

**ROLF  
BOLDREWOOD**

IN BAD COMPANY AND  
OTHER STORIES

Rolf Boldrewood

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## Содержание

IN BAD COMPANY	5
CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	14
CHAPTER III	22
CHAPTER IV	30
CHAPTER V	39
CHAPTER VI	45
CHAPTER VII	51
CHAPTER VIII	63
CHAPTER IX	71
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	72

# In Bad Company and other stories

## IN BAD COMPANY

### CHAPTER I

Bill Hardwick was as fine a specimen of an Australian as you could find in a day's march. Active as a cat and strong withal, he was mostly described as 'a real good all-round chap, that you couldn't put wrong at any kind of work that a man could be asked to do.'

He could plough and reap, dig and mow, put up fences and huts, break in horses and drive bullocks; he could milk cows and help in the dairy as handily as a woman. These and other accomplishments he was known to possess, and being a steady, sensible fellow, was always welcome when work was needed and a good man valued. Besides all this he was the fastest and the best shearer in the district of Tumut, New South Wales, where he was born, as had been his father and mother before him. So that he was a true Australian in every sense of the word.

It could not be said that the British race had degenerated as far as he was concerned. Six feet high, broad-chested, light-flanked, and standing on his legs like a gamecock, he was always ready to fight or work, run, ride or swim, in fact to tackle any muscular exercise in the world at the shortest notice.

Bill had always been temperate, declining to spend his earnings to enrich the easy-going township publican, whose mode of gaining a living struck him as being too far removed from that of honest toil. Such being his principles and mode of life, he had put by a couple of hundred pounds, and 'taken up a selection.' This means (in Australia) that he had conditionally purchased three hundred and twenty acres of Crown Land, had paid up two shillings per acre of the upset price, leaving the balance of eighteen shillings, to be paid off when convenient. He had constructed thereon, chiefly with his own hands, a comfortable, four-roomed cottage, of the 'slab' architecture of the period, and after fencing in his property and devoting the proceeds of a couple of shearings to a modest outlay in furniture, had married Jenny Dawson, a good-looking, well-conducted young woman, whom he had known ever since he was big enough to crack a stockwhip.

In her way she was as clever and capable; exceptionally well adapted for the position of a farmer's wife, towards which occupation her birth and surroundings had tended. She was strong and enduring in her way, as were her husband and brothers in theirs. She could milk cows and make excellent butter, wasn't afraid of a turbulent heifer in the dairy herd, or indisposed to rise before daylight in the winter mornings and drive in the milkers through the wet or frozen grass. She could catch and saddle her own riding-horse or drive the spring cart along an indifferent road to the country town. She knew all about the rearing of calves, pigs, and poultry; could salt beef and cure bacon – in a general way attend to all the details of a farm. Her father had acquired a small grant in the early colonial days, and from its produce and profits reared a family of healthy boys and girls.

They had not been educated up to the State school standard now considered necessary for every dweller in town or country, but they could read and write decently; had also such knowledge of arithmetic as enabled them to keep their modest accounts. Such having been the early training of Bill's helpmate, it was a fair augury that, with luck and good conduct, they were as likely as any young couple of their age to prosper reasonably, so as eventually to acquire a competence, or even, as indeed not a few of their old friends and neighbours had done, to attain to that enviable position generally described as 'making a fortune.'

For the first few years nothing could have been more promising than the course of affairs at Chidowla or 'Appletree Flat,' as their homestead was formerly named, in consequence of the umbrageous growth of the 'angophora' in the meadow by the mountain creek, which bordered their farm. Bill stayed at home and worked steadily, until he had put in his crop. He cleared and cultivated a larger piece of ground with each succeeding year. The seasons were genial, and the rainfall, though occasionally precarious, did not, during this period, show any diminution. But annually, before the first spring month came round, Bill saddled the old mare, and leading a less valuable or perhaps half-broken young horse, packed his travelling 'swag' upon it and started off for the shearing. Jenny did not particularly like being left alone for three months or perhaps four, with no one but the children, for by this time a sturdy boy and baby girl had been added to the household. But Bill brought home such a welcome addition to the funds in the shape of the squatters' cheques, that she hid her uneasiness and discomfort from him, only hoping, as she said, that some day, if matters went on as they were going, they would be able to do without the shearing money, and Bill could afford to stop with his wife and children all the year round. That was what *she* would like.

So time went on, till after one more shearing, Bill began to think about buying the next selection, which an improvident neighbour would shortly be forced to sell, owing to his drinking habits and too great fondness for country race meetings.

The soil of the land so handily situated was better than their own, and, as an adjoining farm, could be managed without additional expense.

The 'improvements' necessary for holding it under the lenient land laws of New South Wales had been effected.

They were not particularly valuable, but they had been passed by the Inspector of Conditional Purchases, who was not too hard on a poor man, if he made his selection his '*bona fide* home and residence.' This condition Mr. Dick Donahue certainly had fulfilled as far as locating his hard-working wife Bridget and half-a-dozen bare-legged, ragged children thereon, with very little to eat sometimes, while he was acting as judge at a bush race meeting, or drinking recklessly at the public-house in the township.

So now the end had come. The place was mortgaged up to its full value with the bank at Talmorah, the manager of which had refused to advance another shilling upon it.

The storekeeper, who had a bill of sale over the furniture, horses and cows, plough, harrow, and winnowing machine, had decided to sell him up. The butcher and the baker, despairing of getting their bills paid, declined further orders. Poor Bridget had been lately feeding herself and the children on milk and potatoes, last year's bacon, and what eggs the fowls, not too well fed themselves, kindly produced.

Jenny had helped them many a time, from womanly pity. But for her, they would often have been without the 'damper' bread, which served to fill up crevices with the hungry brood – not that she expected return or payment, but as she said, 'How could I see the poor things hungry, while we have a snug home and all we can eat and drink?'

Then she would mentally compare Bill's industry with Dick's neglect, and a feeling of wifely pride would thrill her heart as she returned to her comfortable cottage and put her children, always neatly dressed, to sleep in their clean cots.

As she sat before the fire, near the trimly-swept hearth, which looked so pleasant and homely, though there was but a wooden slab chimney with a stone facing, a vision arose before her of prosperous days when they would have a ring fence round their own and the Donahues' farm – perhaps even an 'additional conditional lease,' to be freehold eventually – afterwards a flock of sheep and who knows what in the years to come.

'The Donahues, poor things, would have to sell and go away, that was certain; *they* couldn't prevent them being sold up – and, of course, Bill might as well buy it as another. The bank manager, Mr. Calthorpe, would sell the place, partly on credit, trusting Bill for the remainder, with security on

both farms, because he was sober and industrious. Indeed, he told Bill so last week. What a thing it was to have a good name! When she thought of the way other women's husbands "knocked down" their money after shearing, forty and fifty pounds, even more, in a week's drunken bout, she felt that she could not be too thankful.

'Now Bill, when shearing was over, generally took a small sum in cash – just enough to see him home, and paid in the cheque for the season's shearing to his bank account. It was over sixty pounds last year, for he sold his spare horse – a thirty-shilling colt out of the pound, that he had broken in himself – to the overseer, for ten guineas, and rode home on the old mare, who, being fat and frolicsome after her spell, "carried him and his swag first-rate."

'As to the two farms, no doubt it would give them all they knew, at first, to live and pay interest. But other people could do it, and why shouldn't they? Look at the Mullers! The bark hut they lived in for the first few years is still there. They kept tools, seed potatoes, odds and ends in it now. Next, they built a snug four-roomed slab cottage, with an iron roof. That's used for the kitchen and men's room. For they've got a fine brick house, with a verandah and grand furniture, and a big orchard and more land, and a flock of sheep and a dairy and a buggy and – everything. How I should like a buggy to drive myself and the children to the township! Wouldn't it be grand? To be sure they're Germans, and it's well known they work harder and save more than us natives. But what one man and woman can do, another ought to be able for, I say!'

And here Jenny shut her mouth with a resolute expression and worked away at her needle till bedtime. Things were going on comfortably with this meritorious young couple, and Bill was getting ready to start for the annual trip 'down the river,' as it was generally described. This was a region distant three hundred miles from the agricultural district where the little homestead had been created. The 'down the river' woolsheds were larger and less strictly managed (so report said) than those of the more temperate region, which lay near the sources of the great rivers. In some of them as many as one hundred, two hundred, even three hundred thousand sheep were annually shorn. And as the fast shearers would do from a hundred to a hundred and fifty sheep per day, it may be calculated, at the rate of one pound per hundred, what a nice little cheque would be coming to every man after a season's shearing. More particularly if the weather was fine.

Bill was getting ready to start on the following morning when a man named Janus Stoate arrived, whom he knew pretty well, having more than once shorn in the same shed with him.

He was a cleverish, talkative fellow, with some ability and more assurance, qualities which attract steady-going, unimaginative men like Bill, who at once invited him to stay till the morning, when they could travel together. Stoate cheerfully assented, and on the morrow they took the road after breakfast, much to Mrs. Hardwick's annoyance, who did not care for the arrangement. For, with feminine intuition, she distrusted Janus Stoate, about whom she and her husband had had arguments.

He was a Londoner – an 'assisted' emigrant, a radical socialist, brought out at the expense of the colony. For which service he was so little grateful that he spoke disrespectfully of all the authorities, from the Governor downward, and indeed, as it seemed to her, of respectable people of every rank and condition. Now Jenny, besides being naturally an intelligent young woman, utilised her leisure hours during her husband's absence, for reading the newspapers, as well as any books she could get at. She had indeed more brains than he had, which gift she owed to an Irish grandmother. And though she did by no means attempt to rule him, her advice was always listened to and considered.

'I wish you were going with some one else,' she said with an air of vexation. 'It's strange that that Stoate should come, just on your last evening at home. I don't like him a little bit. He's just artful enough to persuade you men that he's going to do something great with this "Australian Shearers' Union" that I see so much about in the newspapers. I don't believe in him, and so I tell you, Bill!'

'I know you don't like Unions,' he answered, 'but see what they've done for the working classes! What could we shearers have done without ours?'

'Just what you did before you had anything to do with him and his Union. Do your work and get paid for it. You got your shearing money all right, didn't you? Mr. Templemore's cheques, and Mr. Dickson's and Mr. Shand's, were always paid, weren't they? How should we have got the land and this home, but for them?'

'Well, but, Jenny, we ought to think about the other workers as well as ourselves – "Every man should stand by his order," as Stoate says.'

'I don't see that at all. Charity's all very well, but we have our own business to look after and let other people mind theirs. Order, indeed! I call it disorder, – and them that work it up will have to pay for it, mark my words. You look at those children, William Hardwick, that's where you've got to give your money to, and your wife, and not a lot of gassing spouters like Janus Stoate, who don't care if their families starve, while they're drinking and smoking, talking rubbish, and thinking themselves fine fellows, and what fools you and the rest are to pay them for it.'

'Well, but the squatters are lowering the price of shearing, Jenny; we must make a stand against that, surely!'

'And suppose they do. Isn't wool falling, and sheep too? Aren't they boiling down their ewes, and selling legs of mutton for a shilling apiece? Why should they go on paying a pound a hundred when everything's down? When prices rise, shearing'll go up again, and wages too – you know we can get mutton now for a penny a pound. Doesn't that make a difference? You men seem to have no sense in you, to talk in that way!'

'Well, but what are we to do? If they go on cutting down wages, there's no saying what they'll do next.'

'Time enough to think about that when it comes. You take a fair thing, now that times are bad, it'll help them that's helped you, and when they get better, shearing and everything else will go up too. You can't get big wages out of small profits; your friends don't seem to have gumption enough to see that. I'm ashamed of you, I really am, Bill!'

'Well, I must go now – I daresay the squatters will give in, and there'll be no row at all.'

'What do you want to have a row for, I should like to know? Haven't you always been well treated and well fed, and well paid? – and now you want to turn on them that did it for you, just as if you were one of those larrikins and spielers, that come up partly for work, and more for gambling and stealing! I say it's downright ungrateful and foolish besides – and if you follow all the Union fads, mark my words, you'll live to rue the day.'

'Well, good-bye, Jenny, I can't stop any longer, you're too set up to be reasonable.'

'Good-bye, Bill, and don't be going and running risks at another man's bidding; and if you bring that man here again, as sure as my name's Jane Hardwick, I'll set the dogs on him.' And here Jenny went into the cottage, and shut the door with a bang, while Bill rode down the track to join his companion, feeling distinctly uncomfortable; the more so, as he reflected that he and Jenny had never parted in this way before.

'You've been a long time saying good-bye,' said that gentleman, with a sneering accent in his voice; 'that's the worst of bein' married, you never can follow your own opinions without a lot of barneyin' and opposition. It's a curious thing that women never seem to be on the side of progress – they're that narrow-minded, as they don't look ahead of the day's work.'

'My old woman's more given to look ahead than I am,' said Bill seriously. 'But, of course, we all know that we must stick together, if we expect to get anything out of the employers.'

'Yes, yes – by George, you're quite right,' said Stoate, as if Bill had enunciated an original and brilliant idea. 'What I and the workers want is to bring the capitalists on their knees – the labour element has never had its proper share of profits in the past. But we're going to have things different in the future. How was all the big estates put together, and them fine houses built, except by *our* labour? And what do we get after all, now the work's done? We've never had our fair share. Don't you see that?' Here he looked at Bill, who could find nothing to say but —

'I suppose not.'

'Suppose not? We've as much right to be ridin' in our buggies as the man as just passed us with that slashin' pair. Our labour made the land valuable – built the houses and put up the fences. Where do *we* come in, I ask you?'

'Well, I suppose the men that worked got their wages, didn't they?' answered Bill. 'There's been a deal of employment the last few years. I did pretty well out of a fencing contract, I know, and my mate started a big selection from his share.'

'Yes, yes, I daresay, that's where you fellers make the mistake. If you get a few pounds slung to you by these capitalists, you don't think of the other poor chaps walkin' about half starved, begging a meal here and a night's lodging there. What we ought to go in for is a co-operative national movement. That's the easiest of all. One man to find the money.'

'Is it?' Bill could not help saying, interrupting the flood of Stoate's eloquence. 'I've always found it dashed hard to find a few pounds.'

'I don't mean fellers like us; we work hard – a dashed sight too hard for all we get. I mean the regular professional capitalist, in a manner of speakin', that's got his money by buying land, when the Government oughtn't never to have sold it, if they'd had any savey, or had it left him by his father, as had robbed the people some other way. Well, he finds the money, you and I the muscle – and mark you, they can't do nothin' without *that*– and others, smartish chaps as comes from the people mostly, finds the brains.'

'And what after that?'

'That's what I'm a-coming to,' answered Stoate pompously. 'When the sheep's shorn, the fat ones sold, the wheat reaped, and the money put in the bank, we all divide fair, according to our shares. So much for interest on capital, so much for labouring work, so much for head work, so much for light, easy things like clerking, as most any fool can do.'

'That sounds pretty fair,' replied Bill, scratching his head, as he endeavoured to grasp the complex conditions of the scheme. 'But who's to boss the whole thing? There must be a boss?'

'Oh, of course, there'll be a council – elected by the people – that is of course the shareholders in each industrial, co-operative establishment; they all have votes, you know. The council will do all the bossing.'

'Oh, I see, and all share alike. One man's as good as another, I suppose.'

'Certainly, all have equal rights; every man willing to work has a right to have work found for him by the State.'

'But suppose he won't work when it *is* found for him? You and I have known plenty of coves like that.'

'Well, of course, there *is* a difference in men – some haven't the natural gift, as you may say – don't care for "hard graft," but you must remember no one'll have to work hard when labour's federated.'

'How'll the work be done, then?'

'Why, you see, every one will have to do four or six hours a day, rich and poor, young and old, from sixteen to sixty. Before that their eddication [Mr. Stoate's early environment – his father was a radical cobbler – had fixed his pronunciation of that important word inexorably], this eddication, I say (which is the great thing for a worker, and enables him to hold his own against the employers, who've always had a monopoly of it), has to be attended to. After sixty, they've to be pensioned off, not wanted to do no more work. And as Bellamy says in his *Looking Backward* (a great book, as all our chaps ought to read) – "If every one in the State worked their four hours a day, the whole work of the world could be easy done, and no one the worse for it."

'That sounds well enough,' said Bill thoughtfully, 'but I'm afraid it wouldn't wash. A lot of chaps would be trying for the easy parts, and those that were cast for the rough and tumble wouldn't do it with a will, or only half and half. And who's to draft 'em off? The fellers elected to do it would have

all the say, and if they had a down on a chap – perhaps a deal better man than themselves – they could drop him in for the lowest billets going.'

'That could all be set right in the usual way,' replied Stoate, pompously mouthing his words as if addressing an imaginary audience. 'Every member of the Association would have the right of appeal to the Grand Council.'

'And suppose they didn't side with the workin' feller – these talking chaps, as like as not, would hang together – he'd have to grin and bear it. He'd be no better than a slave. Worse than things are now. For a man can get a lawyer, and fight out his case before the P.M., and the other beaks. They're mostly fair and square – what I've seen of 'em. They've no interest one way or the other.'

'No more would the Grand Labour Council.'

'Don't know so much about that, working coves are middlin' jealous of one another. If one chap's been elected to the Council, as you call it, and another feller opposed him and got beat, there's sure to be bad blood between them, and the man that's up like enough'll want to rub it into the man that's down – and there'd be no one to see fair play like the beaks.'

'Why, you're getting to be a regular "master's man." That's not the way to talk, if you're goin' to be a Unionist.'

'Oh, I'll follow the Union,' replied Bill, 'if things are going to be fair and square, not any other way, and so I tell you. But if it's such a jolly good thing to put your money in a station and share and share alike with all the other chaps, why don't some of you Union chaps put your money together? – lots of you could raise a hundred or more if you didn't drink it. Then you could shear your own sheep, sell your own wool, and raise your own bread, meat, vegetables – everything. You could divide the profits at the end of the year, and if running a squatting station's such a thundering good thing, why you'd all make fortunes in no time. What do you say to that now?'

'Well, of course, it sounds right enough,' answered Stoate, with less than his usual readiness. 'There's a lot of things to be considered about afore you put your money into a big thing like that. You've got to get the proper sort of partners – men as you know something about, and that can be depended on for to work steady, and do what they're told.'

'Do what they're told? Why, ain't that the one thing you Union chaps are fighting the squatters about? They're not to be masters in their own woolsheds! The shearers and rouseabouts are *not* to obey the squatters' overseer, they must work as the Union's delegate tells 'em. What sort of fake d'ye call that? Suppose I'm harvestin' – my crop's not much now, but it may be, some day – d'ye mean to say I'm not to talk sharp to my own men, and say "do this" or "do that"? And a delegate walkin' up and down, makin' believe to be boss, while I'm payin' for the wages and rations, and horses and thrashing-machine, and the whole boiling, would I stand that? No! I'd kick him out of the place, and that dashed soon, I can tell you!' And here Bill's eyes began to sparkle and his fists to tighten on the reins as if he itched to 'stand up to his man,' with steady eye and watchful 'left,' ready for the first chance to 'land' his adversary.

The sun was scarcely an hour high when the wayfarers came in sight of the village-appearing group of edifices familiarly known as a 'sheep station.' The 'men's hut' came first into view – a substantial dwelling, with horizontal sawn slabs and shingled roof, a stone chimney and a dining-room. Boasting a cook, moreover, of far from ordinary rank. A superior building, in fact, to the one which the owner of the station thought good enough for himself for the first few years of his occupation of North Yalla-doorra.

This was the abiding-place of the resident labourers on the station; men who received a fixed weekly wage, varying from a pound to twenty-five shillings per week, with board and lodging additional. The Australian labourer is catered for on perhaps the most liberal dietary scale in the world. He is supplied with three meals per diem, of beef or mutton of the best quality, with bread à *discrétion*, also tea (the ordinary drink of the country) in unlimited quantity, with milk and vegetables if procurable. Condiments, sauces, and preserves, if his tastes run that way, he has to pay for as extras.

They can be procured, also wearing apparel, boots, and all other necessaries, at the station store; failing that, at the 'township,' invariably found within easy distance of any large station.

Besides the 'men's hut' comes next in rank the 'shearers' hut,' dedicated to those important and (at shearing time) exclusive personages; the sheep-washers', the rouseabouts' huts, all necessary different establishments; as also the 'travellers' hut,' set apart for the nomadic labourer or 'swagman,' who sojourning but for a night is by the unwritten law of Bushland provided with bread and meat, cooking utensils, water, and firewood *gratis*.

Then, at a certain distance, the woolshed – with half an acre of roofed, battened yards and pens – the 'big house,' the stable, the horse-yard, the stock-yard, the milking-yard, with perhaps half-a-dozen additional nondescript constructions.

It may easily be imagined that such buildings, scattered and disjointed as they were, had much more the appearance of a village than of a single establishment owned, managed, and supported by one man (or one firm), and absolutely subject to his orders and interest.

'Might as well stop here to-night,' said Stoate; 'it's twenty-five mile to Coolah Creek for to-morrow, and the road heavy in places. Look at it! There's a bloomin' township to belong to one man, and *us* travellin' the country looking for work!'

'It took a lot of labour to put up all the huts and places, not to count in the shed and yards, you bet,' said his companion, who had been silent for the last half-hour, 'and many a cheque was drawn afore the last nail was drove in. I know a chap that's made a small fortune out of Mr. Templemore's contracts, and that's got a farm to show for it to-day. What's wrong with that?'

'Why, don't you see? Suppose the State had this first-rate block of country, cut it up in fair-sized farms, advanced the men the money to put up their places and crop it the first year, see what a population it would keep. Keep in comfort, too,' he continued, as he refilled his pipe and made ready for a leisurely smoke. 'Let me see, there's fifty thousand acres of freehold on this North Yalla-doora run, besides as much more leased. Divide that into nice-sized farms, that'd give us a thousand fifty-acre lots, or five 'underd 'underd-acre ones. See what a crowd of families that'd keep.'

'And suppose there come a dry season,' queried Bill rather gruffly, 'how about the families then? I've seen the sheep dyin' by hundreds on this very place – and the whole forty thousand 'd 'a died in another month if rain hadn't come. But I'm gettin' full up of this Union racket. Small farms in a dry country's foolishness. Where are we goin' to camp? Look at the grass on that flat! And I've seen it like a road.'

'It ain't bad near the creek,' said his companion. 'You can let the horses go while I go up to the overseer and get a bit of ration.'

'There's no call to do that. See that bag? My old woman's put bread and beef enough in that for a week anyhow, besides bacon, and tea, and sugar.'

'That's all right,' answered Stoate airily, 'but we may as well get fresh mutton for nothing. They always give travellers a pound or two here, and a pannikin of flour. It comes in handy for cakes.'

'Well, I'm d – d!' said Hardwick, unable to contain his wrathful astonishment. 'D'ye mean to tell me as you're a-goin' to *beg* food from this squatter here and take his charity after abusing him and all belonging to him and schemin' to ruin 'em? I call it dashed, dirty, crawling meanness, and for two pins I wouldn't travel the same side of the road with you, and so I tell you, Janus Stoate.'

There was a snaky glitter in Stoate's small, black eyes as he met for an instant the bold gaze of the Australian; but, with characteristic cunning, he turned it off with a half laugh.

'Why, Bill, what hot coffee you're a-gettin', all over a little joke like this 'ere. Now I feel as I've a right to be fed on the road when I and my feller-workers bring our labour to the door – in a manner of speakin'. We've no call to think ourselves under obligation to the squatters for their "miserable dole," as our Head Centre calls it. It's only our due when all's said and done.'

'Miserable dole,' growled Bill, now engaged in taking off his pack. 'That's a dashed fine name to give free rations, to the tune of half-a-dozen sheep a night, and a couple of bags of flour a week,

which I know Tambo did last shearing. A lot of chaps going about the country askin' for work, and prayin' to God they mayn't find it – and abusin' the people that feed 'em on top of it all. I wonder the squatters don't stop feedin' travellers, and that's all about it. I would if I was boss, I know, except the old men.'

'How about the sheds and the grass when the weather gets dry?' asked Stoate, with a sidelong glance of spite.

'That's easy enough, if a chap's a d – d scoundrel; but suppose he's caught and gets five years in Berrima Gaol, he'd wish he'd acted more like a white man and less like a myall blackfellow. But stoush all this yabber. You boil the billy, while I get out the grub and hobble the horses. I feel up to a good square feed.'

So did Mr. Stoate, apparently, as he consumed slice after slice of the cold corned beef and damper which Jenny had put up neatly in Bill's 'tucker bag,' not disdaining divers hunks of 'brownie,' washed down with a couple of pints of 'billy tea,' after which he professed that he felt better, and proceeded to fill and light his pipe with deliberation.

By this time the hobbled horses had betaken themselves through the abundant pasture of the river flat, and their bells sounding faint and distant, Bill declared his intention of heading them back, in case they should try to make off towards the home they had left. He returned in half an hour, stating that they were in a bend and blocked by a horseshoe lagoon.

Both men addressed themselves to the task of putting up the small tent which Bill carried, and bestowed their swags therein, after which Mr. Stoate proposed that they should go over to the men's hut, and have a bit of a yarn before they turned in.

Bill remarked that they had to be up at daylight, but supposed that an hour wouldn't matter. So the wayfarers strolled over to a long building, not far from the creek bank, which they entered without ceremony. They found themselves in the presence of about twenty men, in the ordinary dress of the station hand, viz. tweed or moleskin trousers and Crimean shirt. Some had coats, but the majority were in their shirt sleeves. There were mostly of ages between twenty and forty, differing in nationality, speech, and occupation.

England, Ireland, Scotland, and Australia were represented. A Frenchman, two Germans, a coloured man (American), besides a tall, well-made Australian half-caste, who spoke much the same English as the others, but had a softer voice, with rather slower intonation.

At one end of the large room was an ample fireplace, with a glowing wood fire, around which several men were sitting or standing, mostly smoking. Others were seated at the long, solid dining-table reading, for in one corner stood some fairly well-filled bookshelves. One man was writing a letter.

A few were lying in their bunks, rows of which were on either side of the room. A certain amount of quiet conversation was going on. There was no loud talking, swearing, or rude behaviour of any sort, and in spite of the bare walls and plain surroundings an air of comfort pervaded the whole.

Stoate was greeted by several of the younger men, one of whom was disposed to be facetious, as he exclaimed —

'Hulloa, my noble agitator, what brings you here? Goin' to call out the shearers, and play the devil generally, eh? You've come to the wrong shop at North Yalla-doorra – we're all steady-going coves here.'

'I suppose you're game to stand up for your rights, Joe Brace, and not afraid of getting your wages raised, if the Union does that for you?'

