

A PRIEST'S THRILLING ADVENTURE IN AUSTRALIA

BY T. J. LAWS.

Father Tom Ryan was seated in his cozy little presbytery, surrounded by some of his parishioners.

"Yes," said Father Ryan, "the ways of Providence are indeed wonderful. That's not a very original observation, is it? But, truth to tell, I was just thinking of an adventure which happened to me during my stay in Australia."

It was Sunday evening; the winter wind howled without and snow fell thickly; but the fire blazed brightly within, and the fire of Christian charity, I am sure, warmed the heart of every one in the room.

"Oh, dear," said the story, "Father!" All joined in this chorus.

"Have I time? I mustn't keep you here too late, because some of you are married men, and you'll get in the wars if you are not at home by ten o'clock. Mr. Delaney, you're nearest the window; will you kindly raise the window and see if its snowing yet?"

"Faster than ever, father."

"Oh, then, you'll have a fair excuse to offer. Draw your chairs a bit nearer the fire. This is the first snow I've seen for ten years."

"See you sorry to be back in the old country, Father?"

"I'm ashamed of you, Mr. Casey, and me a Tipperary man! I wouldn't exchange a square yard of green Irish turf for acres of Australian bush. Yet I never thought, when I was allowed to return, only the Bishop, bless him, saw the climate out there didn't agree with me and sent me home. But now, if you have patience to listen, I'll tell you my bit of a story."

Father Ryan then related the following:

About eight years ago I was bushed. I dare say you don't all know what that means, so I'll tell you. It means that I had lost my way in the bush while taking the Blessed Sacrament to a sick man. Our parishes are large in Australia, and a ride of a few miles to see your next door neighbor is common enough. The man I wished to see was a squatter named Burke, who lived some twenty miles from our mission church at Wallaroo, and to reach his house I had to cross a belt of bush about ten miles in width. I had been through it once before, with a guide, and so, of course, was conceited enough to imagine I could do so a second time without one. And here I was, close on sundown, completely lost, having ridden round three times in as perfect a circle as Euclid ever described. I knew that, by a certain aged and peculiarly formed gum tree whose acquaintance I had made thrice in the course of the day, marking it with a cross as my second visit.

There was a pretty state of things—a sick man waiting for me, myself desperately hungry, no sign of human habitation and the sun almost set. In a few moments darkness swift and sudden would be upon me, and what was to be done then? What was that the stiff leaves of the trees seemed whispering?

"Oh, thou of little faith, is not the Lord with thee—resting upon thy very breast?"

True, and surely no harm could befall me. Yet it was strange that, with the blessed and adorable sacrament in my possession, I should have been allowed to lose my way.

"Man, the trees whisper again, 'what knoweth thou of the purposes of God?'"

And then I forgot my doubts and resigned myself to spend a long and dreary night in the lonely bush.

But it was not to be, for my reverie was suddenly interrupted by the sound of a human voice close at my horse's side.

"Hallo, chum!"

The gruff words startled me like an electric shock.

They came from a tall, sturdy, rough-looking man, who seemed to have sprung from the bowels of the earth to my horse's side. Not a prepossessing gentleman by any means—with black, beetling eyebrows and heavy beard that almost hid his face (a dirty one, from what little I could see of it), shabbily attired, and with a huge revolver stuck in his belt—but this uncouth apparition was as welcome to me then as a warm fire-side to a shivering man.

"My friend," I said, "I am thankful to meet you. I have lost my way; perhaps you can conduct me to some shelter where I may pass the night."

"Bushed, are ye?" was the reply.

"Well, I reckon you couldn't have lighted on a better chum than myself. There are bushrangers about you know, and you might have fallen in with some of them."

"Bushrangers!" I started and scrutinized as keenly as I could in the gathering darkness the features of my new companion, and the thought leaped to my brain that here before me stood as fair a specimen of the genuine ruffian as I had ever seen. But one must not always judge by looks, so I simply said:

"Bushrangers would find a poor prize in me."

"Ye're a parson, ain't ye?" queried the stranger.

"I am a Catholic priest."

"Oh!"

My friend seemed to regard me with that sort of amazed curiosity with which we examine some extraordinary freak of nature; then, after a moment he added:

"Well, come along o' me. I can take you to a shanty belonging to some friends of mine; they'll let you have 'damper' and a 'billy' of tea, and give a shake-down of some sort for the night. It'll be better than camping out here among the snakes and the dingoes."

