had ventured to select. He had heard his wife and daughter agree that a pianoforte was absolutely necessary in their new house; for although no member of the family understood a single note of music, it was argued that some of their visitors might be able to play, and it would look very vulgar not to have an instrument in the drawing-room; in fact, no house could be considered genteel without one or two pianos in it, as the fashions go in Sydney.

One day, when Mr Stubble was sauntering through the city, he noticed in a broker's shop a ponderous six-octave cabinet pianoforte, which had doubtless been a fashionable affair forty years ago. The price asked for it, thirteen pounds, struck Joe as being so astoundingly cheap that he was almost startled into buying it there and then, lest it should be pounced upon by some other discerning buyer with an eye for music. He reasoned that if his family must have a piano, they would not be able to beat that at the price; anyway, he was certain it could not be all the money too dear. But though his musical fit was unusually strong, it did not overpower his caution; so, at the instance of a happy thought which suddenly came into his head, he took the measure of the instrument, and told the broker that he would call again very soon and see if they could make a deal.

In the long room up-stairs (the drawing-room) was a doorway into a back room which had been closed up, leaving a chasm the whole depth of the
massive wall. Joe thought if his piano would fit into that unsightly gap, his wife would be much more pleased with the room. Upon measuring the recess, he found that it was the exact size to a hair; so back he hastened to secure the instrument.

The broker was very glad to see him, and began to expatiate on the virtues of the piano, which he could strongly recommend, doubtless on the score of old acquaintanceship. He firmly resisted Joe's attempts to persuade him to make even money of it, or take a pound less than the price asked; “indeed, he was sorry that he had asked so low a sum; nevertheless, he would stick to his word, and if Mr Stubble liked to say ‘done,’ the piano was his, and he would have a bargain not to be met with every day.”

Joe stood for a few minutes irresolutely pulling his whiskers, and wondering whether the thing would please Maggie; he had no doubt at all that Peggy would be delighted with it. Meanwhile, the broker's little daughter, who had just come from school, at the request of her father, sat down to the instrument, opened her exercise-book, and strummed over that plaintive melody, “In my cottage near a wood,” which touched Joe's softest feelings, and carried his heart all the way back to Chumleigh, and his happy honeymoon in Dab Cottage, near the Copse. Almost before he could wipe his eyes dry, a bargain was completed, and the money paid down. The instrument was forthwith sent home in a spring-cart, with Joe sitting upon it to keep it steady; and it was found to fit into the recess, flush with the wall, as nicely as if it had been made on purpose. Nothing could fit more snugly. The broker's men hinted that it was dry work getting it into its hole, but Joe referred them to the iron pump by the stable door, for he was rather vexed with them for giggling all the time they were fixing the piano.

After the men were gone, Joe sat down and tried his hand on it, but finding that he could not play it satisfactorily, he shut it up and locked it, lest other unpractised hands should injure its tone. He had said nothing to his family about his purchase, for he contemplated giving them a pleasant surprise, and hoped to receive their commendations on his clever device for filling up an ugly chasm in their best room. Joe had solemnly cautioned Biddy to be careful, when she swept the floor, not to kick up too much dust, nor to knock the music with her broom, and he had no sooner gone out than she hurried up-stairs to see what the music was like. I have already described part of her impressions at first sight.

“Well, well, well!” continued Biddy, soliloquisingly. “I wudn't have believed that the master was sich a goof, iv anybody had sweared to it, for to go and put a panney choke-a-block intil the middle ov a brick wall! Ha, ha, ha! iv he had filled the consarn itself wid bricks an' morthar, it wud be pritty nigh as clever. It'll sound as nice as a hand-organ inside a bean-stalk,
I'm thinking; or a kettle-drum choke-full ov tater palin's—ha, ha, ha! Och, Mike! I cudn't help larfin iv I was goin' to be shot for it; still an' all, it's crass I am to see them craythers foolin' away their money, after they've been workin' like black niggers all the best days ov their lives to get what they've got. They are goin' cranky, that's a fact; lasteway, the ould cove himself is, an' no wonder nayther, poor sowl! Shure, nothin' can be more like a cracked fellow's trick, than to bury a panney in a brick wall—ha, ha, ha! Crickey me! what next will I see?”

“Hallo! Nora-creena! Don't cry; mother's better! What have you got inside here—Punch and Judy?” said a painter, lookin' in at the doorway, having been attracted by Biddy's merry laughter, which echoed through the whole house.

“Oh, good luck ta yez, Misther Potts! come an' take a squint at this whizimejig, what the masther has shoved inside the wall to make it sound nice and lively. Did ye iver see the like afore?”

“Ha, ha!” laughed the painter, “the governor is touched in his cobbera;—a bit cranky, I guess. I thought as much t'other day when he axed me to paint the stable pump light blue. Ho, ho, ho! he puts me in mind of an old chap I've heard my wife speak of, where she lived in service before we were married. Let me see, what was his name again—I forget it—but everybody knows him. He lives a mile or two t'other side of the old toll-bar yonder, down by the waterside. He was the rummest old codger that ever I heard tell of for playing monkey tricks that nobody else would ever think of. And he didn't care what the price was neither.”

“Troth, thin, he niver did a nater trick nor this, I'll bet a pinny, though he be an' out-an'-out Paddy from the biggest bog in ould Ireland.”

“A Paddy! not he: he is a born native, which is quite as good, and a jolly old cock too, when you come to know him. My word, how he used to make all the maids grin to see him come driving home with his yellow dog-cart choke-full of all sorts of jimcracks that he had been bamboozled into buying though he didn't want 'em no more than I want a wooden leg. My wife says he fetched home a musical consarn one day, something like this one, only it worked with a handle, so that the old cove himself, or any other fool, could play it without bothering to learn music; and it had a squad of dancing dolls in it too. Another time he drove home with his trap half-full of shoe-horns, boot-jacks, and scrubbing-brushes, that he had bought cheap at some auction-shop. But the best joke of all was——Hallo! I say, Nora, here comes your old cove, and we mustn't let him catch us in here grinning at his thingemee.” The painter, whose narrative was interrupted by the sudden return of Mr Stubble, then popped through the window on to the balcony, and Biddy went to work with her broom.
In a few days more the house was furnished, and the Stubble family were in possession. The upholsterer had certainly shown his taste and skill; and if he also showed that he had done his best to make the most out of a good pliant customer, let those of my readers censure him who are guiltless of doing anything of the sort. Mrs Stubble and her children were highly pleased, when, on the day prior to their occupation of the house, Goldstone escorted them through each room, and modestly assured them that no effort on his part had been wanting to do the correct thing,—a fact which each shining chattel seemed to corroborate, for everything was stylish in the extreme.

It has been said that “there is a Mordecai at every man's gate.” The saying is figurative, of course. The joy of the family trio was marred, even when it ought to have been overflowing, considering the outlay, not by an objectionable person at their gate, but by an ugly old pianoforte in their grand drawing-room, which Joe obstinately refused to have removed, although he had been tried with remonstrances, entreaties, sharp arguments, and ridicule. The truth is, Mr Stubble had been sullen and low-spirited during the busy time of furnishing, for he could not but see that he was being run to most unnecessary expense, and he dreaded the upholsterer's bill as much as he had dreaded his lawyer's bill of costs for two trials over one corner-post. But he had promised not to say a word to check his wife's taste in furnishing the house, and he respected his promise, however much he might have blamed himself for giving it. Great was his surprise and chagrin when he saw a handsome new walnut-wood piano carried into the drawing-room, to match the tables and chairs and “what-nots” in every corner of the room. He had seen many annoying proofs of reckless extravagance before, but that was the climacteric. It was well known to his family that he had already bought a piano, and the idea that there was a combination to ruin him, as well as to show contempt for his taste, rushed into his mind and so much upset his patience that, had there been a hammer at hand, it is very probable he would have cracked the walnut piano. He restrained his fury, however, before the upholsterer's men; but the moment after they had left the house, he kicked the new music-stool with such force that it bounded across the room, and overturned a little fancy table upon which stood the three Graces in Parian marble.

His wife was exasperated, and his daughter was shocked at such an unprecedented display of bad temper, but Joe did not stay to hear their comments; he walked down to the stable to smoke himself calm, and on the way thither, he became conscious that he had hurt his big toe. As his excitement dulled down, the pain in his toe was more acute, till at length he
thought it was broken; so he resolved to go straightway to a doctor as fast as he could limp.

He had often noticed an advertisement in the newspapers setting forth the wondrous skill of a certain medicine-monger, who, by a process confined to his own knowledge, effected cures of all kinds in no time at all, compared with the tedious routine of the regular faculty. Like many other persons of a certain stamp of mind, Mr Stubble had but little confidence in doctors as a body, and in his opinion their profession was half humbug. He was just the sort of subject for quackery to influence; he had a bad pain in his toe, and he wanted to get rid of it by the most summary process; so he went straightway to the great advertising “professor.”

“Ugh, ah! dear me!” shrugged Mr Gobble, when Joe pulled off his sock, and showed his damaged member. “That looks bad, very bad. How did you do that, my good friend?”

“Well, it's no odds how I did it, doctor. What's done can't be undone; but can 'ee cure it,—that's the talk?”

“I'll try what I can do for you, mister; but it is a dangerous part to treat. I have known a less injury than that cause tetanus.”

“What is that, doctor?” asked Joe, with some show of alarm.

“Why, lock-jaw, and certain death in the most dreadful torture imaginable. But don't be shocked; I have cured worse cases than this with three or four bottles of my celebrated Ikepuphetimus. It is well that you have not lost any time in coming to me, or very serious consequences might have ensued, for I can see that your nervous system is very much deranged. You will excuse me for putting the question, as you are a stranger to me; but will the nature of your occupation allow you to lie by for a while—in other words, can you afford to go through the course of treatment which is absolutely necessary for you?”

“Ees, I s'pose so, if I must do't. I've got naught to do in particular; and I s'pose I can afford to pay thee, if that is what 'ee want to know.”

“Exactly so. Pray don't misunderstand me, sir; you know I have a multitude of patients every day, and it is part of my system to study their individual circumstances. I strive to be conscientious in all my doings; in short, sir, I am a religious man.”

“That's all right, doctor; but do 'ee make haste and put summat on my toe, for it smarts uncommon.” The doctor thereupon dipped a strip of lint into some dark fluid and applied it to the toe, which made Joe roar with pain.

“It is all correct, my friend. You must bear a little pain for a time, but I will undertake to cure you in a week or ten days. Come and see me again to-morrow—but stay, you had better not come out of your house. Tell me
where you live, and I will call upon you. You must be very careful.”

“Never mind, doctor. I be moving just now; so I can't tell'ee where I live; besides, I don't want my missis to know I be doctoring. I'll come and see thee myself, and if I can't walk, I'll ride in a cab. What is there to pay, sir?”

“I'll charge you a guinea, which includes a bottle of medicine. Take care of it: there is very precious stuff in it.”

“So I should guess,” said Joe, paying the fee; and after wishing the smirking professor good-day, he hobbled away, grumbling as he went. Before he had gone far he met a gentleman who had spent several days at Buttercup Glen a few months before. He accosted Joe very warmly, and one of his first inquiries was as to the cause of his lameness, when Joe explained that he had hurt his toe, and had just been to Mr Gobble for his professional aid.

“Gobble! What on earth did you go to that quack for? He will keep you lame, and half scare you to death, till he has made a little fortune out of you. I know some of his tricks upon simple folks who have been gulled by his impudent advertisements. Come along with me, and I will introduce you to my family physician. If there is anything serious the matter with you, he will try to cure you; but if there is nothing wrong with you, he will tell you so honestly.”

“This communication is libellous, you know, in the eye of the law, Mr Stubble,” continued the gentleman, as Joe hobbled along by his side. “If Mr Gobble knew what I have said about him, he would be very glad of the chance of increasing his popularity by bringing an action against me; so you had better not tell him if he should call on you, as he is very likely to do. He will find out where you live, depend upon it.”

“But he told me he was a religious man, and if that be's the case, he wouldn't be so wicked as to ruin my toe.”

“I fear his religion is the spurious kind, which Shakespeare makes King Richard the Third confess to, Mr Stubble:—

‘But then I sigh, and with a piece of Scripture
Tell them that God bade us do good for evil;
And thus I clothe my naked villainy,
With old odd ends stolen forth of holy writ;
And seem a saint when most I play the devil.’

A friend of mine was led to fancy there was something the matter with him, after reading one of Gobble's exciting advertisements; so he called on Gobble, who tried to persuade him that he had some terrible disorder, and wanted to operate on him forthwith. But Mr Quack was a little too fast on
that occasion, for my friend was confident he had not the ailment mentioned, and resolutely refused to be operated upon. It was fortunate for him that he was so firm, for Gobble would probably have injured him for life. There are many highly respectable medical gentlemen in Sydney,—men of established reputation for talent and integrity,—and I would strongly advise you, Mr Stubble, if anything ails yourself or your family, to call in one of those duly qualified practitioners, and eschew quacks of the Gobble class as you would shun snakes in the bush.”

After examining Mr Stubble's toe, the doctor, to whom Joe had been introduced by his friend, pronounced it a simple bruise; but it was likely to be made into a serious wound by the caustic lotion which had been applied to it. He tore off Gobble's bandage, and applied another one, which gave momentary ease. The precious mixture he advised Joe to throw away, unless he had rats about his house that he wished to poison with it.
FOR several days Mr Stubble's toe was very troublesome, and constantly reminded him of his petulance in kicking the piano-stool out of its place; he was conscious, too, that he got no more sympathy from his family than he deserved, and he was often annoyed with suspicions that they were silently laughing at his limping efforts to walk like a sound man. At their occasional question, “How is your toe, father?” he looked as vexed as if the inquirer were treading on it, and would tartly reply, “My toe is all right; so doan't 'ee bother about it. Take care of yer own toes.”

One afternoon he hobbled into the dining-room to take his customary “forty winks” on the sofa, when he heard his wife and daughter debating over the possibility of repairing the three Graces, which had been seriously fractured in their lower limbs by father's impetuous kick.

“I think if we get a little bit of what-you-may-call-it, Mag, we might stick these legs together, so that they would stand up again straight enough, so long as nobody meddled with 'em.”

“Oh, ma, we could never mend that middle Grace's knee with putty powder or diamond cement; and even if we could, it would look so shabby to have patched-up ornaments in the drawing-room. We had better have a new set at once.”

“Ugh! new set, indeed! I tell'ee what it is, Mag, thee be'st goin' ahead a plaguey deal too fast, and I be goin' to stop yer gallop,” said Mr Stubble, with warmth. “If thee brings any more of them bare-backed images into my house, blamed if I doan't kick 'em all into the street, if I crack all my toes over it.”

“They are all the fashion now, papa, and every genteel house has got some.”

“Fashion be blowed, gal! I don't see the good of spending money that us can't afford, in getting things as are no use to us at all. There be's scores of jimcracks in the house now that us doan't want, any more than an old sow wants a wig. If us had heaps of money, and could spend it honestly, I wouldn't say aught against encouraging the fine arts, as ye call 'em; though, for my part, I can't see anything superfine in standing a great big stone fellow bolt-upright in the hall.”

“Why, pa, that is a most beautiful statue; and the upholsterer said it
belonged to the late Judge Burton.”

“Well, I suppose I be no judge; but I remember when I was a boy, old Letcham of Exeter was put in the pillory for showing pictures in his shop window only half as bare as that image.”

“It is the statue of Apollo, papa,” explained Maggie.

“I don't care what you call him, Mag; he looks like an impudent scamp, and for two pins I'd pitch 'en out in the road.”

“Oh, Stubble, I never did hear any one go on in such a way as you do!” said Peggy. “It was Benjamin who bought the image. I did not want it, and I am quite willing for it to be taken away again if you don't like it.”

“I bean't going to sit still and be ruined for the sake of all the fine arts in the world. That is all I've got to say,” replied Mr Stubble.

“It only cost five guineas, Joe; so it is not worth making a stir about.”

“Well, Peggy, five guineas would buy a cow.”

“Pooh! what could we do with a cow? I am sure there are cows enough in the next yard; the smell is disgusting.”

“Your nose is getting very particular now, Peggy. I have seen the time when it won't so over-nice.”

“Come, come, Joe! don't be cross. We won't buy any more fine arts,” said Peggy, in a soothing tone. “But we must have some cards, you know.”

“Cards, eh! What next will 'ee want, Peg? Bang'd if I'll have any gambling in my house neither; so that's all about it.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Maggie. “We don't want cards to gamble with, father.”

“Tut! don't 'ee tell me that, lass. I know a pretty deal more about them things than thee dost. I recollect one Sunday, afore I was out of my time, Bill Tossey, the baker's boy, coaxed me to play a hand at 'beat my neighbour,’ up in his master's hay-loft; and almost afore I could say knife, Bill won every button I'd a got on my best corduroy jacket, and when I went home at tea-time I got a real welting from measter for cutting my buttons off. Thee doan't catch me playing at cards again, I'll bet a wager, nor I won't let thee do't neither while I have a hand over thee.”

“Hark 'ee, Joe!” said Peggy. “We don't want any cards of that sort at all; them's the devil's books, as mother used to say. We want visiting cards—small, little bits of shiny pasteboard, with our names printed on 'em—Mr Joseph Stubble, and Mrs Joseph Stubble, and Miss Stubble: don't you see now?”

“What's the good of them things, Peggy?”

“Well, not much good perhaps; but it is fashionable to have 'em, you know, Joe. Folks will be calling on us directly, and we must return their calls, of course; and how foolish we should look without our card-cases!”
“Pooh! Card-cases won't make any odds to our looks 'cept us hang 'em to our ears or our noses. At any rate, have 'em if thee likes; I don't care a farden so long as thee doan't gamble with 'em.”

At that moment, Maggie, who was looking through the window, exclaimed with interesting vehemence, “O mamma, mamma, here is Benjamin and Bob in such a love of a carriage!” In another minute Goldstone was inside the room explaining that “he had brought a trap to give them all a drive round the Domain, for he thought they wanted a sniff of fresh air, especially daddy, with his game toe.”

Mrs Stubble and Maggie were delighted at the idea of the thing, but it took some persuasion to induce Mr Stubble to go for a drive. Eventually, however, they all put on their smartest attire and got into the carriage. Bob sat on the box with Ben, who took the reins and whip with a nonchalant air, which seemed to imply that driving a pair of horses was mere child's play to a man who had often driven four-in-hand. A group of women stood at the door of the green-grocery opposite and audibly commented on the new tenants of the old house, especially noticing the flowers in Maggie's blush-coloured bonnet, and Mrs Stubble's grand parasol. Off went the carriage, and immediately a mob of dirty boys climbed up on the after-springs, while other little urchins, who could not climb up, shouted to Ben, “Whip behind, master!” which envious request Ben did not deign to notice, lest they should be only trying to make a fool of him. Biddy Flynn watched the vehicle round the corner, then went in-doors and laughed and grumbled alternately, until the new house-maid, who had come fresh that morning, began to contemplate going away again that evening, being nervously impressed with the idea that her fellow-servant was crazy.

Never before had Mrs Stubble felt so proudly elated, and never had Maggie felt her young heart more suffused with pleasurable emotions of all sorts. Bob, too, was in his glory and his best clothes, and wanted nothing to complete his happiness but to have the reins and whip in his hands. Nobody would have judged that it was their first ride in a private carriage, for they tried their utmost to look as if they had been used to it all their days. Joe was the only one of the party about whose enjoyment there could have been any doubt; but his uneasiness perhaps escaped general notice, for it is common enough to see old gentlemen riding in soft coaches, and looking far less satisfied with their lot than a sweep's boy on a donkey with a soot-bag for a saddle.

I have before stated that Maggie and her brother were a handsome pair, and they were both very much like their mother. Their stylish dress of course set off their natural charms to the greatest advantage. Even Joe was a smart-looking old man when seated in a carriage with his hat on his head.
and his hands out of sight; in other positions he showed to less advantage, for he could seldom be prevailed upon to wear gloves, and he had an unchangeable fashion of combing his hair slantingly over his forehead in Tim Bobbin's style. It is no wonder, then, Goldstone felt conscious that, on the whole, his turn-out was uncommonly attractive.

It was a fine afternoon, and many persons were taking their airing in the Domain. There were dozens of private vehicles, differing in pretensions, from the old-fashioned gig or modern dog-cart to the spider-like buggy, the dashing brougham, or the more lordly landau of some of the Darling Point grandees. Hired cabriolets were there, too, some of them smart enough to have passed for private concerns, if it were not for the odious law-prescribed number on their panels, and an unmistakably cabby look about the horses and their harness. There was also a sprinkling of patent safeties, shiny as new boots, with their drivers rocking to and fro in their precarious nooks behind, and flicking their horses into paces dangerous to pedestrians at certain sharp corners, or in parts where the dividing lines between the footpaths and the carriage-way were not distinguishable.

Many pedestrians were to be seen there also, some of them, perhaps, considering that, if every one had his due, they themselves would often be riding instead of walking. Some persons are troubled with reflections of that sort occasionally; though it would be more conducive to their comfort, if, instead of fretting because they can't afford to ride, they would congratulate themselves on their power to walk abroad, while so many poor mortals are confined within the walls of a sick-room. And, after all, if they could only have thought so, those persons on foot had most enjoyment, inasmuch as they were free from dread of contusions or fractures from bolting horses; besides, they had more leisure to inhale the balmy air from buds and blossoms, and could more appreciate a rest on a rustic seat under a spreading tree, or a cooler retreat still beneath an overhanging rock, from whence they might watch the tiny waves, and meditate, if they would, on their own ruffled course over the ocean of life, and look joyfully onward and upward to their haven of rest, where all men will be equal.

But the majority of pedestrians who were abroad that day had not fretful views of life and its diversified gifts, as witnessed the gladsome looks of the nurse-maids in charge of little tribes of infantile Australians, or the jaunty airs of the soldiers who were flirting with the said maids, and doubtless trying to persuade them that life in the barracks was all glory and nothing else. The portly blind man, too, who felt his way along with a stick, looked pleased, for though he could not see the sun, he could feel its genial influence, and perhaps he was thankful for the blessing of strong
limbs, and that he was not doomed to a life of suffering and confinement, like his poor paralytic neighbour. Another man with a stick, who may be seen every day in the Domain, did not look so happy as the blind man, for he was constantly seeing something to annoy him in the course of his walks of duty; and I daresay a stroll through the dusty city would have been an agreeable change for him. By the way, there is scarcely a public functionary in the land with whom I more strongly sympathise than with that same man with the stick, whom the vulgar boys call “Paddy the Ranger.” His life must be an unmitigated worry in seasons when locusts are plentiful, for then hordes of street arabs infest the Domain at all points, and climb the trees in quest of the chirping insects. No farmer in corn season is more troubled with cockatoos than the Domain-ranger is with the boys of Sydney. Mischievous young turks some of those boys are, and between them and the ranger there is perpetual warfare. Occasionally he has the satisfaction of cuffing one of his young foes, but not very often, for he must needs catch his foe first, and the ranger cannot run so fast as he could do forty years ago, of which fact the boys are quite as conscious as Paddy is himself.

Goldstone entered the Domain at the Macquarie Street gateway, and drove down the steep decline at a dashing pace past the cricket-ground, where the Sydney eleven were practising for a grand match with the Melbourne eleven. Onward he drove up the rise beyond, and down the steep decline, and along the red road skirting the rocky shores of Wooloomooloo Bay, past the public and private baths, and finally he pulled up at the end of that picturesque peninsula so well known as “Lady Macquarie’s Point.” Most of my Australian readers are doubtless familiar with that locality, and any attempt to describe its peculiar attractions would but show them the meagreness of my descriptive powers; while to persons afar off, my best efforts would fail to convey more than a faint conception of the varied features which combine to make one of the most pleasing landscapes that human eyes have ever beheld. The Domain is one of the most frequented public reserves, or recreation-grounds, in the vicinity of Sydney. It is not for the “upper ten” exclusively, for its level roadway is as free for the spring-cart of the humble tradesman, or the butcher-boy’s bob-tailed cob, as for the carriage or the prancing well-bred hack of the aristocrat, without toll or any other tax whatever. The “Government Domain,” and the adjacent Botanical Gardens, are assuredly boons to the citizens of Sydney, which it would be hard to over-estimate.

There were many carriages drawn up near to the masked battery at the point, some of the occupants of which bowed respectfully to Goldstone, to the increased joy of Mrs Stubble and Maggie, who were proud indeed to
see that Benjamin had so many carriage friends. The Sydney yacht fleet were manoeuvring under the command of their commodore. The sailors in the steam frigate lying in Farm Cove were exercising on the yards. A fine clipper ship from London was being towed up to her anchorage. Dozens of smart little sailing boats were gliding to and fro, and some of the racing gigs from the Australian Subscription Boat Club were out, manned by their spirited amateur crews.

Goldstone's party stayed some time gazing at the attractive scene, and expressing their gladsome emotions in short interjaculatory sentences, the most noticeable of which were—"Did you ever?" and "Deary, deary me!" They then returned homeward by way of the eastern gateway, and along College Street, turning into Park Street, and finally into Slumm Street itself. The nearer they approached to their home, the firmer became Mrs Stubble's conviction that they had not chosen the most alluring part of the city for their residence; however, she said nothing on the subject, as the house belonged to Benjamin's father: besides, Benjamin himself was born in it.

After the inside passengers had alighted at their front door, to their great surprise, they saw Bob get off the box, and open the side gates, when Ben drove the carriage into the back-yard, and in a few minutes more the horses were in the stable. While Joe was speculating upon the reason for that unlooked-for movement, Ben re-entered the house, and in the most delicate manner imaginable, he begged Mrs Stubble to favour him by accepting of the said carriage and pair as a trifling mark of his esteem, veneration, and affection. Such lordly liberality could not but affect the whole family more or less; and some time elapsed before either of the ladies could verbally express their thanks. I shall not stay to describe the exciting scene which ensued, or to explain how modestly Ben combated all the half-uttered objections which were urged against so severely taxing his generosity. He declined to stay to tea, for the overflowing gratitude of the ladies was almost too much for his nerves without tea, and Mr Stubble was apparently struck dumb by excessive feeling; so Ben departed, and the family forthwith went into an unrestrained discussion on the subject of Ben's most magnificent present.

"It be's very good-natured of him, I don't deny that; still I wish he hadn't bought a carriage for us at all," said Joe. "Us can do very well without one, for we've got good legs all of us. Us must keep a groom now; and the feed, and other things, will cost a pretty lot of money."

"You have not considered what we shall save in shoe leather, father," said Peggy with a tender smile.

"Ees, I have, though, missis; and what it will cost for horse-shoes and
harness leather too. Well, never mind, it's no good fretting; when the 
money is all spent, us must use our legs again. But I hope us won't get 
gouty with high living, and proud and lazy into the bargain.”

“What do you say about getting our old stockman, Jack Slash, down, 
father? He would make a first-rate coachman,” said Bob.

“O yes! I always liked Jack,” said Maggie, eagerly. “He is pretty tall, and 
if he would keep his hair cut a little shorter, he would look very respectable 
in a nice modest livery.”

“A modest what?” shouted Joe with unusual vehemence. “Livery did 'ee 
say? Jack Slash in a mulberry coat and blue breeches, driving old Joe 
Stubble about the streets in a grand shandran! Is that what 'ee want to 
see? No, no; dash my wig, if I'll stand that, anyhow! I bean't stark mad 
yet.”

“Yaw, yaw, yaw!” guffed Biddy Flynn, who had just come in with the 
tea-tray; whereupon Mrs Stubble, with stately rage, which made all her 
words hiss, bade her rebellious maid take warning “to leave the house that 
very day week.”

“Shure, I didn't mane to grin at all, missis; but I cudn't help it, 'cept I'd 
dropped all the tay-cups, and choked meself too, wid respect ta yez. But, 
dear knows, I don't want to shtop in yer house—not I; so I'll be aff nixt 
Friday, an' it's glad enough I'll be to do it too.”

“Let me not hear another word of your impudence. Go into your kitchen 
this instant moment, or I'll send y ou out of the house this very minute,” 
said Mrs Stubble, who then sat down in a corner to cool.

“I'm very sorry I spoke, papa; but pray don't vex yourself. I was half 
joking about the livery, you know,” said Maggie, humbly approaching her 
angry sire.

“What is the good of kicking up this dust?” urged Bob, standing up with 
all the grace of a police-office pleader. “Here is a precious row in the house 
in a minute, and all about nothing at all. I'm blessed if I don't put the horses 
in the britzka, and drive it back to Goldstone's lodgings, and tell him to 
keep his coach, for it set us all quarrelling directly after he left the house.”

Bob's address was so very sudden, and withal so forcible, that it was as 
effective as the smart rap of the master's cane on his desk in a large 
schoolful of rackety boys. Even Joe himself would not have sanctioned 
such an extreme measure as Bob threatened, for that would be to offer a 
gratuitous insult to a generous man; so he tamely remarked, “I bean't going 
to say another word,” and pulled out his pipe. Bob accepted that as an 
absolute submission, and then directed his eloquence to his mother. The 
result was, that she gradually softened, until she went into the kitchen and 
rescinded her wrathful warning to Biddy; and peace was presently restored
to the ruffled household. After tea, Bob went out to order some hay and corn, and to buy a curry-comb and a dandy-brush.
Chapter XIII.

The Stubbles receive fashionable visitors.—Joe's awkwardness before company.—Engage a coachman.—Joe agrees to go to school to learn grammar.—Biddy Flynn and the carter.

THE ensuing fortnight was remarkable for events as new as they were exciting to the erst rustic family. Numerous fashionable visitors called on them from day to day. Some were Ben's friends, who were desirous of showing respect for him, as a rising man, by recognising his bride-elect and her relations. Others were neighbours, who had been induced to observe the etiquette of refined life by rumours of the wealth and respectability of the Stubble family; which flattering rumours, I may state, might have been traced by any pains-taking person to Benjamin himself as their author.

Mrs Stubble and her daughter were vastly pleased with these marks of polite attention, and deported themselves before their guests as well as could be expected. Mr Stubble usually contrived to get out of the way when visitors called; in which act he pleased himself, and his wife and daughter also. On one occasion, however, two ladies came in a phaeton when Joe was in the house alone; and, as he was always mindful to show hospitality to strangers, he bade them walk in and sit down, for “his missis had only just gone up to the barber's to get her head frizzled, and she would be back again in half-an-hour or so.” The ladies walked in and sat down, though they politely declined Joe's pressing offer to get them a cup of tea, in accordance with bush hospitality; and when Mrs Stubble and Maggie returned shortly afterwards, they, to their great chagrin, found the strange visitors sitting in the dining-room, listening to Joe's graphic account of his early struggles in the far interior, when he was overseer for Mr Drydun.

Jack Slash, of Daisybank, had been engaged as coachman and groom to the family; but he came to Sydney in moleskin trousers, digger's boots, red juniper and cabbage-tree hat; and as he doggedly refused to alter his costume, or to get his hair shortened, he was discharged again, and an experienced town coachman was hired the same day. Mr Stubble would not hear a word about livery; so, the new man was supplied with a becoming suit of black, and white gloves, and a hat which nobody could doubt was made for a flunkey. Mrs Stubble, with her son and daughter, usually took an airing every day, and always went shopping in the carriage; but Joe could seldom be persuaded to ride in it. His family were very willing to indulge his obstinate crotchet, but they unanimously protested
against calling the carriage “the machine,” which he was accustomed to do whenever he spoke of it. They also objected to his occasional passion for grooming the horses, and bringing hairs and stable odours into the house.

Goldstone had returned to Sydney, rejected by the electors of Muddleton, instead of being returned by them as their representative in Parliament. It was a severe blow to his pride; indeed, it influenced the whole family in various degrees, and none more sensitively than Bob, who had counted upon getting a “snug Government billet” through Ben's political power with the heads of departments.

Ben's defeat was more distressing to him on account of its being wholly unexpected, he having been led to hope that he would distance his Tory opponent by two to one, through the combined influence of tip and tipple, carefully administered. In as few words as possible, I will explain how the linch-pin was taken from a wheel of Ben's political coach, and he was let down into the mire of popular disfavour. It appears that he had wounded the feelings of one of the leading men on his local committee, by innocently putting up at the house of another leading man on his visit to Muddleton shortly before the day of nomination; and though he explained, in his most conciliatory style and with logical clearness, that he could not stay at two inns at one and the same time, the jealous ire of the man was unappeased, and he emphatically promised to “cook Ben's goose.”

Any person less familiar with the poetical figures of speech of country publicans in general, might have supposed that the ruffled committee-man generously intended to roast the said bird for a grand festival after Ben's triumphant return; but Ben understood the current meaning of the trope, and his hopes began to fade away from that moment. He knew full well that the man could wield a mighty influence over a large mass of the population around, that he had only to “shout,” and hundreds of able-bodied men would roar like tigers; and would fight like Turks too, if he only “tipped them the wink.” On perceiving the critical state of affairs, Ben wrote immediately to his political backers in Sydney, imploring them to come to his aid with their powerful logic. They would doubtless have done so, and have made a desperate effort to secure so handy a man; but as luck would have it, the mailbag was stolen by bush-rangers, who had not consideration enough to send on Ben's important letter, but burnt it with all the other letters that contained nothing valuable.

On the morning of the day of nomination, Ben looked as downcast as a culprit going to be hanged, for it was plain to him that he was deserted by his friends, both in town and country. He had been rehearsing his speech the whole night, consequently he felt rather sleepy. To brighten himself up for his appearance on the hustings, when he had solemn reasons for
expecting to meet a very noisy mob, he had recourse to brandy. Many other men have tried the same thing in immoderate doses, though but few have testified to having derived much real strength therefrom, moral or otherwise. Ben's own prior experience might have suggested that the expedient was not a reliable one; perhaps it did; but if so, he did not heed it, for he tried brandy, both pale and dark, in oft-repeated doses, growing more bold, or more blind, at each nobbler, until he had dosed himself into thorough talking trim; or, in other words, he got tipsy, and when on the hustings, he quarrelled with the few supporters that he had left, while his non-supporters playfully pelted him with stale eggs and other matter of an odorous nature. The grand result of the day was, that Ben got woefully beaten about his person, and the next day he was beaten at the poll by his political opponent, who had an overwhelming majority of votes. Thus he lost his election, and returned to Sydney, bruised in body and disturbed in mind, for he was suffering from the “horrors” in a mitigated form.

His own private opinion coincided with public opinion at Muddleton, namely, that he had made an ass of himself; but he was too cunning to tell the unvarnished facts to his friends the Stubbles; and as black lies or white lies were all the same to him, he soon invented a story which afforded a temporary plaster to his wounded pride, and procured for him unlimited sympathy. His visible bruises were laid to the account of a vicious horse, and his defeat at the poll was put down to bribery and corruption, against which no personal merit could be expected to cope. But after all, he said, he was not sorry at his non-success, for legislators were usually the victims of ingratitude and abuse from the very persons for whose benefit they devoted their time and talents. Of course, he had to tell a different story to his political friends in the city; but I shall not weary the reader with details of matters which are not worth mentioning.

At length Maggie's marriage-day was fixed for three weeks hence, and active preparations were begun forthwith. It would not be in good taste to give all particulars thereof. No young lady would like to have her wedding trousseau minutely described in a book, nor would any sensitive mamma be pleased to see all her little domestic manoeuvres publicly explained; so I forbear to go into particulars. I may state, however, without fear of wounding anybody, that they all put forth their very best efforts to make the coming event as grand as possible.

“I say, measter, we ought to keep some wine and stuff in the house,” said Mrs Stubble, one afternoon as her husband was taking his lounge. “If we don't drink it ourselves, many of the folks who call to see us like a little drop, you know. It looks stingy not to give 'em something, and we haven't got any nice new milk to offer them now.”
“Give 'em a cup of tea. That is the best tack, Peggy.”

“Oh, that's nonsense, you know, Joe. It would never do to be taking cups of tea into the drawing-room at all hours of the day, same as we used to do in the bush when folks called to see us.”

“I doan't see why not, Peggy. But if thee can't do that, give 'em some water if they be dry. It's prime water in Sydney, and that be's about the purest thing we get here, to my thinking. It won't pay to 'dulterate that.”

“You are very provoking, Stubble. How it would look to ask fashionable visitors to have a draught of water! Why we should be talked about from one end of the town to t'other. Besides, you know Benjamin likes a little drop of something.”

“I be afeared he likes a big drop, Peggy; that is telling the truth. When he was here t'other night after he coom'd down from Muddleton, if he worn't close up drunk, I be pretty far out in my reckoning.”

“Oh, Joe, what are you talking about? I am shocked at you for saying such a thing. You should say tipsy, if it be right to say it at all; but I'm certain sure that Benjamin was no more the worse for liquor than I am now.”

“Ah, well, thee nose was out of tune, Peggy, or thee'd have scented him as soon as he coom'd into the house, and specially when he kissed thee. Ugh! I be glad he doan't take a fancy to kiss me. Howsomever, there's this to excuse 'en; he'd been 'lectioneering. But there bean't so much fear of his getting drun”——

“Hush! don't say that nasty vulgar word again, Stubble,” interrupted Peggy, with a pettish look. “And now you've put me in mind of another thing I have been going to speak to you about a many times. I will tell it now afore I forget again.”

“What be's that, lass? Speak up, but doan't 'ee get cross. Try to look at me allers same as thee does when grand folks come to see us. Thee looks as sweet as a cookoo eating cherries at them times.”

“Well, don't you say things to vex me, Joe; then I shall look pleasant enough, I am sure. This is what I was going to say, and mind I don't want to find fault with you; so don't you get cross. You bean't very particular in your grammar, measter, and that looks bad, you know; and makes me feel as if I'd got live eels in my pocket, when I hear you begin to speak afore company.”

“Where did thee learn to talk so mighty smooth, Peggy? Us both went to Dame Dubble's school, and bang'd if her know'd more about grammar nor Geordie Loot, the born fool. I know'd how to talk to please thee at one time, and thee didn't say naught about my plain speech in days what's gone by.”
“There, I was afeared you'd get touchy, Joe, and I didn't mean to say aught to vex you. I know I haven't had more schooling than you have, but I have lived in service with gentlefolks, you know, and I've picked up a good bit of larning that way, doan't'ee see, measter?”

“Oh—ay—yes; I daresay thee hast picked up a thing or two about manners; but thee never larnt how to write a letter to thee poor old feyther; so there I beat'ee. Thee can't write no more than thee can talk French.”

“I know I can't write, Joe, and that is what I be's most sorry for. But I mean to learn to do it.”

“That's right, Peggy lass; it bean't never too late to larn to do a right thing. Thee know'st old widow Totty larnt to write after her was sixty years old. It be's easy enough to do't when one has a mind for it. Many folks waste more time in fretting because 'em don't know how to read and write, than it would take to make scholars of 'em.”

“Well, what do you say, Joe? If I set to work to learn to write, will you go to school for a bit, and learn grammar?”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Joe. “Go to school, eh! My wig! wouldn't the little boys grin! Hold on a bit, Peggy; let me read 'en summat what I se'ed t'other day in one of Bob's books; it tickled me, sure enough.” Joe thereupon fetched from his son's room “Halliwell's Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words,” and read therein the following little story, which seemed to excite his fancy exceedingly:—

“THE CORNWALL SCHOOL-BOY.—An ould man found one day a young gentleman's portmantle, as he were a going to 'es dennar; he took'd et en and gived et to 'es wife, and said, ‘Mally, here's roul of lither, look, see, I suppoase some poor ould shoemaker or other have los'en, tak'en, and put'en a top of the teaster of tha bed, he'll be glad ta hab'en agin sum day, I dear say.’ The ould man, Jan, that was 'es neame, went to 'es work as before. Mally then opened the portmantle, and found en et three hundred pounds. Soon after thes, the ould man not being very well, Mally said, ‘Jan, I'av saaved away a little money, by the bye, and, as thee caan't read or write, thee shu'st go to school’ (he were then nigh threescore and ten). He went but a very short time, and comed hoam one day and said, ‘Mally, I waint go to school no more, 'caase the childer do be laffen at me; they can tell their letters, and I can't tell my A, B, C, and I wud rayther go to work agen.’ ‘Do as thee wool,’ ses Mally. Jan had not been out many days, afore the young gentleman came by that lost the portmantle, and said, ‘Well, my ould man, did 'ee see or hear tell o' sich a th ing as a portmantle?’ ‘Portmantle, sar, was't that un, sumthing like thickey?’ (pointing to one behind es saddle). ‘I vound the toth'r day zackly like that.’ ‘Where es et?’ ‘Come along, I carr'd en and gov'en to my ould 'ooman, Mally; thee sha't
av'en nevr vear. Mally, where es that roul of lither I broght en tould thee to put en a top of the teaster of the bed, *afore I go'd to school?* ‘Drat thee emperance,’ said the young gentleman, ‘thee art bewattled; *that were afore I were born.*’ So he druv'd off, and left all the three hundred pounds with Jan an' Mally.”

After Mr and Mrs Stubble had laughed heartily over the fortunate experience of the old Cornish pair, they began to discuss, in serious mood, the feasibility of their improving their very limited education; and finally resolved that they would both set to work in earnest with that commendable object, as soon as the excitement of Maggie's wedding was over.

A few days afterwards a wine-merchant's cart drove up to the door with sundry cases of wine, beer, spirits, liqueurs, &c. Biddy Flynn would have sent the carter away again, in the belief that he had come to the wrong house; but her mistress, who happened to be at home, told Biddy it was all right, and to take it in.

“All right, is it?” quoth Biddy, as she trotted to the front door. “If it don't turn out all wrong, I'll be wrong in me calculation, that's all, an' I hope it'll be so. Save us all! and what are the craythers up till at all? Goin' to poison themselves now, is it? I daresay it's all doctored rubbidge, as 'll breed blue divils in the house. Sure, then, that ould parson in the bush know'd what he was talkin' about whin he tould his congregation that there 'wasn't a dhrop ov good dhrink to be had in the country.' An' what's inside this?” she asked, as the carman carried in a small case.

“That is old Tom,” said the man, with a sly grin at Biddy.

“Ould Tom is it? Fegs, then, it'll play ould Jerry wid'em, I'm thinkin'. I have heard tell what that stuff is made of. And what de ye call this comical consarn?”

“That's a demijohn of real Irish whisky; the sort of stuff that you've had a taste of many a time, I'll bet a wager.”

“Don't ye belave no such thing,” replied Biddy. “I've got a spite agin that same stuff for murtherin' me brother Mike, an' shure I'll niver touch it; it's only for that rayson. What's in them big tubs?”

“Why, port and sherry wine. Lend me a hand to lift them out of the cart, will you?”

“Onshugh! what next? Do ye think I'm goin' to crack me back over that job? Not I, faith!”

“Get out of the way then. Mind yer crooked limbs!” said the man, as he prepared to lift the casks out by himself.

“Tut! bad manners to yiz, ye spalpeen! What do ye mane at all? Crooked limbs, indeed! They'd be crooked enough no doubt, iv I was to help to
empty yer cart-load ov mischief down me own throat.”

“Mischief do you call it? Ha, ha!”

“What is it as does most ov the mischief in the worrld, if it isn't grog, and Sathan himself who invented it?” asked Biddy.

“Was Satan a distiller then, Judy?”

“Sure ye know a dale more about him nor I do. Be aft'her rollin' yer tubs into the cellar, an' thin ye can go off as quick as ye plase.”

“thank'ee, Judy. When shall I come and see you again?”

“Ye can wait till I send for yez, an' ye'll have plenty ov time to polish up yer manners. There now, aff ye go wid yer barrow.”

“Barrow! mine is a cart, Judy.”

“Thin, put yer ugly carcase intil it, an' drive aff out ov this, for I don't want any more ov yer imperence.” Biddy then slammed the door, and went away to her work, muttering her disapproval of that “fresh step that the family were taking on the broad road to ruin.”
Chapter XIV.

Biddy gives Bob and Maggie a lesson on “genteel manners.” Miss Dottz, the literary lady, gets Biddy to tell her why she was transported.—Horror of Miss Dottz.

“AH, sure! ye look slap-up now, Masther Bob!” exclaimed Biddy Flynn, one afternoon as her young master stood brushing his hat in the dining-room, preparatory to going out for a ride on a handsome gelding which he had bought at Burt's a few days before with the fifty pounds which his father had given him.

“Do you think so, Biddy?” replied Bob, with a pleasant smirk.

“Troth, thin, I do think so, or I wouldn't have said it. I never seed a greater transmogrification in any young chap in the worrld than is come over yourself since ye come to town; an' that's a fact, sir. The tailor has had a good hand in it, no doubt; still, an 'all he didn't do it entirely, for I've sane some counthry bhoys what all the tailors in the colony cudn't pad into the shape of jintlemen, nohow, 'cos they fling their limbs about in sich a slummacking style, as iv they wor all arms an' legs, an' nothin' else. Nature has bin on yer side, honey; an' that's plain enough.”

“You will make him proud, Biddy, if you say any more in his praise,” said Maggie, who was sitting in the room sewing.

“I'd be sorrow to make him a bi t prouder nor he is at present, Miss Maggie. Dear knows, he's got enough pride in him, so he has; and it isn't a bad thing for a young feller to have naythir, so long as he don't get consated an' sarcy, same as lots ov gossoons do as soon as iver they get a long-tail'd coat on'em, an' a little bit ov fluff on their upper lip, what they are iverlastin'ly lickin' an' fingerin'.”

“You seem to know a good deal about boys, and their little innocent ways, Biddy,” said Bob.

“Fegs, thin, I do know about 'em, sir, an' about gals too. An' what wud I have been doin' wid me gumption all the days ov me life, iv I didn't know summat out of the common way? Haven't I lived nigh fourteen years wid Squire Bligh, an' seed all his illigant bhoys an' gals grow up to men an' women? I have so. An' I shud jist like to see the pair of yez turn out every ha'porth as jintale as thim wor, an' thin ye'd do to go an' live wid the governor, or the chief justice, or any other great nob in the land; so ye wud, an' no mishtake.”

“Don't you think we should do for the best society in Sydney now, Biddy?” asked Bob, with an involuntary glance at his patent leather boots.
“Shure, ye're honest enow to live wid the bishop, or the dean aythir, sir.”

“Yes, but that is not the question. Nobody would think we were dishonest, I should hope. Are we polished enough to mix with gentlefolks, such as you have been accustomed to see at Squire Bligh's? That is the point, Biddy; and as you have begun to talk on the subject, let us know what you mean.”

“It isn't a nice thing to give an honest opinion allers, an' I've found that out in my experience no end ov times. So long as ye say what's in their favour, most folks will look as plisant as little children suckin' sugar-plums; but ony tell 'em ov something they don't want to belave, some of their faults, which iverybody in the worrld can see 'cept themselves, an' ochone! look out, me bho y, they'll niver respect ye no more, 'cept ye happen to be rich, an' maybe they'll do ye a mischief some day, iv they aren't afeared of bein' cotched at it.”

“You need not be afra id to speak your mind honestly and plainly to us, you know, Biddy. You have done that hitherto, whether we liked it or not.”

“Well, now, I'll jist try iv ye mane what ye say, Masther Bob, ony once't; an' iv ye don't like it, I'll give ye no more ov me brogue. Aisy, sir, afore ye put on yer kid gloves. Do ye think anybody who knows what's what wud mishtake ye for a rale jintelman iv they seed thim long finger-nails ov yourn choke-full ov black dirt? Ugh! not they indeed! Thim nasty nails wud shock dacint society; worser nor the bare toes ov a chimbley-sweep.”

Bob blushed intensely, but said nothing; and Maggie blushed too, for her nails were not much purer than her brother's. “Och! don't ye bite 'em off, Masther Bob, that's shocking vulgar. Go and buy a pair ov nail scissors an' a nail-brush, an' use 'em pritty often. Ye 'll allers see thim things in ivery jinuine jintelman's kit, an' a tooth-brush too, ye may depind. Ye tould me to shpake plain, sir, an' shure that's plain enow, anyway. Wud ye like me shpake agin? If not, say the worrd, an' I'll shtop where I left off, for, dear knows, I wudn't offind ye for a trifle.”

“Say what you like, Biddy. I know you only mean kindness; and it may do us good, for you have seen more of life than either of us here.”

“That's threue for ye, Masther Bob. I've sane more of life's troubles nor ayther of yez will iver see, plase God. Now I'll shpake out what's in me mind, an' I'll give ye all the jintale advice I know of; an' shure iv ye don't take it all, I shan't be offinded, same as some clever craythers are iv ye don't swallow ivery worrd they say. Firsht an' foremost, thin, let me tell you, sir, there's as much difference atween a rale jintelman an' what they call a 'gent' as there is atween a race-horse an' a donkey; an' it's a jintelman as I want to make ov yerself. Now, let me show yez how you should walk intil a drawing-room full ov jintel ladies. Don't grin, but jist walk in
gracefully, same as I do now, and say ‘Besum,’ ever so softly, as ye make yer bow. Bravo, Masther Bob! that's illigantly done—cudn't be done betther, anyhow. Now, supposin' ye wor goin' intil a room full of jintlemen, an' they wor all lookin' at ye, ye must walk in in this way, wid aisy dignity, an' say ‘Broom.’ Capital! ye did it firsh-rate, sir. Ye'll do by and bye; niver fear. Now, again, supposin' ye was goin' to make a spache at a public meetin'—though ye're not such a loony as to be thrying yer hand at that game yit awhile; but in case ye've got to do it presently, I'll tell ye how to go about it. Jist walk up to the platform, as straight as a sodger officer, and say ‘Brush!’ Say it again, sir, an' kape yer eyes open, an' yer head up. Well done! that's jist it, sir. Troth, ye did it to the life; didn't he, Miss Maggie? Ha! ha! ha!”

“I don't quite understand your peculiar lessons, Biddy,” said Maggie. “It would seem very funny to me for a gentleman to walk into a drawing-room, and say ‘besum.’ I should laugh at him directly.”

“In coorse ye wud, honey. Ye cudn't help it iv he did that same; but I don't want him to say ‘besum’ out loud, ye know; nor ‘broom,’ nor ‘brush’ naythir—not at all. He is ony to whispe r it to himself, so softly that nobody can hear it. Don't ye see now, miss?”

“Well, I must be stupid, I suppose, Biddy; but I cannot comprehend how that whispering ‘besum,’ ‘broom,’ and ‘brush’ can influence a gentleman's looks in company.”

“Can't ye, darlint? Hisht a bit th in, whiles I explain my manin', an' I'll ingage ye'll see the common sinse ov it as plain as the man's nose in the moon. No jintleman in the worl'd can whisper ‘besum’ widout lookin' modest; an' that's the way he should allers look afore ladies. Thin agin, he cudn't say ‘broom,’ iv he tried ever so, widout lookin' manly about the mouth—that's clare enough; an' it wudn't be nateral for him to say ‘brush’ widout standin' up stiff an' lookin' sharp; an' that's jist how a man should do iv he is going to say anythin' in public that he wants a lot ov people to listen to. Now, don't you see what I mane, miss? My word for it, Masther Bob, iv ye'd only practise ‘besum,’ ‘broom,’ and ‘brush’ afore yer lookin'-glass ivery day for a week, ye'd lose the biggest part ov that sheepishness that ye brought down wid ye from the counthry, an' that ye can't git quit ov by strokin' yer little beard, or whackin' yer leg wid yer ridin' whip.”

Bob and Maggie laughed merrily at Biddy's quaint lessons on “jintale manners,” which encouraged the honest old creature to proceed.

“Whin ye go intil a drawing-room for a fashionable call, Masther Bob, don't ye be afther puttin' yer hat on the floor, or under yer chair, bekase that'll make yer look shy an' silly; nor don't ye be puttin' it on the table among the ornaments an' card-baskets naythir, for that'll look bold an'
vulgar. Ye'd better put it on til a chair beside yez, or hould it in yer hand aisyly, an' if the lady ov jinterman ov the house wanted ye to shtop a bit wid'em, they'll pritty soon be takin' yer hat from yez, or tellin' ye to hang it up, an' make yerself at home. But, mind ye, don't niver stretch out full length on a sofa, or cock yer foot on yer knee as iv ye wor goin' to bite yer toe-nails; nor ye naydn't pick yer ears, or scratch yer head, or twiddle wid yer beard while the lady is shpakin' ta yez, for thin tricks aren't jin-tale at all at all. Kape the besum in yer mouth all the while, an' I'll ingage ye won't make a mighty big hole in yer manners.

"An' supposin' ye wos axed to shtop to dinner, ye wudn't say nay to that, I'll bet a pinny, for ye are allers ready for yer males, anyway. In coorse, ye'd sit down where the lady or jinterman tould ye to sit; and ye'd kape yer elbows off the table. Don't niver be after makin' pills wid the bread, or rollin' yer napkin up like a snow-ball, or fiddlin' wid yer fork, whiles ye're waitin' for yer plate. Sit up like a man, an' think ov the broom. But don't shlake too much, same as windy fellers allers do; give iverybody a chance to say somethin', for that's ony fair play, ye know. In coorse, ye wudn't think ov fistin' a bone, or lickin' yer fingers, or pickin' yer teeth wid yer thumbs; ye're not sich a haythin as all that; so I naydn't say nothin' about thim things, though I've sane 'em done afore to-day, an' I've sane a nasty feller wipe his mouth on the table-cloth too; but he worn't a born native, I'll say that for the honour ov the countr'y. Another thing I'd like ye to kape in mind, sir, while ye're thinking about the brush, an' that is, to brush yer hair tidy—ye're not mighty particular about that same, let me tell yez—an' don't ye forgit to brush it behind as well as in front, bekase sometimes ye may sit afore somebody in church or elsewhere, an' though ye can't see the back ov yer head yerself, the chap behind yer can see it plain enough, 'cept he's blind; and he can see too if ye've forgot to remember to wash yerself behind yer ears. Thin agin, Masther Bob, ye may take my worrd for it, that no rale jinterman talks slang, and"

“I say. Biddy, I can't stay to hear any more just now,” interrupted Bob. “My horse will break his bridle if I keep him hooked up to the stable door any longer. I am much obliged to you for your useful hints on etiquette and personal cleanliness. I shall try to profit by them, and you may expect to see that your besum has wonderfully improved my rustic manners. Good-bye, Biddy. You had better give Mag a few lessons now.” Bob then departed, and was soon cantering along George Street, muttering “brush!” and looking as bold as a captain of volunteers.

