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The Dis-Honourable
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The Dis-Honourable
Chapter I. The Look-Out Tree.

UPON the shores of Moreton Bay, on the east coast of Australia, is a point of land stretching seaward in the direction of a Government penal settlement, on an island known as St. Helena. Other islands are clustered in close proximity, and with the long hills on Stradbrook and Moreton Islands in the distance, the scene is one of striking beauty. In the summer months, this part of the Bay forms a favourite rendezvous for yachting parties from the Queensland capital.

The point of land referred to rises high above the water, with the Bay on one side and the estuary of a small river on the other. The shore—half mud, half sand—which stretches for a long distance at low water, is, on the seaward side, thickly fringed with mangroves; while overlooking them, upon the utmost headland, one tall tree—pushing out from among its fellows—stands sentinel over the miniature peninsula.

This forest giant, with black massive trunk and branches, is an Australian blood-wood, and presents a singular appearance to the observant onlooker. Its huge limbs, but slightly clothed with foliage, are gnarled and crooked into ungainly and fantastic shapes, by centuries of battling with the south-east gales that not unfrequently sweep fiercely across the Bay from the Pacific Ocean. The tree possesses none of the symmetry common to trees of European or Asiatic growth, except that in some remarkable way its huge ungainly trunk has maintained the perpendicular. Turnings and twistings and contortions notwithstanding, it preserves its general erectness to the very topmost branch, over a hundred feet from the ground, where by a strange freak of nature, a huge bole has been developed, out of which a branch, thicker than a man's body, grows for several feet at a right angle in the direction of the Bay.

On a Friday afternoon in February, 1893, there might have been discerned the figure of a man on that dizzy natural platform, as, grasping a smaller branch above him for support, he gazed intently across the water in the direction of the entrance to the River Brisbane.

Since the commencement of the year the weather had been unusually wet, but that week had beaten all previous record. With brief intervals, of a few hours duration, in the early part of the week, it had rained steadily both night and day. Not in warm genial showers, such as the poet remembered when he wrote of

“The useful trouble of the rain,”

but in a fierce, pitiless, persistent downpour, with gales of wind from the south-east, which had drenched, and drenched again, the sodden earth,
until every sloping piece of roadway was a river, and every gully was filled
with roaring torrents, and every creek, swollen far beyond its natural limits,
was transformed into a red, rushing, devastating flood.

What the River Brisbane was like this Friday afternoon may be imagined.
Floating wreckage and other debris, that had been brought down by its
swirling angry current, had just made its appearance in the Bay. It was
reported that houses had already been destroyed, and that lives had been
lost, but the worst was yet to come. For days neither sun nor sky had been
seen through the thick canopy of clouds. Night was closing in upon the
landscape earlier than usual when the solitary watcher might have been
seen descending from his conning tower. He came down carefully, but
sailor-like and quickly, as though assisted by some foot-hold and a rope,
and without pausing or looking around, hurried off in the direction of the
point.

He there descended a grassy sloping bank, some fifteen or twenty feet to
the shore, where he was completely hidden from the homestead, which
might have been seen a quarter of a mile or more in the distance. Here he
took off his boots and socks, and placed them in the hollow end of a log,
where they were protected from the rain, which had now commenced again
in good earnest.

George Jackson stood up, after depositing his foot gear in the log. He
was a manly looking fellow of about thirty, and stood five feet eleven
without his boots. It was getting too dark to note his features well, but
despite his rough dress there was no mistaking the well-bred bearing of the
man, or the determination of the mouth which, overhung by a brown wavy
moustache, was closely shut. He looked the sort of man one would expect
to ride pretty well anything in the shape of horseflesh, pull a strong steady
oar, and show plenty of cool courage in a time of danger.

As he rolled up his trousers over a pair of muscular legs, in preparation
for a wade through the shallow water, and mud, and sand, and mangrove
roots, he appeared to be equal to any emergency, and quite at home with
his surroundings. Who he was, and how he came to be in the strange
circumstances in which we find him, will have to be explained later on.

Like most of the foreshore of Moreton Bay, the land shelved very
gradually toward deep water, and Jackson had to wade some distance
before he reached the thick fringe of mangrove trees lining the eastern
shore. Even at this distance the water had not risen to his knees.

“Tide is rising fast,” he said to himself, as he worked his way carefully
through the mangroves, towards a black object which had become
entangled with the sweeping branches of one of these singular trees.

It proved to be a good-sized punt, such as is often used by fishing parties,
tarred outside and inside, with two sliding seats. The punt contained a few inches of water, and half submerged on the floor lay the dead body of a man, his eyes staring skyward. One hand, on which was a diamond ring, lay clenched beside him, the other was buried deep in the breast of a large waterproof overcoat, which was tightly buttoned around the corpse. It was a gruesome sight, and the solitary beholder's stout limbs trembled under him, as, just for a moment, he started back, and clung, with one hand, to the branch of a mangrove tree for support. It was raining steadily, darkness was approaching, the tide rising, and yet the man stood there, now over his knees in the water, gazing as though he were under some mesmeric spell, into the death-white face of the corpse.

He took in every feature of the weird and ghastly spectacle. The punt was without oars or side rowlocks, but in the stern was a new pivot rowlock to hold an oar for sculling or steering. A hole had been recently bored through the flat board fastened on the fore part of the punt, and a strong rope dragged from it in the water. One of the stanchion plates was torn off, and the fretted sides of the punt seemed to indicate rough contact with passing objects. There was no sign of luggage of any description. The unfortunate occupant had seemingly made no preparation for the strange journey, on which death had so ruthlessly and mysteriously overtaken him.

The corpse was that of a man well advanced in years, medium height and fairly stout, black greyish hair and beard, white face and hands—bleached whiter still by exposure to the rain, and death—large nose, and thin hard mouth. The head, with hair falling back from the forehead into the water, was without covering, but showed no mark of violence. The strange turn in one of the eyes was evidently a natural defect, probably more noticeable now than when living. The dress was not disarranged, collar and black silk necktie, fastened with a gold pin, set with a single diamond, had seemingly been wetted only by the rain. A strong dark tweed overcoat, with cape of military cut, and fashionable trousers and boots, completed as much of the dress as was visible.

“Good God!” Jackson exclaimed at last, “how horrible! I never expected this. Surely he has not been murdered?”

As though seized by some sudden impulse, he moved nearer to the punt, and hurriedly drew the right hand from the folds of the overcoat. It seemed at first to stick or cling, as though held by something, and on being withdrawn left a bulky leather pocket-book half protruding from the breast. Jackson reached to take it, but a swell on the water moved the punt at the moment, and in his haste and effort to steady himself, it fell into the water at the bottom of the punt. He soon, however, recovered it, and shaking off the water, safely deposited it in the side pocket of his coat. He then drew
the cape of the overcoat over the dead man's face, fastened the painter of
the punt to the trunk of a mangrove, and commenced to wade back to the
shore.

As though struck by a sudden thought, he turned quickly back again, and
steadying the punt with both hands, placed his ear on the breast of the
corpse, and remained in that attitude for half a minute. He listened for the
ticking of the dead man's watch—and distinctly heard it. It must have been
wound up the previous night. Death, however it came about, would have
taken place within the past twenty-four hours.

Reaching the shore the man recovered his boots and socks, and without
waiting to put them on, walked with rapid strides through the long wet
grass and fallen timber toward the house.
Chapter II. A Russian Leather Pocket Book

BOTH homestead and peninsula are known as Darton's Point. The farm, comprising the usual six hundred and forty acres, was only used for grazing and dairying purposes. It had been the property of the Darton family before Separation from New South Wales, and was now occupied by its present owner, largely through the pressure of the times. John Darton found when he came into the property, on the death of his father, that the place would not let at anything like a satisfactory rental. Although now well grassed, it was mostly cold and wet on account of a clay subsoil; so, feeling it necessary to retrench somewhat himself, he took the bull by the horns, moved his household down from the city, where he averred there was not enough business doing to keep a cat, and took to dairy farming.

The house was a fair-sized comfortable-looking wooden dwelling of about a dozen rooms, built on the highest part of the peninsula, and commanded a fine view of both the river and the Bay. It had wide verandahs on the two sides overlooking the Bay. Of course it was lonely. The nearest neighbour lived a mile and a quarter distant, in the direction of a small semi-fashionable marine township, part of which could be seen on another headland from Darton's Point; but, as John Darton told people, and his wife occasionally; notwithstanding its loneliness, the place had its advantages.

Like most Queensland country dwellings the house had been added to from time to time, as occasion required, and a three-roomed weatherboard cottage, with verandah in front, which might have been, and probably was, the original dwelling, stood a few yards from the main building on the lower and western side.

George Jackson made his way to this cottage, and hurriedly entered by a middle door from the verandah, quietly closing and carefully locking it after him. He felt certain that no one had noticed him. The servant man and woman had not come up from the milking yards, and John Darton had been up in Brisbane since the previous day. Edna and Mrs. Darton and Nora were pretty sure to be busy preparing tea. It was raining heavily. There was no covered way from the house to the cottage. The married couple occupied the room with the separate door, nearest to the house, and the others were appropriated by him, as bedroom and private sitting room. When once the rooms were done up by Nora for the day, he was seldom disturbed. He looked at his watch, it was a quarter to seven. Tea would not be served until a quarter past. There was plenty of time to dress, and what he wanted just now very badly—time for thought.
After having lit a lamp and drawn the blinds, for there were two windows to the room (before even removing his damp clothes) he took out the wet pocket-book, and holding it to the lamp examined it carefully. It was of Russian leather, expensively got up, with solid silver mountings, and had evidently belonged to a well-to-do man. It was full of papers, slightly wetted by their temporary immersion in the water of the punt. He unfolded one after another and glanced over their contents with evident interest, spreading them out upon the table afterwards, so that their damp edges might be dried.

Having in this way emptied the outer compartments, he came to a centre one, locked by one of the patent fasteners, which usually give some trouble before the uninitiated can get them undone. It was crammed full, and must have been squeezed hard before the snap had closed, and it was some minutes before Jackson got it open.

“Notes!” he exclaimed, as he drew out a lump of crisp paper. “Fifty, or a hundred pounds perhaps, for travelling expenses or something.”

He undid the bundle, but on scanning them turned ashy pale. His hand trembled with excitement as he looked them over. He had expected to find them ones, and fives, and possibly tens. He saw instead fifties, hundreds, and last of all, no less than twenty single notes, each for five hundred pounds. They were all of them dated some years back, and were on different banks.

“Good Heavens!” he exclaimed, “there's thirty thousand pounds sterling.”

With the bank notes heaped before him on the table, Jackson drew up a chair, and sitting down he stared at them for several minutes as though absorbed in thought. How new and crisp they were! They could not have been handled much. Thirty thousand pounds! He put his elbows on the table, and hid his face in his hands. At last he might have been heard to ejaculate, “God help me!” “God pity me!” There was anguish in his voice. It was between a sob and a groan. The man's stalwart frame shook as he uttered it.

Was it a prayer, wrung from the struggling soul in the unutterable travail of a great crisis? Or was it an ejaculation of the shuddering conscience as the man felt himself to be tottering upon the precipice of a great crime, and caught a momentary glimpse of the black abyss beneath?

It was a close night, notwithstanding the rain; but it was something more than that which caused great drops of sweat to stand thick upon George Jackson's brow, as he lifted his head from his hands, and, with a determined look upon his face, put the notes and papers back into the pocket-book and locked it in the drawer.
All this had taken time, and he now hurriedly put off his damp clothes, and repeatedly bathed his face, and eyes, and head, in water. It was to restore something harder to get back than cleanliness. When the tea bell rang a few minutes afterwards, it was a well-dressed gentlemanly man that stepped out upon the verandah of the cottage. Opening an umbrella to protect himself against the pouring rain, he leaped across the stream of water that was coursing down the pathway, and in a few strides reached the friendly shelter of the main building.

It was dark by this time, and a wild tempestuous night. Nora, the Irish maid servant, met him at the entrance. “Sure, sir, it's an awful night, and I'm afraid it's wet you are. Pity now there is not a covered way down to the cottage.” Jackson made some pleasant answer—for Nora was an obliging, and moreover agreeable, and not bad-looking girl—and passed into a room where the bright lamps, and well spread, well appointed table, formed a pleasant contrast to the outside darkness and raging storm.

Was it the lamp-light that cast a momentary shadow across Jackson's face as he turned round to where there stood near the table a fair young girl in the fresh bloom and beauty of early womanhood, or was it the transient vision of that ghastly thing that lay there in the mangroves, waiting for him, with its dead face turned upwards from the flooded waters to the wrathful sky?

It was gone, however, in a moment, and there was no shadow of guilt on the face that was turned with a smile towards Edna Forrest. He had carefully closed the door as he entered, and going up to the girl, put both arms around her in a close embrace and kissed her. There was passion in the kiss, passion that was returned too, for she placed her fair arms around his neck, and kissed him back.

“Now let me go,” she said, “someone will be coming.”

Another kiss was placed upon her ripe, red lips, by way of answer, and then, stopping for a moment as he let her go, he said, “Edna, will you always, always, love me?”

“I suppose so,” the girl replied demurely, a playful twinkle in her eye. “If you always, always, make me love you, as you do now.”

They were seated at their own places at the table, composed and self-possessed, talking about the rain and floods, when a minute afterwards the room door was opened by Mrs. Darton, followed by her husband, and by Nora bringing in the tea.

Mrs. Darton was in many respects a clever, capable woman, who dressed well, and looked well, and sometimes spoke well. She knew a good deal, and thought she knew more. As with many another capable woman, however, the atmosphere of her own home was thick with passion and
tragedy, of which she was profoundly ignorant.
Chapter III. Edna Forrest

THERE was an air of comfort, and even elegance, about the apartment in which the family had gathered for tea. It was never used for other meals, and not always for this, but on rough unpleasant nights especially, it was Mrs. Darton's pleasure to have tea laid in the drawing room. There were flowers and choice pot plants on the table, and the whole surroundings indicated taste and refinement which

“The hand of gentle woman, sedulous to please, creates for him she loves.”

Mrs. Darton was of a good family, a M'Dermott, had brought her husband some money, and knew what it was to have a much finer home than that at Darton's Point. But it was since the advent of Edna Forrest, John Darton's niece, into the family circle, that the home life had received much of the grace and refinement that adorned it.

Edna was the only daughter of a sister of John Darton's, who had married when very young into a wealthy English family. Both parents had unhappily died when she was quite a child, and John Darton became her guardian, with the Hon. Constant M'Watt as co-trustee. Her fortune, of about ten thousand pounds, had been, on the advice of the last-named trustee, withdrawn from England and invested in Queensland. She had been sent to England and the Continent to finish her education, and Mrs. Darton predicted for her a brilliant match.

It was Edna who had painted the life-like glimpses of English landscape scenery, which hung over her “Paling Victor” piano at the end of the drawing room. She it was who gathered the ferns and orchids out of the “run,” and draped the red pots in which she planted them with picturesque art muslin and dainty silks. She was a born musician, and had a voice of rare sweetness and compass, which had been carefully trained. To hear her sing to her own accompaniment was, as John Darton said, a revelation to most people. They had heard the song fifty times before, but on Edna's lips it became something, which, although sweetly familiar, was strangely new.

She inherited from her father, who was no mean musician, this gift of song. Edna could ride well, and row, and manage a boat if necessary, and was a good swimmer, and graceful dancer, yet she seemed one of the quietest of girls, and evidently was quite content with her temporary country residence at Darton's Point. She was a great reader, and even quaint in some of her fancies and pursuits. The young clergymen of the district, after one of his rare visits, pronounced her a charming creature, but a veritable blue stocking, who, if she were only a good church-woman, would have made a
perfect treasure of a parson's wife.

“Why,” said he to an intimate friend, “they were all out, and I put in quite an hour's conversation with her. I started the usual small talk about the weather, and the neighbours, &c., but she wouldn't have it, and I had to keep all my wits about me. She even quoted Eusebius and Dr. Channing, and thought Pearson on the Creed obsolete. Then to hear her talk about the labour question, and the present state of the colony. She actually advised me to read a new German work by Pastor Von Bodelschwingh on Farm Labour Colonies, and said she feared that ministers of religion generally, were too much waiters upon Providence, and hadn't the courage of their convictions. She admired Dr. Broad, of Melbourne, and told me to my face that if she lived in a city she thought she would have to attend an Unitarian Church. And yet, upon my word, she had such a sweet face with her, even when her observations and opinions were most uncomplimentary and obnoxious, that to have her talk to you was like taking medicine mixed with some elixir of paradise, which over-powered its unpalatableness. I believe that I could almost have turned Unitarian at the time, to have got a smile from her such as she gave a fellow living with the Dartons, they call George Jackson. It is said that he is an Oxford man; came out about three years ago, and got his colonial experience by losing a lot of money in land and mining speculations, and is now studying for the Bar. I suppose that he is after the girl, or he surely would not bury himself down at Darton's Point.”

Edna was quieter to-night than usual, as also was Jackson, and Mr. and Mrs. Darton had the conversation largely to themselves.

“Well, John dear,” commenced Mrs. Darton, as they sat down to tea, “you must have had a roughish time of it in Brisbane the last two days. It has rained here awfully. Edna and I haven't been outside the house. I suppose they will have a flood in Brisbane if the rain continues?”

“Yes, it's been wretched weather in town,” replied John. “Slush and water everywhere. When I left the railway station this afternoon, the river water was running over the lower parts of Stanley Street, and was rising fast. I heard, too, that some parts of Melbourne-street and the Montague Road were so much flooded that the people were moving out of their shops and dwelling houses. Flagge's away north, but the weather forecast published by his assistant at the Observatory this morning, is far from reassuring. It's my opinion that if this rain continues, and we have a big flood, it will put the finishing touch to Brisbane. It's just like our luck in this wretched, misgoverned, God-forsaken colony.”

“Here's the Government,” he continued, after helping himself to another cutlet, “practically without money, for just now they daren't interfere to any
large extent with the Government deposits held by the Banks. We've had one trouble after another, and yet all our legislators seem to think of, after seeing that their own salaries are paid, is to gad about the country at the public expense, and make fat billets for themselves and their friends. And, by George! the astonishing thing is that public opinion seems to be defunct."

He paused for a moment to go on with his tea, but no one spoke, and Edna especially, seemed to be giving him her smiling attention. Although that was nothing, for no one ever knew by Edna's smile what she really thought—it was a playful, bewitching, “Will o' the wisp” sort of smile, which, alas! often led luckless men and women into unexpected pitfalls. It was too bad of Edna, although she would never plead guilty to having beguiled them; but when her smiling attention had actually enticed them into a full disclosure, how she would sometimes come down upon them! Not to really hurt them, or their feelings, over much, but like the big ocean wave that dallies playfully for a moment, and then makes you run for safety, as it rises up to overwhelm you with its volume, brightly capped with sunshine, spray, and foam.

But we had remarked that no one spoke, and Edna smiled attention, so John Darton continued: “There's Sir Anthony Short and Sir Wilmot Strong, both away from the colony, and we have an irresponsible Acting-Chief Secretary, who, to my mind, is just now a sort of acting cat's paw to pull hot chestnuts out of the fire for other members of the Ministry. They subsidise all sorts of speculations out of the public funds, and pocket monstrous retaining fees and refreshers, for their eminent services. But, if the farmers or the working classes, or some genuine new industry wants assistance, it's the old cry, ‘Government has no funds.’ And the people are that disheartened by their losses, and cowed by the unparalleled eminence, and exaltation, and audacity of their rulers, that they daren't say a word. Gad! I'd like to see the whole lot of them swept clean out of power at the general election, and have the country governed by men of less legal and educational eminence, and fewer Imperialistic fancies. What the colony really wants is a Government of ordinary common sense, honesty, and sobriety. The newspapers talk about legislative genius, and administrative capacity, and the knowledge of Parliamentary procedure, and a lot of other things, as being necessary for public positions. I'd like to know what these precious acquisitions have done for us in Queensland during the past seven years. Goodness knows, we've had genius, and scholarship, and capacity, and culture, to the full. We've had statesmen whose names have been spoken in European Courts as belonging to men of rare ability, and whose legislative enactments have been thought good enough to be imitated in
older lands, and what have they done for us? Landed the colony in a very slough of despond, by their extravagance and financial juggling, and utter incompetency, when dealing with the every-day wants of the people of the colony.

They had all been smiling at John Darton's vehement tirade against the powers that be; but when at its climax the orator stopped, quite out of breath, to take a draught from his fragrant cup of tea, they broke into a hearty laugh.

“John,” said Mrs. Darton, “they ought to put you into Parliament at the next election as labour member for the district; but if they did, you'd have to get another wife, or go without one. I'll never be connected with the unwashed mob. But do get on with your tea, dear, that cutlet of yours will be quite cold. It's my opinion,” the lady continued, without giving her husband the chance to get in a word, “that the colony will always be ruled much as it is now; and I don't blame men, when they have the chance, for making good billets for themselves and their friends. The only people that are doing any good for themselves just now, are the men in political power, and those in the civil service, and the big financial institutions. What's the good of men getting hold of the reins if they don't drive the coach so as to give their own friends a bit of a lift by the way?”

“You know very well, John,” she said, waxing considerably warmer, as her husband tried here to interpose a word or two, “you'd have been a good bit better off, if you had stuck a little closer to your friends in power, and thought a little less about what you call the good of the country.”

“But Aunt,” put in Edna, “Uncle does not mean that Sir Anthony is not a good man, and a gentleman and all that, whatever he may think of some of the others. You know Sir Anthony is a special favourite of mine, and, if necessary, I must defend him. What Uncle means is, that he is almost too clever, and theoretic, and comprehensive, and far-reaching, in his views of political life, to attend to the common details of local government.

“Yes, that's all right so far as it goes, Edna,” said John Darton, “but there's something more than that. To my mind, he has frequently shown himself to be lacking in sound judgment, and at times in common political honesty. He has formed opinions and experimented upon them at the cost of the country, and then revised them. I tell you what,” he said excitedly, looking good humouredly, but half defiantly, across at Jackson, who, as yet, had taken no part in the conversation, “Sir Anthony Short has thought himself the great ‘I am’ of Queensland, whose connection with the Government has put honour upon the colony. He has thought it a small thing that in return for the added lustre and distinction of his name, Queensland should give him autocratic power, and the opportunity of
acquiring ample wealth. And yet, between ourselves, his autocratic temper has robbed the colony of the services of some of its ablest men.”

“Now, Uncle, that's too bad,” cried Edna, “I am sure Mr. Jackson does not think that our public men and the affairs of the colony are as bad as you try to make them appear.”

Jackson smiled at Edna, and after a moment's pause said in a grave tone of voice: “Of course you all know my views. In all conscience things are just now very serious. I know from reliable sources that some of our leading firms are tottering upon the very verge of bankruptcy, and others can only save themselves by trenchant reductions in both staff and general expenditure. There are no public works going on, and not likely to be, and trade generally is almost at a standstill. The colony is mortgaged up to its ears, and the banks, and big financial institutions, and English public creditors, are draining money out of the colony in payment of interest, which is just now the life blood of the people. Add to this a drought in the west, and the prospect of floods in the east, and the outlook is certainly not reassuring. As to Sir Anthony Short, I believe that I only express the views of thousands, when I say that his administration of public affairs has on the whole done more harm than good to the colony, whatever benefit Australia and the Empire may have derived. Of course my opinion has always been, and still is, that he has honestly acted up to his light and conviction in political matters. But what do you really think,” he said, addressing John Darton, “about the weather? Is it going to take up? It lulled for an hour this afternoon, and I thought looked more promising.”

“It's nearly impossible to surmise anything,” replied Mr. Darton. “The wind veered a little to the north, but I noticed as I came in that the gale had settled down in the old quarter again, in the south-east. They are getting ready for a flood in Brisbane. The blacks have come into town from all round the district, and I hear they are camping at One Tree Hill. King Billy told a newspaper reporter that 'one big fellow flood is coming 'long to wash away Brisbane. Fish all gone 'long out of Bay, and the ants going up trees and houses, out of the way of big fellow water.’ ”

After tea Jackson followed John Darton to a private snuggery of his, where he kept his account books, and which he called his office. When they were comfortably seated, he handed his cigar case to Jackson, and the two men smoked for a short time in silence. It was evident that each had something on his mind, and was waiting for the other to begin.

“Well,” asked Jackson at last, “how did you get on?”

“Badly.”

“You don't mean to say that he would not help to meet it to-morrow, said Jackson.
“I do,” said John Darton, “and what's more he told me that he could not acknowledge any liability. He said that no matter what the property is worth now, you had value for it at the time, and must find the money, and that if you cannot do it alone I had better assist you.”

“When was it you saw him; not to-day?” Jackson leaned forward in his chair, eagerly waiting the answer.

“No, it was between seven and eight o'clock last evening. Found him alone at Drybrook House. The family are up the mountains, Toowoomba way, and the servants happened to be out. At any rate after I had knocked and rung for some time, he opened the door to me himself. I tackled him afterwards about another matter. You know,” he said, lowering his voice a little, “he is co-trustee with me in the matter of Edna's fortune. He has always arranged the investments, and the interest has been paid regularly, so I have not troubled much to interfere. The fact is, when I have called on him lately, either at his office or at Drybrook House, there were always half-a-dozen people waiting to see him. He seemed to have so much to do, what with his private business and public affairs, that he always managed to put me off. But last night he downright exasperated me, the scoundrel,” continued Darton, more excitedly. “We had a great row, and I told him what my suspicions were, and threatened that unless he gave me a full statement by next Monday, and showed me clearly that all was right, I would serve him with a writ. He just laughed at me, and told me it was more than I dared to do. Then he taunted me about something which he knows to be an accursed lie. You know I'm hot-tempered, George,” he said, as he drew his handkerchief across his forehead to remove the perspiration. “Well, I struck him—struck him twice. He tried to strike me back, and did just hit me, I believe, and then ordered me out of the house. I picked up my hat and went.”

“You know, I was sorry that I struck him, but with all his airs, and fine house, and carriage and pair, and haughty wife and daughters, I believe he's a confounded villain. That's what I do! When a man gets the Honourable tacked on to his name in these colonies, he has wonderful facilities for swindling. But I'll bring an action against him over this money of Edna's as sure as my name is John Darton. It will make a stir, won't it? One trustee against another, and the defendant the Hon. Constant M'Watt.”

An almost irresistible impulse came upon Jackson. It was upon his very lips to say “John Darton, the man you quarrelled with and struck last night, is dead, and lies in a punt outside there, tied to one of your own mangroves,” but by an effort he restrained himself.

“Where did you hit him?” he asked.

“Oh, somewhere about the breast and shoulder, but I don't think I could
have hurt him much. He staggered, but rushed at me almost immediately, and in a great passion ordered me out of the house. If what I fear proves true, I'll give him more than that before I've done with him.”

“But there, it can't be helped now,” he continued, after a pause, “I shan't say anything about it at present to Mrs. Darton, or Edna. I see your cigar's out, so I think we had better go to bed. I expect Mrs. Darton and Edna have retired by this time.”

“By the way,” he said, “I must post up an item or two in the ledger before I forget them; and here,” handing him a letter, “I found this lying at the post office for you when I came back from town. I see it's from the bank. I hope they are not worrying you just now.”

George Jackson took the letter, merely saying, “Thank you, good night.”

He passed through the entrance hall, where he often, by happy chance, shall we say, said “Good night” to Edna with a kiss. But she was nowhere to be seen, and he lingered a moment or two scanning the address upon the envelope. It was written in a clear clerkly hand, “George Jackson, Esq., Darton's Point, via Brisbane.” He turned the envelope and read on the other side the black circular printing on the flap, which the last few weeks he had somehow dreaded to see, “The El Dorado Bank, Brisbane.”

But, though he had waited, no Edna appeared, and with a feeling of unusual depression and disappointment, he took his hat, picked up his umbrella from the hall stand, and went out again into the storm and darkness, and with a few hasty strides landed on the cottage verandah, and entered his room.
Chapter IV. A Night of Adventure

IT WAS no doubt strange that, after what he had just learnt from Darton; with an unopened letter of importance in his hand; and the momentous programme of that black night before him—for he had somehow to get rid of the corpse and punt—George Jackson should sit down in his room, as soon as he had locked the door and lit the lamp, and commence thinking about that girl, and the good-night kiss she hadn't given him.

Men are queer compounds. The great and small often blend grotesquely in their thoughts—often are with difficulty distinguished by them, and sometimes are actually taken, the one for the other. Francis Drake must finish his game of bowls, with the Spanish Armada coming up the English Channel, and George Jackson must spend the first precious half hour of that fateful night thinking about a girl and a caress.

Presently, however, a change came over the man. He opened the letter from the Bank, and read it with a frown, then he unlocked the drawer and took out the pocket-book again, and looking over its contents, placed the bank notes upon one side of him on the table; then he reached down an account book from the shelf and began to make extracts upon a piece of waste paper, and was soon engrossed in what appeared to be a complicated calculation.

“Now, add interest,” he said to himself, “at six per cent., and that makes £25,050, say £25,000, which leaves exactly £5000 over for any claims that John Darton may possibly have. But what shall I do with the corpse?” he suddenly ejaculated. “Something must be done with that, and the punt too, and done to-night. Like a fool, I have tied the cursed thing to a tree, and those fellows from the other side of the river will be round in boats to-morrow, wrecking and looting, and they will find it. And the punt tied up too! Of course it will be asked who tied it there. Curse him,” he continued, with great bitterness, “I can't help hating him, he well nigh ruined both of us, and would have damned me if he could, when living, and now he must come across my path again, dead and ghastly, to tempt me to what the world would call a crime. I don't care much about John Darton; for aught I know he might have killed him, though not intentionally. But Edna knows nothing about it, and she never shall if I can help it—not a word! I'll have it out of this to-night somehow. By Heaven! I will,” he cried in his excitement, “if all the devils of the pit sit grinning round the punt to guard the corpse.”

But how? That was the question. It was a question which Jackson evidently found it difficult to answer, for he paced his room with feverish
step and knitted brow. For nearly half an hour this continued. Then he stopped, and stood still in the middle of the floor, as though some feasible scheme had at last suggested itself.

“Yes, perhaps that will be the best,” he muttered, a far-away look in his eyes. “It will be a long hard pull, and likely enough I shall get the boat swamped, such a night as this. It will be an awful thing to be alone out there, with that punt towing behind, but for all our sakes I must do it, and I will too. The tide must have fallen a good bit by this,” he continued, looking at his watch, “that is, unless the flood waters have backed up to an unusual height.”

He changed his dress, in preparation for his night's work, putting on some strong woollen clothes; took off his boots, looked at his watch, and put out the light. He then opened the window, facing in the direction of the river, and noiselessly drew himself out and dropped upon the grass beneath.

“It's now half-past eleven, he said, “if I have anything like luck I ought to be back again before daylight.”

The moon was up and gave a little light, although thickly obscured by clouds and rain, as Jackson opened the big gate, and took the path leading to the river. He had many a time strolled down that grassy pathway, beneath the trees, with Edna and the Dartons. It faced the west, and he recalled the crimson sunsets that had mantled with their splendid hues, the foliage of the tall old trees, growing around the large lagoon, close by the river.

One magnificent blue gum, he specially remembered; there was an eagle's nest in the fork of a gigantic limb, high overhead, which he had taken Edna once to see—how different that walk to this. The air was warm that evening, and balmy, and fragrant with the scent of ti-tree blossom, and melodious with the murmuring of bees, and the hum of insect life. It was under the spreading branches of that old tree in the glowing twilight of a summer's evening, not long before, that he had told the old sweet story of love in Edna's willing ears. How surprised he was that she had returned his love, and accepted him; that in her sweet modest girlish way, and yet, withal, so frank and womanly, she had given him all her heart. He remembered how those great lustrous eyes of hers, brimming over with love and sympathy, were turned to him in trustful confidence, as she said, “George, I believe you are good and true, and will never deceive me, and I will love and trust you till I die.” As they had walked back, up that very pathway to the house, how exhilarated were his feelings, how sweet his hopes, and that night how rosy were his dreams.

But, to-night, it was all dark; the old pathway was swimming with water, ankle deep; there was a sense of dread, and mystery, and fearsomeness,
quite foreign to his nature, upon him. He looked around several times when a limb or branch fell from a tree. He might he followed, or watched. The dark mood was upon him—had got possession of his very soul, and he could not shake it off. It was the counterpart within, of the dismay and terror of the outside world around him. He passed, in a hollow, a small mob of milking cows; they stood huddled together, nearly knee deep in water, their heads turned from the storm. One of them lowed piteously, as though making a hopeless appeal for help.

Fortunately, he found everything ready to his hand. The boat, a light, but strongly-built sixteen footer, of cedar, had been drawn up close to the bank on account of the flood. He got an extra pair of stout ash oars from the boathouse, in addition to a powerful pair of light racing sculls, and launching her without difficulty, was soon in the current, which carried him swiftly down stream. There was no need to do more than paddle easily along, as at present the current was doing the work. Keeping well in-shore, in ten minutes, or less, he had reached the mangroves. Here the stream was much less swift, and one powerful stroke of the right-hand scull put the boat’s nose into the mangroves, where she grounded. Jackson was not surprised at this, for the tide had been running down for fully two hours, and the boat drew considerably more water than the punt. Getting out on to the hard sandy bottom, the boat immediately floated again, so drawing it nearer to the clump of trees—which detached from the mass of mangroves growing nearer to the shore, stood as a sort of outpost in the broad but shallow estuary—he tied it securely to a branch.

It is a difficult thing sometimes, to identify a particular spot when it is approached in a new direction, especially when wading nearly knee deep in water, and almost in darkness. One clump of mangroves seemed very much like another, and Jackson found himself in a difficulty which he had not in the least foreseen. He carefully took the bearings of the detached clump of trees to which he had fastened his boat, and moved cautiously through the shallow water in search of the punt. He noticed with surprise and some relief that the storm of wind and rain had suddenly moderated its violence. This he afterwards discovered was mainly due to the protection afforded by the dense growth of large mangrove trees, to the south-east of the point, although nearer to the shore. Just in front of him loomed the dark outline of a thick clump of mangroves, towards which he very cautiously advanced, hoping to find fastened to one of their numerous branches the object of which he was in search. He felt about in the deep gloom caused by their thick foliage, with the eerie consciousness that at any moment he might place his hand upon the side of the punt, when, drawing aside a large branch and peering anxiously through, he suddenly beheld that which,
aided by his excited imagination, appeared to him to be one of the most remarkable, and awful, visions, that human eyes had ever looked upon.

He stood perfectly still, breathless and spell-bound. Before him was what seemed to be a large natural amphitheatre floored with a pavement of translucent silver, across which there seemed to pass endless processions of dark shadowy objects. Rising up from this mysteriously illuminated area was a dark massive screen, or sloping wall, which in turn seemed thronged with living ghostly things, and in the very centre of the spirit-haunted arena, its black sides rising up from the strangely glittering pavement, was the dead man's punt.

Jackson strained his eyes and gazed with feelings of intense horror, for on the sides of it he distinctly saw several large white moving objects, which seemed now and again to assume still larger proportions, as though the white draperies of ghostly arms were stretched out toward him, either to beckon him to draw nearer, or to threateningly warn him from the spot.

George Jackson had not a shred of superstition about him, but the whole scene was so unnatural, and ghostly, and horrible, that he felt his pulse beating furiously, as the blood coursed cold and chillingly through his veins.

With a supreme effort he recovered himself, and said aloud—for the sound of his voice even was reassuring in that awful place, "Good God! surely there must be some natural explanation for all this?" Stooping, he moved his hand quickly through the water. *It was phosphorescent.*

"Ah! that's it," he said, with something between a sigh of relief and a hollow laugh. "There must be hundreds of black swans in there sheltering from the bad weather, and no doubt the ghostly objects on the side of the punt are some of the huge white pelicans which I have frequently noticed of late in the Bay."

The supposition proved to be correct. The punt, unnoticed by Jackson in his excitement on its first discovery, had drifted into an open space, around which the mangroves had formed a sort of natural amphitheatre, and here hundreds of black swans had taken refuge. It was their rapid movements on the water that had given to the large space its mysterious phosphorescent light. Notwithstanding this explanation, Jackson felt his nerves to be thoroughly unstrung, and strong man as he was, he started again like a scared child, as, on his nearer approach, the birds rose, the flapping of hundreds of wings upon the water as they did so, sounding in the sheltered enclosure like a long discharge of musketry.

The man took a small flask of brandy from his pocket, and drank eagerly, and then, unfastening the rope, towed the punt after him through the water in the direction of his boat.
“I am a great fool,” he said to himself, “to allow myself to be upset in this way. I suppose if I had not turned up, those pelicans would soon have mutilated the corpse past all recognition. And yet I never thought before that they would prey upon dead carcases. I wish the thing were done with. I almost feel as though I had done a murder myself, and like Tom Hood's ‘Eugene Aram,’ was trying to get rid of the thing and could not.”

“Murder! murder!” he repeated over to himself. “It’s an awful word! Surely he must have died a natural death, heart disease, or apoplexy, or something similar. If I knew that there had been foul play, I believe that even now, I'd tow the punt back and fasten it to the jetty, and go and give information to the police. But then, how about Darton, and Edna, and that thirty thousand pounds? No! I have taken it in hand, and I must go through with it. There's no help for it now.”

It was a pull of five miles that he had before him. The tide, it is true, was somewhat in his favour, but the wind was not, and it was still raining, although not quite so heavily, and the punt he had to tow was heavy and clumsy—square fore and aft. He took a deep grip of the water and settled down to his work, pulling a long powerful stroke, for he was an accomplished oarsman; and yet the weight of the punt, the contrary wind, and chopping sea, greatly retarded his progress. He took his bearings from a light on St. Helena, and one in some private house on the shore. The latter, however, after a time, was extinguished.

During the long hours of that terrible night he was tempted a dozen times to cut the punt adrift, and let it take its chance of drifting inshore again. Sometimes he thought that the wind and rain and sea were actually preventing his making any progress, and then he would pull for half-an-hour at a stretch, quite mechanically, as though rowing in a dream. Twice he had to stop and bail out the water from both boat and punt. In doing this, his hand once came in contact with the cold lifeless hand of the corpse. Only once, he took care of that; but he drew back his hand and shuddered. How he longed to get the dead thing buried out of his sight. Swallowed up in a watery grave, never to return.

It seemed to him sometimes as though the light on St. Helena would never be reached, and that the morning would find him still toiling at his oars, towing that hateful punt. At last, however, he began to catch glimpses of the light over his shoulder, and settling down again, he put all his strength into the strokes. The light was soon on the beam. He felt now relieved and thankful; the light shining dimly across the tossing waters seemed homelike, and comforted him. He would shortly be able to turn his boat back again; his thankless task was well nigh done.

Suddenly, however, a new and unexpected danger confronted him. He
heard something strike with great force against the punt, causing it to swerve round, and strain heavily upon the tow rope. It then grated along the boat, and a moment afterwards an oar was snatched out of his hand, and dragged from the rowlock. He was surrounded with a new and appalling peril.

A swarm of sharks had scented the corpse, and were swimming in all directions round the punt and boat. He could make out the black dorsal fins of several standing high out of the water, quite close to the boat; so hurriedly drawing in the other oar, he grasped the boat hook, as the only weapon of defence at hand. The fierce monsters were evidently hungry; they seemed to have no fear whatever, as they swam close around, turning their white bellies up, with huge open mouths, as though eager to attack him. He realised then why convicts never attempt to escape from St. Helena by swimming to another island, or the mainland. He had seen sharks before, but never such fearful brutes as these. One crunch of those ghastly jaws, or lash of tremendous tail, and his light boat must be smashed in pieces, and with that pack of hungry wolves around him, once in the water, his life would not be worth a moment's purchase. He was strongly inclined to shout for assistance, but it would have been useless. At that distance, and in such a storm, his voice could not possibly have been heard.

He remembered having the pair of spare oars, which we mentioned, but at this juncture it would have been madness to have put them into the water. The sharks would have snapped at them in a moment, and without oars, even if he could keep the boat from swamping, it would be impossible to get back to Darton's Point. All that he could do was to sit quietly, and watch with painful and horrid fascination the movements of the sharks when they approached the punt, which had now drifted right on to the stern of the boat, and was grinding against it with the heave of every wave.

This puzzled Jackson somewhat. Why should the punt bear down in this way upon the boat? Looking again at the leading light on St. Helena, which had now got well upon the boat's quarter, he learnt the reason. They had at last reached the main current, and boat and punt were being swept out to sea.

Without a moment's delay, Jackson drew a large clasp knife from his pocket, and commenced to cut the punt adrift. He found the rope greatly hardened by the wet and the strain of towing, and the knife was not very sharp. In his eagerness, as he severed the last strand, he somehow allowed the knife to slip from his grasp. It must have fallen into the Bay, he thought, or into the punt. But there was no time to look. The punt immediately drifted clear of the boat, and as for the next few minutes Jackson saw nothing more of the sharks, he concluded that they had
followed the punt, and putting his oars into the rowlocks, he turned the boat round in the direction of the shore.

It was a long and wearisome pull back, and the dawn was struggling in the east, the pitiless rain still pouring down in torrents, when George Jackson, wet through, and thoroughly exhausted with the toil and peril of the night, reached his room unobserved. His haggard face startled him for the moment, as he caught a glimpse of it in the toilet glass; but he was not really surprised. So fearful had been the experiences of that awful night, that no change in his appearance could have astonished him.

He thanked God that he was back again in safety, and casting off his wet clothes, threw himself upon his bed, where, as soon as his head touched the pillow, tired nature asserted itself, and he fell fast asleep.
Chapter V. “It was Really Cleverly Done”

WHEN John Darton and Jackson met at the breakfast table, neither of them looked very fresh or rested. A couple of hours’ sleep had done wonders for George, but the toil and peril of the night had left traces which at once caught the attention of both Edna and Mrs. Darton; the latter especially seemed dissatisfied with his excuses, and said more than once, “I'm sure you must be ill.” It transpired, too, that Darton had had a restless wakeful night, which in turn set Jackson thinking.

The latter announced during breakfast that important business would necessitate his going to town by the afternoon train; that he might return by the late down train, if not stopped by the flood, and would be busy in his room writing all the morning, and wished, if possible, not to be disturbed.

Edna attempted to brighten things up, and talked of the rain, which still came down in torrents, but somehow, conversation flagged, and everyone seemed relieved when breakfast was over. Jackson went straight to his room, but feeling too tired to write, lay down upon the bed again, and went to sleep. He was not sure when the opportunity for sleep would come again to him. As far as the coming night was concerned, it might, and it might not. He had sketched out a programme which he was far from being sure he would be able to carry out; but the rain had poured down all night unceasingly, and still continued, and Jackson counted upon this assisting him. If Brisbane was flooded, as he felt sure it must be, he had a good prospect of achieving his purpose. If not, he was hedged in by a network of difficulties, through which he at present saw no way of escape. His one hope was that he would find the Brisbane River in high flood.

On starting for town he managed, fortunately as he thought, to get into a first-class carriage by himself. It was a saloon carriage, and the entrance door, protected by a canvas sheet from the smoke and sparks and weather, faced the engine. Had its position been at the end of the train, it would have been an inspection car, but as it was, sitting with the door open, he had an extensive view of the country both in front and on each side.

It was not until he reached the small township of Junction Creek that he in any way realised the extent of the disaster which had overwhelmed Brisbane. The train here passed through a sea of water, from which on every side arose the walls and roofs of houses. Just before the train moved out of the station a man leaped upon the platform of the carriage, and entering, accosted him.

“Fearful weather, isn't it, Mr. Jackson,” remarked the new arrival, as he shook himself like a water spaniel, and divested himself of hat and
overcoat.

“Never met with anything like it. I came down to make a re-valuation for one of the banks, and hoped to find the land high and dry, but the fact is I could not get on to it, except by boat. You would scarcely believe it; the whole of the population of that place are squatting on a sand ridge, and the food and drink supply is that short that I determined to clear out at once, and get back to Brisbane—that is, if we can reach there. See here,” he said, pointing out of the open door on to the line, “the water is within a foot of the rails on this embankment. I question much if the train will be able to make another trip to-night. It’s rising fast now—about six inches an hour.”

When a man has a very important and all-absorbing matter of business on hand, and over thirty thousand pounds about his person, he naturally feels a little shy of strangers, and while Jackson felt somewhat annoyed at having his privacy intruded upon, he was glad to see that the new comer was fairly well-known to him. He was an auctioneer and valuator, named Fielding—a dark, plump, dressy, red-faced little man, who had succeeded to one of the best businesses of its kind in the city, but through the changed times, after having reduced his staff of clerks to one and an office boy, he found it difficult even at that, to pay his way.

“Yes, it's a very bad prospect for the low-lying parts of the city and suburbs,” said Jackson.

“Bad prospect, my dear sir,” said Fielding, excitedly; “why, it's an accomplished fact—Brisbane is ruined. The flood is the climax of our disasters. The depreciation of property is beyond calculation, and it is raining still. The flood is already without parallel, and I fear we have not yet seen the worst of it. You can insure against fire, and fight it when it comes, but this flood business beats everything. It's disgusting! If it had only held off for another week, I would not have minded so much, but it's ruining business.”

“Just imagine now, I had three acres of land as good as sold to a party, for the best figure I have arranged for these two years. He was to give twelve hundred for it, and between ourselves, I was to have all over nine hundred for commission. Well, he had to run over to Sydney for a few days on some business, and came back this week. He sent down to the office, saying he would go out with me to have another look at the land, and give me a cheque for one hundred as a deposit, and as soon as the deed and transfer came to hand, would pay over the balance. I took him out yesterday morning, but bless you, the only way you could get on to the land was by a boat. The transaction was knocked on the head, of course, and I have lost my commission. The best thing I have had on hand for six months. It's most discouraging. You see if he had only paid the deposit, we
would have held him to his bargain.”

“But,” said Jackson, “the land you refer to was never worth that money.”

“Oh, that's nonsense; land is worth whatever a purchaser will give for it. Of course, it's a different matter when you come to value it for a bank or a mortgagee. But I have been deuced unlucky. Just took the business from old Robert Catchall when the tide turned. Why, when I was cashier for the old firm, things were lively. If a man could only keep his head for a couple of years in those days, he could make a fortune. The Government was floating loans to such an extent that the place was swimming in money; of course they were all of them in the swim, in one way or the other, so it suited them.”

“You were not here at the time, Mr. Jackson, but I can tell you it was prime in those days. Immigrants were coming in by the new line of mail steamers almost weekly, and the land sales every Saturday afternoon, all over the suburbs, went as merrily as marriage bells. You see, it was this way: Our Parliament sanctioned the raising of a loan of ten millions, to be placed on the London market in instalments, as the money was required for the public service. In a few years they borrowed every penny of it, paid it out in railway contracts, and in erecting great public buildings, and loans to municipalities and divisional boards, and goodness knows what. The bulk of it, of course, got into the hands of the general population, and they mostly bought land with it, belonging to the upper crust, at extravagant prices. So you see that it was the men who sanctioned the loans, and got the colony up to its ears in debt, that feathered their nests with the proceeds. Of course, few of us saw the reaction that was coming then. The leading journal certainly pointed out that it could not last, and spoke of the consequences. But everybody wanted to make hay while the sun shone, and to-morrow was left to take care of itself. We had land sales at our mart once, and often twice, a week; besides what we did in city properties. It was astonishing how the oracle was worked, and how the innocent public responded. It was a poor week in those days that our firm did not net a couple of hundred pounds—to say nothing of what might be made sub rosa.”

“What do you mean by that?” inquired Jackson.

“Oh, the way in which you bought, &c. Now, take that Westmead Estate as an illustration,” continued Fielding, “and, by the way, as I came down I noticed that every house on the estate was under water, gardens spoiled, furniture destroyed, and owners, I suppose, half ruined. But that's nothing to us now. More fools they, for buying in such a place. But there must have been over twelve thousand netted by that little transaction. The Hon. Constant M’Watt was the first purchaser, and got the biggest part of the
money. It was really cleverly done.”

Jackson had started slightly when the Hon. Constant M'Watt's name was mentioned; but they had yet some distance to travel before reaching the flooded suburb referred to, so he could not well do other than listen to the loquacious auctioneer.

“You know,” continued Fielding, “there were about twenty-five acres in that Westmead Estate, and I believe that on the old Government maps the greater part of it was marked as swamp and marshy land. It had been bought at one of the Government land sales in Sydney, when Brisbane was known as Moreton Bay only, by a man named Brown. He gave fifteen shillings an acre for it—eighteen pounds fifteen—thought afterwards that he had been a fool to buy a swamp, but got his deed and lost his money, as he said, and there the matter ended. Well, Brown made a bit of money for himself in Sydney, in drapery or something, and went back to England.”

“But I was going to say that ten years ago—that was after the best lots of land in and around Brisbane were subdivided and sold—some of the knowing ones kept clerks pretty well employed in searching at the Land and Real Property Offices for eligible blocks and absentee owners. A clerk of M'Watt's named Tomkins dropped on to this twenty-five acre block, and told the boss about it. They found out that it was purchased in Sydney at a Government land sale, by a man named Brown; but could get no further clue. So the Honourable took steamer down to Sydney, found out as much as he could about Brown, and returned within a fortnight. He must have seen that there were several thousands sticking out of that little transaction, for in a week's time after his return, it was announced that urgent private business necessitated the Hon. Constant M'Watt taking a trip to England. He lost no time, you see, because he was afraid of some of the others getting wind of it, which might have cost him an extra thousand or two, while, if he got in first, the whole transaction might be completed—transfer and all—for a hundred pounds.”

