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THE NEWEST
WOMAN

The Destined Monarch of the
World.

— BY —

MS
MILLIE FINKELSTEIN.

MADAME ADELE,

Scientific Palmist and Phrenologist,

24 EASTERN ARCADE,

BOURKE STREET.

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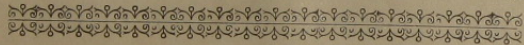
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“THE NEWEST WOMAN,”

The Destined Monarch of the World.

AUTHORESS' EXPLANATION.

IN coming before the public as an authoress I hope to secure the attention of my readers, more by the interest of the tales I tell, than by any special literary ability. “The Newest Woman” will have, I think, a fascination due rather to the subjects than the manner in which I shall place them before my readers. There will be a strong vein of sport and of sensationalism in the work. It projects itself into the future, when the “New Woman” will “come forth, all-conquering, all-redeeming.” It will deal with Victoria in the future, when possibly our vice-regal establishment will be presided over by a Lady Governor; when we

shall have lady legislators ruling the land by laws framed and passed by themselves ; lady judges presiding on the bench, listening to lady lawyers pleading for their clients, and arguing on all the knotty and most intricate points of law ; Australian girl cadets, thoroughly coached up in military discipline ; sportswomen of all kinds, female firemen, "lady" lawbreakers, beautiful bushrangeresses, womanhood in virtue as well as in vice, and the female sex everywhere victorious, with once-triumphant man condemned to bear the burdens of domestic and private life, which he has for centuries placed upon his superior—Woman.

In short, I have endeavoured to thread a series of fanciful incidents into a necklace that shall be highly ornamental to the neck of the woman of the future, and a galling yoke to the neck of the coming man.

The work will deal with all spheres of modern society, moving from the aristocratic halls of "Rupertswood" to the hovels of the lowest parts of the metropolis ; now dealing with the feverish follies of Flemington, and now peering into the prison cells.

In justice to myself I beg to state that the advanced woman of the future, whose triumphs

in both virtue and vice I seek to picture, does not enlist my personal sympathy. I believe that a greater power than politicians and restless and discontented womanhood has decreed that woman's sphere is a thing apart from

"The madding crowd's ignoble strife."

It lies in the home circle, where she is not the inferior, but the true equal and helpmate, of man.

Faithfully yours,

MILLIE FINKLESTEIN.

MONTEFIORE VILLA,
HANOVER STREET,
FITZROY.

THE MISSION.

IT was daylight on the morning of the 3rd of June, 1950, when the electric ship, "Thomas Edison," passed through Port Phillip Heads, after a remarkably rapid passage from England. The passengers had been informed the night before that they were approaching their journey's end, and were on deck early, all eager to catch a first glimpse of the Queen City of the South.

These passengers were as varied in appearance and nationality as an ocean-going ship's freight usually is. There is no need to describe them, for our story has to deal only with the three standing in the forepart of the vessel, looking somewhat listlessly at the scenery. The little group were not like their fellow-passengers, coming out to the New World for pleasure, or in search of fortune. Yet they were seeking that which was dearer than gold to them—dearer than life itself.

Randolph Parker was a man in the prime of life, about 45 years of age, rather fine looking, with dark, auburn, curling hair and beard, but the lines about his face, and the grey streaks which were beginning to show prematurely upon his temples and in his beard, suggested to the close observer that he had seen some great sorrow, from the effects of which he was still suffering.

The two girls by his side were his daughters, and though both of them bore a striking resemblance to their father, they were a great contrast to each other.

Charity Parker was twenty-four, rather below the average height, with dark hair and thoughtful eyes, which gave a sweet but sad expression to her face. Her sister, who was named Pleasure Parker, was some two years younger, tall, with golden hair, that had been nature's dowry, and owed nothing of the richness of its hue to art. Her blue eyes sparkled with mirth and healthy enjoyment of life, although at present the expression of her face was like that of her companions, inexpressibly sad.

It was a sad mission, indeed, upon which the trio were now bent, a mission that had caused them to break up their home in England, and set sail away to the Sunny South.

"Pray Heaven, dear father," said Charity, "that we shall not seek in vain, but that our search will be rewarded."

"I do pray so," said Randolph Parker, solemnly; "such love as ours cannot be in vain—even in this world."

"O father," cried Pleasure, her blue eyes filling with tears, "how could she leave us? how could she be so cruel and so unjust to you—you, who gratified her every wish and gave to her the love of a good, honest man? When I think of her unkindness,——"

"Hush, dear," said Charity, laying her hand upon her sister's shoulder, "remember, she is our mother."

"Charity is right," said Randolph Parker, "we have no right to judge others, for whilst we know the measure of their sin, we know not how terribly they may have been tempted. Least of all should we judge those near and dear to us. Were she ten times more misguided than she is, for she has only been misguided, not intentionally sinful, she is still my fondly loved wife, and your mother. You, my dear girls, are too young to know anything of the snares and temptations of the world. They are many and powerful, and often the sinner blamed and pointed at by the world is more

sinned against than sinning. Let our love for the dear straying one only increase our charity, and let us rather regard her error as misfortune. By this means we shall have more heart in our task, and be the more likely to succeed in our mission."

He brushed the tears from his eyes, kissed his daughters, and with a calm, hopeful smile upon his manly face, he pointed to the church spires and factory chimneys of the great city, which had now become visible.

It is the course of these three persons that we have to follow. The father and the daughters seeking the sinful wife and mother, who had abandoned them without a word of warning, abandoning at the same time, love, purity and honour.

HER EXCELLENCY.

UPON the day following the arrival of the Parkers, Melbourne was *en fête*, for it was the day of arrival of the new Governess. Her Gracious Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Second, had appointed the Countess of Middlesex to the coveted post rendered vacant by the recall of the Marchioness of Salisbury. The citizens of Melbourne had determined to do honour to the newcomer, and prepared to give Her Excellency a right royal Australian reception. The streets were thronged with spectators, mostly of the male population, the once-called softer sex all being busily engaged in doing homage to Her Excellency. The whole of the military (composed solely of ladies), who bore the reputation of being the most thoroughly trained soldieresses in the world, together with Australia's girl cadets, all admirably disciplined, paraded the principal thoroughfares, headed by lady bands of music.

On all sides triumphal arches reared their heads aloft, bunting and flags of every conceivable colour decorated all the buildings, public and private, fluttering in the breeze.

Briefly, then, city and populace may be said to have donned its holiday dress in order to give a fitting welcome to Her Excellency.

The ships in Hobson's Bay, too, were gaily rigged from stem to stern, and at regular intervals pealed forth a joyous salute. The fair artillery-women, stationed at the Military Barracks, St. Kilda Road, not to be behind hand, boomed forth their loyalty to her ladyship.

Time was, in the past ages, when Victoria, then a mere stripling in long clothes, enjoyed the unenviable reputation of being the most miserable, man-mismanaged, God-forsaken spot in the universe. A state of affairs, so records say, that was brought about by an incompetent government, coupled with an epidemic that broke over the land like a tidal-wave of disease, and scattered desolation far and wide,

This malady not only baffled all the then medical men, but to it is traceable the many palatial prisons and lordly-looking lunatic asylums, now filled to overflowing in the cities, suburbs, and provinces.

This was in the Boom time, when men purchased for a song large tracts of land, and resold at fabulous prices. Yet some of these men eventually had not ground enough left for graves, and sought either the river or the revolver, without the proverbial copper to jingle on a tombstone.

But at length the revolution came,

“The world was sad, the desert was a wild,
Till woman came, and man, the hermit, smiled.”

Yes, the male population surrendered, and woman took up the task of re-construction. Lady representatives only were returned to Parliament. On the hustings the gentlemen candidates were howled down on every side by the women electors. Man was relegated to a back seat, having as much as he could do at home in looking after the domestic duties of the house; he rarely, if ever, put in an appearance at any outdoor meeting. Woman, lovely woman, was not only returned by an overwhelming majority, but not a solitary male member went back to the establishment at the top of Bourke-street. Woman ruled everywhere; in the House, and on the Bench. The warehouses, the banks, the learned professions, the share-market, the newspapers, and all the bread-winning walks in life were in the

control of women, and, save as type-writers and bar-tenders, the men confined themselves strictly to private life. The world of politics and commerce was indeed a Paradise, for it was an Adamless Eden.

Amongst the spectators that lined the streets of Melbourne on this day were the three Parkers. They noted with admiration the advanced manner in which the New World had allowed itself to be conquered and despotically ruled by the New Woman. They learned, in conversation with the by-standers, that Her Excellency was not merely a noble woman, but a thorough sportswoman, and had brought with her some of the progeny of the once famous Carbine—the horse who had been taken from Australia to improve the breed of English race-horses.

The knowledge of this fact made Her Excellency the Governess a favourite before she arrived. It was even hinted that when necessary her ladyship could don knickerbockers, and play football with the best of the women.

After hearing these things, the Parkers felt no surprise at the warmth and enthusiasm of Her Excellency's reception, nor at the illuminations of the city and suburbs that evening.

It was a glorious sight by day and night, but to Randolph Parker and his two daughters it was but little attraction. Wistfully they scanned the faces of the crowd, and of the ladies of creation who rolled by in the carriages, hoping to catch a glimpse of one loved, sought-for face, but they saw it not.

Heart-sick, they returned to their hotel, and then Charity said—

“We are losing time by going thus together. Do you, father, and Pleasure, go your way amongst the pleasant scenes of life, leaving the darker ones to me. When we have found our mother we can communicate with each other. I shall not lose sight of you.”

Randolph Parker made a feeble protest. He was a wealthy man, and could afford to employ detectives to discover his lost wife; but his sensitive nature shrank from publicity, and the loving enthusiasm of his daughters made him hopeful of a good result without descending to the employment of private inquiry officers.

He felt no compunction, therefore, at letting Charity go. He could trust her strong will and inflexible purpose, and after pressing his purse into her hand he kissed her and bade her God-speed.

“It is perhaps better thus,” he said to Pleasure, “we shall visit the scenes of brightness and mirth, and Charity will go into the dark places.”

Pleasure agreed with him, for she was a butterfly, to whom the light and warmth were everything. She was not heartless, but pleasure had been her portion through life, and she was glad when a task came that her share of the work was to be done “midst pleasures and palaces” and fine clothes.

As our readers have already gathered, Mrs. Parker had forgotten her duty as a wife and mother, and had eloped from her husband and the two grown-up daughters, taking with her a younger child, a girl.

To find the erring woman, and to reclaim her and the young child, Randolph Parker and Pleasure and Charity had come out to Australia.

Now that the two girls have separated to seek for their mother, it will be my task to follow both of them through the various scenes they encountered in their different phases of life.

THE OPIUM DEN.

