

THE GAMECOCK

BY ALBERT DORRINGTON

(Copyright, 1908, by the New York Herald (Co. All Rights Reserved.)

HE was thickset and cheerful, with a fresh-faced and kindly eye—his right one was concealed under a fish-bone shield. He joined us as we tramped along the wind-swept Australian road, his swag dangling gurgling from his left shoulder.

It was the Sydney-Newcastle road, much frequented by runaway sailors and occasional deserters from the war ships stationed at Farm Cove. Newcastle is the port where the Valparaiso-bound ships depend upon the efforts of the crimp house to whip a crew together at a moment's notice.

The man who joined us was evidently a sailor suffering from a long spell ashore, as his ragged clothes and lacerated boots testified. My mate and I did not yearn for his society, but in Australia the tracks between port and port are lonely, and the long dry space between drinks salts even the comradeship of the deep sea blatherskite.

"Australia's a red hot hole to a chap that's used to king's highway and a pot of four 'arf every two miles," he began. "There's isn't enough water in the country to wash a little dog's face."

We admitted regretfully that our legislators were denuding the country of the old grog lazzarets, where the stately bushman went to poison the atmosphere with his eloquence. We made other references to the dismal state of the country, which fell dead on the ears of the red faced sailor man.

We pushed on, hugging the railway, until the sun stared ahead of us down the long white road. It stayed in our eyes until each man tasted the brine from his own sweat-soaked skin. We called a halt and flung ourselves at the foot of the Waitara railway embankment.

The one-eyed man took out his pipe and watched us fill ours, while speech hung dead between us. He waited fifty seconds until our tobacco returned to our pockets. Then, with a sigh, he drew out his plug reluctantly.

We had met his kind before on the outside tracks, where the mean man with the silver tongue preys upon your tobacco plug with the rapacity of a Shyluck.

He laughed good-humoredly as the smoke wreaths marbled the air above. We decided in a flash that we had misjudged him, for no true seaman can ever learn the tricks of the Australian hunger track.

"Never been so hard up since I left the navy," he said huskily. "I ran away from the old Karakatta because the blinker space wasn't big enough to let you sneeze without barking your shins. I hid myself on the rocks for a month. S'trout the navy's a hot place for shylocks, but the habits of the Sydney larkins are hot enough to melt a six inch gun!" he added.

"My boarding house was back of the Argyle Club. At the table where I used to eat was a cargo thief and a government rat catcher, a bottle—oh, and a landscape artist—one of those chaps that draws waterfalls on the footpath."

"There was fightin' every evenin' among the larkins." I don't like fightin', but I'd sooner put in ten minutes with a burglar than stew in the stokehole of a gunboat. Talk about heat! Why, when a soldier dies, an' wakes up in a hell gone with his graft just the same."

"A woman named Mary Kennedy kept the boarding house. I was used to throw paying stones at the boarders who for got to pay up. I asked her not to throw kerb ornaments at me when she felt husky. When Jack's ashore he doesn't want to crack blue metal with his face. So I gave her the office to cease firin'."

"Mary was a good sort though. She conducted the chicken fights in the backyard on Sundays, and twisted the birds when there was money in the cockpit. 'The bird fightin' is a pretty game among you Colonials; an' I must say that some of your game roosters use their steel like a sergeant at arms."

"Sandy Thompson, one of the boarders Kennedy's had, had a little red bird that beat everything from Botany Bay to the Cut. The bird's name was Kitcho—after Herbert Kitchener. Kitcho was the gamest chick that ever wore steel. There wasn't a bird in Australia could live with him."

"One mornin' a woman came round to Kennedy's and told Sandy Thompson about the yardful of roosters next door that was crownin' her sick husband to death. You know what that means. A chap lies sick in bed in a room overlook-

in a back yard full of poultry and roosters that bugle the top of his head off every ten minutes or so. Hundreds of sick men are crowded to death in the back yards of Sydney."

"Well, Sandy Thompson walked round to the yard where the regiments of cheap roosters were crownin', a dozen at a time. Sandy said there was nearly twenty of 'em, the size of ostriches, stridin' up an' down making noises under the sick man's window."