“Well, there were the usual eulogistic notices in the papers about the esteem in which this prominent citizen was held by a large circle of friends and admirers, and how greatly the colony was indebted to the enterprise of such men, who, while building up their own fortunes, were so conspicuous for their benevolence, probity, and the remaining virtues. Such men were the strength and ornament of the colony, and they heartily wished for him a safe, pleasant, and successful voyage, and speedy return. I was chums then with Tomkins, M'Watt's clerk, and I tell you we laughed over it; he knew very well the racket on which the old man was going home, and how he strengthened and ornamented the colony by charging small farmers and tradesmen twelve and a-half, fifteen, and sometimes twenty per cent., for
temporary accommodation. Well, I heard all about the trip, for when he came back M'Watt let it out one night when he was half drunk. It was after the sale of the first section, and the prices it realised were enough to turn any man's head. He made Tomkins a present of a gold watch and chain that cost more than he gave for the land altogether.”

“But I am anticipating. When M'Watt reached England, accompanied by two of his daughters, he traced the old chap to a large village in Yorkshire, I think it was Bradbury. He was living there in a comfortable cottage, sort of retired. Just himself, a granddaughter, and an old servant woman. So far so good; but the trouble was to get at him without his smelling a rat. You see, it would never have done for M'Watt to have approached him straight and said, ‘I'm the Honourable So-and-so, and have come all the way from Australia to purchase that twenty-five acre block of yours adjoining Victoria Street, South Brisbane.’ Ah! ah!” and the auctioneer laughed heartily at the absurdity of such a thing. “M'Watt wasn't such a fool. He got one of his girls to make the acquaintance, somehow, of the granddaughter, and found out that Brown was a steward at the little Methodist Church. So M'Watt and his girls attended there the next Sabbath, and when old Brown came round with the plate M'Watt put an Australian sovereign into it. Brown noticed it, of course; felt sure that M'Watt must have come from the colonies, and thought he might get a subscription out of him for the church debt. M'Watt gave him five pounds towards the debt, and was actually invited to take the chair a few days afterwards, at their anniversary tea meeting. And the upshot of it was, he bought the Westmead Estate for £35. Took it off Brown's hands as a sort of favour, as Brown was so far away, you know, and could not see into things. I have heard say, however, that the Yorkshire methodist got to know afterwards how neatly he had been taken in, and anathematised M'Watt considerably; but you see he had sold the land, and could do nothing.”

“M'Watt came back in high feather, lodged the deed and transfer in the Real Property Office, and the very week of his return sold the land to a syndicate (which he formed himself, as he boasted, in less than two hours in Queen Street) for £6,500. He kept one-third of the shares and sold the rest to the two Boulderlands and a few others, who paid a small deposit and gave him their promissory notes at even dates for the balance. But I must tell you about that auction sale.”

“Yes, go on, Mr. Auctioneer,” said a thin squeaky voice from the far corner of the carriage, “I would like to hear how you worked that oracle. I was one of the purchasers.”

Both the men turned round at this, in evident astonishment, for they never dreamt but that they were quite alone. They had faced the carriage
door as they sat talking, and had not noticed the entrance of a tall, thin, care-worn individual, who, finding the middle door of the saloon slightly ajar, had pushed it back and taken a seat in the far corner.

Fielding knew almost everybody in Brisbane, and recognised the speaker at once as a somewhat prominent man among the working class.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Wright,” he said, for he made it a rule to be polite to everyone (“you never lose anything by politeness, and you often gain”); “I did not know that we had the honour of your company in the carriage.”

“I suppose not,” retorted Wright, “or you would not have been quite so free in your conversation. I came in through the door there, and sat down. I suppose your being so engrossed in your talk, and the rattle of the carriage, prevented you hearing me. But now we are talking, let me ask you a fair, straight question. It won't be long, for I am getting out at the next station.”

“Fire away,” said the auctioneer, evidently somewhat taken aback, and annoyed at having his conversation with Jackson interrupted.

“Well, it's this. Do you honestly believe that the Hon. Constant M’Watt, and other wealthy land speculators like him, who have gullied the working classes of Brisbane into buying sixteen-perch allotments, which are now, in many cases, not worth a tenth of what was originally given for them, have come honestly by their wealth?”

“Why,” said the man, lifting his hand as though he were addressing a much larger audience, “the accursed white allotment pegs of Brisbane land sharks are stuck in every barren ridge and reeking mangrove swamp for thirty miles around the city. Land that was bought on the representations of auctioneers and their agents, and which the miserable purchasers, who even now are, some of them, paying up their instalments with seven per cent. interest, have never seen, except upon the map.”

“Well,” said the auctioneer, sulkily, “if a man buys a pig in a poke, it's his own fault. You sell a piece of land to a man and he pays for it, and you get the money. Is not that money yours, and don't you come honestly by it?”

“All right,” said the labour leader, “you're a Government man, I know; but let me ask you this: Do you think that the ten million loan men, who, to a very large extent, are responsible for the present depression, and who have, in many instances, grown rich out of the misfortunes of their fellows, Do you think—I ask—that these men are the individuals to restore prudence, economy, and the righteous administration of public affairs, to the colony of Queensland?”

By this time the train had pulled up at the station, and without waiting for an answer, the man said “Good-day,” and left Fielding and Jackson to their reflections.
Chapter VI. The Westmead Land Sale

“CONFOUND those labour fellows!” exclaimed Fielding, testily, as the train moved on again, “with their fads and fancies, and revolutionary selfishness, I am blest if an auctioneer can make an honest living these times. Hanged if they don't think they could govern the country and manage public affairs as well as Sir Anthony Short, or Sir Wilmot Strong, and the Hon. Constant M'Watt, and the like.”

Jackson laughed, but said nothing; he might very well have said something, but at present he did not feel inclined to talk.

However, as the auctioneer had suddenly grown more reserved and silent, and Jackson wanted to hear about the famous Westmead land sale, he said:—

“You must not be too hard on men like Wright; work is very scarce, and they have their own troubles just now. Besides, you know he said he was a purchaser in the Westmead Estate, so if he built there, his place is now very likely under water. Goodness, how it still rains!” he exclaimed, looking out of the carriage window. “But look here, Fielding, you were going to tell me about that land sale.”

“Well, perhaps I might as well finish it now I have commenced,” said Fielding, “but I can't bear to be interrupted when I am telling anything, as that fellow did just now.”

“I think I told you that the Hon. Constant M'Watt formed a syndicate immediately on his return from England. Of course they did not know what he had given for the land. That came out afterwards. They were all big men that he had in with him. So at a meeting of the syndicate, they determined to sell the land at once, and leave the whole arrangement of things in M'Watt's hands. He did the thing to rights, I can tell you,” and the auctioneer quite brightened up, and became himself again, at the mere recollection of that memorable sale.

“Our firm was to have the selling of the estate, and it was old Catchall who suggested that it should be called Westmead. Remarkable man he was, and still is,” said Fielding, reflectively. “Never met with a man his equal at drawing up an advertisement for the sale of land.”

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“Well, perhaps I might as well finish it now I have commenced,” said Fielding, “but I can't bear to be interrupted when I am telling anything, as that fellow did just now.”
“Well, the Honourable went down with me and the boss to look over the land. It was pretty rough in places, but M‘Watt was very cheerful; he said it would look quite different when it was cleared and the undergrowth burnt off, and said that as far as possible the streets and principle roads must run along the swamps and gullies. ‘We shan't be at the expense of making them into good roads,’ he said, ‘and such things never show on the plans.’”

“Our firm then called for tenders for the clearing—paid a good price for it, and had it done to rights. There was a lot of ti-tree on it, but everything was cleared level with the surface, and carted to one corner of the ground, where it was burnt off. Then he actually had the grass eaten close down by a mob of horses. It had been very dry weather, but there was a shower or two of rain a fortnight before the sale, and to see the place pegged out when the surveyors had done with it was a picture. Some clumps of coarse grass and beds of reeds, which the horses would not eat, were cut down with scythes. The allotments were rather small, I thought, for an estate so far distant from town, but M‘Watt said it was quite right. Said he, ‘People will usually give as much for a small allotment as a large one, and if a man wants a fair-sized piece of land, all he has to do is to buy several.’ Of course, everybody knows now, that small allotments spoil a neighbourhood; people won't build villa residences, with humpies on sixteen-perch allotments next door, But, bless you, everything was cut up into sixteen perches in those days—even estates miles away from Brisbane—and the general public (mostly fools) bought them. Twenty-eight perches was the largest-sized allotment on the plans, and the bulk of them were sixteen, and some were only twelve. The lithographs were really works of art, printed in colours, by a leading Sydney firm, regardless of expense.”

“There was a fancy picture of the estate, with several nice-looking houses near at hand. The artist must have drawn a little upon his imagination, for one place, that certainly looked like a villa residence in the picture, proved on inspection to be an old cow shed attached to an adjoining dairy farm. There was a distant glimpse, too, of the river, meandering placidly through sylvan glades. I nearly forgot to mention the railway line and station, by the way, which the artist inserted by express order of the Hon. Constant M‘Watt. He said ‘the Minister had pledged himself to put it on the estimates.’”

“The wording of the advertisement was a literary achievement, quite equal to the picture described. It was addressed to capitalists, squatters, members of Parliament, Government officials, speculators, bankers,
merchants, boot-makers, builders, milliners, butchers, bakers, and the noble minded, honest Queensland working man. Terms: Quarter cash; balance at four, eight, and twelve months, with interest at eight per cent. The advertisement went on to say that Robert Catchall had been favoured with instructions to sell by public auction, on the ground, on Saturday, May 1st, commencing at two o'clock, that grand property in East Bunnoboonoo, named by the proprietors, on account of its beautiful characteristics and rich alluvial soil, the Westmead Estate. This was the first section of the estate, and consisted of one hundred and eighty-four splendid villa sites, having frontages to Brunswick Street, Victoria Street, and several chain-wide avenues and roads intersecting the estate, at right angles from the above-named streets. The advantages of the proposed railway station, and the proposed tramway terminus, were then enlarged upon; its admirable central position and charming surroundings; its wonderfully fertile soil, and undulating hills and slopes, with the distant peeps of the ubiquitous Brisbane River, forcing its serpentine course past the busy wharves of commerce and the great city spires; making—said the announcement—one of the most lovely rural pictures to be seen in all Australia; whose cool breezes would breathe new life into the lips of age, and mark the blushing cheeks of maidens coy with ruddier health and rosier hue. Here the old chap,” said Fielding, somewhat flippantly, “could restrain his pent-up feelings no longer, and burst into song—

‘Here the fair villa residence shall rise,
   Like sparkling gem amid the rural scene;
And train and omnibus and tramway noise
   Be heard but faintly 'neath umbrageous trees.’ ”

“Well, we had matchless weather, and Catchall was in splendid fettle. There was a string of two-horse waggonettes and omnibusses and cabs, placarded with announcements of the sale, and invitations to ride to the ground free of charge, which reached half way down Queen Street. At 12.15 a four-horse drag, with brass band and big placard, went round the city to remind the people of the great event. The syndicate worked well, too; most of them were present themselves, and came, bringing friends with them, in spanking turnouts with high-stepping pairs. M'Watt worked like a Trojan. He actually got the Bishop to come down, on the promise of a handsome donation, if he purchased, to secure a site for a church and school; and of course his lordship was followed by half-a-dozen of the clergy, who came to speculate a little on their own account—to say nothing of nonconformist ministers, who were induced by M'Watt, on one pretext and another, to roll up in great force. This made the sale highly respectable
and popular—although a champagne luncheon was advertised—and by half-past one o'clock we had a great crowd on the ground, with a big sprinkling of genuine buyers among them. There had been a large tent rigged up at one corner, with flag flying, and a spread laid out on long tables, such as many of them had never clapped eyes on before—fowls and turkeys, and hams, and great rounds of beef, and tongues; bottles of beer and wine, spirits with fancy gilt labels, unlimited fizz; and soft drinks for the teetotalers in any quantity. Well, Catchall, in his free and easy gentlemanly way, invites the whole crowd into lunch, and even pressed the Bishop to go and have a glass of wine and biscuit after his ride. How they did crowd the long tables, and swallow down the eatables and drink. There were some members of Parliament, and, if I remember rightly, a couple of Cabinet Ministers—to say nothing of members of the Upper House—these were drafted off to a small separate table, where M'Watt was busy seeing that the waiters uncorked plenty of champagne. The whole crowd ate and drank and talked, until some of them—well, never mind about that.”

“After a while, old Catchall, who had a good tuck-in himself, looked at his watch and announced that it was time for starting, and that the luncheon booth would now be closed. His partner had the sales-book, and myself and another clerk stood on the corner pegs, to show the size of the allotments. After reading the terms of sale, which scarcely anyone could follow or understand, the auctioneer led the crowd to a twenty-eight perch corner allotment, on rising ground. It was, of course, the pick of the whole estate; and there he made, ‘pon my word, quite an eloquent little speech. He compared Australia to the United States, and spoke of the rapid rise and growth of some of the great American cities. He, in imagination, pictured the Brisbane of that day, side by side with the Brisbane of the future, and told how land which they could then buy by the perch, would in a few years be sold by the foot. Then he complimented them on their evident shrewdness and farsightedness, in having attended this highly important sale. He predicted that the allotments they would buy that day for a few pounds, on most advantageous terms, would, in a few years, realise tremendous prices. ‘Why,’ he said, nodding across to a well-known Brisbane merchant, who, I happened to know sub rosa, was one of the syndicate of proprietors,’I am permitted to state that Mr. Gregory bought three of the lots in last Saturday's sale at Bunting's Paddock, and sold them afterwards at the handsome profit of £120. Another gentleman whom you all know and rightly esteem, the Hon. Constant M'Watt, bought the corner lot (which brought the highest price realised at the sale), paying over £200 for it. This was thought by some wiseacres to be a fabulous and foolish figure, and yet the Hon. Constant M'Watt was offered in cash fifty pounds
profit on the following Monday morning. Not so bad, when you consider that there was only one day between the purchase and offer, and that only a small deposit had been paid. But tempting as the offer seemed, what did the Hon. Constant M’Watt do? Why, like the far-sighted and sensible gentleman that he is, he declined it, for the simple reason that the property is worth much more. I see these, and other leading men of Brisbane around me to-day, ladies and gentlemen. They know what they come for, and would not be here, only that there are good building sites to be secured, and that there is money to be made.’ ”

“He then, in a few words, pointed out any local advantageous which the place possessed, and put up the first lot. It hung fire for a few minutes, as though the people felt the situation new to them, and were afraid of each other. Then a working man's voice called out, ‘Ten pounds.’ ‘Really, gentlemen,’ said old Robert, putting on his blandest smile, ‘I have come here to-day to sell this property, and mark you, I am convinced that every allotment will find a bona fide purchaser between this and four o'clock. The gentleman who has just made a bid must, of course, have his little joke; but I may tell you that rather than see this most valuable lot sold for one shilling under £100, I shall request the proprietors to present it to my Lord Bishop as a site for a church and school in this salubrious suburb, which in a few years will undoubtedly be the Toorak of Brisbane. Will some gentleman give me a start?’ ”

“‘Fifty,’ called out an unknown member of the syndicate. ‘Thank you, and five,’ said Catchall, getting a bid in another direction. ‘Sixty pounds in three places,’ and he nodded his head like a Chinese mandarin. ‘Sixty-five, thank you. Seventy—and five. It's against you, sir.’ It now seemed to be between two of them (one, by the way, a member of the syndicate), and was steadily run up until it reached £115. The bid lay with the syndicator, and I am sure he trembled in his boots lest it should be knocked down to him, when all at once a big-faced man called out, ‘I'll make it twenty, then. Knock it down, sir.’ ‘Any advance; any advance, ladies and gentlemen, on £120? Going! going! gone!’ And down came the ivory hammer on the lithograph he held in his hand. The man gave in his name, and a deposit in greasy notes, and I knew jolly well that it was not the Bishop who bought it, but someone who thought it would make a good site for a public house.”

“Well, a good bit of grumbling went on quietly for a few minutes. The tradesmen and workmen, and people who had come intending to buy two or three allotments to build upon, or speculate with, thought it an extravagant price to give for land so far out from the city; but they bought for all that, and in some cases, after buying an allotment in a fairly good position, were persuaded by the auctioneer to take two or three, less
valuable, adjoining ones, at the same price. In some cases where it was seen that a man wanted an allotment to complete a block, members of the syndicate, or their friends, ran him.”

“The sale never once flagged, and what with excitement and drink, there's no doubt lots of purchasers gave double what they would have done for the same allotments if they had been sold privately. I remember, by the way, that Wright bought two allotments at the sale, and I believe they were in the worst part. But then, who thought anything about floods in those days. It's true one chap living in the neighbourhood did suggest it at the sale. But Catchall sat on him in a moment; said he had evidently been drinking too much of the vendor's beer, or he would never have thought of such a thing. I must confess, though, that I had my own misgivings, and so, I believe, had Catchall. But it was a splendid sale, and everybody, except the purchasers, made a pot of money out of it. The syndicate received back their deposits and pro-notes immediately, and got considerable dividends afterward into the bargain. The Hon. Constant M'Watt became a bigger swell than ever, and set up a pair of grays.”

As Fielding concluded his story the train swept suddenly round a curve and then ran down a rather steep decline, and in a moment, before them and all around, was a great sea of surging water, upon which several boats were busy rescuing the half drowned and, in many cases, wholly ruined residents.

“Good Heavens!” ejaculated Fielding. “It's awful, isn't it? Thank God, none of that money went into my pocket. Look there! I believe that child yonder is drowning. It may be Wright's child! It is near to his house—I remember it now. Ah! that boat has saved it. Is it possible!” and he groaned as he said it. “Under that water lies the land of the Westmead Estate.”
Chapter VII. Joe Stunner Appears on the Scene

THE excitement among the passengers was intense as the train, which had slackened speed on reaching the water, moved cautiously along.

The railway line had been carried over a low viaduct across one corner of the estate, and the water had already, in some places, reached to within a few inches of the rails.

Long before daylight that morning, the work of removing goods and furniture had commenced. In the hurry and excitement, pianos and costly articles of furniture had been piled indiscriminately upon carts and waggons, to be soaked through by the pouring rain before they could be deposited in some temporary shelter on higher ground. Scores and hundreds of people, despite warnings and entreaties, had put off their retreat to the last moment, hoping that the flood had reached its highest level.

Hoping against hope, furniture and household goods had been piled on tables and boxes, and lifted higher and higher before the encroaching waters; until it at last became evident that if they would save their lives, the little home and its familiar surroundings, purchased perhaps with the laborious savings of half a life time, must be left to perish. Then how impatiently they cried for help, and importuned their rescuers to let them take some of their household stuff with them in the boat.

Jackson and Fielding gazed with amazed horror on this drama of real life that was being enacted before their eyes, and as they did so, now and again there smote faintly upon their ears, above the noise of rolling wheels, and wind, and rain, and swirling waters, the wailings of women and the cries of children, as, wet through and hungry, they were half dragged into the boats from the miserable ruined homes, which but yesterday many of them had looked upon with honest pride.

These heartrending scenes seemed specially to move Jackson, for he flung himself back into the corner of the carriage, and tears came to his eyes.

The auctioneer turned round to him from the window.

“I cannot look at it, Fielding,” said Jackson, “pent up in this carriage, unable to help them. It would be different if we could.”

The auctioneer turned to the window again, his attention enchained by the thrilling scenes which, during the next few minutes, he saw transpiring on every side; but Jackson kept his eyes on the floor of the carriage, engrossed with his own thoughts.

All that day, for the furtherance of his own purposes, he had been
wishing for this flood; but now that it had come and his eyes beheld it, he was stunned and appalled by the magnitude of the disaster.

He knew the city and its suburbs well, and imagination vividly pictured to him the heartrending scenes which must at that very moment be passing before the eyes of multitudes. The breaking up of houses, the destruction of hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of property, and worse still, the shrieks of drowning men, women, and children, as they lifted their hands wildly above the waters and screamed for help, that—alas!—would never come.

He seemed to hear their cries grow fainter and fainter, until the gurgling waters silenced them at last.

He saw them stretched out afterwards, cold, and stiff, and lifeless; with matted hair, and wildly staring eyes that had looked terror-stricken into the face of death and eternity. And around stood white haired men, weeping; and men in manhood's prime, who would have wept but could not, but who, in the anguish of their hearts, cursed bitterly the day on which they first saw light. He saw all this, and more; and yet, as the pouring rain fell heavily upon the carriage roof, he still felt glad.

Then he wondered whether in all the city, there breathed a monster equal to himself. How could he thus feel glad and thankful, while others wept!

But the chain dragged tightly now; link by link it had wound itself around him. He could not retrace his steps—he could not bring back the past. It was irrevocable. And yet his whole nature rebelled against the fate which made the loss and ruin of his fellow men his opportunity. But so it was. He must shut his eyes and steel his heart against the misery, for as the rain still rattled on the carriage roof and windows, buttoned closely to Jackson's heart was the dead man's pocket-book, containing over thirty thousand pounds.

The train had now passed several stations, and at an exclamation from Fielding, Jackson looked out. They had reached the South Brisbane railway embankment, which runs from Vulture Street, parallel with Grey Street, to the Melbourne Street railway terminus. The embankment was transformed into a pier, running through an unbroken stretch of water.

"Well," exclaimed Fielding, "I've seen floods before, but this beggars all description."

The principal streets of South Brisbane were, in the early days, laid out parallel with the river. Stanley Street, Grey Street, Hope Street, intersecting Melbourne Street, which is a continuation of Queen Street; the river from North to South Brisbane being then spanned by a massive iron structure, known as the Victoria Bridge.

As the train passed along the embankment, it seemed as though the
whole of this extensive and populous portion of the city had been blotted out—the roofs and upper portions of the shops and houses being the only indication that underneath this great lake or inland sea lay, in ordinary times, the homes and haunts of men.

Bridges are carried over the roadway of the streets, reaching from Stanley Street to the West End, and under each of these rushed great streams of water, level with the archways.

“If it were not for this railway embankment,” said Jackson, who by this time had somewhat recovered himself, “pretty nearly the whole of the houses in the streets to our right, including Stanley Street, would have been swept into the river.”

“Yes,” replied Fielding, “come over to this side and look out. Just see the wreckage!”

It was perfectly true. The embankment had acted as a breakwater that impeded the course of the current, which swept round from the river side of the West End and the Montague Road, and had piled up against it the remains of scores of houses, and thousands of pounds worth of furniture and other goods.

The train pulled up at the Melbourne Street terminus, which is wisely built on a level with the embankment. The water lapped the topmost step of the two flights of broad stairs leading down to the street. The terminus had been transformed into a pier head, surrounded on every side by over twenty feet of water. Cabs usually were waiting in abundance on the stand just below, in Grey Street, trams and omnibusses usually plied continuously on the other side of the station, in Melbourne Street; but that afternoon, the only means of leaving the Melbourne Street terminus was by boat.

Several watermen were waiting with their boats on the Grey Street side of the station, but Jackson allowed the rush of passengers to embark without doing so himself.

It was a little after five o'clock, and would be light for about another couple of hours. He was in no hurry; indeed, had not yet fully matured his plans. So he walked up and down amongst the crowd that thronged the long station platform, with a curious yet not unpitying eye.

All the numerous rooms in the basement of the station buildings were under water, but the suites of offices and waiting rooms on the level of the platforms had been thrown open by the railway authorities for the shelter of homeless flooded-out individuals. Many of them were but half clad, and most of them were wet through. Blankets were being served out, and hurriedly-prepared provisions, for many had been surprised by the flood water, and had not eaten anything since the previous day.

All was excitement, confusion, and consternation, and the rain still fell in
torrents on the rising waters.

“How many of them have you got here?” asked Jackson of the station master.

“I believe several hundred,” was the reply, “and we have just sent sixty families to sleep to-night in spare carriages down at Park Road station.”

“Will you be able to send this train back to Breezeland again to-night?”

“Yes; it should start at 5.30, but we shall keep it back for half-an-hour if possible, so as to give everyone a chance. I have just had a wire to say that the flood water is now over the rails at Kingston, and is rising fast; but it's a good road, and the rails are well ballasted, so as long as daylight lasts they can get through a few inches of water. But there will be no late train down to-night; in fact, this will be the last train out of the station perhaps for days, by the present look of things. Our other lines are completely blocked, for at some places we already have ten feet of water over the line.”

Walking along the platform to the far end, in the direction of the engine tank, Jackson noticed a porter stationed with a big yard broom, with which he occasionally swept the platform vigorously.

Wondering what the man could be at, sweeping away there in the rain, he drew nearer, and, to his surprise, observed the railway embankment swarming with cockroaches, centipedes, mice, beetles, and other and, occasionally, more dangerous vermin and reptiles, which were seeking refuge out of the wreckage of the flood. The porter had been put there to keep these pests at bay.

Jackson could hardly refrain from smiling at this, as he turned to where the watermen's boats were lying. A small steam launch was pushing its way swiftly, but cautiously, down Grey Street, flying the Government ensign, and guessing that it might have come for the mails, he stood watching it, when suddenly he was accosted.

“Mr. Jackson, sur!”

Turning on his heel, Jackson caught the eye of a waterman, who had just landed several intended passengers for the train on to the station platform.

“Why, Joe, is that you?” said Jackson.

“It is, sur,” the man replied; “leastways, as much of me as isn't soaked off with this 'ere blessed rain and flood.”

“S'pose you want to get over the bridge, sur. I'm just goin' across Stanley Street for the last time to-night, to bring over a few more of these unfortunate pedestrans, so you'd better step into the boat, sur, I promised the old woman to be back for tea, and tie the boat up in the yard to-night; leastways I should have to shift the pirano and mangle for her, out of the way of the flood.”

“It's all very well, sur,” he continued, as he pushed off, “to show yer
'nevolence and good nature by pullin' yer fellow critters over to the other side of the street at a shillin' a head and sixpence for children and babies in arms, but my old skipper used to say 'Charity 'gins at home,' and I's got to look arter the ole woman, you know, or nobody else will.”

“And how is Mrs. Stunner?” asked Jackson; “in good health, I hope, and well out of the flood. Why, I believe the last time I saw her was at Deal, and that must be years ago.”

“Thank yer kindly, sur, for inquirin'. Her's wery well, 'cept for a little roomatism, and hasn't forgot the jinleman that saved her favorite gran'child from drownin', that her hasn't. Yes, we're conveniently out of the flood. Jest handy 'nough, yer see, sur, fer me to go home by water and pull in at the back yard gate down in the hollow, and tie up the ‘Mary Jane’ to the fowl-house.”

They had now reached the foot of Victoria Bridge, which, although washed by the flood water, was still accessible to foot passengers, when, instead of getting out, Jackson said: “Joe, I think I'll go back with you, and you shall pull me down to the West End. I don't want to go over to the North side now.”

They took a good boat load over to the station, and landed them at a shilling a head; and then turned the bows of the “Mary Jane” into Melbourne Street.

It was a bronzed weather-beaten face, with bright little eyes, thin nose, and good-humored mouth, that looked out from under the oilskin sou'-wester.

An oilskin coat, drawn over a blue woollen guernsey, with overalls and strong water-tight boots, completed the dress of a man who might have been anywhere between fifty and sixty years of age. He was of medium height, but his muscular arms pushed the strong wherry through the water as easily as though she had only been a double-seated skiff.

“I suppose you have had a long day, Joe,” said Jackson, “and made a trifle, too, over your usual takings.”

“Yer right, sur, about the length of the day,” replied Joe. “I commenced this morning with a pirano; and by the same token, sur, it's the last pirano I hiver intend shall come aboard the ‘Mary Jane.'”

“As for the amount of the takin's, I guess it'll make the Misses' eyes brighten up, for we've had pretty bad times lately, and yer see, sur, unfortunately this 'ere flood can't last wery long. Not but what I'm sorry for the loss to poor people. But bless yer, sur, the times 'er been wery bad.”

“But what was that about the piano, Joe?”

“Well, yer see, sur, there's an old doctor lives not far frum our place. Not a bad old sort—in fact, sur, he's a very nice jinleman, when there ain't no
flood. Well, there's a hollow all round his 'ouse, and the water filled it up early yesterday.”

“The 'ouse was high and dry, but his friends thought it warn't safe. The old gentleman, though, sort of differed from them, and although they brought a carriage and very quiet horse in for him through the water, he wouldn't leave.”

“His missus and darters left, but he said that if the 'ouse was left, 't'd be robbed—like enough too, for he had a power of plate, and books, and picters, and old chiner, and a most waluable pirano. Besides, he has a cork leg, so you see he thought he couldn't possibly drown; but that wery nice old gentleman was mistaken arter all about that 'ere cork leg of his, for it played up old Humphery with us all, and nearly drowned me and his boy, as well as hisself.”

“Well, I was saying he wouldn't leave, so he 'nd two of his boys sat up all night watchin' the water.”

“Jest about daylight, who should come along but one of his sons, on an old gray pony. You see the water had come up a good bit in the night, and the old chap began to get a bit skeered.”

“Says the young chap, ‘Mister Stunner.’ ‘That's me,’ says I. ‘Pa wants yer to bring yer boat round to move him and a few things out of our 'ouse, Browning Villa.’ ”

“ ‘Right yer are, sur,’ says I, 'I'll be round in a jiffy.’ ”

“You see I had the ‘Mary Jane’ tied up in a neighbour's yard, 'cos the water hadn't reached to our yard the night before.”

“Well, I waded round to the boat and pulled across to Browning Villa, but when I got there, hanged if I could open the gate to float the ‘Mary Jane’ through into the garden, and there warn't water enough, anywhere, to take her over the fence. The old chap was standing on a chair on the werandah, to keep his feet dry, and he called out:”

“ ‘Never mind, ferryman’—which, to be sure, is a name as never belonged ter me—'it won't do to wait,’ says he. ‘Tie yer boat up and come in 'long the fence and help carry out a few wallerbles. It's a three rail fence, and you can walk 'long the middle one without gittin’ very wet, and it joins 'nother one that'll bring yer right on'tr the werandah.”

“Well, it warn't a bad idea of the old gent's, but I didn't want to git wet agin without some'at extra, so I sings out:”

“ ‘Mister Doctor, yer'll make it an extra shillin’ or two for the wettin’?’ ”

“ ‘Come 'long, old man,’ says he; ‘I'll give yer half a sovereign if yer'll git this 'ere trunk and two bags, and myself and son, out to a safe place.’ ”

“Well, I got round the fence, and carried out the trunk and two bags all right, and it's perty heavy they were, with the gentleman's gold and silver
plate and ornaments, and other things. Then I went back along the fence for himself.”

“When I got in agin to the drawring room, the water was jist comin' over the door sill on to the carpet, and I felt kinder sorry to see that 'ere beautiful room, and furniter, and mirrors, and picters, and books, and silk hangin's, and things, jist about to be destroyed by the devourin' inimy, and I s'pose he saw it in me eye.”

“‘Stunner,’ says he. ‘Yes, sur,’ says I.”

“‘I'm a'feared I've left it too late, Stunner,’ says he.”

“‘It looks verry like it, sur,’ says I.”

“‘Stunner,’ says he, ‘yer see that there pirano.’ ”

“I have it in my eye, sur,’ says I.”

“‘Stunner,’ says he, ‘that's a most valuable hinsterment; the water'll ruin it. 'Twas picked fer me by an himinent musicer, and cost one 'undred guineas.”

“He came close to me in his beautiful drawring room and said, Git that there pirano into yer boat and save it fer me, and Stunner, I'll give yer twenty shillin's, and visit yer when yer sick, until yer die.’ ”

“Well, yer see, sur, 'twas an extr'ordinary offer, so says I, ‘Stunner's yer man.’ ”

“I didn't trouble ner more with the fence, but waded in up to my shoulders with an axe, and wrenched open the big gates, and brought the ‘Mary Jane’ right up to the werandah.”

“I was a bit afeared, yer know, when I looked at the ‘Mary Jane,’ for a boat's summat like a woman, wants kerful handlin', and I was a bit curious like as to how she'd take to that 'ere pirano.”

“However, I've had fourteen pussons in the ‘Mary Jane’—although she's only licensed to carry ten—so I thought I orter manage the business.”

“Well, the old gentleman was verry perticler; brought a blanket to lay across the boat, and pulled two worsted stockings over the pirano's front legs. Then I worked her out sideways, and got her on to the werandah on a sort of wharf we made with some heavy shutters, raised up on a lot of old books. Then we lashed another blanket firmly round the valuable hinsterment, and backed it round opposite the boat.”

“‘Now,’ says I to the old chap, ‘me and this 'ere young gentleman’ (meaning his son) ‘I'll lower her down on her back if yer'll steady the “Mary Jane.” ’ Yer see, I'd got the boat stern on to the werandah, and I was afeared that she wouldn't be held steady 'cept by someone standin' in the water.”

“Arter a good bit of persuadin' like, I got the old gentleman, dressed in his beautiful black cloth suit and silk bell topper, to stand in the water and hold
the boat.”

“Yer see, he wouldn't have risked it, but it was a werry valuabe pirano, and he trusted greatly to that 'ere cork leg.”

“Says I, ‘Is all ready?’ ‘Aye, aye,’ says both of them.”

“ ‘Lower away then, boys,’ says I, and down comes the end of the pirano, fair and square on to the stern of the ‘Mary Jane.’ ”

“ ‘Steady! Steady there!’ bawled out the old doctor, and I saw his fat hands hold on like death to the side of the boat.”

“And jist then, all at once, I saw the gentleman's hidd bob down and go under the water; up came the cork leg, and away slipped the ‘Mary Jane.’ ”

“I stuck to that 'ere valuabe pirano for a second like death, but the young chap couldn't hold his side, so we all lost our balance, pirano and all, and pitched hidd first into the water.”

“When I got up agin, the gentleman's son was wiping the dirty water out of his eyes, and the doctor was drifting out of his own front garden gate, with his cork leg bobbing above the water, followed by the ‘Mary Jane.’ ”

“Only fer the old gentleman's havin' promised to wisit me, I'm blest if I think I should have ever got him saved. It warn't so werry deep, for his black silk hat scraped 'long the ground and brought him to an anchor. I caught him inmejiately!”

“He came up spluttering and swearing, and blest if the furst thing he said to me warn't:

“ ‘Stunner, you willain! Yer've ruined my valuabe pirano, and I won't pay you a penny of that there thirty shillin's.’ ”

“All right, sur,’ says I, ‘then the job's finished with’—and I let him go agin.”

“Well, the shameful way in which that gentleman's cork leg bobbed up to the surface, during the next minute or two, was awful to witness. He got up and struggled, and tumbled down agin, and we had actually to hold 'is leg down under the water to git 'im into the boat. And when I afterwards landed 'im near the schoolhouse, sur, to hear 'im curse 'umanity generally, and cork legs, and floods, and piranos, and ferrymen, in perticler, was somethin' to be remembered.”

They had now reached their destination, and after a little conversation, which included the making of an agreement to meet again later in the evening, they separated.
Chapter VIII. The Flooded Mansion

ON Saturday night, the 4th February, the moon rose over the city shortly after ten o'clock. The rain was still falling, but not so heavily, and by midnight had almost ceased. The moon, which by this time had attained a fair altitude, shone brightly, save when obscured by the scudding clouds, which, driven by the south-east wind, still swept wildly across the sky.

In hundreds of houses in Brisbane that night no one slept, and, as the gas still held out on the south side of the river, lights, even at midnight, were still pretty generally visible. Boats were rowing to and fro through the flooded streets; for the work of rescue, sustained by fresh relays of helpers, went on all through the night.

One part, however, the boats carefully avoided. It was from the far west boundary of the Montague Road to the Gas Works, where a fearful current swept across from the bend of the river opposite Toowong.

This great body of water had carried everything before it. House after house,* in many cases fully furnished, had been lifted clear of the foundations and swept along its stream into the main current of the river.

Towards this dangerous locality a boat might have been seen making its way about midnight.

Keeping as much as possible out of the current, they steered towards the farthest point of land opposite Toowong, where a large clump of bamboos growing on higher ground, near to the bank of river, seemed to bid defiance to the violent current which surged around its base.

None but daring men, bent upon some desperate or heroic mission, would have braved the fury of the elements at such an hour, on such a night as this.

“Keep her steady now, Joe,” said Jackson, who was pulling the stroke oar, “and have the boat hook handy; everything is clear in front of us. We shall be in the current in a few seconds.”

“All we have to do is to keep her head down stream on her present course,” he continued, “and we shall make the north bank a little below a clump of fir trees and bamboos, that I took the bearings of this afternoon; it will land us almost opposite Drybrook House.”

“Ah! she's in it,” said Joe, as the strong current caught the boat, and danced it like a cork upon its bosom, “we must give way now to keep her bows across the stream.”

Both men were powerful and practised oarsmen, and although the current carried them down at racing speed, the boat's head was kept steadily slanting towards the other side.
“How about these 'ere 'ouses and things, Master Jackson?” queried Joe, as they swept over the branches of a tree which Jackson knew was one of several growing on the river bank.

“They won't interfere with us, Joe,” Jackson replied, cheerfully, “we are going down stream just as fast as they are, and a little faster, and if we keep moving on and steer clear of obstacles in front of us, we shall be perfectly safe, and can run into still water on the other side.”

Notwithstanding Jackson's brave words and confident tone of voice, both men knew that the crossing of the river was fraught with fearful and appalling danger; indeed, that the chances were they would never reach the other side alive, but it was too late now to attempt to return. Their one chance was to keep the boat going downstream, and gradually work their way across.

During the evening the river had been rising with alarming rapidity, and in many places it was now rushing from twenty to thirty feet above its usual banks. It was also twice or three times its ordinary width.

The moon broke out clear of the clouds as the boat entered the main channel of the river, and shone brightly on the scene. Its light told an unmistakable tale to the spectators of the havoc and destruction which the flood had wrought in the higher reaches of the river.

Sweeping along on the bosom of the flood were to be seen houses, stables, trees, household furniture, snags of all sizes, and now and then a haystack, or some cattle or domestic animals, clinging in terror to a floating mass of debris.

“What's that noise, Joe?” asked Jackson, as crash after crash smote upon their ears with sickening regularity from lower down the river.

“It's 'ouses and big wreckage smashin' up against Victoria Bridge.”

The two men had no time, however, to think of the losses or peril of others; they had enough to do just now to look after their own safety.

At times their destruction seemed certain. They cleared snags and trees and houses, as it were, only by a hair's breadth. One danger past, their nerves were strained to the utmost to escape another. But both men kept wonderfully cool; Jackson actually reached out his hand on one occasion, as they shaved past a small weatherboard cottage, and snatched a half-drowned cat from the corner of the roof. The very animals seemed to be imbued, for the time, with extraordinary instincts, for as the boat swung past, the cat had crept to the very edge of its floating prison, and mewed piteously.

Joe had been brought up at Deal, had owned a share in a lugger, and had helped to rescue many a sailor off the Goodwin Sands. Once fairly in it, the danger and excitement became even pleasurable. It was like going back to
the days of his fearless, reckless youth.

“Steady, sur,” said Joe, “there's a fence and still water just in front of us. Yer a bit out of yer recknin', but not so much. We've been swept half a mile down stream.”

They pulled back for a short distance, past several half submerged deserted houses. Quite nine feet beneath the surface of the water on which they rowed, were gates and fences and gardens. Presently they had to steer the boat more carefully. They found themselves in the midst of firs and other ornamental trees; and the tops of flowering shrubs occasionally scraped the bottom of the boat as they passed over them. They had entered the spacious grounds of a gentleman's mansion, now completely inundated by the flood waters.

It was a large two-storied house which they approached, built in a semi-Elizabethan style of architecture, with large square windows, and long corridors and verandahs, and numerous spires and tall Gothic chimneys. It was rich and gorgeous, rather than elegant and comfortable, and had been built by the Hon. Constant M’Watt, almost regardless of expense, in the height of the land boom. He had named it Drybrook House.

They rowed up to the front entrance, and noticed, with some surprise that the large hall door was wide open, and that the water was eighteen or twenty inches deep all over the ground floor. They shipped their oars, and waited for a few minutes in perfect silence.

It was clear that Jackson had imparted to Joe Stunner some reason for this mysterious midnight visit, that had been fraught with so much peril to them both.

Nothing was to be heard save the lapping of the water against the sides of the house, and an occasional dripping, or a splash from small falling objects. Within the house, all was in perfect darkness.

“I think, Joe,” said Jackson, “that we might as well take the boat into the hall. There'll be just about water enough to float her, and the flood is still rising. You can make fast to the staircase bannister and smoke a pipe until I return.”

“Aye, aye, sur,” said Joe.

There was no difficulty about this, and the boat was soon pushed by the two men through the entrance doorway, into the spacious hall, and made fast to the polished mahogany staircase. Jackson struck a wax vesta and held it above his head, and the two men looked round the hall.

The light had revealed a curious scene.

The large apartment had been furnished with luxurious taste, and, except for the entrance of the water, was undisturbed. The ceiling was wrought into compartments, picked out in gilt and subdued colours, and from the
centre hung a large hall lamp, lacquered and burnished, and glazed with coloured glass. Heavy cornices supported the ceiling, and on the walls hung expensive oil paintings in massive gilt frames.

On the black marble table of a large mahogany hall stand, rested a hat and pair of gloves, and silver-mounted silk umbrella. All was in perfect order; the water had not even reached high enough to upset the chairs, or float the huge majolica vases.

The handsome wide staircase was richly carpeted, and just above, on the first landing, under a costly stained glass window, was a life-sized statue of the Hon. Constant M'Watt, exquisitely sculptured in white Carrara marble. The statue was supported on a large black marble pedestal. The legislator was represented by the sculptor as standing erect, in the act of addressing a public assembly; a scroll of paper was held in the left hand, and the right arm was extended forward, with the forefinger pointing downward—at present, alas! to the flood water and the boat.

“Well, I'm blest if this 'ere ain't the rummiest go I ever heard on,” said Joe, as he struck another match to light his pipe. “To think of the 'Mary Jane' floating into this 'ere luxurious residence, and being hitched up to a valuable polished staircase. Well, it is a rummy go,” and quite overcome by his feelings, Joe Stunner sat down in the boat and smoked his pipe in silence; and stroked the cat which Jackson had rescued from the flood.

Jackson was in no humor for conversation, and had by this time stepped out of the boat on to the rich velvet pile carpet of the staircase. There were a number of polished doors leading out of the entrance hall, but Jackson took no notice of them, and mounted the staircase without hesitation, as though perfectly familiar with the house.

On reaching the head of the stairs he paused a moment and struck another match. Before him was a long handsome corridor, simply furnished, but adorned with taste, and the evidence of abundant wealth. Passing a number of doors Jackson walked quickly to the end of the corridor. Here a damask curtain was hung with rings upon a brass rod. Drawing this aside he opened a door and entered a large apartment.

It was the library and special private sanctum of the Hon. Constant M'Watt.

Striking another match, Jackson found, as he had expected, candles, in addition to the movable opal gas jet upon the large writing table in the centre of the room. Lighting a candle he looked around him.

“Yes,” he said, “this is the room.”

It was a long and richly furnished apartment divided about the centre by a heavy curtain, making it into two rooms. That one in which Jackson stood had a large library of books arranged around the walls, A Gothic
overmantel of some dark wood with polished mirrors was fixed above the fireplace, and in a recess at the side of it, built into the brick work of the outer wall and fireplace, was the door of a large steel fire-proof safe.

Jackson stepped hurriedly across the room, drew aside the curtain and looked into the enclosed space. It was similarly furnished to the other part of the room, and seemingly satisfied with his scrutiny, he came back again and placed the light on the table.

He then sat down and took from the breast pocket of his overcoat the pocket-book. Unfastening it he took out two small flat keys, with one of which he went across and unlocked the iron safe.

It was a medium-size safe with one open tray at the top, a space for books below, and underneath two iron drawers (each half the width of the safe) with patent locks. It was one of these drawers that the other key unlocked.

He happened upon the right drawer at once, and turning the key in the lock the bolt shot back. He opened it with an effort and found it nearly full of sovereigns.

He stood looking at them for a moment, and stooping lifted a handful, and poured them back through his fingers. They shone under the candle light as though they were fresh and unhandled from the Mint. The gold was heavy and he had to exert himself to pull out the drawer. Having done so he pushed the pocket-book to the back of the safe, and then inserted the drawer and forcibly closed it. He shut and locked it. The bolt shot up and down freely.

There was sufficient room for the pocket-book in the space behind the drawer of the safe.

As though satisfied Jackson was about to re-lock the safe, when an envelope—possibly caught by his coat sleeve—fluttered from the top of a parcel of deeds tied with red tape, and fell upon the floor. He stooped to pick it up and was about to replace it, when his eye caught an address upon the envelope.

He held the candle nearer. The ink had a fresh appearance, and the envelope was addressed as follows. “The executors of my will, my solicitors, or any person into whose hands this letter may come, is hereby authorised by me, Constant M’Watt, of Drybrook House, Brisbane, at any time after my decease, to open, peruse, and make known to all the parties concerned, and also to some magistrate of the Territory, the contents of the enclosed document.”

Jackson stood for several minutes staring at the envelope. He then placed it on the table, and going across to the safe, closed and locked the door.

He took the two keys and tying them together with a small piece of red
tape, which lay upon the table, placed them at the back of the drawer half filled with papers, and closing it sat down again and took the envelope in his hand.

He was clearly, he thought, authorised by its inscription to break the seal, but he hesitated.

As he looked at it by the candle-light a dismal foreboding of coming evil seemed to oppress both heart and brain, but at last with an effort he tore it open. It was painful to see the man's distorted features as he read it. He read it a second time with glaring eyes.

“It can't be true!” at last he ejaculated.

“It's an accursed lie, written in fiendish hate and revenge, intended to ruin Darton, and blight Edna's life, and drive me mad!”

“Good Heavens! the very thought of it, a fratricide, and he her father. No, there are no proofs, it's a hellish lie, and he has gone where he will have to answer for it!”

Placing the envelope with its contents in his pocket, with a troubled countenance, he took up the candle and left the room. He had only taken a few steps along the long corridor, when he heard a voice calling in an adjoining room.

“George! George!”

No words can adequately describe Jackson's surprise and consternation. He stopped immediately, and listened breathlessly. Joe Stunner was down stairs in the boat. This voice came from a room opposite to him, the door of which stood ajar.

“George,” said the voice again, “aren't you ashamed of yourself.”

Jackson did not wait a moment longer but immediately flung open the door of the room.

There was really no cause for alarm, but conscience makes cowards of us all. He saw before him, chained to a perch and stand, a large white cockatoo. “Merely some scolding word he has picked up from a servant,” said Jackson to himself.

“Poor Polly, poor Polly,” said the bird. “Polly all alone. No one cares for Polly. Polly wants a bone.”

“I see you've plenty of water,” said Jackson, examining the perch and stand, and here is some more corn for you on this shelf.”

He gave it some, saying, “There that will last you till the servants come back.”

He turned to leave the room when the bird called out “Come back George. Poor Polly. Polly all alone.”

A sudden thought seemed to strike Jackson. He had been trying to solve a difficulty, and here was possibly its elucidation. At any rate he would try.
Going up to the bird, he said: “Polly, it's at the back of the iron drawer.”

The bird wagged it's head knowingly, and repeated the words: “It's at the back of the iron drawer.”

“Polly,” he repeated once more, “It's at the back of the iron drawer.” The bird looked solemnly at him, and nodding its head said: “It's at the back of the iron drawer.”

Jackson closed the door softly, and as he walked down the corridor heard the bird slowly repeating to itself: “It's at the back of the iron drawer.”

“Let's get out of this now, Joe, as quickly as we can, said Jackson, as he re-entered the boat.

“All right sur; glad to get out of it. I'd a been werry lonesome but for my pipe and the cat. Queer noises goin' on in these 'ere rooms all round this 'ere 'all. Makes one feel sort of shivery, as though the place were 'aunted.”

“Oh,” said Jackson, “that is only the furniture and things being tumbled over by the water. I see that since I have been upstairs the river has risen quite another foot.”

* The houses referred to were, of course, built of wood; residence of all sizes being erected of that material in the suburbs of Brisbane; many of them, of imposing dimensions, being built of hard wood or chamfred boards.
Chapter IX. Old Pinchpenny's Donation

THE whole of the road between Toowong and the North Quay was under water, with a strong current running over it, so the men kept the boat in the still water which flooded a large and fairly populous district to their left. They had no intention of attempting to recross the river, and were making their way to the unflooded portion of North Brisbane, intending to get refreshments; and if possible, a sleep. Soon, however, their attention was attracted by piteous appeals for help, and for the next few hours they were busily engaged in rescue work.

“May we bring you another family?” said Jackson to a little round-faced man, one of the oldest residents of the neighbourhood, whose large house, although surrounded by water, being on rising ground was not yet flooded.

“Yes, bring them along, we will manage somehow; we have twelve families already—sixty souls besides my own people. God grant that it may not reach us!”

The last woman and child were placed in the good man's house in safety, and they rowed on towards George Street, where Joe met some acquaintances, and lent his boat for work in the city.

They found an hotel open and doing a roaring trade, as most of them were during that eventful night. Refreshments were brought, but they were informed that they could not get beds; the house was full. There was a spare sofa and lounge in the dining room which they could have.