THE resolve that the family came to before they were twenty four hours in Melbourne, namely, that they should seek their mother in different spheres of life, was one that had been arrived at after mature consideration. When Mrs. Parker fled from her husband and the two elder children, she took but little worldly wealth with her, and although it was known that the silly man with whom she fled was wealthy, Randolph Parker was sufficiently a man of the world to know that when once love—such love as theirs—ceased, there would be little feeling of generosity between the confederates. Randolph Parker knew, therefore, that his wife was to be looked for in any sphere, the highest or the lowest. He had heard of how an eminent painter had taken his wife as an honored guest to Government House, and how much admired the lady was, until the real wife appeared upon

the scene, and charged the husband with desertion. Mrs. Parker and her companion might be found in the halls of the great, or the partnership between Margaret Parker and her companion might have been dissolved by mutual dislike, and Margaret might have become—what? Randolph Parker shuddered to think of the toils, troubles, and dangers to which his wife might be exposed. He knew that she was strong, daring and self-reliant; but he also knew that if she were a stranger in a strange land, without money, friends or influence, her lot would indeed be a hard one.

Yes, he thought, she must be sought for in the low as well as in the high circles. His daughters and himself would search the world over until they found Margaret Parker.

Such were Randolph Parker's thoughts, as he walked sadly home one day, to the little furnished cottage which he had rented in East Melbourne. The door was opened to him by Charity. Something peculiar in her dress struck him as strange. When he spoke of it she said—

“It is a strange dress, dear father. I have joined the ranks of the Salvation Army.”

Her father was too surprised to speak, and she hastened to answer the question that she saw in his face.

"This dress will enable me to go into places into which I would not otherwise be able to venture. As a Hallelujah lassie I have a passport into all the alleys and by-ways of this great city. Men may laugh and pass a joke, but the lowest of them will not dare to offer violence to me. Persons upon a religious or charitable errand are respected, even by the lowest and most degraded."

"But in your wanderings at night I shall act as your escort," said Randolph.

"No, father," replied Charity, "it is better not. Pleasure's quest is in the congenial sphere of light and gaiety; mine is in the dark and sinful places; yours, in all our interests, is to keep house here for us, and, during the day, seek, by inquiry, to find any trace of the missing one. Watch over Pleasure, father, and be sure that you will hear from me frequently—Good-bye."

She kissed him, and before he could recover his surprise, she was gone.

Few, except those whose business takes them there, know what wretched hovels are to be found in the blind alleys of a great city, and

actually within the shadow of the buildings in the principal and most respectable streets. These lanes lead out of the small dark streets, but terminate before they reach the large ones, or if the lane should run through to Collins, Bourke, Lonsdale, or Flinders Streets, blind alleys and "places" branch out of them as if they feared the light, and in these branches the hovels seem to have retreated and huddled themselves together for secrecy and evil companionship, but not for warmth. There is no warmth in such places, save that which the rum-bottle and the opium-pipe can give.

Into one of these lanes, running from the worst part of Little Bourke-street, a young and comely woman, and a man of about twenty-five, penetrated after dark. The darkness of the unlit alley, the loud laughter, and the foul language that could be heard, only too plainly, through the tumble-down ram-shackle, weather-board walls of the hovels, might have made the stoutest of hearts quail, but Charity Parker and Martin Johnson knew no fear. Charity's companion was a leading member of the Salvation Army. He had been intended for a clergyman, but his enthusiastic young nature could not brook the slow methods of the church, which waited for believers to come, so he had joined

that great organisation which goes out into the bye-ways in its work of reformation. To him Charity had confided as much of her story as she deemed necessary, concealing only her relationship to the woman of whom she was in search. She found in Martin Johnson a willing and eager associate, and it was in consequence of this that these two were in such a strange and terrible place this night.

Martin Johnson approached one of the largest and most delapidated of these dwellings, which seemed like angry cancers upon the fair, and in other respects, healthy city. He turned the handle of the door, without going through the ceremony of knocking (the doors are rarely locked in the slums), and beckoning his companion to follow him, entered the house.

A vicious-looking Chinaman leaped suddenly from a rude bunk behind the door, and angrily confronted them, but on perceiving Martin Johnson he calmed down, and cringed to him, leering horribly at Charity.

"This is one of our Lassies, John," said Martin Johnson sternly to the grinning Mongolian, "we wish to see who is here." "You know the way," grunted the Chinaman, without removing his pipe, as he kicked the door to and prepared

to lie down again upon his bunk. Charity shuddered, and a faint sick feeling seemed to oppress her. The closeness of the place, and the absence of ventilation would have fully accounted for this. But in addition to the absence of pure air, the atmosphere was vitiated by hot greasy smells of cooking, and that peculiar odour, so repulsive to Europeans, which seems to cling about the dwellings of the Chinamen of the lower class. Strange feelings of suspicion and cowardice filled Charity's breast, but only for an instant. One glance at the face of her companion reassured her, for though there was only the feeble light of a small kerosene lamp, she could see that true courage and earnestness of good purpose were written upon every line of his features. He seemed to know that the first entrance into such a place must prove a terrible shock to her, and he made no attempt to move until she had mastered her emotions.

"I am ready," she said at last.

"I sincerely trust," said Martin, "that she whom you seek will never be found in such a place as this."

They passed through another door which led them into a passage with rooms or hutches on either side, so small that they looked like the berths on board ship. In these bunks were

Chinamen and Europeans, men and women. They lay two in a bunk, with a little lamp between them. Beside the lamp was a tiny round horn box, about the size of those in which wax matches are sold. From this box each person would in turn take upon the point of a long pin a portion of the treacly-looking opium, and holding it over and twisting it in the flame until it shrivelled up into a small black ball, would place it on the flat bowl of their pipes. To do this it was necessary that they should raise themselves upon one arm, and then lying back, would inhale the fumes of the deadly drug.

It was a horrible sight to Charity Parker to see these people lying there listlessly with semi-vacant eyes. They saw things passing round them, but saw them as people see things in a dream. As the visitors looked in upon them and scanned their faces, the victims of opium showed no sign either of surprise or shame.

"What terrible degradation and immorality," whispered Charity to her companion.

"Terrible indeed," he replied, "but not as the outer world believes it. Opium is a fearful curse, but not in the way that well-meaning clergymen and religious women, who never see these sights declare. Opium *is* a curse, but its use is

the effect not the cause of immorality. Not one of the lost creatures that you may see in such vile slums as these owes her fate to opium. It is *after* she has chosen that fate that she flies to the drug for forgetfulness. I have seen much of these places, and I honestly believe from all I hear or can ascertain that a Chinaman never gives opium to a European man or woman, except in pity for mental or bodily suffering, and often to save the man or woman from suicide. But opium is a terrible alternative even to death, and I heartily cooperate for the suppression of the drug with those reverend gentlemen and well-meaning ladies, although they do not know what they are talking about.

Charity had eagerly scanned the faces of the various opium victims, but saw none that bore any trace to the loved features of which she was in search.

With a sigh of relief she whispered to Martin "Let us get away from this horrible place."

"There is yet another portion of the den for you to see, and"—he hesitated for an instant, "and in it lies a woman who is—is marked for death."

Charity staggered and would have fallen, but he caught her in his arms.

"You are not well," he said, "the place is stifling you. We will come back to-morrow."

A terrible chill struck through Charity's frame for she felt a foreboding as to the identity of this dying woman. But certainty was better than suspense. Recovering her composure, she said calmly, "No, let us know the worst now, I will see this dying woman."

With some fear and misgivings upon his own part, he led the way into a large room behind, where on a rude bed a woman lay dying. There could be no doubt that she was dying—and dying fast.

If she had ever been handsome, all traces of her beauty had vanished. The flesh seemed to have been used up in supplying the warmth necessary to maintain life, for she had taken no solid food for weeks. Opium was now her only refuge. The drug gave her no pleasure, no joyous remembrances of her happy childhood, her pleasant youth or her wasted life. It gave her a sweeter boon, the forgetfulness of those innocent hours, and a relief from the racking pain and hacking cough which convulsed her attenuated frame.

She was under the influence of opium when the two visitors entered. Charity saw the

figure in the bed. The dim flame of the small lamp did not give much light to the place. Charity looked steadily at the lamp which seemed from shortness of wick or scarcity of oil to flicker, burning up for an instant and then sinking down almost to darkness, so like the poor wretch lying there whose life seemed to ebb and flow like the flame.

"Will you look at her," whispered Martin, "she has not long to live." Charity dared not, she feared to see that which she most wanted to see, the face of her mother.

Before Charity could summon her self-possession to her aid, the eyes of the dying woman which until now had that far away look of the victim of opium, seemed to be recalled from their dreaminess and to return to the worldly objects for the last time. In them shone the final flicker that a guttering candle gives before it goes out for ever.

"Who is that," cried the sick woman, "I know that face. Ah! I know that face well. It is—it is——"

In an instant and with a cry that was almost one of joy, Charity looked at the dying woman, and sprang to the bedside.

"Thank God," Martin heard her murmur, "it is *not* my mother." As Charity knelt beside her, the dying woman went on "it is *her* face, and yet not her face—Hers was older than yours, and—and—besides she spoke of having daughters. You must be one of them. She was a swell when she came out here a little while back, and I was a bad one drifting downwards, but in the man who called himself her husband I recognised one who had years back cast me adrift. I told her my story, and she resolved to leave him. Yes, and she told me her story—you—you must be one of her daughters."

"Yes, yes," eagerly cried Charity, "and where is she now?"

The lamp guttered more and more as if in echo to the woman's feeble cough.

"Where is she now," wearily murmured the dying woman, "where is she now—where—I can't remember. Ha! where is the light?"

Charity saw that the eyes were glazing, and that darkness was coming upon the wretched woman. She had no time to lose, if she would gain the clue.

"What was the name under which she was known," she pleaded tenderly, beseechingly, "was it Parker?"

"No," said the invalid feebly, "it was not Parker,—it was—"

"Yes, yes," cried Charity, "it was—it was—"

"Bring the light nearer to me, it is getting so dark—so dark. Ha! yes, I *do* remember now, the name they went under was—Oh Lord have mercy—"

Martin gently raised the sobbing Charity and led her from the place. The lamp that had been used by the opium victim had gone out.



THE MELBOURNE CUP.

THE Melbourne Cup had been an institution for many years. Age had not withered its interest nor had time staled its infinite variety of odds. In the years past the favourite had sometimes won, and more often lost. There was special attraction in this race for the cup, because her Excellency had entered her favourite mare Lady Carbine the Fourth, for the race.

There was a great amount of interest in the race, but Lady Carbine IV. attracted no attention because it was understood that Her Excellency only raced for pleasure, and therefore there was no chance of squaring the female jockey who rode the mare.