'If it does,' rejoined Joe sarcastically; 'and who's to go bail for that, I'd like to know? You and your crowd haven't done any great things so far, except make bad blood between masters and men – when everything was peace and goodwill before, as the parson says.'

'Well – what's that? Yer can't get nothin' in the world without fightin' for it – I reckon we're going to have a bit of war for a change. Yes, *war*, and a dashed good thing too, when men have to take orders from their feller-men, and be worked like slaves into the bargain.'

'Brayvo, Janus, old man!' replied the other, with mock approval. 'I see what it's come to. You're to be a delegate with a pot hat and a watch-chain, and get four pound a week for gassin', while us fools of fellers does the hard graft. That's your dart, to sit alongside of Barraker and the rest of the people's try-bunes – ain't them the blokes that stands up and says, like Ben Willett, as we're trod on, and starved, and treated worse than nigger slaves?'

'So you are, if you only knew it. Look at all this here country-side in the hands of two or three men, as sucks your blood, and fattens on it!'

'The boss here ain't too fat, if that's what's the matter, and we're not a very hungry-lookin' crowd, boys,' said the speaker, looking round. 'We've got good wages, good food, a book or two to read, and a table to write our letters at. You've been loafin' in Melbourne, Janus, and got oppressed there – spent all your money, forgot to buy a decent rig-out (them's last year's boots as you have on), come on the roads to beg from station to station, and abuse them as feeds you, after your belly's full. What do *you* say, Paddy?'

The man whom he addressed folded up the sheet upon which he had been writing, and rising from the form on which he sat, stood before the fire, displaying an athletic figure, and determined countenance, lighted up by a pair of glancing blue eyes, which proclaimed his nationality.

'I say that this strike business is all d – d rot, run by a lot of sneaks for their own ends. *They're* the vermin that fatten on the working-men, that are fools enough to believe their rubbish – not the squatters, who've mostly worked hard for what they've made, and spent it free enough, more power to them! Where's there a man on North Yalla-doorra that's got anything to complain of? We're well paid, well fed, well cooked for, eh, Jack? and as comfortable in our way as the boss is in his. More indeed, for we've got a shingled roof, and his is box-bark. The travellers' hut's shingled, so is the rouseabouts'. He's never had time to have his own place done up, though he lives like a gentleman, as we all know.'

'Yer 'arf a gentleman yerself, ain't yer, *Mister O'Kelly?*' replied Stoate sneeringly. 'No wonder yer don't take no interest in the workers – the men that makes the wealth of this country, and every other. Yer the makin's of a first-class "scab," and if the chaps here was of my mind you'd be put out of every hut on the river.' Before the last word was fully out, O'Kelly made a couple of steps forward with so vengeful a glare in his blue eyes that Stoate involuntarily drew back – with such haste also, that he trod on the foot of a man behind him and nearly fell backward.

'You infernal scoundrel!' he cried; 'dare to take my name into your ugly mouth again, and I'll kick you from here to the woolshed, and drown you in the wash-pen afterwards. I've done a man's work in Australia for the last five years, though I wasn't brought up to it, as some of you know. I've nothing to say against the men who gave me honest pay for honest work, and whose salt I've eaten. But skulking crawlers like you are ruining the country. You're worse than a dingo —*he* don't beg. You come here and whine for food, and then try to bite the hand that feeds you. Didn't I see you at the store to-night, waiting for grub, like the other travellers?'

'No, yer didn't then,' snarled Stoate.

'Well, I have before this, and more than once. I expect you're loafing on your mate, who's a decent fellow, and the sooner he parts company with a hound like you, the better. But this is our hut, and out you go, or I will, and that's the long and short of it. Come on, Joe!'

'The public's not on for a sermon to-night, Janus, old man,' said the young fellow before mentioned. 'Paddy's got his monkey up, and it'll be bloody wars if you don't clear. Yer mate's a cove as we'd like to spend the evenin' with, but the votin's agin yer, Janus, it raly is.'

'I came in with Stoate,' said Bill, 'and in course I'm here to see it out with him, man to man. But this is your hut, and not ours, mate, so we'd better get back to our camp – good-night all!'

## CHAPTER II

The sun-rays were slowly irradiating 'the level waste, the rounded grey' which accurately described the landscape, in the lower Riverina, which our travellers had reached after a fortnight's travel, and where the large and pastorally famous sheep station of Tandāra had been constructed. Far as the eye could range was an unbroken expanse of sea-like plain, covered at this spring time of year with profuse vegetation – the monotony being occasionally relieved by clumps of the peculiar timber growing only amid the vast levels watered by the Darling. The wilga, the boree, and the mogil copses were in shape, outline, and area so curiously alike, that the lost wanderer proverbially found difficulty in fixing upon any particular clump as a landmark. Once strayed from the faint irregular track, often the only road between stations thirty or forty miles apart – once confused as to the compass bearings, and how little hope was there for the wayfarer, especially if weary, thirsty, and on foot! The clump of mogil or wilga trees, which he had toiled so many a mile in the burning afternoon to reach, was the facsimile of the one left, was it that morning or the one before? More than once had he, by walking in a circle, and making for apparently 'creek timber' at variance with his original course, found himself at the *same clump*, verified by his own tracks, and the ashes of his small fire, as the one which he had left forty-eight hours ago.

Reckless and desperate, he takes the course again, feeling weaker by two days' hard walking – footsore, hungry – above all, *thirsty*, to the verge of delirium. Let us hope that he falls in with a belated boundary rider who shows him an endless-seeming wire fence, which he commands him to follow, till he meets the jackaroo sent with a water-bag to meet him. If this good angel (not otherwise angelic-seeming) 'drops across' him, well and good; if not so, or he does not 'cut the tracks' of a station team, or the lonely mailman going a back road, God help him! Soon will the crows gathering expectant round a pair of eagles, telegraph to the sharp-eyed scouts of the wilderness that they may ride over and see the dried-up, wasted similitude of what *was* once a man.

No such tragedy was likely to be enacted in the case of our two shearers. They were fairly mounted. They had food and water to spare. Bill was an experienced bushman, and both men had been along this track before. So they followed the winding trail traced faintly on the broad green sheet of spring herbage, sometimes almost invisible – or wholly so, where an old sheep camp had erased the hoof- or wheel-marks – turning to the right or the left with confident accuracy, until they 'picked up' the course again. Wading girth-deep through the subsidiary watercourses – billabongs, cowalls, and such – bank high in this year of unusual rain and plenty (they are synonymous in riverine Australia, 'arida nutrix'), and scaring the water-fowl, which floated or flew in countless flocks.

That gigantic crane, the brolgan (or native companion), danced his quadrille in front of them, 'advance, retire, flap wing, and set to partner,' before he sailed away to a region unfrequented by the peaceful-seeming but dangerous intruder. Crimson-winged, French grey galah parrots fluttered around them in companies, never very far out of shot; the small speckled doves, loveliest of the columba tribes, rose whirring in bevvies, while the

swift-footed 'emu' over the waste  
Speeds like a horseman that travels in haste.

To the inexperienced European traveller beholding this region for the first time, all-ignorant of the reverse side of the shield, what a pastoral paradise it would have seemed! Concealed from his vision the dread spectres of Famine, Death, Ruin, and Despair, which the shutting-up of the windows of Heaven for a season, has power to summon thereon.

This was a good year, however, in pastoral parlance. Thousands of lambs born in the autumnal months of April and May were now skipping, fat and frolicsome, by the sides of the ewes, in the immense untended flocks. They had been but recently marked and numbered, the latter arithmetical

conclusion being obtained by the accurate if primitive method of counting the heaps of severed tails, which modern sheep-farming exacts from the bleeding innocents. The percentage ranged from ninety to nearly a hundred, an almost abnormally favourable result.

How different from the famine years of a past decade, still fresh in men's minds, when every lamb was killed as soon as born 'to save its mother's life,' and in many stations one-half of the ewes died also, from sheer starvation; when immense migratory flocks, like those of the 'mesta' of their Spanish ancestors, swept over the land, destroying, locust-like, every green thing (and dry, too, for that matter), steering towards the mountain plateaux, which boast green grass and rill-melodies, the long relentless summer through – that summer which, on lower levels, had slain even the wild creatures of the forest and plain, inured from countless ages to the deadly droughts of their Austral home.

When the kangaroos by the thousand die,  
It's rough on the travelling sheep,

as 'Banjo' sings.

This station, when reached, presented a different appearance from North Yalla-doora. The prairie-like plain, far as the eye could reach, was bisected by a wide and turbid stream, flowing between banks, now low and partly submerged, now lofty and precipitous; occasionally overhanging as if cut away by the angry waters, in one of the foaming floods which, from time to time, alternated with seasons when the shallow stream trickled feebly over the rock-bars in the river-bed.

The buildings were large, but less complete in appearance than those of Yalla-doora. An air of feverish energy pervaded the whole establishment, which seemed to denote that time was more valued than finish, for the pressing work in hand. The windings of the river could be distinctly marked by the size of the great eucalypts which fringed the banks, refusing to grow away from its waters. How often had they been hailed with joy by the weary wayfarer, athirst even unto death, who knows that his trials are over, when from afar he sights the 'river timber.' And now, the signs of the campaign were visible. Men rode in at speed from distant parts of the immense area known as Tandara 'run.' From the far horizon came nearer and yet nearer the lines of unladen waggons, with long teams of lagging horses or even bullocks, from twelve to twenty in number.

Far from fat and well-liking were these necessary beasts of draught, but sure to leave the station frolicsome and obese after a few weeks' depasturing upon the giant herbage which for a hundred leagues in every direction waved in vast meads like ripening corn. An assemblage of tents and hastily constructed shelters on a 'point' of the river proclaims the 'camp' or temporary abode of the expectant shearers and rouseabouts, wool-pressers, ordinary hands, and general utility men, upon every large run at shearing time, but more especially on so exceptionally important a property as that of Tandara.

'By George! there's a big roll up on Steamer Point this time,' said Bill. 'I've shorn here twice, and never seen as many afore. There won't be stands for half of 'em when the roll's called.'

'No more there will,' said Stoate, as he looked in the direction of the populous camp, where much talk and argument seemed to be going on. 'And them that wrote and got their names put down months back won't have a rosy time of it neither.'

'Why not?' queried Bill. 'Ain't they done right to come and shear when they promised last year, and got the cove to keep places for them?'

'Oh, I didn't mean that, though I don't hold, mind you, with taking places such a dashed long time before shearin's on. It's hard on a chap, when he comes to a shed after travellin' three or four 'underd mile, to be told that all the stands is took up. But there'll be a big row all the same.'

'How's that?'

'Why, Drench the delegate told me, the last place we stopped at, that orders had come up that if the boss wouldn't give in to the Shearers' Union agreement the men were to be called off the board.'

'Hunter won't stand it,' said Bill. 'You take my word. He's always been a good employer; no man can deny that. Good wages, good rations, and pays cash on the nail when the men want it. Don't

even give cheques, and that blocks the publican, because a chap can pay as he goes, and needn't hand his cheque over the bar counter. But I know what he'll say to the delegate, or any other man that tells him he's not to be boss in his own shed.'

'What'll that be?' asked Stoate, with a sidelong look, half of curiosity, half of concealed malice.

'He'll tell 'em to go to hell and mind their own business, and leave him to look after his; that he'll see the Union and every one connected with it d – d first before he'll give up the right to manage his own property in his own way.'

'We'll show him different – that is, the Union will,' said Stoate, correcting himself hastily. '*His* property! Who made it? who dug the tanks and put up the fences, and shepherded the sheep afore they was paddocked? and built the blooming shed, as is an emblem of tyranny, to my thinking – when every man ought to have his five 'underd or a thousand ewes of his own, and a neat little place to shear 'em in? *His property!* I say it's *our* property. *We* made it – with the labour of our 'ands – and we ought to have the biggest say in the managin' of it.'

'What about buyin' the sheep and cattle, and the horses, and the payin' of wages this year?' said Bill. 'Suppose they come o' theirselves, "kinder growed," as the nigger gal says in that book about slavery in America, as Jenny read out to me last winter.'

'Wages be hanged!' retorted the disciple of Henry George and Bellamy. 'Our labour makes the fund out of which they pays their bloomin' *wages*, as they call 'em – infernal skinflints, as they are. It's dashed easy for them as gets the profits of our hard earnin's to dribble a trifle back, hardly enough to keep us in workin' order, like them team 'orses as is just turned out – a bite of chaff, and that's about all.'

'Well, only for the chaff, they'd be deaders the first dry season – down from weakness for a week or two, with their eyes picked out by the crows, and the ants eatin' 'em alive. I've seen the wild "brumbies" like that. I expect *they* ought to go on strike for stable keep, and three feeds of oats a day?'

'Men and 'orses is different – you can't compare 'em, in the way of their rights.'

'No; I know you can't,' answered Bill. 'The horses are a dashed sight the straightest crowd of the two. Howsomever, we shan't agree on them points, if we talk till Christmas. You take your way, and I'll take mine. But look here, Stoate, if there's goin' to be any of this burnin' and smashin' racket, as I've heard tell of, I'm *not on*. Mind that – don't you make any mistake! I've a bit of property of my own, as I've worked hard for, and I'm not goin' to hurt another man's savin's, Union or no Union, for all the Labour delegates in Australia, and so I tell you.'

Stoate did not speak for a few moments, then his eyes once more assumed the covert look of malice which they had worn before, as he said slowly —

'That means that you're not game to stand up for the rights of your horder, and you'll act the spy on the men as does.'

Bill's grey eyes blazed out with so sudden a light, as he made a half movement to jump off his horse, that Stoate involuntarily tightened his rein, and touched his leg-weary steed with the one spur of which he made constant use. But Bill resumed his saddle seat, and putting strong constraint on himself, replied: 'I'm that game as I'll give you a crack on the "point," as 'll stop your blowin' for a bit, if you'll get down and put your hands up. You're a light weight, and not very fit, or I'd knock some of the gas out'n yer now if you'd stand up to me. Not as you would – you're a deal better at talkin' than fightin', let alone workin'. But you and me's mates no more, mind that. You clear out with your moke, and make your own camp, and don't you come anigh me never again, or I'll give you what for, in a style you'll remember till the shearin' after next.' And so saying, Bill touched up his horse, and went off at a hand gallop, with his pack-horse – which by this time had learned to follow his companion steed – after him. Mr. Stoate regarded this action on the part of his whilom companion with baleful eye and resentful feeling, which at length found vent in these memorable words —

'You're very flash, Bill Hardwick, with your fresh 'oss and yer packer. S'pose you think you've left me in a hole, all for a few words on these blarsted, hungry, grinding squatters; but I've seen better

coves'n you straightened afore to-day. And by – ! I'll be even with yer before the year's out, as sure as my name's Janus Stoate!

After which pious resolve, Mr. Stoate jogged sullenly onward to the head station, where his sense of the dignity of labour did not prevent him from joining a crowd of men, who were in turn receiving the ordinary bush dole – viz. a pound or two of fresh beef or mutton, in addition to a pint pannikin of flour. As there were at least forty or fifty men who received these components of two substantial meals – supper and breakfast – it may be guessed what a daily contribution the squatter was required to make toward the support of the nomadic labourer of the period.

With respect to that universally recognised Australian institution, the 'travellers' hut,' to which Mr. Stoate betook himself, on receiving his free supper and breakfast materials, an explanation may not be out of place. In the good old times, 'before the war,' in the pre-union days, and when owing to the smaller size of pastoral properties the hands required were necessarily fewer, the chance labourer was made free of the 'men's hut.' In those Arcadian days the men's cook prepared his meals, and he sat at meat with the permanent employés.

This was all very well, when one or two casual guests at the outside were wont to arrive in an evening. But when, in consequence of the growth of population, and the increase of stock, the units were turned into scores, with a possibility of hundreds, the free hospitality had to be restricted.

Complaints were made by the permanent hands that the pilgrim was in the habit of picking up unconsidered trifles, when the men had gone to work after breakfast, and absconding with the same. The cook, too, expostulated, inasmuch as the 'traveller,' after availing himself copiously of the meals set before him, generally took the precaution of loading himself with 'cooked food' sufficient for the next day or two, whereby he, the cook, was kept baking and boiling all day and half the night, in addition to his ordinary work.

For some or all of these reasons, the 'travellers' hut' was decided upon. A roomy and substantial structure, placed near the creek or dam, as the case might be, at a certain distance from the other buildings, to which all future travellers not being gentlefolk, coming with introductions to the overseer's quarters, or 'the big house,' were relegated. 'Bunks' or sleeping-places, a table, and stools were mostly provided; also a load of firewood, an axe, a frying-pan, bucket, and iron pot.

Wayfarers henceforth came under the obligation to cook for themselves. The frying of chops, the boiling of beef and the baking of cakes – operations, with which every bushman is familiar, not being considered to be hardships worth speaking of. The stock of firewood was kept up, it being found that, in default, the uninvited guests felt no delicacy in burning the interior fittings, or even the doors and window frames. To this sanctuary, Mr. Stoate, in place of his former comfortable camp with Hardwick, was fain to betake himself. It was half a mile 'down the creek,' and he cursed freely at being told by the overseer that he must turn out his horse in the 'strangers' paddock,' another half-mile farther, and on no account to put him into the homestead horse-paddock.

'I'm not going to have all the feed ate up that I've saved for the station horses,' said that functionary, in decided tones, 'and so I tell you. You shearers and rouseabouts think it's nothing, I suppose, to find grass for a hundred or two horses, and a mob of bullocks big enough to stock a small run. But you'll have to pay for your grass one of these fine days, if you don't mind your eye.'

'D'ye think a man's to walk all over the bloomin' bush, lookin' for work and carrying oats and hay with him, if he's got a moke?' growled Stoate. 'The squatters have got all the blessed country, and they grudge a pore man a mouthful of food, and every blade of grass his horse eats.'

'A poor man!' said the overseer. 'What sort of a poor man d'ye call yourself, Stoate? Your cheque last year, what with fencing and shearing, was over forty pounds for three months' work. You've neither wife, chick nor child (not in this country, anyhow). What have you done with your money? Spent it in town; now you come up here crawling and begging for the bread you eat, and doing all the harm you can to the men you're living on. Why don't you keep a pound or two for the road, like Bill Hardwick and other chaps? Then you needn't be beholden to any one; and if you like

to talk rot to the men that are fools enough to trust you, that's their look-out. But to come here and to every station along the river begging for food and trying to harm the men you're living on is mean, d – d mean, and treacherous to boot. If the boss was of my way of thinking, he'd never let you inside a shed of his, or pay you another pound for shearing, and now you know my mind, – take your grub.'

And then Mr. Macdonald, an athletic Australian Scot, who towered above the short though wiry Londoner as does a mastiff above a lurcher, poured the pannikin of flour into the 'tucker bag' which Stoate held out, and cutting off a lump of fat mutton tossed it contemptuously at him.

Stoate caught the meat before it fell, and looked at the overseer with evil passions writ plain in his sullen face and snaky eye, as he said: 'You might come to be sorry for this some day, boss, big as you are!'

'Yes, you sneaking hound, I know what that means. But I've got old Harry Bower (who used to shepherd here long ago, before he turned bushranger) as night-watchman at the shed, in case some of you dogs that disgrace the Shearers' Union take a fancy to light it up. He was a *man* when he took to the bush. *You'd* do it and fellows like you, only you haven't the pluck. He's got a double-barrelled gun, and swears by his God he'll use it if he catches any curs sneaking about the shed after dark. The grass is too green to burn for a month or two, but if I come across you near a bush fire, after shearing, I'll shoot you like a crow. So take that with you – and do your worst.'

Mr. Macdonald, though a born Australian, had inherited, it will be seen, the characteristic 'perfervidum ingenium.'

It seemed imprudent of him to speak so openly before the crowd of shearers and '*bona-fide* travellers,' so called. But a bold, declared policy is sometimes more diplomatic than a halting, opportunist one. The men knew that war was declared, given certain acts of aggression or intimidation on their part. Severe sentences would unquestionably follow – if convictions were secured before the courts. On the whole, though they did not fear him, they respected him more for his openness and decided action.

'He's a *man* that hits out straight from the shoulder,' said one young fellow. 'I like that sort. You know where you have 'em. I don't hold with all this Union racket. It does more harm than good, to my mind. The most of these delegates is reg'lar blatherskites, as I wouldn't trust to carry a pound note across the street. Pretty coves to make laws for the likes of us.'

'I'm dashed sorry I ever had any truck with this Union crowd,' said his mate, as they walked away. 'I'd never no call to complain, as I know. If I didn't like a man's ways in his shed, I didn't shear there. There's plenty more. I don't fancy free men like us shearers bein' under one man's thumb, and him lookin' out for himself all the time. It's too much of the monkey for me, and I'm not goin' to stand it after this season, no matter what comes of it.'

The minor troubles having been surmounted, the roll-call read over, the rouseabouts settled and contented – each man in receipt of twenty-five shillings per week, with everything found on a scale of liberality, not to say profuseness, huts, cooks, wood and water, beef and mutton, tea and sugar, vegetables – everything reasonable and unreasonable, in fact, that the heart of bushman could desire.

The shearers, in number nearly a hundred, were apparently placated by being allowed to shear for the first time at Tandara under 'Union Rules,' a copy of which was posted up in a prominent part of the shed, setting forth that on certain points of dispute, if such should arise, the Delegate, that important, dignified personage, should have the power of joint decision with the shed manager. Wool had gone down nearly one-half in price, fat sheep as much or more; but holding to a modern doctrine that wages were not to be regulated by profits, and that Labour and not Capital provided the wage-fund, the same rate of payment per hundred sheep as was paid in more prosperous times had been exacted by the shearers' representatives. This was agreed to under protest, though considered inequitable by the proprietors of North Yalla-doorra and other representative sheds as the lesser evil, compared with that of a delayed shearing and perhaps ruined wool clip. A truly serious matter.

For the same reason the Union Rules had been accepted by several proprietors, though much against the grain, and the woolshed ticketed for the first time as a 'Union Shed.' This was done under the impression that a feeling of loyalty to the principles which professed to guide the Shearers' Union would ensure steady and continuous work.

It was a concession to expediency, unwillingly made by Mr. Hunter and others at the last moment, in the hope of 'getting the shearing over quickly' – a matter involving great gain or loss. The latter, in this particular era of low prices of wool and stock of all kinds, cattle and horses, as well as sheep, approaching the margin of ruin, ominously close. 'If the fellows shear decently and behave themselves, I don't care what they stick up in the shed, or what they call their confounded Union. They shored well enough for me and Anderson last year, so I shall go on with them as long as they treat me well. You might as well do so, too.'

This had been the reasoning of Mr. M'Andrew, one of Mr. Hunter's neighbours, a shrewd, somewhat self-seeking man of the world. And it had a savour of argument about it. 'What did it matter,' he had said, 'how other squatters looked at the question? All they had to think of was to get their own work properly done, and let every man mind his own business. He was not sure that the Pastoral Association did much good. It only set the men and masters more at odds with each other. A great deal of this ill-feeling and strike had been brought on by such proprietors as old Jackson, M'Slaney, and Pigdon. Men notoriously hard and grasping in their dealings with their employés – cutting down wages, the price of shearing and contract bush work, in every way possible; feeding, housing, and paying their people badly, while charging exorbitant prices for necessaries – flour, meat, shears, tobacco – all things, in fact, which they could not carry with them and were bound to buy from the station store. These pastoralists were primarily responsible for the dissatisfaction which had led to the strikes and rioting. For his part, as he had always acted fairly and squarely with his men, as everybody knew, it was not to be expected that he should be compelled to pay up for a contest which he had no share in bringing on.'

This had seemed fair reasoning to that class of men who are glad of any excuse to avoid paying cash out of pocket and to the avowal of a decided policy. But there were other squatters equally averse to unnecessary outlay, who, possessing more forecast and logical acumen, refused on principle to make terms with the shearers' or any other Union. They had stated their grounds of dissent from the policy of opportunism, and, what was more important, acted upon them with courage and consistency.

'This station,' said Archibald Douglas Kinross, 'chiefly freehold land, with the sheep depasturing thereon, is *my* property, as the law stands at present. And I claim the right of every Briton to manage his own affairs in his own way. To employ persons to do my work —*my* work, you understand, not any one else's – as I shall choose, in my own way and after my own taste. If any section of workmen does not wish to work for me, they are at liberty not to do so. I leave them absolute freedom in that respect; but if they accept my pay and my employment, they must do my work *as I choose* – not as *they* choose – all socialistic sophistry notwithstanding.

'Australia still contains men willing to work for high wages and good food, and to do what they are told by a fair employer, and if I am threatened or my property injured by lawless ill-disposed persons, I shall appeal to that statute under which law and order have hitherto, in Australia, been vindicated. Moreover I, Archie Kinross, am *not* going to place myself under the heel of any body of men calling themselves by one name or another. Once concede Trade Unions their right to coerce the individual, and farewell to that freedom which has so long been the Briton's boast.

'Every man who had the misfortune to acquire or inherit property would, as the so-called Unions gained power by cowardly subservience or mistaken reasoning, be at the mercy of an irresponsible, ignorant, perhaps more or less unprincipled committee, anxious to blackmail those more fortunately placed than themselves.

'They would be told how many servants they were to employ, and what they were to pay them; feed, clothe, and otherwise provide for them. Not improbably, other concessions would be

gradually exacted. The whole result being reached in a state of modified communism, certain to end in bloodshed and revolution. A social upheaval, which all history tells us is the invariable precursor of a military despotism.'

After ever so much trouble, worry and anxiety, arising from the offensively independent and even obstructive attitude of the shearers at all the sheds in the Lower Darling and elsewhere in New South Wales, a start was made at Tandara.

Jack Macdonald, bitterly aggrieved that his employers should have given in, was almost out of his mind with the irritating, puerile demands and objections which he had to meet.

'In old days he would have knocked down the ringleader, and told the sympathisers to "go to the devil" – that they need never show up at this shed or station again. Never should they get a pound of mutton or a pannikin of flour from the store, if they were dying of hunger; that they were ungrateful dogs, and here – at Tandara of all places, known for the most liberal station in the whole blooming district for pay and rations, where useless old hands were pensioned and kept on at make-believe work, when no one else would have had them on the place; where more expensive improvements – huts, fencing, tanks, wells, and stock-yards – had been made and put up, than on any station from the Queensland border to the sea. And now, what had come of it all?

'Where was the gratitude of the working-man, who, with his fellows, had been fed, lodged, and supported in good seasons and bad – when wool was down and money was scarce, and half the squatters on the verge of ruin? When the shed was down with influenza last year, didn't the wife and daughters of the "boss," who happened to be staying over shearing that year, make jelly, sago puddings and cakes, all sorts of blooming luxuries for the men that were going to die (by their own account), and couldn't hold their heads up?