“Ha, ha, ha! I didn't think Mistrher Bob wud have shtopped half as long to listen to my lingo,” said Biddy, looking quite pleased at the success of her first lecture.
“I think your remarks were very sensible, Biddy, and I'm sure Bob thinks so too; and he will remember you with gratitude,” replied Maggie.

“Bless the hearts ov both ov yez! I love ye like chickens, so I do, an' it's ony for that I shpake up now an' agin. Many's the time I've sane fine handsome bhoys an' gals spoil their good looks intirely, bekase they didn't know how to behave themselves dacintly in company, no more nor young bog-trotters, more shame till their parents for not tachin' 'em betther; but, be the same token, many ov thim same parents wor as bad-mannered as the young uns thimelves, an' didn't know no betther. Och! isn't it a shocking thing, Miss Maggie, to see a fine strong strappin' lass wid her hair all touzzled like a wisp ov hay, for want ov a comb an' brush, an', maybe, her dress ripped open at the gathers, an' grate big taters in the heels of her stockin's, to say nothin' about her face bein' a'most as grimy as her hands, an' her teeth niver bin touched wid a brush all the days ov her life! I allers feel cross an' sorry when I see the like; an' I ses to meself, ‘Arrah, mercy on the poor unlucky man who gets you for a wife, ye dawdlin' dolly! Ye'll allers kape him ragged an' miserable, an' not clane naythir’. But I say, Miss Maggie, shure as death, here comes Miss What's-her-name, the ould gal wid spectacles, an' I wisht she ha' shtopped at home.”

“Patience me! I didn't expect her so soon, and I am not dressed. Show her up into the drawing-room, Biddy, and tell her I will be there in ten minutes or so.”

Miss Dottz was a middle-aged lady, who had the reputation of being very clever. She had ample pecuniary means, and was making a tour of the Australian colonies for the avowed purpose of gathering material for a book of travels which she intended to publish on her return to London; not so much with an eye to profit as for the éclat of authorship. She had lodged for some months in the same house with Ben Goldstone, and through him she was introduced to the Stubbles, and appeared to take quite a lively interest in the family. She had a happy way of making herself at home wherever she went: and was, upon the whole, an agreeable companion, for she was very well informed, and had a pleasant communicative manner. Her unreserved use of a note-book sometimes made casual acquaintances dread that she was taking their portraits to embellish her forthcoming volume; but it is only fair to say that she was too well-bred to be guilty of such rudeness, and no one who really knew her was afraid of such a thing. She was generally on the qui vive for any little bits of useful information, or amusing incidents, which nobody could reasonably object to her appropriating; but it would have been in better taste had she kept her suspicious-looking note-book out of sight, and then even strangers would have enjoyed her cheerful society.
Miss Dottz had been invited to tea that evening, and it occurred to her that she might take her tatting-bag and go an hour or two earlier, for the sake of a little pleasant gossip with Mrs and Miss Stubble, who she knew would be glad to see her. As I have before stated, Biddy Flynn had a great repugnance to answering questions respecting her earlier history; moreover, she had a settled idea that Miss Dottz was going to put her into her new book, for which honoured position Biddy was not at all ambitious. She was therefore particularly taciturn when that lady was present, and usually returned evasive answers to inquiries when they directly referred to her own affairs.

Biddy showed Miss Dottz into the drawing-room, and was about to retire directly, when that lady detained her by asking a few questions respecting the health of the family.

“They're all hearty enow, ma'am, thank God,” replied Biddy, shuffling towards the door.

“And pray, how long have you been in this colony?” asked Miss Dottz, with a persuasive smile.

“Close up thirty years, ma'am.”

“Thirty years! Bless me, that is a long time. You must have been a mere girl when you came.”

“That's thrue for ye, ma'am.”

“Did ye come with your parents, Biddy?”

“I did not, ma'am.”

“Came here all alone, did you?”

“Shure, thin, I didn't do that naythir, for there was lots ov gals came in the same ship wid me. But iv ye won't be aisy till ye know all about it, whisht while I tell it yez. I was sent here a prisoner, same as hundreds of betther gals nor meself wor in them unlucky days.”

“Dear, dear me! sent here as a prisoner, were you? Poor thing! What a sad blow it must have been for your parents.”

“It was worser for meself, ma'am, a pritty dale.”

“Yes, yes; I daresay it was indeed. May I ask you why you were sent here so young, Biddy? I feel interested in you, and that is why I put the question; but perhaps you don't like to answer it.”

“I'll tell ye all about it, an' more too, ma'am; so, git ready yer pocket-book, an' dot it all down cleverly. This was it, ma'am, wid respect to yez. I was mortal hungry one day as I was tramping through one of the back slums ov Dublin looking for tater palins, an' I seed a purty little boy sittin' on a door-step nursin' a kitten. I was innocently goin' to take the pussy from him to ate it up quietly widout killin' it, but whin I took hold ov the little boy's arm, it felt so nice and tender; so I did—shure, I cudn't help it,
ma'am; hunger is a savage feelin’”——

“Mercy me! do you really mean to say you bit it off?”

“Hould on a bit, ma'am; don't ye be so awfully skeered; see, I saved the bone—ha, ha! Here it is, ma'am,” added Biddy, taking from her pocket an old-fashioned ivory needle-case, and offering it to the old lady; “ye shall have it for a kape-sake, as ye're so mighty fond ov me, ma'am.”

“Ugh! Yah! Get away from me, you dreadful creature!” shrieked Miss Dottz.

“Arrah! take that wid yer. Go an' print that in yer new book, ye pryin' ould pen-an'-ink monger,” muttered Biddy, as she hurried down to the kitchen.

“Oh, dear me! Miss Stubble. I have just had such a terrible shock to my nerves! Do get me a glass of water, love!” gasped Miss Dottz, when Maggie entered the drawing-room a few minutes afterwards.

“What is the matter, Miss Dottz? You are looking as pale as death. What has alarmed you?”

“Oh, mercy me! that wicked old servant of yours has given me such a turn. She has got a little boy's bone in her pocket, and”——

“A little boy's what?” exclaimed Maggie; then suddenly surmising that Biddy had been practising some of her comical freaks on the literary lady, she burst out laughing, which further shocked Miss Dottz's sensitive system.

“I humbly beg pardon,” said Maggie, handing Miss Dottz a glass of water. “But I could not help laughing at the idea of you're being so much afraid of poor Biddy, who is the kindest old soul in the world. I am sure she would not hurt a cat.”

“Why, she told me only a few minutes ago, that she was once going to actually eat a live kitten; and,—oh, it's too horrible to repeat what she said beside! I was nearly swooning when you came into the room.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Maggie again. “Pray excuse me, Miss Dottz; I am ashamed of my rudeness. I think this is the explanation of Biddy's strange conduct. She has a silly idea that you intend to introduce her in your book of adventures, and she is afraid of you on that account. Though she is a crochety old creature, and sometimes says the most extraordinary things, she is as good-natured honest a soul as ever lived; and I am sure you would like her if you knew her better.”

The explanation seemed to revive Miss Dottz a little; but it was some time before she resumed her usual vivacity; nor did she seem to make rapid progress towards liking Biddy very strongly, for whenever she entered the room during the evening, Miss Dottz eyed her as suspiciously as she would have eyed a mad dog without a muzzle.
Chapter XV.

Mr Simon Goldstone and the bridesmaids.—Mr Stubble tries whisky toddy.—Biddy Flynn's reflections on her master's defection.—Ben Goldstone's conviviality.

BEN GOLDSTONE gradually recovered from the effects of his excesses; and at the end of a fortnight, none but a Muddletonian would have supposed him to be the identical blusterer who had so lately offered to fight all the Conservatives in the electorate, “one down, and another come on.”

Ben had not been inactive during his convalescent season, though he had kept away from his accustomed haunts, from a modest dislike to be consoled with on his late inglorious defeat. He had in the meantime taken a cottage ornée at Waverley, and given Hunt & Co. orders to furnish it in becoming style. He had also been measured for his wedding-suit, and had made other necessary preparations for the approaching nuptial ceremony. After his blue bruises had toned down sufficiently to escape the notice of a short-sighted man, Ben called to see his father, who smiled when his humbled son explained how “that he had been sold by a clique of Muddletonian savages, who had been bought by the unscrupulous agents of his political opponent.”

Mr Goldstone expressed a hope that it would be a salutary warning to his son not to attempt again to mount into a position for which everybody but himself could see his utter unfitness. He politely thanked Ben for an invitation to his wedding, but was not sure that he could attend on account of his cough; but he promised to call on the Stubbles, as they were now his tenants, and he could, at the same time, pay his respects to his daughter-in-law elect. Ben said she would be exceedingly proud to see him; and after a little more conversation on nothing in particular, he departed.

The next afternoon Mr Goldstone called to see his new tenants. He was shown up into the drawing-room, and quite unexpectedly found himself in the presence of Maggie and half-a-dozen of her young female friends, who had met to discuss certain matters connected with the forthcoming bridal ceremony, in which they, as bridesmaids, were interested.

Frigid indeed must any old gentleman be who could sit in the presence of seven comely maidens without showing some outward sign of satisfaction. From divers causes, Mr Goldstone was in an unusually placid mood that day. In the first place, he had been relieved of an annoying mental load by the news of his son's political defeat; then the change from his murky room
to the sunshine and fresh air was exhilarating to his shaken system; furthermore, he had been cheered, on his entrance to the house, to see how nicely it had been put in order at the tenant's expense; and lastly, the presence of the blooming lasses was not the least of the influences which had all combined to make his heart glad: in fact, he had not felt so pleasingly excited for many a long day, and his yellow face looked as cheerful as a fog-lantern.

“And pray, which is the young lady that my son has been fortunate enough to win?” asked Simon, in his pleasantest tones.

“This is the fortunate young lady, sir. Allow me to introduce her, as I am to have the honour of being her chief bridesmaid,” said a roguish-looking lassie with black eyes and brown ringlets, as she led Maggie up to her smiling father-in-law, who shook hands with her very cordially, and seemed as if he were half-inclined to salute her in a more loving way.

“I am very glad to see you, my dear. If Ben were here, I should offer him my honest congratulations on his choice. He is a lucky fellow. I hope you may be happy, my child.”

Maggie felt relieved of a depressing influence which had struck her dumb at the first entrance of Mr Goldstone. She had formed a dreadful opinion of him from little rumours which had reached her from time to time, and from certain hints which Ben had given her to mind her P's and Q's when his father called on her. She had expected to see a sour-looking, snarling old fellow, who would freeze her with his first touch, whose cynical sayings would wound all her susceptibilities, and whose scowling looks would shrivel her back to her native insignificance in a minute; and she was the more embarrassed on account of the absence of her parents. But Simon's affectionate manner had quite reassured her, and the timidity she felt at his entry to the room gave place to a feeling of real delight at seeing such a very different person to the one whom she had expected to see. Her young companions were equally pleased; and Simon presently astonished himself at the funny things he was encouraged to say, and which set all the lasses laughing like elves.

Girls usually feel licensed to take innocent liberties with a merry old man; and their rapid progress in good fellowship may be estimated by the fact, that when Ben arrived, half-an-hour afterwards, he was not a little surprised to see his father sitting on a couch, with all the girls clustered around him, trying to coax him to sing; while the old gentleman, with tears of laughter in his eyes, was protesting that he had never sung a song in his life, and did not know one.

“Oh, here is Mr Benjamin!” cried the roguish lassie with black eyes, and who was the merriest of the merry girls. “You have just come in time; do,
pray, try to persuade your father to sing us a song. He has been saying such
funny things—ha, ha, ha! I am sure he must be able to sing. Now, Mr
Goldstone, sing us a song—do, there's a dear old ducky!"

“Aye, father, sing ‘Old dog Tray,’ ” said Ben, laughing.

“Tut, tut, boy! what nonsense you talk! You know very well that I have
no more voice for singing than a fish-hawk has.”

“Oh, yes; do sing about dog Tray, Mr Goldstone,” giggled all the girls in
chorus, while they clustered more closely round the old man, who actually
laughed till he cried, though no moral pressure could induce him to sing.
Ben was highly amused at the scene, and was enlightened also, for he had
never before seen his father in such a happy mood. It was clear to him that
feminine fun had more effect on the crusted nature of his sire than any
influence which he, Ben, was acquainted with; and he sagaciously resolved
to trust to Maggie's winsome ways, instead of his own logic, in his future
appeals to his father's feelings, or his future attempts on his father's pocket.

After a while, Mr Goldstone took his leave, and walked homeward with a
more elastic step than he had done for years. As he went along, he reflected
that, after all, a little genial society was more exhilarating to the animal
spirits than were even the profoundest studies in mental philosophy; and
the girls were, in the meantime, unanimous in their declaration that he was
a “dear old darling.” The roguish lassie, before alluded to, went so far as to
say that she was downright in love with him, which made her companions
exclaim, “O Lydia!” She was only in fun, of course; but Ben thought it was
too serious a matter to joke about, and secretly hoped the young lady
would not say that again, for he did not like to encourage even the shadow
of an idea that his father would be silly enough to marry again.

Mr and Mrs Stubble returned home a short time after Mr Goldstone left
the house, and Maggie got a mild scolding for not asking him to stay to tea.
Mrs Stubble was in a ruffled mood. She had been to a photographer's to sit
for her likeness, and had trimmed herself up extra smart, as most ladies do
for such interesting operations. It had been decided by a family conference
that father and mother should be taken together; so they started out that
afternoon for the purpose. But the difficulty of the task could only be
appreciated by the artist himself; and his patience was so sorely tested that,
in order to relieve his feelings, he had several times to go into his dark
room and blow up his boy. Two fine pictures had been spoiled by Mr
Stubble moving his arms or legs after he had been screwed into a becoming
pose; a third had been marred by his winking at his wife when the artist put
his head into the baize bag; and the fourth, in which Peggy was taken to
perfection, represented Joe in the act of stifling a yawn, with his mouth
drawn towards his left ear. He had refused to sit again, for which obstinacy
his wife had rated him all the way home.

After tea, Ben and Mr Stubble adjourned to a little room, which was called the “snuggery,” there to smoke their pipes over a glass of whisky-toddy (which Joe was learning to sip without coughing), and to discuss sundry topics of interest. In the first place, Ben produced a proper statement of monies expended by him on Mr Stubble's account, for repairs to the house; also the tailor's and upholsterer's bills, all duly receipted. The commercial abbreviations, “per pro. note at 3 mos.,” were unintelligible to Joe. Still, he did not like to show his ignorance by asking questions; so he merely said, “I daresay 'em be all right, Benjamin,” and put them into his pocket without further examination, lest he should be supposed to have a doubt on the subject. The balance in his favour, Ben told him, he could have the next day, if he chose to keep his own bank accounts. Joe had previously been cogitating over the uncertainty of life and other contingencies, and had arrived at the conclusion that the money would be as well in his own hands as under the sole control of his intended son-in-law; so he replied, “Well, perhaps thee may as well hand me over the money, if it be's all the same to thee, sir.”

“Just so,” said Ben, with a look which might have caused uneasiness to a keener observer than Mr Stubble, or to one more accustomed to the ways of the world. In truth, Ben was not so willing to hand over the balance as he wished his companion to suppose, for his electioneering expenses had been heavy, and the cost of furnishing his cottage ornée would not be light; besides, luck had been dead against him at the late Hombush races. Still, it was no part of his policy to explain these matters. “Just so, father; I am glad you have decided so, as it will relieve me of a little anxiety. I think you had better open a bank account, say in the Commercial. I'll go with you to-morrow, and introduce you to the manager. Nice fellow, Ingoldby. I know him intimately. Won't you try another nobbler of toddy?” he added, as he replenished his own glass.

“Noa, thank'ee, Benjamin; I be young at this game. I feel this glass that I have just drink’d tingling all the way down to my little toes. I woan't take any more, or mayhap it'll get into my head and capsize me altogether.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Ben; “you will soon be able to stand a second glass. I have been thinking, father, that you and I might make money like winking by uniting our capital, as it were, and going in for a bold spec now and then, say in flour, or”——

“Noa; I bean't going to spec in making bread dear, for that 'ud speckle my conscience,” replied Joe, with far more boldness than usual, for which the whisky-toddy was accountable. “I seed that game carried on years agone by a lot of dodging chaps in Sydney, who ‘raised the wind' atween
themselves by some sort of hocus-pocus what Master Rowley tried to explain to me; and bless'd if 'em didn't run the price of flour up to £3 a hundred. It didn't stop long at that price, thee may be sure; no thanks to them though, for they would have runned 'en up to £6 if 'em could. Down it came again; but these greedy beggars held on to their stuff till it got full of worms, and won't wholesome for pig's meat. Then, in course, 'em was glad to sell at any price; and for months and months folks were half-poisoned with bad bread, especially the poor chaps far away in the bush, where 'em wor forced to eat it, or go without. No, no, Benjamin; I bean't going to turn famine-monger, if I know it.”

“I mentioned flour, father, incidentally; but I don't approve of monopolising the staff of life any more than you do; in fact, I believe there is a curse hanging over the practice,” said Ben, with a virtuous air. “There are scores of other things that we might go in for, and make money without risk. By the bye, I'll tell you something that I heard of yesterday, but you must not mention it to a soul. I know a gentleman—an intimate friend of mine in fact—who has a private still, and”——

“Well, he may keep his still, and all the luck he'll brew out of it too, for it's sartain to be bad luck,” interrupted Joe. “I won't have naught to do wi 't, anyway. I'd sooner deal in dead horses and feed cats.”

“I did not ask you to have anything to do with it, father; so you need not be so precious sharp with me all at once,” said Ben, rather tartly.

“Beg your pardon, Benjamin. Didn't mean to say naught to vex thee. I wor thinkin' just then of a yarn as neighbour Doddle told me about a cove as he knew who kept a private still, and drove himself mad with it.”

“That is very likely,” said Ben. “Sly grog-making has done lots of mischief. It was common enough before the excise duties were reduced. It used to be called ‘wicked willany;’ and I have heard my father tell some queer stories about old Bob R—er—what's his name?”

“Bob Dickells,” suggested Joe.

“Not at all. He was in quite another line; and let me warn you, that it is not safe to say there is ‘wicked willany’ in his profession, though poor Bob is dead and gone.”

“Hold on a bit, Benjamin; that puts me in mind of a true story as Mr Rowley told me about that very same gentleman, and thee had better let me tell it now, afore I forget 'en. One day Bob Dickells had the bailie put in his house for a debt of fifty pounds. I suppose it was for rent, though it might have been for summat else, for he was pretty often run into strait through being too free in lending or giving away his money; anyway, he was five pounds short of the sum he wanted to pay off the bailie; so out he goes to borrow it. As luck would have it, the first friend he called on to ax for the
money had a bailie in his house too, so he couldn't lend naught. 'I be sorry to see thee in the same fix as myself,' said Bob, looking at the chap in the kind, jolly, careless way that he always had with him. "What is the amount of yer debt?"

"Seven pounds ten," said the poor man, who was close up crying, because his wife was ill in bed, and the bailie's bellman was outside her widow, ringing away like fire.

"Here it is, old fellow!" said Bob, taking the money out of his pocket, and counting it down on the table. "We needn't both be in trouble at once; so pay your bailie off, and stop that beggaring bell."

"Bravo! Bob," exclaimed Ben. "That was jocose; and yet I have heard some superfine people say wicked things of poor Dickells after he was dead."

"Yes; that's natural, Benjamin, because it's safer to backbite a dead man than a live one, you know; and it's likely enough them chaps as run him down would have seeded the bed sold from under the sick woman afore 'em would have paid down seven pounds ten shillings to save it. I mean to say Bob was a brick, whatever his enemies say against it."

"I say ditto," remarked Ben.

"There are other men in the colony too who are said to be first-rate bad," continued Mr Stubble, with warmth; "and blamed if I don't believe 'em 'll astonish a lot of the good ones at the grand squaring-up day for us all."

"Well, there is good in everybody and everything, I suppose," said Ben, with a philosophical look. "There are jewels in a toad's head, the poets say."

"Perhaps so, Benjamin, though I never seed any; but I know there be's prime soup in a kangaroo's tail, and tripe isn't bad tack when it's nice and clean."

"There is not much poetry in it anyway, father."

"Ha, ha! that old fellow with a cart who cries out 'Tripe O!' doesn't look much like a poet neither. But I say, Benjamin, I don't feel the whisky tickling me now as it did awhile ago when I first drink'd it. How is that?"

"You should keep the steam up, daddy. You cannot expect one glass of whisky to make you frisky all night long."

"I s'pose it won't then; but I bean't much used to 'en. I never dranked grog afore in my life 'cept one time, and that was at a harvest supper at whoam. Measter gived us a glass of old Tom all round, and et made some of our chaps wicked sure enough, for 'em had been drinking sharp cider afore that. But I heard tell of a sailor as went into a grog-shop in Sydney t'other day, and says he to the landlord, 'I say, gov'nor, give us another nobbler of the same tack as I had here on Saturday night; it tickled my limbers like hot
bullets for three days. The landlord looked scared, as if it was a ghost at his bar, for he know'd before that he had made a mistake and gived the chap a glass out of the bottle of vitriol, or some other stingeree stuff what he kept to 'liven his rum with, and he was afear'd he'd be hanged for killing his customer out and out.”

“Ha, ha, ha! That fellow was used to it, father, and that shows what practice will do. Let me mix you another tot,” said Ben, who thereupon prepared a second glass of toddy for Joe, and a third for himself.

“Codlins! this be's woful strong, though, Benjamin,” said Joe, after taking a few pleasant sips. “There be's plenty of tickle in this, for I begin to feel all alive already.”

“That is what I call mixing it on the square, or fair and equal parts of water and whisky. Suck it up, daddy; it will make you talk pure Devonshire.”

Half-an-hour afterwards Mrs Stubble tapped at the room-door to remind her husband that it was bed-time, when he calle'd out in loud stammering tones, such as she had never before heard from him. “Coom in, Pe-Pe-Peggy lass! Drabbit, what be thee ra-rappin' at the door for? (hic.) Coom in, an' welcome, old 'ooman.”

“Why, measter, what have you been about? Your nose is as red as a carrot!” exclaimed Peggy, as she entered the room, and gazed with unfeigned surprise at her spouse, who was grinning and nodding and winking in that facetious style which usually marks an early stage of inebriety, when the patient is disposed to be playful in the extreme.

“Here, ta-take a sup of this, mother,” said Joe, pulling his wife on to his knee. “This will warm thee heart like friendship, and make thee love thee enemies. Give us a buss, Peg. Tut, doan't 'ee be shy, lass; I knowed thee forty years gone and more—(hic.) What's the odds if Ben be's looking at us? He's our own boy now, close up—(hic)—ha, ha, ha! I be as happy as a rat in a granary—ho, ho, ho! That's right, Peg; take another sip, lass—(hic)—plenty more in the cellar—ha, ha, ha! I be so out-and-out jolly.

‘O there was an old 'ooman in Darby,
And in Darby her did dwell.’ ”

“Why, bless my heart, Joe, I never heard you sing afore in all my born days,” said Peggy, laughing.

“I don't know no more of that song—(hic)—but I'll give thee the same over agin as long as thee likes. Us used to sing it at harvest supper in the old country.” Joe forthwith began to sing it again in a style which doubtless
astonished the pawnbroker over the way, and probably the watch-house keeper too, at the corner of the next street.

"Save us all! what on airth is that row?" exclaimed Biddy, running up from the kitchen. Bob and Maggie were equally astonished; and on hastening into the snuggerly they beheld their mother sitting on father's knee, and Goldstone sitting opposite, looking highly amused at what he called a "jolly domestic scene." As Benjamin was laughing, Bob and his sister laughed too, though the scene might have made them weep, for their father was intoxicated, and their mother was smirking or laughing aloud at his grossly absurd sayings and doings.

"Ochone! an' it's come to this, is it? They wull pritty soon settle themselves now," whined Biddy, as she shuffled back to the kitchen. "The ould feller is singin' dhrunk, an' them are all grinnin' at him, as if it wor mighty witty for him to make a fool ov himself, an' a baste too. Well, well! didn't I say to meself what wud be up, when I seed that carrt-load ov grog comin' into the house? I did so; for I' ve sane forty hundred poor sowls, or more, ruined intirely by that same stuff since I fisht came to the colony. Ah, shure! I am sorry enough for these craythers; so I am, for they'll go post-haste to the divil from this out, unless the good Lord himself sinds some blissed trouble to shtop 'em. But I'll go to bed, an' git out ov the way, anyhow, for I can't bear to see the like; an' for sartin, I shall offind 'em all iv I let my gabbling tongue loose."

* * * * *

Two hours afterwards, Biddy was aroused from her sober slumbers by a great noise on the stairs, and she was not long in learning the cause of it. Mrs Stubble and her children were carrying Mr Stubble up to bed.

"Och musha!" sighed Biddy, as she drew her night-cap over her ears to stifle Joe's incoherent whinings. "The poor ould masther is cryin' dhrunk now, an' I'll ingage he'll look as dismal as a smoky Chinaman to-morrow morning. Ochone! what misery that horrid grog is makin' in the worrld to be shure, an' nothin' at all can stop it. Yis, there is though—I make a mistake—the grace of God can stop it, for it stopped it from ruining meself years agone, whin many ov the gals who came out in the ship wid me went to the bad altogether, through dhrinkin' rum."

"I don't mane to say that, if I had a pig, I wadn't let the baste ate grains from a brewery or a still-house; I ain't sich a boiling-hot tay-tottler as all that," continued Biddy, after a few minutes' silent meditation on her own merciful deliverance from the curse of drink. "Nor I won't say that iverybody who takes a dhrop of drink in moderation is a haythin; not at all. I niver sed that, though I have heard somebody say as much; but I mane to
say that them as never tastes a smell ov it are safest. Troth, I wish from me heart that all the bright boys and gals in this land wud say they niver wud touch it at all. Ah! well, well! this dhrinkin' bout in the house to-night will be a lesson to Masther Bob an' his sister, anyhow; an' afther seeing what a fool grog has made ov their poor old father, naythir ov them will have the bad sinse to taste a single sup ov it, no more nor they wud go within a chain's length ov Teddy, the butcher's bull-dog.”

After that somewhat comforting reflection, Biddy shut her eyes and soon snored herself to sleep.
Chapter XVI.

Morning reflections.—Squaring up with Ben Goldstone.—
Unhappy tiff over it.—Mr Stubble opens account with the
Commercial Bank.

“Ha, ha, ha! Do you really say that you don't remember kissing Benjamin
last night, father?”

“Not I, indeed, gal! Never kissed a man in my life as I know of, nor I
doan't want to, neither. I remember dancing a fandango with mother round
the snuggery table, and singin' about the ould 'ooman in Darby; but that's
all the harm I did, 'cept getting drunk, and I be sorry enow I did that.”

“Oh, Joe, I saw you kiss Benjamin with my own eyes,” said Peggy; “and
you told him to his face that he was a regular gentleman, though when you
first saw him you thought he was a rogue-rascal, who was going to teach
your gal the first step in the ruination gallop.”

“I tell'ee I doan't remember aught about 'en, Peggy. But doan't 'ee bother
me any more just now, there 's a good soul; my head ackes like whopping.”

“I remember that you promised me a new saddle and bridle, father; and I
mean to call at Smart's this morning and order them,” said Bob, with a sly
look at his sister.

“Well, well, boy, if I did promise 'en, it's all right; thee shall have 'en; but
I doan't remember that neither.”

“You surely don't forget that you promised me that nice large piano that
you bought so cheap, father,” said Maggie, with a persuasive look at her
father, and a side-glance at her mother.

“Noa, lass, I doan't recollect it no more than I do being born into the
world; howsomer, thee shall have the panney safe enow. I meant to
make thee a handsome present for yer new house; so that'll do nicely. Give
us a cup of coffee, Peggy, and doan't 'ee say any more any of yer, for I be
'shamed of myself, and that's all about it. I tould thee how it would be,
missis, when thee first telled about getting such a lot of drink in the house,
for I've seen this sort of thing afore today, and so hast thee too. Old Daddy
Wood, as us knowed up country, was a happy man till he began to keep a
case of gin under his bed, and that pretty soon settled 'en.”

“I didn't get all that liquor, you know, Joe; I should never have thought of
buying a whole cart-load.”

“But thee telled Ben to buy et though; and he allers does things by
wholesale. For my part, I wish it wor all spilled into the drain; and I'll go
and do't too, if thee 'll say the word. Us never had a sup of grog in our
house afore since us have been in the land; and that's why us made so much money, I believe. Us have allers been healthy and happy without it; but now us have both broken our pledges—more shame for us—what us kept more nor five-and-twenty years. I be fit to cry.”

“Us, you say! Why, I didn't get tipsy, father,” said Peggy, warmly

“Noa, I didn't say thee did, Peggy; but thee took a sip or two, and that's enow to break the promise us made when us stood up, hand in hand, afore dear old fayther and mother in Dab cottage, and said us would never taste strong drink as long as us lived.”

“Oh, that's such a long time ago, that I forgot it, Joe; besides we couldn't afford anything but skim milk in them days. Times are altered, you know, and it is only common sense that we should alter too. We can afford to live as other folks do now; and as I said before, it is necessary to have wine and stuff in the house for our visitors, unless we want to be talked about everywhere. We are not bound to drink it ourselves, unless we like. I never dreamt of you getting tipsy, father, at no time, especially on the very first night you tapped the demijohn of whisky.”

“Neither did I dream about et, I can tell'ee. I didn't mean to touch the stuff at all, but Ben kept on coaxing me to take just a little sup to keep him company, and I thought it looked bad manners not to do't in my own house; so I took a sup more to oblige Ben than to please myself. Then after I tooked one tot, I was easily persuaded to take another, and that upset me, for Ben made et woful strong. But the best thing us can do, Peggy, is to shake hands again now directly, and promise afore Bob and Mag not to taste any more. That's the safest way to deal with dangerous stuff, for if us don't drink the first glass, there is no danger of the second, or the floorer. What dost thee say, lass!”

“What is the good of doing that, measter? I am sure we should not keep our words with all this liquor in the house, and Mag's wedding coming off next week. We must drink her health, I suppose, same as other folks do, if we only take a sip; and how shabby it would look for us to drink it in water! Benjamin wouldn't like that, I am sure, and other friends would laugh at us. But you may depend on it that I will never get tipsy; and if you promise not to do it again, I shall be satisfied. You made a mistake last night, but I don't see why you should grieve yourself to death about it; better men that you have made mistakes of that sort. I bean't a bit afeard of you getting tipsy again, measter.”

“Thee be's right there, Peggy. I shan't do't again in a hurry, I'll bet a guinea. It'll be a long day afore I forget this splitting headache. Give us another cup of coffee, lass.”

The foregoing colloquy took place at the breakfast-table on the morning
after Mr Stubble's unprecedented debauch. Some of my readers may probably understand his peculiar sensations; I trust, however, that but few, if any of my youthful friends have an experimental knowledge of the enervating reaction of strong drink. Young Australians are comparatively free from the degrading vice of intemperance; and however much our excise returns may seem to contradict that statement, I firmly adhere to it. The currency lads and lasses do not aid much in making up the enormous aggregate which statistics of the liquor traffic exhibit; and though recent analysts have shown a startling average expenditure, it is certain that there are thousands of young persons in the land who have never spent a penny in strong drink. This reflection may help to reanimate the dispirited faggers of temperance reform, who certainly want a little more encouragement. Though the miasma of intemperance sadly distempers our social atmosphere, there is a good time coming; for when the hosts of children who are now associated with our Sunday schools and bands of hope* grow up to men and women, their influence will be mighty in dispelling this moral pestilence.

“I say, missis, art thee going to use the machine to-day?” asked Joe, as he arose from the table, after breakfast was over.

“I have begged of you, I don't know how many times, Stubble, not to call our carriage the machine. It sounds so shockingly vulgar, and you know very well it annoys Mag and Bob.”

“Beg pardon, Peggy; I forgot. Didn't mean to vex thee. I'll recollect next time. If thee wert going out this afternoon, I'd like thee to give me a lift as far as Ben's place.”

“I would rather you asked for a drive, father; a lift sounds so much like a carman's talk. But I heard you promise Benjamin to meet him this morning at eleven o'clock, to go to the bank about something or other.”

“My wig! so I did, and I'd clean forgot it. Glad thee hast told me, Peggy. Bring me my boots, Biddy. Look sharp, will 'ee! Bang the maid! what ails her this morning, I wonder?”

Biddy shortly appeared with the boots, and explained that “it wor unpossible to polish 'em at all, bekase summat was split on 'em last night, what took ivery bit ov the shine out ov the leather.”

Joe sighed as he drew on his dull boots, for he reflected that the same stuff had taken the shine off his character for sobriety. As soon as he had left the house, his wife and daughter began to laugh at the clever way in which they had managed to get rid of the odious old cabinet piano from their grand drawing-room. A furniture van was sent for at once; and Bob undertook to see the objectionable instrument snugly stowed away in the stable at the rear of Ben's lodgings, and covered up with clean straw.
“How are you this morning, daddy?” asked Ben, as Joe walked into Tattersall's long room, about eleven o'clock.

“I be sick and sorry, Benjamin,” replied Joe, with a slight groan. “My head be's as sore as if it had been thrashed with a bean-flail, and my narves be's all twiddling about like skinned eels.”

“Ha, ha, ha! You look rather seedy. You had better take a hair of the dog that bit you. Hey, waiter! bring some soda-water and brandy.”

“Two sodas and brandy, sir—yes sir,” said the waiter, and away he hurried to execute the order.

“I doan't want any more strong stuff to make me weaker than I be, Benjamin,” said Joe, after the waiter had left the mixture sparkling in the glasses before them. “I promised the missis I'd never get drunk agin.”

“Drunk! Of course not, father. You took one glass too much last night, and that is what always does the mischief; but this is sober tipple, the established panacea for morning creeps. If you are going to the bank with me, you will want your hand steady enough to sign your name in the depositors' book; so, drink this up while it fizzes. Here's luck!”

After that popular hob-nobbing toast, Ben tossed off his reviver; and Joe with trembling hands raised his tumbler to his lips. The first sip was wonderfully refreshing, so he took a second sip, which made him bold enough to drink it all; and he felt, as he confessed, ever so much better directly.

“Now then, old man, we will go and see my friend Zachary at the Commercial. But stay a minute,—don' t be in a hurry; sit down, while I show you how I propose to square our little money matters. Here is my cheque, you see, for £472, 3s. 2d.; you must pay that into current account, which you will open with the bank. I'll show you how to do it by and bye.”

“Thee don't mean to say thee has spent all 'cept this?” said Joe, with extreme wonderment and alarm in his countenance.

“Not at all. I'll explain in a minute or two. Here is my promissory-note for the balance, £2350. You will find that is right to a penny. It is drawn at four months—merely a nominal thing, you know; you can get the cash for it at any time you like, that is to say, on any discount-day; but you don't want it at present, I know.”

“Be's this thing what 'em call a bill?” asked Joe, shrinking back as though Ben were handing him a stinging nettle or a tame snake.

“It is not generally styled a thing by polite people, sir. Sometimes it is called a bill, at other times a promissory-note; but it is all the same. What are you afraid of?”

“Well, I've heard so much talk about these consarns that I be scared to have aught to do with 'em; that's a fact, Benjamin. Master Rowley has
telled me of such a heap of roguery, and”——

“Rowley be blowed!” interrupted Ben, with a vehemence which made Joe jump, for he was unusually nervous that morning. But recovering his temper as suddenly as he had lost it, Ben straightened himself up, like lofty principle towering over vulgar prejudice, and replied with stately emphasis. “I am very glad you have expressed your doubts of my honour and my solvency to myself, Mr Stubble, It would have been a far more severe blow to my honest pride if you had let Mr Ingoldby see that you regarded my bill as a mere thing; in fact, as an instrument of roguery.”

“I didn't say that at all; leastways, I didn't mean it.”

“Hitherto I have had the proud satisfaction of knowing that bankers and the public in general regarded me as a gentleman of capital as well as principle; as a man worthy the suffrages of a great constituency,” continued Ben, without appearing to notice Joe's stammering attempts at explanation. “My bill has never been questioned before for an instant; in fact, any thoroughly sane person would as soon think of objecting to a bank-note. But it appears that I have miscalculated the extent of your confidence in me, sir. I am certainly grieved at it for domestic reasons; but it will not otherwise affect me, for it is as easy for me to raise ten thousand pounds as to toss up twopence. If you will stop here for an hour or so, Mr Stubble, I will go and get the cash for you. But stay; upon second thoughts, you will perhaps pardon me for saying that I would prefer paying it to you in the presence of your highly-esteemed family. My motive for this is to enable me to produce documentary proofs which I trust will satisfy all parties, that you have no tangible grounds for stigmatising my honour and my credit in the way you have done, sir.”

“Humbly beg pardon Benj——er—Mr Goldstone,” stammered Joe, who was really concerned at the idea of having hurt his friend's feelings, which was far from his intention. Ben's wordy address, too, frightened him like a lawyer's letter. “I didn't say naught against yer honourable credit, sir. I'd rather be skinne——

“Do you mean to insinuate that I want to skin you, sir?” interrupted Ben. “Not I, Benjamin; never thought of such a thing. I was going to say I'd rather be flayed alive than say aught to offend thee; that's it, Benjamin.”

“When I volunteered to take charge of your money, Mr Stubble,” continued Ben, with increasing emotion, “I was actuated by the purest motives of interest in your family, and anxiety for your personal safety in a city which, I blush to say, contains some persons unscrupulous enough to knock a man's brains out for the mere convenience of picking his pockets quietly. I transferred that risk to myself, sir; and for my kindness in so doing, I have been wounded in the severest manner possible by the very
person whose life and money I have been so anxious to guard from robbery
and violence. Is it any wonder, then, that I exhibit strong feeling? Hey, wai
ter! bring me a nobbler of pale brandy.”

While Ben was swallowing the nobbler, Joe explained, in the most
pathetic terms, that he had not the slightest intention to cast doubt on the
honour of his beloved young friend; and laying his hand affectionately on
the wounded youth's shoulder, Joe told him he might give him his bill, or
he might keep the whole toto if he liked; but by no means was he to say a
word at home about their little unhappy tiff, for it would make Maggie sulk
for a month.

“I felt hurt last night, father,” said Ben, in softened accents, “at the abrupt
way in which you spoke to me when I merely hinted at our going into
business speculations for our mutual benefit. Your manner was as sharp as
if I had actually proposed to you to start a sly grogery, or to conspire to
make poor people eat mouldy bread, when my very soul abhors such
doings. My motive was to benefit you principally —I need not try to make
money for myself; and I was going to propose some honest speculation or
other, if you had permitted me to speak. I shall soon have the honour of
being related to you, and I naturally feel as much interest in your affairs as
I do in my own—more, in fact, because”——

“Yes, yes; I know all that, Benjamin. I be very much obliged to thee.
Now, doan't 'ee say any more about it; there's a good ma—gentleman. I be
mortal sorry that I vexed thee; but I wor drunk last night, thee know'st, and
I be stupid this morning. Shake hands, now, and make it all up; I'll never
do't agin. That's right, me boy. Now us be good friends. Come away to the
bank, and see Mr Zachary —what's his name? and only tell me what to do,
and I'll do't in a crack.”

They forthwith proceeded to the bank, and after a short private
conference, Goldstone introduced Mr Stubble to the manager, who shook
hands with him in the pleasant manner he usually showed to independent
customers, for Ben had explained Mr Stubble's financial position in
flattering terms. Joe had never been inside such a big bank before; and the
awe which the various monetary manipulations induced actually made him
perspire. His excessive humility, manifested in every look and action, was
an interesting contrast to the deportment of monied men in general; and the
junior clerks might have fancied that he was seeking accommodation of
some kind. But Zachary's experience in the more responsible routine of
financial life had taught him to look sharp; so he could tell, by merely half
a glance from one eye, that Joe's genuine rustic modesty was quite foreign
to the creeping diffidence of a needy customer, whose heart was aching
with anxiety, and quaking too with a consciousness of the tremendous
crushing powers of the little man in the morocco chair. He could read Joe's character in a minute; and though he had long before mentally set Ben Goldstone down as one of his natural enemies, he had no misgivings about Mr Stubble ever attempting to draw a penny more out of the bank than he had previously paid into it. Nor would he (Zachary) ever have to look suspiciously at Joe, and formally promise “to lay his application before the board.” Such customers as Mr Stubble do not contribute much to satisfactory dividends; still, banks must have depositors; and in times of active competition it is considered good policy to treat them deferentially.

Joe's business was speedily settled. He deposited the cheque to current account, lodged the bill for collection, and affixed his signature to the bank register as usual; then said, “I wish 'ee good day, sir,” to the complaisant manager, bowed timidly to the messenger at the door-way, and departed with his new cheque-book coiled inside his hat.

* “The Grand United Band of Hope” has recently been inaugurated in Sydney. It seeks to incorporate the children of all the Sunday Schools throughout the colony. The projectors of this movement are men of the right sort.
Chapter XVII.

Bob's visit to the opera with Ben Goldstone.—Sees Miss Blunt, a young lady with £40,000.—Ben's advice to Bob on matrimonial matters.

“LOOK across to the second box there, Bob, at that girl beside the old lady with heavy jewellery and a rainbow turban. Take a good quiz at her through my opera-glass, and tell me what you think of her.”

“Rather plain article in my eyes,” drawled Bob, after he had scrutinised the young lady for several minutes. “Who is she, Goldstone?”

“I'll tell you all about her presently. Tut! don't let her see you quizzing her, or the old woman will be down on you like pewter pots. You are not half up to the mark as a lady-killer, Bob, though you are so clever at bringing down a bird.”

The above colloquy took place in the dress-circle of the Prince of Wales' theatre. Ben Goldstone had undertaken to show his unsophisticated young friend a little of life in Sydney; so of course he took him to the opera. Bob Stubble had never been in a play-house before; and on his first entry he felt so bedazzled by the gaudy display around him, that Ben rather brusquely told him not to put on such a jolly green look, or he would be sure to get his pockets picked. Bob thereupon blushed for his ignorance of town-life, and began to smell the silver top of his cane, and to practise a few other current fopperies, in imitation of certain knowing youths whom he observed promenading the upper circle, and in the wings of the pit, and looking as much in their glory as goats in a flower garden.

When the first act of the opera was over, the two friends adjourned to a neighbouring café for refreshments, and then Ben confidentially informed Bob that the young lady to whom he had called his attention in the theatre was a Miss Blunt, only daughter of the late Jacob Blunt, who died about a year ago, worth two or three bushels of sovereigns, heap measure, which he left to his wife and daughter, share and share alike. “There's a chance for you, my boy!” added Ben, “and you may smite her as easily as knocking down a parrot, if you go the right way to work about it.”

“I would not have her at any price!” exclaimed Bob. “She is such a queer-looking girl, and a regular kicker in harness, I'll warrant.”

“Pooh! what does that matter? She is worth £40,000 at least. If you like to go in for that spec, Bob, I know the way to work it. That will be better than any Government billet I could have got for you, if I had been returned for Muddleton.”
“I would rather have a girl I was fond of, without a pennypiece. It would be horrible to be tied for life to a woman whom I could not love; indeed, I have no idea of selling my liberty.”

“Balderdash! selling your liberty! You would have the handling of the money just as legally as if your own father had made it; and what liberty and licence is there that cash will not procure? I tell you, in strict confidence, Bob, that I happen to know a party who has seen old Blunt's will, and the money is left without any of those abominable restrictions which some surly fathers insist upon. Old Blunt drew up his will himself, for he was a saving man, and got his own clerks to witness it. It is short and sweet, without any legal lumber, and not a single word in it to prevent either his wife or daughter disposing of their share of the money in any way they like—that is to say, it is theirs absolutely; so of course it is their husband's property if they marry. Any good-looking young fellow who will go gingerly to work with the mother, may soon become her worthy son-in-law; but she is a cunning old Judy, and if she suspects any one has an eye to the money more than to the girl, it would be all U.P. with him directly. Now, it strikes me you are the very fellow to manage her, Bob. You have an innocent look about you, and can talk soft nonsense as natural as life. If you will follow my directions to the letter, your fortune is made; but you must be as careful as if you were going to handle a young thorough-bred filly; I will get you an introduction in a day or two, if you like. It won't do to take you to their box just now; there are too many eyes on the look-out; they would twig our little game, and perhaps spoil it; for these rich wife-hunters are a jealous lot of snobs.”

“Do you know the Blunts intimately, Goldstone?”

“Oh, yes,—that is to say, moderately so. My father and old Blunt used to do business together a few years ago. You saw the ladies bow to me the other day when we were driving in the Domain. They were in a brougham, with a copper-coloured coachman in dun livery.”

“There were so many persons who recognised you then that I scarcely remember any one in particular. How is it that you did not stick up to Miss Blunt yourself?” added Bob, with some hesitation, lest the question should be considered too bold, or be in some way damaging to his sister's interest.

“Hum—er—aw. Why, you see, Bob, having plenty of money of my own in possession or expectancy, I did not want to look after a rich wife: I chose to please my fancy, you know. Love before money, is my motto.”

“Well, I am not in a hurry for a wife; but I should like to please my fancy too, if I ever get married.”

“Of course; and so you can, if you have lots of money, Bob. You noticed that young fellow driving a pair of iron grays in a sociable up William
Street, as we came into town this evening. You saw me wink at him?”

“What, the dashing-looking chap with a Turkish turban round his hat, and a girl something like Maggie sitting beside him?”

“Yes; slap-up girl, wasn't she? Well, he married a widow worth four thousand a year; no cross children, and no crabbed trustees to bother his life out.”

“She is a very young widow, if that was she in the sociable.”

“Tut! widow, indeed!” exclaimed Ben, with a facial twist which Bob could not understand. “That was his cousin! His wife is up at her farm. How jolly green you are, Bob! Ha, ha, ha! Crisp as young spinach. But let us go and see the opera out; we can talk about this afterwards. I'll put you up to a move or two, my boy, if you will make use of your mother-wit: but, mind you, mum's the word, Bob,—not a single syllable of this must be mentioned at home, you know. Keep your own counsel and stick to me, and I'll show you how to make money a hundred times easier than working for it. Since you have been figged up by my tailor, you are a jolly smart-looking fellow, and you may make a fortune by your good looks. I don't see why men should not do a little in that line as well as women.”

“ ‘What is good for the goose is good for the gander,’ I suppose,” said Bob, whose smirky looks at Ben's sophistical speech showed that he thought there was some force in it, and a voluptuous field of sentiment seemed to present itself which his fancy had never yet explored. Ben noted the effect of his remarks on his pliant young pupil, but he deemed it premature to detail his scheme for Ben's matrimonial advancement just then.

Whether it was coyness, or any other virtue, the reader must judge; but Ben did not disclose to Bob all he knew of Miss Blunt and her spirited mamma; neither did he confess to the failure of his own bold attempt on the heart or the fortune of that young lady. But the truth is, Ben had proposed to her, and was sternly repulsed, or, as Mrs Blunt tritely remarked, “She had sent him away with a flea in his ear,” for she happened to know him better than she cared to trust him.

“Who was that girl whom you nodded to just now, Goldstone?” asked Bob, as they sauntered along, arm-in-arm, after leaving the café.

“Eh—er—oh! a girl I've merely seen across a counter. I don't know her, of course. By the bye, you twig that little shop over the way, Bob? Now, if you want to see a nice batch of pretty modest girls, just pop in there some evening.”

“I would rather not, thank'ee,” replied Bob, blushing. “I never went into a place of that sort yet, and I don't mean to begin neither. I've heard too much about the misery that has befallen young fellows who have been
lured into such dens. I have a good constitution, and I intend to take care of it. Charley Swallow is as rickety as an old man, and he is not thirty years old.”

“Tush! what are you talking about, Bob? Do you think I would induce you to enter a brothel?” said Ben, with virtuous warmth. “That is a respectable shop—merely a house of call for young girls who are in places of business—a sort of trysting-place where their sweethearts meet them to see them home. That is all. Lots of modest girls call there.”

“If I had a sister in a place of business in Sydney, I would take care to see her home myself, if she could not leave business before dark,” replied Bob.

“Yes, yes; you would be quite right too, Bob. But every young girl has not got a big brother to see her home. At any rate, all of them have not got brothers who are so wise as yourself, or so careful of their sister's honour. But I hope you don't think that I have ever been into any of those improper places that you have hinted at, Bob?”

“Oh, dear no, Goldstone; I did not mean to insinuate such a thing. I beg pardon for the mistake I made.”

“Just so; but don't you make another mistake, and mention at home anything that I have said to you to-night. I am only desirous of putting you up to an innocent trick or two; nothing more, I assure you; I hate immorality. Come away into the play; I'm afraid the second act is half over by this time, we have had such a long gossip at the café. Stay a minute, Bob. Excuse me, but don't stick your hat so far down on the back of your head. That is better; incline it a little to the left side. Now you look twice as knowing. And mind you don't be quizzing Betsy Blunt again through the opera-glass. You can look straight at her, you know; but when she twigs you, take your eyes off her and look modest, like a ram with a tick in his tail. If you manage it naturally, she will think she has struck you comical. Ha, ha, ha! I'll pilot you to a snug berth, if you keep your luff—as we used to say in the navy.”
Chapter XVIII.

Maggie's wedding-day.—Rudeness of the Slumm Street rabble.—Mrs Stubble's troubles, and her husband's expedients.—Various exciting occurrences.—Arrival of the bridal pair at the “Red Cow.”

THE sun arose in unclouded brightness to gild Maggie's wedding-day, but she was up an hour before its priming tints were visible on the eastern sky. It is not marvellous that a young girl should be wakeful on a morning so momentous in her life's history; indeed, it would be an unfavourable symptom if it were otherwise. The day had been long anticipated by all the household; but though preparations had been going on for several days, there was much to be done on the identical morning before church-time; and Mrs Stubble was more than usually fussy and peevish, though it was clear enough that every one around her was striving to do the work in style. She was, in fact, suffering from the efforts of long continued excitement, which the coming exaltation of her family provoked, and was more fit to be in bed than to be bustling about in the smoke and steam of the kitchen; but she would not have believed that, even if a doctor had told her so.

“What a plaguey nuisance those bawling brats of children are outside!” whined Mrs Stubble, alluding to a gathering of all the little boys and girls in the neighbourhood, who were attracted to the spot by the extraordinary event of a grand wedding in Slumm Street, although they would have seen quite as much of the ceremony if they had gone to Rose Bay or Coogee Beach. But children are always pleased to look even at the outside of a building if anything exciting is going on inside. “The worst of this house is, that you can't possibly do anything in it, but you are overlooked by gawking, gossiping neighbours, who say all sorts of things about us. That pawnbroker's horrid daughter is always spying across through a long telescope from their attic window; and I know she hates Mag. Do, for patience sake, go out, and send those yelping little savages away, Stubble. I declare there is a lot of them playing at 'king of the castle' in the front verandah! Their impudence is past all bearing, and I won't put up with it any longer.”

“What is the good of bothering yer head about 'em, missis? It's as natural for young 'uns to make a noise as it is for old uns to want to be quiet. Us liked to kick up our heels a bit when us was young, Peggy; and thee know'st us used to play king o' the castle on the tombstones at Chumleigh, and laugh at old Diggs, the sexton, too, when he tried to cotch us. Let 'em alone, poor things! 'em don't often see anything out of the common way.”
“Ugh! poor things, indeed! There's forty of 'em, or more, in our nice clean verandah, drat 'em! If you don't choose to send 'em away, Stubble, I will. I'll poor things 'em, with a vengeance.”

Mrs Stubble then trotted into the verandah with the coach whip in her hand, and began to slash away right and left, making the boys flee like cats in a hail-storm.

“I'll let you see that you have no right to come making this uproar in front of my house, you young monkeys! Don't let me catch any of you here again, or I'll skin you alive, I will!”

Mrs Stubble delivered this short address in very excited tones, emphasising each word by a shake of the whip-stick; but instead of making the naughty boys quake with terror, it made them laugh, or dance, or shout according to their several fancies, while one little shoeless urchin actually had the temerity to mock Mrs Stubble, by shaking a cabbage-stalk at her, and imitating her vociferous utterance.

Finding that the boys utterly disregarded her commands to go away, and that the more she scolded the more they laughed at her, she went in-doors and began to cry. On learning the cause of his mother's grief, Bob grew spiteful, and rushed out with his fists doubled up for action. The nimblest of the boys ran away, for they suspected that Bob would hit hard; but he caught the little urchin with the cabbage-stalk, who happened to be lame, and after cuffing him sufficiently, Bob returned to the house to receive his mother's commendation on his chivalry.

