

MELVILLE'S MISSION.

Seated beneath the veranda of his Queensland homestead, and gazing contentedly on the broad expanse of pasture land before him, Mark Melville looked the picture of content. He and his brother Frank owned the largest flocks of sheep and herds of cattle near Darling Downs, and he was mentally mapping out a trip to "the old country," when his pleasant musings were cut short by the arrival of one of the ranchmen on horseback.

"Well, Jim," queried Mark, "what's your hurry, my lad? Are the police on your track?"

"No, sir," was the reply, with a faint attempt at a smile. "Wuss en that, wuss that luck. It's about Mister Frank, sir."

Mark's tall figure was standing erect in an instant, and he eagerly asked, "Mister Frank! What of him? Speak out, Jim, quick!"

"Well, sir, he's bin shot down at Grundy's saloon, about an hour ago." Then Jim paused, nervously fumbling with his horse's mane, and added, "I'm afeard it's all up with him, sir."

"Frank shot! Good Heavens! It can't be true. Here, Barney! Bill! get the bay mare saddled and bring her around at once. Frank shot! My poor—Who is she scoundrel? He cannot live here. Nobody in this district would have had the heart to hurt him."

"It was a stranger as shot him, sir, and the wust of it is as he's escaped; but a lot of the boys were after him, and if he's caught it'll be a case of the Lord's ave mussy on his soul! I b'lieve he's been staying at Pintold's farm for a day or two."

"Then I met him this morning," said Mark, eagerly. "He was dressed in grey tweed and rode a dark brown cob. He pulled up and asked me how far it was to the town."

Just then, Barney brought up the bay mare, and without uttering another word, Mark leaped into the saddle and started off at full gallop in the direction of Toowoomba. Twenty minutes later, he was in the room at the rear of Grundy's saloon, bending over the dead body of his brother.

"What a miserable end!" he sobbed, "my merry, light-hearted chum! But the wretch who laid you low, my boy, shall die by my hands! I will be his judge and executioner as well. I will, Frank, so heaven help me."

He gently covered the face of the dead man, and strode into the bar, where a score of men were excitedly discussing the details of the crime and extolling the many good qualities of poor Frank Melville.

In reply to Mark's queries, Grundy, the barkeeper, described how he and Red Rory had been talking at the far end of the bar, when in walked a young fellow, a town bird by his looks, most likely from Brisbane: name supposed to be Durning. He ordered a drink. Rory asked him to have a drink with him. He says as he never drinks with strangers. Rory said as he must be a stuck-up sort of cuss. He whips out a revolver and fires at Rory; just missed. Rory fires back; misses, too. Then, the young fellow has a second aim, just as Mister Frank, who'd been reading a paper, steps forward to stop the row, and he was shot down, when only a yard off, as if he'd been a dog.

Mark listened with feverish attention to every word of the story. He said nothing at its close, but his tightly-compressed lips and the nervous twitching of his fingers showed, more plainly than words could have done, that he meant mischief.

During the following two days, which were chiefly occupied by the inquest and the funeral, Mark was gloomy and taciturn. Only three witnesses gave evidence before the coroner, Grundy and Red Rory, who told the story we have already heard, and Martin Pintold, who had merely to say that the man Durning called at his farm-house the morning before the murder and asked for food and shelter. He said he had been out shooting, had lost his way in the bush, and he seemed quite exhausted. He had plenty of money on him, and said he lived in Brisbane.

A verdict of wilful murder against Henry Durning was returned, and two days afterwards, having placed full control of his affairs in the hands of a trusty servant, Mark Melville started for Brisbane to fulfil his mission of vengeance.

Although he had a few friends in the city, he engaged a room at the principal hotel, but directly afterwards called at the office of Messrs. Crawford and Sherwin, who had for many years attended to the shipment of his clip of wool to London. Mr. Crawford welcomed his client cordially. Mark told him the object of his visit, and the shipper, who had been deeply grieved by Frank's tragic death, said:—

"It's an awfully sad affair, Mr. Melville; but do not, I beg, think of avenging Frank's death with your own hands. Let the law punish the guilty."

