MISS HELEN.

Her Part in an Australian Miner's Pathetic Romance.

Rowdy! 'Tis no word for it—too genteel by half. We were as wicked a set, at our diggin's, as New South Wales could show—no slight thing. If the world's kettle had been set on the boil, we'd have come to the top as prime scum—truth, and no lie, mate. But amongst us was a man dubbed "the squire," because, though he fared like the rest of us, lived and dressed just as we did, yet there was that in him which stamped him as of quite a different breed. Swells out of luck are to be found by the bushel in Australia; still, I never came upon his double before or since. Rumor went that he was a baronet at home in England, but had been forced to cut and run; so he tried New South Wales and the gold diggin's, bent on succeeding.

I found him at Green Valley creek when I reached it; we worked not far off each other. I can't say I liked him, though he was wonderfully quiet and civil spoken, but cold as ice, and hard as nails; a chap who was never tired, and who never gave in, but plodded on and on towards his own end, whatever that might be. But silent as he was, and selfish, he opened out a bit to me, pra'aps because, though I didn't set up either for a swell or a saint, I wasn't quite so bad as the worst in Green Valley Creek. I had been respectably brought up, the son of a small farmer in Kent; but I didn't go in for respectability myself; it never agreed with me; so I was sent adrift at last with fifty pounds in my pocket, and the world before me. There was a fresh stampede towards Australia at the time, and I joined the general rush and scramble; and, as I say, when I had settled down at my claim "the squire" and I scraped up a sort of friendship.

He did not live alone; his daughter was with him, though how and when she reached him none knew; she had reached him, and bore her strange life as best she might. They dwelt in a small shanty in the midst of many pines, a poor, rough place, far apart from the other huts; a queer frame for such a stately picture of a woman—a lady! with the same superior bearing visible in her father. I'd walked that way with "the squire" once, and she ran out to meet him. The sight of her struck me all of a heap, so unexpected in the lonely spot, where there was no other company than the bright-winged birds, no other sound than the stir of the windy trees. She was tall, the color of wild roses in her cheeks, Heaven's blue in her eyes. Her dress, dark and close-fitting, had none of the flashy ornaments that women such as we take up with cram on; her hair, coiled smoothly about her head, shone like black satin.

"This is one of my—chums, my dear," said "the squire" with his soft voice and his hard smile.

Since then, I had hung about the log-house often, labor ended. I fetched water, got in sticks, cleaned boots, or did such odd jobs which were not fit for her and said no word; but she found me out in a brace of shakes, and grew used to and was thankful for such help as I could give, knowing that I meant no harm, though I startled her at first—a great Orson of a chap in my rough gear.

One evening I came on her watching in the gloaming. How eerie it was there underneath the trees; the wind soughed through the branches, bringing a dash of rain; a deluge was in the black clouds sweeping across the sky.

"I am anxious about my father," she said, looking like a tall white lily that somehow had been shoved into the wrong pot, and touching my big earth-stained fingers with her fine slim hand. "I am always anxious about him; though, since knowing you, I have not felt so absolutely distressed, for I am glad to recollect that you are within his call. You would stand between him and harm, I think."

"Why, yes, miss; make your mind easy on that score; 'twould be done with a will. But what harm is like to come, that you need flurry?"

"Oh, but, Mr. Straightways, it is such a hard, dreadful life for him!"

"And for you, miss!"

"Ah! but I will not think of myself; that would never do," she answered, quickly. And, going indoors, she began to tidy the scrap of a room, thus trying to rout her terrors.

"Ned!" she cried, stopping suddenly (her father always called me so), "I had such a curious dream last night. I dreamed that I went down into the little valley beyond the wood and there I saw my father lying on the grass sound asleep—so sound that I could not wake him—while the clusters of wild flowers sprang up so high that they hid him, and I heard the pines in the distance chanting a solemn kind of litany. I was crying when I woke."

"You are too much alone, miss, and grow nervous."

"Perhaps. And then—I am troubled about his journey to Goulburn to-morrow, and his taking so much value with him."

Goulburn, as I suppose everybody knows, is the chief place in the southern gold-mining district; we all went there at times to get our gains weighed, or changed, or banked.

