ROLF BOLDREWOOD

BABES IN THE BUSH

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I
'FRESH FIELDS AND PASTURES NEW'

'What letter are you holding in your hand all this time, my dear?' said Captain Howard Effingham to his wife during a certain family council.

'Really, I had almost forgotten it. A foreign postmark – I suppose it is from your friend Mr. Sternworth, in Australia or New Zealand.'

'Sternworth lives in New South Wales, not New Zealand,' returned he rather testily. 'I have told you more than once that the two places are a thousand miles apart by sea. Yes! it is from old Harley. When he was chaplain to our regiment he was always hankering after a change from routine duty. Now he has got it with a vengeance. He was slightly eccentric, but a better fellow, a stauncher friend, never stepped.'

'Don't people go to Australia to make money?' asked Rosamond Effingham, a girl of twenty, with 'eldest daughter' plainly inscribed upon her thoughtful features. 'I saw in a

newspaper that some one had come home after making a fortune, or it may have been that he died there and left it to his relatives.'

'Sternworth has not made a fortune. He is not the man to want one. Still, he seems wonderfully contented and raves about the beauty of the climate and the progress of his colony.'

'Let me read his letter out,' pleaded the anxious wife softly, and, with a gesture of assent, the father and daughter sat expectant.

Mrs. Effingham had the gift of reading aloud with effect, which, with that of facile, clear-cut composition, came to her as naturally as the notes of a song-bird, which indeed her tuneful voice resembled.

'The letter is dated from Yass – (what a funny name! a native one, I suppose) – in New South Wales, and June the 20th, 1834. Nearly six months ago! Does it take all that time to come? What a long, long way off it must be. Now then for the contents.

'My dear Effingham – I have not written for an age – though I had your last in reply to mine in due course – partly because, after my first acknowledgment, I had nothing particular to say, nor any counsel to offer you, suitable for the situation in which you appear to have landed yourself. When you were in the old regiment you were always a bad manager of your money, and the Yorkshireman had to come to your assistance with his hard head more than once. I thought all that sort of thing was over when you succeeded to a settled position and a good estate. I was much put out to find by your last letter that you had again got among

the shallows of debt. I doubt it is chronic with you. But it is a serious matter for the family. If I were near you I would scold you roundly, but I am too far off to do it effectually.

'My reason for writing now – for I am too busy a man to send the compliments of the season across the globe – is that a tempting investment in land – a perfect gift, as the phrase is – has come to my knowledge.

'Now, I am not hard-natured enough to tempt you to come here with your amiable wife, whose praises, not always from yourself, I have often heard – [really, my dear, I had no idea you paid me compliments in your letters to your friends] – and your tenderly nurtured family; that is, if you can retain your position, or one in any way approaching it. But I know that the loss of fortune in the old country entails a more complete stripping of all that men hold dear, than in this new land, where aristocratic poverty, or rather, scantiness of money, is the rule, and wealth, as yet, the exception.

'I cannot believe that you are *totally* without means. Here, cash is at a premium. Therefore, if you have but the shreds and fragments of your fortune left, you may still have capital available from the wreck sufficient to make a modest venture, which I shall explain.

'A family long resident near this rising town – say forty or fifty miles distant – have been compelled, like you, to offer their estate for sale. I will not enter into the circumstances or the causes of the step. The fact that we are concerned with is, that a valuable

property – as fair judges consider it – comprising a decent house and several thousand acres of good land, may be bought for three or four thousand pounds.

'I do not hide from you that many people consider that the present bad times are likely to last, even to become more pressing. *I* fully expect a reaction. If you can do better in any way I do not ask you for one moment to consider this matter, much as I should like to see my old comrade and his family here.

'But if otherwise, and the melancholy life of the ruined middle-aged Briton stares you in the face, I say boldly, do not go to Boulogne, or other refuge for the shady destitute, where a man simply counts the days which he must linger out in cheap lodgings and cheese-paring idleness, but come to Australia and try a more wholesome, more manly, if occasionally ruder life. I know what you home-keeping English think of a colony. But you may find here a career for your boys – even suitable marriages for your girls, whose virtues and accomplishments would doubtless invest them with distinction.

'If you can get this sum together, and a few hundreds to have in your pocket at landing, I can guarantee you a livelihood – you know my caution of old – with many of the essentials, God forbid I should say *all*, of "the gentle life." Still, you may come to these by and by. The worst of my adopted country is that there is a cruel uncertainty of seasons, at times sore on man and beast. That you must risk, like other people. If you come, you will have one friend here in old Harley Sternworth, who, without chick or

child, will be proud to pour out whatever feelings of affection God has given him, into the lap of your family. If you decide on coming, send a draft for three thousand pounds payable to my order at once. I will manage the rest, and have Warbrok ready to receive you in some plain way on your arrival. So farewell for the present. God bless you and yours, says your old friend,

Harley Sternworth.'

As the letter disclosed this positive invitation and plan of emigration which, whether possible or impossible, was now brought into tangible form, the clasp in which lay the father's hand and the daughter's slightly tightened. Their eyes met, their faces gradually softened from the expression of pained endurance which had characterised them, and as the clear tones of the reader came to an end, Rosamond, rising to her feet, exclaimed, 'God has sent us a friend in our need. If we go to this far land we may work together and live and love undivided. But oh, mother, it breaks my heart to think of *you*. We are young, it should matter little to us; but how will you bear to be taken away from this pleasant home to a rude, waste country, such as Australia must be?'

'My darling,' said the matron, as she folded the letter with an instinctive habit of neatness, and handed it to her husband, 'the sacrifice to me will be great, far greater than at one time I should have thought it possible to bear. But with my husband and children are my life and my true dwelling-place. Where they are, I abide thankfully to life's close. Strength, I cannot doubt, will be

given to us all to bear our – our – '

Here the thought, the inevitable, unimaginable woe of quitting the loved home of youth, the atmosphere of early friendship, the intertwining ties of relationship, completely overcame the courage of the speaker. Her eyes overflowed as, burying her face in her husband's arms, which were opened to receive her, she wept long and silently.

'How could we think of such a thing, my darling, for one moment?' said Effingham. 'It would kill you to part, at one blow, from a whole previous existence. I hardly foresaw what a living death it would be for you, more than all, to leave England *for ever*. There is a world of agony in that thought alone! I certainly gave Sternworth a full account of my position in my last letters. It was a relief. He has always been a true friend. But he has rashly concluded that we were prepared to go to his wild country. It would be your death-blow, darling wife; and then, what good would our lives be to us? Some of our friends will help us, surely. Let us live quietly for a year or two. I may get some appointment.'

'It relieves my bursting heart to weep; yet it will fit me for future duty. No, Howard, we must not falter or draw back. You can trust, I know, in Mr. Sternworth's practical wisdom, for you have a hundred times told me how far-seeing, shrewd, and yet kindly he was. In his plan there is the certainty of independence; together we can cheer each other when the day's work is done. As for living in England, trusting to the assistance of friends, and the lingering uncertainty of a provision from the Government, I have

seen too many families pitiably drifting towards a lower level. There is no middle course. No! Our path has been chosen for us. Let us go where a merciful Providence would seem to lead us.'

The fateful conference was ended. A council, not much bruited about, but fraught with momentous results to those yet unborn, in the Effingham family, and it may be to other races and sections of humanity. Who may limit the effects produced in the coming time, by the transplantation of but *one* rarely endowed family of our upward-striving race?

Nothing remained but to communicate the decision of the high contracting parties of the little state to the remaining members. The heir was absent. To him would have been accorded, as a right, a place in the parliament. But he was in Ireland visiting a college chum, for whom he had formed one of the ardent friendships characteristic of early manhood. Wilfred Effingham was an enthusiast – sanguine and impulsive – whose impulses, chiefly, took a good direction. His heart was warm, his principles fixed. Still, so sensitive was he to the impressions of the hour, that only by the sternest consciousness of responsibility could he remain faithful to the call of duty.

Devoted primarily to art and literature; sport, travel, and social intercourse likewise put in claims to his attention and mingled in his nature the impulses of a refined Greek with the energy and self-denial of his northern race.

It must be confessed that these latter qualities were chiefly in the embryonic stage. So latent and undeveloped were they,

indeed, that no one but his fond mother had fully credited his possession of them.

But as the rounded limbs of the Antinous conceal the muscles which after-years develop and harden, so in the graceful physique and sensitive mind of Wilfred Effingham lay hidden powers, which, could he have foreseen their future exercise, would have astonished no one more than himself. Such was the youth recalled from his joyous revel in the Green Isle, where he had been shooting and fishing to his heart's content.

A letter from his mother first told that his destiny had been changed. In a moment he was transformed. No longer was he to be an enjoyer of the hoarded wealth of art, letters, science, sitting on high and choosing what he would, as one of the gods of Olympus. His lot, henceforth, would be that of a toiler for the necessaries of life! It was a shrewd blow. Small wonder had he reeled before it! It met him without warning, unsoftened, save by the tender pity and loving counsel so long associated with his mother's handwriting. The well-remembered characters, so fair in delicate regularity, which since earliest schooldays had cheered and comforted him. Never had they failed him; steadfast ever as a mother's faith, unfailing as a mother's love!

Grown to manhood, still, as of old, he looked, almost at weekly intervals, for the missive, ever the harbinger of home love, the herald of joy, the bearer of wise counsel – never once of sharp rebuke or untempered anger.

And now – to the spoiled child of affection, of endowment –

had come this message fraught with woe.

A meaner mind, so softly nurtured, might have shrunk from the ordeal. To the chivalrous soul of Wilfred Effingham the vision was but the summons to the fray, which bids the knight quit the tourney and the banquet for the stern joys of battle.

His nature, one of those complex organisms having the dreamy poetic side much developed, yet held room for physical demonstration. Preferring for the most part contemplation to action, he had ever passed, apparently without effort, from unchecked reverie and study to tireless bodily toil in the quest of sport, travel, or adventure. Possessed of a constitution originally vigorous, and unworn by dissipation, from which a sensitive nature joined with deference to a lofty ideal had hitherto preserved him, Wilfred Effingham approached that rare combination which has ere now resulted, under pressure of circumstance, in the hero, the poet, the warrior, or the statesman.

He braced himself to withstand the shock. It was a shrewd buffet. Yet, after realising its force, he was conscious, much to his surprise, of a distinct feeling of exaltation.

'I shall suffer for it afterwards,' he told his friend Gerald O'More, half unconsciously, as they sat together over a turf fire which glowed in the enormous chimney of a rude but comfortable shooting lodge; 'but, for the soul of me, I can't help feeling agreeably acted upon.'

'Acted upon by what?' said his companion and college chum, with whom he had sworn eternal friendship. 'Is it the whisky

hot? It's equal to John Jameson, and yet it never bothered an exciseman! Sure that same is amaylioratin' my lot to a degree I should have never believed possible. Take another glass. Defy Fate and tell me all about it. Has your father, honest man, discovered another Roman tile or Julius Cæsar's tobacco-pouch? [the elder Effingham was an antiquarian of great perseverance], or have ministers gone out, to the ruin of the country, and the triumph of those villains the radicals? 'Tis little that ever happens in that stagnant existence that you Saxons call country life, barring a trifle of make-believe hunting and shooting. Sure, didn't me uncle Phelim blaze away into a farmer's poultry-yard in Kent for half-an-hour, and swear (it was after lunch) that he never saw pheasants so hard to rise before.'

Thus the light-hearted Irishman rattled on, well divining, for all his apparent mirth, that something more than common had come in the letter, that had the power to drive the blood from Wilfred's cheek and set Care's seal upon his brow. That impress remained indelible, even when he smiled, and affected to resume his ordinary cheerfulness.

At length he spoke: 'Gerald, old fellow! there is news from home which most people would call bad. It is distinct of its kind. We have lost everything; are ruined utterly. Not a chance of recovery, it seems. My dear mother bids me understand *that* most clearly; warns me to have no hope of anything otherwise. The governor has been hard hit, it seems, in foreign bonds; Central African Railways, or Kamschatka telegraph lines, – some

of the infernal traps for English capital at any rate. The Chase is mortgaged and will have to go. The family must emigrate. Australia is to be the future home of the Effinghams. This appears to be settled. That's a good deal to be hid in two sheets of note-paper, isn't it?' And he tossed up the carefully directed letter, caught it as it fell, and placed it in his pocket.

'My breath is taken away; reach me the whisky, if you wish to save my life, or else it will be – ' (prompt measures were taken to relieve the unfortunate gentleman, but without success). 'Wilfred, me dear fellow, do you tell me that you're serious? What will ye do at all, at all?'

'Do? What better men have had to do before now. Face the old foe of mortals, Anagkaia, and see what she can do when a man stands up to her. I don't like the idea any the worse for having to cross the sea to a new world, to find a lost fortune. After all, one was getting tired of this sing-song, nineteenth century life of fashionable learning, fashionable play, fashionable work – everything, in fact, regulated by dame Fashion. I shall be glad to stretch my limbs in a hunter's hammock, and bid adieu to the whole unreal pageant.'

'Bedad! I don't know. I'd say the reality was nearer where we are, with all the disadvantages of good dinners, good sport, good books, and good company. But you're right, me dear fellow, to put a bold face on it; and if you have to take the shilling in the divil's regiment, sure ye'll die a hero, or rise to Commander-in-Chief, if I know ye. But your mother, and poor Miss Effingham,

and the Captain – without his turnips and his justice-room and his pointers and his poachers, his fibulæ and amphoræ – whatever will he do among blackfellows and kangaroos? My heart aches for ye all, Wilfred. Sure ye know it does. If ye won't take any more potheen, let us sleep on it; and we'll have a great day among the cocks, if we live, and talk it over afterwards. There never was that sorrow yet that ye didn't lighten it if ye tired your legs well between sun and sun!'

With the morrow's sun came an unwonted calm and settled resolve to the soul of Wilfred Effingham. Together, gay, staunch Gerald O'More and he took the last day's sport they were likely to have for many a day. The shooting was rather above than under the average, as if the ruined heir was willing to show that his nerves had not been affected by his prospects.

'I must take out the old gun,' he said, 'and keep up my shooting. Who knows but that we may depend upon it for a meal now and then in this New Atlantis that we are bound for. But one thing is fixed, old fellow, as far as a changeable nature will permit. I shall have to be the mainstay of my father's house. I must play the man, if it's in me. No more dilettantism, no more mediæval treasures, no more tall copies. The present, not the past, is what we must stand or fall by. The governor is shaken by all this trouble; not the best man of business at any time. My dear mother is a saint *en habit de Cour*; she will have to suffer a sea-change that might break the hearts of ordinary worldlings. Upon Rosamond and myself will fall the brunt of the battle. She has prepared herself

for it, happily, by years of unselfish care and thought. I have been an idler and a loiterer. Now the time has come to show of what stuff I am made. It will mean good-bye to you, Gerald O'More, fast friend and *bon camarade*. We shall have no more shooting and fishing together, no more talk about art and poetry, no more vacation tours, no more rambles, for long years – let us not say for ever. Good-bye to my old life, my old Self! God speed us all; we must arm and away.'

'I'd say you might have a worse life, Wilfred, though it will come hard on you at first to be shooting kangaroos and bushrangers, instead of grouse and partridges, like a Christian. But we get used to everything, I am told, even to being a land-agent, with every boy in the barony wondering if he could tumble ye at sixty paces with the ould duck gun. When a thing's to be done – marrying or burying, standing out on the sod on a foggy morning with a nate shot opposite ye, or studying for the law – there's nothing like facing it cool and steady. You'll write me and Hallam a line after you're landed; and we'll think of ye often enough, never fear. God speed ye, my boy! Sure, it's Miss Annabel that will make the illigant colonist entirely.'

The friends parted. Wilfred lost no time in reaching home, where his presence comforted the family in the midst of that most discouraging state of change for the worse, the packing and preparing for departure.

But he had utilised the interval since he left his friend by stern self-examination, ending in a fixed, unalterable resolve.

His mother, his sisters, and his father were alike surprised at his changed bearing. He had grown years older in a week. He listened to the explanation of their misfortune from his father with respectful silence or short, undoubting comment. He confirmed the decision to which the family counsel had arrived. Emigration to Australia was, under the circumstances, the only path which promised reparation of the fortunes of the house. He carefully read the letter from Mr. Sternworth, upon which their fate seemed to hang. He cheered his mother by expressing regret for his previous desultory life, asking her to believe that his future existence should be devoted to the welfare of all whom both held so dear.

'*You* have never doubted, my dearest mother,' he said, 'but that your heedless son would one day do credit to his early teaching? I stand pledged to make your words good.'

The arrival of the heir, who had taken his place at his father's right hand in so worthy a spirit, seemed to infuse confidence into the other members of the family. Each and all appeared to recognise the fact that their expatriation was decided upon, and while lamenting their loved home, they commenced to gather information about their new abode, and to dwell upon the more cheering probabilities.

The family was not a small one. Guy Effingham was a high-spirited schoolboy of fourteen, whose cricket and football engagements had hitherto, with that amount of the humanities which an English public schoolboy is compelled to master, under

penalties too dire for endurance, been sufficient to fill up his irresponsible life. It was arranged that he was to remain at school until the week previous to their departure. His presence at home was not necessary, while his mother wished him to utilise the last effective teaching which he was likely to have. To her was committed the task of preparing him for his altered position. Two younger daughters, with a boy and girl of tender years, the darlings of the family, completed the number of the Effinghams. The third daughter, Annabel, was the beauty of the family. A natural pride in her unquestioned loveliness had always mingled with the maternal repression of all save the higher aims and qualities which it had been the fond mother's life-long duty to inculcate. Annabel Effingham had received from nature the revival of the loveliness of some ancestress, heightened and intensified by admixture of family type. She was fair, with the bright colouring, the silken hair, the delicate roseate glow which had long been the boast of the women of her mother's family – of ancient Saxon blood – for many generations. But she had superadded to these elements of beauty a classical delicacy of outline, a darker shade of blue in the somewhat prouder eye, a figure almost regal in the nobility of carriage and unconscious dignity of motion, which told of a diverse lineage. Beatrice, the second daughter of the house, had up to the present time exhibited neither the strong altruistic bias which, along with the faculty of organisation, characterised Rosamond, nor the universally confessed fascination which rendered Annabel's path

a species of royal progress. Refined, distinguished in appearance, as indeed were all the members of the family, she had not as yet developed any special vocation. In her appearance one saw but the ordinary traits which stamp a highly cultured girl of the upper classes. She was, perhaps, more distinctly literary in her tastes than either of her sisters, but her reserved habits concealed her attainments. For the rest, she appeared to have made up her mind to the inevitable with less apparent effort than the other members of the family.

'What can it avail – all this grieving and lamenting?' she would say. 'I feel parting with The Chase, with our relations and friends – with all our old life, in fact – deeply and bitterly. But that once admitted, what good end is served by repeating the thought and renewing the tears? Other people are ruined in England, and have to go to Boulogne and horrid continental towns, where they lead sham lives, and potter about, unreal in everything but dulness and poverty, till they die. We shall go to Australia to *do* something – or not to do it. Both are good in their way. Next to honest effort I like a frank failure.'

'But suppose we *do* fail, and lose all our money, and have nothing to eat in a horrid new country,' said Annabel, 'what *will* become of us?'

'Just what would become of us here, I suppose; we should have to work – become teachers at a school, or governesses, or hospital nurses; only, as young women are not so plentiful in Australia as in England, why, we should be better paid.'

'Oh, but here we know so many people, and they would help us to find pleasant places to live in,' pleaded Annabel piteously. 'It does seem so dreadful to be ten thousand miles away from your own country. I am sure we shall starve!'

'Don't be a goose, Annabel. How can we starve? First, we have the chance of making money and living in plenty, if not in refinement, on this estate that papa is going to buy. And if that does not turn out a success, we must find you a place as companion to the Governor-General's wife, or as nursery governess for *very* young children. I'll become a "school marm" at Yass – that's the name – and Rosamond will turn dressmaker, she has such a talent for a good fit.'

'Oh dear, oh dear! don't talk of such dreadful things. Are we to go all over the world only to become drudges and work-women? We may as well drown ourselves at once.'

'My child! my child!' said a gentle voice. 'What folly is this? What are we, that we should be absolved from the trials that others have to bear? God has chosen, for His own good purpose, to bring this misfortune upon us. He will give us strength to bear it in a chastened spirit. If we do not bear it in a resigned and chastened spirit, we are untrue to the teaching which we have all our lives affected to believe in. We have all our part to perform. Let us have no repining, my dearest Annabel. Our way is clear, and we have others to think of who require support.'

'But you *like* to be miserable, you know, mother; you think it is God's hand that afflicts you,' sobbed the desponding spoiled

child. 'I can't feel that way. I haven't your faith. And it breaks my heart; I shall die, I shall die, I know.'

'Pray, my darling, pray for help and grace from on high,' continued the sweet, sad tones of the mother, as she drew her child's fair head upon her lap, and passed her hand amid 'the clustering ringlets rich and rare,' while Beatrice sat rather unsympathetically by. 'You will have me and your sisters to cheer you.' Here the fair disconsolate looked distrustfully at Beatrice.

By degrees the half-mesmeric, instinctive influence of the loved mother's pitying tones overcame the unwonted fit of unreason.

'I will try and be good,' she murmured, looking up with a soft light in her lovely eyes, 'but you know I am a poor creature at best. You must bear with me, and I will help as much as I can, and try to keep from repining. But, oh, my home, my home, the dear old place where I was born. How dark and dreary do this long voyage and journey seem!'

'Have we not a yet longer voyage, a more distant journey to make, my own one?' whispered the mother, in accents soft as those with which in times gone by she had lulled the complaining babe. 'We know not the time, nor the hour. Think! If we do not prepare ourselves by prayer and faith, how dark *that* departure will appear!'

'You are always good and kind, always right, mother,' said the girl, recovering her composure and assuming a more steadfast air. 'Pray for me, that I may find strength; but do I not know that

you pray for all of us incessantly? We ought – that is – I ought to be better than I am.'