"Thank you very much," I said, "but how far am I from Burke's place? I ought to visit a sick man there."

"You'd never find your way there; it's ten good miles. Sick men'll have to wait till to-morrow."

Say whether you'll come with me or not; make up your mind quick, for I'm peckish."

"I shall only be too glad to accompany you," I replied, "and thank you sincerely. I also agree that the sooner we reach your friend's shanty the better, for if you are peckish I am absolutely wolfish."

"Come on, then."

He laid his hand on my horse's bridle, and in an incredibly short space of time—I should not think three minutes could have elapsed—we stood outside the door of a fairly large hut or shanty. My guide gave a peculiarly low whistle, which was answered in kind from within, and the door opened.

"Dismount, reverend sir," said my conductor; "I'll look after your horse."

I obeyed his direction.

"Now," he said, "you're welcome to our humble abode; we don't often see gentlemen of your cloth here; but you're all the more welcome for that, so hope you don't object to smoke?"

Now, nobody is fonder of smoke than I when it comes from a good cigar, but the atmosphere I faced on entering the cabin was enough to make a skipper quail. The whole interior seemed enveloped in dense and remarkably penetrating fog, which immediately got down my throat and caused a prolonged coughing fit. Somewhere out of the fog came sounds of laughter, which, when I cleared the tears from my eyes and was able to discern anything at all, I discovered proceeded from four men who were seated round a rough deal table in the centre of the hut. Great rough-bearded fellows they were, fitting mates for my guide, though all appearing bigger-built men than he. They regarded me, I thought, with a kind of amused curiosity, puffing the while great volumes of smoke from dirty short clay pipes.

"Hallo, Jack Blake!" roared one red-headed giant, in a voice like that of a lion with the croup. "What new chum have you brought us to-night?"

"This," said my guide, "is a reverend gentleman—I don't know his name."

And he vanished into the outer air—my friend's name was, but, I doubt, he'll be able to satisfy your demands."

"Then, perhaps, you won't mind paying in advance."

There was a peculiar emphasis placed on these words that I did not like.

"Certainly," I replied; "now or later on—what does it matter? How much do you require?"

"Only all you have about you," was the grim reply.

"What do you mean?" I cried.

"No nonsense!" was the answer.

"But up! I'm Jack Rennie—may be you've heard of me?"

I had, indeed. All Australia rang with his name as that of the most daring of bushrangers. What was to be done? I cared nothing for the little money I had about me—but the Blessed and Adorable Sacrament—how should I save it from outrage? I made a dash for the door.

"Stop!" thundered Rennie.

I turned; all the men had sprung to their feet, and four ugly looking revolvers were pointed straight at my head. A sudden thought occurred to me. The worst of men have some good in them—I would tell these fellows the whole truth and throw myself upon their generosity.

"Men," I said, "you are welcome to what cash I have about me, also to my watch. You shall have them freely if you will give me your word to spare the treasure I bear with me—a treasure of which I fear you know little. I am taking the Blessed Sacrament to a dying man."

"Oh, stop your preaching!" shouted Rennie; "I'm no fool, and I know you priests carry these wafers that you worship in boxes of gold and silver—jeweled, too, mayhap; so you needn't think we shall let such a prize as that escape us."

"For God's sake!" I entreated, "for your own sakes, beware how you commit such an awful sin."

"Oh, we're used to awful sins here!" and the ruffians laughed hoarsely. "Come, father, bail up! Hand over your pretty box and its precious contents."

"You must take my life first," I answered, every nerve in my body tingling with excitement. I felt as though I had the strength of a lion to defend my Blessed Lord.

"We aren't particular as to that," shouted Rennie. "Upon him, men—don't waste cartridges; strangle him if he won't give up peaceably."

The four rushed on me as one man. I'm not the weakest fellow in the world and knocked one down very comfortably, but the other three all seized me at once. I shouted for help, but where could it come from? A brassy arm encircled my throat from behind, and—

"Stop that infernal row!"

These words came in stern accents from the further end of the hut, and forth from the gloom stepped a gigantic and fierce looking man, revolver in hand. My assailants were lambs in appearance compared with the new comer, whose eyes gleamed like live coals in the semi-darkness.

"Have ye forgotten," the giant went on, "that my chum's dying here? Let him die in peace, 'e've hear, or there'll be more funerals than one from this shanty."