All the excitement was centred in the favourite the "Old Man," who was freely quoted at odds of 2 to 1. There were several less important horses in the race, but even they were more fancied than Lady Carbine IV, who had no supporters but her owner and a young lady named Miss Pleasure Parker.

It was a gay and dazzling scene at Flemington that day. The women were anxious to see the scratchings and back their fancies, whilst the men sat on the grand stand and ate their luncheons and made up shilling sweeps upon the race. As the women took their gentlemen friends for a promenade upon the lawn, Pleasure eagerly watched the faces, seeking for one that she would know anywhere. She did not see it however, and as her nature was one to drift into pleasure, whenever pleasure came before her view, her attention was speedily attracted to the moving scene that lay before her.

The great course laid out by the hand of nature spread before her, clad in its mantle of green velvet. The bright colours streaming from the various booths dazzled her eyes, and the bookmakeresses in their silk and satin suits shouting the odds made her dizzy with their many colors. She gazed upon the scene with a feeling of wonder and awe.

But soon the shouts that rose attracted her attention. Bookmakeresses paraded the lawn and intruded the stand asking who wanted to lay. Scarcely knowing what she said to one of those obtrusive ring women who asked her what she fancied, Pleasure replied "Lady Carbine."

"Right," was the reply of the business metallicienne, "I'll lay you 50 to 1. How much will you wager?"

"Only ten pounds," replied Pleasure listlessly as she scanned the faces of the jockeys who came out one by one. "Five hundred to a tenner," cried the lady bookmaker as she noted the bet and gave Pleasure a card with her name and address upon it.

Presently all eyes were centered upon the start for the great race, the Melbourne Cup. A hundred thousand women and their husbands watched it eagerly. The horses swept grandly by—like a rainbow with their colours flashing in the sun. The women's hearts beat high, hoping that their husbands would win. Round by the river and past the abattoirs the varied colors flashed, and now they enter the straight.

Who is the fair young girl upon the horse coming with a rush upon the outside?

It is "Cassandra," no, it's "Cleopatra"—No, no—"See Lady Carbine coming." They reach the carriage-paddock— "Cassandra," "Cleopatra," "Lady Carbine," fall from different mouths, each expressing the mother of the thought that possesses the excited women. For a few instants the issue is in doubt. Cassandra

and Cleopatra come along fighting out each yard of ground, and just as they are a few yards from the judge's box, Lady Carbine shoots out like an arrow from the bow and wins by half a length. But what is the matter with the winning jockey? She is evidently unwomanned, she sinks upon the horse's neck for an instant and then rides calmly to the scales. Her weight is correct and she faints into the arms of Pleasure Parker, who has gone down with one of the stewardesses to witness the "returning to scale."

"Poor girl," sighs Pleasure as she tenderly carries the insensible lady rider into the jockeys' room, "it is a fearfully exciting life."

"Fearful indeed," says a man's voice behind her, "we have got a clue at last."

Pleasure turns suddenly and sees that the speaker is her father.

"Father, you here?"

"Yes," he replies in cold, hard, stern tones, "do you not know who this young jockey is?"

A strange, dazed, inquiring look is her only answer.

"This girl, Pleasure," said Randolph Parker, "is your young sister Faith, the sister that

your mother took away with her. Now we have indeed got a clue to your mother's whereabouts."

But the rider of the winner of the Cup lay insensible in the room and could make no answer to the eager questions that were poured into her deaf ears.



THE BURNING OF THE THEATRE.

AS Martin Johnson and Charity Parker took their way from the loathsome quarter which they had visited, they witnessed a curious sight. The night had been a dark one, and as they turned on their way to East Melbourne their ears were assailed with a dull rumble that rose above the noise of trams and cabs. They turned and looked. There was a glare in the western sky, and strange sounds met their ears as hurrying figures passed them by.

"What is the matter?" said Martin Johnson, as he grasped a passing larrikin by the arm.

"Fire!" shouted the lad, as he wrenched himself free from the grasp.

"What is the matter?" asked Charity, as an abandoned woman hurried past her.

"Fire!" said the fallen one.

Fire! Fire! Fire! That fearful cry rings out and startles all the echoes of the night,

rousing Melbourne from its golden slumber. The sky is brilliantly illuminated with a ruddy glare, while the fire-bells of the city and suburbs wildly clang out their dreadful notes of warning. The streets seem instantly filled with a rushing, crushing mass of humanity. Tearing along the thoroughfares comes vehicles of every description, whilst the electric fire-engines, freighted with female firemen, shoot through the thoroughfares to the scene of action—The Theatre. Fortunately the performance is over. The hoses are rapidly brought into play, and the fire-fiend is fought on every side. The water falls into the burning mass, but it is only fuel to the fire, the huge tongue of liquid flame mounting higher and higher skywards, licking in with an evident grim relish all around it. The fury of the flames is not confined to the Theatre alone, for with terrible rapidity the fire-fiend turns its attention to the neighbouring buildings, notwithstanding the gallant efforts of the heroic women, who work like Trojans. In the midst of all the turmoil the police officers are kept busily engaged in forcing back the dense mass of people now surging round the blazing wreck. Walls and roofs fall in with a crash loud enough to wake the dead, when lo! above all the din and uproar caused by the

falling ruins and crackling of the flames, is heard the shrill shriek of a woman's voice; and there, high up above the heads of the multitude, a terrified mother, clasping in mad despair her infant child, emerges from the skylight on to the roof. Never before was there seen a sight of such fierce grandeur. The fragile form of the woman, who—awakening from her sleep—finds the place a mass of flames, hastily snatching up her baby girl at her side, fled to what appeared to her a place of safety—the roof. Instantly the fire escapes shoot up on all sides, while cheers of encouragement went up from the spectators. The woman moved forward a step or two with her precious charge, and just as she succeeded in touching the fire escape another tremendous cheer went up aloft. She paused, made another step, and then, imprinting a fond, passionate kiss upon the little one's lips, staggered and fell, child in arms, a lifeless lump.

Suddenly another gigantic shout was heard, as running nimbly up a ladder to the rescue might be seen a slight, girlish figure, clad in the well-known uniform of the Salvation Army. Arrived on the roof she first seized the child, but the infant was so tightly locked in the mother's arms, that the rescuer abandoned her hold and turned her attention to the mother.

After a futile attempt to lift the woman up, and with the flames gradually closing in, the plucky little Salvationist, with a strength born of despair, half lifted, half dragged her precious treasure towards the fire escape, which, fortunately, was close at hand. A deathly silence prevailed in the streets below; it was life and death now, and the dense crowd, awestricken with such heroism, held its breath, fearful lest the least movement should prove fatal to the three human beings above. Martin, exhorting the crowd, found many willing volunteers were now below, but at his request they withdrew from the foot of the ladder, as all eyes were rivetted on the scene being enacted above. Another desperate effort on the part of the brave Salvation girl, another move, the flames following them step by step, when the rescuer's left hand at first barely touches and then firmly grasps one of the uprights of the ladder, then, with renewed strength, her whole weight in her work, she draws with her right arm her burden towards her, and in another instant the pent-up admiration of the mighty multitude bursts out into one long, gigantic, deafening cheer, as mother and child glide swiftly down the fire escape, followed by their gallant rescuer, Charity Parker.

BURGLARS AT WORK.

RANDOLPH Parker and his daughter had the injured jockey conveyed to the cottage in East Melbourne. Their grief at the state of the poor girl was somewhat assuaged by the knowledge that they were at last on the right track, and that they were in touch with the means of finding out the place in which Mrs. Parker was hiding.

The jockey had not recovered consciousness, and the lady doctor who had been called in regarded the case as a serious one.

"This is not an ordinary case of hysteria," she said, "there is some brain trouble here. This girl has had some serious shock which will make the cure of her body and brain a matter of difficulty. Judging by the peculiar lines upon her face, I should say that when she recovers, she should see only friends or familiar faces about her—otherwise her reason will go."

Randolph Parker told the doctor his story and asked her whether, under the circumstances it would be wise that his youngest daughter should see him when she returned to consciousness.

"Yes," said the doctor, "it would. Nothing could be better. But she must be prepared for it. She has evidently been suffering from some severe strain, and I think it would be better that she should have a long rest before she is called upon to stand the shock of meeting you and her sister."

The doctor turned to his patient and examined her.

"She will wake in a few minutes," she said, dropping the hand upon the coverlet, "but it will not be wise to let her see you now. When she becomes conscious, I will give her an opiate, and at daylight to-morrow when she wakes, you may hope for the happiest results. Let her not be disturbed during the night." Randolph Parker retired to another room and receiving the doctor's assurance that there was no need to sit by the bedside of the patient, he called Pleasure to him.

"At last, my dear," he said to her, "I begin to see the end of the journey. In the morning we shall know all, and then shall be able to find

your mother. Go to bed now, and to-morrow you will nurse your sister, whilst I go forth and find your mother."

With lighter hearts than they had known for some time they retired to rest.

In the morning Randolph Parker was about early. As he came along the passage, he met the servant man looking at him with a scared face.

"Oh, sir," cried the domestic, "burglars, burglars—they have been here!"

Parker smiled. The burglars could not harm him. It was a furnished lodging, and even if the thieves took any of his valuables, he cared little. His mission was nearly at an end. He had found his youngest daughter, and would soon find his wife.

He opened the sick bedroom, looked in and saw that it was empty—the invalid was gone.

BEAUTIFUL BUSHRANGERS.

THE greatest excitement prevailed in Melbourne when it became known that burglars were not content with stealing valuables, but had also taken to stealing invalids. After a few leading articles had appeared in the Melbourne papers, suggesting that the reason might be the brigand's desire for ransom, the interest soon died out, especially as a newer sensation attracted public attention. The country had been startled by the reports of the depredations of a bushranging gang. All the North Eastern district was under a reign of terror, caused by a band of desperadoes of armed women, headed by one Kate Keely as she was called, though by her companions she was invariably spoken of as Dare Devil Dolly. She was tall, slenderly built, and of somewhat girlish appearance, remarkably good looking, with dark piercing eyes, and notwithstanding her occupation, bore out to a degree what her comrades said, that she was the

“merriest little woman alive.” That she was a lady bred and born could be seen at a single glance. She was an accomplished horsewoman and sat her steed with a grace and elegance that would have put many a circus rider to the blush. Her costume was neatness itself, and consisted of a superbly fitting black cloth coat, resembling more the regulation claw-hammer than anything else. A prettily arranged white cravat encased the neck, while the white riding pants, tight fitting, finished up in a pair of dainty, toy-looking, riding boots. A small black hat, conical shaped, tilted on to the back of the head, her black curly hair peeping out over her forehead from under the rim of her hat, and again hanging in the most admired disorder loosely down her back.