"Sandy took Kitcho from under his coat and dropped him with his steel on over the fence. I wasn't there to see the fight, but they say that little Kitcho sliced up the ostrich farm in seven minutes, while Sandy was round at the front door yarin' with the man who kept the fowl run."

"The yard, after Sandy got Kitcho out, was strewn with disabled Dorkins and murdered B. Orps. Sandy say all the hens stopped laying for three months after the fowl yard owner told the police that a burglar with a scythe had destroyed his flock of roosters. Anyway, the few birds that was left used to crow in a hushed voice for fear that Kitcho might hear 'em."

"One mornin' I was kept in a shed under my winder. Sandy told me that the little bird was worth ten pounds for up country matches. Y'see, some of the old cabbage tree squatters was partial to a bit of chicken fightin' when things were quiet."

"Sandy trained and fed his bird regularly, and Kitcho was always fit to put the muffers on with a heavier bird than himself. I've trained torpedoes to hit a battleship in the morning, but I never saw anything to come near the little red rooster when he was in the ring."

"One mornin' I started early for the Australian back blocks with Kitcho covered up in an old parrot cage. It seemed

a pity to let him stay with a chap like Sandy, who allowed him to sleep on a lump of coal every night. I didn't know whether Kitcho liked being taken away in a parrot cage, but he never cowered once while I was leaving the house."

"I'd been told that one or two cabbage squatters lived in the Mudgee district; so I got my railway ticket and put Kitcho in the guard's van. If there was money in chicken fightin' out back, I reckoned I owned a bird that could beat anything on the wing bar eagles."

"At Mudgee they told me that I'd have to 'coach or foot it for thirty miles before I reached Grogan's Station, where rooster fightin' was allowed after the sheep had been dressed and shaven. I started off with the cage under my arm, feelin' that a good walk would give me an appetite for supper. There's a lot of nice country round Mudgee, wine orchards and cow farms, an' bees swarmin' over the vines. I kept my weather eye on the ranges as I tramped along so's to get off the track."

"I'm a sailor by trade, an' not much of a hand at makin' fires on the march. But make one I did until it blazed for ten miles around my billy. Of course I started off with the cage under my arm, feelin' that a good walk would give me an appetite for supper. There's a lot of nice country round Mudgee, wine orchards and cow farms, an' bees swarmin' over the vines. I kept my weather eye on the ranges as I tramped along so's to get off the track."

"I took fright. I'd heard of seafarin' chaps gettin' ten years and a foggin' for burnin' the squatters' grass and fences. The wind carried the fire over the skyline, and you could hear the crack and roar of it for miles. I didn't stop walkin' till I found myself breathin' 'ard in the middle of a big mulga forest. Some of the timber was as thick as a gunboat and high as the ranges. There was mill-lions of ferns and no blade of grass anywhere. Still it looked a nice cool place to sleep. So I filled Kitcho's water

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

tin from my bag, gave him a bit of corn, and lay down. The heat woke me an' the blamed silence got on my nerves, so without stoppin' to boil my billy I started off with the cage under my arm for Grogan's Station, and the harder I walked the hotter it grew. And somehow the trees wouldn't let me out into the open. Up an' down the bush I hunted, but there wasn't a sign of his red feathers anywhere. The wind fairly poured down through the trees till my tongue grew hard as a stick. I walked back to where I'd left the cage and water bag, an' blamed it if I could find 'em!"

"You're hushed, Joseph," I says to myself, 'an' the Lord help you! Off I started again, but I must have walked ten miles before I found myself back at the old spot. The sun was pretty low, an' my head seemed to be hittin' the sides of my hard felt hat. 'Palpitation of the brain,

hopped back an' the blood from its heels dropped on my face an' chest. "The crows flew back to the tree top like a gang of thieves disturbed. I turned an' saw the old king bird flapping on his side, a spurlike hole in his neck. Five yards away Kitcho was struttin' up an' down waitin' for his nile to get up. The crowd of carion up above watched him as he high stepped through the hot sand and crows again."