Among the lesser trials which, at the time of his great sorrow, oppressed Howard Effingham, not the least was the necessity for parting with old servants and retainers. He was a man prone to become attached to attendants long used to his ways. Partly from kindly feeling, partly from indolence, he much disliked changing domestics or farm labourers. Accustomed to lean against a more readily available if not a stronger support than his own, he was, in most relations of life, more dependent than most men upon his confidential servants.

In this instance, therefore, he had taken it much to heart that his Scotch land-steward, a man of exceptional capacity and absolute personal fidelity, having a wife also, of rare excellence in her own department, should be torn from him by fate.

Backed up by his trusty Andrew, with his admirable wife, he felt as if he could have faced all ordinary colonial perils. While under Jeanie Cargill's care, his wife and daughters might have defied the ills of any climate, and risked the absence of the whole College of Physicians.

Andrew Cargill was one of those individuals of strongly marked idiosyncrasy, a majority of whom appear to have been placed, by some mysterious arrangement of nature, on the north side of the Tweed. Originally the under-gardener at The Chase, he had risen slowly but irresistibly through the gradations of upper-gardener and under-bailiff to the limited order of land-

steward required by a moderate property. He had been a newly-married man when he formed the resolution of testing the high wages of the Southron lairds. His family, as also his rate of wages, had increased. His expenses he had uniformly restricted, with the thoroughness of his economical forefathers. He despised all wasteful ways. He managed his master's affairs, as committed to his charge, with more than the rigorous exactitude he was wont to apply to his own. Gaining authority, by the steady pressure of unrelaxing forecast habit of life, he was permitted a certain license as to advice and implied rebuke. Had Andrew Cargill been permitted to exercise the same control over the extra-rural affairs that he was wont to use over the farm-servants and the plough-teams, the tenants and the trespassers, the crops and the orchards, the under-gardeners and the pineries, no failure, financial or otherwise, would have occurred at The Chase.

When the dread disaster could no longer be concealed, it is questionable whether Mr. Effingham felt anything more acutely than the necessity which existed of explaining to this faithful follower the extent, or worse, the cause of his misfortune. He anticipated the unbroken silence, the incredulous expression, with which all attempts at favourable explanation would be received. Open condemnation, of course, was out of the question. But the mute reproach or guarded reference to his master's inconceivable imbecility, which on this occasion might be more strongly accented than usual, would be hard to endure.

Mr. Effingham could not depute his wife, or one of the girls,

to convey the information to the formidable Andrew. So he was fain to pull himself together one morning, and go forth to this uncompromising logician. Having briefly related the eventful tale, he concluded by dispensing with his faithful servant, as they were going to a new country, and very probably would never be able to employ servants again.

Having thrown down the bombshell, the 'lost leader' looked fixedly at Andrew's unmoved countenance, and awaited the particular kind of concentrated contempt which he doubted not would issue forth.

His astonishment was great when, after the hurried conclusion, 'I shall miss you, Andrew, you may be sure, more than I say; and as for Jeanie, I don't know how the young ladies and the mistress will get on without her,' the following words issued slowly and oracularly from Andrew's lips: —

'Ye'll no miss me ava, Maister Effingham. Dinna ye think that it's a' news ye're tellin' me. I behoved just to speer a bit what garred the puir mistress look sae dowie and wae. And the upshot o' matters is that I'm gaun wi' ye.'

'And your wife and children?'

'Ye didna threep I was to leave them ahint? Andra' Cargill isna ane o' thae kind o' folk, sae just tak' heart, and for a' that's come and gane ye may lift up your heid ance mair; it's nae great things o' a heid, as the auld wife said o' the Deuk's, but if Botany Bay is the gra-and country they ca' it, and the book-writers and the agents haena been tellin' the maist unco-omon set o' lees, a' may

gang weel yet.'

'But what's put this in *your* head, of all people in the world, Andrew?' queried his master, becoming bold, like individuals, or corporate bodies, of purely defensive ideas, after observing tokens of weakness in the besieging force.

'Weel, aweel, first and foremost, Laird, ye'll no say that we haena eaten your bread and saut this mony a year; there's been neither stint nor stay till't. I hae naething to say against the wage; aiblins a man weel instructed in his profession should aye be worthy o' his hire. Jeanie has been just spoiled by the mistress – my heart's sairvice to her and the young leddies – till ilka land they were no in, wad be strange eneugh to her, puir body. And the lang and short o' the hail matter is, that we loe ye and your bonnie lads and lassies, Laird, sae weel that we winna be pairted frae ye.'

As Mr. Effingham grasped the hand of the staunch, true servitor, who thus stood by him in his need, under whose gnarled bark of natural roughness lay hid so tender and true a core, the tears stood in his eyes.

'I shall never forget this, Andrew,' said he; 'you and Jeanie, old friend, will be the comfort of our lives in the land over-sea, and I cannot say what fresh courage your determination has given me. But are you sure it will be for your own advantage? You must have saved money, and might take a farm and live snugly here.'

'I was aboot to acquent ye, Laird,' said the conscientious Scot, too faithful to his religious principles to take credit for

a disinterestedness to which he felt but partially entitled. 'Ye'll see, Laird, for ye're weel acquent wi' the Word, that the battle's no always to the strong, nor the race to the swift. Ye'll ken that, frae your ain experience – aweel, I winna just say that neither' – proceeded Andrew, getting slightly involved between his quotations and his determination to be 'faithful' to his erring master, and by no means cloaking his sins of omission. 'I'll no say but what ye've been lettin' ither folks lead ye, and throw dust in ye're een in no the maist wiselike fashion, as nae doot ye wad hae dune wi' the tenants, puir bodies, gin I had letten ye. But touchin' my ain affairs, I haena sae muckle cause to brag; for maybe I was unco stiff-necked, and it behoved to chasten me, as weel's yersell; I hae tint – just flung awa' – my sma' scrapin's and savin's, these saxteen years and mair, in siccan a senseless daft-like way too!'

Here Andrew could not forbear a groan, which was echoed by an exclamation from his master.

'I am sincerely grieved – astonished beyond expression! Why, Andrew, surely *you* have not been dabbling in stocks and foreign loans?'

'Na – nae ga-amblin' for *me*, Laird!' replied Andrew sourly, and with an accentuation which implied speedy return to his ordinary critical state of mind; 'but if I had minded the Scripture, I wadna hae lost money and faith at one blow. "Strike not hands for a surety,"' it saith, 'but I trusted Geordie Ballantyne like a brither; my ain cousin, twice removed. He was aboot to be roupit oot, stock and lock, and him wi' a hoosefu' o' weans. I just gaed

surety to him for three hunder pound!'

'You were never so mad – a prudent man like you?'

'And he just flitted to America, fled frae his ain land, his plighted word, and left me to bear the wyte o't. It's nae use greetin' ower spilt brose. The money's a' paid, and Andra' Cargill's as puir a man's when he cam' to The Chase, saxteen years last Michaelmas. Sae, between the heart-break it wad be to pairt wi' the family, and the sair heart I hae gotten at pairtin' wi' my siller, the loss o' a friend – "mine own familiar freend," as the Psawmist says – as weel's the earnings o' the maist feck o' my days, at ae blast, I hae settled to gang oot, Laird, to Australia, and maybe lay oot a wheen straight furrows for ye, as I did lang syne on the bonnie holms o' Ettrick.'

Here Andrew's voice faltered, and the momentous unprecedented conversation ended abruptly.

The unfeigned delight with which his wife and daughters received the news did much to reconcile Mr. Effingham to his expatriation, and even went far to persuade him that he had, in some way, originated the whole idea. Nor was their satisfaction unfounded. Andrew, with all his apparent sternness and occasional incivility, was shrewd, capable, and even versatile, in the application of his industry and unerring common sense to a wide range of occupations. He was the ideal colonist of his order, as certain to succeed in his own person as to be the most helpful and trustworthy of retainers.

As for Jeanie, she differed from her husband in almost every

respect, except in the cardinal virtues. She had been a rustic celebrity in her youth, and Andrew occasionally referred still, in moments of unbending, to the difficulties of his courtship, and the victory gained over a host of rival suitors. She still retained the softness of manner and tenderness of nature which no doubt had originally led to the fascination of her masterful, rugged-natured husband.

For the rest, Jean Cargill had always been one of those servants, rare even in England, the land of peerless domestics, whose loving, unselfish service knew no abatement in sickness and in health, good fortune or evil hap. Her perceptive tastes and strong sense of propriety rendered her, as years rolled on, a trusted friend; an infinitely more suitable companion for the mistress and her children, as she always called them, than many a woman of higher culture. A tireless nurse in time of sickness; a brave, clear-headed, but withal modest and cautious, aid to the physician in the hour of peril. She had stood by the bedstead of more than one member of the family, in the dark hour, when the angel of death waited on the threshold of the chamber. Never had she slackened or faltered, by night or day, careless of food or repose till the crisis had passed, and the 'whisper of wings in the air' faded away.

Mrs. Effingham, with all her maternal fondness and devotion, had been physically unable at times to bear up against the fatigue of protracted watching and anxiety. She had more than once, from sheer bodily weakness, been compelled to abandon her

post. But to Jeanie Cargill, sustained by matchless love and devotion, such a thing had never occurred. At noon or midnight, her hand was ever ready to offer the needful food, the vital draught; her ear ever watchful to catch the faint murmur of request; her eye, sleepless as a star, was ever undimmed, vigilant to detect the slightest change of symptom. Many nurses had been heard of, seen, and even read of, in the domestic circles of Reigate, but in the estimation of every matron capable of giving an opinion, Jeanie Cargill, by countless degrees of comparison, outshone them all.

That night, when Mrs. Effingham, as was her wont, sought relief from the burden of her daily cares, and the crowding anxieties of the morrow, 'meekly kneeling upon her knees,' it appeared to her as if in literal truth the wind had been tempered to the shorn lamb. That terrible travel into the unknown, the discomforts and dangers of the melancholy main, with the dreary waste of colonial life, would be quite different adventures, softened by the aid and companionship of everybody's 'dear old Jeanie.' Her patient industry, her helpful sympathy, her matchless loyalty and self-denial, would be well-springs of heaven-sent water in that desert. Andrew's company, though not socially exhilarating, was also an invigorating fact. Altogether, Mrs. Effingham's spirits improved, and her hopes arose freshly strengthened.

No sooner was it settled that Andrew and his fortunes were to be wafted o'er the main, in the vessel which bore the Effingham

family, than, with characteristic energy, he had constituted himself Grand Vizier and responsible adviser. He definitely approved of much that had been done, and counselled still further additions to the outfit. Prime and invincible was his objection to leave behind a certain pet 'Jersey coo,' 'a maist extraordinar' milker, and for butter, juist unco-omon. If she could be ta'en oot to thae parts, she wad be a sma' fortune – that is, in ony Christian land where butter and cheese were used. Maybe the sea-captain wad let her gang for the value o' her milk; she was juist in the height o't the noo. It wad be a sin and a shame to let her be roupit for half price, like the ither kye, puir things.'

Persistent advocacy secured his point. Daisy had been morally abandoned to her fate; but Wilfred, goaded by Andrew's appeals, had an interview with the shipping clerk, and arranged that Daisy, if approved of, should fill the place of the proverbial milch cow, so invariably bracketed with the 'experienced surgeon' in the advertisements of the Commercial Marine. Her calf also, being old enough to eat hay, was permitted to accompany her.

Andrew also combated the idea that the greyhounds, or at least a pair, should be left behind, still less the guns or fishing-rods.

'Wasna the Laird the best judge of a dog in the haill country-side, and no that far frae the best shot? What for suld he walk aboot the woods in Australia waesome and disjaskit like, when there might be kangaroos, or whatna kind o' ootlandish game, to be had for the killing? Hoot, hoot, puir Page and Damsel couldna be left ahint, nor the wee terrier Vennie.'

There was more trouble with the greyhounds' passage than the cows, but in consideration of the large amount of freight and passage-money paid by the family, the aristocratic long-tails were franked. Andrew, with his own hands, packed up the fowling-pieces and fishing-rods, which, with the exaggerated prudence of youth, Wilfred had been minded to leave behind, considering nothing worthy of removal that would not be likely to add to their material gains in the 'new settlement.' He had yet to learn that recreation can never be advantageously disregarded, whether the community be a young or an old one.

Little by little, a chain of slow yet subtle advances, by which, equally with geologic alterations of the earth's surface, its ephemeral living tenants proceed or retrograde, effected the translation of Howard Effingham, with wife and children, retainers and household goods. Averse by nature to all exertion which savoured of detail, reserving his energy for what he was pleased to dignify with the title of great occasions, as he looked back over the series of multitudinous necessary arrangements, Howard Effingham wondered, in his secret soul, at the transference of his household. Left to himself, he was candid enough to admit, such a result could never have been achieved. But the ceaseless ministration of Jeanie and Andrew, the calm forethought of Mrs. Effingham, the unsparing personal labour of Wilfred, had, in due time, worked the miracle.

CHAPTER II
THE FIRST CAMP

Whatever may be the loss or injury inseparable from misfortune, no one of experience denies that the pain is lightened when the blow has fallen. The shuddering terror, the harrowing doubts, which precede an operation, far outrun the torture of the knife. Worse a thousandfold to endure than actual misery, poverty and disgrace, is the dull sense of impending doom, the daily anxiety, the secret dread, the formless, unhasting, unsparing terror, which each day brings nearer to the victim.

Howard Effingham had, for weeks past, suffered the torments of the lost. An unwise concealment of the coming ruin which his reserved temperament forbade him to announce, had stretched him upon the rack. The acute agony was now past, and he felt unspeakably relieved as, with increasing completeness, the preparations for departure were accomplished.

After the shock of the disaster he commenced the necessary duties with an unwontedly tranquil mind. He had despatched a bank draft for the amount mentioned by his friend and counsellor the Rev. Harley Sternworth. Prior to this needful act, he held various conferences with the trustees of Mrs. Effingham's settlement. In many instances such authorities are difficult, even impracticable, to deal with, preferring the minimum interest

which can be safely procured in the matter of trust money, to the slightest risk. In this instance, the arbiter of destiny was an old gentleman, at once prudent yet liberal-minded, who did not disdain to examine the arguments in favour of the Australian plan. After reading Mr. Sternworth's letter, and comparing the facts therein stated with colonial securities, to which he had access, he gave in his adhesion to the investment, and converted his coadjutor, a mild, obstinate personage, who could with difficulty be induced to see any other investment legally open to them but the 'sweet simplicity of the three per cents.'

Long was the last day in coming, but it came at last. Their stay in the old home was protracted until only time was given for the journey to Southampton, where the staunch, old-fashioned wool-ship lay, which was to receive their condensed personal effects and, as it seemed to them, shrivelled-up personalities.

Adieus were said, some with sore weeping and many tears; some with moderate but sincere regret; some with the half-veiled indifference with which any action not affecting their own comfort, interest, or reputation is regarded by a large class of acquaintances. The minor possessions – the carriages, the horses, the library, the furniture – were sold. A selection of the plainest articles of this last requisite, which, the freight being wonderfully low, their chief adviser had counselled them to carry with them, was alone retained.

'It will sell for next to nothing,' his last letter had said, 'judging from my experience after the regiment had "got the route," and

you will have it landed here for less than the price of very ordinary substitutes. Bring all the small matters you can, that may be useful; and don't leave the piano behind. I must have a tune when I come to see you at Warbrok, and hear Mrs. Effingham sing "Auld Robin Gray" again. You recollect how our old Colonel broke down, with tears rolling over his wrinkled cheeks, when she sang it?'

All was now over. The terrible wrench had been endured, tearing apart those living fibres which in early life are entwined around hearth and home. They had gazed in mournful farewell upon each familiar thing which from childhood's hour had seemed a portion of their sheltered life. Like plants and flowerets, no denizens of hothouse or simulated tropic clime, but not the less carefully tended from harmful extremes, climatic or social, had the Effingham family grown and flourished. Now they were about to be abandoned to the elemental forces. Who should say whether they would wither under rude blasts and a fiercer sun, or, from natural vigour and inherent vitality, burgeon and bloom beneath the Southern heavens?

Of the whole party, she who showed less outward token of sorrow, felt in her heart the most unresting anguish. To a woman like Mrs. Effingham, reared from infancy in the exclusive tenets of English county life, the idea of so comprehensive a change, of a semi-barbarous migration, had been well-nigh more bitter than death – but for one source of aid and spiritual support, unendurable.

Her reliance had a twofold foundation. The undoubting faith in a Supreme Being, who ordered aright all the ways of His creatures, even when apparently remote from happiness, remained unshaken. Firmly had she ever trusted in that God by whom her former life had been guided. Events might take a mysteriously doubtful course. But, in the wilderness, under leafy forest-arches, beneath the shadow of the gathering tempest, on land or ocean, she would trust in God and her Redeemer. Steadfast and brave of mien, though with trembling lip and sickened heart, she marshalled her little troop and led them on board the stout ship, which only awaited the morrow's dawn to spread her wings and sweep southward – ever southward – amid unknown seas, until the great island continent should arise from out the sky-line, telling of a land which was to provide them with a home, with friends, even perhaps a fortune. What a mockery in that hour of utter wretchedness did such hope promptings appear!

After protracted mental conflict, no more perfect system of rest can be devised than that afforded by a sea-voyage. Anxiety, however mordant, must be lulled to rest under the fixed conditions of a journey, before the termination of which no battle of life can be commenced, no campaign resumed.

Toil and strife, privation and poverty, labour and luck, all the contending forces of life are hushed as in a trance. As in hibernation, the physical and mental attributes appear to rally, to recruit fresh stores of energy. 'The dead past buries

its dead' – sorrowfully perchance, and with silent weeping. But the clouds which have gathered around the spirit disperse and flee heavenwards, as from a snow-robed Alp at morning light. Then the roseate hues of dawn steal slowly o'er the silver-pure peaks and glaciers. The sun gilds anew the dark pine forest, the purple hills. Once more hope springs forth ardent and unfettered. Endeavour presses onward to victory or to death.

To the Effingham family came a natural surprise, that, under their circumstances of exile and misfortune, any cheerfulness could occur. The parents possessed an air of decent resignation. But the younger members of the family, after the first days of unalloyed wretchedness, commenced to exhibit the elastic temperament of youth.

The seamanship displayed on the staunch sailing ship commenced to interest them. The changing aspects of sea and sky, the still noon, the gathering storm-cloud, the starry midnight, the phosphorescent fire-trail following the night-path of their bark – all these had power to move the sad hearts of the exiles. And, in youth, to move the heart is to lighten the spirit.

Wilfred Effingham, true to his determination to deliver himself over to every practical duty which might grow out of their life, had procured books professing to give information with regard to all the Australian colonies.

With difficulty he managed, after an extended literary tour involving Tasmania, Swan River, and New Zealand, to distinguish the colony to which they were bound, though he failed

to gather precise information regarding the district in which their land was situated. He made out that the climate was mild, and favourable to the Anglo-Saxon constitution; that in mid-winter, flowering shrubs and delicate plants bloomed in spite of the pretended rigour of the season; that the heat in summer was considerable, as far as shown by the reading of the thermometer, but that from the extreme dryness of atmosphere no greater oppressiveness followed than in apparently cooler days in other climates.

'Here, mother,' he said, having mastered the latter fact, 'we have been unconsciously coming to the exact country suited to your health and pursuits. You know how fond of flowers you are. Well, you can have a winter garden now, without the expense of glass or the trouble of hothouse flues; while you can cheat the season by abstaining from colds, which you could never do in England, you know.'

'I shall be happy to have a little garden of my own, my son,' she replied, 'but who is to work in it? We have done for ever, I suppose, with head and under gardeners. You and Guy and everybody will always, I suppose, be at farm-work, or herding cattle and sheep, busy from morning to dark. How glad we shall be to see your faces at night!'

'It does not follow,' replied Wilfred, 'that we shall never have a moment to spare. Listen to what this author says: "The colonist who has previously been accustomed to lead a life, where intervals of leisure and intellectual recreation hold

an acknowledged place, must not consider that, in choosing Australia for his home, he has forfeited all right to such indulgences. Let him not think that he has pledged himself to a life of unbroken toil and unremitting manual labour. On the contrary, he will discover that the avocations of an Australian country gentleman chiefly demand the exercise of ordinary prudence and of those rudimentary business habits which are easily acquired. Intelligent supervision, rather than manual labour, is the special qualification for colonial success; and we do not err in saying that by its exercise more fortunes have been made than by the rude toils which are supposed to be indispensable in the life of an Australian settler."

'There, mother!' said the ardent adventurer. 'That writer is a very sensible fellow. He knows what he is talking about, for he has been ever so many years in Australia, and has been over every part of it.'

'Well, there certainly seems permission given to us to have a flower-garden for mamma without ruining ourselves or neglecting our business,' said Rosamond. 'And if the climate is so beautiful as they say, these dreadful February neuralgia-martyrdoms will be things of the past with you, dearest old lady.'

'There, mother, what do you say to that? Why, you will grow so young and beautiful that you will be taken for our elder sister, and papa would be ashamed to say you are his wife, only that old gentlemen generally marry young girls nowadays. Then, fancy what a garden we shall have at The Chase – we *must* call it The

Chase, no matter what its present name is. It wouldn't feel natural for us to live anywhere but at a Chase. It would be like changing our name.'

On board ship there is always abundant leisure for talk and recreation, especially in low latitudes and half calms. The Effinghams, after they had been a month out, began to feel sensibly the cheering effects of total change of scene – the life-breathing atmosphere of the unbounded sea. The demons of Regret and Fear, for the most part, shun the blue wave and lie in wait on land for unwary mortals. The ship was seaworthy and spacious, the officers capable, the few passengers passably agreeable. Gradually the tone was restored of Captain Effingham's nervous system. He ceased to repine and regret. He even beheld some grains of hope in the future, black as the outlook had until now appeared. While the expression of sweet serenity and calm resignation which ever dwelt upon the features of Mrs. Effingham became heightened and assured under the concomitants of the voyage, until she appeared to radiate peace and goodwill sufficient to affect beneficially the whole ship's company. As for the two little ones, Selden and Blanche, they appeared to have been accustomed since infancy to a seafaring life. They ran about unchecked, and were in everybody's way and every one's affections. They were the youngest children on board, and many a rough sailor turned to look, with something like a glistening in his eye, on the saucy brown-eyed boy, and the delicate little five-year-old fairy, whose masses of fair hair

floated in the breeze, or were temporarily confined with an unwilling ribbon.