"Mind your own affairs, Donovan," replied Rennie, but he didn't speak very loudly, I noticed. "We're only just relieving this person of his superfluous wealth; and he won't take the operation gently, so he must roughly."

"Donovan!" I cried, "I am a Catholic priest."

"A priest!" he shouted. "Release him boys! 'Tis a priest, Dan Clancy has been moaning after for hours, and, by thunder! he shall have one. Step this way, your reverence, and have no fear."

"Stop a minute!" cried Rennie; "you are going ahead too fast, Donovan. I believe I'm captain of this gang—you're mighty commanding all of a sudden, but who do you think will obey your orders? This man's our booty, and we'll do with him as we please. You'll get your share, never fear."

"Well," said Donovan, "you're captain, right enough, and in a great way I'm ready to follow your lead; but the case stands this way: My pal's been crying and moaning for a priest for hours. Here comes one ready to hand—I should say heaven sent him, but heaven has naught to do with us here. Now, you aren't going to rob poor Dan of what may make his death easier. He's been a true chum to me, boys, and I'd die for him if I could. The priest is here, and poor Dan shan't die without seeing him!"

"But he shall!" roared Rennie.

"What, let a priest hear all our secrets? Dan Clancy knows enough to hang us all twice over, and if we let him confess to this fellow we are all lost."

"A priest," I ventured to say, "never reveals anything told him in confession. Men, I beg of you, let me see this poor dying wretch—it is my duty."

"Besides," interrupted Donovan, "if you fear his reverence blabbing, after he has seen Dan as you can before."

"Prevention is better than cure," retorted Rennie; "he shan't go in; that's flat!"

"And I wear he shall!" said Donovan in a low tense voice.

"You see this revolver? Let go of him instantly, or there'll soon be four rogues less in the world."

"Fool!" cried Rennie, "we are four to one and all of us have shooting irons."

"Ah!" replied Donovan, "but there are no cartridges in them—the few we had left are now in my gun. I hold your lives in my hand; release the priest and let him come this way."

Suddenly my captors fell back from me.

"Don't be afraid, your reverence," said Donovan; "come!"

He lifted a blanket hung curtain-wise, which I now saw screened off one portion of the room and made a sort of inner compartment.

"You'll find poor Dan in there, Father," he went on. "I'll keep guard, and if you can give the boy the comfort he needs, it's Ned Donovan will see you safe out of this anyhow. Never fear yonder rogues—they don't come a foot nearer than they are."

He dropped the curtain, and I surveyed the wretched scene before me by the light of a miserable "home-made" candle which sputtered on a broken stool beside a couch or litter of straw and dried leaves.

On this rude bed tossed and moaned the emaciated form of what had evidently been a stalwart and handsome man, though disfigurement had left its unmistakable traces on his haggard face, and the hand of death was pressing visibly his worn and ashen cheeks.

As I gazed at him, from his thin and trembling lips broke a mournful cry.

"Oh, God! oh God! Mercy! mercy! Send me a priest—I cannot die like this a priest!"

I knelt beside him and took his hand.

His confession was a long one, often interrupted by such exhausting fits of bodily anguish that I more than once feared he would not be

able to reach the end. But, thank God! he did, and whatever he had done in the past, I believe in that solemn hour he had grace to make an act of true contrition, and I administered to him the Blessed Sacrament.

Almost immediately the dread change came of us know too well came over his face. I softly called Donovan, who knelt beside me at the bedside, revolver in one hand and clasping his friend's wasted palm in the other, and thus, just after receiving his Saviour, the soul of Dan Clancy went forth into the night.

"It's all over, Father," said Donovan, and a big tear rolled down his cheek; "the truest chum man ever had is no more. But now to look after your safety. Follow me and stick close to me."

I did so. We found Rennie and his three mates in front of the door of the hut, with scowling brows.

"Now, chums," said Donovan, "let's have no nonsense. You've got to let his reverence go in peace. He's been good to my chum, and you shan't harm him. I'm going to guide him part of the road."

"Curse you, you want to betray us!" shouted Rennie.

"You're a liar, Rennie," said Donovan, "and if I hadn't just left poor Dan's death bed—for he's dead now, head, stand from that door before I count five, or your miserable lives aren't worth much. One—two—"

Slowly and sulkily the four retreated from the door, keeping as far as the limits of the hut would allow from the muzzle of Donovan's weapon.