Slung carelessly on her shoulder was a small leather bag, such as schoolboys use, a couple of revolvers adorned her waist, whilst in her left hand she carried a dainty little rifle, more like a child's plaything than anything else. A rose, her favourite flower, in the buttonhole of her coat. What Dare Devil Dolly looked like, and what Dare Devil Dolly was, so were the rest of the gang.

The fame of this formidable gang had spread far and wide. The Melbourne papers each

morning contained an account of further deprecations by the Keely band. The Criminal Investigation Department was at its wits' end. Parties of police were sent in each direction from which an outrage had been reported, but in vain, for the dashing Kate Keely immediately appeared in another part of the colony, robbing a bank, and even going the length of sticking up the watch-houses of a district, and making the policemen prisoners. Justice seemed to be completely baffled, the press called upon the police department to do its duty, and give the community assurance that such daring crimes as those committed by the Keely Gang should not be tolerated in a civilised country. The police department was goaded to desperation by the constant taunts levelled at it for its failure to secure the desperadoes, when fortune at last favoured the officers of justice. The Keely Gang was reported as being at Glenrowan. The police preparations were hastily made and a special train was despatched to Glenrowan. Kate Keely and her gang had taken possession of the place, had locked up the policeman in his own watch-house, and were amusing themselves drinking, smoking and making the residents of Glenrowan perform absurd antics for their tipsy enjoyment.

It was late at night when the police train arrived, and then Kate Keely appeared to have some presentment that the end was close at hand. Dare Devil Dolly seemed to become a changed woman. She gave orders that the place should be barricaded, and determined to sell her life as dearly as possible. The police, knowing the desperate character of the woman with whom they had to deal, were chary of approaching too near the hotel in which the bushrangeresses were entrenched, and contented themselves with occasionally firing a shot at the house to show that the occupants were under surveillance.

So the long night passed away, the desperadoes and the police being both loth to begin what they felt would be a desperate conflict. Just as day dawned the police watchers beheld the figure of a woman emerging from the hotel. She was instantly covered by a dozen rifles.

"You need not fire," she said. "I surrender. I am Kate Keely, otherwise known as Dare-Devil Dolly."

Further search served to show that under cover of darkness, with this one solitary exception, the gang had eluded the police, and made good their escape.

A tremendous shout went up from the police force upon learning that the great desperadoe had at length been captured. They jumped out from behind logs and bushes in which they had been hiding, and sprang upon the woman who had been a terror throughout the colony, whose name was a spell to conjure with, and whose skill and daring had placed all the powers of the police and detective departments at nought for months and months. Securely handcuffed and closely guarded, Kate Keely was brought to Melbourne. The preliminary investigation at the Police Court occupied but little time. The evidence against the accused was overwhelming, and the magistrate committed her for trial.



THE CRIMINAL SESSIONS.

THE SENTENCE OF DEATH.

THE few days that intervened before the trial served but to excite the public and whet their appetite for sensation. Never had there been such a rush for seats at the Central Criminal Court. It was not strange that Randolph Parker and his daughter Charity should find themselves amongst the crowd that thronged the court. Every person who could possibly gain admission endeavoured to hear this, the greatest trial of the century. Her Honour Lady Madene, the Chief Justice, presided. Twelve good women and true were empannelled to try the case. Mrs. Smythe, Q.C., the Crown Prosecutrix, appeared for the Crown and Miss Purves defended.

Mrs. Smythe said that the charge was one of robbery under arms, the penalty for which was death. She was sure that the women of the

jury would do their duty, and not allow the sex or the beauty of the prisoner to lead them away from their clear duty of judging solely by the evidence which would be placed before them. The prisoner was young in years but old in crime.

Randolph and Charity Parker had, up to this time, been unable to catch a glimpse of the prisoner's face. Wedged in amongst the crowd, they had struggled to get forward into such a position as would enable them to look upon the face of this daring criminal whose name was in every person's mouth. At length they could get a view of the dock.

"See," cried Charity, in an amazed whisper, "it is Faith!"

Randolph Parker looked and saw, in the criminal in the dock, the woman whose name had made her notorious throughout the length and breadth of the land, his youngest daughter, the girl who had accompanied his wife when she fled from home.

Randolph Parker and his daughter had been attracted to the court through idle curiosity, but now he had a fearful interest in watching every detail of the trial.

The case for the crown appeared to leave no loophole for escape. By skilful and careful

repetition the Crown Prosecutrix seemed to spin the hemp that was to destroy this girl. Witness after witness testified to the deeds of the daring Kate Keely, and was positive as to her identity. There was practically no defence. Miss Purves devoted all her energies to shaking the testimony of the Crown witnesses, but without avail. In a passionate address the barristeress claimed that the wretched girl was not responsible for her actions, and that she simply obeyed an uncontrollable impulse; that her deeds were not the outcome of crime, but of hysteria; and she (Miss Purves) besought the jury to remember that they were women themselves, and not to consign the poor girl to a shameful and ignominious death at the hands of the common hangwoman.

Lady Madene summed up carefully and impartially, asking the jurywomen to dismiss from their minds anything that they might have read in the press to the prisoner's detriment. If there was any doubt in the minds of the jury, they should give the prisoner the benefit of it. The jury would bear in mind that the prisoner had not to prove her innocence, but the Crown had to prove her guilt.

Eagerly did Randolph and Charity try to read the faces of the jurywomen as they filed

out of court. What they saw upon those faces filled them with dread. In a quarter of an hour the jury returned into court.

"Ladies of the jury," said the associate, "have you agreed upon your verdict?"

"We have," replied the forewoman.

"How say you? Is the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty?"

"GUILTY!"

"Prisoner at the bar," said Her Honour, "I will not add to the pain that you must feel at finding yourself in this awful position. Yours has been a wasted life. With youth, beauty, talents, and charms that might have enabled you to make a figure in the world, you have deliberately flung away your opportunities and embarked upon a career of crime. Your ultimate fate rests not with me but with the executive. It is now only my painful duty to warn you that your days on earth are numbered and to pass upon you the last dread sentence of the law."

Her Honor then assumed the black hat and passed sentence of death. As she concluded with the words, "till you are dead, and may the Lord have mercy upon your soul," a piercing shriek rang through the Court, as Charity Parker swooned in her father's arms.

THE HALLS OF RUPERTSWOOD.

THE country seat of the lord of Rupertswood was *en fete*. The baronet gives a special entertainment to which all the society and fashion of Victoria have been invited. Her Excellency is to grace the function, and every person of note is to be present. A special train has been engaged to bring the guests from the metropolis, and it is crowded. Though the distance from the station is but short, drags are in waiting to convey the party to Rupertswood, snugly nestling upon a knoll in the basin formed by great hills which shelter it from the rude breezes. All society is here, from Her Excellency and their Honours the lady judges to the fashionable nonentities and distinguished visitors from the old country. Pleasure Parker is amongst the guests. She has become one of the belles of Melbourne, and as such has been taken under the chaperonage of the honorable Mrs. Glitter, who goes every-

where and knows everybody. Amongst the many guests at Rupertswood is the eminent stranger, Sir Harry Irwin. He is an actor of world-wide renown, and has come out to Australia more for pleasure than profit. It is well-known that he is a wealthy man and remains in the profession more for love of his art than from any desire for gain. He is a handsome man, clean-shaven as a necessity of his profession, but with dark, penetrative eyes and a soft musical voice, quite different from the powerful tone which he uses when he appears upon the stage.

The burning of the theatre has left him free for a while, and as he is sufficiently famous to be much sought after in society, he willingly accepts the invitation to Rupertswood. Sir Harry is not an impressionable man, but when he is introduced to Pleasure Parker, he feels that at length he has met his fate.

There must be some subtle magnetism in love which makes Pleasure Parker feel an attraction to this celebrated man. He dances with her once, twice, thrice, and she feels irresistibly drawn towards him. She seems to have known him for a very long time, and when he asks her whether she will sit out two or three dances with him, the request does not appear at

all strange. "Shall we walk around the grounds?" he whispers to her.

Taking her silence for consent, he draws her arm within his, and they go out together into the spacious grounds now flooded by the glorious moonlight.

"How beautiful is this moonlight!" he says to her. "I am always reminded of the lines in the Merchant of Venice, that is, if you will not think that I am talking 'shop.'"

"What lines?" asks Pleasure, trembling, she knows not why.

"How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony."

"Miss Parker, Pleasure, do you believe in love at first sight?"

Pleasure could find no words to answer. She was a light-hearted, joyous creature, but even her simple nature felt that upon so brief an acquaintance Sir Harry had no right to speak to her in such meaning tones.

"Do not turn away," he said pleadingly, as he seized her hand. "Believe me, I have no desire to offend you, but I am a fatalist, and when I met you this evening, something told

me that I had met the one woman in the whole world for whom I should ever care."

"Sir Harry," faltered Pleasure, "you should not speak thus to me upon so short an acquaintance. I cannot permit——"

"Miss Parker, I feel that you will never forgive, but I cannot help myself. Although I have known you but a few hours, you have brought something into my life that was not there before. In all men's lives a crisis comes sooner or later, when to hesitate is to be lost. This night I feel is a crisis in my life, and if I am hurried on to say that which you may blush to hear, forgive me, and believe me that I do so in the dread that I may lose the opportunity. I have made love a hundred times upon the stage. I have counterfeited the sacred passion to the best of my ability, and have striven, out of my love for my art, to make the counterfeit of passion seem real, but it has been a poor and wretched imitation. Until this night I never knew how genuine passion could sway a man."

"Oh! Sir Harry," pleaded Pleasure, "you must not speak thus."

"But I must!" he cried, still holding her hand. "I must speak now, when the passion that thrills my soul refuses to run the risk of silence. I cannot hope that the feeling which

has taken possession of me so suddenly and so completely, is mutual, but I beg of you to give me some hope—only some possibility of hope. I do not ask for your love yet, that would be presumptuous arrogance; but tell me, dear one, that I may hope—that you have not given your heart to another."

Pleasure trembled still more violently than before. Some strange magnetism was in his voice, and in the touch of his hand, which still clasped hers. It seemed unmaidenly to admit that he, who but a few hours before had been a complete stranger to her, was no longer indifferent to her.

"You do not reply," he said. "Then you have given your heart to another?"

She looked at him hastily, and cried—"Oh, no, no!"

He drew her gently towards him, and in the low tones of his musical voice, he whispered—

"And I may hope?"

"Yes, you may hope," she whispered, as he stooped and kissed her unresisting cheek.

"They are playing a waltz," she said, as she nestled closely to him. "I shall be missed by my chaperon. Will you be my partner?"

"Ay, for life," he answered, as he proudly led her back to the ball-room.

THE CONDEMNED CELL.