It seemed but the lengthening limit of a dream when the seaman at the good ship's bow was commanded to keep a lookout for land; when, yet another bright blue day, fading into eve, and a low coast-line is seen, rising like an evening cloud from out a summer sea.

'Hurrah!' said Wilfred Effingham, as the second mate pointed out the land of promise, 'now our life begins. We shall belong to ourselves again, instead of being the indulgently treated slaves – very well treated, I confess – but still the unquestionable bond-slaves of that enlightened taskmaster, Captain Henry Fleetby of the *Marlshire*.'

'We have been very happy, my dear,' said Mrs. Effingham, 'happier than I should have thought possible in a ship, under any circumstances. Let us hope our good fortune will continue on land. I shall always look back to this voyage as the most wonderful rest that our poor wounded hearts could have enjoyed. Your papa looks quite himself again, and I feel better than I have done for years. I shall remember our captain, his officers, and his ship, with gratitude, as long as I live.'

'I feel quite attached to the dear old vessel,' said Annabel, 'but we can't go sailing about the world all our lives, like respectable Flying Dutchmen. I suppose the captain must turn us out to-morrow. Who would have thought we should regret coming to the end of the voyage?'

How calm was that last day of the long, but not too long, voyage, when they glided for hours on a waveless sea, by a great wall of sandstone cliffs, which finally opened, as if by magic, and discovered the portal of an Enchanted Haven! Surely the prospect could not all be real, of this wondrous nook, stolen from the vast, the limitless Pacific, in which they discerned, through the empurpling eve, villas, cottages, mansions, churches, white-walled and fantastic to their eyes, girt with strange shrubs and stately forest trees of unknown aspect. As the *Marlshire* floated to her anchorage, threading a fleet of skiffs, which made the waters gay with many a sail, the full heart of the mother and the wife overflowed.

Involuntarily a fervent prayer of thanksgiving went up to that Being who had safely guarded them o'er the waste of ocean; had permitted their entrance into this good land, which lay ready to receive them in their need.

Passengers concluding a short voyage are nervously anxious to land, and commence the frantic enjoyment of existence on *terra firma*. Not so with the denizens of the good ship *Marlshire*, which had been their home and dwelling-place for more than a quarter of a year. Having grown, with the strange adaptiveness of our nature, to love the gallant bark, you revere the captain, respect the first officer, and believe in the second. Even the crew is above the average of the mercantile Jack-tar novel. You will always swear by the old tub; and you will not go on shore till to-morrow morning, if then.

All things considered, the family decided to stay quietly on board the *Marlshire* that night, so as to disembark in a leisurely way in the morning, when they would have the day before them in which to make arrangements.

They talked of staying quietly on board, but the excitement of being so near the land was too much for them. The unnatural quietude of the ship, the calm water of the bay, the glancing lights, which denoted the thousand homes of the city, the cries and sounds of the massed population of a seaport, the warm midnight air, the woods and white beaches which denoted the shore-line, the gliding harbour-boats, all seemed to sound in one strangely distinct chorus: 'Land, land, land at last.' All magically exciting, these sounds and scenes forbade sleep. Long after the other members of the family had gone below for the night, Wilfred and Rosamond paced the deck, eagerly discussing plans for the future, and, with the sanguine temper of youth, rapidly following each freshly-formed track to fortune.

No one was likely to indulge in slumber after sunrise. A babel of sounds announced that the unlading of cargo had commenced. Their last ship breakfast prefaced the actual stepping upon the friendly gangway, which now alone divided them from the other side of the world. Before that feat was performed, a squarely-built, grey-headed personage, in clerical garb, but withal of a somewhat secular manner, walked rapidly from the wharf to the deck and confronted the party.

'Here you are at last, all safe and sound, Howard, my dear

fellow!' said he, shaking hands warmly with Mr. Effingham. 'Not so much changed either; too easy-going for that. Pray present me to Mrs. Effingham and the young ladies. Your eldest son looking after the luggage? – proper place for him. Allow me to take your arm, my dear madam, and to conduct you to the hotel, where I have engaged rooms for you. May as well set off – talk as we go along. Only heard of the *Marlshire* being signalled the day before yesterday. Came a long journey – slightly knocked up this morning, but soon recovered – splendid climate – make a young man of you, Earl Percy, in a year or two. We always called him Earl Percy in the regiment, Mrs. Effingham. Perhaps he told you. And all this fine family too – two, four, six, seven. I can hardly credit my senses. Plenty of room for them in this country – plenty of room – that's one thing.'

'We have every reason to be thankful for the comfortable way in which we have voyaged here,' said Mrs. Effingham; 'and now that you have so kindly come to meet us, I feel as if half our troubles were over.'

'Your troubles are just commencing, my dear madam, but with Harley Sternworth's help something may be done to lighten them. Still I feel sure that these young ladies will look upon difficulties in a sensible way, not expecting too much, or being discouraged – just at first, you know.'

'Your country, my old friend, will have to look bad indeed if my wife cannot find a good word to say for it,' said Mr. Effingham, roused to unwonted cheerfulness. 'At any rate, it suits

you well; you look as hard as a west country drover.'

'Never was better. Haven't had a dose of medicine for years. Ride fifty miles a day if necessary. Finest climate – finest country – under the sun. Lots of parish work and travelling, with a dash of botanising, and a pinch of geology to fill up spare time. Wouldn't go back and live in a country town for the world. Mope to death.'

All this time the reverend gentleman was pressing forward up a gentle incline, towards the lower end of George Street, and after walking up that noble thoroughfare, and discreetly refraining from mention of the buildings which ornament that part of it, he turned again towards the water and piloted his party successfully to Batty's Hotel.

'Here, my dear madam, you will find that I have secured you pleasant apartments for a week or ten days, during which time you will be able to recruit after the voyage, and do justice to the beauties of the city. You are not going up country at once. A few days' leisure will be economy in the end.'

'So we are not to start off hundreds of miles at once, in a bullock dray, as the captain told us?' said Rosamond.

'No, my dear young lady, neither now nor, I hope, at any time will such a mode of travelling be necessary. I cannot say too much for your conveyance, but it will be fairly comfortable and take you to your destination safely. After that will commence what you will doubtless consider to be a tolerably rough life. Yes – a rough life.'

'These young people have made up their minds to anything

short of living like Esquimaux,' said Mr. Effingham. 'I don't think you will frighten them. You and I saw curious backwoods places when we were quartered in Canada, didn't we? You will hardly match them in Australia.'

'Nothing to be compared to it,' said Mr. Sternworth earnestly. 'We have no winter here, to begin with; that is, none worth speaking about for cold. Moreover, the people are intensely British in their manners and customs, in an old-fashioned way. But I am not going to explain everything. You will have to *live* the explanation, which is far better than hearing it, and is sure to be retained by the memory.'

It was decided that no move was to be made for the interior until the baggage was landed, and arrangements made for its safe carriage by dray.

'If you leave before all is ready,' said their mentor, 'you run risk of the loss of a portion, by mistake or negligence; and this loss may never be repaired. You will find your furniture of immense value in the new abode, and will congratulate yourself upon having brought it. It is astonishing with what different eyes you look upon a table or sideboard here and in England.'

'I was anxious to bring out some of our old possessions,' said Mrs. Effingham. 'But I had hard work to persuade my husband that we might not be able to procure such here. Your advice was most opportune. I feel more pleased than I can say that we were able to act upon it.'

At lunch they were joined by Wilfred, who had discovered

that there was no chance of all the furniture coming ashore that day. He had arranged with the captain that Andrew and his family should remain on board, as also Daisy the cow, until everything was ready to load the drays with the heavy baggage.

Andrew had expressed himself much pleased with the arrangement, regarding the ship as 'mair hamelike' than the busy foreign-looking city, to the inhabitants of which he did not take kindly, particularly after an exploring stroll, which happened to be on the Sunday after arrival.

'A maist freevolous folk, given up to mammon-worship and pleesure-huntin', – walkin' in thae gairdens – no that they're no just by-ordinar' for shrubs and floorin' plants frae a' lands – walkin' and haverin' in the gairdens on the Sawbath day, a' smilin' and heedless, just on the vairge o' happiness. Saw ye ever the like? It's juist fearsome.'

Upon the lady portion of the family, the city with its shops, parks, and inhabitants made a more favourable impression.

Mr. Sternworth was untiring in showing them, in the excursions which Mrs. Effingham and the girls made under his guidance, the beauties of the city. They wandered much in the lovely public gardens, to Mrs. Effingham's intense delight, whose love of flowers was, perhaps, her strongest taste. They drove out on the South Head road, and duly noted the white-walled mansions, plunged deeply in such luxuriant flower-growth as the Northern strangers had rarely yet beheld. Wonderfully gracious seemed the weather. It was the Australian spring with air as soft

and balmy as that of Italy in her fairest hours.

How enjoyable was that halt between two stages of existence! Daily, as they rose from the morning meal, they devoted themselves to fresh rambles around the city, under the chaperonage of the worthy person. They commenced to feel an involuntary exhilaration. The pure air, the bright days, the glowing sun, the pleasant sea-breeze, combined to cause an indefinable conviction that they had found a region formed for aid and consolation.

The streets, the equipages, the people, presented, it is true, few of the contrasts, to their English experience, which a foreign town would have afforded. Yet was there the excitement, strong and vivid, which arises from the first sight of a strange land and an unfamiliar people.

'This town has a great look of Marseilles,' said Wilfred, as they loitered, pleasantly fatigued, towards their temporary home in the deepening twilight. 'The same white, balconied, terraced houses of pale freestone; the southern climate, the same polyglot water-side population, only the Marseilles quay might be stowed away in a hundred corners of this wonderful harbour; and the people – only look at them – have a Parisian tendency to spend their evenings in the streets. I suppose the mildness of the climate tends to it.'

'This kind of thing, I suppose, strikes you sharply at first,' said Mr. Sternworth; 'but my eyes have become so accustomed to all the aspects of my little world, that I cannot see much difference

between it and many English places I have known in my day. The variations noted at first have long since disappeared; and I feel as much at home as I used to do at Bideford, when I was quartered there with the old regiment.'

'But surely the people must be different from what they are in England,' said Beatrice. 'The country is different, the trees, the plants – how beautiful many of them are! – and the climate; surely all this must tend to alter the character or the appearance of the people.'

'It may in a few centuries have that effect, my dear young lady,' said the old gentleman, 'but such changes are after the fashion of nature's workings, imperceptibly slow. You will agree with me in another year, that many old acquaintances in men and manners are to be met with out here, and the rest present only outward points of divergence.'

The days of restful peace had passed. The valuable freight – to them invaluable – having been safely loaded, Mr. Sternworth unfolded the plan which he had arranged for their journey.

'You are aware,' he said, 'that Warbrok Chase, as the young ladies have decided to call your estate, is more than 200 miles from Sydney. It lies 40 miles beyond Yass, which town is distant 180 miles from the Metropolis. Now, although we shall have railways in good time, there is nothing of the sort yet, and the roads are chiefly in their natural state. I would therefore suggest that you should travel in a roomy horse-waggon, comfortably fitted up, taking a tent with you in which to sleep at night. I have

procured a driver well acquainted with the country, who knows all the camps and stopping-places, and may be depended upon to take you safely to your journey's end.'

'No railways, no coaches,' said Mr. Effingham; 'yours is rather a primitive country, Harley, it must be confessed; but you know what is best for us all, and the weather is so mild that none of us can suffer from the bivouac.'

'I should not have hazarded it if there had been any risk to health,' said the old gentleman, bowing courteously. 'There are coaches, however, and you might reach your destination in four days, after hurried travelling. But the tariff is expensive for so large a party; you would be crowded, or meet unsuitable fellow-travellers, while you could take but little of your luggage with you.'

'I vote for the overland journey,' said Rosamond. 'I am sure it will be quite refreshingly eastern. I suppose Andrew and Jeanie and poor dear Daisy and the dogs and everything can go.'

'Everything and everybody you please but the heavy luggage. Your servants will be able to sleep under a part of the waggon-tilt, which will be comfortable enough at night. The cow will give you milk for your tea. Even the greyhounds may catch you a wallaby or two, which will come in for soup.'

'There could not be a better scheme,' said Wilfred exultingly. 'My dear sir, you are a second father to us. How long do you think it will take us to get to Warbrok altogether?'

'You will have to make up your minds to ten or twelve days'

travelling, I am afraid – say, twenty miles a day. I really believe you will not find it tedious, but, as with your water journey, get quite to like it. Besides, there is one grand advantage, as far as the young ladies are concerned.'

'What is that?' said Annabel, with added interest, but somewhat doleful countenance. 'Is there *any* advantage in travelling like gipsies?'

'It is this, then, my dear girls,' said the old man, bending upon them his clear, kindly beaming eyes, 'that you will make acquaintance with the rougher habitudes (and yet not unduly so) of country life in Australia by this primitive forest journeying. When you arrive at your destination you will therefore be proportionately satisfied with your new residence, because it will represent *a settled home*. Your daily journey will by that time have become a task, so that you will hail the prospect of repose with thankfulness.'

'Is that all?' asked Annabel with a disappointed air. 'Then we are to undergo something dreadful, in order that something only disagreeable may not look so bad after it. Is all Australian life like that? But I daresay I shall die young, and so it won't matter much. Is the lunch nearly ready? I declare I am famishing.'

Every one laughed at this characteristic sequence to Annabel's prophecy, and the matter of the march having been settled, their friend promised to send up the waggon-driver next morning, in order that the proper fittings and the lamps – indispensable articles – and luggage might be arranged and packed. A tent also

was purchased, and bedding, cooking utensils, provisions, etc., secured.

'You will find Dick Evans an original character,' said the parson, 'but I do not know any man in the district so well suited for this particular service. He has been twenty years in Australia, and knows everything, both good and evil, that can be known of the country and people. He is an old soldier, and in the 50th Regiment saw plenty of service. He has his faults, but they don't appear on the surface, and I know him well enough to guarantee that you will be wholly ignorant of them. His manners – with a dash of soldier servant – are not to be surpassed.'

At an hour next morning so soon after dawn that Andrew Cargill, the most incorruptible of early birds, was nearly caught napping, Mr. Dick Evans arrived with two horses and his waggon. The rest of the team, not being wanted, he had left in their paddock at Homebush. He immediately placed the waggon in the most convenient position for general reference, took out his horses, which he accommodated with nose-bags, and with an air of almost suspicious deference inquired of Andrew what he could commence to do in the way of packing.

The two men, as if foreseeing that possible encounters might henceforth take place between them, looked keenly at each other. Richard Evans had the erect bearing of which the recipient of early drill can rarely divest himself. His wiry figure but slightly above the middle height, his clean-shaved, ruddy cheek, his keen grey eye, hardly denoted the fifty years and more which he

carried so lightly.

A faultless constitution, an open-air occupation with habits of great bodily activity, had borne him scatheless through a life of hardship and risk.

This personage commenced with a request to be shown the whole of the articles intended to be taken, gently but firmly withstanding any opinion of Andrew's to the contrary, and replying to his protests with the mild superiority of the attendant in a lunatic asylum. After the whole of the light luggage had been displayed, he addressed himself to the task of loading and securing it with so much economy of space and advantage of position, that Andrew readily yielded to him the right to such leadership in future.

'Nae doot,' he said, 'the auld graceless sworder that he is, has had muckle experience in guiding his team through thae pathless wildernesses, and it behoves a wise man to "jouk and let the jaw gae by." But wae's me, it's dwelling i' the tents o' Kedar!'

Dick Evans, who was a man of few words and strong in the heat of argument, was by no means given to mixing up discussion with work. He therefore kept on steadily with his packing until evening, only requiring from Andrew such help and information as were indispensable.

'There,' said he, as he removed the low-crowned straw hat from his heated brow, and prepared to fill his pipe, 'I think that will about do. The ladies can sit there in the middle, where I've put the tent loose, and use it as a sofy, if they've a mind to. I can

pitch it in five minutes at night, and they can sleep in it as snug as if they had a cottage with them. You and your wife can have the body of the waggon to yourselves at night, and I'll sleep under the shafts. The captain and the young gentlemen can have all the room between the wheels, and nobody can want more than that. I suppose your missis can do what cooking's wanted?'

'Nae doot,' Andrew replied with dignity, 'Mistress Cargill wad provide a few bits o' plain victual. A wheen parritch, a thocht brose, wad serve a' hands better than flesh meat, and tea or coffee, or siccan trash.'

'Porridge won't do for me,' said the veteran firmly, 'not if I know it. Oatmeal's right enough for you Scotchmen, and not bad stuff either, *in your own country*, but beef and mutton's our tack in Australia.'

'And will ye find a flesher in this "bush," as they ca' it, that we've to push through?' demanded Andrew. 'Wad it no be mair wiselike to keep to victual that we can carry in our sacks?'

'Get plenty of beef and mutton and everything else on the road,' said Mr. Evans, lighting his pipe and declining further argument. 'Don't you forget to bring a frying-pan. I'll take the horses back to the paddock now and be here by daylight, so as we can make a good start.'

It had been arranged by Mr. Sternworth that the boys, as he called them, should set forth in the morning with Evans and the waggon, as also Andrew and Jeanie, taking with them the cow, the dogs, and the smaller matters which the family had

brought. No necessity for Captain Effingham and the ladies to leave Sydney until the second day. He would drive them in a hired carriage as far as the first camp, which Evans had described to him.

They would thus avoid the two days' travel, and commence their journey after the expedition had performed its trial trip, so to speak.

'What *should* we have done without your kind care of us?' said Mrs. Effingham. 'Everything up to this time has been a pleasure trip. When is the hard life that we heard so much of to begin?'

'Perhaps,' said Rosamond, 'Mr. Sternworth is going to be like the brigand in the romances, who used to lure persons from their homes. I have no doubt but that there are "hard times" awaiting us somewhere or somehow.'

'My dear young lady, let me compliment you on your good sense in taking that view of the future. It will save you from disappointment, and fill your mind with a wholesome strength to resist adversity. You may need all your philosophy, and I counsel you to keep it, like armour, well burnished. I do not know of any evil likely to befall you, but that you will have trouble and toil may be taken as certain. Only, after a time, I predict that you will overcome your difficulties, and find yourselves permanently benefited.'

The old gentleman, whose arrangements were as successfully carried out as if he had been the commissary instead of the chaplain of his former regiment, made his appearance on the

following day in a neat barouche drawn by a pair of good-looking bay horses, and driven by a highly presentable coachman.

'Why, it might pass muster for a private carriage,' said Annabel. 'And I can see a crest on the panels. I suppose we shall never own a carriage again as long as we live.'

'This *is* a private carriage, or rather was, once upon a time,' said Mr. Sternworth; 'the horses and the coachman belonged to it. Many carriages were put down last year, owing to a scarcity of money, and my old friend Watkins here, having saved his wages, like a prudent man, bought his master's carriage and horses, and commenced as cab proprietor. He has a large connection among his former master's friends, and is much in demand at balls and other festivities.'

The ex-coachman drove them at a lively pace, but steadily, along a macadamised turnpike road, not so very different from a country lane in Surrey, though wider, and not confined by hedges. The day was fine. On either side, after the town was left behind, were large enclosures, wherein grazed sheep, cattle, and horses. Sometimes they passed an orangery, and the girls were charmed with the rows of dark green trees, upon which the golden fruit was ripe. Then an old-fashioned house, in an orchard, surrounded by a wall – wall and house coloured red, and rusty with the stains of age – much like a farmhouse in Hertfordshire. One town they passed was so manifestly old-fashioned, having even *ruins*, to their delight and astonishment, that they could hardly believe they were in a new country.

'Some one has been playing Rip Van Winkle tricks upon us,' said Rosamond. 'We have been asleep a hundred years, and are come back finding all things grown old and in decay.'

'You must not forget that the colony has been established nearly fifty years,' said Mr. Sternworth, 'and that these are some of the earliest settlements. They were not always placed in the most judicious sites; wherefore, as newer towns have passed them in the race for trade, these have submitted to become, as you see them, "grey with the rime of years," and simulating decay as well as circumstances will permit.'

'Well, I think much more highly of Australia, now that I have seen a *real* ruin or two,' said Annabel decisively. 'I always pictured the country full of hideous houses of boards, painted white, with spinach green doors and windows.'

The afternoon was well advanced as the inmates of the carriage descried the encampment which Mr. Evans had ordered, with some assistance from his military experience. So complete in all arrangements for comfort was it – not wholly disregarding the element of romantic scenery – that the girls cried aloud in admiration.

The streamlet (or creek) which afforded the needful water meandered round the base of a crag, jutting out from a forest-clothed hill. The water-hole (or basin) in the channel of the creek was larger than such generally are, and reflected brightly the rays of the declining sun. The meadow, which afforded space for the encampment, was green, and fertile of appearance. The

waggon stood near the water; the four horses were peacefully grazing. At a short distance, under a spreading tree, the tent had been pitched, while before it was a wood fire, upon which Jeanie was cooking something appetising. Wilfred and his brother were strolling, gun in hand, up the creek; the cow was feeding among the rushes with great contentment; Andrew was seated, meditating, upon a box which he had brought forth from the recesses of the waggon; while Dick Evans, not far from a small fire, upon which stood a camp-kettle at boiling-point, was smoking with an air of conscious pride, as if not only the picturesque beauty, but the personages pertaining to the landscape, belonged to him individually.

'I could not leave you more comfortably provided for,' said their 'guide, philosopher, and friend.' 'Old Dick may be trusted in all such matters as implicitly as the Duke of Wellington. I never knew him at fault yet in this kind of life.'

'You must positively stay and have afternoon tea with us,' exclaimed Annabel. 'It is exactly five, and there is Dick putting a tin cupful of tea into the teapot. What extravagant people you colonists are! I never drank tea in the open air before, but it seems quite the right thing to do. I see Jeanie has made griddle-cakes, like a dear old thing. And I know there is butter. I am so hungry. You *will* stay, won't you?'