"Now, listen," my protector went on, "I'm going to call Jack Blake to bring my horse and the priest's. Don't any of you dare to breathe a whisper of warning to him."

In a very few minutes, though I can assure you they seemed to me like hours, the two horses were brought to the door, and Jack Blake entered the hut to be unceremoniously thrown by Donovan among his mates. Often and often does that scene come back to me in my dreams—I can shut my eyes and see it now, the dim obscurity of the hut, the savage eyes of the baffled ruffians glaring through the gloom in impotent rage—and the gigantic figure of my preserver standing in the doorway of the hut, revolver in hand, as I mounted my horse.

A moment later he had closed the door behind us, sprang into his saddle, and we were riding at full gallop through the fairly open bush beneath the soft light of the solemn southern stars.

"We are out of danger now, Father," he said. "Luckily for us, they have no ammunition."

Scarcely had these words left his lips when—crack—crack—the report of two pistol shots sounded in our ears.

"Fool that I have been!" cried Donovan; "I forgot poor Dan's revolver—that was very likely loaded."

Ye see, we only ran out of cartridges yesterday, and Dan's been ill for days. They've found his gun, and they're using it to kill his chum!"

"No—or I'd have a pop at them," Crack—crack—came again on the air.

"Ah!" The cry was from Donovan.

"Are you hurt?" I shouted.

"No—nothing to speak of. Follow me close—the bush is pretty scattered here—like the wind!"

No more shots were heard, and as far as I know, no further pursuit was made. On—on we dashed in silence, the gums flying past us like spectres in the darkness grew less gloomy, and before we reached the edge of the bush the glorious sun rose resplendent above the horizon and showed to my delighted eyes at no more than a mile's distance the homestead belonging to Burke, the man I had set out on the previous morning to visit.

And now, Father, I must leave you," said Donovan, reining in his horse.

"And where will you go?" I asked.

"Anywhere—what does it matter? The law will have me sooner or later."

"Come with me," I said, "and try to lead a decent life."

"Too late, Father," he said; "I've led an awful life. I've been guilty of—"

His voice died away in his throat, his face became the color of ashes, he reeled in the saddle, and, before I could render him any assistance, fell heavily to the ground. His horse gave a frightened neigh and bolted straight back into the bush. I sprang from my saddle and went to the prostrate man. Then I discovered that he had been wounded in the side by one of the shots fired after us, and the brave constitution triumphed over all, and until loss of blood deprived him of his senses.

I bound up his wound as skillfully as I could, with my handkerchief (luckily a large one), and feeling certain no harm could come to him for a few minutes, rode as fast as I could (my horse was pretty tired) toward Burke's house, where I was received at the door by the master alive and well; having, as he told me, made a most marvelous recovery in a few hours.

Perhaps I ought to have handed him over to the law, but wild as his life had been, he had kept from shedding blood, and after all, one does not feel inclined to give into custody the man who has saved one's life.

BE SURE that your blood is rich and pure. The best blood purifier, enricher and vitalizer is Hood's Sarsaparilla. Be sure to GET HOOD'S

In concluding the story, Father Ryan said:

"There! that's the end of my story, and though I'm sorry to part with you, it's time you were all going home. The snow has ceased and the stars are out. Good night!"

"One moment, Father," said one of the company. "What became of the rest of the gang?"

"As usual, Mr. Casey, you want to get to the bottom of everything. Well, I took the police from Wallaroo to the hut, but we found it empty, save for the decomposing body of poor Dan. We buried him decently, but not one of the bushrangers were found at that time. The only one I have heard of since is Rennie, who was hung for murder at Melbourne two years ago. He was a thorough bad lot. May he be forgiven!"

"I believe, Father," said Mr. Casey, "that you've charity enough to pray for a mad dog."

"I'd pray he wouldn't bite me, anyhow. Good night and God bless you all."—Catholic Fireside.

Pale and Bloodless.

THOUSANDS OF ANAEMIC GIRLS HURRYING TO THE GRAVE.

A Young Lady at Cobourg, Ont., Whose Case Was Pronounced Hopeless, Tells How She Regained Health and Strength—A Lesson to Mothers.

