

everywhere beside. It was an evil time for travel, the year the bush-rangers were out. Young men all of these, and daring, and in some ways even generous and romantic after the Claude Duval school, and unhappily carrying with them the sympathy and encouragement of no small section of the population. They had "stuck up" the gold escort at Eugowra, carrying off some 15,000 ounces and leaving three troopers dead upon the field. They had "bailed up" travellers of all description and in every company; they had carried away and held for ransom peaceable settlers torn from the bosom of their families; they had occupied whole villages, consigning the police to the lock-up, and receiving compulsory entertainment from the musical and dancing ladies of the community, and levying toll on every man who passed through. To all who had aught to lose theirs was a name of terror. At starting early the day before we, of the mail-coach party, had therefore very serious apprehensions of encounter, and relaxed no vigilance towards self-protection. But the worst bits on the road had been passed in safety, and it seemed that we were to get through without adventure after all. There were two or three who expressed disappointment, but I can vouch for one at least who was thankful exceedingly.

Among and across these open park lands there run not unfrequently narrow belts of dense scrub, and occasionally of heavier trees. Here the road must be cut, and is as narrow as merely to serve its purpose. Dashing round a sharp bend in one of these—you always go full speed through the ugly places—our leaders drove fair against some fallen timber, and one of them reared and fell. There came a curt order from behind the leafy screen that flanked the way:—

"Let no man stir, but throw up your hands all! There shall be no hurt done."

Then we knew that we had fallen into a trap, and had very quickly to decide how best to get out of it. Three of the passengers inside were concealed by the leathern curtains of the stage, and each of the three silently drew his revolver. The others in full view made no sign.

From the other side of the road came once again the command:—

"Throw up your hands before we fire! Quick if you would save your lives!"

All this had passed so quickly that it is impossible to give any word-picture of the situation. But a trooper had leaped from his horse, and the driver's companion of the box-seat was at his side, and both were pressing to remove the barricade. There were two sharp reports, and the trooper staggered a pace or two backwards and fell heavily, his thigh-bone broken. His horse which had stood patiently by, maddened by a wound plunged forward in wild pain, and, dashing through the thinnest edge of the barrier, tore furiously up the drive. The single passenger