'And now, because labour was scarce, owing to the Coolgardie goldfield having broken out, and the season coming on early, with the burr and grass seeds ripening every day, they must try and ruin their best friends, the squatters – threatening to strike for this and that – faulting the meat, the bread, the sugar, the tea, every mortal thing (far better than ever they'd been used to), and all at the bidding of a fellow like Stead, a man that had been educated at the expense of the State, people putting their hands in their pockets to pay for his schooling. And this is the first use he makes of it. It was enough to make a man feel ashamed of the colony he was born in, ashamed of being an Australian native, enough to make him clear out to South Africa, where the Boers and blackfellows were said to be no great things, but couldn't be such sneaks and dogs and thieves as his countrymen here.'

Jack Macdonald repeated this unreserved statement of opinion so often, for the benefit of all whom it might concern, that he began to know it by heart, and half thought of standing for the district, when the next election came round. However, the men liked him, and didn't mind his hard words, knowing that they held the key of the position, and that he was powerless if he wanted his sheep shorn. He couldn't afford to kick them out, however much he might wish so to do. All the sheds in the district were short of men, and if the shearers left in a body, the year's clip would suffer ruinous loss and injury. So they turned up their noses at the beautiful, fat, well-cooked mutton, – said 'they wanted more chops.' To which Macdonald sarcastically replied 'that he supposed they must grow a new breed of sheep, *all chops*.' In spite of their *five* meals a day, early breakfast, tea and 'brownie' at eleven o'clock, dinner at one, afternoon tea at four o'clock, and supper at half-past six, they were not satisfied, and, indeed, would not have gone without a second supper at 9 P.M. if the cook had not refused point-blank, and being a fighting man of some eminence, invited the deputation to 'step outside and put up their hands,' one after the other.

However, as before mentioned, a start *was* made, and though the quality of shearing was no great things, and Mr. Stoaate, duly elected Shearers' Delegate, produced his appointment and walked up and down the shed, with great dignity, carefully ignoring Macdonald, and ostentatiously writing or

telegraphing to W. Stead, Esq., President of the A.S.U., Wagga Wagga,<sup>1</sup> N.S. Wales, some kind of progress was made, and the super's face began to lose its saturnine expression. The weather, which in the early days of spring had been showery and unfavourable, changed for the better, and the heaviest of the flocks having been shorn, 'big tallies' – a hundred and thirty, and even one hundred and fifty or sixty – began to be made.

The discontented shearers even, whose minds had been unsettled by specious, communistic talk, prophesying a general distribution of property among the wage-earners, according to the gospel of Bellamy, commenced to be more or less satisfied. Visions of the big cheque, to which each man was adding now (prospectively) at the rate of from a pound to thirty-five shillings *a day*, commenced to float in the air. All was comparative peace and joy. Macdonald, it is true, had a trifling altercation with Mr. Janus Stoate one Friday afternoon, during which the last-named gentleman received a telegram, which he put into his pocket, after reading it, with a sneering smile. 'You'll know directly who's master on this floor – you, the hired servant of a capitalist, as is livin' on the blood of these pore ignorant chaps; or me, that's been elected by the workers of the land to see as they gets justice from their grindin' employers.'

Macdonald made one step towards the insolent underling, as might the second mate of a north sea whale-ship, if cook or fo'c's'le hand dared withstand him, while the wrathful glitter in his eye caused the offender to alter his tone. But the thought of the shearing, now three-parts through, being delayed on his account, was even a stronger controlling force.

Halting, with an effort, he glared for a few seconds at the contemptible creature, that yet had such power of annoyance, as if he could crush him with his heel. Then with studiously calm and measured tones, he said: 'You'd do great things if you were able, Mr. Delegate Stoate. If I had my way, I'd have you shot and nailed up on a barn door, as they do your namesakes in the old country. That's the only way to treat varmint, and it's a pity it isn't done here.'

The man received this little compliment with an attempt at cynical self-possession, which his shifty, malignant gaze belied, as the small eyes gleamed with reptilian malice. 'I'll learn yer,' he hissed out, 'to talk to the people's chyce as if he was the dirt under yer feet.' 'Men of the Australian Shearers' Union,' he said, raising his voice to a shrill cry, 'listen to me, and drop them shears – every man Jack of yer. D'ye know what's in this bloomin' tallagram? A strike's ordered. D'ye hear? – a *strike!* Here's the wire from the Head Centre at Wagga.

""By order of the President and Council of the Australian Shearers' Union. Every shed in the Darling district, Union or non-Union, is hereby commanded to come out and stop working *instantly* on receiving this notice from the Delegate of the Branch, under penalty of being reported to the Council of the Union at Headquarters.

Signed by me, W. Stead,  
At Wagga Wagga, this 30th September 189-.""

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<sup>1</sup> Pronounced 'Waūgāh Waūgāh.'

## CHAPTER III

This was a bombshell with a vengeance. The anarchist, who threw it metaphorically, would have had no scruples – except those of personal apprehension – in casting a dynamite duplicate on the shearing floor. A sudden confusion filled the shed. Murmurs and sullen rejoinders were made, as the more prudent division of the men recognised that their shearing cheques, the outcome of weeks of hard work, were doomed to delay, perhaps to forfeiture. Some openly withstood the triumphant delegate, others, less impulsive, were disposed to temporise, while 'I thought this was a Union shed' remarked, with slow impressiveness, a gigantic native, considerably over six feet in height, whose wiry, muscular frame and tremendous reach stamped him as one of the 'ringers' of the shed. 'Ain't the Union Rules put up there?' pointing to the copy ostentatiously affixed at the end of the shed for reference. 'What's this darned foolishness, stoppin' men that's only a week's work between them and a big cheque?'

'You can read and write, I suppose,' replied Mr. Stoate contemptuously. ('Better nor you,' murmured a young fellow just within earshot.) 'Is them words on the telegram, what I told the men of this shed, and are you thereby ordered to come out, or are you not? That's what I want to know. Are you a-goin' to defy the Union? Think a bit afore you chance that and turn "scab."'

'I'm goin' to think a bit – just so, – and I hope you other chaps'll do the same, and not rush into law, like a bull at a gate, and lose your money, because of any second fiddle in the land. As to being a "scab," Delegate Stoate, I'm no more one than you are, perhaps not as much, if the truth's told. But don't you say that to me again, or I'll pitch you through one of them skylights, with one hand too.' And here the giant stretched forward his enormous fore-arm, and looking upward to the skylight in the roof of the woolshed, made as though there would be no unusual difficulty in the feat. 'Show me that telegram, please; this step wants consideration.'

'Ain't you goin' to obey the Union?' demanded Stoate with a great assumption of dignity. 'P'raps you ain't aweer, men, as this is a serious act of disobedience, which I shall report accordin'.'

'That's all very well,' answered the dissenter, whose unusual height, as he towered above his fellows, seemed to give him a certain title to leadership. 'I'm as good a Unionist as any man here; but I see no points in chuckin' away our money and hurtin' an employer who's been fair and square with us. Where's he gone against our rules? I ask you all. Isn't the rules put up at the end of the shed, all ship-shape and reg'lar? Didn't we stop shearin' for two days last week, and the weather fine, because the delegate here said the wool was damp? I didn't feel no damp, nor my mate neither, and we lost two dashed good days' work – a couple of pounds each all round. Now, I don't want to go dead against the Union, though I can't see the fun of losin' a goodish cheque, and, as I say, hurtin' a gentleman as never did any man here a bad turn. Let's try a middle course. Suppose we pick a man as we all can trust, and send him to Wagga. He can interview the Head Centre there, and *make sure*, afore we chuck away our stuff, whether every Union shed's bound to come out, or whether, under partic'lar circumstances like this here, we can't *cut out the shed* afore we go. I move a resolution to that effect.'

'And I second it,' said Bill Hardwick. 'I want to take my money home to my old woman and the kids; I've got a lot to do with it this season, and so, I daresay, have most of you, chaps. I don't see no sense in clearin' out now, when we've got fifty or sixty pound a man, to take and goin' off with neither money nor grub. Of course, we can *wait* to be paid out of Union funds, but we know what *that* means. Those that votes for Jim Stanford's motion, and fair play, hold up your hands.'

The scene that followed was hard to describe. A forest of hands was held up, while there rose a babel of voices, some laying down the law, others expressing a doubt of the prudence of flouting the mysterious powers of the A.S.U., in the midst of which Mr. Stoate, standing upon the wool table, vainly attempted to make himself heard.

The controversy continued until the dinner-bell rang, by which time it was clear that the sense of the meeting was overwhelmingly in favour of Stanford's amendment.

So, in spite of Stoaate's threats and envious malice, a steady-going, middle-aged shearer of known probity and experience was chosen and despatched to Narandera, *en route* for Wagga Wagga, for further instructions. In the meantime, it was agreed to go on with the shearing, to which the men addressed themselves with such energy and determination, that when the knock-off evening bell sounded, the tallies were larger than on any preceding afternoon of the week. Jack Macdonald was delighted, though he refrained from open commendation, as he noticed that all the fast shearers made a point of shearing carefully and giving no room for disapprobation on his part.

Mr. Stoaate viewed the whole proceedings with unconcealed disgust, and talked big about taking down the names of every man in the shed, and so reporting them that they would never get another 'stand' in a Union shed. He found, however, that except among the young, unmarried men, and a few reckless spendthrifts, who were carried away by the specious ideas at that time freely ventilated, he had little influence.

Stanford and Hardwick were noted men – honest, hard-working, and respected as 'ringers,' and as such, leaders in their profession. As Stanford bent his long back, and lifted out a fresh sheep every few minutes from the pen, with as much apparent ease as if the big, struggling seventy pound wether had been a rabbit, a feeling of industrial emulation seemed to pervade the great shed, and each man 'shore for his life,' as old Billy Day expressed it – 'and that dashed neat and careful, as if there was a hundred pound prize at next Wagga Show hangin' to it.'

'Wait till George Greenwell comes back,' said Stoaate – 'and he ought to be here inside of eight days, as he can get the rail from Narandera – and see what you'll have to say, then.'

Of course, telegrams had been sent, and arrived with reiterated command from the Napoleon at Wagga Wagga – to lay down their arms, or rather their shears, as ordered.

And this was the crowning injustice and treachery of the ukase – that all the *Union* sheds in New South Wales, where the proprietors had surrendered their independence, and pocketed their pride, at the bidding of expediency, were penalised. Those squatters who 'bowed not the knee to Baal,' and fought out the contest, with sheds half full of 'learners,' and strangers from other colonies, brought over by the Pastoral Association, as well as the free shearers, who, intimidated by the *Union* guerillas, were often injured and hindered as to their lawful work, were now in a far better position. They were able to laugh at the surrendering squatters.

'You have given in,' said they; 'sacrificed principle and set a bad example for the sake of getting quickly through this season's shearing. You betrayed your pastoral comrades, and are *now betrayed by the Union*; you are left in the lurch. Serve you right!'

So, 'deserted in their utmost need,' with half-shorn sheep, and no hope of fresh men – as the non-*Union* sheds had secured most of the available labour – they were in a pitiable condition, neither help nor sympathy being procurable; while many of the free sheds were shearing steadily and comfortably, with a 'full board.'

In seven days, Mr. Greenwell was expected to appear. He could ride to Narandera in three days; twenty-four hours would take him to Wagga Wagga, after stopping for the night at June Junction. This was far and away the finest railway station in New South Wales, perhaps in Australia, having not only an imposing structure connected with the railway proper, but a very fine hotel, erected by the Government of New South Wales, liberally managed and expensively furnished.

There, the railway passenger could spend the night, or a week, if he so decided, being sure that he would be called at the proper time, either by night or day, to be despatched on his journey in an enviable and Christian state of mind.

The days passed on at Tandara, the week was nearly over. Such quick and clean shearing had never been done there before. The last day of the allotted time approached. Greenwell had not arrived, but surely he would turn up on the morrow.

Stoate was uneasily anxious. He hinted at treachery. But Greenwell, a regular, downright 'white man,' could not be 'got at.' Every one scoffed at the idea. One of the rouseabouts, who had known better times, hummed the refrain of 'Mariana in the moated grange': 'He cometh not, she said.' Worst of all, from Stoate's point of view, the shearing would be finished in two more days. The shed would then be paid off – shearers, pressers, rouseabouts, the cook and his mate, everybody down to the tar-boy. If their emissary didn't come before then, he might just as well not come at all. The 'might, majesty, and dominion' of the Australian Shearers' Union, with 20,000 members in all the colonies, which had aimed at one great 'Australian Labourers' Union' in town and country, would be set at nought. They had planned the inclusion of every worker – that is, muscle-worker, for brains didn't count – from the ship's cook of the coaster to the boundary rider on the Lower Darling or the Red Barcoo; from the gas-stoker in Melbourne or Sydney, where they hoped to plunge the cities into darkness, to the stock-rider, behind his drove of Queensland bullocks; and the back-block carrier, with his waggon and team of fourteen unshod Clydesdales or Suffolks.

And now, in the case of the Tandara shed, one of the best known and oldest stations on the Darling, this campaign against capital was to end in defeat and disappointment.

Stoate groaned in despair, as the eighth day arrived and no messenger. For the last forty-eight hours he had been looking anxiously for the cloud of dust at the end of the long, straight road across the endless plain, which heralded the approach of team, coach, or horseman.

As if to aggravate the Strike leaders, and all connected with that beneficent institution, the weather had been miraculously fine. No spring storms had come out of the cloudless sky, not so much as a 'Darling River shower' – four drops upon five acres,' in the vernacular – had sprinkled the red dust of the plain, to give the delegate the excuse to declare the sheep too wet to shear, and so lose a day. Nothing, in fact, happened. And on the noontide hour of the fourth day succeeding the week, Tandara shed 'cut out.' The 'cobbler,' the last sheep – a bad one to shear, and so considerably left for 'some one else,' by every man who picked out of the large middle pen – was lifted aloft by Stanford, amid the jeers of the men, now preparing with stiff backs and aching sinews to surrender their task for a full week at any rate, before they 'struck' the next shed, lower down the river.

'I could shear him,' said he, regarding the closely wrinkled 'boardy' fleece, 'if he was covered with bloomin' pin-wire. My word! isn't it a pity that Greenwell didn't turn up afore? Eh, Mr. Delegate? D'ye think the Union'll guillotine us, same as they did chaps at the French Revolution? I'm off to Launceston in case of accidents. My cheque'll keep me for the rest of the summer, in a country that *is* a country – not a God-forsaken dust-heap like this.' Thus speaking, and shearing all the while, with punctilious precision, Mr. Stanford trimmed the 'cobbler' with a great affectation of anxiety, and dismissing him down the shoot of the pen with a harmless kick, said, 'Good-bye, and God bless you, old man; you make eighty-nine – not a bad forenoon's work.'

'Come along, men, down to the office,' said Macdonald, 'your money's ready for you – the storekeeper and I were up pretty nigh all night getting the accounts made out. You'll enjoy your dinners all the better for having your money in your pockets. The rouseabouts and shed hands can come in the afternoon. They won't want to leave before morning.'

'Who's that coming along the Wagga road on a grey horse?' said a sharp-eyed young shearer. 'By Jing! I believe it's Greenwell. Whatever can have kep' him, Mr. Stoate?'

'Never mind him,' said Macdonald. 'John Anderson, this is your account; look it over. £45:10:6. You'll take a cheque; here it is – sign the book. I'll take you all by the alphabet.'

As the men stood round the little room at the side of the big store, that served for the station office, the traveller on the grey horse rode slowly towards them.

The men were in a merry humour. Their keen eyes had recognised horse and rider afar off. It *was* the messenger who had so signally failed in coming up to time. He was received with a storm of ironical cheers and derisive exclamations.

'Halloa, George – where yer been? To Sydney and back? Got warrants for us all? To think as we should ha' cut out, and you on the road with an order from the Head Centre in your pocket! Come along, Mr. Delegate, and talk straight to him.'

These and the like specimens of humorous conversation were shouted at the unlucky emissary, who, as he came up and wearily dismounted, evidently knew that an explanation would be demanded of him.

Stoate walked out with a solemn and dignified air to meet him. 'Well done, Mr. Delegate, give it to him from the shoulder. He's a jolly telegraph, ain't he? Why, Joe Kearney the sprinter could have *run* all the way and beat him, hands down.'

'Will you oblige me by statin' the cause of your delay on a mission of importance to the Union and your feller-workers?'

'Now then, George, speak up – give us the straight griffin. What was it? Honour bright; did yer join a circus? Was there a good-looking girl in the way? And you a married man. For shame of you!'

Between the awful visage of Mr. Stoate and the running fire of chaff from his mates, Greenwell looked rather nonplussed.

However, girding himself for the contest, he mustered up courage, and thus delivered himself.

'Well, boys, the long and short of it is, I was took ill at Junee, on the return journey, and after stayin' a day, just as I was startin' back, some old mates of mine, as had just cut out at Hangin' Rock, come along, and – well, the truth's the truth, we all got on a bit of a spree. Now the murder's out, and you can make the best of it. I don't see as there's anything broke, so far.'

'Anything broke,' retorted Stoate indignantly. 'Hasn't the shed been cut out, in direct disobedience of orders, and the Union treated with contempt?'

'We're just gettin' our cheques,' called out a young fellow at the back of the crowd. 'Jolly awkward, ain't it? But I'll get over it, and so'll Dick Dawson.'

When the weighty matter of the payment was over, and the men were finishing their 'wash and brush up,' getting up their horses and settling their packs, one of the older men approached Stanford, who was quietly proceeding with his preparations, and thus addressed him —

'Now, Jim, you knowed that chap afore, didn't yer? Hadn't yer no notion as he might get on a "tear," with money in his pocket, and half nothin' to do like?'

Mr. Stanford made no verbal answer, but drawing himself up to the full height of his exalted stature, looked down into the interrogator's face, with an expression of great solemnity. It is just possible that he may have observed a slight deflection in the corner of his left eye, as he relaxed the severity of his countenance, while he observed resignedly, 'Well, it might have been worse; I've got the boss's cheque for £57:14s., and a few notes for the road in my pocket, this blessed minute.'

'Mine's a shade more'n that,' replied 'Long Jim,' with deliberation. "'All's well that ends well" 's a good motter. I've done enough for this season, I reckon. I had a fairish fencing contract in the winter. It'll be time enough to think about the "dignity of labour" and the "ethics of war" (wasn't that what the Head Centre called 'em?) afore next shearin' comes round. I'm off to a cooler shop across the Straits.'

The shearing at Tandara having ended satisfactorily to the shearer, the sheep-washers, the rouseabouts, the boundary riders, the overseers, to every one connected with the establishment in fact, from the 'ringer' to the tar-boy, all of whose wages and accounts were paid up to the last hour of the last day, in fact to every one except Mr. Janus Stoate, whose remuneration was in the future, a great silence commenced to settle down upon the place so lately resounding with the 'language used, and the clamour of men and dogs.' The high-piled waggons, drawn by bullock teams of from twelve to twenty, and horse teams of nearly the same number, had rolled away. The shed labourers had walked off with swags on their backs. The shearers, many of whom had two horses, poor in condition when they came, but now sleek and spirited, had ridden off with money in both pockets, full of glee and playful as schoolboys. The great shed, empty save for a few bales of sheepskins, was carefully locked up, as were also the shearers' and the other huts. Even Bower, the grim night-guardian of the

woolshed, liberally remunerated, had left for Melbourne by Cobb and Co.'s coach. There, among other recreations and city joys, he betook himself to the Wax-works in Bourke Street.

As with hair and beard trimmed, newly apparelled from top to toe, he wandered around, looking at the effigies of former friends and acquaintances, now, alas, cut off in their prime, or immersed in the dungeon of the period for such venial irregularities as burglary, highway robbery, manslaughter, and the like, his gaze became fixed, his footsteps arrested. He stands before the waxen, life-like presentment of a grizzled elderly man, in rough bush habiliments, his hat a ruin, his clothes ragged and torn, his boots disreputable. A double-barrelled gun rests on his shoulder, while above his head is a placard, on which in large letters could be seen by the staring spectator —

### **'Harry Bower, the Celebrated Bushranger.'**

Cut to the heart, not so much by the heartless publicity of the affair as by the disgraceful attempt to brand him as a dirty disreputable-*looking* individual, he glared angrily at his simulacrum. 'And me that was always so tasty in my dress,' he muttered. So saying, he seized the hapless figure by the arm, and dragging it along with wrathful vehemence, made for the door.

'Oh, Mr. Bower, Mr. Bower!' cried the proprietress, 'ye'll ruin him – I mane yerself. Sure ye wouldn't go to injure a poor widdy woman, and all the people sayin' it's your dead imidge.'

'Imidge of me, is it?' shouted Bower, the furious, ungovernable temper of the 'long sentence convict' breaking out. 'I'll tache ye to make a laughing-stock of Harry Bower, this day. Ye might have dressed me dacent, while ye wor about it.'

So saying, he dragged the inanimate malefactor through the door, and casting him down upon the Bourke Street pavement, commenced to kick him to pieces, to the great astonishment of the crowd which speedily gathered around him. A rumour had started that 'Bower the bushranger was killing a man outside the Wax-works,' and before many minutes the street was blocked with men, women, and children, lured to the spot by the expectation of seeing a real live bushranger in the exercise of his bloodthirsty vocation.

A few minutes later – having dissevered several vital portions of the 'Frankenstein' individual, and, like Artemus Ward's enthusiastic Bible Christian, who 'caved Judassis' head in,' more or less demolished the victim – Mr. Bower, desisting, stalked moodily up the street, his peculiar reputation not leading any one to volunteer pursuit. There was no constable in sight, so the Mrs. Jarley of the establishment was left to her lamentations, and the dubious satisfaction of a remedy by civil process.

Next day, below startling headlines, similar paragraphs appeared in the leading journals.

### **'An Ex-Bushranger**

#### **'Assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm**

'About three o'clock yesterday afternoon, such denizens of Bourke Street as were passing Mrs. Dooley's interesting collection of Wax-works were alarmed by the spectacle of an aged man of athletic proportions, who had assaulted an individual of similar age and appearance; had thrown him down on the pavement, and was savagely kicking him about the head and the body; indeed it was feared – such was the fury of his gestures – that he was actually trampling the unfortunate victim of his rage to death. None dared to interfere, every one appeared paralysed; but after one or two public-spirited individuals had started for the Swanston Street police station, an adventurous bystander called out, 'Why, it's a wax figure.' Though a shout of laughter greeted the announcement, no one cared to remonstrate with the hero of so many legends – the man who, long outlawed, and captured after

a desperate resistance, had barely escaped the gallows for the manslaughter of the warders of the hulk *President* in a frustrated plot for escape – the dreaded bushranger, Henry Bower. We have since learned that this attempt at *felo de se* (in wax) – for the injured individual turned out to be a fairly correct likeness of himself – can only be proceeded for as a debt, which Bower in his cooler moments will not be averse to liquidating, he having returned from the bush with a reasonably large cheque, earned in the service of an old employer, who gave him a berth at a couple of pounds a week as night-watchman of his woolshed. In these times of disturbance and incendiary troubles, most of our readers will concur with our opinion, that old Harry Bower, with his double-barrel, not swayed by frivolous objection to bloodshed, was, in such a position of trust, "the right man in the right place."

When the shearers took their cash or cheques as each elected, and departed, splitting into small parties, on different routes, division of opinion took place likewise. Bill Hardwick openly declared his intention, as did several others, to 'cut the Shearers' Union' and go 'on their own' for the future. 'I've had enough of this Union racket,' said he, as, lighting his pipe, and jogging off with his two fat horses, saddled and packed, he prepared to take the 'down river' road. 'I don't see no points in being bossed by chaps like this Stead, and callin' theirselves chairmen and presidents, and what not – fellers as have done dashed little but blather this years and years. They've turned dog on the squatters as trusted 'em and "went Union," and deuced near done us out of six weeks' hard graft at this very shed. We've got our cash, boys; that'll carry us on for a bit. But suppose we'd turned out when that galoot at Wagga wanted us to, where should we be now? Travellin' the country without a shillin' in our pockets, our shearin' money forfeited by the next police magistrate (and serve us right, too, for bein' such bally fools), and summonses and warrants out against every man on the board. I'm full of Mr. Head Centre at Wagga, with his top hat, and gold chain, and his billiards, as our money goes to pay for. But he won't get none of mine to monkey with, nor you either, Janus Stoate, and so you may tell him next time you wire.'

'I'll report your language to the Union secretary, William Hardwick, never fear,' replied Stoate, fixing his snaky eye upon him. 'You'll soon know which is the strongest – you or the Association, as protects the workers' interests. So I warn you, and all others as is fools enough to stand by you.'

'That'll do, Mr. Delegate,' said Bill; 'don't you go to bully me. Say another word, and I'll give you a smack or two, that'll make a better yarn when you're touching up the tell-tale business for the Head Centre. I'm off to Moorara, where there's 300,000 sheep to shear, and a board only half full. Who's comin' my way?'

There had been a hum of approbation when Bill finished his humble oratorical effort, after which a dozen of the best and fastest shearers announced their intention to go with him, to the wrath and despair of Mr. Stoate.

'I'll be even with you, Bill Hardwick,' he yelled, 'and you too, Johnny Jones – see if I don't. You'll get no stands from us this year, nor next either.'

A hundred and fifty miles below Tandara. A red-walled promontory overlooking the Darling, in this year a broad, majestic stream, with anabranches of equal breadth and volume running out for many a mile, where the river steamers took their course, cutting off corners, and, because of the depth of water in this most bountiful season, almost indifferent to obstacles. Here stood the great Head Station of Moorara. Miles of fencing of substantial character surrounded it on all sides. There was none of the ordinary carelessness as to finish, popularly supposed to be characteristic of back-block stations 'a thousand miles from everywhere,' as had been said descriptively by an imaginative tourist. On the contrary, every hut, paling, fence, gate, wall, and roof in that immense holding was in what old-fashioned English country people called 'apple-pie order.'

Everything was mended and kept right, up to date. Six carpenters and three blacksmiths lived on the premises all the year round. There was no waiting until that pastoral millennium 'after shearing' arrived. Everything was done at once, and done well. The 'stitch in time' was an article of the faith at Moorara, and, as such, religiously observed. If any superficial judging tourist, observing these

things, ventured to remark that such improvements must have cost a mint of money, or to hint a doubt whether such a place 'paid,' he was frowned down at once and haughtily reminded that this was Moorara, the property of the Hon. Mr. M'Cormack, whose sheep shorn last year (this was *one* of his long list of stations) would total up to over a million!