FAITH PARKER, to give her her right name, sat in the condemned cell of the Melbourne Gaol, a female watcher by her side. Hers had indeed been a wasted life. Her devil-may-care nature had made her a fit companion for her mother whom she had accompanied upon that fatal day when Mrs. Parker had left her peaceful happy home. The wayward nature of the woman was repeated in the child, and soon after her arrival in Victoria, Faith had drifted apart from her mother and had taken to a wild and reckless life. Chance had thrown her into the society of her father, as already stated, but the evil companions whom she had for a time abandoned, were lost without their leader, and had watched and waited for her. They had followed her from the course upon which she had fainted, and carried her away to compel her to lead them once again in their depredations against society, with what result the reader already knows.

And the condemned cell was the end of it all! She had nothing to look forward to now but a

shameful death upon the gallows, for Faith Parker knew that there was no hope of a reprieve as she sat in the cell upon the night after her conviction.

Was there no hope, no chance of escape?

As the condemned woman glanced round the narrow cell, looked up at the barred window and allowed her gaze to rest for an instant at the female watcher who sat near her, she felt that escape was hopeless. And yet, hope springs eternal in the human breast. Was it fancy, or was she dreaming? She thought that the watcher seemed to be tired out, and to doze. If she could only get outside of the cell, and into the gaol-yard, there might be a chance of getting away. Yes, the watcher was dozing. Faith hardly dared to breathe as she observed the woman's head gradually fall forward on her breast.

She slept. There was no doubt of that—Faith, in right of her sex, had been spared the irons with which condemned males were manacled. She stole softly to the side of her slumbering guardian, took the keys from her belt, and quietly unlocking the door of the cell, crept noiselessly out, locking the sleeping watcher in the cell.

THE ESCAPE FROM MELBOURNE
GAOL.

THE night was a fearful one. The rain descended in torrents, and not a solitary person was to be seen in the streets, save the homeless and the outcasts, and these, gathering their rags around them, were huddled together closely in the doorways. Ever and anon flashes of forked lightning illuminated the lurid heavens, accompanied by the loud roaring of thunder overhead. If ever an opportunity offered itself for a prison escape, here then was one, rain and sleet notwithstanding. During one of the flashes, and for an instant only, there in Russell-street, on top of the walls of the Melbourne Gaol, poised, as it were, half way between captivity and freedom, might have been seen the drenched, though dark outline of a slender form, with blanched and terror-stricken face that peered as it were inquiringly across at the detective office. Another flash of lightning, and lo! as if by magic, the weird vision had vanished into the blackness of the night. As the *escapee* touched the ground and regained her

freedom, there boomed forth another giant-like peal of thunder that made the prison fairly rattle on its foundations. Flash, flash, came the lightning as (fearing to face the city) the uncaged bird pausing for an instant only to regain her breath, with beating heart she bounded like the wind, along Franklyn-street up past the old cemetery and thence through lanes and bye-ways, on, on in the darkness at breakneck speed, towards Spencer-street Railway Station. The hour was so early that the place was quite deserted, save for the presence of one or two night birds, who were prowling round, "any port in a storm" and there before the fugitive stood an Iron Horse with its big, broad, shining back and gigantic wheels. This engine was known as the "Terror," and was used only for doing the shunting, &c., about the station; for in the long distance journeys, the principal propelling power was electricity. The *escapee* gazed breathlessly upon the iron monster ("here at least," thought she, "I will obtain a brief respite, and a few moments' shelter from the pitiless storm.") To think was to act, and glancing furtively around, she clambered, cat-like, on to the engine. The furnace was blazing hot, and nestling down in a corner, the poor outcast, her teeth chattering

with cold, joyously greeted the heavenly warmth. Suddenly she arose to her feet, a brilliant idea dashed through her bewildered brain. Maddened with the fear of being recaptured, she eagerly jumped at the idea of escape, no matter at what cost. Her hands groped here and there, touching first one part of the engine, then another. She opened the furnace door, it was blazing hot. Suddenly, by accident, her hand touched a piece of the mechanism; there issued a jet of steam. The night prowlers who were hanging about took no notice of what was going on, being too busy looking after their own poor bones—a second jet! a third! the heavy mass trembles, as if with life. Puff! Puff! and the iron monster slowly moves forward. Scarcely knowing what she is doing, the woman, maddened and excited, makes frantic endeavours to stop the engine, but so great is her terror and confusion, she turns the lever with all her strength the wrong way, and "The Terror" dashes along over the rails with increasing speed. The convict in her escape from prison has exerted all her remaining strength, and now stands helpless, peering through the little round window, out into the blackness beyond. Onward the engine glides, with terrible speed. The station

hangers-on, now fully alive to the fact that something unusual has happened, gather together, and look on in utter bewilderment at the fast disappearing engine, that shoots, rocket-like, ahead. Away along the rails speeds the iron horse with its lonely occupant, her deathly pale face petrified with fear, mutely appealing as it were for pardon and assistance. The monster dashes madly on breaking through gate after gate, the crashing and smashing rousing the affrighted gate-keepers from their slumbers, and bringing them out to see what was the matter, only to find the runaway turning a bend in the line further on. John Gilpin's memorable ride was nothing compared to that of which we now write—On! On!! On!!! And the day is breaking fast, but heedless of everything the engine continues on its mad career; fields and farm-houses appear to flash by her. The woman who has braved so much in her daring escape from prison is only mortal after all, and now is thoroughly exhausted and as helpless as a child. Through station after station the snorting engine dashes with a roar—people excitedly wave their hands aloft and shout themselves hoarse to her to try and turn the lever; but this no one but the occupant can do. She and she alone can bring the "Terror" to a

standstill. On like a rushing whirlwind flies the huge mass of machinery, still battering and shattering gate after gate, crashing and dashing through station after station, finally reaching what may be called the open country. By this time the day has far advanced; another station to pass and then there is only a single line of rails, and upon this a down excursion train, with a heavy load of passengers is already *en route* for Melbourne. There is only one alternative open, and prompt action must be taken. The telegraph wires are brought into requisition and a message flashed along them to the effect to turn the runaway engine on to siding and off the line—naturally the greatest excitement prevails. All eyes are strained and necks craned to catch a glimpse of the coming monster. The points are changed, and with breathless anxiety the people wait the approach of the runaway. See! here it comes rounding the turn with a terrific snort, leaving clouds of smoke in its wake. The spectators are horror-stricken, what do they see? A woman kneeling on the engine, her hands clasped, her pallid lips moving as if in prayer, her death-like face raised towards Heaven. It is done, a terrible crash! a roar! a shower of splinters, a fearful hissing of steam.

The whole of the passengers, holiday-seekers by the down excursion train to Melbourne are saved. A convict has escaped; for there, amidst the smoking ruins of the wrecked engine lies the mangled body of Faith Parker—yes, the prisoner had escaped and regained her freedom—in Heaven.



AN ACTOR'S LOVE.

THE story of the prisoner's escape and shocking death caused but temporary excitement in Melbourne, where, after the usual nine days of wonder, newer sensations and more recent crimes jostled the name of Dare-Devil Dolly out of recollection. The capture of the leader of the gang was speedily followed by the death or capture of the others, who had contrived to make their escape at Glenrowan during the excitement and confusion that reigned upon the arrest of the ringleader. This story has, however, nothing further to do with their fates and fortunes.

But if the busy world soon forgot the memory of the erring, condemned woman, there were others to whom forgetfulness was impossible, viz., her father and sisters. The shock was a terrible one to that little family. Randolph Parker was very much shaken, and aged visibly. He had not only to mourn a sinful daughter, dead whilst escaping from the shameful punishment which her crimes had

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deserved, but with the death of Faith, the one hopeful clue to the whereabouts of his wife also disappeared. There seemed to be some fatality about his mission, as if some adverse fate had resolved that it should never be crowned with success. He lost heart and hope, and became moody and discontented, believing that some dire curse hung over him and all connected with him.

Several months thus passed away, without bringing any tidings of Mrs. Parker and the man with whom she had eloped. The search was still kept up, the services of private detectives engaged and all inquiries made, but as week after week and month after month passed without result, it was not strange, perhaps, that the searchers grew disheartened, and began to regard Mrs. Parker as one who, in this world, was dead to them. The one exception in the family was Charity Parker, who, aided by her enthusiastic fellow-worker, Martin Johnson, pursued her inquiries amongst scenes of poverty and vice. Although she had one central purpose of her life, the rôle of Salvationist which she had adopted suited her quiet, earnest nature. It was a sphere of useful work that exactly suited her character, and she flung herself into the task of seeking to reclaim the

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poor and degraded. Her success, and the whole-souled manner with which she entered into the labour of love, kept her mind occupied, and prevented her losing hope, or giving way to melancholy, like her father.

The disposition of Pleasure Parker was a very different one. Being of a less serious turn of mind than her sister, she seemed to feel the futility of their quest far less than the others.

This fact was further assisted by two circumstances—one, that her walk in life was far different to that of her sister. Pleasure was by nature and inclination one of the butterflies of human nature, anxious for brightness and gaiety and light. The other reason was that, as into Sir Harry Irwin's life, so into that of Pleasure Parker a new feeling, a treasured secret had come—the treasured secret of love.

Love begets love, and though the confession of Sir Harry upon their first meeting at Rupertswood might to many appear hasty and ill-advised, Sir Harry was sufficiently a man of the world to know that no woman is displeased with an avowal of affection from a man, when that avowal comes honestly from a manly heart. Pleasure Parker was not the timid, lovely rose of the poet Waller, but was willing to—

“Suffer herself to be desired,
And not blush so to be admired.”

As the time wore on, and Sir Harry was a devoted and attentive lover, Pleasure experienced the exquisite sensations of a strong and reciprocated love. Indeed Sir Harry was one of whose conquest Pleasure might well be proud. Young, handsome, wealthy, and talented in his art beyond the best actors of his time, he was the envied of the men, and the admiration of the women. He had won triumphs in England and in America, and was shortly to repeat his successes in Australia. The fair sexes of the three continents might be said to be sighing at the feet of this, the most dashing and talented actor of his age. But in spite of all the praise and admiration lavished upon him he had remained heart-whole, running the gauntlet of numberless pretty English faces, and the more open assaults of American heiresses. No woman had moved him, although he had, as he said, counterfeited love upon the stage to numberless women. Some of the actresses whom he was called upon to woo upon the mimic scene, would have been glad if he had carried the stage courtship into private life, but Sir Harry Irwin had seen too much of stage and society life to lightly give his heart away, or permit himself the indulgence of matrimonial intentions. He was not a woman-hater, far

from it, but he was not going to sacrifice himself and his art to woman's caprice, nor would he ever tie himself down, so he thought, to the humdrum life of Darby and Joan, harnessed for life to some frivolous creature or some pretty doll of a girl.