But their triumph at the flight of their foes was only temporary, for the mother of the beaten boy, excited by his pathetic cries, was disposed to take his part, as the mildest of mothers sometimes are, when their offspring are the victims of cruelty. In a few minutes the vexed woman was in front of the house, sparring like a man, and breathing out a most unpoetical effusion of street eloquence, while the noisy boys and girls had reassembled, and attracted with them a dozen or two of adult stragglers, to whom a street row is always a welcome excitement.

“Oh, my patience!” exclaimed Mrs Stubble, with a very impatient look at her husband. “Did you ever hear such dreadful things as that woman is saying, Stubble? For mercy's sake, go out and get a constable to take her up. The carriages will be here directly, and only think! such a disturbance in front of the house! I shall go crazy—I certainly shall! My poor head will never stand this noise. Hark! do you hear that, Stubble? She says we were both lagged out here for body-snatching. Why don't you deny it, instead of sitting there grinning like an old—old—I—don't—know what? Oh dear, dear, dear! however could you bring your family into such a nasty disagreeable neighbourhood, Stubble? I wish I were in my grave?”
“Ah, thee art allers wishing theeself in some place where thee shouldn't be, missis. I have telled thee above forty times, that if thee had been contented to stop at the old house at Buttercup, thee wouldn't have had the bother thee hast had for months past. Thee wanted to be mighty fine; and us have paid for it, Peggy, more than it is worth a long deal, for whipped if I think thee hast had a day's comfort since thee came to town, and thee hasn't let me have much neither. As for taking this house, thee can't blame me there, anyhow, for Ben and Bob had more to do wi't than I had; and that's lucky for me.”

“How can you sit there prating, Stubble, while that wicked woman is scandalising us all in this dreadful way? Can't you hear her? She says our Mag was trained by old Mother Brown! If Benjamin should hear that, what will he think?”

“Let her rave. Her slang won't hurt us, no more than a broadside of boiled taters would knock down Fort Macquarie,” said Joe, calmly. “Thee will allers have yer own way, missis, and ye bean't often satisfied with it neither. I tould 'ee to let them boys alone; and it would have been better if thee had minded what I said to thee for once. I'd soon have sent 'em off quietly enow; but thee must go out with the whip to 'em, and make theeself look silly afore all the neighbours. Thee ought to have knowed better than that, Peg. Suppose when us were youngsters, any ould 'ooman had runned after us with a whip, wouldn't us ha ve made fun of her? In course us would. But I bean't going to say any more; so doan't 'ee let us have a rumpus in the house this morning, there's a good soul. I'll go and see if I can stop that creeter's tongue, and do'ee try to look good-tempered for a bit; us will have a houseful of company presently, and it wouldn't be nice for 'em to hear us argufying in this style on our darter's wedding-day, and with our grand new clothes on. Do'ee cheer up, Peggy, lass.”

After that mollifying speech, Mr Stubble went outside, and in a few minutes the noisy mother was as quiet as a slumbering infant. Biddy told her fellow-servant that she “seed the masther give the woman a silver somethin’.” Whatever it was that he gave her, it stopped her noise immediately, and she hurried off to the inn at the corner for refreshment.

Joe then addressed the assembled boys and girls in his usual good-natured tones. “I tell'ee what it is, children, it bean't manners to be kicking up this noise afore my front door; it's against the law too; but I bean't goin' to law, so ye needn't be skeered. Hearken to what I say now. If thee all like to behave decently for the rest of the day, I'll give 'ee a reg'lar treat tomorrow of all the nice things us have left after the feast; there'll be a pretty lot, I'll be bound. And look 'ee here, Jerry, or what else yer name is,” he added, speaking to one of the elder boys. “You trot to the market yonder,
and buy a bushel or two of peaches with this crown, and share 'em out fair an' square amongst the lot. Off ye go now, every Jack and Jill of ye; and mind ye don't come here agin to-day, making a rumpus, or ye'll get no treat to-morrow,—no, not so much as a dry bone. Do ye hear what I say, children?"

“All right, sir! all right, master!” shouted the delighted boys and girls. “We won't come anigh yer house agin to-day; never fear, sir. Hooray!” After that parting salute, away scampered Jerry with the crown-piece and the host of little ragamuffins after him towards the fruit market, to feast upon peaches, while Joe returned to the house smiling at the successful ruse for getting rid of their noise.

“Shure, thin, that's the right way to conquer human natur', masther dear,” said Biddy. “Kindness afore cruelty, any day. A penn'orth ov peaches 'ull do a mortal sight more to quiet a cantankerous gossoon nor a great big horse-whip— that's plain enough, sir.”

“You please to hold your tongue, Biddy, and go and baste those turkeys,” said Mrs Stubble, sharply; and then she went up-stairs to dress for church.

* * * * *

It would be tedious to detail the whole of that day's proceedings; so I briefly state that the happy pair were married at St James's Church, and after the ceremony they drove back to the house in Slumm Street, followed by five carriages and cabs, containing the six bridesmaids and other friends who had been invited.

Æsopus Clodius, a celebrated Roman actor, is said at one entertainment to have had a dish filled with singing and speaking birds which cost £800.” If that was not the height of extravagance, it surely must have been nearly up to it.

The Stubbles were not so silly as the Roman actor; still, they were lavish beyond all family precedent; and nothing was lacking which reason or fancy could suggest to make the wedding-feast an uncommon one. The quality of the cookery and the style of dishing-up were less noticeable than the superabundance of food prepared; and if any dining-table in the colony might be excused for groaning before company, Stubble's table certainly might, for it was wonderfully overladen; and that it did not actually break down is a circumstance which proves the staunch quality of well-seasoned Australian cedar.

The writer has seen great feasts among the natives of New Zealand, Friendly Islands, and Fiji, where four times as much food was prepared as could possibly be eaten by the guests before it got putrid. A distressing waste was the result; and perhaps hundreds of persons went on short
allowance for many weeks afterwards. If Mrs Stubble had not seen similar entertainments, she had doubtless heard of civic banquets. At any rate, her notions of a display of food were as large as the notions of any uncivilised person in Polynesia or elsewhere.

Mr Stubble could not help quietly contrasting the costly banquet spread before him with the humble appearance of his festive board on his own wedding-day, when a hough of bacon, a dish of broad beans, a squab pie, a figgy pudding, and a big brown jugful of cider, comprised the whole bill of fare, and very good fare it was then considered. He felt relieved by the reflection that the food they could not consume would not be wasted, for he had promised the street children a treat next day; and his heart glowed as he fancied how much the poor things would enjoy it.

The breakfast, which by the way was a hot dinner, progressed without any mishap of consequence. All the guests seemed pleased, and the host and hostess were proud beyond measure. Biddy Flynn was at the head of the domestic staff, and was as active as the boatswain of a dismasted ship.

Benjamin looked sternly thoughtful at times; but fortunately no one noticed it. At any rate, no person but himself could have known the cause, which was simply on account of his father appearing at the table in a fashionable coat and a white waistcoat, and sitting next to the roguish young bridesmaid mentioned in a previous chapter. Ben had never before seen his sire dressed so smartly, nor had he ever before seen his hair oiled. He remarked also that the old gentlemen did not so much as hint at his lumbago, and always tried to stifle his cough; in short, he looked as brisk as a boy.

Those little things, simple in themselves, had a dispiriting influence on Ben, though as a dutiful son he might have had opposite feelings. He tried to cheer himself with the idea that no young girl would be simple enough to marry such a rickety old man of seventy; but that belief was not sustained, for he suddenly remembered that he had seen several instances of such unequal yoking; indeed, only a few days before, when on a visit to a well-known watering-place near Sydney, he had seen a merry old man of seventy-five playing with his little son, about three years old, while his wife, a buxom-looking woman of about twenty-seven years, was suckling an infant. Those reflections tended to becloud Benjamin's brow, even with his blushing bride by his side.

After the knives and forks were done with, some appropriate toasts were given, and several speeches were made; but it would not proper to make them public. Mrs Stubble wept while Benjamin expatiated on his present happiness, and on the honour he felt at being surrounded by so many good friends whom he highly prized, and especially at having by his side one
whom he could now call his darling wife, the charming partner of his future fortunes.

Old Mr Goldstone, too, made a neat little speech, from which nobody would have judged that he was in any way miserly; and at the wind-up, he dilated so tenderly on the blissful associations of wedded life, that all the bridesmaids were tickled exceedingly, or at any rate they laughed as if they were so; and Biddy quietly remarked to the housemaid “that the roguish young lady's eyes flashed fire, like brass tinderboxes.”

Mr Stubble's speech was short and rather incoherent, for drinking bumpers had not improved his diction. He would have got on better, as he afterwards confessed, if his wife had not kept on making faces at him from the other end of the table. Peggy's explanation of the matter was, that “she wasn't making faces at him; only she was afraid he was going to take the company all the way back to Chumleigh, and she was merely giving him a silent hint now and then, with her eyebrows, to warn him not to do it.”

At length the cab arrived to take the happy pair to the railway station; so the festive party broke up, and after the usual leave-taking ceremonies the bride and bridegroom stepped into the vehicle, while a crowd of bonnetless women stood by to witness the departure, and to pass a few jocose remarks among themselves.

“Who has got an old shoe?” asked Simon, who had been immoderately merry since the last toast. “Ho, ho, ho! Give me an old shoe to throw after them for luck.”

“Here is one of my son Bob's best boots, sir,” said Mrs Stubble, who was more solemnly excited than Simon, for she really believed in the luck of the act.

“A shoe would be better,” chuckled Simon; “but never mind, we will make this do.” He then hurled the boot into the cab—alas, with too much earnestness, for it went through the glass pane of the opposite door.

“Bravo! this will be as good as a pair of boots to my old man, 'cos he's got a wooden leg!” exclaimed one of the untidy women, as she picked up the boot, and stuffed it into her pocket. “That's luck in my way, anyhow. Ha, ha, ha! Bravo! old skin-and-bone! Do it agin!”

Cabmen in general are seemingly as tender of their vehicles as sea-captains are of their chronometers. It would be a happy thing indeed for cab horses if they were half as well cared for. This curious fact in town life might be borne out by the experience of numberless passengers who have at times accidentally injured the blinds or lining of a cab, and have been obliged to listen to the forcible appeals of the driver for prompt reparation.

It is no wonder, then, that Ben's Jarvey was hurt to see his off-side pane smashed in that silly manner. He had frequently seen a boot thrust through
his cab window by a high-spirited fare going home from the play, or from some other house of amusement; but there was always a foot in the boot, and its owner was usually in a rollicking mood, and was easily induced to pay liberally for the glazier. Had the cabman been of a more philosophical turn of mind, he would have reflected that the boot was thrown for luck; and it might be made a lucky throw for him, for the giggling old gentleman who threw it would never refuse to pay for the damage while so many pretty girls were beside him smiling at his facetiae. But the cabman was a surly man, and instead of touching his hat and asking Simon for a sovereign, he called him sundry names, not at all polite, and threatened “to pull him to the police court, for wilfully damaging the vehicle.”

“Hallo! what do you mean by this impudence?” shouted Ben; at the same time he sprang from the cab with the ferocity of a cannibal chief. “Get on to your box, sir; and drive me off this instant, or by gemini, I'll knock your head off in two minutes.”

As I have before stated, Benjamin was strong. He had often knocked down cabmen, and other men too; and he was just then in prime alcoholic trim for hitting an adversary very hard, although he might not strike scientifically. The driver seemed more hardened than softened by Ben's emphatic address, and began to reply in true cabby style; but ere he had uttered more than ten words, or five oaths, he was knocked down by a blow from Ben's right fist, while the left fist was clenched, ready to knock him up again, if need be.

But though floored, cabby was not conquered; and the agility with which he got on to his feet again showed that the blow had not much affected his head. He had had the privilege of being an early pupil of “deaf Burke,” the famous London bruiser—a circumstance which he briefly explained as he sparred up to Ben, and, in the language of the ring, “fetched him a reg'lar smeller,” and “tapped his claret,” to the sad disfigurement of his wedding-waistcoat.

“Yah! Hooray! Bravo, cabby! That's hooked his konk like the snout of the market pump!” exclaimed the vulgar woman with the boot in her pocket, whose sympathies were evidently strong on the cabman's side. “Hit him again, whippy! Bung up his peepers!”

Thus encouraged, the cabman warily sparred round his bulky opponent, who was striking out left and right with a tremendous display of power, but without hitting his foe. The odds were decidedly in favour of science, when Bob Stubble rushed up, and his warmth of feeling for his brother-in-law's damaged nose scotched his sense of fair-play for a moment, and he struck the unlucky cabman a blow from behind, which knocked him down again.

Never, perhaps, since the days when the late Captain Cook was a baby,
and Slumm Street was in undisputed possession of the primitive aborigines, was there heard such a yelling as burst from the lungs of the bonnetless women, to mark their disapproval of Bob's cowardly attack. It is highly probable that they would have proceeded at once to carry out their savage threat of scalping him, had not the general attention been diverted by the sudden bolting of the horses.

It is seldom, indeed, that cab-horses can muster spirit enough for a voluntary gallop, and in general they are more prone to lie down in harness; but no horses in the world, however stiff and bony, could have heard that awful yelling without making an effort to run away from it. Off they started, with poor Maggie inside the cab, and her personal luggage outside; and as it whirled round the corner into a cross street, her distracted friends could see her leaning out of the near-side window, and waving both her hands.

It would be a rather stirring moral exercise to reflect on the strange vicissitudes of life which this case presents. Only a few brief minutes before, Maggie had been the object of admiration, perhaps of the envy too, of six bridesmaids, to say nothing of what any of the matrons felt. She had sat at the festive board, and with prideful feelings had heard the most glorifying things said of herself and her devoted husband at her side, and the most exuberant wishes expressed for her future happiness. Alas! how changed the scene! In the turn of a sand-glass, how startling the contrast! What matron would secretly envy Maggie now? What bridesmaid in her senses would wish to exchange places with the bride in a cab drawn by a pair of runaway horses?

A strange spectacle it was, no doubt, to see all the males of that gay wedding-party rushing through the streets without their hats, and Benjamin and the cabman racing neck-and-neck, the one trembling for the fate of his young wife, and the other for the soundness of his coach and horses. Simon Goldstone kept up a brisk trot, and though he was a long way behind the rest of the runners, he pluckily resolved to see the end of it. His old neighbours were equally surprised at his smart attire and his smart paces, and as but few of them knew what he was running for, it was generally believed that some of his tenants had flitted, and that the old man had run mad.

The cab-horses took a straight course towards their owner's stables at Strawberry Hills, fortunately without coming in contact with anything on their route; so, although Maggie was terribly frightened, she was not otherwise hurt.

A little skilful negotiation on the part of Mr Stubble soon smoothed down the cabman's feelings; and for a handsome consideration he agreed to drive
to Parramatta forthwith, as he had missed the four o'clock train. A fresh pair of horses were put in the cab, and in due course the bridal pair arrived safely at the Red Cow Inn. After all the excitement and danger, the only tangible marks of mischief were on Benjamin's nose, which looked very like a ripe fig.

After tea that evening, Mr Stubble and Simon Goldstone took a tumbler of punch together in the snuggery, and Simon grew marvellously confidential and talkative. Among other things, he told Joe that he had fully resolved to enjoy himself for the rest of his days, instead of living miserably and hoarding up his money for somebody to squander after he was dead; but he could not exactly see the force of Joe's suggestion, that he should enjoy himself by pulling down a lot of the old rickety tenements that he owned in the city, and building model dwellings for the working-classes, and thus leave a name to be gratefully remembered long after he was dead. He was just about to explain what he really did mean to do, when the door of the snuggery was opened, and in ran the six blooming bridesmaids, and by pleasant force they hustled the two old gentlemen upstairs to the drawing-room to play a game of forfeits.

After supper everybody seemed to grow more funny than ever. Mr Goldstone waltzed with the roguish bridesmaid, and Mr Stubble danced a rural fandango with Mrs Stubble, and after he had finished it, he fell down on the hearth-rug muttering, “I be reg'larly done up.” He was straightway carried to bed, singing in a lofty key, “There was an old 'ooman in Darby.”

The company left as the clock was striking two; and as soon as they were gone, Mrs Stubble discovered that whilst they had been dancing in the drawing-room, some dishonest person or persons had entered an open window of the dining-room, and stolen all the silver forks and spoons, and the silver cake-basket, with the wedding-cake in it.
Book III.
Chapter I.

Elevation of the Stubbles in fashionable life.—Joe becomes Member for Muddleton.—Mrs Stubble's experience with domestic servants.

AFTER the excitement of Maggie's wedding was over, Mr Stubble went to school to learn English grammar, in fulfilment of the compact which he had previously made with his wife. What he might have accomplished if he had been more persevering, it is not easy to estimate, but at the end of six weeks he impatiently declared that “he had had enough of verbs and other puzzling consarns, and he would not bother his head any more, whether he spoke plain English or not.” But he thought his recent exercise had polished his lingo a bit, for he had learned a good many new words, and was trying to forget a lot of old ones which the schoolmaster said were vulgar. Peggy had respected her part of the compact by taking private lessons in writing from Miss Dottz; but that lady sailed for England to print her budget before her dull pupil had done with “pot-hooks and hangers,” so the copy-book was thrown aside for a convenient season to begin on the higher branches of caligraphic art; and poor Mrs Stubble continued to waste much time in lamenting over her early disadvantages, and blaming herself for not beginning five years ago “to learn to be a scholar.” She had grown more painfully conscious of her deficiencies since she became intimate with Mrs Smatter, and other fashionable ladies, who knew everything in the world; still, her outward and visible pride did not diminish a single tittle.

After their year of tenancy expired, the Stubbles removed from the house in Slumm Street to one of far greater pretensions to style. It was situate in the fashionable purlieus of Double Bay. Peggy had set her heart on that identical house six months before, because it had a semi-circular carriage drive right up to the door, or, as she remarked, “You could go in at one gate, and out at the other, without turning round.” Mr Stubble gradually grew out of his dislike to city life, and his self-confidence expanded to such a cheering extent, that he could walk into the dining-hall at Entwistle's (even on a baron-of-beef day) carrying his head as erect as a lordly squatter from Beardy Plains, and without showing the least sign of sheepishness, though a hundred eyes were taken off fifty plates to gaze at him. He soon became quite “at home” with the rollicking habitués of the “smoking crib,” and the intimacy with some of them soon ripened into financial transactions of no ordinary kind. Mr John Murrabig, the jovial Hunter
River squire, and Mr Stubble sometimes had a mild tipple together, and would grow as sentimental as gipsies while they talked of the lanes and hedges of old Devon, and compared their early experiences in garden, field, or stable, or the softer recollections of their apple-picking exploits amid a scrambling bevy of rosy-faced lasses, for which their native county is so famous. The highly-cultivated “Count” Sticky has deigned to take hold of Joe's arm, and strongly recommend him to buy a nice estate on the Nimrod, and to talk to him upon other matters, which clearly showed his confidence in the man. Cannie Jock was like a brither to him, and on two occasions made him a present of some prime smoked tongues and bullocks tails. The great wool-man, of champagne-breakfast celebrity, often shook hands with Joe, and asked after his wife. Other men of less renown, though perhaps equally worthy, testified their affection for Joe in various ways. Moreover, he became a man of mark to the liveliest of the Sydney brokers, and the bargains, or “snug little specs,” that were brought to his notice from day to day, were sometimes too good to be slighted.

To guard in some measure against the encroachment of pride, which such varied attentions were calculated to induce, Mr Stubble would sometimes come out in an old country-cut coat, and he occasionally carried a rough sapling or stick, such as blind men use as feelers; but he dropped his stick and doffed his old coat on being told that that “humble dodge” had been tried by a worthy civic councillor, and it did not answer any other end than to excite the satire of Punch.

Success has a wonderful influence in inspiring even the meekest of men with confidence in their own tact, and also in gaining for them the approbation of their keen-sighted neighbours. Mr Stubble had made several very profitable speculations, which were currently talked about, and had such an exalting influence on his reputation for sagacity and money, that after a while he was powerfully pressed to stand as Member of Parliament for Mudderlon, which seat had become vacant through the resignation of Mr Morrison, who “went home” to enjoy himself with the fortune he had made in Australia, after the example of many others who have “morris'd off,” after making their “pile.”

A Dublin jury was once sitting on the body of an Irish hodman, who had fallen from a ladder, and, by the doctor's report, had broken his neck. The coroner was summing up the evidence preparatory to receiving a verdict, when Patrick suddenly raised himself up from the shell in which he was placed, and exclaimed in a faint voice, “Fegs, I think I'm alive yet!”

“Arrah! lie down ye crayther!” growled a hungry juror, who was impatient to get home to his dinner. “Lie down, sir, this minute! Do you mane to say ye know betther nor the docthor, who ses ye're dead?”
Mr Stubble's honest assertion that he knew no more about politics than he did about steering a ship was smilingly taken as an indication of praiseworthy modesty by his enthusiastic supporters, and they were so loud in their opinions of his fitness for the post of dignity and trust, that at length he began to suspect that he had all through his life underrated his own powers; at any rate, it was only reasonable to believe that a deputation of seven intelligent electors must surely know better than his own humble self, so he agreed to leave himself in their hands, and promised to do his best for the constituency if they made a Member of him.

After a sharp contest, he was returned by a majority of nine. His election cost him £500, but he was assured by friends, who knew what they were talking about, that it was a cheap seat after all, considering the manifold advantages that might accrue therefrom, if he kept his eyes open to his own interest.

As a matter of course, his elevation to the Legislative Assembly gained him abundant honour of an indirect kind, and his name was often seen in the public prints as well as seen posted on all the old walls in town. “Joseph Stubble, Esq., M.L.A., has kindly consented to take the chair,” was an announcement to be seen sometimes twice in one column of advertisements of public meetings of a moral or social character. He was highly esteemed as a chairman, for he usually put a cheque in the plate; and as he never attempted to say much, his reticence was properly regarded as a mark of wisdom. Almost every speaker on the programme would remark, as usual, “I am happy to see you in the chair, sir—et cetera;” and as honest Joe did not know anything about stock phrases of public orators, he used to believe every word they said, and would look as smirky as a blackfellow in a new blanket. His name was also placed on many local committees, sometimes without previously asking his leave, for, on the assumption that he had nothing particular to do, everybody was willing to find him a job. In his stammering reply to a complimentary vote of thanks for his ability in the chair, he on one occasion remarked, “that he was always ready to help any good cause with his personal efforts, and with his purse also.” After that encouraging sentiment, it was sagely argued by collectors, that to neglect to call on him for a subscription was virtually to admit that the cause they were collecting for was a bad one, which would never do; and the number of “good causes” he was solicited to subscribe to was enough to cheer any one of a philanthropic turn of mind. Professional beggars found out where he lived, of course; and though they occasionally got a scolding from the mistress of the house, they were sustained under it by the certain hope of an alms, if the master happened to be at home, and they were lucky enough to catch him alone, to tell him their tales of sorrow.
Mr Stubble's native modesty made him shrink from the numerous posts of honour or responsibility which were thrust upon him; but his objections were always joked away by his partial admirers, who could not be so ill-mannered as to accept a plea of incapacity, and after a while he was lulled into the belief that he really did possess latent talent of a popular kind. If some of my readers should doubt the possibility of any man being so befuddled, let them look around them, and if they happen to be in a civilised community, they may see many analogous cases, where men have been lifted almost above their own individual recognition by the syren voice of public flattery and private wheedling.

Ben Goldstone's social position had naturally improved since his marriage. Apart from higher considerations, he was more patronised by fashionable friends, which was a source of glorification to him; but receiving visitors and returning calls was so irksome to poor Maggie, that she often sighed for the quietude of a country life, and wished from her heart that Ben would take a farm and remove her away from the embarrassing routine of city fashion, and the choking influence of city dust.

It was often a matter of wondering conjecture with gossipping neighbours what profession or calling young Goldstone followed, but no uninitiated one could solve the mystery. He had an office in town, and kept a sporting-looking clerk; and he mixed a good deal with sharp speculators, sea-captains, money-lenders, and horse-dealers; but as he always seemed to be flush of money, people did not give themselves much trouble to investigate his business affairs.

Although Mr Stubble was not aware of it, he was largely indebted to his son-in-law for his rapid advancement in public and social life; for Ben, to use his own words, “was up to all the moves on the board,” and was intimately acquainted with some of the sharpest men in Sydney. He had “worked the oracle” so successfully, that Mr Stubble was generally believed to be a man of very large means, and of a great depth of wisdom also, which he tried to hide beneath his rustic manners. It was through Ben's secret influence that Joe had been led out by the Liberal party to stand for Muddleton, and it was through Ben's hints and inuendoes that Joe was supposed to be the owner of bricks and mortar (i.e., houses) all over the country, and plenty of ready money beside.

Mrs Stubble's veneration for Ben had diminished, for she shrewdly suspected that he was not so fond of his wife as he had professed to be before he married her: still, Maggie never complained of anything, and the strictest cross-examination failed to elicit a word from her condemnatory of her husband; so Peggy was silenced, though not cured of her suspicions.
Biddy Flynn had been summarily dismissed the service, for threatening to crack the housemaid's head with a blacking brush. One morning very early Mrs Stubble overheard Biddy scolding Dolly, and, with her usual impetuosity, the irate mistress descended the stairs in her night-cap, and told Biddy to “march off, bag and baggage, that blessed minute.” Biddy took the hint, and started off, without her breakfast, to Maggie's house, where she was gladly sheltered.

It was soon ascertained that Biddy's wrath had been excited by seeing the housemaid wash her face and hands in the water-butt. Mrs Stubble admitted that the nasty wench deserved a worse scolding than she had got, and asked Biddy to return to her old station: but she declined the invitation, stating that “she wanted pace and quietness, an' shure she hadn't had much of that same since she left Buttercup Glen. Still an' all, she didn't mane to lave the family intirely, so she'd shtop wid Miss Maggie” (as she still called Mrs Goldstone). Biddy added a little advice to her late mistress, to the effect, “that if she didn't want to be pisoned out an' out, she had better kape a sharp look-out after that same Dolly Slapp, for she'd seen her carry the water for the toilet bottles up-stairs in the covered bucket, and do a lot of other neat tricks, for the convanie nce ov savin' herself a little bit ov work; an' she wore dungaree aprons, 'cos they hide the dirt.”

Mrs Stubble was so excited by that disclosure, that she discharged the slovenly maid at a minute's notice, and without half-a-minute's reflection on the inconvenience she was causing herself by her petulant act. After Dolly Slapp was gone, Mrs Stubble sat down to repent of her hastiness, and to “wonder whatever she should do without a single servant in the house, and company coming to dinner the day after tomorrow.”

Mr Stubble was appealed to for counsel in the emergency, and he calmly suggested “that they should give their expected guests a leg of mutton and a figgy pudding for dinner; and he thought Peggy might manage to cook that much, for once and away.”

Mrs Stubble pettishly replied, “that was just like him, always annoying her when she was worried, instead of trying to help her.” He then advised her to go to one of the registry offices in Sydney, and pick out a couple of servants: there were always lots of girls sitting in those places waiting to be hired.”

Mrs Stubble objected to that course, and said “she did not choose to go running after servants, which would make them think too much of themselves. The proper way was to make them come to her.”

“Well, Peggy; I be agreeable;” said Joe; “but I wish you would not fidget yourself so much, for that won't help you a bit.”

An advertisement was sent to the *Herald* and *Empire*, for a cook and
laundress, and a housemaid; and the next day two full-grown women presented themselves at Stubbleton to offer their services. After examining their testimonials (which were very flattering ones, although written on very common paper), Mrs Stubble engaged them, and they agreed to come that evening. They had lived in service together; and Mrs Stubble reasoned that, as they doubtless understood each other's ways, it would save her no end of bother.

The next day there was much bustle and preparation for the dinner-party, which was to be an extra grand one. Mrs Stubble was beginning her old fussy, domineering ways, which poor Biddy had so long borne with, when the new cook sternly intimated that “she did not like her mistress to be buzznagging about in the kitchen.” Peggy was startled at that early symptom of an insubordinate spirit; but she resolved to bear it silently for that day, as she could not help herself, but “she would talk to the saucy thing to-morrow, and let her see who was mistress in that house.”

About an hour before dinner-time, a strong scent of overroasted meat ascended to the parlour, so Mrs Stubble ventured down-stairs, and peeped into the kitchen to see what was burning. There was the quarter of lamb blackening before the fire, in consequence of the roasting-jack having run down, and there was the cook lying on the floor, with a gravy-spoon in her hand, and with her nose looking highly inflamed. The alarmed mistress thought the maid was in a fit, so shook her roughly, to arouse her out of it, when she half-opened her eyes and mumbled, “Hallo! Wh-wh-what's up now, m-missis?”

“Mercy! What have you been drinking?”
“Gin-gin-ginger-beer, m-missis, that's all—hic.”
“Oh, you vile woman! You have been stealing the whisky!” exclaimed Mrs Stubble. “However could I have been so silly as to leave that cellar door unlocked? Get out of the house this instant, or I'll send for a constable. Here Charlotte! Charlotte, go for a policeman, directly. Where are you, Charlotte?”

“Ye-ye-yes, mum; here am I,” said the housemaid, staggering from her bedroom adjoining the kitchen.

“Gracious me! why, you are drunk too, you nasty creature!” shrieked Mrs Stubble, with disgust and indignation distorting all her features. “Oh, that I should be imposed upon by two such dreadful women!”

A description of the noisy scene which ensued during the process of expelling the unfaithful servants from the house, and the subsequent troubles of that exciting day, would fill a long chapter; but as I cannot afford the space, the reader may imagine it all. With the help of a charwoman, Mrs Stubble managed to prepare a tolerably good dinner; and
she was somewhat consoled at learning, from the experience of some of her lady-guests, that she was not the only mistress in Sydney who had been plagued with bad cooks and housemaids.

Seven servants were engaged during the ensuing month, and were all summarily discharged for failings of various kinds, including kleptomania, tipple-mania, and dirt-mania. At length Mrs Stubble resolved that she would not hire another girl without first inquiring her character from her last mistress. The result of that sensible plan was, that she eventually got two really good servants, and her late troublesome experience incited her to strive to keep them. To that end, she ceased to nag them perpetually, as she had nagged poor Biddy, and she soon found that kind, encouraging words were far more effective than sharp ones in getting work done well, and in securing the respect of her domestics.
Chapter II.

Interview between Mr Stubble and Mr Rowley.—Their conversation on many topics of interest.—Some of Mr Stubble's parliamentary experience.

MR STUBBLE was sitting in the library at his house overlooking Double Bay one morning, about three years after his induction to city life, and was spelling over a parliamentary document, in which he seemed much interested, when his manservant announced a visitor, and the next minute Mr Rowley entered the room, with the nervous step of a disrated official seeking an interview with the premier.

“What! Rowley, my boy! How are you? Glad to see you,” said Mr Stubble, rising and shaking his friend's hand with genuine warmth.

“I am pretty well, thank you, Joe—hem—a—Mr Stubble. Beg pardon, sir; I forgot myself for a minute.”

“Come, come, none of this ceremony, Peter,” said Joe, laughing. “I am Joe Stubble still to my old friends, though I be a little bit higher up in the world than I used to be. There is no silly pride about me; so don't be stiff and formish, Peter, or you'll make me feel uneasy. Hang your hat up in the hall, or put it down on your table, and make yourself at home.”

“I am pleased to hear you talk in that neighbourly strain, Joe,” replied Mr Rowley, smiling. “I don't see why a change of position should alter a man's bearing towards his old friends, though it does do so pretty often. It is said that a man when he is poor is able to discern objects at the greatest distance with the naked eye, which he could not see, though standing at his elbow, when he is rich.”

“That is true enough, Peter, and I've seen plenty of that uppish pride in the men that I have to mix with every day; not that they show it to me, you know, for I must say everybody treats me with uncommon respectfulness.”

“Of course they will do that, Joe. Position will generally gain a man respect, or at any rate the outward form of it, irrespective of his moral worth. But I am forgetting to ask after Mrs Stubble and the family. How are they all?”

“Nicely, thank'ee, Peter; and how are all your folks? Hearty, I hope. I haven't heard of you for I don't know when, and I think it is nearly three years since I saw you last. When did you come to town?”

“I came down by yesterday's steamer, but did not reach Sydney till this morning, for our boiler burst on the passage.”

“Hi, hi! that was a rum go. Was anybody killed?”
“No, thank God! there was no one killed, but one of the firemen was badly scalded. The captain happened to overhear a remark I made to Sam about the necessity for keeping the boiler in good order, when he got quite cross, and insisted ‘that his boiler was all right, for his six months’ certificate had three weeks more to run.’ Fortunately for us, the weather was fine, and we sailed to Sydney; but my wife was frightened a bit.”

“Oh, the missis is down, is she? Why didn't you bring her out with you? Mrs Stubble would be glad to see her, never fear. You should not make yourself so strangified, Peter. I tell you again we are not aristocracks, though we live in a more stylish way than we did when you knew us in days agone.”

“Mrs Rowley and I have come down to see Sophy and her husband off; they will sail for Melbourne this afternoon. You heard that my girl married young Rafter, of course.”

“Yes, yes, Peter; and I was very glad to hear it; but how is it they are going to leave you?”

“Sam has had an offer of partnership from a gentleman who is in a large way of business in Victoria. He knew Sam before he was out of his time; and as he wants a trustworthy working partner, he wrote to Sam making certain propositions, which after due consideration he has accepted. I dare not persuade him not to go, because I can see it will be to his advantage, for his partner is an excellent man and is in a thriving position.”

“I am very pleased to hear this, Peter. I always liked Sam; and I knew he would rise in the world, for he is a knowledgeable chap. I only wish my boy Bob had taken pattern from Sam when they were boys together.”

“By the bye, how is Bob getting on, Joe?”

“Ah, don't say aught to me about him, for it makes my heart ache. He has gone and married a girl without brains or heart either. It's nation hard, Peter, after rearing a son up to manhood, to see him throw himself away, as it were; for I look upon a young fellow as done for, if he marries a fool, though she may be worth her dead weight in sovereigns.”

“I am grieved to hear this of Bob. He was a fine-spirited lad; only I always thought he wanted a tighter rein kept on him than he had at home.”

“Bob was always a bit skittish, though there was no vice in him, as I could see. He liked cracking a stock-whip a deal better than studying his school-books; and skinning 'possums and snakes was better fun to him than learning Latin and such like head-work. I couldn't always keep the bearing-rein on him, Peter; and you know the reason why.”

“Pray excuse my remark, Joe; I did not mean it as a reproach, you know. And how is Maggie—beg pardon, Mrs Goldstone, I mean?”

“Poor girl, she bean't in such first-rate health as she used to have; town
life doesn't suit her at all. I am uneasy about her too; so you see, neighbour, that with all my honours and stylish set-out, I bean't over and above happy. I have got my share of trouble, though I don't cry about it to everybody, or put on a dismal look to excite people to pity me.”

“‘Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.’ That is a sacred truth from the Bible, you know, Joe. Any man who expects to get through life without trouble, no matter how high his social position may be, must discredit God's own word to the contrary; and troubles terribly gall a man who does not believe that they are amongst the ‘all things’ that God sees it necessary to send to him, to make him set his heart on a better world than this one.”

“That is pretty much like what our good minister said last Sunday night; and it's true enough, no doubt,” replied Joe, with a sigh.

“You go to church then, Joe?”

“I do so, Peter. I have had a pew in your old church for close up three years.”

“I am glad of that, Joe. I'm sure you cannot sit under Mr Goodwin's preaching without profit; for he is an earnest man, and evidences his piety ‘not only with his lips, but in his life.’ ”

“By the bye, I saw your name in the Government Gazette among the new magistrates, Peter,” said Joe, who was desirous of changing the topic of conversation.

“I suspect I am indebted to your political influence for that honour, Joe. I am much obliged to you; but I did not expect such a distinction, and should not have sought it.”

“I don't know who has a right to expect such a distinction if an honest sensible man has not. A stick fit for a besomshank don't stay long in the wood. But don't say aught about the obligation to me; I didn't know you would think I had a hand in it, or I wouldn't have named it to you. It was my friend the Secretary who managed it.”

“I never was more surprised at anything than at seeing you offer yourself as a candidate for a seat in the Assembly, Joe.”

“Ha, ha, ha! I guess you were astonished, and I bet a guinea you laughed at me a bit. But I have heard you say yourself, Peter, that a man doesn't know what he can do till he tries; and how was I to know that I wasn't able to legislate till I had a try at it? But, joking aside, you know, I had no more notion of being an M.L.A. when I first came to Sydney than I had of being a sodger officer, and if anybody had told me I should, I'd have thought he worn't sober. But it is wonderful how soon a man, even a plain country yokel, will change his opinion of himself, if half-a-dozen sharp fellows set to work to convince him that he is clever. Ha, ha, ha! It's human nature, I
suppose, Peter; for I can see that I am not the only yokel who has been persuaded that there is dormant knowledge in his head, which ought to be roused up for the benefit of the country.”

“I thought you had been pressed into the service, Joe. Tell me how you overcame your natural diffidence.”

“It would take too long to tell you all I said against the thing, Peter; but I told the deputation who came to me that I worn't a fit and proper man for the post either by education, political knowledge, or power of speech, in plain English; but they wouldn't take all that for an answer. They said I had got colonial experience, and common sense, and a stake in the country, and a tongue in my head. I could not deny those facts, you know, Peter; and while I was considering what to say next, they went hard at me on the tea and sugar racket, and argued that it was my bounden duty to stand up and protect the poor man from having his common necessaries of life taxed, which was a burning shame. There they nailed me, for I haven't forgotten the time when I was down in the world. They saw I was beginning to feel their logic, so they went at it again, and in such a touching way, that blessed if I could bear it; so I said I wouldn't stand by and see the poor man's tea-pot taxed if my going into the House would stop it. So they went to work, and I was returned for Muddleton.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Mr Rowley. “Excuse me for interrupting you so rudely, Joe; but I am just reminded of a story I heard a minister tell the other day. Two Scotchmen had had a long night's fuddle together, and when daylight was appearing, one of them, who was ‘unco fou,’ began to cry. ‘Eh, Sandy, ma freend, dinna fret. What ails ye mon?’ asked his fellow-fuddler. ‘It's this muckle national debt mak's me weep,’ sobbed Sandy, rubbing his eyes. Now,” continued Mr Rowley, “I think the anxiety of the tea and sugar ranters, in general, is about as earnest as the fuddled Scotchman's grief for his country's large debt of honour. But I should have thought you were up to that old clap-trap cry of political adventurers, Joe. The poor man's tea and sugar!—Ha, ha!”

“I am up to it now, Peter; and I wonder that poor men, as they are called, cannot see that it is all bunkum. A tea and sugar tax would bear less upon the poor than upon the rich, and that is as clear to my mind as that four farthings make a penny.”

“How did you get on in the Assembly at the first set-off? I should like to have seen you take your seat ‘amongst the rulers of the land, Joe.’ ”

“At first start-off I was as shy and skeered as a young colt in the branding yard; but I soon saw that I wasn't the only ‘new chum’ in politics; so I began to take heart, and thinks I to myself I'll show some of these customers a thing or two by and bye that I have learnt in the bush. A little
before that you know, Peter, I went to school for a bit to learn to talk straight. I daresay you have observed that I have dropped a lot of my old Devonshire lingo, and learnt a few fashionable words. Then I began to study politics, and though it's precious little of that science I've learnt yet, everybody don't know that I bean't a reg'lar wiseacre, for I never attempt to make a set speech, and I never open my mouth to speak at all unless I know what I am going to talk about. I don't mean to say that I am in my right place, Peter; but, right or wrong, I am a duly-elected member of the House; so it is my duty to make myself as useful as I can, and I'll do it too, as soon as I have learnt the way."

“That is the way to talk, Joe. You cannot expect to take a leading part in the debates; but you may use your experienced judgment in giving your vote on divisions, and you may render good practical service in committees. I know you will act honestly, and will not connive at wrong-doing.”

“I have been reading a paper this morning that is just issued from the Government printing-office; I wish you would get a copy, Peter, and read it carefully, for it contains some of the most startling things I have ever heard of.”

“What paper is it, Joe?”

“It is called ‘Report from the Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Classes of the Metropolis.’”

“I should like to see it, for I have heard something about it. Where can I get a copy, Joe?”

“You can get it for 51/2d. at the Government printing-office; but I'll see if I can get a copy for you to-morrow. It makes some saddening disclosures of the state of the poorer classes in Sydney, and especially in relation to juvenile prostitution. It is a lengthy affair, for the committee have had twenty-two meetings and examined forty-one witnesses.”

“What is the practical object of the report?”

“Well, that remains to be seen, Peter; but if I stop in the House I'll try to get something done with it, though I expect the chairman of the committee will not lose sight of the matter," for he is a real worker.”

“I wish there were more workers in the House, and fewer talkers, Joe.”

“You are right, Peter; and it would be a good thing for the country if you had your wish. I once saw an old hen on my farm standing over her nest of eggs, which were covered by flood-waters; and I have often been reminded of the silly bird when I have heard men gabble for hours on a stretch about some matter not worth a nest of addled eggs, and thinks I to myself, I wish you talkative gentlemen would set about doing something useful, and you needn't look far to find a job, if you are willing to adapt your work to your
capacity, or your capacity to your work.”

“Well done, Joe! You talk like a philosopher.”

“I don't know about the philosophy of it, but I think it's common sense, Peter; and perhaps one is as good as the other for every-day use. There are several matters that I mean to see after, if I be spared, and nobody else forestalls me. In the first place, I am going to try to bring in a bill to bung up all the cesspits in the city; and that would be a blessing for every citizen's nose and his lungs too. I'll be bound there bean't many members in the House who know more about muck than I do, Peter, however they may talk. I know the value of it when it is rightly applied to the land; but it is deadly stuff to sleep amongst; and my word for it, if something is not done in the matter, we shall have typhus fever, and perhaps *cholera morbus* in the city, one of these hot days. I have got a lot of calculations about it; some of them are out of my own head, and others from doctors' reports; and I mean to try to get a law to compel owners of houses to erect earth closets,— ah, you may laugh, Peter, for you live in the country, where the air is sweet; but perhaps you wouldn't have spirit enough to laugh if you lived for a few months in the heart of the city, where there are thousands of pestilent cesspits, to say nothing of the open drains.”

“Beg your pardon, Joe. I was smiling at your earnestness in taking up such a troublesome matter, not ridiculing the idea; far from it; for I am quite of your opinion as to its importance, and have wondered that it has not been legislated upon long ago.”

“I am not the man to sit down and do nothing you know; and I am willing to do little odd jobs that come within the scope of my knowledge, and that other men would not care to put their hands to for fear of getting a nickname. But I say, Peter, it is dry work talking: what will you take to drink? Beg pardon for not asking you before.”

“I never drink anything stronger than my wife's ginger-beer, Joe. I thought you were a teetotaller of twenty-years' standing.”

“Yes, so I was till I came to Sydney, Peter. But it's all the go here to drink nobblers; so I be got into the fashion; and I ain't easy now without my reg'lars, though I feel pretty sure I should be better without them. You'll stay and dine with us, of course; so, if you have no objection, we will go and take a stroll for an hour through the Government gardens, and then we can have a quiet chat about the best way to put the world to rights, and smell the sweet flowers at the same time. What do you say?”

Mr Rowley cheerfully acquiesced in the proposal; so Joe rang the bell, and ordered the carriage round to the front door, and soon afterwards the cosy pair started for their drive.

As the carriage bowled along the level road past Rushcutters' Bay, a
group of aborigines were observed a little distance ahead. There were three men, dressed in various articles of European left-off apparel, and three women, each wrapped about with a blanket. As the carriage drew near, one of the men lifted an old black hat off his woolly head, and with a low bow he exclaimed, “Hallo, massa! Good morning!”

Mr Stubble told the coachman to stop, and then with an assumed sternness in his look, he asked, “Who are you, sir? How dare you stop me on the Queen's highway?”

The blackfellow looked puzzled for an instant; then, with another bow and a grin, he exclaimed, “You know me, massa! Billy, Port Stebens! Sit down your place long while ago—you know.”

“How should I know you, sir?”

“Yah! Gammon! You know me, Massa Tubble. You know Billy.”

“What do you mean by calling me Massa Tubble? Isn't my name Brown?”

“Baal that Brown—Ha, ha, ha! Gammon! You Massa Tubble—Old Joe! Yah! ha, ha! I know you long time ago. Gib me tikee-pence, massa, if you please, sir.”

The two friends then burst into a hearty laugh, and were joined by the merry group of natives, who were too keen-sighted not to recognise Mr Stubble, even though he had tried to disguise his face by austere looks. It appeared that the natives had lately come to Sydney from the Hunter River, and had been camping on the domain of a worthy son of the soil at Darling Point, a gentleman whose hearty good nature is plainly discernible in his every look and action, and who has always been ready to administer to the material necessities of the aborigines on their occasional visits to the metropolis.

“If I give you sixpence, you will buy betalligo (grog) with it,” remarked Mr Stubble, taking out his purse, and addressing grinning Billy.

“Baal, massa, baal. Me buy loaf and 'bacca. Baal me buy betalligo, Massa Tubble. Gib me tikee-pence, if you please, sir.”

“Here you are, then—here is a shilling. Now, mind you don't spend it in grog.”

“Baal, that buy grog, massa. Tank'ee, sir; much 'bliged to ye, sir. Ha, ha, ha! No gammon. Massa murra good man, sir.”

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“I perceive that you advocate strict temperance sometimes, neighbour,” said Mr Rowley, laughing, as the carriage drove away from the rejoicing group in the road.

“It was right to caution that fellow, was it not, Peter?”
“Yes, yes; quite right, my friend. I am not making game of your good counsel; but it struck me at the same time that your ‘reg'lars’ for one day are perhaps more than Billy drinks in a month. Don't be uneasy at my remarks, Joe; I do not insinuate that you are an excessive drinker nevertheless.”

“But that fellow will perhaps go and get tipsy, in spite of my good advice.”

“Very likely he will; but if he were as much accustomed to grog as a daily beverage as you say you are, a shilling's worth of the stuff would not suffice to make him even half tipsy. Billy has not a convenient sideboard to keep his supply in; so he drinks all he can get right off, and its effects are seen at once; but if he divided his annual consumption into equal daily portions, his moderation would excel that of thousands of reputable citizens, who would be shocked at being compared with him.”

“Ha, ha, ha! I never calculated the thing in that way, Peter; but I daresay you are right. Poor Billy! I have known him for many years. He used to camp for weeks together on my run, and he often went out shooting with Bob. He is an honest, good-natured creature; and his wife can wash linen with any white woman.”

“Did you ever reflect that Billy has got an immortal soul, Joe?”

“I never thought much about it one way or the other, Peter; but I have heard many people say that our blackfellows are only a single degree above the monkey family.”

“Yes, I have heard that said too, Joe; and it has been argued by educated colonists that our aborigines are incapable of enlightenment of a moral or religious nature. I am sorry to add that many persons who know better than to believe that heathenish doctrine act towards the poor blacks as if it were true, for they neither try to instruct them themselves, nor are they willing to support a missionary who is competent for the good work, and anxious to be engaged in it.”

“To tell you the plain truth, Peter, I don't believe that our black fellows are capable of learning anything about religion, or any such difficult subject.”

“I wish you would have half-an-hour's chat with the Rev. Mr R——, a gentleman, a scholar, and a devoted Christian. He lives in Sydney, and is as well known as the Speaker of the Assembly. He would be delighted to see you, or any one else who is interested in the welfare of the poor neglected natives; and you might get some admirable lectures and papers which he has published at various times on the subject. A few years ago that reverend gentleman went as a missionary to the blacks in the north; but, to the shame of the Christians of this great land, he was compelled to
relinquish the work in which he laboured with all his energies and talents, because he was not supported even in the homely way in which he was contented to live. By the bye,” continued Peter, “I recollect I have amongst my papers at home an interesting account of a visit which a friend of mine made to the deathbed of an aborigine in the Melbourne Hospital. I will send you the paper, Joe; and after reading it, I am sure you will be no longer sceptical of the capacity of the Australian aborigine to comprehend divine truth. Bah! such an idea is dishonouring to our Almighty Father, who made the race, and endowed them with immortal spirits such as you and I have, Joe.”

* The *Vernon* training-ship for boys (Sydney), and the industrial school for girls (Newcastle), are some of the results of that lengthened inquiry.

* See Appendix, “An Aboriginal Disciple.”
Chapter III.

Visit of Mr Stubble and Mr Rowley to Government Gardens.—Joe explains his financial affairs to his friend.—Fulsome pride of Mrs Stubble.

“I THINK, if I lived in Sydney, I should visit this pleasant retreat every day, Joe,” remarked Mr Rowley, as he and his friend entered the Botanical Gardens by the eastern gate.

“So I used to think, Peter, before I came to live in town; but I don't seem to be able to find time to enjoy a quiet ramble here very often. If somebody were to advertise that there was a pig in yon corner with two heads, or a monkey with two tails, no doubt there would be a regular rush of folks to see it, even if there was something to pay for the sight. Now, there are oceans of things in these gardens more wonderful and much more pleasing than monstrous pigs or monkeys to be seen for nothing; and yet there are hundreds of folks in Sydney who seldom or never look at them. That is queer, isn't it, Peter?”

“It is like human nature in general, Joe. Millions of people are running after monstrosities and nonsense, while they are blind and deaf to a world full of music and beauty. These gardens certainly contain the most charming variety of scenic and floral beauties that I have ever seen in a like space elsewhere; and nothing presents so much inducement to me to leave the country as the pleasure of visiting this place occasionally. The residents of Sydney have many privileges of which they ought to be proud.”

“And some of the folks are proud too, Peter. Ha, ha!”

“Yes; some of them have more pride than principle; but we must not be cynical, Joe; we are not perfect ourselves. I have been thinking, since we came into the gardens, that, with deference to the talented manager, if the names of the various plants and flowers were given in plain English, it would very much add to the pleasure and instruction of ordinary visitors, such as you and me. I do not object to classical terminology for those who can appreciate it; but let us have the common names as well, for the advantage of those persons who are not classically educated.”

“That is just what I have said to my wife, when she has been bothering her head to find out what those foreign names signified. Lots of these things might as well be ticketed in Chinese lingo as far as I am concerned; for I haven't learned Latin, nor never shall learn it now. It is my opinion, Peter, that”—

“Excuse me for interrupting you, Joe; but here is a sensible arrangement,
and a capital illustration of our argument,” said Mr Rowley, stopping before an immense cluster of creaking bamboos, labelled thus—

GRAMINACEÆ.

BAMBUSÁ ARUNDINÁCEÁ.

(Common Bamboo.)

“The scholar and the simple servant-maid are studied in this label.”

“Yes; that is plain enough, Peter—the last line of it, anyhow; though almost any simpleton would know a bamboo if it wasn't ticketed at all. I can't see how the gardeners don't mark everything else in the same common-sense way, instead of bamboozling unlearned folks with their long spifflicating names, that not many of the scientific gentlemen themselves thoroughly understand. I tell'ee what it is, neighbour, I'll make a motion about it in the House, after I've put them other concerns to rights; and that common bamboo will help me with a lively argument to stir up sleepy members.”

“Ha, ha! you are planning plenty of work for yourself in the House, Joe. I hope you may be spared to carry out some of your practical schemes. But tell me, now we are quietly together, what are your ideas of city life, after your three years' experience?”

“Do you want to come to Sydney to live, Peter?”

“Not I, indeed. I am not tired of a peaceful life, Joe; but I should like to know what you think of it; and whether you find yourself happier in town than you were in the country.”

“I'll tell you candidly, Peter, as you have asked me,” replied Mr Stubble, with a sigh. “I have never been comfortable since I left my old farm at the Glen; and I don't believe my missis has either, though perhaps she would not confess it so plainly as I do. It was a move in the wrong direction, Peter; and I feared as much when I first decided on it. A man who has lived all his days in the country, especially a man of my uneducated mind, isn't much fitted for a fashionable life in town, either by taste, or habit, or anything else. It is true enough I have risen in the social scale, as it is called, and I have been overloaded with offices of honour; but there is not much solid comfort in all that—at any rate, I can't find it if there is.”

“You would be the cleverest man that ever lived in the world if you could find it, Joe.”

“Well, I am not half so clever as folks say I am, Peter; and the effort to bring myself up to the mark for the duties that have been forced upon me is almost too much for me at my time of life, and considering the disadvantages I have against me, in the lack of early training and my inexperience of public life. I have done my best so far, honestly and zealously, and I will continue to do it; but I often think I am standing in the
way of some better man. It isn't comforting for a fellow to feel himself a sham, you know, Peter.”

“I sympathise with you to some extent, Joe. A becoming humility is at all times commendable; but there is a danger of its assuming a morbid character, and by yielding to it a man is soon unfitted for the positive duties of life. I judge that you have improved your position in a pecuniary sense by coming to Sydney?”

“Yes, Peter; there is no doubt about that, if my debtors pay up honestly, and I am not wrong in my calculations. I made close up £7000 in two ventures in cattle, let alone other lucky specs. It's a fact that almost everything I have had a hand in has turned out profitable; but none of us know how soon luck may turn on us, and that thought often makes me fidgety. Though I didn't seek to get so high up in the world, I should not like to tumble down again, you know; for the higher a man is up before he tumbles, the more he will feel his fall.”

“So long as you confine your dealings to cattle, and such things as you thoroughly understand, I have not much fear of your making any serious mistake, Joe. Still, continued success is apt to make a man over-sanguine; and though you should try to avoid troubling yourself about mishaps which may never occur, it is well to mind that you do not grow careless.”

“I have gone into other things besides cattle, Peter; but I cannot tell you all my speculations just now.”

“I have no desire to pry into your affairs, or to obtrude my advice upon you. I hope I have not appeared to do so, Joe?”

