

been wise enough to transfer in time. But of this there was no confirmation, two letters to his address having been returned through the post office with the intimation, sufficiently ominous of his departure for quarters unknown. Everything seemed to go badly with him. Miss Fenchurch reported his correspondence as irregular and alarming, alternating between sanguine vivacity and deep despondency. The rumours which reached England regarding him, had evidently assumed a graver character, and it was pretty plain that the worst inferences were being drawn from the known fact of his having dropped his paternal name. Poor little Nell wrote what comfort might occur to her, and did her best to support Charley's fidelity. Indeed upon this and our own friendship, it seemed that her *fiance* could now alone rely.

Such was the position as I sat one morning in the office of 609, to extract information from the Secretary. Our undertaking had proved more tedious than anticipated, and calls followed expenses with such dispiriting regularity, as to shake considerably the confidence of the market. Never having had purpose to sell, this effected us but slightly, but still fifty pounds per fathom seemed an enormous cost for our shafts, and I had called in some anxiety to learn the immediate indications of their sinking. It was while thus employed that, to my unfeigned amazement, Lockyer himself entered, gay, unruffled, *debonair* as usual, and as though he had never in his life-time as much as heard of the Bolinda, or set his hand and seal to its Deed of Settlement. He had come up in some mysterious fashion by a Willanga Schooner, and had fortunately thought of at once seeking me at the head-quarters of my worldly interests. In half an hour Nelly was welcoming him to Burrane, and overwhelming him with such a *melange* of interrogations and information as nothing but his laughing *insouciance* could have borne up against. Fortunately a diversion came with luncheon, after which our visitor vouchsafed a recital of the more recent of his past vicissitudes.

"Of course," he began, "you know all about the Bolinda smash; it was lucky I kept clear of the direction, the majority of the Board being this moment engaged in breaking stones at Pontridge. It came upon us like a thunder-clap, and gave no chance of escape to anybody. Not a week before I had been offered 275 for my lot, and laughed to scorn the broker's audacity. I would have let him have my Bon Accords if he liked them, but he refused, and if he had not, I don't know where I should be now. They came up nobly to the rescue; a good fortnight's yield with plenty of rain having given them such a lift as was never looked for. But for them the liquidator's last call would have swamped me, and, as it is, I got clear with very little to spare. I hadn't the least notion of what to do, when a young fellow turned up at the Criterion from beyond Castlemaine, who asked me up to the station for