Just calculate what so many fleeces come to, the average weight being eight or nine pounds, and the value per head *rarely* under as many shillings. Then, of course, there are the other stations, carrying six hundred thousand high-class merino sheep!

Now the woolshed to which Bill and his ten or twelve companions were bound was one of which the owner had 'stood out' from the first against the tyranny of the Shearers' Union.

As Bill and his companions journeyed down the river, rumour reached them of serious developments of the Great Strike. This protest against the alleged dictation of Capital had reached its culminating stage. The o'er-vaulting ambition of the State-school educated Mr. Stead, the originator and prime mover of the Civil War, which was now fully recognised, had struck a blow at the State itself – that State under which he had been bred and nurtured, fed, protected, and presented with a 'free, compulsory, and secular education.' He had justified the forebodings of old-fashioned Conservatives, who had always doubted the wisdom of educating the labouring classes at the expense of the ratepayers, of breeding up an army of enemies to Capital and to the settled order of the Government.

And now the long-threatened result *had* come to pass – a revolt against order and good government, a deliberate attempt to subvert the Constitution under the specious guise of federated labour. It had commenced with a quarrel between the cook's mate of a coasting steamer and the so-called 'delegate' of the crew, spreading with portentous rapidity, like the bush-fires of the land, until it enveloped the stock-riders of the Paroo and the teamsters of 'the Gulf.' It menaced life and property. It attempted to plunge cities into darkness by 'calling out' the gas-stokers. It essayed to paralyse commerce by intimidating the carriers, whom it forbade to convey the wool – the staple Australian export – to the wharves, by restraining the wharf labourers from loading the vessels.

But, in these two instances, the common-sense of the city populations came to the rescue. The young men of the learned professions, of the upper classes – in the true sense of the word – came out to play a man's part in the interests of law and order. They manned the gas-works, and, amid furnace-heat and grime, provided the necessary labour, all unused as they were to toil under such conditions. The cities were *not* wrapped in darkness, and the streets were *not* made ready for the spoil by the burglar, the garrotter, and the thief. A line of wool teams was driven down the principal street of Sydney by barristers and bankers, by clerks and merchants, chiefly young men, high-couraged and athletic. But on the foremost waggon, high-seated behind his four-horse team, which he toiled with practised ease, might be recognised the leonine visage and abundant beard of Winston Darling, the Explorer, the Pioneer Squatter, the well-known Pastoral Leader and Ruler of the Waste.

The streets were crowded with yelling, blaspheming, riotous Unionists, with difficulty kept within bounds by a strong body of police.

Stones were thrown, and foul epithets freely used. But though one youthful driver had his head cut open, no further damage was done. And the wool was safely conveyed to the wharves and shipped in spite of the threatening demeanour of the assembled thousands.

These amateurs, native-born Australian gentlefolk, worked for weeks, from six to six, in many instances galling the hands, which were wholly unused to such rude treatment. But they kept at it till the stubborn conflict subsided, and not till then did they fall out of the ranks of the 'muscle-workers,' who in this and other instances have arrogated to themselves the title of the *only workers* in this complex and many-sided body politic.

This demonstration was chiefly confined to the seaports. When, however, the Ministry was sufficiently strong to call out the Volunteer regiments, their disciplined action gained control of the disorderly mobs, and order was regained, without discouraging delay.

But in the bush, far from help, police or military protection, matters were far otherwise. Lonely stations were terrorised. Large camps of armed and apparently desperate men were formed, who intimidated those non-Union shearers and bush labourers who neither conformed to their rules nor submitted to their dictation.

They were in many cases captured, so to speak, assaulted, maltreated, and illegally restrained from following their lawful occupation. The carriers' horses or bullocks were driven away or slaughtered, their waggons, in some instances, burned.

These outrages were directed against men and their employers who had dared to be independent, to exercise the right of free Britons to manage their own affairs and their own property.

It may easily be imagined how bodies of two or three hundred men, well armed and mounted, could terrorise a thinly-populated country. Specific acts of incendiarism and other offences against property were frequent. Woolsheds were burned with their contents, sometimes to the value of thousands of pounds; fences were cut and demolished; bridges and telegraph lines destroyed; in short, no lawless action which could result in expense and loss to the pastoralist, or those of the labourers who defied the New Tyranny, was omitted.

## CHAPTER IV

Some explanation of the Great Australian Strike of 1890, which lasted in more or less virulence and intensity until 1895, producing widespread damage and ruinous loss, may not here be out of place.

This important industrial conflict exhibited the nearest approach to civil war which Australia has known. It originated, as did certain historical revolutions and mutinies, from an occurrence ludicrously insignificant compared with the magnitude of the results and the widespread disasters involved.

A fireman was discharged by the captain of a coasting steamer belonging to the Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company, whereupon the Seamen's Union took up the matter, the man being their 'delegate,' and demanded his reinstatement.

He had been 'victimised,' they asserted, by the chief steward, who must be dismissed or the fireman reinstated. The Cooks' and Stewards' Union, in the interests of the chief steward, held an inquiry, in conjunction with the Seamen's Union, to which the fireman belonged. The result failed to substantiate any charge against the chief steward. But the Seamen's Union decided to hold the captain responsible, threatening to take the crew out of the ship. No inquiry was asked of the owners.

About a month after the threat the crew gave notice, and were paid off. The captain had received the following letter: —

'Seamen's Union Office,  
Sydney, July 1890.

'Captain —, Steamer —.

'Dear Sir — We are instructed by the members of the above Society to state that we intend to have our delegate — reinstated on board. If he is not reinstated by the return of the ship to Sydney, the crew will be given twenty-four hours' notice.

'We intend to protect our members from being victimised (*sic*) by chief stewards and others, and intend at all hazards to have him reinstated. — I remain, yours truly,

'The President and Acting Secretary.'  
'Sydney, 6th July 1890.

'The Acting Secretary.

'Sir — With regard to your letter as to the discharge of a fireman from the steamer *Corinna*, the captain informs me that the chief steward had nothing whatever to do with the discharge. The fireman made no complaint about his food. He was discharged in the Company's interests, but there is no objection to his joining any other of the Company's vessels. The captain also was not aware that he was a delegate, and had nothing to do with his discharge. It seems strange that men should leave the Company without explanation, while the Company is denied the same right. — I remain, etc.'

Now, what in the world had the colliers of Newcastle, N.S.W., to do with the injustice or otherwise meted out to the fireman through that powerful and distinguished official, the ship's cook, or even by the chief steward? Such would be the common-sense view of any ordinary person, especially if he had been reared in the belief that 'mind your own business' was a maxim of weight and authority, verified by the lore of ages. Not so thought the leaders of the mining community. A fatal fascination appeared to have actuated one and all under the influence of a false and specious principle.

No sooner had the steamer arrived at the Agricultural Association's wharf desiring a cargo of coal than the miners 'came out' of the Sea Pit, at that time in full work. Then the Northern Colliery owners, justly indignant at this breach of agreement, stopped work at all the pits under their control. Fourteen days' notice should have been given by the miners, on the terms of their agreement.

There was no grievance between master and man, and yet at the bidding of an outside person the miners abandoned their work without notice.

The Unionist shearers, at the instigation of their dictator, hastened to join the revolt. They commenced to formulate an agreement imposing higher pay, shorter hours, the supervision of sheds by workmen appointed by themselves, the deposition of the rule of the employer over his own work, as to his own property, in his own woolshed.

Then the employers, up to that time slow to move and more or less disunited, saw that the time had come for them to combine against the tyranny of a communistic organisation. The Shearers' Union, however, as represented by their president, thought it improper of other people to form Unions. They began to threaten as follows: —

'Should the employers maintain their present attitude, the trades' organisation will be compelled to use *every means* to win their cause, methods which at present they have avoided.

'For instance, they could call out *all the shearers (sic)*, and at one blow cause widespread disaster. [This they did later on, including those who, in reliance on their promises, were shearing under Union Rules.] The effects of such a step would be to paralyse the whole industry of the colony. In Victoria, shearing is only just commencing. In New South Wales it is barely half over. At the Labour Conference in Sydney it was decided that the Western miners be called out next day. This meant cutting off the sole remaining coal supply of the colony. Decided also that all the shearers, rouseabouts, and carriers be called out. Instructions sent accordingly.

'In New South Wales alone this will affect 22,000 shearers, 15,000 rouseabouts, 10,000 carriers also, together with all affiliated trades, such as butchers, bakers, grocers, and compositors. Whether the railway men will be included cannot be now ascertained.'

As a sample of the class of arguments used to set class against class, and to inflame the minds of the bush labourers against their employers, the following circular, signed by the leaders, and privately distributed, may serve as a specimen. It was headed: —

### **An Appeal to Station Labourers**

'A shed labourer's lot is not a happy one. To work all hours and to endure all manner of privations. To work hard for a miserable starvation wage. A victim of capitalistic greed and tyranny. Suffering *worse treatment than the negro slaves* of the Southern States of America. The reason for this being that they have had no means of protection. Let them unite. Let them be men, free men, and have a voice in the settlement of the terms at which they shall sell their labour.

'The rights of the labourers will then be recognised. Capital will no longer have Labour by the throat. The mighty heritage of a glorious independence is in their grasp.

'Let them rise above the bondage of capital, and be a unit in that which will make one powerful whole – the General Woolshed Labourers' Union of Australia!'

That this sort of language was calculated to arouse the passions and heighten the prejudices of uneducated men may well be conceded. The ludicrous comparison with the 'wrongs of slaves' in the Southern States of America might raise a smile, had not reports of outrages, unhappily but too well authenticated, followed this and similar proclamations.

However, the Employers' Union and the Pastoral Association were not minded to submit tamely to the oppression of a 'jacquerie,' however arrogant, as the following extract from a metropolitan journal, under date 22nd September 1890, will show: —

'In Sydney that picturesque procession of lorries, loaded with non-Union wool, and driven by leading merchants and squatters, will once more betake itself through the streets, and may be the signal of actual civil war. These waggons, with their unaccustomed drivers, embody in a dramatic shape that aspect of the strike in which the Unionists have morally the weakest case. The shearers have undertaken to make Unionism *compulsory* at one stroke, in every woolshed in Australia, by the tyrannical process of forbidding every bale of wool shorn by non-Unionists to reach a market. Why must merchants and squatters, at the risk of their lives, drive these particular bales of wool to the

wharf? We frankly hope that the wool "boycott" will break down hopelessly, ignobly. All reasonable men are against this fatal blunder of the Unionists.'

Commencing in 1890 among men 'who go down to the sea in ships,' the revolt against employment and authority spread among 'all sorts and conditions of men' dwelling in the continent of Australia. All trades and occupations by which the muscle-workers of the land, falsely assumed to be the only labourers worthy of the name of 'working-men,' were attempted to be captured and absorbed. To account for the readiness with which the new gospel of labour was accepted, it must be borne in mind that many of the better-educated labourers and mechanics had been for years supplied by their leaders with so-called socialistic literature. They had in a sense sat at the feet of apostles of the school of Henry George and Mr. Bellamy.

The former was convinced that all the 'riddles of the painful earth' might be solved by the taxation and gradual confiscation of land; this plausible-appearing policy would remove all the oppressions and exactions under which the excellent of the earth had so long groaned. Mr. Bellamy's method of procuring universal happiness, solvency, and contentment was simple and comprehensive. Every adult was to be compelled to labour for four hours of the day – no one to be permitted to work for *more* than this very reasonable, recreational period. Every one to be pensioned when he or she reached the age of sixty.

By this happy apportionment of the primeval curse, every one would be obliged to furnish a sufficient quantity of labour to provide for his own and other people's wants.

No one would be expected to do a full day's work – always unpopular as a task, and suspected to be unwholesome.

Dining and Music Halls, an artistic atmosphere, with all mental and physical luxuries, to be provided by the State, in exchange for Labour Coupons of specified value.

It cannot be doubted that speculative theories of this nature, proposals for minimising labour and dividing the wealth, accumulated by the industry and thrift of ages, among individuals who had neither worked nor saved for its maintenance, had a wide-reaching influence for evil among the members of the Labour Unions. Dazzled by alluring statements, they were ready to adopt the wildest enterprises, founded on delusive principles and untried experiments.

Perhaps the most important of the Utopian projects, which at the close of the conflict found favour in the eyes of the Unionists, was that of a Communistic settlement in Paraguay, to which the leader, an Americanised North Briton, gave the name of New Australia. This was to be somewhat on the lines of the settlement so delicately satirised by Hawthorne in the *Blithedale Romance*.

It was decided by a caucus of certain wise men of the Union that a country where the dietary scale for working-men was the most liberal in the world, the hours of work the *shortest*, the pay the highest, the climate the most genial, the franchise the most liberal, was not adapted for British labourers. It was accordingly agreed to establish a co-operative community in a foreign land, where brotherly love and the unselfish partition of the necessaries of life might exhibit to an admiring world an ideal State, free from the grasping employer and the callous capitalist. This modern Utopia they proposed to call New Australia. Money not being so scarce among Australian labourers as, from the tremendous denunciations of their leader, which freely compared them to negro slaves (only worse paid, fed, and driven), might have been supposed, they were expected to pay sixty pounds each towards the charter and freight of a suitable vessel.

This notable plan they carried out. One man indeed sold a cottage in a country town for £400, and putting the cash into the common fund, sailed away for South America amid great jubilation from the Radical press and Labour organs; thankful, however, before long to work his passage back to England.

Hope and Mr. W. G. Spence told a flattering tale before experience came to the audit. A tract was found in the Paraguayan Chaco – '234,000 acres, well watered and timbered – splendid land,'

thus described in the New Australia newspaper, the journal of the New Co-operative Settlement Association, Wagga, New South Wales, 28th January 1892.

In September 1893 two hundred and sixty New Australians arrived to take possession of the Promised Land. Even on board ship differences of opinion arose. In December there was a notable desertion. The 'five-meal, meat-fed men' doubtless thought sadly of poor 'Old Australia,' where they had no dictator and few privations, save those irreparable from high wages and good food. They missed many things for which they had been the reverse of thankful, when supplied gratis. They even missed the police and the magistrate. One man at any rate did, who was thrashed for impertinence, and could not so much as take out a summons for assault. They must have gasped when they saw, in their own journal, in answer to questions – 'A. K. If you didn't like it, you could leave. The equal annual yearly division of wealth production would enable you to ship back to Australia, if you wanted to.' Many wanted to, but the Dictator's reply, slightly altered from that of Mr. Mawworm in *The Serious Family*, was – 'We deeply sympathise, but we *never* refund.' As to how the deserters got to Buenos Ayres, on their way 'home,' doubtless many tales of adventure could be told. The equal partition did not work out well. No one had a right to anything, apparently – milk for a sick child – a razor – any trifling personal possession, when all had a right to everything. The dissatisfaction deepened to despair. The 'rest is silence.' Migration to the 'Gran Chaco' is played out.

The Shearers' Strike drifted into the Shearers' War. Not vigorously dealt with at the beginning by the Government of any colony, it emboldened the agitators, who called themselves tribunes of the people, to suggest bolder assaults upon the law, to carry out yet more dangerous disturbances of the public peace.

The specious process of 'picketing' – an illegal practice involving insult and intimidation, under the transparent guise of 'persuasion' – was tacitly permitted. Becoming habituated to the assembling in force, armed and drilled in military fashion, it was patent to the lowest intelligence that the Government, if worthy of the name, must confront these menacing and illegal levies.

The tardy Executives, which had watched the ill-usage of free citizens, the burning of woolsheds, the killing of stock, with apparent apathy, now became alarmed and ordered out the Volunteer regiments. Directly a disciplined contingent, properly armed and officered, took the field, the pseudo-guerillas disbanded and disappeared. If prompt measures had been taken at the start, years of demoralisation and damage, loss of wages, and ruin of property would have been saved both to employers and workmen.

Such a disgraceful incident as that reported from Bowen Downs in July 1895 might never have occurred.

'A private message states that *two attempts* have been made within three days to poison free shearers here. On the first occasion eight men were poisoned; on the second, forty-nine.'

A Barcaldine telegram states: 'Forty-nine fresh cases reported from Bowen Downs. Strychnine suspected to have been put into the meat and sago pudding used by the men. A letter received states that the scenes in the shed at Bowen Downs were beyond description. The men, contorted with agony, lying about in all shapes. One man named Thomas has since died. He is not known in the district. Name probably an assumed one. Richardson, one of five brothers, said to be very bad; also Christie Schultz; a second death expected.

'Bowen Downs was managed by Mr. Fraser for a Scottish Investment Company. It is expected that 250,000 sheep will be shorn there this year. Sharing in the "strike troubles" last year (1894), the sheep were shorn by free labourers and some Unionists.

'They followed the example of Howe and others on the Barcoo run, and went to work in defiance of the Union mandate. This year many of the same men returned to the station to shear.

'The authorities had previous information that poisoning was likely to be resorted to on some stations. The Aramac and Mutta-burra police are at the station. No evidence was attainable against the authors of this cowardly crime, resulting in one murder at least, and the possible death of a score

or more of their fellow-workmen. It is significant, however, as against the theory of *accident*, that the injured men, well-nigh sick unto death, were *free shearers*.

'It is notorious that elaborate preparations have been made for committing further outrages on property, and violence on persons. Hitherto the Government has erred on the side of insufficient precaution and protection to loyal subjects.

'Violence and intimidation, on the other hand, have been approved by the Labour Federations. A demand is made by them that employers should not be allowed the right to employ any but Union men, on Union terms. Such an edict is inadmissible in a free country. So Sir Samuel Griffith, C.J., of Queensland, stated the case.

'The Moreton Mounted Infantry left by the Wodonga for the seat of the disturbance. In consequence of further outrages by the so-called Labour organisations, one of which was the shooting of a team of working bullocks, eleven in number, belonging to a non-Union carrier, Colonel French has been sent to the north with a force of 130 men, having also a field-piece and a Gatling gun. The Union leaders had boasted of the wreck and ruin of squatting property which would follow the strike.'

In the second year of the revolt a special parade of the Queensland Mounted Infantry was ordered. They were ready to a man. In view of the outrages already committed, and the justifiable expectation of more to follow, military protection was manifestly needed. This drew forth a pathetic remonstrance from the 'General Secretary of the Australian Labour Federation.' He was virtuously indignant at the whole force of the Government being 'strained to subjugate the wage-earners of the central district, under the dictation of capitalistic organisations.' It was emphasised that 'the Australian Labour Federation's steady influence had always been used to substitute peaceful agitation and moderation for needless suspension of industry. The Government is urged to use its influence to induce organised capitalism to meet organised labour in the conference.'

The high official so addressed replied: 'The Government is merely endeavouring to maintain law and order; to punish disorder, violence, and crime. The existing state of matters is misrepresented by the Labour organs.'

As might have been expected, manslaughter and arson, if not murder and spoliation, *did* result from this and similar teachings. Some of these crimes were undetected, others were partially expiated by imprisonment; while in more instances the wire-pullers – the deliberate and wilful offenders against the law of the land – escaped punishment. But when the burning of the *Dundonald* took place, with the capture of free labourers by disguised men, the tardy action of the Executive was accelerated. That the apprehensions of the dwellers in the pastoral districts, and their appeals to the Government of the day in the first years of the strike, were not without foundation, an extract from a letter taken, among others, from the person of an arrested 'labour organiser,' affords convincing proof.

'Queensland Labour Union, Maranoa Branch,  
'Roma, 10th March 1891.

'Dear George – It is a mistake collecting our men at the terminus of the railway. Better to split them up in bodies of a hundred and fifty each. One lot to stop at Clermont, another at Tambo; others at outside stations, such as Bowen Downs, Ayrshire Downs, Richmond Downs, Maneroo, West-lands, Northampton, and Malvern Hills. Say a hundred and fifty at Maranoa; same below St. George. Every station that a hundred and fifty men came to would demand police protection from the Government. Then, if you wanted to make a grand coup, send mounted messengers round and have all your forces concentrated, away from railways if possible, and force the running by putting *a little more devil* into the fight. They will have no railways to cart the Gatling guns and Nordenfeldts about. – Yours, etc.

Ned – '

Such were the missives which passed between the 'labour organisers' and their 'brother officers.' Small wonder that the rank and file were stirred up to deeds of wrong and outrage, stopping short by accident, or almost miracle, of the 'red fool-fury of the Seine.' Imagine the anxiety and apprehension

at the lonely station, miles way from help, with a hundred and fifty horsemen, armed and threatening, arriving perhaps at midnight – the terror of the women, the mingled wrath and despair of the men. And the temperate suggestion of the labour organiser to 'put a little more devil into the fight, to force the running!'

Doubtless it would, but not quite in the manner which this calculating criminal intended. Such a wave of righteous indignation would have been evoked from the ordinarily apathetic surface of Australian politics, that the culprits and their cowardly advisers would have been swept from the face of the earth.

If it be doubted for a moment whether the serious acts of violence and outrage alluded to were actually committed, or, as was unblushingly asserted by the so-called democratic organs, invented, exaggerated, or – most ludicrous attempt at deception of all – got up by *capitalists and squatters* for the purpose of throwing *discredit upon Unionists*, let a list of acts perpetrated in deliberate defiance of the law of the land be produced in evidence.

The Dagworth woolshed had seven armed men on watch, as the Unionists had threatened to burn it. Among them were the Messrs. Macpherson, owners of the station. When the bushranger Morgan was killed at Pechelbah, in their father's time, they hardly expected to have to defend Dagworth against a lawless band humorously describing themselves as Union Shearers.

In spite of their defensive operations, a ruffian crawled through and set fire to the valuable building, which was totally consumed.

They were armed, and shots were freely interchanged. One Unionist found dead was believed to be one of the attacking party.

The 'Shearers' War' languished for a time, but was still smouldering three years afterwards, as on the 4th of August 1894 the Cambridge Downs woolshed was burnt. This was a very expensive building, in keeping with the size and value of the station, where artesian bores had been put down, and artificial lakes filled from the subterranean water-flow. Money had been liberally, lavishly spent in these and other well-considered improvements, aids to the working of the great industrial enterprise evolved from the brain of one man, and having supported hundreds of labourers and artisans for years past. In the great solitudes where the emu and kangaroo or the roving cattle herds alone found sustenance, the blacksmith's forge now glowed, the carpenter's hammer rang, the ploughman walked afield beside his team, the 'lowing herd wound slowly o'er the lea,' recalling to many an exiled Briton his village home.

The 'big house,' the squire-proprietor's abode, rose, garden-and grove-encircled, amid the cottages and humbler homes which it protected – a mansion in close resemblance, allowing for altered conditions and more spacious surroundings, to homes of the Motherland, which all loved so well. At what cost of head and hand, of toil, and danger, and hardship, ay, even of blood, let the headstones in the little shaded graveyard tell! And now, when long years, the best years of early manhood, had been expended freely, ungrudgingly in the conflict with Nature, was the workman, the junior partner in the enterprise, well paid, well fed and housed during the doubtful campaign, the loss of which could smite to ruin the senior, to lay his rash destroying hand upon the beneficent structure he had helped to raise?

Pulling down in suicidal mania, at the bidding of a secret caucus, the industrial temple, which so surely would whelm him and his fellows in its ruins!

Ayrshire Downs woolshed followed suit. At Murweh, the roll of shearers was about to be called, and fifty thousand sheep were ready for the shears, when it was set on fire and burned – all the preparations for shearing rendered useless. A makeshift woolshed would probably be run up, which meant loss of time – hasty indifferent work, a few thousand pounds loss and damage inevitable. At Combe-Marten a station hand was shot, and several prisoners committed to take their trial at Rockhampton. The woolshed at Errangalla was burned to the ground.

The Netallie shed, with eighty thousand sheep in readiness, was attempted to be set on fire – kerosene having been profusely exhibited for the purpose – but, with all the goodwill (or rather bad)

in the world, the plot miscarried. After a riot at Netallie a large force of Unionists attempted, but failed, to abduct the free labourers.

At Grasmere woolshed the police were compelled to use firearms. Shortly before 9 P.M. a hundred Unionists came to Grasmere, and gathered at the men's huts, saying that they were armed and determined to bring out the free labourers. Sergeant M'Donagh said they could not be allowed to do so. He was felled to the ground, and the door of the free labourers' hut smashed in with a battering-ram. Shots were exchanged between the police and the Unionists. Two of the latter were wounded. One free labourer fired with a revolver. The attacking party then retired, taking the wounded men with them.

The police overtook them, and, taking charge of the wounded men, conveyed them to Wilcannia Hospital in a buggy. One was shot in the left breast; the other near the same spot. The bullet travelled to the back, near the spine. From the size of the bullet it would appear to have been fired by a free labourer, the police navy revolvers carrying a larger bullet.

Unaware of the extreme length to which 'the ethics of war' (to use a phrase grandiloquently applied in one of Mr. Stead's harangues) had been pushed, Bill Hardwick and his comrades rode gay and unheeding 'down the river.'

They were within a dozen miles of Moorara, and had travelled late in order to get to the station that evening, as shearing had commenced. An unwonted sight presented itself. Before them lay a large encampment, from which many voices made themselves heard, and around which were fires in all directions. 'Hulloa!' said one of the men, 'what's all this? Have they moved the station up, or what is it? Have the men got to camp here because of the grass, and ride to Moorara and back, like boys going to school?'

'By Jove! it's a Union Camp,' said Bill; 'we'd better look out. They're a rough lot here by all accounts. They might go for us if they hear we've dropped the A.S.U. – for a bit.'

'I don't see as they can do much,' said a grey-haired man, one of the best shearers in the shed. 'We've come last from a Union shed. We've no call to say more nor that till we get to Moorara.'

'That's all right,' said a younger man, who, like Hardwick, was a selector on the Upper Waters, 'but that sweep Janus Stoate might have wired to the delegate here and put us away. Anyhow, we'll soon see.'

'Who goes there?' suddenly demanded a voice from the pine scrub. 'Who are you, and where from?'

'Who are you, if it comes to that?' answered Bill. 'Is this here an army, and are you goin' to take the bloomin' country, that a man can't ride down the river on his own business?'

'We'll soon learn yer,' said the man who had challenged. 'Where are yer from last?'

'From Tandara. It's a Union shed, I believe, and we shore under Union Rules.'

'We know all about that. What's yer name – is it William Hardwick?'

'I never was called anything else,' answered Bill, who, now that he had got his monkey up (as he would have said), cared for nothing and nobody.

'Well, yer accused by the delegate, as was in charge of that shed, of disobedience of orders; also of conspiring to bring the Union into contempt, and of being on the way, with others, to shear at a non-Union shed against the interests of the Australian Workers' Federated Union. What d'ye say in reply to the charge?'

