

of course it will ;' but at that minute it flashed across me, as if some one had written it in letters of fire all over the place, 'And supposing it *dose*'nt go off; WHAT THEN ?'

"It was then that I began to feel frightened for the first time. I turned sick all at once, as if I was going to die, and likely enough I may have fainted, for the next thing I remember, there was a great silence all over the camp ; and by that I knew that the men were having their dinner, and that it must be late in the afternoon. As night came on, I began to feel very bad every way. So long as the sun was shining, and the sound of the picking and shoveling went on, the light, and the noise, and the feeling of having lots of people close to me, kept me up a bit ; but when the sound died away little by little, and the darkness came all round, as if it were locking me in, I felt as cast down and helpless as a child lost in a great town. However, my hunger made me savage-like, and that held me up ; for so long as there's strength enough for anger in a man, he's got a chance ; it's when he *can't* feel savage that his heart's broken. Only I kept always wishing that something would break the silence ; and at last something *did* with a vengeance, for a lot of horrible dingoes commenced howling. And so they kept on, and worked me up till I felt as if I'd give anything to have just one blow at them, no matter what came after ; for what with the hunger, and the lying still so long, and the howling of these brutes, I'd got so mad, that I'd have liked to killed *something*, no matter what it was. And so the night wore away—a dreary night for me ?"

While he was speaking the moon had become gradually obscured, and we were wrapped in a shadowy dimness that harmonized well with the gloomy recital, to which the deepening somberness of his tone lent additional horror.

"The sun rose at last, but it brought no bright morning hope with it ; only the same weary helplessness, which seemed as if it had lasted for days and days—for I had lost all count of time. When the noise of the diggings began again, I almost wished it would leave off, much as I had wished for it before ; for it sent a kind of horror through me to think of the hundreds of men so near, any one of whom would have run like lightning to help me, if he'd only known of the scrape I was in—while I lay dumb and dying close by. Ay, *dying* ! It was no use shamming hopeful any longer ; for now I began to feel a gnawing and tugging in my inside, as if the teeth of a wolf were tearing it ; and I knew what it meant, for I'd felt it before, only not so bad. I wouldn't have minded so much, if I could only have screamed, or flung myself about, or *anything* to show what I felt ; but to lie there, stock-still and speechless, it was horrible."

A shudder, which I could see in the uncertain light, shook his strong frame as he proceeded.

"As the sun grew hotter, the flies began to swarm ; as I watched them, it struck me all of a sudden, what a way I should be in, supposing they should attack me ; for, as I was then, they might have sucked every drop of blood before I could have stirred a finger. I knew something of what Australian bush-flies could do, for I'd once stumbled on the body of a shepherd who had been tied to a tree by the bush-rangers, and left. However, luckily for me, there was something else in the tent that tempted them more, and that was the food I'd left lying on