'I think, sir,' said the ex-family coachman, looking indulgently at the special pleader, 'that we shall have time to get back to the Red Cow Inn to-night, after a cup of tea, as the young lady wishes

it. I'll run you into town bright and early to-morrow.'

'Very well then, Miss Annabel, I shall have the honour to accept your invitation,' bowed the old man. 'I go away more cheerfully than I expected, now that I leave you all so comparatively snug. It will not be for long. Be sure that I shall meet you on the threshold of Warbrok.'

The *al fresco* meal was partaken of with much relish, even gaiety, after which civilisation – as personified by the reverend gentleman and the carriage – departed. Annabel looked after it ruefully, while Jeanie and Mrs. Effingham took counsel together for the night. It was for the first time in the family history. Never before had the Effinghams slept, so to speak, in the open air. It was a novel adventure in their uneventful lives – a marked commencement of their colonial career. It affected them differently, according to their idiosyncrasies. Rosamond was calmly resolute, Annabel apprehensive, and Beatrice indifferent; the boys in high spirits; Mr. Effingham half in disapproval, despondently self-accusing; while Mrs. Effingham and Jeanie were so fully absorbed in the great bedding question that they had no emotions to spare for any abstract consideration whatever.

The moon, in her second quarter, had arisen lustrous in the pure, dark blue firmament, fire-besprinkled with 'patines of bright gold,' before this important matter (and supper) was concluded. Then it was formally announced that the tent was fully furnished, and had turned out wonderfully commodious. The mattresses were placed upon a layer of 'bush-feathers,' as Dick

Evans called them, and which (the small twigs and leaf-shoots of the eucalyptus) he had impressed Wilfred and his brother to gather. There was a lantern secured to the tent-pole, which lighted up the apartment; and sheets, blankets, coverlets being brought forth, Annabel declared that she was sure they would all sleep like tops, that for her part she must insist on going to bed at once as the keen air had made her quite drowsy. A dressing-table had been improvised, chiefly with the aid of Mr. Evans' mechanical skill. When the matron and her daughters made their farewell for the night, and closed their canvas portal, every one was of the opinion that a high degree of comfort and effective lodging had been reached.

Mr. and Mrs. Cargill and family retired to the inmost recesses of the upper waggon, where the ends of the tilt, fastened together, protected them. Mr. Effingham and his sons joined Dick Evans at his briskly burning fire, where the old man was smoking and occasionally indulging in a refresher of tea as if he had no intention of going to bed till he reached Warbrok.

'We are having glorious weather to travel in, Evans,' said Mr. Effingham. 'You have been in the service, Mr. Sternworth tells me; what regiment?'

'I was in the old 50th for many a year, Captain,' he said, unconsciously standing erect and giving the salute. 'I served under Sir Hugh Gough in India, where I got this slash from a Mahratta sabre. Didn't seem a hard cut neither; the fellow just seemed to swing his wrist, careless-like, as he rode by, but it was

nigh deep enough to take the "wick" out of me. Their swords was a deal sharper than ours, and their wooden scabbards kept 'em from getting blunt again. I had a great argument with my sergeant about it once,' continued the old man. 'I couldn't a-bear to see our poor chaps sliced up by them razor-edged tulwars, while our regulation swords was a'most too dull to cut through a quilted cotton helment. Ah! them was fine times,' said the old soldier, with so genuine a regret in his tones that Howard Effingham almost believed he had, for the first time in his life, fallen across a noble private, pleased with his profession, and anxious to return to it.

'I have rarely heard a soldier regret the army,' said he. 'But you still retain zeal for the service, I am pleased to find.'

'Well, sir, that's all very well,' said the philosophical man-at-arms; 'but what I was a-thinking of was the "loot." It's enough to bring tears into a man's eyes that served his Queen and country, to think of the things as we passed over. Didn't Jimmy O'Hara and two or three more men of my company get together once and made bold to stick up the priest of one of them temples. No great things either – gold earrings and bangles, and a trifle of gold mohurs, the priest's own. There was a copper-coloured, bronze-looking idol – regular heathen god, or some such cretur – which the priest kept calling out "Sammy" to, or "Swammi." The ugly thing had bright glittering eyes, and Jim wanted to get 'em out badly, but the priest said, "Feringhee wantee like this?" and he picked up a bit of glass, and smiled contempshus like. At

last we left him and "Swammi," eyes and all. I don't ever deserve to have a day's luck, sir, agin, as long as I live.'

'Why so?' said Mr. Effingham, astonished at the high moral tone, which he had not been used to associate with the light infantry man of the period. 'Not for taking the image away, surely?'

'No!' shouted the old man, roused from his ordinary respectful tone. 'But for leavin' him behind! That Sammy, sir, was pure gold, and his eyes was di'monds, di'monds! Think o' that. We left a thousand pound a man behind, because we didn't know gold when we seen it. It will haunt me, sir, to my dying day.'

The boys laughed at the unsentimental conclusion of the veteran's tale. Their father looked grave.

'I cannot approve of the plunder of religious edifices, Evans; though the temptation was too great for soldiers, and indeed for others in those days.'

The chief personages having retired, Mr. Effingham and his sons essayed to make their couch under the waggon.

'It is many a year since I had any experience in this kind of thing,' said he; 'but, if I remember rightly, it was in Spain that I bivouacked last. This locality is not unlike Estramadura. That rocky ravine, with the track running down it, is just where you would have expected to see the muleteer stepping gaily along beside his mules singing or swearing, as the case might be; and they do both with great vigour.'

'I remember Don Pedro, Captain,' said Dick. 'I mind the wine-

skins putty well too. It wasn't bad stuff; but I don't know as dark brandy doesn't come handier if ye wants a stir up. But there's one thing you can't have forgot, Captain, that beats this country holler.'

'You must mean the fleas,' said Effingham; '*they* certainly could not be surpassed. I hope you don't mean to rival them here.'

'Well, I don't deny, Captain, that in some huts, where the people aren't particular, in a sandy country, in summer you will find a few, and likewise them other reptiles, 'specially where there's pine slabs, but in a general way we're pretty clean in this country, and you've no call to be afeard to tackle your blankets.'

'I'm glad to hear it, Evans,' said Effingham, yawning. 'I have no doubt that your camp is always fit for inspection. I think we may say good-night.'

Between the keen air of the forest, and the unwonted exercise, a tendency to drowsiness now set in, which Mr. Effingham and his sons discovered by the time that the blankets were drawn over them. The sides of their apartment, represented by the wheels of the waggon, were covered by the canvas tilt, the ceiling was low but sufficient. It was the ideal chamber in one respect. Ventilation was unimpeded, while shelter was secured.

CHAPTER III
THE NEW HOME

When Wilfred awoke from deep untroubled slumber, the sun seemed gazing at the encampment with haughty, fixed regard, as of a monarch, enthroned upon the summit of the purple mountain range.

Unwitting of the lengths (fortunately) to which the unsparing archer could go in Southern lands, he essayed to commence dressing.

Rising hurriedly, he was reminded by a tap on the head from the axle-tree that he was in a bedroom of restricted accommodation. More guarded in his after-movements he crawled outside, first placing on the dewy grass a rug upon which to stand. He commenced his toilette, and cast a comprehensive glance around.

The first thing he saw was the upright form of Richard Evans, who, returning from a search after his hobbled horses, drove them before him towards the camp, at the same time smoking his pipe with a serene and satisfied air. The morning was chilly, but he had not thought a coat necessary, and in a check shirt and moleskin trousers calmly braved an atmosphere not much above forty degrees Fahrenheit.

'This must be a fine climate,' said Wilfred to his father. 'We

shall be well wrapped up till breakfast time, at any rate, and yet that old buffer is wandering about in his shirt-sleeves as if he were in Naples.'

'He is pretty hard-bitten, you may depend,' said Mr. Effingham. 'I think some of our old "die-hards" are as tough samples of humanity as could anywhere be met. I do not uphold the British soldier as a model, but they were men in my time, beyond any manner of doubt.'

Dick marched up his team to the waggon, whence the lodgers had by this time issued – Andrew to make a fire near the tent, and Jeanie to penetrate that sacred enclosure, and presumably to act as tire-woman in the interior.

The shafts, which had served Dick as a sleeping apartment during the night, aided by a shroud of tarpaulin, were uplifted, and bagging being thereon stretched, were converted into a manger for the chaff and maize, which the horses quickly commenced to consume.

Presently Jeanie issued from the tent, and finding the camp-kettle boiling, proceeded to make tea. Andrew, in the meantime, milked the cow. The gridiron was brought into requisition, and certain mutton chops broiled. Eventually Mrs. Effingham and her daughters issued from the tent, fresh and dainty of aspect as if they had just left their bedrooms at The Chase. Then the day commenced, and also breakfast.

'Good-morning, O mother! Hail, O tender maidens! What do you think of camping out?' was Wilfred's greeting, 'Have you

been sitting up weeping, or did you forget everything till daylight, as we did?'

'We all slept like tops,' said Annabel. 'I never was so sleepy in my life. I was almost off before I could undress. I think it's splendid. And oh! what is there for breakfast?'

Grilled chops, smoking cups of tea, with bread and butter, constituted the repast. Worse meals have been eaten. The appetites were, like the travellers, highly respectable. By the time the meal was finished, Mr. Richard Evans had harnessed his team, and bringing himself up to the attitude of 'attention,' requested to know when the ladies would like to make a start.

After consultation, it was notified to their guide and courier that as soon as the tent was struck and the baggage packed, every one would be ready.

The troops being in high health and spirits, in a comparatively short space of time the march was resumed. Wilfred and Guy walked ahead, fowling-piece in hand. Andrew drove the cow, which followed quietly in the rear. The coupled greyhounds looked eagerly around, as if sensible that they were now in hunting country. They were with difficulty restrained when a wallaby, in two bounds, crossed the road and disappeared in an adjoining scrub.

The dry air was pure and fresh, the unclouded sky blue as a sapphire dome, the winding forest road free from all impediment but an occasional ledge of sandstone. If there is any portion of the day 'when the poor are rich in spirits and health,' when

the heart of youth stirs, when age is soothed with dreams of happiness, it is in that sweetest hour which follows the early morning meal in rural Australia. Dawn is austere, mid-day often sultry, but nowhere will he, whose heart and intelligence respond alike gratefully to that charmed time, find its inspirations more invigorating than in the early summer of Australia. Then the fortunate traveller experiences coolness without cold, and warmth without the heat which produces lassitude.

As the waggon rolled easily along, the horses stepping cheerily on the track, the wayfarers paced over the unwonted herbage with an alertness of mien which would have suggested a very different history.

'How lovely the shrubs are that we see in all directions!' said Mrs. Effingham. 'What should we have given for that golden flowering mimosa at The Chase, or this blue-leaved, pink pointed tree, which I suppose must be a young eucalyptus. Here they are so common that no one heeds them, and yet there are rare plants enough to set up a dozen greenhouses.'

'Everything is so utterly different,' said Rosamond. 'I am most agreeably surprised at the landscape. What erroneous ideas one has of far countries! I suppose it is because we seldom feel sufficient interest to learn about them thoroughly. I pictured Australia a sandy waste, with burned-up reedy grass, and a general air of the desert. Now, here we have woods, a pretty little brook rippling by, rocks and hills, and in the distance a mountain. I could make quite an effective sketch.'

'The country isn't all like this, Miss,' said Dick Evans, with a deferential air. 'If you was to go two or three hundred miles into the bush, there's no timber at all; you'ld find it all sand and salt-bushes – the curiousest place ever you see.'

'How can it be the "bush,"' inquired Wilfred, 'if there are no trees? But we are not going so far, at any rate.'

'Finest grazing land out,' said Richard the experienced. 'All the stock rolling fat – no trouble in looking after 'em. If I was a young gentleman, that's the place I'd make for. Not but what Warbrok's a pleasant spot, and maybe the young ladies will like it better than the plains.'

'I fancy we all shall, Richard,' said Rosamond. 'The plains may be very well for sheep and cattle, but I prefer a woodland country like this. I suppose we can have a garden there?'

'Used to be the best garden in all the country-side, Miss, but the Warleighs were a wild lot; they let everything go to wrack. The trees and bushes is mostly wore out, but the sile's that good, as a handy man would soon make it ship-shape again.'

'What are we to do for lunch?' said Annabel, with some appearance of anxiety. 'If we are to go on roaming over the land from sunrise to sunset without stopping, I shall die of hunger – I'm sure I shall. I keep thinking about those cakes of Jeanie's.'

'My dear child,' said her mother, 'I daresay we shall manage to feed you and the rest of the flock. I am pleased to find that you have such a famous appetite. To be sure, you have not stopped growing yet, and this fresh air acts as a tonic. So far, we must not

complain of the climate.'

'It's only a few miles furder on, ma'am, to the King Parrot Waterhole, where we can stop in the middle of the day, and have a bit to eat if the young ladies is sharp-set. I always stop on the road and feed my horses about twelve o'clock. And if the young gentlemen was to walk on, they might shoot a pair of ducks at the waterhole, as would come in handy for the pot.'

When about mid-day they reached the King Parrot Waterhole, a reed-fringed pool, about as large as their English horse-pond, they found Wilfred in possession of a pair of the beautiful grey-breasted wood-ducks (*Anas Boscha*), a teal, with chestnut and black feathers and a brilliant green neck, also a dark-furred kangaroo, which Dick pronounced to be a rock wallaby.

'Australia isn't such a bad place for game,' said Guy. 'We found the ducks swimming in the pool, three brace altogether, and "Damsel" caught this two-legged hare, as she thought it, as it was making up that stony hill. *I* like it better than Surrey.'

'We shall find out ever so many interesting things,' said Rosamond. 'I shall never feel thankful enough to that good old Professor Muste for teaching me the small bit of botany that I know. Now, look at this lovely Clianthus, is it not enough to warm the heart of a Trappist? And here is that exquisite purple Kennedya, which ought, in an Australian novel, to be wreathed round the heroine's hat. Do my eyes deceive me, or is not that a white heath? I must dig it up.'

'I believe, Rosamond, that you could comfort yourself on

Mount Ararat,' said Annabel. 'Why, it will be *ages* before those ducks can be picked and roasted. Oh, Jeanie, Jeanie, can't we have them before tea-time? I wish I had never seen them.'

'If you like, you can help me take off the feathers, and spare Jeanie's everlastingly busy fingers,' said Beatrice.

Here Annabel looked ruefully at her tiny, delicate hands, with a child's pout.

'Oh, it's no use looking at your pretty hands,' said the more practical Beatrice. 'This is the land of work, and all who can't make themselves useful will be treated like the foolish virgins in the parable. It always makes me smile when that chapter is read. I can fancy Annabel holding out her lamp, with an injured expression, saying, "Well, nobody told me it was time to get ready."'

'Beatrice, my daughter,' said Mrs. Effingham gravely, 'sacred subjects are not befitting matter for idle talking; dispositions vary, and you may remember that Martha was not praised for her anxiety to serve.'

At mid-day the kettle bubbled on the fire, kindled by the ever-ready Richard, cakes and sandwiches were handed round, the tea – thanks to Daisy – was gratefully sipped.

The sun shone brightly on the green flat, where the horses grazed in peace and plenty. The birds chirped and called at intervals; all Nature seemed glad and responsive to the joyous season of the southern spring.

Thus their days wore on, in peaceful progression, alike

free from toil, anxiety, or adventure. The daily stage was accomplished, under Dick's experienced direction, without mistake or misadventure. The evening meal was a time of rest and cheerful enjoyment, the night's slumbers refreshing and unbroken.

'What a delightful country this is! I feel quite a new creature, especially after breakfast,' exclaimed Annabel one morning. 'I could go on like this for months, till we reached the other side of the continent, if there is any other side. Will it be as nice as this, I wonder, at Malbrook, or Warbrok, or whatever they call it? Warbrok Chase won't look so bad on our letters, when we write home. I must send a sketch of it to cousin Elizabeth, with a bark cabin, of course. She will never believe that we have a real house to live in among the backwoods. What sort of a house is it, Dick? Is it thatched and gabled and damp and delightful, with dear little diamond casements like the keeper's lodge, or is it a horrid wooden barn? Tell me now, there's a dear old man!'

'We shall be there, Miss, the day after to-morrer, please God,' responded Dick with respectful solemnity. 'Parson Sternworth said I was to say nought about the place, but let it come on you suddent-like. And I'm a man as is used to obey orders.'

'Very well, you disagreeable old soldier,' said the playful maiden. 'I'll be even with you and the parson, as you call him. See if I don't.'

'Sorry to disobleege you, Miss Anniebell,' said the veteran, 'but if my old General, Sir Hugh Gough, was to come and

say, "Corporal Richard Evans, hand me over the chart of the country," I should have to tell him that he hadn't got the countersign.'

'And quite right too, Evans,' interposed Mr. Effingham, 'to keep up your good old habits in a new country. Discipline is the soul of the army.'

'I was allers taught *that*, sir,' replied Dick, with an air of military reminiscence which would have befitted a veteran of the Great Frederick. 'But when we reaches Warbrok my agreement's out with the Parson, and Miss can order me about all day.'

In spite of Annabel's asseverations that the party would never reach the spot indicated, and that she believed there never was any such place, but that Dick would lead them into a trackless forest and abandon them, the journey ended about the time specified. A rugged track, indeed, one afternoon tried their patience. The horses laboured, the docile cow limped and lagged, the girls complained, while Andrew's countenance became visibly elongated.

At length Dick Evans's wooden facial muscles relaxed, as halting on the hardly-gained hill-top he pointed with his whip-handle, saying simply, 'There's Warbrok! So the young ladies and gentlemen can see for theirselves.'

How eagerly did the whole party gaze upon the landscape, which now, in the clear light of the Southern eve, lay softly in repose before them!

The character of the scenery had changed with the wondrous

suddenness peculiar to the land in which they had come to dwell. A picture set in a frame of forest and unfriendly thickets! Now before their eyes came with magical abruptness a vision of green slopes, tall groves, and verdurous meadows. It was one of nature's forest parks. Traces of the imperfect operations of a new country were visible, in felled timber, in naked, girdled trees, in unsightly fences. But nature was in bounteous mood, and had heightened the contrast with the barren region they had over-passed, by a flushed abundance of summer vegetation. This lavish profusion of herb and leaf imparted a richness of colouring, a clearness of tone, which in a less favourable season of the year Warbrok must perceptibly have lacked.

'Oh, what a lovely, lovely place!' cried Annabel, transported beyond herself as she stood on tip-toe and gazed rapturously at the scene. 'Those must be the Delectable Mountains. Dick, you are a Christian hero [the old man smiled deprecatingly], I forgive you on the spot. And there is the house, a *real* house with two storeys – actually two – I thought there were only cottages up the country – and an orchard; and is that a blue cloud or the sea? We must have turned round again. Surely it can't be *our lake*? That would be too heavenly, and those glorious mountains beyond!'

'That's Lake William, miss, called after His Gracious Majesty King William the Fourth,' explained Dick, accurate and reverential. 'Fourteen miles long and seven broad. You'll find the house big enough, but it's a long way from being in good order; and it's a mercy there's a tree alive in the orchard.'

'Oh, never mind, we'll soon put things to rights, won't we, mamma? And what splendid creatures those old trees will be when they come out in leaf. I suppose it's too early in the spring yet?' continued she.

'Dead – every one of 'em, miss,' explained their conductor. 'They've been ring-barked, more's the pity. They was beauties when I knowed 'em fust, before the blessed tenants was let ruinate everything about the place. I wonder there's a stone of the house standing, that I do. And now, sir, we'll get on, and the young ladies can have tea in their own parlour, if my old woman's made a fire, accordin' to orders.'

The hearts of the more reflective portion of the party were too full for comment, so Annabel's chatter was allowed to run on unchecked. A feeling of despondency had been gradually stealing over Howard Effingham and his wife, as for the two last stages they had pictured to themselves the toil of building up a home amid the barren solitudes, such as, in their innocence, they thought their new property might resemble. Now, here was a spot in which they might live out their lives with cheerful and contented minds, thankful that 'their lines had fallen in pleasant places'; having reason to hope that their children might dwell in peace and prosperity after them.

'We can never be sufficiently grateful to your dear old friend,' said Mrs. Effingham. 'If he had not in the first place written you that letter, Howard, and afterwards acted upon his opinion so boldly, what might have been our fate?'

'He always used to look after me when we were in the regiment,' said her husband acquiescingly; 'I daresay he'll find a similar pleasure in taking charge of us now. Fortunately for you and the girls, he never married.'

A few miles only needed to be traversed before Mr. Evans triumphantly drove his team through the gate of the dilapidated garden fence surrounding the front of a large old-fashioned stone mansion, with wide verandah and lofty balcony, supported upon freestone pillars. A stout, elderly woman of decided aspect opened the creaking hall door, and casting a searching glance at Mr. R. Evans, made the strangers welcome.

'I'm sure I'm very glad to see you, my lady,' said she, bobbing an antiquated curtsey, 'and you, sir, and the young ladies and gentlemen. I've done all I could to clean up the old barrack of a house; it was that lonesome, and made me frighted with ghosts, as I thought I'd never live to see you all; and Dick here, I knew there was no certainty of, as might have gone to Timor, or the Indies, and never let on a word about it. Please you to come in, my lady.'

'My old woman's temper is none of the best, Captain,' said Dick, stating the fact with philosophical calmness, 'but I'll warrant she's cleaned up as much as any two, and very bad it wanted it when Parson Sternworth brought us over.'

Now that a nearer view was afforded of the demesne and dwelling, it was evident that the place had been long abandoned to natural decay and sordid neglect. The fences were rotten,

gapped, or fallen; the orchard, though the aged trees were high out of the reach of browsing cattle, had been used as a convenient species of stock paddock; the climbers, including a magnificent bignonia and a wistaria, the great laterals of which had erstwhile clothed the verandah pillars with beauty and bloom, were broken and twisted. In the rear of the building all the broken bottles and bones of the land appeared to be collected; while, with windows broken, shutters hanging on a single hinge, doors closing with difficulty, or impossible to open, all things told of the recklessness of ruined owners.