'Go to the devil,' said Bill, at the same time spurring his horse. But the strange man jumped at his bridle-rein, and though Bill got in a right-hander, before he could get loose, armed men broke out of the pine clump, and, rifle in hand, forced the party to dismount.

'Tie their hands,' said the leader. 'We'll show the bally "scabs" what it is to pal in with the squatters, as have ground down the workers long enough. March 'em up to the camp and bring 'em afore the Committee.'

'This is a jolly fine state of things,' said one of the younger men of Bill's party. 'I used to believe this was a free country. One would think we was horse-stealers or bushrangers. Are ye goin' to hang us, mate?'

'You hold yer gab, youngster, or it'll be the worse for you. We'll straighten yer a bit, afore yer goes shearin' again in the wrong shed,' said a man behind him, sourly, at the same time giving him a blow on the back with the butt-end of a rifle.

'By – ! if my hands was loose, I'd give yer something to remember Dan Doolan by, yer cowardly, sneakin', underhand dog, crawlin' after fellers like Stoate, keepin' honest men out o' work, and spendin' it on spoutin' loafers. Well, we'll see who comes out on top, anyhow,' upon which Mr. Dan Doolan relapsed into silence – being 'full up,' as he would have expressed it, of 'Government of the people, by the people, for the people,' in its logical outcome.

Arrived at the camp, they were surrounded by a crowd of men, looking less like workmen of any kind than an array of freebooters. Nearly all had arms. Others had apparently put them by for the night. They affected a raffish, semi-military rig, and evidently regarded themselves as revolutionists; which, in point of fact, they were. Not as yet, perhaps, ripe for a policy of plunder and bloodshed, but within measurable distance of it – needing but an accidental contest with the police or a well-defended station (and there were such) to be irrevocably committed to it.

A great show of form and ceremony was aimed at, as Bill and his companions in captivity were brought before half-a-dozen serious-looking individuals, seated before a table outside of a tent of larger than average size. One man was in the centre, and was addressed as Mr. President.

'Have you brought the suspected individuals, mentioned in the communication received by the Committee this morning, before us?'

'Yes, Mr. President. Here they are. We found them close by the camp, a-ridin' towards Moorara.'

'What are their names?'

The apprehending personage read out from a telegraph form the names of William Hardwick, Daniel Doolan, George Bond, Donald MacCallum, James Atkins, Joseph Warner, John Stevens, Cyrus Cable, Thomas Hyland, John Jones, William Murphy, Jacob Dawson, and Martin Hannigan.

'You stand charged with obstructing the work of the Delegate of the A.S.U. at Tandara, and disobeying an order to come out, sent by the duly authorised Vice-President at Wagga Wagga. How do you plead?'

'Is this a bally Supreme Court?' inquired Bill. 'What are we to plead for? I never signed no agreement to obey a pair of loafers like Stoate and Stead. I've seen one of 'em beg rations from a squatter, layin' by to do him all the harm in his power, and the other tried his best to take their money out of the pockets of hard-working men at Tandara. You may talk till you're black in the face, I'm not goin' to play at court work, for you or any other blatherskite, and so I tell you.'

'Remove these men to the lock-up hut, and place a sentry before the door,' said the chairman, with dignity.

So Bill and Co. were hauled off, and bundled into a small hut, where they spent the night without food or bedding.

Their swags had been considerably taken care of, and their horses turned out among the camp herd for the night. This done, they listened to the order given to the sentry to shoot any man that attempted to come out; and much musing upon the strange condition in which they found themselves in their native country, spent the night in a most unpleasant state of discomfort.

As for the *corps d'armee*— as they, no doubt, considered themselves to be – they were more jovial and self-contained.

Songs and recitations were given, apparently met with admiration and applause. Rifles and revolvers were discharged, as well to have the loading replaced as to inform any employés of the adjoining station that the camp was armed, and considered itself to be an independent, well-provided

contingent. Orations were made by speakers filled with detestation of the tyranny of the squatter, and the malignant nature of all Capital, except when diverted into the pocket of the virtuous (and muscular) working-man.

Hints were thrown out, not too closely veiled, of the retribution in store for those treacherous enemies of the working-man, who, instead of supporting him, like brothers, against the curse of Capital, presumed to have opinions of their own, and exercised the right of private judgment even against the interests of their own *Order*— this was a great word with them. Dark suggestions were made with regard to a cargo of free labourers (otherwise 'scabs' or blacklegs) now coming down river in a steamboat. They were to be met and 'dealt with,' after what fashion the speakers did not as yet enlighten their hearers.

When the wire-pullers of the Australian Shearers' Union had converted or terrorised the labourers of the land to such an extent that employers were met at every turn by exorbitant demands, or impossible regulations, it became necessary to form a Pastoral Association to oppose the tyranny. For it was evident that unless united action was taken they would be no longer permitted to manage their own affairs.

The work and wages connected with an immense export, with a property to the value of hundreds of millions sterling, were to be regulated by irresponsible impecunious agents, chosen by a plebiscite of labourers naturally unfitted for the direction of affairs involving important national issues.

Some idea of the magnitude of the interests involved may be gathered if it is considered that the cost of management of the vast flock of sheep depastured on the freehold and Crown lands of the colonies necessitates the paying away annually not less than £10,000,000 sterling, most of which is expended for wages, for shearing, and for stores. Shearing, which lasts for a considerable period of each year, finds employment for 25,000 shearers, and the extra hands required in connection with this work may be put up at 10,000 to 12,000.

The following figures tend to further explanation of the position: — Value of freehold land on which stock is depastured, £200,000,000 sterling; value of sheep and plant, £100,000,000 sterling. The income from the properties is, as nearly as possible — from wool, say £22,000,000, from surplus stock £5,250,000, and stock £27,250,000.

The outgoings will be — for wages, carriage, stores, £10,000,000; interest on £300,000,000 capital at 5¾ per cent, £17,250,000; total outgoing, £27,250,000. The returns are comparatively small, taking the whole of the population together.

The frequent droughts, causing the loss of millions of sheep, with other ills and ailments fatal to stock, have not been taken into the calculation. The properties as a whole will bear no increase in cost of management.

Another reason which actuated the employers, pastoralists, merchants, and others connected with the pastoral industry, was that the sudden withdrawal of their labourers was attended with greater loss and expense than, say, in the case of mines or shipping. The mines could be closed, the ships laid up. Expenditure on the part of owners would then cease until the strike was ended. But, on the far back stations, wells had to be worked, wood carted for machinery, edible shrubs cut for starving sheep, in default of which *immediate loss* of stock to a very great extent would take place.

## CHAPTER V

One of the methods which the Pastoralists were compelled to use to defeat the attempted domination of the Shearers' Union was to import free labour: men who were contented to work for high wages and abundant food; to obey those who paid, lodged, and fed them well. It may here be stated that the fare in shearing time, provided for the shearers, the station hands, and the supernumerary labourers, was such as might well be considered not only sufficing and wholesome, but luxurious, in any other part of the world. Three principal meals a day, consisting of beef or mutton, good wheaten bread, pudding, vegetables when procurable; three minor repasts of scones and cakes, with tea *ad libitum*; the whole well cooked, of good quality, with no limitation as to quantity. Where is the rural labourer in Europe similarly provided?

Agencies were established in the principal towns of the colonies. Men were hired and forwarded to such stations as were in need. The cost of transit was paid by the associated employers. They were forwarded by rail, by coach, on horseback, or by steamer, as such transit was available. An unfair, even illegal system of intimidation, under the specious name of 'picketing,' to prevent the men thus engaged from following their lawful occupation, came into vogue. Unionists were stationed along roads or near stations, nominally to 'persuade' the free labourers not to fulfil their agreements, but, in reality, to threaten and abuse, not infrequently with brutal violence to assault and ill-treat the nonconformists.

The majority of the Unionists were well-intentioned men, led away by specious demagogues; but among them were lawless ruffians, who, ignorantly prejudiced against their superiors and even their equals, who had risen in life by the exercise of industry and thrift, were capable of any villainy, not even stopping short of arson and bloodshed. Up to this time the Ministry of the day had been tardy and over-cautious, both in the protection of property and in the punishment of a criminal crew. But they were gradually coming to a determination to stop such disorders summarily. The strong arm of the law was invoked to that intent. For too frequently had peaceable workmen, under the ban of the Unionist tyranny, been captured, ill-treated, robbed, and temporarily deprived of their liberty.

Grown bold by previous toleration, the Union Camp by Moorara had determined to make an example of this particular steamer, with her load of free shearers and rouseabouts – to teach them what the penalty was of withstanding the Australian Shearers' Union and bringing a load of blacklegs past their very camp.

It was nearly midnight when a scout galloped in to announce that the *Dundonald* was within half a mile of the camp, on her way down river with fifty free labourers on board.

'By the God of Heaven,' shouted a dissolute-looking shearer, 'we'll give them a lesson to-night, if we never do it again. I know the agent well – a d – d infernal swell, who looks upon working-men as dogs, and talks to them like the dirt under his feet. I told him I'd meet him some day, and that day's come.'

'Come along, lads,' shouts an evil-faced larrikin from a city lane; 'let's give it 'em hot. We'll burn their bloomin' boat, and have roast blackleg for breakfast.'

'You'd as well mind your eye, my lad,' said a slow-speaking, steady-going Sydney-sider, from Campbelltown. 'Seth Dannaker's the skipper of this boat – I can hear her paddles now, and he'll shoot straight if you meddle with his loadin'. You're not the sort to face Seth's pea-rifle, 'nless yer got a fairish big tree in front of yer.'

Upon this discouraging statement, the product of 'a city's smoke and steam' – under-sized, untended from childhood, grown to manhood, untaught save in precocious villainy – slunk into the background, while from the centre of a group emerged the man who had posed as the 'President of the Council,' and thus addressed the crowding shearers: —

'Bring out Bill Hardwick and them other "scabs." We'll have 'em in front when the shootin' begins. It'll do 'em good to feel what their friends' tyranny's brought the people to.'

The sentry was directed to quit his post, and a score of eager hands competed for the privilege of dragging out the weary, famished men, and rushing with them to the river-bank, while with slow, reverberating strokes the measured beat of the paddles was heard, as the dimly-lighted hull of the steamer showed amid the ebon darkness – the throbbing of her overpowered engines sounding like the heart-beats of some monstrous creature, slow-emerging from the channels of a prehistoric morass.

'Boat ahoy!' shouted the President, with an accent telling of a seaman's experiences. 'Heave to, and let us have a look at your passenger list.'

'Who the hell are you, anyway?' was returned in answer – the intonation confirming the Sydney-sider's information. 'What's my passenger list to you? I'm bound to Moorara, and the men on board hev' their passage paid – that's all I've to look to. Full steam ahead!'

A derisive laugh was the only answer from the river-bank. But the skipper's complacency was of short duration, as a violent shock almost dislodged him from the bridge, and made every bit of loose timber, or unsecured deck cargo, rock and rattle again. The *Dundonald* had gone full speed against a wire rope, or rather against two twisted together, which had been feloniously taken from a punt higher up the river, because the misguided lessee had carried across free labourers.

A yell of exultation burst from the excited crowd, now fully determined to board the obnoxious steamer, while a voice from their midst, after commanding silence, called out, 'Steamer ahoy!'

'Well, what is it? What do you want, stopping me on a voyage? You'd as well take care; I'm a quiet man, but a bad one to meddle with.'

'We want those infernal traitors you've got aboard.'

'And suppose I won't give up my passengers?'

'Then we'll burn yer bloomin' boat, and roast them and you along with it. Don't yer make no mistake.'

'Then you'd better come and do it.'

At this defiance, a chorus of yells and execrations ascended through the warm, still air, as a hundred men dashed into the tepid waters of the smooth stream, the slow current of which hardly sufficed to bear them below the steamer's hull. Like a swarm of Malay pirates, they clambered on the low rail of the half barge, half steamer, which had done her share in carrying the wool-crop of the limitless levels so many times to the sea. But her last voyage had come. The crew stubbornly resisted. Many a man fell backward, half stunned by blows from marline-spikes and gun-stocks – though as yet only a few shots were fired – and more than one of the rioters narrowly escaped death by drowning. But the 'free labourers,' disordered by the suddenness of the onslaught, fought but half-heartedly. Outnumbered by ten to one, they were driven back, foot by foot, till they were forced aft, almost to the rail, before the skipper yielded.

A few shots had been fired from the bank before the charge through the water was made, in the pious hope of hitting the captain or one of the crew; better still, a free labourer. They were promptly returned, and one of the men nearest the leader fell, shot through the body. But at that moment the leader's strident voice was heard. 'Stop firin'; I'll shoot the next man that holds up a gun. Let's catch 'em alive and deal with 'em and their blasted boat afterwards. There's enough of yer to eat 'em!'

When the surrender was imminent, the skipper had one of the boats lowered – a broad-beamed, serviceable, barge-like affair, in which great loads had been conveyed in the flooded seasons – and putting a white cloth on to the end of his rifle-barrel, called for a parley. It was granted.

'See here, yer darned pirates! I want a word or two. There's a ton of powder on board, and the man you wounded with your cowardly first shoot is sitting on a chair beside a coil of fuse, with a sperm candle and a box of matches. It's a sure thing he won't live, and he don't love the men that took his life, foul and coward-like. I'm to fire this revolver twice for a signal, and next minute we'll all go to hell together, sociable like. Jump into the boat, men, and take your guns, some grub, and a tarpaulin. Those that like may stay with me – I stop with the ship.'

If there's anything that undisciplined men fear, it is an explosion of gunpowder. They did not know for certain whether there was any on board. But if there was, there was no time to lose. A panic seized them, one and all. The crew descended into the boat in good order, obeying the captain's commands. His cool, decided voice imposed upon the rioters. They tumbled into the river by scores – knocking over their comrades and even striking them, like men in a sinking vessel, under the influence of fear – until the last man had reached the bank, when they even ran some distance in their terror before they could rid themselves of the fear of hearing *too late* the thunderous roar of the explosion, and being hurled into eternity in an instant.

The free labourers, on the other hand, from having assisted in the navigation of the steamer in her slow voyage from Echuca, had made themselves acquainted with every nook and cranny and pound of cargo on the boat. They knew that there was no magazine, nor any powder, and, divining the captain's ruse, made for the opposite bank with all convenient speed. Those who could swim, lost no time; and those who could not, escaped into the bush, undisturbed by the privateering crowd that had been so valorous a few minutes before.

When the boat returned and not before, the captain descended with deliberation, remarking, 'Now, lads, we've got a clear track before us. There ain't no powder, there ain't no wounded man, and I reckon them long-shore skunks will find themselves in an all-fired mess when the police come. There's a big body of 'em only ten miles from here, at Moorara Station. We'll just make camp and have a snack – some of us want it pretty bad. We'll build fires to warm those that's wet – wood's plenty. Leave 'em burning and make down river so's to warn the police under Colonel Elliot. The Union army won't cross before morning, for fear of the old tub blowing up and making a scatteration among 'em.'

The programme was carried out. The night was of Egyptian darkness. Supper was hastily disposed of. The fires were freshly made up, and shortly afterwards the whole contingent took the down-river road and by daylight were miles away from the scene of the encounter.

The unusually large body of police which had been ordered up by the Government, to join with another force on the Darling, had made rendezvous at Moorara, having heard from a scout that mischief, rather above the ordinary limit, was being enacted near Poliah. When, next morning, the captain and crew of the *Dundonald*, with the greater portion of the free labourers, arrived, a strong sensation was aroused. This was an unparalleled outrage, and, if unchecked, meant the commencement of *Civil War*, plain and undisguised.

What horrors might follow! A guerilla band, with its attendant crimes – murder, pillage, outrage! Such a band of reckless desperadoes, armed and mounted, like a regiment of irregular horse, was sufficient to terrorise the country; gathering on the march, till every criminal in the land that could steal a horse and a gun would be added to their ranks in a surprisingly short time.

Once launched on such a campaign of crime, the country would be ravaged before a military force could be organised. The proverbial snowball may be arrested at the first movement, but after gathering velocity, it descends the mountain-side with the force and fury of the avalanche.

The colonel in command of the Volunteers was a soldier to whom border raids in wild lands, with a wilder foe, was not unfamiliar. 'Boot and saddle' was sounded. Without a moment's unnecessary delay, the troop was in full marching order along the 'river road,' a well-marked trail, heading for Poliah.

The night was still dark, but comparatively cool. No inconvenience was felt as the men trotted briskly along and joked as to the sort of battle in which they would engage.

'Bless yer, they won't fight, not if there was another thousand of 'em,' said a grizzled sergeant, 'and every man with the newest arm invented. I've seen mobs afore. Men as ain't drilled and disciplined never stands a charge.'

'They've got rifles and revolvers, I know,' said a younger man, 'and they can shoot pretty straight, some of 'em. Suppose they keep open order, and pepper us at long range? What's to keep 'em from droppin' us that way, from cover, and then makin' a rush?'

'There's nothin' to keep 'em, *only they won't do it*,' replied the sergeant oracularly. 'They know the law's agin' 'em, which means a lot in Australia – so far. Besides that, they've never faced a charge, or don't know what it's like to stiffen up in line. You'll see how they'll cut it when they hear the colonel give the word, not to mention the bugle-call. Why, what the devil – ?'

Then the sergeant, ending his sentence abruptly, almost halted, as a column of flame rose through the night air, sending up tongues of flame and red banners through the darkness which precedes the dawn.

'D – d if they haven't burned the bloomin' steamer!' quoth he. 'What next, I'd like to know? This country's going to the devil. I always thought it was a mistake sending our old regiment away.'

'Halt!' suddenly rang out in the clear, strong tones of the colonel – the voice of a man who had seen service and bore the tokens of it in a tulwar slash and a couple of bullet wounds. 'These fellows have set fire to the steamer, and of course she will burn to the water's edge. They will hardly make a fight of it though. In case they do, sergeant, take twenty men and skirt round so as to intercept their left wing. I'll do myself the honour to lead the charge on their main body, always supposing they wait for us to come up.'

The character of the resistance offered proved the sergeant's estimate to be absolutely correct. A few dropping shots were heard before the police came up, but when the rioters saw the steady advance of a hundred mounted men – an imposing cavalry force for Australia – saw Colonel Elliot, who rode at their head with his sword drawn, heard the clanking of the steel scabbards and the colonel's stern command, 'Charge!' they wavered and broke rank in all directions.

'Arrest every man on the river-bank with firearms in his hands,' roared the colonel. The sergeant, with a dozen of his smartest troopers, had each their man in custody a few seconds after the order was given – Bill Hardwick among the rest, who was fated to illustrate the cost of being found among evil-doers. One man alone made a desperate resistance, but after a crack from the butt-end of a carbine, he accepted his defeat sullenly. By the time his capture was complete, so was the rout of the rebel array. Hardly a man was to be seen, while the retreating body of highly irregular horse sounded like a break-out from a stock-yard.

Matters had reached the stage when the stokers at the Gas Works were 'called out,' and the city of Melbourne threatened with total darkness after 6 P.M.

Then a volunteer corps of Mounted Rifles was summoned from the country. The city was saved from a disgraceful panic – perhaps from worse things. The Unionist mob quailed at the sight of the well-mounted, armed, and disciplined body of cavalry, whose leader showed no disposition to mince matters, and whose hardy troopers had apparently no democratic doubts which the word 'Charge!' could not dispel.

At the deserted Gas Works, aristocratic stokers kept the indispensable flame alight until the repentant, out-colonelled artisans returned to their work.

This was the crisis of the struggle – the turning-point of the fight; as far as the element of force was concerned, the battle was over. It showed, that with proper firmness, which should have been exhibited at the outset, the result is ever the same. The forces of the State, with law and justice behind them, must overawe any undisciplined body of men attempting to terrorise the body politic in defence of fancied rights or the redress of imaginary wrongs.

The rioting in the cities of Melbourne and Sydney was promptly abated when the citizen cavalry, 'armed and accoutred proper,' clanked along Collins Street in Melbourne, while Winston Darling led the sons of his old friends and schoolfellows, who drove the high-piled wool waggons in procession down George Street in Sydney to the Darling Harbour Warehouses.

Much was threatened as to the latter demonstration, by blatant demagogues, who described it as 'a challenge; an insult to labour.' It was a challenge, doubtless – a reminder that Old New South Wales, with the founders of the Pastoral Industry – that great export now reaching the value of three

hundred millions sterling – was not to be tyrannised over by a misguided mob, swayed by self-seeking, irresponsible agitators.

No doubt can exist in the minds of impartial observers that if the Ministries of the different colonies over which this wave of industrial warfare passed, in the years following 1891, had acted with promptness and decision at the outset, the heavy losses and destructive damage which followed might have been averted.

But the labour vote was strong – was believed, indeed, to be more powerful than it proved to be when tested. And the legislatures elected by universal suffrage were, in consequence, slow to declare war against the enemies of law and order.

They temporised, they hesitated to take strong measures. They tacitly condoned acts of violence and disorder. They permitted 'picketing,' a grossly unfair, even illegal (see Justice Bramwell's ruling) form of intimidation, employed to terrorise the free labourers.

The natural results followed. Woolsheds were burned, notably the Ayrshire Downs; the Cambridge Downs shed, 4th August 1894; Murweh, with 50,000 sheep to be shorn – roll to be called that day. Fences were cut, bridges sawn through, stock were injured, squatters and free labourers were assaulted or grossly reviled.

Everything in the way of ruffianism and disorder short of civil war was practised, apparently from one end of Australia to the other, before the Executive saw fit to intervene to check the excesses of the lawless forces which, well armed and mounted, harassed the once peaceful, pastoral Arcadia.

At length the situation became intolerable; the governing powers, with the choice before them of restraining bands of *condottieri* or abdicating their functions, woke up.

It was high time. From the 'Never Never' country in remotest Queensland, from the fabled land 'where the pelican builds her nest' to the great Riverina levels of New South Wales, from the highlands of the Upper Murray and the Snowy River to the silver mines of the Barrier, a movement arose, which called itself Industrial Unionism, but which really meant rebellion and anarchy.

It was rebellion against all previously-accepted ideas of government. If carried out, it would have subverted social and financial arrangements. It would have delivered over the accumulated treasure of 'wealth and knowledge and arts,' garnered by the thrift, industry, and intelligence of bygone generations, to one section of the workers of the land – the most numerous certainly, but incontestably the least intelligent – to be wasted in a brief and ignoble scramble.

The list of outrages, unchecked and unpunished, during this period, makes painful reading for the lover of his country.

A distinguished and patriotic member of the 'Australian Natives' Association,' in one of his addresses before that body, declared 'that, for the first time in his life, he felt ashamed of his native country.' That feeling was shared by many of his compatriots, as day after day the telegrams of the leading journals added another to the list of woolsheds deliberately set on fire, of others defended by armed men – sometimes, indeed, unsuccessfully.

When the directors of the Proprietary Silver Mine at Broken Hill saw fit to diminish the number of miners, for which there was not sufficient employment, it was beleaguered by an armed and threatening crowd of five thousand men. A real siege was enacted. No one was allowed to pass the lines without a passport from the so-called President of the Miners' Committee.

For three days and nights, as the Stipendiary Magistrate stated (he was sent up specially by the New South Wales Government, trusting in his lengthened experience and proved capacity), the inmates of the mine-works sat with arms in their hands, and without changing their clothes, hourly expectant of a rush from the excited crowd.

The crisis was, however, tided over without bloodshed, chiefly owing, in the words of a leading metropolitan journal, to the 'admirable firmness and discretion' displayed by the official referred to – now, alas! no more. He died in harness, fulfilling his arduous and responsible duties to the last, with

a record of half a century of official service in positions of high responsibility, without a reflection in all that time having been cast upon his integrity, his courage, or his capacity.

More decisive action was taken, and was compelled to be taken, in Queensland than in the other colonies.

There, owing to the enormous areas necessarily occupied by the Pastoralists, the immense distances separating the holdings from each other, and, perhaps, the heterogeneous nature of the labour element, the acts of lawlessness became more serious and menacing. A military organisation was therefore found to be necessary. Volunteers were enrolled. Large bodies of these troops and of an armed constabulary force were mobilised, and many of the incidental features of a civil war were displayed to a population that had rarely seen firearms discharged in anger.

The nomadic population had been largely recruited from the criminals of other colonies, who, fleeing from justice, were notoriously in the habit of crossing the Queensland border, and evading a too searching inquiry.

These were outlaws in the worst sense of the word; desperate and degraded, conversant with undetected crime, and always willing to join in the quasi-industrial revolts, unfortunately of everyday occurrence.

In these, bloodshed was barely avoided, while hand-to-hand fights, inflicting grievous bodily injury, were only too common.

## CHAPTER VI

After the burning of the *Dundonald*, a score of the rioters had been arrested and imprisoned. But owing to the confusion of the *mêlée* and the prompt dispersion of the Unionists it had been found difficult to procure the necessary identification and direct evidence of criminality. Thus, after some weeks of imprisonment, all were discharged except six prisoners, among whom, unfortunately for himself and his family, was that notorious malefactor, William Hardwick. Fate, in his case, would appear to have leaned to the wrong side!

His appearance and manner had so favourably impressed the Bench of Magistrates, before whom, after several remands, he and his fellow-prisoners had been brought, that they were on the point of discharging him, when Janus Stoate was tendered by the Sub-Inspector of Police in charge of the case as a material witness for the Crown. He had kept in the background after he saw the affair well started, taking care to be heard protesting against violence on the part of the Unionists. Having been sworn, he admitted his connection with them, to the extent of belonging to the camp and having acted as a delegate, appointed by the Council of the Australian Shearers' Union. He had worked last at Tandara woolshed. At that station the men had completed their contract and been paid off in the usual way. He as delegate had received notice from the President of the Union to call out the shearers before shearing was concluded. They declined, temporarily, and a messenger, elected by the men, was sent to Wagga Wagga for further instructions.

Before he returned, the shed had 'cut out' – finished shearing, that is. He could not say he approved of the arrangement, but was glad that the contract was completed and all settled amicably. He was an upholder of passive resistance, and could bring witnesses to prove that he dissuaded the men from violence.

'Did he know the defendant, William Hardwick?'

'Yes, very well – he was sorry to see him in this position.'

'Had he seen him inciting or assisting the men who were concerned in the burning of the steamer?'

'No, he could not say that he had, but –'

The witness was urged to explain, which he did, apparently with unwillingness.

'He had seen him standing by the river-bank, with a gun in his hand.'

'Did he discharge the gun?'

'Yes, he did; he saw him put the gun to his shoulder and fire.'

'Was it directed at any one of the crew of the *Dundonald*?'