"A black taste got into my mouth as I fell back again. The brown gum tree creaked over me in the dry wind; the sun peeped through the leaves like a devil with a shakin' eye. I heard the sea again an' the sound of the port watch at cutlass drill. I dreamt that I was drinkin' water out of a great white cup—pure, clear water that never satisfied my thirst. But when I opened my eye—the king crow had the other—there was always the 'cal' cal' overhead, the shinin' beaks and the black, dry furnace in my throat."

"'Cal' cal' says they, stoppin' an' balancin' on the boughs to get a look at me 'Cal' cal'."

"'Cocks-a-doodle-do!' says Kitcho, struttin' underneath. 'Come an' have some more, he says, hittin' the air with both wings."

"The crows seemed to have made up their mind that I was theirs, an' they waited till Kitcho had strutted round the far side of the tree. Five of 'em swooped at my head, strikin' at my eye. I don't know how a sheep protects its person, unless it sticks its head in a hole. These five hit me in a bunch, three from the rear, two from the front. Their long bills dug an' scooped through my fingers till the blood ran over my face."

"Flap! bang! clink! That's how it sounded. Clink! clink! clink! Kitcho—he seemed to come out of my dreams—hit and clapped his blades about their heads like a guardman among a pack of niggers. Up and down he struck, under an' over, hittin' like lightning, slacin' his spurs through their tough black skins."

"A crow knows what to do when he's hit in the air by a hawk, but when he's stabbed an' crippled on the ground, he flaps about makin' a blamed dust with his head an' wings."

"But Kitcho overreached himself. Clapping his heels at the head of an old bird, the steel pinned in the tough skin an' held him. He rolled an' lay with the crow flappin' under him."

"They've got you now, Kitcho," I thought. "They'll make raspberry stuffin' of him when they've cleaned me up." I stretched out my hand to jerk him loose, an' my head seemed to swim through the hot sand until it floated out to sea. Then I felt myself workin' in the stokehole tarrin' out while firebrars whirled round. Somethin' turled me over and somethin' whirled the blood from my face."

"'Hullo, old chap! Yer fellin' better?' said the voice."

"'A couple of Australian bush lads were standin' over me. One of 'em, with a spoonful of brandy, was knockin' my head. A fire was burnin' about a yard from our camp, a big billy was hangin' over it."

"I felt the brandy movin' through my body; it seemed to kill the dry devils of thirst in my throat. An' the cool wet handgrips on my face stopped the burnin' in my eyes."

"You'll be all right after a spell," says one of the lads, slippin' a pillow under my head. "We'll get you into a hospital as soon as it's safe to move you. Have a drop of this broth, he says, bringin' a cup from the fire. 'It'll put life into you.' I looked at one pretty hard, an' then I noticed one or two red feathers lyin' on the ground near the fire. I pushed away the cup of broth."

"Where's the little red bird that was here?" I said. The one with his spurs locked in the crow's neck?"

"The little gamecock," says he, smilin'. "Is that him in the pot? I says, tryin' to sit up. 'Gawd's truth, chaps, if you'd known you wouldn't have done it.' An' I broke down like a four-year-old baby."

"'What's he takin' about,' said the lad by the fire. 'Hold hard, mate, he says, 'You're over to me, you've got the end of it. D'ye think we didn't see some of the fight? Look here.'"

"He slipped into the tent an' brought out the parrot cage with Kitcho inside lookin' at me through the wire and clinkin' its heels."

"Give me some of that soup," I says. 'An' allow me to ask your pardon, mate. It would have been unimportant, wouldn't it?'"

"By Gawd, it would!" they says. "I pulled through all right. And Kitcho? Well, I sold him to a station owner at Mulla Downs, who was born in Bulgaria. He gave me a job, too, lookin' after horses an' cleanin' up the yard."

"Kitcho got to know me better after a while, especially when I used to pop around with a pocketful of corn. But he never heard a 'cal' cal' overhead without lookin' up at me."

MAKE THE SPOUT AS LARGE AS POSSIBLE