"I'll think over it," Mark coldly replied. "Do, there's a good fellow. And you'll stop at my house while here?"

"No thanks. I shall have a better chance of meeting him in the hotel quarter."

"Well, come round to-night. We shall be glad to see you."

Mark accepted the invitation and then went off to the public-office, where he remained for half an hour in close conference with the officials who had the tracking of Henry Durning in hand. He left his address and requested they would inform him if any clue were found. In the evening he called on Crawford, and was heartily received by the host, hostess, and their family, a strapping son and two buxom daughters. There was also present a Mr. Lennox and his daughter, Maud, intimate friends of the Crawfords. She was singularly sweet and winning in her manner, which indicated a happy blending of girlish gaiety and gentleness, rendering her particularly attractive in the eyes of Frank Melville, who, under the shadow of his great sorrow, was inclined to despondency.

He thought that he had never seen so lovely a woman before, and when she sang in tender and touching tones a few old ballads, he was so much affected that he could hardly restrain his emotion.

Mr. Lennox, a prosperous store-keeper, was much interested in Mark's painful position and invited him to his house, the hospitable request being acceded to with unusual eagerness, a fact which was duly noted by Maud, to whom it did not seem at all displeasing.

The Lennoxes lived in one of the prettiest houses in the outskirts of Brisbane, and on one pretext or another, Mark called

almost daily. Mr. Lennox was a widower, and, as Maud was left in sole charge of the house for a good portion of the day, Mark enjoyed the exclusive companionship of that very charming young lady whenever he made a morning or an afternoon call. It must be confessed that, although he did not relax his efforts to find some trace of Henry Durning, he prolonged his stay in Brisbane rather more than was necessary, and he began to be conscious of this. At last, after many consultations with the police, Mark concluded that the murderer must have left Brisbane by steamer for Sydney on the day after the crime was committed, so he decided to follow him at once.

Before leaving he called to see Miss Lennox, who was busy with some needlework when he arrived. She greeted him with frank cordiality, but he was ill at ease. He could not decide on the best method of announcing his departure; but at last, during an awkward pause in the conversation, he abruptly said:—

"I have come to say good-bye, Miss Lennox. I am going to Sydney tomorrow."

She started, and her cheeks paled a little, but her voice betrayed no emotion as she replied:—

"Oh, Mr. Melville, I am sorry you are leaving so soon; very sorry, for my brother Charley returned home last night, and I wanted you to become great friends. He will be here directly, for he has only gone down towards the city to buy the 'Courier,' to post himself up in civilized affairs, as he says, before he returns to the office. But where are you going to in such a hurry, Mr. Melville—have you had any news of—of him?"

"Nothing definite," he answered gloomily; "but it is believed that he left here for Sydney, and it is my duty to track him down. My poor brother's death is still unavenged, and I cannot rest anywhere, not even with you, until the assassin meets his just doom. Indeed, Miss Lennox, here Mark looked straight into her beautiful eyes, "I am afraid that the fascination of your society has caused me to neglect the task I set myself."

She flushed slightly at the compliment and pretended to be very anxious to find a pin on the little work-table. Then, raising her eyes, she gently asked, "Is the mission worthy of you, Mr. Melville?" and, with just the suspicion of a tremor in her voice: "Is it not full of danger to yourself?"

"I have no fear of the result, Miss Lennox, if ever I should meet the man I seek, my only fear is that he may elude me. And you would not ask if it were worthy of me, had you known poor Frank. For ten years we lived happily together on the farm, of which he was the light and life. We had in our English home been surrounded with every comfort that kind parents could bestow upon us, until disaster came. My father, through trusting false friends, became a bankrupt, and it broke his heart. A few months afterwards my mother was laid in the same grave, and her last words to me were, 'Mark, my son, take care of Frank.'"

