

a month or so, and really seemed to be lonely enough down there to make it worth his while to have me; so I jumped readily, and have been in the bush ever since. I don't suppose he would have let me go yet, but that he was himself leaving for England, and I promise you, Mr. Heywood, when I saw him on board the P. & O. Steamer, I would have given something that our connexion should have continued. It was with this sort of home-sickness strong upon me that I thought of running over to you, and here you have me, an unromantic prodigal, whose journey into the far country has turned out exactly in the old fashion."

"Prodigals are always welcome," said Nelly cheerily. "And, if we have no calves fatted at the moment, at least we've got lots of geese and fowls and rabbits—do you care for rabbits?—not those Ostend things you get in London, you know, but regular wild ones from Kangaroo Island; and if you'd only been here last week you should have had black swan, and—oh, I dare say we'll get you something!"

"I regret the swan," said Lockyer gravely, "but as he hasn't flown off with the welcome, we won't shed unavailing tears. And now, when did you hear from Charley, and what does she say?"

This was a disagreeable question to answer truthfully, and yet the truth should be told. Fred seemed excessively astonished at the details of the rumours which had gone abroad, or rather gone home, to his disadvantage; and, if either of us had any inclination to give them credit, his manifest perplexity could not but have vindicated him. When the change of his name was hinted at, he lost all patience:

"Oh come," he cried, "that's really too bad—to make capital out of the most innocent piece of strategy in the world. You must know that the Hon. Frederick, who, between ourselves, will make a very doubtful sort of peer, was not very long in growing weary of the dull old Grange; and, as he never cared three straws for the governor, he had not my old inducement to forbearance and discretion. So he bolted, and Sir James, left all alone, was good enough to fancy it worth his while to have me back again, and accordingly wrote a condescending letter, much in the style as King Ahasuerus might have stretched out his sceptre, intimating that, as I had no doubt by that time seen the folly of my boyish frivolities, and must be prepared to renounce such immoral associations as he had found me stooping to, he would graciously consent—on my assurance of the fact, to receive me once more to favour and to Kennington. There was a postscript, drawing a 'solemn deduction from the Sheffield outrages, as well as from recent *carbonari* assassinations, against all secret societies, and a peroration especially devoting to execration Freemasonry as the worst of the whole of them.' I don't believe the old gentlemen ever gave a minute's thought to the existence of the Craft