“Joe,” said Jackson, as they sat down to a substantial meal, which they badly needed, “what have you done with the cat?”

“Left it with that 'nevolent old party in Squib Street,” said Joe.

“Now, that was imposing on good nature,” said Jackson, laughing, “but did you tell anyone?”

“Oh yes, told the darter. She said it was all right—that made fifteen cats, nine dorgs, and seventy-two pussons.”

“But, bless yer sur,” continued Joe, reflectively, “he's a werry kind old gentlemen, he is, and so is his missus, and the young gentlemen. The'r known of it all roun' the district; he's clean grit, altho' they do say he's an elder at old M'Duffin's church.”

“But this 'ere is a werry bad flood. Ninety was bad 'nough, but this beats it by several feet, and for the presint the toughest is got tinder like, and soft 'earted.”

“I had old Pinchpenny in the ‘Mary Jane’ yesterday. Yer know him, don't yer? Tall, spare, thin-faced man, dresses in dark shabby clothes, like a superanerated parson, and works the topsail halliards a bit from 'low deck
at 'lection times. Wanted me to take a battered old thrippenny as payment for a shillin' ride, and called me a swindlin' imposter that robbed the widder and the farderless, 'cause I threatened to 'and 'im over to the perilce. Well, I 'ere he's promised to give £25 to the Relief Fund when he gits his next rints from those Norman Street properties of his, that he swindled old Bailee Jones out of for sixteen hundred pund's.”

“Yer see, sur, he were standin' by the bridge watchin' the 'ouses and furniter, and things comin' down the river, with one of the Boulderlands, when an alderman comes up 'an asks 'im fer a 'nation to help feed the starvin' critters who'd lost everythin' in the flood. Boulderland raps out his purse and gives him three ten pun notes without a word. But Pinchpenny said he'd 'ad 'is own losses and would think about it.”

“Well, jist thin a big square two-storied nine-roomed 'ouse came sailin' down the river. The crowds of people shouted as she came down, and then held their breaths to see her strike the bridge. She came broadside on to a sand barge, that 'ad got stuck in the bridge and wreckage earlier in the day, and smashed up with a report like a cannon. Somehow it took the 'ull roof clean off her, before she broke up an' went down, and you could see into the 'ull of the up-stairs rooms. Drawring room and bed rooms and all, each of 'em beautifully furnished complete, an' as clean an' straight and neat, as though the 'ouse had been tidied up for the missus' birthday party. There were a nice young chap standin' next to Pinchpenny as 'ad lent him half his umbrella, cause yer know old Pinchpenny never takes his out in the rain lest it should git wet.”

“They'd been talkin' 'bout the flood and so on, and watchin' the 'ouses, and neither of 'em 'ad spoke as this un come down. All at once the young chap calls out”—

“Good God! Pinchpenny, that's my 'ouse and furniter,” and he dropped down in a dead faint on the ground. Old Pinchpenny turned straight roun' to the alderman, who was still standin' jist behind 'im, and a bit 'uskie like says: “Put me down fer five and twenty punds.”

“Most extraordinary thing that,” said Jackson.

“Yer right sur,” said Joe, “it was an extr'ordinary thing, for the young chap 'ad moved 'is missus and family into the city, and locked up his 'ouse and furniter, thinkin' them quite safe from the flood.”

“But there 'ave been queerer things than that 'appened in this 'ere flood sur. Would yer believe it, my missus' cousin's sister-in-law told her fer a fact, jist afore we 'ad our tea yesterday, that a gentleman down Doveridge way, and a werry great swell, too, sur, 'ad on one of 'is 'ousekeeper's stockins the night before, when they moved out of their big 'ouse on account of the flood. Yer see, sur, people were that excited as they were
dressin' themselves, with the water comin' up about the 'ouse they did not 'alf of them know what they were doin'. It was the gentleman's wife found out the mistake he 'ad made, and there was a pretty row they say, 'cause yer see he could not give a satisfactory 'planation. Awk'ard, wasn't it, sur? And yer see there 'ad been some bother 'bout that 'ere 'ousekeeper afore, and they 'ad it up at the church at some meetin'. But thin yer see he was werry well off sur, and 'ad influence, and 'splained things like, so he was 'onourably acquitted, and the parson 'pologised and said he left the meetin' without a stain on his character. But that 'ere stockin' were a puzzler. The gentleman couldn't 'count for it nohow. But thin yer see there's no countin' fer anythin' what happens in sich floods as these.”

“Joe,” said Jackson, when the boatman had finished this long rigmarole. “I expect you'd like to go outside and have another pipe, and then we'll turn in for a few hours. It will soon be daylight.”
Chapter X. A Half Ruined City

THERE were thousands of people in Brisbane that first Sunday morning in February, who had watched and waited impatiently for the day. Sad indeed had been their vigils during the long hours of darkness, and when the morning at last dawned, it was upon a scene of widespread desolation. There was no concealing the fact—east and west and north and south—Brisbane presented the spectacle of a half ruined city. The havoc made by the devastating water was appalling, and the wildest rumors were current.

It was asserted that hundreds of houses had been washed away during the night, that the leading merchants and large retail houses had lost almost the whole of their stocks; that the principal streets in the city were submerged up to the first floors of the shops and warehouses: and worse still, it was believed that very many lives had been lost. It was a morning of terror and amazement, never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it.

At a quarter to six o'clock, just as the dawn was breaking, the great iron railway bridge, which spanned the river at Indooroopilly, gave way with a crash and roar like thunder, that was distinctly heard a mile distant from the scene. As the hours passed by, horsemen were seen approaching by the higher roads, and by paths along the hilly ridges from all directions, with bad tidings of death and ruin caused by the flood. They came appealing to the authorities for assistance. The telegraph wires were down on all sides, and that Sunday, neither train nor steamer departed or approached. Brisbane was completely cut off from all communication with the outside world. The city sat desolate, like one with none to comfort her, and the lamentation of the old Hebrew prophet might have been literally applied. For the waters were come up upon Brisbane, she was covered with the multitude of the waves thereof, her pleasant places lay desolate, and fear was upon every side.

But the spirit of the people rose to the occasion. As soon as the magnitude of their disaster could be known, sympathy and help would pour in upon them from the sister colonies, from England, and from all the world. Someone had blundered, or the city would never have been placed where so fearful a calamity could have overtaken it. But that could not be helped now, and they set themselves nobly and bravely to do their best.

It may be explained here that the river winds through the city and suburbs somewhat in the form of the capital letter S, twice repeated, with an additional half-circle joining the two letters. From Oxley, at the top of the first S, to the Hamilton, at the bottom of the second S, is a distance by water of something like a dozen miles.
Beginning at the top of the first letter, Oxley, Corinda, and Sherwood lie southward, and on that Sunday morning the most sensational reports were circulated as to the fate of the inhabitants. On the previous Saturday the river had broken clean over the Indooroopilly pocket on the opposite side. Following the letter down we come on to Toowong and Milton, on the next bend; with Hill End, West End, and the Montague Road, on the south side. This is the portion of the river over which Jackson and Stunner made their perilous passage on the previous Saturday night, and needs no further description.

It may be said that the lower half of this letter was entirely flooded, and comprised the business part of South Brisbane on the left, from Victoria Bridge to the Dry Dock. To the right of this lay the business part of North Brisbane, covering ten or a dozen streets entirely occupied with shops or warehouses, almost the whole of which were submerged. The banks of the river are here lined with wharves, the sheds of which were either completely covered or had their roofs only visible above the water. In the half circle uniting the two letters are the Botanical Gardens. On the Sunday referred to a gun boat, several barges, and one of the A.U.S.N. Co.'s steamers were floating above the ruined flower beds and shrubberies. The destruction wrought may be imagined. The opposite bank to the gardens stands high and is partly formed of rocky cliffs; but Kangaroo Point, where the second S commences, experienced the full force of the destroying element, and the scene witnessed here was one never to be forgotten.

Following down the bend of our second capital letter, we have New Farm and Fortitude Valley in the first half-circle, with East Brisbane on the other side, backing on to Norman's Creek, Coopooroo and other large areas, the whole of which were flooded. The river sweeps round again here, through Bulimba, Breakfast Creek, and the Hamilton—districts which are studded over in all directions with the houses of the wealthy, and the dwellings of the poor—the latter it need scarcely be said, being mostly on the lower ground. It should be mentioned too that there are large and populous neighbourhoods far back from the banks on the north side of the river, of which we have made no mention, that were entirely submerged. The leading journal might well say when reviewing the situation: “It were idle to ignore or minimise the magnitude of the disaster which has befallen the city and the colony. A war or an earthquake might cause more deaths, but it seems hard to believe that either the one or the other could entail more suffering, and privation, and destruction of property.”

The rain had ceased, and the sun was shining through the clouds, when Jackson and Joe Stunner left the hotel on Sunday morning, and went off in search of the “Mary Jane.” They walked along to Queen Street, but before
reaching the Opera House were stopped by the water. A large steam launch came puffing round the corner of Edward Street, and stopped between the great buildings of the Courier office and a large retail draper's shop on the other side. The water was within a few feet of the ceilings of shops and warehouses, and to see through the glass windows valuable goods floating about in it, was truly pitiful.

“What do you think of this, Jackson?” said a club acquaintance in the crowd, touching his arm, “Just driven in from our place, on the heights overlooking Rosalie and Bayswater. 'Pon my word, the scene's indescribable. I drove a reporter in, who had been writing it up for his paper. He says ‘its general appearance is as though a mighty hand had played chess on the flats, with houses for pieces, and had, in a moment of anger, brushed them carelessly into a confused heap’; and, by George, he's about right.”

The two men entered into conversation, and Joe Stunner, who seemed to have something on his mind, went off in search of his boat. He had heard that she had been seen somewhere in Adelaide Street.

An hour or two later Jackson was in Roma Street, on the look-out for Joe, when he saw one of the corporation drays coming up the street with a large boat carefully poised across it. A minute after he was accosted by Stunner.

“I've been lookin' for yer this 'alf-hour, Master Jackson.”

“Well, what's in the wind now, Joe?”

“Yer see, I've got the ‘Mary Jane’ at last, sur, although she does not look in her element on that 'ere cart, jolting over these 'ere stones, but it's the only way to get her over. We can't pull her up stream against this flood; the chap has promised to be very keerful with her. Yer see,” he continued, “there's a son of an old friend of my missus's alone in a 'ouse t'other side of the river, and he's 'ad a candle in the window all night to show as the 'ouse is there and he's alive. Golliker's his name, nice young chap, and his mother has been carrying on all night through, crying and sobbing as though 'er 'art would break. When I saw her this morning I couldn't stand it, and so I came away agin to have another look for yer, sur, and the ‘Mary Jane.’ ”

“Yer know, sur,” and the eyes of the honest old chap shone with excitement, “if you'd take an oar with me, I'd just show some of these 'ere Brisbane people how we used to save life on the Goodwins. I 'member an East Indi'man being on them sands one a'ternoon; the wind was blowin' ard on to her, with great seas breakin' clean over the fok'sel 'ead. We were in a lugger, a fine handy craft, and the skipper saw that the only chance to save them was for them to throw us a rope, to hang on to. We daren't go up to them, to lay 'longside, fer we should 'ave been stove in at once, but we
sailed past as close as we dared, and the skipper sang out to them as we went by the first time, ‘Throw us a rope.’ We shot past, up went the helm, 'bout ship, and then rattled down on ter them agin. But the crew hung over the side, jist looking at us half daft, as though we were out fer a blow with our gals on a Sunday afternoon. ‘Throw us a rope,’ yelled the skipper, and we flew past the second time. ‘For God's sake throw us a rope,’ called out the skipper, the third time, and he put us in that close to her that some of us 'eld our breaths. Well, the skipper swore a bucketful, and said he'd only give the thick-eds one more chance. He stood at the tiller, and I fixed myself in the bows to catch the rope. And they flung it that time. I made fast; the lug was dropped in a jiffy; and we swung round under her stern like a sea-gull. One by one fourteen men scrambled down that rope, and we landed every soul of them safely that afternoon in Deal. They'd lost everythin', and the ship's owners, who took the insurance money, never paid us a sixpence fer our trouble, or fer risking our lives to save the crew. Not that it mattered much, fer a sailor would risk his life at any time rather than see a feller critter perish in a watery grave."

“Master Jackson,” said Joe, with great earnestness, “the only possible way to save this 'ere young man is with a rope.”

They had now reached the North Quay ferry, and found an excited crowd gathered around a woman, who wept and moaned in momentary expectation of being an eye-witness of the death of her only son. He was in a house on the opposite bank, situated on the bend of the river, where the fierce current seemed to spend its wildest force. Part of the verandah had already been washed away, and the house seemed to tremble, as though at any moment the whole structure might be destroyed. Stunner went down to the frantic woman on the ferry steps, and whispered something, for which she seemed to thank him, after which he commenced to perform one of the strangest pantomimes ever witnessed.

He had the boat and cart drawn as closely as possible to the ferry steps, then he climbed on to one of the seats of the boat and beckoned, and at last seemed to make the young man understand that the boat was shortly coming to rescue him. The gravity of the situation caused the crowd to keep silence during the rest of Stunner's performance. He had a long coil of stout rope neatly arranged in the bows of the boat, and getting Jackson to stand on a dray near at hand, again beckoned to the young fellow in the endangered house to watch him. He leaned as far forward as he dared over the boiling flood, and Joe seemed satisfied.

“Draw yer 'orse along a few fathoms, captain,” he called out to the drayman. Then, as the dray and boat went slowly past the place where Jackson stood, Stunner threw the rope with unerring aim on to Jackson's
outstretched arm, and pulled on the rope, which Jackson now held fast, as though bent on stopping both boat and dray. Golliker held up both hands to signify that he had seen and understood the pantomime.

A quarter of an hour after, watched by hundreds of breathless spectators, the “Mary Jane” came swiftly down from where she had been launched, higher up the river. Jackson was again pulling stroke oar. They had lost a little through having to avoid a large snag, and had to lay back upon their oars to regain ground. How the men pulled. It seemed as though the stout ash oars must break.

“Steady, sur,”

“Steady it is,” said Jackson.

Stunner had shipped his oar, and stood with the coil of rope in his hand, ready to throw at the right moment. The boat was shooting down with arrowy swiftness toward the house, where the young man clung to the remains of the verandah. The crowd on the farther bank held its breath in mute excitement. The only sound audible was the roar of the mighty torrent.

“Put her head in jist a little more, Master Jackson,” said Stunner, as coolly as though he were asking for change of sixpence at the Garden ferry.

A moment afterwards the rope went whizzing through the air, hurled with such force that part of the large coil flattened itself against the wall of the building close by the young man's head. He could not help but catch it, and in a second or two had fastened it round the remaining two verandah posts at the corner.

Jackson now pulled the boat more inshore, as the strength of the current swept from this point over to the north side. This checked the boat's speed somewhat, and turned her bows. For half a minute Stunner let the rope run out, which it did as smoothly as if out of the tub of a whale boat. Her head was half round as the rope tightened, and she was in much calmer water, and swung round as the strain came upon her without shipping more than a cupful. It was a daring and clever manoeuvre, and the crowd cheered frantically as they saw its success. Joe now hauled the boat back with the rope. The “Mary Jane,” however, swayed about as she was caught again by the violence of the current, and it became clear to Stunner that it would be dangerous to go nearer, and that Golliker would have to scramble somehow down the rope, in imitation of the wrecked seamen on the Goodwin Sands. The youngster was not deficient in pluck, and soon swung himself on to the rope over the boiling tide. The rope, however, failed to bear the additional strain (either it broke or had not been strongly enough fastened), and in a moment the boat was swept adrift, and Golliker was sinking in the flood. A heart-rending, blood-curdling scream, was heard on
the other shore.

It was the young man's mother. Jackson's boots, coat, and hat, were off in a moment, and he had sprung into the current in the direction of the drowning man.

Jackson saved him—how, he never could explain; like many another daring and heroic deed, it baffled description. Stunner took in the situation at a glance, and catching hold of the oars, pulled with a will toward where the forms of the two men were visible. Jackson had managed to catch hold of Golliker's hair, and was keeping his head above the water. Within three minutes, by some means or the other, Joe had helped the two men into the boat. As he did so, however, it was caught in an eddy and whirled round like a straw.

To his dismay, as Jackson wiped the water out of his eyes, he saw the oars slip from the rowlocks into the river. The crowd saw it too, and a groan involuntarily escaped from scores of lips.

Like a bubble on the mighty torrent, the boat now swept toward Victoria Bridge, and for a moment the three men sat in the boat—oarless, helpless, and hopeless; seemingly on their way to certain death.

The water was level with the flooring of the bridge, and a great mass of wreckage stretched like a barrier on the north side—in some places heaped high in the air—against which the river foamed, and ever and anon flung up its waters in great showers of spray. The people followed the boat, running along the North Quay, mingling with horsemen; all hurrying to see the end. Escape seemed impossible. The hearts of the beholders sank within them—paralysed! The boat would be crushed like an egg-shell, against the iron sides and girders of the bridge!

Jackson recovered himself in a few moments. He measured with his eye the distance between them and the bridge, pulled his hat on to his dripping head, put on his boots, picked up his coat, shook it, and put it on. He had a large sum of money in notes in the breast pocket, and he put in his hand to feel that it was right. He had formed a plan of escape.

“Cut off a long end of rope Joe, and lash it round your waist.”

“Aye, aye, sur.”

Allowing a yard or two over Jackson wrapped and tied the middle of it under Golliker's arms, who sat in the middle of the boat half insensible, then he fastened it firmly round his own waist. The boat was hurried along with the current broadside on, toward a part of the bridge less blocked with wreckage. In another half-minute it would strike and their fate would be decided.

“Now, Golliker, old fellow,” said Jackson, kindly, “stir yourself up and we'll save you yet.”
“Be ready to jump Joe” he said in the same breath.
“Aye, aye”—but Stunner never finished it. A crack like a pistol-shot was heard above the hoarse roar of the flood—the Mary Jane was smashed into fragments, and two men, bruised and battered, were clinging with bleeding fingers to the iron lattice-work of the bridge, and between them was suspended the inanimate body of a seemingly dead man. For several minutes they clung there, the flood waters spouting and foaming around them. Then it flashed upon the spectators, that for some cause the men were powerless to move.

Heroism begets heroes, and in a moment twenty men were about to rush along the bridge to their assistance.

“Three will be enough,” called out a commissioner of police, who had stood watching the whole scene. “The bridge is dangerous; may part at any moment!”

Three stout fellows stooped under the rope that barred access to the doomed structure, and made their way through the water, which rushed foaming across the flooring of the bridge. They climbed on to the side parapet, and lifted up Golliker by the rope, and one of them gave Jackson a hand to get on to the parapet.

“Come along old chap” said another of them to Stunner, But he still clung to the lattice-work.”

“Master Jackson,” said the old man looking up in his face, “'pears to me as though my fingers had got glued to this 'ere bridge. I can't undo them. The men had to bend back the old hero's bleeding fingers one by one, before they could rescue him from his dangerous position. The strain and convulsive effort with which he had clung for life had caused the muscles to contract upon the ironwork.

He was greatly shaken, and while the men carried Golliker over the quaking bridge to Queen Street, Jackson had to put his arm around Stunner to help him along. The old man was very quiet as they waded through the rushing water, but on getting nearer to the end of the bridge Jackson looked down into his weather-beaten honest face to see what was the matter. His eyes were brimming with tears.

“What's the matter Joe, old fellow, are you suffering much pain?” Jackson's voice as he said this was as tender and compassionate as a woman's.

“No, it isn't the pain Master Jackson, it's to think that we've seen the last of the poor old 'Mary Jane.' ”

“Stunner,” said George, “I've money enough in my breast coat pocket to buy you fifty boats as good as the Mary Jane, and I'll make you a present of a spanking new boat, with everything complete as soon as this flood's
over.”

“Aye, Master Jackson, you're a werry kind gentleman, you always was, but I'm afeared I shall never git 'tached like to 'nother boat as I was to the 'Mary Jane.'”

The following morning at four o'clock the massive bridge, which for days had gallantly resisted the enormous weight of flood water and accumulated wreckage, at last gave way. The rain had ceased, and bright moonlight gleamed upon the seething waters, which still roared and foamed as though eager to devour their prey. The middle span of the great thoroughfare, built at a cost of one hundred and fifty thousand pounds, gave way first, with a crash that shook the earth, and made the buildings on the banks tremble to their foundations. Another crash followed, and another; and another, as span after span collapsed, while the waters heaved convulsively, and spouted upward in great floods of moonlit foam-capped water. On the north side not a single vestige of the bridge remained.

Having completed its work of destruction, the remorseless river swept on again, unstemmed by barrier, as with the irresistible march of a triumphant army, bearing upon its bosom destruction, woe, and death. And yet, let it be said as we close this chapter, not without a blessing scattered upon its awful and desolating pathway. For it is out of the fires of trial and disappointment that there comes the gold of a nation's purity; and out of the flood and earthquake the still small voice of a nation's strength.
Chapter XI. A Rejected Offer of Marriage

IN order to sustain the continuity of our story, it will be necessary to return for a chapter or two to Darton's Point. There was, of course, no reliable information obtainable from Brisbane on Sunday morning. John Darton had up his iron gray saddle hack, and rode down to the township to see if he could pick up any news. But the flood waters had cut off all communication with city or suburbs, and he rode back again, bringing only terrible rumours that Brisbane was almost ruined, and whole neighbourhoods destroyed; that Victoria Bridge had been swept away, and over one hundred lives lost.

Tears came to Edna's eyes as she listened to these fearful reports. She had a woman's generous sympathy for the distressed and suffering. Her kind heart never heard a cry of distress, but it had compassion; never saw a tear without a wish to wipe it away.

But she had no real anxiety for Jackson. He was her ideal, her hero, and her mind could scarcely conceive of a situation in which he would not possess the mastery. There was a flood; but who such a swimmer as he, and her fancy pictured him in the midst of dangerous scenes, bravely rescuing men and women and children from watery graves. She saw him, in her excited imagination, bearing them in his strong arms in safety to the shore, and heard the plaudits of the crowd as her dripping hero stepped upon the bank. She was glad that he was there, and even wished that she might have had the good fortune to be with him. She could swim, and row, and by George Jackson's side she would have been the Grace Darling of the flood; and as she imagined deeds of prowess, and heroism, and chivalry, which he might at that very moment be engaged in, her eyes sparkled, and her form assumed a bearing of intrepid resolution.

“Whatever is the matter with you, Edna?” asked Mrs. Darton, looking at her in astonishment, for she seemed for the moment to be transfigured, as she stood there—erect, stately, and radiant.

“Well, Aunty! I was just thinking of that address of the Spartan women to their husbands and sons; did you never read it?” and without waiting her aunt's reply, she repeated the following lines, her cheeks flushing with excitement:—

“We are brave men's mothers, and brave men's wives,
    We are ready to do and dare;
We are ready to man your walls with our lives,
    And string your bows with our hair.
Let the young and the brave lie down to-night,
   And dream of the brave old dead—
Their broad shields bright, for to-morrow's fight,
   And their spears beneath their heads.”

“You're the queerest girl I ever met with,” was the only reply that Mrs. Darton vouchsafed to her.

Sunday was always a quiet day at Darton's Point. Occasionally the family drove to church, and sometimes a visitor or two from Brisbane, or the neighbourhood, came in; but John Darton and Edna liked quiet Sundays, and mostly had their way. That afternoon the sun shone out a little, and its unwonted brightness drew them out of doors; they were reading on the verandah overlooking the Bay.

Edna and Mrs. Darton were both on lounges. The latter had been glancing through a religious newspaper, which some friend posted to John Darton regularly from England, and the former had a volume of poems on her knee. She was not reading; her thoughts were with her lover.

Surely a sweeter picture than Edna Forrest that afternoon was never seen. The passion of a first great love, to which she had surrendered her whole being, had glorified with a new, almost saintly, beauty, a face that was rare and beautiful before. In a few week's time Edna would attain her majority, and be mistress of her fortune. It pleased her that it would be so, for all she had, she whispered to herself, was his. Her nut-brown wavy hair—a white fragrant flower its sole adornment—was coiled in heavy masses around her graceful head, which lay half buried in a velvet cushion. Large brown winning eyes looked out from between long sweeping lashes, and it was hard to guess whether she merely looked at the black silk bows of her dainty shoes, that reached just far enough to give a glimpse of black open-worked stockings and shapely ankles, or at something else. Two rings shone on the fingers of one hand, which lay carelessly across the other, upon the Wordsworth lying on her knee. Upon her rising bosom lay another flower, which, nestling in the folds of her dress, seemed to press close and fondly to its lovely resting place. But it was Edna's mouth that seemed her chief attraction. Such calm full lips, and small white teeth, and fragrant breath; and then her smile, and mirth-provoking laugh. But this we have already referred to. It is no wonder that such a girl, with ten thousand pounds and accumulated interest, should have been thought by Mrs. Darton worthy of a brilliant match. She wondered how it was Darton kept George Jackson so long with him. She liked Jackson, of course—could not well help it; he was a gentleman, and all that, and the son of one of their oldest friends; but Edna ought to look much higher. She was good enough, she said one day, when alone with John, for the best and richest man in
Queensland.

“Edna, my dear, jump up; I do believe there's a carriage coming through the station paddock!”

Mrs. Darton rose up herself, and smoothing the folds of her dress, passed into the hall to see if the household was ready for visitors, and her husband anywhere at hand. A few minutes after, a stylish turn-out, drawn by a pair of bays, came rattling up the drive.

It was George Charles De Ville, Esq., J.P., of Oaklands Park, Brisbane, and Miss Clara De Ville, his sister. They had a handsome marine residence in the neighbourhood called Bay View Lodge, and, as Mr. De Ville said, had just dropped in to talk over the flood, and hear if Mr. and Mrs. Darton had any news from Brisbane.

De Ville's father had recently died, and what with station holdings and city properties, &c., he took rank with the wealthiest men of the colony.

The Dartons really owed the visit to several causes, one of which, and perhaps two, John was not ignorant of. De Ville was the holder of a promissory note for £275 13s., made by George Jackson in favour of Henry Stuart, and endorsed by John Darton. Both Jackson and Darton were puzzled as to how it had got into his hands, and only a few weeks before, had incidentally been made aware of the fact.

De Ville was a man who never missed the opportunity of killing two birds with one stone, or three if possible, when he had the chance. He had come over, for one thing, to find out, if possible, whether the pro-note had been met on the previous Saturday, which, it will be remembered, was the fourth of the month. Also to show off his new pair of bays, that had cost a hundred guineas, to his sister and the Dartons; but principally to see Edna Forrest.

De Ville, or “Devill,” as his father had been called when he was a bullock driver on old Sandy M’Govan's run, early in the forties, was a man of about five and thirty, medium height, and fair complexion. He had a round fat head, and face covered thinly with fair hair, and small gray eyes. It was a disputed point with those who knew him as to whether he shaved. At any rate, only a few straggling hairs showed on his fat cheeks, and chin, and upper lip. He was dressed fashionably, and in perfect taste, and had the easy self-assurance which comes of conscious wealth. He was known amongst his intimate acquaintances as Mephistophiles, but the sobriquet had probably never reached his ears.

Keen and unscrupulous in business, he invested his money at the highest rate of interest attainable, and on the best security, and never missed a chance. He had a smooth silky voice, always wore a flower in his button-hole, never forgot an injury, and unless it served his own purpose, was
never known to help a friend.

His sister was a simpering, over-grown, large-featured girl, of about five and twenty. She had, of course, left school, having learnt as little as possible. She simpered assent when talked to, as though she knew everything, when she really knew nothing. Thumped the piano in the morning, and read French novels, and painted impossible landscapes in the afternoons; had neither the instincts nor the breeding of a lady, stared vacantly at people who bowed to her, even after formal introduction, unless they were reputed to be wealthy; had a vile temper, no heart, a soul about big enough for a mosquito, and a fortune of thirty-five thousand pounds. They were, of course, great people in the country surrounding Darton's Point, and lookedcoldly down upon the neighbourhood from their eminence of wealth. They visited only two or three families in the district—one of them being the Darton's.

The fact was, De Ville had made up his mind to bestow upon Edna Forrest the honour of his heart and hand. She was, he considered, the handsomest and most accomplished girl he had met, and as he proposed entering Parliament shortly, and would in time, of course, become Chief Secretary, he wished to have a beautiful and fascinating woman for his wife. He was not altogether unmindful of her fortune, but that was a mere bagatelle, and he would let her keep it for pin money; he hated to see a woman ill-dressed. And what was £10,000! He had made nearly as much as that by a little corner in shares, a few weeks before, almost unknown to anyone. He had told his sister as they drove out that he had made up his mind to marry Edna Forrest, and might propose to her that very afternoon, so she might as well become a little better acquainted with her.

On their arrival De Ville at once enquired after Miss Forrest, who was nowhere to be seen, so Mrs. Darton, who, by the way, was in quite a little flutter of excitement, went to look for her.

"Really Aunt," said Edna, when Mrs. Darton found her in her own pretty room, "if it won't seem discourteous, I wish you would kindly make some excuse for me, they won't stop long, and I would sooner not go in."

"What nonsense child," said her aunt with some asperity. "It will be rude, and they will very likely take it as a slight on your part. I cannot understand you. You must have noticed the attention which Mr. De Ville paid you at the last Government House ball, and he told your uncle the next day, when he met him at the Club, that he considered you the most beautiful and accomplished girl in Brisbane, and complimented him on having such a handsome young lady for his niece. Now let me smooth your hair, and come out and make yourself agreeable. He must be enormously wealthy, and see how well he always dresses, and what fine horses he
drives. My advice to you in all seriousness Edna, is to encourage his attentions, and if he proposes to you, think yourself a lucky girl, and accept him at once. There is nothing would please me better than to see you married to him."

“But Aunt, I don't like him! With all his money he's not a gentleman, and there's something under that smooth silky speech of his that does not please me. It's my belief that beneath all his smooth exterior, he is a hard, cruel, treacherous, and unprincipled man. I heard one thing about him, which I quite believe to be true, that would settle the question of my marrying him.”

Mrs. Darton looked at her niece in horrified astonishment, as she saw her castles in the air being so ruthlessly tumbled to the ground.

In half-laughing defiance, Edna continued, “why you can't even make a good word out of his name. Take off the first letter and its evil, transpose it and its vile, spell it back-wards and it becomes a lie, and turn it into plain English and it's devil! Apart from all other things I really couldn't marry any man with such a name as that.”

“Edna, you are incorrigible; I don't believe a word of the foolish story you have heard about him. I never knew of such an insane thing as to refuse a man of wealth and refinement, and position, who likely enough will go into Parliament and become a Minister of the Crown, and perhaps get a title, because you don't like his name. It's my opinion that Lady De Ville would sound very aristocratic and in perfect good taste.”

“Now you are talking nonsense Aunt Sarah, we should just be Mr. and Mrs. Devil to the end of the chapter, and if we had a family it would be Pa and Ma and the four little devils. No thank you Aunty dear, you know I'm not very particular, but one must consider appearances just a little bit you know. However, to please you, I'll come into the drawing room, and make myself agreeable to his Satanic majesty for a little while.”

Mr. De Ville and his sister met Edna with great cordiality; the latter actually put up her thin vinegar lips to kiss her intended sister-in-law, and simpered, “So pleased to see you Miss Edna, my dear,” at which the J.P. smiled a gracious approval, and for the moment wished he'd been a girl.

De Ville and Darton had been talking business, but the conversation now became general. Afternoon tea was brought in, and the talk turned again upon the all absorbing topic of the flood.

“Any losses at Oaklands Mr. De Ville?” asked Darton.

“Oh no, nor anywhere else; every bit of property I own, or have advanced money upon, is high above flood mark. You cannot make me believe that there were not plenty like my old father, who knew all about these floods, and who knew Brisbane was being laid out in a wrong
situation altogether. For instance, how do you account for it that every site and building belonging to the Government is high and dry, and entirely clear of the flood waters? There's the Parliament and Government Houses, the Treasury Buildings, Supreme Court, General Post Office, Land Office, Government Printing Office, Immigration Office, Custom House, &c., although they are scattered all over the city, every one is above highest flood mark. You don't think it came about by chance! Of course they knew that the city would be liable to floods, and some of them ought to have been hung for allowing such a thing. The best men of the day, my father among the number, urged that Cleveland should have been made the capital, and had they done so millions of money would have been saved to the colony, and a city equal to Sydney would in course of time have sprung up upon the shores of Moreton Bay.”

“May I ask you Miss Forrest,” he said blandly, turning to Edna, who sat listening without joining in the conversation, “to kindly show me the new orchid which Mrs. Darton tells me you have found. I have a fine collection at Oaklands, and would like to see if it is new to me.” Edna bowed, and said “With pleasure, Mr. De Ville,” and led the way to a large bush house, filled with choice ferns, and flowers, and orchids, which adjoined the house.

It appeared to be something new even to De Ville, and he bent over it in long examination. The fact was, he was considering how he should best arrange the terms of his proposal.

“This is a beautiful bush house. Miss Edna,” he said, after a minute, as he looked into her face with his little cold gray eyes, “and you have some lovely ferns and flowers here.”

She smiled assent, for she really had no idea of what was coming, although she thought it strange that he should call her Edna.

“And you are fond of flowers Miss Edna.”

“Of course I am Mr. De Ville,” she answered, “all girls are I think, or ought to be.”

“It's only natural, he said, that you should love them, for you are one of them yourself—the fairest flower in all the country side, and my admiration of you knows no bounds. See,” he said to the breathless and astounded girl, “I have brought a diamond ring to place upon that lily hand; and here, surrounded by your own sweet flowers, allow me to offer you my heart, and hand, and fortune.”

“Miss Forrest, pardon me for asking you so important a question, with what may seem so little preparation, but I have already consulted my friend, Mr. Darton, your guardian, and have obtained his consent to pay you my addresses, and you know that time presses heavily on the hands of
business men like myself."

“Miss Forrest, or may I call you Edna?” he said, trying to seize her hand, “will you be my wife?”

Edna evaded his outstretched hand, in which glittered the diamond ring, and drawing herself up like a queen, gazed into his face with her big brown eyes in scornful astonishment.

“Pardon me Mr. De Ville, I do not understand you. You cannot surely expect me to accept an engaged ring, and promise to be the wife of a man, who, until this singular interview, has never said one word that would lead me to expect such an offer. Of course I know that it is a compliment for Mr. De Ville to offer such a high position to a simple country maiden like myself,” she said, a slight tinge of sarcasm in her voice, “but it is an offer that I cannot think of entertaining, much less accept. I hope, Sir, you will never address me on the subject again. The man that marries me, be he rich or poor, will be one who has fairly won my love, and shown himself to some extent worthy of it. But see,” she said, “it is commencing to rain again, and your sister and my uncle and aunt will be waiting for us.”

“Miss Forrest, is that your final answer?”

“It is.”

“Then I shall not take it. You have not considered the matter. I have been too hasty. You will consult your aunt and uncle, and then communicate with me again.”

“I shall consult no one Mr. De Ville, and you certainly need not expect to receive any communication from me,” said Edna indignantly.”

“But, Miss Forrest, you cannot understand the nature of my offer, and the position which I can place you in. As my wife I could make you the proudest lady in the land.”

“Exactly what I never wish to be,” said Edna, leading the way from the bush house to the hall.

“I certainly shall not think of taking this for an answer,” said De Ville following her.

It was a blow to the man's pride that he was altogether unprepared for. Money had been his father's God, and he had grown up with the idea instilled into him from earliest childhood, that everything had its price in current coin. He had seen what gold had done in the material world. With this all powerful metal in his hand, he had walked in his own little world like a second creator—obedient crowds had done his bidding, gold had brought him all he ever wished for until now, men had lifted their hats to him as he passed, and smiled approval at his often stupid utterances, simply because he was rich; and he knew it, and despised them. And well he knew of scores who would have sold their bodies and souls to him for
his gold. But this simple girl, with her paltry ten thousand pounds, had actually refused him. Whatever should he say to his sister! He would not tell her! Edna Forrest could not have meant it. A woman's “No” meant “Yes.” Everything came to the man that waited. He would wait, and circumstances would alter, and he would add this girl to his other possessions. He would take no denial. He wanted Edna Forrest; and somehow, fair or foul, he would get her, for his wife.

The horses had been ordered by Miss De Ville when the rain first threatened, and were now waiting somewhat impatiently. Just as they drove off, De Ville pointed across the Bay to a large black punt, that seemed to be drifting in toward the shore.

“Look there, Darton,” he said, “there's a boat or punt broken away from somewhere, it will be on the beach in front of your house by the morning. There seems to be considerable floating wreckage along the coast. Looks bad for Brisbane.”

Bowing politely as they drove off, Mr. and Mrs. Darton, and Edna, stood at the hall steps and watched them.

“Fine stepping horses he drives,” said John Darton. “Very rich man, but he's a hard nail. Constant M'Watt told me some months ago that he had made him one of the executors to his will. Queer thing, too, the other is Caleb Angel the barrister. M'Watt laughed when he told me; said it would be a good joke; his executors would be 'a devil and an angel.’ ”
Chapter XII. Edna's Dream

THAT Sunday night it rained harder than ever. As Edna sat brushing her long hair before her dressing glass, her thoughts were busy with many things. De Ville's proposal aroused her contempt and indignation. She had an independent spirit, and withal a touch of wholesome pride, and her mind rebelled at the very thought of this man wishing to be engaged to her without the wooing. What a contrast was George, she thought, to him. She had known Jackson in England, had spent her summer holidays often with his sisters, at their father's house. George was a good son, and a good brother. He had been unfortunate since coming to Australia, but that she felt sure was owing to his having been led away by John Darton's sanguine hopes, and by Constant M'Watt's knavery. Jackson had said practically nothing to her about his losses; except that he had let her know that for the considerable fortune he had brought out with him, he now had little more than several hundred acres of unproductive land, and a block of unsaleable city property—that, indeed, he was comparatively a poor man.

But he was not one of the whining curs who, in their greed for fortune, grab at every chance, and invest their money on the advice of any sanguine man; and if the speculation proves a failure, over-looking any personal loss of their too hopeful adviser, brand him as a swindling villain, and pour into the ears of every willing listener a pitiful story of how they had been misled, and duped, and victimised.

Edna pretty well knew that it was for her sake Jackson came out to Australia, although he had never actually said so. How good and thoughtful he had been on board the steamer! The clergyman's family, in whose charge she returned, was not the most agreeable, but George had been like an elder brother to her all through the voyage. Thus her thoughts went on.

It is true George Jackson was not exactly what Edna Forrest pictured him. A young girl's love is like our memories of the past—eclectic. In our pleasure we forget the pain there may have been in the days of long ago, and memory makes for all of us enchanted spots somewhere adown the years, bright visions we love to think about; and so a woman's love, to some extent, always glorifies and ennobles the hero of her heart. This is, perhaps, the only explanation why men of De Ville's stamp get wives at all—that is, wives who really love, and reverence, and believe in them. Happy they if never disillusionised! So far as Edna Forrest knew George Jackson, he, with all his faults, was not unworthy of her love.

Edna slept at last, lulled by the sighing winds and monotonous beat of the rain, and as she slept she dreamed.
She stood barefooted on the shore, and on the distant horizon saw a small black cloud, at first no larger than a man's hand. The sun shone brightly on the waters of the Bay, and on the white sails of pleasure yachts—that sped like sea-gulls on the crested billows—and on the green cool foliage of the islands, lying like gems of beauty, with blue sea around and blue sky above.

But as she stood and watched the lovely scene, she saw the black cloud growing larger, and larger, and larger, until its shadow came sweeping like a huge black veil over the landscape, blotting out the sunlight, and the summer isles, and ships, and sea. For a time she stood in darkness, when a lightning flash suddenly rent the clouds asunder. Then there seemed to rise above and around her, the long drawn aisles and cold stone pillars of a great cathedral. She saw the delicate tracery of the fretted roof above her head, and the moulded cornices and fluted pillars. In deep recesses were the monuments of heroes, and statesmen, and poets.

But now a haunting human face mixed with the phantasy of her dream. It was a familiar face, but dead. She saw it above the altar, at the end of the great chancel. It was looking at her through the painted windows of the transept, and she shuddered—it was a dead cold face, but its eyes were open. She now felt oppressed by fear and dread, and tried to cry out, but could not. Presently, in soft tremulous tones she heard the first vibration of the organ; 'twas like the sobbing of the autumn wind at its commencement, but rose gradually, until its full-voiced notes pealed in solemn and stately measure through the building. It fell, and swelled, and rose, and died away again, “in low deep cadence wonderfully sad.” She shrank into a corner—the cathedral aisles were filling, all the people dressed in mourning, and the organ notes wailed out in grief. A procession entered by the open door; at its head, in sacerdotal robes, a priest, book in hand, muttering a prayer, and behind a great black velvet pall, with plumes, and flowers; and following were many mourners. The music died away in soft tremulous tones, again vibrating through the building, and as it did so, the congregation slowly vanished—priest, pall, procession, people, melted as into air.

Then the face came back again, but it had changed into another face, more familiar, more pleasing than the last; but still she could recall no person and no name; it wore a dark, sad, troubled look. And then she felt the spacious cathedral walls to be slowly contracting around her, and around the face. Smaller and smaller they grew, until transept and chancel and long-drawn aisles had disappeared. It was now a dungeon, or a cave, or some dark place of death, and a cold damp air struck chillingly upon her cheek; she heard the dripping of water, and it was as though a great hand was coming down upon her out of the darkness, and down upon the face—
down, down, to press out happiness, and hope, and life. She would have
closed her eyes, but could not; and the darkness grew more dense, and the
oppressing hand more crushing and unendurable. Again she would have
cried out; but could not. The face had gone now, for all was total darkness,
but she still looked to where the face had been—and waited.

It seemed a century of years while she looked and waited, gazing
patiently upon the spot where the face had disappeared, until at last it was
as though a gray streak spread itself far away upon the very verge of the
darkness; it grew, and ebbed, and died away, and then came back again,
until at last a thin line of tremulous light lay sparkling on the distant
horizon. Then thin rays of fire shot upwards, and the gray lines of clouds
blushed into crimson, and burned into amber and gold, and the sweet light
poured its healthful rays on land, and sea, and sky. As she stood barefooted
on the sand, her bosom heaved with pleasure. Now she would have wept
for joy; but could not. It was the morning!

Never, she thought, had such a morning dawned upon that dear familiar
scene. It was a divine moment in her own, and in Nature's life. The
universe had put off its work day dress, and rising above its usual majesty,
had robed itself in splendour, as for the reception of its king. The towering
mountains on distant Stradbrook smoked with incense. The waters became
an ocean of fire, and she seemed to stand like the bush in Horeb,
encircled by living, radiant, exhilarating flame, but unconsumed. She
had no sense of fear, no thought other than of gladness. The awful night
had passed away at last, and it was morning.

The excess of glory now died away, and a sound like distant music fell
upon her ears; and the birds chirped and carolled, and the waves lapped the
sands softly at her feet, and the sweet breath of the morning fanned her
cheek and cooled her brow. She awoke. It was a dream. A wonderful
dream!

Edna jumped out of bed and threw up the window. The rain had cleared,
and the wind blew softly from the sea.

It was early morning, and she lay down again, thinking and wondering
about her dream.

Presently she heard voices near the window. It was John Darton speaking
to his wife. His voice was hoarse, almost choked with suppressed
excitement.

“For God's sake, Sarah, don't go near the beach, nor let Edna go! That
punt De Ville pointed out last night has come ashore, and there's a
murdered corpse in it, and it's someone that we all know. I have sent Frank
for a constable, and told him to tell De Ville about it as he passed. I expect
that De Ville will ride up at once. Will very likely stop to breakfast.”
The two faces of her dream came back to Edna. “Surely,” she moaned to herself, “surely, it cannot be George!”

She went straight to the window. “Uncle! Uncle!” she almost screamed. “I had an awful dream last night. I heard just now what you said to Aunt. I must know who the murdered man down in the punt is. Tell me, uncle! Tell me!”

Her uncle groaned as he answered her. He was strangely overcome and agitated, even making all allowance for the startling and terrible discovery. He said: “It's the body of Constant M'Watt!”
Chapter XIII. Cutts the Banker

AS FAR as business went in Brisbane, Monday, the 6th of February, was dies non. The flood had brought everything to a standstill, and blotted out all other considerations. It was nearly midnight before the water had disappeared from Queen Street.

Just before eleven o'clock on Tuesday, George Jackson called in at the El Dorado Bank of Australia to see the manager. He was not quite sure that he would find the Bank open, for all along Queen Street shops and offices were being cleansed of ruined stocks and filthy deposits of mud. The Bank, he thought, might be similarly occupied—proof that Jackson had something to learn as to the ways of banks. He found, to his surprise, the large vestibule and splendid banking chamber in perfect order and repose. Behind the substantial carved polished counters were busy clerks and tellers; and bills, and drafts, and cheques passed through their hands as though they lived where floods were never heard of.

There was very little business doing. Business people had no Saturday's takings to pay in, and having had losses by the flood, did not dare attempt to draw anything out until they had interviewed the manager. Mr. Pinchpenny was there, of course, as usual, with a little bag and book, and blue deposit slip, to place another substantial amount to his credit. It was a portion of his weekly rents. The crafty old fellow had anticipated that there might be some trouble over getting the rent from some of his tenants that flood week, so he had taken the precaution to call round on the previous Friday, to ask each of them to make a special effort to pay their rents on the following Monday, as he had an amount to meet and was rather short. “You know,” he said, “you will have no excuse now when I call next week.” The cunning old fox had got most of the rents collected—“some of them in a blessed boat,” Joe Stunner said—and he purred benevolently over his deposit as he paid it in.

“Ah, just alter that total. I see I've got another couple of shillings in my overcoat pocket,” he said to the teller; “no church yesterday, you know, so I saved that, and may as well put it in with the rest,” and as he handed across the coins he purred again.

The manager was engaged, so Jackson drew a chair up to a table, and as he wanted some change, filled up a cheque for £5. He waited until Pinchpenny had departed, and then presented it across the counter.

“How will you take it, Mr. Jackson?” asked the teller.

“Three ones, and the rest in silver, please.”

The clerk was just marking this in blue pencil on the back of the cheque,
as usual, when the cashier stepped into his compartment and whispered something to him.

“I beg your pardon, sir,” said the clerk, in some confusion, “but will you step into the manager's room before I pay the cheque.”

Jackson stared at the young man in astonishment.

“You don't say that you have instructions to dishonour my cheque for £5?”

“I can only obey orders, sir; you had better see the manager.”

“Do you know that a remittance from England for £365 was paid into my credit last week?”

“I do, sir, but the account is still overdrawn.”

“For which the Bank holds several thousand pound's worth of securities, and yet you have instructions to dishonour a cheque of mine for £5. Of course I know that you have nothing to do with it, but I think it's about time I saw the manager.”

“Mr. Cutts is disengaged,” said the cashier to him, as he passed across the handsome tessalated floor to the manager's room.

Mr. Cutts was a tall, well-conditioned, and rather prepossessing man. He had mild blue eyes, and the smooth, serene, oily voice, peculiar to bankers and managers of financial institutions. Few could surpass him in fussy politeness to a wealthy depositor, or in harsh insolence to an unfortunate debtor. He had been sent up by the Directors when the worst of the depression had set in, with general instructions to use his best discretion in dealing with the Bank's customers; but to see that the Bank made no losses—which, translated, meant “put the screw on.” He had done this with a vengeance, and many a score of men, whom unforeseen disaster had put into the golden clutches of the Bank, had felt the grinding of that screw. Men stepped into that banking parlour, thinking themselves, notwithstanding misfortune, fairly honest truthful men. But they had borne from Cutts what no man would bear from another—unless a bank manager—without a blow. Between hope and fear, they had given hesitating assent to proposals, which were at once written down by the manager in his conversation book as promises. At the next interview they had been accused of falsehood and semi-scoundrelism, until, bullied and brow-beaten, they well nigh stood aghast at their own unscrupulous characters, as revealed to them by the astute bank manager.

There had been considerable depreciation in the value of the Bank's securities through the flood, and Cutts was in no friendly humour when Jackson confronted him.

“Take a chair, Mr. Jackson; I wished to see you about your account. You know, I suppose, that a promissory note of yours fell due last Saturday that
you had not provided for. We dishonoured it, of course. I will see what the amount is if you wish.” He pressed a button as he spoke; an electric bell rang outside, and a clerk immediately entered.

“Bring me a statement of Mr. Jackson's overdraft account, and also the amount of the promissory note presented on Saturday, which we endorsed ‘Referred to maker,’ ” and Mr. Cutts turned to an account book as though absorbed in a more important matter.

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Cutts,” said Jackson, “but I want an explanation. A payment was made into my account last week of £365. My account was, with that addition, if I am rightly informed, nearly four hundred pounds under my cash credit limit, and yet you have dishonoured this bill of Stuart's, and this morning actually dishonoured my cheque for a paltry £5. Do you call that banking business? It seems to me more upon the lines on which a man would run a pawnshop.”

Cutts turned a bit white, but made no answer; he knew very well that Jackson had opened his account with the Bank a few years before by paying in nearly twelve thousand pounds, and that he had for a long time kept a thousand or two lying in open account to his credit. But he regarded him now as pretty well done for; and his city property was unlet, and had been badly flooded. He had made up his mind that there was nothing more to be got out of Jackson; the half-yearly balance was coming on, and he had been requested by his board to get rid of the account.