"My father has been very fortunate lately, has he not?" she asked.

"He has had some good finds, miss; and to-day he got hold of two jolly big nuggets."

"I am glad. Will he bring them home this evening? What's that?" and she sprang to the door, flinging it wide open, the shine of the lamp behind her. "Dearest father!" she cried, "is it you?" But she broke off, alarm in her voice: "Ned! Ned!" for no father was there, but two of the worst of our lot—scamps for whom hemp was growing; the one a blackguard sailor; the other, a smartish, slimy chap, thin, dark, lying. His name was Phil Dawlish.

I remembered now, as I saw him by the flash of the light, that he as well as I had been near when "the squire" held up the two great nuggets; and it struck me—I'm quick at conclusions—that both scoundrels had not intended to come up to the house, but were just lurking round. What for?

Miss Helen—I only knew her by her Christian name then—faced them steadily, though she had called me to her, and asked what they wanted.

"Why, nothin' in special, miss," stammered Dawlish, lifting his ragged straw hat with swell-mob politeness, and a leer which made me tingle to kick him; "on'y, is the old boss at home? I—I mean your pa, miss," he translated.

"No," she replied, holding her head high, to show she was not frightened; but I, being close to her, could hear her heart thudding like a hammer, whilst the blood flamed to her brows under the foul gaze roving over her. "Why do you ask?"

"Just this, mum. Will you be so good as tell him that me and my pal's off to Hulton's ranch for a short spell, and if he'd like to tramp over—why, 'tis a mighty 'andsome part o' the country, and he'd be welcome, that's all."

"You must be in a hurry to go," I said, putting in my oar, "if you're trudging twenty mile for pleasure such a night as this."

"Oh! we didn't know as *you* wos in charge here," with a brutish laugh; "but the walk is our look-out; the lady can deliver a civil message, I hope."

"I will give it," interposed Miss Helen, "as soon as my father comes in."

"Much obleeged, miss; then theer's nothin' more to add; so we'll toddle. Good night, miss," and he flourished his hat again.

She shut the door upon them, drawing a stout bar across it. "Are those the men *he* works with?" she cried, flinging up her hands—"Heaven help us!"

I tried to turn the subject, stirring the fire into a blaze, and pretending to do a lot of things, for I didn't care to leave her. 'Twas my belief the two blackguards were still hanging about. As for their invitation to "the squire," it was but a lie invented on the moment.

I was casting round for another job, when she stayed me by asking if I would go to meet her father.

"But you"—

"Nay; I do not mind. The little house is secure. Why," with a wistful smile, "I am always alone from daybreak until dark."

I knew it was the fact; so, bidding her open to none until she heard me or "the squire" whistle, I started on my errand.

Not very far had I to go, for I met him in that same little ravine of which his daughter had dreamed; it skirted the pine wood. His pick was over his shoulder, his right hand in his pocket—feeling the nuggets, perhaps. He was singing a song in some foreign lingo, Italian or Spanish. He looked more content than I had seen him—more at rest, nodding to me in his patronizing fashion. After a few stray words, I related what had happened, advising him to be on his guard.

"Thanks, I will," he replied, haughtily amused at the scamps asking *him* to pay a visit in their company. "But I've a secret to tell you, Ned," he added. "I have done with Green Valley creek, and shaken off its crew. Luck has favored me beyond my hopes; I can afford to turn my back upon it. I shall take my daughter—she does not know it yet—with me to Goulburn to-morrow, where we shall remain for a short time, then go on to Melbourne; I have thoughts of settling there."

As he spoke, the little tie of comradeship between us shattered; in a moment we were sundered as the poles, so quietly he brushed it away.

"If you like to step round early in the morning and see us off, you can. Why, my good fellow, you look quite down. Well, it is kind to be sorry to lose me. We shall meet the wagons at the end of the wood. If those scoundrels intend to dog my steps—I agree with you their trip to Hulton's is only a ruse—I should find your company useful; also, you could help to carry our few belongings. I paid up my rent to Johnson at the tavern last night; perhaps you'd kindly give him the shanty key?—Why, Straightways," with laughing surprise, "has my news struck you dumb?"