“Not at all, my boy! Say what you like to me, and I shall be much obliged to you, for there is not a man in the land whose advice I would sooner take than yours, Peter. I have often thought of the pleasant chats we used to have, as we smoked our pipes by your snug fireside in the bush; and many times I have wished I were beside you again to ask your counsel, especially when I've been in a quandary about bill consarns.”

“Then, you have had something to do with bills, Joe?”

“I have so, neighbour; and I'll defy you to go in for large speculations in Sydney without paper transactions, unless you have pockets like Bill Dash or Archy Midge.”

“I never objected to genuine trade bills, Joe; they are legitimate enough; but bills representing sham transactions, called ‘accommodation paper,’ or ‘kites,’ are as dangerous to handle as blasting powder; in fact, they have blasted many young traders' prospects for life. Those are the things I wished to warn you against when we used to have the cosy chats that you have referred to.”

“Just so, Peter; and you regularly scared me; for when I came first to
Sydney, I was as shy of all sorts of bills as a young horse is of a wheelbarrow, but by degrees I got more plucky. I used to see men who carried high heads borrow their neighbours' names as coolly as I'd ask you for the loan of a rake, and after a bit I got talked into doing a little in the sham way. But I had a practical caution the other day which will do more towards curing me of the weakness than all your sensible hints beforehand. A chap failed all of a sudden, and I had to take up a little bill that I lent him to oblige him. I don't expect to lose anything, for he says he will pay twenty shillings in the pound all right, as soon as he swings round; but it's made me vow to myself that I'll never do so any more—leastways, I won't if I can help it.”

Mr Rowley quietly smiled at the simplicity of his friend; but he did not like to depress him by giving his own experience of sanguine debtors who had promised to pay him in full. After a few remarks on the danger of suretyship in general, Mr Rowley, by way of changing the subject, which was becoming embarrassing to Joe, asked how Ben Goldstone was getting on.

“I can hardly tell you, Peter,” replied Joe, with a sigh. “Ben beats all my calculations; still, he is clever—there's no mistake about that. I have been in a good many speculations with him, and most of them have turned out first-rate; but he is too venturesome to please me, and he is as obstinate as a donkey. It is no use for me to try to influence him.”

“I hope he is steady, Joe.”

“Well, he is not over-steady, I am sorry to say. He drinks an awful lot of grog every day; but I would not care so much about that, for he can stand any amount of drink, and look sharp all the while; but he is such a terrible fellow to gamble, and I know what that usually leads to. But what grieves me more than all, I am afraid he isn't over-kind to his wife; though, poor girl, she never will own to it.”

“Dear me! you have more trouble than I thought you had, neighbour,” said Mr Rowley, in a sympathising tone. “I am very sorry for you.”

“Yes; I have more on my mind than I have told you of yet, Peter. I am a good deal mixed up with Ben in business concerns, and I shall have to deal very gently with him in order to get a squaring-up; but when I get that done, I'll take care to drive my own cart in future.”

“Where is Ben now, Joe?”

“He is in the country to the north, buying horses to ship to India.”

“You have proper account-books, I presume; and they ought to show how you stand with Ben.”

“Yes, we have a lot of books; but you know I don't understand much about accounts, and I have trusted those matters to Ben. He has totted up
the profits on each of our transactions, and made everything look fair and square; but I have lately heard it rumoured that he lost a sight of money at the last races in Melbourne, so I feel uneasy till he comes back to explain his affairs to me. What has made me more fidgety than anything else is this, Peter——I know I can tell you all my troubles without fear of you talking about them.”

“You may depend I shall not mention what you tell me to a soul, Joe; and if I can help you by my counsel or otherwise, I will do it gladly.”

“Thank you, Peter; you are very kind. This is what is bothering me a good deal, and upsetting my head for going at the work I have planned to do in the House. A few days ago, when I went to my bank to pay in some money, the manager asked me to step into his private room for a few minutes, so in I went, cheerfully enough, for he has always been mighty civil to me. ‘Take a chair, Mr Stubble,’ says he, and then he opened a book full of figures, and says he, ‘I wanted to suggest to you, sir, as your liabilities to this bank are rather heavy, that you allow me to be the escritoir of your title-deeds. A mere matter of form, you know, sir; but I have been requested by the directors to make the suggestion, and I hope you will not object to it.’ I felt regularly taken aback, Peter, for I did not expect anything of the sort. So I told him I would see about it, and came away; but I have been very uneasy ever since, because I can't understand the thing.”

“Of course you know the extent of your liabilities to the bank, Joe.”

“Well, not exactly; and that bothers me, for I don't like to ask the manager, and let him think that I have not been keeping careful tally. I shall soon find out when Ben comes back. You know, Peter, I have had so many jobs in hand, in the House and on committees, and presiding at public meetings, and all the rest, that I haven't had much time for looking sharp after money matters; and, as I told you before, I have trusted to Ben. I know I ought to have more than £20,000 to the good, if everybody pays me honestly; so you may imagine how queer I felt when the manager talked to me in that uncommon way. Mind you don't say a word about this before the missis, Peter, for she can't bear the least sign of trouble; and I don't know that there is anything to be afraid of after all.”

“I shall be careful not to say a word, Joe. I would advise you to write to Ben, and request him to come to Sydney to assist in a thorough investigation of your accounts, and then give up speculating altogether. You have money enough for all your wants, if you take care of it; and by trying to make more of it, you run a fearful risk of losing all, for in these days of sharp competition in commercial circles, it stands to reason that a man who has such a limited business knowledge as you have, can have but little chance of making money by speculating in merchandise or things of
the kind.”

“You are right, my boy; and I'll take your advice as soon as I can,” said Joe, assuming a more cheerful look. I heard a little story the other day that made me merry for a minute. I don't know if I can tell it exactly, but I'll try. A rather eccentric divine was trying one day to convince an argumentative clodpole of the truth of miraculous agency, which the man obstinately denied.

“‘Will you tell me what is a miracle, your reverence?’ asked the man, after cavilling a long time about it.

“‘It is not easy to make you understand anything by logical rules,’ replied the parson, whose patience was running short. ‘But I'll try another method. Step in front of me a pace or two, will you?’ The man obeyed, when his reverence lifted his best leg and gave him a sturdy kick. ‘Hallo!’ roared the clodpole, turning round, and angrily confronting his preceptor; ‘what did you do that for?’ ‘Simply to illustrate my answer to your question,’ said the parson. ‘If you had not felt my foot, that would have been a miracle.’

“Now, thinks I to myself,” continued Joe, “after I heard that story, it would have been a miracle if I had not felt the moral kick that the bank manager gave me, and a wonder too, if I don't get perplexed a bit with all the business affairs that I have in hand, especially if anything should happen to Ben; so I made up my mind to have a final squaring up with that fast young gentleman as soon as he comes back to Sydney; and after that is done, I shall invest my money in some way that will insure me a steady income without annoying my head with merchant's work or banking concerns that I know naught about. When that is all settled comfortably, my brain will be clear to set to work about some of the social improvements of the city that I have been talking about. Ben will be back in a month I daresay; so if the manager wants my title-deeds, I may as well let him have them till then; they will be as safe in the bank as they are in my lawyer's box. Now I think we may as well go home to dinner, Peter. You have heard enough of my town troubles; but I feel a good deal more comfortable since I have opened my mind to you.”

The two friends then got into the carriage, and returned to Stubbleton, which was the name of Joe's villa.

Although Mrs Stubble received her guest cordially, and inquired very kindly after his family, Mr Rowley did not feel at ease in her company, and he was glad of having a good excuse for declining to take his wife out to spend a day at Stubbleton. He was going to return home the following night, so he could reasonably plead want of time to pay another visit.

During dinner, Mrs Stubble behaved with a stately propriety which was
anything but composing to the diffident feelings of her country guest, though it was not intended to make him feel ill at ease, but merely to impress him with her lady-like manner. There was withal a scowling expression on her face, which showed that though she was surrounded by luxury, she was not satisfied. Her sharp domineering tone when she addressed her good-natured spouse, did not betoken becoming respect, much less affection for him. Her impatient looks, too, when he indulged in any little merry allusion to old times, were too plain to escape the notice of Peter; and while he pitied his old neighbour's hen-pecked condition, he was anxious for dinner to be over, to take his leave of his exacting hostess, whose intolerable pride was manifested in her every word and action.

“Stubble, do for patience sake take your elbows off the table,” said his wife sharply, as Joe was sitting at ease, and telling a little incident of bush life to his smiling friend after the second course had been removed.

“I don't so much care about it before Mr Rowley, for I know he will excuse it,” added Peggy; “but it does look so boorish when strangers are here; and I wish, too, that you would use your table-napkin instead of your pocket-handkerchief.”

“All right, missis, I won't do it again. Don't 'ee flurry yourself.—Well, as I was saying, Peter,” continued Joe, resuming his story, “the dray was stuck as tight as wax, and the bullocks were bogged right up to their bellies, and”——

“Hem—hem! Stubble, do not tell those vulgar stories while the servants are coming into the room,” interrupted Peggy.

“Bang the servants! what do I care for 'em. I bean't going to tell anything wicked,” said Joe, warmly; whereupon his wife retorted in still warmer style, and in a few minutes there was a domestic cyclone which threatened to sweep the table; but during a temporary lull, Mr Rowley discovered, by referring to his watch, that it was time for him to go, as he had to see his son and daughter off by the four o'clock steamer; so he took his hat and departed.
Chapter IV.

Bob Stubble's courtship and marriage with Miss Blunt.—His disappointment at finding that she has not a fortune.—Ben Goldstone's legerdemain.

BOB STUBBLE'S marriage has been before alluded to; but I will now explain how it was brought about.

Ben Goldstone had some difficulty in convincing his doubting pupil that a match with Betsy Blunt would be the best spec he could possibly make. Bob could not see it for some time; perhaps his heart was stubborn; but when his scruples had been subdued, Ben began “to work the oracle.” I need not tell all his manoeuvres, some of which were as mysterious as necromancy; but the result of them was, that in less than a month Bob was the accepted suitor of Miss Blunt, with the cordial assent of her mother. His own mother and father he had not deemed it expedient to consult, lest they should raise certain family questions which Ben facetiously suggested “would be sure to puncture Mrs Blunt's pride, and upset Bob's apple-cart in a trice.”

A part of Ben's grand scheme was to impress Mrs Blunt with the belief that Bob had plenty of money in possession, and that he would come in for a large fortune on the death of his father. To aid in carrying out that little deception, Ben advanced £500 to Bob on his note of hand at four months; and as he argued it would not fall due till after his marriage, he would have ample funds to meet it. It was an agreeable novelty to Bob to carry a cheque-book in his pocket, and he took it out to look at it as often as a boy looks at his new watch. He did not scruple to use his cheques neither; and the costly presents of jewellery which he made to his gratified Betsy had perhaps more effect in cementing her attachment to him than any personal virtue which he possessed, for she inherited her late sire's practical turn of mind. Ben had reminded Bob, with an insinuating nudge in the ribs at the same time, that making prenuptial presents was not like sinking money, for such little things, articles of jewellery especially, were handy at any time for raising the wind, if necessary; and, of course, they would be his own after the knot was tied, the same as everything else that his wife possessed, in the absence of any legal instrument defining her own special rights, and appointing trustees to guard them.

“Has the old lady said anything about a deed of settlement?” asked Ben when Bob informed him that the wedding-day had been fixed.

“Not a syllable, Goldstone.”
“Bravo, Bob! Your fortune is made, old fellow! But you must still go gingerly to work till the job is completed; mind that, whatever you do. Don't make a mistake at any time, and forget your innocent deportment, for it all hinges upon that. My word! if the old woman were to twig our little game, we should have to run, for she has a tongue in her head that would frighten a policeman. How do you like Miss Betsy by this time, Bob?”

“Only so-so,” replied Bob with an affected drawl. “In fact—aw—I'm sorry we have gone so far with the joke, for I don't believe I can ever actually like her, let alone love her, you know.”

“Nonsense, Bob! You will like her well enough after you are married. She is a nice little nuggety article if she isn't handsome; besides, she is literally worth her own weight in gold three times over, and that should recommend any judy in the world to a man of mettle.”

“Ah, it's very well for you to talk, Goldstone; but it will be no nonsense for me to be tied for life to a judy that I don't fancy a bit, even though she had a ton weight of gold. Besides, Betsy's peppery temper will not agree with mine very long, and we shall quarrel like wild dingoes.”

“That is nothing when you are used to it, Bob—ha, ha, ha! She is naturally high-spirited like her mother, but I don't think she is a sour-tempered girl. Not at all.”

“Oh, ho! don't you think so? Then, you should have seen her the night before last when the old lady asked her to play her poor dear father's favourite song, ‘Roley poley, gammon and spinach!’ She flopped down on to the piano-stool with her mouth screwed up to her left ear; and, my word, she looked as grim as one of those stone heads on the University gables. I almost loathed the sight of her.”

“Pooh! You are mistaken altogether, Bob. That was not an exhibition of temper—not at all. I know her little ways better than you do. She has a modish habit of making grimaces which are meant to look interesting. She was aiming soft blandishments at your heart then, and you should have looked spooney. Blow it all! you are not half-awake, Bob. I have seen other girls make rum faces when they were in their merriest mood; it is only an interesting way of giving expression to their features when they want to be very funny or unusually striking. That's it, Bob. I am sure you have seen Mag ogle often enough; in fact, I rather like to see her come out in that way, when she does not do it too strikingly.”

“Yes, yes, Goldstone; but Mag is a pretty girl, with fine eyes and good teeth, and that makes all the difference, you know. Let her twist her face about as she likes, she can't make it look hideous; but you remember how interesting old Dolly Dottz used to look when she was imitating Mag's expressive twists, and stretching open her mouth and eyes like a cat with a
bone in her throat.”

“Ha, ha, ha! Don't mention it again, or I shall faint,” said Ben. “I hate to see old women ogling and grimacing in girl fashion, though they often do it. Dolly Dottz did not know what a fright she looked, or she would not have screwed her old face about in such style for a dollar a twist.”

“Well, if Betsy ever makes any of her queer grimaces again in order to strike me spooney, I am certain I shall run off directly like a scared colt, even if it should be on my weddingnight.”

“You may bold then if you like, Bob,” remarked Ben, with a portentous wink. “But don't run away before, whatever you do. You will never get another such chance of making a fortune right off the reel; so don't lose it through any silly squeamishness. That is my advice, Bob, if you choose to take it.”

“I would ten times sooner have Lydia Swan, though she has only got a brick house for her portion. I could love her. In fact, I would rather have her without a shilling.”

“Yes, a loveable wife is very desirable, I grant you, Bob; but a domestic circle without any shillings in it would be awfully cold and comfortless.”

“Hang it all, Goldstone! I could do something to earn the wherewithal to keep a wife, surely,” said Bob, with rising warmth.

“Of course you could. I didn't say you could not. There was a billet vacant a few days ago at Burt's horse bazaar would have suited you to a T. Three pounds a week! Give up Bet if you like. I don't care so long as you meet your bill when it falls due. Your marriage will not benefit me, any more than the pleasure of seeing you in a position corresponding with my own. Marry Lyddy if you like; in fact, I should be pleased to see you do it, for I verily believe my old dad is going crazy after her; but, by Jerry, if he attempts to marry her, I'll have him put in the mad-house.”

“Don't be cross, Goldstone,” said Bob, softening in tone. “I am sorry I said so much. I am engaged to the girl, and it would be unfair to break the engagement. I am much obliged for your advice and help. I will try to like Betsy. Love springs up like mushrooms sometimes; and it may be so in my case after I am married.”

Preparations for the wedding went on actively on both sides. Bob took a convenient house at Darlinghurst, and entrusted the furnishing of it to an upholsterer in Sydney, who charged fancy prices for his chattels, but was not particular as to the time of payment, provided his “marks” were first-rate. Goldstone had assured him that Bob was right as the bank; so the trusting tradesman went to work, and furnished the house from the kitchen to the attic, in fashionable style, and to the complete satisfaction of Miss Blunt and her mother, who paid a visit of inspection when the house was in
As the important day drew near, Bob's conscience became uneasy, and would not allow him to take so momentous a step in his life's history without informing his parents; so, contrary to Ben's advice, he broke the news to them a few days before the event. In the first excitement which the unexpected disclosure created, Mrs Stubble spoke very unguardedly, and even declared, with startling vehemence, that she would see him dead and buried sooner than her only living son should form such a horridly low connexion; and added so long a string of bitter invectives against the whole generation of Blunts, that Bob's fiery temper was at length aroused, and he emphatically declared that he would marry Betsy in spite of his mother and his father too, and that not one of his family should be invited to the wedding.

Mr Stubble was far less excited than his wife, and repeatedly suggested that they should talk the matter over smoothly, and not rate out so that the servants in the kitchen could hear all about it. He urged that it was no good trying to bounce Bob, as if he were a boy in a pinafore; that if he loved the young girl, and she was all right and straight, it wasn't for them to say he shouldn't have her, if he had a mind to. Furthermore, he argued, that for aught he knew, the Blunts were as high up as the Stubbles, so far as their pedigree was concerned; but if they were ever so bad, abusing them would not make them better; at any rate, he did not see any fun in kicking up a row about them in his house; he wouldn't have it neither; and that was all about it.

But notwithstanding Mr Stubble's pacific arguments and his emphatic ultimatum, his wife still persisted in saying damaging things about the Blunts, especially referring to a tradition about a hocuspussed digger, which again excited Bob to such an extent, that he at length took up his hat and left the house in a rage. His mother then sat down, and cried aloud with sorrow and vexation.

Bob was compelled to explain part of the family dissent to Betsy and her mother; and in turn their pride and wrath were stirred together in such a whirl that, only for Ben's skilful interposition, it is probable that the match would have been abruptly broken off; and, as Ben remarked, Bob would have been humbled to the dust in the eyes of the world, and his bran-new furniture would have become the spoil of a lot of dusty brokers.

At length, they were married in a quiet way, or, as Mrs Blunt tritely remarked, “without any fuss and nonsense.” The only guests present were Mr Barrelton, the wine merchant (Mrs Blunt's sister's husband), with his wife and three daughters, who acted as bridesmaids. Ben Goldstone, and a mercantile gentleman who had been confidential clerk to the late Mr Blunt,
were the bridegroom's men.

After the ceremony came the breakfast, of course; and when that was eaten, the youthful pair started for Manly Beach, to spend the honeymoon.

Ben Goldstone returned to his house that night rejoicing, for one great cause of anxiety was gone. He had dreaded up to the last hour lest Bob should turn sulky and "shy off" the match, for it was clear that he did not love his bride in the least, and he had told his devoted brother-in-law that it was purely to oblige him that he was thus sacrificing himself, which pointed declaration Ben affected not to understand.

Although the fund of useful information which the young bride possessed was very small, she had a strong disposition to talk: it is no wonder, then, that her conversation was more of a domestic than an intellectual character. As is commonly the case with such poorly-cultured minds, her stock of talking matter was pretty well exhausted before the honeymoon was at its full; but in the course of her garrulous exposition of family affairs, it became evident to Bob that he had made a serious miscalculation in the amount of fortune which his bride inherited in her own right, for she did not own anything at all in actual possession, though she was heir-apparent to her mother's property. I will explain the matter in fewer words than Bob learned it from his wife.

The late Mr Blunt, though the ostensible owner of a good deal of city and country property, was in a similar position to other owners of property this day; that is to say, his estate was heavily mortgaged. He had been lured out of his own lucky line of business by a plausible broker with a greedy eye to commission, and had bought a whole cargo of rice, molasses, bamboo-chairs, and pickled ginger, by which he lost an immense sum of money, and had to borrow on his real estate to pay his debts. His widow, who was wonderfully sharp in money matters, had been gradually paying off incumbrances upon some properties by selling others, and she had lately encouraged a hope that through the pecuniary assistance of her new son-in-law she might redeem the residue of her houses from the clutches of her powerful enemy, the mortgager.

Though Mrs Blunt's income was sufficient to enable her to live in comfortable style, it was not a tithe of the amount which Ben had been led to suppose. He got his information respecting the family affairs from a discarded clerk of the late Mr Blunt, who had been witness to his will, made seven years before. But since that time real property had very much decreased in value,—so much so, indeed, that poor Mr Blunt was supposed to have died of a broken heart in consequence. A few months prior to his death he had made another will (with his own hands, to save expense) by which he bequeathed the whole of his property to his wife, absolutely
during her widowhood, and appointed her sole executrix. The discarded clerk knew nothing about the second will, and sharp as Benjamin Goldstone was, it did not occur to him to ask his informant the date of the will he had witnessed, or to find out if a subsequent will had been made. It is not surprising that Ben knew nothing of Mr Blunt's heavy loss on the Indian cargo, for mercantile men are usually pretty close on the subject of losses, except when they want to show a good excuse for breaking; and in Mr Blunt's case it was not expedient to break, because he would have lost by it; so he buried his troubles in his own breast, and current report said they killed him.

Bob had been carefully reticent about money matters to his bride-elect and her mother, lest it might be suggestive of a deed of settlement; and Mrs Blunt's dread, lest her daughter should lose the chance of a rich husband through his discovering that she was dowerless, made her equally shy of speaking about business, or asking Bob any particulars respecting his source of income, until the nuptial knot was tied. Ben's crafty inuendoes, and the more direct evidence of Bob's cheque-book, had seduced her into the belief that the young man was rich; and from his apparent ductility, she had no doubt of being able to do as she liked with him by and bye; so she remained silent and hopeful.

The first evening after Bob's return to town, his mother-in-law, with a pleasant candour which she had never before shown, explained to him every particular respecting her affairs, including her income and expenditure. Her statement tallied so closely with what he had previously heard from the lips of his wife, that there was not the slightest room to doubt that he had made a miserable mistake. Mrs Blunt's manner seemed to indicate that she expected an equally explicit disclosure of his financial condition, which he was not prepared to afford her till he had consulted his trusty brother Ben; so he adroitly evaded the matter by asking his wife to sing “Roley poley,” and he would try to play an accompaniment on his brass Jew's harp.

Poor Bob passed a sleepless night after that family reunion, and bitterly did he reproach himself for encouraging a spirit of despicable covetousness and idleness, which had led him into perplexities from which he could see no pleasant way of extricating himself. Immediately after breakfast next morning, he left his home for the purpose of meeting Ben as he came into town.

“I say, Goldstone, here's a pretty go!” exclaimed Bob, seizing Ben's arm at the corner of King Street.

“What's up, old fellow? You look regularly scared. Has your wife been combing your hair with the claws of her piano-stool?”
“No fear! Tell me who informed you that Betsy has £40,000 in her own right, Ben?”

“Who? Why, Jack Carss, the broker at Bridge Street, Blunt's old clerk. I promised to give him quarter per cent upon the”——

“Pooh! quarter per cent upon nothing; how much is that?”

“Don't be playing the fool with me, Bob, for I am not in the humour to stand it this morning. I have worry enough already.”

“I think you have been playing the fool with me, Ben, and I shall have to hop to the tune of “Gammon and spinach” all the days of my life.”

“What do you mean?” asked Ben, turning pale with excitement.

“I mean that my wife is not worth a dump.”

“'Tis false, Bob! If that is the way you are going to repay me my £500, I'll—I'll soon put somebody on your scent.”

“How dare you talk to me in that way?” interrupted Bob fiercely, at the same time shaking his riding-whip in Ben's face. “I'll knock your nose off, if you say that again.”

“Here, come into the café, Bob. Don't let people in the street see us quarrelling,” said Ben, in a mollifying tone, which contrasted strangely with his bullying manner a minute before. “Make haste. Here comes long John, and I don't want to meet him this morning, for special reasons.” He then passed his arm through Bob's, and led him to the French café in George Street.

Bob's temper was not so accommodating as that of his wily relative, and it was some time before his ruffled spirits were softened down sufficiently to enable him to speak. When he had grown calmer, he explained to Ben the substance of Mrs Blunt's disclosure on the previous night. While Ben sat and listened, he was evidently making a violent effort to suppress his outraged feelings; at length he said, “Let us go to Carss's office, and hear what he has to say about it.”

“What is the good of going to him? I tell you, I have seen a copy of old Blunt's will with my own eyes. Every stick he had is left to his wife.”

“If Jack has wilfully deceived me, I'll massacre him this blessed morning,” said Ben, striking the table with his huge fist.

“Be quiet, Ben; the waiters are grinning at us. I don't believe Carss knew anything about old Blunt's affairs of late. As far as I can make out, Jack was discharged for drunkenness seven years ago, and has never entered Blunt's office since then. The old man lost £65,000 in three years by unlucky speculations and bad debts, let alone depreciation of his house property.”

“Whew!” whistled Ben. “Then the old woman can't be worth very much now.”
“She has about £700 a year from rents.”
“Is the property all hers absolutely?”
“Every stick and stone of it, unless she should marry again; in which case it is to be equally divided between herself and Betsy—share and share alike, the will says.”

Ben swallowed the small residue of liquor in the tumbler before him, and then remarked with a forced laugh, “I wish we could make up a match between her and my old dad; but I’m afraid that is no go, for he is cranky after Miss Swan.”

“Poor Lyddy!” sighed Bob. “You did not let me finish what I was talking about, Ben. The several shares are to be vested in trustees for Betsy and her mother, individually, for their own sole and separate use and benefit, free and clear of and from all and singular”—

“Tush! I don’t want to hear all the legal jargon. It is plain that we are done brown,” exclaimed Ben with a savage oath.

“It strikes me, that I am done brownest of the two; and it is not unlikely that I shall be done black and blue before I pacify Mrs Blunt for my part in this cheating transaction.”

“Mrs Blunt be blowed! She is the greatest cheat of the lot. She led me all along to believe that Blundleton Terrace belongs to Bet, and now it appears that she sold it two years ago, to pay off mortgages.”

“But it is no use whining over it. How much money have you in the bank now, Bob!”

“Not any to spare at present, I assure you,” replied Bob, carelessly.

“Well, I must raise £1000 in some way by this day week, or it is all up with my credit. By the bye, Bob, is your household furniture insured?”

“I am sure I don’t know—at any rate, I have not insured it; I never thought of it. Why, Ben?”

“Eh—oh—nothing; only, it is not safe to run risks, you know; there was a house burnt down a month ago.”

“Yes; and there are thousands of houses in Sydney that have never been burnt at all.”

“That is a nonsensical argument. You might be burnt out to-night. It is safer to insure.”

“I should not care very much if I were burned myself,” said Bob, despondingly. “The fact is, I dread to go home lest Mrs Blunt should be there. I must tell her my position, and then there will be a comical scene, I know. I wish I was a sailor, and I would be off to sea.”

“You need not go home till late to-night, Bob, then the old dame will be gone to Newtown; and in the meantime we can consider what is best to be done. The sudden news has taken me slap-aback, and I cannot think clearly
about anything just now. Waiter! another cocktail!”

“Ah, that is refreshing! You are a fool not to try one, Bob,” said Ben, when he had drunk the mixture which the waiter placed on the table before him. “Now, then, let me first of all explain to you how I am fixed at present, and show you how you can help me, and then I will help you to consider a safe way to bamboozle Mrs Blunt. I have a heavy bill to meet this day week in favour of your father, and my credit hinges upon its being punctually met. I think it is the very first bill the governor has ever taken, and if it were dishonoured, there would be a grand kick-up, and, worse than all, he would be dead set against bills for ever after. I can see the way clear to do a rattling stroke of business if I can keep on the right side of our daddy, and I shall let you in for a share in the speculations. But nobody must know our true positions; mind that, Bob. You crack me up, and I'll crack you up—you understand? How much money have you got in the bank now?”

“About £140; but I really cannot spare any of that, Goldstone.”

“My word! you have been doing it pretty extensively, Bob. £360 in less than three months, and all for nothing! Well, never mind—can't be helped; other fellows as wide-awake as ourselves have been nipped before to-day. I don't want your balance, old fellow; you must eke that out, and take care Betsy doesn't see your pass-book. I daresay your bank will melt one of my bills, say for £300. You must slip it into the pot and try. I can get your bill to me done at my bank for £200. That will make £500, less discount, which is neither here nor there. Then you must get an advance of £500 on your furniture, and that will make up the sum I want as right as ninepence.”

“How am I to get an advance on the furniture, Ben?” asked Bob, with a look of concern.

“Simply enough. Leave that to me; only give me a written authority, and take your wife and Mother Blunt to Parramatta for a day's fresh air. I will manage it all right.”

“But you know the furniture is not paid for, Ben.”

“What does that matter? If I buy a horse from you on credit, am I not at liberty to sell it till I pay you for it? Foogh! how would commercial men manage their large concerns if your squeamish notion were to become mercantile law? Besides, you will only want the advance for a week or two. I shall soon have plenty of funds in hand, and you can wipe off the advance, and pay for the traps as well. Don't you see?”

“I suppose it is all right, Ben. I am very willing to help you in any way I can; but pray don't involve me in pecuniary difficulty. And now tell me what I shall say to Mrs Blunt when I go home; for the fact is, I am in a quaking, nervous fever.”
“I'll turn the whole matter over in my mind to-day, Bob, and we will discuss it over a hot supper at the ‘crib.’ Nabal has just returned from Melbourne in the Governor-General, and he is sure to go to the ‘crib’ tonight to see Susan. I hear he has sold his Collins Street property; so I hope to do a useful stroke with him, if the sporting Victorians have not cleaned him out. Keep your collar up, old fellow, and don't look so dismal. I'll put you on a track that will carry you along smoothly enough for a month or two, and we must trust to chance for what will turn up in the interim. Why don't you try a nobbler?”

“I would rather not, thank you, Ben; my head is aching.”

“Sparkle up then, and let us go over to Rumball's office, and do this little bill business; we can get blank forms there; then I must go and attend to some other delicate affairs that I have in hand, and I will meet you at the ‘crib’ at eight o'clock.”

“Do you see this card, Bob?” said Ben soon after they met in the evening at the appointed rendezvous. “Twig it well. Do you see anything green about it?”

“I can see a tiny piece of blue paper sticking on the back of it,” replied Bob, after he had scrutinised it carefully.

“Just so. Now keep your eyes open and your mouth shut, and you may learn something to-night that will be better than a trade to you. Hush!—shut up! Here come Nabal and his cousin Gregory!”

* * * * *

A little after midnight, Bob, who had been growing very uneasy, whispered Ben that he must go home; whereupon Ben arose from the card-table, at which several young men were seated with flushed faces, and remarking that he would be back in less than ten minutes, he left the house with his dispirited brother-in-law.

“Ha, ha, ha!—glorious sport! Luck has been on my side to-night, and no mistake!” exclaimed Ben exultingly, when the two friends got on to Hyde Park.

“Luck, do you call it?” said Bob. “I think it was sleight-of-hand. What perfect fools those fellows are to sit there, and see you pocket their money in that style.”

“They think they are going to win it back; that is always the way, you know. Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Ben, slapping his pocket. “I shall not want you to pawn your furniture this time, Bob. But I must go back before those sporting blades have time to cool down. My word! I have done a stroke to-night.”

“What shall I say to Mrs Blunt, Ben, if she asks me any questions?”
“Say? why, bamboozle her you know. I have not time to go into particulars now; but I'll see you in the morning. Talk largely about the station at New England, and the farm at the Hunter, and you may have my estate in Cumberland to make a noise with. If she asks any pointed questions, refer her to me for information, or take the huff and turn sulky. You can tell Betsy you don't like to feel that you are an object of suspicion and vulgar doubts. Can't stay any longer, Bob. I must clear out Nabal and his cousin to-night, while they are in a sporting humour; somebody else will do it to-morrow, if I let the chance slip. Ta, ta! give my love to Betsy. Keep your pecker up, old fellow. Good-night.”

Ben then hastened back to the “crib,” and Bob pursued his way home, hoping as he went that his inquisitive mother-in-law would not be there.
Chapter V.

A glance at the history of Mr and Mrs Blunt.—Bob Stubble's discomfiture.—His insolvency.—Departure for Melbourne.—Various other matters of interest.

A FULL account of Bob Stubble's career for the three years ensuing would fill up my book; so, I must summarise his doings in one chapter. But first of all, it will be necessary to glance back at the history of his wife and her parents.

Mr and Mrs Blunt had, before their marriage, lived fellow-servants in a gentleman's family at the Glebe; the former as coachman, and the latter as cook. After a proper season of courtship, they were united in holy wedlock; and then, with their joint savings, they opened a house in the public line at one of the most thirsty corners of the city. There they did “a roaring trade;” notwithstanding which, the “Jolly Dingo” was considered a respectable house, and a favourite shop for getting a noon-day nobbler on the quiet, for it had a private entrance to the bar screened off nice and snug for the encouragement of bashful tipplers.

The second engineer of a coasting steamer had not harder work in his department than Mrs Blunt had behind the bar from day-dawn till midnight; but she was as active a woman as ever handled a pewter pot: moreover, the stimulus of making money dulled her sense of aching limbs, and cheered her spirits with the hope of ease and happiness when “the pile” was made. Mr Blunt had busy times of it too in the underground department, which he managed wholly himself by the light of a safety-lamp; but after he had finished his mysterious operations of mixing-off for the day, he was always ready to stand by the beer-engine, and let his wife attend to the lighter duties of the spirit-taps and the chalktally.

Almost every successful man is an object of envy; and Mr Blunt was not an exception. There was a peculiarly attractive influence about the angular doorway of the “Jolly Dingo,” and customers were whirled inside as they were rounding the corner like sticks and straws in a tide-eddy. Several brother tapsters longed for Jacob's lucky stand; but his landlord could never be induced to turn him out of it, though he was offered more than double the rent which Jacob paid. The fact of his having a lease of the house was probably the cause of his landlord's favouring firmness; and though this is mere hypothesis, it could be supported by many examples from colonial life, where tenants at will have been turned out of house and home to make room for others in whom the landlord felt greater interest.
But envy is not easily foiled, and it soon began to show itself in another form, which furtively aimed at muzzling or shutting up the “Jolly Dingo,” and diverting the strong current of traffic in another direction. Jacob was repeatedly fined for Sunday selling, at the instance of a virtuous policeman, who had his eye to promotion, and whose zeal for the decency of the particular locality was perhaps stimulated by the circumstance of the houses at two opposite corners being owned by an influential J.P. Mrs Blunt was in favour of turning strict Sabbatarians, lest they should lose their licence; but Jacob, though not less pious than his wife, did not like to lose custom, and he said “he'd chance it.” He did so, was again summoned by the vigilant constable, and his licence was cancelled forthwith, as a solemn warning to other publicans to mind what they were about. The “Jolly Dingo” never wagged his tail again.

Though it was a shocking blow to Mr Blunt, it was not what is called “a settler,” for he was a made man, having bought a good deal of property very cheap, when the exodus to California threw so many small houses into the market. He retired in disgust from the retail liquor trade, and started in the wholesale way, in which he soon began to make money like dirt. His wife retired into private life, but with a spirit soured by mortal hatred to the persecuting policeman, and the arbitrary J.P. who cancelled the licence.

Their only daughter Betsy was sent to a second-rate boarding-school a short distance from Sydney, where she learnt many more things than were noticed in the quarterly bulletin of progress, for some of her schoolfellows were very precocious young ladies. Perhaps the main reason why Betsy did not become a finished flirt was, that she was remarkably plain, and not a favourite with the adventurous youths who, by means which the governess failed to guard against, used to hold nocturnal communications with other girls in the school.

At the death of her father, Betsy left school, for she had “finished her education,” and went to reside with her mother at Newtown. She was not wholly slighted by the other sex; far from it; for she had had several brisk beaux, including Ben Goldstone; but her keen-sighted mamma could read their mercenary motives, and she started them off as sharply as she dismissed street-beggars. But when Bob Stubble presented himself, his modest mien impressed Mrs Blunt at once that he was not a matrimonial juggler; and the pleasant belief that he had plenty of money of his own, forbade the idea that he was seeking her daughter with sordid eyes. His comely person and harmlessly rollicking manner soon won upon the heart of Betsy, and she confessed to her mother that she loved him tremendously; so he was accepted without any scrupulous questions being asked.
For several weeks after the last interview with Ben, noticed in the preceding chapter, Bob continued to keep his wife and her mother in ignorance of the true state of his financial affairs. He occasionally alluded to his station up-country and his farm on the Hunter River, in accordance with Ben's counsel; but it was done in such a bunglingly bashful manner that it is no wonder he felt conscious Mrs Blunt's searching look was tinctured with suspicion; and the misery he endured in her presence can only be estimated by those who have been lured into a similar course of deception and trickery. His confidence in Ben was entirely gone since he had been eye-witness to several of his recent schemes for raising money, including his gross fraud upon the imbecile young spendthrift, Nebal Samms; indeed, he had come to the forced conclusion that Ben was a thorough blackleg. Bitterly he bemoaned his folly in yielding to evil counsel, and bartering his liberty, and honour, and peace of mind, for a life of wretched thraldom with a wife whose disposition was dreadfully contrary to his own, and with whom he was daily growing more disgusted. He felt that an exposé of his affairs must inevitably take place, and he never could shake off the dread which it created. He grew so wretchedly nervous, that the well-known rat-tat of Mrs Blunt at his front-door, would startle him more than the bang of a carronade under his bed would have done a few months before.

In a state of extreme mental depression, he one day appealed to Ben, whom he met on the street, for pecuniary help, as his balance in the bank was nearly expended, and his first quarter's rent was due the next day. Ben explained that, in consequence of his luck having taken a turn, and losses resulting, he was unable to furnish him with any of the “ready rhino;” but offered “to melt” another bill for him, as his last one had “gone down like a bladder of lard.”

Bob replied that “he would not sign any more bills; for, as he saw no way of paying them, it was positive cheating. Besides, the idea of being encumbered by debt made him intolerably wretched.”

Ben then suggested that Bob should ask his father for a small loan; but he vehemently declared he would rather die than let his parents know of his humbled position, after what had recently passed between them.

“I tell you what you can do, Bob, as easily as skinning a snake,” said Ben, lowering his voice to a whisper. “You can write a cheque for Nabal, you know; he is always muddled, and would not know anything about it. And even if he should perchance find it out by and bye, I can make it all right, for he is under my thumb completely.”
“What! do you want me to commit forgery, Goldstone?” asked Bob, with a look of horror.

“What a blessed muff you are, Bob! Why do you speak so loudly? We shall have a mob round us in a minute. Look you, you may as well have a few hundreds out of Nabal as let other sharks have it all; in fact, it will be doing him a kindness to borrow a little from him in the way I suggest; for you will pay him back, of course, and it will come in handy for him after he is cleaned out, which he certainly will be before long.”

“I tell you, Ben,”—

“Hold on a minute, and hear what I have to say. The thing can be done without the least risk, for I'll guarantee Nabal would not miss £400. He never checks his passbook, and I doubt if he even keeps a rough account of the cheques he draws.”

“You have led me into misery enough already, Goldstone, without tempting me to finish up by committing felony,” replied Bob, drawing himself up in a manner which made Ben wince. “I shall go home at once, and declare my real position to my wife and her mother, and that will rid me of some of the anxiety which is eating my heart away.”

“More fool you!” interrupted Ben savagely. “You can easily stave them off for a month or two longer. My luck will surely turn in the meantime, and I shall be able to help you. I have several little dodges in hand; and, as I told you before, if you will stick to me and show yourself plucky, I will pull you through your difficulties. But if you prefer to take your own way, and go home whining about your poverty, look out; that's all. Old Mother Blunt will tattoo your face with her dirty nails; so mind your eyes.”

“Better to run that risk than be a convict for life, as you want to make me,” said Bob, bitterly. “I tell you again, Goldstone, I cannot keep up a system of deceit and falsehood, however well you may manage to do it. I won't be a rogue any longer, if I know it; and I will starve before I have recourse to your disreputable schemes and plots for raising money.”

That taunting remark was immediately followed by a heavy blow from Ben's fist, which Bob promptly returned; and a scuffle ensued, in which the latter got his face severely bruised, and his coat torn off his back. The combatants were soon separated by some passers-by, when Bob slunk away home in a state of mind not easily depicted.

His battered condition of course elicited inquiries from his wife and her mother; when Bob, with sobbing utterance, explained the cause of it, and also confessed the deception which he had been persuaded to practise upon them, and wound up his startling disclosure by a pathetic appeal to their good-nature for forgiveness, and a promise that he would go to work, and earn a livelihood for himself and wife in any honest way that offered itself
to him. I shall not give a full account of the domestic scene which ensued, but will simply record that poor Bob was mute to all the invectives which Mrs Blunt discharged at him with the full force of her practised tongue. To her threats of a criminal prosecution for conspiracy, Bob made no remark, for he felt he deserved it; but when she showed a furious disposition to dispense summary justice with her own hands by means of the parlour poker, he plucked up effort to evade it, for which nobody can blame him. Seizing a spare coat that hung on a peg in the hall, he fled from the house, leaving his wife screaming with hysterical tantrum, and his mother-in-law swearing like a common sailor.

Bob would have gone home in a thoroughly humbled mood, and sought sympathy in his distress from his parents, but he dreaded a disclosure of Ben's infamous doings, which he knew would shock his parents terribly, and perhaps be the death of Maggie, who was in a very low nervous state. He therefore resolved to keep away from his family altogether, and as soon as practicable to leave the colony and seek his fortune elsewhere.

A few days afterwards a sheriff officer found out his secluded lodgings at Prymont, and served him with a writ at suit of the accommodating upholsterer before mentioned, who had become suddenly impressed with the idea that Bob was a bad mark. The next process was to lodge him in the debtors' prison, from whence he could only extricate himself by filing his schedule.

I forbear to follow Bob in his trying passage through the Insolvent Court, lest I arouse shuddering recollections in the minds of some of my honest readers, who would doubtless prefer a passage round Cape Horn in a leaky ship to another liquidating process before the Commissioner. But at length a day of deliverance came, and Bob issued from the court with his certificate in his pocket, and his heart eased of more than half its load of trouble. As he walked down the “valley of humiliation” into Pitt Street, he mentally resolved that he would henceforward eschew prodigality in all its forms, and would work to earn an honest livelihood, even at the humblest calling, rather than again run into debt, and undergo the misery attendant thereupon. His wearing apparel had been considerately allowed him by the Commissioner. His gold watch had been overlooked by his surly opposing creditor, and it was at the bottom of his fob; so he took it out, and a friend of the needy, named Molloy, lent him £6 upon it. Bob forthwith took a steerage passage to Melbourne under an assumed name, to prevent his friends discovering his whereabouts, and when the steamer cleared Sydney Heads, he felt that he was free, although miserably sea-sick.

He did not stay in Melbourne, but started on foot for Bendigo. He
worked for a fortnight on the road, breaking stones, at which he saved £4, for stone-breakers were paid better wages in those days than they are now. As he was very frugal, he had cash in his pocket when he arrived at Sandhurst. He had entertained some hope of finding his lost brother, but he soon judged that it would be lost time to look for Dick amongst the crowds of diggers at Bendigo; so he began to look out for himself.

Fortunately for him, he fell in with three young men who had recently opened up a small claim; two of them were sailors, the third, who was by no means fond of hard work, was the prodigal son of a clergyman in England. He was very glad to sell his share in the claim to Bob for a pair of decent trousers and the balance of his cash in hand; and it was a bargain which gave much satisfaction to his mates, who were, in plain terms, glad to get rid of him, and were equally glad to get Bob for a partner, as he was both able and willing to work.

Bob experienced the usual vicissitudes of a digger's life, but he enjoyed it, for he was comparatively free from harass of mind. His partners were intelligent young men, full of nautical fun; and they agreed well together, for they were all industrious and saving. They opened several claims, some of which turned out tolerably well, others were “shicers” (i.e., worthless); but on the whole, they had reason to be satisfied, and grumbling was never heard in their camp. Sailors in general are handy fellows at almost any kind of work on shore, and they usually appreciate a position where they have “their watch below” all night.

“No turning out to reef topsails or to take your turn at the wheel, to-night,” one of Bob's sailor friends would sometimes laughingly say to the other, as they lay coiled up in their snug bunks, while the winter wind howled round the tent. “And no cross mother-in-law to make me shudder directly I get up in the morning, or dunning creditors to dog me as soon as I put my head into the open air,” muttered Bob, as he snuggled up in his corner of the tent. So they were all happy in the enjoyment of liberty; and they worked away at their claim with the exciting hope that they might at some lucky stroke of the pick-axe turn out a nugget heavy enough to make them independent men for life.

After about two years, one of Bob's mates was unfortunately killed by the sudden caving-in of the shaft; so the partnership was dissolved, and the claim was sold. Bob found himself in possession of £450, with which he started for Melbourne direct. A few days before, he wrote to his wife, asking her forgiveness for his long neglect, and for all his other misconduct. He told her of the success of his industrious efforts, and expounded his future plans, as far as he could see them. It was his intention, if she approved of it, to rent a small dairy-farm on the Hunter, or
elsewhere; he had enough money to stock it, and to furnish a house comfortably, and hoped he would be able to afford her a dog-cart; at any rate, she should have a nice horse, and he would teach her to ride. He drew a fanciful picture of their future rural homestead, and finished his letter by expressing a sincere hope that they would be able to live happily together, as man and wife should do.

By return of post he received a black-margined note from his mother-in-law, coldly informing him that his wife had died seven months before of scarlatina. The writer significantly hinted that she had been thus prompt in replying to his communication, in order to save him the trouble and expense of coming to Sydney.

“Poor Betsy!” sighed Bob, as he put the letter into his pocket. “Perhaps it is all for the best. We never should have lived happily together. Impossible!”

That was about the height or depth of his heart-mourning for his lost wife; but he had been taught by his mother the propriety of exhibiting the outward symbols of respect and grief for departed relatives in whatever part of the world they had died. On one occasion, when they lived in the country, his mother had spent more than forty pounds for family mourning on hearing of the death of her eldest brother, who, for nine months prior to his decease, had scarcely common necessaries, let alone delicacies suitable for a sick man. Undoubtedly, the forty pounds might have been more kindly expended in ministering to the comfort of the sufferer; but perhaps Peggy did not think of that; whether or not, it is but reasonable to infer from her acts, that she thought it of less importance than to put on sable apparel, and “bear about the semblance of woe,” after his decease. Bob was not disposed to disrespect his wife’s memory, however much he had slighted her personally; so he went forthwith to a tailor and ordered a suit of superfine mourning, and put a band on his hat four and three-quarter inches deep; he could not get a five-inch band. He also tried to keep his face in a becomingly serious shape, and carefully watched against his acquired habit of whistling popular airs in the street.

He had not received a letter from his parents since he left home; so he concluded that they were irreconcilably offended with him, and he decided not to go to Sydney to see them, but to “take a spell” for a month or two, and in the meantime see a little of quiet life in Melbourne. He accordingly took lodgings at a respectable private boarding-house near Carlton Gardens, and lodged his money in the Bank of Victoria.

There were several young gentlemen lodging at the same house with him; but as they were of a decidedly frolicsome turn, he avoided a close intimacy with them, for he thought it would never do for a man in deep
mourning to look merry; nevertheless, he quietly enjoyed some of their fun at the table, and now and then picked up a bit of interesting information from their remarks, for they were well acquainted with Melbourne men, and with the manners and customs of that cosmopolite community.

The usual topic of discussion at the tea-table was the state of the gold share market during the day, and much excitement was manifested, for all in the house, including the landlady, were shareholders. Bob heard many stimulating examples of sudden fortunes being made by men and women, and even by boys, who had never even seen a gold-field, but who had made lucky purchases of gold-quartz reef shares on the Melbourne Mining Exchange. In short, the speculative fever was then at its height, and almost everybody in the city was anxious to try his luck.

“I say, Morris, will you sell your Tiddliwinks?” asked a young man of his friend at the opposite side of the table, one evening, while Bob sat by silently sipping his tea, but with his ears wide open.

“No fear,” replied Morris; “they fetched £3 10s. today.

“That is a clear £150 in my pocket. They will be up to £6 by this day week; and then I mean to sell out, and go in for something else.”

“I will bet you five notes that they don't go up to £6 within a month,” said his friend, whose name was Jobson.

“Done!” cried Morris, and forthwith the two spirited young gentlemen drew out their betting-books, and each one, after making an entry, said “All right.”

The next morning Bob coolly walked down to the Mining Exchange in Collins Street, and after a little negotiation with a bustling sharebroker, he succeeded in buying one hundred shares in the Tiddliwink gold-quartz reef for £4 a share. He was only just in time to secure the bargain, for the shares were £4 15s. at three o'clock that afternoon,—indeed, he was offered £4 16s. for his lot if he would take a bill, which he declined doing lest the bill should turn out a “shicer.”

“Well, this is about the best day's work I ever did,” thought Bob, as he rolled about in his bed that night, forming plans what to do with his money after he had sold out his Tiddliwink shares at £6. “Many a day I have been delving deep under ground, up to my knees in mud, without getting even the colour of gold, and here I have made, say £75, without any harder labour than merely writing a cheque! My word! that is the way to make money; and it is perfectly honest, too,—not like Master Ben's trickery with marked cards. Ha, ha, ha! Diggers may dig if they like; but they will not catch me slaving my flesh off again so long as I can do the correct thing at this rate. Let me see: if I sell out even at £5 10s., I shall make £150: but if I get £6, I shall make £200, slap. Ha, ha! that's the way to do it!” With that
comforting reflection he lulled himself to sleep.

Alas for poor Bob's golden harvest! His shares had reached their maximum on that very day. They could not be puffed up higher by any sort of hocus-pocus that was being secretly practised. The next week it was currently rumoured that the Tiddliwink reef had been “peppered” or “salted,” and the shares were not saleable at any price.

The unexpected news had a distracting effect upon Messrs Morris and Jobson, who were fellow-clerks in a large mercantile house in the city. A fortnight afterwards they were fellow-prisoners in the stockade at Pentridge, having been convicted of embezzlement. Their pathetic plea, that “they had simply borrowed the money, and fully intended to restore it,” though believed by both judge and jury, was not held sufficient in law to justify even the temporary appropriation of their master's money.

Bob Stubble lost all his hardly-earned capital except about £20; but he was thankful that he had not lost his liberty or his character. He at once made up his mind to seek some honest employment in Melbourne, and firmly resolved that he would never again dabble in gold-mining shares, unless he were thoroughly acquainted with the mine itself, or had undoubted proof of the respectability of the projectors or directors of the mining company in which he was induced to invest his money.

I would commend Bob Stubble's wise resolution to the consideration of any of my youthful readers who may be tempted to believe that speculation of any kind is a better way to make money than by working for it at their proper honest trade or calling.
Chapter VI.

Mr Simon Goldstone's courtship and marriage with Lydia Swan.

MR SIMON GOLDSTONE'S introduction to Lydia Swan, the merry bridesmaid, has been described in a previous chapter. It is but fair to acquit that young lady of a deliberate design to smite the old gentleman's heart when she began to coy with him in company with Maggie and her frolicsome maids. Though Lydia was fond of a bit of fun, and was leader of innocent feminine mischief among her youthful associates, she was not a flirt or a determined angler for a rich husband. Had Simon been half-a-century younger, with all his money, she would not have dared to throw off her maidenly reserve for a moment, much less call him endearing names to coax him to sing, or say all sorts of merry things to make him laugh. Many young ladies who are out of their teens think it quite safe to frolic, in a sisterly way, with a boy in a round jacket, or with an old bachelor of seventy winters, when they would stand tip-toed on their dignity if a man of twenty-five were to presume in any way to transgress the established rules of etiquette in his approaches to them.

I do not mean to say that frolicking, even with a boy in a jacket, is either safe or decorous conduct for a young maiden, but it is sometimes practised, and innocently enough too. But if it be safe sport for the girl, which is questionable, it is not always so for the boy; and I have known a youth of sixteen lose his heart through a course of platonic coying with a damsel of twenty-two, who was as virtuous as she was beautiful, and who had no more idea of enslaving the affections of her boy-lover than she had of marrying the Duke of Wellington.

Lydia Swan was an orphan, and was left to the guardianship of a bachelor uncle, who was clerk in an office in Sydney. Her income was about £100 a year, the rent of a house left her by her late father. She had been well educated, and, notwithstanding her frolicsome humour, she was a young lady of superior mental endowments. She was generous to an extreme; and out of her limited income she contributed to the support of two infirm widows. In her sprightly way she has often remarked, as many other girls have playfully done, “I wish I could captivate some rich old nabob. What a lot of good I might do with his wealth! I should like to have plenty of money to give away, if it were only to save me from heart-ache, when I see so many sick persons around me destitute of common comforts.”
When Simon rapped at the door of the house in Kent Street on the memorable day before referred to, his heart was cold as the iron knocker; in fact, it had never been very warm. And when he entered the drawing-room, had the young ladies sat with dignified stiffness, and talked to him in a becomingly reverent manner, it is doubtful if he would have had any other feeling than a desire to get away again as soon as possible, for he had always felt a creeping diffidence in female society, and a morbid idea that he was an object of disfavour and ridicule. If Lydia had been alone, or even in the presence of a few sedate companions, it is not likely that she would have had any perceptible influence on Simon's heart, for she would not have presumed to be funny or familiar. But the encouraging support of six other lively lasses, and being withal in a frolicking mood, she let her merry tongue loose, and her gamboling fancy fly; and, without the least idea of doing it, she made Simon's heart simmer like a roasting pippin.