“There's the amount you owe the Bank,” he said, pushing a slip of paper containing a memorandum over to him. “You have not reduced it according to your promise, and the Bank is dissatisfied with the securities—under water, I hear, in this flood, which you were no doubt well acquainted with when you lodged the deeds against the overdraft. I was warned when I came up here to be careful how I made advances to you, that you were unreliable, and—”

“Go on,” said Jackson.

“Oh, I don't want to hurt your feelings. If you had kept your word with the Bank I should not have mentioned it.”

“When did I break my word?”

“I haven't time to enter into details now. There is the amount of your indebtedness to us; all you have to do is to pay it, and the thing's settled.”

“Well, supposing I cannot pay it?”

“Then get some other bank to take up the account; we don't care about it.”

“I am afraid that just now, with this flood, it will be no easy matter either to get money, or to remove an overdraft account from one bank to another.”
“That means, I suppose,” said Cutts, fiercely, getting ready for an onslaught on the unfortunate debtor, such as has caused so many banking parlours to be known as sweating establishments, “that means that you don't intend to make any effort, does it? But we'll see about that. I will give you to the end of this week, and if the amount, with interest to date, is not then paid in full, we shall serve you with a writ and foreclose upon the property. I do not want you for anything further. Good morning.”

“Mr. Cutts,” said Jackson, “I am short of change; will you mark this cheque for £5 to be paid, so that I may have money to take me back to Darton's Point.”

“No, certainly not,” said the banker; “could not think of such a thing. It's really like your insolence, owing the bank as you do, nearly a thousand pounds, to ask me to do it.”

“No; only £824 17s. 2d.,” said Jackson, coolly. “Well, as you won't pay my cheque for £5, will you kindly give me gold in exchange for these notes of yours,” he said, laying down four separate notes, each for £500, and five each for £100. “I think I'll just square off that overdraft and get the balance in gold, and open an account at another bank. I can take the cash over in a cab.”

“Now, look sharp, Mr. Cutts. I want gold for these precious notes of yours, and I hope that it may be the last transaction that I shall ever have, either with you or your bank; and, by the way, you'll oblige me by letting one of your clerks get out my deeds, and just cancel that mortgage, or perhaps you had better tear off the signature and hand it to me.”

To say that Cutts was thunderstruck at the turn things had now taken, would but mildly express his astonishment. He did not know at first how to act, or what to say. He had evidently been mistaken about Jackson; the man had resources he had never expected, and apart from other things, as a professional man he felt chagrined at his mistake; but how to recover himself without loss of dignity, he could not for the moment tell.

“Pray be seated again, Mr. Jackson,” he said at last, with an effort; “I will ring for a clerk. You have really taken me by surprise. If you had paid this amount into your account in the ordinary way, there need have been no unpleasantness whatever.”

“I was really sorry to have to press you,” he continued, “for I felt sure that your account was perfectly safe, but when bank managers get instructions from their head office, what can they do? Now, what would you have done, Jackson?” he said, with suave familiarity, his face relaxing into a smile. “You really had better let this money go to your credit in the usual way, and draw upon it as you need; and if you want a few hundreds at any time, you know that you can have them. There's an old saying
among business men: ‘Never fall out with a bank.’ Just think it over.”

“How about those letters you have been annoying me with the last three weeks?” said Jackson, who was determined not to be conciliated. “No, I have made up my mind. I gave you a fair chance this morning to show yourself a gentleman, and one would have expected, with this terrible disaster upon the city, that even a bank manager would have relaxed a little. Of course it's easy enough to put it on to the directors. As a board, they have, as the saying is, ‘neither a body to be kicked, nor a soul to be damned,’ or they might act differently.”

“I hear that the Bank has lost a number of good customers since you came to Brisbane,” he said, picking up his hat, “and if my recommendation will be of any service, you'll lose some more.”

Cutts looked at him in contemptuous indignation, but made no reply.

“I prefer to transact my business in the outer office,” continued Jackson, “so if you'll have one of the clerks get out the securities, I will call in for them in the course of the morning, and the affair will be settled.”

He reached forward to take up the notes, which were still lying on the banker's table, when Cutts, who kept his temper remarkably well, said, “Pardon me a moment. I noticed that all these notes bear the same date, and seem never to have been handled much; it's an unusual thing for anyone to have kept so large a sum as £2,500 by him for four years, without its bearing interest. All the better for the Bank, of course, but at six per cent., a loss to the holder of £600. I don't suppose you have had them all that time in your possession,” he said, looking straight into Jackson's face.

Jackson started; but looked back at the manager, and replied, “No, I am not quite such a fool as to throw away money in that fashion.”

Taking the notes in his hand, Jackson passed into the public banking chamber, and going to the cashier, surprised him by asking that his account might have interest added to date, and he would pay it. This was done, and he handed in the notes, saying he would take the balance, of over £1,600, in gold.

It was an unwise thing to have done, for several reasons. Had he paid the notes into another bank, he would have had no trouble with the money, and it would have amounted in the end to the same thing. He had good cause afterwards, for many reasons, to regret his foolishness.

The cashier carefully examined the notes, and even took them in again to the manager. He came back and said, “The notes are all right, of course; but do you mind endorsing them, Mr. Jackson, as they are for large amounts.”

“Certainly,” said George, thinking it merely a matter of banking routine.
“You've been in the flood, sir,” said the teller a minute after, as, with the notes in front of him, he weighed out the sovereigns in hundreds, and put them into small canvas bags.

“How do you know that?” asked Jackson.

“Oh, the notes have been wet on the edges lately; had them in a pocket-book, perhaps, when you were wet through.”

Had anyone watched Jackson closely, they might have seen him give a perceptible start.

“Very likely,” he said, “I was wet through several times last week,” and at the words he shivered, as though seized with sudden pain.

The manager came out about ten minutes after Jackson had departed with his bags of sovereigns. He said to the cashier, “It's rather singular about those notes, I see they were all issued on the same date; some of them were signed by the manager, and some for the manager by the cashier. I am just a bit curious about them. See if you can trace them in the books.”

An hour or so afterwards, the cashier came into Cutts, who was leaning back in his chair looking over the newspaper. “Well?”

“Fenwick has traced them at last. There was a cheque drawn that day by the Hon. Constant M'Watt on a trust account, for £5,000, and the whole of it was paid in notes. Nine for five hundred each, and five notes for one hundred pounds each. I expect the manager and cashier signed them while M'Watt's clerk waited, as the cheque was presented and endorsed by a young fellow who was then clerk with him, named Fred. Tomkins. I believe the rest of the notes are still out.”

“Thank you,” said Cutts, and he turned again to the pages of the newspaper.

There was no ferry established yet between the North and South municipalities, as the flood waters still swept with eddying violence between the river banks. A few adventurous spirits had crossed that Tuesday in boats, but at great risk, and although Jackson had now completed his business, he determined to wait until next day before returning to Darton's Point. He was not the man to risk either life or limb without good reason.
Chapter XIV. What the Newspapers Said

THE following report is extracted from the Brisbane Chronicle of Wednesday the 8th of February:—

“To the many sorrows that surround us in these mournful times, it is our painful duty this morning to announce another. One of the most prominent and esteemed of our citizens has been found dead, under circumstances which unmistakably point to deliberate and wilful murder. The corpse, we regret to say, is that of the Hon. Constant M'Watt. The blow will be felt the more severely by the public mind on account of the calamities which have just overwhelmed us. Men of position, and experience, and wealth, and large-hearted generosity, can ill be spared to the community in such an hour as this. But when, at such a time, they are torn from us by violence and murder, the demand for justice upon the head of the criminal will be the more sternly exacted. So far the crime is surrounded by inscrutable mystery, The body was found in a punt last Monday morning, upon the shores of Moreton Bay, with the face disfigured by a blow across the forehead, which evidently caused instantaneous unconsciousness, and then death. So far there seems to be not the slightest clue to the assassin. A rusted knife was found in the punt, but as there are no marks of wounds it could not have been used in committal of the murder. With all our lines of communication cut off, it is unfortunately possible that the murderer may have already escaped from the scene of his crime; and possibly from the colony. The public may, however, rest assured that every effort will be made by the police department to unravel the mystery. The detective that brings to justice the murderer of the Hon. Constant M'Watt will deserve well of the colony. The following are the facts of the case:—

“Last Sunday, the 5th day of February, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, Mr. De Ville, of Oaklands Park, Brisbane, and Bay View Lodge, Redland Point, was returning from a visit to Mr. and Mrs. Darton, of Darton's Point, and had just taken the reins to leave, when looking across the Bay, he noticed a large punt which seemed to be drifting towards the shore. Pointing across the Bay he called Mr. Darton's attention to it, and remarking that it must have broken away during the flood, said ‘You'll have it on the beach in the front of your house by the morning.’ Mr. De Ville, who is one of the executors of the deceased gentleman's will, little dreamt as he drove off, that the punt contained the murdered body of his friend. Mr. Darton thought no more about the matter until the next morning, when one of the first things he noticed was the punt lying high and dry, far up the beach, at a short distance from the garden fence. The
tide had been unusually high on account of the flood, which had floated the punt clear of all obstacles to the shore. Mr. Darton imagined that he could see something in the bottom, so he went across to make a closer inspection, when, to his intense horror, he discovered the body. He at once sent a servant man on horseback to Redland Point for the constable stationed there, and also sent news of the startling discovery to Mr. De Ville, and allowed no one to go near the punt until their arrival.

“It was then found that the corpse was in an advanced stage of decomposition, so it was thought advisable to send a telegram to Breezeland for Sergeant Bevan to come over at once, and another to Sunnyside to Dr. Black, who had recently taken up his residence in that suburb. Fortunately, although there was no communication with Brisbane, the train was able to run on Monday as far as Sunnyside, as a ballast train, and on its return it brought down the doctor. Sergeant Bevan rode over with great promptitude, and was at Darton's Point within an hour after receiving the wire. In the interval the constable took charge of the punt, never leaving it until the arrival of his senior officer. The examination of the remains was made in the presence of William Henry Black, Esq., M.D., F.R.C.S., George Charles De Ville, Esq., J.P., John Darton, Esq., and the two police officers. The body was lying on its back in the punt, dressed in a dark tweed suit, and except for the one fearful blow across the forehead showed no marks of violence. A valuable diamond ring which the deceased usually wore on the little finger of the left hand was missing, and the skin of the finger seemed to be abraded, as though the ring had been violently wrenched off. It may, however, have been taken off by the deceased himself, previous to the murder, and the skin of the finger injured by some other cause; as further investigation showed that the body had not been robbed. In the waistcoat pocket was a valuable gold repeating hunting watch, with the hands pointing to ten minutes to four o'clock, gold guard and Masonic seals, and gold pencil case. A purse containing money was in the right hand trousers pocket, and several letters and two valuable documents in the inside pocket of the coat. A rusted knife of somewhat peculiar shape was found in the water, which nearly half filled the punt. The latter was freshly tarred both within and without, but a very careful scrutiny on the part of the police officers revealed no name or mark by which it might be identified. The punt measures ten feet by three feet six inches, has two movable seats, holes bored for side rowlocks, and in the stern a new rowlock for sculling or steering with. A hole which seemed to be newly bored had a painter dragging from it, the end of which had the appearance of having been recently cut with a blunt knife. After Dr. Black had completed his post-mortem examination, the results of which will be
made public at the inquest, the body was enclosed in a coffin which had been hurriedly prepared, and was yesterday afternoon brought up to town by the quarter past twelve train, which, we may say, was the first that entered Melbourne Street since the subsidence of the flood waters. Dr. Black had no hesitation in saying that death was caused by the blow upon the forehead, which, he believes, was inflicted by some smooth round heavy weapon, such as a bar of iron, or heavy ebony office ruler. He expresses his surprise that the body should show no sign of rough handling when placed in the punt after the murder. The fearful deed, he thinks, cannot have been committed in the punt; or in the fall, after the blow, the body would have been bruised. He thinks that the murderer must have had an accomplice, and that after the murder the corpse was lifted by two men into the punt, which was then set afloat in the river, and by a singular chance, carried without capsizing to the Bay, and eventually landed on the shore opposite St. Helena. The fact that the valuable jewellery, and large amount of money, found upon the person of the deceased was untouched, proves that robbery was not the motive for this ghastly crime, and surrounds the whole affair with the more impenetrable mystery. We await anxiously any further evidence, calculated to solve the painful problem, which may be forthcoming at the inquest, which is to be held on the body of the deceased this morning.”

The afternoon paper contained, in addition to the above, the following further information, and also an editorial note upon the subject. After copying the extract as above, and stating they were indebted to their able and esteemed morning contemporary for the information, they said: “A careful examination of Drybrook House was made last night by a prominent official of the detective department, in company with one of our reporters. It was found that the flood waters had reached to a height of two feet ten and a half inches over the whole of the ground floor. The butler, Mr. Wm. Linton, was met, by a singular chance, just at the entrance to the mansion, as owing to the near vicinity of a creek, and the hollow which surrounds the outer portion of the grounds, he had only just been able to make his way back across the receding waters. He made the following statement to the detective in presence of our reporter:—

“On the afternoon of Thursday, the 2nd of February, the Hon. Constant M’Watt dined alone at Drybrook House. The family were staying for a few weeks change up the Range, on account of the muggy and oppressive heat. They had taken two of the house servants with them, and those left, were myself, the cook, one housemaid, Smith the gardener, the coachman and groom; also a boy (buttons) named George. The coachman, groom, and gardener, live in cottages in the grounds, and do not board or sleep in the
house. The Honourable drove down to town as usual in the morning, but spent the afternoon in his private study. The steady advance in the height of the river, the increasing force of its current, and the persistency with which the rain fell, had caused both myself and fellow servants some alarm. I spoke to the master, but he ridiculed the idea of the flood reaching to the house. About four o'clock I sent the boy to town to post some important Sydney letters at the General Post-Office, and soon after gave the cook and housemaid leave to go and see the mother of the latter, who lives at Toowong, as she was anxious as to how her house would be situated in the event of a flood. At half-past five, as the boy had not returned, and the flood waters were rising fast, I began to be anxious and asked the Honourable, who had dined early, if he minded being left alone for an hour as the two servants were out, and I was concerned about the boy George. He said ‘all right, Linton, I don't suppose anyone will call in this pouring rain.’

‘I lit the gas in the hall, and in one or two other rooms before I went, for fear I might be later than I intended. Well, I could not see nor hear anything of the boy, and happened to meet a friend I hadn't seen for years, and we went into the Auriel for a glass to keep out the wet and to have a bit of a chat. I thought of course that the cook and housemaid would be back, and stayed just a little later than I intended. When I got near to Drybrook House on my return, I found to my surprise the flood waters completely covering the low ground, all round the place. It was dark and I did not know what depth the water might be, so I went back to town and slept at the Auriel. There has been no chance of getting back until now, and it's only one hour since, that I heard of the murder of my poor master.

‘Linton, we should say, was very much overcome and horrified at the terrible tragedy enacted during his absence. On reaching the mansion, the entrance door was found wide open, and the hall covered thick with mud, the furniture was tumbled down and disarranged, as chairs and other articles had been floated about by the flood. The doors of the apartments leading into the hall were all closed. Approaching the wide staircase, the butler called the detective's attention to some marks on the carpet near to the bannisters, on the fifth stair from the bottom. The carpet was trodden down, as though some heavy man with strong boots had stood there for some time, the next step showed unusual sign of pressure, as though he had afterwards sat down. Close by the railings was a little heap of tobacco ash, as though knocked from a pipe, and on the carpet were a quantity of black hairs, which the detective said must have belonged to a cat. The butler, Mr. Linton, affirms that none of these marks were there when he left Drybrook House. He says it is impossible that they could have been. No one with
nails in their boots ever ascended that staircase, no one would dare to smoke a pipe under the statue of the deceased gentleman, which occupies a prominent position on the landing above, and he does not believe there was a black cat about the premises. The detective thought that he could see the marks of wet boots upon the stair carpet, but our reporter failed to discern them. The private study of the deceased was then carefully examined, but showed no sign of any struggle. On a side-table in a large adjoining recess, separated from the main room by a heavy damask curtain, were two wine glasses, biscuits, and a half empty decanter of port. There were biscuit crumbs upon a large velvet drumhead lounge near a window, and a little wine remained in the bottoms of each of the glasses. On the large writing table of the main apartment were the ends of two wax vestas, which the butler said he could not account for, as only patent safety matches were used in the house. None of the other servants had returned, and the only living thing about the place was a large white cockatoo, which the butler said was usually in the outer hall, or servants' quarters. He could not account for its being upstairs, where it was found in a room adjoining the study of deceased. He said it had been taught to talk, and was the source of considerable amusement to the household. It had a little maize left and some water, but seemed disinclined to show its powers of speech to the detective and our reporter. It is a pity that it cannot be called as a witness at the inquest, which will be sitting as we go to press.”

The editorial note, after expressing the editor's profound regret at the loss sustained by the community, and colony at large, by the death of so distinguished a citizen, and his abhorrence of the cowardly crime, went on to say that possibly while the murderer interviewed M'Watt upstairs, and gave in some unexpected moment the fatal blow which deprived him of life, his accomplice sat below upon the stairs, ready to prevent any interference on the part of the servants, or to assist his confederate in case of need. Murder would out, and insignificant as seemed the clue, even the tobacco ashes knocked out of the ruffian's pipe upon the staircase, might lead up to a more important link, in a chain of evidence which would yet, he felt assured, bring the murderer to the gallows.

The motive for the crime was the chief secret to be found out. It was not in order to rob him that he was killed. It would have to be known whether he had quarrelled with anyone, who might have murdered him in revenge. However in the next day's issue they would give a full report of the inquest, a picture of Drybrook House, and a diagram pointing out the position of the room, in which it was supposed that the murder was committed.
Chapter XV. The Inquest

THE body was not brought over the river to North Brisbane until Wednesday morning, on account of the difficulty which still existed through the violence of the current. The inquest commenced at 11 o'clock. Gilbert Brooks, of the detective department, who had the previous evening visited Drybrook House, was also present, and also Mr. Dyson Foggitt, of Foley and Foggitt, solicitors to the deceased. The following articles found on the corpse and in the punt were exhibited by Sergeant Bevan:—

1.—Purse containing twelve pounds thirteen shillings and sixpence in gold, silver, and notes. 2.—Gold keyless watch and chain. 3.—Gold pencil case. 4.—Silver toothpick. 5.—Bunch of small keys. 6.—Sundry papers and other documents. 7.—A knife. 8.—A rowlock. 9.—Fragment of rope.

The sergeant explained that the punt was expected to arrive by the next train, and could be viewed by the jury later in the day. The first witness called was John Darton, who gave his evidence without hesitation, but betrayed much emotion. This was explained during the proceedings as resulting from close intimacy of the witness with the deceased — they being co-trustees, &c. He repeated the narrative of the finding of the body, which the reader has already perused from the columns of the newspaper.

"There was considerable wreckage in the Bay last Sunday afternoon the 5th instant?" said the coroner.

"Yes."

"Have you any means of estimating how long the punt would take to drift from Brisbane to Darton's Point?"

"I noticed some wreckage in the Bay on the previous Saturday, and as I believe the first houses were carried away on the afternoon of Friday, a very few hours might have sufficed."

"Was the body or punt approached by anyone except yourself prior to the arrival of the police constable?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Does anything suggest itself to you, which might assist the jury in coming to a conclusion as to the cause of the death of deceased?"

"No." The witness took a moment or two to think, and seemed to hesitate as he gave his answer.

The detective (Brooks) watched him keenly when this question was put by the coroner, and made a note in his pocket-book.

George Charles de Ville gave evidence as to having seen the punt on the Sunday, and made one of the examiners of the corpse the following day. He identified the body as that of the Hon. Constant M'Watt. He was one of
the executors to the will of deceased.

Henry Black was called. He deposed: “I am a duly qualified medical practitioner, residing at Sunnyside, Brisbane. In response to a telegram, I went to Darton's Point last Monday and saw the body of deceased, which I recognised as that of the Hon. Constant M'Watt. It was in a somewhat advanced stage of decomposition. I made a post mortem examination on Monday afternoon. The body was extremely well nourished, and of a healthy appearance. A contused fracture extended across the frontal bone of the skull, which had caused concussion of the brain. This was the only mark of violence. The lungs were healthy, but slightly congested. The stomach contained about half a pint of completely digested food. There was a slight spirituous odour discernable. The heart was rigid, the organ showed a tendency to fatty degeneration.”

“I am of opinion that deceased died from the effects of a blow upon the forehead, from some hard, smooth, heavy weapon.”

William Linton was then called, and gave evidence that was substantially the same as that reported in the newspapers.

In cross-examination it was elicited that the deceased was in his usual health, when last seen by witness, and that he had not intimated any expectation of visitors calling that night.

He was about to stand down when the Coroner asked, “How long were you in the employment of deceased?”

“Over eleven years.”

“You were treated by deceased as a confidential servant?”

“Yes.”

“Was deceased in the habit of keeping large sums of money in his library at Drybrook House?”

“I believe so.”

“Did he occasionally transact business there?”

“Yes.”

“Paid away money?”

“Yes.”

“Where was the money usually kept?”

“In a steel fire proof safe, built into the wall.”

“Have you any reason to suppose that on the night of the murder deceased had any large sum of money upon his person?”

“No.”

“Did you meet anyone coming from the direction of Drybrook House on your attempted return on the night of Thursday, the 2nd of February?”

“I met several persons, but none that I could have recognised. There are other houses in the neighbourhood.”
“What time was it when you started to return?”
“Ten o'clock.”
“How long were you in reaching Drybrook House grounds?”
“About half an hour.”
“Were the lights still visible in the house?”
“Yes.”
“In the deceased's study?”
“I could not see that part of the house.”
“Did any of your fellow servants return to Drybrook House that night?”
“I believe not, but have no personal knowledge.”
The coachman, gardener, and groom were then called, but their evidence threw no further light upon the case, and the Coroner proceeded to sum up. He said there could be no doubt but that deceased had met with a violent death. The evidence showed that, when last seen, on the night of the 2nd of February, he was in good health. Three days afterwards his corpse was floating in a punt in Moreton Bay, with a contused wound upon the forehead, which the medical evidence showed to be sufficient to cause death. The position of the body in the punt, and the absence of bruises upon other parts of the body, led to the supposition that more than one person was involved in the crime. Deceased had evidently been murdered, and afterward placed in the punt, and set adrift upon the flooded waters of the river. The only point the jury had to consider was, whether the circumstantial evidence submitted, was sufficient to prove to their satisfaction, beyond all reasonable doubt, that deceased's death had been caused by the blow upon the forehead.
If so they must frame their verdict in accordance with that evidence.
The jury returned after an absence of twenty minutes, and gave the following verdict: “That the deceased, Constant M'Watt, died on or about the 3rd day of February from the effects of a blow, administered by some person or persons unknown; and the jury on their oaths, say that the said unknown person or persons, did wilfully and maliciously murder the said deceased.”
Chapter XVI. Mrs. Stunner's Advice

MEN reveal in their surroundings more readily than women their characters, turn of thought, early habits and associations. Concealment is more natural to women. Fairway Cottage boasted a flagstaff, so dear to the heart of the retired seaman, with gaff complete. The wooden palings were painted a bright green, and on a neat black board in white letters was inscribed: “Joseph Stunner,Licensed Waterman.” A shingle pathway, edged with London Pride, led through a bit of well-kept garden, (evidence of Mrs. Stunner's taste and industry) to the cottage. The room upon which the door opened, showed unmistakably the character and profession of its owner. A collection of polished shells filled the fireplace, above which was the model of a full rigged ship, and on each side nicknacks from foreign lands. A large engraving on the opposite wall depicted the death of Nelson, under which was hung a large sea telescope; the flags of all nations had at one time been painted on it in bright colours, but they were now almost obliterated. On a bracket was a weather indicator, in which a man came out of the house when it was wet, and a woman when it promised to be fine. Spittoons, half filled with clean yellow sand, were on each side of the fender, and the hair-cloth furniture was covered everywhere with large snow-white crochet-worked anti-macassars.

The air of tidy primness about the room suggested that it was rarely used, and that the hands that kept it so clean and orderly belonged to a lass (or one who was once a lass) that loved a sailor.

It was Wednesday evening. Joe had specially enjoyed his tea. He had pretty well recovered the effect of the accident, and George Jackson had called that morning and given the old man fifty-pounds in five-pound notes, and had advised him to get another boat made to order—a fac simile of the Mary Jane. His hands were still sore, and he had determined, on Jackson's advice, to take a few weeks holiday and just look after the building of the boat. Seated in a large wooden armchair, with his feet on the big home-made hearth-rug, his pipe alight, and a glass of warm rum toddy at his elbow, he was in a very amiable mood.

Mrs. Stunner's thin gray hair was pushed under her white cap, and with the evening newspaper in hand, she was looking with calm gray eyes through her spectacles at her husband.

"I don't see anything in the paper, Joe, about your having saved young Golliker," she said, “but here is an account of an awful murder."

“Aye, an' so they's said nothin' about the loss of the ‘Mary Jane.’ Well, like enough; they have plenty just now to fill up their papers with, but I'd a
liked 'em to give Master Jackson a good word; he's a werry kind-hearted gentleman, he is, and as brave as a lion. No conceit about him either. Aye, I wish there were more like 'im!"

“It's the Hon. Constant M'Watt as has been killed,” said Mrs. Stunner.

“Yer don't say so,” said Joe, “and it's only last Saturday night that Mr. Jackson called there to leave some things for him. When did it 'appen, 'Liza? He was alive on Saturday night, for I 'eard 'im talkin' to Master Jackson as I sat waitin' on the stairs. Lestways, I thought it was 'im.”

“They believe that he was killed on Friday or Saturday night. Body was picked up on Monday morning at Darton's Point. It had floated down in a punt.”

Joe Stunner's face assumed a thoughtful and serious aspect. “Read it out to me, 'Liza.”

Mrs. Stunner wiped the glasses of her spectacles upon her snow-white apron, and readjusting them, commenced reading the description which appeared in the evening newspaper already referred to.

“They're on the wrong tack there,” he said, when Mrs. Stunner read of the tobacco ash being found on the staircase.

“I knocked that 'ere ash out of my pipe myself, and blest if the 'air did not come off the cat Master Jackson rescued from the flood.”

The editorial note upon the clue furnished by the “ashes knocked out of the ruffian's pipe,” moved him greatly. He flushed scarlet, and said, “'Liza, I'll have to set 'em right on that 'ere.”

“Joseph,” said Mrs. Stunner, looking at her husband over the rim of her glasses, “how long did Master Jackson stay with Honourable M'Watt?”

“Nigh on an hour,” said Joe.

“Do you think they quarrelled?”

“I'm sure Master Jackson did not kill him no more than me.”

“What did he want at Drybrook House at all that night?” asked Mrs. Stunner.

“Blest if I know; 'ad some business with him, I s'pose.”

“Joe,” said Mrs. Stunner, “take your wife's advice; don't mention to any person that you and Master Jackson went to Drybrook House last Saturday night. I hope they'll soon catch the murderer, and get him hung.”

“Aye, aye, you're right, wife, I believe you are; but I should like to have a word about it with Master Jackson.”

Joe Stunner sat for nearly an hour after that, and smoked his pipe absorbed in thought. In his mind, he went over again every incident of that night and morning. He was a bit confused, but to have suspected Jackson of the murder was impossible to his simple mind.

A neighbour called in shortly after to talk over the murder, which had
become the common topic of conversation throughout the city. He informed Joe that bills were being put up, offering a reward of two hundred pounds for such information as would lead to the conviction of the murderer. One hundred pounds was offered by the Government, and one hundred pounds by the executors of the deceased.

A verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown had been brought in by the jury at the inquest.

The owner of the punt had been discovered. It had been tied up in about a foot of water near a fence adjoining the river. The owner was a well-known citizen, quite above suspicion. He had no knowledge of its removal, nor had he, or any member of his family, authorised any person to take it away. The crime, said Stunner's informant, was involved in the greatest mystery, and the general opinion was that unless one of the accomplices confessed, or gave information, the murderer would never be discovered. It was supposed by some that political motives had prompted the crime; in fact, all sorts of rumors were current, and it was believed that some arrests would shortly be made. Something would have to be done, or no public man would feel his life to be secure.

Joe Stunner seemed to have lost his usual fluency, and was not sorry when his visitor said “Good night.”

That night Caleb Angel, barrister-at-law, received an urgent telegram in Adelaide, giving him a brief statement of what had happened, and urging him to at once return to Brisbane. It was signed “George Charles De Ville.”
Chapter XVII. Constant M'Watt's Will

FROM information received, Detective Brooks was closeted with the manager of the El Dorado Bank, on the morning after the inquest.

“I sent for you,” said Mr. Cutts, “on account of an incident which occurred this week in connection with the account of a late customer of the Bank. There may be nothing in it, and you must thoroughly understand that should there be something, I do not want the Bank to be in any way implicated, or necessitated to give evidence. We do not mind assisting in bringing criminals to justice, when occasion arises, but a Bank never likes to be brought into court if matters can be satisfactorily arranged outside.”

“Do I understand you,” said Brooks, “to mean that should a criminal be discovered in this case you refer to, the Bank wishes not to prosecute.”

“You evidently don't understand me,” said Cutts. “My sending for you is to give you information which may have something to do with the death of the Hon. Constant M'Watt.”

“I beg your pardon; I thought you were referring to some fresh case,” said Brooks, and he at once manifested increased interest.

“The facts are these,” said Cutts, “and by the way, I may say that it was at a suggestion of the Bank, that certain questions regarding money matters were put by the Coroner to Linton (the butler) at the inquest.”

The detective nodded, but said nothing. He looked like a man who hoped that he had got a clue.

“Last Tuesday morning,” said the manager, “a customer of the Bank, who has since closed his account, paid in a sum of £2,500 in notes. The notes are known to have been drawn out four years previously, as part of a cheque for £5,000 cashed by a clerk of the late Hon. Constant M'Watt. The customer referred to owed the Bank over £800, for payment of which we were pressing him.”

“Singular,” said the detective, after a few minutes pause, “but then it is generally understood that M'Watt's financial operations were on a very extensive scale; the notes may have passed through several hands before reaching those of your customer.”

“Not likely,” said Cutts, “there were nine different notes, and they scarcely appear to have been handled, except that the edges had been wetted, and dried again.”

“Can I see them?”

“Certainly; I have them here.” Cutts took the notes from a drawer and handed them to the detective. The latter drew up a chair close to the table, and examined the face of the first note carefully, and put down its number.
and amount in his pocket-book. It was for £500. He did this with each one, and then turned the last face down, to scrutinise the back.

“Been endorsed, I see.”

“Yes, we had each of them endorsed by the customer.”

“George Jackson,” read the detective. The signature was written in a bold, firm hand.

“He did not refuse or hesitate to sign his name?”

“I believe not.”

“Do you know much of him?”

“A little; he was once very friendly with M'Watt, who, I believe, introduced him to the Bank. They were in here several times together on business. Opened his account with a deposit of several thousands, but lost a good deal through land and mining speculations. His address is Darton's Point, Breezeland.”

“That's where the body was discovered,” said Brooks.

“Yes.”

“What sort of a man do you consider this George Jackson to be?”

“Well,” said the manager, flushing slightly, “he's a man I never liked, and in fact,” he said, bitterly, “for my own part, I would not mind seeing him hanged. Of course, I'm only joking,” he continued, hurriedly, “but I don't trust him.”

The detective looked at Cutts for a moment, and scanned his face closely and keenly, but said nothing. The banker shrank, however, from his penetrating glance.

“Is Jackson married?”

“I believe not.”

“He has closed his account with your Bank. Do you mind giving his reason for doing so?”

“Certainly not; we wrote him some pressing letters, and, indeed, threatened to writ him. We were dissatisfied with his securities, so he paid off his indebtedness and closed the account.”

“Pardon me, but had you any personal quarrel with him?” said Brooks.

“Well, not exactly.”

Brooks waited a moment, and then suddenly rose, and said, “I expect that you are busy, sir, so I must not detain you longer. I must thank you for having tendered me this information, although I cannot at present attach much importance to it; a criminal would scarcely endorse notes in that open way, stolen from a man he had murdered. I expect that your customer could account for his possessing them all right. Still, I am very much obliged to you all the same, for the information. Good morning, sir.”

Mr. Cutts walked up and down his comfortable parlour for five minutes
after the detective had gone. “Curse the fellow's impudence,” he said, “to cross-examine me like that. I am almost sorry that I gave him any information at all.”

Brooks walked quietly up Queen Street—he was a short stoutish man, with light hair and keen gray eyes. He thought to himself, “Cutts has had a row with Jackson, that's evident. He was sorry he let that out about liking to see him hanged. For some reason or other, he hates him. However, I won't lose sight of what he has told me. Those notes had been wet on the edges; dried afterwards. Been in a pocket-book and got wet. He may have brought the money up to bank it from Darton's Point; and it's been such terrible weather; here's the rain pelting down again to-day. No harm to see, however, if any large sum of money was paid away by M'Watt last week. I wonder at which bank he kept his private account. Not at the El Dorado evidently. I think that I will make a call on Mr. De Ville; he is one of his executors.”

He found, on calling at De Ville's office, that he was up at Foley and Foggitt's, so he bent his steps in that direction.

The body of the Hon. Constant M'Watt had been interred that morning. On account of the painful circumstances of his death, the funeral had been made as quiet and private as possible, and left for the cemetery at an unusually early hour. It had, however, been largely attended. Drybrook House had not yet been cleaned or renovated, and was closed up, and placed in temporary charge of the coachman and groom. Mrs. M'Watt averred that they could never occupy the place again, and wished De Ville to take charge of everything, pending the arrival of his co-executor, Mr. Angel. It had been arranged that the will should be read at Foley and Foggitt's offices, after which Mrs. M'Watt would return at once to their summer residence, near Toowoomba. Brooks reached the entrance to the solicitors' offices just as the funeral party had gone up the staircase. De Ville was, of course, with them, so the detective slowly followed.

The offices of Foley and Foggitt were centrally situated, and their very appearance betokened the character of the extensive business in the hands of the firm. The staircase, with its massive cedar polished bannisters and thick velvety linoleum, seemed to say, “You are now approaching the offices of a highly respectable and well-to-do firm of solicitors, and you must expect their bill of costs to be proportionate to the costly fittings which you see around you.” At the top of the staircase was a landing, where a swinging moulded door, with ground glass panel, upon which was written in gold letters “Foley and Foggitt,” led to a handsomely-fitted vestibule. We may say that there was no need for the handsome door referred to, to add one word to the bare announcement, “Foley and
Foggitt.” All the city knew that the elder partner was a notary public, and one time Cabinet Minister, and that every class of legal practice came within the range of their business. They had a large staff of clerks in the suite of offices upstairs, and Mr. Grind and Mr. Graball were quite able to put through any business matter that might be considered beneath the dignity of the partners.

Brooks pushed back the swinging glass door and entered the vestibule, which was carpeted and well furnished, with massive counter adorned and surrounded by ornamental woodwork.

In answer to his inquiries, he was informed that the Hon. Spencer Foley was out, and not likely to return; and that Mr. Dyson Foggitt was engaged and would be occupied for some time, after which he had an appointment at the Supreme Court.

Yes, Mr. De Ville was in with Mr. Dyson Foggitt, but of course, could not be disturbed. Would he call again?

Brooks said he would sooner wait; and seeing that he was not recognised by the clerk, said, “You have a number of people coming in and out here; I don't wish to be seen, can you put me in some unoccupied room until Mr. De Ville or Mr. Foggitt is disengaged?”

The clerk looked at him. Brooks was well, although quietly dressed—had a gentlemanly, almost distinguished air.

After looking at him for a moment—and probably taking him for a new and apparently fat client, to be shorn in due course, for the benefit of the firm—the clerk said, “You can wait in Mr. Foley's room, he is out of town.” It should be explained that several doors led out of the vestibule, in addition to that already referred to. The large room to the left was for meetings of trustees, creditors, etc., the door on the other side opened upon the clerks' staircase, and two others to the private offices of the heads of the firm. On one was written, Hon. Spencer Foley, and on the other, Mr. Dyson Foggitt. There was a door connecting the two rooms.

Brooks glanced round the room into which he was now ushered by the clerk, who pointed to a seat and closed the door behind him.

Everything in the room was massive, and calculated to impress a visitor with the substantial resources of the firm. Two large iron safes stood in one corner, doubtless full of deeds and other valuable documents. An extensive legal library, on shelves enclosed in a mahogany glazed bookcase, filled a recess. The floor was stained and polished, and partly covered with a large heavy Turkey carpet. Attached to the centre writing table were speaking tubes, with ivory mouth-pieces, communicating with the upper suites of offices. The whole surroundings inspired confidence. It was the very room in which a client would unhesitatingly hand over his newly-received legacy.
for investment; or pour into the listening ear of his solicitor the delicate revelations of a domestic scandal, or the complicated particulars of a lawsuit, involving tens of thousands of pounds. Nothing succeeds like success, and although the junior partner really managed the business, and considerably managed his elder colleague, at the head of the firm, they were probably making several thousands a year more than any other professional partnership in the city.

Brooks had a purpose in view; he had been in the rooms before, and found to his intense satisfaction that the dividing door, leading into Mr. Dyson Foggitt's room, stood slightly ajar. He noiselessly placed himself in a chair near the door, kept his hat in his hand, put on the appearance of a man who was a bit tired and bored by having to wait so long, and intently listened to what was passing in the adjoining apartment.

He could hear the sound of several voices that were strange to him, speaking in the subdued tone common to people when attending funerals, especially when in the presence of relatives of the deceased. Then he heard Dyson Foggitt's voice giving some instructions to a clerk.

A dead silence followed. Foggitt was probably looking over the will. Then his voice was heard addressing De Ville, who intimated that they were all quite ready.

"I regret," he said, in calm, thin, measured legal tones, "the absence of one of the executors to this will which I hold in my hand—Caleb Angel Esq., barrister-at-law, who is unfortunately away in an adjoining colony. An urgent telegram has been sent to him by his co-executor, who I am pleased to see present, and who has taken at this trying time the estate into his able management—I refer to Mr. George Charles De Ville. There is no doubt, however, but that the said Caleb Angel will return immediately on receipt of the mournful tidings, to take his share of the sad duties now devolving upon the executors."

Here Dyson Foggitt refreshed himself with a sip from a glass of water, to the despair of certain poor relations, who waited on the tip-toe of hope and expectation to hear the contents of M'Watt's will.

"The will I hold in my hand," continued Foggitt, wiping his lips with a white cambric handkerchief, which cast a faint odour of 'Jockey Club' perfume round the room, "is dated the first day of April, 1889, and is as follows:—

Brooks almost unconsciously leant over nearer to the door, and held a big coloured silk handkerchief to his mouth, to smother, if possible, a bit of a tickling cough, which seemed inclined to force its way up his throat—the water came to his eyes as he struggled, and at last choked and swallowed it back again. It might have upset the whole of his little plan.
“Excuse me,” he heard De Ville say, “do you feel a draught from that door Mrs. M'Watt?”

“No,” said a faint voice, “I prefer it to be open, the room feels a little close.”

“Give it a push Mr. De Ville,” said Foggitt, “there's no one in the room.”

The door opened a little wider, and Brooks, making sure that he would now be discovered, slipped hurriedly into a chair further from the door. His apprehension was, however, needless, for in the same dry professional tone, Foggitt commenced to read the will. Brooks moved back into his former seat; there was no need to lean forward, the door was open wide enough for him to hear distinctly.

“This the last will and testament (made in revocation of all former and other wills) of me, Constant M'Watt, of Drybrook House, North Brisbane, Gentleman.” The document went on in stiff legal phraseology, after directing the payment of debts, funeral, and testamentary expenses, &c., to give devise and bequeath the whole of his freehold hereditaments, which were particularised at length with tiresome minuteness, to his trustees, upon trust, who were to permit his wife (Ellen M'Watt) to hold, occupy, and enjoy the said Drybrook House, and all and every the contents thereof, during the term of her natural life. They were further directed to pay her a sum of £1000 per annum. The executors were directed to pay to his three daughters £10,000 each, at such time as the youngest should attain the age of twenty-one years. The sum of £30,000, which the will stated, the executors would find in bank notes, in a pocket-book in an iron safe, in his private library at Drybrook House, was to be paid, without any deduction to the trustees of the Bethel Calvinistic Church, Brisbane, and they were further directed to disburse a sum of £1,500, which would be found in sovereigns, in a drawer of the said iron fire-proof safe, according to the terms of an enclosed document deposited in the said safe, at the said Drybrook House. A few small and unimportant legacies to servants, and the balance of the estate, after its realisation, and the payment of legacies, was to be invested in the names of the trustees, until the death of Mrs. M'Watt, when the whole residuary estate was to be sold, and the proceeds equally divided between the two executors, George Charles De Ville and Caleb Angel.

It was a long and involved legal document, engrossed on six sheets of parchment, which occupied an unnecessarily long time in reading, and was most difficult to understand. It was an unjust will, likely to please no one, except the trustees of the Bethel Calvinistic Church, and the mysterious recipient of the £1,500. M'Watt's numerous poor relations were entirely overlooked.
“So,” said Brooks to himself, “there was a matter of at least £31,500 at the time of the murder, in notes and gold, in that safe at Drybrook House. I wonder whether that money will be found just as M’Watt left it.”

Brooks had now heard all that he wanted to, so he stepped noiselessly out of the room, saying to the clerk in the vestibule (who had by this time forgotten all about him) that as they were such a terrible time, he wouldn't wait, but would look in again by and bye, and went down into the street. Here he waited a few yards from the doorway, for the funeral party to leave.

There were about nine people, including De Ville: the latter, in company with Mrs. M’Watt—who was closely veiled and in deep mourning—entered a private carriage.

“I would like to see him if possible to-night,” thought Brooks, and hailing a hansom cab, he told the man to follow the carriage. It stopped, however, at De Ville's offices near by. De Ville stepped out, and after having shaken hands with Mrs. M’Watt left her, so Brooks dismissed his cab, and followed De Ville up the staircase.

“I want to have a word with you Mr. De Ville.”

“It will have to be very brief then.”

De Ville had not recognised him, so Brooks handed him his card.

“Oh yes,” said De Ville, in a more compliant tone of voice.

“Has there been robbery as well as murder at Drybrook House?” asked Brooks almost in a whisper.

“Not that I know of,” De Ville answered with a start, “but why do you ask me such a question?” he continued, looking at Brooks. The detective looked back at him, but made no reply, so after a moment's pause, De Ville said, “I'll tell you what, I am just going up to the house to get some things for Mrs. M’Watt, who leaves by the afternoon train, and there will be time for us to examine the safe together.”

“Do you know whether there was any money in it?” asked De Ville, looking at him carelessly.

“Yes, £31,500,” said Brooks slowly.

“The deuce! How do you know that? No one knew it until the will was read,” and he looked at him in amazement. “Look here.” he said, “you may as well come up with me in my cab, and we will see. No doubt the money is there, and you can see it for yourself, and you will be satisfied.”

A few minutes after the two men were seated in a hansom, dashing along the North Quay, in the direction of Drybrook House.

“Do you think that you have any clue to the murderer?” asked De Ville.

“Not exactly,” said the detective, “only a faint suspicion. If the money is there all right, it will be dissipated.”
“Can you not tell me anything further?”
“Well, I may tell you this,” said the detective. “A customer of one of the banks paid £2,500, in bank notes, into his account last Tuesday, and it has been discovered that the notes were received in exchange for a cheque cashed by M'Watt four years ago, just about the time when that will was made.”
“By George! Brooks, you seem to know all about that will,” said De Ville.
“May I ask the customer's name?”
“George Jackson, of Darton's Point,” said Brooks.
“Strange,” said De Ville, “but then he had business transactions with M'Watt, and probably received the notes in that way, but I thought that their business relations had /??/ceased some time ago; Jackson is hardly worth a cent.”
“You see I don't intend to interfere with anything,” said De Ville, as they entered Drybrook House, “until Mr. Angel gets back from Adelaide; but come upstairs, and we'll see that this money is safe. It would really be best to remove it, and lodge it in a bank.”
He took a bunch of keys from his pocket and unlocked the safe. The detective noticed De Ville's hand trembling with excitement. Nothing seemed to escape Brooks! The top tray contained only papers, neatly arranged and fastened in separate bundles, with elastic bands or red tape. The right-hand bottom drawer contained a few old letters, a quantity of jewellery, and some uncut diamonds and other precious stones. The left-hand drawer was then opened; it was quite empty. A careful and minute search was then made by the two men, through deeds, private account books, and papers.
There was no trace whatever of the gold or pocket-book, or bank notes, or enclosed document, mentioned in the will.
De Ville and Brooks looked into each other's faces in blank astonishment.
“Well,” said Brooks at last, “we have one thing plain at any rate. If M'Watt put the money and documents into the safe, and they have been stolen, we are furnished with a motive for the crime. I must find out something more about this George Jackson.”
Had the detective happened to have been passing Drybrook House that night after dark, he would have seen a light burning in the library of the late Hon. Constant M'Watt. It was De Ville, searching every inch of the apartment for the pocket-book containing £30,000. But his search was in vain.
Strange! he did not seem to trouble himself about the £1,500 in gold,
mentioned in the will.
Chapter XVIII. A Strange Funeral Sermon

THE Bethel Calvanistic Church was one of the relics of the olden time. It possessed a little city property, purchased by far-sighted trustees, or donated to the Church many years before, the rents of which slightly augmented the Minister's stipend. The congregation was fairly large and decidedly ambitious; but lack of funds had prevented them from emulating the architectural exploits of other denominations, who had sold their church sites during the land boom, and with the spoils thereof, studded Brisbane with costly and elegant ecclesiastical structures. When it became known that the great sum of £30,000 had been left the trustees, without being hampered by any restrictions, the excitement of the Church members rose to fever heat.

Mrs. Deacon De Lain, a young and energetic woman, who exercised great influence over her husband, who was the senior and most prominent deacon of the Rev. Daniel Dare's Church, at once called upon Mrs. Deacon Goodchild for conference and congratulations, and to arrange as to the best way in which the legacy should be disbursed.

“We shall have to erect a new church,” said Mrs. De Lain, “that's certain. How glad I shall be to get out of that old barn. I believe then that there will be no difficulty about getting Harold and Marjorie to attend, instead of going off to the English Church, and except for”—and the good lady sighed, and left the sentence incomplete.

“Sister De Lain,” said Mrs. Goodchild, “it is true that we need a new sanctuary, but there is something more that we need. We shall also have to import a new minister.”

Mrs. De Lain smiled sweetly at her friend, and said, “I am afraid dear sister that will not be so readily done. What minister would give up a church without a struggle that had just received a legacy of £30,000.”

It was arranged by the ladies before separating that Mrs. De Lain should suggest to her husband the appropriateness of a thanksgiving prayer meeting taking the place of the usual week-evening service.

This was suggested by Deacon De Lain in due course to the pastor, but, to everyone's surprise, the Rev. Daniel Dare put difficulties in the way. It looked like Mammon worship, he said, to make it a special function. The brethren might refer to it in their thanksgivings, but there were circumstances which, in his judgment, made it not advisable to give prominence to the matter. They had not yet received the money— the deceased was only just buried; he had not been by any means a regular attendant at their services, and many poor relations had been entirely
overlooked.

He had no wish to lord it over God's heritage, but he humbly submitted to his brethren the deacons, that a thanksgiving service would at present neither be profitable to the people nor in good taste—so the subject was allowed to drop.

“There is one matter, however,” said Deacon Fusby, “that I wish to submit to the consideration of our pastor and the brethren. It would be appropriate, I think, on next Sabbath morning, for the Rev. Daniel Dare to improve the solemn occasion by preaching a funeral sermon on the death of our late lamented brother, the Hon. Constant M'Watt.”

A deep silence followed, although several of the deacons nodded their heads in approval of the suggestion.

“Will some other brother express his views upon the matter,” said the minister.

De Lain looked across the room with an encouraging smile to some of his younger brethren, as much as to say, “Now, please don't wait for me to give my opinion.”

The fact was he knew a good bit about M'Watt's business methods and sharp practices, &c., and had inadvertently said one or two things about M'Watt quite recently, to the pastor.

The pause was at last broken by one of the younger deacons, a talkative, round-faced, spruce-looking man of about eight and thirty, who had left one of the banks to commence business on his own account, which had resulted in more profit to the bank than advantage to himself. However, he was well connected, and principally on that account had been made a deacon. He spoke quickly, and with an unconscious, snappish self-assertion, which contrasted strangely with the studied humility of his address.