Fine vows and strong resolves, strong bubbles that the sweet breath of a light-hearted woman, and one glance from bright eyes, shattered in an instant.

If any person had told Sir Harry that upon his arrival in Australia, he the celebrated, the invulnerable, would fall a victim to love at first sight, he would have laughed the suggestion to scorn. Yet such was the case. The most invulnerable have some weak point, even as Achilles had a vulnerable heel which caused his downfall. So, perhaps with a little pride that might have been pardonable in the light of his previous invulnerability, his haughty spirit led him to a pleasant and unexpected destruction on the altar of love on the lovely night when he had met Pleasure for the first time at the ball at Rupertswood.

Nor did he for an instant regret the "fall" as he laughingly called it. The more he saw of this dainty creature, the more passionately he adored her. The affection that grew up in

Pleasure's heart was no less strong and genuine.

Sir Harry was a most devoted lover, and fortunately was enabled to take a greater part in the functions of the fashionable world than he would otherwise. The theatre in which he had arranged to appear for his Melbourne season had, as already narrated, been burned, and, as he was on a pleasure as well as an artistic tour, the time that must elapse until the theatre could be rebuilt gave him many opportunities of pressing his suit with Pleasure Parker.

Randolph Parker saw no objections to the wooing of his daughter. He took but little interest in life, and if at times he did brighten somewhat and shake off the melancholy which enveloped him, it was in the society of the frank young actor, who, having learnt the history of the family, sought unobtrusively to lead Randolph Parker away from himself and his life's sorrow.

The building of the theatre was rapidly proceeded with, and the date of its reopening was already fixed, "upon which occasion," as the announcements in the press stated, "the Eminent Young English Actor, Sir Harry Irwin would make his first appearance in Australia, in his own Powerful Drama, entitled—*The Newest Woman.*"

Public expectation was on tiptoe, for the name of Sir Harry Irwin was well-known and the fame of his histrionic ability world-wide.

Pleasure Parker was not the least expectant and excited, for it was quite arranged between the lovers now that some day they were to become man and wife, and she was nervously anxious about Harry's success.

"I must come to the first performance," she said to her lover, "and I do so want to come down behind the scenes and congratulate you after the first act."

"Why, of course you shall, Pleasure," was the actor's reply, "and Mr. Parker must come to. I insist upon that. You shall have a box and he shall act as your escort, for I shall not be able to do so as I shall have plenty of work to look after myself upon such an occasion."

Randolph Parker made a feeble objection. He did not care for amusements of any kind, they gave him no pleasure. But Sir Harry was firm and would take no denial, and Pleasure adding her entreaties to Sir Harry's and pointing out that she could not go to the theatre without an escort, Randolph reluctantly consented to make one of the audience upon the occasion of the first appearance of Sir Harry

Irwin and the initial Australian production of *The Newest Woman*.

The delay in the appearance of Sir Harry Irwin upon the Australian stage only served to whet public curiosity and act as a splendid advertisement, the more especially since he went about a good deal in society. The rumours of his intended marriage gave him an additional interest in the eyes of the Melbourne ladies who had heard of his supposed invulnerability to the tender passion, and how he fell a victim as soon as he had arrived in the sunny south. It was true that the lady of his choice was a "new chum" and not an Australian girl, which was a pity, but then the fact showed, so the ladies said, that even an English girl became irresistible in an Australian climate.

Sir Harry had been interviewed by a dozen newspapers, and his portrait had appeared in half the number. All sorts of absurd rumours, devoid of foundation, save the fertility of the imagination of scribes who were "paid by the line." It was stated that he had become a large squatter, having purchased an enormous grazing area in New South Wales, and that he intended settling down in Melbourne as he had purchased the new theatre and intended to go in for management upon a lavish and stupendous scale,

and a hundred such rumours as the invention and the poverty of the penny-a-liners could suggest. Sir Harry smiled, somewhat contemptuously, at these harmless and baseless fictions when Pleasure called his attention to them.

"They are so many baldheaded advertisements for me," he said to her one day, "and the worst of it is that one half the readers will believe firmly that they emanate from me."

"Then why not write contradicting that impression?" asked Pleasure.

Sir Harry laughed heartily before replying.

"Why you simple child, unsophisticated in the ways of theatrical advertising, that would be only to further advertise myself and make people certain that the first rumour was only a dodge to get a double advertisement—the rumour itself and its contradiction."

The additional attraction of the opening of a new theatre helped the public excitement. When the plan for the circle for the first night was opened there was a rush for seats quite unprecedented in the annals of the Australian stage. In a few hours all the seats had been booked, and next day tickets were sold by lucky speculators at a premium.

The great event arrived at last. The theatre was thronged in every part long before the

rising of the curtain. Society filled the circle and the stalls, the *bourgeoise* of the suburbs overflowed the upper circle, and all sorts and conditions of men, from the shabby-genteel clerk and the comfortable-looking horny-handed son of toil down to the tag-rag and bobtail who could manage to raise the price of admission, surged, jostled, cut harmless jokes and otherwise amused themselves into a state of merriment and perspiration amongst the gods in the gallery.

In one of the private boxes Randolph Parker and his daughter sat. Pleasure was very anxious and nervous, for though she knew that her lover was the greatest actor in the world and she felt that to her hero failure in anything was impossible, her nerves were in a high state of tension until assurance had been made doubly sure, and the success that she regarded as certain was an actual accomplished fact. As for Randolph Parker, nothing amused him now, and he gazed round the house somewhat listlessly, for constant failure had made him despair of seeing in any chance crowd the face he longed to gaze upon once again. For Pleasure's sake he affected at times an interest that he did not feel, but it was but a poor affectation and did not deceive his daughter.

It could, however, scarcely be said to seriously distress her for she was young and her heart was filled with a great love, which with the excitement of the occasion left little room for any other feelings in her breast.

Although the main interest centred in the appearance of Sir Henry Irwin there was considerable public curiosity in connection with another Melbourne *debutant*, whose name appeared upon the bills as "Mr. Hector Montgomery, the celebrated English amateur; his first appearance upon the professional stage." It was an open secret, or at any rate a widely-circulated rumour that "Mr. Harry Montgomery was the stage name of a young scion of the British aristocracy."

At length the curtain rose upon the new play "The Newest Woman." The plot dealt with the story of a woman of the most advanced type. She was a clergyman's daughter who had been brought up in a quiet vicarage in the West of England, and had lived a life of contentment and serene happiness, doing good and brightening all around her. She had no thought but to live out her peaceful life in the sphere in which fate had placed her. One day there came to visit her father a young man of handsome appearance and good address. He had been

her father's pupil in earlier days, and between the clergyman and his young scholar the warmest friendship prevailed. Walter Gray came often to the vicarage and it soon became evident, even to the clergyman, that there was a stronger attraction than an old man's friendship for Walter. It was plain that the real magnet which drew the young fellow to the quiet peaceful spot was Marian. It was with joyful pleasure that the clergyman observed that the affection between the young folks was mutual, for there was no man to whom he would rather trust his daughter's future to than Walter Gray. At length the young lover spoke his love, was accepted, and the first act was devoted to a delineation of the first happy days of wedlock. Sir Harry Irwin played the hero, Walter Gray, and Marian was enacted by a celebrated Australian actress. Sir Harry received an enthusiastic reception, and, although the first act did not afford him very great opportunities for display, the audience recognised the fact that he was a great actor and that his success was assured. Pleasure felt certain of that before the first act was over. She now felt some slight curiosity as to the success of Mr. Montgomery, who did not appear until the second act.

From the *resume* which had appeared in the Melbourne papers in advance, it was known that the second act was a very powerful one, for it was in that one Markham appeared and came like a serpent into the quiet Eden of Walter Gray's home, tempting his Eve into the eating of the forbidden fruit of knowledge. He had to insidiously and by crafty arguments of equality and the rights of women to transform the quiet clergyman's daughter and happy wife into a discontented woman, yearning for she knew not what, aspiring to be anything but that for which nature had fitted her, that which she was, the light of a good and loving man's home. Upon the scene in this act, where, having sown the seeds of discontent in Marian, he persuades her to leave her husband's house and elope with him, the success of the piece in a great measure and of the actor who played Markham entirely depended. The audience knew this, and waited anxiously for the second act.

Not so Pleasure, for the success in which she was bound up had already been assured, and as soon as the first act was concluded she reminded her father of their promise to Harry to go down upon the stage.

At the foot of a winding staircase leading from the circle to the stage they found Sir Harry Irwin waiting for them. After the first congratulations were over, Pleasure looked around her in wonder. Although her intended husband was an actor, Pleasure had never been in that strange place "behind the scenes" before. She had asked Harry to take her to one of the rehearsals, but he did not wish to have her enjoyment of the new piece spoiled by so doing. Now she gazed around upon what had hitherto been a sealed book to her. The place seemed more like an immense ship than a theatre. High above her were ropes and pulleys and an immensity of tackle, the uses of which she could not understand. Now she was jostled by sceneshifters moving what seemed to be huge buildings in an absurdly easy manner. These stage-hands were apparently no respecters of persons, for their "Out of the way, please" was directed with the same stolidity and gruffness to high and low alike. What most of all surprised her was the perfect equality which appeared to exist upon the stage. A dirty sceneshifter in his shirt-sleeves ordered Sir Harry Irwin—her Harry, and the star of the season—out of the way with as little ceremony as if he were only the call-boy.

Stranger still, Sir Harry seemed to accept the mandate as if there were nothing unusual or impertinent in it, but moved out of the way, carrying the wall of a West-end mansion in quite an obedient manner. He, however, noted the look of surprise and indignation on Pleasure's face, for he said—

"My dear, on the night of performance there are no social ranks or distinction between the persons taking part. So far as the employés personally are concerned, all are equal and only take their rank from the posts they fill for the time being. When the curtain is up, each actor and actress is in his or her respective character. When the curtain falls all the mummerys cease to be, and the stage-hands, the mechanists and the scene-shifters take the boards and reign supreme."

"It is a curious world," replied Pleasure, "but I did not see the necessity for you kissing that pretty actress so very naturally in that first act."

Pleasure pouted a little as she spoke, for she was a true woman and was jealous of her lover even though she knew he was but acting.

"Why, you silly little Pleasure," said Sir Harry laughing, "that was only make-believe."

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"Yes," said Pleasure, only half consoled, "but when a gentleman is engaged to be married to one young lady, he should not make-believe too well to another. I'm sure she is not a bit good-looking, and I know that she thinks you are over head and ears in love with her."

What reply Sir Harry would have made to this remark was prevented by the call-boy brushing past them in the same abrupt and business-like manner adopted by the scene-shifters and calling out as he passed along.