The effect was as surprising as it was pleasing to him. A new-born gladness seemed to tingle his old system like dance-music. He had never before been called a dear old darling, or a merry old duck, by such pretty pouting lips. Never in his recollection had a pair of flashing black eyes looked at him in that loving way. Not a solitary once, in his whole lifetime, had he been coaxed to “sing a song of sixpence” by such a bewitching voice; in fact, nobody had ever done him the honour of supposing him capable of singing a song of any sort. Female eyes had usually looked at him with coldness or disdain, if ever they deigned to look at him at all; and female faces were drawn into sombre longitude at his approach, as if in mockery of the stony old miser who could not love anybody but himself. It is no wonder, then, that he laughed so uncommonly while the seven lively girls grouped around him; no wonder that his long frozen-up feelings were thawed by such genial influences; nor is it strange that he should lie and revolve the whole pleasing scene over and over again in his mind after he got into bed that night.

“Heigho!” sighed Simon, as he adjusted his flannel nightcap, and took another cough lozenge from a box beneath his pillow. “If my poor dear wife who is dead and gone had been as lively and cheerful as that pretty lass whom I saw at Stubble's this afternoon, what a happy life I should have lived with her! But she never even smiled in my presence, and that used to make me look gloomy. She was always peevish and fretful, which kept me from being kind and loving to her, when I wished to be so. But, poor dear, she was not strong, either in body or mind; and perhaps I was in fault for not removing from that dingy house, and allowing her a little more cheerful society. Half-a-dozen merry lasses for companions would have
made a difference in her temper, I'll be bound. Yes, I was in fault; but not wholly so, for her mother was to blame too. She ought to have had more sense than to interfere in our domestic matters; that sort of thing usually leads to a rupture. Well, poor Granny Farden is dead and gone; so I need not grumble at her now. I wonder if that lassie would have me if I asked her? What a remarkable change it would make in my dreary life! But I am too old for her. If I could adopt her as a daughter, I should hear her merry voice in my house. No, no, no; that won't do at all; it is impracticable. Envious tongues would talk about it, and injure her reputation; and I would not have that for the world.

“Heigho!” sighed Simon again, after a few minutes' meditation. “I don't know when I have enjoyed myself so much as I have done this afternoon. A good genuine laugh is a blessed thing. I wish I could enjoy one every day. My money does not make me laugh, nay, it does not even excite me as it used to do when I was engaged in making it; and I am troubled with the unpleasant reflection that it may make some poor mortals in the world cry, if I should die suddenly, and that thriftless son of mine should begin to scatter it.” Simon then fell into a solemn reverie, and finally dropped off to sleep, and dreamed that he saw ten thousand ragged boys and girls scrambling for threepenny-bits, which he was throwing to them from his front attic window. He woke up with an unusual fit of laughter, took another lozenge, then dozed off again and dreamed that he was riding to church in Scully's wedding-coach, with Lydia by his side, and his son Ben on the box.

I have already described Simon's smart attire and his jaunty air at Maggie's wedding. His marked attention to Miss Swan was observed by other persons besides Ben; and she was subjected to a more than customary share of banter and quizzing on that account, for it was the general opinion that she had fascinated the old gentleman; or, as it was facetiously expressed, drawn the old snail quite out of his shell.

“You must be joking,” said Lydia, laughing till her merry eyes sparkled in tears of fun, when an experienced matron, in solemn mood, said she was certain old Mr Goldstone thought she (Lydia) was in earnest with her familiarity. “I have had a bit of fun with him certainly, but in the same spirit that I should have played with my grandfather; nothing more, I assure you, Mrs Dix; and I cannot believe that he looks at me in any other way than as a giddy girl. Perhaps he thinks I deserve to be whipped for my mad-cap behaviour. It is impossible that he can be so silly as to think of me for his wife—ha, ha, ha! Nonsense, Mrs Dix!”

But if such were Lydia's real sentiments respecting Simon's feelings or intentions, she was soon undeceived; for, a few days afterwards, he drew
up to her uncle's house in a cab, and solicited an interview with Miss Swan.

Lydia was in the kitchen making pastry when the servant brought Mr Goldstone's card; and her surprise and trepidation may be imagined. Without changing her dress, she entered the drawing-room, and received her visitor with an easy grace which she had some difficulty in assuming; but her manner was sedately becoming her position as mistress of the house, and in company with a gentleman alone.

After a few minutes' conversation on general topics, Mr Goldstone, with wonderful calmness, and in his usual gentlemanly style, told Lydia the object of his visit, which was to make her an offer of marriage. Observing that she changed colour, and looked embarrassed, he added, in a kind tone, “I daresay you are surprised at my presumption. You might with good reason doubt my judgment, or even question my seriousness, on account of the great disparity in our ages; but, I assure you, I have carefully considered the subject, and, from my point of view, the obstacles do not appear to be so formidable as to mar your happiness, or I should not make this proposal. I would willingly explain my views more clearly to you; but I will not stay now, for I can see that I have embarrassed you, my child. This visit was unexpected by you, I am sure. I wish you to take time to consider my proposal, and to consult your guardian. I will only ask you to allow me the privilege of another visit, to receive your verbal answer; and whatever your decision may be, I trust that, at all events, you will ever regard me as your sincere friend.”

Lydia was only able to articulate a few words, which Simon took for an assent to his last proposition; so, with the most delicate desire to spare her further excitement, he shook hands with her and departed. When he had left the house, she ran up to her bedroom, and burst into tears. The merry, frolicsome, romping girl was for a few minutes overcome with sorrow for her folly in flirting with the kind old gentleman, and thoughtlessly leading him to hope for an impossibility.

When her uncle came home in the evening, her serious face showed that something unusual had occurred, and, in reply to his affectionate inquiries, she told him of the visit of Mr Goldstone, and the object of it. After hearing her story, her uncle laughed heartily, and Lydia could not help laughing with him, though she did not feel in a merry humour.

“You should have said ‘boo!’ to him, and scared him away,” said her uncle. “I wish I had been here to talk to the old goose. Report says that he is the most inveterate miser in the land; so if you were to link yourself to him, it is very likely he would starve you to death. 'Tis true I have never spoken to the man, but I have heard his character long ago. Marry you, indeed! Pooh, pooh! I have not patience enough to think of such a thing for
a moment.”

“His manner this morning was very gentle and dignified, uncle. There was nothing of the doting old lover in his address or demeanour. I must say that for him.”

“Do you want my consent to the match, Lyd? You know that is not necessary, for you are your own mistress now. You are twenty-two years old, come Sunday.”

“Consent! Oh, dear no! uncle; I have no idea of accepting his offer. Of course not. But I do not want to offend him, or to cause him unnecessary trouble, for his manner was exceedingly kind; and it is only right, you know, for me to treat him with respect. I have brought this about by my silly, thoughtless fun, but really I had no wish to do mischief. I thought I could be as familiar as I pleased with such a very old man, and he was so funny himself that he led me on;— you know what a romping mad-cap I can be, uncle.”

“You are right there, Lyd; and you had better be sedate in future. But I will suggest an easy way to get rid of your old beau. When he comes here again, tell him that you are the most expensive girl in the city. I daresay you would be so Lyd, if you had plenty of money to give away. If that confession does not scare him, tell him that if you have him, he must settle, say £5000 on you, as private pocket-money, to spend as you please—ha, ha, ha! I'll warrant that will be enough to scare away all his love for you in a twinkling; he will hobble off home, and you will never see him here again. Now brighten up, my dear, and don't think any more about it.”

Three days afterwards, Mr Goldstone called again at Lydia's house. He was dressed in a new suit of black clothes, of a becoming cut; and he looked very genteel, without any of the old dandy appearance which he had shown in his modish attire at Maggie's wedding. Lydia received him without any visible embarrassment. She had prepared herself for the interview, and she assumed a sprightly demeanour. After a while, Simon, in a calm, collected tone, asked her if she had sufficiently considered his proposal.

“Yes, Mr Goldstone, I have thought a good deal about it; but it is only fair to tell you, first of all, that you would find me the most costly, noisy, wild, troublesome creature you ever heard of; in short, I should be most dreadfully extravagant and a terrible fidget, and I don't know what besides.”

Simon smiled pleasantly, and said he should be only too happy to call her his wife, even if she had twice as many failings as she really possessed. His reply took Lydia somewhat by surprise; but she soon recovered her self-possession, and, putting on her arch look again, she said, “But you know,
Mr Goldstone, I should want a pocketful of money to spend every day.”
You shall have it, my child, and anything you wish for besides, that is in
my power to procure for you.”
Oh, but I want a great lot of money in my own purse. I shall require at
least £5000 made over to me absolutely, placed in my uncle's hands for me
to spend as I like, for I am monstrously expensive.”
I will most gladly give you ten, aye, twenty thousand pounds, my child,
for that is less than a quarter of what I possess. I will secure that sum to
you, for your own special use, to spend as you please; and when that is
spent, you shall have more; I am sure you will not waste it. Moreover, you
shall be the sole legatee of my property at my decease, for I am determined
it shall not pander to the idleness and dissipation of my spendthrift son.
Every shilling that I possess shall be yours, my child.”
Oh! don't say any more to me, Mr Goldstone, if you please,” said Lydia,
looking imploringly into his face. “Pray, don't say any more to me! Your
kindness oppresses me. I am truly sorry I have trifled with you. Forgive
me, sir; it was thoughtless folly, and not design, I assure you. I did not
intend to mislead you into the belief that I could ever marry you. I cannot
do it, sir. You are”—She hesitated, and blushed deeply.
Too old,” suggested Simon. “Yes, my dear child, I know it. It would be
a very unequal match. I know too much of human nature to believe that
any old man, verging upon seventy, is likely to engage the affections of a
bright young girl upon a short acquaintance. Your present candour
increases my confidence in you, and confirms the estimate I had formed of
your character from personal observation and otherwise. Pardon me for
checking you,” he added, as Lydia was about to speak. “Hear me for a few
minutes; then I will depart, for it grieves me to cause you so much
embarrassment. I deeply considered this matter before I resolved to speak
to you. You will make a sacrifice, no doubt; but I have allowed myself to
hope that the power, in a pecuniary sense, of dispensing succour to so
many objects of need will outweigh what might otherwise be to you
insurmountable. A surprising change has taken place in me of late, and I
can trace it partly to your happy influence. Your dear, cheerful voice has
opened a new joy-spring in my heart, and forced me to shake off my long-
cherished avarice; and now I see the world around me with other eyes. I
believe I shall live to be beloved and respected, instead of being shunned
and pointed at as a selfish, money-loving old hermit. I could explain much
more of my recent experience, but I dread being prolix. At some other time
I may tell you all. I have hoarded money for a son who, to my sorrow, has
proved himself unworthy to be trusted with it. It would be a sin to leave it
to him, for he would do mischief with it. It shall be yours, Lydia, if you
will accept of it; and the remainder of my life shall be devoted to promoting your happiness, and in helping you to make others happy. Consider again about it, my dear child, calmly and dispassionately. I will wait a week longer for your decision.” Simon then shook hands with the agitated girl, and considerately withdrew.

“Well, well! you have thoroughly astounded me, girl,” said Mr Balmer, Lydia's uncle, when, on his return home in the evening, she had related the whole particulars of her interview with Mr Goldstone. “What do you think about it, Lyd?”

“I have been so excited all day, uncle, that I dare not tell you my thoughts, lest you should think me crazy.”

“I can see you are looking anxious, my girl; so you had better not say any more about it at present. You will be able to consider the affair calmly by the time Mr Goldstone calls again, and I will ponder over it too; for it is only fair to him to think seriously about it, though at first I was inclined to treat it as a joke. His behaviour has been very gentleman-like, and his confidence and liberality are truly wonderful. He must have been terribly belied, or else you have wrought a marvellous change in him, Lyd.” Her uncle then began to chat in his liveliest strain upon current news of the day, the most exciting of which was the arrival in Sydney of a lady of the Bloomer persuasion, who was going to reform the tastes of the currencylasses in the important matter of dress.

Nearly a week had elapsed, when one evening, as Mr Balmer was reclining in his arm-chair by the fire, his niece seated herself on a carpeted foot-stool, and placing her hands on his knees, said she was going to speak to him respecting Mr Goldstone, as she expected him to call the next day. “You know, dear uncle, I have always had a desire for plenty of money, so that I could help those who are suffering from poverty and sickness; but I never had an idea of owning such an immense sum as I have now within my reach. I think I should do right in accepting Mr Goldstone's offer.”

“For the sake of his money, Lyd?”

“Principally so, I admit, uncle, for the sake of the good I might do with it. How many sad hearts I may be able to cheer in the course of a year! How many poor outcast children I may be able to clothe and educate! How many charitable institutions, that are now languishing for want of funds, I may be able to assist from my heavy purse! And lastly, though it will be my first object, how comfortably I can settle you for life, dear uncle, and save you from the necessity of sitting in a cold office all day when your rheumatism is so severe.”

Tears stood in Mr Balmer's eyes as he gazed at the upturned face of his beautiful niece, and it was some time before he could speak; at length he
said, “You must leave me out of your reckoning, Lyd. I will never consent to your bartering your happiness on my account.”

“Bartering my happiness, dear uncle! Will it not be happiness to do good in the world with money which would otherwise remain locked up in an iron box? Indeed, it will; and I shall have so much good work to do that I shall not find leisure to be unhappy. As regards yourself, you must live with me; and if you object to that part of the bargain, my decision is made at once. I shall want your experienced judgment to help me in laying out my money carefully and usefully. I would not incur the responsibility of doing it all myself, I am such a little goose, you know, and designing people would impose upon me.”

Uncle Will smiled pleasantly at the idea of having nothing else to do but spend money; then remarked, “Well, my dear, you know I appreciate your generosity; but we will not argue the point concerning myself just now; it is the least important part of the matter. Have you duly considered how you will be able to bear the quizzical banter of your old playfellows, and the cynical remarks of disappointed young beaux, and tattling gossips? It is only reasonable, you know, to expect that your marriage with a rich old gentleman will set a lot of tongues talking and heads wagging. It will certainly be said that you have married for money.”

“As for all that, uncle, I don't know that it is worth much consideration, when we look at the many advantages in the other scale,” said Lydia, with a merry look. “At any rate, those things shall not influence me, if you approve of my marriage. I shall never be able to please everybody, marry whom I may, or if I live an old maid. There is this comforting idea, after all; I shall not hear what is said of me, for envious folks are generally considerate enough to say spiteful things out of the hearing of the person spoken against; and mere saucy words aimed at my back will not pierce me like arrows or air-gun bullets. Besides, don't you see, uncle Will, I may hear some nice soft words, for folks are often very polite to rich men's wives.”

“So far so good, Lyd; you are a sensible little puss, though you are such a romping plague to me at times,” said Uncle Will, kissing her fondly. “Now comes the most important question of all, and there must be no joking over it: Can you honestly make the solemn vow to ‘love, honour, cherish, and obey’ Mr Goldstone for life?”

Lydia's face looked thoughtfully serious as she replied, “I believe I shall love Mr Goldstone dearly, for love begets love, you know, uncle. He is so kind and gentle, and so scrupulously delicate in his demeanour to me, without a particle of the monkeyfied manner which some old men affect; then he is so learned and clever you know; he can teach me such a lot of
wisdom, and there is nothing I so much need as that. I daresay many people will think that it is impossible I can make a dutiful wife to a man so much older than myself; but I think they will be all mistaken. I shall be happy, uncle, if you approve of what I do.”

A long discussion ensued, which I need not relate; but the result was, that Mr Balmer assented to the plans of his niece, and the next day Mr Goldstone was overjoyed at hearing a decision quite opposite to the one he had anticipated.

Ben Goldstone was violently opposed to the match, and even threatened to make application to the judges for a writ of *lunatico inquirendo*; but his undutiful opposition was treated with calm indifference by his father; and Ben was almost lunatic himself with rage and disappointment. Gossiping neighbours also had a good deal to say about the young belle and her old beau, and some of them professed to be quite shocked at the connexion; nevertheless, preparations for the wedding went on, perhaps as smoothly as if no one had been shocked at all over it.

Lydia had explained to Simon that she did not wish for a very large house, and he kindly bade her please herself; so, with the aid of her uncle, she found a suitable villa residence about a mile from Sydney, and had it furnished to her own taste. After it was all in order, Simon went to see it, and said he was delighted with everything she had done.

In due course the promised deed of settlement was executed, and Simon and Lydia were married.
Chapter VII.

Old Simon and his young wife at home.—Uncle Will, the good old English gentleman.—His happy influence over Simon.

LYDIA had appended the significant words “no cards” to the announcement of her marriage in the newspapers, and she secretly wished there would be no ceremonious callers; but she was not gratified in that respect, for soon after her return to town with her husband, she had many fashionable visitors. It is paradoxical, if not strange, that the persons who were most shocked at her engagement with a rich old man were strongest in their congratulations on her fortunate lot, and wished her joy with more fluency of speech than did those friends who really meant all they said, but said very little.

The marriage was town-talk for a day or two, and caused a sensation almost equal to the recent balloon explosion at the Haymarket. Of course there were some caustic jokes made about old Simon and his young wife; and some witty epigrammatic puns on their names were composed for private circulation. Some base inuendoes were also uttered by certain masculines, who estimate female virtue by the low standard of their own moral perceptions or qualities; but as Lydia did not hear the scandalous remarks, she was not shocked by them.

After the excitement of receiving and returning calls was over, and Lydia had settled down to a quiet routine, she began to devise plans for employing her time and money usefully; and the dearly-bought experience of her uncle was called into practical use, to guide her in her philanthropic designs. Mr Goldstone spent a good deal of his time in his library; but, though studious, he was not mopeish—far from it; he was very cheerful in her society, and was ever ready to give her advice on any subject she propounded, and all her plans for doing good met with his ready acquiescence.

Mr Balmer, or Uncle Will, as he was usually called, was a fine old English gentleman of fifty-seven summers. He had a comfortably portly frame, and was very active for his age. The first glance at his jovial-looking face would have assured any sensible person that there was not an atom of the crusty old bachelor in his composition, and any one who knew where to look for his bump of benevolence, would not be long in deciding that he “had a heart that could feel for another.” His twinkling black eyes seemed full of sympathy, intelligence, and fun; his manner was at all times open and confiding; and his disposition generous in the extreme. He had
been tolerably rich at one time of his life; but through helping everybody but himself, he lost his money. But he did not lose his self-respect or his peace of mind; nor did he fret about his lost riches, in the maudlin hope of exciting pity. Whenever trials came from which he could not honourably escape, he would say, “It is all right. My Almighty Father knows what is best for me, and I am sure he will not suffer me to be afflicted beyond what is necessary to keep me humble. ‘The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.’ ”

Uncle Will might have embarked in business again, for several good friends offered to lend him the necessary capital; but he was averse to borrowing money, lest he should lose it; so he accepted a situation as clerk in a merchant's office, which post he filled for several years, until his niece persuaded him to resign it, and in her arch way told him he was to consider himself engaged to her as amanuensis, or “man Friday.”

Lydia had two rooms in her new house set apart for her uncle, furnished with everything she could think of to make him comfortable. She also insisted on his receiving £5 a week as pocket-money, for she knew the joy it afforded him to relieve distress in a quiet way. It would not have been an easy matter for a niece of mere ordinary tact to have induced Uncle Will to accept of such liberal bounty; but Lydia had such a happy way of managing him, that he could seldom resist her, and she almost did as she pleased with him. If he began to object to anything she proposed for his benefit, she would threaten to tickle him into submission; and he never could stand that infliction. She managed her husband in a similarly pleasant way; and it was fun to see the old men laughing at the sayings and doings of their merry little monitress in her whimsical efforts to “keep her two troublesome boys in order.”

Uncle Will was a quiet unobtrusive Christian. He lived a life of faith, and it was nearly always summer in his soul. He did not talk much about religion, unless it was to encourage a poor way-worn pilgrim, or to lead some benighted one into the light of truth; but his lamp was always burning, and its gladsome glow has led many around him to believe in the reality of the hope which enabled him to show a cheerful courage under losses and crosses, which would have bowed some men's spirits to the dust, or kept them enveloped in the gloom of despair. Such desponding ones may perhaps say, “It was natural for Uncle Will to show strong confidence in the supply of his daily wants, with such a niece, and such a home, and withal £5 a week of certain income.” It is true enough that it is easier for a sailor to trust in the strength of his ship's tackles in fine weather and smooth water, than it is when clawing off a lee-shore in a gale of wind; but a thorough sailor will never lose heart so long as he is outside of the
breakers, and a thorough Christian will never cast away his faith in God so long as he is this side of the grave.

Uncle Will was a well-read man, but his life's guide-book was the Bible, and with it he was most intimately acquainted. He has often been heard to say, that he would not barter the store of Scriptural texts which he had in his memory for a nabob's fortune. His stock of psalms and hymns, too, was surprising, and he was very fond of singing. He did not object to secular music of a harmless kind, and his collection of old songs would have been a good stock-in-trade for a professional ballad-singer, but he was most partial to old-fashioned psalm-music. He was fond of children, and few things pleased him more than to have a bit of fun with a group of merry boys and girls, and for the time being he was a boy again, and leader of the frolics.

A warm attachment soon grew up between Uncle Will and Simon, and they spent much time together. It was both pleasing and instructive for Lydia to sit and hear the old men chat about the past and present affairs of the world; of the progress of scientific discovery, and the advancement of social and political reform. Occasionally the conversation would lead to remarks on the moral and religious movements of the age; but then she usually observed that her husband grew less eloquent than he had been upon other topics, and would courteously shift the subject, or propose some music or a game at chess, which interesting game both gentlemen played skilfully.

One afternoon, Lydia was sitting at her work-table, and her husband was reading aloud, as he often did, stopping occasionally to explain some passage which might appear abstruse to her less experienced mind. The book he had selected, and which was of engrossing interest to Lydia, was entitled “The Tongue of Fire.” After a while he suddenly ceased reading, and appeared to be in deep thought. Lydia did not disturb his reverie by asking him “what he was thinking of?” or “what was the matter with him?” or any of the silly sort of questions which some good wives are in the habit of teasing their husbands with when they wish to be left alone; so she noiselessly opened a scrap-book which lay on the centre table, and soon found something to interest her. Presently Simon remarked, “What have you there, my bird, that makes you smile so pleasantly?”

“Oh, I thought you were taking a nap, deary. You shall hear what I was smiling at; it may make you smile too. I fancy you are unusually dull this afternoon.”

“I am so, my child, but pray don't be uneasy; there is nothing very serious the matter. Read to me what so amused you a minute ago.” Lydia then read the subjoined extract, entitled “A Receipt for Low Spirits”:—
“Take an ounce of the seeds of resolution, mixed well with the oil of good conscience, infuse into it a large spoonful of the salts of patience; distil very carefully a composing plant called “others' woes,” which you will find in every part of the garden of life, growing under the broad leaves of disguise; add a small quantity, and it will greatly assist the salts of patience in their operation; gather a handful of the blossom of hope, then sweeten them properly with the balm of prudence; and if you can get any of the seeds of true friendship, you will then have the most valuable medicine that can be administered. But you must be careful to get some of the seeds of true friendship, as there is a seed very much like it called “self-interest,” which will spoil the whole composition. Make the ingredients into pills, take one night and morning, and the cure will be effected.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Lydia, “I will make a big boxful of those pills for family use. Now, Simmy!” she added, rising and stroking her husband's thin locks affectionately, “Tell me what made you look so thoughtful before I tickled your fancy, and made you laugh. Come, sir! tell me all about it this minute, or I shall surmise all sorts of funny things, and blame myself, of course, for that is quite natural.”

“It was merely a simple remark your uncle made last night that came into my mind all of a sudden. Nothing more, I assure you; so pray do not trouble yourself. Now, love, I think I should enjoy a nap for half-an-hour. Will you play over that pretty little song uncle and you were singing last night.”

Lydia placed a cushion behind her husband's head, then sat down to the piano and sang in a soft key, “A Day's March nearer Home!” When she had finished the song, Simon was asleep; so she glided out of the room, and joined her uncle, who was making some preparations on the lawn for fêting the children of the School of Industry on the ensuing day. After a few words of encouragement to her worthy relative on the admirable arrangements he was making for the entertainment of his youthful visitors, she told him of the singular depression which she had just observed in her husband, and asked her uncle the nature of their late conversation, for she feared they might have had some misunderstanding.

Uncle Will smiled as though it were gladsome news to him, and then replied kindly, “Don't distress yourself in the least, my dear. I think I can explain it all in a minute. I was talking with Simon last night about the various charitable institutions in the city that you and I have visited this week. I spoke of the urgent necessity there was for other establishments, especially a night refuge for the destitute and a home for the indigent blind,” when he remarked that he had an idea of endowing a night refuge
for street vagrants; for, he added with a sigh, ‘I have a son for whose benefit I have wasted the best years of my life,—that is to say, I have toiled and pinched to hoard up money, in the blind belief that I was doing it for his benefit, and totally unconscious that I was thus cankering my own heart with selfishness and all kinds of hateful meanness that spring therefrom. That son is going to ruin as fast as he can go. His present reckless career, which he little thinks I am so well acquainted with, must inevitably end in misery and want, if it is not cut short by a sudden death. I am powerless to stop him in his reckless course, for I have no influence over him. I have resolved not to minister to his profligacy by bequeathing him money at my decease; but I should like to provide a home for him, or a roof where he might get shelter from the cold night storms, and not be necessitated, as so many unhappy creatures are, to lie out on the race-course, or under the trees in the Domain, when his miserable career draws near to its close.’

‘I replied,’ continued Uncle Will, “that it was a praiseworthy forethought which other sorrowing parents in the land would do well to imitate; still, it was of comparatively small moment whether or not he had a roof to shelter his poverty-stricken body if his soul were prepared for the great hereafter. That is about the substance of what passed between Simon and me last night, Lyd. I was going to say a little more when the supper-bell rang. But as you will have to superintend the preparations for the juvenile feast, Lyd, I may have a little more close conversation with him this evening. He is evidently concerned for his own as well as for his son's soul.”

When tea was over, Lydia said she must go into the kitchen for an hour or two, to keep her maids at work; so the gentlemen were left together in the parlour. After a while, the subject of human happiness was broached, and an animated conversation ensued, in the course of which Simon quoted the following lines from Willis, as being in harmony with his own ideas on the subject of discussion:—

``
'Tis to have
Attentive and believing faculties;
To go abroad rejoicing in the joy
Of beautiful and well-created things;
To love the voice of waters, and the sheen
Of silver fountains leaping to the sea;
To thrill with the rich melody of birds
Living their life of music; to be glad
In the gay sunshine, reverent in the storm;
To see a beauty in the stirring leaf,
And find calm thoughts beneath the whisp'ring tree;
To see, and hear, and breathe the evidence  
Of God's deep wisdom in the natural world.”

“Very pretty thoughts certainly, and smoothly expressed, and my feelings vibrate to every word” said Mr Balmer. “I dearly love the works of nature, for in them I can trace the infinite wisdom of their Omnipotent Creator. Still, none of the wonders or beauties that I behold in the world around me, or in the starry skies above me, would bring to me individually the comforting assurance of the life of the world to come. God's holy Word alone reveals that to my heart. The book of nature is gloriously wonderful, but God's Word is life-breathing, and yields spiritual joy unspeakable to the humble believer.”

“The Bible is a wondrously mysterious book,” remarked Simon, with an inquiring glance at the glowing face of his friend.

“I presume you have read it extensively, Mr Goldstone?”

“Yes, sir, from beginning to end, over and over again; but I sadly confess that I do not understand it as you do. I have also read the philosophy of many astute thinkers and the arguments of learned controversialists without number, but my obtuseness is not removed.”

“There are many things in the Bible that are hard to be understood; still, there is an inexhaustible fund of truth which the simplest mind can receive, if the Scriptures be searched with a sincere desire to know God's will, and with earnest prayer to Him for spiritual enlightenment. That poor old cripple to whom you gave a greatcoat this afternoon is but barely able to read, and yet he could tell you more about the spiritual power of God's Word than you would learn from the works of all the learned rationalistic writers whom you named to me the other day.”

“I daresay you are right, Mr Balmer. I do sincerely wish I could derive the same amount of light and comfort that you get in reading the Bible,” said Mr Goldstone, with a sigh. “I have often been overwhelmed with wonder at some parts of it, but I have never experienced a comforting feeling; and I have, when reading other parts, been subject to influences that I should not like to name. How is this?”

“Let me repeat what I heard a minister say a few Sundays ago in the course of an able sermon, which I shall never forget,” remarked Mr Balmer. “The reverend gentleman modestly premised that the following figurative exposition was addressed to the boys of the college of which he is Principal; but I think it may be addressed to many boys outside of his college, and to a multitude of old folks as well. He said, when expatiating on the inestimable qualities of God's holy Word, “There are some things in the Bible which I should not have put there if I had written the book; but
God is wiser than I, and He has seen fit to put them there with a good purpose, no doubt. Suppose a garden, stocked with choice flowers, had in one corner of it a carrion carcase. If a bee and a blow-fly entered that garden, the bee would sip honey from the flowers but would not touch the carrion, while the blow-fly would go straightway to the corner where the carcase was, and perhaps not even stop to light on a flower. The Bible is like a rich parterre; and when we see any one leaving the flowers which abound therein for those excrescences which are doubtless left there for admonition and warning, we see at once that he is certainly not a bee. Those parts which I, in my short-sighted judgment, would have left out are perhaps put in the book for us to test ourselves by, to see whether we are bees or blow-flies.”

“Alas! I fear that I have been a blow-fly!” said Simon, with a mournful look.

“Pardon me, Mr Goldstone. I did not mean to be personal. I am very sorry that”——

“The figure aptly applies to me, sir,” interrupted Simon; “and you need not be sorry for having quoted it, but quite the contrary. It is exactly my case; and perhaps it would equally apply to many of the learned sceptics whose writings I have studied with far more earnestness than I have studied God's Word itself. Yes, Mr Balmer; those rationalistic writers that I named are blow-flies; and I would at this moment give all I possess if I could wholly rid my mind of the infidel dogmas they have blown into it, to the destruction of my present peace, and the blighting of my hope of happiness in the world to come.”

“God's Word will show you the way to find a peace that passes all understanding,” Mr Goldstone.

“Yes; I believe that is true, sir. I thank God for the spark of true light which I now possess, but I long for more than a spark; I want to ‘be enlightened with the light of the living.’ ”

“Seek, and you shall find,” said Mr Balmer.

“Yes, sir, I will seek; I will search the Scriptures diligently, and with humble prayer to God to open my eyes ‘that I may behold wondrous things out of His law.’ I am grateful to you, Mr Balmer, for the Christian counsel which you have given me from time to time, and for the consistent example you have shown me, which has perhaps had more influence upon me than mere precept. Oh, that I had met with such a faithful friend as you fifty years ago! What a multitude of sins might have been hidden or prevented. But, thank God! it is not too late to turn to Him, though it be the eleventh hour.”

“I am joyful, indeed, that I have, in my humble way, been instrumental to
your spiritual enlightenment, Mr Goldstone. It is the duty of every Christian to speak a ‘word in season;’ and a powerful incentive is given him to do so in the very text which you have just now partially quoted—the last words the apostle James wrote. By the way, I have a sermon by a great preacher from that very text; and if you will allow me, I will read you a short passage which particularly struck me, showing the wonderful influence of individual effort under the providential guidance of Almighty God.”

Mr Goldstone intimated his desire to hear the passage referred to; so Mr Balmer read as follows:—

“Oh! you do not know what you do when you convert a soul. Think of death, the death of the body—nay, that is nothing; think of the death of the soul, more terrible far than the death of the body. Saving a soul from death! And then, that is not all; you stop the train of evil. Save one soul, and you save all the souls whom that one soul would have corrupted, and all the souls whom that one soul will reclaim. The influence is mighty, and goes spreading on like the ripple of a lake, until the only stoppage to the circulation is the boundary of the lake itself. There, in the far-off olden time, is the pious mother teaching the lessons of gospel truth to her child from the Dutch tiles upon the mantel-piece. The seed enters into his heart; he grows up and becomes a minister of the gospel, and his name is Philip Doddridge. The mother dies; but the son lives, and his works live, and he writes ‘The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul;’ and that work has a large circulation, and enters into the heart of a rich man, wise, valiant, honourable, reputable, and full of everything that the world covets and enjoys; it is like an arrow in a sure place, and it makes an impression upon him which issues in his conversion, and that man was William Wilberforce; and he wrote a book entitled ‘Practical Christianity,’ which, from the position and antecedents of the writer, gets a large circulation too; and north and south, and east and west, the copies fly; and far down in the south, they get into the hands of a man, and give him clearer views of godliness than he has ever known before, and that man is Legh Richmond; and he writes ‘The Dairyman's Daughter,’ which has gone, by God's good hand, converting thousands upon thousands instrumentally, from that day to this. And then, far up in the north again, in a country manse of Scotland, that book falls into the hands of a minister who has been preaching a gospel that he did not know; it gave him clearer views of truth, and brought him to the feet of Jesus; and with what power and vigour did he proclaim the truth! His name was Thomas Chalmers; and all Scotland rings with the testimony which he bore for the truth of Christ. You do not know what you do, when you convert a soul.”
“That is very wonderful,” said Simon. “I have been thinking while you were reading, Mr Balmer, that if I could influence my old friend Roberts, what a deal of evil it might prevent, for he has a great influence over many young men. But stay—I must first learn the way of holiness myself before I presume to teach others.”

“Christ is the way, Mr Goldstone; and He has promised wisdom to all who lack it. ‘Ask, and ye shall receive.’ ”

Lydia just then tapped at the door to say that supper was ready; so the interesting conversation terminated.

* There is now a night refuge in Sydney, also a temporary asylum for blind persons in connexion with the Deaf and Dumb Institution.
Chapter VIII.

A summary of Ben Goldstone's doings since his marriage.—His commercial transactions with Mr Stubble.—Poor Maggie's domestic misery.—Biddy Flynn's sympathy.

TO attempt a clear and comprehensive explanation of Ben Goldstone's financial progress for the three years succeeding his marriage would be fruitless, for he himself boastfully declared that he would defy a lawyer to fathom his schemes, and in his poetical moods he has often exclaimed, “Deep as the d——l is Benjamin?” Assuming that Ben was right for once, it would scarcely be a pleasant investigation, if it were practicable, to get to the bottom of his affairs; so, I shall take a mere surface glance at them, which will be deep enough for my purpose.

The cash which he held as private banker for Mr Stubble, and his winnings from Nabal Samms, had, by a little jingling manipulation, gained him the reputation of being a capitalist. How he had acquired the money, no one took the liberty to inquire; that was of but little consequence compared with the fact that he had money, which no one could doubt who was in his company for five minutes. He soon became a man of mark in sporting and in commercial circles, especially as he manifested a lively disposition to sport or to speculate with his capital. All the brokers in town regarded him as a desirable client; and though for a time directors were as shy of his paper as sly old fish are of a bare hook, after a while any of the banks would discount his bills as eagerly as a red bream would bite at a yellow-tail. He was on familiar terms with all the “horsey” men in the metropolis, and was better known at Tattersall's than Tattersall himself.

His active superintendence of repairs to the old house in Slumm Street had been helpful to him, inasmuch as it showed that he was on good terms with his wealthy sire; and he contrived to induce the current belief that he had the supervision of the whole of his father's property. It was also quietly rumoured that he had got £5000 cash down with his wife. Mr Stubble was quite prepared to give £2000 to his daughter for a marriage-portion; indeed he had a notion that money was always expected to be forthcoming at marriage in high life; but as Ben did not even hint at it, Joe refrained from opening the subject. It was not extreme modesty, however, which kept Ben silent; but he was desirous of impressing his father-in-law with the idea that he had plenty of money of his own. He shrewdly estimated that he would get whatever cash he wanted from Joe if he went carefully to work; in short, all Ben's acts showed him to be a calculating youth. The carriage
and horses, for instance, cost him nearly £200; but he received more than that sum as quiet commission from the upholsterer, the tailor, and the contractor who repaired the house. Thus he made Mr Stubble pay for the turn-out; while he, Ben, had the credit of being uncommonly liberal, and considerate in the extreme. The additional prestige which the carriage gave to the family was a collateral advantage to Ben, and helpful to his plans for getting his name up.

Bob Stubble, although aware of Ben's difficulty in raising money to meet the bills payable to Mr Stubble, did not suspect him of being more than temporarily short of cash. Bob's disagreement with his parents, and his subsequent departure from the colony, prevented him from knowing anything more of Ben's movements; and his desire to spare his sister's feelings prevented him from explaining what he did know of Ben's disreputable method of making money, and of his general lack of moral principle.

The bill for £2500 was duly honoured, and thus a dead weight of prejudice was removed from Mr Stubble's mind against that species of paper currency; and sundry minor speculations which he entered upon having turned out profitable, he was stimulated to launch out upon his credit, instead of nervously confining himself to simple cash transactions, which Ben designated as a mere cheap-butcher's style of doing business. Mr Stubble was induced to go largely into store cattle, which were then selling at a temptingly low figure. To obtain the ready cash, it was deemed necessary to resort to a common device well known as “kite-flying,” which Ben assured his credulous relative was all right so long as his bank directors did not find it out; but even if they did know it, it was no matter, provided he were well into their books, or stood well in their opinion as a man of capital. The cattle were sent, in convenient mobs, overland to Melbourne, and arrived there at a favourable time of scarcity; and the speculation netted nearly £7000 profit. Mr Stubble was naturally elated at that piece of good luck; and it gained him considerable éclat with certain sharp men of business, who usually respect men who make money.

Another venture in shipping cattle to New Zealand, when Ben went as supercargo, was not so fortunate, for expenses were enormously heavy; nevertheless, the transaction left a small profit, which was better than a loss, as Ben facetiously remarked.

The next speculation was the purchase of a vessel for a trading voyage to the South Sea Islands. Ben predicted large gains from that venture, as he had some knowledge of the islands; but he never cared to give the particulars of his experience for special reasons not delicate to mention. Mr Stubble did not enter heartily into that venture, because the principal article
of trade was inferior spirits, and he had seen a good deal of mischief caused by that commodity in the bush. It was some time before he would be persuaded that there was any difference, in a moral point of view, between the sly grog-cart of the bush-hawker and the spirit-laden schooner of the island trader; but Ben, with his peculiar logic, demonstrated that the distinction was as clear as “Old Tom” itself; for the former traffic was confined to a low class of fellows, whose only capital were their carts and the rubbish in their kegs; whereas the latter trade was made respectable by the countenance and support of men who carried high heads in the community, and who helped to make wholesome laws for us all. As for what was said and written about the demoralising influence of the trade on the poor islanders, that was all bosh; a mere missionary outcry that nobody heeded. The natives in general were free and independent men, though they were half-naked; and they had as much right to drink what they pleased as the enlightened citizens of Sydney, for whose convenience the Government sanctioned the licensing of more than half-a-thousand public-houses.

“Besides, daddy, you surely don't mean to set yourself up as a greater moralist than Mr Gall Deacon, or a more profound political economist than Mr Bobton?” said Ben, as a wind-up to his argument.

“Not I, Ben. I bean't half as good or as knowing as either of them. I never said I was.”

“Very well, then; Bobton has I don't know how many vessels in the island trade, and has been making money hand over fist, as sailors say, for many years past; and as for Gall Deacon, everybody knows that he is a large importer of spirits; and I should like to know who would presume, on any Sunday morning, to say black is the white of his eye.”

At those two veritable examples Mr Stubble's conscientious scruples began to waver; Ben's confident assertion, too, that the spec was like coining money, was a powerful stimulus to the love of gain, which lurks in every heart; and finally Joe's scruples were silenced, if not wholly removed.

“Hooker has a brig to sell dirt cheap, daddy; and we can get her on terms. She is an old clumbung; but never mind, she will answer our purpose as well as if she were A 1. It is the fine-weather season, you know, and we are not going to load her as deep as a collier; besides, she has first-rate pumps, and a life-boat on her port davits.”

The Bumbee was bought, and afterwards was “thoroughly refitted;” that is to say, she was smartened up with paint and pitch, and her rigging was rubbed down with the best tar. A sailor had a severe fall to the deck, through boldly trusting his whole weight on the foot-rope of the fore-top-gallant yard; but he was carefully carried to the accident ward of the
infirmary. The marine surveyor was not quite satisfied with the *Bumbee's* ground-tackle, and ordered another cable to be put on board; so Ben bought an old one very cheap, and chuckled at his cleverness in cheating the surveyor, for the chain was not strong enough to tether a cow, though it looked nice and heavy.

The *Bumbee* had a *light* cargo, judiciously stowed on her ballast, though her published manifest showed that she had a prodigious load for her tonnage. That discrepancy could only have been explained by Ben and a few of his allies, if any inquiry had been made about it. The ship and cargo were comfortably insured, and Ben started on his voyage with an old school-fellow for a skipper, a young gentleman who knew more nautical manoeuvres than are referred to in “Norrie's Epitome of Navigation,” and as jolly a dog as ever kicked a common sailor.

The *Bumbee* never returned to Sydney; but Benjamin returned in about six months, with his captain and crew, and demonstrated, beyond all legal controversy, to the underwriters, that the brig had struck a rock, “not laid down in any chart,” off Tonga-taboo; and as she soon afterwards sank in deep water, a survey was impracticable. The insurance was duly paid; and though Mr Stubble thought the transaction entailed a slight loss, Benjamin secretly knew that it left a large profit; and he had had a pleasantly exciting cruise into the bargain. How it was possible to make profit out of a total wreck, I shall not stay to consider; but I daresay there are both shippers and ship-owners in this part of the world who could explain the process, anomalous as it may seem.

An extensive shipment to California of sour beer, with a forged label on the bottles, purporting it to be the double-stout of a well-known London brewer, did not turn out a favourable speculation in any way. The sailors, with the proclivity which their class have for testing liquid cargo, broke bulk on the voyage, and got the *cholera morbus* for their pains; so the whole parcel of pseudo XXX was condemned by the Board of Health at Honolulu, having previously been terribly becursed by the surviving sailors on board ship. Mr Stubble really knew nothing of that nefarious transaction beyond bearing his share of the loss; the whole affair was managed by Benjamin and a certain agent in town, whose turn for polished knavery was only equalled by Benjamin himself, and by their mutual ally, whose name it is not polite to write in plain English.

A clearing-out speculation in American ware, which Blarney the broker coaxed Mr Stubble to enter upon, gave him a good deal of anxiety, for he knew nothing about “Yankee notions,” and subsequent heavy importations of similar goods had so glutted the market that, to quote a broker's phrase, “they could not be placed so as to leave a favourable margin.” The bright
faces of Joe's wooden clocks were getting dulled with mildew, and his fresh lobsters began to smell suspiciously stale; the rats were eating his dried apples by wholesale, and store rent was gradually eating up everything, to say nothing of interest of money lying dead. Altogether it was a very depressing affair, when, as if to crown Joe's troubles, a disastrous fire one night consumed the building in which the unfortunate goods were stored. Poor Joe was in a sad state of excitement while the fire was blazing, and burnt his fingers badly in carrying hot "notions" from the building; for as he did not know they were covered by insurance, he exerted himself like a salvage thief to save what he could. But Ben presently eased his mind by calling him a fool for trying to save the goods, as they were fully insured. "The origin of the fire was unknown."

Benjamin's efforts to sell his father's house in Slumm Street to Mr Stubble were unsuccessful. Mrs Stubble firmly opposed the purchase at any price, for it was in an intolerably low neighbourhood, and not fit for any genteel family to live in. To Ben's reminder that he was born in the house, Peggy sharply replied she did not doubt it; and it was also clear to her that she should die in the house if she stayed there much longer, for the stench from the drains was strong enough to kill a pig. Furthermore, she remarked, "if Mr Stubble wanted to get rid of her, the safest way he could do it would be to buy the house, and she would say no more about it."

That, of course, settled the question; but it did not affect Ben as much as it might have done under other circumstances, for he had contrived to get Mr Stubble mixed up with him in so many extensive transactions that he knew it was impossible for that gentleman to withdraw his capital, if he were ever so much inclined thereto. Ben had several accommodating friends in town, who were willing at any time to lend him their names in exchange for his own or Mr Stubble's; thus he found no difficulty in raising money to any extent he wished, and his swaggering importance was more than ever manifest. Mr Stubble was so much engaged with his political and social reform movements, that he did not look carefully into Ben's transactions; and as he managed to show a profit on almost every venture by a "cooking" process in which he was skilled, Joe was lulled into a fancied security, and actually believed he was making money in an easy way, quite as fast as some of the Sydney merchants, who were plodding with body and mind at their legitimate calling.

It soon became known to the astute Zachary that Mr Stubble was entangled in the nets of a coterie of kite-flyers, who were notoriously rotten, and some of them were roguishly inclined too. The commercial relationship between Mr Stubble and his son-in-law was not clearly understood; but it was not deemed expedient to sift the mystery, lest Joe
might take umbrage, and shift his account. Bankers have a peculiar delicacy in making obtrusive inquiries into the dealings of clients of whose present stability there are tangible evidences; and it is not their business to caution rash customers, and run the risk of actions at law for defamation. That would never pay dividends and bonuses!

In the meantime, Benjamin had been doing what he called a stroke or two in various ways, of which Mr Stubble knew nothing at all. In the first place, he had helped to clear out Nabal Samms; and that young spendthrift retired into obscurity with a blotched face, a broken constitution, and an allowance of a pound a week from his mother. Ben had also made his appearance on the Melbourne turf as an amateur book-maker, but the sporting Victorians were too knowing for him; he was “hit hard,” and lost a large sum of money. In trying to win some of it back at the billiard-table, he lost more. His skill at cards had never failed him in ordinary society; so he tried his sharpest tricks, but was detected in a minute by men who knew twice as much as himself in that way. He was unmercifully kicked and bonneted, and only escaped scalping or gouging by his superior powers of running. Those mishaps, and many other mishaps and exploits during his ten weeks' stay in Victoria, he kept secret from Mr Stubble, who believed that his zealous son-in-law went to Melbourne solely for the purpose of seeing after an agent to whom they had consigned a quantity of horse feed. The agent in question was so tardy in making a return for the corn, that Mr Stubble began to fear it had slipped his memory, or that he had slipped off himself, never to return; so Benjamin volunteered to go and “touch him up.”

* * * * *

Poor Maggie's connubial experience was an unhappy one indeed. Scarcely had a month elapsed from her wedding day ere she was the object of an unlooked-for outburst of passion on the part of her husband which almost broke her heart. Anxiety for his personal safety had induced her to set out very late one night, in company with Biddy, in search of him. She met him a short distance from their house, staggering homeward intoxicated; and his wrath at being, as he said, “watched by his wife,” was so furious that even courageous Biddy tremblingly muttered that she “had niver heard the like afore from any sane man who worn't stark mad.”

That was the beginning of Maggie's sorrows. A record of her subsequent sufferings would not be pleasant reading to any one; so I shall not write more of it than the interest of my story demands.

The day after the stormy ebullition just noticed. Ben seemed sorry for his conduct, but tried to excuse it by saying that he always got ruffled if he felt
that prying eyes were upon him. Maggie hung upon his neck, and with choking utterance promised never to go out to look for him again, if he were ever so late; and implored him not to say such dreadful things to her again, for she could not bear them. He said he was very sorry, and would never do so any more; so Maggie dried her tears, and tried to look happy again.

But Ben was a tippler, and his disease had reached that chronic stage which is marked by a perpetual craving for alcoholic excitement. At the first blush of morning light he took a dram from a bottle at his bedside, and throughout the day he kept up the steam with nobblers out of number. It is pretty well known that steam will have vent in some way or other; and Ben's alcoholic vapour often blew off in noisy jets of choler, and especially if those near to him were not able or willing to retort upon him in his own abusive style. He usually kept the lever of policy on the escape-valve during his intercourse with business men of influence, or with his sporting associates, whom it was expedient to avoid offending; but when he entered his home, the most insignificant cause, the smallest screw loose in the domestic machinery, was enough to lift the valve and let the steam off with a vengeance, and then his wife and the servants had to flee for their lives and limbs. The walls of his dining-room had many marks of broken tumblers, and other dangerous missiles, which he had thrown at the heads of the scampering objects of his sudden outbursts; and fractured furniture bore palpable indication of the destructive power of the high-pressure steam which I have figuratively alluded to. Before six months of wedded life passed, Ben had, in his seasons of temporary madness, torn his wife's treasured bridal attire into shreds, and demolished many of the valued presents which she received on her wedding-day; but worse than all, the bright girl, whom he had solemnly vowed to love and cherish, had more than once been smitten to the floor by blows from his heavy fist.

After the birth of her son, Maggie's health began to fail. For a short period her husband was less violent in his demeanour, and treated her more kindly; but it was only a brief season of peace, for he soon relapsed into his old courses, and she became a neglected, broken-spirited wife. Like a fragile flower blasted by a cold wind, her beauty was gone, and her poor thin face was prematurely wrinkled by sorrow and suffering. It is true that she had sometimes shown her old sullen temper, which is not surprising; but Ben coarsely vowed to stamp that out of her, and he succeeded in doing it. Very soon she was thoroughly subdued—cowed down, as he called it; and then her pensive looks were usually attributed to sullenness, which he assayed to cure by absenting himself from home for a week or more, to give her time to have her sulky fit out.
Amid all her troubles Maggie never spoke of them to any one except to Biddy, who she knew was too shrewd not to observe all that was going on in that unhappy home. Biddy had often interposed to shield her mistress from violence, and at such times she gave the “masther” a bit of her mind in her own style, which made him quail before her. She had many times been ordered to leave the house instanter, but she resolutely declared that she would “stop and be murthered forty times afore she wud lave Miss Maggie.” On one memorable occasion, after savagely knocking his wife down, and then kicking her, Ben attempted to put Biddy out of the room by main force, when she turned on him like an infuriated cat, and he was glad to escape from her teeth and nails, which he found were even sharper than her tongue.

“Och! dash it all, Miss Maggie! Where is all yer spirit gone to at all?” exclaimed Biddy, in an excited manner, after the fierce contest above alluded to, and Ben had left the house. “Shure I've sane the day whin ye wudn't sit still to be knocked down and kicked by the like of”—— Here the little woman checked herself, and running up, clasped Maggie in her arms with a mother's fondness. “Ah, acushla! I didn't mane to say half as much as that, but it slipped out onknown 'st to me. I know ye're ill and downhearted, honey; and ye've got no more pluck in yez nor a little kid, God help ye. I won't shpake agin in that way, whatever comes; so chare up, jewel, and don't ye frit about me the laste bit in life. I won't rin away from yez, niver fear, though I sed as much awhile agone, when I was close up cranky.”

“You are very, very kind, Biddy; and I am sure you would not willingly say a word to wound any one.”

“That's true for ye, honey! I wudn't say half a word, iv it didn't slip out afore I cud stop it. Still an' all, I ain't so out an' out particular as the ould lady I heard tell ov once. She was niver known to say a bad word against anybody at all, black or white. One day some ov her boys an' gals were talkin' about the ould lady's vartues, an' one of 'em sed, ses he, ‘I sartinly belave our dear ould granny wud have summat good to say even ov Satan himself.’ ‘Here she comes, an' I'll tell her what you say,’ sed another broth of a boy. So whin the ould lady came in, he up an' told her that brother Jack had had the imperence to say that she wud shpake a good word for the d——I. ‘Well, my dear children,’ sed the darling ould crayther, widout stopping to think for an instant, ‘I wish we all had Satan's industry and perseverence.’

“Now, that's jist what I say meself,” added Biddy. “Satan is all there for work—bad luck to him! an' it's busy enough he's been lately wid your own unfort'nate family, Miss Maggie. But I won't shpake any more, honey, lest
I say summat sharp agin him, for I don't like him a morsel, an' that's a fact; an' sure I've got a strong wakeness for sayin' out what I've got aginst anybody, 'stead ov kapin' a lot ov savagery in me brist to make me look as sour as pickled cabbage.”
Chapter IX.

Maggie's illness.—Biddy's gentle nursing and soothing counsel.—Poor Percy.—Ben Goldstone's villany.—Heavy trouble looming over the Stubble family.

“NOW, Miss Maggie, sip a small tashte ov this nice beef-tay, what I've jist made meself,” said Biddy Flynn, one afternoon a few weeks after the scene described in the last chapter, as she entered a bed-room in Ben Goldstone's house, where Maggie sat, propped up with pillows, in an armchair.

“Whisha! What, cryin' agin, is it, honey? Ah! don't ye kape on doin' that same, or ye'll break me poor ould heart intirely; so ye will. An' what is it as is frittin' ye now, darlint?” continued Biddy, with a look of tender interest.

“Shure, I see what's the matther widout axin' yez. Ye've bin to the bottom drawer beyont, an' I thought it was locked up safe enough. An' didn't I ax yez not to stir half-an-inch till I came back agin?”

“Poor Percy!” exclaimed Maggie, burstin' into tears; at the same time a little velvet cap dropped from under her wrapper. During the brief absence of her faithful attendant, Maggie had opened a drawer in her wardrobe which was full of precious relics, the clothing and toys of her late beloved boy, her only child and her heart's idol, who had died very suddenly about five weeks before. The velvet cap was a birth-day present from Maggie to little Percy when he attained his second year.

“Hush! a-cushla! Don't think ov him at all till ye git strong again,—but it's onpossible for ye not to do that, I'm thinkin', for none ov us can't conquer natur' intirely; but don't ye frit so sorrowfuly, honey! Poor Percy is all right, an' safe, an' happy, niver fear; aye, an' tin times more honoured nor if the mighty Queen of England had got him nursed to sleep in her lap.”

“The last words he spoke were, ‘Dood-night, mamma!’ ” sobbed Maggie. "I felt a sad presentiment when I put him into his cot that evening, that something would happen to him very soon. He was too beautiful to live long: too much like an angel to stay in this cruel world. Poor little Percy!”