“Mr. Chairman, if I, as one of the younger members of this diaconate, may be allowed to give expression to my opinion, which I do with all deference to you, sir (bowing to the minister), and to my brother deacons, I should say that the present is a very favourable opportunity to attract the outside public to our services, and considerably augment the ordinary Sabbath collections, which I regret to notice—owing, no doubt, to the wet weather and general depression, and not to any failure in the weekly ministrations of our pastor—have had a downward tendency of late. In fact, it's my opinion—which I hold, of course, subject to any further information, or the wiser counsels that may be submitted to this meeting—I say, sir and brethren, that in my opinion, we need more variety in our Sunday services. The service of praise should, I think, have greater prominence. In fact, the able discourses of our pastor might be shortened
occasionally with advantage, in order to give opportunity to the choir, of
which I may say that as a church we have reason to be proud, to give an
occasional anthem, or display its powers of rendition in short selections
from some of our great composers. We shall, of course, have the church
draped in mourning next Sunday, and appropriately decorated with white
flowers, and have the services well advertised. One week's interest only of
the large sum which the late Hon. Constant M'Watt has so nobly, and I
may say thoughtfully and generously, donated to this church, will well nigh
defray the whole expense. As being specially interested in the musical
portion of the service, I would suggest that the ‘Dead March in Saul’
should be played as a voluntary, and that Miss Marjorie De Lain should be
requested to render as a solo during the offertory, after the appropriate and
pathetic sermon which our esteemed pastor is so well able to preach, either
‘O rest in the Lord’ or ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth.’ ”

“I may say, in closing, Mr. Chairman and brethren, that I regard the
present as a time for congratulation. Through the generosity of our dear
deceased brother, a vista of possibility is opening up before the church
such as, I confess, never suggested itself to me in my most sanguine
moments. To my mind, we have already entered upon a new chapter in our
church history. Opportunities of usefulness and influence will now
multiply themselves around us. In this time of depression, we may
purchase a magnificent site for a new church, in one of the main
thoroughfares of the city, at a merely nominal price. We may erect an
ornate and commodious building, that shall be adapted to our growing
influence and position in this city. A new pipe organ may be imported, and
after all this has been accomplished, we may still have left over a
handsome surplus, which, invested at 7 1/2 per cent. on good city property,
may enable us to offer a stipend which (of course, after the retirement of
our present beloved pastor) will enable us to command the services of one
of the most eloquent and representative ministers of the old land. I
congratulate you, brethren, upon your changed prospects, and I assure you
that next Sabbath I shall appear dressed in deep mourning, to add to the
general effect, as far as possible, of the solemn memorial service in which
we shall be engaged.”

One of the younger deacons said “Hear, hear,” at the close of this
eloquent and comprehensive speech. But the fact was it had taken away the
breath of the majority. They were prepared for something striking and
original whenever Mr. Bright's humility allowed him to address them, but
this had surpassed all expectation. The reference to Mr. Dare's possible
retirement was the climax.

There was a long and painful silence, which Mr. Bright —whose ardent
nature had anticipated as the effect of his address a general hand-shaking on the part of pastor and deacons— took as a personal slight if not an insult, and he had commenced to consider the terms in which he might best word his resignation of office, when honest old Sandy M'Bain, who held that the mission of the Church was to save souls, and who, through thick and thin, stood by the pastor, said:

“Very likely our brother, Mr. Dare, will by this time be prepared to assist the meeting by his counsels. For my own part, I hardly know what to think about this enormous legacy. It seems to me that at no time has the responsibility of this diaconate been so great. We need to advise and influence the Church with the most prayerful caution, or there is a serious danger, that, like other churches, we may lose our spirituality and usefulness, in the desire to be prominent in the city, and outdo our neighbours. It appears to me that the matter of this funeral discourse may be safely left in the hands of the minister.”

The Rev. Daniel Dare rose as he addressed them.

“Dear brethren,” he said, “I must thank you all for the free expression of your views upon this subject. We are a self-governing body, and all shades of opinion are worthy of our respectful and serious consideration.”

At this Mr. Bright felt considerably mollified, and at once decided to think no more about resignation.

“I approach the subject before us,” continued the pastor, “with some delicacy. I could, of course, in a funeral discourse, only give expression to my honest convictions in regard to the deceased gentleman, and it is a subject upon which I fear that I should have very little to say in approval, in the house of God. I could not, honestly, brethren, hold up his life before our young men as worthy of imitation. He has rarely attended our services, and there are depreciatory rumours current about him, which are generally known in the community. I have no personal knowledge of the facts myself, and God forbid, brethren, that I should sit in judgment upon any man, or give credence to idle rumours concerning any man's character. But what is our motive in holding this service? Who will be likely to be benefited by a pulpit eulogy of any excellencies which I may be able to discover in the character of the deceased? The Press has already done this, with, to my mind, sickening superfluity. If he had not left our Church this enormous sum of money (which, God grant may not prove a curse to us), we should never have dreamed of holding a memorial service at all; but,” said the minister—remembering his wife and young children at home, and wondering how, if he got his dismissal from this Church, he would obtain a call to any other—“I leave the matter to the decision of this meeting. It will still be in my province to decide the subject matter of discourse. The
selection of music may, if you wish, be left to Mr. Bright, and I shall be
pleased to shorten my sermon to give ample time for its rendition.”

Mr. Dare closed thus, because he could see in the faces of the deacons
that the service had been pre-arranged for by a majority, before the
meeting, and that it was useless for him to offer further opposition.

There was a good bit of whispered conversation amongst some of the
deacons after this, during which the minister turned over the leaves of his
hymn book. Presently the senior deacon arose, and, without any word of
comment, moved:—“That in the opinion of this meeting a funeral service
should be held next Sabbath morning, in memory of the late Hon. Constant
M'Watt; that the Church should be appropriately draped, and special hymns
rendered, and that the service should be advertised in the daily and weekly
papers.”

Mr. Bright jumped up eagerly to second it, and it was carried with only
one dissenting vote—Sandy M'Bain's.

Going home afterwards, Mr. Bright said to a brother deacon, “Mr. Dare
seems to be failing of late; is losing his influence over the young people;
the collections are falling off considerably; and with so many popular
preachers, with their new methods of attracting large congregations, it's
evident that we are losing ground.”

“Yes,” said his companion, “he has been a long time with us, and his
usefulness seems almost past. It would be a good thing if he would
voluntarily retire.”

“What are we paying him?” asked Bright, “I really don't trouble about
such matters generally.”

“£250 and a manse.”

“Why,” said Bright, “with this legacy we shall be able to give him a
small pension, and get a new man out, who would stir the whole city, at a
salary of one thousand a year.”

The service was duly advertised, and the following Sunday morning a
large congregation assembled, necessitating the placing of forms and chairs
along the aisles to accommodate them. “What did I tell you,” said Deacon
Bright to Deacon De Lain, “see how it has drawn the crowd.”

Among the large number of strangers, mostly of the more wealthy class,
who had come partly out of curiosity to see the church that had come in for
such a windfall, and partly to show deference to M'Watt's position and
wealth— and who mostly looked round the unpretentious building, and at
their neighbours, with a curious supercilious stare, which was intended to
show that the surroundings were entirely new and unaccustomed to them,
and that when they worshipped, it was in a very different building to that—
were the servants and some of the humbler dependents of M'Watt's
household.

One of them was a white-haired old man named Sanderson, still hale and hearty, but far down the hill of life. He was a first cousin of M'Watt's, and the only relative of the late Honourable in the edifice. He had been employed by M'Watt to do odd jobs about the office at a small weekly wage, and it was generally supposed that M'Watt would see to it that after his death the old man was reasonably provided for.

No provision, however, was made for old Sanderson in M'Watt's will, and it is idle to imagine that he felt no disappointment. “Martha,” he had been in the habit of saying to his wife, “Constant will not forget us. He and I were like brothers in the old days at home.”

Sanderson lived not far from Joe Stunner, and had persuaded Joe to come across with him to attend the service. Joe had said, “Yer see it's not much in my way, this 'ere goin' to church, but I'll come and 'ear about yer cousin.”

They sat together, two as clean and wholesome old men as any in the building. Sanderson had quite forgiven M'Watt for having overlooked him in his will, and as his eyes roamed around the heavily-draped building and pulpit, and congregation mostly dressed in mourning, he began to wander, in his thoughts, back to the days of boyhood. There was a bunch of fragrant white flowers upon the pulpit stand. They reminded him of the gowans he and Constant M'Watt had pulled, when they were herding cows together on the old moor farm. He was older than Constant, and much stronger, too; and often had he taken him upon his back for sport, in crossing the burns and rills of their native moorlands. He had saved his life, too, once. And now he was dead!

And as he thought about it, the present faded, and it was not the great Queensland Honourable that had died, but bright-eyed Con (his cousin), the friend and companion of his boyhood; and tears came to the old man's eyes. And yet, no provision whatever was made for this man in M'Watt's will. He who had saved M'Watt's life in boyhood, and after he came to wealth and power, had served him for years—a faithful, simple-minded, humble dependent—was wilfully and wickedly passed by; and yet—as the reader will find later on—under cover of a secret document he had left £1,500 in gold to an abandoned woman of the town. To some of us, one small deed of charity to this white-headed aged man, with a wife and invalided daughter dependent upon him, would have covered a multitude of sins. But M'Watt had lost his opportunity for ever, and instead—hoping thereby, perhaps, to pave his path to Heaven—had left to the Bethel Calvinists £30,000—or as Fielding, the auctioneer, put it, “at 6 per cent. only, £1,800 a year for ever.”
But now the solemn strains of the organ voluntary announced the time for the commencement of the service, and with the music the Rev. Daniel Dare entered, robed in a plain Geneva gown. He was fairly tall, and had a face that stamped him as one of Heaven's own ministers. There was nothing bald or meagre about the opening exercises, as is so often the case with Nonconformist services. The extemporary prayer offered was comprehensive and tender, and no one seemed to be forgotten; the flood disasters were, of course, prominent, and every sufferer seemed to be remembered. M'Watt's bereaved relatives were prayed for, and the poor ones specially mentioned—and old Sanderson felt comforted. Forgiveness was even invoked for the murderer, and that he might be brought to repentance; but not a word was uttered about the dear departed brother (the Hon. Constant M'Watt) or the £30,000. After the hymn, the organ died away again in tremulous melody, and the Rev. Daniel Dare arose to preach the Hon. Constant M'Watt's funeral sermon. The text announced, referred to the murder of John the Baptist by Herod, and seemed singularly appropriate. It was: “And they took up the body and buried it.”

By way of introduction, reference was made to the mystery and tyranny of death. How its loathsome hand mars the beauty of the fairest and best beloved, and makes us say with the sorrowing Abraham: “Let me bury my dead out of my sight.” The speaker then reviewed the circumstances of Herod's birthday party, and how, to reward the dancing of a shameless girl, he gave her, at the instigation of her revengeful mother, the bloody head of John the Baptist. Then followed a life-like description of Herod the Great; his great wealth, and great palaces, and great retinue of servants, and great extent of landed property—fawned upon by the rich and hated by the poor. He spoke of his luxurious life, and his gluttony, and greed, and licentiousness. Truly, he was a great man, said the preacher, and a religious man too, for he spent untold wealth to rebuild the Jewish Temple, for the administrations of religious worship: but alas! it was a religion he scoffed at, and a service which he despised. The very wealth, too, which he thus lavished upon the re-building and adornment of that magnificent structure known as Herod's Temple, was wrung by the grinding extortions of his tax collectors, out of the wages of the poor.

“At last he died,” said the preacher, “died on a set day; died by the judgment of God—eaten of worms. But he was known as Herod the Great notwithstanding, and doubtless had a great funeral, and long and complimentary obituary notices in the newspapers of his day. But,” said the preacher, “that was not Heaven's estimate of Herod, or of Herod's splendid son. God never called him great. When the great man's name was used on one occasion threateningly to the Lord Christ, he sent to him a
divine message. What was it? Go ye and tell the great Herod? No. ‘Go ye and tell that fox.’” Then followed an excellent peroration, which set up the memory of Herod as a light-house whose warning cry to them was: Keep off the rocks. The rocks of self-destruction, of sin, of pride of place, and power, and wealth. In closing, the preacher's voice melted into plaintive tenderness, as he spoke of earthly bereavements and divine consolations, and forgiveness, and heaven.

“Wonderful preacher that,” said some city men as they left the church. “Did not think we had such a man in Brisbane.”

“Most singular sermon,” said Bright to De Lain, “cannot make head or tail of it. Not at all suited to the occasion. Not adapted, I fear, to the advanced thought and culture of modern society either. By the way, what a number of prominent citizens were present, and what a collection!”

“Blest if he didn't pitch into them avaricious swells that 'cumulate bags of money, and live licentious lives, and make long prayers, and grind the faces of the poor, and rebuild temples,” said Joe Stunner to Sanderson.

“Did you ever hear such a sermon,” said Mrs. Deacon De Lain to Mrs. Deacon Goodchild, “Such shocking bad taste. I could have sank down in the pew with vexation. Why, he held our generous benefactor up to the scorn and contempt of the whole congregation. Ah, well! one comfort is, he won't be with us much longer.”

“Thank God, he has dared to be a Daniel,” said old Sandy M'Bain, unconsciously punning on the minister's name, “and dared to stand alone. But I'll stick to him; and they Shan't send him away either, if I can help it.”
Chapter XIX. In Conference

IT was Sunday night the 12th of February, the rain was still descending and the river rising. Brisbane was threatened with another flood. In the comfortable sanctum of one of the Commissioners of Police two men sat smoking. It was Brooks and his superior officer. They had been smoking in perfect silence for fully a quarter of an hour. It was evidently a pre-arranged confidential meeting, and they were not likely to be disturbed; this was proved by one fact alone, both of them were smoking pipes—except before intimates, and in strict privacy, the superior officer only smoked cigars.

The solace of the fragrant weed was drawn slowly and meditatively from the smouldering bowls, in long inhalations. Between each emission of blue wreathing smoke there seemed to be a long period, during which the smoker's eye dreamily followed the curling cloud, as though his thoughts were engaged with some perplexing problem that defied solution.

“Hang it all, Brooks,” exclaimed the superior officer at last, “you'll have to arrest somebody. Here it's a week now since the body was discovered, and it seems to me that you have practically done nothing.”

“I'm having the life pestered out of me by the heads of departments, and yesterday old Clankside actually got me into the Under-Secretary's office and damned me and the whole force, for a lot of blockheads and imbeciles, and said that if he had been Colonial Secretary he would have had the murderer arrested within four and twenty hours, or he'd have known the reason why. He's an irascible old nigger driver, no doubt, and certainly made things pretty lively when he was in office, but he's right in one thing, it's high time something was done. Why there's getting to be a regular panic amongst some of them; they have taken it into their heads to attribute the murder of M'Watt to political revenge, and regard it as an act of intimidation on the part of some of the Labour men to influence things at the General Election. I don't believe a word of it; some hot-headed fools among them may send threatening letters, but it's all smoke. They play their cards better than that. Why if it could be shown that this murder was the work of the Labour Party, or any section of it, it would ruin their prospects for the election. Anyhow, there are two more who have sent to ask for police protection, and one of them is a member of the Upper House.”

“It's no use talking, Brooks; unless you can make an arrest in a few days, I shall have to put the matter into the hands of Dingle. You know that I have every confidence in you, but there are one or two things that have
been muddled lately, and we are really getting into discredit with the Government.”

“How would it do to arrest the butler?” said Brooks after a pause.

“Well, not so bad,” said the chief after a few minute's reflection, “it would turn the scent away from the Labour men. But no,” he continued, laughing, “I'm not to be had like that, Brooks; you know very well that it could not be done; he slept that night at the Auriel. You'll have to arrest someone who, at any rate, cannot prove an alibi.”

“That's just it,” said Brooks, “it's this flood that has so completely destroyed any traces, and thrown us off our ordinary modes of procedure. There is not an end to be got hold of anywhere. It's my belief that the murder was not committed on Thursday night at all. M'Watt was probably prevented from getting away on Thursday, and may have been murdered by a party of burglars, or wreckers, on Friday or Saturday night. There were numbers of them about in boats, pretending to rescue, but really on the look out for plunder. I believe that some of them did actually assist to save life, and in one case it was proved that after saving the occupants they went back and robbed the house. But what with the rain, and darkness, and flood, you know very well not one of them has been arrested.”

“What was that you told me about Mr. Jackson of Darton's Point?—but it's impossible he should be implicated; why last Sunday afternoon I saw him and a waterman named Stunner do one of the most plucky things I have witnessed all through the flood. But just let me know exactly what you have done so far.”

“Well, I have questioned each of the servants, and find their statements similar and self-confirmatory,” said Brooks.

“Yes.”

“I have examined the house and grounds minutely— alone, and in company with one of the executors—but can find no trace of any intruders except the tobacco ash upon the stairs, marks of feet, and the black hairs of a cat. Upstairs in M'Watt's private room were the remains of two wax vestas.”

“But you see all this might easily be accounted for. My supposition is that M'Watt remained over Thursday, and probably over Friday night at Drybrook House; there would be plenty to eat, and no doubt when he saw himself cut off by the flood he preferred to stay, feeling perfectly secure. When the water first came into the house he may have sat upon the stairs himself, under his own statue, and watched the water. I have found out that he often smoked when alone—why should he not have smoked a pipe as he sat there? and for the matter of that have stroked a cat for company. He must have carried that cockatoo upstairs, and why should he not have had a
cat with him?"

“Did his bed show signs of having been slept in?”

“It did not occur to me to inquire until Friday, and then I found that one of the servants had straightened up the rooms, and I could not find out,” replied Brooks.

“Ah! make a note of that and just make sure.”

“What about the money that was lost out of the safe?”

“Well, I have my doubts about it. The will made, it must be remembered, four years ago, stated that there would be found in the safe a private document, and also a pocket-book containing £30,000, and gold to the amount of £1500. But it's very likely that M'Watt, like others, has had his losses lately, and he may have paid away the money, or for some cause have removed it.”

“The Chief smoked away vigorously for a moment or two and then said:

“Find out from the executors how his affairs stood, and whether he had a large cash balance at his bankers, and, by the way, you say that he withdrew £5000 in notes on the 20th day of March, 1889, from the El Dorado Bank; now that may have been one-sixth of the £30,000. Make inquiries and see if any large or similar amounts were drawn, on or about the same date, from other banks. Do you know where he kept his private bank account? Well you had better find out. You saw the owner of the punt?”

“Yes, there is nothing to be learnt there—they are thoroughly respectable people, and besides, no person having anything to do with a murder would have the body put into his own punt.”

“There was a knife found in the punt,” said the Chief.

“I have taken it round to every ironmonger's and pawnbroker's shop in Brisbane, but they none of them recognised it. One of the chief cutlers says that there are no knives sold now similar to it, and that it is of foreign workmanship— probably Maltese.”

“By George! bought by somebody on the way out from Home; came by steamer; called at Malta, or perhaps bought it at Port Said. What's the knife like?”

“Here it is,” said Brooks, “I have not returned it yet.”

It was a fairly large clasp knife, with a single blade of plain but finished workmanship. There was a broad silver name plate, but with nothing engraved upon it. There were a few scratches upon the handle, but seemingly nothing by which it might be specially identified.

“It might be sworn to,” said the Chief, slowly, “if its ownership could be discovered. I don't think it belonged to a labouring, or working man. There is no need to ask you whether all the principal police stations in this and
the other colonies have been wired to.”

“That was done as soon as communication was restored after the flood,” said Brooks.

“Well, attend carefully to the suggestions I have made, and meet me here at the same hour to-morrow night.”
YOU'RE sharp to time, Brooks,” said the Chief, as he greeted him on the following night, “I hope that matters are shaping a bit better.”

In reply, Brooks handed his superior officer a letter. The latter read it over, placed it upon the table, and the two men commenced to smoke.

“Supposing that there is anything in this letter?” queried the Chief.

“But there is,” replied Brooks, “the letter came to the office by the first delivery this morning.”

The Chief picked it up, and read it through again with a smile, which, however, soon passed, and left a shade of sadness and regret upon his face. The letter, except that we have corrected the spelling, was as follows:—

   Pentland Cottage,
   South Brisbane.
   Mr, Police Officer,
   At the Roma Street Barracks.
   I write this to let you know that I overheard my old man tell a friend of his that a mate of his, a waterman named Joe Stunner, rowed somebody over the river late last Saturday night to Drybrook House. Likely it was the same as murdered the gentleman all the fuss has been about. Please send me the £200 reward by the same postman as brings us the letters, and be sure and say nothing about it to my old man. Anxiously awaiting the money,

      Your humble servant,
      MARGARET ADAMS.

“I went over,” continued Brooks, “at once, found out the waterman's place, and saw his wife. She did not, of course, recognise me as belonging to the force. I had a good deal of trouble to get anything out of the old lady. She seemed on her guard a bit, which confirmed my suspicions. Anyhow, I found out that her husband had been away from home on Saturday night, and that he must have crossed the river in his boat, for the simple old soul allowed that he had tea with her at home, and that he was over on the north side on Sunday morning, and that the boat was wrecked on Sunday afternoon against the Victoria Bridge. I got out of her that Stunner was having another boat built, and that some benevolent gentleman gave him £50 to replace the lost boat. I believe that she called it the ‘Mary Jane.’ ”

“Who do you think it was that he rowed over?”

“George Jackson.”

“I don't care what evidence there is,” said the Chief, impulsively, “I'll never believe that Jackson is a murderer.”
“They may have quarrelled,” said Brooks.

“Even then, I cannot think that Jackson would have struck him. M'Watt was a regular coward; would bluster a bit at times, but he never would have the pluck to lift his hand to a brawny fellow like Jackson. As to Jackson, he's one of the coolest cards I ever met; and besides, M'Watt was killed with some weapon. Look here, Brooks, you're on the wrong track. Constant M'Watt was never murdered by George Jackson.”

“Well, hear the rest of the evidence. 1. Although the housemaid could not be sure that M'Watt's bed had been slept in, she is prepared to swear that it was tumbled, and that someone had lain on it. 2. There was a credit balance at the Colonial Bank, where M'Watt kept his private account when he died, of no less than £37,600. 3. On the 20th March, 1889, a cheque was cashed for £25,000 at the Colonial Bank, the whole of which was drawn in notes.”

“I have found out Tomkins, who is at Warwick; wired there, and got one of the sergeants to interview him. He distinctly remembers the transaction, and also that at M'Watt's request, he afterwards exchanged £20,000 worth of the notes for those of other banks; £5,000 of each, and all for large amounts. He remembers it distinctly, as he had some trouble to get them. He believes that M'Watt took the notes with him to Drybrook House the same afternoon, as he seemed a bit nervous, and made him go home with him for company in the waggonette. M'Watt was not in very good health at the time.”

“Well!” said the Chief.

“I think that is all plain enough,” said Brooks. “Stunner rowed Jackson over to Drybrook House on Saturday night.”

“A thing which seems to me impossible,” interjected the Chief; “why Brooks, I was out that night myself in one of the boats, and I assure you that no one but a madman would have attempted to cross the river in a boat that night. Scores of houses were coming down, and the river was a perfect Niagara, half choked with wreckage, and to cross it in the dark too! But go on.”

“Men will take big risks with £30,000 in question,” said Brooks dryly.

“Well, as I was saying, they crossed the river and found nearly two feet of water covering the ground floor of Drybrook House. Jackson left Stunner with the boat, went up and found M'Watt asleep, struck him with a heavy ebony ruler taken from the library table, and afterward robbed the safe; he and Stunner then lifted the body into the punt and set it adrift. I have found out that Jackson and Stunner came into a George Street Hotel about half-past two on Sunday morning and asked for refreshments. They seemed very tired, and explained that they had been working in the flood. They asked for beds, but as they were full, slept afterwards on lounges in
the dining room. The following Tuesday morning Jackson paid £2,500 in notes—that were drawn out by Tomkins for M’Watt, on the 20th March, 1889—into his account at the El Dorado Bank.”

“Looks bad for Jackson, and I suppose you are getting a warrant out for his arrest,” said the Chief. “But 'pon my word, Brooks, even now I cannot believe it of Jackson.”

“Why, man,” he said almost angrily, “I know him well. I'd as soon believe that I did the murder myself!”

“Well, suppose that I can prove that the knife found in the punt was Jackson's property?”

“Ah!” said the Chief, starting, “if you can prove that, there will be evidence complete enough to hang any man.”

By an early train next morning two men travelled second class to Redland station. They had a bit of a horsey appearance; one of them wore spurs and carried a stock-whip. The constable at the Melbourne Street station noticed them, and thought they were a couple of stockmen going down for a mob of cattle or horses. If he could have seen under their coats, he would have found fastened at the back, in the belts of each, a pair of handcuffs. They were going down to arrest George Jackson, of Darton's Point, for the murder of the Hon. Constant M’Watt.

That morning, Frank, John Darton's man of all work, was cutting firewood in a paddock a short distance from the house, when he noticed two horsey looking men coming in at the gate; one of them stooped down and seemed to pick something out of the grass, they then stopped for a minute and looked at it. Coming over, the elder of the two said to him.

“Good morning; is the boss about.”

“He's up at the house, I think, in his office,” was the reply.

“Has he got any horses to be broken in?” asked the man.

“I don't think so,” replied Frank. “You had better go up and ask him. There are some in the Big Swamp paddock that he might have handled, but you'll have to do it cheap.”

The two men turned to go up to the house, when one of them stepped back and said, “Look here, mate, we picked up this knife in the grass, over against the gate. I suppose it belongs to someone about the place.”

Frank took the knife and looked at it, and, without any hesitation, said, “Belongs to Mr. Jackson; he lent it to me one day to cut a bit of greenhide. I'll show you how I know it,” and he pulled out two spring guards, one on each side of the blade. “Mr. Jackson told me that he bought it somewhere coming out on the steamer. The knife is his all right; I could swear to it.”

“Is Mr. Jackson up at the house?”

“Yes, you'll find him most likely with the boss.”
“Ah! then I can give it to him myself,” said the man.

John Darton had just received a letter which had given him some uneasiness, and Mrs. Darton, Edna, and Jackson, were sitting in the breakfast room, engaged in what was evidently a serious discussion. The letter was from De Ville, in reply to an inquiry of Darton's in reference to the way in which M'Watt had left Edna Forrest's trust account. In it he regretted that M'Watt's business affairs had been left in very considerable confusion, no doubt partly owing to his very sudden death. He had examined M'Watt's account books and private ledger, but could find no trust account in Miss Forrest's name. He had not been able to discover any deed of trust, or other document referring to the matter. It looked as though the £10,000 had gone directly through the private account of the deceased, without any specification as to the source from which it had come, or the purpose for which it had been received. If M'Watt had ever received the money, continued the letter, it was a most unbusinesslike way of dealing with the transaction. The cheques for interest could be traced, but they were entered in the cash book simply as payments to John Darton, on account of Edna Forrest. He would have the matter carefully looked into on the arrival of Mr. Caleb Angel, his co-trustee, but unless they possessed documents fully substantiating the claim, he did not see how the £10,000 could be made a charge upon the estate.

“We have no documents,” said John Darton, “not even a receipt. The money came by bank draft from England, and I handed it over to M'Watt. He was my co-trustee, and it never occurred to me to ask for a receipt.”

The whole party looked at each other in consternation and amazement. Edna spoke first. Her voice quivered somewhat; for several days past the shadow of her dream had swept darkly across her life. Somehow George was not quite the same; she felt sure that he had something upon his mind. He started when spoken to sometimes, and he looked ill, and shuddered when she had told him of her dream. Then he had laughed and said it was nothing.

“Never mind, Uncle,” she said, “it will all come right somehow; we can trust Caleb Angel to do fairly, and he will be back within a week's time.”

“Look, John,” said Mrs. Darton, “there are two men, stockmen I think, coming up the drive. I suppose they want you. It's like their impudence to come up to the front of the house. I do wish that you would give orders to Frank, always to tell people of that class to come to the back entrance.”

John Darton went out by the hall door on to the verandah,

“Morning sir,” said the short, stoutish man; “is Mr. Jackson anywhere about?”

“Yes, he's inside,” and going to the hall door he called, “Jackson, here's a
couple of men want you.”

Jackson came out, a frown upon his face, but cool and self-possessed.

“Well, what is it?”

“The man down in the paddock says that this is your knife?”

“It is,” said Jackson, looking at it, and then lifting his eyes to his interrogator, he looked him straight in the face.

“Well, what then?” he said.

“George Jackson, I arrest you in the Queen's name,” said Brooks, stepping forward.

“What for, fellow?” ejaculated Darton, not realising for the moment that the stockman was a detective in disguise.

“For the murder of the Hon. Constant M'Watt.”

Jackson stood looking at him like a man in a dream. He was thinking not of himself but of Edna. She must have heard it.

“My good man,” said Darton, “you're making a terrible mistake. Tell him so, George!”

“It's of no use, John,” said Jackson, “I shall have to go with them, but as I stand before my God this moment, I am innocent.”

There was the flutter of a dress, and the arms of a sobbing girl were round George Jackson's neck, and burning kisses were pressed upon his lips before them all.

“George! George dear, we all of us believe you!”

“Edna,” said Mrs. Darton, “I am astonished at you; of course we believe Mr. Jackson to be innocent, but you are allowing your excited feelings to carry you beyond all bounds of decorum. Before two strange men too!”

Cried Edna in a broken voice: “At such a time as this, I'd kiss him before all the world!” and then she dropped down upon a seat, and burst into a passionate flood of tears.

The two men went back again by the afternoon train, George Jackson with them. As he walked down the Melbourne Street station steps, a member of the Upper House was ascending.

“Halloo, Jackson! I just wanted to see you,” and he reached out his hand.

“I beg your pardon,” replied Jackson, without accepting the proffered hand, a tremor shaking his voice, “I cannot speak to you now; you will know why presently.”

His friend looked back in amazement as Jackson and the two men passed.

“Good Heavens!” he exclaimed, “why he's handcuffed by the right wrist to the other man's left; no wonder that he could not shake hands with me. Detectives I suppose. What on earth can he have done?” and he went back to the Club to tell the astonishing news.
“I was going out to Ipswich, but 'pon my word I feel that knocked over I can do nothing to-day. Here, Barnes, go out and see if you can get me an evening paper.”

For the first time in his life George Jackson passed a night in gaol. We say he passed the night, for the shock, although half expected, had been so severe that he could not sleep.
Chapter XXI. Caleb Angel

TO THE chagrin of the editors of the evening papers, the news of the arrest of Jackson arrived too late for publication in the special editions. The train did not get into Melbourne Street station until five o'clock, and that evening the news was only known by a few.

Poor old Stunner was arrested the same night in bed. He had retired early with an untroubled mind—for the present of the £50 had done wonders for him—and was just falling asleep, when two police constables came to the front door. Brooks knew that there would be no trouble about arresting the old man; he felt a bit tired himself, and wanted to see his superior officer, so he sent two subordinates. They rapped at the front door and, without waiting, turned the handle and looked into Mrs. Stunner's best parlour. Her good man, as she called him, was in bed in the next room, the only door of entrance to which was from the room into which the police officers had partly obtained entrance.

As soon as Mrs. Stunner saw that it was a police constable that had opened the door, and that another tall officer in uniform was peering over his shoulder, all her marital instincts were aroused, and with flashing eyes she demanded their business.

"We want your husband, my good woman; I suppose your name is Eliza Stunner?"

"Yes, my name is Eliza Stunner," said the dame, blocking up the doorway, "and a good honest name it is, too, and not one as is known to the perlice. My good man is in bed, and you can't see him. You can come again in the morning, if yer business is pressing. I s'pose, being a licensed waterman, yer think yer can disturb his folks at any hour of the night, coming into decent bodies' houses without asking by your leave, or anything. Now take yer foot away from the door, or I'll report yer for forcing yer way into the house!"

"Go and stand round by the window, South," said the sergeant to his companion, without speaking to the indignant wife, "he may try to escape that way; he's in the adjoining room. Keep your handcuffs ready."

"It's come to 'rest my Joe ye are, is it?" said Mrs. Stunner, raising her voice. "I tell you he's in bed, and can't be 'rested or anything else to-night."

"My good woman," commenced the sergeant.

"W'at's matter, 'Liza?" sang out a voice from the bedroom, "summat wants a boat; tell 'em 'Mary Jane' was wrecked on Sunday 'ginst Victoria Bridge, all hands saved, and skipper's takin' 'is watch below, till to-morrow mornin'.'"
“Joe,” said Mrs. Stunner, with an indignant sob in her throat, “it's two perlicemen, and one of the wagabonds has gone round to the window, and here's another with his foot 'gainst the door, and they's come to 'rest you.”

“Surely they's made a mistake,” said Joe, cheerfully. “I say, Mister,” he shouted out, “wait till I get me duds on, an' I'll come out an' speak to yer. Yer's come to the wrong vessel, that's what yer 'as. We don't do any piratical smuggling business in this yer harbour.”

The sergeant could not help smiling, and wondered to himself what Stunner was like. The voice certainly hadn't the sound of one who had been an accomplice in a murder.

“Look here,” he said to Mrs. Stunner, who still faced him like a lioness about to be robbed of her whelps, “I'll take a chair and wait till your husband dresses himself.”

“All right, me 'early,” sang out Joe from the dormitory, “take a cheer and I'll be with thee in a jiffy.”

The sergeant rose from his chair as Stunner entered the parlour, and looking into the kindly eyes of the old man, was for a moment quite thrown off his guard, and forgot his uniform and buttons.

“I'm sorry to have to do it, old man. I have no doubt there's some mistake about it. You don't look like one that would help to do a murder, but I must arrest you, you know, for I have to take you back with me to the office. Joseph Stunner,” he said, slightly raising his voice, “I arrest you in the Queen's name for the murder of Constant M'Watt.”

“Why,” said Joe, “yer boss must be a blessed idiot. D'yer think I could murder a man and then go and 'ear 'is parson preach 'is funeral sarmon!”

As they marched Joe off to the police station, his wife walked beside him, clapping his hand. Tears were in her eyes—a small crowd followed—but she kept up a brave heart, as befitted a sailor's wife.

“Ah, Joe! I was afeared there'd be trouble out of it, but mayhap they'll lock me up wid thee,” she whispered to him, “and then I wouldn't so much mind.”

There was a great sensation next morning in Brisbane. “The Recent Floods,” “The Home Rule Bill,” “The Federal Bank Failure”—all in large type headings, were passed over, for in equally large type appeared the announcement—“Capture of the Alleged Murderers of the Hon. Constant M'Watt.”

The police are supposed to keep departmental matters perfectly secret, and how it got out no one knew; not even Detective Brooks, who was highly commended for the “clever capture.” But the whole story of the arrest was there, coloured by the fancy of the reporter to suit the public taste, with a full and detailed account of Brooks' supposition as to the way
in which the murder had been committed. How they raked it up was a mystery, but an enterprising reporter had actually found out that a black cat had been left on Sunday morning about half-past one o'clock in Squib Street, by the supposed murderers, who, it was alleged, had taken a great sum in gold and notes, and had also stolen all the costly plate and family jewellery, which was kept in a fireproof safe at Drybrook House. That one of the supposed criminals should belong to the upper class, and be an intimate of Drybrook House and a friend of the deceased, made it the more sensational.

The public house in George Street made a small fortune by supplying drink to the crowds who flocked to see the two lounges on which the alleged murderers had slept, after the fearful deed of that awful Saturday night.

So much for the newspapers. However, it served their purpose. The afternoon journals sold out no less than three late editions, and put on special reporters to hunt up fresh sensational particulars for the following day.

We must, however, now introduce to our readers another actor in this strange story of colonial life.

On the morning of the 17th instant, at half-past five, a steamer was seen to be rounding Cape Moreton. She had made rather a long passage, and was detained two hours by thick weather when crossing the Bay. The Brisbane River was still heavily flooded. For several days the rain had again poured down in torrents. Probably there were several impatient passengers on board the "Wodonga," but none more so than Caleb Angel, barrister-at-law, co-executor with De Ville to Constant M'Watt's will, and the special friend and comrade of George Jackson, inmate of the Wagga Road Gaol, Brisbane.

The steamer dropped anchor below Breakfast Creek soon after twelve the same day, and as this was the nearest point they could get to the city, as soon as possible Angel got himself and his belongings placed on shore. He was in bachelor lodgings at New Farm, and although comparatively young, was a rising member of the Queensland Bar.

Having reached home, changed his wet clothes, and refreshed himself, his first thought was to go over and see Jackson. He had read a telegraphic account of his arrest in a Sydney paper before leaving, and he was eager to hear from Jackson's own mouth how it had all come about. He never for a moment believed him guilty. He looked at his watch—it was after three o'clock. How the time had slipped away. He went to the window and drew aside the lace curtain. The rain fell in torrents; the street was all a-wash, and although the house was high above any possible flood, Caleb realised
the fact that umbrella and macintosh could afford no protection before that
driving rain, and that to go out meant to be soaked through before he could
get to a cab stand. He would look at the papers for the past few days—but
were there no letters?

He rang the bell.

“Susie,” he said, as a neatly-dressed servant promptly answered, “were
there no letters for me?”

“I beg your pardon, sir; they are here. I thought that you would see
them.”

She handed him five letters from a shelf, and then placed a heap of the
daily papers beside him on the table.

“The papers are here, too, sir.”

“Thank you, Susie; that will do nicely. By the way, I won't go out in this
pouring rain. Just make me a nice cup of afternoon tea and bring it in to
me.”

He looked at each of the letters before opening the envelopes, and
seemingly recognised the handwriting of each. He opened the two least
important ones first, and glanced over their contents. Then he tore up the
envelopes and threw them into a waste paper basket, straightened out the
letters, and placed them under a paper weight.

“Now which shall I read first,” he said, looking at the three letters; “De
Ville's, John Darton's, or Edna Forrest's. Ah, well,” he said, with a half
sigh, “I'd perhaps better keep the best wine until the last.” He took De
Ville's letter. It was as follows:—

Oaklands Park,
Brisbane, February 15th, 93.

My dear Angel,

You will have received my telegram in Adelaide, telling you of M'Watt's
death, and I suppose that we may expect you by the end of the present
week. I write thus early, in order that you may be advised of the state of
affairs re our executorship, before I see you. You will have seen full
particulars of the murder in the papers. It has been a great shock to
everyone. Mrs. M'Watt and the girls are up the Range. They don't seem
greatly cut up; have not been left quite as well off as they expected to be. I
shall send with this letter copy of the will under separate cover, as it will
save time for you to peruse it and become familiar with its contents before
I see you. I may say that M'Watt has left plenty of cash in the bank, and
property worth considerably over £100,000, but his affairs generally are in
a great muddle. I have had a letter from Darton about £10,000 of trust
money belonging to Miss Forrest, which he says M'Watt had, but there is
no trace of it, and Darton has no confirmatory documents, so I don't see
how we can pay it out of the estate. However, we can talk it over when I see you. You will see a reference in the will to a pocket-book containing £30,000 in notes, and a statement that a drawer in the safe contained £1,500 in gold. I intended to leave things untouched at Drybrook House awaiting your return. But after the reading of the will, a detective on the scent for the murderer followed me up to my office, and wanted to know if the money was safe. I told him to come up with me, so we ran up at once in a cab. We made a most careful search, but could find neither bank notes nor gold, nor yet the enclosed document which the will refers to. Evidence has since been forthcoming that M’Watt drew the £30,000 from the bank accounts, and full particulars of the matter have been furnished by the clerk who drew the money. Now comes the strange part of it. It is proved that on the Tuesday after the murder, George Jackson (I am sorry to hear that he is an intimate friend of yours, but I presume that you are done with him now), paid into his private bank account two thousand five hundred pounds of the very notes proved to have been put by M’Watt into his safe. You will have read in the papers that Jackson was at Drybrook House on Saturday night, the 4th instant, and that a knife of his was found in the punt by the side of M’Watt's body, when it was picked up at Darton's Point. Queer that the murdered body should have floated into the murderer's very door. But murder will out, and the general opinion in Brisbane is that Jackson stole both gold and notes after committing the murder, and that he will be hung for it.

By the way, I hear that Miss Forrest has openly avowed her attachment for the fellow; but she will think better of that before the trial is over. I cannot imagine what she ever saw in him. Of course you will hardly agree with me, but I confess I never liked the man, and others I speak to have felt the same. Cutts, of the El Dorado Bank, told me to-day that he always distrusted him. I hope matters have been successful with you in Adelaide, and that you will find things all right here on your return.

Believe me, dear Angel,

Yours very truly,

GEORGE C. DE VILLE.

P.S.—I have made application for an order of the court to impound the balance of moneys to the credit of George Jackson at the Colonial Bank, as they are proved to have been stolen from the estate of which we are co-executors. You will, of course, endorse my action in this.

G. C. DE V.

“I am not so sure about that,” said Caleb Angel to himself; “but let us see what John Darton has to say.” The letter from the latter ran as follows:—

Darton's Point, via Brisbane,
February 16th, 1893.

Dear Sir,

Knowing of your friendship for Mr. Jackson, who is now unhappily in prison upon the charge of having murdered the late Hon. Constant M'Watt, I send you this letter in the hope that it may find you upon your first arrival. I need give you no particulars as to what has transpired regarding M'Watt's death. I should say, though, that the newspaper accounts are much exaggerated. I, of course, am convinced of Jackson's innocence, and I hope that you will be, when you hear the facts. I have asked Smithers, Ralf and M'Leod to take charge of the case, and have advised them to retain you as leading counsel for the defence.

There is another matter I shall have to speak to you about. I refer to a sum of £10,000 belonging to my ward, Miss Forrest, which was entrusted to M'Watt for investment. Your co-trustee, Mr. De Ville, advises me that there is no trace of it to be found, except that the payment of interest is noted in the cash book.

However, as Miss Forrest says, everything must stand on one side until we can get the trial over, and George Jackson honourably acquitted. The solicitors will, of course, communicate with you professionally as to Jackson's defence. We should, however, like you to see him as soon as possible. You will have freer access to him than I can obtain. I need not say, do your best for him; you will do that, I am sure, and more if it were possible.

Yours very faithfully,

JOHN DARTON.

"You are quite right there, John Darton; if any effort of mine can clear George Jackson of this charge, it will be made."

"Hang it all! This rain is abominable. I would go over at once, but I hear that the ferries have stopped running, and if I risk my neck in trying to cross the river in a boat and get drowned, so much the worse for poor old George. I must wait until to-morrow, that's certain."

"But why has Edna Forrest written? What a quaint, characteristic hand it is she writes," he said, taking up her letter. Then he leaned back in his chair, the letter still unread. He had been dreaming for several minutes, with Edna Forrest as the central figure, when Susie knocked at the door with the afternoon tea.

Edna Forrest had two other suitors for her hand and heart besides George Jackson. The reader already knows of De Ville's proposal; the other suitor, and a more worthy one, was Caleb Angel. M'Watt's joke applied to Edna as well as to his will. She had three lovers. The one she had accepted was, alas! likely to be hanged. The other two were a Devil and an Angel. Edna's
letter was as follows:—

Darton's Point, February 16th, 1893.

Dear Mr. Angel,

My uncle tells me that you will be retained as counsel to defend Mr. Jackson. I am very glad. There is no one in the world I would sooner have defend him, other than yourself. Before Mr. Jackson left here for Brisbane, he said he feared that a man named Joseph Stunner would be arrested, who is just as innocent as himself, but Mr. Jackson seemed very anxious about him; felt that it was through him that he had got into this trouble, and I know that he will be anxious that he shall at once have proper legal advice and defence. I have been able to save a little out of my private income, and enclose you with this a cheque for £200. Please get some respectable firm of solicitors to undertake his defence, and do not spare expense in employing able counsel. I will send any further funds that may be required.

Believe me to remain,

Yours very sincerely,

EDNA FORREST.

Angel read the letter over, especially the first part, more than once, or twice. It had cost him many a heart pang to give up Edna to George Jackson, but he knew that he had been fairly beaten, and bore no malice against his successful rival. And now he was called upon to defend the life of the accepted lover of the woman he loved. He drank his tea, and then paced up and down the room.

"It's the sort of thing," he said to himself, "that would be put in a novel. Edna does not doubt but that I will take up Jackson's case; says that she is very glad; would sooner that I defended him than anyone else in the world. Well, I'll endeavour not to disappoint her, and I'll see that Stunner is well defended too. I think that I will put it into the hands of Harkness. He is an able man, and will give his best attention to the case; and I'll advise him to retain Browning as counsel. Now, let's see what was done at the police court yesterday. Committed for trial, I suppose, and bail refused."

"Ah! that's it," he said, glancing over the paper. "Court crowded; prisoners pleaded 'not guilty'; reserved their defence; committed for trial; bail refused."

"Evidence seems very strong against them," he continued, "but one side is all right until you hear the other. It places me in a strange position, though. One of the executors of the murdered man's will, and leading counsel for the defence of the supposed murderer, and supposed thief too, and also the accepted suitor of the girl I love most dearly. It surpasses all romance. But"—and his face became suffused with manly resolution, and the nobleness of the man's character seemed to shine out from his whole
person—“by God's help, I'll undertake the case, and as John Darton puts it, I'll endeavour to do better than my best.”
Chapter XXII. “At the Back of the Iron Drawer”

BY THE following morning it was evident that Brisbane was doomed to bear the brunt of another great flood. The rise of the waters throughout the night had been steady, if not rapid, and by the forenoon of Saturday, the 18th instant, the flood had obtained a level nearly three feet higher than the highest point reached in 1890.

Caleb Angel started for his chambers in Adelaide Street a little before ten o'clock. The sky was still overcast, and when, between occasional showers, the sun's rays broke out, they were excessively hot, and the atmosphere was intolerably close and muggy. He took the tram into town, but found, to his surprise, that the water at that hour was rising over the lower parts of the city. Little or no business was doing, except by tradesmen who were selling bargains in flooded goods. The shopkeepers and professional men, who had their businesses and offices on the ground floor, were in the greatest consternation, for by half past ten the river was seventeen feet above high water mark, and was rising at the rate of nearly six inches an hour. After transacting some business at his chambers, Caleb called round to De Ville's office. He was not there, however; had not been there on the previous day, and was not expected back until Monday. There was no business doing, so after answering a few letters, which he did not trouble to post, for Brisbane was again cut off from all outside communication, he called a cab. He had determined to run up and see his widowed mother, and brothers and sisters, who lived in a pleasant home about three miles out of the city, at Lutwyche. He was in temporary lodgings for the sake of quiet study, and nearness to his chambers. Just as he was about to enter the cab, a somewhat smartly-dressed young girl, closely veiled, placed a letter in his hand, and was gone again before he had time to stop her. He looked at the address upon the envelope: “Caleb Angel, Esq., Barrister, Tribunal Chambers, Brisbane,” and was jumping into the cab intending to follow the girl, when he found that she had completely disappeared. He opened the letter. It was written in a scrawling feminine hand, and was as follows:—

“Brisbane, February 18th.

Sir,—I noticed your name in the ‘Wodonga's’ passenger list in this morning's paper, so as I suppose you will be at your chambers, I will send this to be delivered into your own hand by a friend. The late Constant M'Watt has left £1,500 in sovereigns in a drawer in the iron safe at Drybrook House, and has left a private memo. in the same place to say that the money is to be paid to me. He told me that I need give no receipt, and that you and Mr. De Ville would ask no questions. I do not see why you
should not pay this money to me at once, as I know that it's there in the
drawer. I saw it there myself shortly before he was murdered, and wanted
him to give it to me then, but he wouldn't; said that he would take care of
me while he lived, and that that was there for me when he died. Now I
would like to have the money as soon as possible, as I have made up my
mind to leave Brisbane—and indeed, Queensland—and I dare say you'll all
be glad to know that I am gone. No one can talk then! I need not give you
my address or name, as the document which I saw M'Watt write and lock
up in the safe, tells you all about that, and how you are to pay me the
money. I rely upon you to see to this at once, or I may make a disturbance
that won't be pleasant. I know a little about De Ville, and would not trust
him; but from all I hear of you, I believe you will do the straight thing, and
carry out M'Watt's wishes without any further trouble, so please give the
matter your early attention and oblige
Yours respectfully,
——"

Caleb frowned as he put the letter in his pocket. “I am afraid there will be
more trouble,” he said. “This letter bears no signature, but it has evidently
been written by a woman. The thing looks shady; says she saw the money
there herself; some of the money that De Ville says is stolen. I expect if the
other side can get hold of her they will put her in the box, and then I
anticipate that there will be some highly sensational revelations. Shocking
scandal in high life, and the rest of it. It is right enough to ‘speak only good
of the dead,’ but I cannot help thinking that M'Watt was a regular bad old
fellow after all. It's the old story; a bad will, a bad woman, and a great sum
of money left to a church. However, De Ville is certainly not friendly to
Jackson, and there is no reason why I should disclose the contents of this
letter to him at once.”

He drove around the Brisbane heights with his sister that afternoon, along
Wickham Terrace and around Red Hill. The sight was one never to be
forgotten—it staggered and appalled him. “Why,” he said to his sister, “I
could not have believed it possible!” As they drove back, they had a full
view of Toowong and Milton.

“Look, Annie,” he said to his sister, “there's Drybrook House surrounded
by water again.” He little thought that his co-executor (George Charles De
Ville) was in the house at that very time, and was practically a prisoner.

It had come about in this way. De Ville felt quite hopeful,
notwithstanding the payment of the £2,500 into Jackson's bank account,
that the pocket-book with the £30,000 was still somewhere in the library at
Drybrook House. He knew that the gold had not been touched, for the fact
was, that on the afternoon before the will was read, he was at Drybrook
House and found the sovereigns. He had thought it over, and decided in his own mind that they had been kept there by M'Watt for business purposes only; for, like others, De Ville knew how often, if the actual gold could be placed in hundreds before the seller's eyes, and within reach of his hands, marvellous bargains could be obtained.

Why, was not old Cartridge got at in that very way over some Elizabeth Street property. “Sell it for £700,” he had said, “I'm not such a fool.” But he afterwards sold it for £650, although it was worth five times that sum. When the bags of gold were emptied of their contents upon a table, under the eyes of the avaricious old man, the temptation was too much for him. A *cheque* for twice the amount would not have moved him. But gold! gold!! gold!!!

