

CHAPTER II

As the girl walked slowly down the path, the outline of which could now only be discerned by the light of the stars, Captain Lathom's collie dog came running after her, and thrust his cold nose against her hand with a whine of satisfaction. In his affections Helen came next to his master, and he knew that she understood him when he so often sat on the verandah steps, whining, and gazing wistfully down the path after "the captain" when the latter had told him with unaffected sternness to stay with his mistress, though to his mistress poor Russ was generally "an odious creature," who would insist on following his master about the house whenever he was at home.

"Come, Russ. We shall have a whole hour or more to ourselves."

The dog leaped ahead, and plunged into the under-
scrub in search of paddymelons or bandicoots, or some
predatory iguana stealing through the thick carpet of
dry leaves towards the settlers' fowl-houses.

The road to the wharf led in a straight line from the
commandant's house, and showed like a riband of white
through the dark vista of lofty trees on each side. It
was ankle deep in soft powdery dust, still warm to even
the booted foot from the rays of a scorching Australian
sun. At the verge of the bank, however, the dust ended,