“Hush, darlint! Don't cry so harrd. 'Deed, thin, he was a beautiful boy,” said Biddy, wiping her eyes. “But shure, Miss Maggie, he's twinty hundred times more beautifuller now, for God's glory is shining on him. He is up in heaven, safe enough, out of the way ov trouble altogether; an' it'saisy he got there too, for he died whin he was asleep. Yis, yis; he's safe, not a doubt of it, for he didn't stay long enough in the worrld to larn wickedness,
not the laste bit in life; so there was nothin' for him but to go to glory in a
twinkling, and not a worrd sed till him at all, save lovely words of
welcome; and isn't that a happy thing for him, honey?"

“Oh, yes, indeed; that is a great comfort,” sobbed Maggie. “But do you
think that all little children go to heaven, Biddy?”

“Troth, I do think so, darlint! an' I've wished all me lifetime that I had
died whin I was a little innocent babby. Hisht now, whiles I tell yez what
our good parson sed t'other day in the church, ony I'm fear'd I can't
remember the illigant way he sed it. Ses he, ‘When all the people that iver
lived in the worrl'd shall stand before God's awful bar at the great
judgment-day,—and some on 'em looking mighty scared, no doubt,—thin
there will be a wide opening made up the middle of the crowd; the big
folks will have to stand back right and left, and thin millions of little
shining children will come flying up the open space, singing like birds of
heaven; an' God Almighty will smile at 'em, an' bid 'em come up close
beside Himself, for there is no judgment for thim to hear, bekase they niver
did no sin.’ Isn't that a nice pleasant thought, Miss Maggie? It is so. So all
the young children will be right enough, an' darlint little Percy will be
amongst that blessed flock; and ye'll see him there too. Now isn't that
lovely to think about? Doesn't it comfort yer heart, honey? That it does, I'll
ingage.”

“Yes, Biddy, it is very consolinge. I know he is better off than he could
possibly be with me.”

“Betther off! 'Deed, thin, he is so, a million times or more; for supposin'
he had growed up to be the 'Torney-General, or the right reverend Bishop
himself, he wouldn't be nigh hand so safe as he is now. An' thin, on the
other hand, suppose he had growed up to be like his——like no end of
poor craythers who are crawling along to perdition, through a lifetime of
misery. Och! I can't bear to think ov that for half a minute,—to picture
precious Percy an awful wicked man. I can't do it at all; an' yit many
unlucky parents have lived to see the like: God help 'em. But your blessed
boy is safe enough, thank God. So don't ye grieve any more about him,
jewel.”

“I will try to think of your comforting words, Biddy; and I will not cry
any more, if I can help it. From the lessons I have had in the world, I
should feel happy that my dear child is thus early removed from it; but we
cannot always make reason overcome feeling, you know.”

“That's true enough, honey. All the rayson in the worrl'd wudn't cure
rheumatism; an' be the same token, it isn't raysonable to expect a mother
not to feel the loss ov her child. I know that well enough; 'deed, thin, she
wudn't be very tender iv she didn't do that. Still an' all, it's betther to be
lookin' up at yer living treasure in heaven, nor it is to be thinkin' ov the marble-cowld body underground.”

“Yes, that is very true, Biddy; and I will try to look upwards instead of looking downwards. I wish you would put that black dress of mine away somewhere. I cannot wear it, you know, and I do not like to see it.”

“Nor I don't like to see it naythir, Miss Maggie,” said Biddy, as she hung the dress in the wardrobe, and closed the door. “What on earth folks want to wear black dresses for whin their friends go to heaven, bates my understanding intirely; so it does. Our parson sad t'other day, ses he, ‘People wear black at funerals when they ought to wear white, an' strew the grave wid flowers. Angels were at the grave of Jesus; and shure, angels are often at the graves ov our friends too; only we can't see 'em, bekase our eyes are full ov tears.’ It's my opinion that crape an' the like was only invinted to pick the pockets ov poor unfort'nate widees an' orphans. But I won't shpake any more now, Miss Maggie, bekase I want ye to have a nap; ye didn't sleep a single wink last night.” Biddy then drew the window-curtains, so as to darken the room; and sat down to watch in silence beside her suffering mistress. . .

“How long have I been asleep, Biddy?” asked Maggie, opening her eyes and gazing on her faithful attendant, who had moved to a seat by the window, and was sewing.

“How long is it, dar lint? Why, not more nor an hour. Hisht now! try and sleep a little bit longer; it wull do ye a power ov good.”

“I cannot sleep again now, Biddy; my side is very painful. Will you change the wet bandage for me?”

“To be shure I wull, honey! I was jist thinkin' to ax ye to let me do it, soh. Och, musha! an' this place looks worser an' worser, so it does,” exclaimed Biddy, as she applied a wet cloth to a large bruise on Maggie's right side. “Ye'd betther be lettin' me fitch a docther to look at this, honey! It's gittin' beyont my gumption.”

“No, no, Biddy! pray don't get a doct or. Ma would be sure to hear of it, and I could not then prevent her knowing the cause of my illness, and there would be dreadful work. I think it will get well if I keep wet cloths constantly applied to it.”

“Yis, ye sed that ten days agoone, jewel; but it's my belief it's beyond the power ov simple cowld wather to cure ye ov that ugly kick anyhow. It's a spiteful looking”——

“Hush, Biddy. Don't call it a kick again,” said Maggie, with tears in her eyes. “I would not have anybody know it for the world.”

“Shure, I'm not goin' to tell anybody about it, darlint, for yer own sake. Not I indeed; an' I won't say it agin; so don't ye frit. There now, that's nice
an' cool. How do you feel now, dear?"
   "I think I am a little easier now, thank you. Which way is the wind blowing, Biddy?"
   "It's blowing mighty strong, Miss Maggie; an' the master will have a rale knockin' about iv he is on board the ship now, so he will. He'd rayther be ridin' a horse widout a saddle, I'll ingage."
   "Is it a fair wind, Biddy?"
   "Not it, honey! It's foul enough for anythin', an' it's rainin' like peas an' beans. This is the right sort ov weather for wicked sinners to go to sea, bekase they sometimes say their prayers when they are afear'd ov being drownded. I've sane 'em at it meself; an' perhaps it wud have been a good thing for some ov 'em iv they had gone straight down to the bottom jist thin, poor souls; for, maybe, they niver prayed agin, afther 'em got on shore."
   "Benjamin said in his letter that he would be in Sydney to-night, for he has some particular matter to see papa about; but he will probably go away again to-morrow night, to finish his business in the country."
   "Ugh! more luck ta him!" muttered Biddy to herself as she drew up the blinds to lighten the room. "An' iv he'd shtop away till I sind for him, he'd have a pritty long spell in the country."
   "You had better go and get the tea ready Biddy; and tell Mary to light a fire in the breakfast-parlour, and to put her master's slippers on the fender. He will be wet and cold if he comes home."
   "Aye, and as snappish as a trapped dingo, forbye," muttered Biddy, but she audibly replied, "yes, honey! I'll go and attend to it all this minute, an' I'll bring you a cup ov tay in here firsht an' foremost." Away went Biddy on her errand, leaving Maggie reclining on a chair with her hand pressed to her aching side.

The bruise, which Biddy said was the exact shape of a boot-heel, was caused by the brutal kick from Ben which I have before alluded to. Though Biddy was witness to the act, and had remarked, "it was a marcy it did not kick the life out ov the poor crayther entirely," she was not aware that Maggie suffered so severely from its effects, until a fortnight afterwards, when she could no longer conceal it. She firmly refused to call in medical aid, and Biddy had perseveringly applied her sovereign specific, cold water. The pain continued to increase, however, and inflammatory symptoms appearing, Biddy had a strong doubt if it were right for her to treat the case any longer, and resolved that if the patient were not better the next day, she would fetch a doctor, whether her mistress sanctioned the act or not.

About ten 'clock that evening Goldstone arrived home, very wet and
suffering from the effects of sea-sickness. He said the steamer had had an awful rough passage, and was under water half the time. To the joyful surprise of all in the house, he was unusually passive, and nobody heard him swear. There was even a show of tenderness in his manner at meeting his emaciated wife, who gave him a loving embrace, and said not a word to him about her bruised side.

After partaking of some refreshment, Ben explained that he had come to Sydney for the purpose of getting money to pay for a large mob of horses which he had bought in the Hunter district, and which he was making arrangements to ship direct for the Indian market. It was necessary, he said, for him to return to Newcastle by the next evening's steamer, as the venders of the horses would be there to meet him. He further stated that he should not be away more than a week, and on his return to Sydney he would take her (Maggie) to the Currajong for a change.

Early on the following morning Ben rode over to Double Bay to see his father-in-law before he went into town. Mr Stubble was startled when Ben told him the large sum of money he wanted to pay for the horses, and said he could not see how to manage it and meet all the bills coming due at the end of next week.

“'In less than a week's time all the horses will be on board ship, and then you can hypothecate them.’”

“Do what to them?” asked Mr Stubble.

“Not skin and eat them, daddy,” said Ben, laughing at Joe's inquiring look. “I mean that you can draw against the bills of lading, through your bank.”

“I tell you what it is, Benjamin,” said Mr Stubble, firmly; “I be almost sick and tired of drawing upon the bank, as you call it. I would as soon have a tooth drawn out as draw anything from anybody on credit. I am not used to this sort of thing, and it bothers my head more than I can bear. I am going off my appetite, and can't sleep at night, and am getting as thin and miserable as a blackfellow's dog; and it is all caused by anxiety of mind. I wish I had never seen a bill in my life, or had naught to do with city business.”

“It is nonsense talking in that way, father. Bills have been very handy to you in raising money to carry on with. Have you not made £12,000, or more, since you came to Sydney?”

“I don't know what I have made or what I have lost, Benjamin; but if I had the money that I brought to Sydney safely in my pocket, I should be glad enough to go back to the country again; and if I did not live in style, I should have peace and comfort.”

“I cannot believe that you have any cause to complain of city life, daddy.
See the position you have made."

"Well, it's no use argifying with me, Ben. I bean't fit for my position, and I have found that out before to-day. Put me on a farm or a station, and I know how to manage as well as many men; but the constant worry of money concerns, and puzzling business that I be got into, has pretty nearly withered my head; and if I don't soon alter my way of life, I shall go crazy altogether."

"You will not have any worry after I have shipped off the horses; so cheer up, old man! I will return to Sydney as soon as I can, and take all the mercantile affairs off your hands, and leave you to go on with your social reform and your parliamentary work, for which you are so well adapted."

"I don't believe I be adapted for it at all, Ben; and I was a simpleton to be talked into it. There bean't no more think in my head than there is in a horse's hoof. I have been wofully upset, day and night, ever since Mr Ingoldby made me give him my title-deeds. I never parted with a deed before in my life, nor never borrowed twopence, till I got wheedled into signing a lot of plaguey bills for Tom, Dick, and Harry. Mr Ingoldby said to me a day or two ago, that I had better mind what I was doing."

"Ingoldby is a hum"——

"It is all very fine to talk bounce behind his back," interrupted Joe; "but you must speak softly enough to his face, when he knows he has got his thumb upon you. Blamed if it don't make my knees knock together like roguery when I go inside that bank now, for Zachary looks at me as suspiciously as if I was going to steal all his notes. There is 'knuckle down, my boy' on his brow, as plain as printing."

"Nonsense, daddy! you are too sensitive. It is his natural look when he does not put on his board-room smirks. I'll go in and talk to him; and you will not see my knees knock, I'll warrant. Get your horse, and let us go into town, for I have a good deal to do to-day; and I must go up by the steamer to-night, for all the horses will be in Newcastle to-morrow. A splendid mob! I should like you to go up and see them before they are shipped. Come on, daddy! Brighten up, old boy! I will take all the business affairs off your hands in a week's time; and you can go up and visit your constituents at Muddleton."

"I wish you would stay in town for a day or two, Benjamin, and just explain to me, in a straightforward way, how I stand; for I don't know no more than a fool."

"Don't know how you stand, father? Why there are all the books in my office for you to examine at any time you please."

"Yes; but what is the use of my examining the books, Ben? I don't know aught about accounts in the way you keep 'em."
“It is a regular system, father, that I learnt at school, plain as a milestone!”

“That may be; but I cannot understand it no more than I can see into a milestone. I never was wrong a threepennybit when I used to keep my own accounts, up in the bush; but then I had naught to do with bills, and cross-bills, and exchange, and drafts on bills of lading, and all the rest of it. It is Dutch to me; and I can't say whether it is right or wrong.”

“I hope you do not doubt my honour, father?” said Ben, with a look of deep concern.

“No, Benjamin; I don't exactly say that—leastways, I don't like your gambling; I have told you that before; but you may be deceived yourself, for there are some reg'lar rogues in Sydney, and I am afraid we are in with some of them too. I heard, only yesterday, that Bragg & Co. are shaky again, and they bought all our flour, you know.”

“That firm shaky! Pooh! Don't you believe it, daddy. Bragg & Co. are as solid as the ‘Sow and Pigs’ rocks; for it is not six months since they smashed up, and paid four and ninepence in the pound.”

“They are as solid as sow and pig's bladders, I am thinking,” said Joe, dubiously; “anyway, I wish I had naught to do with them.”

“I can see you are getting nervous, daddy; so I will come back to Sydney the day after to-morrow, and go into figures with you—square the yards, as we used to say at sea; and then, if you like to take a good lump sum, cash down, to go out of the concern, I can get it for you in a crack.”

“That is just what I should like to do, Benjamin,” said Joe, brightening up a little. “I will give up all my profits if you hand me back my own money; then I will invest it, and live upon the interest. I do not want to make more money; in fact, I would not have the harass of mind that I now feel if I could make enough money to buy all the grand houses at Darling Point.”

“I know that, father. You want your mind free from care and perplexities, which are ever attendant on large commercial speculations, so as to enable you to carry out your praiseworthy schemes of philanthropy. That is it! I see what you are sighing for, and I will manage it for you in less than a week; so cheer up and look plucky.”

“I don't believe that great heaps of money will make a man happy, you know, Benjamin,” continued Mr Stubbble, who was evidently affected by the sympathy of his son-in-law. “There is many a common sailor at sea, eating cat's meat, who is ten times merrier at heart than his miserly owner on shore; and lots of poor shepherds, smoking moulid 'baccy in the bush, who are more free from care than their wealthy masters, who are riding about town in shiny carriages.”

“You are right, daddy; money always makes a man miserable: but I say,
let us be off and see Zachary before board time. I daresay he will let you draw £2000 against the bills and other securities lying in the bank; but if he hesitates you can offer to hypothecate the horses.”

“I don't know whether he will do it, Benjamin; but we will see.”

“If you brush up, and look jolly independent, he will think you are in a position to shift your account to some other bank, and he would let you have twice as much as you are going to ask for. But come on, daddy; your horse is all ready.”

I need not tell of all the negotiations which followed, but simply state that Ben got the money he wanted, and all in sovereigns too, for he explained that those country horsesdealers were precious chary of paper money, and if he had not gold to pay them, they might cry off their bargains, which would be a pity.

That night Goldstone started by steamer for Newcastle, and Mr Stubble went to bed with a lighter heart than usual, for Ben had again assured him that he would return to Sydney in two days, and set him free from all his commercial liabilities, by buying out his interest for a lump sum, cash down.
Chapter X.

More trouble.—Mrs Stubble's grief and anger.—Arrival of a stranger from Melbourne.—Letter from Ben Goldstone.—Bursting of the storm-cloud.

ON Monday morning, Biddy Flynn put on her best bonnet and shawl, and told her mistress that she was going straight into Sydney.

“What are you going there for, Biddy?” asked Maggie, in a feeble voice.

“I am going to fetch a doctor to see ye, Miss Maggie. Arrah! don't ye say nay, darlint! I'll be grieved to go against yer will, an' I must do it; for shure, I can't shtop here an' see ye dying every day, an' maybe my medical tratement wull be blamed for doin' all the mischief, for the profession are allers mighty jealous iv anybody but themselves loses a patient.”

“You know you have often cured me of little aches and pains before, Biddy.”

“That's thrue enough, honey! but ye niver had a bout like this afore. I can docther any mortial thing in common rayson wid cowld wather an' herb-tay; but how can a simple ould woman, who doesn't know a single word ov Latin, trate internal wounds an' bruises inside, what she can't see at all? I shtopped from going for the docther on Saturday, bekase the masther was at home, an' I didn't want a row in the house; but now he is gone agin, I am goin' to see that ye git proper tratement; so don't ye say nay to it iv ye plase, honey!”

“O Biddy! what shall I say to the doctor if he asks me how my side was injured?”

“Say to him? Why, it's allers the bist plan to shpake the truth; but iv ye won't tell him all the true facts, ye won't tell him a lie, I'll ingage. Troth, I don't know what ye'll say at all, an' I can't shtop to invint an honest story at prisint; but I won't tell him about it, niver fear. Now, darlint, be as aisy as you can till I come back. I must hurry, for there's the omblibus-boy blowin' his brains out wid his norn. Och! what an ugly nuisance thim bus-horns are, whin a sick patient wants to be paceable.” Biddy then hastened away, and in less than an hour she returned with the family doctor, who found that Maggie was suffering from acute inflammation of the liver. After giving certain instructions to Biddy respecting the patient, and leaving a prescription, the doctor departed.

He had scarcely left the house when Mrs Stubble arrived in her carriage. Of course she was anxious to know the object of the doctor's visit, for though Maggie had been an invalid for some time, she had seldom sought
medical aid. “What is the matter with your mistress, Biddy?” asked Mrs Stubble.

“She is not well, ma'am.”

“Why did you not send for me immediately?”

“Bekase I knowed the docther wud do her more good nor yerself; so I fitted him firsh an' foremost, ma'am.”

“That is more of your impudence; but I will soon see if I am to be treated in this way by you,” said Mrs Stubble, angrily. She then went straightway to her daughter's bedroom, grumbling at Biddy's lack of respect for her.

“Ugh! you proud, stuck-up owld thing! I wish ye had yer daughter's kick in yer side—shtop! that's wicked, so it is, an' I don't mean it; but I wish ye'd got her soft heart in yer, or one jist like it;—there is no sin in sayin' that much, anyway.—Shure, I wonder now, who that chap is at all? He has bin walkin' afore the house iver since susnrise. He doesn't look like a thief or a robber, but he may be one for all that; there's no tellin' who is honest by the cut ov his coat; so I'd betther be tellin' Mary to look after the linen on the lines.” At that moment a man walked up to the front gate, and asked Biddy if her master was at home.

There was something in his manner which made Biddy instinctively shudder, though he was not at all an ill-looking man, and was respectably dressed. He was about fifty years of age, and had the appearance of having come off a journey and to be suffering from want of rest. Biddy briefly replied that her master was not at home.

“It is no use telling me that, if it be merely to put me off; for see him I must and will.”

“An' what else cud I tell ye, unless I towld ye a lie? Troth, I wudn't try to shtop ye from looking at him iv he was here, niver fear.”

“I will stay here till I do see him,” said the man, with a sort of frenzied determination in his utterance.

“Thin, ye'll get cowld an' hungry enough, I'm thinkin', iv ye do that same. Anyway ye can plase yerself, misther; this is a free country now, thank God; an' I suppose nobody wull charge ye nothin' for sleepin' in the road for a week or two.”

Biddy then walked into the house and found Mrs Stubble in a high state of excitement, and poor Maggie sobbing hysterically.

“The monster! The fiend in human form! The—the—the—slaughterman! I would tear his eyes out, if I were near him!” shrieked Mrs Stubble.

“Whisht, now, mistress! Noisy words will niver pass for strong rayson; nor they won't hale wounds naythir.”

“Hold your tongue this minute! How dare you presume to talk to me in
that way?” said Mrs Stubble, turning fiercely upon Biddy. “And pray, why did you stand by and see my daughter maimed in this cannibal style without letting me know it? Why did you not call in the police?”

“The very last words the docther sed to me were these, ‘Be sure you kape your mistress quiet,’ ses he; an' jist look at her now, poor darlint! Och, Mistress Stubble! for the love of marcy, be aisy, or ye may soon call in the undertaker, so ye may. What on earth is the good ov yer kicking up this racket? Can't ye see that ye are scaring away the little bit ov life there is left in yer unfort'nate darter? Why don't ye wait till the masther comes back, and thin tell him all ye've got to say?”

“Wait till he comes back, indeed? I wi ll do nothing of the kind. I'll have him brought back this very night and tried for wilful murder! Oh, dear, dear! To think that my poor dear girl should come to this—to be kicked like a football! I wish she had never been born! What shall I do? what shall I do?—Hoo, hoo, hoo!” Mrs Stubble then sank into a chair and gave vent to a flood of tears, which had as smoothing an effect on her tongue as heavy rain-showers have upon a rough sea. In the meantime, Biddy gently undressed Maggie and assisted her into bed; and after saying all the soothing things she could think of, she hurried into the kitchen to make some gruel, leaving Mrs Stubble rocking herself calm in a nursing-chair.

“Oh, Biddy! my poor heart is almost breaking!” whined Mrs Stubble, as she entered the kitchen a few minutes afterwards, with her face drawn into sorrowful longitude.

“Not a bit o' fear ov that, ma'am,” responded Biddy, coldly.

“To think I should have reared up my only daughter to be treated in this shocking way, and by her lawful husband too! Oh, dear, dear! It is dreadful! You have never been a mother, Biddy.”

“No, indeed, ma'am, niver.”

“Oh, Biddy! you must have known months and months ago that my poor dear child was being shamefully ill-used; why did not you come and tell me?”

“Bekase I know'd very well iv I did that same, I should only have bin makin' bad worse. That's jist it, ma'am. Besides, I wud as soon think ov carryin' the silver spoons out ov the house, as to carry out family secrets for all the town to be talkin ov'em. Shure there is no end ov mischief that tattlin' sarvants make; and I've sane a pretty lot ov it too, in me time. It isn't a bit ov good ov yer cryin' about it now, ma'am, no more nor it wud be sensible for me to tell yez what ye might have done years agone to save yer darter from this cruel tratement; but iv ye'll take my simple advice for once't, ma'am, ye'll see it wull be all the betther for iverybody belonging till yer.”
“What is it, Biddy? I am sure I will do anything I can. This terrible disclosure has shocked me so much that I really do think I am going crazy.”

“I thought as much meself awhile agone, ma'am. If ye'll listen to me, ye'll say no more to Miss Maggie about what's gone and past, an' can't be mended. Don't shpake a word till her, ma'am, 'cept it be soft, an' kind, an' tinder. Let us try an' save her life, an' thin talk about family brawls afterwards. She is dangerously ill, that is my belief, ma'am, an' I know the docther thinks so too, though he didn't say as much.”

“Do you really think so, Biddy? Oh, my poor dear girl! Whatever shall I do if I lose her? I think I will go home and get a few things for myself, and then come and stay here to help you, Biddy, for you are looking fagged and worn out.”

“As you plase, ma'am; but let me tell ye agin not to say any more about the masther afore Miss Maggie, bekase it only makes her cry, poor crayther! No woman wid a heart likes to hear her husband called ugly names, no matter what he has done till her. An' my word for it, ma'am, that poor child has had enough to bear widout being bothered to death now.”

Mrs Stubble soon afterwards left the house, promising to be back in an hour or so. As she was about to get into her carriage, the man before mentioned stepped up to her, and lifting his hat respectfully, asked if she could inform him whether the master of that house were at home or not. Not liking the peculiar manner of the stranger, she cautiously replied by asking him why he wanted to know.

“Are you Mr Goldstone's mother, madam?”

“No, indeed, I am not,” said Mrs Stubble, sharply. Seemingly encouraged by the tone of her last answer, the man said, “Will you allow me to speak a few words to you, madam. Have you a daughter?”

“Yes, I have a daughter,” replied Mrs Stubble, while tears filled her eyes as she thought of poor emaciated Maggie.

“So have I, madam,” said the man, his voice tremulous from suppressed emotion. “Pray hear me tell my sad story; I will not detain you long. My wife died about five years ago and left me an only child, who was the solace of my loneliness, the only being I had in the world to love. She is now seventeen years of age. I reside in Melbourne, madam, and am a commercial traveller. About twelve months ago, I was commissioned to go to India and China by the mercantile house that I am connected with; so I gave up housekeeping, and my daughter took a situation as pupil-teacher in a respectable school at Collingwood, and resided with her aunt at North Melbourne, where I also lodged when I was in town.

“Five days ago I returned from my Eastern voyage, and judge of my
feelings, if you can, madam, when I found my once bright-eyed, beautiful, innocent girl a mere wreck, both in body and mind. She was daily expecting to become a mother. The infamous treatment she had been subjected to by a filthy quack, together with grief and shame at her fallen position, had so altered her that I did not know her when I first saw her. Poor, dear, unhappy girl! I cannot shake off the gloomy presentiment that I shall never see her again, for she has not physical strength for the trial which awaits her. My poor, ruined, darling girl!” Here the unhappy man sobbed aloud.

Mrs Stubble said “she was very sorry to hear his affecting story, but she had troubles of her own which would not allow her to stay any longer.” She was moving away, when the man, with his former peculiarly wild look, said, “Pray wait one minute more, madam. I have come up from Melbourne for the sole purpose of seeing face to face the author of my poor girl's ruin. He lives in that house.”

“What! Mr Goldstone!”

“Yes, madam, that is his name. He is a married man, I am told: but my poor infatuated girl was led to believe otherwise.”

“Oh, the vile wretch!” shrieked Mrs Stubble.

“Will you be kind enough to tell me if he is at home. I have reason to believe that he expects a visit from me, and he may be shutting himself up, in the hope that I will soon go away. If so, he is mistaken; for never will I rest my head upon a pillow till I have confronted the base destroyer of my happiness, and the rifler of my blighted child's honour. I will stay here and watch for him while I have a spark of life remaining.”

“Oh, pray don't stay here, my good man. My poor daughter is dangerously ill; and if she knew what you have just told me, it would be the death of her. I am the mother of Mr Goldstone's unfortunate wife. He is now away from home, at Newcastle.”

“May I depend upon the correctness of that information, madam? Pray excuse my abruptness.”

“Yes, of course you may; he went away by the steamer the night before last.”

“Thank you madam,” said the man lifting his hat, and again bowing respectfully, he then turned and walked hastily away. Mrs Stubble got into her carriage, and drove homeward in a state of mind not easily described.

Notwithstanding Mrs Stubble's silly pride and her troublesome temper, she had a strong affection for her children; she really loved her husband too, but his submission to her dominant spirit had lessened her respect for him. As I have already intimated, she suspected that Ben was not kind to his wife, and she had remarked to Joe, that “she never could have believed
it possible for a man to change so quickly, for Ben was no more like what he was when he first fell in love with Mag, than a canary-bird is like a toad; indeed, his bearing towards the whole family was totally changed to what it was on the first night he called to see them in the little house at Redfern, and seemed to be so proud of them all.” But Peggy's closest observation had failed to detect anything more than extreme gruffness of manner and lack of outward show of affection for his wife; she had no idea that he had been guilty of the unmanly acts of beating and kicking poor Maggie. Mrs Stubble's unexpected appearance that morning, and her direct questions to her daughter as to the cause of her illness, led to the confession which had so terribly aroused all her wrathful passions, and made her for a time unconscious that she was adding to the sufferings of her ill-used child.

On reaching her home, Mrs Stubble went direct to the library, where Joe was sitting thoughtfully scanning a letter, which he threw upon a table at her entrance. His countenance might have told her the disturbed state of his mind, and warned her not to increase his perplexity by disclosing her newly-found troubles just then; but she was seldom disposed to soften matters to her husband; on the contrary, she usually tried to make petty trials into large ones, when talking to him about them. Perhaps this did not spring so much from positive unkindness towards him, as from the indulgence of a thoughtless pettishness, until it had become second nature to her; moreover, when she was in trouble she never could see anything but the trouble itself, which always made her trouble double. She might with good reason have spared poor Joe's feelings as much as possible, if she had reflected that it was her own self-will and pride which had been the primary cause of all their disasters in city life; but she did not reflect in that way. Without pausing a minute, she, in excited tones, told Joe all she had seen and heard that morning, including the startling story of the man at the gate.

“That explains this letter,” said Joe, starting up and pacing the room with his hands pressed to his forehead. “It is all out now, and we are ruined! Us will have to begin the world again, Peggy.”

“Ruined! ruined!” whatever do you mean, Stubble?”

“Don't shriek at me in that way, Peggy, 'cept you want to drive me mad. Read that letter from Ben, that I have received by this morning's post. I have been afraid there was something wrong going on for six weeks past; there has been a load on my mind that I could not shake off.”

“I have told you over and over again, Stubble, that you were very foolish in bothering your head so much with business things that you knew naught about; but you never would mind what I said to you, and now this is the
end of it—we are ruined. Well, it does not matter to me; I shall soon be in my grave. Is this the letter from Ben? What a nasty-looking smudged thing.” Mrs Stubble then read the following epistle, while her husband continued to pace the room, looking the image of despair.

“Ship Screaming Eagle,

“NEWCASTLE, Sunday evening.

“DEAR FATHER,—I have no doubt this letter will shock you. It grieves me to write it. Circumstances, which I cannot fully explain, impel me to leave the colony for a time. I shall sail to-morrow at daylight for San Francisco. My departure will cause a stir among some of our friends in Sydney, and I shall be cursed by them in their own style; but I don't care a jot for that. I am sorry I have involved you, and I am sorry for poor Mag; but it will not be so bad if you will follow the advice I am now about to give you.

“When you get this letter, lose no time in quietly scraping together every pound you can lay your hands on, and plant it in some snug place. I am vexed that you gave your deeds to the bank; I have told you before you were a fool for doing so; you should have secured your house property to mother; but it cannot be helped now. If you keep your head cool, and manage carefully, you may secure two or three thousand pounds before the grand smash-up. I could work it so as to secure twice as much for you; but I cannot stay in the colony any longer with safety to myself. I expected to have been away a month ago, but this cursed ship heeled on to a rock and injured her rudder.

“Bragg and Co. must burst up before the fourth of next month, unless their particular friend helps them on a little longer. When they go smash, half-a-score of other bubblemongers will go too, and I regret to say you are mixed up with them all. No doubt I shall be made the scape-goat, and be blamed for bursting the bellows. It is an old colonial dodge to put the blame upon some absent partner; but I don't care what they say of me. They are all as rotten as old Nobbley's collier fleet; but I did not know it until I had got too far into their clutches to get out. My late heavy losses in Melbourne and at Homebush have floored me; in fact, luck has been dead against me for the last nine months, and I could not recover myself even if it were possible for me to remain in the colony, unless my father died intestate; but his wheedling young wife will take care of that chance.

“You will find all the account-books in my office, but you cannot understand them; so do not bother your head with them. There is nothing to show that you and I were partners, unless you choose to admit it; and you are a fool if you do. Admit nothing at all,—that is the safest way. You will find a lot of bills signed for blank amounts in the private drawer of my
desk. They are all shicers, and will not melt, except perhaps the one of T. Fawner and Co. I think that would go down still; you can fill it up for £498, 12s 9d. You must not make it even money; discount it at once, and stick to the money. I enclose a cheque for the balance in my bank; draw it out immediately and give it to Mag. Tell her she had better plant all the plate, and say I have got it. The creditors will not take her furniture, nor yours neither; they never think of such a thing in large failures.”

“I forgot to tell you the certificates of rum are held by Grabb as security for a loan. I do not think you will ever hear of the brig in which we shipped the tea and tobacco to Dunedin. You may be able to make the insurance policy over to mother; but you had better consult Jack Carss,—he will work it if it is to be done. I am taking a little money with me, and will send for Mag when I get settled. If she goes softly to work, she may get a good lift from my father; but he is an old——or he would not have kept his son short of money, and forced him to scheming. There is a madman on his way from Melbourne; he is coming up purposely to talk to me about some imaginary wrong he fancies I have done him. It would not be safe for me to stay to argue with him. I cannot write any more, for my head is bewildered. Again I advise you to keep cool and look out for yourself. Give my love to mother and poor Mag.—Your affectionate son,

“BENJAMIN GOLDSTONE.”

I need not try to describe Mrs Stubble's excitement while spelling over the foregoing letter; but after she had read it through, she broke out in a whining strain of complaint, blaming every one but herself for the calamities which had befallen them, and which she was sure would be the cause of her sudden death from “flutteration of the heart.”

“O Peggy lass! what is the use of going on in that way?” said Joe, appealingly. “If disasters have come upon us, you ought to try to help me to bear up against them, and not make things worse by distressing me with your complainings. When the *Flying Buck* was in that hard squall which scared us all on to our knees to pray to God for help,—you remember the time, lass,—suppose, then, the chief mate, instead of going to work like a man to save the ship from capsizing, had begun to grumble at the captain for not seeing the squall coming, what sense would there have been in that, think you?”

“That is a different thing altogether Stubble, and I never want to hear again about that old *Flying Buck*; I wish she had sunk in the squall. What are you going to do to get out of this mess? that is the question.”

“Don't ask me any questions now, Peggy, for pity's sake. Can't you see that I am nearly bothered out of my senses? Tell John to saddle my horse, and I'll go into town;—stay, I will not go out of the house. I don't know
what to do. Leave me to myself a bit, Peggy; and do'ee try to be soft and kind to me, or my head will go wrong.”

Soon afterwards Joe sat down, and with trembling hand wrote a few lines to his friend Mr Rowley, and sent the letter to the post forthwith.
Chapter XI.

Mrs Rowley makes a lucky discovery.—Mr Rowley's departure to Sydney.—Tragical event on the passage.—“Lines on a Skeleton.”

“OH, I have such a piece of news to tell you, Peter!” said Mrs Rowley, as she trotted to the front gate to meet her husband, who had just returned on horseback from Daisybank.

“And I have some news to tell you too, mother,” replied Peter, with a serious tone, although he was smiling at his wife's unusual exultation.

“Have you, dear? What is it? Tell it me at once.”

“No, no; you had better tell your news first, mother; it is more cheering than mine, I can see by your merry face. But don't be alarmed, dear;” he added, as he saw her countenance change. “There is not anything the matter with our young folks. What is your good news? Mine will keep for half-an-hour.”

“Come inside, and I will tell you. You know we have often talked of putting a new cover on that old arm-chair of neighbour Stubble's, which you keep in your little cosy. I had nothing particular to do this morning; so after you left, I thought I would rip the old cover off the chair, and get it cleaned, and see if it would do to put on again, before going to the expense of new stuff: for as Joe is rather whimsical, I thought he might like the old cover best. Many people like old things better than new, you know.”

“Yes, but you are a long time getting to the good news, mother. Never mind the old chair.”

“Ha, ha! Old chair, indeed! you will not make fun of it any more, I promise. While I was turning out the dusty horse-hair stuffing, what do you think I found?”

“Some bugs, I daresay, mother.”

“Tut! For shame, Peter! You know there is not one in the house. This is what I found,” said Mrs Rowley, handing a roll of bank-notes to her astonished husband.

“Hey, day! mother. This is a piece of news indeed!” exclaimed Peter, as he spread out the musty notes, which had apparently been rolled together for many years. Pooh! This one is no good to begin with.—Bank of Australia: stop a bit; hand me my spectacles. All right; I see it is the Bank of Australasia; I made a mistake. Good as gold. £310! Well, well! This is a lucky find, mother. I wonder who it belongs to? Some old miser, no doubt.”

“Do you not think that Mr Stubble put it in the chair, Peter?”
“Not he, dear; no more than I did. Joe is not a miser. He got the chair from his old master at Luckyboy; but Mr Drydun did not put the money there for certain; he was as poor as Lazarus before he left the colony. I wonder who he got the chair from. If we could find that out, we might trace the owner of the money.”

“But you have not told me what your news is,” said Mrs Rowley, as Peter sat gazing abstractedly at the notes in his hand.

“It is sad news, dear, and very strange, or providential I should say, that it should come just at the time of this unexpected discovery. Poor Joe Stubble is ruined!”

“Ruined, Peter!” exclaimed Mrs Rowley. “Has he killed himself? Tell me all about it.”

“No, thank God; he has not killed himself, dear, for that would be eternal ruin. I have quoted the expression in his letter to me which I received this morning. He has lost all his money; and that is generally called being ruined by persons who do not know any better.”

“Dear, dear me! Poor fellow! I am very sorry to hear it,” said Rowley, with real sympathy in her looks.

“The news is not so startling to me, because I feared, from a few remarks which Joe made to me when I was in Sydney, that he was speculating to a great extent; and I know the risk of that sort of thing, especially to men who are wholly inexperienced in mercantile affairs.”

“How silly he must be, to be sure! He had everything a reasonable man could wish for,—good farm, comfortable home, and thousands of pounds in the bank; and yet he could not be satisfied, but must go to Sydney; and now he has lost all his hard earnings. Dear, dear me! Whatever will poor Mrs Stubble say? She will be in a sad way!”

“As I rode home from the township, thinking of our poor neighbour's sudden downfall, the words of Job's friend Elihu came to my mind: ‘Lo! all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit; to be enlightened with the light of the living.’ It is all right, mother; depend upon it. It will perhaps turn out the best thing that ever happened to the Stubbles, though they cannot see it yet. I daresay Joe is terribly cast down, and it would not do any good to tell him, at the present time, all I think about the trouble that has befallen him, but I firmly believe he will be glad of it by and bye. I must go to Sydney tomorrow, and see what I can do to help him. I know the value of a cool-headed friend in a time of need. Stubble is an honest man ‘who has fallen among thieves;’ but every one may not know him so well as I do, and the excitement which he cannot help showing will be prejudicial to him, and he may be mistaken for a schemer of the same class as the men who have caused his downfall. I may
be able to obviate that to some extent.”

“Will you take this money down to him, Peter?”

“No, my dear. We had better say nothing about it for the present. Lock it up in the strong-box just as it is. I will soon find out from Joe, by an indirect question or two, whether he knows anything about it or not, and I shall then know how to act. I will try to do what is right, you may rest assured.”

* * * * * * *

The following morning Mr Rowley embarked in the steamer for Sydney, taking with him a kind letter from his wife to Mrs Stubble, inviting her to Briarburn. As the vessel steamed down the river, Mr Rowley was conversing with the captain on the bridge, when the latter casually remarked, “That was a queer start of poor Davis's wife. You have heard of it, I suppose, sir?”

“No; I have heard nothing particular. What has happened to her?”

“Happened to her? Why, she has bolted off to California in the Screaming Eagle, and left three children behind her.”

“The heartless creature!” said Mr Rowley. “What a sad trial for her husband!”

“Well, it almost serves him right, though I am sorry for him,” replied the captain. “He has allowed that long-spliced horse-marine of a fellow to ride about with his wife almost every day for the last five weeks, and has encouraged his visits to the house; so what could he expect? If you fondle a snake, it is almost sure to bite you.”

“He could certainly expect his wife to show common affection for her children, even if she were destitute of becoming modesty. To run away from her family, and all young children too, is almost unparalleled barbarity. The woman must be out of her mind.”

“Not she, sir; she is knowing enough. But she has been bewitched in some way that I cannot explain—electrification, I think, they call it. I would hang that fellow to the yard-arm if I had my will, for he is a thorough scoundrel, ten times more dangerous than a mad dog. I have heard him myself boast, when he was half-seas over, that he could do what he liked with any young woman, if she would only let him look straight into her eyes for a minute, or let him get a gripe of her hand.”

“He is a false-hearted villain, whoever he is. What is his name, pray?”

“You must know him, sir. He married a daughter of Mr Stubble, the member for Muddleton, who had a farm out your way somewhere.”

“You don't say so?” exclaimed Mr Rowley, who was shocked. “Goldstone?”
“That is he, sir. A flash, leary-eyed rogue, who would sneak into any man's bunk if he got a chance. My blocks! I would tar his rigging down if I had him on board my ship for a long voyage. I hope that Yankee skipper will give him cow skin before he gets to California.”

* * * * *

When the steamer arrived at the Newcastle wharf, Mr Rowley stepped on shore for a few minutes, and then he heard the captain's statement confirmed. Goldstone had gone to San Francisco in the ship Screaming Eagle, with a dashing-looking woman, the wife of a gentleman who lived a short distance from Newcastle. That information further explained to Mr Rowley his friend Stubble's note to him, which briefly asked him to come to Sydney, as he, the writer, was ruined, and overwhelmed with trouble beside.

Just as the steamer was pushing off from the wharf, a man hurried down and sprang on board. His manner was so excited that Mr Rowley could not but notice him carefully; and it seemed that he was an object of special remark to the bystanders on shore. He at once ascended to the bridge or platform between the paddle-boxes, and began to walk to and fro, with his arms behind him, and his head bent downward, as if in deep and painful contemplation. He was genteelly dressed, and his general appearance betokened him a man of intelligence; but his peculiar wildness of manner induced all the passengers on board to avoid him. For two hours after the vessel put to sea, he continued to pace the bridge in the same abstracted manner, until he ceased to attract general notice. Presently he was observed to take off his overcoat, and throw it carelessly on to the deck; whereupon the second mate left his post on the bridge, for the purpose of expressing his fears to the captain respecting the sanity of the stranger; but he had scarcely got aft before the man threw his hat on to the deck beside his coat; and, uttering a piercing scream, he flung himself headlong overboard in front of the paddle-wheel. The engines were stopped as soon as possible, and a boat was lowered, but not a trace of the unhappy man could be seen; and it was supposed that he had been struck by the wheel, and had sunk immediately.

It is needless to describe the thrilling sensation the above tragical incident caused on board the steamer. After the first excitement was over, an eager search was made in the pockets of the overcoat to discover who the man was, when several papers were found, some of which I transcribe. The first was a telegram of that morning's date, as follows:—“From Jane Green, Melbourne, to R. Smith, Esq., Newcastle.—Grieved to say poor Amy died last night—ten o'clock.”
The next document was addressed to some person in Victoria whose name could not be deciphered, for the writing was much blurred and soiled, as with marks of tears. The composition was erratic, evidently the effort of a distracted mind. The first page contained some bitter strictures on the conduct of certain married men who were well known deflowerers of maiden innocence. The next page contained the following pathetic rhapsody:—

“Were there not unhappy victims enough on the midnight pave of Melbourne to satiate the lust of this ——, but he must seek to add my pure, innocent, lovely child to the host of hopeless outcasts? That he must rifle her of her virtue, and ruin my peace for ever! Poor Amy! my heart bleeds when I think of her present degraded position, and contrast her former purity, and her winsome, clinging fondness for me in my hours of sorrowful bereavement! The religion which I was taught in my childhood condemns the thirst for revenge which burns in my heart. I know it is wrong. Vengeance belongs to Almighty God: He will repay. I know that, but I cannot resist the force which impels me to seek out and confront the man who has wrecked my once bright, happy girl, and shaken my poor mind to the verge of madness.”

Then followed an incoherent account of the writer's visit to Goldstone's house in Sydney, of his watching before it a whole night, and the discovery that Goldstone had left for Newcastle.

The next part was evidently written at Newcastle. It expressed regret at being too late to meet the man he was seeking, who had sailed on the previous day for California. The letter concluded with an expression of devoted attachment to his fallen daughter, and a hope that he might be allowed the happiness of once more clasping her to his breaking heart before she died; for which object he intended to return to Melbourne by the next steamer.

There was no signature to the letter, and it was evident that the writer intended to add to it before posting it in Sydney. The telegram was dated 11 o'clock A.M., only ten minutes before the steamer left the wharf at Newcastle. The sad news it communicated had broken the last worn link which connected his mind with reason; and in a paroxysm of despair, the wretched, broken-hearted father had hurled himself into the sea of death—a sad, hopeless way of escape from misery, but doubtless the poor man was mad.

The person to whom the letter was addressed was probably connected with the press in some way, for in the same envelope were the following lines, “for insertion if they were thought suitable.” They were in print, and attached thereto was a note stating “that forty years ago the lines appeared
in the *Morning Chronicle* from an unknown contributor. Fifty pounds reward was offered to discover the author, but without success. All that transpired was, that a poem, in a fair clerk's hand, was found under a skeleton of remarkable symmetry of form, in the Museum of Royal College of Surgeons, Lincoln's Inn.”

The lines in question are so beautiful, that I need not hesitate to transcribe them.

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Behold this ruin! 'Twas a skull,
Once of ethereal spirit full;
This narrow cell was life's retreat,
This space was thought's mysterious seat!
What beauteous visions filled this spot!
What dreams of pleasure long forgot;
Nor hope, nor love, nor joy, nor fear,
Have left one trace of record here.

Beneath this mouldering canopy
Once shone the bright and busy eye;
But—start not at the dismal void—
If social love that eye employed;
If with no lawless fire it gleamed,
But through the dews of kindness beamed,
That eye shall be for ever bright,
When stars and suns are sunk in night.

Within this hollow cavern hung
The ready, swift, and tuneful tongue;
If falsehood's honey it disdained,
And where it could not praise, was chained;
If bold in virtue's cause it spoke,
Yet gentle concord never broke,
This silent tongue shall plead for thee
When time unveils eternity.

Say, did these fingers delve the mine?
Or with its envied rubies shine?
To hew the rock, or wear the gem,
Can little now avail to them.
But if the page of truth they sought,
Or comfort to the mourner brought,
These hands a richer meed shall claim,
Than all that wait on wealth or fame.

A vails it, whether bare or shod,
These feet the paths of duty trod?
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If from the bower of ease they fled,
To seek affliction's humble shed;
If grandeur's guilty bribe they spurned,
And home to virtue's cot returned;
These feet with angel's wings shall vie,
And tread the palace of the sky.

Alas! no contemplative human eyes will ever gaze on the skeleton of the unhappy being whose taste had treasured the above exquisite stanzas. Down in the ocean depths his unshrouded bones will lie until the sea shall give up its dead.
Chapter XII.

Mr Rowley's sympathy and help to his friend Stubble in his distress.—Joe jumps into the life-boat.

MR ROWLEY hired a cab, and drove out to Stubbleton as soon as he arrived in Sydney. He found poor Joe in a pitiable state of mental depression. His wife was looking sorrowful, but her manner was quiet and subdued, for she had begun to have serious fears for her husband's health, and that had aroused all her latent kindness; in short, the legitimate fruits of trouble were beginning to show themselves.

Mr Rowley was too cool a tactician to further excite Joe's perturbed mind with discussions upon his business affairs immediately; so, after tea, he proposed that they should smoke a quiet pipe together, as they had often done in "days lang syne." Joe willingly acquiesced; and presently they were sitting in the library, and Mr Rowley was trying to engage his friend in cheerful conversation, and at the same time was indirectly gaining little scraps of important information, without letting him perceive his drift.

"By the bye, Joe, my wife is going to trim up your old arm-chair for you, and she wished me to ask if you would like a new cover for it, or if you preferred to have the old one cleaned up," said Peter, after a short pause in their conversation.

"It is very kind of Mrs Rowley; but I don't care what she does with the old chair. If you have a fancy for it, Peter, you may have it, and welcome. I would not sell it with my other effects, you know, because Mr Drydun gave it to me."

"Did he bring it out from England with him, Joe?"

"Not at all. He bought it when old Jack Shellbag's traps were sold off after he died."

"Who was Jack Shellbag? It is a funny name for a man."

"He was a queer old fellow who used to live at Geebungie in a little cottage all alone, and it was said he starved himself to death to save his money. Anyway he lived upon nothing but dry damper and Jack-the-painter tea, though it is believed that he had lots of dollars planted away somewhere; besides, he had a good few head of cattle in the bush, and the house he lived in was his own."

"He was a miser, then, Joe?"

"Aye, he was a miserable old beggar, sure enough! A few minutes before he died he asked the old man who was nursing him to hand him five threepenny-bits that were hidden in a crack of the mantelpiece."
“His ruling passion was strong to the last;” remarked Peter. “How very sad to hear of a poor unhappy mortal leaving the world in that way! Still, it is far from being a solitary case. Was he married, Joe?”

“Not he. Married, indeed! What woman would have such a dirty old crawler? He had neither kith nor kin in the colony.”

“Who got his property, then?”

“The government sold it off, and kept the money, I suppose, for I never heard of anybody coming forward to claim it. Mr Drydun happened to be at Geebungie when the chief-constable was selling off Jack's furniture, and he went out of curiosity to see what it was like. The only thing in the cottage worth carting away was that old chair; so Mr Drydun bought it for a pound, and gave it to me. You may have it, Peter, if you like.”

“Thank you, Joe; I will accept of it, for it is a comfortable old chair. I will get my wife to restuff it, and clean it well; I daresay there is some dust inside it.” Having satisfied himself that Joe knew nothing of the hoard in the chair, Mr Rowley started some other topic; but his lively efforts to draw his friend's thoughts away from his perplexing affairs for a while were not wholly successful, and his heavy sighs, now and then, showed that he had a troublesome load on his heart. Presently he asked, “Have you seen the newspaper to-day, Peter?”

“No! I have not, Joe; for I started out here directly after I landed from the steamer. Is there anything particularly new in it?”

“There is so,” replied Joe, with a groan. “Look at this!” He then handed the newspaper to Peter, who read a short paragraph headed “ANOTHER BOLTER.” There was no person's name mentioned, but it stated that the absconder, who had gone to California with a married woman, was well known in sporting circles, and also was closely connected with an honourable member of the Lower House.

“Have you been into the city to-day, Joe?”

“No, I have not been in for four days, but I must go tomorrow. I wanted to see you first of all to tell me what to do, for I am in a regular quandary.”

“Have you any of your account-books here?”

“No; they are all at Ben's office, except a small book with the dates of bills I have to pay each month dotted down in my own simple way.”

“When are your next payments due?”

“To-morrow week, Peter. I have a lot of money to pay then, and I was expecting to pawn the horses that Ben said he had bought, but he has not bought a single head or tail. Read this, Peter, and it will show you the miserable predicament I am in.”

Joe then handed him Ben's letter, which Mr Rowley read over with evident disgust and sorrow.
“What do you think of that, Peter?” asked Joe, after his friend had finished reading the letter.

“I dare not trust myself to say all I think of it, Joe; but it is very plain to me that you have been sadly victimised. However, do not worry yourself about it to-night, if you can help it; we will go in to Goldstone's office to-morrow, and endeavour to find out the amount of your liabilities, for that is an important thing to arrive at. Cheer up, my friend! Things may not turn out so disastrously as you imagine; and even if the worst should happen, that is to say, if you should lose all your money, you will not lose your good name, or the consciousness of having acted in a way that you thought was right, which is a comforting assurance that many men in Sydney cannot lay claim to.”

“I have not wilfully done anything that is wrong, Peter; though I have foolishly allowed myself to be talked into several speculations that I am ashamed of; that is, I have found money for Ben and other schemers to work with. But whatever I have done wrong, I want to do what is right now, even if I have to give up everything I own. I think I had better resign all my offices of trust at once, Peter. I ought never to have taken such important duties upon me.”

“Have patience, Joe, my boy! Let us do one thing at a time; and the best thing we can do now is to ask Almighty God to guide us aright, for without His help we can do nothing. If you have done anything that is wrong, and are truly sorry for it, God will forgive you; and if you humbly desire to do what is right in future, God will help you. Let us pray to Him!”

Joe willingly knelt down beside his good friend, who offered up a prayer in language simple but fervent; and when they arose from their knees, Joe said he felt his heart ever so much easier.

“To tell you the truth, Peter, I never before felt a prayer do me so much good.”

“‘God is a very present help in trouble.’ He knows all about your affairs, Joe, and He can send you help in a thousand ways that you know nothing about. ‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding.’ ”

“I wish I could do that, Peter,” said Joe, with a sigh. “I wish I could really trust in Him.”

“You evidently trust me, for you told me just now, that you were waiting for me to come to town to tell you what to do in your perplexing affairs.”

“Yes, that is right, Peter; I ought to trust you certainly, for you have always been a friend to me.”

“And can you not trust Almighty God?”

“I know I ought to do so, Peter; but I do not seem to be able to, while my
mind is in such a whirl of anxiety.”

“Nothing but Divine influence can calm your troubled mind, Joe; and that will be vouchsafed to you the moment you ‘cast your burden upon the Lord,’ as He himself has invited you to do. An observant friend of mine told me that he was voyaging from Tasmania to Sydney, some time ago, in a sailing vessel. When in Bass's Straits they encountered a severe storm, and were in some danger of being wrecked. In the height of the gale, while the vessel was struggling, under storm-sails, in the heavy sea that was running, my friend observed a little bird asleep on the water with its head beneath its wing. He said that the peaceful repose of the bird in the midst of the roaring waters seemed to convey a reproof to him for his fears, which had denoted lack of trust in the Omni-potent God who rules the raging sea. That same God can make your mind calm and placid amid all your perplexing trials. He surely can; and He will do it too, if you trust in Him, and do not let unbelief drag you along the dreary road to despair.”

“Yes, Peter; I know that God can do all things, and I am sure that nothing can happen without His knowledge and permission. I have not sat under Mr Goodwin's preaching for three years without learning about true religion. I know a good deal more than I talk about.”

“I am sure of that, Joe; but have you appropriated the gospel truths you have heard enunciated. In plain terms, have you accepted Christ as your Saviour from the guilt of past sin, and as your present living Saviour from the power and dominion of sin? That is the point; and it is a most important point for you to decide.”

“I cannot say that I have, Peter; so I will not deceive you nor myself neither; but I am more than ever resolved to seek to get religion, for I am certain there is no real happiness in life without it. I have had convincing proofs enough of late that solid peace of mind is not to be found in riches, nor in worldly honours and distinctions. As soon as I get my mind settled a bit so as to think clearly, I mean to set to work about religion in real earnest; I promise you that, Peter.”