“Pour out another bagful,” said the old miser, dazzled with the heap of glittering coins, “and you shall have it.”

It was a dodge that De Ville was up to. And was there any dodge beneath the sun or moon that M'Watt was unacquainted with? Not one!

That these sovereigns would be specified in the will never occurred to De Ville, or he would not have touched them. As soon as he had heard the contents of the will he had determined to replace them, but Brooks was too quick for him and took him unawares; and he had not time then to put them back. Besides, he had removed them from the house. And then again, it would help to hang George Jackson, who had the cursed impertinence to stand between him and the woman he had picked out for his wife. But that pocket-book was still to be found, and he meant to find it before Caleb Angel's return.

“He'd see the Bethel Calvanists burned before he would let them get that £30,000. Only ruin their usefulness” he grinned to himself, “they will be rich and wrap themselves in Laodicean ease. It's really a mercy that I am here to save them from such dire ruin. If old M'Watt now had left them, say £300, it would have helped them perhaps, and done them good, but £30,000—I'll see them burned first!”

When a man is absorbed in an exciting search, time flies very quickly, and De Ville found himself hemmed in by the waters on that Friday afternoon before he was aware. He continued his search unsuccessfully far into the night, and slept for a few hours on a lounge. With the morning he found himself a prisoner, hopelessly; but on ransacking round the store room, he discovered tinned meats, and preserves, and biscuits, and other eatables on shelves above flood mark, so there was no danger of starvation. The cockatoo had been removed to the servants' quarters again, but as the waters were still rising De Ville said:

“Look here, Cocky, why don't you talk? You have not said a word since I
have been in the house. Here I'll carry you upstairs out of this beastly flood. Hanged if I'm not about sick of it. What do you think of it, aye Cocky?"

“George,” said the bird, “you ought to be ashamed of yourself.” De Ville let the stand go and staggered back in amazement. “Why you're the devil, how do you know my name?”

“George,” repeated the bird more solemnly. “You ought to be ashamed of yourself.”

De Ville laughed at this, but like many of his class, who, while they profess to have no religious beliefs, are often full of foolish superstitions, he regarded the bird somewhat askance. However, he would not leave it there in the flood, and it would be company, so he carried it into the library. He had been a whole day by himself, and he felt nervous. He cursed the flood roundly, and the pocket-book which he could not find.

“George, don't swear,” said the bird abruptly. “George, you ought to be ashamed of yourself.”

“Look here, old boy,” said De Ville, “as you're so clever, perhaps you can tell me where this pocket-book is that I've been looking for?”

“It's at the back of the iron drawer,” replied the bird.

“Well I believe you are the devil, or one of his imps,” said the startled man, “but I'll look. Strange that with all my searching I should never have thought to pull out the safe drawers, and look at the back of them, but then there's no room at the back. However, here goes,” The bird watched him as though greatly interested. He pulled out the drawer that had contained the gold.

Pushing his arm far back he touched something.

“Good Heavens!” he exclaimed, “it's it! It's the pocket-book!” He tore it open, and there were the notes. “£30,000,” he said; “but it's strange,” he said, “here are three cheques totalling £2,507,” and then it flashed upon him about Jackson having paid just £2,500 into his account in M'Watt's bank notes. He sat down and looked at them for some time, and then suddenly turned round and stared at the bird.

“Look here,” said he, “I'm going to kill you, you know too much.”

The bird ruffled its feathers, spread its wings, raised its crest, and opening it's beak screamed defiance at him.

De Ville moved towards it in a threatening attitude, lifting a heavy ebony ruler from the writing table—the one that it was supposed M'Watt had been murdered with. The bird screamed again in evident terror, and sprang up as though to escape and flew away—the chain that had fastened it's claw to the stand had broken. The bird perched itself on the cornice of the window curtain, and staring defiantly at its opponent, rolled its tongue in its beak
and said:

“George, you ought to be ashamed of yourself.” With this parting admonition, the bird flew across the room and escaped by an open window.

The perspiration stood thick on De Ville's face. “I wonder,” he said, “whether that thing is bird or devil. I was a fool to let it escape me!”
Chapter XXIII. De Ville, J.P., Reveals Himself

AFTER the escape of the cockatoo, De Ville looked more leisurely and carefully over the contents of the pocket-book. There was a letter acknowledging the receipt of a sum of money, and some valuable mining scrip, which he thought it would be a pity to have lost to the estate, so he placed them with other papers in a drawer. There was also a short memorandum in regard to an important land transaction in which George Jackson was interested, the production of which would have enabled Jackson to have recovered a large sum, which he always believed M'Watt had obtained by sharp practice, if not fraudulent means.

"I think that I will burn this," he said, placing it on one side. "If Angel saw it he would be for paying Jackson something like £7000 on that little transaction, By George! M'Watt was pretty smart."

"Ah!" he said, "what's this? Memo. of remittance of £10,000, paid to account on January 3rd, 1885. That must be Edna Forrest's money, let's see if it shows in the Bank pass book on that date. "No," he said, after examining a thick red bank book, "here's an amount of £16,000 paid in on that date, so it could scarcely be traced without this memorandum. I'll keep this. If I should marry Edna after Jackson's hung, I can place it amongst some of the papers of the estate—there are piles of them down at the office—and happen upon it at a convenient time. Edna Forrest may make up her mind to this, however. She'll never get one sixpence of that £10,000 unless she marries George Charles De Ville, and she will too, yet, I know. Wait until I get Jackson out of the way. I don't think that I will destroy any of these papers, they will be safe enough with the pocket-book, inside my own private safe. By the way, who was it said that a wise man would never write a letter, and never burn one? It's not often that I do the latter. It's wonderful how old letters turn up trumps sometimes. A man writes a foolish one in some thoughtless hour, and sends it to his friend, who he thinks will burn it. Years after they quarrel and become enemies, and the old foolish letter turns up again—a whip to castigate with. No, I don't often burn documents which I have not written, and I won't burn these. They may prove useful some day, who knows."

"Now about these notes and cheques. The former are all right, and after this affair has blown over, I can, by degrees, pass them through some bank account and get them cashed. I can afford to wait for a year or two, for the matter of that, but these cheques puzzle me. I suppose M'Watt must have cashed them for Jackson out of the £30,000 worth of notes. Why, here is one payable yesterday, and one is post dated still. The cheques are as good
as gold. Two Sydney ones, and one of Sir Henry Moore's for £507 14s. 6d.,
due next week; that's good enough. I see, too, that there are a few pounds
over the £2,500. M'Watt deducted that for exchange, I suppose. I wonder
what he charged him for cashing them? But is it possible that Jackson took
out the notes and put in these cheques? I don't think so; they are not
payable to him, nor has he endorsed them. And yet, why should he come
over here that Saturday night in a boat—if he really came? But suppose
Jackson did not do it, how did M'Watt meet with his death? Well, it's the
biggest puzzle and mystery I have had anything to do with; beats all the
detective stories I ever read. How about Jackson's knife being found in the
boat, though? The fellow must have had a hand in it. 'Pon my soul, I hope
he did; it's a pity for a man to be hung for nothing.”

“That newspaper report, by the way,” continued De Ville to himself,
supposed that he was murdered in this room, and was struck by the
murderer with a heavy round weapon, as he lay sleeping on a lounge. If so,
it may have been done with this very ebony ruler, and M'Watt may have
been sleeping on the lounge behind that curtain. Perhaps he was a bit gone.
The decanter of port was found half empty. Curse this flood, to keep me
penned up alone in this place again to-night. Somehow, last night I did not
feel so lonesome. I wonder if I could find some more brandy downstairs. I
must get some candles, too; it will soon be dark again. Not a pleasant
prospect, to have to spend another night in this dreary place. That wretched
cockatoo has quite upset my nerves. How could it have got hold of my
name, I wonder, and have known where that pocket-book was. It must be
an emissary of the evil one. I wonder whether it's true that a man can sell
himself to the devil? Bah! old women's tales! There's no such thing as a
personal devil at all. The bird picked it up somewhere. But if it's anywhere
about after the flood, I'll have it shot, as sure as my name is De Ville. I
wish that I had killed it.”

The water was now about ten inches over the ground floor, so he took off
his boots and waded out to the storeroom. The water was deeper here. He
could find no brandy, but he got a bottle of whisky out of the butler's
pantry. “Ah! this will drive away low spirits,” he said; “now for some
sugar and candles. I've plenty of eatables upstairs.”

He took these things into a small room near the top of the staircase, used
as a sort of private reading and sewing room by the ladies of the house. It
was comfortably furnished, and had a good view of the river from the front
window.

De Ville made himself a stiff glass of whisky and water.

“Ah!” he said, smacking his fat lips, “that's the right sort of stuff. Better
than all your port or sherry. Nothing like spirits to drive away spirits,” he
said, laughing at his own conceit. “I don't like the prospect of stopping here to-night. I suppose the water will be down by to-morrow. Sun's been shining these two or three hours; shouldn't be surprised if it's at a standstill now. I'll go down and watch it for a while, and smoke a cigar.”

He looked at his gold repeater—it was just six o'clock. Going down the staircase, he put a pin in the carpet, level with the water. He smoked away in silence for a few minutes. “Still rising,” he said, after a while, “the pin is covered.”

“Quarter past six,” he said, presently, after having eyed his watch for some time. He then examined the pin again.

“Hang it all,” he ejaculated, “it's risen over an inch in the quarter of an hour. I've a jolly good mind to go upstairs and get drunk on old M'Watt's whisky, and sleep it off until morning; I shall surely be able to get away then. No, that won't do either; I am fat, and for aught I know, may be subject to heart disease, fatty degeneration, &c. Then, too, how do I know but what some of these burglars that are going around in boats may give the house a call, and knock me on the head. Good thought—I must keep candles burning all night to keep them off. Old M'Watt's room is the best for that; faces the main thoroughfare. I did not intend to go in there again to-night. Suppose the old chap was murdered there, and that the room is haunted. I wish I were out of the place. I think I'll go in and light a candle before it gets quite dark, and then if I light another in this room at the same time, I shall know how long that in M'Watt's room will remain burning.”

“Here, let's have another drop of whisky; I feel all of a shake. Confound that cockatoo; but I'll shoot it; shoot it the very first chance, as sure as my name is George Charles De Ville.”

He poured out the whisky and took the lighted candle into M'Watt's study, and placed it upon the writing table. He found that he had left the iron safe open, so he locked it, and put the keys carefully back into a drawer of the massive table. Then he looked carefully round the room, closed the window—which had been left open at the top—looked into the recess behind the damask curtain, closed the door after him, and drew the curtain over it.

There was another smaller staircase at the end of the corridor, used by the servants, and occasionally by the family, as it was a short way from this end of the house down to the breakfast room. De Ville looked down and saw the water glistening at the foot of the staircase. Darkness was now coming on, and he went back again to the reading room, where he had, for the present, established his quarters. “I'll have another glass of this whisky,” he said, “and then I'll lie down for an hour.”

The whisky was strong, and he had been drinking it from a tumbler, and
had poured it out with a shaky as well as a liberal hand, and he was soon in a heavy drunken sleep. How ugly and repulsive he looked, this man of wealth and position! The breath came thickly from his bloated cheeks and lips, as he lay there on the sofa, and the candle, burning near the half empty whisky bottle, flickered in the draught from the partly opened door. Yet this was the man who thought he honoured Edna Forrest by asking her to become his wife.

Imagine the humiliation to her fine nature to have been wedded to this coarse, sordid lump of unprincipled clay; this wealthy magistrate of the territory, who that week had stolen over £30,000; but who aspired to be a member of the Legislative Assembly and, in time, Chief Secretary, with a title. Yet even all this might come true, for this drunken knave had wealth, and queerer things have come to pass than that. There is not much that money cannot purchase for ambitious, and even unprincipled, men in Australia!

We have neither time nor patience to tell how De Ville eventually made his escape on Sunday afternoon from Drybrook House. When he was questioned afterward by his sister as to where he had been, he explained that he had been at a friend's house, stuck up by the flood.
Chapter XXIV. An Interview with the Prisoner

IF this were a romance, instead of a sober relation of facts, the writer would deem it extravagant and unpardonable nonsense to depict a large city like Brisbane on two Sundays, within one fortnight, with rowing boats, steam launches, and even sailing vessels, passing to and fro between the houses of its principal streets. But truth is often stranger than fiction, and we are only chronicling a fact within the memory of thousands when we so describe the scene of our story on the second memorable Sunday of the great floods of February, 1893.

The sun shone out brightly, however, upon the flooded city on that second Sunday morning, and it was felt that the worst must now be past.

The losses had again been very great, and many who could have pulled through the effects of the first flood were hopelessly ruined by the second. The water, which had reached its highest level in the early hours of the morning, when it stood twenty-two feet eight inches above high-water mark, and only ten inches below the flood of the previous Sunday week, was now receding, and the unfortunate population of the city turned more cheerfully to the work of salvage, and cleansing, and renovation.

When Caleb Angel crossed over the river to see George Jackson at the gaol on the following day he could scarcely believe his eyes. Stanley Street, usually bustling with trams and omnibuses, farmers' carts and waggons, presented the appearance of a ruined street in Pompeii, or some other city of the dead.

He felt thankful for the hopeful words with which the Chronicle, in a sub-leader, had endeavoured that morning to inspire the community. In the course of a short, cheery article it had said:—

“Scores, perhaps even hundreds, of our people will have been ruined, and compelled to begin the world afresh, yet the sun will continue to shine, people will be born, will marry, and will die, just as though there had been no convulsion of Nature a few months previously. Hopes will have been blighted, capital destroyed, and some men will have gone under, and been replaced by others endowed with greater energy, elasticity, or youthfulness. But the growth of Brisbane will not have been sensibly checked, nor the general prosperity of her citizens seriously injured, nor the confidence of capitalists in her securities permanently shaken, by the events of February, 1893.”

Although Brisbane society had been greatly stirred and scandalised by the arrest of George Jackson, who was well known in the best circles—and had been especially prominent, and considered: a catch by many mothers
with marriageable daughters, when he came from England, with influential introductions and a considerable fortune—the second flood had, to a large extent, caused the affair to sink into forgetfulness. For the nonce the flood-persecuted inhabitants of Brisbane had ceased to be interested in anything except their losses by the turgid inundations of the past fortnight.

Angel was shocked and pained, when he entered the cell in which Jackson was confined, to see the change wrought upon him in so short a time. His face was pale and haggard, and lines of care marked his brow.

There was a great contrast between the two men as they stood together, their hands united in a close, fervent clasp. Caleb Angel was several inches shorter than George Jackson, and fair, while the latter was dark. The former, slight, with the delicate and finely-formed limbs of a woman, the latter robust and brawny. But both men had good faces, large eyes, finely-formed mouths and high foreheads. They had become friends since Jackson's arrival in Queensland; but it was one of the few friendships formed by men in mature life, which are deep and lasting.

"I am glad that you have come, Caleb," said Jackson, in a voice husky with emotion. "Whatever others thought of me, I knew that you would not forsake me."

"My dear fellow," said his friend, "I cannot express my sorrow. I came as soon as I could get across, with this disastrous flood; landed on Friday afternoon; but since then they have had about five feet of water in Queen Street again."

"What! another big flood?" exclaimed George, his astonishment getting the better of his dismal condition and surroundings.

"Yes," said Caleb, "but it's all over now and the water will soon be down to its normal level."

"But you must tell me all about your trouble, George, for Darton has asked me to undertake your defence, and we must get you out of this hole as soon as possible. I see Smithers, Ralf, and M'Leod are acting for you, but for the sake of old friendship, and a bit of professional pride, perhaps (for I intend to have you triumphantly acquitted), I prefer to get up the case as far as possible myself. You'll have to explain everything fully to me."

George shook his head sadly and said: "I am afraid, Caleb, the evidence will be too strong for me. My chief anxiety now is to see old Stunner acquitted. I have never forgiven myself for getting the old chap into this trouble, but all he did was in complete ignorance of what was happening. I ought to have managed somehow to have gone over by myself."

Caleb looked at Jackson in astonishment, for there was more significance in the way he had said this, even than in the words themselves. It sounded like the remorseful confession of a guilty man.
“But,” said Caleb, “you did not kill M’Watt?”

“No, thank God, I did not kill him, and I have no positive knowledge as to who did, although I know that the theory of the murder, as given by the doctor and the newspapers, is altogether wrong. It was not any blow upon the forehead that killed him, I am sure of that.”

“My dear friend, you are speaking in riddles. Have you any personal knowledge or suspicion as to how he may have met with his death?”

“I have.”

“Then of course you will tell me.”

“No, Caleb, I cannot tell anyone. It would implicate one I believe to be innocent, at any rate of any intention to cause M’Watt's death; but it is not that merely, it would necessitate the revelation of statements which I believe to be false, and which I would sooner die than have blazoned abroad before the jeering populace.”

“But, my dear fellow, how am I to defend you, unless you supply me with the information. I have read all that the newspapers have to say, and the facts look black enough no doubt. If you are determined not to assist me, how can I possibly prepare your defence?”

“I have thought of all that, Caleb, and have, after long and painful consideration, decided to reveal, to whoever undertook my defence, all the facts of the case as they relate to myself. I shall do this the more freely as I have you for my counsel, and Smithers, Ralf and M’Leod for my solicitors. I always liked Smithers, he's one of the few honest lawyers I have met. Let me say, too, that whatever you may think of my course of procedure, I shall still consider that under the circumstances I acted for the best, and am perfectly justified in the action I took.”

“Look here, George, you are yourself training for the bar, and should be competent to form a sound judgment. Have you evidence that will clear you of the murder, apart from that which you have determined not to reveal? You were at Drybrook House on the Saturday?”

“I have ample evidence for myself, and for you, and for those of my friends who will believe my statements, but unless we can get hold of other independent witnesses, I fear it will not prove sufficient to convince a jury.”

“Well, out with it, George; you cannot conceive of my impatience.”

“M’Watt was not murdered on Saturday night at all. He was murdered some time on Thursday night or very early on Friday morning.”

“And you were at Darton's Point then, and can prove an alibi,” said his friend, with a face beaming with pleasure.

“I am not so sure about that.”

“George, I see it's of no use my asking you questions while I am in the
dark. You must have been educated for the law when at school or college, and will get your silk gown in no time after you are called to the bar. Now," said he, taking out his pocket-book and pencil, "I am all attention."

Slowly, and with the minutest detail, Jackson disclosed to his friend the facts which are already familiar to our readers. Once or twice Caleb Angel shuddered at the ghastly recital. He took copious notes occasionally, in shorthand, but never once spoke until Jackson had finished. He was a good listener.

"Now, will you answer any questions that I may put to you?"

"Yes, provided they do not refer to M'Watt's letter which I found in the safe."

"But, my dear fellow, that belongs to the executors. It was addressed to them, and is mentioned in the will."

"Caleb," said Jackson, putting his hand on his friend's arm, "I am not sure of that; but supposing it does, believe me, it is a wicked, false, damnable document, which concerns people whose good name is very dear to me; and if ever there was a case in which it was lawful to do evil that good might come, this is that one, and to take it and to destroy it, is neither theft nor sin."

"Well, we will leave that for further argument; I think that I shall be able to bring you round to let me know its contents. But how came you to climb that tree?"

"I was concerned about things in Brisbane. We had had very little information that day, and I went up to see whether much wreckage was coming down the river. There is a very extensive view from the top; it used to be a look-out tree for the blacks, from which one of the tribes would watch for shoals of fish in the Bay. It has niches for foothold, and I one day put a strong line from top to bottom. It is now almost as easy to climb as the rigging of a ship."

"From there you saw the punt coming ashore, and went down to examine it?"

"Yes, my first impulse was to give an alarm. But then, I did not want to frighten Mrs. Darton or Miss Forrest. It was getting late, too, and I knew Darton would soon be back from Brisbane. I saw something bulky in the overcoat pocket, and partly out of curiosity, drew it out. I was, of course, greatly excited; for you know, Caleb, my relations with M'Watt had latterly not been of the pleasantest, and I was suspicious that there was something wrong about Miss Forrest's trust money, as Darton had hinted as much to me. And then, to come upon his dead body in that way was fearful, and upset me more than I could have believed."

"When I opened the pocket-book, I read the papers as I took them out.
The very first one I opened referred to a transaction in land which I had with M'Watt, and which conclusively proved to my mind that I had been defrauded of over £7,000. There was also a memo. referring to £10,000, which I believe will give the clue to trace Miss Forrest's trust money. When I opened the inside pocket, I was staggered at seeing the notes. I then remembered that you were away in Adelaide. I do not, and never did, trust De Ville, and in your absence he might have destroyed the documents in the pocket-book. I was greatly perplexed, and at one time determined to tell John Darton, but I learnt something later in the evening which settled my mind in regard to the matter."

"May I ask what that was?"

"Caleb, you must trust me over that; it is one of the things I have determined not to reveal. It can do no good now, and might do incalculable harm."

"Well, George, you are a queer fellow," said Caleb, with a dissatisfied air. "Here is your life hanging in the balance, and for some fancy or other, you refuse to give me what is, on the face of things, most important information. Go on."

"After a lot of anxious consideration, I decided to tow the corpse out into the Bay again."

"In doing which you made a terrible mistake," ejaculated Angel.

"Well, that is a matter of opinion. It was only by doing this that I could accomplish the plan I had formed to protect Miss Forrest's and my own interests, which was to put back the pocket-book in the safe at Drybrook House, or in some hiding place where it was unlikely to be discovered until after your return."

"You told me that you returned the pocket-book, but did not tell me where you put it. De Ville writes me that he has searched everywhere for it, but without success. Where is it?"

"It's at the back of one of the iron drawers of the fire-proof safe."

"Oh!" exclaimed Angel. "But," he said, after a moment's pause, "there was £1,500 in sovereigns in one of those drawers. They are not there now. If they were there, you would have seen them." Caleb listened breathlessly for his answer, for he was thinking of the anonymous letter which he had received.

"The drawer was nearly full of gold on Saturday night, for I drew it out to place the pocket-book at the back of it. It was heavy enough for that sum."

"Well, where has it gone?"

"I cannot tell. I suppose there is no need for me to tell you, Caleb, that I did not touch a single coin of it."
“The whole thing is fearfully complicated,” said Angel, “but we shall have to unravel it somehow.”

“How about the £2,500 which they say you paid into your account at the El Dorado Bank.”

“Ah! I confess that was a mad thing to do, and I regretted it immediately afterwards, but it was then too late. It came into my head to do it at Darton's Point, but of course, it never occurred to me that the corpse would come back again, and actually, by a strange fatality, strand on the same place again. I bought some property in Sydney when I came through on arrival from Home, and my agents there sold it a few weeks ago. The buyers did not want to give promissory notes, so I took two post-dated cheques, each for £1,000. I also had a post-dated cheque of Sir Henry Moore's for £500 odd, on account of purchase of mining serip. I knew they were all as good as gold at due date, so it occurred to me to cash them out of the £30,000 in notes. I left sufficient margin to cover exchange. I did not want to ask any further favour of Cutts, the bank manager, as he had written me several unpleasant letters about my account. That I had no suspicion of their getting me into trouble is proved by the fact that I unhesitatingly endorsed each of the notes at the bank, when asked by the cashier to do so.”

“We can, of course, prove payment of the cheques to you, and even put Sir Henry Moore into the witness-box if necessary. But that pocket-book with the £30,000 must be secured at once. I don't like the loss of this £1,500 in gold; it will tend to throw doubt upon the whole of your statement.”

“I wonder,” he said, after several minutes' silence, “whether any person saw the punt and body in the Bay between Friday night and Sunday.”

“That's it,” said Jackson, “of course they did. The corpse had a diamond ring on the little finger of the left hand when I found it in the punt. I can swear to that; and there was then no mark of a blow upon the forehead.”

“Well, who took the ring?”

“A party of wreckers in a boat, of course,” said Jackson, “there were half-a-dozen of them about the Bay that week. Why, we watched some of them from Darton's Point.”

“But how about the blow across the forehead which the doctor says caused death.”

“Ah, that's a mystery to me. I've racked my brains until I'm weary of thinking about it. Of one thing, however, I am positive—the injury was inflicted after M'Watt was dead.”

“So far so good,” said Caleb Angel, glancing over his notes. “What we have to do is, first, to get the pocket-book and money from the back of the
safe drawer; second, to hunt the pawn-shops and jewellers for the diamond ring, and if we cannot get it that way, to offer a reward for the discovery of the wreckers—or perhaps what will be better, to set a detective on their track. They may surely be discovered.”

“When I get these matters attended to I must have another talk with you about that enclosed secret document. I know more about it than you suspect, and you will have to tell me where it is to be found.”

“I am completely puzzled,” said Angel to himself, as he recrossed the river, in happy oblivion of the muddle which still continued with the ferry traffic between the two municipalities. “He did not commit the murder, nor take the money, that's certain; but he allows that he has some personal knowledge as to how M'Watt may have met with his death. It cannot possibly be anything in that secret document referred to by the will. He either knows who killed M'Watt, or he thinks that he does. It is someone he wishes to protect, if possible, from discovery, and even at the peril of his own neck. It is most extraordinary! I suppose, however, he will reveal it rather than be hanged.”
Chapter XXV. The Defence Finally Arranged

DE VILLE met Angel with cordiality. They had not been very intimate or friendly previously, but it suited De Ville's purpose. They conferred long and seriously over the position of M'Watt's estate, and the contents of the will. De Ville said that he had searched everywhere for the pocket-book; but when he heard of the £2,500 in notes being paid into Jackson's bank account, he saved himself further trouble. Jackson evidently stole it, and no doubt had the rest of the notes hidden away somewhere with the gold.

“You looked everywhere about the safe?” asked Angel.

“Yes.”

“Did you take the drawers out and look behind them?”

“No, never thought of doing that.”

“It might be there,” said Angel cautiously.

“I don't think there would be room,” answered De Ville.

“Let us get a cab and run up and see.”

“Well, to tell you the truth, I have an important matter to attend to; a person is waiting now outside. Here are the keys, you go up, and come back and let me know. I don't think that it can possibly be there, there is not room for it. But you run up and see for yourself. I hope you may find it.”

A few minutes afterwards Angel was on his way to Drybrook House, with every confidence that he would return within half an hour the possessor of the pocket-book.

He ran straight up the staircase to M'Watt's study, on arrival, and at once unlocked the safe, and pulled out both drawers—but there was no pocket-book! He sat down in a chair trembling, and with a feeling of exhaustion, so great was his surprise and consternation. He looked again, searched everywhere, but all trace of it had disappeared.

With a feeling of unspeakable dejection and sinking of heart, he went back to De Ville's luxurious office.

“Well, I see in your face that you have not found it.”

“No. It's a most mysterious affair.”

“I do not see where the mystery comes in,” said De Ville. “Jackson is proved to have been there on Saturday night, and of course he took the money. Actually paid some of the notes into his bank account. There's no mystery about it.”

“De Ville,” said Angel warmly, “I may as well tell you at once. I am persuaded that whoever has taken this money, George Jackson did not. Not do I believe that he is the murderer of M'Watt. Indeed I may say further
that I have accepted a retainer to defend him at the trial."

“Well, I am very sorry to hear it,” said De Ville coldly. “It will put you in a very awkward position, as one of the executors of the murdered man's will.”

“But it's not yet proved that M'Watt was murdered.”

“My dear fellow,” said De Ville, “the jury will decide that quick enough. How about the knife, and the £2,500 in notes? However, if you have undertaken to defend Jackson we had better not say anything more upon the subject; you will think differently before the trial is over.”

“By the way, I've had a letter from the Bethel Calvanistic Church, expressing their pleasure at hearing of the legacy, and asking when the money will be available. They are in a precious hurry, seeing that we have not yet taken out probate of the will.”

“I think,” said Angel, “we had better write to them at once, and tell them there is no prospect of their getting this money. The notes actually referred to by the will are not found among the personality, and we have no authority to pay it out of the general estate. There is no knowing what mad thing they may do in prospect of getting this legacy. I hear that they went to no end of expense in draping their church for a funeral service.”

“Yes,” said De Ville, “they'll bite their fingers a bit when they learn that they are not to get the money. I looked in the papers for an account of the sermon to send up to Mrs, M'Watt, but couldn't find a word about it. I was wondering what their parson would have to say of him.”

Caleb Angel returned to his chambers in no enviable state of mind. Everything was in a confused tangle. The loss of the pocket-book appalled him. There was absolutely nothing to substantiate Jackson's statement, unless that could be found, and the trial was coming on in a fortnight. He had to reply to John Darton's and Edna Forrest's letters, but what could he now say to them. He dreaded his next interview with Jackson.

The result of the letters that he wrote to Darton's Point was that a few days later Mr. and Mrs. Darton and Edna had taken up their residence at the Circular Hotel until after the trial. The day after Angel's conversation with De Ville, he and Smithers were in close conference with Jackson in the latter's cell. Thoughtful anxiety was written upon their faces, for Angel had told them of the unsuccessful search for the pocket-book.

“The unfortunate thing is,” said Smithers, “that we can get no evidence. Dingle is doing his best to discover the ring, but without success. If we could just lay our hands on the man who took that off the finger of the corpse we could no doubt win the case, but as it is, we can prove nothing, and any statement you may make,” he said, turning to Jackson, “will be valueless, unless we can produce the pocket-book as confirmatory
There was a long pause after this, which was at last broken by Jackson. “There is only one thing for it,” he said, “I shall have, with your assistance, to conduct my own defence.”

“That will never do, my dear fellow,” exclaimed Smithers. “Just remember what the charge is. We, of course, know you to be innocent; but it is of no use disguising the fact, things are black against you, and the jury will go into the box strongly biassed. There is no help for it, they will regard you as a murderer. Now, consider, what chance will you have to remove that impression, and get a fair hearing? Besides, you are not a professional man; you are not used to the usages of the court: you will of necessity let slip opportunities that a barrister would seize. Of course we will stand by you through the case, anyhow, and do our best, but I do entreat you not to think of conducting the case yourself. You will lose it as sure as we are here. A prisoner tried upon a capital charge can never defend himself to advantage, or with a reasonable hope of gaining a verdict.”

“I know that you give this advice with the best intention,” replied Jackson, “but listen to me for a moment. My friend Angel here is encompassed with difficulties which absolutely debar him from taking any leading part in the defence. I am persuaded that De Ville has found the pocketbook, and has also stolen the £1,500 in gold. “You,” he said, turning to Angel, “won't hear of it; of course I cannot blame you for refusing to believe evil of your co-executor, because I confess that I have no proof, except that the money is missing, and he is the only man that had access to it; and I believe,” said Jackson, bitterly, “he would stand at nothing to get me out of the way. Then, too, I should wish to see you called as a witness,” he said, again turning to Angel. “You say that both De Ville and Cutts will be put in the witness-box by the prosecution; then we must have someone to prove animus—they will, both of them, do their best to get me hung. I can only hope and pray that those wreckers may be discovered.”

Angel now interposed. “Jackson,” he said, “why do you not confide to Smithers and myself the contents of that document you told me you took from the safe in Drybrook House. It is my firm belief that it contains enough, in some way or other, to clear you of this charge, for you said almost as much. You know where it is, and can produce it. If it will not clear you, at any rate it will strengthen our hands for the defence. Besides, as I have said before, you had no right to take the document. I do not wish to say hard things, but you know what such action amounts to in the eye of the law.”

“Yes, it's a felony,” said Jackson, looking with a calm, almost stony, gaze
at his friend. “Caleb,” he continued, with an effort, “I have that paper, and I believe it to be perfectly safe from discovery; but I will tell you and Smithers something about it, and you shall judge of my conduct in the matter. You shall judge,” he said, excitedly, “whether it would not be better for me to sacrifice my life, than live a wretched outcast, and a traitor to the woman that I love.”

At these words Angel started and shuddered, and sat with his eyes shaded by his hand.

“Yes, I will tell you enough,” said Jackson, “and you shall tell me whether, by revealing its contents, I should not make myself the basest villain in the world.”

“M’Watt and Darton quarrelled shortly before the death—or, if you like, murder—of M’Watt. Darton, you know, was M’Watt's half-brother, and their lives were closely associated up to manhood. They got mixed up in business transactions here in Queensland, but were never great friends. They had some secret between them. The quarrel was over Edna Forrest's fortune. I question much whether the document I have, is the one referred to in the will. You may yet find the other. The document I have is addressed to ‘The Executors of my will, my solicitor’s, or any person into whose hands this letter may come.’ It was written on the night of the 2nd February last, and bears that date.”

“How do you know it was written at night?” asked Angel.

“I do know,” said Jackson, “but that is one of the things I must ask you not to urge me to explain; it would involve another.”

“The letter,” continued Jackson, “contains a charge of murder, which I have reason to believe is utterly false, and which M’Watt knew at the time of writing to be false. It further contains a statement which, if true, or which, if made public, would blast Miss Forrest's happiness and prospects for ever. It is a statement which I believe to be a hateful, malicious, and accursed lie. The whole document emanated from cruel, hellish spite; it could only have been written by a man possessed of the devil, for it was written when he feared that he himself was on the point of death, and it was deliberately aimed at, and intended to destroy, Miss Forrest, myself, and another. I put it to you—with the conviction that the whole is a wicked fabrication, the outcome of a revengeful spirit—should I be a man, to carry out the diabolical intent of M’Watt by making it public? No; he is dead, and I would sooner die upon the scaffold for a crime of which I swear before God that I am innocent, than save myself by making such a document public—if, indeed, it would save me, which I doubt. In fact, it might be actually used against me by the prosecution as an evidence of guilt. Should God spare my life,” he added, reverently, “it is my settled purpose to
dedicate it to the task of proving those allegations false.”

“I put it to you, can any possible good result from my production of this letter. Caleb Angel, you are an honest man, a gentleman, and a Christian. What would you do if in my place?”

Caleb reached his hand across and grasped that of Jackson, and said, “I think that we had better let the matter remain as it is. You may trust to Smithers and myself to keep it secret.” Smithers was not a man of many words. He simply bowed his head in silent assent.

“Now,” said Jackson, “let me give you my plans. In this hateful cell, I think and think about it, and I suppose that I shall continue to, until the trial makes me a free man, or seals my doom. This is my plan:

“Stunner must be persuaded to turn Queen's evidence. I am afraid that you will have some difficulty, but let him understand that it is my positive wish, and that it will be to my advantage. Retain Browning on the case to assist Angel and myself. Browning and myself will arrange as to cross-examinations, and I will make the address to the jury myself. It is the only chance. I could not now trust anyone else to defend me except Angel, and he is debarred by circumstances from addressing the court. Whoever does that must know all that I know, or he will be at a disadvantage. I agree, to a very large extent, with what you say, Smithers, but it is a choice between two evils, and for me to conduct my own case, with legal assistance, is the lesser of the two.”

So the matter was decided. Smithers went back to his office to use every effort for the obtaining of further evidence, and Angel to his chambers, to meet John Darton and let him know the result of the interview with Jackson. He met Darton, however, with a sense of constraint; he tried hard to cast it off, but could not. His share of George Jackson's secret weighed heavily upon his heart. It was constantly in his thoughts; it haunted him sleeping and waking. But he no longer blamed Jackson, for Caleb Angel loved Edna Forrest better than he loved his life.
Chapter XXVI. The Trial Commences

THERE was an unusual stir in the precincts of the Supreme Court on Tuesday the 14th day of March. The trial of the supposed murderer of the late Hon. Constant M'Watt was about to be conducted on unprecedented lines. It was understood that, at the last moment, Barrister Angel had given up the case, and that Jackson, the supposed murderer, would conduct his own defence, assisted by his solicitors, and two leading barristers. There were private reasons, it was alleged, why Mr. Angel had retired, and there promised to be some sensational revelations made at the trial. Expectation was on tiptoe, and the court was crowded. It was stated in the morning paper that Stunner had confessed to having been an accessory to the crime, and had offered to give evidence, and make full confession. Notwithstanding this exaggeration, however, the tide of public sympathy had turned strongly in favour of the prisoner.

An advertisement, offering a large reward to any person who had seen the body of the late Hon. Constant M'Watt floating in the punt on the waters of Moreton Bay, prior to Sunday the 5th day of February, had appeared constantly in the newspapers, and had excited great curiosity. It appeared in the paper on the morning of the trial, and it was rumoured there was much to come out which was not at present known.

“You know,” whispered an M.L.C. to a friend who sat near him in the crowded court, “there's a lot in this case entirely unknown to the public; Jackson will be triumphantly acquitted.”

Some of the knowing ones, however, took five to one that Jackson could not get out of it. “You see,” said a fussy, thick-set man, “his accomplice in the crime has turned Queen's evidence; he evidently had nothing to do with the actual murder; that alone will seal Jackson's fate.”

Those of our readers who have been present in a court of justice when a fellow creature has been on trial for his life, will recall the sense of solemn responsibility with which the proceedings of the court open. The feeling, it is true, wears off to a large extent during the trial, until the time comes for the jury to deliver their verdict, when it returns with accumulated force. But generally, it may be said, that a trial upon a capital charge is distinguished from all others.

There was a hush as the judge entered, the court rising to receive him, and immediately afterwards Jackson was brought in. He was led first into the dock, but after a little whispered consultation among the court officials, he was removed to a table and sat down near his counsel and solicitor. Two police constables placed themselves within easy distance behind him. It
was noticed that Smithers shook him cordially by the hand, and whispered something to him. He was also greeted by the two barristers. He leaned back in his chair with closed eyes.

He felt his position most keenly. Naturally a proud, straightforward, and fearless man, he shrank from the curious and half-pitying gaze of the crowded court. There were men there whom he, in his heart, despised. How they glared at him, he thought. There was Pinchpenny and Boulderland, Fielding the auctioneer, and a crowd of club, and city, and legal acquaintances, who it was easy, for a man who had been incarcerated in a prison cell as a murderer for several weeks, to think, looked upon him with pitying contempt.

His sensitive nature—for he was a man of keen susceptibilities, as well as of a generous and courageous heart—shrank, too, from the compassion of the crowd. His proud spirit recoiled from the humiliation and shame of his surroundings.

It had come upon him like a flood tide, and he bowed his head in his hands for a moment and wept. It was, however, but a momentary weakness, and he nerved himself for the ordeal through which he had now to pass. He believed that there were those in the court who hated him. There should be no breakdown on his part in their presence, no tremor in his voice, no shrinking of any truant nerve. His heart might bleed secretly, but his face should yield no sign that would give occasion to any of these, his enemies, to rejoice over his discomfiture. If he lost his case he would accept his sentence with composure, and look his enemies in the face and tell them that they lied, and step upon the scaffold with calmness, and die, affirming his innocence.

His hand was pressed eagerly by Angel. He turned his eyes round and met Edna's, who had removed her veil a moment. Her lustrous eyes were swimming with tears of love and pity. John Darton sat near her. Jackson was soon himself again. He glanced for a moment quietly and composedly around the court, and then let his eyes fall upon a document which he took from the table in front of him. It was a brief of the case. Not that he needed to peruse it. In the solitude of his cell his defence had marshalled itself before him. He was familiar with every line of it. He needed no notes to assist his memory.

Dyson Foggitt was present to watch the case on behalf of the M'Watt executors, and at the opening of the court De Ville sat near to him. The Crown solicitors and prosecutor occupied positions on the same side. As the jury was being empanelled three men were objected to by barrister Browning on behalf of the prisoner; one of them was Pinchpenny. He frowned as he stepped down. He had determined to hear the case, and had
congratulated himself on the prospect of having, in addition, the usual juror's fee.

They were at last sworn in, and the Crown Prosecutor rose to deliver his opening address.

Amid deep silence he gave a brief account of the finding of the body at Darton's Point on Sunday the 6th day of February, and then told the story of Jackson meeting Stunner on the previous Saturday at the Melbourne Street railway station, and how the latter had left him for about four and a-half hours at Hill End. He then explained how Jackson awoke Stunner shortly after eleven, and described the two men starting upon their perilous journey across the river. “Alas!” said the learned counsel, “it was a pity that the errand was not a worthier one. It was a deed of reckless daring, such as could only have been performed by desperate men. Whether the prisoner then meditated the fearful crime which he afterwards committed, was known only to himself and his Maker. The crossing of the river was, however, achieved in safety, and, on account of the height of the flood, it was found possible to tie the boat to the staircase bannisters.” He should place the waterman in the box to prove on oath that here Jackson left him. The prisoner had told Stunner that his business there was to return some documents that he had had from M'Watt. The house was a large one, and the library and private study of the deceased was situated twenty-six yards from the landing at the top of the staircase, to which the boat was tied. It had been measured for the purpose of the trial. About five minutes after the prisoner had left Stunner, the latter heard a noise at the end of the house as though a blow had been administered, or some heavy object had fallen upon the floor. It never occurred to Stunner to go upstairs to Jackson. If he had been wanted, the prisoner would have called to him. He got tired of sitting in the boat, where he had been smoking, and stepped upon the staircase, which, as the night had cleared somewhat, he could see by the moonlight that shone through the open doorway.

He here knocked out the ashes of his pipe, and lifted a black cat, which they had saved from the flood, and which was trying to follow him out of the boat, on to his knee, and stroked it. After some time had passed he heard the prisoner's step in the corridor above. Then he stopped and spoke to someone. The witness was prepared to swear that two voices were distinctly audible. Very shortly afterwards the prisoner returned, and seemed agitated, and hastened their departure, saying, “Let's get out of this now, Joe, as quickly as we can.”

On examining the room afterwards in which the murder was committed, two soiled wine glasses were found which had been recently used. Upon the private staircase there were found traces of tar upon three steps.
Doubtless from the feet of the criminal who had assisted the prisoner to remove the body and place it in the punt. The prisoner slept that night, or rather, the following morning, in an hotel in George Street, and on the Tuesday after, paid a sum of £2,500 in notes (which it could be proved had been stolen from Drybrook House) into his bank account. When the body of the murdered gentleman, who had, alas! held an honourable and distinguished position in the community, was picked up at Darton's Point, a knife, which he could prove belonged to the prisoner, and was actually in his possession the previous week, was found in the punt by the side of the murdered man. Not that it was used in the committal of the murder, but by the singular avenging providence which seems to dog the footsteps of a criminal, this startling evidence had been added to the rest. Never was there a case submitted to a jury in which circumstantial, and direct evidence, combined so completely to prove a prisoner's guilt. If it was asked what motive induced the prisoner and his accomplices to commit the crime, he replied that the great sum of £31,500 was stolen that night from the murdered man, a large portion of which had been traced to the possession of the prisoner, who he should prove was at that very time in financial straits, and had recently violently quarrelled with the murdered man, over some monetary transaction in which he thought himself aggrieved.

In fact that very afternoon a promissory note for a large amount had been dishonoured at the prisoner's bank, which the prisoner had wanted the murdered man to pay. There was not a single link missing in the chain of evidence which would bring this educated and accomplished villain to the scaffold.

The whole case was so clear that they could actually see it before their eyes. The butler would swear that he left the deceased alone in the house. The flood water which prevented his return would also deter the murdered man from leaving. The hour was fixed for midnight—the punt from the still back waters bore down upon Drybrook House and waited. The prisoner brought the boat with the simpleminded waterman to the front of the house. With stealthy steps he passed up the stairs, and stole along the corridor; opening the door he entered the room where the murdered man lay sleeping on a lounge. A heavy ebony ruler lay upon the writing table. Joseph Stunner heard the blow through the still house where he sat upon the staircase. The murderer's accomplice came up the private staircase near the library, leaving some of the tar from the punt upon the carpet. Stunner heard them talking together as they carried the body of the murdered man, and the plunder, down the stairs. The corpse was taken away in the punt, and afterwards set adrift upon the flooded river. “These, gentlemen of the
jury,” said the learned counsel, “are the facts that I shall incontestably prove by reliable witnesses, and let me say before I proceed to do so, that while I regret that a man of the reputation, and position, and education of the prisoner, should have been tempted by lust for gold to commit this terrible crime, I cannot but express my astonishment that under the circumstances he should have the effrontery to conduct his own case in person, instead of leaving it in the hands of some of my brother barristers, who are well able to say all that can be said in his defence. I will now call the first witness, William Linton.”

The speech had been listened to with strained attention, for it was the first time that the whole of this theory of the murder had been made public, and it was different from that which had appeared in the newspapers.

Dark looks of abhorrence were turned upon the prisoner, and there were very few in the crowded court, but felt that his guilt would be proved beyond a doubt.

On being sworn, Linton deposed to the fact that M'Watt was at Drybrook House on the evening of February 2nd, and that when at half past ten he was prevented from getting back by the flood waters in the grounds around the house, there were still lights there. He remembered the afternoon of the 25th day of November, 1892; he had heard prisoner then quarrel with deceased, and call him unjust and lishonourable. Deceased had rung for him to show prisoner to the door. It was over a land transaction that the quarrel took place.

There was only one question asked this witness in cross-examination by Browning.

“Might not the deceased have left Drybrook House before he was hemmed in by the flood waters on that Thursday?”

The answer was in the affirmative.

John Darton deposed to having seen the punt on Sunday afternoon, the 5th, and to the finding of the body on Monday in the punt. He identified it as that of the late Hon. Constant M'Watt. There was a knife in the punt which he identified as similar to one belonging to the prisoner. The punt might have drifted down to Darton's Point in eight or ten hours. Several hundred sacks of flour were washed away from one of the city wharves on the Saturday of the second great flood, some of which were stranded on the shores of the Bay near Darton's Point, on Sunday morning.

“That proves then,” interposed the judge, “that if the punt was set adrift on Saturday, the 4th, it might have been seen from Darton's Point on the following afternoon?”

“Yes,” replied the witness.

This witness was not cross-examined.
The next witness was Dr. Black, who swore that in his opinion, the deceased died from the effects of a blow upon the frontal bone of the skull, administered by some hard, blunt body, or instrument. An ebony ruler would have produced such a fracture. Mechanical violence might be sufficient to take away life without laceration of the skin.

For the first time during the day George Jackson arose; he intended to cross-examine this witness himself.

Every eye in the building was immediately turned upon him, and his first word was awaited with breathless silence. He spoke calmly and quietly, and his auditors remarked how full and sonorous was his voice. It was heard clearly and distinctly in every part of the building.

“When did you make the post-mortem examination?”
“On Monday afternoon, February 6th.”
“In what state did you find the body?”
“In an advanced stage of decomposition.”
“You said in your evidence at the inquest that the deceased must have been dead several days. How many days?”
“I could not say for certain.”
“Do you think that life had been extinct for two days?”
“Yes.”
“For more than two days?”
“It is possible, but the weather was so close and muggy, that decomposition would be rapid, as the body was exposed.”
“Could you swear that deceased had not been dead three days?”
“I could not.”
A hum went round the court, and the jurymen made a note. It was the first point that had been made by the defence.

“In the decomposed state in which you say you found the body, can you positively swear that the blow on the forehead was not delivered after the death of deceased?”

It was a question which the doctor was evidently quite unprepared for; he hesitated, and then said:
“I could not.”
“What would be the effect of such a blow to a living person?”
“Compression of the brain.”
“What symptoms would follow?”
“Insensibility, small or imperceptible pulse, stertorous breathing, dilated pupils, and if death followed, violent contraction of the heart.”
“Were the lungs in a healthy state?”
“Yes, as far as I could judge in the then state of the body. There were signs of a slight ecchymosis on the surface of the left lung.”
“No contraction or indication of difficult breathing?”
“No.”
“Would the blow upon the forehead, if given to a living person, have deranged or greatly obstructed the respiratory movements of the lungs?”
“Yes.”
“Then if death was caused by the blow upon the forehead, ought the lungs to have given evidence of this derangement?”
“No necessarily.”
“Ought the cavities of the heart to have been contracted?”
“Yes.”
“Were they contracted?”
“I do not remember.”
“Was there extravasated blood under the skin of the scalp, at the site of the injury?”
“The whole of the skin of the forehead and face were discoloured by decomposition, accelerated by the sun's action.”
“Then you cannot positively swear that death resulted from the blow upon the forehead, on account of the state of decomposition in which you found the corpse?”
“No, I cannot, although the skull was fractured; but I am morally certain that death was caused by the blow.”
“Sir,” said Jackson, with dignity, as though he were counsel for the prisoner merely, instead of the prisoner himself, “this court can only accept as evidence that which you are prepared to affirm upon your oath.”
“I will ask you one more question,” said Jackson, after a moment's pause.
“Were you quite sober when you made the post-mortem examination?”
“Certainly,” said the witness, with great indignation.
“Had you taken any stimulants that morning?”
“Yes,” with hesitation; “I usually take a little.”
“On your oath, how many drinks had you, and what were they?”
The witness hesitated, and the judge said sharply:
“Answer the question, sir.”
“As nearly as I can remember, I had three glasses of brandy before leaving Sunnyside.”
“And at Darton's Point?”
“One on arrival with Mr. De Ville, before viewing the body; one before conducting the post-mortem, and one after.”
“Then you had six glasses of brandy before you wrote out the result of your post-mortem examination. Thank you, that will do.”
Jackson sat down. The result of the cross-examination had been distinctly in his favor. Some over sanguine friends thought it ought to be enough to
clear him.

The prosecution evidently considered that this witness was best left alone, for he was asked no further questions.

Tomkins then deposed to having drawn out the £30,000 for M'Watt in notes, from different banks, on the 20th March, 1889, and clerks from the two principal banks were put in the witness-box, to corroborate on oath Tomkin's statement.

