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LISC

The Little Scissors.

Vol. I.

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No. 2.

MR. NOBODY.

I know a funny little man,
As quiet as a mouse,
Who does the mischief that is done
In everybody's house.
There's no one ever sees his face,
And yet we all agree,
That every plate we break was cracked
By Mr. No-bod-ee.

'Tis he tears our books,
Who leaves our doors ajar;
He pulls the buttons from our shirts,
And scatters pins afar.
That squeaking door will always squeak,
For, prithee, don't you see,
We leave the office to be done
By Mr. No-bod-ee.

The finger-marks upon the doors,
By none of us are made;
We never have the blinds unclosed,
To let the curtains fade;
The ink we never spill; the boots
That lying round you see,
Are not our boots! They belong
To Mr. No-bod-ee.

KILLING AN OLD MAN.

It was shortly after the opening of the great Exhibition of 1851, that I set sail from England for the gold fields of New South Wales, with a heart brimful of hope and expectation, and pockets, boxes, and portmanteaus, made of sufficiently capacious dimensions to hold any amount of the precious metal (when found,) in addition to my somewhat scanty wardrobe.

Well do I remember the packing of that black-leather portmanteau, and the swallow-tailed dress-coat that my mother would insist upon putting in, although, having a presentiment that such articles of apparel were not *comme il faut* at the gold fields, I vigorously resisted the measures. I also remember the many dozen pairs of warm socks that had been manufactured with sisterly affection and grey worsted, by the five girls—from Julia, the eldest, aged nineteen, down to Susan, the youngest, just turned nine. Finally I have a distinct memory of how my maiden aunt, on the strength of her sixteen stone weight, jumped upon the aforesaid portmanteau and performed a kind of war dance thereon, so as to enable Tom, the groom, and Mary, the housemaid, to strap and lock it, and how after many tears being shed by my father and mother, sister and brother, and my maiden aunt in particular, I was whisked away to the railway station in order to catch the 9.45 a.m. train for London.

I will not dwell on the voyage out, because it was very much like other voyages. Suffice it to say that in just a hundred days we arrived at Sydney, the Capital of New South Wales, and here I discovered that the favorite gold field of the day was at Ophir, near Bathurst, 145 miles up the country. Here some tremendous finds had lately been made, and people had been turning up nuggets like an Irishman shovels up potatoes.

In due time, after a fortnight's weary journey in an ox-cart, which also contained my cradle, my pick and shovel, my tent, and other camp requisites, as well as my personal luggage, I arrived at the gold-fields.

I found Ophir then a peculiar and yet a romantic looking place. Two hills rose in a pyramid shape toward the sky, both covered with gentle undulations, both thinly timbered to their summits. The lower slopes of these hills were thickly dotted with diggers' tents, and the Summer-Hill Creek wound right around their base.

At the time I reached this gold field the diggings were estimated to cover an extent of 500 miles, though eight months previously the existence of gold in any part of Australia was utterly unknown.

I lost no time in pitching my tent, and making out a claim, and twenty-four hours later I was as hard at work as the rest of them.

My tent was pitched in close proximity to one occupied by two strong burly fellows of the old convict class, or at least such I set them down to be, on account of the odd way in which I fancied each of them lifted the left leg in walking, a peculiarity appertaining to most men who have been accustomed to perambulate in leg-irons for any lengthy period. These men were always very civil to me, and of course I was the same; and yet, somehow or other, I contracted a dread of them, which I could neither overcome nor combat; and when sometimes one or the other of them would stroll up, pipe in mouth, to the edge of my pit, and ask me how I was getting on, I used to fancy that it was only done to see whether I was turning up anything good, and consequently worth robbing; and I used to conceal my gold in all sorts of out-of-the-way places to elude their suspected designs.

One night I heard a horrid revelation that confirmed all my suspicions against these men. And now I come to the very subject matter of my story.

I have said that my tent adjoined that of my two mysterious acquaintances; in fact the canvass of one tent touched that of the other; and from my tent I could hear the conversation they carried on in their very plainly. I had never before listened to their discourse, but one night, just as I was retiring to bed, I heard one say to the other:—"Yes, this little knife did it for him; I killed the old man with one blow sir."

The horrible admission staggered me, and I felt that I must listen to the end of this discourse now, at whatever risk to myself, so I glued my ear to the canvass in time to hear his mate rejoin: "Did you now? And did the fellow resist you?"

"Faith and he did," replied the assassin. "He grasped me till he nearly pressed the life out of me, and tried to rip me up with his spur; but I drove the knife into him up to the hilt, and then cut his head off."

"Bravo, Charlie!" cried the other, "that makes the seventh old man we've killed since our arrival in the colonies, don't it?"

"No, the eighth," was the reply. "Don't you remember that black fellow?"

"Oh, aye, to be sure, right you are," said the other; "but what have you done with the illustrious dead in this present instance?"

"Why I left the body in the bush, with the exception of the legs, which are here in the tent."

The conversation here ceased, and was not resumed; in fact, a stentorian snoring soon told me that it was very improbable that it would be so

for that night, at the least; so I crept into my bed, but not to sleep (how could I, after so horrible a discovery?) but to reflect upon all that I had heard.

"The eighth old man they had killed! and one of them an unfortunate black fellow. Oh, the wretched miscreants!" I muttered to myself; and then I wandered away, and I wondered why it was that they always murdered old men—how it was that their last victim tried to rip his murderer up with a spur, such an extraordinary weapon of defence, and what on earth had induced the assassin to cut his victim's legs and bring them into his tent. At last, however, I did sink into a disturbed unrefreshing slumber, and was afflicted by a frightful dream, in which I fancied that one of my next door neighbours was kneeling on my chest and cutting my throat from ear to ear.

My dream had, in fact, some slight foundation, for I was awakened by a rough hand shaking me by the shoulder; and my eyes, on opening them, rested on the rough bearded face of the very man I had been dreaming of.

I was about to scream "murder!" for I thought that my last hour had come; but glancing around I saw that it was broad daylight, and that the fellow was merely asking me for a match to light his pipe with. This I immediately gave him, and he went away with a muttered expression of thanks.

That day, instead of going to work, I set out for the tent of the police commissioner, and after a long walk succeeded in reaching it. I had to wait a very long time before I was granted an audience; but when I was ushered into the presence of the dread functionary, and told him as succinctly as possible the circumstances of the case, and how I had heard the rascals confess their numerous crimes, and particularly their last murder, the enthusiasm of the commissioner was fully aroused, and he felt as anxious for their capture and punishment as myself. He suggested that two policemen, disguised as diggers, and well armed, should come to my tent that evening, on the pretence of paying me a visit as old acquaintances, and that after it was dark, and the two murderers had turned in for the night, we should rush into their tent and secure them.

This was a very feasible plot, and I heartily entered into it; so I minutely described the position of my tent, and to make it still more easily discoverable, promised that a bright red pocket handkerchief should be hanging on some conspicuous part of it, as though to dry, and having made all these arrangements, I took my leave.

Well, I got back to my abode about one o'clock in the afternoon, and after a hasty meal, not wishing to lose a whole day, I went to my claim, and set to for a three hours' dig. Strange to say, I had not been at work five minutes, when I came across a pretty little nugget, of about the size of a walnut, and a few minutes later picked out another as large as a crab-apple. I was about to pocket the latter, when I looked up and saw one of the assassins gazing down on me.

"Lucky find, mate!" said he, with a broad grin, that in my prejudiced mind seemed to say, "Aye, but it will be mine before long."