Still, in despite of all deficiencies, the essentials of value could not be overlooked. The house, though naked and desolate of aspect, was large and commodious, promising in its shingled roof and massive stone walls protection against the heat of summer, the cold of winter. The deep black mould needed but ordinary culture to respond generously. The offices might be mouldering and valueless, but the *land* was there, thinly timbered, richly grassed, well adapted for stock of all kinds. And though the gaunt limbs of the girdled trees looked sadly unpicturesque between the front of the house and the lake shore, some had been left untouched, and the grass was all the more richly swarded. The lake itself was a grand indisputable fact. It was deep and fresh, abounding in water-fowl, a priceless boon to dwellers in a climate wherein a lack of rivers and permanent reservoirs is unhappily a distinguishing characteristic.

Let it not be supposed that Wilfred and his mother, the

girls and Jeanie were outside the house all this time. Very promptly had Dick unloaded the household stores, pressing all able-bodied persons, including his wife, into the service, until the commissariat was safely bestowed under shelter. His waggon was taken to the rear, his horses unharnessed, and he himself in a marvellously short space of time enjoying a well-earned pipe, and advising Andrew to bestow Daisy's calf in a dilapidated but still convertible calf-pen, so that his mother might graze at ease, and yet be available for the family breakfast table in the morning.

'The grass here is fust-rate,' he said, in a tone of explanation to Andrew. 'There's been a lot of rain in spring. It's a pity but we had a few good cows to milk. It would be just play for you and me and the young master in the mornings. Teach him to catch hold like and learn him the use of his hands.'

'*Him* milk!' exclaimed Andrew, in a tone of horrified contempt. 'And yet – I dinna say but if it's the Lord's will the family should ha' been brocht to this strange land, it may be no that wrang that he should labour, like the apostles, "working with his hauns." There's guid warrant for't.'

Meanwhile, inside the house important arrangements were proceeding. The sitting-room, a great, bare apartment, had an ample fireplace, which threw out a genial warmth from glowing logs. There was a large, solid cedar table, which Mrs. Evans had rubbed and polished till the dark red grain of the noble wood was clearly visible. Also a dozen *real* chairs, as Annabel delightedly observed, stood around, upon which it was possible to enjoy

the long-disused comfort of sitting down. Of this privilege she promptly availed herself.

The night-draperies were disposed in the chief bedchamber, though until the arrival of the furniture it was apparent that the primitive sleeping accommodation of the road would need to be continued. Mr. Effingham and his sons were luxuriously billeted in another apartment, where, after their axle-tree experiences, they did not pity themselves.

Andrew and his family were disposed of in the divisions of the kitchen, which, in colonial fashion, was a detached building in the rear. Mr. and Mrs. Evans had, on their previous entry on the premises, located themselves in an outlying cottage (or hut, as they called it), formerly the abode of the dairyman, where their possessions had no need of rearrangement. Even the dogs had quarters allotted to them, in the long range of stabling formerly tenanted by many a gallant steed in the old extravagant days of the colony, when unstinted hospitality and claret had been the proverbial rule at Warbrok.

'Oh dear!' exclaimed Annabel from her chair, 'what a luxurious feeling it is to be once more in a *home* of one's own! Though it's a funny old place and must have been a tempting refuge for ghosts wandering in search of quarters. And then to think that to-morrow morning we shall not have to move on, for ever and ever. I was beginning to get the least bit tired of it; were not you, mamma? Though I would have died sooner than confess it.'

'Words cannot describe how thankful I am, my dear child,' said her mother, 'that we have had the good fortune to end this land journey so well. It is the first one of the kind I ever undertook, and I trust it will be the last. But let us remember in our prayers to-night *whose* hand has shielded us from the perils of the deep, and whatever dangers we may have escaped upon the land.'

'I feel as if we had all been acting a charade or an extended *tableau vivant*,' said Rosamond. 'Like you, Annabel, dear, I am not sorry that the theatricals are over, though the play has been a success so far. It has no more nights to run, fortunately for the performers. Our everyday life will commence to-morrow. We must enter upon it in a cheerful, determined spirit.'

'I cannot help fancying,' said Beatrice, 'that colonial travellers enjoy an unnecessary amount of prestige, or some experiences must differ from ours. We might have had a Dick who would have lost his horses or overturned the waggon, and bushrangers (there *are* bushrangers, for I saw in a paper that Donohoe and his gang had "stuck-up," whatever that means, Mr. Icely's drays and robbed them) might have taken us captive. We have missed the romance of Australian life evidently.'

Howard Effingham felt strangely moved as he walked slowly forth at dawn. He watched the majestic orb irradiate the mist-shrouded turrets of the great mountain range which lay to the eastward. Endless wealth of colour was evoked by the day-god's kiss, softly, stealingly, suffusing the neutral-tinted dome, then

with magical completeness flashing into supernal splendour. The dew glistened upon the vernal greensward. The pied warbler rolled his richest notes in flute-like carol. The wild-fowl, on the glistening mirror of the lake, swam, dived, or flew in playful pursuit. The bracing air was unspeakably grateful to Howard Effingham's rurally attuned senses. Amid this bounty of nature in her less sophisticated aspects, his heart swelled with the thought that much of the wide champaign, the woodland, and the water, over which his eye roamed wonderingly, called him master. He saw, with the quick projection of a sanguine spirit, his family domiciled once more with comfort and security. And not without befitting dignity, so long despaired of. He prized the ability to indulge again the disused pursuits of a country life. Though in a far land, among strange people, separated by a whole ocean from the scenes of his youth and manhood, he now felt for the first time since the great disaster that contentment, even happiness, was possible. Once more he felt himself a country gentleman, or at the least an Australian squire. With the thought he recalled the village chimes in their lost home, and his wife's reference of every circumstance of life to the special dispensation of a benign, overruling Providence occurred to him. With unconscious soliloquy he exclaimed, 'I have not deserved this; God be merciful to me a sinner!'

Dick Evans, with his horses, now appeared upon the scene, bells, hobbles, and all. He bore every appearance of having been up at least two hours.

'What a wonderful old fellow that is!' said Wilfred, who had joined his father; 'day or night seems alike to him. He is always hard at work at something or other – always helpful and civil, apparently good at a score of trades, yet military as a pipe-clayed belt. Mr. Sternworth admitted that he had faults, but up to this time we have never discovered them.'

'If he has none, he is such an old soldier as I have never met,' said his father mildly. 'Longer acquaintance will, I suppose, abate his unnatural perfection. But, in any case, we must keep him on until we are sufficiently acclimatised to set up for ourselves.'

'Quite so, sir! We cannot have our reverend mentor always at beck and call. We want some one here who knows the country and its ways. Guy and I will soon pick up the lie of the land, as he calls it, but at present we are all raw and ignorant together.'

'Then we had better engage him at once. I suppose he can tell us the proper wages.'

'Very possibly; but now I think of it, sir, hadn't you better delegate the executive department to me? Of course to carry out your instructions, but you might do worse than appoint me your responsible minister.'

'My boy!' said Effingham, grasping his son's hand, 'I should have made the suggestion if you had not anticipated me. I cheerfully yield the management to you, as you will have the laborious part of the work. Many things will need to be done, for which I am unfit, but which you will gradually master. I fully trust you, both as an example to Guy and Selden, and the guardian of

your mother and sisters.'

'As God will help me in my need, they will need no other,' replied the eldest son. 'So far I have led a self-indulgent life. But the spur of necessity (you must admit) has been wanting. Now the hour has come. You never refused me a pleasure; trust me to fulfil every duty.'

'I never have doubted it, my boy! I always knew that higher qualities were latent in your nature. As you say, the hour has come. We were never laggards when the trumpet-call sounded. And now, let us join the family party.'

As they reached the house, from which they had rambled some distance, the sun was two hours high, and the smoke issuing from the kitchen chimney denoted that culinary operations were in progress. At that moment a serviceable-looking dogcart, drawn by a wiry, roan horse, trotted briskly along the track from the main road, and in drawing up, displayed in the driver the welcome presentment of the Rev. Harley Sternworth.

'How do, Howard? How are you, Wilfred, my boy? Welcome to Warbrok – to Warbrok Chase, that is. I shall learn it in time. Very proper addendum; suits the country, and gratifies the young ladies' taste. Thought I'd catch you at your first breakfast. Here, Dick, you old rascal – that is, you deserving veteran – take Roanoke.'

The somewhat decided features of the old army chaplain softened visibly as, entering the bare uncarpeted apartment, he descried Mrs. Effingham and her daughters sitting near the

breakfast table, evidently awaiting the master of the house. His quick eye noticed at once the progress of feminine adaptation, as well as the marked air of comfort produced with such scanty material.

He must surely have been gratified by the sensation he produced. The girls embraced him, hanging upon his words with eagerness, as on the accents of the recovered relative of the melodrama. Mrs. Effingham greeted him with an amount of warmth foreign to her usual demeanour. The little ones held up their faces to be kissed by 'Uncle Harley.'

'We are just going to have our first breakfast,' said Annabel. 'Sit down this very minute. Haven't we done wonders?'

Indeed, by the fresh, morning light, the parlour already looked homelike and attractive. The breakfast table, 'decored with napery,' as Caleb Balderstone phrased it, had a delicately clean and appetising appearance. A brimming milk jug showed that the herbage of Warbrok had not been without its effect upon their fellow-passenger from the Channel Islands. A goodly round of beef, their last roadside purchase, constituted the *pièce de résistance*. A dish of eggs and bacon, supplied by Mrs. Evans, whose poultry travelled with her everywhere, and looked upon the waggon as their home, added to the glory of the repast. A large loaf of fresh bread, baked by the same useful matron, stood proudly upon a plate, near the roadside tea equipage, and a kettle like a Russian *samovar*. Nor was artistic ornamentation wholly absent. Annabel had fished up a broken vase from a lumber

room, which, filled with the poor remnants of the borders, 'where once a garden smiled,' and supplemented with 'wild buttercups and very nearly daisies,' as she described the native flora, made an harmonious contribution.

Before commencing the meal, as Mr. Effingham took his seat at the head of his own table once more, humble as were the surroundings, his wife glanced at the youngest darling, Blanche. She ran across to a smaller table covered with a rug, and thence lifting off a volume of some weight, brought it to their guest. His eyes met those of his old comrade and of her his life's faithful companion. The chaplain's eyes were moistened, in despite of his efforts at composure. What recollections were not summoned up by the recurrence of that simple household observance? His voice faltering, at first, with genuine emotion, Harley Sternworth took the sacred volume, and read a portion, before praying in simple phrase, that the Great Being who had been pleased to lead the steps of His servants to this far land, would guide them in all their ways, and prosper the work of their hands in their new home. 'May His blessing be upon you all, and upon your children's children after you, in this the land of our adoption,' said the good priest, as he arose in the midst of the universal amen.

'Do you know that it was by no means too warm when I left Yass at daylight this morning? This is called a hot climate. But in our early summer we have frosts sometimes worthy of Yorkshire. Yesterday there was rather a sharp one. We shall have rain again

soon.'

'Oh, I hope not,' said Annabel. 'This is such lovely, charming weather. So clear and bright, and not at all too warm. I should like it to last for months.'

'Then, my dear young lady, we should all be ruined. Rain rarely does harm in this country. Sometimes there are floods, and people who live on meadowlands suffer. But the more rain the merrier, in this country at least. It is a land of contradictions, you know. Your Lake William, here, will never overflow, so you may be easy in your minds, if it rains ever so hard.'

'And what does my thoughtful young friend, Rosamond, think of the new home?' inquired the old gentleman, looking at her with affectionate eyes.

'She thinks, Uncle Sternworth, that nothing better for us all could have been devised in the wide world, unless the Queen had ordered her Ministers to turn out Sir Percy de Warrenne and put us in possession of Old Court. Even that, though Sir Percy is a graceless kinsman, might not have been so good for us, as making a home for ourselves here, out of our own heads, as the children say.'

'And you are quite satisfied, my dear?'

'More than satisfied. I am exulting and eager to begin work. In England I suffered sometimes from want of occupation. Here, every moment of the day will be well and usefully employed.'

'And Miss Beatrice also approves?'

'*Miss* Beatrice says,' replied that more difficult damsel, who

was generally held to be reserved, if not proud, 'she would not have come to Australia if it could have been helped. But having come, supposes she will not make more useless lament than other people.'

'Beatrice secretly hates the country, I know she does,' exclaimed Annabel, 'and it is ungrateful of her, particularly when we have such a lovely place, with a garden, and a lake, and mountains and sunsets, and everything we can possibly want.'

'I am not so imaginative as to expect to live on mountains and sunsets, and I must confess it will take me a long time to become accustomed to the want of *nearly* all the pleasures of life, but I suppose I shall manage to bear up my share of the family burdens.'

'You have always done so hitherto, my dear,' said Mrs. Effingham; 'but you are not fond of putting forward your good deeds – hardly sufficiently so, as I tell you.'

'Some one has run away with Beatrice's share of vanity,' said Rosamond. 'But we must not stay talking all the morning. I am chief butler, and shall have to be chief baker too, perhaps, some day. I must break up the meeting, as every one has apparently breakfasted.'

'And I must have a serious business conversation with your father and Wilfred,' said Mr. Sternworth. 'Where is the study – the library, I mean? Not furnished yet! Well, suppose we adjourn to the ex-drawing-room. It's a spacious apartment, where the late tenant, a practical man, used to store his maize. There is a deal

table, for I put it there myself. Guy, you may as well ask Dick Evans to show you the most likely place for wild-fowl. Better bring chairs, Wilfred. We are going to have a “sederunt,” as they say in Scotland.’

CHAPTER IV
MR HENRY O'DESMOND OF BADAJOS

'Now, Howard, my young friend!' said the worthy man, as they settled themselves at a small table, near a noble mantelpiece of Australian gray marble, curiously marked with the imprints of the fossil encrinite, 'I address you as I used to do in our army days, for, with regard to money matters, I feel sure you are as young as ever. In the first place, I must render an account of my stewardship. Observe, here is the conveyance to you and your heirs for ever of the estate of Warbrok, a Crown grant to Colonel Rupert Falkland Warleigh, late of Her Majesty's 80th Regiment, dated as far back as 1805, comprising 5174 acres, 1 rood, 3 perches, by him devised in equal shares to his sons – Randal, Clement, and Hubert. It was not entailed, as were most of the early grants. They fell away from the traditions of the family, and lived reckless, dissipated lives. Their education was neglected – perhaps not the best example exhibited to them by the old Colonel – he was always a gentleman though – what wonder the poor boys went wrong? They came to be called the "Wild Warleighs of Warbrok." At last the end came. Hopelessly in debt, they were forced to sell. Here are their signatures, duly attested. Your purchase money, at the rate of 10s. per acre – a low price,

but ready money was very scarce in the colony at the time – amounted to £2587:5s., mentioned as the consideration. Out of your draft for £3000 remained, therefore, £412:15s.; expenses and necessary farm work done, with wages to Dick Evans and his wife, have amounted to £62:7s. This includes the ploughing and sowing of a paddock – a field you would call it – of 20 acres of wheat, as the season had to be availed of. I hand you a deposit receipt for £350:8s., lodged to your credit in the Bank of New Holland, at Yass, where I advise you to place the rest of your capital, and I thereby wash my hands of you, pecuniarily, for the present.'

'My dear old friend,' said Effingham, 'it is not for the first time that you have pulled me through a difficulty, though never before did we face one like this. But how comes it that I have money to receive? I thought the draft of £3000 would barely suffice to pay for the estate.'

'You must know that I transacted this piece of business through a solicitor, a shrewd man of business, who kept my counsel, making no sign until the property was put up to auction. The terms being cash, he had a decided advantage, and it was not known until after the sale, for whom he had purchased. So the Warleighs having retired, we must see what the Effinghams will make of it.'

'There will be no riotous living, at any rate,' said Wilfred; 'and now, as you have done with the Governor, please advise me as to our future course. I am the duly-appointed overseer – I believe

that is the proper title – and intend to begin work this very day.'

'Couldn't do better. We may as well call Dick Evans into council. He was hired by me at 18s. per week, with board and lodging. For this wage he engaged to give his own and wife's services, also those of his team and waggon. The wages are under the ordinary rate, but he explained that his horses would get fat here, and that he liked being employed on a place like Warbrok, and under an ex-officer in Her Majesty's service. I should continue the engagement for a few months, at all events; you will find him most useful.'

'Up to this time he has been simply perfect,' said Wilfred. 'It's a pleasure to look at such an active worker – so respectful, too, in his manner.'

'Our experience of the Light Infantry man, Howard,' said Mr. Sternworth, 'must prevent us from fully endorsing Wilfred's opinion, but Dick Evans is a good man; at all country work better, indeed, than most of his class. Let us hear what he says.'

Probably anticipating some such summons he was not far off, having returned from showing Guy a flock of wild-fowl. He walked into the room and, saluting, stood at ease, as if such a thing as a chair had never been by him encountered in the whole course of existence.

'Corporal Evans! – pshaw! that is, Dick,' said the worthy ex-military priest, 'I have sent for you to speak to Captain Effingham, and Mr. Wilfred, who is to be farm manager and stock overseer. I have told them that you are the very man for

the place, when you behave yourself.' Here the keen grey eyes looked somewhat sternly at Mr. Evans, who put on a look of mild surprise. 'Are you willing to hire for six months at the same rate of wages, with two rations, at which I engaged you? You will work your team, I know, reasonably; and Mrs. Evans will wash and help the ladies in any way she can?'

'Well, Mr. Chaplain, the wages is not too high,' replied Evans, 'but I like the place, and my horses knows the run, and does well here. *You* know I like to serve a gentleman, 'specially one that's been in the service. I'll stay on at the same rate for six months.'

'Well, that's settled. Now, let us have a talk about requirements. How to use the grass to the best advantage?'

'There's no better place in the country-side for dairying,' said Dick, addressing himself to his clerical employer, as alone capable of understanding the bearings of the case; 'it's a wonderful fine season, and there's a deal of grass going to waste. There's stray cattle between here and the other end of the lake as will want nothing better than to clear it all off, as they're used to do, if we're soft enough to let 'em. Many a good pick they've had over these Warbrok flats, and they naturally looks for it again, 'specially as there's a new gentleman come as don't know the ways of the country. Now, what I should do, if I was the master, would be to buy two or three hundred mixed cattle – there's a plenty for sale just now about Yass – and start a dairy. We might make as much butter between now and Christmas as would pay middlin' well, and keep other people's cattle from coming on

the place and eating us out of house and home, in a manner of speakin'.'

'Good idea, Richard,' said Mr. Sternworth; 'but how about the yard and cowshed? It's nearly all down, and half-rotten. Mr. Effingham doesn't want to engage fencers and splitters, and have all the country coming here for employment.'

'There's no call for that, sir,' said the many-sided veteran. 'I had a look at the yard this morning. If I had a man to help me for a fortnight I'll be bound to make it cattle-proof with a load of posts and rails, that I could run out myself, only we want a maul and wedges.'

'I'll be your man,' said Wilfred, 'if that's all that's necessary. I may as well learn a trade without delay. Andrew can help, too, I daresay.'

'*He's* not much account,' quoth Dick disdainfully. 'He thinks he knows too much already. These new hands – no offence to you, sir – is more in the way than anything else. But if you'll buckle to, sir, we'll soon make a show.'

'I know a stock agent who can get the exact cattle you want,' said Mr. Sternworth. 'He told me that Mr. O'Desmond had a hundred young cows and heifers for sale. They are known to be a fine breed of cattle.'

'The best in the country,' said Dick. 'Old Harry O'Desmond never had any but right down good horses, cattle, and sheep at Badajos, and if we give a little more for them at the start it will be money saved in the end. He's the man to give us an extra good

pick, when he knows they're for an officer and a gentleman.'

'Our friend Richard has aristocratic notions, you observe,' said the parson, smiling. 'But Harry O'Desmond is just the man to act as he says. You will do well to treat with him.'

'Only too happy,' said Effingham. 'Everything arranges itself with surprising ease, with your aid. Is this kind of settling made easy to go on for ever? It was almost a pity we took the voyage at all. You might have made our fortunes, it seems to me, as a form of recreation, and left us to receive the profits in England.'

'And how am I to be paid, you heedless voluptuary, may I ask, if not by the presence of your charming family? Since I've seen them I wouldn't have had the colony lose them for twice the value of the investment. Besides, seriously, if the seasons change or a decline takes place in the stock market you'll need all *your* brains and Wilfred's to keep the ship afloat. Never lose sight of the fact that this is an uncertain land, with a more uncertain climate.'

'It's all right if you don't overstock, sir,' spoke the practical Richard. 'But Mr. Sternworth's right. I mind the '27 drought well. We was forced to live upon kangaroo soup, rice, and maize meal, with marshmallers and "fat hen" for a little salad. But they say the climate's changed like, and myster than it used to be.'

'Climates *never* change in their normal conditions,' said Sternworth positively. 'Any assertion to the contrary is absurd. What has been will be again. Let us make such provision as we can against droughts and other disasters, and leave the rest to Providence, which has favoured this land and its inhabitants so

far.'

'The fences seem dilapidated. Ought they not to be repaired at once?' said Wilfred.

'By degrees, all in good time,' said the old gentleman testily. 'We must not go deeply into "improvements," as they are called here, lest they run away with our money at the commencement of affairs. Dick will explain to you that the cattle can be kept in bounds without fencing for a time. And now I feel half a farmer and half an exhausted parson. So I think I must refresh myself with another look at the lady part of the establishment, have a mouthful of lunch, and start for home.'

'It's a murder you didn't take to farming, sir, like Parson Rocker,' said Dick, with sincere regret in his tones. 'You'd ha' showed 'em whether sojer officers can't make money, though the folks here don't think so.'

'I have my own work, Richard,' said the old gentlemen. 'It may be that there is occasionally rather more of the church militant about me than is prudent. But the town and neighbourhood of Yass will be the better for old Harley Sternworth's labours before we say farewell to one another.'