Dyson Foggitt was sworn, and deposed that the sums of £30,000 in notes, and £1,500 in gold, were distinctly specified in the will of deceased, as being deposited in a steel fire-proof safe in Drybrook House. An attested copy of the will was put in as evidence.

“Call Joseph Stunner,” said the counsel for the prosecution.

Joe stepped into the witness-box, and looked across at Jackson with a shamefaced expression. He could not get over having turned Queen's evidence, although he had been told by Angel that it would be for Jackson's good. “He who as good as saved my life that Sunday, and afterwards gave me £50. Master Jackson's no murderer no more than I am!”

He was sworn upon the Bible in due form, and gave his evidence without hesitation, and in a simple fashion that soon gained for him the confidence of the assemblage. He was skilfully led through the story of that Saturday night's work by the Crown Prosecutor. He swore distinctly to having heard another voice besides Jackson's in the corridor above him. He had received £50 in notes from the prisoner on the following week. This was now mentioned for the first time, and made some sensation. The payment of so large a sum to him by the prisoner told distinctly against Jackson.

Browning rose to cross-examine on behalf of the defence.

“Was that gift of £50 payment in any way for hire of your boat to take the prisoner over to Drybrook House?”

“No.”

“How do you prove that?”

“Because Master Jackson paid me ten shillings for the boat's hire before we started on the Saturday for Drybrook House, and I gave it to the missus.”

“Tell the jury, Stunner, why the prisoner gave you the £50.”

The whole story of the heroic rescue of Golliker and the loss of the “Mary Jane” was then given, with a warm meed of praise to Jackson, which evidently pleased Browning well.

“Did the prisoner give you any reason to think, by his manner on the way to Drybrook House, that he meditated the committal of a crime?”

“No, sur; certainly not.”

“You say that after the prisoner had gone upstairs, you heard some heavy
object fall?"
"Yes, sur."
"Did you hear any cry, or scream, or groan?"
"No, certainly not."
"Did it occur to you that any act of violence was being committed?"
"No."
"What was the sound like?"
"As though some heavy thing was lifted on to the floor."
"Would a heavy iron box dropped upon the floor make such a noise?"
"I believe it would, sur."
"Did you see any light in the house?"
"No, sur."
"Did you strike any wax matches?"
"Yes, sur, and I heard Master Jackson strike some more after he had gone upstairs."
"Now, Mr. Stunner, you heard the prisoner talking to someone upstairs, you say. Was the voice that of a man or a woman?"
"I cannot say."
"Did you hear anything that was said?"
"No. I was startled to hear him talking to someone, but I did not try to listen."
"Did you not hear any one word that was spoken?"
"Well, I believe that whoever it was speaking called Mr. Jackson by his christian name, but I could not swear to it."
"Well," asked Browning, "what is his christian name?"
"George."
"Now, do you think that it might have been a bird—a cockatoo—that you heard call the prisoner 'George'?"
"Surely it might have been; and now you come to mention it, sur, I think the voice I heard did sound like a cockatoo's."

This closed the evidence of this witness, and as there seemed no prospect of completing the case for the prosecution that day, and it was getting late, the court adjourned. Jackson was escorted back to prison in charge of two police officers. The evidence of the last witness had done little for the prosecution, beyond proving the midnight visit of Jackson to Drybrook House. That, however, in itself, was serious enough, in view of the knife, and missing notes and gold, and the general opinion was that the prisoner was a clever, and an accomplished villain, who would brazen out his guilty hypocrisy and falsehood to the last.

Dr. Black was greatly commiserated.
Chapter XXVII. A Sensational Scene in Court

THE court on the following morning was, if possible, fuller than on the previous day, many being unable to gain admission. The non-legal friends of the prisoner were decidedly more hopeful, but the solicitors and counsel for the defence still felt that they were fighting a losing battle, unless further evidence was forthcoming.

The advertisement for information about the punt prior to Sunday the 5th day of February, appeared again in the newspapers.

After the court was opened the judge said that he held in his hand a letter addressed to the foreman of the jury. As he believed it to be one of those idle letters sent by some persons on such occasions, he should adopt the more prudent course of abstaining from opening it until the case was over.

The Crown Prosecutor called Sergeant Bevan, who deposed to the finding of the knife in the punt.

It had already been acknowledged to belong to the prisoner.

George Charles De Ville deposed to the notes and gold having been unsuccessfully searched for in the safe at Drybrook House. De Ville was dressed with scrupulous taste. He wore gloves, and a buttonhole of white flowers, with a spray of maiden-hair fern. He beamed around the court with a half smile towards his acquaintances, and a patronising jaunty air to everyone else, as though judge, jury and court officials, were his employees, and the public generally his obsequious admirers.

Jackson arose to cross-examine this witness. It was noticed that his face was, if possible, paler and more anxious than on the previous day.

“Were you alone when you searched for the money?”

“No, I was accompanied by a detective.”

“You say that this visit was made to Drybrook House on Wednesday afternoon, after the reading of the will. Did you not visit the house on the previous day?”

“Yes, but I made no search for money. I locked the study door, after the place had been viewed by the detective and others.”

“You found no money on that afternoon or evening?”

“No.”

“Did you open the safe door?”

“No.”

“Where did you get the keys of the safe from?”

“Duplicate keys were kept in another safe at M'Watt's office, they were handed to me by his clerk.”

“The other keys have not been found?”
“No.”
“You were an intimate friend of the deceased?”
“I was.”
“Did deceased habitually wear a diamond ring upon the little finger of the left hand?”
“Yes, I never saw him without it, until the morning on which the corpse was found at Darton's Point.”
“Did that finger look as though the ring had been violently withdrawn?”
“I thought so. Indeed I mentioned the matter to Mr. Darton as being singular, in view of the fact that otherwise the body was not robbed.”

The Crown Prosecutor smiled, and made a note. He had omitted to bring out the fact that the body, except for the loss of the ring, had not been robbed, as would have been the case if the murder had been committed by a common thief.

Jackson, continuing his cross-examination, said:
“There was a large white cockatoo at Drybrook House. Did you see the bird there?”

De Ville's smooth face flushed up; he was evidently taken by surprise by this question, which was really almost put at random by Jackson. But the latter noticed De Ville's surprise and confusion, and thought it wise to follow up the clue.

“Yes, I did; but I do not see what the bird can have to do with the case, your Honor,” he said, addressing the judge.

The Crown Prosecutor immediately arose and begged his Honor not to allow the time of the court to be wasted by irrelevant questions.

Browning had been reading a memorandum in pencil just scrawled, and passed on to him, by Angel. He handed it to Jackson, and at once took the floor as he sat down.

“Your Honor, we are defending a man's life, and I respectfully submit that no evidence that can in any way lead to the establishment of his innocence, should be regarded as irrelevant.”

Angel's memorandum, just handed to Jackson, read as follows:—“Press him on this point. I have the bird. He ordered it to be destroyed and believes it dead.”

“Let the cross-examination continue,” said the judge; “I allow the question.”

“You know that the bird was a great favourite with the deceased, and talked remarkably well?”

“Yes.”

“You have heard it talk?”

“I have.”
“Did it ever call you by your christian name?”
“No.”
“I mean by your first christian name?”
“Certainly not.”
“Is the bird now dead?”
“I have no personal knowledge of the fact, but I believe so,” said the witness, with a smile.
“Why did you order the coachman to destroy it?”
De Ville had expected this, after the question which had preceded it, and answered calmly, although he was still flushed in the face, and evidenced some confusion.
“I had it destroyed because it was noisy and a nuisance.”
“Had it in any way specially annoyed you?”
“Oh, no!”
“You never attempted to kill it yourself?”
“Certainly not.”
“The bird was always friendly towards you?”
“It was neither friendly nor unfriendly. I never had anything to do with the thing.”
“And yet you ordered it to be destroyed?”
“Yes, I did,” said the witness, looking at his questioner with contemptuous defiance.
“I fear,” interposed the judge, “that the time of the court is being wasted, and that the prosecution has just grounds for complaint.”
“I will only ask the witness one more question, your Honor,” said Jackson, calmly.
“When you found the pocket-book at the back of the iron drawer of the fire-proof safe, did it contain, in addition to the notes, three post-dated cheques, two each for £1,000, and one for £507 16s. 4d.—?”

The Crown Prosecutor jumped up in wrathful indignation. “Don't answer the question,” he called out to De Ville. “Your Honor, may I ask you to protect my witness from insult and degradation at the hands of the prisoner. It's what might be expected,” he said, sotto voce to his junior, “when criminals are allowed to conduct their own defence.”

De Ville grasped the witness-box with his two fat hands, and his little eyes stared horribly out of his flushed fat cheeks; whether it was anger, or indignation, or fear, a spectator could hardly have decided.

Browning at once arose. “Your Honor, I claim your indulgence one moment. I most respectfully submit that the case has been conducted by the defence, thus far, with the greatest decorum. The indignation of my learned friend for the prosecution is, I allow, quite natural and excusable. The
question is a most extraordinary one—unparalleled, I admit, in the whole range of my professional experience—but I can assure you, your Honour, and the jury, and my learned friend the Crown Prosecutor, that we have substantial reasons for putting this question to the witness, which will, we believe, be amply shown later on in these proceedings.”

The sensation caused by all this amongst the spectators, and especially Browning's latter statement, was immense. There was a hum of voices, disregarded for the moment by the judge.

The Crown Prosecutor rose again. “The witness cannot be allowed to answer the question in any way, not even to deny it. It's too outrageous; it's a mean, underhand dodge!”

The judge had scrutinised De Ville's face keenly and curiously for a moment, and could not help noticing his confusion and, he thought, alarm.

“I must protect the witness,” he said. “The question ought not to have been put—and certainly not in that form.”

It had been put, however, and although the judge directed the jury that it had no bearing upon the evidence as to the murder, it had made an impression not readily removed. Jackson's remarkably able management of his case and singular composure and self-control weighted with the jury, although they were each and all still persuaded of his guilt.

It did not tend to restore De Ville's composure when it was intimated to him, as he was about to leave the court, that he would probably be wanted again in the afternoon.

“Call Sturgis Cutts,” said the Crown Prosecutor.

The manager of the El Dorado Bank of Australia was the last witness but one for the prosecution, and he stepped into the witness-box and took the oath with an air of reluctance, but also of self-conscious importance. He had wanted the cashier, or a clerk, to have been served with the subpoena, but the Crown solicitors were inexorable.

“It's of no use, my dear sir,” the chief clerk had said; “you have kindly given us valuable information, and will have to appear yourself.” “It's bad for the bank,” Cutts had replied; “who knows what questions may be put to me in cross-examination.” “Very sorry, sir, but we cannot help it; very important case, sir; you must take your chance.”

He stated, in answer to questions, that the prisoner had an account at his bank—since closed. They had been reluctantly compelled to press him for payment of a long-standing overdraft. Had written him on or about the 1st of February. Had looked over the account after the monthly balance; saw that a promissory note for a large amount, held by Mr. De Ville, and made by prisoner in favour of Henry Stuart, was falling due. On Tuesday, the 7th day of February, prisoner paid £2,500 in notes into the bank, closed the
account, and drew the balance in gold. The notes were traced as having been some of those paid to the deceased four years previously.

Browning cross-examined this witness, and to his great annoyance elicited a number of facts by no means to his credit as a bank manager. A large sum he allowed had been paid into the prisoner's account the previous week. Had he paid the promissory note the account would still have been somewhere about £100 below the limit of cash credit agreed to by the bank. Before the flood he considered the properties held by them to be ample security. De Ville had expressed a wish that the promissory note might be dishonoured. De Ville and he were friends. John Darton had his account at his bank. Had, on the advice of De Ville, attempted to put difficulties in the way of money being obtained to defend this case. Had supplied information to the coroner, and also to Detective Brooks, who first put the police on the track of Jackson. The bank had lost considerable business through their pressure of creditors.

There were some angry recriminations between counsel during the cross-examination. The mortification of Cutts, on stepping out of the witness box, was extreme, and he mentally decided that the game was not worth the candle, even if it resulted in Jackson being hanged.

Mr. Brooks followed, and proved the fact of tar having been found on the steps of the private staircase, which closed the case for the Crown.

Immediately on the closing of the case for the prosecution, the prisoner, to the surprise of the court generally, was placed in the witness-box. Browning arose and said:—

“Your Honor and gentlemen of the jury, the line of defence which we intend to take is a somewhat unusual one. With your permission I will now ask the prisoner, to make a statement. This the jury will understand the prisoner cannot make on oath, although he would be glad enough to do so, were such a procedure permissable. We shall afterwards call but few witnesses. Most unfortunately, the witnesses whose evidence would at once prove the innocence of the prisoner, we have not yet been able to discover. With your permission, your Honor, the prisoner will now make a brief statement.”

The judge bowed his head in sign of assent, and the whole assembly settled down to listen with closest attention.

Jackson told of the finding of the punt on the 3rd of February, and of his discovery of the pocket-book, containing the £30,000, and also containing the documents, affecting both himself and a lady, whose fortune of £10,000 had been entrusted to M'Watt for investment. He distrusted De Ville; and Mr. Angel, the other executor, being away, he determined to take the body out into the Bay again, so as to secure time to visit Drybrook
House, and put the pocket-book in some hiding place where it would not be discovered until Mr. Angel's return. It was daylight when he first saw the corpse, and there was no fracture on the forehead, and no mark of violence to be seen upon the person. He believed then that death had resulted from a fit, or heart disease. When towing the punt out into the Bay he encountered a shoal of sharks, and in the excitement when cutting the punt adrift, the knife had slipped from his hand, and fallen into the punt. He had thought at first that it had fallen into the Bay. He went up to Brisbane on Saturday afternoon. Met Stunner, accidentally, at the Melbourne Street station, and arranged with him to go across to Drybrook House. He knew, of course, that it was unlikely anyone would be there, as the Hon. Constant M'Watt was dead, and the house was flooded. He left Stunner in the boat as had been stated, struck wax vestas, and lit a candle which he found there. The keys were in the pocket-book. He unlocked the safe and also the left-hand drawer, and placed the pocket-book at the back of the drawer. He should say that before doing this he took out £2,500 in notes, and put in their place two post-dated cheques, each for £1,000, and one for £507 16s. 4d.; they were perfectly good cheques, drawn by the parties already mentioned. The odd money he left for exchange. The drawer was heavy, and he dropped one end of it upon the ground, causing the noise heard by Stunner. On his way along the corridor he was startled by a voice from one of the rooms calling “George.” It was a large white cockatoo, that could talk remarkably well. He stopped and gave it some food to eat until the return of the servants. It's fluent speech suggested to him the thought that he might teach it something that might lead, in course of time, to the discovery of the pocket-book, without any outside interposition, so he said twice to it: “It's at the back of the iron drawer.” This the bird repeated. He left with Stunner, and they spent about two hours together, in rescue work, saving the lives of five families. On the following Tuesday he paid £2,500 in notes into his account at the El Dorado Bank. The edges of the notes had been wet, which was remarked by the bank teller.

It had been caused by his having accidentally dropped the pocket-book into the water when he first discovered the body of deceased. He called upon Stunner and gave him £50 to buy a new boat. It was wrecked when they were endeavouring to save life, against Victoria Bridge.

“What are the words you say the bird used to you?” said the judge, when Jackson had completed his statement.

Jackson repeated the bird's doggerel rhyme, to the amusement of the court.

“I will now call the witnesses,” said Browning, rising.
Sarah Darton, a well-dressed lady of about forty-five, deposed to the prisoner having looked ill on the morning of Saturday, the 4th February. She asked him if anything was the matter with him. He put her off, but he looked as though he had been out all night.

Frank Brewer deposed that he was Mr. Darton's man; he had found an end of rope in the stern of the boat; he produced that and the piece taken from the punt. He had examined them, and believed them to be of the same material, and that they had been cut with a knife.

The rope was passed round to the jury for their inspection.

Joseph Stunner was recalled. He swore that he had not met the prisoner on Saturday, the 4th February, by appointment. It was purely accidental. They spent fully two hours in rescue work after the visit to Drybrook House.

Evidence was also tendered proving the payment of the cheques to Jackson for the sum of £2,507 16s. 4d., the butts of the cheques being also produced.

Caleb Angel deposed to a difficulty existing as to tracing an investment of £10,000 said to have been entrusted to the deceased by Mr. Darton on account of his niece. No document had been discovered, as yet, which would authorise the trustees to pay the money. Mr. De Ville had certainly shown great antipathy to the prisoner. He knew personally that both Mr. De Ville and the prisoner were suitors for the hand of Mr. Darton's niece.

William Thornton, medical practitioner, deposed that the post mortem examination should certainly have plainly revealed whether the death of deceased had resulted from the blow on the frontal bone of the skull. The state of the heart, lungs, &c., in death by violence, always afforded ample evidence for the examiner to declare on oath whether that was, or was not, the cause of death. To his mind, the medical evidence tendered by the prosecution was highly unsatisfactory.

It was noticeable that the prosecution made no attempt at cross-examination. It was, as counsel supposed; they had determined to ignore the defence, as it had principally emanated from a statement of the prisoner's, and rely upon the evidence of their own witnesses.

“There is one witness I should like to call, your Honor and gentlemen of the jury, but I fear that it is of no use. He is erratic, and might refuse to speak.”

“By all means call him, Mr. Browning,” said the judge. “We will see that he speaks.”

“I refer, your Honor, to the cockatoo.”

There was some laughter at this, but it was instantly repressed.

“You may try,” said the judge, “if the bird is in the precincts of the court.
If it spoke in the manner described, it might be held as favourable to the defence."

“I fear, your Honor, that it is useless; when the bird sees the crowded court it will be afraid.”

“Let some folding screens be brought in,” said the judge to one of the officers, “and entirely close in the dock.”

This was done in a few minutes.

“Let there be perfect silence in the court,” said his Honor. “Are you ready with the bird?”

“In a moment, your Honor,” answered Browning. At that instant Angel entered with a man carrying the bird in a large covered cage.

“The interest in the proceedings had now risen to fever height. A chair had been placed in the dock for Jackson, and a table for the bird. The cloth was removed from the cage by the attendant, and the prisoner and the cockatoo were left alone face to face.

The screen had been so arranged that the judge and jury could watch Jackson without being seen by the bird. The silence was, after a few minutes, painful. Nothing was to be heard save the steady tick-tack, tick-tack of the court-house clock. The bird could be heard moving occasionally upon its perch. Jackson had been instructed that he must not speak or make any overture to it. Several minutes more passed, when a lead pencil memo. from the judge and a small parcel, were handed to the prisoner over the top of the screen. It read as follows: “Offer the bird some of the maize.”

Jackson at once got up, still in full view of the judge, and poured some of the maize into the bird's cage. The cockatoo was then heard sharpening its beak against the side of the cage. A moment after it spoke.

“George, you're a good fellow. George, don't go away. Poor Polly. Polly all alone. No one cares for Polly. Polly wants a bone. George don't go away. It's at the back of the iron drawer.”

“Let the officers who have the prisoner in charge,” said the judge, “take him out of the dock. Leave the bird there and call George Charles De Ville.”

“Mr. De Ville,” said the judge, as he stepped towards the witness-box, “you stated in your evidence this morning that you were neither friendly nor unfriendly with the cockatoo at Drybrook House, will you kindly step into the enclosure in the dock for a moment, it will give additional weight to your evidence, should the bird not recognise you. Of course, whatever may be the result, a large margin must be left for the possible idiosyncrasies of the cockatoo.”

A moment's silence followed, during which the cockatoo was heard cracking some of the corn. The Crown Prosecutor was whispering
hurriedly to De Ville, who appeared wholly confounded by the request of the judge.

“I beg your Lordship's pardon” (at the sound of De Ville's smooth, silky voice, those near the dock heard the bird at once leave off eating), “but I cannot accede to—”

“George, you villain, you villain,” was literally screamed out of the enclosure, and the judge leaning round saw the bird, with crest erect and wings extended, showing every indication of extreme fear and anger.

“George, you villain, why you're the devil. It's at the back of the iron drawer. George, you ought to be ashamed of yourself.”

The bird then gave a succession of defiant screams, and the judge ordered it to be covered and taken out of court.

De Ville's face was the picture of anger and despair.

“I find that I have one more witness to call, your Honor,” said Browning.

Thomas Carpenter deposed that he had been ordered by Mr. De Ville to destroy the cockatoo, which he identified as the one in court that morning. He had caught it in the grounds at Drybrook House, with a piece of broken chain fastened to one claw. It seemed mopish and afraid, and screamed once when Mr. De Ville approached it. Mr. Angel sent him word that the bird was on no account to be destroyed. He had not taught it any words, and since it had been under his care had not heard it speak, except on one occasion when it had said: “It's at the back of the iron drawer.” He did not know what the bird meant. There was a servant boy at Drybrook House who fed and cleaned the bird named George. This closed the evidence for the defence.
Chapter XXVIII. Speech of the Crown Prosecutor

THE Crown Prosecutor arose, and on the plea of the extraordinary nature of the defence, asked for an adjournment until the following day. To this, however, the judge would not consent, so the case proceeded, and the counsel for the prosecution arose to address the jury.

He had asked for an adjournment, he said, as he wished the jury to enter upon the closing stages of this very important trial with their minds perfectly composed, and unprejudiced by the singular incidents which had transpired before them in that court. The case which they had to decide that day, upon their oaths, was, for several reasons, one of the most remarkable criminal cases that had come within the range of his knowledge, or experience. Stress had been laid upon the fact that the prisoner was on trial for his life. He feared that side issues had been so cleverly made prominent that day, that there was some danger of the jury forgetting that already the sanctity of human life had been assailed by violent hands. They were there to do justice to a murdered man, and to affirm the inviolate majesty of their country's laws, and not to consider what might be the effect of their decision upon the person of the prisoner being tried at their bar. What he demanded was simple justice from them as between the murdered man and the prisoner. To obtain this he felt that he must warn them against a danger, which might even be hidden by its own great pre-eminence. Never in the course of his professional experience, had a criminal with so poor a defence, had it set forth and handled with such masterly skill. With the assistance of his solicitors, and two able barristers, the prisoner had conducted his own defence. There was positively nothing in that defence, and they must remember that only evidence affirmed on oath could be regarded as of value in enabling them to arrive at their decision. He said there was nothing in the defence set up by the other side, for it was merely the clever fabrication of a remarkably accomplished man. He could imagine how black was the heart, and seared the conscience of the murderer of Constant M'Watt, but he bowed in astonished homage before the ability of the prisoner. In this lay the danger, and against this he warned them. He supposed that a spirit of darkness might defend himself with matchless skill, and even deceive the very elect. And such, he felt convinced, was the state of the case before them. Let them see to it, that the skilful audacity of the prisoner's defence did not cause them to pervert judgment. They must make no mistake. A man of position and influence amongst them had been ruthlessly murdered, and it was for them to see that justice was done upon the person of the criminal. What did the defence
amount to? Just to this. A chain of the clearest evidence, that contained not one missing link, proved a man of more than ordinary ability to be a murderer. The criminal has no defence. Facts are too clear against him. He takes the bull by the horns. Admits all that he knows he cannot disprove, and fabricates an explanation that shall fit with the nicest accuracy into the evidence, which he knows he is unable to controvert.

“I have told you, gentlemen of the jury,” said the learned counsel, growing warmer with his argument, “that the prisoner is one of the ablest and most accomplished of criminals. His life is at stake, so he calls into play the whole of his fine resources, and the result is the cross-examination of witnesses, and the remarkable statement, and exhibition, which, by the favour of the court, he has presented to you to-day. Let me say, however, that his house of cards falls to the ground before the first breath of just criticism. The structure that he has attempted to rear is without foundation, and even explains itself away. He tells us that he made his journey across the river, not to steal a pocket-book, but to replace one. Well, gentlemen of the jury, where is that pocket-book? With consummate cleverness and audacity he has attempted to suggest that it has been stolen; stolen by one of our wealthiest and most prominent citizens, and with an ingenuity worthy of the father of lies, he has managed somehow to teach a cockatoo to repeat half-a-dozen words by rote, and has actually got the bird into the court to trick you into the belief that its doggerel nonsense is evidence. Good Heavens! gentlemen! evidence!! evidence!!! I can only say, that if you allow this exhibition to weigh with you one iota, in regard to your verdict to-day, then farewell to justice. That the prisoner taught the bird these words, either at the time of the murder or since, I will not attempt to dispute. I pay a willing tribute to the farsighted sagacity and cunning of the man. He had great things at stake, so his masterly rascality forecasts every contingency, and as he dared not call in a human witness to cover his retreat, he craftily invokes the aid of this cockatoo. Would, gentlemen, that instead of repeating these ingenious phrases, it might have the power to describe that which actually transpired.”

“I must now briefly review the evidence which is tendered on oath—the only evidence, let me solemnly remind you, upon which the issue of the case must be decided.”

“The body of the murdered man was in a punt in Moreton Bay on Sunday, February 5th. On Monday morning it was drawn to shore, partly decomposed. Let me remind you that everything was favourable to rapid putrefaction; it was exposed to the sun's action. Death occurring under these conditions on Saturday night, it is no wonder the medical attendant found the body in an advanced stage of decomposition by the following
Monday at mid-day. While I regret that the evidence of Dr. Black was unsupported by that of another medical man, I must remind you that the flood put difficulties in the way of all investigation, and under the stress of weather and exceptional floods, thousands of men in Brisbane took more largely of stimulants than was their custom. The prisoner has tried to show that death was not caused by the blow upon the forehead, but here even his clever imagination fails him, for he does not attempt to suggest how otherwise the deceased was murdered. I take the simple facts as they stand upon the surface, and appeal to the common sense of ordinary thoughtful men, and fearlessly affirm that from these facts there is only one conclusion—Constant M'Watt was struck upon the forehead with some heavy weapon. That fact the defence, with all their ingenuity, cannot, and do not, attempt to disprove. Constant M'Watt is dead. And the only conclusion to be arrived at is that which is given as the result of the post mortem examination, and that which the jury gave as their decision at the inquest. He died from the effects of a blow administered by some person or persons unknown."

“Now to return to Drybrook House. On that fatal Saturday night, the evidence proves that the prisoner was there; he does not dispute the fact, for the testimony of Stunner, the waterman, is too strong for him. He was there, he says, to restore a pocket-book which he had taken from the person of the deceased. But alas! for his story, there is no pocket-book to be found, but instead there is a ghastly murder committed, and £31,500 missing from Drybrook House safe. And on the following Tuesday, £2,500 of the very notes proved to have been taken from the £30,000 in that pocket-book, are paid by the prisoner into his account at the El Dorado Bank, a fact which my learned friends who are assisting the prisoner in his defence do not even attempt to disprove. Again the prisoner accepts the inevitable fact, and tries artfully to explain it away. He received cheques, he says, for £2,507, and calls witnesses to prove the fact, but that does not assist to clear him of the theft of the £31,500. Where is this money? Lost, stolen, untraceable; except £2,500 of it, and that we find in the possession of the prisoner. The fact is so patent that he cannot deny it, and so once more he undertakes to explain away a piece of awkward—yea, for the prisoner, damning—evidence.”

“His connection with the murdered man crops up at every turn. His knife is found with the dead body, but he has a week to supply an explanation, and his cleverness does not fail him. He cuts off a piece of the same, or similar, rope, and presents it to us as his reason for using the knife, and its having been found by the side of his victim. Gentlemen of the jury, I pray you make no mistake in this matter; the lives of your fellow-men are in
your hands to-day. If one murderer escapes, others are encouraged and licensed to similar deeds. The prisoner's clever trick has been tried before and failed, as it will fail again to-day. And let me impress this upon you: The very skill and cleverness, and masterly audacity of the prisoner, makes his escape from the hands of justice fraught with greater peril to the cause of justice, and the lives and security of your fellows. If the murderer of Constant M'Watt escapes, with the crime proved to the very hilt, and taken with the money in his possession, red-handed in his guilt, then who shall be convicted? Again, I say, gentlemen, see that you are not led away by false issues, and statements which are not evidence, and sentiment which is totally misleading. You have to do only with facts, and they, unhappily for the prisoner, in spite of all his cleverness, have proved him guilty of the most abhorrent of crimes— murder, murder for the sake of robbery. I leave it to your consciences, gentlemen. I am assured that you can only record one verdict. On the evidence, you have no alternative but to find the prisoner at the bar, guilty.”

The effect of this speech upon the jury, and crowded court, was, to the friends of the prisoner, appalling. It seemed as though every shred of the defence had been swept away. The counsel had had a hard task before him to remove the favourable effect which the prisoner's frank defence had created. But the sweeping torrent of argument and eloquence had carried all before it, and a conviction of George Jackson's guilt seemed stamped on every face. Edna had listened to it all; every bitter accusation had been a knife stabbing to her very heart. She wept noiselessly, but bitterly, behind her veil. Was there no one in all that crowded court to say one word for the darling of her heart? The darkness of her dream came back to her; it grew more dense, and the great hand was coming down upon her out of the heavens, to press out happiness, and hope, and life. Down! down! down! It was total darkness—night.
Chapter XXIX. The Defence: A Thrilling Appeal

It was now the turn of Browning, the counsel for the defence, to ask for an adjournment; but the judge was inexorable. He would sit until the case finished.

The general feeling towards the prisoner had become one of pity and abhorrence, as when a raging wild beast is felled with a stunning blow, and lies at our feet; powerless to do further injury. The argument of the Crown Prosecutor had caused the belief in Jackson's guilt to become general, and to the dismay of his friends he sat there in his chair—where he had been brought from the dock to make the closing speech for the defence—like a man in a dream. The police constables almost unconsciously edged up nearer to him. They felt that the last act but one was nearly ended, and they would soon have to conduct him to the condemned cell.

Angel came up to him, and catching him by the hand, whispered:

“Are you well enough to answer him, old fellow, or shall Browning do it?”

The grasp of the hand, and the “old fellow” supplied just the tonic Jackson needed. He took a sip from a tumbler of water, and said: “Thank you, Caleb, I had better finish it.”

Once more he stood up; now to make the one last struggle for his life.

“Gentlemen of the jury”—his voice was at first thick and husky. But he seemed cool and collected, although the waiting silence was almost painful. He was regarded as a doomed man.

How ever could he attempt to answer such a speech? He would fail! He would break down! It was impossible!

“Gentlemen of the jury,—It is my duty to address to you the last words which may be said in defence, and on behalf of, the prisoner, who is on trial for his life at the bar of this court to-day. The solemnity of the occasion has already been impressed upon you; you have to do justice between the dead and the living, and justice is all that I claim at your hands. Yet it will be hard for you to listen unbiased to me, and render even justice to the prisoner, after the address you have just listened to. The learned counsel's eloquence has, I fear, thrown judgment from her balance; and yet, as Australians, and men, you will, I am sure, hear me before you finally decide this question, which, for one of us, is life or death. The learned counsel for the prosecution assigns to the prisoner a pre-eminence in criminal sagacity, and ability. It might then be expected that something could be discovered in the prisoner's early surroundings and past career suggestive of this. Coming events cast their shadows before them, and if
the prisoner is the monster of criminal ability and ingenuity which he is represented to be, there should be some trace of it in his early history. He certainly does not come of criminal stock, for his father to this day, as is known to a dozen persons in this court, is a magistrate of his county in England, whose white head is a crown of glory to him, because it is found in the way of righteousness.”

“The prisoner, unfortunately, came to this country less than four years ago, possessed of modest but ample means. On his way through Sydney he invested about £2,000 in house property, and on his arrival here, deposited nearly £12,000 in the El Dorado Bank. He had met with the deceased in England, and acting on his advice, speedily found himself despoiled of the greater part of his capital. He did not, however, brood over his losses; but having had the advantage of a liberal education, set himself to read for the Colonial Bar. Thus was he occupied, when the, to him, fatal 3rd of February dawned.”

“I am not here, gentlemen of the jury, to defend the conduct of the prisoner in all particulars on that occasion. He has stated that on that Friday evening he saw the punt with the corpse on shore. He should have called some witness to that fact. Yea, I am prepared to affirm that he was blameworthy, in that he did not at once make his knowledge public, and leave an overruling Providence to avert the consequences which he feared. But I am reminded that any statement of the prisoner's may be classed as fabrication, and cannot rank as evidence, so I will now review the sworn evidence upon which you have to decide the case.”

“The charge of the prosecution rests, first, upon the supposed fact that the deceased was in Drybrook House on the night of Saturday, the 4th of February. This, every person in the court will allow, lies at the very foundation of the argument for the prosecution. The butler left deceased there on Thursday evening, and at half-past ten that same night was unable, on account of the flood waters on the low ground surrounding the house, to return; but what may not have occurred during the four hours of the butler's absence; during at least three of which it was possible for ingress and egress to have been effected? What visitors may not have called; occasion may even have arisen during that long period of time, for the deceased to have left Drybrook House altogether. But to substantiate the supposition of the prosecution—for, gentlemen, there is positively no evidence. It has not even been attempted to prove that deceased remained in Drybrook House even throughout Thursday night—he must have remained there throughout Friday and Saturday. You will note that if it can be shown that deceased was murdered at any time before midnight on Saturday, the 4th of February, the prisoner must be acquitted, for every hour of the previous
time to that moment can be accounted for.”

“For two whole days, then, the deceased, according to the theory of the prosecution, must have resided alone in Drybrook House, and yet there was no trace found of such residence. With the exception of two used wine glasses and the biscuit crumbs, there is no evidence that during all this time he partook of food. In the butler’s pantry there was abundance of food above reach of flood mark, but the detective, on the following Tuesday evening, found no sign of food having been partaken—no dirty dishes. It is impossible that deceased would have subsisted for two whole days on port wine and biscuits, when there was abundance of more substantial food easily accessible. But further, during this time the deceased must have slept. Is it likely that, with ample sleeping accommodation at hand, he would for three nights have remained there without availing himself of it? If he feared that the house might be visited by flood burglars in boats, he could have locked and barred his door, and have kept lights burning to warn them from the house. But the prosecution have been unable to prove that any bed was slept in, and they represent the deceased as having been murdered when, wrapped in an overcoat, he lay sleeping on a lounge.”

“Another point deserves mention. Through the rising of the flood waters, there was no gas available in the lower part of the suburbs after Thursday night, but it was not proved that any candles were burned by deceased. Is it credible, gentlemen, that for three nights the deceased remained in Drybrook House without sleeping in a bed, and that the murderer found him at midnight on Saturday, fully attired, with watch and purse, and adornments and dress, in perfect order, enveloped in an overcoat, sleeping on a lounge? That from Friday morning to midnight on Saturday he had gone without food, save a little wine and biscuits, and that for two long nights he had continued in the house in darkness? If lights had been visible on Friday or Saturday, they could have been seen from houses in the neighbourhood, or on the opposite side of the river, and you may be assured that the keen scrutiny of detectives, and counsel for the prosecution, would not have allowed so valuable a piece of evidence to have been overlooked. It was incumbent upon the prosecution to have proved beyond reasonable doubt that the deceased was actually resident in Drybrook House, from the time that he was left there by the butler until the time they supposed him to have been murdered, two days after, by the prisoner. This, the very first link in their chain of evidence, is wanting.”

“But take the fact of the two wine glasses having been used. Does it not point to the supposition that on Thursday evening, after the departure of the butler, the deceased had a visitor? Whoever took wine with him, called before the flood waters had surrounded the house. Is it not most probable—
especially in view of the fact that there is positively no evidence that deceased resided during the flood at Drybrook House, for had he done so he must have eaten and slept— that deceased left in company with this visitor?”

“Take now the evidence resulting from the post mortem examination. The state of the body was such that the doctor could not swear that, when examined, it had not been dead for three days. I pass over the unsatisfactory nature of the evidence as to whether deceased died from the effects of the blow, although the evidence of the medical man, on that point alone, is sufficient to impair the value of his evidence on the whole case. The diagnosis should have furnished him with proof upon which he could unhesitatingly have sworn as to the cause of death. But he stated on oath that the body was so far decomposed that he could not. Then I put it to you, on the sworn evidence of the doctor, deceased must have died prior to the midnight of the 4th of February. On the theory of the prosecution, only one day and six or seven hours elapsed from the time of the murder to the finding of the body. When about five hours afterwards the doctor saw it, he asserts on oath that it was in an advanced stage of decomposition. If evidence has any value, there is only one deduction. The deceased must have been dead one or two days before the prisoner visited Drybrook House on the night of Saturday, the 4th of February. If this is proved, no other evidence need be considered; you are bound, on your consciences, and on your oaths, to return a verdict of not guilty.”

“It is proved, gentlemen; proved to the very hilt. There is no competent medical practitioner in Brisbane but will tell you the deceased must have been dead more than thirty-six hours.”

“But let me take you a stage further. The prisoner reached Brisbane from Darton's Point on Saturday afternoon. The theory of the prosecution is, that a plan to murder M'Watt at midnight had been agreed upon by the prisoner with some unknown accomplice, who brought the punt to the back staircase of Drybrook House. But is there any evidence whatever to support this supposition? Absolutely none! The witness Stunner swears that the meeting was purely accidental, so that with all his supposed cleverness, the prisoner had made no prior arrangement for crossing the river to Drybrook House. For the plan of the murder to have been pre-arranged, there must have been foreknowledge of the most unlikely circumstance: that the deceased would be found alone upon the flooded premises. It is a wonder that in the endeavour to give plausibility to this, the prosecution has not impeached the fidelity of the servants, and made them accessories to a murder. If all this was pre-arranged, as supposed by the learned counsel on the other side, then the absence of the whole of the
servants must have also been pre-arranged. But what is the sworn
evidence? Why, that when the prisoner and the waterman reached
Drybrook House, the front door stood wide open; there were no lights,
there was no sound, and the flood covered the whole of the ground floor.”

“You can see the house, gentlemen of the jury, in your mind's eye. I ask
you, does it look like a place inhabited? After the boat was made fast, the
waterman swears that lights were struck in the hall. He received no caution
from the prisoner to keep quiet. The prisoner went up the staircase, straight
to the private study of the deceased, and the witness Stunner again swears
that he heard him strike two wax vestas. Is it at all likely that he would
have done this, under the circumstances suggested by the prosecution?
How could he possibly have known where M'Watt was sleeping? Would he
not have feared to wake his intended victim? The waterman heard no
sound for some time, except the fall of something heavy upon the floor.
There was no voice, no cry, no scream for help, no groan, no sound of
struggle. The stillness of midnight reigned throughout the mansion. Even
the striking of a match was audible to the waterman, and yet you are asked
to believe that it was possible to commit a violent and sudden murder in
silence.”

“Gentlemen, the case for the Crown breaks down on the evidence of their
own witnesses. The waterman swears that he heard no cry, no groan, no
sound of struggle. Is it possible, I ask again, upon your oaths, gentlemen,
could a man of the stature and strength, and vigorous health of the
deceased, so have died? It is impossible!”

“There is another missing link, gentlemen, in the prosecution's ‘chain of
clearest evidence.’ It follows that the body of the murdered man must have
been carried down the back stairs in perfect silence; that the prisoner and
his supposed accomplice carried down the heavy body of the deceased
without any sound of shuffling feet, or opening or closing doors, or
whispered consultation. Again does common sense exclaim, impossible!
But now comes in the strangest part of this absurd supposition. The
murderers having accomplished their fell design in silence, now talk
audibly together in the corridor, in the hearing of the waterman. Is it not
most improbable? The prisoner says that he was called by a favourite
cockatoo kept in the house. The waterman, on his oath, declared, ‘I think
the voice I heard did sound like a cockatoo’s.’ You are yourselves
witnesses of the existence of the bird. It is indisputable; in this court you
have seen it, and you have heard it speak the words attributed to it.”

“Let me remind you that the prisoner, since that night, had had no access
to it; but in your own hearing, it has witnessed to the correctness of the
prisoner's explanation. I shall say nothing further about the pocket-book. It
is unfortunately, missing, as also is the gold. You have had ample
evidence, however, on oath to-day, that in a certain quarter there is animus
against the prisoner. It has been proved that attempts have been made to
deprive him of the means for conducting his defence. You know what his
explanation of the loss of the money is, and where his suspicions lie. I say
no more as to the prisoner's possession of the notes; you have his
explanation, supported on oath by the witnesses who paid him the cheques
for £2,507 16s. 4d These cheques cannot, unfortunately, be produced, but
the butts of the cheque books, and the oaths of the witnesses, are proof of
their having been paid, to the prisoner. Nor was the prisoner in the
financial straits represented. A man in these days, holding city and
suburban property unencumbered, and with several hundred pounds to his
credit in a bank, can scarcely be regarded as in financial difficulties.”

“Further, there was no attempt at concealment. The prisoner went to a
bank, and to a man who has proved himself to be one of his bitterest
enemies, and openly paid in the money, and with a firm hand,
unhesitatingly endorsed the notes. Gentlemen, it was not the act of a
murderer!”

“But to close this address—the length of which you will pardon, as the
last utterance of one who defends a prisoner on trial for his life—let me
recall to your remembrance that first disastrous Sunday, when this city lay
submerged beneath the destroying waters of a mighty and irresistible flood.
In the early hours of that sad morning, piteous cries for help came from
many a half-broken heart and ruined home. Responding to such cries as
these, for nearly two hours two men wrought amid the swirling, seething
waters—not to destroy, but to save men's lives; until, by their unaided
exertions, five families were placed in safety, beyond reach of the
devouring element. As the last boat load was being removed from the roof
of a house, situated in the very midst of a dangerous current, that threatened
every moment to carry the structure bodily away, a baby boy slipped
from his mother's numbed and weary arms into the swirling tide. ‘Poor
little darling,’ was the cry, ‘alas! no one can save it.’ But a man leaped into
the midnight sea, and at the peril of his own life, snatched the drowning
child out of the jaws of death, and restored him to his mother.”

“He who to-day is arraigned at your tribunal, as having just before
murdered Constant M'Watt, is the man who flung his own life into the
balance, to save a little child. Gentlemen of the jury, men of Brisbane,” he
cried, looking for the first time around the breathless court, and tossing
back his handsome head, “Was that the action of a red-handed murderer?”

“That afternoon, in the face of day, and before the eyes of hundreds, a
boat swept down the flooded river with two men in it, in all human
probability on their last pathway to eternity. They were Englishmen, and may I not say it, in such an hour as this, they were brave men, who believed in an all-wise, and an all-good Providence. They went to the rescue of a young man, the only son and stay of his mother, and she was a widow. By an old waterman's skilful daring strategy, they were on the point of saving him, when a rope broke, and the young man, unable to swim, swept drowning past the boat."

“But a man, a strong swimmer, before the eyes of that great crowd of witnesses on the North Quay, sprang from the boat, and—God only knows how—saved him. Five minutes after, that boat was crushed like an egg-shell, against the iron pier of Victoria Bridge, and lashed between the two men, who clung with bleeding fingers to the iron trellis work of the bridge, was the unconscious form of the young man Golliker. He stands there amongst you, in this very court to-day, and he will tell you that he owes his life to George Jackson, the prisoner at your bar—the alleged murderer of Constant M'Watt. Gentlemen of the jury, men of Brisbane, I ask you, on your oaths, was that the deed of a murderer?”

By this time the emotion of the audience was over-powering; many were there who had seen the deed, so graphically described. Tears stood in almost every eye, and sobs were heard from several parts of the building. The reaction in the prisoner's favour was complete and overwhelming. Men could scarcely restrain themselves from cheering him, as he stood there with uplifted hands, and flashing eyes, suffused with tears. He closed his address more calmly.

“Gentlemen of the jury; men with the spoils of robbery in their hands, and the guilt of murder freshly on their souls, shrink from death and judgment. They fear to die. They take no risks to save that which their cruel hands have so ruthlessly destroyed. Murderers are haunted men, haunted of an evil conscience, which makes cowards of us all.”

“Gentlemen of the jury; I leave the verdict, as the counsel for the other side has done, to your consciences. I appeal to the sworn evidence that is before you. It proves step by step irresistibly, and incontestably, that the prisoner is innocent; that whatever may be his faults, George Jackson is not the murderer of Constant M'Watt.”

At this the prisoner sank back into his chair.

It is impossible to describe the effect made by this speech; the applause was with difficulty suppressed. Men looked into each other's eyes in mute amazement. It was as though they said each to the other: What do you think of it? The prisoner sat with his face covered by his hands.

The learned judge then proceeded to sum up the case. It was a masterly summing up. The legal issues were divested of all extraneous matter, and
presented simply and plainly to the jury. It was a summing up so terse, and so devoid of emotion and colouring, that it would be well nigh impossible to compress it, without losing some important point. It was distinctly in favour of the prisoner.

The jury then went out to consider their verdict, but no one else moved, except the judge, who retired, and the prisoner, who was conducted by the police constables out of the court. Caleb Angel had shook hands and whispered something to him, as he left; he then went to where Mrs. Darton and Edna sat with Mr. Darton. Both of them were weeping behind their veils. He pressed their hands for a moment, and, with deep emotion, said to Mr. Darton: “It was a magnificent address, we must get a verdict.”

It was growing dark, and one of the court ushers came in and lit the gas. He was watched by the crowd in silence. A life was in the scales of judgment—a brave and eloquent man's life. The speech had carried them away captive from themselves. Those thrilling appeals and climaxes, still rang in their memories; they could not yet shake off the spell of the enchantment.

The clock hands dragged wearily round three-quarters of an hour. Would the jury never come back! An hour!

A sound of whispered conversation now murmurs through the building, which quiets suddenly. The jury are returning. They enter the box, and all eyes look at them, as though they would read the verdict in their faces.

The scream of a fainting woman, who can bear the suspense no longer, is heard. It is old Eliza Stunner who drops insensible upon the floor. But Edna keeps up. Her eyes are glaring wildly from beneath her long lashes; her lips are parched; her heart beats madly. Caleb stands near her. She whispers thickly: “Will this suspense never end?”

Jackson is now placed in the dock; two constables keeping beside him. He stands like a cold stone statue; almost as white as marble, to hear his doom.

Now the judge has come in at last. Ah! the black cap is in his pocket. He takes his seat. This is indeed the moment of the case. How long it seems!

“Have you agreed, gentlemen, upon your verdict?” said the judge in a grave but anxious voice.

The foreman of the jury stood up. “We have, your Honor. Our verdict is NOT GUILTY.”

Was there ever such a scene in court before! The crowded benches all round the dock burst out in one prolonged shout of congratulation. Hats and umbrellas were waved aloft, and one sporting man, who had booked heavily on the prisoner's innocence, yelled out: “Good man, bravo Jackson!” The crier of the court calls to order, and the threats of the judge
at last calm the enthusiasm.

The judge, in a grave voice, delivered his judgment, and discharged the prisoner in accordance with the verdict.

For a moment the prisoner bowed his head as though unable to realise that he was liberated, and then George Jackson stepped out of the dock—a free man. Crowds of enthusiastic friends pushed forward to congratulate him, but old Stunner's hand was one of the first he took.

“Aye! Master Jackson,” said the old man, the tears running down his face, “it's been a worser time than that 'ere last trip in the ‘Mary Jane.’ But thank God ye'r on shore agen!”

George pushed his way through the kindly crowd, to one of the ante-chambers of the court. There were only four people there waiting for him. He met Mrs. Darton near the doorway. She said not a word, but just kissed him. Edna's arms were round his neck a moment afterwards.

“George,” she said, “my own love, I could never have lived through this; but I knew that God would save you. Why else did I have that dream; but the darkness has passed now, and it is morning. Morning!

And in the new-born morning light of restored peace and happiness, the little party returned, taking Jackson with them, to their temporary home.

As Cutts and De Ville went down the court-house stairs together, hisses were audibly heard all round them. It was the first time that De Ville had been publicly hissed. He trembled, and looked around as though he feared someone would strike him.

“Surely,” said one man to another, as they watched them through the gates, “that De Ville will never dare to hold his head up again in Brisbane.”
Chapter XXX. The Wrecker's Story

BEFORE the judge left the court the letter to the foreman of the jury was opened. On hearing its contents the judge's face became grave.

“I saw Sergeant Dingle in the court,” he said to an attendant. “See if you can find him, and bring him to me at once.”

They were in close conference for a few minutes. “Be sure,” said the judge, as the Sergeant left him, “that you get them secured to-night. It can then be made public at the same time as the verdict.”

The last train had left for Breezeland fully an hour when four horsemen passed out of Brisbane, in the direction of Darton's Point; three of them led spare horses, and all were armed. They were well mounted, and the horses appeared fresh and fit for anything. They crossed Governor Creek bridge at a swinging trot, and then broke into a canter. The night was dark, but the roads were good, being finished off with white blinding, which makes them the very best for travelling upon at night. Up hill and down the troopers, for such they were, never drew rein until an hour and ten minutes afterward they pulled up at an open space where two main roads met.

“Now my men,” said the leader, “follow on slowly, and I will ride to the public house and get information, and then come back and meet you at a ruined shanty you will find to the right hand about half a mile along the road. Stop anyone that passes, and ask their names. They're a queer lot living about here, and someone may warn them, and we shall find the birds flown.”

Twenty minutes afterwards they met again at the ruined shanty, near the banks of a large navigable creek which ran into Moreton Bay.

“Hitch the three spare horses to the fence yonder,” said the sergeant;” “Davey you stay and watch them, and South and Williams come with me.”

“If you hear my whistle, bring one horse on, but if two whistles, leave the horses and come to us at once.”

Followed by the two troopers the speaker made his way along a bridle track into the bush.