Anaemia is the term used by doctors to indicate poverty of the blood. The prevalence of this trouble is most alarming, especially among young girls, and a large percentage of the altogether too numerous cases of consumption which annually ravage the country have their origin in this trouble. The first indication of anaemia is a pale, sallow or waxy complexion. This is followed by loss of appetite, frequent headaches, indisposition to exertion, swelling of limbs, violent heart palpitation and frequently fainting fits. These symptoms may not all be present, but the more there are the greater the urgency for prompt and effective treatment, which should be persisted in until all traces of the trouble have vanished. Among the thousands who have been brought near to the brink of the grave from this trouble, and ultimately restored to health through the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, is Miss Bella Boyd, an estimable young lady whose home is at Cobourg. Miss Boyd gives her experience as follows:—

"It is nearly ten years since my illness first commenced, and although I was doctoring more or less, I received little or no benefit, as the doctors did not seem to understand my trouble. Two years ago my health became so bad that another doctor was called in, and he stated that my case was a most severe type of anaemia, and that while he could help me the trouble had progressed to such a stage that he could hold out little hopes of a cure. At this time I was as pale as chalk, my eyelids were swollen and would hang down over my eyes like sacks of water. My feet and limbs would swell, and were always cold. I was subject to violent headaches, severe palpitation of the heart, and if I stopped over I would be so dizzy that I could scarcely regain an upright position. My appetite failed me almost entirely, and I grew so weak that I was a mere wreck. While in this condition I read in a newspaper of the cure of a young girl whose case was much like mine, through the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and I determined to try them. Those who knew me did not think any medicine could do me any good or that I would ever get better, but I determined at all events to give the pills a fair trial. I have since learned that I was nearly at the result that I feel like a new person. The swelling in my eyelids and limbs has disappeared; my appetite is good and my face is regaining the color which it felt years ago. I can sew and do work about the house, and this great change in my condition is due solely to the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. It is not too much to say that they have saved my life and I strongly urge girls who are similarly afflicted to give them a thorough trial."

EXPERTS DISCUSS CONSUMPTION

The Tenement House Commission held its first public hearing in New York on Friday last. The subject under discussion was "The Relation of Tuberculosis to the Tenement House Problem." It was gone into exhaustively, a half dozen students of the problem laying the results of their researches before the commission. It was the unanimous sentiment of those heard that with the proper kind of tenement houses, houses which would make it possible for the tenants to get plenty of sunlight and air and to keep clean, and with the proper supervision and care by the city of those afflicted with the disease, tuberculosis could eventually be entirely stamped out.

Dr. John H. Pryor, of Buffalo, who was chairman of a committee to investigate tenement house evils in that city, was the first witness. He said that in Manhattan alone there were constantly 20,000 persons suffering from tuberculosis of the lungs in its various stages. In his opinion the majority of tenement house dwellers had some form of tuberculosis. One reason for its great prevalence was that no proper care was taken of the victims. There were accommodations for 1,000 where 20,000 had the disease. The result was that the infection constantly spread. He said it was the only disease which did not receive proper care.

"The disease is curable," Dr. Pryor declared. "People die of it because they are poor. That's putting it bluntly, but it's true. If they had the means to get away in the early stages of the disease and get proper treatment they would get well. The public has come to look on the disease as hereditary. This is not true. There are but two cases on record

where it has been transmitted in this way. The tendency may be transmitted, the inability to resist it readily, but not the disease. Six thousand persons die yearly in New York of tuberculosis of the lungs. This could be checked very readily if officials had the power to change conditions in the tenements and put the afflicted people where they could be cared for."

Dr. Pryor favored making it compulsory that every occupant of a tenement have 600 cubic feet of air, that no tenement be allowed to be built on a 25-foot lot and that the people should be educated as to how to prevent infection.

FIRST AND FOREMOST

In the field of medicine is Hood's Sarsaparilla. It possesses actual and unequalled merit by which it cures all diseases caused or promoted by impure and impoverished blood. If you have rheumatism, dyspepsia, scrofula or catarrh you may take Hood's Sarsaparilla and be cured. If you are run down and feel weak and tired, you may be sure it will do you good.

The favorite family cathartic is Hood's Pills.

He whose main hope is that he shall die rich has begun to dig the grave of his nobler faculties.

Both thoughtless and gay, Suppressed repentance And brushed off

The feelings in a Must'er remembrance Far too early For others to

The sob that fails She struggled For there, unknown crowd, Sat the young mother.

A Priest of God! Her pride, her The glory of her Her noble, cheerful

His youthful She watched her And fervently that To guard him

The voice which thrill With hope and In childish prattle That loving mo

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