'I can now leave you all with perfect confidence,' he said after lunch, as Dick Evans brought Roanoke and the dogcart to the door. 'The next time I come I must bring an old friend to pay his respects, but that will not be till the furniture has arrived. I foresee you will make astonishing changes, and turn The Chase into the show mansion of the district. I must bring you some

of my "Souvenirs de Malmaison" and "Madame Charles." "The Cloth of Gold" and others I see you have. I am prouder of my roses than of my sermons, I think. I don't know which require most care in pruning. Good-bye, my dear friends!'

The roan tossed his head, and set off at such a pace along the grass-grown track which led to the main 'down the country' road, as the highway from Yass to Sydney was provincially termed, that it was easy to see he had been making a calculation as to the homeward route. The girls looked after the fast-receding vehicle for a while before recommencing their household tasks. Howard Effingham and his wife walked to and fro along the pleasant sun-protected colonnade of the south verandah. When they separated, little had been said which was free from praise of their tried friend, or from thankfulness to the Almighty Disposer of events, who had shown them His mercy in the day of need.

This eventful colloquy concluded, settled daily employment commenced for all the denizens of The Chase. They rose early, and each one attended to the duties allotted by special arrangement. Breakfast over, Wilfred shouldered an axe and marched off with Dick Evans to some forest tree, to be converted into posts and rails for the fast-recovering dairy-yard.

Andrew had betaken himself to the renovation of the orchard and garden with grateful persistence, as he recalled his earlier feats at the English home of the family, duly thankful for the opportunity of exercising his energies in a direction wherein he could show himself capable.

'It's gra-and soil,' he was pleased to observe, 'and I hae nae doot whatever that I shall be able to grow maist unco-omon vegetables, gin I had some food – that is, manure – to gie the puir things. The trees are sair negleckit and disjaskit, but they'll come round wi' care and the knife. The spring is a thocht advanced, as that auld carle Evans has gi'en me to understand. I winna say he's no auld farrand wi' a' the "bush" ways, as they ca' them, but he's an awfu' slave o' Satan wi' his tongue – just fearsome. But gin ye'll put me a fence round this bit park, Maister Wilfred, I'll show yon folks here that auld Andrew Cargill can grow prize kail in baith hemispheres.'

'We are going to split some palings before we are done,' said Wilfred, smiling at the old man's rounding off of his sentence. 'Then we'll pull this old fence down and take in more ground, so that you may exercise your landscape gardening talent.'

'This bit garden will keep my body employed and my thochts frae unprofitable wanderings, brawly, during this season o' inexperience. Ye see, Maister Wilfred, it wadna become me, as a pairson o' reflection, to da-ash presumptuously into a' matters o' practice, but they canna haud me to obsairve and gather up the ootcome of thae bush maitters, and bide my time a wee, till the day comes when I can take my place at the laird's right hand ance mair.'

'No one will be better pleased than I shall be, Andrew,' said Wilfred, heartily grasping the hand of his faithful servitor. 'I'll no deny that he kens maist things befitting a dweller in the

wilderness. The de'il's aye guid at gifts to his ain folk. But, wae's me, he's lightsome and profane abune a' belief.'

The great event of the year, after all, was the arrival of the drays with the heavy luggage and the furniture reserved from sale.

Joy and thankfulness all too deep for words greeted the welcome wains, promptly unladen, and their inestimable contents brought into the shelter of the wide verandah before unpacking.

'I never could have believed,' said Mrs. Effingham, 'that anything in Australia could have had the power to afford me so much pleasure. The refurnishing of our house at The Chase never produced half such pleasure as I now feel at the prospect of seeing the old tables and chairs, the sideboard, and my dear old davenport again.'

'And the piano!' cried Annabel. 'What a luxury to us, who have been tuneless and songless all these months! Even the morning "scales" would have been better than nothing. I shall really go in for steady practising – I know I never did before. There is nothing like being starved a little.'

'Starving seems to agree with you in a bodily sense,' said Rosamond, 'if I may judge from certain alterations of dresses. But you are right in believing that it gives a wonderful relish for mental food. Look at these two lovely boxes of books. The library was sold, but here are many of our old favourites. How I shall enjoy seeing their faces again!'

'I am certain Jeanie must have *stolen* a quantity of things after the sale,' asserted Beatrice, who had been examining the externals of the packages; 'bedding and curtains, and every kind of thing likely to be useful. I expect my room will be so like the one at the old Chase that I shall never find out the difference of a morning, till I go downstairs and see the verandahs.'

'There are no verandahs in England,' said Guy, who was one of the 'fatigue party,' as Dick expressed it. 'They ought to take a hint from the colonies – stunning places they make on a wet day, or a hot one, I can tell you.'

'Where shall we tek this sideboard, mem?' said Dick Evans, with his ultra-respectful, family-servant intonation.

'Into the dining-room, of course,' screamed the delighted Annabel. 'Why, *every* room in the house will be furnished more or less; it will be quite a palace.'

Willing hands abounded, Mr. Evans in person superintending the opening of the cases, taking care to draw nails in order to fit the boards for future usefulness, so that, very shortly, the whole English shipment was transferred to its final Australian resting-place.

Robinson Crusoe, when he had made the last successful raft-passage and transhipment from the Guinea trader before she went down, could not have been more grateful than our deported friends when the litter and the cases and Dick and Andrew were cleared off, and they were free to gloat over their precious property.

How different the rooms looked! There was an air of comfort and refinement about the well-preserved furniture which was inexpressibly comforting to the ex-dwellers in tents. The large rooms looked perhaps a shade too bare, but in warm climates an Indian non-obtrusion of upholstering is thought becoming. The well-remembered tones of the piano, which glorified an unoccupied corner of the drawing-room, echoed through that spacious apartment, now provided with a carpet almost as good as new, which Jeanie's provident care had abstracted from the schoolroom at The Chase. The dear old round table was there, 'out of mother's morning-room; the engravings from father's study, particularly those favourite ones of "The fighting Temeraire" and "Talavera" – all were here. When the climbers grew up over the verandah pillars, shading the front windows with the purple masses of the wistaria, there might be a prettier room in Sydney, but in the bush they were sure it was unsurpassed.'

Nor were Andrew and Jeanie devoid of personal interest in the arrival of the treasure-waggons. Certain garden tools and agricultural implements, dear to Andrew's practical soul, now gladdened his eyes, also a collection of carefully packed seeds. Besides all these, a rigorously select list of necessaries in good order and preservation, once the pride of his snug cottage, came to hand. For days after this arrival of the Lares and Penates, the work of rearrangement proceeded unceasingly. Mrs. Effingham and Rosamond placed and replaced each

article in every conceivable position. Annabel played and sang unremittingly. Jeanie rubbed and polished, with such anxious solicitude, that table and chair, wardrobe and sideboard, shone like new mahogany. Beatrice had possessed herself of the bookcase, and after her morning share of housekeeping work was performed, read, save at dinner, without stopping until it was time to go for that evening walk which the sisters never omitted.

Once it fell upon a day that a gentleman rode up in leisurely fashion towards the entrance gate. He was descried before he came within a hundred yards, and some trepidation ensued while the question was considered as to who should take his horse, and how that valuable animal should be provided for.

Mr. Effingham, Guy, and Wilfred were away at the stock-yard, which by this time was reported to be nearly in a state of efficiency. Andrew had disappeared temporarily. The gentleman, for such plainly was his rank, was a stalwart, distinguished-looking personage, sitting squarely, and with something of military pose in his saddle. He was mounted upon a handsome, carefully-groomed hackney. He reined up at the dilapidated garden fence, and after looking about and seeing no appearance of an entrance gate, as indeed that portal had been long blocked up by rails, gathered up his reins, and clearing the two-railed fence with practised ease, rode along the grass-grown path to the front door of the house. At the same moment Dick Evans, who had just arrived with a load of palings, appeared from the rear, and took his horse.

The stranger briskly dismounted, and knocked at the hall door with the air of a man who was thoroughly acquainted with the locale. He bowed low to Mrs. Effingham who opened it.

'Permit me to make myself known as Henry O'Desmond, one of your neighbours, my dear madam,' said he, with the high-bred air of a man of the world of fashion, who possesses also the advantage of being an Irishman. 'I presume I am addressing Mrs. Effingham. I have anticipated the proper time for paying my respects; but there has been a matter of business named by my agent, in which I hope to be able to serve Captain Effingham. He is quite well, I trust?'

Mrs. Effingham explained that her husband had been perfectly well that morning; furthermore, if Mr. O'Desmond would give them the pleasure of his company to lunch, he would be enabled to make his acquaintance.

That gentleman bowed with an air of heartfelt gratitude, and asserted that it would give him the sincerest gratification to have such an opportunity of meeting Captain Effingham, to which he had looked forward, since hearing of the good fortune that was about to befall the district, from his respected friend the Rev. Mr. Sternworth.

Being introduced to the young ladies, Mr. O'Desmond, a handsome, well-preserved man, promptly demonstrated that he was capable of entertaining himself and them until his host should think fit to arrive. Indeed, when Mrs. Effingham, who had left the room for reasons connected with the repast, returned,

having captured her husband, and superintended his toilet, she found her daughters and their guest considerably advanced in acquaintance.

'Oh, papa,' said Annabel, 'Mr. O'Desmond says there's such a lovely view about ten miles from here – a ravine full of ferns, actually *full* of them; and a waterfall – a real one! It is called Fern-tree Gorge; and he has invited us all to a picnic there some day.'

'Very happy to make Mr. O'Desmond's acquaintance,' said Effingham, advancing with a recollection of old days strong upon him. 'We are hardly aware yet in what consists the proper proportion of work and play in Australia; and in how much of the latter struggling colonists can indulge. We shall be very grateful for information on the subject.'

'And right welcome you are, my dear sir, to both, especially to the latter. They'll tell you that Harry O'Desmond is not unacquainted with work during the twenty years he has spent in this wild country. But for fun and recreation he'll turn his back on no man living.'

'Here is my lieutenant, and eldest son; permit me to introduce him. He is burning to distinguish himself in the practical line.'

'Then he couldn't have a better drill instructor than my old acquaintance, Dick Evans – wonderfully clever in all bush work, and scrupulous after his own fashion. But, see here now, I came partly to talk about cows, till the young ladies put business clean out of my head. I'm told you want to buy cattle, Mr. Wilfred; if you'll mount your horse and take old Dick with you to-morrow

morning, he'll show you the way to Badajos, and I'll pick you the best hundred cows this day in the country.'

This was held to be an excellent arrangement, and lunch being now proclaimed, a temporary cessation of all but society talk took place. Every one being in the highest spirits, it was quite a brilliant symposium. It was a novel luxury to be again in the society of a pleasant stranger, well read, travelled, and constitutionally agreeable. O'Desmond sketched with humour and spirit the characteristic points of their nearest neighbours; slightly satirised the local celebrities in their chief town of Yass; and finally departed, having earned for himself the reputation of an agreeable, well-bred personage; a perfect miracle of a neighbour, when ill-hap might have made him equally near and unchangeably disagreeable.

'What a delightful creature!' said Annabel. 'Didn't some one say before we left home that there were no gentlemen in Australia – only "rough colonists"? I suppose that English girls will call us "rough colonists" when we've been here a few years. Why, he's like – oh, I know now – he's the very image of the Knight of Gwynne. Fancy lighting on a facsimile of that charming old dear – of course Mr. Desmond is not nearly so old. He's not young though, and takes great care of himself, you can see.'

'He's not so *very* old, Annabel,' said Beatrice mischievously. 'That is the kind of man I should advise you to marry. Not a foolish boy of five-and-twenty.'

'Thank you, Beatrice,' said Annabel, with dignity. 'I'll think

over it and let you know. I don't think it's probable I should ever marry any one only a little older than myself. What could he know? I should laugh at him if he was angry. But Wilfred is going over to Badajos, or whatever is the name of the O'Desmond's place, to-morrow, so he can bring us back a full, true, and particular account of everything, and whether Rosamond, or you, dear, would be the fitter helpmate for him. I'm too young and foolish at present, and might be more so – that is, foolish, not young, of course.'

'I notice that the air of this climate seems to have a peculiar effect upon young people's tongues,' said the soft voice of Mrs. Effingham. 'They seem to run faster here than in England.'

Mr. Desmond's property, Badajos, was nearly twenty miles from Warbrok Chase. As it had been clearly settled that Wilfred should go there on the following day, arrangements had to be made. Dick must accompany him for the double purpose of confirming any selection of cattle. That veteran cheerfully endorsed the idea, averring that now the yard was all but finished, and the fencing stuff drawn in, leave of absence could be well afforded. He therefore put on a clean check shirt, and buckled a pea-jacket in front of his saddle, which he placed upon his old mare, and was ready for the road.

Provided with a stock-whip, taken from his miscellaneous possessions, with lighted pipe and trusty steed, his features wore the expression of anticipated happiness, which distinguishes the schoolboy out for a holiday. He passed Andrew Cargill with an

air of easy superiority, as that conscientious labourer, raising his moistened brow as he delved at the long-untilled beds, could not refrain from a look of astonishment at this new evidence of universal capacity, as he marked Dick's easy seat and portentous whip.

He muttered, 'I wadna doot but that the auld graceless sorrow can ride through braes and thickets, and crack yon muckle clothes-line they ca' a stock-wheep like ony lad. The de'il aye makes his peets o' masterfu' men, wae's me.'

A difficulty arose as to Wilfred's steed. Mr. Sternworth had declined the delicate task of remount agent. Thus The Chase was temporarily unprovided with horseflesh. However, Dick Evans was not a man to be prevented from carrying out a pleasant expedition for want of a horse to ride. Sallying out early, he had run in a lot of the ownerless animals, always to be found in the neighbourhood of unstocked pastures. Choosing from among them a sensible-looking cob, and putting Wilfred's English saddle and bridle on him, he led him up to the garden gate, where he stood with his ordinary air of deep respectability.

'I was just wondering how in the world I was to get a horse,' said Wilfred. 'I see you have one. Did you borrow, or buy, or steal one for my use?'

'I've been many a year in this country, Mr. Wilfred, without tekkin' other people's property, and I'm too old to begin now. But there's 2C on this chestnut pony's near shoulder. I'm nigh sure it's Bill Chalker's colt, as he lost two years ago, and told me to

keep him in hand, if ever I came acrost him.'

'Then I may ride him without risk of being tried for horse-stealing, or lynched, if they affect that here,' said Wilfred gaily. 'I shouldn't care to do it in England, I know.'

'Things is quite different on the Sydney Side,' said Mr. Evans with mild dogmatism.

Wilfred did not consider this assertion to be conclusive, but time pressing, and the ready-saddled horse inviting his approval, he compounded with his conscience by taking it for granted that people were not particular as to strayed horses. The fresh and spirited animal, which had not been ridden for months, but was (luckily for his rider) free from vice, snorted and sidled, but proceeded steadily in the main. He soon settled down to the hand of a fair average horseman.

Noticing fresh objects of interest in each flowering shrub, in the birds that flew overhead, or the strange animals that ever and again crossed their path, about each and all of which his retainer had information to offer, the time did not hang heavily on hand. They halted towards evening before a spacious enclosure, having passed through which, they came upon a roomy cottage, surrounded by a trim orchard, and backed up by farm buildings.

'Here's Badajos, Mr. Wilfred,' said his guide. 'And a better kept place there ain't in the whole country side.'

'Welcome to Badajos, Mr. Effingham,' said the proprietor. 'William, take this gentleman's horse; you know your way, Dick. We'll defer business till the morning. I have had the cattle yarded,

ready for drafting; to-morrow you can choose the nucleus of a good herd. I shall be proud to put you in the way of cattle-farming in the only true way to succeed – by commencing with females of the right kind.'

As Wilfred followed his entertainer into the house, he felt unaffectedly surprised at the appearance of elegance mingled with comfort which characterised the establishment. The rooms were not large, but arranged with an attention of detail which he had not expected to find in a bush dwelling. The furniture was artistically disposed. Books and periodicals lay around. High-class engravings, with a few oil-paintings, which recalled Wilfred Effingham's past life, hung on the walls. Couches and lounges, of modern fashion, looked inviting, while a Broadwood piano stood in the corner of the drawing-room, into which he followed his host.

'I am a bachelor, more's the pity,' said Mr. O'Desmond; 'but there's no law against a little comfort in the wilderness. Will you take some refreshment now? Or would you like to be shown to your room?'

Wilfred accepted the latter proposal. In a very comfortable chamber he proceeded to divest himself of the traces of the road, after a leisurely and satisfactory fashion. He had barely regained the drawing-room, when a gong sounded with a melodiously reminiscent clang.

The dinner was after the fashion of civilised man. Soup and fish, fresh from a neighbouring stream, with meritorious

entrées and entremets, showed skill beyond that of an ordinary domestic. While the host, who had sufficiently altered his attire for comfort, without committing the *bêtise* of out-dressing a guest, as he recommended a dry sherry, or passed the undeniable claret, seemed an embodied souvenir of London, Paris, Vienna, of that world of fortune and fashion which Wilfred was vowed to forsake for ever. Next morning the sun and Mr. W. Effingham arose simultaneously. Dick Evans had anticipated both, and was standing at ease near the stable.

'This place is worth looking at, sir. You don't see nothing to speak of out of order – tidy as a barrack-yard.'

Wonderfully trim and orderly was the appearance of all things. The enclosure referred to was neatly gravelled, and showed not a vagrant straw. The garden was dug, raked, and pruned into orderly perfection. The servants' quarters, masked by a climber-covered trellis, were ornamental and unostentatious. The dog-kennels, tenanted by pointers, greyhounds, collies, and terriers, were snug and spacious. The stables were as neat as those of a London dealer. It was a show establishment.

'Mr. O'Desmond's servants must be attached to him, to work so well,' said Wilfred.

'Humph!' replied the veteran, 'he makes 'em toe the line pretty smart, and quite right too,' he added, with a grim setting of his under jaw. 'He was in the colony afore there was many free men in it. Shall we walk down to the milking-yard, sir?'

The full-uddered shorthorn cows, with their fragrant breath

and mild countenances, having been admired in their clean, paved milking-yard, a return was made towards the cottage. As they neared the garden, O'Desmond rode briskly up to the stable door, and dismounting, threw the reins to a groom, who stood ready as a sentinel.

'The top of the morning to you, Mr. Effingham; I trust you slept well? I have had a canter of a few miles, which will give me an appetite for breakfast. I rode over to the drafting-yards, to make sure that the cattle were there, according to orders. Everything will be in readiness, so that you can drive easily to Warbrok to-night. You can manage that, Dick, can you not?'

'Easy enough, if you'll send a boy with us half-way, Mr. O'Desmond,' replied Dick. 'You see, sir, Mr. Effingham's rather new to cattle-driving, and if the young heifers was to break back, we might lose some of them.'

'Quite right, Dick; you are always right where stock are concerned – that is, the driving of them,' he added. 'I look to you to stay with Mr. Effingham till his dairy herd is established. I shall then have the pleasure of adding his name to that of the many gentlemen in this district whose fortunes I have helped to make.'

'Quite true, sir,' assented Dick heartily. 'The Camden sheep and the Badajos cattle and horses are known all over the country by them as are judges. But you don't want me to be praising on 'em up – they speak for themselves.'

Breakfast over, as faultless a repast as had been the dinner, it

became apparent that Mr. O'Desmond held punctuality nearly in as high esteem as comfort. His groom stood ready in the yard with his own and Wilfred's horses saddled, the shining thoroughbred, which he called his hackney, offering a strong contrast to the unkempt though well-conditioned animal which his guest bestrode.

As they rode briskly along the winding forest track, Wilfred, observing the quality of his host's hackney, the silver brightness of his bit and stirrup-irons, the correctness of his general turnout, remembering also the completeness of the establishment and the character of the hospitality he had enjoyed, doubted within himself whether, in course of time, the owner of Warbrok Chase might ever attain to such a pinnacle of colonial prosperity.

'How incredible this would all appear to some of my English friends!' he thought. 'I can hardly describe it without the fear of being supposed to exaggerate.'

'Here we are,' said O'Desmond, reining up, and dismounting at a substantial stock-yard, while a lad instantly approached and took his horse. 'I have ordered the heifers and young cows to be placed in this yard. We can run them through before you. You can make your choice, and reject any animals below the average.'

'They look rather confused at present,' answered Wilfred; 'but I suppose Dick here understands how to separate them.'

'I'll manage that, never you fear, sir – that is, if you and Mr. O'Desmond have settled about the price.'

'I may state now,' remarked that gentleman, 'that the price,

four pounds per head, mentioned to me on your account by your agent is a liberal one, as markets go. I shall endeavour to give you value in kind.'

'It's a good price,' asserted Dick; 'but Mr. O'Desmond's cattle are cheaper at four pounds all round than many another man's about here at fifty shillings. If he lets me turn back any beast I don't fancy, we'll take away the primest lot of cattle to begin a dairy with as has travelled the line for years.'

'I will give you my general idea of the sort of cattle I prefer,' said Wilfred, not minded to commence by leaving the *whole* management in any servant's hands, 'then you can select such as appear to answer the description.'

'All right, sir,' quoth Mr. Evans, mounting the fence. 'I suppose you want 'em large-framed cattle, good colours, looking as if they'd run to milk and not to beef, not under three, and not more than five year old, and putty quiet in their looks and ways.'

'That is exactly the substance of what I was going to say to you,' said Wilfred, with some surprise. 'It will save me the trouble of explaining.'

'We may as well begin, sir,' said Dick, addressing himself to the proprietor. Then, in quite another tone, 'Open the rails, boys; look sharp, and let 'em into the drafting-yards.'

The cattle were driven through a succession of yards after such a fashion that Wilfred was enabled to perceive how the right of choice could be exercised. By the time the operation was concluded he felt himself to be inducted into the art and mystery

of 'drafting.' Also, he respected himself as having appreciably helped to select and separate the one hundred prepossessing-looking kine which now stood in a separate yard, recognised as his property.

'You will have no reason to be dissatisfied with your choice,' said O'Desmond. 'They look a nice lot. I always brand any cattle before they leave my yard. You will not object to a numeral being put on them before they go? It will assist in their identification in case of any coming back.'

'Coming back! – come back twenty miles?' queried Wilfred, with amazement. 'How could they get back such a distance?'

'Just as you would – by walking it, and a hundred to the back of that. So I think, say, No. 1. brand – they are A1 certainly – will be a prudent precaution.'