“I see, Joe, you are resolved to get your mind set at rest by your own efforts. That is like proud human nature; but it will be a failure. Thousands of poor lost souls have found that out. You may as well try to fly.”

“No; that is not what I mean exactly. The fact is, I don't feel that I be fit to profess religion. I have not been living as I ought; and many times lately I have stopped away from church on Sunday nights to talk to Ben about business; and I have often been thinking about money matters while I was listening to a sermon. I know that is wrong; but I cannot help it at present. I feel my need of Christ, but I also see my own inconsistency, and that keeps me back; by and bye, when I get my affairs put straight, you see, Peter,
then I shall be able to attend better to my religious duties.”

“That amounts to the same thing, Joe. You want to make yourself a little better before you accept of Christ's loving invitation, ‘Come unto Me!’ ”

“Well, I certainly want to live a better life you know, Peter. I do not see how I can go to Christ as I am now. I wish I could do it!” added Joe, with tears in his eyes. “God knows I am weary and heavy-laden, and that I want rest for my soul. Oh! I do wish I could find it.”

“I remember you telling me a long while ago about the providential escape you had from being drowned when you were going to Sydney once from the Clarence River, in a small schooner,” said Peter.

“Aye, indeed! I got a sad fright that time. Only for the pilot I should have been lost for certain; and I was not so well prepared for death as I am now, for I knew nothing about religion then.”

“When the vessel was bumping on the Clarence bar, surrounded by breakers, you did not stay below in the cabin to smarten yourself up, I'll be bound, Joe.”

“No; that I did not, you may be sure. I was up in the main rigging, holding tightly enough till the pilot-boat came alongside, and then I had to jump into it pretty smartly the moment the pilot sung out, now. It was a wonderful escape, and I shall never forget it. The ship went to pieces soon after I had got safe out of her.”

“Suppose, Joe, that when the pilot bade you ‘jump now,’ you had told him to keep his boat alongside, and wait while you went below to put on your best clothes?”

“I should have been a fool to do that, Peter, for I could feel the vessel breaking up under me. When the pilot sung out ‘now is your time!’ I jumped into the boat that instant.”

“Can you not see, Joe, my boy, that you are telling the great pilot of your soul to wait with his life-boat till you are properly clad, before you will jump and be saved?” asked Peter, with affectionate earnestness. “In less figurative words, Joe, are you not waiting till you do something to merit the salvation which is offered you through faith in Christ? Do you not see that you are virtually ignoring God's free grace, by relying on your own merits, instead of on the merits of Christ's atonement?”

Joe looked solemnly thoughtful for a minute, then suddenly exclaimed with earnestness, “Yes, I do see it, Peter. Thank God, I do see it as I never saw it before. I do believe in Christ Jesus, and in His willingness to save me this very moment. Without waiting to try to change my own wicked heart, I cast myself on the merits of Christ alone for salvation. He is the pilot. Jesus, take me now! Just as I am! Save me, or I perish!” added Joe, falling on his knees.
“Thank God?” exclaimed Mr Rowley.

“I am saved!” shouted Mr Stubble. “Oh! I never felt so happy in all my life! Thank God! I have jumped into the life-boat, and I am saved!”

On hearing such unusual sounds from the library, Mrs Stubble entered it without knocking, when, to her amazement, she beheld her husband's face glowing with joy, though tears were streaming from his eyes, and Mr Rowley was similarly affected.

“Oh, Peggy I am so happy!” said Joe, embracing his wife fondly. “Let the money go, lass; it won't fret me now. I have got what is worth all the money in the world, the peace of God in my heart; and I want you to have it too, Peggy. Mr Rowley will tell you the way to obtain it now, directly.”

Peggy gave an anxiously inquiring look at Mr Rowley, who, thus encouraged, began in a simple way to explain the plan of salvation through Christ, “the way, the truth, and the life;” while Peggy listened with evident signs of strong feeling. “But you have heard all this before, Mrs Stubble,” added Peter; “Mr Goodwin has often expounded the gospel way of peace to you.”

“Oh, yes, sir; I have often heard it, and have often wished I could enjoy it; but my temper is so bad, and that stops me, I know. It is getting worse and worse instead of better, for everything is going against me, and I have nothing but worrit, worrit, worrit every day; and now I am going to lose poor Maggie, for the doctor has given her up.” Here Mrs Stubble's voice faltered, and she burst into tears. Mr Rowley gently told her “the only way to gain the mastery over evil temper and all other besetments, and to get comfort in all her trials and afflictions, was to cast herself wholly upon Jesus, and resolve to live a life of faith in Him.”

After a while Mrs Stubble became more composed. She thanked Mr Rowley for his good counsel, and promised to try to follow it. They then reverently knelt down, and Peter offered up an appropriate prayer; after which they all retired for the night.
Chapter XIII.

Mr Stubble's insolvency.—Happy change in Peggy's demeanour.

THE following morning, Mr Rowley and Mr Stubble drove straightway to Ben Goldstone's office. The clerk was absent, but a note on his desk explained that the state of his health demanded a change of air; so, he had gone to Geelong and elsewhere.

Throughout that day Mr Rowley was engaged in a patient investigation of the books and papers that he found in the office. Many inquiring creditors called during the day, and seemed somewhat comforted when Mr Stubble told them to send in particulars of their claims as soon as possible. Some of them were very uncomplimentary in their remarks; but Joe refrained from arguing in defence of the absent defaulter, for the case was undoubtedly a bad one.

When Mr Rowley and Joe returned home to tea, Mrs Stubble told them that Mrs Simon Goldstone and her uncle had called in the afternoon. They stated that the news of Benjamin's gross misconduct had so affected his father, that he was thoroughly prostrated; but he wished to express sympathy with the Stubble family, and also to say that he would most willingly render them pecuniary aid if they needed it.

"It is very kind of Mr Goldstone," said Mr Stubble; "but we cannot tell yet how I stand. You never saw such a muddle, Peggy, as there is in Ben's office. The affairs puzzle our good friend here; and I don't like to see him taking so much trouble."

"Do not distress yourself in the least on my account, Joe," said Mr Rowley kindly. "We must have patience, you know. I think, as there are so many excited callers at the office, we had better get all the books and papers removed out here; then we can look through them quietly, and without interruption."

That suggestion was acted upon next morning; and for the whole ensuing week, Mr Rowley plodded through the intricacies of Ben's entries, and cross-entries, and non-entries, and examined a host of letters and other documents relating to business transactions, of which he could find no record in the books. At length he was forced to admit that he was unable to unravel the accounts sufficiently to attempt to make even a rough balance-sheet; and he could form no other conclusion but that Ben had systematically complicated his accounts, so that no human being but himself could understand them,—a device not at all uncommon with men of cheating proclivities.
“In my opinion, Joe, the most straightforward course for you to adopt is to call a meeting of your creditors, and explain your position to them,” said Mr Rowley, after he had given the result of his inquiry.

“Do you say so, Peter?” responded Joe, sorrowfully. I can meet the bills due to-morrow.”

“Yes; but I see they are accommodation-bills, Joe, and it would not be fair to pay them if there is a doubt of other bona fide claims being left unpaid.”

“I surely do not owe more than I can pay by and bye, Peter! I thought I should find a large sum to the good.”

“You do not know what you owe, or rather, what you are liable for. I perceive you have been in the practice of signing bills in blank, and leaving Ben to fill them up as he chose. However could you be so unwise as to do that, Joe? I fancied that none but thoroughly reckless men, who had nothing to lose, did such unbusiness-like things.”

“Well, Peter, it is no use to say anything to me now; I see my folly. The fact is, I have been gradually fooled into placing confidence in Ben; and, as I told you before, I have left everything to his management while I have been working away for the public good. That is all about it.”

“I understand it, Joe; and I do not mean to say anything to reproach you—far from it. There will be plenty of people ready to do that I daresay, for that is the way of the world in showing sympathy for misfortune. It was perhaps natural for you to repose confidence in your son-in-law; but he has shamefully betrayed your confidence, and there is no disguising the fact. He has got you inextricably involved in cross-bill transactions with nine or ten persons in town, some of whom are notorious sharpers. There is a large amount of their paper under discount, for which you are liable. If it should all be paid, I have no doubt you will find a pretty large balance in your favour; but I tell you candidly, I have no faith in the stability of any of the persons; and if one should fail they will all fail, and, in that case, you will be insolvent likewise.”

“As old Mr Goldstone has offered to lend me a hand, I might pay everything, Peter.”

“In my opinion it would hardly be fair to accept his generous offer, to take his money and pay it to rogues and schemers, Joe. He would be grieved if he knew you did that.”

“True, Peter; it would not be right. I will not take a penny from him. But there are lots of goods in various stores in town; we might see after them.”

“I am afraid you will find that all the goods are hypothecated in some way, Joe. Depend on it, there will be claims set up against them if you attempt to remove them. That is usually the case under such circumstances;
there is generally a scramble after a failing man's assets, especially if he is helpless, as you certainly are. In plain terms, Joe, the only honest course for you is to call your creditors together. To attempt to patch up your affairs would only involve you still farther, and perhaps undermine your health with anxiety.”

“I will take your advice, Peter. I never thought I should have got into the insolvent list, and it will be a bitter pill for me to swallow; but I daresay it will all be for the best. Thank God, I am able to think so, whatever happens to me now. I want to do what is straightforward and honest; and so long as my good name is not sacrificed, I don't care.”

“God can take care of your good name, Joe.”

“That is true enough, Peter. What time I am afraid, I will trust in Him. All these things will work together for good in some way that I cannot yet see.”

Two days afterwards there was a meeting of Mr Stubble's creditors. It was soon evident to them all that Joe had been grossly deceived and victimised, and the utmost sympathy was shown for him. After a brief discussion, trustees were appointed, who took charge of all the books and papers relating to Joe's affairs; and it was hoped by some that all claims on him would be liquidated, and a balance remain to be handed over to him. They allowed him his household furniture. After the meeting Joe walked home beside his good friend, satisfied at having taken an honest course, and glad at heart that not one of his creditors had evinced the least suspicion that he had knowingly acted dishonestly in any way.

“This serious affair does not fret me at all, as far as I am personally concerned,” remarked Joe. “I am able and willing to work for my living, and it will be all the better for my health if I do so; but I am afraid my poor wife will be sadly cut up when she hears that I have given up everything, and that we have nothing left in the world but our household effects.”

“I do not think Mrs Stubble will fret much about it, Joe. I have been delighted to see her in such a placid state of mind for several days past.”

“Poor thing! I heard her sobbing and sighing last night, and I did not like to say aught to her; I thought she was grieving about our losses.”

Mrs Stubble met them at the door as they entered the house, when poor Joe burst into tears, and threw his arms about her neck. “Oh, Peggy!” he sobbed, “I have given up every penny I had in the world. Us have got no money now; it is all gone, and we must work for our living.”

“Never mind, Joe dear,” said Peggy, kissing him affectionately, while tears streamed down her face. “We have got health and strength left, and what is better than all, dear, we have got peace of mind, which all the wealth of the world would never give. Since you have been away I have
been praying to God to subdue my stubborn will, and help me to bear with patience and resignation any fresh trial that may come upon us; and I have derived such comfort, Joe. God has answered my prayer, and I am now ready to submit to anything He sees fit to send. Thank God! I am so happy now, Joe,” added Peggy, burying her face on her husband's breast and sobbing aloud.

I pass over the occurrences of the next two hours; but Mr Rowley told his wife, when he went home, that it was one of the happiest seasons he had ever experienced.

“Have you any money to go on with, Joe?” asked Mr Rowley, as they sat a few hours afterwards smoking their pipes in the library.

“I have a few shillings, Peter. You know I gave a cheque for my balance in the bank to my trustees.”

“They will probably offer you an allowance for a while; but in the meantime let me supply you with what you want,” said Mr Rowley, pulling out his pocket-book and laying a ten-pound note on the table.

“No, Peter; I will never take money from you; thank you all the same. I shall soon set about doing something; I won't be idle very long, never fear.”

“This is your own money, Joe; so do not scruple to use it.” Peter then explained to his astonished friend how that Mrs Rowley had found the roll of notes in the old arm-chair.

“But don't you think I ought to give it up to my trustees, Peter?” asked Joe, after his surprise had subsided sufficiently to enable him to speak.

“No; I do not think they have any claim to it. If the original owner of the chair was alive, or even if you knew his descendants, it would be right to return it to him or them, but otherwise, I think, you may honestly keep it yourself.”

“Well, well! this is lucky, or providential I mean. It will just start me on a farm again—ha, ha! Won't Peggy laugh when she thinks how she wanted to sell the old chair? Let us call her in and tell her all about it; here she comes up the garden walk.”

Peggy's joyful surprise was highly amusing to Mr Rowley. After she had left the room, Joe remarked that he would have given a five-pound note if Peggy's likeness could have been taken a few minutes ago. He had never seen her look so pretty before in all his life; and if it were not for that fashionable fright of a bonnet, and her queer petticoats, she would look exactly like an angel.
Chapter XIV.

Death of Maggie.—Death of Simon Goldstone.—Mrs Stubble goes to Briarburn.—Mr Stubble goes to Illawara to look for a farm.

THE late startling occurrences had been carefully kept from the knowledge of Maggie; still, she suspected that there was some fresh trouble in the family. Biddy Flynn's evasive, though tender, replies to her questions, confirmed her suspicion, and the painful suspense was perhaps as trying to her as a full disclosure would have been.

Ben Goldstone's estate had been placed in the Insolvency Court; and as all the household effects were to be sold off, it was deemed expedient to remove Maggie, to prevent her knowing of the sale. Accordingly, she was conveyed in a close carriage to Stubbleton, ostensibly for the advantage of being under her mother's immediate charge. Her doctor, who had not been consulted as to her removal, was so highly displeased at it, that he declined to attend the case any longer. A fresh doctor was called in, who condemned the professional system of his predecessor, and forthwith began a totally opposite course of treatment. But nothing seemed to alleviate poor Maggie's sufferings; she continued to grow worse, until she was reduced to a mere shadow, and even hopeful Biddy began to fear that she would soon lose her darling young mistress.

Three weeks elapsed from Ben's departure, and Maggie's anxiety respecting his prolonged absence grew so intense, that it was at length decided to tell her that Ben had left the colony for a time. Accordingly, the news was communicated to her one evening by her mother, as gently as possible. Maggie listened in pensive silence, while tears rolled down her withered cheeks; presently she sobbed, "It was cruel of him to leave me so ill;" but she asked no questions, evidently dreading lest she should hear something even more distressing, and which she could see her mother was desirous of concealing from her.

Mrs Simon Goldstone called every day, though she was not always allowed to see Maggie. Her kindness was extreme; and she requested Mrs Stubble to leave no means untried for Maggie's relief, and said that her husband had wished her to supply any money that was required. He was still confined to his bed, with a severe attack of an old complaint; consequently could not go to see his daughter-in-law; but he was tenderly interested in her.

One afternoon Biddy was watching beside Maggie's bed, to relieve Mrs Stubble, who had gone to lie down for a while. She had been sleeping, and
seemed, from the calmness of her features, to be free from pain. Presently she opened her eyes and fixed them for some time on her faithful attendant; then held out one of her thin hands, which Biddy took and pressed to her quivering lips.

“Biddy!” she softly whispered, “I have had such a pleasant dream. I thought I saw dear Percy in heaven among a host of shining angels; and he smiled at me so lovingly, and held out his arms to come to me, as he used to do when he awoke up from a sleep in his cot. But he looked so amazingly beautiful, ten times brighter than a star. I wonder if I shall know him in heaven, Biddy. Tell me; what do you think?”

“To be shure you will, darlint,—that is a clear case; for supposin' ye shudn't be a bit more wiser nor ye are at present, ye'd know yer own child. It is ony common sinse to think that. But it's my belief you'll be a hundred times wiser nor ye are now, honey; so ye'll be shure to know yer own blessed boy the minute ye git to heaven; an' ye'll know all yer other fronds besides who have got safe there, though they may be all shining like rainbows an' sunset-glory. It isn't a bit likely that dear fronds will be separated in heaven. Not at all. That was a lovely dream Miss Maggie; so it was. An' what a happy place heaven must be! all joy an' no sorrow,—no pain, no trouble, nothin' but love—the love of God itself. Shure it makes me heart full of joy to think of it.”

“Oh Biddy! do you really think God will forgive me for all my sins and shortcomings?”

“Didn't ye tell me last night, honey, that ye was sartin sure God had forgiven ye for the sake of Jesus Christ? Ye sed ye know'd God loved ye, an' that His love was filling yer heart an' making yez happy; forbye all yer pains an' sorrow.”

“Yes, I know I did, Biddy; but I am not so sure about it now. I don't feel so happy as I did last night; my mind seems beclouded.”

“It is the natur' ov us poor wake mortials to change a dozen times a day; but the Almighty God never changes. That is a blessed thought to cheer us. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and he loves ye to-day as much as he did last night; so don't ye be onaisy about that same, honey. Ye are not always doubtin' whether yer own father loves ye. An' don't ye be lookin' at yer own heart ivery minute to know how it feels, darlint; shure ye'll niver git much comfort doin' that same, bekase yer feelings will change as often as the wind that blows, an' oftener too. Look to Jesus; an' jist whisper that ye want Him to comfort ye, an' yer poor ruffled mind will get as calm as a summer's evening. Try now, honey. Look to Jesus.”

“Yes, Biddy; I am looking to Jesus. He is helping me. I am happier now, Biddy, and my distressing doubts are gone. Jesus is mine!
“Could my tears for ever flow,
Could my zeal no languor know,
These for sin could not atone;
Christ must save, and He alone.
In my hands no price I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling.”

After Maggie had softly repeated the foregoing verse, she said, “Is not that a beautiful verse, Biddy? So soothing! so comforting! Jesus is my rock.”

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That night poor Maggie's weary spirit left the world for its eternal rest. The doctor had apprised her friends that the crisis of her disease was approaching. A large abscess had formed in her side, and a fatal result was expected. Mrs Stubble and Biddy were watching beside the bed about midnight, when they suddenly observed a change, and whilst gazing on her death-stamped face, Maggie opened her eyes and extended a hand to each; she then softly whispered, “Jesus is my refuge!” and before Mr Stubble could be summoned to the room, Maggie was dead.

*         *         *         *         *

Mr and Mrs Stubble were much affected by the loss of their beloved daughter; still, they did not utter a word of murmuring, and for the first time they learnt what it was to be “sorrowful, yet rejoicing.”

Biddy Flynn's grief was more demonstrative, but it was very brief. When the first outburst subsided, the affectionate old creature declared, with tears in her eyes, that “she was glad from her heart that the dear darlint was gone home to glory before she knew all the wickedness of her worthless husband, or seed the ruination he had brought upon the whole family wid his dishonest cheatin’.”

Maggie's death had a most disastrous effect upon Mr Simon Goldstone, who was at the time in a very precarious state of health. Lydia and her uncle were from home when a messenger arrived from Stubbleton with the sad news, so he was shown up into Mr Goldstone's bedroom. He had previously heard that Maggie's illness was mainly caused by a brutal kick she had received from her husband; and when the news of her death was suddenly communicated to him, the shock was too severe for his weakened system; he was seized with an apoplectic fit, and that night he died without having shown any signs of consciousness in the interim.
A fortnight after Maggie's funeral Mr Stubble sold off all his household effects by auction. Mrs Stumble then went to Briarburn to spend a few weeks with Mrs Rowley, who had very kindly invited her. After resigning all his offices of trust in the city, including his seat in the Legislative Assembly, Mr Stubble went to Illawara to look at a dairy-farm which was advertised for sale. Biddy Flynn went to live with Widow Goldstone.
Chapter XV.

Ben Goldstone's flight from Newcastle in the ship Screaming Eagle, with Mrs Davis.—Remorse of his paramour, and vexation of Ben.—An apparition.

ON the morning of Ben Goldstone's departure from Newcastle in the Screaming Eagle he issued from his cabin long before the dawn of day. He had passed a sleepless night, and was painfully anxious lest some mishap should prevent the ship from getting to sea on that day, in which case he knew that all his deeply-concocted schemes would be exposed. He had induced the husband of his paramour to go to Lochinvar the day before, to bargain for some horses, and meanwhile he wiled away the infatuated woman so slyly that not one of her sharp-eyed neighbours saw her leave the house; and there she was, fast asleep, in the best state-room on board the ship. Mr Davis would probably return to Newcastle by the eleven o'clock train, and then the elopement would be discovered, of course; but Ben hoped to be out of sight of land by that time—or, as he poetically expressed it to his lady, “They would be speeding away to the land of the free on the white horses of the Pacific.” It is no wonder then that he could not sleep composedly, seeing that all his plans and plots might be frustrated by a mere change in the wind, or by a calm, or even by a fog-bank.

The stars were shining brightly when Ben came on deck, and the sky was clear, save a few cirrous clouds to the westward. A light land-wind was blowing, and as he paced the deck with an impatient step he would occasionally stop and exclaim, “Blow, good breezes!” then resume his hurried walk, whistling in that dissonant, hissing key which many sailors superstitiously believe has a stimulating influence on the wind. There were no signs of life on board the ship, save the anchor-watch, who was drearily pacing the top-gallant-forecastle, and the pigs under the long-boat, which began to scent the morning air, and to grunt for their breakfast. The morning star arose brightly above the horizon, and sparkled in the distant ocean, which was as smooth as a lagoon.

“Curse it all!” exclaimed Ben, stopping suddenly in his walk. “Here is a fair wind freshening up, and the tide all right for a good start, and these skulking sea-dogs are all snoring in their bunks. Rot their lazy bones! If I were the skipper, I'd soon rouse them out with a rope's end or a belaying-pin. I wish we had the mate of the Juno on board here; he would smarten up all hands with his big toe, and make them hop about like French fiddlers.”
Just then the man on the forecastle struck the bells (five o'clock), and walked aft and tapped at the chief mate's cabin to tell him the time. Soon afterwards, smoke began to issue from the galley-funnel, and the cook put the coffee-kettle on to boil. Presently the boatswain came on deck, and lighted his pipe; then the chief mate issued from his cabin, and ordered the hands to be roused out, to heave the cable short; and, finally, the captain came on deck, and three hands were sent aloft to loose the topsails. All these signs of active preparation would have been satisfactory to an ordinary passenger, still Ben was impatient and dissatisfied; he thought that the men did not work the windlass with a will, and the second mate did not bully them enough to stimulate their drowsy energies; the men on the yards, too, seemed to be half-asleep, and the captain himself was only half-awake. So thought Ben; but he was afraid to grumble out his discontent.

As the gray morning light gradually brightened, he could see the pilot-boat preparing to push off to the ship, and then his heart began to quail with apprehension that some unlooked-for event had caused Davis to return before the expected time, and lest he should come off in the pilot-boat to reclaim his truant wife, and punish her seducer. Anxiously Ben stood gazing through a telescope at the approaching boat, until he was satisfied that there was no person in the stern-sheets but the pilot himself, who presently ascended the gangway ladder, and took charge of the ship.

Ben had disguised himself in sailors' gear; so, in order to escape the notice of the pilot, he went forward and took a turn at the windlass-handles, and by the promise of a gallon of rum after they got to sea, he induced the crew to put a little more power into their movements. He was also very active in lending a hand to sheet home the topsails and hoist up the yards, and then to hoist the quarter-boats up to the davits. No mishap occurred to hinder them, and soon after six o'clock the Screaming Eagle had discharged the pilot outside "Nobby's;" and while part of the crew were getting the anchors on deck, other hands were making sail to an increasing breeze from south-west.

Sail after sail was set, in which operation Ben soon showed the crew that he knew all the ropes. The vessel glided through the water with increasing speed, and Ben's spirits gradually rose as his prospect of getting clear away was brightening every minute. At eight-bells the log was hove, and showed full eleven knots, with a freshening breeze; so Ben muttered to himself, "All right!" and went below to breakfast.

"My dearest Jane, we are free! The land is four leagues astern, and bluff old Nobby does not look bigger than a sailor's hat," said Ben, as he entered the state-room where Mrs Davis was lying in a berth, looking pale and poorly. "Sparkle up my precious ruby! Let not needless apprehension dim
those lovely eyes! We are as safe as if we were inside the golden gate of San Francisco. There is not a tug-boat in Newcastle harbour could catch us now if they pressed up steam to within half-an-ounce of bursting the boiler. Ha, ha! the *Screaming Eagle* is a clipper worthy of our confidence! Cheer up, my bonnie bird!"

But notwithstanding that encouraging address, Mrs Davis looked as cheerless as a caged robin; and instead of responding in a similarly poetical strain, she said with sobbing utterance, “I would give the world to be at home again. I am wretched in the extreme.”

Ben looked quite staggered for a minute. Such a total change in the views of his companion was to him as incomprehensible as it was unexpected. The previous night she had been in overflowing spirits, and had sung sentimental and sea-songs until past midnight. It is true she was rather tipsy, but that was not a new trait. She had slept heavily all night, and had not awakened until the ship began to plunge about in the short seas about ten miles off the land; then she began to feel both sick and sorry, and was evidently unable to appreciate the sentiment which had just bubbled from the lips of her exultant paramour. Presently Ben recovered from his surprise, and said in the softest tones he could assume, “Come, come, deary! Don't yield to those silly qualms. Show yourself a true woman. Let me lead you out to breakfast. Come, cheer up, my Jenny!”

“No, no, no! I can't move; my head is splitting. Oh dear, dear! dear!”

“Try a little brandy and soda-water, Jenny.”

“Ugh! I can't touch anything; I am dreadfully sick. Oh my! oh my! whatever did I come here for?”

“Don't cry, ducky! You will be better in a day or two. Do let me get you a little brandy.”

“I tell you I can't take anything. Please to leave me alone for a while, Goldstone.”

“As you please, Jane,” said Ben, in a less gentle tone, and forthwith he went out to the breakfast table, looking rather disconcerted.

Poor Mrs Davis was early awakening to a sense of her degraded position, and her heartlessness in leaving her husband and young family. She had yielded to a fatal temptation, been spell-bound, as it were, by Ben's arts and flattery, and only seemed conscious of the enormity of her error when the hope of retrieving it was past. The reaction of the stimulants which she had lately learnt to imbibe, and the nauseating sensation of sea-sickness, were almost intolerable; but added to her physical sufferings were the pangs of conscience and the yearnings which every heart, to some extent, feels for home; and no picture of misery could be more complete than she presented. On the previous night she had kissed her sleeping children, and
while doing so, her maternal feelings had almost prevailed over her lawless passion; but Ben stood by, and passing his arm round her waist, he gently drew her from the bedside, and immediately administered a cordial from his dram-bottle, or “pocket-pistol,” then he hurried her away to the boat. Now her mind was tortured by mental pictures of the poor little forsaken ones waking up, crying for their breakfast, and piteously calling aloud for mamma. Then she would fancy her husband returning to his deserted home, and her paroxysms of grief were agonising.

When Ben re-entered her state-room after breakfast, he tried his utmost to soothe her. The man who could seldom speak a kind word to his own faithful, suffering wife, was apparently deeply concerned at the self-wrought misery of a woman who had proved herself void of moral principle, natural affection, or even common modesty! But all his honeyed words and libidinous looks were ineffectual; they did not assuage her sorrow or her sickness in the least degree; and after a while he grew tired of talking softly to a listener who did nothing but cry and retch at all he said; so he left her and went on deck, to see how the ship was speeding, and to have a comforting nobbler by himself on the spars amidships.

I must now glance back at Ben's career for a few weeks prior to his departure. He had several reasons for absenting himself from Sydney, the strongest of which was the dread of a visit from the father of the poor girl in Melbourne whom he had led astray. He had received a communication from one of his Victorian associates, warning him “to look out for squalls;” that “daddy Smith was on his passage back from China, and he would most likely call Ben to account for his little affair with Amy.” It further stated that “Smith was a cranky old fellow, and Ben had better steer clear of him until his wrath had stilled down a bit, and then something might be done to compromise the matter.”

Ben would probably have stood his ground and risked Mr Smith's wrath, had his pecuniary affairs been in a satisfactory state, for he had confidence in the power of money to insure protection from any ordinary danger. He had not transgressed the criminal code of law, and a mere action for damages would not have scared him, for he had many means of showing a jury that the girl was no better than she ought to be. Of course the law would protect him against the cudgel of Mr Smith, or of any other crusty sire who essayed to inflict summary justice with his own hands. But Ben was, to use a current phrase, “hard up;” his recent attempts to retrieve his heavy losses in Melbourne had resulted in still further losses. He had reason to believe that there would soon be a grand break up of the accommodating cheque in Sydney, with which he was largely involved. Moreover, he had certain misgivings that Mr Smith might possibly meet
him some day on a sudden, and argue his case with a Colt's revolver; so he finally resolved to get out of the way of so much impending danger. He could spend a year or two on foreign travel, and in the mean-time his father might die, or some other lucky stroke of fortune might turn up in his favour. On one side, he saw nothing but personal risk and trouble, including the domestic annoyances of a sick wife and a fidgety mother-in-law; on the other side, he saw liberty, freedom, enjoyment! a life on the ocean wave, and the exciting novelties of the glorious land of the West; and he might go away with money in both pockets, if he managed with his usual dexterity.

The plea of buying horses for India served Ben while he was making preparations for his departure. He had quietly arranged for a passage in the *Screaming Eagle* a month previously; but a few days before the ship was ready for sea she took the ground, and injured her ruder and stern-post, and had to discharge cargo to undergo necessary repairs. The delay was very annoying to Ben; but, as he afterwards reasoned, it was a lucky knock, for he was enabled to secure a charming companion, one whose tastes, he thought, singularly accorded with his own. The fact of his having taken a passage in the ship was only known to persons who were bound to secrecy by the strongest tie that could hold them; and while repairs were progressing, Ben was sporting about Newcastle and Maitland, and making a feint to buy horses, though he did not pay for any. He was waiting, he said, for the arrival of next mail-steamer, when he expected a military friend from India, who would assist him in his final bargaining for the animals.

On Ben's frequent visits to the billiard-room of one of the hotels in Newcastle, he had met with a Mr Davis, a gentleman who could handle a cue almost as well as Ben could himself, and whose taste in general was of a decidedly sporting turn. He had formerly held a government appointment in a country town; but there had been a difference of opinion between himself and the Colonial Treasurer respecting his quarterly cash returns, and, to his extreme dissatisfaction, he had been dismissed the service. He explained the whole affair to Ben, and showed himself an injured man. Ben looked very sorry for him, and said “the Treasurer deserved to have his head tied up in a canvas money-bag, and be pelted with copper tokens by all the unfortunate victims that he had mercilessly sacked.”

Mr Davis, who was half-tipsy, seemed much affected by such strong sympathy from a mere stranger. He seized Ben's hand, swore he was a brick, and called for two “ginslings.” He then, in a wheedling tone, which frequent practice had rendered almost perfect in its way, asked Ben “to lend him a couple of sovereigns for three days.”
“Here you are, old fellow,” said Ben. “Take this five-pound note, and keep it till I ask you for it. That is more than the Treasurer would do for you.”

“The Treasurer has tried to starve my poor wife and children, sir,” said Mr Davis, in tones of hissing contempt; to which Ben feelingly responded, “Shame! shame!”

Ben had previously heard that Mr Davis had a very handsome young wife; and it was on that account, more than any real fondness he had for the lazy sponger himself, that Ben had assumed to be interested in his case. Had it not been for that enticing fact, Ben would have referred him to some other sympathising friend, or to the pawnbroker round the corner, for “a loan for three days.” The five-pound note was a mere bait, and the tipsy-brained man took it as eagerly as a barracouta bites at a floating hook in a ship's wake. He pocketed the note, and secretly believed that Ben was a “jolly flat.”

That evening Ben took tea with Mr and Mrs Davis in their cottage, a short distance from Newcastle. After tea, all had some rum-toddy together, and while they sat cosily round the fire, Ben explained that his object in staying in the neighbourhood for a few weeks was to buy horses for India. He wished to have the animals all selected prior to the arrival of his friend, Captain Curber, from Bengal. With a delicate frankness, which was expressly meant to strike the lady, he further stated that “he could put a good thing in his (Mr Davis’) way, if he would not consider it infra dig. to undertake a duty so much below his position. He might as well have a commission as any one else, and five per cent. on, say £2000, would be a comfortable sum to have in his pocket. He hoped they would excuse him for naming it; still, if Mr Davis liked to accept the job to select the horses, he should have it.”

Mr Davis assured Ben that he should only be too happy to have the job; in fact, it was just what he liked. He knew a horse's points as well as Burt or Buchan Thomson, and he was also intimately acquainted with the district, and with the most likely persons to have animals suitable for a foreign market. While he was expatiating on his own skill, an idea struck him that he might slyly get five per cent. from the vendors, which would double his commission, and it was all fair enough as times go, and in common with usage in certain quarters that he was familiar with. “I gladly accept your kind offer, sir,” he added, “with ten thousand thanks.”

“All right, old fellow! That is settled, then; now let us have a drop more toddy over it. You can go to work and make your selection as soon as you like, Davis; only do not complete a bargain until Captain Curber arrives. Here is another five-pound note to help to pay your travelling expenses.”...
I need not give any further particulars of this disgraceful affair; the result I have shown. There was the wretched, degraded wife in her cabin, a prey to feelings impossible to describe; and Ben had already begun to regret that he had encumbered himself with a companion who, he imagined, had no more real courage than a young kitten,—in fact, she was a crying doll.

The captain and mate of the *Screaming Eagle* were aware that Ben was an absconder. In addition to paying a high price for his accommodation on board, he had given a liberal *douceur* to both captain and mate. They suspected that the lady was not his wife, but they were silent on the subject. They were plain, unpolished men, particularly taciturn, and seemingly unobservant of anything but the concerns of the ship. It was impossible, however, for them not to hear the bickerings which were frequent between their passengers. For the first week out, Mrs Davis continued very sick, and did not leave her cabin. Ben showed surprising patience in trying to quiet her incessant repining; but his leering looks, which had struck so many women stupid, were lost upon her, for she turned her back to him, nor would she be consoled either by his poetical flights or his prosy reasonings. After a while he grew discouraged, and resolved to leave her to have her sulky fit out. She grew worse at being, as she said, deserted by him; whereupon a disagreement ensued, a mere tiff at first, but it gradually grew to a noisy quarrel, and Ben's irritable temper so much mastered his cool cunning, that, in an unguarded moment, he struck her a smart blow on the breast. He was sorry for it in less than a minute, for he found that he had not his own gentle Maggie to deal with, and he also saw his mistake in supposing that Mrs Davis was such a tame little pussy. At that hasty blow, her dormant spirit blazed up like fat in the fire, and Ben was obliged to hold her hands to keep her from throwing bottles and other dangerous missiles at his head, or spoiling his features with her fingernails.

Her screams soon brought the captain and mate into her cabin, when she claimed their protection, and told them how she had been decoyed from her home and her family by Goldstone's arts and schemes; in fact, that he had drugged her until she did not know what she was doing. She implored them to land her on the first inhabited island they sighted, or put her on board any vessel they met, for she was afraid of her life with that vile man near her. Ben was incensed at the captain's interference, and a stormy dispute arose between them. The result was, that Ben was ordered to take a cabin to himself and keep to it, on pain of leg-irons and handcuffs if he was caught outside the door. The determined manner of the captain convinced Ben that he was over-matched at last, and that his best course was to
submit; so he thenceforth took all his meals by himself, and the only fresh
air he could get was through the port-hole. The fact of being a prisoner on
board chafed his fiery spirit almost to madness, and all day long he paced
to and fro his narrow cabin, like a caged tiger.

The ship had been at sea about twenty-five days, when one night, as the
chief mate was relieving the watch at eight-bells (midnight), he was
startled by loud shrieks from Goldstone's cabin. He rushed in, and found
Ben writhing in a fit. The captain was called, and such remedies were
applied as were procurable, and in about two hours Ben's consciousness
returned; but his manner was extremely wild, and he seemed terrified at
something he had seen, but he refused to say what it was. The captain
supposed that he was suffering from delirium tremens, as he had drunk
hard every day since he came on board from a private stock of his own; so
the steward was ordered to stay in the cabin, and watch him. After the
captain and mate had gone on deck, Ben told the steward that a woman in
grave-clothes had appeared to him, and he believed it was his poor wife.
He implored the steward not to leave him for a minute, and promised to
give him £100 at the end of the voyage.

Mrs Davis kept closely to her own cabin, and during those days of
loneliness she had ample time for sober reflection. Bitter indeed was her
sorrow for her past misconduct; and solemnly she resolved that, if she were
spared to get back to her home, she would henceforth live a new life. As
one grand step towards it, she then vowed that she would never again taste
strong drink, for to that fatal influence she mainly attributed her present
miserable, degraded position.
Chapter XVI.

Fearful Hurricane.—Foundering of the *Screaming Eagle.*—Awful end of Ben Goldstone.

A FEW days afterwards, Ben sent a submissive message to the captain, asking permission to walk the poop for half-an-hour, which was granted. When he went on deck he observed that all hands were busy sending down royal and top-gallant yards, reefing preventer-braces, and making other preparations for heavy weather. It was nearly calm, but the sky had a dull leaden hue, and there was a portentous closeness in the air which no sailor could misunderstand. The ship was then a few degrees to the north-west of the Marquesas Islands. After a while Ben ventured to ask the captain what he thought of the weather, when he curtly replied, “Dirty, sir; very dirty. A low glass, and still falling fast. We are going to have one of these roundy-go-roundies.”

Ben understood what the captain meant, for he had experienced a hurricane when on board the *Juno* whaler in the Tonga group; and though the ship was lying with three anchors ahead in the land-locked harbour of Vavau, they narrowly escaped being wrecked. He remarked “that he was afraid they had not much sea-room to run for it,” when the captain replied, “No, sir; we are jammed in on all tacks by coral reefs; and come what may, we must lie to, and sweat it out the best way we can. We have a good ship under us, but she is too deep for heavy weather, and I told my agent so before I took in the last lighter of coal that came alongside; but he only smiled and said, ‘Forty tons won't make much difference to this big ship, captain.’ That is the way lots of ships are sent to the bottom of the sea, sir; when they fall in with heavy weather, they get smothered.”

As night approached, the appearance of the sky was awful in the extreme. Lightnings streamed from the murky clouds, and thunders shook the ocean to its bed. The wind was veering about from all points of the compass, accompanied with heavy squalls of rain. Sail had been reduced to a close-reefed main-topsail and storm staysail; everything else was furled and secured by double gaskets. About thirty tons of coal had been thrown overboard, and the hatches were made all secure with extra tarpaulins; in short, all that sailor-like skill and forethought could do, was done.

At about eight-bells a furious hurricane burst upon them, which blew the canvas away like brown paper, and hove the ship's starboard rail under water, in which helpless position she lay, broadside to it, though the helm was put hard up. The sea was feather-white, and the roaring of the wind
through the rigging was even louder than the thunder, while the blue lightning seemed to run down every rope. Most of the cabin furniture fetched way, and crashed down into the state-rooms to leeward; and the smashing of crockery and glass in the steward's pantry added to the general din of destruction. In that awful crisis, Mrs Davis left her cabin and rushed frantically into Ben's arms, beseeching him to save her, while he, pale and agitated, and trembling in every limb, could not articulate a word of comfort, and seemed paralysed with extreme fear.

“O God, have mercy upon us!” exclaimed the distracted woman. “Save us, O God!” Ben's lips moved; perhaps he was mentally repeating that prayer, but he uttered not a word. Presently the captain looked into the cuddy, and said in a hurried tone of authority, “Mr Goldstone, you said you were a sailor; now you must show yourself to be one. Come on deck, sir, and take a turn at the pumps, or else go below and trim the cargo up to windward. Bear a hand, sir; there is no time to think about it; ten minutes longer in this position will send us all to eternity. Steward, you come on deck too.”

Ben scrambled up the companion-way, but he could get no further; his nerves were so shaken by his long-continued excesses, that he was powerless as an infant. The ship was on its beam-ends, and the cargo had shifted. The second mate, with part of the crew, were in the fore-hold, trimming the coal over to windward; the rest of the crew were lashed at the pumps. The captain and mate had clambered along the weather topsides, and were cutting away the laniards of the fore-rigging. Presently the foremast went by the board, taking the main-top-gallant mast with it, when the ship partially righted; but she still lay wallowing and straining in the trough of the sea.

At midnight there was a sudden lull, and the sea then began to break on board, like vast hillocks of water. The long-boat, spars, fore-deck house, galley, and all the lee bulwarks were washed away; one of the seaman was lost overboard, and several others were badly injured.

The lull lasted but half-an-hour, when the hurricane burst on them again, and the main and mizen topmasts went over the side. It continued to blow furiously till day-dawn, when a pitiable scene of wreck presented itself to the view of the weather-beaten crew. The ship had strained very much as she lay on her broadside, and she leaked badly. The broken spars dashing against her sides also damaged her, and there was no possibility of clearing away the wreck while the sea continued to break on board with such force and fury. There was four feet of water in the hold, and the men were nearly knocked up with incessant pumping all night; nevertheless, they nobly kept at work; but at six-bells there was five feet of water in the hold, and one of
the pumps was choked with coal-dust. It was then decided to abandon the ship, as it was not possible to keep her afloat another hour.

Fortunately, the two quarter-boats were uninjured; so the chief mate took charge of one, and the captain the other. Provisions and water were hastily put into the boats, and they were successfully lowered into the water,—a work of imminent hazard on account of the furious cross sea which was breaking over the ship on all sides. The crew were told off for each boat, and stood by, watching for a favourable opportunity of lowering themselves into their respective boats by means of a rope fastened to the end of the spanker-boom. Mrs Davis, who was half-frantic with terror, was with much difficulty lowered into the captain's boat, and there she sat with her face covered in a shawl, as if afraid to gaze on the terrific scene around her.

Meanwhile Ben had gone to his cabin to secure his gold; he had three canvas bags full of sovereigns. In his excited efforts to carry them all on deck at once, he let one bag fall, when it burst, and the coin rolled over the cabin floor. He fell down on his hands and knees, and scraped up part of the treasure, which he put into the pockets of his monkey-jacket. He could not stop to gather it all up, for he heard the captain vociferously calling on him to “bear a hand, if he didn't want to go down in the ship;” so he seized the other two bags of sovereigns, and staggered with them to the deck. Every soul had left the ship but himself, and the boats were lying under the stern, the crews plying the oars to keep from drifting to leeward. The wind had lulled, but there was a dangerous sea, which threatened to engulf the boats.

“I will not risk the lives of all in the boat by waiting another minute,” shouted the captain. “We shall be stoved up against the ship if we lie here.”

“Hold on half-a-minute, captain! Here, save this gold! I will give £500 to the man who will save it!” shrieked Ben, holding up one of his bags of sovereigns.

“Heave it into the boat,” roared a sailor who was sitting in the headsheets holding a boat-hook. “Look sharp; heave it in, and I'll catch it.” The boat just then lifted to a sea, and Ben threw the bag. The man caught it, but it was heavier than he had expected, and it fell across the gunwale and split open; part of the coin fell overboard, and the rest scattered into the boat.

Ben uttered an involuntary imprecation on the man's carelessness, then seizing the remaining bag of gold, he passed his leathern belt through a loop in the neck, and fastened it round his waist, being evidently determined to trust in his own power to save that.

“Hold on a bit! hold on, sir!” shouted the captain, whose boat had just shipped a sea and was half-full of water; he then called out to the mate to
come up with his boat, and take off Goldstone. Ben evidently misunderstood the captain's words, for instead of waiting till the boat was nearer to the ship, he swung himself off the end of the boom, and there he hung on by his hands only.

“For heaven's sake, make haste, captain!” screamed Ben, who ever and anon dipped into the sea as the vessel rose or fell to the waves. “For mercy's sake, bear a hand! I can't hold on much longer! O my God! O my God! I am going! Captain! captain! save me, and take all my gold!”

“Hang on! hang on, sir!” shouted both captain and mate, who were making strenuous efforts to reach the vessel. With the ship perfectly motionless, it would have been a severe exercise for a strong man to hang on by his hands to a rope for five minutes, but with the ship plunging and rolling in that furious sea, it was a marvel how Ben held on so long with at least seventy pounds weight of gold in his pockets and fastened to his belt.

The men did their utmost to save him. The crew of the mate's boats used extraordinary efforts to get under the stern, and had almost succeeded; another minute, and they would have had him in their boat; but they were one precious minute too late: the ship took a plunge into a heavy sea, burying her bows and lifting her stern high out of the water. The sudden jerk was too much for Ben's exhausted strength; he uttered a piercing scream, which rang in the ears of every survivor for many days afterwards, and in an instant he was gone. Down he went to the depths of the sea, with his pockets full of gold.

After being several days at sea, the boats of the *Screaming Eagle* were picked up by a ship bound from San Francisco to Melbourne. About two months afterwards, Mrs Davis returned to her home and her children, a wiser, if not a better woman.
Bob Stubble meets Sam Rafter in Melbourne.—Sam's lecture.—
His prosperity.—Bob's sorrow for the misfortunes of his family.—
Goes to Sydney.

BOB STUBBLE got a good deal of wordy sympathy from his landlady and others after the loss of his money in the Tiddliwink venture, especially as they learnt that he had not lost his all. He had only about twenty pounds left in the bank; but he did not tell any one the state of his account. He was, perhaps, in quite as good a financial position as many persons who were speculating largely in the share market, and he might have “gone in” again with greater boldness, as he had so little to lose, but Bob never had a taste for gambling of any sort, and he wisely resolved to seek some steady employment, as the safest and surest way of retrieving his fallen fortune.

He searched the columns of the newspapers every morning, and replied to many advertisements headed “Wanted a strong, active young man,” but unfortunately he was always too late; some other active young man had secured the berth before him. At that time there were scores of men walking about the streets of Melbourne seeking for employment; indeed there are at all times many persons who seem to have an unconquerable disposition to lounge about the metropolis in preference to going into the country, where they would have a better chance of finding employment, and where, too, they could, in general, live at much less expense than they can do in a crowded city. Bob Stubble's motive for remaining in Melbourne was certainly a praiseworthy one; he was desirous of availing himself of the advantages of the splendid free library, and also of uniting himself to some of the young men's mutual improvement classes in the city.

It was evident that Bob was not lofty in his ideas of an occupation, and that he had no notion of allowing his pride to starve him, for he applied one morning for the appointment of cart-driver to a baker; but he was considered ineligible for the post on account of his not being sufficiently acquainted with the city. He was offered a job to hawk onions and potatoes by a produce-dealer in Flinders Lane; but “advance Australia” was always Bob's motto, and he thought it would be more advantageous to the commonwealth for him to grow vegetables rather than to hawk them; so he decided that if at the end of that week he had not succeeded in getting suitable employment, he would either go back to the diggings at Bendigo, or else return to New South Wales, and go to farm work again.

As he was looking through the Argus one morning, he chanced to see an
advertisement headed “Lecture to Young Men this evening, by Alderman Rafter, at the Temperance Hall, Russell Street; admission free.” The name of the lecturer could not fail to attract Bob; still, he did not for a moment suspect it was his old playmate Sam, the sawyer's son. He was not aware that Sam was in Melbourne, much less did he expect to see him elevated to the dignity of alderman. However, the subject was an encouraging one, and there was nothing to pay for it; so Bob determined to go and hear it. His surprise may be imagined when he saw a fine-looking man walk with a dignified step on to the platform, and at once he recognised the identical Sam Rafter whom the vulgar boys of Daisybank used to call “chips”; and in one of the reserved seats sat the object of Bob's early love, Sophy Rowley (now Mrs Rafter), gazing proudly at her honoured husband.

The hall was well filled with a respectable audience, and from the way in which they cheered the lecturer from time to time, it was evident that his subject was highly appreciated. The lecture contained a variety of useful hints to young men in every walk of life, showing the advantages that will eventually accrue to them by wisely applying their vigorous young days to the acquirement of useful knowledge. Many examples were adduced of young men who had by steady perseverance and effort risen in the world, and had been made instrumental in benefitting tens of thousands of their fellow-creatures. Perhaps the most striking of Sam's illustrations was from the experience of the Rev. Thomas Binney, as told by himself at the concluding part of a lecture which he delivered to young men in London. It is so very instructive and encouraging, that I give the extract verbatim.

The reverend gentleman said:—"You are young men engaged in business, but have to improve your minds as best you can in your leisure hours. Well, I was once in the same position. I was seven years in a bookseller's concern (the late firm of Angus & Son), and during that time my hours were, for two years, from seven to eight, and for five years from seven to seven—under great pressure, I have sometimes been engaged from six till ten. But somehow, all the time, and especially from my fourteenth to my twentieth year, I found opportunities for much reading and a great deal of composition. I did not shirk, however, my Latin and Greek, for I went for some time two evenings in the week to an old Presbyterian clergyman, to learn the elements of the two languages, and could read Caesar and St John; but my great work was English. I read many of the best authors, and I wrote largely both poetry and prose; and I did so with much pains-taking. I laboured to acquire a good style of expression, as well as merely to express my thoughts. Some of the plans I pursued were rather odd, and produced odd results. I read the whole of Johnson's 'Rambler,' put down all the new words I met with—and they
were a good many—with their proper meanings, and then I wrote essays in imitation of Johnson, and used them up. I did the same with Thomson's 'Seasons,' and wrote blank verse to use his words, and also to acquire something of music and rhythm. And so I went on, sometimes writing long poems in heroic verse; one on the 'Being of a God,' another, in two or three 'books,' in blank verse, in imitation of 'Paradise Lost.' I wrote essays on the immortality of the soul, sermons, a tragedy in three acts, and other things, very wonderful in their way, you may be sure. I think I can say I never fancied myself a poet or philosopher; but I wrote on and on to acquire the power to write with readiness; and I say to you, with a full conviction of the truth of what I say, that, having lived to gain a little reputation as a writer, I attribute all my success to what I did for myself, and to the habits I formed during those years to which I have thus referred. I have never before mentioned these things, and I do so now simply to urge you young men to laborious self-improvement. I think that a fact drawn from one's own experience may have more weight than a hundred arguments.”

After the lecture was ended, Bob waited till the audience had dispersed, and then he walked forward to the platform with a timid air. Mr Rafter recognised him instantly, and his cordial greeting to his old playfellow showed that he had the heart of a boy, though he had the mind of a man. Mrs Rafter seemed equally pleased to see Bob. They gave him a pressing invitation to return with them to their house, and stay the night. To that he modestly demurred; he felt his position to be so different from theirs, that he shrink from a close intimacy; but the kind-hearted pair would not receive his excuses; their phaeton was waiting at the door of the hall, and there was a seat for him; so go he must.

An hour afterwards, Bob was sitting with his good friends at the supper-table in their house at Emerald Hill, and was by degrees losing that reserve which had at first been so painful to him, for he could not but feel that Sam's friendship was as real as ever, although he had risen in the world. After they had chatted a while on family affairs, Sam remarked, with a pleasant smile: “I had not the least idea that you were amongst my audience to-night, Bob. I should not have got on so composedly with my discourse if I had known that you were listening.”

“Why not, Mr Rafter? I am sure I am not competent to criticise your lecture, even if there were anything in it to cavil at.”

“Competency is not always deemed a necessary qualification for censorship, Bob; but I say, please to call me Sam when I am not engaged at aldermanic duties; it sounds less formal and more friendly, you know. I could not help smiling to-night,” continued Sam, “when my audience
cheered me so heartily, and especially after the complimentary remarks of the chairman at the conclusion, for I remembered that the last time I delivered that lecture, at Daisybank, I was hooted at by a crowd of unruly boys, and laughed at too by several foolish old folks, who would not do me the justice of hearing what I had to say before they sneered me down.”

“Is that actually the same lecture that old Mr Sleeky called ‘stuff and nonsense,’ Sam?” asked Bob with a look of surprise.

“The very same, I assure you. The only addition is that little bit of the Rev. Mr Binney’s experience, which I thought was too good to be omitted. I have several other lectures which are much more pretentious than that one; but I was desirous of seeing how my first effort at composition would pass with a respectable audience. You have accidentally been there tonight, Bob, to witness my triumph over the despisers of my early efforts in my native village. Ha, ha, ha! Is not that a capital illustration of the principle which I was trying to lay down to-night, viz., that a young man should not be discouraged if his merits are not soon appreciated, but should work on perseveringly, for assuredly his reaping-time will come, if he is sowing good seed?”

“I think if I had been snubbed as you were by the Daisybank audience, Sam, I should never have had the courage to stand up again as a lecturer.”

“I believe you wrongly there, Bob. If you felt convinced that you could do a certain thing, and it was right for you to do it, you would not be deterred by a single failure. I am sure of that from my knowledge of your characteristics. How many times have I seen you risk your neck by mounting a fiery young colt, which had thrown itself down under you! Lecturing may not be your forte, Bob; we are not all cut out for the same work, you know; there must be masons and joiners, and plasterers and painters, in the erection of a dwelling-house; but if you had been inclined to come out as a public speaker, a roomful of noisy boys and old fogies would no more have permanently cowed you than they have cowed me. There is too much Australian pluck in you, Bob, to be scared at trifles. That is my real opinion of you.”

“Well, I think it would have taken some of the conceit out of me, at any rate.”

“Possibly so, Bob, and a good thing, too; that would have been helpful, so long as it was not all taken out of you, for a little conceit, or rather self-esteem, is as useful to every man as spirit is in a horse. My first snubbing was not pleasant to me, I assure you. It caused me to lie awake at night, though I feigned to laugh at it when spoken to on the subject; but I now know that it was a salutary ordeal, which did me far more real good than if I had been applauded as loudly as I was to-night.”
“I cannot exactly understand that, Sam.”