'He could not say that. The night was dark – just before daylight. He fired at or near somebody, that was all he could say.'

'That will do.'

Another Unionist witness was brought forward. This man was actuated by a revengeful spirit towards the free labourers, and especially towards those shearers that had opposed the Union. He therefore gave damaging evidence against Bill and his companions. He swore that he had seen Hardwick – that was his name, he believed – anyway he was the 'blackleg' now before the Court – loading and firing, like some of the camp men.

He was warned not to use the expression 'blackleg,' as it was disrespectful to the Court. Such conduct might lead to his being committed for contempt of Court and imprisoned.

The witness had 'done time' in another colony, been before a Court more than once or twice probably. He laughed impudently, saying, 'He didn't mean no offence, but it was 'ard on a man, as was true to his fellow-workers, to keep his tongue off such sneaks.'

This was one of the cases where a magistrate, not being able to deal effectively with a witness, will take as little offence as possible, so as to get him out of the box and have done with him. In a

city or county town such a man would be sent to gaol for twenty-four hours, for contempt of Court, to appear next morning in a chastened frame of mind. But as the fire-raisers were to be committed for trial and forwarded under escort to the Circuit Court at Wagga Wagga, nothing would be gained by delaying the whole affair for the purpose of punishing a single witness.

So poor Bill, being asked by the magistrate what he had to say in his defence, made a bungling job of it, as many an innocent man, under the circumstances, has done before, and will again.

'He could only state, that though seen among the Unionist rioters, he was there under compulsion; that he and his mates, who had come from Tandara, had determined, after seeing the unfair way in which the sheds that "shore Union" had been ordered out, to cut loose from the tyranny. But they had been captured by the rioters at Moorara; made to carry arms and stand in front, where they were nearly being shot. As God was his Judge, he never fired a shot or meant to fire one. He would far rather have emptied his gun at the fellows who had robbed and ill-treated him – for his horses, saddles, and swag were "put away," he believed, his cheque and loose money were gone, and he had nothing but what he stood up in. What call had he to hurt the boat, or any one aboard her? It was the other way on. The witnesses had perjured themselves, particularly Janus Stoate, who had eaten his bread and borrowed money from him in times past, and now was swearing falsely, to ruin him, and rob his wife and children of their home. He had no more to say.'

Unluckily for poor Bill, several of the accused, who *were* guilty, had made substantially the same defence. They were proved, by the evidence of the crew of the *Dundonald* and the police, to have been actively aiding and abetting in the outrage. One, indeed, who tried to look virtuous and made a plausible speech, had been seen pouring kerosene over the doomed steamer, preparatory to her being set on fire.

This prejudiced the Bench against all defences of the same nature as Bill's. He might, of course, have called on his mates, who had left the Tandara shed with him, resolving to sever all connection with the Union. They would, of course, have been able to corroborate his story, and have ensured his discharge. But, here again, Fate (or else blind Chance, which she too often resembles) was against him. 'Fortune's my foe,' he might have quoted, with reason, had such literary *morceaux* been in his line.

One of the shearers from Tandara, being a smart bushman, had escaped, in the uncertain light and confusion of the *mêlée*, and discovering the horses of the party, feeding by themselves, in an angle of the station fence, caught the quietest of the lot, annexed a stray halter, and ran them into a yard. He then returned to the insurgents, and mingling with the crowd, managed to warn his comrades, except Bill, who was wedged in between two armed men, with another at his back, by special instruction of Stoate. Leaving unostentatiously, they escaped notice, and providing themselves with saddles and bridles from the numbers which lay on the ground outside of tents, or on horizontal limbs of trees, departed quietly, and by sundown were many a mile away on the road to the next non-Union station. They would not have abandoned their companion had they the least idea of what he was likely to undergo at the hands of the law; but the last thought that could have entered into their heads would be that *he* was liable to arrest and trial in connection with the burning of the steamer. So, believing that they might run serious risk by remaining among the excited, dangerous crowd, at the same time being powerless to do him any good, they decided to clear off.

As there was sworn evidence to incriminate him without available witnesses to testify in his favour, the Bench had no alternative but to commit William Hardwick for trial at the next ensuing Assize Court, to be holden at Wagga Wagga. Thither, with the other prisoners, ruffians with whom he could neither sympathise nor associate, was poor Bill, manacled and despairing, sent off in the up-river coach, a prey to anxiety and despondent imaginings.

What would be Jenny's feelings when she saw in an extract from the *Wilcannia Watchman*, too faithfully copied into the *Talmorah Advertiser*: —

## 'Outrage by Unionists

### 'Burning of the "Dundonald."

'Arrest and trial before the Bench of Magistrates at Tolarno. William Hardwick, John Jones, J. Abershaw, T. Murphy, and others, committed for trial at next Assize Court. Severe sentences may be looked for.'

Jenny's distress at this announcement may be imagined. She had not heard from Bill since he left Tandara, at which time he had written in good spirits, mentioning the amount of his cheque, and his resolution to cut loose from the Shearers' Union (which he was sorry he ever joined), and more particularly from Stoate and all his works.

'It's that villain, and no one else,' cried poor Jenny. 'I knew he'd do Bill a mischief before he'd done with him – a regular snake in the grass. I'd like to have a crack at him with a roping pole. He's worked round poor Bill, some road or other, who's that soft and straightforward, as any man could talk him over – and yet I wonder, after what he wrote –'

And here Jenny took Bill's last letter out of her homely treasure-chest, read it once more and cried over it, after which she dried her eyes and changed her dress, preparatory to seeking counsel of Mr. Calthorpe, the banker in the township. This gentleman received her sympathetically, and heard all she had to say, before giving an opinion.

In small and remote centres of population such as Talmorah the bank manager is, even more than the clergyman or the doctor, the 'guide, philosopher, and friend' of the humbler classes, whom he chiefly advises for their good, and, in moderation, aids pecuniarily, if he can do so, with safety to the bank. He is often young, but, from a wider than ordinary outlook on men and affairs, endowed with discretion beyond his years. For Jenny and her husband he had a genuine liking and respect, based chiefly on his knowledge of character, but partly on the creditable state of Bill's bank account.

'It's a bad business, Mrs. Hardwick,' he said, when Jenny had concluded her story in a fit of weeping, which she could not restrain. 'And Bill's the last man I should have expected to be mixed up with this affair. It's wonderful what harm this strike business is doing all over Australia. However, it's no use thinking of that. The question is, how to help your husband out of the trouble, now he's in it. He's only committed now – which doesn't go for much. It's the trial before the Judge and Jury we have to look to.'

Here Mr. Calthorpe took down a file of newspapers and looked through them. 'Yes, I thought so; to be tried at next ensuing Assize Court at Wagga. You'd like him to have a lawyer to defend him, wouldn't you?'

'Of course I would,' replied the loyal wife. 'We've worked hard for our bit of money, but I'd spend the last shilling of it before Bill should go to gaol.'

'Quite right. Bill's man enough to make more – his liberty's the main thing. Well, I'll send a letter by this night's mail to the Manager of our bank at Wagga and ask him to see Mr. Biddulph, the solicitor – I was stationed there years ago – and *he'll* get him off if any one can. Money is wanted, though, to pay witnesses' expenses – you must be prepared for that.'

'Whatever's wanted, let him have, in God's name,' Jenny cried recklessly. 'You know Bill's good for it, sir, and I've butter-money saved up of my own. Bill always let me keep that. I've got it in this bag. It will do to begin with.'

'Never mind that,' said the banker, good-humouredly. 'I have your deeds, you know, and the balance is on the right side of your account. So don't be down-hearted, and I'll let you know as soon as I hear from Biddulph. Good-bye, and keep up your spirits; fretting won't do you any good, or Bill

either. All right, Mr. Mason,' he said, as his assistant, after knocking, looked in at the door; 'tell Mr. Thornhill I can see him in a minute.'

'I'll never forget your kindness,' said Jenny, as she shook hands warmly with the friend in need. 'You'll let me know directly you hear anything.'

'You may depend on that. Good-bye till Saturday; the up-river mail will be in then.' As she passed out, a stoutish, middle-aged man came in.

'Morning, Calthorpe. Comforting the widow or the orphan? Saw she was in trouble.'

'Deuced hard lines,' said the Manager gravely. 'Very decent people – selectors at Chidowla, near Curra Creek. Her husband's got into trouble – committed for trial about that burning of the *Dundonald*.'

'Serve him right, too. Those Union fellows are playing the deuce all over the country. If they're not stopped there's no saying what they'll do next. The country's going to the devil. The Government won't act with decision, while property is being destroyed and life menaced every day. I don't blame the men so much; it's these rascally agitators that ought to suffer, and they mostly get out of it.'

'I'll never believe that Bill Hardwick went in for the steamer-burning business,' said the banker, 'though he seems to have got mixed up with it somehow. There's some cur working it, I'm sure. He's got a decent stake in the country himself. He'd never risk losing his farm and the money that he's saved. I won't believe it till it's proved.'

'But he must have been with those Union fellows or they couldn't have arrested him,' answered the squatter. 'What was he doing in a Union Camp? Comes of keeping bad company, you see. I'm sorry for his wife – she seems a good sort; but if a man takes up with such people, he must pay the penalty.'

And then the Manager went keenly into his client's business, removing all thought of Bill's hard luck and Jenny's sad face from his mental vision. But after his day's work was done, and his books duly posted up, as he took his usual walk round the outskirts of the township, the 'case of William Hardwick, charged with arson in the matter of the steamer *Dundonald*,' recurred again and again with almost painful iteration.

'Must be a put-up job!' he ejaculated, as he turned towards the unpretending four-roomed cottage which served him for dwelling-place, office, and treasure-house. His clerk and assistant, a young fellow of twenty, in training for higher posts when the years of discretion had arrived, slept there with him.

But both took their meals in the best hotel of the township (there were only two) – a more interesting way of managing the commissariat than house-keeping where servants were scarce, as well as presenting distinct advantages from the cooking side. It may be added that they were never absent from the bank at the same time.

In addition to the convenience of the latter arrangement a country banker in Australia finds his account in a general suavity of demeanour. Bits of information then fall in his way, which a less cordial manner would not have attracted.

At the ordinary table of the Teamsters' Arms, Talmorah, being a great 'carrying centre,' all sorts and conditions of men were represented. Not that the partially renovated swagman or bullock-driver sat at meat with the correctly attired squatter, station-manager, or commercial traveller. Such is not the fashion in rural Australia. Meals, except in case of illness, are not served in private rooms – a limited staff of servants forbidding such luxury. But a second table is provided, of which the lower tariff practically effects a separation between the socially unequal sections. If not, a hint is never wanting from the prudent but decisive landlord.

At the bar counter, however, a nearer approach to democratic equality is reached; and it was here that Mr. Calthorpe caught a few words that decided him to ask for a glass of beer, while a rather heated argument was being carried on.

'Heard about Bill Hardwick fallin' in, over that steamer-burnin' racket?' queried a sunburnt teamster, whose dust-enveloped garb and beard proclaimed a long and wearisome trail.

'We all heard of it,' answered the man addressed – an agricultural-appearing person, not so distinctively 'back-block' in appearance as the first speaker – 'and we're dashed sorry it's true in this quarter. Bill's a neighbour of mine, and a straighter chap never stepped. I don't hold with that sort of foolishness that the Union's been carryin' on lately. I joined 'em and so did Bill, and I'd be as well pleased I hadn't now, and so'd he I reckon. But as for him helpin' to burn a steamer, I'd just as soon believe he'd stick up this bank.'

'Banks is one thing and Union leaders is another,' decided the man from the waste, finishing a portentous 'long sleeve.' 'But a chap's fool enough to go with his crowd now and again; he don't care about being ticketed as a "blackleg." Why shouldn't Bill do it as well as another?'

'Because he's the wrong sort; he's married and has a couple of kids. His wife's a hard-working, savin' kind of woman as ever you see – always at it from daylight to dark. Besides, he's lookin' to go in for another selection. That's not the sort of chap that goes burnin' sheds and steamers. It's a bloomin' plant, I'll take my oath.'

'That's your notion, is it?' quoth the teamster, who, having imbibed as much colonial beer as would have half-drowned a smaller and less desiccated man, was disposed to be confidential. 'I wouldn't say as you're far out. I was comin' by Quambone with Bangate wool – forty-five bales of greasy – it's now onloadin', and I'd a yarn with a chap that was in the Union Camp at Moorara. He kep' as far back as he could, and cleared out first chance. Of course they was all mixed up when the firin' came, and some of 'em, as hadn't wanted to go too far, took their chance to cut it. But afore he went, he heard Stoate ('you know him?' – the listener nodded) tell another of the "committy," as they called themselves, "that he'd fix up Bill Hardwick if it come to a trial – if any man had to do a stretch over it, *he'd* not get off."

"How'll you work that?" says the other cove. "He's never gone solid along of us; and now he'll be dead agen Unionism, and no wonder. He told some one this morning he'd lost his shearing cheque."

'So that's the way they nobbled him,' said his hearer. 'Infernal bloomin' scoundrels to swear a man's liberty away. Bill's got a friend or two yet, though, and money in the bank, though some of them spoutin' loafers has his cheque in their pockets. So long.'

The gaunt, sun-baked teamster departed to turn out his bullocks, and generally recreate after his journey, deferring till the morrow the pleasant process of receiving his cheque for carriage and safe delivery of his valuable load – over five hundred pounds' worth of merino wool.

But Mr. Calthorpe, the banker, who, without listening to the whole conversation, had caught Bill's name occasionally, touched Donahue's arm (for that perfunctory agriculturist it was) as he turned reluctantly homeward, and questioned him concerning his late acquaintance's words.

Nothing loath, indeed gratified with the chance of placating the local potentate who wielded the power of life and death (financially) over him and others, he cheerfully disclosed all that he had heard, being, moreover, a good-natured, obliging sort of fellow, as indeed thriftless persons often are.

'Now, look here, Donahue!' said the great man. 'I've a liking for Hardwick, whom I've always found a steady and industrious chap, that it's a pleasure to help. Some men are not built that way, Dick' – here he looked Donahue squarely in the face. 'They idle their time, and spend the money drinking and horse-racing that ought to go to paying their debts and keeping the wife and children.' Mr. Donahue looked embarrassed, and gazed into the distance. 'But I want your help to take this business out of winding, and if you'll work with me, I *might* – I don't say I will, mind you – recommend the Bank to give you time to pay off the arrears on your selection.'

Dick Donahue, whose cheerful demeanour covered an aching heart and remorseful feelings whenever he thought of the possibility of the family losing their home because of his want of steady industry, turned round, almost with the tears in his eyes, as he said, not without a touch of natural dignity —

'Mr. Calthorpe, I'd do what I could for Bill, who's a better man than myself, with all the veins of my heart – as poor old father used to say – and ask no return in the world; and for Jenny Hardwick, who's been a good head to Biddy and the children (more shame for me that they wanted help), I'd risk my life any day. And if you think well of givin' me more time to pay up, I've got a fencing contract from Mr. Dickson, after the New Year, and I'll never touch a drop till it's finished, and give you an order on him for the lot.'

'All right, Dick, we can arrange that; you work like a man and do your duty to your family, and you'll find a friend in me.' He held out his hand, which the repentant prodigal shook fervently, and turned away without another word.

Nothing more was said on that day, but in the following week Richard Donahue, fairly well turned out, and riding a horse 'fit to go for a man's life,' as he expressed it, started 'down river,' leaving Mrs. Bridget in a state of mind very different from that with which she ordinarily regarded her husband's absence from home 'on business,' always uncertain as to return and rarely satisfactory as to remuneration.

## CHAPTER VII

The inland town of Wagga Wagga, in New South Wales, historically celebrated as the dwelling-place of the Tichborne Claimant, where that lapsed scion of the aristocracy followed the indispensable but not socially eminent occupation of butcher, was, if not *en fête*, pardonably excited at the arrival of the Judge and officers of the Assize Court to be holden on the morrow.

This traditional spectacle – almost as interesting as the Annual Race Meeting or the Agricultural Show – was afforded to the inhabitants at half-yearly intervals. The curiosity aroused by these unfamiliar personages, before whom were decided the issues of freedom or imprisonment, life or death, was concentrated and intense. The Judge who presided, the Bar, the Deputy Sheriff, the Crown Prosecutor, the Associate, were objects of admiration to the denizens of a city three hundred miles from a metropolis – chiefly ignorant of other than rural life, and to whom the ocean itself was almost unknown. To the jurymen, culled from the town dwellers and the surrounding farms, the summons to aid in the administration of justice was a memorable solemnity.

The compulsory withdrawal from their ordinary avocations was fully compensated by urban pleasures, and doubtless aided their intelligent comprehension of the laws of the land.

Among the townspeople a certain amount of social festivity was deemed appropriate to the occasion.

It may therefore be imagined that among the young men and maidens the infrequent procession of the Judge's carriage, escorted by the Superintendent of Police and half-a-dozen troopers, well armed, mounted, and accurately turned out, created a thrill of pleasurable anticipation.

These feelings were heightened by the fact that Wagga (as, for convenience, the thriving town on the Murrumbidgee River was chiefly designated) stood at the edge of a vast pastoral district, being also bounded by one of the finest agricultural regions of Australia.

The cases to be tried at this sitting of the Court concerned as well the great pastoral interest as the army of labourers, to whom that interest paid in wages not less than ten millions sterling annually.

Punctually as the Post-office clock struck ten, the Court House was filled, great anxiety being shown to behold the six prisoners, who were marched from the gaol and placed in the dock, a forbidding-looking, iron-railed enclosure with a narrow wooden seat. On this some promptly sat down, while others stood up and gazed around with a well-acted look of indifference. Bill Hardwick had never been in such a place before, and the thought of what Jenny's feelings would be if she had seen him there nearly broke his heart. He sat with his head covered with his hands – the picture of misery and despair. He knew that he was to be defended – indeed had been closely questioned long before the day of trial about his conduct on the eventful morning of the burning of the *Dundonald*.

He had asserted his innocence in moving terms, such as even touched the heart of the solicitor, hardened as he was by long acquaintance with desperate criminals as well as cases where plaintiffs, witnesses, and defendants all seemed to be leagued in one striking exhibition of false swearing and prevarication calculated to defeat the ends of justice.

'That's all right,' said the lawyer, 'and I believe every word you've said, Bill, and deuced hard lines it is – not that I believe defendants generally, on their oath or otherwise. But you're a different sort, and it's a monstrous thing that you should have to spend your hard-earned money on lawyers and witnesses to defend yourself from a false charge. But what we've got to look to, is to make the Judge and jury believe you. These d – d scoundrels that were on for burning the boat, saw you with a gun in your hand while the affair was going on, and will swear to that, back and edge. Your friend Stoate, who isn't here yet, but will be up in time for the trial, will clinch the nail, and he can bring the constable to back him up, who saw you holding a gun. He doesn't say more than that, but it goes to corroborate. The jury must go by sworn evidence. There's only your own statement, which won't weigh against deponents, who've apparently nothing to gain on the other side.'

'It's all the spite of that hound Stoate,' cried out Bill passionately. 'He was crabbed for my belittling him in the Tandara shed. He's put those Unionists up to ruining me, and I'll break his neck when I get out, if I have to swing for it.'

'No, you won't, Bill! If you get a sentence, which I hope you won't, when you come out you'll be so jolly glad to find yourself free, that you won't want to go back even for revenge. But never mind that for the present; we must look things in the face. It's a thousand pities you couldn't get some of those chaps that were driven into the hut along with you, by the Unionists, the first night. Any idea where they've gone? Know their names?'

'They went down the river, I heard say. They're hundreds of miles away by this time. What's the use of knowing their names?'

'That's my business. It's wonderful how people turn up sometimes. Come, out with their names – where they came from – all you know about them.'

Thus adjured, Bill gave their names and a sketch of personal appearance, home address, and so on. 'All of them were natives, and some of them, when they were at home, which was not often, had selections in the same district.' This being done, Mr. Biddulph folded up the paper, and left Bill to his reflections, telling him that he could do nothing more for him at present, but to 'keep up his pecker,' and not to think the race was over till the numbers were up.

This quasi-encouragement, however, availed him but little. 'He had lost his shearing cheque; and here was money,' he sadly thought, 'being spent like water, to prove him innocent of a crime for which he never should have been charged. His wife would be nearly killed with anxiety, besides being made aware that they could not now think of buying Donahue's or any other selection. How everything had gone wrong since he rode away from home that morning with Stoate (infernally, blasted traitor that he was!), and had been going from bad to worse ever since. It was against Jenny's advice that he joined the Union. She had a knack of being right, though she was not much of a talker. Another time – but when would that be?'

So Bill – 'a hunter of the hills,' more or less, as was the Prisoner of Chillon – had to pass the weary hours until the day of trial, and he could exchange the confinement of the gaol for the expansive scenery of the dock – restricted as to space, certainly, but having an outlook upon the world, and a sort of companionship in the crowd of spectators, lawyers, and witnesses, finishing up with the Judge.

At this judicial potentate Bill looked long and wistfully. He had an idea that a Judge was a ruthless administrator of hard laws, with a fixed prejudice against working-men who presumed to do anything illegal, or in fact to trouble themselves about anything but their work and wages. However, he could not fail to see in this Judge a mild, serious, patient gentleman, showing greater anxiety to understand the facts of the case than to inflict sentences. Still, he was only partly reassured. Might he not be one of those benevolent-seeming ones – he had heard of such – who would talk sweetly to the prisoner, reminding him of the happy days of childhood, and his, perhaps, exemplary conduct when he used to attend Sunday School – trust that he intended to lead a new life, and then paralyse him with a ten years' sentence, hard labour, and two days' solitary in each month?

He did not know what to expect. Wasn't there Pat Macarthy, who got three years for assault with intent to commit grievous bodily harm (certainly he more than half killed the other man)? Well, his wife worked his farm, and slaved away the whole time, denying herself almost decent clothes to wear. At the end of his term, he came out to find her hopelessly insane; she had been taken to the Lunatic Asylum only the week before.

Bill hardly thought that Jenny would go 'off her head,' in the popular sense. It was too level and well-balanced. But if he was sentenced to three or five years more of this infernal, hopeless, caged-in existence, he expected *he* would.

The prisoners that he had watched in the exercise yard didn't seem to mind it so much. But they were old and worn-out; had nothing much to wish themselves outside for. Others did not look as if they had worked much in their lives – had indeed 'done time' more than once, as the slang phrase went,

content to loll on the benches in the exercise yard and talk to their fellow-convicts – not always after an improving fashion. But to *him* it would be a living death. Up and out every morning of his life at or before daylight, – hard at work at the thousand-and-one-tasks of a farm until it was too dark to tell an axe from a spade, – how *could* he endure this cruel deprivation of all that made life worth living?

Fortunately for him, in one sense, the day of his trial was absolutely perfect as to weather. Bright and warm – it was late December – the sky unflecked by a single cloud. But there was a cool, sea wind, which, wandering up from the distant coast, set every human creature (not in sickness, sorrow, or 'hard bound in misery and iron'), aglow with the joy of living. It raised the spirits even of that plaything of destiny known among men as William Hardwick, so that as the whispering breeze stole through the open windows of the Court he held up his dejected head and felt almost like a man again.

The proceedings commenced, the jury had been impanelled. The Crown Prosecutor threw back his gown, and fixing his eyes on the Judge's impassive countenance opened the case.

'May it please your Honour, you will pardon me perhaps if, before calling witnesses, I sketch briefly the state of affairs which, more or less connected with the strike of 1891, has developed into a condition of matters perilous to life and property, and altogether without precedent in Australia.

'From a determination on the part of the seamen on coasting steamers to refuse work unless certain privileges were granted to them by the owners, a commencement was made of the most widespread, important, and, in its effects, the most disastrous strike ever known in Australia. Into the question of the adequacy or otherwise of the wage claimed, it is not my intention to enter.

'The consequences, however, of the refusal of these seamen and others to continue at work except under certain conditions, were far-reaching, and such as could not have been reasonably anticipated. The revolt, as it was called by the leaders of the movement, spread from sea to land, and throughout all kinds and conditions of labourers, with startling rapidity.

'Many of these bodies of workmen could not have been thought to have been concerned with the original dissentients, by any process of reasoning. But by the leaders of the rebellion – for such it may truly be designated – the opportunity was deemed favourable for the promulgation of what are known as communistic or socialistic doctrines. More especially was this observable in the conduct of a large body of workmen, members of the Australian Shearers' Union. Guided by ambitious individuals of moderate education but considerable shrewdness, not wholly unmingled with cunning, the shearers, and indeed the whole body of labourers connected with the great wool export, had been misled. They were asked to believe that a conspiracy existed on the part of the representatives of capital, whether merchants, bankers, or landholders – indeed of all employers, whether private individuals or incorporated companies – to defraud the labourer of his hire.

'Inflamed by seditious pamphlets and utterances, shearers and others banded themselves together for the purpose of intimidating all workmen who were unwilling to be guided by the autocratic Unions, and arranged on their own terms with employers.

'Not only did they, by "picketing," – an alleged method of moral suasion, but in reality a policy of insult, annoyance, and obstruction, – forcibly prevent other workmen from following their lawful occupations, but they commenced to destroy the property of the pastoral tenants, believed to be opposed to Union despotism. As a specimen of the inflammatory language used, perhaps your Honour will permit me to read an extract from a paper published in the (alleged) interest of the working classes.'

His Honour 'thought that however such extracts might indicate a tendency on the part of certain sections of workmen to engage in acts of violence causing injury to property, – a most lamentable state of feeling, in his opinion, – yet the Court was directly concerned to-day with only specific evidence as to the complicity of the prisoners in the crime of arson on which they were arraigned. He thought the extract at this stage irrelevant.'

'After drawing the attention of your Honour and the jury to the seditious, dishonest statements referred to, I will briefly refer to the lamentable list of outrages upon property, not stopping short indeed of personal violence and grievous bodily injury.

'Matters have reached such a pitch that a state of civil war may be said to have commenced. If not only the country but the towns and cities of Australia are not to be theatres of bloodshed, outrage, and incendiary flames, from which, by the mercy of Providence, Australia has up to this period been preserved, the law in its majesty must step in, and adequately punish the actors in the flagrant criminality as to which I have to address your Honour this day.'

The prisoners, having been duly arraigned, with one accord pleaded not guilty. The last name was that of William Hardwick. Just before his name was called, room was made in the crowded Court and a seat provided by the Sergeant of Police for a woman with two children, whose travel-worn appearance denoted recent arrival.

Bill turned his head, and in that fragment of time recognised Jenny with their little boy and girl. His name had to be repeated a second time. Then he drew himself up, squared his shoulders, and looking straight at the Judge, said 'Not Guilty' in a voice which sounded throughout the Court, and if it had not the ring of truth, was a marvellous imitation.