I felt as if it had, as if I were shot through and through; the earth swayed under my feet. He was condescendingly gratified at my troubled state, taking it all to himself; he was just the man to do it.

"You were always an honest fellow, Ned!—a trusty creature! Be sure that you come to-morrow; my daughter will like to shake hands with you before she leaves;" and he went on gayly through the rich, thick grass.

No rest was mine that night; evil was in the air. So, as I could not sleep, I got up and went out. Not being a fool—I knew I must keep my misery to myself; but my life was empty! empty! It held a vacant place that could never be filled—never again! never again! You see, I was hard hit, mate, like the donkeys. I stamped and stormed at myself for a mooning idiot. What Miss Helen was to me? What could she ever have been to me?—a lumbering vagabond chap, not worthy to kiss the dust she trod on.

But I must go back and watch the house that covered her for this last night, so I returned to the ravine. In it were many little dells swarming with the wild-flowers of the grand Australian spring. Now, in one of these same dells what do you think I saw?—a dead man's face. Yes, I knew at once that he was dead; but so easily "the squire" rested on the wet moss, that the song I had heard him singing might still have been upon his lips. Raising his head, I found a blow aimed from behind had killed him. He had dropped and died at once. His pockets, turned lining outward, were empty. Snatching up his fallen pick, I tore on to the log house, knowing well whom I should find there—my long sharp knife was in my belt. I raced round to the back; the little kitchen door was undone; the fiends in possession had small fear of interruption. They were in "the squire's" bedroom, making free with some whisky which he had kept in a cupboard. Gold was there also, as I knew. By their shouts, I fancied they had come upon it. But I let them be. Where was Miss Helen?

I found her in the sitting-room, tied in her chair, her lips bleeding over her white teeth; the cursed hounds had struck her. "There are three of them," she whispered; "those two who came, and another man. They watched for my father and murdered him—they told me so. Hark! they are coming. Ned, they have pistols, and will shoot you where you stand. Go away this instant—only—kill me first;" and she lifted her white pillar of a throat.

"Now, my beauty," roared a drunken voice through the thin partition, "we're bringin' you a cup o' whisky to drink our 'ealths in. Ain't you longin' for us to make love to you? We'll stow away the rhino first, and then you shall have your turn."

"Be quiet," I whispered back to her, hacking at the cords with my knife, and in a few seconds I had her out of the chair, and we dashed out of the house together. Seizing her hand to prevent her from falling, I guided her as fast as possible from the crew who were now following after us with curses and howls. Fortunately the demons were too drunk to run very fast. A couple of bullets whizzed by us, striking the tree-stems instead of our heads. In our desperate haste, we stumbled and fell more than once over the spreading roots, but were up again in a moment.

On and on until the last tree was at our backs. Then we made for a lane which led to Johnson's tavern, leaving the yells faint in the distance; there we stopped, and there she told her tale.

News spread quickly at the diggin's, and Judge Lynch is for immediate action. Before noon the stolen gold—including the two big nuggets—had been recovered and a couple of figures dangled from an oak by the wayside; whilst the third villain, not guilty of bloodshed, shed plenty of his own beneath avenging blows. We had a habit of settling matters speedily at Green Valley creek.

As soon as it was possible Miss Helen started for Melbourne, whence she set sail for England, where she would join her mother's relatives — very heavy swells indeed, I believe. And I followed her in secret every inch of the way, though she knew it not until I stood by her on the deck of the steamer, after I had helped to stow her boxes safely in the hold. Then I blurted out that I hoped she "would not be offended at my coming, but—"and then I shut up.

"Ned!" she cried, "brave Ned! Dear, kind, good Ned! There are debts which can never be repaid, and I am your debtor always — always, Ned!" and holding out her hands to me, she bowed her lovely head upon my big brown fists and sobbed.

"Don't you be a confounded noodle at the last, Straightways," I said to myself; "you've pulled the reins in fairly well up to the present; pull tight, my man, pull tight;" and I did.

"You are very welcome, Miss Helen"—I spoke with a quiet voice. "I wish—I wish—I could have been a gentleman for just a little while, so that I might have served you better."