"Beginners for the second act ready."

"You will have time to come up to my dressing room and take a glass of wine," said Sir Harry to Randolph Parker and his daughter, "I do not come on till near the close of this act. It is in this scene that Montgomery gets his great opportunity. As a matter of fact he ought to make a big success in it, for although I wrote the play it was he who gave me the idea of the plot and suggested the various incidents. He is a smart man, this Montgomery, but I think he wants ballast. He is inclined to be a bit wild, harumscarum, and a little too fond of a glass and a lass; but still a very able man with great natural talents, but a sad lack of application. However you will be

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able to judge of him for yourselves presently when you see him."

Whilst they discussed a glass of wine in Sir Harry's room and the silent dresser flitted noiselessly about arranging the star's necktie, buttonhole, hat, gloves, and other little articles of apparel, the trio conversed on the piece, its chances of success, the probability of the length of its run and other matters till a tap came at the door and the voice of the call boy was heard.

"Curtain's up Sir Harry!"

Sir Harry bade his dresser see Mr. Parker and his daughter safely through the maze of frames and appliances to the circle steps, whilst he proceeded with his dressing for the end of the second act.

They paused a few minutes at the prompt-entrance to learn the cause of the sudden burst of applause that shook the walls. The prompter informed them that the cause of the cheers was the appearance of the new actor—Mr. Montgomery. From where they stood they could not see him, but when the applause subsided they heard his voice. At the sound Randolph Parker, whose habitual melancholy seldom left him, started, and looked around him in a dazed, helpless fashion, like a person suddenly awakened from sleep.

"Listen," he cried, grasping his daughter's wrist, "am I dreaming or am I going mad? Surely that is his voice. I should know it anywhere."

Just then the representative of Markham, advancing towards the footlights, came into the view of those standing in the prompt entrance.

"'Tis he!" shouted Parker. "Thank God at last we meet."

Before his daughter was aware of his purpose, or the prompter could interfere to stop him, Parker with the fierce light of hate and revenge in his eyes, had sprung forward upon the stage and seized the unexpectant Markham by the throat.

"At last, you scoundrel," he screamed as he shook the terrified actor by the throat, "we meet face to face. Where is she? Where have you hidden my wife? Tell me before I throttle the worthless life out of you."

At first the audience did not know whether the conflict was a pre-arranged portion of the play or not, but when they saw the genuine alarm in the face of the actress upon the stage they seemed to feel that something unrehearsed was happening, and a scene of panic took place

sorrow; confide in me as you would in some loving sister. Tell me what has caused this change in you."

He looked at her with a quick glance, and seemed as if about to speak, but he checked himself, sighed and remained silent. Charity could see that he was suffering acutely.

"Martin," continued Charity, "If you will not give me a brother's confidence, I will take a sister's privilege. You have formed a strong attachment for some woman."

Martin Johnson started but did not speak.

"That attachment," she went on, "you know is hopeless. The woman you love does not return your love."

"I fear not," answered Martin Johnson in a low voice.

"Forget her," said Charity, "your life is too high and noble to be clouded by an affection for one who is unworthy of you, some frivolous beauty who could never understand the greatness of your nature or appreciate the glorious self-sacrifice of the life that you are leading, a life of devotion to the noblest of purposes, the rescue of your fellow-creatures from sin and shame. Blot out her image from your heart! Forget her, for I repeat that she is not worthy of you!"

"But you are as devoted—"

"I?" She started from him as the truth seemed to flash upon her all at once. "I?"

"Yes, you," said Martin, seizing her hand. "Oh, Charity, I had determined to have kept the secret of my love for you locked in my own breast, rather than run the risk of offending you by a declaration of my passion. I could bear to suffer in silence, but it is intolerable to me that you should think any woman other than yourself could occupy a place in my thoughts. I must speak out now, even if the result of my rash words should be banishment from your presence. Charity, I love you, and want you to become my wife."

He drew her towards him as he spoke, and kissed her unresisting lips. Gently she disengaged herself from his embrace.

"Martin," she said slowly. "I have already told you that there should be perfect confidence between us. I scorn to affect a coy modesty that I do not feel. I love you with all my heart, but I cannot marry you. There is a stain upon my name, a shadow of shame over my family."

"But, Charity," cried Martin Johnson, "shame only affects the sinner, and you, I know, are pure."

"There is the unforgivable sin," she replied, "which casts a dark cloud of dishonour and disgrace upon the innocent as well as upon the guilty. You know that I have been seeking to find a lost woman?"

"Yes," said Martin, "some near and dear friend."

"Nearer and dearer than any friend," continued Charity, as her eyes filled with tears. "The lost woman that I have been seeking is my mother."

"Great heaven!" ejaculated Martin.

"It is well that you should know all now," said Charity. "Hear the story, and you will understand why I love and respect you too much to bring you within the shadow of the dishonour which hangs like a pall upon my family's name."

He drew her arm protectingly within his own, and she proceeded to tell the story of her father's shame and sorrow.

"My father," said Charity, "was—nay, is! one of the best, kindest and most affectionate of men. He loved my mother with an intense devotion that amounted almost to passionate worship. I have sometimes thought that he gave her an adoration that should not be accorded to a mortal, and that his sorrow

came upon him as a judgment for his impiety. My father was well-to-do in the world, and my mother was regarded as one of the beauties of her time. My father wooed and won her from many admirers. His love seemed but to increase with marriage, and the admiration of the lover was never submerged in the husband. His happiness seemed to be complete. Child after child was born, and for a score of years my father enjoyed that greatest of all earthly happiness, the supreme pleasure of loving and being loved. My father had infected us children with the belief that my mother was not merely his equal but his superior.

"It is not for a child to judge her mother and I will presume that there was no evil in her nature. My father so persistently preached her superiority that she must be pardoned for believing the chorus of the song that she was always singing—her perfection.

"To her, prepared with a woman's belief in her own superiority, there came a young man, noble and good-looking, with a glib tongue that was ever propounding schemes for the reversal of nature's laws. He had abandoned a plan for bleaching the inhabitants of tropical climates, and was now fired with a desire to prove that men and women were equal in all respects, and

that, if anything, the woman was intended to be the destined monarch of the world. My mother listened with that foolish attention that a woman will always pay to a young and admiring man. His talk seemed to emphasise my father's good opinion of my mother, and she accepted all the cunning suggestions of a black-hearted villain. What arguments he used to blight our home and break my father's heart I know not. I only know that one morning a change came over my father's life. Our mother had fled and taken my youngest sister with her. It was to find my mother that we came to Australia. It was to find her that I joined the Salvation Army. That youngest sister took to a life of crime and died whilst escaping from justice. My mother is a dishonoured wife, possibly a criminal. Now, Martin, you can understand why I will not marry you and bring shame into your life."

"Charity," said Martin Johnson, as he caressed the hand that lay upon his arm, "where there is no sin, there is no shame. Men and women must be judged by their own actions, their own good deeds and bad deeds. It is the sower that should reap, and if an All-Wise Providence has at times visited the sins of the fathers upon the children, it does not

necessarily follow that man should do the same. It is you, Charity, that I love. It is you that I ask to become my wife. True love knows nothing of friends and relations. It cares not whether the object of its affection be worthy of the love or not. It only loves. I think it is Edgar Allen Poe who says that one verse of Thomas Moore embodies the all-in-all of the passion of love—

"Oh, what was love made for, if 'tis not the same,
Through joy and through torment through glory and
shame ?

I know not, I ask not if guilt's in that heart,
I but know that I love thee ; whatever thou art."

"So, Charity I love thee. Whatever your mother was, or is, has nothing to do with my love for you. Now that I have heard the sorrow which clouds your life, I ask you once again to give me the rich gift of your love and to bestow upon me the proudest title that a man could bear, that of your husband. Charity, will you become my wife?"

She looked up into his face and answered simply

"I will."

IN THE HOSPITAL.

IN a ward in the Melbourne Hospital Mr. Montgomery lay sick unto death, gazing up listlessly at the white walls, and seeing only the black record of a wasted and dissipated life. He was but a young man, but he had lived fast and crowded the three score years and ten into less than half that number. He was but little over thirty years of age, yet he lay there marked for death, and with no companions but Regret and Remorse. The fit with which he had been seized was comparatively trifling, for a fiercer and more deadly disease was upon him. His stomach refused to retain any food, and the doctor in whose charge he was shook his head ominously. Sir Harry Irwin wished that the patient might be removed to his hotel, but the physician sternly forbade such a proceeding.

"He is better here," said the doctor, "than at an hotel. It matters very little, however, where he is, for I fear that his case is past hope."

"What disease is he suffering from?" asked Sir Harry Irwin.

"The disease that too often follows upon a life which alternates carelessness with dissipation—the outlet that a break-up of the system finds too quickly and surely—cancer of the stomach."

"And is it likely to be fatal?" asked Sir Harry.

"It is certain," was the reply. "He can be sustained on stimulants for a little time, but spirits will only keep the warmth in his frame; they will not repair the waste of animal tissue. He will slowly waste away for want of genuine nourishment, and he will starve to death."

The sick man heard the words and startled the doctor by asking in a matter-of-fact way—

"Is this the truth, doctor—the honest, inevitable result of my sickness?"

The medical man hesitated an instant, and then decided that it was better that there should be no disguise in the matter.

"It is the truth," he said.

"When shall I die?" asked Montgomery, calmly.

"Not for a day or two," said the physician, "probably in a week or ten days; certainly within a month."

"There is no doubt in the matter?" the actor next inquired.

"None," replied the doctor. "If there be any truth whatever in science your recovery is impossible. The time for a physician has passed. If you have peace to make with Heaven it is a clergyman that you should see."

"Thank you, doctor, for your candour," said the dying man. "Irwin," he continued glancing up at his fellow actor, "I have done many evil deeds in my life and now I want to do one good act. There *is* one wrong that, thank Heaven, is not past reparation. Will you bring Randolph Parker to see me?"

Irwin started, for he had learned the whole story from Parker.

"Surely," said Irwin, kneeling down by the bed side, "you don't wish to add to the wrong you have done him and increase the sorrow of his life by glorying in the ruin you have caused?"

"It is reparation, not ruin," said the invalid, "for Heaven's sake, bring him to me, for *his* peace of mind if not for *mine*. Let me tell him the whole truth before I die, you have heard what the doctor said. My case is hopeless. I shall never rise from this bed again. It is not likely that a man whose hours upon earth are

numbered would indulge in foolish spite. I wish to do Randolph Parker a kind action, and one which I swear to you, he will thank me for."

"I believe you," said Sir Harry Irwin grasping the other by the hand.

"I will bring him to you."