“They are a rough lot here,” said Dingle, for he was the officer in charge, “so keep on the alert, we may have a rough and tumble before we are done with this job.”

At twelve o'clock that night a newspaper reporter, from information received, called at the police office, and passed in through a small mob of sweating troopers' horses waiting outside. Inside, the names of three prisoners were being entered on the charge sheet, for robbery in Moreton Bay. One was a short light-complexioned man, with sandy hair, another
tall and dark, and the third little more than a lad. They gave their names as Juchan, O'Keefe and Winton. The first and last were willing to tell everything.

They came across the punt and dead body in the Bay on Saturday morning about ten o'clock.

"My word, it's a lucky thing for Jackson," said a Chronicle reporter to the sub-editor as they rushed up the "copy" to the foreman of the compositors. "He will have the whole affair complete in to-morrow's paper. Speech, verdict, and the account of the arrest of the wreckers who stole the ring from the corpse on Saturday morning in Moreton Bay. It would have saved some trouble if the judge had opened that letter at first. Were you in the court, Balfour?"

"No."

"Then you missed one of the biggest sensations that ever was. I'm not so well in, as you know, or I should have paid you that ten shillings I owe you, before this; but 'pon my honour, I wouldn't have missed the thing for a five-pound note. The Crown Prosecutor made a rattling good speech too, but, by George, I wonder what he'll think when he sees to-morrow morning's paper."

The vindication of Jackson was complete, for at the police court the following morning not only was the ring produced, but new light was thrown upon the injury to the forehead of the corpse. Two of the prisoners gave voluntary evidence to the effect that they were out in Moreton Bay picking up timber and other valuables swept down from the city by the flood. About ten o'clock on Saturday morning they saw the punt and rowed up to it. Seeing that it contained a dead body Juchan and Winton wanted to have nothing to do with it, but O'Keefe swore that it was the best find they had had, and he would see what was in its pockets. Then he caught sight of the ring, and wrenched it off. A quarrel began, as the two men feared to be implicated in the robbery, and perhaps be charged with murder, but O'Keefe got into a violent passion, and seizing a boat hook, which had an unusually heavy handle, he aimed a violent blow at Winton, who was leaning over to push away the punt. The blow was aimed at Winton's head, and had it struck him it must certainly have stunned, if not killed him, but he moved in time, and the blow came crashing down straight across the dead man's forehead, fracturing the skull. The accident so startled O'Keefe that he consented to return to shore. They wanted him to throw the ring back into the punt, but he refused to do so. They picked up some timber and pulled back and landed.

It may be said that O'Keefe was tried and found guilty of the robbery. He was sentenced to three years' imprisonment, on which occasion the bench
made some very pertinent remarks upon the effects of labouring men engaging in wrecking.

Said the judge: “Men, who under ordinary circumstances would not steal a farthing; in times of fire or flood occasionally become transformed into desperate criminals. Instead of lamenting for the loss of others, they rejoice over the havoc and destruction, on account of the opportunity for wreckage. Every new disaster, is, to them, a new harvest to be reaped; the sensibilities and conscience become hardened, until the transformation is complete, and a man who all his life before was engaged in honest industry, or peaceful agriculture, will tear a jewel from a dead man's finger, and run the risk of murdering his fellow who attempts to thwart his intention of pillaging the pockets of a corpse.”

“He hoped that Brisbane might never see another such flood, not only on account of the great losses to the community, but on account of its ethical effects, in the opportunities for looting and wrecking put in the way of numbers of people. The honest gain which came by the labour of the hands, and the sweat of the brow, was better than any personal acquisition or advantage, which resulted from the disaster or loss of another.”

The papers were of course full of the trial, and verdict, and the discovery of the ring. Jackson was complimented on the completeness of his vindication, and it was predicted for him, that on being called to the bar, he would have a brilliant career.

But, continued the article, we are unfortunately still confronted with the mysterious problem of the Hon. Constant M'Watt's death, and the loss of the great sum of £31,500. It is proved now that the deceased was not killed by a blow; and the question arises: Was he murdered at all? and if so, how? It is the opinion of some medical men, that the body ought to be at once exhumed, and another post mortem examination made, so that it may be known with some certainty, how the deceased really met with his death. The detectives are still searching for further evidence, and it is to be sincerely hoped that their efforts will be successful. If there is an unknown murderer amongst us, the sooner he is arrested, and brought to justice, the better for the community. It is a mystery that would have been impossible, but for the late floods. But who was the mysterious visitor that took wine with the deceased, after the departure of the butler, on the evening of the 2nd of February? This is the clue that ought to be followed up.”

“George,” said John Darton to Jackson a few nights afterwards, as the two men sat smoking in Jackson's room, “it was uncommonly good and generous of you to keep secret what I told you about my visit to M'Watt on the night of the 2nd of February.”

“I have not mentioned it to anyone,” said Jackson quietly, “and I don't
intend to.”

“Well, I can only say that I can never repay your generous kindness. Had you told what you knew, I might have been tried for murder.”

Had John Darton known all the facts, he would have said manslaughter, for there was that in the sealed document, which, at the back of his own statement of what happened during his interview with M'Watt, would have made it well nigh impossible for him to have cleared himself from that charge.
Chapter XXXI. Edna's Perplexity: The Dream Song

PROBATE of M'Watt's will had been obtained, and the two executors were together in De Ville's office. They were not very cordial, but things had been patched up between them, and somewhat to Angel's surprise De Ville was compliant and agreeable.

Angel had determined that the £10,000 should be paid out of the estate to Edna Forrest, for he held that the regular payment of interest added to John Darton's statement, proved M'Watt's indebtedness.

He was surprised to find that De Ville placed no obstacle in the way. He did not imagine that De Ville entertained hopes of winning Edna Forrest for himself. But De Ville in matters of this sort did not know when he was defeated, and he believed that he held in his hand a trump card, which might win the game for him, if all else failed.

Soon after the trial, to the surprise of his friends, and especially of Edna, to whom George was now formally engaged, the latter announced his intention of paying a visit to England at a very early date.

Mrs. Darton had hinted to him in her outspoken way that if he must go off in that fashion, he had better be married first, and take his wife with him for a wedding trip.

But it was evident that he had no intention of suggesting such a thing. Edna was perplexed and almost annoyed with him. He might be away he said for four or five months. It was important business that necessitated his going, and that was all that anyone could get out of him. He was not in any way less affectionate or attentive to Edna; but with a woman's intuition, she felt that there was something, which in some measure divided their confidence, and she thought about it more than was good for her.

One morning, to everyone's surprise, George said he should have to run up north for a few days, to transact some business which required his personal attention, and within a fortnight after the trial he was gone.

"Edna," said Mrs. Darton, a day or so afterwards, as they sat alone together, "George Jackson, like all the rest of the men, will go through fire and water to get anything he sets his heart upon, but when he gets it—"

"Now, Aunt dear, I won't have George pulled to pieces. He has not got me yet, so what you say cannot apply. He has something upon his mind, and while I confess that I should like to know what it is, he has, I believe, good reasons for not disclosing it, and I have made up my mind to try and wait patiently, and not worry him."

"I know this much, Edna, if I were you he would have to tell me, or I would marry Mr. De Ville or Mr. Angel, while he was away in England."
You could have either of them by holding up your little finger.”

“Not the latter, Aunty, while I was betrothed to his friend. I mean,” continued Edna, “that Caleb Angel is a man of honour, who would not betray his friend even to marry a woman that he loved. But what nonsense, I do not intend to marry anyone except George.”

Edna meant all that she said, and more, and yet her aunt's words rankled in her mind. Surely George might have told her. Could he not trust her to keep a secret, if it was of such importance as to take him away to England just now. Well, she would not stop at Darton's Point. She would persuade her aunt and uncle to take a trip to Sydney, and Melbourne, and New Zealand, while he was away.

But her love for him never wavered. He was still her hero. The one true man who had won her supreme affection. She sat down at the piano, and running her fingers over the keys, sang a simple melody of her own composition, the words of which were:—

The wind blows from the sea,
And the dark clouds raise on high;
But they bring no harm to him or me,
Those storm clouds of the sky.
He is my true love brave,
And I a sailor's bride,
And though white wings skim the rolling waves,
Where sea-flowers bloom o'er sailors' graves,
His barque to the haven glides.

My dream is no more a dream,
For the cloud is cleft in twain,
And through its darkness the sunrays stream,
To woo from the heart its pain.
The ship draws near the shore,
And the morn light rises higher;
But trem'rous sheen of the wavelets glow,
And sweet fresh breath of the winds that blow,
Cannot picture my heart's desire.

Come morning on sea and shore!
Come love of my heart so brave!
My soul shall rejoice the more,
Far the storm-tossed troubled wave.
The days of pain are passed,
Press thy sweet lips close to mine,
And wholly confide in me sweetheart,
For nothing but death shall ever part,
Two lives, love—mine and thine.
“Wherever did you pick that song up, Edna?” asked Mrs. Darton.

“Well, Aunty dear, I'll tell you a secret. It's one of my own composing, and I'm going to sing it to George some day when he's extra sweet, after we're married.”
Chapter XXXII. De Ville's Explanation: A Lawyer's Letter

THE loss of the pocket-book was almost relegated to past history, when one afternoon the De Ville carriage was to be seen coming up the gravel drive to Darton's Point House. It had been arranged that a cheque for £10,000, with interest, signed by George Charles De Ville and Caleb Angel, should be paid that day to John Darton, on account of Miss Forrest; and Mr. De Ville wrote that instead of putting Miss Forrest and Mr. Darton to the trouble of coming up to town, he would run over that afternoon and, in person, discharge the indebtedness.

De Ville had again brought his sister with him, who, since he had been left so much money by M'Watt's will, had shown a decided preference for Caleb Angel.

De Ville and Darton were transacting the legal part of the business, and preparing certain documents for signature, in another room, so the three ladies were alone. It may interest our readers to know something of their conversation.

“How wet the weather has continued to be,” said Mrs. Darton.

“Very,” replied Miss De Ville.

“It seems as though it would never take up again,” continued the hostess.

“Yes,” responded Miss De Ville.

“Do you find it very dull down here?” asked Edna.

“Yes, there are so few gentlemen that one cares to meet residing in the district; but my brother has invited Mr. Angel to stay with us at Bay View Lodge for a few weeks. I am not sure that he will come, though. What a very nice gentleman he is.”

“Thank goodness!” thought Edna; she has got something to talk about at last!

Mrs. Darton encouraged her to proceed by remarking that he was one of the most accomplished men in Brisbane.

“Yes,” simpered Miss De Ville, “I hear that he writes poetry. If he comes down, I am going to ask him to write me some.”

Just then Mr. Darton came in, and asked Edna to go into the breakfast parlour. The several documents were then signed in due form; after which, to Edna's surprise, Mr. Darton asked her and Mr. De Ville to excuse him for a moment, and closing the door behind him, they were left alone.

De Ville commenced at once.

“Miss Forrest, I asked Mr. Darton to do me the kindness to allow me the opportunity of making a certain explanation to you alone.”
Edna bowed her head; she could scarcely do other than give a hearing to the man who, much as she detested him, had just paid to her guardian, on her account, the large sum of £10,000.

“You will naturally have been prejudiced against me, Miss Forrest, by recent events, and by the interpretation that has doubtless been tendered to you by Mr. Jackson, but as it is the highest ambition of my life to stand well in your estimation, I am glad of this opportunity to say something privately to you in self-defence. The business matter which we have just completed will, to some extent, prove my desire for fair play and justice in my business relations. There was no legal necessity laid upon us, as trustees, to pay this money. The insinuations that have been made against my honour in certain quarters are, I assure you, Miss Forrest, as entirely without foundation, as they are beneath my notice. For a man in my position,” said the J.P., drawing himself up to his full height, “to be charged with theft, is, on the face of it, absurd. A man worth a quarter of a million of money is not likely to be tempted to run risks for the sake of a few thousand pounds.”

Edna bowed her head again, and said, “It certainly appears improbable, Mr. De Ville.

“I thank you, Miss Forrest, for your good opinion of me,” said Mr. De Ville, taking a good deal more for granted than Edna's words warranted; “and I am encouraged to again address you on a subject very near to my heart. It is rumoured in Brisbane that you are likely to be engaged, and married to Mr. Jackson.”

Edna blushed a little, but bowed her head gravely and decidedly.

“What I wish to say,” he continued, “is with the consent of your uncle, and I trust you will not think it out of place as coming from one who, to some extent, has taken the position held by the late Constant M'Watt. You are still young, Miss Forrest, and, with comfortable means at your disposal, and gifts of mind and graces of person which would fit you for any position in society, should certainly hesitate before committing yourself to a marriage which can scarcely secure for you the rank of which you are so worthy”

“I am informed that Mr. Jackson is about to take a journey to England upon business, the nature of which he has not imparted, either to Mr. Darton, yourself, or his most intimate friends in Brisbane. After all that has transpired, Mr. Darton tells me that he does not care to interfere, or urge you to any course. But he agrees with me that as Mr. Jackson is going away in this singular fashion, he ought in fairness to leave you free. Mr. Jackson will probably find that his business will detain him longer than he expects. Months will elapse, and in that time you may see reasons for
altering your mind.”

“I need say nothing now of my own feelings towards you. If I can be of any service to you in the future, you have but to command me. I do not ask for any response to my advice, but as it is not merely my counsel, but also your aunt's and uncle's, I beg respectfully to leave it with you, trusting that it may have your best consideration.”

“Allow me, Miss Forrest, to open the door, and be your escort to the drawing room.”

The whole interview lasted but a very short time, and Edna was in the drawing room almost before she knew what had happened, and immediately after the De Villes took their departure.

“Charles” (De Ville was generally known by his second Christian name at home), “how are you progressing with your proposal to Miss Forrest, you'll have to be quick, or she will marry Mr. Jackson.”

“Oh, it does not do to be in too big a hurry, Clara, over such matters,” said De Ville. “Edna Forrest is a different breed of girl to you.”

“Thank you, Charles, for the compliment, but you seem to forget that we are brother and sister.”

De Ville felt uncommonly well satisfied with himself that afternoon.

“She was gracious, at any rate,” he said to himself. “Who knows, she may come round yet without any threat.”

When De Ville went up to his office next morning, he found among his letters one from the lawyer of the trustees of the Bethel Calvanistic Church. It contained a formal demand for the sum of £30,000, payable to the trustees under the last will and testament of the Hon. Constant M'Watt, of Drybrook House, Brisbane.

“Hang them,” said De Ville impatiently. “I suppose that they think a lawyer's letter will frighten us. I'll just send it up for Dyson Foggitt to answer, he will put them straight. The lawyer promptly replied, and the result was a special meeting of the church to consider what should be the next course adopted.

“It is my duty, brethren,” said the Rev. Daniel Dare, who occupied the chair ex officio, “to point out to you the legal difficulties of the case. A special sum, to be found in a particular pocket-book, was donated to this church. That pocket-book is, however, with the money, lost.”

“Then,” interposed one of the members, “the executors are responsible for its production, and in my opinion we ought to appeal to a jury.”

“I would urge you, brethren, to hesitate before you institute any legal proceedings. The uncertainties of law are proverbial, and there is a very important matter confronting you at the very outset. Some persons will have to make themselves liable for the legal expenses, and a considerable
amount of ready money will have to be provided at the very start. Moreover, you must bear in mind that a short time back a large legacy was lost to a church association in this colony because the will contained the signatures of only two witnesses instead of three.”

“I have taken the advice of my solicitor on that point,” said Deacon Fusby, “and he assures me that our position is altogether different and that we have a good case.”

“Brethren, be not beguiled by lawyers,” said the pastor, “they are always confident of success when there is the prospect of protracted litigation.”

“The commencement of strife,” says the old book, “is as the letting out of water. The letting out of water makes a flood, and a flood, as we have had painful experience, sweeps the accumulation of years of industry before it. Legal proceedings have been a flood of destroying waters to thousands.”

“But why should the church be robbed of its rights?” said Deacon Fusby, who was specially sore and restive upon the subject, for he had been the chief promoter of the draping of the church, and the funeral sermon.

“Mr. Chairman and brethren”—it was Deacon Sandy M'Bain who addressed the meeting—“I wish, as one of the trustees of the church property, to call your attention to an important matter. The trust deed of our property debars us from diverting any of the moneys of the church to other than the purposes therein stated, and no mortgage can be given over any portion thereof, for any purpose, except to enlarge or re-build the church premises.”

Old Sandy had been led to make this statement through having heard some of the hot-headed younger members suggesting among themselves that if there was no other way, they could mortgage the church property to obtain the money to carry on the lawsuit.

The outcome of the meeting was a resolution empowering the pastor and deacons to take such action as their united wisdom suggested in the matter of the late Hon. Constant M'Watt's legacy.

At a deacons' meeting held a few nights afterwards, to the surprise of everyone, Deacon De Lain announced that he and Deacon Bright had arranged to become responsible for the expenses of the legal proceedings. How this arrangement was come to will be explained in the next chapter, but in the meantime, we may say that proceedings were at once instituted, by the executors of the late Hon. Constant M'Watt being served with a writ.
Chapter XXXIII. De Ville is Discomfited

NOTWITHSTANDING De Ville's bluster about the Bethel Calvanists and their legacy, he received an unpleasant shock when the writ was served upon him one morning at his office. The service of a writ is never a pleasant proceeding for the recipient, no matter how strong may be his position and defence.

What De Ville dreaded most, was to be again placed in the witness-box, and subjected to cross-examination about the pocket-book and the £31,500. Then, too, they would be certain to subpoena Caleb Angel and George Jackson. He positively shivered when he thought of what the latter might say about him in the witness-box. Angel too, he felt sure, was suspicious of his guilt, and his conscience just then interposed, “so are a number of other people.”

Why, the lawsuit would be like a trial during which he, personally, would be on his defence. If the Bethel Calvinists placed the matter in the hands of a strong lawyer, he would put detectives on the scent for the pocket-book, and gold.

De Ville had a bad time that day—and a number of days afterwards—and he cursed the gold, and pocket-book, and bank notes, and Bethel Calvinists, bitterly in his heart.

Foley and Foggitt were instructed by him to defend the case, and to put all the difficulties and obstructions possible in the way. Accordingly, they, first of all, did not put in an appearance in response to the writ until the very last day.

This meant a bad time for De Lain and Bright. Day after day the latter called on their solicitor, to be met by the cheerful words, “They have not yet entered an appearance in the suit,” and to be charged ten-and-six for a consultation fee. Mr. Gammon, however, knew very well that they intended to defend the case; it was only a common custom of the other side, to keep their opponents in the dark as long as possible. When, on the last day but one, Bright rushed into De Lain's warehouse, saying excitedly: “No appearance entered yet; they must intend to let the case go by default,” De Lain shook his head.

“No such luck, Bright; wait until to-morrow.”

In good time on the following day, a clerk walked up to the court from Foley and Foggitt's, and Bright's delusive hopes were dissipated. They had to go on with the case.

Somewhat to Bright's astonishment, De Lain, after this, seemed to hesitate, and wished for counsel's opinion to be obtained on the case before
they proceeded further. The fact was, De Lain's financial position was steadily growing more and more precarious. He had known before the floods that it was well-nigh impossible for him to pull through, and but for that knowledge, it is probable that he would never have undertaken to become, jointly and severally, responsible with Bright for the legal costs; but his bankers had just decided to take his account in hand, and that morning he had received a note from the manager, requesting him to call round during the day.

The result of the interview had been that he had consented to give the bank a bill of sale over the whole of the stock in his warehouse. He knew very well that the registration of that bill of sale by the bank would be, for him, the beginning of the end, and he did not want the costs of this lawsuit to appear in his statement of liabilities.

He knew, too, that Bright was shaky, and he did not wish to involve him unnecessarily, if there was any danger of their losing the case.

De Lain had weakly consented to give this bill of sale to the bank, which was really an injustice to the other creditors, in order to obtain a short respite. A few weeks' grace at such a time is worth something to a man of De Lain's stamp.

In the meantime, affairs were going still more badly over this lawsuit, with De Ville. In getting up the preliminaries for the defence, Foggitt had already submitted him to a considerable amount of questioning, which, to De Ville, was decidedly unusual and objectionable. George Jackson had returned from his northern trip, and the plaintiffs had at once served him with a subpoena, so he would have to put off his trip to England until after the trial; and, said Dyson Foggitt to De Ville: “He will be a very awkward witness to deal with in the box.”

De Ville, perhaps for the first time in his life, began to realise that the way of transgressors is hard. The gold and pocket-book were both locked up in the private safe, at his office, of which he alone kept the keys, but the whole thing was a source of continual worry, annoyance, and apprehension.

For him, however, the worst had yet to come.

One afternoon he received a note from Foley and Foggitt, asking him to call in before he left for home, as Mr. Dyson Foggitt wished to see him upon a matter of importance.

There was something about the note which gave De Ville considerable uneasiness. It was less deferential than usual. Generally Dyson Foggitt called upon him if he wished to have a private conversation.

De Ville put on his hat and went up to Foley and Foggitt's offices with a disturbed mind, and in a state of trepidation very different to his customary
Dyson Foggitt was in, and seemed to be expecting him. De Ville thought that he received him more coldly than usual. The very first question he put to him made his heart sink with strange misgiving as to what would be the outcome of the interview.

“You have in your office, Mr. De Ville, a son of Mr. Goodchild's, one of the deacons of the Rev. Daniel Dare's church?”

“I have; what of that?”

“Have you ever, to your knowledge, left the keys of a private safe at your office within reach of that gentleman?” asked Foggitt, taking no notice of De Ville's question.

“Not to my recollection.”

“Well, you must have done so without remembering it,” said Dyson Foggitt dryly.

“Why?” said De Ville. There was an ominous shake about his voice as he put the interrogation.

“Because the young gentleman says that you have £1,500 in gold there, and a pocket-book containing £30,000.”

“It's a lie!” exclaimed De Ville.

“Well, the youth says that he called in the office boy, and showed him the fifteen bags of gold, containing £100 each, and also the pocket-book containing the notes.”

For a moment De Ville made no reply, so Dyson Foggitt continued: “To shut their mouths effectually, the best plan will be for you to let me come down with you to your office at once, call your clerks in, and open the safe in my presence, show that it's a falsehood, and then discharge young Goodchild and the office boy on the spot. I can go with you at once,” he said, reaching down his hat.

De Ville got up like a man in a dream, and then sat down again. Dyson Foggitt sat down also, without giving way to any expression, or gesture of surprise. He was used to startling incidents; it was part of his profession never to be surprised.

“Foggitt, I have that money in the safe,” said De Ville with an effort; of course I hold it there in trust for the estate, but it seemed to me a confounded shame to hand such a sum over to a church.”

“Does Mr. Angel know that you have it?” asked Foggitt.

“No,” replied De Ville.

“You swore in your evidence at Jackson's trial that you had not been able to find it.”

“Yes,” said De Ville, his discomfiture complete. Dyson Foggitt did not spare him; he looked straight in his face and said:
“Well, what do you propose to do?”
De Ville hid his face in his hands, but made no reply.
“Look here, De Ville,” said Dyson Foggitt brusquely, “don't make a fool of yourself. I cannot think how a man in your position, and with your wealth, came to get into such a mess. If Jackson gets to know of it, I expect he'll have you arrested and tried for perjury, to say nothing of the felony. You had better look in again to-morrow morning, and in the meantime I will think over some plan of dealing with the matter; but it's so fearfully complicated there's no knowing where the thing ends, or who is involved in it. You will have to be prepared to lose a good bit of money, and I expect the estate will have to pay the £30,000 to those church people. It's lucky for you that Jackson was not hauged.”
“Do your best for me,” said De Ville, hoarsely; “I will pay anything you like to charge.”
Dyson Foggitt did not offer to shake hands with him; he had him under his thumb, and there was no necessity!
“It's as well,” he said to himself afterward, as he leaned back in his office chair, “to make him feel his position a bit just now. I am afraid that I cannot pull him out of this scrape without involving myself a little; but, by George, he's a scoundrel with all his wealth, and I'll make him bleed for it.”
Chapter XXXIV. The Bethel Calvinists Forego the Lawsuit

EVENTS sometimes crowd upon each other with startling propinquity; and such was the case at this period of our story.

A few days after the conversation between De Ville and Dyson Foggitt, Bright was gazetted an insolvent. It was a surprise to everyone, and especially to De Lain and Mr. Gammon, the solicitor. It was already rumoured that De Lain could not hold out much longer, so Mr. Gammon insisted upon being paid his costs to date, including the fee of £10 for counsel's opinion, before proceeding further with the case.

He also required a fresh guarantee as to the costs, to be entered into by some persons of undoubted financial resources.

De Lain paid for the counsel's opinion, and found it to be distinctly against them, so a meeting of the diaconite was at once called.

De Lain laid before his brother deacons the whole position of affairs. Counsel's opinion, he regretted to state, was distinctly against them. He could not hide from his brethren the fact that he was no longer able to find the necessary funds to carry on the case, even if it was likely to prove successful; and they would all have heard how their brother Bright had been compelled, on account of his losses by the flood, and other adverse circumstances, to call a meeting of his creditors. He saw no alternative but for them to stop the proceedings.

“But,” said Deacon Goodchild, “I have a most important statement to make to this meeting, and it seems to me wrong to stay proceedings at this juncture.”

“Before Brother Goodchild makes his statement,” interposed Deacon Fusby, “let me put a question to the meeting as a whole. We have opposed to us men of almost unlimited wealth. They have already retained the best counsel in the city for the defence, and will spare neither money nor talent to get a verdict. If the case goes on, who will make themselves responsible for the costs? Remember, brethren, it will probably mean several hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of pounds. I must state for myself, that I will not go security for one shilling.”

Deacon Fusby sat down. His remarks had fallen like a wet blanket upon any enthusiasm left in the meeting.

Deacon Goodchild was about to say something without rising, when old Sandy M'Bain, who was hard of hearing, called out:

“I suppose the brethren have pretty well decided that the matter will have to drop. But I want to know who is responsible for payment of costs to
date. I daresay, including both sides, it has reached a hundred or two already.”

All eyes were instantly turned to Deacon De Lain.

“Yes, brethren,” he said, “the expense of this ill-advised action must now, unfortunately, fall upon my shoulders. The church has taken no liability, so there is no need for any resolution. I think that the chairman had better close the meeting.”

The benediction was promptly pronounced by the chairman in due form, and as a whole, it must he said that both minister, deacons, and church members were glad to be done with the matter.

It had already brought more heart-burnings into the church than months of quietness would cure. The principal opponents of the Rev. Daniel Dare had, to a large extent, become discredited, and lost their influence. The draping of the church was a large and bitter item in the treasurer's quarterly statement.

Sandy M'Bain actually rejoiced that the church had lost the money. The Rev. Daniel Dare was still “Vicar of Bray”; and some averred that there was a knowing twinkle in the old Scotch deacon's eye the next Sunday morning, in church, as though he knew a secret worth the telling. He carried the Bible and hymn book up into the pulpit before his pastor, and looked round upon the waiting congregation, as much as to say: “You'll get it this morning.”

The Rev. Daniel Dare preached a powerful discourse from a text not often expounded in these days of cushioned pews and golden offerings. It was: “For the love of money is a root of all evil.”

De Ville made no confession to his co-executor. His humiliation was complete enough without that. The lawyer had met him more cordially on the following morning, and whatever his advice was, De Ville had to write a cheque for several thousand pounds before he left.

That afternoon a clerk from Foley and Foggitt's paid £12,500 in bank notes and gold into the bank account of the M'Watt estate executors.

An hour afterwards young Goodchild and the office boy were discharged without characters or explanation. Young Goodchild made some muttered threat to the senior clerk as he was collecting his belongings together, but the only reply he got was:

“You'll be a fool if you do. You cannot prove anything, and no one will believe you. What can you or your father do with George Charles De Ville, Esq., J.P.”

The same week other large sums were paid into the M'Watt executors account, including three cheques totalling £2,507 16s. 4d.; they were presented in due course, and paid.
The cashier of the El Dorado bank bustled into the parlor of Mr. Cutts one morning in a state of mild excitement.

“What is the matter?” asked Cutts.

“The rest of these notes of M’Watt's have come in.”

The banker started. “Well, I suppose you have paid them?”

“Yes,” said the cashier, “but—”

“We don't want to have any more fooling over that affair,” said Cutts. “It's only a further proof of Jackson's innocence.”

“But—” commenced the cashier.

“Through what bank have they been presented?” asked Cutts, interrupting him.

“The Colonial.”

“Ah! that's where the M'Watt trust account is kept. You need not say anything more about it. You don't think that I am such a fool as to send further information to the detective department.”

The makers of the three cheques at once notified Jackson of their having been presented and paid. The latter at once made it his business to see Angel.

“I don't think, George,” said Caleb, “that it is advisable to say anything more about the matter. They were paid in with other money through Foley and Foggitt. Dyson Foggitt knows something, of course, but he refuses to disclose anything, and says that the money came into his hands professionally, and that he is not permitted to give any further information. De Ville expressed great astonishment and pleasure, and says that the recovery of the money of course entirely clears you.”

“You have heard, I suppose, that the Bethel Calvinists have thought better of it, and have given formal notice that they throw up the case. There is some bother now about their payment of the costs; Gammon and De Lain have to find the money for the whole of them.”

“If I had not decided to leave next week for England,” said Jackson, “I would find some means to sheet home the theft of that money to De Ville. I suppose through this impending trial, he has had to disclose his dishonesty to Dyson Foggitt. The latter would make him refund the money to the estate; but what has become of the papers and pocket-book?”

“You may be sure of one thing,” said Angel, “the pocket-book is destroyed.”

“Yes, that would be done to block the Bethel Calvinists of course. Pretty sharp trick that,” said Jackson.

“Well, I have secured one good thing for you George,” said Caleb. “Dyson Foggitt and De Ville have both agreed to your being paid that £7,000.”
“I am glad to hear that,” said George.

“There's only one thing,” he continued. “If I could only prove that hateful document of M'Watt's which I found in the safe, to be false. Good heavens! Caleb, you cannot imagine the anguish and grief of heart that accursed thing gives me. Sleeping and waking, it's ever in my thoughts. But it's a foul fiendish lie, I know it is!”

“Why don't you tell Darton?” said Caleb.

“No, I won't do that. You don't know, Caleb, what happened between him and M'Watt on that awful night, the 2nd February.”

“Did Darton see him after the butler left?” asked Caleb in astonishment. Jackson bent his head. “Now don't ask me anything more Caleb,” he said.

“Good heavens! and you knew that at the trial, and never mentioned it.”

“May God bless you, George. You're a noble fellow. There's not one man in a thousand would have kept it a secret at such a time.”

George opened the evening paper that afternoon in the train, and bit his lip a moment as his eye caught a paragraph. It announced that Mr. De Ville, of Oaklands Park, was about to take a trip to China, partly on pleasure and partly on business. Then followed a short complimentary notice of De Ville's distinguished position and career, and a recommendation to the Chinese authorities to receive him with befitting attention.

“Money, money,” said Jackson to himself; “knave as he is, he'll be a cabinet minister yet!”

The next few days were not very cheerful ones at Darton's Point.

John Darton was several times closeted with George, and gave him sundry particulars of his early life and connections with his half-brother, Constant M'Watt. Jackson told him nothing, but to some extent Darton guessed the purport of his sudden journey home.

The goodbye between Edna and George was a long and sad one. They would correspond regularly, of course, and said George, “It's about the only chance I shall have of writing love letters to you; and courtship, you know, dearest, is not complete without that.”

So George Jackson started, and Mrs. Darton and Edna commenced to make preparations for a long visit to the southern colonies and New Zealand.
Chapter XXXV. The Mystery Solved

IT was about half-past nine one evening, nearly a week: ter Jackson had
gone South, that a cab drove up to The Palms Cottage at New Farm, and a
young girl, cloaked and veiled, knocked and rang as though in extreme
haste.

Susie ran to the door.
“Is Mr. Caleb Angel in?” asked a girlish voice.
“No, Miss,” replied Susie.
“How long will he be?”
“About ten, but he may be later.”
“Do you know where I can find him?” asked the girl eagerly.
“No,” replied Susie, “but I will ask Mrs. Lewis. Will you come in?”
“No, thank you,” said the girl.

Susie’s mistress knew no more than she did herself, so the girl at last said,
that she would wait.

“The business was urgent; indeed it was to see someone who was dying.”
She would not go in, but would wait in the cab.

Susie immediately bestirred herself to prepare coffee and a tray of
something tempting for Mr. Angel to eat before going. Everyone liked
Caleb Angel; frank and courteous, he was also generous and thoughtful.
The men respected him, and the women—perhaps we had better not say—
but Susie adored him.

“Ah, Susie,” he said, as he came in, and tore the letter open given to him
by the girl, “that's kind and thoughtful of you; this coffee is delicious. I fear
that I shall be late, but I shall not want anything more to-night. I am asked
to go and see someone who is dying.”

The letter was from the anonymous female correspondent to whom
Constant M’Watt had left £1,500. It was signed Millie Matson, and dated
from a residence within half a mile of Drybrook House.

Angel got into the cab in which sat the young lady. A thought flashed
across his mind as he did so; but he did not give it a second consideration.
His character was above suspicion, and he was always chivalrous to
women.

The cab stopped at a two-storied comfortable-looking house, surrounded
by thickly-foliaged trees, and a fair-sized garden.

“You had better wait,” said the girl to the cabman.
“All right, Miss,” he answered.
“No, my man,” said Angel; “go and get yourself something to eat, and
come back in about half an hour's time. I have to see a dying woman here.
What is your number?"

The number was given and made a note of, and Caleb followed the girl up the shaded garden walk.

“I suppose that you had the flood up here?” said Caleb.

“Yes, sir,” she replied, “it was over the front fence of the garden, and all through the lower part of the house.”

The girl rapped with her hand on the door, which was at once opened by a middle-aged woman.

“How is she, Kate?” enquired the girl.

“Only just alive,” was the reply, “we have been keeping her up with champagne for the last two hours. She wants to die to get out of her pain and trouble; but cannot, she says, until she has seen this gentleman.”

“I think I had better go in and tell them. Will you wait in here a moment, please, sir.”

The entrance hall was well furnished and carpeted; pictures, mirrors, and candelabra, were arranged around the walls; but the room which Caleb now entered was still more elaborately and richly decorated. Chandeliers, and mirrors, and gilding, added to the brilliancy of bright lights and luxuriously upholstered furniture.

Caleb had been seated but a few minutes, when one of the large central folding doors was opened, and a richly dressed woman entered.

“She will see you here in a few minutes,” was all that she said, at the same time placing wine and biscuits on the table.

Caleb looked after her in astonishment, and muttered to himself, “She will see me here! A dying woman! It's very strange.”

He was not kept waiting long. Suddenly two of the folding doors were noiselessly opened, and four girls, handsomely dressed, entered, bearing between them a large couch, on which reclined, supported by pillows, a woman, who had once been fair to look upon, if not actually beautiful; but whose emaciated, haggard face and sunken eyes, showed that she was not far from death.

“You can all go,” she hoarsely whispered to one of the girls, while I speak to this gentleman; one of you wait in the next room, within sound of the bell. Give me another glass of champagne first,” she whispered. “It may keep me up for sufficient time. Put the little silver bell on the table.”

While this was being done Caleb looked at the wreck of a woman before him, She could not, he thought, be much more than forty years of age. Dressed in a costly robe, with flashing jewels glistening on her fingers, she had refused to die in bed, and insisted on being dressed, although she groaned with pain as they had done her bidding.

“Turn down the gas, Mr. Angel.” she whispered, “it hurts my eyes. Now
sit near to me, I can only whisper. This afternoon the doctor only gave me three hours to live, but I felt that I could not die until I had seen you, and told you all—at least all that I know."

“I don't want that £1,500; give it to the poor. Use it if you can to help those that may be forced either to sin or starve. They will have plenty here to bury me with, and something to divide among themselves when I am done with.”

“But that is nothing to you. I sent for you to tell you about the death of M’Watt. Ah! you start. You wonder why I did not send you word during the trial of Jackson. Well you see, I had no expectation of dying then, and I did not want to be hung.”

“Yes, he died in this house, and would you think it, on this couch, in this very room. You need not shudder. He died pretty quietly at last. You need not look like that, we did not murder him! I took the pillows from beneath his head, it's true; but it only hurried him off a trifle more quickly. The punt had floated to the garden fence, and I did not wish to have him found here; we wanted to be done with him before daylight. I think he was dead at any rate.”

“I was up at Drybrook house that night. I occasionally called; he used to see plenty of people in the evening, after dinner, on business.”

“Just pour me out another glass of wine,” she whispered. “Thank you, I expect that will be the last.”

“Well, we had a glass or two of wine, and some biscuits; he was very much excited when I went in. He said a cursed half brother of his had struck him, and it had brought on a bad attack of something. He had the safe open, and a pocket-book lay on the table when I went in; I suppose it contained the £30,000. I don't know what possessed him, but he showed me the drawer of gold, and told me what I mentioned in the letter. Then he complained again of feeling ill, and swore, and said that he would be even with that Darton, and all his crew, and told me to sit down while he wrote something. It took him a long time, and I complained at being kept waiting; but he said:

“‘Don't grumble, Millie, I'm writing something here for you.’ ”

“He went down to see if the servants had returned, but none of them had come back, so I persuaded him to come here with me.”

“The flood waters were just rushing down the channels at the gateway as we passed. We could not get into my house by the front, so we went round the back. He was taken ill soon after. I could not send for a doctor, and I don't know that I should have done so, if I could. It was to my interest for him to die. He was a bad man. He even cheated me; but he was a fool too, or he would never have told me about that £1,500 I was to have after he
was dead. It was little enough for him to give me! He went off in a kind of swoon, after an hour or so, and when he came to, called for brandy and sat up. ‘Millie,’ he said, ‘give me some paper and an envelope.’"

“He was moaning, and seemed terribly frightened. I gave it to him, and he wrote for about five minutes, and sealed the envelope. It's addressed to you. I've got it here. You had better take it now. I promised him to place it in your own hands in case he died. Of course I opened it, and read it; he knew very well I should do that, so he put something in it to ensure its delivery.”

“Don't read it now, it does not matter, until I am dead. I have something more to tell you. He had some more brandy after he had written it, and moaned a good deal, and I made sure that he was dying. I was in a fearful fright. Then I thought of the punt; one of the girls had told me of its being caught against our fence.”

“It had broken adrift from somewhere. I was desperate, so I waded out myself to the knees, and brought it to the gate. I supposed that he was dead, and frightened the two girls into helping me; we pulled his overcoat on to him, and buttoned it up. I remember now there was a book in the breast pocket. He had forgotten to put it into the safe, and slipped it in as he left the room. I did not know what was in it, or I should have run that little risk!”

“However, I did not want anything belonging to him left in the place. He was heavy, and it took three of us to lift him into the punt. I pushed a felt cap he wore on to his head, but it dropped off again in the garden. I was afraid there would not be current enough to carry the punt away, and I waded out to my waist to get it as far from the house as possible.”

“I believe that's what has been the death of me. When I came in again I was shivering from head to foot.”

“And look! I'm glad to die, although I suppose I shall go to the bad place; but it cannot be worse than this. Do you know,” she said, staring wildly round, “every night I dream about him. That's one reason why I wanted to get away from this place. I haven't been in bed for weeks. I keep one of the girls near me, and she wakes me if I scream. But I don't always scream! I'm here with the corpse in this room, but it's all draped in black, and I lift up his head and take away the pillow, and then he groans, and I try to lift him by myself, and can't; and then there's a knock at the door, and I can hear a fearful noise, saying, 'Have you killed him yet? We're ready with the punt!' ”

She reached out her thin jewelled hand and put it on Angel's, and he felt its touch cold and clammy with the sweat of death.

“Caleb Angel,” she hissed, “I dream that every night, and sometimes in
the day, if I fall asleep. It's a hell upon earth for me to live; you can't wonder that I want to die.”

“I'd have come up and told it all out at Jackson's trial, but I was afraid; and yet I haven't told you that we killed him. But,” she continued, excitedly, “I haven't told you one thing. In this room I sometimes see it in the day—awake. Ah! ah!” and she pointed towards the mirror, and then swooned. Angel shuddered with horror, and immediately rang the bell.

“I fear that she's dead, sir,” said the girl, as she looked at her. “We've had an awful time with her.”

“No, she cannot possibly be dead,” said Angel, “she spoke not a minute ago.”

Every ordinary remedy was tried, but there was no sign of returning consciousness, and ten minutes afterward Angel left a house that in more senses than one was an abode of death.

The cabman had been back again over an hour, waiting, and it was midnight when Caleb reached his lodgings. He at once opened the envelope. The letter read as follows:

Brisbane, February 2, 1893.

Caleb Angel,

As I write this I am fearfully ill, and suffering acute agony from an internal complaint which I have been subject to for years. Before I left Drybrook House to-night, I wrote a document; but bad as I am, I dare not go into eternity with that upon my conscience, for it's a lie. Burn it, burn it without reading it. It's on the top of some deeds in the safe. I wrote it in bitterness and spite. For years I have hated Darton, and to-night he struck me, but I've sins enough to answer for without bringing Darton unjustly to the scaffold; to have him perhaps renewing acquaintance with me in hell. When you get this letter, go up and burn that document at once—it's all a lie. And see to it that Millie Matson is paid the £1,500 which I have left her in the will. I have put it in the safe in gold, so that there may be no dispute about it.

CONSTANT M'Watt.

“Thank God!” exclaimed Angel, “the truth is out at last. George Jackson may save himself his journey to England. I'll wire to Adelaide to stop him in the morning. What a fearful, terrible night this has been. Poor miserable haunted wretch. Made what she was, to a large extent, by M'Watt, and others like him.”

A telegram was sent to Adelaide the following morning, addressed to Jackson. The day afterwards the papers contained a notice of a woman's death.

“Who was Milly Matson?” asked more than one fashionably-attired
woman. “Yes, who?” “Who was her father? Who was her mother? Had she a sister? or had she a brother?”

George found the telegram waiting for him at Adelaide, and at once returned by rail to Brisbane. A heavy weight was lifted from his heart when Caleb showed him M’Watt's last letter. It made his journey to England no longer necessary. They agreed that the document found by Jackson in the safe should be burned in accordance with the dead man's wish. Its contents remained a secret, known only to the man who refused to take advantage of them, when it appeared to him that one statement alone contained there might have saved his life.
Chapter XXXVI. Clear Shining After Rain

WE are glad to turn from the horrors of the preceding chapter to a happier scene.

It was a Sunday morning. Rain had fallen heavily for several days, up to the previous Saturday. People had been asking themselves well nigh in despair: “Is this sunny Queensland? Is this the land to which we turned with longing eyes from the gloom and cloudy days of England—the land of summer radiance, and placid crystal seas, and cloudless skies?” This morning, however, more than redeemed its character.

It was Edna's last Sunday at, to quote her own expression, “Dear old Darton's Point.” George and she occupied the old rustic seat, which John Darton had fixed up, under the look-out tree upon the promontory.

They sat for a time absorbed in happy thought, as they contemplated the lovely scene before and around them. The knowledge of the fact, that it was probably the last time they would look upon it for years, perhaps for ever, no doubt enhanced to their eyes its loveliness.

It was indeed no common day, and no ordinary landscape.

The sun looked down with burning eye from a great over-hanging vault of pale sapphire blue. The warring tempest had spent its force.

The clouds, no longer mustering in ponderous columns to the trumpet call of the storm king, were straying, fancy free, in long lines of soft, white, fleecy vapour, “their snowy hands clasped each in each, the beautiful idlers of the sky.”

Peace sat enthroned as in a palace of beauty, and communed with Nature in her sacramental hour. The tide was at the full, and covering over the mud and sand with its bright waters, flung its tiny wavelets right upon the grass.

The quiet lapping of the water, and the occasional twittering of birds, were the only sounds audible. It was as though the summer sky bent breathless and enamoured, over the blue calm sea, and wide extended landscape.

It seemed to Edna as though the mangrove trees had never robed themselves before in such beautiful green foliage, and that the islands of the Bay and distant line of mountains had never stood out so clearly and distinctly in the serene atmosphere. Half a dozen white sails dotted Moreton Bay, and ever and anon the booming of the breakers on the Pacific beach of Moreton Island was faintly heard.

Poised high in the air above the peaceful scene was an eagle-hawk. With broad extended wing it whirled round and round in sweeping graceful
gyrations. A very much smaller bird followed it everywhere, keeping just above it as it circled around and around. The smaller bird occasionally uttered what seemed to be a shrill warning cry.

George drew Edna's attention to the hawk. "You see," he said, "even the sweetest earthly paradise has its bird of prey."

"Yes," replied Edna, "but watch that little bird above it. Surely it means that every callow fledgling has its guardian angel."

They were to be married quietly on the morrow in Brisbane. They would then leave by train for Melbourne and Adelaide, and from thence for Egypt, Italy, France, and England.

"Oh, how glad I shall be, George," said Edna, "to get away from the petty littleness of colonial life; and the purse-proud arrogance of men with little minds."

"Are you quite fair, Edna?" said George. "Queensland is a great country, and will in time become the home of a great people."

"Then I would like to sleep a hundred years, and wake again when the new time of nobler men and deeds had dawned. George, it frets me to see the selfishness, and greediness, and ingratitude of so many men out here. I suppose that things are too young, and new, and unfamiliar, or men would never cheat in business, and badger each other in public councils, as they do; but in spite of it all, the nation works on, and grows, and somehow, pays its way."

"It's as well, Edna, that you are going back to England. They say that English trained men and women look at things out here through coloured glasses, and there's truth in it. Upon my word, I believe that I am more of a colonial than you are!"

"What if I should say, then, that it has not improved you?" said Edna.

"Ah, but it has. There is nothing like travel and widened experience to develop the mind. But to refer again to your criticism of men out here. You must not expect to have all the virtues and excellencies in one place. You haven't them in England. And putting all things together, I am not sure that the old land has so much of the advantage. Give them time here, and wonders will be done. For instance, the flood disasters that now figure so largely in the public eye will, in a few months, be well nigh forgotten. With all the unseemly bickerings between North and South Brisbane, they will build new bridges, and develop natural resources, and grow and thrive. Past disappointments and failures will be made the stepping stones to future success, and permanent prosperity."

"George," said Edna, "I hope when we get tired of travel, you won't settle down into an English country gentleman. To my mind, that means to be nothing, and nobody. You must enter for the English bar."
“Edna, do you see yonder stump?” asked George.
“Yes,” she replied, smiling, “but what of that?”
“Now,” he said, picking up a handful of pebbles, “it's strange, but one often makes a hit the first time.”
“There,” he said, as the stone struck the dead stump a ringing blow right in the centre.
“Now, see!” He threw several pebbles before he hit it again. “It's so with many things in life. The first time, under exceptional circumstances, a man makes a hit. He writes a book, makes a speech, designs a building, and it's successful. You must not think me a born barrister because on one occasion I made a successful effort to save my own life. If I am ever successful at the bar, I shall have, like others, to work for it. But I will not settle down into a prosy English country squire if I can help it.
“Don't talk about that trial any more George,” was all that Edna said.
“But I must add one thing, sweetheart,” said George tenderly, “If a man possessed any natural ability, or any nobleness of character, you are just the woman to bring it out. I don't think there is another such a woman in the world.”
“George, don't talk nonsense.” But Edna stopped there, for her lover sealed her lips with kisses.
They were married quietly, but with many congratulations on the following day. Joe Stunner and his “missis” were present with the little company that witnessed the ceremony in the church.
“Master Jackson,” said Joe, “don't yer be fer goin' over in that 'ere steam ferry this afternoon to me et the train. I've got the ‘Mary Jane’ cushioned and carpeted for the 'casion, and I'd like to take yer and yer bonny lady across for the last time praps.” And so it was arranged, to the waterman's intense satisfaction.
“But what,” it may be asked, “of Caleb Angel. Did he console himself for the loss of Edna Forrest, by marrying Clara de Ville?”
Not he! Men of the Caleb Angel stamp do not wittingly marry Clara de Villes. When last heard of, he was just the same; nor had he grown in any sense morose and crabbed, because through an evil destiny, a stronger force had come between him and the object of his love. He bore his disappointment patiently and nobly, as befitted his character, and his past career. Would that there were more like him among us, to teach to the peevish petulence of these disappointed years, by their patient heroism and quiet lives, that it is possible, even under most untoward circumstances, to continue faithful to the high ideals and aspirations, which make some few we meet with, different to the common crowd; that it is possible to suffer and to smile; not, let it be said, through helpless weakness, but by the
strength of grandest manhood; for as the quiet forces of nature are the
mightiest, so the silent dauntless men, who can meet with loss and
humiliation, and even pain and ignominy, and pass through it all without a
whimper, are the strongest and the best. Such an one have we found Caleb
Angel, and so we leave him.

The particulars of the actual cause of the death of Constant M'Watt, as
given in this narrative, are, we confess, not as full and clear as might be
wished. Our readers may draw their own conclusions from the confession
of Millie Matson. But the problem, to our mind, is only partially solved.

Questions suggest themselves which yet remain unanswered. What was
the complaint that M'Watt referred to? What were the effects of John
Darton's blows? How came that right hand to hold with a death grasp the
pocketbook containing the notes?

We must affirm again that the dying woman's confession is to us but
partially satisfactory.

Whether it was death from natural causes, or unintentional manslaughter,
or heartless murder, remains yet undecided. The death of the late Hon.
Constant M'Watt must still continue—A mystery of the Brisbane floods.