"A gentleman!" she cried, lifting her face, and looking full at me, and then she raised those hard fists of mine to her soft lips and kissed them. Yes, she kissed them—and I—how was I to help it?—the touch of those soft lips broke me down smash. Away went all my self-control, as if the winds had blown it, and up from my heart, like a pent stream bursting its bounds, rushed the strong surge of love and adoration, which—having broken loose at last—wouldn't be driven back. I can't remember clearly what I said, though I've tried often; the whirl and tempest within were too much. I didn't plead with her: no, no—I knew better than that, even then in the midst of my madness. I didn't dare even to touch her with one of my rough fingers, but I think I made her understand somehow that my heart and my life had gone out to her for evermore. Then I stopped, sudden, my chest heaving, my voice choking, my sight blinded by a mist that didn't come from the sea. I stopped because of the great start of surprise that shook her from head to heel, and because of the red color flooding up to the roots of her hair. Yet she was not angry nor offended. She put out her little hands to me again—I knew it—both to silence and to comfort me. She did not speak—for what could she have said?—besides, the steamer's engines were puffing, and time was up. She laid her head down on my arm a moment, and then left with a rain of pitying tears.

When the vessel had passed completely out of sight, and its long smoke-line had died out from the sky, I hurried back to Green Valley creek, and took up my work again—hard work is the best friend life has for us, sometimes.

But I have never forgotten Miss Helen—I never shall forget her; and I've trudged to the old spot often and stood before the empty house. And when the sun flamed down behind the pines and the shadows crept longer and longer across the grass, I've had a fancy that I still could see her at the open door—watching for her father.

That's my story, old chappie; we've each other our own, of one sort or other. Fill up your glass and let's have a pipe.—Vivian Brooke, in Chambers' Journal.

An Irish Word.

Tory originally meant robber; the word comes from the Irish toiriohe, a pursuer, a searcher, hence plunderer. A tory was at first an Irish robber; the state papers of 1566 use the word "tories and other lawless persons." Then the word was transplanted to England, where, after the restoration, the cavalier party became that of the tories, the name being given maliciously, with the intention of identifying the court party with the Irish outlaws in its support of Roman Catholic measures. Then, during our revolution, the word was applied to the court party in this country.

CATHOLIC EXCURSION

THE GREATEST WORLD'S FAIR EVENT.

The most attractive period of the Columbian Exposition season to Catholics in this country will be the week of Sept. 4th, as that is to be called Catholic Week at the World's Fair, owing to the Congresses of most or all societies of the church convening there then. In view of this, elaborate arrangements have been made by the Very Rev. Father Bouchet, Vicar General of the Louisville Diocese, with the celebrated Monon Route, for special trains to take a large party from Kentucky, leaving Louisville Sunday evening, Sept. [illegible] from the Union Station. [illegible] made his arrangements to secure agreement by which [illegible] to advance rates, [illegible] members of his party will enjoy certain special advantages, as arrangements are being made to stop at a [illegible] hotel near the Exposition [illegible] a suitable discount was secured for the party. Though a [illegible] expected, this is the year [illegible] prepared, and it is certain [illegible] the Monon's splendid equipment will provide for all. Father Bouchet extends thro' the Kentucky press an invitation to all to participate in the arrangements he has made, and to go to the Fair with his party. Applications for information in detail should be addressed to E. H. Bacon, D. P. A. Monon Route, Louisville, Ky.

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On this doctors don't disagree. It may be regarded as an assured fact that the delegates to the Pan American Congress at Washington, who travel over the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway will, with one accord, praise its scenery and train service. There is nothing in the way of lovely mountain views and picturesque valleys of the Virginias, to compare with that through which the Chesapeake & Ohio Railrood passes. There is nothing of historic nature in America as great as a trip through the Virginias and there is no other railroad in America superior to the C. & O. in the smoothness and stability of its tracks, the F. F. V. Vestibule Limited being one of the famous trains of the world. The Chesapeake & Ohio passes through Bull Run, Manassas and other noted battle fields and is in all respects the best route for the West, North-West and South-West to the National Capital. For copy of Virginia in black and white, free and full information regarding rates and train service, address C. B. Ryan. Assistant G. P. A., Cincinnati, Ohio.

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