Poor Jenny, who had preserved a strained, fixed look of composure, broke down at this juncture. The sight of her husband, standing in the dock with men of crime-hardened and to her eyes of guilty appearance – one of whom, indeed, wore leg-irons, which clanked as he moved – overcame all attempts at self-possession. Her sobs were audible through the whole Court.

'Wife of the prisoner, your Honour,' explained the sergeant. 'Just off the coach; been travelling twenty hours without rest or sleep.'

'Had she not better stay in the witnesses' room?' suggested the Judge sympathetically. 'Refreshment can be brought to her there.'

But Jenny, though temporarily overcome, was not the woman to give in at such a time. Wiping her eyes, 'I've come a long way, if you please, your Honour,' she said, 'to hear my man tried on a false charge, if ever there was one; and I hope you'll let me see it out. I'll not disturb the Court again.'

It was a piteous spectacle.

Little Billy Hardwick, a precocious, resolute youngster 'rising five,' looked for a while with much gravity at his father, and then said, 'Is this a church, mother? Why doesn't father come out of that pew?'

Jenny was nearly overcome by this fresh assault on her sympathies, but accentuating her order by a shake, replied, *sotto voce*, 'It's not a church, Billy; but you mustn't talk, or else a policeman will lock you up in prison.' The child had heard of prisons, where bad people were locked up, even in Talmorah, where the primitive structure was, in his little mind, associated with the constable's children, who used to play therein when the cells were empty. He would have liked further explanation, but he read the signs in his mother's set face and closed lips, and spoke no more; while the little girl, holding on to her mother's gown, mingled her tears with those of her parent. Jenny Hardwick was 'not much in the crying line,' as an early friend had said of her, and was besides possessed of an unusual share of physical courage as well as of strength of mind. So, when she had hastily dried her eyes, she gave every indication of being as good as her word.

'Call the first witness,' said the Crown Prosecutor, anxious to get to work. This proved to be the Captain of Volunteers, who marched into the box accordingly.

'Your name is Gilbert Elliot, formerly of the 60th Regiment, now commanding a mounted Volunteer force. Were you at Moorara on the Darling on the 28th of August 1894?'

'I was.'

'Please to state what you did and what you saw then.'

'When the troop reached Poliah, at the date mentioned, I saw the steamer *Dundonald* floating down the river. She was on fire and burning fiercely. Apparently no one was on board. There was a

large camp of armed men – several hundreds – whom I concluded to be Union shearers. They were yelling and shouting out that they had just burned the – boat and would roast the crew and captain for bringing up "blacklegs." I called upon them to disperse, and as they made a show of resistance I ordered my men to charge. They commenced to retreat and disperse, upon which I caused all the men to be arrested who had arms in their hands, and who were pointed out to me as having fired at the crew of the steamer or having set fire to the vessel.'

'Do you recognise the prisoners before the Court?'

'Yes; all of them.'

'Your Honour, I appear for prisoner William Hardwick,' said a shrewd, alert-looking person, who had just then bustled into the Court and appeared to be well known to the legal section. 'May I ask to have the captain's evidence read over to me? Ordinarily I should not think of troubling your Honour or delaying the business of the Court; but I have travelled from Harden, and, being delayed on the road, have only this moment arrived.'

'Under the circumstances, Mr. Biddulph, the evidence of Captain Elliot may be read over from my notes.' This was done.

The witness's evidence was proceeded with.

'Was there any show of resistance by the men assembled in the camp?'

'There was a movement as if they were disposed to fight. They outnumbered my troopers more than six to one, but at the first charge they wavered and dispersed. They made no opposition to my arresting the prisoners before the Court. One of them, the one now in irons, made a desperate resistance, but was not supported.'

'Now, Captain Elliot,' said Mr. Biddulph, 'will you look at the prisoner at this end of the dock; do you remember him?'

'Perfectly. He had a rifle in his hand when I ordered him to be arrested.'

'Did he resist?'

'No.'

'Did he say anything? If so, what was it?'

'He said, "I'm not here of my own free-will. I've been robbed and ill-treated by these men. I was forced to carry this gun. You can see that it has not been discharged. My mates (there are several of them) can prove that." I asked him where they were. He said he did not know.'

'Then you had him arrested, though he disclaimed taking any part in the unlawful proceedings? Did you not believe him?'

'I did not. As it happened, other prisoners made substantially the same defence who had been seen firing their guns just as we rode up.'

'That will do, captain.'

The next witness was called.

'My name is Humphrey Bolton. I am a Sergeant of Volunteers, and came up from Moorara by a forced march as soon as we heard that the steamer was burnt. When we struck the camp there were six or seven hundred men, most of them armed. They appeared very excited. I saw the steamer drifting down the river. She was on fire. I saw a barge with a number of men in it. I noticed the Unionists standing on the bank of the river and firing from time to time in the direction of the barge. The men in the barge were bending down and lying in the bottom as if afraid of being hit. I did not hear of any of them being hurt; a few shots were fired back, and one man in the camp was wounded.'

'What happened next?' said the Crown Prosecutor.

'Captain Elliot ordered me to capture all men on the river-bank who had arms in their hands. The six prisoners before the Court and about a dozen others were taken in charge accordingly.'

'Did the crowd resist their capture?'

'They made a show of it at first, but as soon as we charged, they gave way and cleared off in all directions.'

'Now, sergeant,' said Mr. Biddulph, 'look at the prisoner William Hardwick. Had he arms?'

'He was carrying a gun.'

'Did you see him fire it?'

'No.'

'Did you examine it, when he said it had not been fired?'

'Yes, the captain ordered me to do so; it had not been fired recently.'

'Wasn't that proof that he was speaking the truth?'

'How could I tell? He might have been going to fire, or picked up one that had not been used. Besides, my officer told me to arrest him, and, of course, I obeyed orders. He was in company with men who had just committed a felony, at any rate.'

'I see – evil communications. You may go down, sergeant.'

The next witness was the captain of the *Dundonald*.

'My name is Seth Dannaker, Master Mariner, out of Boston, U.S.A. I was lately in command of the steamer *Dundonald*– now at the bottom of the river Darling. I had come from Pooncarrie, carrying forty-five free labourers, last Saturday, without obstruction or disturbance. I took wood on board, and tied up, with swamp all round, a little below Poliah. We heard that a large camp of Unionists were waiting to attack us there; they had wire ropes across the river. We had steam up all night and a watch was kept. About four o'clock A.M. a mob of disguised men rushed on board the boat, and took possession of her. They knocked me about, and put me and the crew on board the barge, now moored at Moorara. They afterwards set the *Dundonald* on fire. She drifted down the river, and finally sank. They took possession of the free labourers, and counted them. They had guns and revolvers, threatening to shoot me and all who resisted them. I have lost all my personal effects, including money. I thought this was a free country; now I know it isn't.'

Cross-examined by Mr. Carter, appearing for the prisoners – with the exception of William Hardwick.

'You say you were threatened by one or more of the Unionists. Can you recognise any of the prisoners now before the Court?'

'Yes; the man in irons. I was told his name was Abershaw. He put a revolver to my head, swearing he would shoot me if I resisted; also that he would burn the b – y steamer, and roast me and the Agent of the Employers' Association for bringing up blacklegs.'

'Was he sober?'

'I cannot say. He was much excited, and more like a madman than any one in his senses. Two or three men struck me. I cannot identify any other prisoners. I had left my revolver in the cabin, or I should have shot some of them.'

'Did you see any persons firing at the vessel or crew?'

'Yes; there was a line of men on the bank firing with rifles at the crew. They wounded two of them. I cannot identify any of them.'

Cross-examined by Mr. Biddulph.

'Will you look at the man in the corner of the dock nearest to you? Did you see him firing or carrying a gun?'

'I never saw him at all, to my knowledge. Of course there was confusion.'

Next witness. 'My name is James Davidson. I am the Agent of the Employers' Association. On or about the 28th August 1894, I came up in the *Dundonald* in charge of free labourers (forty-five) to a spot near Poliah. The police had been sent for from Tolarno. We had heard of the Unionists intending to obstruct the boat, and so kept watch above and below. Next morning, just before daylight, a number of men rushed on board. One of them pointed a gun at the man who tried to set the boat free, threatening to kill him if he moved. They went into the wheel-house, and struck the captain; I heard them tell him they would kill him and burn the boat. He was knocked about badly. I got a few blows before the leaders got the men quiet. Then they started getting my men out.'

By the Crown Prosecutor. 'Whom do you mean by your men?'

'The free labourers.'

'Did they resist, or go quietly?'

'Some went quietly – others resisted, and were thrown overboard. A few were only in their shirts, as they had not had time to dress. They were then set up in a line and counted, to see if they were all there. A guard was put over them.'

'Was the guard armed?'

'Yes. Another gang was busy unloosing the steamer, and preparing her for the fire. They smashed in the cabins and stole everything. Nothing escaped them when they began to pillage. I lost my portmanteau, clothes, and money. Everything was taken out of my cabin, leaving me nothing but the clothes I had on.'

'Were the Unionists much excited?'

'Excited? – raving mad, I should call it. We were lucky to get off with our lives. Fortunately, few persons were injured. We received every attention when we got to Moorara. There is a large Union Camp at Tolarno. They have given out that they intend to burn two more steamers, for carrying free labourers.'

'Do you identify the prisoners in the dock?'

'Two of them. The man in irons struck the captain, and said he would burn the boat and roast him alive. The one with the large beard was the one who said he would shoot the man who was unloosing the cable. The others I have no knowledge of.'

By Mr. Carter. 'Did you see the prisoner William Hardwick – the one at this end of the dock?'

'Not that I am aware of.'

'You said you lost some money?'

'Yes, ten or twelve pounds; it was in a purse in my portmanteau. I had to draw on the Association for a few pounds, as I was left penniless and without a change of wearing apparel.'

'I suppose that was a form of "picketing," in accordance with the "ethics of war."'

'"Pickpocketing," I should call it.'

'One moment, Mr. Davidson,' interposed Mr. Biddulph, as the Agent turned to leave the witness-box. 'Did you see the prisoner at this end of the dock, carrying a gun or in any way joining in this creditable work?'

'I never saw him at all.'

'That will do.'

'Call Janus Stoate, witness for the Crown.'

As his name was mentioned, Bill turned his head towards the door where the witnesses came in, with a look of murderous hate, such as no man had ever seen before on his good-natured countenance.

Jenny, as she looked anxiously towards the dock, hardly knew him. By that door was to walk in the man who had eaten many a time at his humble but plentiful table, and in return had treacherously denounced him, ruined his character, helped to deprive him of his hard-earned wages, gone near to render his children paupers, and break his wife's heart. A man of his easy-going, confiding character, easily deceived, is not prone to suspicion, but when injured – outraged in his deepest, tenderest feelings – is terrible in wrath. As Bill unconsciously clenched his hands, and stared at the open door, he looked as one eager to tear his enemy limb from limb.

But the thronged Court was disappointed, and Bill's vengeance delayed, as no Janus Stoate appeared.

Mr. Biddulph, who had left the Court, now appeared in company with a mounted trooper, whose semi-military attire told of a rapid ride. He spoke in a low voice to the Sub-Inspector of Police, who thereupon proceeded to address the Judge.

'If your Honour pleases, there will be a trifling delay before this witness can give his evidence, owing to circumstances to which I cannot at present allude. As the hour for your Honour's luncheon

has nearly arrived, may I suggest a short adjournment? I can assure your Honour that I make the application for sufficient reasons.'

'I am opposed,' answered the Judge, 'to adjournments in criminal cases; but on Mr. Sub-Inspector's assurance, I consent to relax my rule. Let the Court be adjourned until half-past one o'clock.'

There was a gasp of relief, half of satisfaction, half of disappointment, from the crowd as they hurried from the Court to snatch a hasty meal and ventilate their opinions.

'It's another dodge of the Government to block our workers from gettin' justice,' said one oratorical agitator, partially disguised as a working-man, and whose soft hands betrayed his immunity from recent toil. 'It's a conspiracy hatched up to block Delegate Stoate's evidence agin that blackleg Hardwick.'

'You be hanged!' said a rough-looking bushman, who had just hung his horse up to one of the posts in front of the Murrumbidgee Hotel. 'You won't have so much gab when you see Delegate Stoate, as you call *him*, before the Court, and some one as can tell the truth about him. Bill Hardwick's as honest a cove as ever walked, and he *is* a worker, and not a blatherskite as hasn't done a day's work for years, and sets on skunks like Stoate to rob honest men of their liberty. Don't you stand there gassin' afore me, or I'll knock your hat over your eyes.'

There was presumably a majority of Mr. Stoate's own persuasion around listening to the foregoing remarks, but the onlookers did not seem inclined to controvert this earnest speaker's arguments – seeing that he was distinctly an awkward customer, as he stood there, obviously in hard condition, and eager for the fray.

'See here now, boys,' said a large imposing-looking policeman, 'sure it's bettther for yees to be gettin' a bit to ate and a sup of beer this hot day, than to be disputing within the hearin' of the Coort, and may be gettin' "run in" before sundown. Sure it's Mистер Barker that's sittin' the good example.' Here he pointed to the agitator, who, after mumbling a few words about 'workers who didn't stand by their order,' had moved off, and was heading straight for the bar of the Murrumbidgee Hotel.

This broke up the meeting, as the Union labourers were anxious to hear the conclusion of the case, *Regina v. Hardwick* and others, and were not unobservant either of the unusually large force of police which the Resident Magistrate of Wagga Wagga, a man of proverbial courage and experience, had called up, in anticipation of any *émeute* which might arise as a result of this exciting trial. At half-past one o'clock the Judge, accompanied by the Deputy Sheriff, took his seat upon the Bench, and the Court was again formally declared open.

As the name Janus Stoate was called by the official, in a particularly clear and audible voice, every eye was turned toward the door by which the Crown witnesses entered, and that distinguished delegate walked in, closely accompanied by a senior constable.

His ordinarily assured and aggressively familiar manner had, however, deserted him; he looked, as the spectators realised, some with surprise, others with chagrin, more like a criminal than a Crown witness.

Bill's gaze was fixed upon him, but instead of homicidal fury, his whole countenance exhibited unutterable scorn, loathing, and contempt. As he turned away, he confronted the spectators and the Court officials generally, with a cheerful and gratified expression, unshared by his companions in misfortune.

Even they regarded Stoate with doubt and disfavour. Deeply suspicious and often envious of their fellow-workmen who attained parliamentary promotion, and more than that, a fixed and comfortable salary, they were skilled experts in facial expression. In the lowered eyes and depressed look of Mr. Delegate Stoate they read defeat and disaster, not improbably treachery.

'The beggar's been squared or "copped" for some bloomin' fake,' said the prisoner on the other side of the man in irons. 'He's goin' to turn dog on us, after all.'

'If I don't get a "stretch,"' growled the other, 'his blood-money won't do him no good.'

'Silence in the Court,' said the senior Sergeant, and Mr. Stoate was duly sworn.

'Your name is Janus Stoate, and you are a shearer and a bush labourer?' said the Crown Prosecutor.

'That is so, mostly go shearin' when I can get a shed.'

'Now, do you know the prisoners in the dock? Look at them well. Their names are William Stokes, Daniel Lynch, Hector O'Halloran, Samson Dawker, Jeremiah Abershaw, and William Hardwick.'

'Yes, your Honour; I've met 'em as feller-workers. I don't know as I've been pusson'ly intimate with 'em – except prisoner Hardwick.'

'*He does know him*, to our sorrow, the false villain!' cried out Jenny, coming a pace forward with a child in each hand, and delivering her impeachment before any one could stop her. 'Ask him, your Honour, if he hasn't lived with us, lived *upon* us I call it, for weeks at a time – and now he's going to bear false witness and ruin the family, body and soul.'

'Is this the person who interrupted before?' said the Judge. 'Order *must* be kept in the Court. Let her be removed.' Here the Deputy Sheriff said a few words in a low tone to his Honour. 'Indeed!' said the Judge mildly. 'She must control her feelings, however. My good woman, if I hear another interruption, it will be my duty to have you removed from the Court.'

'Mrs. Hardwick,' said Biddulph, when Jenny's sobs had ceased, 'don't you make a fool of yourself, you're hurting Bill's case. I thought you had more sense. Do you want me to throw it up?'

This settled poor Jenny effectually, and humbly begging pardon, she promised amendment, and kept her word – only regarding Stoate from time to time with the expression which she had assumed at times when a native cat (*Dasyurus*) had got into her dairy.

'Were you at a place called Poliah, on the river Darling, on or about the 28th August last?'

'Yes, I was.'

'Was there a camp there of Unionist shearers?'

'There was workers of all sorts, besides shearers, rouseabouts, and labourers, also loafers.'

'Very likely; but what I want you to tell me is, were they chiefly shearers? In number, how many?'

'Well, say six or seven 'underd.'

'You acted as a delegate, I believe, under rules of the Australian Shearers' Union, at several stations during shearing?'

'I was app'inted as delegate by my feller-workers, and acted as sich on several occasions.'

'What were your duties as a delegate?'

'I 'ad to be in the shed while shearin' was goin on, to see the rules of the Australian Shearers' Union was carried out strickly, and that the men got justice.'

'In what way?'

'Well, that they wasn't done out of their pay for bad shearin', when they shored reasonable well; that they got proper food and lodgin', and wasn't made shear wet sheep, which ain't wholesome – and other things, as between employer and employee.'

'As delegate, did you go to Poliah? and did you see a steamer called the *Dundonald* on the river?'

'Yes, I did.'

'Did you see a number of men rush on board of her, and take the free labourers out of her?'

'No. I was at the back of the camp persuadin' of the men not to use no vi'lence. Then I heard a great hubbub, and guns fired. After that I saw the steamer afire and drifting down river.'

'Did you see who set it on fire?'

'No.'

'Did you see who fired the guns?'

'No; I heard the reports of 'em.'

'Did you see any men on the bank with guns in their hands?'

'Yes; a line of 'em along the river.'

'Were the prisoners now before the Court there?'

'They might have been, I can't speak positive.'

'Was the prisoner Hardwick there carrying a gun?'

'I can't be sure. He might have been. I thought I saw him, but I wasn't near him, and I can't be sure in my mind.'

'You can't be sure?' asked the Crown Prosecutor angrily. 'Didn't you swear at the Police Court at Dilga that you saw him not only holding a gun, but firing it towards the steamer? I'll read your deposition. "I saw the prisoner holding the gun produced. He appeared to have been firing it."'

'Now, Mr. Stoate, is that your signature? and how do you account for your going back on your sworn evidence? You're intelligent enough – in a way. I am at a loss to understand your conduct.'

'Well, I was a bit flurried at the time – confused like. The police came down and charged the mob, and a lot of the shearers cleared out.'

'Then you won't swear that Hardwick held the gun, or fired it?'

'No; I wasn't near enough to him to be dead certain. It was a man like him.'

'Your Honour,' said the Crown Prosecutor, 'this is a most extraordinary change of front on the part of this witness; it amounts to gross prevarication, if not something worse. I *may* have occasion to prosecute him for perjury. You may go down, sir.'

'Not yet. With your Honour's permission, I propose to cross-examine the witness,' interposed Mr. Biddulph. 'Now, Mr. Delegate Stoate, is Janus your Christian name?'

'Yes.'

'Janus, is it? Sounds more heathen than Christian; more suitable also, if I mistake not. Now, Janus Stoate, you're my witness, for the present – remember that – and I advise you to be careful what you say, for your own good, and don't "suppose" so much as you did in your answer to my learned friend. You and Hardwick were on friendly terms before shearing, and came down the river together?'

'Yes, we were friends, in a manner of speakin'.'

'Were you friends or not? Answer me, and don't fence. Have you not stayed at his house often, for more than a week at a time?'

'Yes, now and then – workers often help one another a bit. I'd 'a done the same by him if he'd 'a come along the road lookin' for work.'

'Given him house-room, and three meals a day for a week or more, I daresay. But, let me see —*have you a house?*'

'Well, not exactly. I live in Melbourne.'

'Where?'

'At a boarding-house.'

'You left his house, then, for the shearing, the last time you were there. You had board and lodging for the previous night, and came down the river to North Yalla-doorra together; is that so?'

'Yes.'

'Did you say you were a delegate before the shearing began?'

'No.'

'Why not?'

'For no reason in partic'lar.'

'Did you and he have a dispute on the road, and part company before you came to North Yalla-doorra?'

'Well, we had a bit of a barney, nothing much.'

'Oh! nothing much? You were at Tandara while the shearing was going on; and did he and others refuse to come out on strike when you produced a telegram from the Head Centre, or whatever you call him, at Wagga?'

'He refused to obey the order of the properly app'inted hoffer of the Australian Shearers' Union; and was disrespectful to me, pusson'ly.'

'Did you then say that you would make it hot for him at the next shed?'

'I don't remember. But I was displeased at his disloyal haction.'

'Disloyal to whom? to the Queen?'

'No, to a greater power than the Queen – to the People, as is represented by the Australian Shearers' Union.'

'Very good; keep that for your next speech. You'll find out something about the powers of Her Majesty the Queen before long.'

'Do you not think, Mr. Biddulph,' said the Judge, with much politeness, 'that you have tested this part of the cross-examination sufficiently?'

'It was necessary to prove malice, your Honour; but I will proceed to the witness's acts and deeds, which are more important. Now, Mr. Delegate, answer these few questions straightforwardly.'

'I am on my oath, Mr. Lawyer.'

'I am aware of that; I don't attach much importance to the obligation, I am sorry to say. Did you not say to the President of the Shearers' Committee, during the riot, which might have ended in murder, and did end in arson – "Send a couple of men with Bill Hardwick and put him in the front with a rifle"?''

'Nothing of the sort.'

'If it is sworn by a respectable witness that he heard you, will you still deny it?'

'Certainly I will.'

'Call Joseph Broad. (I merely call this witness to be identified, your Honour.) Did you see this man at the shearers' camp?' to Stoate.

'I saw him there, but that's all.'

'That will do, Broad; go out of Court for the present. Did you hear your President speak to him?'

'Not to my knowledge.'

'Did Lynch and another man stand on each side of Hardwick on the bank of the river, and threaten to shoot him if he didn't stop there and hold out his rifle?'

'I didn't hear them.'

'Now listen to me, and be very careful how you answer this question. Did *you* stand close behind him with a revolver and say, "Don't you move for your life"?''

'Not that I remember. We was all crushed up that close together, as the crew of the steamer fired into us, that a man couldn't tell who was next or anigh him.'

'Very probably. That will do. Stay,' as Mr. Stoate turned away, and left the witness-box with a relieved expression. 'Go into the box for a moment. How did you come here – walk or ride?'

'Rode.'

'Rode your own horse?'

'No, a police horse; I came up with Sergeant Kennedy.'

'Oh, then, he lent you a horse – very kind of him – and accompanied you here. How was that?'

'Well, I believe there was some sort of a case trumped-up against me.'

'Oh! some kind of a trumped-up case, was there? We'll hear more about that, by and by. That will do for the present, Mr. Delegate.'

The witness then left the Court, followed by the strange trooper, so closely indeed, that but for the absence of handcuffs he might have been thought to have been in custody.

'Call Sergeant Kennedy.'

John Kennedy, being duly sworn, deposed as follows: 'I am a senior Sergeant of Police, stationed at Dilga, on Cowall Creek, which runs into the Darling. I saw the last witness at Tandara Run on December the 20th instant. He was given into my custody by Mr. Macdonald, the manager, charged with wilfully and maliciously setting fire to the run. I searched him in his presence and found on him

two half-crowns, a knife, a meerschaum pipe, a plug of tobacco, two sovereigns, a copy of Union Shearers' rules, a letter, and a cheque. The cheque was drawn by John Macdonald in favour of William Hardwick, dated 10th October. The amount was £55: 17s.'

When this announcement was made an audible murmur arose from the body of the Court, even a few hisses were heard, which were promptly suppressed. Bill opened his eyes in wonder and amazement, and then turned to where Jenny sat crying peacefully to herself, but not from grief. Their money had been recovered, their traitorous enemy disgraced and confounded. She, in her mind's eye, saw her home once more glorified with Bill's presence – a free, unstained man. God was merciful, and she despaired no longer of His goodness.

'You didn't observe anything in the rules of the A.S.U. as to pocketing the cash of all shearers unfriendly to the Union? No? Then you may go down.'

'I have no questions to ask this witness,' said the Crown Prosecutor, with emphasis – 'at present, that is to say.'

So Mr. J. Stoate, who had departed with the trooper, was for greater safety and security lodged in the modern substitute for the dungeon of the Middle Ages, until the Judge, after the finding of the jury, should have pronounced sentence or otherwise on the *other* prisoners.

## CHAPTER VIII

'Call Cyrus Cable!' for the defence. As the long-legged, bronzed Sydney-sider lounged up to the witness-box, Bill's face, which had assumed a more hopeful expression, became distinctly irradiated. For this man was one of the shearers who had travelled down with him from Tandara, and had agreed to drop all connection with the Union and its revolutionary tactics. They had both been imprisoned at Poliah; had suffered wrong and indignity at the hands of the insurgents. How had he come up from the Darling, just in the nick of time? Bill didn't know, but if he had seen Dick Donahue outside of the Court he might have guessed.

'My name's Cyrus Cable, native of Bathurst. I'm a shearer in the season; have a selection at Chidowla, this side of Tumberumba. I know some of the men in the dock; saw them at Poliah when the row was on and the steamer was burnt.'

'Will you point out any of the prisoners that you can identify?'

'Well, there's Bill Hardwick, an old mate of mine – and fellow-prisoner, if it comes to that. It's dashed hard lines on him to be scuffed and gaoled by those Union scallowags, first for not joinin' 'em, and then locked up and tried because they ill-treated him and he couldn't get away. I call that a queer sort of law.'

The witness is requested to confine himself to answering such questions as are put to him, and not to give his opinion as to the law of the land.

'Do you identify any other prisoners?'

'Yes. I saw that beauty with the hobbles on, fire his gun at the crew on the boat twice; I saw him reload. He was one of the men as hustled Bill, and the rest of our mob that came from Tandara, into the tent and set a guard on us. I took notice of him then, and can swear to him positive.'

'Was the prisoner Hardwick with the rioters?'

'Yes, like me, because he couldn't help himself. I heard the President, as he calls himself – there he is, the t'other end of the "bot" (I mean the dock, but it's so like a branding pen) – say to that Janus Stoate, him as passed the wire with our names when we left Tandara – "Put a good man on each side of Bill Hardwick, so's he can't stir, and they'll take him for a Unionist and keep pottin' at him. What fun it'll be!" and he laughed. "I'll be behind him," says Stoate, "so he won't have no chance of boltin'." That's the way it was worked to bring Bill, as straight a chap as ever sharpened shears, into this steamer-burnin' racket.'