Upon the following day Randolph Parker sat by the bedside of the man who had so grievously wronged him. It required but little medical knowledge to see that the patient was a doomed man. There was an unearthly light in his eyes, and when Randolph Parker approached to him the red colour came into his cheeks, but it was the blush of shame and not the flush of health.

"Randolph Parker," said the dying man, "I have done you a grievous wrong."

"You have indeed," was the reply, "and I would have made you answer for it on earth, but that I can see a higher Power has taken vengeance out of my hands and will shortly call upon you to answer for your misdeed in another world."

"I have done you cruel wrong," was the reply in still fainter tones, "but not so great a wrong as you think. I can at least make some reparation in assuring you that your wife has

never dishonoured your name. It is a dying man who speaks and he tells you the truth."

"What do you mean?" gasped Parker.

"I used all my arts to lead your wife from you. I saw that she was afflicted with the craze of the New Woman, and for my own base purposes I fostered that craze and humoured her ideas as to the perfect equality of women with men. I showed her that in a new country like Australia we might become the apostles of a great and advancing creed which should regenerate the world. We might found a religion in which both sexes would be equal, and whose members would rise superior to all earthly thoughts of marriage or sensuality, where all should be simply pure and intellectually pleasure. It was all a base design of mine, but she listened, and with her youngest daughter eloped with me. Whenever the villainous portion of my scheme attempted to develop itself, she repulsed me. I waited my time till we arrived in Australia, but she was always ice to me, and though her good name was compromised she was never more than what a sister might have been. She was willing to go about and appear to be my wife, but she was far more removed from me than as if she had been under your roof. This life became intolerable for I was never of

a platonic nature. As soon as we arrived your daughter learnt sufficient of me to know that I did not want *her* about us. She left and I believe fell into evil ways. Soon your wife, finding what I did not care to conceal, that she had been duped, left me and when last I heard of her was a nurse in some country hospital. This is the truth, I swear to you Parker, upon the word of a dying man, who, before the sun sets will have been committed for trial before a higher than earthly tribunal."

Here the nurse intervened, as she saw that the patient was growing weaker and weaker. She drew the screen around the bed to hide the last scene from the rest of the ward. Parker sat gazing at his enemy, and all feeling of revenge went out from his heart as he witnessed the final spasm convulse the wasted frame as the life left it.



RANDOLPH PARKER FINDS
HIS WIFE.

LITTLE of importance took place with the Parkers during the next few months. Randolph searched in vain for his wife, and decided at last to abandon his search and return to England. His daughters and their affianced husbands resolved to accompany him and celebrate a double wedding in the old land.

The Port Melbourne pier was a scene of bustle and excitement consequent upon the departure of the mail boat for England. There was a full complement of passengers, amongst those who had booked berths being Randolph Parker and his two daughters, Sir Harry Irwin; and Martin Johnson, who had decided to take up the work of reformation in the great city of London.

There was a great crowd of people on the pier, many of whom went out in the tug to bid a last farewell and *bon voyage* to departing relatives.

It was a beautiful day; old Sol shone smilingly out overhead, as if amused at the busy scene below. The best of friends must part, however, and after much hearty hand-shaking and tearful adieux "The Kangaroo" bounded off *en route* "to Merrie England."

"My friend yonder is struggling under some heavy load of sorrow," thought Captain Dawson to himself as he eyed Randolph Parker, with his arms folded, standing gazing vacantly out on the water.

Captain Dawson was one of those bluff, weather-beaten British seaman, who felt ill at ease unless he saw all around him comfortable, so that it was not long ere, as the captain put it, he took Randolph Parker "in tow."

Martin Johnson and Charity were great favourites on board, the women and children particularly taking to the latter, who would be one moment ministering to some invalid and the next romping the deck in girlish glee with the children. Yes, "the little woman in black," as she was lovingly called, was immensely popular.

Sir Harry and Pleasure busied themselves arranging impromptu performances, much to the delight of their fellow passengers. Sir Harry Irwin's dramatic recitals were, of course, "a whole show in themselves," but if the

audiences on board were astonished, it was nothing to the surprise that Pleasure had in store for "the eminent actor."

She had coyly hinted that she'd like to attempt a love scene with Sir Harry—the latter readily acquiesced—"of course we must have a rehearsal," queried Pleasure.

"One! nay, a dozen," replied Sir Harry, with a merry twinkle in his eye, "they require to be word perfect, and besides love scenes, darling, demand much attention as regards business and detail," and bending down he passionately kissed the upturned lips. Pleasure's "first appearance" was a great success and brought down the house (or to be exact the boat).

Sir Harry, who had seen much of this kind of thing was fairly astounded at her remarkable performance. "Why Pleasure my love, you're a born genius and would take London by storm," he cried delightedly. The entertainments were continued and Sir Harry, who was "stage manager," insisted on Miss Parker always contributing love scenes with himself. All went merry as the proverbial marriage bell, till one morning as Captain Dawson and Randolph Parker walked the deck arm-in-arm, the former said—

"I'll tell you what it is, Parker old man, unless you throw this load of sorrow off your mind, the weight of it will sink the blooming boat; and, by the way, that reminds me unless I am very much mistaken there's a trifle of rough weather a head of us, or my name's not Dawson."

There was no beating about the bush with Dawson, a skilful seaman, honest to the heart's core and "straight as a die," he always spoke his mind. As the day wore on and evening approached, it was plain to all on board that there was a "trifle of rough weather ahead." Captain Dawson was too old a bird to be caught napping and so gave orders to have everything in readiness for the reception of the approaching storm that was about to swoop down upon them.

The sun had disappeared and darker and darker grew the night, while the wind whistled as if to signal to Captain Dawson that the storm king would soon be on hand.

Dawson smiled, "this is not the first storm I've been in by many a long shot," he thought.

Gradually the gale came upon them, the once whistling wind now blowing a hurricane, and as each clap of thunder, which appeared to start with a deafening boom directly over-head, rolled

with a terrific rumble through the heavens and eventually died away in the distance, another, louder and still more gigantic arose and galloped in its wake.

The slumbering ocean as if awakened from its sleep by the continuous roaring of the wind and booming of the thunder, now fairly angered, rose mountains high.

Hither and thither like a child's plaything the vessel was mercilessly tossed from billow to billow—the huge waves dashed over the sides of the ship sweeping all before them. Captain Dawson had a heart of British oak, and now fully alive to the fact that they were "in trouble," stood at his post, calm, cool and collected.

Life belts were served out to everybody, and on the Captain's orders the boats were lowered. Captain and crew, Randolph, Sir Harry and Martin worked like Trojans in their frantic endeavours to get the women and children into the boats. The scene was a fearful one, the waves dashing on board and dealing destruction in all directions. The heartrending cries of women and children baffle description, for the struggle of life and death had now begun in real earnest.

Presently there arose high above the maddened storm the shrill shriek of a woman as a

huge wave dashed on deck and then back again, carrying over the side of the vessel the fragile form of Charity.

Randolph Parker had seen the last of his daughter.

Captain Dawson and Randolph stood side by side, the latter refusing to leave without the former.

Thunder, lightning, wind and rain, the storm continued unabated, but notwithstanding the extreme difficulty everybody with the exception of Charity, who was swept overboard, and Dawson and Parker, were got into the boats.

"For God's sake, Dawson come, let us leave the doomed vessel," said Parker. "No, old man," replied the Captain, "I'll stick by her till the last. You go, I'm all right; save yourself," with which he fairly pushed him over the side of the boat. As he did so one of the ship's timbers came crashing on to the deck with terrific force, striking the skipper.

Captain Dawson died at his post. He was killed on the spot.

This was a wild night at sea, and though the rain that had been descending in one long continuous downpour had now ceased, the wind still howled furiously, and the boats were tossing

about entirely at the mercy of the waves, the occupants praying for the Heavenly day-break.

This was evidently not the only shipwreck, for shooting high up through the blackness of the night sky-rockets and other signals of distress might be seen in all directions. "At last! At last! Thank God at last!" cried Sir Harry, as, peering through the darkness, those in the boats could see a light, apparently about the size of a man's hand. This imbued them with courage. They must be closer to land than they thought, and the people on the coast had kindled a fire in answer to their signals of distress—either this, or what they saw must be the beacon of a neighbouring lighthouse.

The light in the distance grew larger and larger, when lo! and behold it was spread out into a stupendous sheet of flame, a floating fiery mass.

Nearer, nearer, nearer, and the terrible truth dawns upon the castaways, this is no answering signal, no lighthouse, but a ship on fire. Nearer, nearer, nearer, heart rendering cries of anguish are now distinctly heard proceeding from the burning boat. Aided by the glare the terror stricken occupants of the boats can now plainly see those on board working heroically to get the boats away from the ship. This they

accomplish with much peril. The man who had been directing operations, the Captain, has also gone, the last to leave the vessel—no, not the last, for see there appears on deck a woman. All earthly hope of rescue is gone—no, not all, for Randolph Parker leaping from out of the boat into the water, makes for the burning pile. A wild heart broken wail comes from the woman as Parker is seen to clamber up the side of the burning ship.

But it is not to be, for losing his hold Randolph Parker falls back into the water.

* * * * *

At last the day breaks, and oh! what a scene of sad disaster met the gaze. No trace can now be seen of the burning ship, of the "Kangaroo," Randolph Parker or of Charity. The sea is litterly strewn with wreckage, sad relics of a memorable night.

Those on board the large vessels that now appeared like magic, nothing being known of their proximity the night before, took care of the wrecked people. Judge of Martin Johnson's joy on discovering that Charity was on board, having been rescued the night before.

As there were no tidings of Randolph Parker, the opinion was freely expressed that he had been picked up and probably taken on to

Melbourne by one of the many vessels *en route*
for the land of the Newest Woman.

* * * * *

Some short time after the fearful wreck on the terrible night referred to above, the fishermen on the coast, in the vicinity of the wreck, had plenty to do in recovering the wreckage that was thrown up on the beach.

The Melbourne *Age* one day some time after the fearful disaster, gave a long and detailed account of finding of several bodies that had been washed ashore. It was noted at the time as being most remarkable that two bodies, a man and a woman, were found tightly locked in each other's embrace, on the body of the man being found a cabinet photograph of the dead woman by his side.

* * * * *

Randolph Parker had found his wife.

Years have passed, and the shadow of sorrow and disgrace has long been gone from the lives of Lady Irwin and Mrs. Martin Johnson. Happy in the loves of their husbands, content to labour in the respective spheres to which Heaven had called them, and blessed with the musical laughter of merry children, they feel no yearnings for that "equality" which led their mother to leave her loving husband and happy

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home. The agitation for the new, the newer, and the newest woman still continues, but has no interest for the daughters of Randolph Parker. In their opinion at any rate the destined monarch of the world is not the New Woman, but that great power behind the throne—the True Woman.



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