He paused a few seconds, as if overcome by his feelings, then he resumed:—

"With all our bright prospects hopelessly destroyed, we determined to seek our fortunes in Australia. I was twenty-three and he was twenty when we landed here and found what we sought. But I would sacrifice every penny I can call my own and every living thing upon the farm, if I could only stand in Brisbane today with Frank at my side! Forgive me, Miss Lennox, I am distressing you," for the tears were streaming down her cheeks as he spoke, "but you are the only being in the world I have told this to, or could tell it to."

"Ah! if you had but known him! Why, in all those long, lonely years, he was the one gleam of sunshine in our house, which made it like home, and made life bearable. No matter how severe were the struggles we had at first, no matter how serious the disasters that befell our early efforts, Frank's merry laugh was never stilled, his light heart and sunny temperament were superior to misfortune. And now my brother, my chum, is dead!" His voice became hoarse and broken, but suddenly hardened as he concluded: "And his murderer lives, and, maybe, gloats over his crime—perhaps in this very city!"

He leaned forward and buried his face in his hands, while Maud arose, and with infinite pity in her eyes, leaned gently over him, and was about to whisper in his ear some soothing words of sympathy, when the door was thrown suddenly open, and a bright, curly-haired young fellow entered, and, waving a newspaper gleefully in his hand, exclaimed "Maud! Maud! I have glorious news!" Then he saw that his sister was not alone, and he looked inquiringly at the stranger, whose back was towards him.

"Maud said gently, 'My brother Charley is here, Mr. Melville,' and, mastering his grief, Mark got up, and turning round stood face to face with the man who, from the description, he knew must be his brother's murderer!"

Poor Mark was in a dilemma. He did not know how to act in order to spare this gentle girl any pain. But Charley came to the rescue by replying to her agonized look of inquiry:—

"When I came in I said I had glorious news, and so I have in this late edition of the Courier. For the last fortnight I have been living with a charge of murder against me; but I am innocent. I know that my bare statement would go for nothing, but there is absolute proof that what I say is true. Read this paragraph Maud."

She lost in amazement, read as follows:—

"Startling Development in the Melville Murder Case.—On Wednesday evening James Grundy, keeper of a saloon in Toowoomba, was shot by Roderick Taylor, a customer, known in the district as 'Red Rory.' Grundy is not expected to recover and his assailant has been arrested. The extraordinary feature about the case is that the wounded man has made a statement regarding the Melville case, which completely exonerates Henry Durning from complicity in the murder. According to Grundy's assertion, Durning entered the saloon and asked for a bottle of beer. Red Rory demanded a drink from him; he refused, when the former, without any provocation, fired at him. Durning then made for the door, and Mr. Frank Melville, who had been looking at a newspaper, dashed forward to prevent Red

Rory firing a second shot, but the pistol went off and mortally wounded Mr. Melville."

As Maud ceased reading she was still quite mystified, and inquired, "But how can you be effected by this, Charley?"

"Well, that wants a little explanation. When our shooting party started out, Willie Stanhope suggested that we should travel, like the Queen does sometimes, under assumed names, and we fell in with the idea, just for fun, so that I am Henry Durning who has been suspected of the crime. At the inquest a verdict of wilful murder was returned against me, and everybody in and about Toowoomba believed me guilty, until this news came out."

Mark muttered, "Thank God! it is not her brother," and held out his hand to Charley, who grasped it warmly.

"And now," said Maud, "your mission is ended."

"Not quite," replied Mark, taking her soft white hand in his big brown one. "When I left home it was to fulfil a mission of hate, but it has been turned—I hardly know how—into a mission of love, for I love you very dearly."

At this point Charley discreetly slipped out of the room.

"If you, Maud, will make it a successful mission, you may bring into my life even more joy and happiness than did that poor lad who left before Red Rory's revolver. Do you think, dear, that you could do this?" He drew her gently towards him as he concluded, and as her head reclined on his shoulder, she answered, "I will try."

REMINISCENCES OF LINCOLN.

His Kindly Method of Dealing With Applicants for Clemency.