'Couldn't do a better thing,' assented Dick. 'We'll brand 'em again when we go home, sir; but if we lost 'em anyway near the place, they'd be all here before you could say Jack Robinson.'

A fire was quickly lighted, the iron brands were heated, the cows driven by a score at a time into a narrow yard, and for the first time in his life Wilfred saw the red-hot iron applied to the hide of the live animal. The pain, like much evil in this world, if intense, was brief; the cows cringed and showed disapproval, but soon appeared to forget. The morning was not far advanced when Wilfred Effingham found himself riding behind a drove, or 'mob' (as Dick phrased it), *of his own cattle*.

'There goes the best lot of heifers this day in the country,' said

the old man, 'let the others be where they may. Mr. O'Desmond's a rare man for givin' you a good beast if you give him a fair price; you may trust him like yourself, but he's a hard man and bitter enough if anybody tries to take advantage of him.'

'And quite right too, Dick. I take Mr. O'Desmond to be a most honourable man, with whom I shouldn't care to come to cross purposes.'

'No man ever did much good that tried that game, sir. He's a bad man to get on the wrong side of.'

CHAPTER V
'CALLED ON BY THE COUNTY'

When the important drove reached Warbrok, great was the excitement. Wilfred's absence was the loss of Hamlet from the play; his return the signal for joy and congratulation. The little commonwealth was visibly agitated as the tired cattle trailed along the track to the stock-yard, with Dick sitting bolt upright in his saddle behind them, and Wilfred essaying to crack the inconveniently long whip provided for him.

The girls made their appearance upon the verandah; Andrew looked forth as interested, yet under protest. Guy walked behind, and much admired the vast number and imposing appearance of the herd; while Captain and Mrs. Effingham stood arm in arm at a safe distance appreciating the prowess of their first-born.

'Now, sir,' quoth the ready Dick, 'we'll put 'em in the yard and make 'em safe to-night; to-morrow, some one will have to tail 'em.'

'Tail them?' said Wilfred. 'Some of their ears have been scolloped, I see; but surely it is not necessary to cut their tails in a hot climate like this?'

'S'cuse me, sir,' said Dick respectfully, 'I wouldn't put the knife to them for pounds; "tailing" means shepherdin'.'

'And what does "shepherding" mean? I thought shepherds

were only for sheep?'

'Well, sir, I never heerd talk of shepherdin' at home, but it's a currency word for follerin' anything that close, right agin' their tails, that a shepherd couldn't be more careful with his sheep; so we talk of shepherdin' a s'picious c'rakter, or a lot of stock, or a man that's tossicated with notes stickin' out of his pocket, or a young woman, or anything that wants lookin' after very partickler.'

'Now I understand,' said Wilfred. 'It's not a bad word, and might be used in serious matters.'

'No mistake about that, sir. Now the yard's finished off and topped up, we'll soon be able to make a start with the dairy. There'll be half-a-dozen calves within the week, and more afore the month's out. There's nothin' breaks in cows to stop like their young calves; you'll soon see 'em hanging about the yard as if they'd been bred here, 'specially as the feed is so forrard. There's no mistake, a myst season do make everything go pleasant.'

When the cattle were in the yard, and the slip rails made safe by having spare posts put across them, Wilfred unsaddled his provisional mount and walked into the house in a satisfactory mental condition.

'So, behold you of return!' quoted Rosamond, running to meet him, and marching him triumphantly into the dining-room, where all was ready for tea. 'The time has been rather long. Papa has been walking about, not knowing exactly what to do, or leave undone; Guy shooting, not over-successfully. The most steadily

employed member of the household, and the happiest, I suppose, has been Andrew, digging without intermission the whole time.'

'I wish we could dig too, or have some employment found for us,' said Annabel; 'girls are shamefully unprovided with real work, except stocking-mending. Jeanie won't let us do anything in the kitchen, and really, that is the only place where there is any fun. The house is so large, and echoing at night when the wind blows. And only think, we found the mark of a pistol bullet in the dining-room wall at one end, and there is another in the ceiling!'

'How do you know it was a pistol shot?' inquired Wilfred. 'Some one threw a salt-cellar at the butler in the good old times.'

'Perhaps it was fired in the good old times; perhaps it killed some one – how horrible! Perhaps he was carried out through the passage. But we know it was a shot, because Guy poked about and found the bullet flattened out.'

'Well, we must ask Evans; very likely old Colonel Warleigh fired pistols in his mad fits. He used to sit, they say, night after night, drinking and cursing by himself after his wife died and his sons left him. No one dared go near him when his pistols were loaded. But we need not think of these things now, Annabel. He is dead and gone, and his sons are not in this part of the country. So I see you have had flower-beds made while I was away. I declare the wistaria and bignonia are breaking into flower. How gorgeous they will look!'

'Yes, mamma said she could not exist without flowers any longer, so we persuaded Andrew, much against his will, – for he

said “he was just fair harassed wi’ thae early potatoes,” – to dig these borders. Guy helped us to transplant and sow seeds, so we shall have flowers of our own once more.’

‘We shall have everything of our own in a few years if we are patient,’ said Wilfred; ‘and you damsels don’t want trips to watering-places, and so on. This life is better than Boulogne, or the Channel Islands, though it may be a trifle lonely.’

‘Boulogne! A thousandfold,’ said Rosamond. ‘Here we have life and hope. Those poor families we used to see there looked liked ghosts and apparitions of their old selves. You remember watching them walking down drearily to see the packet come in – the girls dowdy or shabby, the old people hopeless and apathetic, the sons so idle and lounging? I shudder when I think how near we were to such horrors ourselves. The very air of Australia seems to give one fresh life. Can anything be finer than this sunset?’

In truth, the scene upon which her eyes rested might have cheered a sadder heart than that of the high-hearted maiden who now, with her arm upon her brother’s shoulder, directed his gaze to the far empurpled hills, merging their violet cloud masses and orange-gold tints in the darkening eve. The green pastures, relieved by clumps of heavy-foliaged trees, glowed emerald bright against the dark-browed mountain spur. The dying sun-rays fell in fire-flakes of burning gold on the mirrored silver of the lake. Wrapped in soft tremulous mist lay the hills upon the farther shore, vast with the subtle effect of limitless distance. At

such times one could dream with the faith of older days – that Earth, the universal mother, loved her children, and breathed forth in growth of herb and flower her smiling welcome.

That night, as the Effinghams sat around their table, an unconscious feeling of thankfulness swelled each heart. The parents saw assurance of a well-provided suitable home for the little troop, the probable disbanding of which had cost such sad forebodings. The sons, strong in the faith of youth, saw a future of adventure, well-rewarded labour, perhaps brilliant success. The girls felt that their lives would not be henceforth deprived of the social intercourse which had once been an ordinary condition of existence.

'How did you fare at Mr. O'Desmond's, my son? What kind of an establishment does he keep?' inquired Mrs. Effingham.

'You will all be rather astonished,' answered Wilfred mysteriously. 'What should you think, Annabel? You are a good hand at guessing.'

'Let me think. He is very aristocratic and dignified, yet he might live in a hut. Men are so independent of rooms or houses, almost of looking-glasses. Now a woman in a poky little place always shows it in her dress. I should say he lives in a comfortable cottage, and has everything very complete.'

'And you would be right. We shall have to mind our manners and dinners when he comes again. He lives like a club bachelor, and is as well lodged as – let us say – a land steward on an absentee nobleman's estate.'

'You must be romancing, Wilfred,' said Beatrice. 'Where could he get the luxuries that such a great man as you have described could procure? What a wonderful difference a few thousand miles makes! We think ourselves not so much worse, essentially, than we were in England; but we must be deteriorating.'

'Don't talk nonsense, my dear Beatrice,' said Rosamond. 'Is it not a little vulgar to attach so much weight to externals? As long as we are doing our duty, why should there be any deterioration? It will be our own fault if we adopt a lower level of manners.'

'Oh, but how can any one expect to be the same in colonial society?' exclaimed Annabel. 'See how insignificant even the "best people" are out here. Why, I was reading yesterday about a "country baronet," and even a "well-meaning, unfashionable countess," being looked down upon – positively laughed at – in England. Now think what tremendous potentates they would be out here! I'm sure that proves what I say.'

'Your propositions and proofs are worthy of one another, my dear,' said Wilfred. 'But as to society, I shan't be sorry when more of our neighbours call.'

'Now that the house is fit to receive them I shall be pleased, my dear son, to see the people of the land. I am sure I hope there are some nice ones.'

Wilfred rose early next morning to indulge himself with another look at the new cattle. He was only just in time, as Dick had breakfasted, caught his horse, and was about to let out the

imprisoned drove.

'I'll tail 'em for the first few days, sir,' he said, 'till I give 'em the way of camping under them big trees near the little swamp. It will make a first-rate camp for 'em, and learn 'em to run handy to the place. After that we must get some sort of a lad to foller 'em. It won't pay you to keep me at blackfellow's work.'

'What's that?' inquired Wilfred.

'Why, simple work like this, that any black boy could do, if he didn't give his mind to 'possums. Besides, we wants a horse-yard, and a bit of a paddock, and another field cleared, to plough for next year.'

'That seems a good deal of work to carry on, Richard. Won't it take more hands? Remember, we must go economically to work. My father is by no means a rich man.'

'That's quite right, sir; no one should run themselves out of pocket, high or low. But if we had some one to go with these cows till the calves come, and that won't be long, you and I could do what work I've chalked out.'

'Why should not Guy "tail" the cows, as you call it?' suggested Wilfred, pleased with the idea that they would be able to provide labour from their own community. 'It would do him no harm.'

'Perhaps the young gentleman mightn't like it,' said Dick, with deep respect. 'It's dull work, every day, like.'

'Oh, he *must* like it!' decided Wilfred, with the despotic elder brother tone. 'We have come out here to work, and he must take his share. He may find it dull for a time; but he can shoot a little

and amuse himself, as long as he doesn't come home without them, like Little Bo-peep. What would a boy cost?'

'About six or eight shillings a week, and his rations, sir, which would come to as much again. But the young master needn't stay out after four o'clock.'

'Then we make a saving at once of say sixteen shillings a week. Guy never earned so much in his life before. He will be quite proud of his value in the labour market. You and I can begin splitting and fencing at once.'

'But we shall want some more cattle, sir,' suggested Dick.

'More cattle!' said Wilfred in amazement, to whom a hundred head was an awe-striking number. 'What for?'

'Why, to eat! It don't do to buy meat every time you want a roast or a steak. Cheapest to kill your own. If we was to buy a mob of common cattle, they'd cost nothing to speak of; the bullocks soon fatten, and the cows would breed you up a fair mixed herd in no time.'

'Well, but we have these cattle you have just let out,' pleaded Wilfred, looking admiringly at the red, white, and roan shorthorn crosses, which, spreading over the rich meadow, were feeding quietly, as if reared there.

'Them's all very well, sir; but it'll be years before you kill a bullock out of that lot; they've got to come, all in good time. But the quiet steers, and the worst of the cows, in a mixed herd, will be fat before you can look round, in a season like this, and your beef won't cost you above a penny a pound.'

It was decided that Guy was to 'tail' or herd the new cows at present. Upon this duty being named to him, he made no objection – rather seemed to like it.

'I suppose as long as I don't lose them I can do anything I like,' he said; 'hunt 'possums, shoot, ferret out ferns for Rosamond, or even read.'

'The more you lets the cattle alone the better, Mr. Guy,' said Dick. 'As long as they don't sneak away from you, you can't take it too easy. There's fine feed all roads now, and after the first hour or two they'll fill theirselves and lie down like working bullocks. But you'll want a horse.'

'That I shall,' said the boy, beginning to take up the fashions of the bush, and to rebel at the idea of going on foot, as if mankind was a species of centaur.

'Must have more horses too, sir,' announced Dick, with a calm air of ask and have.

'How many?' returned Wilfred uncomplyingly; 'it seems we shall want more horses – we haven't any, certainly – more cattle, more tillage, more yards, more paddocks; it will soon come to wanting more money, and where to get *that* I don't know.'

'Horses are dirt cheap, sir, just now, and can't be done without, nohow. You'll want a cob for the Captain to potter about on, a couple of hacks for yourself, one apiece for Mr. Guy and the young ladies – they'd like a canter now and then afore Christmas. I hear Mick Donnelly's selling off, to clear out for Monaro. You couldn't do better than ride over and see his lot; they'll be pretty

sure to live on our grass, if any of the neighbours gets 'em, and you may as well have that profit out of 'em yourself.'

The conversation having come to an end, Mr. Evans was about to move after his cattle, now indulging in a pretty wide spread, when a horseman joining them, greeted Wilfred.

'Good-morning, sir,' said the stranger, with loud, peculiar, but not unpleasant voice, having a note of culture too. 'Glad to make your acquaintance; Mr. Effingham, I believe? We're neighbours, on the south, about ten miles from Benmohr. You haven't seen a chestnut pony about, branded 2C? He used to run here in Hunt's time. Why, hang me! if he isn't coming up to show himself!'

The chestnut pony which had borne Wilfred so successfully in the journey for the new cattle now trotted up, having followed Evans's mare, to which animal he had attached himself, after the manner of horses, prone to contract sudden friendships.

Wilfred, about to disclaim any knowledge of the strange gentleman's chestnut, not dreaming that the estray which had come in so handily could be his property, and as yet not given to reading at a glance 2C or other hieroglyph, felt rather nonplussed, more especially when he noticed the stranger's eye attracted to the saddle-mark on the pony's fat back.

'I must confess to having ridden your horse, if he be so, a short journey. We were not aware of his ownership, and I had no horse of my own. I trust you will forgive the liberty.'

'He *has* rather nice paces. How did you like him?' inquired the stranger urbanely, much as if he had a favour conferred upon

him. 'I'll run him into the yard now with your permission, and lead him home.'

'Pray come in, and allow me to introduce you to my people,' said Wilfred, satisfied, from the stranger's bearing, that he was a desirable acquaintance. 'With the exception of Mr. O'Desmond, from whom I bought these cattle, we have not seen a neighbour yet.'

'Know them all in time,' said the stranger; 'no great shakes, some of them, when you *do* know them. My name's Churbett, by the bye – Fred Churbett, of The Oaks; cattle station on Banksia Creek, used to be called She-oak Flat – had to change it. Nice cattle O'Desmond let you have; got good stock, but makes you pay for them.'

'How you have improved the old place!' continued Mr. Churbett, as they approached the house. 'Who would believe that so much could have been made of it? Never saw it in the palmy days of Colonel Warleigh, though. Seems to have run in the military line of ownership. The old boy kept up great state. Four-in-hand always to Yass, they say. Coachman, butler, lots of servants – convicts, of course. Awful temper; cursed freely, drank ditto. Sons not behindhand, improved upon the paternal sins – gambling, horse-racing, Old Harry generally. Had to clear out and sell. Great pull for the district having a family straight from "home" settled in it.'

'I trust the advantage will be mutual,' said Wilfred. 'We hope to be neighbourly when we are quite settled. But you will

understand that it has taken us a little time to shake down.'

'Thought of that,' said Mr. Churbett, 'or should have had the pleasure of calling before. Trotted over to look up master "Traveller" for the muster, or should have waited another week.'

Mr. Churbett's horses having been disposed of, he was duly introduced. He proved if anything a greater success than Mr. O'Desmond. He was musical, and the sight of the piano immediately brought up talk about the last opera he had heard in London. He was also a great reader, and after touching upon half a score of authors, promised to bring over a new book which he had just got up from town.

'Really,' said Annabel innocently, 'this is a surprise. I never dreamed of getting a new book in the bush. Why, it only came out just before we left. I was longing to read it; but, of course, we were too miserable and worried. How can it have got here so quickly?'

'Just the same way that we did, I suppose,' said Beatrice – 'in a ship. You forget the time that has passed since we landed.'

'Still, it is a pleasant surprise. I shouldn't wonder, perhaps we may get some new music soon. But I should as soon have thought of a book-club in the moon.'

'Talking of book-clubs,' said Churbett, 'we are trying to get up one; I hope you will join. With twelve members, and a moderate subscription, we can import a very fair lot of books every year. A brother of mine in London can choose them for us; I am to be librarian. The books are divided into sets, which each subscriber

sends on in turn.'

Annabel clapped her hands. 'How delightful! Wilfred, of course, will join. Fancy, dear, *clean* new books every month. Really, life is becoming quite intoxicating, and I thought we should die of dulness and ennui.'

'No; did you, though?' echoed Mr. Churbett compassionately. 'I confess to feeling inclined to cry when I came up to Murson Creek and saw the hut I was to live in for the first year. But one's feelings get wonderfully altered after a while.'

'And are you *quite* resigned, that is contented, to give up operas and picture galleries, clubs and travel, all the pleasant parts of English life?' asked Rosamond.

'It *was* hard at first, Miss Effingham; but here I have independence, with the prospect of a fortune. In England such was not the case, particularly the independence. Operas and other memories recall a fairy realm which I may yet re-enter. Meantime, I ride about all day, work now and then, smoke and read at night, and if not exactly happy, am decently cheerful.'

'What the world calls pleasure you never see, I suppose?' said Beatrice philosophically.

'Do we not? I forgot one compensation in our virtuous, self-denying lives. Once a year, at least, we have races in Yass, which is our metropolis. Then we all meet together, as a solemn, social obligation. Pilgrimage to Mecca, and so on. Very few true believers absent. Balls, picnics, any amount of dancing, flirtation, what not. Enough to last for the rest of the year. After a week or

two we go home sorrowfully, staying at each other's houses on the way, to let down the excitement by degrees.'

'Where do the ladies come from?' asked Annabel. 'I suppose there are very few?'

'Very few!' said Mr. Churbett in tones of horror. '*Ever* so many. Is it possible you have never heard, even in Europe, of the beautiful Miss Christabel Rockley, the fascinating Mrs. Snowden, the talented Mrs. Porchester? Ladies! They abound, or how should we remain civilised? Yass is well known to be the home of all the graces. Could O'Desmond retain his *grand seigneur* air but for the advantage of refined association? I wish I could take you round, Miss Effingham, on an introductory tour. What a book we could write of our experiences! – "Travels and Sketches in the Upper Strata of the Social System of the Yass District, by Miss Annabel Effingham, illustrated by F. Churbett, F.R.Y.A.S.S., Fellow of the Royal Yass Analytical Squatting Society," reads well.'

'Quite delicious,' said Annabel. 'But everything that is nice is improper, so, of course, I shouldn't be let go. Not even Rosamond, who is prudence personified. I'm afraid there is no more liberty for poor women in a new country than an old one. That *is* the bell – I was sure of it. Mr. Churbett, allow me to invite you to dinner – an early one, which is about the extent of my privileges.'

Mr. Churbett accepted the invitation, as he no doubt would have acceded to any proposition emanating from the speaker

even less manifestly beneficial. He kept the whole party amused, and lingered until he declared he should have to gallop Grey Surrey all the way home to get there before dark.

'He's like me,' he explained, upon being charged with cruelty; 'he only does a day's work now and then, and he doesn't mind it when it does come.'

Resisting all invitation to stop for the night, on the plea that the effort necessary in his case must be made some time and might as well be undergone now, he departed in the odour of high consideration, if not of sanctity.

In order that no opportunities might be lost, Wilfred commenced the habit of rising at dawn and joining Dick at the stock-yard, where the old man had initiated a dairy, with the aid of the few cows of the O'Desmond brand which had produced calves. Here he was attended by Andrew, who sturdily proceeded to take his share of the work, in spite of Dick's sarcastic attitude. He evidently considered the dairy to be his province, and regarded Andrew as an interloper.

'Na, na, Maister Wilfred,' said Andrew, 'I hae been acquent in my time wi' a' manner o' kye, and had a collie following me these thretty years. It's no because we're in a new land that I'm to turn my back on ilka occupa-ation that will bring in profit to the laird and his bairns. Jeanie can mak' as sweet butter as ever a gudewife in Lothian, and we hae to depend maistly on the butter-keggies, for what I see.'

'You'll find that garden of yours, when the weeds come up,

quite enough for one, I'm thinking. There's enough of us here, if Mr. Wilfred takes to it kind, as he seems to do. But if you're such a dab hand at milking, you can tek that red cow that's come in this morning.'

'And a gra-and show o' milk she has,' quoth Andrew, 'maist unco-omon!'

Dick commenced, with a stolid expression, to arrange the slip-rails, which apparently took time to adjust. Andrew, meanwhile, proud of the opportunity of exhibiting his familiarity with the art and science of milking, moved the red cow into one of the bails, or stalls, in which cows are ordinarily milked in Australia.

Sitting upon a three-legged stool, he commenced his ancient and classical task. He had succeeded in, perhaps, drawing a pint from the over-full udder of the red cow aforesaid, when she suddenly raised her hind leg and caught him with such emphasis that man and milk, pail and stool, went clattering down into the corner of the yard.

'Gude save us!' exclaimed Andrew, picking himself up, and rubbing his person, while he collected all that was recoverable of the scattered properties. 'What garred the fell beastie act sae daft-like. I hae milket a hunner coos, and ne'er was whummled like yon.'

'Perhaps they was Scotch cows, and understood your talk, Mr. Cargill,' said Dick, with great politeness, covering a grim enjoyment; 'but in this country we mostly *leg-ropes* cows when we bail 'em up, for fear of accidents.'

'Weel, I winna say that these queys, being brocht up in a mair savage fashion than in bonnie Scotland, wadna need head and heel fastenings. But, ma certie, they would glower in my part of the country, gin ye tied a coo's leg like a thrawn ox at the smithy.'

'I suppose "we must do at Rome, etc.," and all the rest of it, Andrew,' said Wilfred. 'Here, Dick, make a beginning with your cow, and Andrew and I will put a leg-rope on this one. Never too late to mend. I'll back Andrew to hold his own yet in the milking-yard, or anywhere else.'

Old Dick, having satisfied his grudge by compassing the downfall of Andrew, whom he had shrewdly guessed never to have been accustomed to a leg-rope, condescended to instruct Wilfred in the proper way to knot it. The cows were eventually milked *secundum artem*, and when the full buckets, foaming over with creamy fluid, stood on a bench outside the yard, Wilfred saw with distinct gratification the first dividend from the cattle investment.