'How was it that you and your mates left your comrade in the lurch?'

'Well, we cleared as soon as the police came. The Union men bolted in all directions and left the free labourers to mind themselves. We thought Bill was comin' after us, and never missed him till we were miles away.'

'Did you not return to rescue him?'

'No fear! We thought the police might run *us* in for "aidin' and abettin'." It was every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.'

The witness was reprimanded for levity, and directed not to refer to the devil unnecessarily. In cross-examination he stated that he took particular notice of the man in irons, as he had repeatedly struck him and his mates with the butt-end of his rifle. Like the other rebels, he was very brave against unarmed men, but cut it when the police showed they meant business.

'Have you not a revengeful feeling against the prisoner Abershaw, the one who is (very improperly, in my opinion) brought into the Court in leg-irons?'

'Well, I've the feelings of a man, and I don't cotton to a cowardly dog who kept rammin' the butt-end of his gun into the small of my back, when I couldn't defend myself. But I'm here to speak the truth, and to get justice for an innocent man.'

'I suppose you were told that you would be paid your expense for attending this trial?'

'I got a Crown subpoena. So did Martin.'

'Who served it to you?'

'A police constable at Toovale.'

'Was anybody with him?'

'Yes, Dick Donahue. He told me and my mate, Martin Hannigan, that Bill Hardwick was to be tried at Wagga for burnin' the *Dundonald* and shootin' at the crew. "That be hanged for a yarn!" says I. "Fancy Bill, with a farm and a wife and kids, settin' out to burn steamers and kill people! Holy Moses! Are you sure he didn't rob a church, while he was about it?" But he said it was no laughing matter, and he might get three years in gaol. So of course we come, and would have turned up if we'd had to do it on foot and pay our own expenses!'

'Of course, your Honour will note this witness's evident bias?' said the counsel for the prisoners.

'I shall take my notes in the ordinary manner,' said the Judge. 'It is not necessary for counsel to suggest points of practice to a Judge before he addresses the Court at the conclusion of the evidence.'

'Your Honour will perhaps pardon me; I thought it might have escaped your notice.'

'I trust, Mr. Carter, that *nothing* escapes my notice in an important criminal case. Let the next witness be called.'

'Martin Hannigan is your name?' said Mr. Biddulph. 'You were at Poliah Camp on the 28th of August, were you not? Do you know the prisoners before the Court?'

'Some of them. I know Bill Hardwick, and the man with the leg-irons, but not his name. Yes; I know the one with the black beard – they called him the President.'

'Who called him by that title?'

'The shearers, or rioters, or loafers, whoever they were. They were six of one and half-a-dozen of the other, if you ask me.'

'Never mind answering what you are not asked. What did you *see them do*?'

'Well – Mr. President and his mob, all armed, made Bill and me and eight or nine other chaps that came down from Tandara, prisoners of war, in a manner of speakin' – "robbery under arms" I call it, for they boned our swags, our horses, our grub, and our pack-saddles. I found the horses, when they were boltin' from the police, or we should 'a never seen 'em again; two of us had to ride bareback. I seen that gaol-bird there – he's "done time," I'll take my oath – and another man shovin' Bill Hardwick between them towards the river-bank – one of 'em was puttin' a gun into his hand – swore he'd shoot him if he didn't carry it. I saw one of 'em fire at the boat. I'd not swear he hit anybody. I heard the "President" say, "We'll burn the bally boat; that'll learn 'em to bring 'scabs' down the river." I saw the steamer blaze up after the crew and free labourers was out. Then the police came, and Martin, my mate, and I cleared for our lives. We caught our horses in a bend and rode down the river to Toovale, when we got a non-Union shed, and wired in. That's about all I know.'

By the Crown Prosecutor.

'Your name is Martin Hannigan. Are you an Irishman?'

'No, nor an Englishman either. I'm an Australian, and so was my father. What's that to do with the case?'

'I thought you were rather humorous in your evidence, that's all. The Irish are a witty race, you know.'

'So they say. I've never been there. Anythin' else you'd like to ask me?'

'Only a few questions. When were you served with a subpoena to attend this Court, and where?'

'At Toovale, on the Lower Darling. The policeman came to the shed where Cable and I were working and served us. Dick Donahue came with him, and told us that Bill Hardwick was being tried with the other men for burning the *Dundonald*.'

'Didn't you know before? That seems strange.'

'Well, we were workin' hard to make up for lost time, by this strike foolishness, and we were too dashed tired at night to go in for readin' papers, or anything but supper and a smoke.'

'I suppose Donahue told you all about Hardwick's being arrested, and you had a talk over the case – what evidence you could give, and so on.'

'He didn't say much about evidence. He knew we was there, and seen all there was to see; might have *felt* something too, if a bullet had come our way – they were flying pretty thick for a few minutes. I seen that President chap fire once, and load again.'

'And that was all that passed?'

'Yes, pretty well all; we weren't "coached," if that's what you mean.'

'You swear that you saw that man fire, and load again?'

'Yes.'

'Did you see the free labourers?'

'Yes, forty or fifty; some looked damp, as they had been chucked into the river. Some had only their shirts on. They were stood up in a line, and counted like a lot of store cattle. They cleared off like us, when the police came, and the Union fellows bolted. We passed little mobs of them makin' down the river.'

'You swear you didn't see Hardwick fire his gun?'

'It wasn't his gun, and he didn't shoot.'

The sensational part of the trial was over; other witnesses were examined for the defence. They agreed in 'swearing up' for the prisoners before the Court, always excepting for Bill Hardwick. 'The other four men had exhibited great mildness, and a desire for peace. They had not seen the captain of the *Dundonald* assaulted; they saw the steamer on fire – they didn't know how it had started burnin' – might have been from kerosene in the cargo – it often happened. There was some shooting, but the crew of the steamer fired first. They didn't see any of the prisoners firing at the boat, except William Hardwick. Would swear positive that he had a gun, and loaded, after he fired every time – yes, every time. Saw no men thrown overboard. Some of them swam ashore, but they did it of their own accord.'

These witnesses broke down under cross-examination.

The Crown Prosecutor made a brief but powerful address to the jury, pointing out discrepancies in evidence, and the manifest perjury committed by the last witnesses. He trusted the jury would not overlook their conduct, and appraise their evidence at its true value.

The counsel for the defence, a well-known barrister, made a long and impassioned appeal to the jury 'to excuse the more or less technically illegal acts, which, he admitted, could not be defended. It was, however, in the line of "rough justice," the origin of which was a long series of capitalistic tyranny and oppression. They had suffered long from inadequate payment for their skilled labour, for shearing was no ordinary muscle work which could be performed by the mere nomadic labourer of the day. It required an apprenticeship, sometimes lasting for years. It was difficult, and exhausting beyond all other bush labour, having to be performed at a high rate of speed and for long hours, unknown to the European workman. The food was of bad quality, the cooking rude. The huts in which they had to dwell, worse than stables, nearly always. They had besides to travel long distances, expensive in time lost and wayside accommodation. For all these reasons, they had come to the conclusion that the question of pay and allowances, with other matters, required reconstruction, and failing to obtain a conference with the Employers' Union – a combination of squatters, merchants, bankers, and plutocrats generally – they had used the only weapon the law allowed to the workers of Australia and had organised a *strike*.

'The labour leaders had in all cases counselled moderation and constitutional action for the redressing of their wrongs. But – and it was by none more regretted than by the labour organisers themselves – rude and undisciplined members of the Union had resorted to personal violence, and had injured the property of squatters and others, believed to be desirous of crushing Unionism. Some allowance might be made for these men. They saw their means of livelihood menaced by cargoes of free labourers, bought up like slaves by the capitalistic class. They saw their wages lowered, their industry interfered with – the bread taken out of their mouth, so to speak – by a wealthy combination,

which had no sympathy for the workers of the land, who had by their labour built up this enormous wool industry, now employing armies of men and fleets of vessels.

'Were they, the creators of all this wealth, to be put off with a crust of bread and a sweating wage? No! They had been worked up to frenzy by a plutocratic invasion of their natural rights; and if they crossed the line of lawful resistance to oppression, was it to be wondered at? He trusted that his Honour, in the highly improbable event of a verdict of "guilty," would see his way to inflict a merely nominal term of imprisonment, which, he undertook to say, would act as an effective caution for the future.'

His Honour proceeded to sum up. 'In this case, the prisoners were charged with committing a certain act, distinctly a criminal offence, punishable by a term of imprisonment. He would not dilate upon the collateral results, but impress upon the jury that all they had to consider was the evidence which they had heard. Did the evidence point conclusively to the fact that the prisoners had committed the crime of arson – the burning of the steamer *Dundonald*– then and there, on the 28th of August last, on the waters of the Darling River? With the conflicting interests of the pastoral employers, and the rate of wages, or the propriety of strikes, or otherwise, they had nothing whatever to do. He would repeat, *nothing whatever to do*.

'Did they believe the evidence for the prosecution? He would take that evidence, *seriatim*, from his notes.

'First there was that of the officer of Volunteers, which was direct and circumstantial. He deposes to having seen the steamer *Dundonald* floating down the river, burning fiercely then, with apparently no one on board. He saw a large camp of armed men, who shouted out that they had burnt the steamer, and would roast the captain and crew, for bringing up blacklegs. This last expression, he was informed, meant non-Union labourers. He caused the arrest of several men with arms in their hands, pointed out to him as having fired at the crew of the vessel, or having set fire to her. Among them was the prisoner Hardwick, who had a gun in his hand.

'The next witness was the sergeant of Volunteers. He saw the burning vessel, the crowd of armed men, and also men firing in the direction of a barge containing the crew presumably. He arrested by the colonel's order the six prisoners now before the Court, as well as others. They had arms in their hands.

'Captain Dannaker of the *Dundonald* deposed to a very serious state of matters. He had as passengers forty-five free labourers. Before daylight, a band of armed, disguised men boarded the vessel – of which they took full possession. Their action was not far removed from that of pirates. They threatened with death the captain, the crew, the agent of the Employers' Union, several of whom were assaulted, and ill-used. They "looted" the steamer, to use an Indian term – smashing cabins and appropriating private property. These unlawful acts they completed by forcing the free labourers to land, compelling the crew to go into the barge, setting the steamer on fire and casting her away, after which she was observed to sink. He also saw men on the river-bank firing at the crew and passengers. He identifies Abershaw, the prisoner in irons, as the man who assaulted and threatened him. He did not notice prisoner Hardwick.

'Mr. Davidson, the agent of the Employers' Union, corroborates the foregoing evidence in all particulars. He himself was assaulted, as were the free labourers. He saw the rioters throw some of the free labourers overboard. He saw them unloosing the steamer and preparing it for burning. His clothes and money were taken out of his cabin. He identifies Abershaw, but not prisoner Hardwick. He identifies Dawker, the man with the large beard, as the "President," so called.

'The witness for the Crown, Janus Stoate, gave, in his (the Judge's) opinion, unsatisfactory evidence after the adjournment. He described himself as a shearer; also a delegate appointed by the Shearers' Union. Though present at the scene of outrage, he apparently saw no one conduct himself indiscreetly, with the exception of his friend and fellow-shearer, William Hardwick. He swears that he saw *him* load and fire a gun in the direction of the steamer. He did not see the two prisoners

Abershaw and Dawker, identified by the other witnesses, say or do anything illegal. He heard the report of firearms, but could not say who used them, except in the case of Hardwick. In several respects his evidence differed from that given before the Bench of Magistrates at Dilga Court of Petty Sessions, when the prisoners were committed for trial. He admitted in cross-examination having had a quarrel with Hardwick at Tandara woolshed, and to having arrived here in custody.

'Sergeant Kennedy, of the New South Wales Police, deposes to the arrest of this witness at Tandara station, on a charge of maliciously setting fire to the grass on the run, and to finding in his pocket, when searched, a cheque drawn in favour of William Hardwick for £55: 17s., said prisoner having previously testified as to its being lost or stolen.

'He would tell the jury here that he had no confidence whatever in the evidence of the witness Stote. He appeared to have prevaricated, and also to have been actuated by a revengeful feeling in the case of William Hardwick, though, strange to say, he was apparently without eyes or ears in the case of the other prisoners, all of whom had been positively identified as having been seen in the commission of unlawful acts. In conclusion, he would entreat the jury to examine carefully, to weigh well, the evidence in this very serious and important case, and with close adherence to the obligation of their oaths, to bring in their verdict accordingly. The Court now stands adjourned till two o'clock.'

The jury were absent more than an hour, and during that time Mr. Biddulph persuaded Jenny to have a cup of tea, and otherwise refresh herself and the children, who had outstayed their usual meal-time.

She, with difficulty, was induced to touch anything: dead to all ordinary feelings, as she described herself, until Bill's fate was decided. 'How can I think of anything else?' she exclaimed passionately to Dick Donahue, who, with unflinching optimism, tried to convince her that Bill must be let off, and next day would be with her and the children on the way to Chidowla.

'How can we tell?' said she. 'Wasn't there Jack Woodman, and the lawyers told him he must be let off on a point of law, instead of which he got three years, and he's in gaol now.'

'Ah! but that was for cattle-stealing,' replied Mr. Donahue; 'and Jack had been run in before, for duffing fats off Mount Banda – tried too, and got off by the skin of his teeth. This time he shook a selector's poddies, and the jury couldn't stand that. But Bill's innocent, as everybody knows. See what the Judge said about Stote's evidence! I'll bet you a hat to a new bonnet that Bill's out a free man this afternoon, and that Stote's in the dock for settin' fire to Tandara, with a six to one on chance of seem' the inside of Berrima Gaol, and those four other chaps to keep him company.'

Jenny couldn't help relaxing into a wintry smile at this reassuring prophecy. But her face assumed its wonted seriousness as she said, 'Well, Dick Donahue, you've been a staunch friend all through this trouble, and I'll never forget you and Bidy for it as long as I live, and Bill won't neither.'

'Don't be troubling yourself about that, Mrs. Hardwick,' said Donahue. 'You were a good friend to her and her children before all this racket – they would have wanted many a meal only for you. But I'm a changed man. I've some hope before me, thanks to Mr. Calthorpe; and if Bill will go partners with me, we'll be Hardwick and Donahue, with a tidy cattle-station one day yet.'

'The Court's sitting,' called out some one, 'and the jury's agreed.' A rush was made by all interested persons and the spectators generally. Not a seat was vacant as the Court official demanded silence, and the Judge's Associate proceeded to read out the names of the jurors, who, headed by their foreman, stood in line on the floor of the Court.

'Are you agreed, Mr. Foreman, on your verdict?'

'We are.'

'How do you find?'

'We find William Stokes, Daniel Lynch, Hector O'Halloran, Samson Dawker, and Jeremiah Abershaw guilty of arson, and we find William Hardwick *not guilty*.'

The verdict of guilty was received in silence. A number of the spectators were Unionists, and though the more sensible members of the association had always been opposed to lawless proceedings,

yet from a mistaken sense of comradeship they felt bound not to repudiate the acts of any of their confraternity. No doubt at the next ballot the voting would have been almost unanimous against injury to property, and such outrages as the law's slow but sure retribution has never yet failed to overtake.

But when the verdict of 'Not Guilty' was announced, there was a cheer which it tasked the stern mandate of the Deputy-Sheriff and the vigorous efforts of the police to suppress. Jenny did not hear much of it, as the fateful words had barely been pronounced when she fell as if dead. She was promptly carried out into the witnesses' room, and measures taken for her recovery. When she came to herself, Bill was bending over her, and the children, smiling amidst their tears, were holding fast to one of his hands.

Anxious as both husband and wife were to shake the Wagga dust from their feet and get away up the river to their half-deserted home, Bill's Court work was not yet concluded. He was constrained to appear again in the memorable cases of Regina *versus* Stoate, charged with arson, and the same Gracious Lady (who impersonates Nemesis on so many occasions over such a wide area of the earth's surface) *versus* Stoate, charged with 'larceny from the person.'

No sooner had the jury been dismissed, and, with the witnesses, were wending their way to the office of the Clerk of the Bench, expectant of expenses, than the Crown Prosecutor addressed his Honour, representing that only at luncheon had he received the depositions in a fresh case – he referred to that of Regina *versus* Stoate. He was aware that the cases just disposed of had been supposed to conclude the sitting, and that his Honour was expected at Narrabri the day after to-morrow; but under the peculiar circumstances, as several of the witnesses and two members of the legal profession who were concerned in the last case were to be briefed in this, he trusted that his Honour would overlook his personal discomfort, and consent to deal with this case at the present sitting of the Court.

His Honour feared that the jurors and witnesses in the heavy cases at Narrabri might suffer inconvenience by the postponement of his departure; but, as the adjourning of this case to the next Assize Court – nearly five months – would more seriously affect all concerned, and as he was opposed on principle to prisoners on committal being detained in gaol, or defendants delayed one week longer than was actually necessary, he would accede to counsel's very reasonable request.

'Let another jury be impanelled, Mr. Associate, and then adjourn the Court until ten o'clock to-morrow morning. I shall consider the evidence taken in the previous cases, and deliver the sentences at the opening of the Court. The prisoners may be removed.'

On the following morning the five prisoners were again placed in the dock, looking anxious, and more or less despondent, with the exception of Abershaw, the man in irons. He was a hardened offender, and reckless as to what might befall him in the shape of punishment. He had served terms of imprisonment in another colony. Like many criminals, he had unfortunately not taken warning by previous penalties, as it was less than a year since he had been released. He looked around with an affected contempt for his surroundings, and smiled at an occasional sympathiser in Court with unabashed defiance.

But, as the Judge commenced to address the prisoners before announcing the sentences, the look of tension on the other men's faces was painful to witness, and even *he* appeared to feel the seriousness of the situation.

'William Stokes, Daniel Lynch, Hector O'Halloran, Samson Dawker, Jeremiah Abershaw, you have been found guilty, on the clearest evidence, of a dangerous and concerted attack on society. If organisations of this kind were permitted – if lawless bodies of men, organising themselves with the discipline of a military force, were permitted to go about the country interfering with honest men – there could be no safety for any one in the community. I am gratified to find that the jury have arrived at the only conclusion rational men could arrive at in such a case, and with no more time spent in deliberation than was necessary to consider the case of each man separately. I do not suppose that, excepting the residents of the neighbourhood of Poliah and the Lower Darling region generally, people are fully aware of what has been going on there.'

'I have had a tolerable knowledge of the country, but I had no idea, until I came to try this case, what a state of things existed in the locality mentioned in depositions – a state of things probably unparalleled in the history of New South Wales.

'I should not have thought it possible that six or seven hundred men could camp on a main stock route, by a navigable river, for the purpose of preventing honest men going to work, much less could capture, bind them as prisoners, and hold them as such.

'Let any one contemplate what may follow if this kind of thing is permitted. There would be an end of liberty and safety; but the law exists for the protection of all, whether high or low, in the community, and those who take part in proceedings of this kind must expect to have every man's heart hardened against them. If a man's liberty were interfered with, if his life were threatened by overwhelming numbers, he and every other honest man is entitled to protect himself by taking the lives of those who come upon him. This, in law, is termed justifiable homicide; on the other hand, if lawless persons take life, they are guilty of murder.

'Having explained the law on intimidation, I will pass on to the circumstances more immediately surrounding the case. It is proved beyond doubt that the *Dundonald* steamer was deliberately and wilfully set on fire by the prisoners and others. If any person had perished in the flames by their act, or if, when shooting at the vessel, any of the crew or passengers had been killed, they would now be on their trial for murder.

'As it is, they have, most properly, been found guilty of arson by the jury, a crime punishable, under Victoria No. 89, section 6, with imprisonment with hard labour, and solitary confinement.

'I accordingly sentence Samson Dawker, who has been referred to as the "President," and Jeremiah Abershaw, to three years' imprisonment with hard labour, and periods of solitary confinement, both to be served in Berrima Gaol. The other prisoners do not appear to have been so actively employed in these unlawful, demoralising acts. They are therefore sentenced to two years' imprisonment only, with hard labour. I cannot conclude my remarks without stating that I fully agree with the verdict of acquittal by the jury in the case of William Hardwick, who might have been deprived of his liberty by a conspiracy of unprincipled persons, had not the jury rightly discriminated as to the manifest unreliability of the evidence against him. He therefore is enabled to leave the Court, I have pleasure in stating, without a stain upon his character.'

## **Regina v. Stoate**

### **Charged with Arson**

'May it please your Honour,' said the Crown Prosecutor, 'the prisoner before the Court is charged with wilfully and maliciously setting fire to the grass of the Tandara Run. I purpose calling the arresting constable and the manager, Mr. Macdonald; also the aboriginal Daroolman, who is exceptionally intelligent. The case will not be a lengthy one. Call Senior Sergeant Kennedy.'

'My name is John Kennedy, Senior Sergeant of the New South Wales Police Force, stationed at Dilga, on the Darling. I called at Tandara station on duty. I there saw Mr. Macdonald, the manager. He remarked that there had been no rain for a month, and the grass was very dry. He requested me to accompany him a few miles on the up-river road. He mentioned that a man named Stoate had left shortly before, having been refused rations, threatening "to get square with him." He considered him a likely person to set fire to the Run, and was just going to track him up.

'I agreed, and put my black boy on the trail. After riding two or three miles, the boy pointed to the tracks leaving the road and making towards a sandhill. We rode fast, as we saw smoke rising. The aboriginal said "that one swaggie makum fire longa grass, me seeum lightem match." We saw a man kneeling down, and galloped towards him. Apparently he did not hear us coming; as he looked

up he seemed surprised. The grass around him had just ignited and was burning fiercely. There was no wood near. Mr. Macdonald seized him by the arm, saying, "You scoundrel! You're a pretty sort of delegate! I thought you were up to some mischief." Prisoner seemed confused and unable to say anything. The black boy picked up a brass match-box, half full of wax matches; also a half-burned wax match. The match-box (which I produce) had J. S. scratched on one side. Prisoner declined to say anything, except that he was going to boil his billy. There was no wood, nor any trace of roadway in the vicinity. I arrested him on the charge of setting fire to the Tandara Run. He made no reply. On searching him I found the cheque referred to in my former depositions, it was drawn in favour of William Hardwick for £55: 17s., also a knife, two sovereigns, and some small articles. I conveyed him to the lock-up at Curbin, where he appeared before the Bench of Magistrates, and was committed to take his trial at the next ensuing Assize Court. We put out the fire with difficulty; if it had beat us it might have destroyed half the grass on the Run.'

John Macdonald, being sworn, states:

'I am the manager of Tandara station. I have known the prisoner, off and on, for some years, as a shearer and bush labourer. He came to me on December 20th and asked for rations. He was on foot. I said, "You had better ask the Shearers' Union to feed you, I have nothing for agitators; you tried to spoil our shearing, and now you come whining for rations." I threatened to kick him off the place.

'He went away muttering, "I'll get square with you yet." Being uneasy, I mounted my horse, and shortly afterwards the last witness and a black boy came up, and at my request accompanied me. The boy followed his track till it turned off the main road in the direction of a sandhill. As we rode nearer, a small column of smoke rose up. We found prisoner standing by the fire, which had just started. I saw the black boy pick up the box of matches (produced in Court) from under prisoner's feet. It was marked J. S., and was nearly full of wax matches. The black boy pointed to a half-burnt match, close to the tuft of grass from which the fire had started. I said, "You scoundrel! You're a pretty sort of delegate!" I saw the sergeant take the cheque (produced) for £55: 17s., payable to William Hardwick, out of his pocket. If we had been five minutes later, all the men in the country couldn't have put the fire out; it would have swept the Run.'

'What would have been the effect of that?' asked the Judge.

'We might have had to travel 100,000 sheep, which alone would have needed fifty shepherds, besides the expense of cooks and ration-carriers, with tents, provisions, and loss of sheep. Altogether it would have meant an expenditure of several thousand pounds at the very least – besides injury to the sheep.'

'Have you any questions to ask, prisoner?' said the Judge.

'None,' said Mr. Stoate. 'These witnesses are at the beck of the capitalistic class, and will swear anything.'

Richard Donahue and the black boy corroborated the previous evidence, the latter saying, 'Me seeum light when piccaninny match-box tumble down alonga that one fella tarouser.'

Being asked if he had anything to say in his defence, Mr. Stoate elected to be sworn, taking the oath with great solemnity, and making a long-winded, rambling defence, in which he abused the capitalists, the police, the bankers, and the selectors, who, he said, were all in a league with the 'plutocrats' to crush the Union workers, and grind down the faces of the poor. With regard to the cheque, he had picked it up, and intended to restore it to Hardwick. If that man swore that he never gave him or any other man authority to take care of his money, he swore what was false. It was a common custom among mates. If the jury convicted him on this trumped-up charge, which any one could see was manufactured, he would willingly suffer in the cause of his fellow-workers. But let the oppressor beware – a day of reckoning would come!

## CHAPTER IX

The Court was not very full. The 'fellow-workers' to whom Stoate so often referred had made up their minds about him. Open warfare, rioting, plunder, even arson or bloodshed, in a moderate degree they would have condoned. But to be *caught in the act* of setting fire to a Run, and detected with a stolen cheque in your pocket – that cheque, too, belonging to a shearer – these were offences of mingled meanness and malignity which no Union Caucus could palliate. 'He's a disgrace to the Order; the Associated Workers disown him. The Judge'll straighten him, and it's hoped he'll give him a good "stretch" while he's about it.'

This was the prejudicial sentence. And having made up their minds that their over-cunning ex-delegate by dishonourable imprudence had played into the hands of the enemy, few of the Unionists took the trouble to attend, for the melancholy pleasure of hearing sentence passed on their late comrade and 'officer.'

So, the evidence being overwhelming, the jury found Mr. Stoate guilty, and the Judge, having drawn attention to the recklessness and revengeful feeling shown by the prisoner – not halting at the probable consequences of a crime against society, by which human life might have been endangered, if not sacrificed – sentenced him to five years' imprisonment with hard labour. He was immediately afterwards arraigned on the charge of 'stealing from the person,' and the sergeant's evidence, as well as that of Hardwick, was shortly taken. Being again found guilty, he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment – which, however, the Judge decreed to be concurrent, trusting that the longer term of incarceration might suffice for reformation. In conclusion, he again congratulated William Hardwick on the recovery of his money and his character, both of which he had so nearly lost through association with men who had banded themselves together to defy the law of the land, and to attempt illegal coercion of workmen who differed from their opinions.

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