Representative Bundy, of Ohio, enjoys among other things two distinctions—he is the father-in-law of Judge Foraker, the noted republican from the Buckeye state, and was a presidential elector for Abraham Lincoln.

"The following reminiscences about 'Old Abe,'" said Mr. Bundy the other day, "have never been in print. I heard them while visiting my town in 1862, on which occasion I had come on to Washington to secure the release of a union recruiting officer who had been unjustly charged with having made false vouchers of enlistments, and had been sent to Baltimore and placed in jail at Fort McHenry. Before me in the line of those waiting to see the president was the wife of a colonel of an Illinois regiment who had been captured and was imprisoned in the south. She wanted to secure a special order of exchange for her husband."

"I can't do it, madam," said Mr. Lincoln, in his most polite manner. "There have been altogether too many special exchanges already. Besides, Jeff Davis won't do anything I want him to. He has fifty thousand privates in his kingdom whom I should prefer to exchange rather than your husband."

"But my husband is a brave man and a loyal one. I cannot understand what you mean," was the lady's reply.

"Madam," replied Lincoln, as he pulled his old quill pen from behind his ear, "with this pen I can make a colonel in five seconds, but I cannot give him a regiment." Then he added kindly: "Go and see Gen. Hatch, who has charge of exchanges. If he will grant your request I will not interfere."

"The next person in line," continued Mr. Bundy, "was a man with some alleged letters of loyalty from an ex-governor of Maryland. As he handed them to Mr. Lincoln another man, what had been said and interrupted the conversation to tell Lincoln that the papers must have been forged, as the Maryland ex-governor has been dead for several years. The man who had brought in the letter collapsed, and Lincoln with that peculiar pity which he could show even to those who least deserved it, replied quickly: 'O, never mind, sir, never mind, sir; I would rather get a letter from a dead man than from a live man any day.'"

"The third to have a conversation with the president was a Wall street broker and adventurer, who wanted to be made assistant secretary of the treasury, so as to relieve the government, as he declared, by floating an issue of bonds. His plan was to borrow for the government a certain amount of money on a pledge of \$100,000,000 of United States bonds which were to be issued as collateral for the payment of the loan. The plan of the schemer was very evidently to break the price of the bonds and then get possession of them at a price less than the market, for his margin was very narrow."

"Mr. Lincoln listened patiently until the man was through, and then as he eyed him closely he said solemnly: 'My friend, that is a mighty good plan to get bonds for less than they are worth and very well thought out; but,' as he shook his head, 'don't ask me to help you in it.'"

At last it was Mr. Bundy's return. He told Mr. Lincoln, by way of introduction, that he had been a Lincoln elector, and that what he wanted to ask of him was simply an act of justice to the falsely imprisoned recruiting officer. Mr. Lincoln heard the story, and then said: 'My friend, when are you going to start for home?' It was Saturday night, and Mr. Bundy told the president that, as he did not travel Sunday, he should start on Monday morning.

Mr. Lincoln paused a moment and then said: "Well, sir, unless you start for Ohio at once your friend will wait you home."

One Way of Getting a Living.

"S'king about the odd ways of making a living," said a lawyer to me, "I can tell you a new one, and it is followed by a man who says he does fairly well. He goes from office to office all over the city and does nothing but sew on buttons for men of all kinds, bachelors and boys and married men too. It's a nickel a button, and he generally furnishes the button, and he in most cases, he says, the men have the buttons with them. As he enters an office his usual salutation is, 'Buttons, buttons, any buttons?' and on either coat, vest or trousers every man is pretty sure to find a button off or nearly ready to come off. The genius carries his pockets of buttons of every kind and class, and he seldom fails to match. His waxed breads, needles and scissors are ready at hand, and a man need not miss five minutes from his duties to be nicely repaired a far as buttons are concerned. The sewed button sewer is not very commu-

nicative, but it's a bad day when he fails to sew on 20 buttons. In one office at least, where six or eight are employed, I saw him gather 40 cents in a half hour. And a girl paid him 10 cents at that amount if he would stitch two loose buttons on her jacket and make them firm."

"THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM."

What the Great Astronomer Camille Flammarion has to say of it.

Some time ago various newspapers of Europe and America contained the startling intelligence that the star which guided the "Wise Men" would again appear. This star was connected with that celebrated one which three hundred and eighteen years ago disappeared from the constellation of Cassiopeia, and it was found that this star of 1572 had previously appeared in the years 1264 and 945, and, if counted back, must have appeared in the year of the birth of Christ. It these facts were well established, we must certainly expect the star to appear again in our days. We should then see a new body in the heavens, entirely unlike any fixed star to be seen in full daylight, which would in a short time again disappear.

Every astronomer in recent times was asked hundreds of questions on the subject. Is it true that the Star of Bethlehem will again appear? Is it periodical? Is its place in the sky appointed? The next question is: What really happened in 1572? It was a few months after St. Bartholomew's Night, Tycho Brahe, the great observer of those days, tells us that: "One evening, as I was watching the heavens in my accustomed manner, I saw to my great astonishment, in the constellation of Cassiopeia, a brilliant star of unusual clearness." This was on November 11, 1572. Three days before the star had been seen by Cornelius Gemma, who spoke of it as "the new Venus." With regard to the Star of Bethlehem, there are five assumptions: (1.) It had no existence, and the entire statement is a beautiful Oriental fairy tale. (2.) The fixed star, seen by the Wise men, was Venus, at the time of its greatest splendor. (3.) It was a periodical star like that of 1572. (4.) The phenomenon was occasioned by a conjunction of planets. (5.) It was a comet. Of these assumptions, the most probable is the second. That it was a periodical is scarcely likely, for Ptolemy and Ma-tuan-lin would have spoken of it. The fourth statement was suggested in 1816, by the German astronomer, Ideler, and repeated by Encke in 1831. In the year 3 B. C., there were conjunctions of the planets Jupiter, Mars and Saturn on May 29, September 3, and December 5, but on none of these days were the planets nearer together than a degree, so that the Wise Men must have been very near-sighted to take them for one star. The fifth assumption is also not to be considered, for people already knew how to distinguish a comet from other stars, and, besides, we have no knowledge of a comet at that time. For all these reasons we have not the least occasion to expect the return of the Star of Bethlehem at the close of our century. And even if such a star should appear, it would simply be the twenty-sixth such case observed in historical times, and the interest attached to it would be purely astronomical.

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O! Diamond Dyes, ye colors fair, Prepared with scientific care, Ye joy of every woman's heart, From our lov'd homes, oh, ne'er depart. Ye are our choice, our joy, our pride, Forever in our homes abide, That ye may show our marvellous powers, When time brings on our dying hours.

In vain have speculators tried To mar thy worth, thy flame deride; But women's hearts so warm and true, Forever loyal are to you. Shine on! shine on! ye stars of light, Ye Diamond Dyes so fast and bright, Ye gems of true economy, May millions yet be bless'd by thee.

Cure for Somnambulism. An old colored "mammy," noted for her originality in methods of nursing, declares that she cured a whole family of sleep walking by placing a strip of oilcloth each side of the bed—the feet touching the cold floor awakened the sleeper. Wet carpet on the floor is a not unknown remedy, and a bath tub of water where the wandering sleeper would descend into it on leaving his bed is the rather heroic treatment sometimes resorted. The old mammy's method deserves a trial, and would seem to be both effective and not too severe.

The Czar's royal yacht, the Polar Star, cost more than £1,000,000.

W bin the memory of middle aged people CONSUMPTION and other Lung troubles were much more prevalent and fatal than they are to-day. The existing improvement in the public health in this respect is, in considerable measure, due to a more widespread appreciation of sanitary laws; but PUTNER'S EMULSION OF COD LIVER OIL, with the Hypophosphites of Lime and Soda, and Pancreatine, may justly claim to have largely aided the good work. Many persons who, some years ago, were in a most critical state of health are to-day sound and well, as a consequence of a faithful use of this valuable remedy.

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