'We must calculate now, Andrew,' he said, as they walked over to the house, 'how much butter can be made from the milk of these cows. It is a small matter, of course; but multiplied by ten – as we shall have at least fifty cows in milk, Dick says, before Christmas – it will not be so bad.'

'After conseederin' the matter maist carefully,' said Andrew, 'I am free to give it as ma deleeberate opeenion that gin the pasture keeps aye green and plenteous we may mak' baith butter and cheese o' the best quality. As to price, I canna yet say, havin' nae

knowledge o' the mairkets.'

'Well, we have made a beginning, Andrew, and that is a great matter. If we can only pay current expenses, without employing more hands, we shall be doing well, I consider.'

'We must work gey and close at the first gang aff, Maister Wilfred, and then dinna ye fear. Wi' the Lord's blessing, we'll be spared to set up our horn on high, as weel as thae prood Amalekites, that have had the first grip o' this gra-and Canaan. I was doon yestreen and lookit at the field o' victual – the paddock, as yon auld carle ca's it. It's maist promising – forbye ordinar' – maist unco-omon.'

Among the list of indispensable investments which Dick Evans had urged upon Wilfred, but which he had not at present thought it necessary to undertake, were another lot of cattle, a dozen horses (more or less), and some kind of taxed cart, or light vehicle. Apparently these would be advantageous and profitable, but Wilfred had determined to be most sparing in all outlay, lest the reserve fund of the family should come to a premature end.

On this day it seemed that the advanced guard of the neighbouring gentry had commenced to lay formal siege to Warbrok Chase. On his return to the house in the afternoon, Wilfred descried two good-looking horses hanging up to the garden fence, and upon entering the sitting-room beheld their owners in amicable converse with his mother and sisters. He was promptly introduced to Mr. Argyll and Mr. Charles Hamilton. Both men were well, even fashionably dressed, and bore about

them the nameless air which stamps the holder of a degree in the university of society.

'We should have called before,' said Mr. Argyll, a tall fair-haired man, whose quick glancing blue eye and mobile features betrayed natural impetuosity, kept under by training; 'but my partner here is such an awfully hard-working fellow, that he would not quit the engineering with which he was busied, to visit the Queen of Sheba, if she had just settled in the neighbourhood.'

'I was not aware,' said Mr. Hamilton coolly, and with an air of settled conviction upon his regular and handsome features, 'of the extent of my sacrifice to duty. I may venture to assure Mrs. Effingham that my neighbourly duties for the future will not be neglected.'

'I hope not,' said Mrs. Effingham; 'for, now that the excitement of settling in such a very different world has passed away, we begin to feel rather lonely – may I say dull?'

'No, mamma,' said Rosamond, 'you must not say that. We are all so fully occupied, from morning to dusk, that we have no time to be dull.'

'Oh, but we cannot get on without society,' remarked Annabel. 'I feel in the highest spirits as long as there is so much to do, that there is no time for thinking; indeed, I hate to have a moment to myself. But in the afternoons, when papa and the boys are out, I begin to realise our solitary position, and the feeling becomes oppressive.'

'Very naturally too,' said Mr. Argyll. 'But as yet you have no

idea of the social resources which you will be able to draw upon when you are acquainted with everybody.'

'And who is everybody?' asked Beatrice. 'How can we be sociable if people don't come to see us? Suppose you tell us who are the nice people of the district, and we shall be able to enjoy them in anticipation.'

'You will see most of them within the month; but I shrink from describing them. Charles, you are afraid of nobody, suppose you give us a *catalogue raisonné*.'

'Certainly, if Miss Effingham wishes it,' assented Mr. Hamilton, who had the imperturbable look which goes with a temperament difficult to surprise or intimidate. 'I shall have great pleasure in trotting out our friends for her information. We have been here only three years, so in case of mistakes you must be considerate.'

'Oh, we shall be most discreet,' said Annabel; 'besides, we have no acquaintance yet to chatter to – that's the best guarantee for prudence.'

'I think I may take your solemn affirmation not to betray me,' said Mr. Hamilton, looking admiringly into Annabel's lovely eyes, 'and even then I would face the risk. First, there is Captain Snowden with his wife. He was in the navy, I think; he has rather more of the sailor about him than – what shall I say? – the courtier, though he can be very agreeable when he likes. Madame is extremely lady-like, clever, travelled, what not. You must see her and judge for yourself.'

'Are there any more ladies?' asked Rosamond. 'They possess an absorbing interest for us.'

'Ever so many more,' laughed Hamilton. 'Mrs. Porchester, who is rather a "blue"; Mrs. Egremont, who is a beauty; the Misses Carter, who are good-nature itself. The others, I think, you must find out by degrees. In Yass there are some very nice families, particularly that of Mr. Rockley. He is the leading merchant in these parts, and rules like a benevolent despot. His wife is hospitable and amiable beyond compare; his daughter, Miss Christabel, dangerously beautiful. I *must* leave something to the imagination.'

'I assure you we are most grateful to you as it is,' said Mrs. Effingham. 'It is really encouraging to find that there are so many charming people in the neighbourhood. We should hardly consider them in the same county at home; but here they don't seem to mind riding any distance.'

'I am mistaken,' said Hamilton, 'if you do not find people riding wonderful distances to visit Warbrok. We are less than twenty miles away, I am thankful to say, so you will see us as often as you care for. By the way,' turning to Wilfred, 'did I hear you say you were going to Donnelly's sale? If you buy stock there, you had better stay a night at Benmohr on your return. It is just a fair stage.'

'Thanks. I shall be most happy. Do you think it a good idea to invest at Donnelly's?'

'If I were in your place I should buy all his cattle and a few

horses. They can't fail to be a profitable purchase, as you seem to have any amount of grass. But we must be going. We shall expect you at Benmohr the day after the sale. Mrs. Effingham, I shall do myself the honour of another visit, after you have been able to verify my portraitures.'

'What gentlemanlike young men!' said Mrs. Effingham, when the guests were fairly away. 'I am so sorry that your papa was out. He would have been so pleased. Mr. Argyll seems so clever, and Mr. Hamilton is very handsome – both wonderfully well dressed for the bush.'

'I should say Mr. Argyll was disposed to be sarcastic,' said Rosamond; 'and I am mistaken if he has not a fierce temper. He told us he was a Highlander, which accounts for it.'

'Mr. Hamilton is one of the nicest-looking men I have seen for a long time,' said Annabel; 'what splendid eyes he has! He is very particular about his gloves too; gives time and reflection to his toilet, I should say.'

'I have heard Dick say that he is the hardest-working squatter in the district,' said Wilfred. 'He is devoted to ploughing, digging, navvy-work, horse-breaking – "all manner of slavery," as Dick says.'

'Who would have thought it!' exclaimed Mrs. Effingham in tones of astonishment. 'From his appearance I should have thought that he was afraid to soil those white hands of his.'

'The best-dressed people are not the most backward at work or fighting,' said Wilfred.

'But how *can* he keep his hands white,' inquired Annabel with a great appearance of interest, 'if he really works like a labourer?'

'Perhaps he works in gloves; a man can get through a great deal of work in a pair of old riding-gloves, and his hands be never the worse. There is something about those two men that I like extremely. Mr. Argyll puts me in mind of Fergus M'Ivor with that fiery glance; he looks as if he had a savage temper, well held in.'

'They are both very nice, and I hope you will make real friends of them, Wilfred,' said Mrs. Effingham. 'Might I also suggest that, as it is evidently practicable to dress like a gentleman and work hard, a certain young man should be more careful of his appearance?'

'I deserve that, I know, old lady,' said her son laughingly; 'but really there is a temptation in the wilderness to costume a little. I promise you to amend.'

'Our circle of acquaintance is expanding,' said Beatrice; 'certainly it has the charm of variety. Mr. O'Desmond is Irish, Mr. Churbett from London, our last visitors Scots – one Highland, one Lowland. All differing among themselves too. I am sure we shall be fully occupied; it will be a task of some delicacy *tenir de salon*, if we ever have them here at a party.'

'A party!' said Mrs. Effingham; 'don't think of it for *years* to come, child. It would be impossible, inappropriate in every way.'

'But there's no harm, mamma, surely, in *thinking* of it,' pleaded Annabel. 'It encourages one to keep alive, if nothing else.'

CHAPTER VI
AN AUSTRALIAN YEOMAN

A week of laborious work preceded the day when circumstances permitted Wilfred and his serving-man to ride forth for the purpose of attending the sale of Mr. Michael Donnelly's stock and effects. Formerly known as 'Willoughby's Mick,' he had, during an unpretending career as stock-rider for that gentleman, accumulated a small herd of cattle and horses, with which to commence life on a grazing farm near Yass. Here, by exercise of the strictest economy as to personal expenses, as well as from the natural increase of stock, he had, during a residence of a dozen years, amassed a considerable property. Yet on his holding there was but scant evidence of toil or contrivance. A few straggling peach trees represented the garden. The bark-roofed slab hut which he found when he came had sufficed for the lodging of himself and wife, with nearly a dozen children. The fences, not originally good, were now ruinous. The fields, suffered to go out of cultivation, lay fallow and unsightly, only half-cleared of tree-stumps. The dress of this honest yeoman had altered for the worse since the hard-riding days of 'Willoughby's Mick.' The healthy boys and girls were more or less ragged; the younger ones barefooted. The saddles and cart harness were patched with raw hide, or clumsily repaired. The cow-shed was

rickety; the calves unsheltered. Yet with all this apparent decay and disorder, any one, judging from appearances, who had put down Michael Donnelly as an impoverished farmer, would have been egregiously deceived. His neighbours knew that his battered old cabbage-tree hat covered a head with an unusual amount of brains. Uneducated and bush-bred, he possessed intuitive powers of calculation and forecast frequently denied to cultured individuals. Early in life he had appropriated the fact, that in this land of boundless pasturage, profitable up to a certain point, without the necessity of one *farthing* of expenditure, the multiplication of stock was possible to any conceivable extent. Once make a commencement with a few cows, and it was a man's own fault if he died without more cattle than he could count. Hadn't Johnny Shore begun that way? *Walked* over to Monaro with half-a-crown in his pocket. He saved his wages for a few years and got the needful start.

Become a capitalist, his instincts revolted against spending money needlessly, when every pound, often less, would buy a cow, which cow would turn into fifty head of cattle in a few years. 'What could a man do that would pay him half as well? Why employ labour that could be done without? It was all very well for Mr. Willoughby, who had raised his wages gradually from twenty pounds per annum and one ration. Mr. Willoughby was a gentleman with a big station, and threw his money about a bit; but why should he, Mick Donnelly, go keeping and feeding men to put in crops when farming didn't pay? Therefore his fields might

lie fallow and go out of cultivation.'

His boys were getting big lumps of fellows, old enough to help brand and muster. The girls could milk, and break in the heifers, as well as all the men in the country. His wife could cook – there wasn't much of that; and wash – it didn't fatigue her; and sweep – that process was economised – as well as ever. Any kind of duds did for working people, as long as they went decent to chapel on Sundays. That they had always done and would do, please God. But all other occasions of spending money were wasteful and unnecessary.

The sole expenses, then, of this large family were in the purchase of flour, tea, sugar, and clothes, none of which articles came to an extravagant sum for the year. While the sales were steady and considerable, Mick and his sons drove many a lot of cattle, fat or store, to the neighbouring markets. The profits of the dairy in butter and bacon, the representatives of which latter product roamed in small herds around the place, paid all the household expenses twice over; while the amount of his credit balance at the Bank of New Holland in Yass would have astonished many a tourist who watched Mick smoking on his stock-yard rails, or riding an unshod mare down the range after a mob of active cattle.

But now a more ambitious idea was evolved from the yeoman's slowly maturing, but accurate mental processes. He had been noting the relative scale of outlay and income of a neighbouring sheep-farmer. After certain cautious comparisons, he fixed the

conclusion that, other things being equal, sheep would pay him better than cattle. He heard from an old comrade of the forced sale of a sheep station in the then half-explored, unstocked district of Monaro, lying between the Great Range and the Snowy River. His offer of cash, at a rate far from remunerative to the late owner, had been accepted.

That part of his plan settled, he sold his freehold to a neighbouring proprietor who was commencing to found an estate, receiving rather more than double his original purchase money. Stock being at a reasonable price, Donnelly determined to sell off the whole of his possessions, merely reserving his dray, team, and a sufficiency of saddle-horses for the family. His herd had become too numerous for the run. His boys and girls would make shepherds and shepherdesses for a while – by no means a picturesque occupation in Australia, but still profitable as of old. He would be enabled to continue independent of hired labour. He trusted to the duplication of stock to do the rest. Hence the clearing-off sale, which a number of farmers in the neighbourhood were likely to attend, and to which Wilfred and his chief servitor were at present wending their way.

On this occasion Wilfred had resisted the idea of mounting any of the strayed horses, still numerous upon the enticing pastures of Warbrok. Having unwittingly placed himself in a false position, he was resolved not to repeat the impropriety.

'Mr. Churbett had behaved most courteously,' he said; 'but it might have been otherwise. I was not aware that it was other than

a colonial custom. There must be no more mistakes of this kind, Dick, or you and I shall quarrel. Go to one of the nearest farmers and see if you can hire me a decent hack.'

So Dick, though chafing at the over-delicacy which led his master to pay for a mount while available steeds were eating his grass, proceeded to obey orders, and shortly returned with a substantial half-bred, upon which Wilfred bestowed himself.

Dick Evans was always in good spirits at the prospect of a cruise in foreign parts. Mrs. Evans, on the other hand, was prone to dwell upon the unpleasant side of domestic matters. Her habit of mind had doubtless resulted in the philosophic calm with which her husband bore his frequent, and occasionally protracted, absences from the conjugal headquarters. As before, he mounted his old mare with a distinct air of cheerfulness.

'The dairy work will get along all right for a day or two, sir,' he said. 'Old Andy begins to be a fairish milker – he was dead slow at first – and Mr. Guy's a great help bailin' up. There's nothing brisks me up like a jaunt somewheres – I don't care where it is, if it was to the Cannibal Islands. God Almighty never intended me to stop long in one place, I expect.'

'A rolling stone gathers no moss, Dick,' said Wilfred. 'You'll never save up anything if you carry out those ideas always.'

'I don't want to save nothing, sir. I've no call to keep money in a box; I can find work pretty well wherever I go that will keep me and my old woman in full and plenty. I'm safe of my wages as long as I can work, and when I can't work no more I shall die

– suddent like. I've always felt that.'

'But why don't you get a bit of land, Dick, and have a place of your own? You could easily save enough money to buy a farm.'

'Bless your heart, sir, I wouldn't live on a farm allers, day in, day out, if you'd give me one. I should get that sick of the place as I should come to hate the sight of it. But hadn't you better settle with yourself like, sir, what kind of stock you're agoin' to bid for when we get to Mick's? There'll be a lot of people there, and noise, and perhaps a little fighting if there's any grog goin', so it's best to be ready for action, as old Sir Hugh Gough used to tell us.'

'Mr. Churbett and Mr. Hamilton thought I should buy all the mixed cattle, as many of them would be ready for the butcher before winter.'

'So they will, sir, or my name's not Richard Evans, twice corporal in the old 50th, and would have been sergeant, if I'd been cleverer at my book, and not quite so clever at the canteen. But that's neither here nor there. What I look at is, they're all dairy-bred cattle, and broke in close to your own run, which saves a power of trouble. If you can get a hundred or two of 'em for thirty shillings or two pound a head, they'll pay it all back by next season – easy and flippant.'

Finishing up with his favourite adjective, which he used when desirous of showing with what ridiculous ease any given result might be obtained, Mr. Richard Evans lighted his pipe with an air of assurance of success which commenced to infect his employer.

About mid-day they reached the abode of Michael Donnelly, Esq., as such designated by the local papers, who 'was about to submit to public competition his quiet and well-bred herd of dairy cattle, his choice stud, his equipages, farming implements, teams, carts, harness, etc., with other articles too numerous to mention.' Other articles there were none, except he had decided to sell the olive branches. Wilfred was shocked at the appearance of the homestead of this thriving farmer. The falling fences, the neglected orchard, the dilapidated hut, the curiously patched and mended stock-yard, partly brush, partly of logs, with here and there a gap, secured by a couple of rude tree-forks, with a clumsy sapling laid across – all these did not look like the surroundings of a man who could give his cheque for several thousand pounds. However, the personal appearance of Mick himself, an athletic, manly, full-bearded fellow, as also that of his family, was decidedly prepossessing. They were busily attending to the various classes of stock, with much difficulty kept apart for purposes of sale. Whatever else these Australian Celts lacked, they had been well nourished in youth and infancy. A finer sample of youthful humanity, physically considered, Wilfred had never seen. The lack of order everywhere visible had in no way reacted upon their faculties. All their lives they had known abundant nutriment, unrestricted range. Healthful exercise had been theirs, congenial labour, and diet unstinted in the great essentials. Few other considerations had entered into the family councils.

And now they were about to migrate, like the world's elder children, to a land promising more room. Then, as now, a higher life was possible, where the sheep and the oxen, the camels and the asses, would enjoy a wider range. The sale over, they would once more resume that journey which, commencing soon after the marriage day of Michael Donnelly and Bridget Joyce, was not ended yet.

Wilfred Effingham was soon confirmed in his opinion that he had done well to attend. Many of the neighbouring settlers were there, as well as farmers and townspeople from Yass, brought together by the mysterious attraction of an auction sale. One of the townspeople, asking first if he was Mr. Effingham of Warbrok, put into his hand a note which ran as follows: —

'My dear Wilfred – I thought you were likely to be at Donnelly's sale, so I send you a line by a parishioner of mine. I have made inquiries about the stock, and consider that you could not do better than buy as many of the cattle as you have grass for. They are known to be quiet, having been used to dairy tending, and are certain to increase in value and number, as you have so much grass at Warbrok. Price about two pounds. A few horses would not be superfluous, and there are some good ones in Donnelly's lot, or they would hardly have stood his work. Mention my name to Mick, and say he is to let you down easy. I have had a touch of rheumatism lately —*et ego in Arcadia*– there's no escape from old age and its infirmities in any climate, however good, or I'd have looked you up before now.

Tell your father I'm coming over soon. – Always yours sincerely,

Harley Sternworth.'

The hour of sale having arrived, and indeed passed, the auctioneer, who had driven out from Yass for the purpose, commenced his task, which he did by climbing on to the 'cap' of the stock-yard and rapping violently with a hammer-handled hunting-crop. A broad-chested, stout-lunged, florid personage was Mr. Crackemup, and if selling by auction deserved to be ranked as one of the fine arts, he was no mean professor.

'Ladies and gentlemen!' he shouted. 'I say ladies, for I notice quite a number of the fair sex have honoured me with their presence. Let me mention, in the first place, that the owner of this valuable stock we see before us has resolved to leave this part of the country. Yes, my friends, to leave Gumbaragongara for good and all! Why do I mention this fact – why do I dwell upon it? Because, ladies and gentlemen, it makes all the difference as to the *bona fide* nature of the sale which we are met together to-day to celebrate – that is – a – to carry out – according to these written conditions. My principal, Mr. Donnelly, with the shrewdness which has characterised him through life, seized upon this view of the case. "If I leave the country bodily," he said to me, "and sell the stock for what they'll fetch, no one can say that I went away and took the best with me." No, ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Donnelly departs to-morrow for Monaro, taking only a dray and team, with a few riding-horses, so that all his well-bred, quiet, beautiful herd of dairy cattle, selected with great care from

some of the best herds in the colony [here divers of the audience grinned irreverently], I shall have the honour of submitting to public competition this day.

'The first lot, ladies and gentlemen, is No. 1. Generally so, isn't it? Ha! ha! One hundred and fifty-four cows and heifers, all broken to bail; most of them with calves at foot, or about to – to – become mothers.'

Mr. Crackemup was a man of delicate ideas, so he euphemised the maternal probabilities.

'Any one buying this choice lot, with butter at a shilling, and cheese not to be bought, buys a fortune. I will sell a "run out" of twenty head, with the option of taking the lot. "Fifteen shillings a head" – nonsense; one pound, twenty-two and six, twenty-five-thank you, miss; thirty shillings, thirty-five, thirty-seven and six-thank you, sir. One pound seventeen and sixpence, once; one pound seventeen and sixpence, twice; for the third and last time, one pound seventeen shillings and sixpence. Gone! What name shall I say, sir? "Howard Effingham, Warbrok Chase." Twenty head. Thank you, sir.'

At this critical moment the voice of Dick Evans was heard by Wilfred, in close proximity to his ear: 'Collar the lot, sir; they're dirt cheap; soon be in full milk. Don't let 'em go.'

'I believe,' said Wilfred, raising his voice, 'that I have the option of taking the whole.'

'Quite correct, sir; but if I might advise – '

'I take the lot,' said Wilfred decisively.

And though there was a murmur from the crowd, and one stalwart dame said, 'That's not fair, thin; I med sure I'd get a pen of springers myself,' the auctioneer confirmed his right, and the dairy lot became his property.

It turned out, as is often the case, that the first offered stock were the most moderate in price. Many of the buyers had been holding back, thinking they would go in lots of twenty, and that better bargains might be obtained. When they found that the stranger had carried off all the best dairy cows, their disappointment was great.

'Serves you right, boys,' was heard in the big voice of the proprietor; 'if you had bid up like men, instead of keeping dark, you'd have choked the cove off taking the lot. Serves you all dashed well right.'

The remaining lots of cattle consisted of weaners, two and three-year-old steers and heifers. Of fat cattle the herd had been pretty well 'scraped,' as Donnelly called it, before the sale. For most of these the bidding was so brisk and spirited that Wilfred thought himself lucky in securing forty steers at twenty-five shillings, which completed his drove, and were placed in the yard with the cows.

Then came the horses; nearly a hundred all told – mares, colts, fillies, yearlings, with aged or other riding-horses. These last Donnelly excused himself for selling by the statement that if he took them to Monaro half of them would be lost trying to get back to where they had been bred, and that between stock-riders

and cattle-stealers his chance of regaining them would be small.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.