

III

INTRODUCES A FAIR DUELLIST

I SHALL never forget the first time I caught sight of this young lady. The General, Maitland, Jack, Parker and myself having bought several horses, chose five of the best, and rode out to Hans Lagoon, where the widow's cattle run was situated. Though open and bare round Burketown, the country was beautifully wooded as we neared the lagoon. Before we got to the station buildings, which were pleasantly placed on slightly rising ground, we heard an odd hubbub ahead. The excited barking of dogs was mingled with pistol-like cracks. We pushed forward, and in the clear space of the bush beheld a remarkable sight. A tall, slim girl in a white dress, with a stock-whip in her hand, was facing an enormous carpet snake which was coiled close to a large fallen tree. His big head was raised, and his slender neck was bent into the form of a capital S, the curves lying flat behind the head. His agate-like eyes were instinct with a fiendish intelligence and rage. He must have been fifteen feet long, a more than usually large specimen of this, the larger of the Australian species of the python family. Smaller than the boa-constrictor, the anaconda of America, or the rock snake of India and Java, the carpet snake of Australia