“Cannot you? Then I will try to explain what I mean by it. If I had been overwhelmed with praise at my first start-off, I might have grown vain and self-confident; it is only a reasonable hypothesis, judging from what we can see around us every day. Perhaps I should have become careless, and presuming on my popularity, I might have bestowed less thought and study on the next subject I lectured upon, and so have become at length a mere superficial talker. If I had been ‘led out’ prematurely, as many half-educated youths are, and made too much of,—become a general favourite, as it is called,—I should have had far less time for the diligent study which is necessary to acquire a solid ground-work, or foundation, whereupon to rear a superstructure of usefulness in after-life. Depend upon it, Bob, it would be a happy thing for many of the smart, promising young men around us, if they got a good-natured snubbing now and then; not to cow them down, or to wound their feelings rudely, but to put them on their mettle, and stir their mental powers into active exercise. Some of them would then, perhaps, become real men, fit to take the helm of affairs, if need be, in a political hurricane; whereas they now run a risk of being flattered and coddled into mere smooth-water sailors, and would be afraid to look on deck in bad weather. You know what I mean by that nautical figure. But you smile at my old-mannish remarks, Bob,” added Sam. “Ha, ha, ha! well, you may smile, when you remember that it is not much more than a dozen years since I was a barefooted little urchin. You know I would not venture to say quite so much before the promising young men that I have alluded to, or they would probably think me presumptuous; nevertheless, I think there is common sense in my remarks, though I have not reached the defined philosophic age.”

“I think your remarks are very sensible, Sam; and I wish young Australians in general would follow your wise example as well as your precepts,” said Bob, with earnestness. “Do you know I felt terribly self-condemned to-night, when I saw you standing up with such manly firmness before a large audience, who were attentively listening to every word you said; for I reflected that I have had far superior advantages to you, if I had made proper use of them. But I have wasted my time, and slighted my opportunities; and now I feel that my mind is as barren as a dry swamp. For the last four years I have scarcely even looked into a book, except a sporting novel, or some such work; and I feel such a humbling sense of my own deficiency, that I actually shrink from the society of enlightened young men, or if I am thrown amongst them by accident, I am made miserable by seeing my own defects.”

“Come, come, Bob, you must not talk too much in that gloomy strain, or
I shall begin to fancy that my lecture to-night has done you harm instead of good,” said Sam, kindly.

“No fear of that, Sam; but I was going to remark what a privilege it would have been to me if I had rightly valued your friendship years ago. If I had diligently applied my energies to self-culture as you did, and as you wished me to do, I might now feel myself of some use in the world, instead of being a drone or a know-nothing, only fit to drive a baker's cart, and worse than all, to be always teased with miserable regrets for having wasted my best years in prideful frivolities, if not in positive mischief. How much I would give to recall even the last four years of my life! What a very different course I would pursue!”

“‘Time past can never be recalled!’ I remember that axiom was a round-text heading in my copy-book when I went to Mr Phillip's evening class at Daisybank,” said Sam. “But, thank God, the time present may be improved; so cheer up, Bob, my boy! You are not quite twenty-six years old, and if you set to work diligently now, by the time you are thirty you may gain a surprising amount of wisdom, and at forty you may be a philosopher.”

Bob smiled faintly, and said “his ambition did not soar so high as that, and he must be content to hop about on the ground like a broken-winged magpie.”

“Your present humble feelings are hopeful indications for the future, Bob; for a sense of past errors usually precedes an attempt to set out on a new course of action. At the same time, you should not allow morbid feelings to master you, for it is a miserable waste of time to fret over misdoings or disasters which cannot be remedied. Be thankful, Bob, that you have so soon awakened to a sense of your position, and that you are determined, with God's help to redeem the time in future, so that you may not have to look back, when your head is frosted by age, over a wasted life.”

“Your words are very comforting, Sam,” said Bob, looking more cheerful. “I consider it is providential that I have met with you to-night, for my mind seems wonderfully relieved. I am resolved not to waste any more time in sorrowing over what cannot possibly be mended, but to strive earnestly in future to make up for lost opportunities. I will get you to give me a course of study for the next twelve months, Sam, and you shall see that I will pursue it with all my energies.”

“I will most gladly advise you to the best of my ability, Bob. I need hardly remind you that ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.’ The great Teacher himself has said, ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.’ all needful
things, you know, including wisdom, strength, and energy.” . . .

A long and serious conversation ensued, which my space will not allow me to give in detail. At a late hour, Bob retired to rest with his heart much lighter than it had ever been before, for he had solemnly resolved, in the strength of the Lord God, that he would henceforward walk in newness of life, and strive to be in some degree useful in the world.

The next morning, after breakfast, Sam told Bob that he wished to have some private conversation with him; so they adjourned to Sam's little study, in a quiet part of the house. When they were seated, Sam said, in his kindest tone, “Bob, my dear friend, I have some saddening news to communicate to you. I ascertained by your casual remarks last night that you had not heard of or from your family for nearly three years; but I purposely refrained from telling you what I know respecting them, for I did not wish to spoil your night's rest. I knew it would be time enough to tell you this morning. I do not think it right to withhold the information any longer from you, because there is a steamer going to Sydney to-day, and you may see it expedient to go by it.”

Sam then, as gently as possible, told his agitated friend of the bankruptcy of his father, of the absconding of Goldstone, and of his poor sister Maggie's death.

The news seemed overwhelming, and Bob's grief was intense. After a while, Sam considerately left him alone, ostensibly for the purpose of attending to some business matters. In about an hour Sam returned, when he found Bob's grief had softened down to some extent, and he said that he had prayed to God for grace to bear his heavy trials with patient submission, and also to guide him aright.

“You might have thought last night, when you were telling me of your present position, that I was unkind in not offering to help you in some way, Bob,” said Sam. “I have no doubt that I have influence enough to procure you a situation in Melbourne, and I should offer to interest myself in your behalf now, but I think it is clearly your duty to go to Sydney at once, and comfort your parents in their complicated misfortunes. If you should afterwards decide upon settling in this colony, come, and make my house your home until you get into suitable employment, and I will do all in my power to further your interests. If you want any money now, Bob, don't scruple to tell me, for I have some to spare, thank God, for a friend in need.”

Bob thanked his generous friend, but declined his offer of pecuniary assistance. Shortly afterwards he took an affectionate farewell of Sam and his worthy wife, and went straightway to his lodgings to pack up his luggage.
That afternoon he embarked in the steamer *Telegraph* for Sydney.
Chapter XVIII.

Adieu to city life.—Settlement of the family at Unity Vale, Illawara.—Mr Stubble is persuaded to give an oration at the School of Arts.

WHEN Bob Stubble arrived in Sydney, he found that his father and mother had gone to their new farm, so he went straightway out to Mrs Simon Goldstone's house. Lydia and her uncle received him very kindly, and prevailed upon him to stay the night.

From Biddy Flynn Bob learned a good deal about the various sad occurrences in his family during his absence from Sydney, and he saw with bitter regret, that, if he had not allowed his sullen temper to estrange him from them, he might have prevented many of the disasters which had overtaken them.

The next day Bob took steamer for Illawara. His meeting with his parents was a touching scene: they wept and smiled alternately, and then they all reverently thanked God for His goodness in again uniting them after their long separation and their many trials.

Mr Stubble's farm was situated at Illawara, that romantic district which has especially invoked the muse of one of Australia's most gifted poets. The late owner of the farm was about to leave the colony, and Mr Stubble bought it, with all its appurtenances, at a moderate price. The proceeds of sale of his household effects in Sydney, and the cash in the old chair, enabled him to complete his purchase without borrowing money from any one, and he once more felt himself an independent man; for although the farm was small, he believed that it would yield him a respectable living, and that was all he wanted. The house was not large, but it was snug and comfortable. It was charmingly situated in the midst of a shrubbery, and when Joe and his wife had got fairly settled in it, they confessed that they had never felt so contented before. Bob decided to stay and help to work the farm, and his father agreed to give him a share in the profits of it. It was not far from a township where there was a mechanics' institute with a good library attached to it; also a young men's mutual improvement association. Bob united himself to all those institutions, and the whole family joined themselves to a church in the same town.

Bob was both surprised and delighted at the change in his mother's disposition and demeanour. He had expected to find her pining herself to death at their humbled position and their loss of fortune, instead of which, she was uniformly cheerful and contented; nor had he ever seen her
looking in better health. She did all the dairy work, and a good deal of the house work too, for they kept only a little girl from the orphan school as servant. She frequently spoke in affectionate terms of Mrs Rowley, and often referred to the happy time she spent at Briar Burn after poor Maggie's death, and she acknowledged herself greatly indebted to Mrs Rowley for her Christian-like advice and her consistent example.

Mrs Stubble was almost always cheerful, and Bob often heard him, in his quaint way, express his gratitude to God for taking away his money, and giving him in return a heart full of peace and contentment. There never was seen a more happy old couple than Joe and Peggy. Seldom indeed was a note of discord heard in their home, and never was there uttered by either of them a word of reproach for past misdoings or mistakes. Bygones were bygones with them. They “lived and loved together,” and they lived, too, in preparation for, and in joyful hope of, “the life of the world to come.” No busybody ever presumed to whisper a word to Peggy about her husband's folly or lack of judgment in losing his money; her manifested respect for him checked any unwarrantable interference in their affairs, and if she ever thought he was blameable, she would dispel the idea in a moment by the reflection, that God had permitted their reverses and trials for good and wise purposes no doubt, and “the judge of all the earth would do right.” Besides, she knew that she herself was largely to blame in inducing her husband to go to Sydney, and she had been extravagant and proud, and idle too. She knew that Joe had not gambled away his money, or wasted it in riotous living; and the bitter anxiety he had endured was punishment enough for him, if he deserved punishment, for being too kind and too credulous, without reproaches or unkind looks from her, to wound his sensitive spirit, and to check the new energy which was gradually evidencing itself in his life.

The arrival of an ex-member of Parliament to the district, as a permanent resident, caused quite a sensation in the rural community, and Joe received many marked tokens of veneration and respect whenever he went into the neighbouring township, not only from tradespeople who were anxious for his custom, but also from people who had nothing to sell. Soon after he had got fairly into his new homestead, he was waited on one day by a deputation from the mechanics' institute, with a request that he would favour them by giving a lecture in aid of the funds of the institution. Mr Stubble smiled pleasantly at the applicants, and told them that they had over-rated his powers altogether; that he was not capable of giving a lecture, nor had he ever attempted such a task in his life. He would subscribe as much as he could afford to their institution, but he might as well try to hop over Mount Keira as attempt to deliver a lecture.
But the deputation were not to be put off even by that difficult figure. There were some very persevering men among them,—men who had had large experience on similar delicate missions, and in collecting for public charities,—and they were prepared with more arguments than Joe could answer. It would be tedious to give all their pros and cons, their strongest proposition, which Joe could not refute, was, “that it was the duty of every man to do what he could to benefit his fellow-creatures,” and on that point they concentrated their united stress. “It would be very instructive,” they said, “if Mr Stubble would favour them with some hints and reflections from his costly experience of city life; and as they were all plain country folks, it would be peculiarly interesting.”

After a vast deal of persuasion, Joe reluctantly consented to give them an hour's talk about town affairs in his simple, homely way; and he thought he might throw out a few hints worth thinking about, if folks would have patience to listen to him.

“We are very much obliged to you, sir. What shall we call your lecture?” said the spokesman of the deputation.

“Lecture! Ha, ha! Don't you be calling my gabble a lecture, or I won't go at all. It will be a plain matter-of-fact discourse, suitable only for plain people, for I am no hand at speaking, though I have been a ‘member;’ so don't you make a mistake.”

“Yes, sir, I understand,” said the man with a deferential smile; “but will you please to tell us what will be the nature—that is to say, the title—of your discourse.”

“I don't know, I'm sure,” replied Joe; “I have never thought of the thing: call it what you like. So long as you don't make too much fuss about it, it is no matter to me what name you give it.”

“Beg your pardon, sir, but we would rather that you gave a title to your subject,” said the spokesman modestly. “Any name will do, you know, sir. We are not particular. Most of us are plain dairy-farmers in this part, sir.”

“I can't think of a name all at once,” said Joe, stroking his beard and looking puzzled. Just then his little servant-maid walked past with a bottle of pickles in her hand, to put on the dinner-table. “Here is a title for you, all ready corked up and bladdered over,” added Joe, taking the bottle from the girl's hand. “Call my discourse ‘Piccalily;’ it is a pretty name, and not very common—Ha, ha! There is plenty of mustard in this mixture.”

The deputation smiled, and said that title would do very nicely. They then thanked him and went away.

A few days afterwards Bob rode into the township to get the newspapers, and to his great surprise he saw posted up on the School of Arts, and in various other places, large placards headed—“Oration by Joseph Stubble,
Esq., late M.L.A. Subject, Piccalily! Admission, one shilling.”

*         *         *         *         *

On the evening appointed for the “oration,” Mr Stubble drove his wife into the township in a spring-cart, and Bob followed on horseback. The School of Arts was lighted up, and a small crowd had assembled at the door. As Joe approached there was a general buzz of conversation, and he overheard one lad say to another, “That is old Piccalily in the white hat.”

When Joe entered the building he saw that it was tastefully decorated with festoons of bush flowers and wreaths of grasstree and fern leaves. The secretary met him at the door, and politely escorted him to the platform, where there were several ministers and other influential residents of the town, one of whom was to take the chair. They all received Mr Stubble very respectfully, and made some complimentary remarks on the honour he was conferring on their institution.

Joe felt anything but elated, and he afterwards confessed to his wife that he would very gladly have exchanged positions with a solitary shepherd in the far bush, sitting under a tree and howling with the toothache. As the time drew near for him to begin, all the ideas in his head seemed to jumble up together like prizes in a lucky-bag. To add to his discomfiture, there sat just in front of him a city gentleman of the Dundreary type, with a glass stuck in his eye, and he directed an incessant stare at Joe, while his lips curled contemptuously and his nose was turned up to keep his glass steady, and to snub the presumptuous orator at the same time. Poor Joe thought he would have given anything if that quizzical gentleman had had the good manners to put his eye-glass into his pocket, for he surely could not need it to see a full-grown man only six or seven yards from him.

The chairman at length took his seat, and Joe's heart began to tick like a turret-clock. Suddenly an idea came into his head to plead sickness and go home, but a better idea soon encouraged him to stand his ground like a man. He silently reasoned with his qualms: “What have I to be afraid of? I bean't going to break the law in any way, as I know of. All the folks be looking pleasant at me except that dandy chap with the bull's-eye, and why should I let him scare me? His glass won't shoot me, and if it would, why, many a man has faced a rank of musketry in a worse cause than I be engaged in to-night. I did not seek this position—that's certain; and I have no selfish or vainglorious object in view. I am pledged to talk a bit to-night; so it would be unmanly to run away. I will do the best I can. Good Lord, help me!”

When the chairman sat down, after his introductory remarks, Joe got up with modest boldness; he coughed a little, as a matter of form, and then
began his extemporaneous discourse, a summary of which may be seen in my next chapter.
Chapter XIX.

“Piccalily,” or Mr Joseph Stubble's “oration.”

AFTER addressing the chairman and the audience in proper style, Mr Stubble said:—"I have heard a good many gentlemen speechify on platforms of late years, and I have noticed that it has been a fashion with most of them to make a soft apology first and foremost, as if 'em were ashamed of what they were going to say. I shall not copy them to-night, because I don't like sham of any sort, and I bean't going to say or do anything that will offend any one, if I know it. I did not seek this honourable position. Not at all. I was persuaded into it, like a simple yokel who takes a shilling from a recruiting-sergeant and sells himself for a soldier, and afterwards is very sorry over the bargain. No doubt I should feel more happy just now if I were in my barn husking maize, or mending my broken bullock yoke; but here I be, and as it bean't natural for a Briton to desert his post of duty or danger, depend upon it I shall not run away till I have said my say, unless you all run away from me, which it bean't unlikely you will do, if you have come here expecting to hear an oration.

"I feel myself in a like quandary that I have seen other modest men fixed through the over-zeal of their friends in trumpeting them into public notice. I have known some good humble-minded men to be regularly broken down through being what is called “cracked up” high above their natural level. They were men of fair abilities no doubt, and would have got along cleverly enough in their own quiet groove; but they are either forced or coaxed out of it, same as I be now, and puffed up in advertisements and in great big placards, so that folks, who went to hear them lecture or preach expecting something extra wonderful, were disappointed, and perhaps they showed it by their scowling looks, which would act like a shovelful of snow on the speaker's fluttering heart. The efforts of the poor fellow to wriggle up to the standard which his friends had hoisted far too high, were more than his mere ordinary brain could bear, and in a few months he has sunk under the over-pressure. Thus, many good, earnest men have been killed, as it were, by the kindness of a few friends, who had either over-rated the powers of their pets, or else were unscrupulously anxious to draw a host to their tabernacle or their lecture-room; like the waterman in Sydney, t'other day, who advertised a shark as big as a brewer's horse, to be seen for threepence, in a tent rigged up on the Circular Quay, and after all it was only a dog-fish not much bigger than a cod.

"Now, let me tell you, friends, that I did not call my rigmarole to-night
an oration, though it is printed so on all the walls in town. I bean't an orator no more than I be a conjurer. I told the gentlemen who asked me to come here, that I would try to give a plain common-sense discourse, and bade them not to dignify it with the name of a lecture. They said they wouldn't; and so, in order to be extra-modest, they have called it an ‘oration!’—Ha, ha, ha! Well, friends, I can't help it, as the old woman said when the cow kicked her. I shall do my best to please you, and if you bean't satisfied when I have done, you had better ask the gentleman at the door to give you back your shillings.”

Loud cheering followed Mr Stubble's preliminary remarks, and vociferous clapping by a nest of boys up in a far corner, one of whom shouted out, “Bravo! mixed pickles!”

“Aye, boy,” said Mr Stubble, smiling, “you'll get some mixed pickles before your head is as gray as mine; but you needn't be scared beforehand, perhaps they won't hurt you no more than hailstones can hurt a turtle. The lightning-stroke does not shiver every tree in the bush, nor the water-spout doesn't burst over every man's home, you know. But I am going to try to show you how you may avoid some of life's unpalatable pickles; so I hope you boys will behave like men, and not make too much noise with your hands and feet, nor with your tongues either. Applause is pleasant enough, but too much of it is apt to upset a weak head.

“You have all heard the old story of the fox who lost his tail in a steel trap, and then went back to his brother foxes and tried to persuade them to get their tails docked in the same way. Now, if I tell my tale of city life, it bean't because I want any of you plain country folks to go to town and get docked too, but to warn you against some of the man-traps that I have been caught in. This will be a sufficient excuse, I think, if I talk a good deal about myself to-night.”

Mr Stubble then told them as briefly as possible how he landed in Sydney, nearly a quarter of a century ago, with five pounds in his pocket; how he worked hard, and saved all the money he could, and how, through possessing a small capital, he had suddenly risen to be his own master; and, finally, of his removal to the metropolis with a moderate fortune. He acknowledged the mistake he made in the latter step, and argued the policy of a man stopping in the district where he had risen up or made his fortune, for in general his influence for good would be greater there than it would be elsewhere.

“I bean't much of a political economist,” continued Joe; “still, I think it is only common sense for a man to be as careful where he locates himself as he would be in looking out for a market for his wares, if he had any to sell. No Sydney merchant would ever think of sending anchors and cables up to
Bathurst for sale, or butter and bacon to this district, nor they would not be likely to send coal-scuttles and fire-irons to Fiji or Tonga, where there are no chimneys at all in the houses. There may sometimes be good reasons why a countryman should go to live in the city, but, as a general thing, he will find that the country is the fittest and the safest place for him. He may have some ground for thinking himself a rather important man in his rural neighbourhood, but he will feel his importance shrink up like burnt bladders if he goes to live in the city, unless his experience should be different to mine, or unless his bump of self-esteem should be bigger than ordinary.

“‘Every man to his trade,’ is a good old motto, and many men have suffered through slighting it. Suppose a plain hard-working farmer, for instance, should take it into his head to turn parson, or doctor, or lawyer, or literary man; I don't say anything against the thing—it may be a commendable ambition, or some higher motive, that prompted it; but he does not always count the cost to himself. He must necessarily study hard to fit himself for his new duties, and he will soon begin to find that it is not such a rosy life as he thought it was. The change from the plough-tail to the desk will most likely upset his digestive affairs, and then he will begin to think that the world is going round the wrong way, or that ‘Old Boggy’ has been playing tricks with his brain, or has turned his liver into bees'-wax; and a hundred other queer fancies will get into his mind in spite of all his logic. If he has got real “grit” in him, as the Yankees say, and he sticks to his studies, and after a time is moderately successful in his new vocation, he must pay for popularity in harder coins than sovereigns. He will most likely catch pen and ink from professional critics, and friends and neighbours will chafe his tenderest parts in the name of pity and sympathy; and if his “grit” is not as hard as blue road-metal, he will wish he could exchange all his honour and glory for a bark hut in the bush, and a shingle-splitter's licence. Take my word for it, friends, if a farmer thinks he has superior sense in his head, he had better use it to improve his farm or his live stock, and not be too ready to leave his own legitimate occupation to study for any profession or calling of a sedentary kind. That remark will apply to others as well as to farmers. The mason had better stick to his mallet and pickaxe, and not seek to be an architect; and the sailor had better stick to his ship, and not set up as a schoolmaster, or an editor, unless he should happen to be unseaworthy, and then, of course, he must earn his junk the best way he can, poor fellow!

“Some farmers that I know have fancied it was easier work to sell country produce than to raise it, and they have started as commission-agents; but I never met with one man who was half as happy in his city
store as he used to be on his farm. He usually looked as uncomfortable as an old cockatoo in a hen-coop. Perhaps not more than one man in a dozen has made money by the change; and some of them have lost their money and their morals too.

“I don't know if any of your friends have ever seen a very fat sailor; that is to say, a regular working jack-tar. I never saw one, though I have seen lots of rolling fat captains and mates. Nor I don't remember ever seeing a very flabby-looking ploughman; and that convinces me that hard wholesome work is essential to robust health. I don't mean to say that fat men are not sometimes healthy and happy too, but if I had my choice, I would far sooner have the nerves and the digestive powers of a common sailor or a ploughman than those of a fat skipper, who never thinks of going aloft, or of hauling on to a tackle-fall; or those of a portly landlord, who never handles a plough, and who but seldom handles anything else heavier than a carving-knife and fork, or a cut-glass decanter.

“It bean't always an easy thing to make young folks agree with the logic of hard labour, or to believe that a trade is the best thing for them, but I believe that it is so in a general way. I have heard tell that the ancient Jews used to say that ‘a boy was either training for a trade or for a thief;’ so they gave most of their sons trades. You know the great apostle Paul was a tentmaker. I bean't going to be so hard upon the boys as the old Jews were, for I am sure there are hosts of honest boys who are not learning trades; still, a trade is a good thing to depend on,—as handy as a sheet-anchor is to a ship. There are many parents in the colony now who are sadly perplexed what to do with their sons, who are just leaving college or school; and there are lots of smart lads who have no employment. When I lived in town I was often applied to by parents to get their sons into situations—‘government billets’ were usually preferred; but they were not easy to get, for there were always scores of names on the lists for fresh openings. A lady called on me one day, and asked me what I could recommend her to do with her son, a fine, big, strapping lad, about sixteen years of age. I found out that he had a turn for handling tools of all sorts, so I advised the lady to make an engineer of him. Ha, ha, ha! I shall never forget how shocked she was, and how she stared at me.

“‘My son has been well educated, sir,’ she said; ‘and I think he is fit for something better than a mere blacksmith.’

“I explained that an engineer had not so much to do with hammer and tongs as a blacksmith, still, it certainly was a rather smutty trade, and would not agree with delicate fingers. When I asked her if she had ever read Mr Elihu Burritt's ‘Sparks from the Anvil,’ she said she had read nothing of the sort; so I told her that Mr Burritt was at one time a
blacksmith, but now he is a famous writer and a very learned man; that the sparks from his bright brain have scattered all over the world, and doubtless have edified millions of persons who have read his books. I also told her of lots of gentlemen in England, now lights in the land, who were at one time mechanics of some sort, and I tried to persuade her that the more education her son had, the better it was for him, whatever calling or occupation he chose. But the lady could not see the sense of my arguments at all; she looked as cross at me as if I had advised her to make her boy a bushranger; and off she went with her precious son Tom tucked under her arm, and Tom himself looked as if he would like to drop a blacksmith's big hammer on my toes. Soon afterwards I heard that she had got him into an office,—made a clerk of him,—which is like doing all she can to make a poor dependent drudge of him all the days of his life; for of all the underpaid, over-worked men in the colony, I believe that clerks are the worst: of course I speak of them generally. As a class, they are gentlemen; so it is natural for them to wish to live above the common, and to bring their children up respectfully; and how they do it often puzzles me more than it does to guess how all the lawyers in Sydney get their living.

"But notwithstanding the palpable fact, that clerks are getting less pay every year, and that at the present time there are scores of them out of employment, and anxious to get into berths at almost any low rate of pay, many persons are desirous of getting their sons into offices, even without a salary, in preference to giving them some useful handicraft which may make them independent men; for an honest, steady mechanic can generally insure a comfortable living, which a clerk cannot do. Notwithstanding all the difficulties of competing with foreign manufacturers, and granted that much can be said on the subject, I believe that we shall eventually become a great manufacturing nation. Who can doubt it when they see the progress which colonial manufactures are making in the present day, despite all the drawbacks against which they have to cope? The learned professions are in danger of being over-stocked, and evils are likely to arise therefrom which would take me too long even to hint at; besides, you know, it bean't very safe for the like of me to talk much about learned men. I say firmly, that if I had half-a-dozen boys, and they were all strong and healthy, I would in the first place give them the best education I could afford, and then either make farmers, or sailors, or mechanics of them. If any of them afterwards showed that they had got superior intellect, depend on it they would find their proper niche in the world, however high up it might be; and they could take a start upwards from the plough, or the work-bench, or the main-deck, same as hundreds of mighty men have done. The currency lads are real climbers. I never could nail up a paling high enough to keep them
out of my orchard when the plums and peaches were ripe; but I must say they were boys of the buck-jumping sort, who had never been to school to learn morals or manners. Now that schools are springing up all through the bush, they will be taught to behave better.

“‘What are we to do with our girls, sir?’ asked a voice from the centre of the hall.

“I have not quite finished polishing the boys,” replied Mr Stubble; “but perhaps I had better notice the girls a little, for some of them are jealous little pussies, and will very likely think they ought to have been served first. It is a puzzling thing to tell you what to do with your girls, without a few weeks' consideration; however, you cannot do better than give them a good education,—not merely make them ‘accomplished,’ as it is called now-a-days, but give them good, solid, sensible schooling, and a thorough home training as well. Bring them up to be tidy, economical housewives; that is essential, whatever else you make of them. A woman who does not know how to bake a loaf, or cook a joint of meat, or wash a shirt, would be a shocking poor helpmate to a man either in town or country, even though she could play the piano like fury, and talk French like Mrs Napoleon. And be sure you look well after your girls so long as they are under your rule; for they require as much watchful care as young lambs do in a drooping season. The enormities which frequently occur—and which no decent language can describe—is saddening proof of the necessity for that precaution.

“And when they have grown up to blushing womanhood, don't part with the dear darlings to Thomas, Richard, or Henry, however plausibly they may ‘pop the question,’ or however demure they may look over it, until you are assured that they are sober and industrious,—in short, that they possess sterling religious principle. I have seen parents exercise less commonsense judgment in deciding upon a husband for their daughter than they would use in the purchase of a cart-horse; indeed, I have known parents to give a girl away to a man whom they would not trust with a five-pound note. Mind you keep profligate, raking dandies away from your homes, whatever you do, or they will do all they can, in an underhand way, to crush your hearts with sorrow. It is not lawful or right to serve them as you serve hawks that hover above your chicken-coops; but there is a moral influence which will scare such human hawks even more effectually than dread of physical wounds and bruises. Train your children up in the ‘fear of the Lord,’ and that ‘will save them from a thousand snares.’ Satan can't do them any real harm if they humbly trust in Almighty God for guidance.

“While the youngsters are under the home roof, you parents should set them an example of godliness and temperance; you must not expect too
much from them if you neglect that important duty. None of us farmers hope to reap a crop of wheat if we have not ploughed up the ground and put in the seed. And when your children go out into the world, do not fail to warn them against the common danger of tippling. Most of us old fellows know something of that tyrannical habit from bitter experience; and all of us—aye, even the stone blind—can trace the evil effects of it in every part of the land. To send a boy or a girl away from home to begin life without warning them against that dangerous vice, is ten times worse folly than starting a team along a rough road without linch-pins in the wheels. I believe that there are cart-loads of bones bleaching in the bush which would this day carry living men and women if it had not been for the fatal influence of strong drink. I specially commend that horrible fact to the sober reflection of merchants and importers of the article, and also to some of their customers who do a good deal in the ‘doctoring’ line. It is murder in the sight of God to put poison in a rum keg, just as wilful as firing a revolver at a man's head, or stabbing him in the back with a knife. Train your children to be ‘temperate in all things.’ Bid them ‘avoid temptation where they can, and when they cannot do that, to shun it.’ Those are two golden maxims, but my head did not make them; so you need not begin to think I am a sage. ‘Temperance puts wood on the fire, meal in the barrel, money in the purse, contentment in the house, clothes on the children, vigour on the body, intelligence in the brain, and spirit in the whole constitution.’ Intemperance is—but I cannot attempt a description of it. If any of you would like to see some clusters of its sad fruits, go any day to the soup kitchen in Sydney; or to the ‘Sunday morning breakfasts for poor outcasts,’ at the Temperance Hall; or to Mr George Lucas's night refuge for the destitute, in Francis Street.

“If you send your young daughters up to Sydney to service or to work in shops, be careful what sort of masters and mistresses you entrust them with, and insist upon it that they do have the run of the streets at night. Bid them shun those evening dancing saloons and singing shops as they would shun a dead-house, with fever-stricken corpses in it. Caution them against reading books of a silly sentimental character, which will tend to make lackadaisical nawnies of your girls, and soft spoonies of your boys: let them read solid, sensible books, that will help to make men and women of them; and give them a light innocent tale occasionally, if you like, as a sort of moral lollipop for being good children and minding their studies.”

Mr Stubble gave a good many more useful hints to the girls, and then he thus addressed the lads in the far corner:—“Boys, I am going to talk to you again, for I am afraid you are going to sleep. Listen to what I say now: never talk slang, boys, not even in fun, or it may soon grow into a habit,
and a very vulgar one too, which no young corn-stalk ought to encourage. I will tell you a little story of a cockney cabman who lost a fare through his confirmed slangy habit. One day, a very stately old lady beckoned a cab from a stand in London, and asked the driver what he would charge to take her to the Bank.

“You shall go for a bob, marm,” said cabby, opening the door of his vehicle. The old lady, who did not understand the slang name for a shilling, was naturally vexed at being told she should go for a Bob, which was a common man's name. The cabman, who was anxious for the job, thought she was demurring at his charge, so he said, ‘Well, jump in, marm, I'll take you for a tanner.’ ‘Take me for a tanner!’ exclaimed the lady, looking indignantly at the poor cabman, who could not tell why she was so cross. ‘What do you mean, you impudent fellow? I will not ride in your cab at all.’ Off went the lady, vexed enough at being taken for a bob and a tanner, and in her fine silk dress too, and wondering no doubt what the man meant, for she was not aware that a ‘tanner’ was the slang name for sixpence.

“Thus you see the cabman offended a good customer. Don't you use slang phrases, boys, or you will certainly offend all those friends who hear you who have any claim to good taste. Another thing I would warn you against is smoking. Boys, don't learn to smoke, and then you will never know the difficulty of conquering the craving for the pipe when you grow up to be old men. I know many poor old smoky fellows who would give a small slice off each of their ears if that would effectually cure them of the slavish habit. Some people affirm that smoking is a sin, but I don't put it to you in that shape; I advise you, on the ground of expediency, to abstain from what may very likely become a passion, and you know, boys, that ‘if we do not subdue our passions, they will subdue us.’ A pious old sailor was much troubled, after being told by a rabid anti-tobacco man that smoking was sinful in the sight of God; so old Jack began to pray about it, as he did about all his concerns, great and small. While he was on his knees he fancied this answer came into his mind (it was mere fancy of course), ‘You may smoke your pipe in moderation, Jack; but don't grumble when you have got no 'baccy.’ The grumbling may be sinful, but I don't believe that smoking is; nevertheless, I say to you again, boys, don't learn to smoke.”

Just then there was a general titter among the audience near to the platform, and the chairman waggishly whispered to the lecturer that the stem of his pipe was sticking out of his waistcoat pocket. Mr Stubble laughed, and then remarked, “I own I be preaching what I don't practise, and that is the way of the world, as I have pretty often found it: still, my advice may be the more valuable, as it is clear that I speak from
experience. I have often thought that if some good-natured old smoker had given me a gentle caution when I was a boy, that I should not have begun to acquire the dirty habit; and that is the reason why I warn youngsters whenever I have a chance. If I had thought of it, though, I would have left my pipe at home to-night.

“Another thing I want to say to you, boys: don't gamble! If I were able to describe a scene which I saw with my own eyes in Sydney, a short time ago, I think it would make each boy up in the corner yonder say to himself, this very minute, ‘I'll never gamble, and break my poor mother's heart.’ I saw an old widow lady, just after her only son was taken out of her house one night by detectives, who had a warrant charging him with embezzling money from his employer, to pay ‘debts of honour!’ I shall never forget that poor lady's intense sorrow, nor the unhappy lad's look of despair, as the policemen were putting the handcuffs on him.

“Horse-racing is perhaps the most popular form of gambling now-a-days. It would take me a week to tell you even the half of the mischief I have seen and heard of through that alluring bait which Satan has set up in his trap-road to ruin. It is right enough, no doubt, to improve the breed of horses; but for all really useful purposes nobody wants his horse to go ahead at the rate of an express engine. None but drunken fools care to ride or drive through the streets at full gallop. I mean to say that it isn't dignified nor sensible of the great gentlemen and ladies of the land to patronise races on purpose to encourage the breeding of fast horses, for these furious riders or drivers to knock down or run over poor helpless old folks or young children, which often happens in the streets of Sydney. I would suggest that the most common-sense way of improving the breed of the noble animal, for really practical ends, would be to have occasional trials of strength between draught horses, in lieu of races: there would be far less gambling over that fun, and less cruelty too; besides, most of us plain farmers could have a go at it if we liked. I don't suppose that many ‘book-makers,’ or other professional turfites, will approve of my plan, and some of the jockeys may feel inclined to argue the point with me by hitting me over the head with a stirrup-iron, or sticking a spur into my leg; still, there is the hint for them, and whether they take it or not, I hope some of you boys up there will take my serious advice, and resolve not to go to races at all, lest you should catch the betting mania, which has desolated so many hearts and homes in this land and elsewhere.”

Mr Stubble then warmly congratulated both boys and girls on the facilities they had for gaining a useful education, and contrasted the disadvantages of the times when he went to school. After a few comical reminiscences of his school-mistress, old Dame Duddle, and her primitive
system of teaching her pupils to spell, which was all she could do herself, he remarked, “It is a wise movement of our Government to establish schools throughout the country. We had better pay schoolmasters than policemen; it is far better to build school-houses than lock-ups and gaols, and we must do either one or the other to keep our spirited boys and girls in order. If we educate them properly, they will pay us back with good interest,—they will help to find out for us what this great land is made of; but if we neglect that duty, depend on it they will make us pay for it by and bye, and perhaps make us smart for it too. I know the value of education from the lack of it, and if it were proposed to compel careless parents to send their children to a school of some sort, I would hold up my hand for it, although I be no advocate for ‘interfering with the honest liberties of the subject.’ I mean to say that parents have no more right, looking at it in one sense, to rear up children as ignorant as the blacks in the bush, than they have to keep a lot of young lions loose about their homesteads, to the danger or injury of their neighbours. I daresay some mothers will be cross with me for saying all that, but, bless their hearts! I don't want to hurt their children,—not a bit of it; I want to do them good, poor things!”

Mr Stubble next alluded in a piquant style to the overtrading disposition of city folks in general, and explained a good many of the sleight-of-hand manoeuvres that are sometimes used for “raising the wind,” which made some of his rustic hearers look as much surprised as if the shingles above their heads had begun to whirl about like butterflies. “There are too many petty traders by half in Sydney,” continued Mr Stubble; “and that is the reason why we so often hear the cry of ‘bad times.’ Hundreds of great strong fellows are trying to eke out a precarious living by hawking wares of some sort or other, instead of working at their trades, or going into the country and doing something towards making themselves independent, and, at the same time, contributing to the general wealth of the community. Whenever I see an able-bodied man lolling behind a fruit-stall in the street, I feel inclined to upset his concern, and bid the lazy fellow go to work and leave the fruit and lollipop trade to poor old men or women who are past hard labour.”

Mr Stubble then touched upon a variety of other topics of city life, including some of his costly experience in the law courts. He thought it was a great hardship on jurors to be forced to leave their own business to sit, perhaps for a week or more, to decide between two litigants, over a matter not worth twopence-halfpenny, and of no real interest to anybody beside the legal gentlemen concerned. He said, a merry lawyer once told him that “the best counsel for both plaintiff and defendant was, Don't go to law;” but the lawyer did not tell him that until after he had been at law, and
had lost by it. Mr Stubble's illustrations and incidents were more varied than I have reported them, and his audience heartily appreciated all he said. Even Dundreary seemed to be amused; he dropped his eye-glass, and began to look at the speaker in a pleasant natural way. Peggy's black eyes sparkled with pleasure and pride at seeing her Joe get on so bravely, and that he did not break down or bolt out at the back-door, as she had dreaded he would do before he warmed up to his work.

After talking for more than an hour, Mr Stubble looked at his watch, and remarked “that he must wind himself up, for it was getting late,” whereupon there were loud shouts of “Go on, sir, go on!” and the boys at the back shouted, “More Piccalily,” and other merry expressions, which stimulated him to stand up a little longer.

“I think I heard one of you boys cry out, ‘Give us a gerkin!’ ” continued Joe. “Well, here is one for you, and I hope it won't set your teeth on edge. I have noticed that many of you youngsters crowd round the doors of the church on Sundays before the service begins, to the annoyance of quiet persons, and especially to ladies. Now, let me tell you boys, kindly but seriously, that such conduct is highly unbecoming in young Australian gentlemen who have had a Sunday-school training. There might be some excuse for the little ragamuffins in the street, if they were to do it, because they have never been taught to do better; but in you it is inexcusable. I should like to give another gerkin, or a little pickled pepper, to some of the older folks, who are so fond of hob-nobbing in the church porch after the service is over; but I have not time for it now. A man cannot treat all the nuisances of social life in one night.”

The gentleman in the audience who had previously spoken, then stood up and asked Mr Stubble to give them a little of his parliamentary experience. Joe smiled and said, “There bean't much time to go into that concern tonight, though it would not take me long to tell you all my doings in the House. The good I did was of what is called a negative kind; that is, I took care not to do much harm. I used to sit still, and keep my eyes and ears open, except when I dozed off to sleep. I daresay I could tell you a thing or two that would make you feel sorry, only it bean't fair to tell tales out of school.

“If I were asked to state, in the fewest possible words, my experienced opinion of the great requirements of this country. I should say, ‘We want good legislation and emigration,’ and if I could make my voice heard through the length and breadth of the land, I would recommend the people in general to use their common sense in selecting wise representatives, and not to send men into Parliament who are no more fit for the responsible post than I was myself. Suppose now that any of you farmers were going to
buy a cow for the dairy, you would certainly take a good look at her first of all; and perhaps you would try to find out her milking qualities from some of the neighbours around who knew her. I'll wager you would not buy a cow on sight-unseen. You would not pay out your money for a scraggy old crawler, with her udder as dry as a night-cap; nor you would not take one that was rolling fat, and only fit for the butcher. Not you indeed! And surely it is but reasonable for you to look well at the character and qualities of the men whom you appoint to represent your interests and to guard your rights. If merely for the sake of yourselves and your families, you should do that; but it is only fair and right to do something to advance the interests of the land you live in, and you cannot do anything better than to elect good, honest, clever men, to govern it properly. Then I say, let every man Jack of us in the land (for we have all got a vote), do our duty, and at the next general election use our vote with judgment, and by all honest means try to keep little-brained men like myself out of the House, for they are no more use there than a lot of old wooden-legged soldiers would be on board of an iron-clad frigate. There are some really noble men among our present rulers, and there is no scarcity of sterling talent to form a Parliament worthy of this great country, if a careful selection were made. If we neglect to exercise our common sense in this important matter, we deserve to be taxed up to our necks, and to see our money fooled away: that's all I've got to say about it.

“And if I could shout out louder still, so that my voice would echo round Cape Horn to the old country, wouldn't I tickle the ears of the thousands of honest men and women there who are toiling and pinching and wearing themselves out for a meagre livelihood! I would so. I'd say to them with hearty goodwill, ‘Come over here, friends! Make haste! Here is plenty of room for you, and you may shake off pauperism for ever, and make yourselves independent.’ My heart seems to swell out as big as a water-melon when I think of the lots of happiness there is in store in our wild bush for millions of poor mortals who will be here by and bye, when they are provided with means to come. Then let us do our best to secure wise legislators, friends, and systematic immigration will result as certainly as the young grass and yellow flowers spring up on our mountain-slopes when a general rain-fall comes after a season of drought.”

After that rhetorical effort Mr Stubble took a sip of water, and then in a more reverent tone he said,—“‘The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea. I bean't going to give you a sermon, friends; so you need not be feeling for your hats. Preaching bean't in my line exactly; but I be going to say a dozen words seriously, and then I be done. I have been told that the last words which the late venerable
Bishop Broughton uttered was the text which I have just quoted. A wonderfully cheering text it is too. How that divine prediction will be brought about I cannot tell, but it will certainly be so, ‘for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.’ No doubt it will be, in some measure, wrought through human instrumentality, and that we all have a part to take in the great work if we do our duty. Some men seem to think that it is to be done by the power and might of their lungs; but I don't think it is myself—at any rate, I shall not try to do my share in that way. The plough does more work in the world than the thrashing-machine, though it does not make any clatter. Thrashing-machines are useful in their way, though one may be enough for a whole district; but we want at least a couple of ploughs on every farm. I know a few figurative ploughmen in Sydney who are always at work, though nobody hears the noise of them, and I am thinking that in the final day of account, when all our tallies will be made up, some of the great machinemen will be surprised to find that those quiet, unpretending plodders have the largest score of good marks to their names. I cannot stop to polish up that homely figure, for it is getting late; but I will just remark, friends, before I sit down, that it is likely I shall live till I die in this beautiful district. I have made my home here, and I shall try in my humble way to do all the good I can to every one around me. But I mean to be a plough, and do my work quietly. I certainly shall not set up for a thrashing-machine, and you may depend you won't catch me here again as an ‘orator.’ I make no secret of my religious belief nor of my political principles, and I mean to hold my own like a man, I'll never strike my colours to please anybody, or any sect or party. I will support my church and minister, both in a moral and a pecuniary sense, as far as I can, and I will do all I can to hold up the blessed light of God's truth to any poor mortal whom I see groping along in the dark towards the gulf of perdition, and who has no other human friend to guide him. But I bean't going to jar or quarrel or fight with any man because he doesn't think as I think, or do as I do; that sort of thing would not tally with my notions of Christianity.

“Friends, I be an Englishman, as you may tell by my lingo; but thank God I have a heart open to feel for a brother man, be he white, black, or copper-coloured. If he is hungry, I'll give him a loaf without asking him first of all what part of the world he was born in. I love my native country dearly, but I am not absurdly clannish. Irishmen and Scotchmen are as dear to me as Englishmen, and here is my hand of fellowship for them, if they be true men. They are Britons like myself, and long may we remain so. May no bitter, seditious spirit ever tarnish our loyalty to one of the most virtuous monarchs that ever wore a royal crown. Long may we unitedly shout ‘God save the Queen!’ Ha, ha, ha! Well done, boys! That was a
noble shout! Shout again, all of us, ‘God save the Queen!’ Ha, ha! that warms my heart like woman's love. I can't sing, friends, but I'll talk you the best end of a merry old song to finish up with—

‘May the sons of the Tweed, of the Thames, and the Shannon,
Drub the foes that dare plant on their confines a cannon;
United and happy, at loyalty's shrine
May the Rose and the Thistle long flourish and twine,
Round the sprig of Shillelah and Shamrock so green.’"

Mr Stubble then sat down amid rapturous cheering and clapping, and shouts of “Bravo, Piccalily!” from the boys at the back. Peggy got so excited that she poked the floor with her umbrella, and made as much noise as two men. There was a short complimentary speech from the chairman, and then, after much shaking of hands, the company dispersed.

As Mr and Mrs Stubble drove homeward in the cart, Peggy was quite enthusiastic in her commendations of her happy spouse; and when Bob rode on ahead to take down the sliprails, she could no longer restrain her feelings; she put her arms round Joe's neck and kissed him twice, and said “her dear old man was ten times more clever than she ever thought he was.”
Chapter XX.

CONCLUSION.

MR STUBBLE'S oration was what is commonly called “a great success,” and was the talk of the town for many days. He was soon afterwards requested to deliver another address in behalf of some other useful institution; but he firmly declined the honour. Perhaps he had in mind the example of an influential neighbour of his in the country, who on one memorable occasion made a brilliant speech in the House of Assembly, which astonished every one present, foreigners as well natives; but he never made another speech. The reason for his subsequent silence was left to conjecture, for he was not so candid as Mr Stubble, who confessed to the second deputation that he had told them all he knew. No amount of persuasion could ever induce him to give another oration.

Mr Stubble still resides on his farm, and is much respected by all his neighbours. He works sufficiently to keep him in health, and he devotes a good deal of time to reading. His favourite books, after the Bible, are histories, biographies of great and good men, and other works of a solid, useful character. He was recently offered the honour of a seat on the bench, but he modestly declined it, on the plea that there were many gentlemen in the district better fitted for the office than himself. His farm is a good one, and he works it well; so it yields him a fair return for his labour. He is enabled to live in comfort, and to save a little money besides. Mrs Stubble is in good health and good spirits; and in various ways the happy pair strive to be useful in their neighbourhood.

Their son Bob lived with them for two years, and took the active superintendence of the farm, and in his leisure hours he diligently applied himself to his prescribed course of study. He kept up a regular correspondence with Sam Rafter, and at the end of a year Bob had made such good progress as to call for especial encomiums from his friend and monitor.

Mrs Simon Goldstone and her uncle paid several visits to Mr Stubble's homestead at Unity Vale. On those happy occasions, Bob had always shown polite attention to his lady-guest: his modesty operated against his ever presuming to show more than that, for Lydia's riches seemed to place her high above his hopes. Perhaps she understood his diffidence—she had a large share of woman's wit—and she may have given him encouragement in some decorous way or other. Of that I am not certain; I cannot tell how it was managed (probably she helped him, as is usual in cases of the kind);
but this I can record, that at the end of two years, Uncle Will's consent was asked, and was cheerfully granted; and soon afterwards Bob and Lydia were married. They are now living near to Sydney, in a quiet, unostentatious style, and are as happy as a pair of burgeré gars in a tree laden with ripe loquats. Uncle Will is living with them. His good old friend Simon left him a comfortable annuity, in token of his gratitude to the man who taught him the way to heaven.

The late Simon Goldstone spent much of the last days of his life in writing, and has left some valuable MSS., which may one day get into the printer's hands. Amongst them was an unfinished essay entitled “Advice to Parents on the Training of their Children,” in which he touchingly deplores the errors which he himself made in hoarding up wealth for his son, and neglecting his religious and moral culture; by which he reaped a harvest of sorrow for himself, and, worse than all, he bitterly feared his unhappy son would lose his soul.

Mrs Blunt died suddenly of apoplexy, and her property came into the possession of Bob Stubble as survivor of his late wife. It is not unlikely that Bob will have the honour of being the first Australian “Peabody,” if some other happy man does not make haste and forestal him in the plans which he is quietly maturing.

Dick Stubble was never heard of by his parents, who often sorrowfully longed to know what had become of him. It is well for them, however, that they did not know of his untimely fate. When he decamped from his home, he had led his friends to surmise that he had gone to the Bendigo diggings; but that was merely a ruse to prevent his real track being known, for he went in the opposite direction, towards Queensland. On his way he fell in with a gang of lawless young men who had taken to the bush, and for many months they kept that part of the country in a state of alarm. They committed many daring atrocities, and on two occasions fatally wounded persons who resisted their attacks. Eventually, however, all the members of the gang were captured by the police, and suffered the extreme penalty of the law. Dick had given an assumed name, and that is why his parents never knew of his terrible end.

Sam Rafter continues to advance both socially and intellectually. His business is very prosperous, and he is in a fair way of becoming a wealthy man. He has already had an intimation that he is looked upon as “the coming man” to represent a certain important constituency in the Victorian Parliament; but he has wisely resolved not to accept of any such responsible post until he is better qualified by mental culture and experience, and until he is in a position to attend faithfully to the duties which would devolve upon him, without neglecting his own business. He
holds an office in the church to which he is united, and he takes an active part in temperance societies, bands of hope, ragged schools, penny readings, and other social reform movements.

Mr and Mrs Rowley have removed to Victoria, and are living in a nice cottage at Emerald Hill, not far from the residence of their daughter. If they do not make much noise in the world, they endeavour to show how Christians should live; and the example of a steady, consistent walk of faith is sometimes as effectual as more stirring ethical efforts, in inducing careless ones to seek to possess the Divine grace, which alone can produce such happy results.

Biddy Flynn is living with Mr and Mrs Bob Stubble, and is, at her earnest request, installed as nursemaid to their two children. Happy would it be for thousands of young Australians, who are now in little petticoats, if they had such judicious, tender nurses as Biddy. She not only attends to their material wants and wishes with almost a grandmother's fondness, but she is zealous for the purity and stamina of their young minds. Although she is as lively an old lass as there can be found in the colony, she is merry and wise when her children are near, and not a word reaches their quick little ears that their careful mamma would object to. Biddy never astounds their infantile reason with any such old-fashioned nursery nonsense as “The Cat and the Fiddle,” nor scares them into submission to arbitrary rules with ghastly legends of “Daddy Long-Legs,” or “Old Boggy.” But she has an inexhaustible stock of comical incidents which keen observation, through her eventful lifetime, has stamped on her memory; and her fertile fancy can dress them up into shapes highly amusing to her docile pupils; and “whin she is tired of invintin' true facts for 'em, she can read 'em no ind ov purty little stories an' lovely potery,” from the “Children's Friend,” and other illustrated books of that sterling character. It is her ambition to see them grow up a lady and gentleman: “an' shure she manes to tache the darlints all she knows about gintale manners; anyhow, she'll take care they don't larn no vulgar tricks at all. An' if they don't turn out ivery bit as illigant as Squire Bligh's childers, they shan't be able to say, by and bye, that the crayther who spoilt 'em was ould Biddy Flynn.”

If ten thousand of such faithful servants would speed across the sea, from the dear old lands at the antipodes, they would be gladly welcomed to our shores by all right-hearted colonists, whose proud aim it is to “ADVANCE AUSTRALIA.”
Appendix.

NOTE TO PAGE 282.

AN ABORIGINAL DISCIPLE.
(To the Editor of the Christian Times.)

SIR,—For the last two weeks I have been staying in this fine city, and having had sufficient leisure, I have visited many of the public charitable institutions. Amongst many interesting incidents which have come under my observation is the following:—

When visiting one of the wards of the Melbourne Hospital a few days ago, I saw an aboriginal man lying on one of the cleanly and comfortable beds, which are so creditable to that excellent institution. A Testament and several other good books were lying on a box by his bedside. On conversing with the poor fellow, I found, to my great joy and surprise, that he could read well, and that he had a good knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and the plan of salvation.

He told me that he had been instructed by a lady residing at Brighton, Victoria (Mrs D——), and that his wife, who had also been instructed by that lady, had died some time ago in the full assurance of life eternal. He, in most feeling terms, deplored the ignorance and wretchedness of his poor uninstructed black brethren, and said “it was too bad for wicked white men to give them grog, and to teach them to swear. That they ought to teach them to read and to pray to Jesus. If God would let him get well again, he would go to them himself, and read to them and pray with them.” That “he often prayed for them.” He further told me that, some time before he came to the hospital, a poor white man who lived at Brighton was very ill. He knew nothing about Jesus; that he (the black) went to him many nights, and read and prayed with him, and that the white man said he believed in Jesus before he died.

About a fortnight ago I attended a union prayer meeting in the Protestant Hall, and was much delighted at hearing the rev. gentleman who presided on the occasion give a short narration of a recent tour he had taken to the Moravian aboriginal missions on the Murray River, with an interesting account of the baptism of a native named Nathaniel Pepper.

Instructing the aborigines is a work which has hitherto been sadly
neglected, to the great shame of this Christian community. I rejoice that the
good work is now being prosecuted with so much energy. Let us, then,
whilst we pray for God's blessing on the labours of our Moravian brethren,
try to second their efforts in every way in our power.

I am not a believer in the theory which I have often heard propounded, that
“the aborigines are a degraded class, incapable of receiving religious
instruction.” The divine command, “Preach the gospel to every creature,”
must be obeyed; and He who gave that command has also promised to give
His Holy Spirit to accompany His word.

J. R. H.

MELBOURNE, Oct. 10, 1860.