

had a great love of flowers, and, with much care and a considerable display of taste, had formed a beautiful little garden, taking advantage of every natural beauty the place possessed. Little beds of flowers were prettily laid out, and a large charred and withered gum tree was made to do duty and contribute to the picture by spreading out its limbs to be covered with green-leaved and gay, bright-blossomed creepers.

A large paddock for horses adjoined the garden. In a corner of it was the stock yard, having slip rails opening into the paddock; and into this the horses were driven when any were wanted. There was no stable—they were not so common twenty years ago as they are now.

At that time a gang of bushrangers was roving about Victoria, robbing every one they met, and often murdering their victims when they did not get any money from them. It was this gang of which the following tale is told:—A settler, called J. H. P., was stopped several times; but, being rather a cute fellow, the bushrangers never got more than a few shillings from him. This constant disappointment so enraged them, that they told him that if they ever caught him without money again—and plenty, too—they would tie him to a tree, and burn him alive. I suppose, either he took care to carry a well-filled purse, or had the good fortune never to meet his friends again; for he has escaped such a very hot reception so far.

This gang was very daring, often committing the most impudent robberies in broad daylight, and on one or two occasions even robbing the police themselves, when this intelligent force was supposed to be hunting for them in order to obtain the reward offered for their capture. It was surprising how well-informed the gang was. If persons sold stock, or by any other means had money in their houses, they were pretty certain to receive a visit, and lucky were they if they only lost their money.

Having some business to do with a neighbor of Griffiths, I thought I would take their place on the way. Accordingly, I went there, intending to stay an hour, and then proceed; but we had so much to talk about, and Arthur had so many completed improvements to show me, and so many proposed ones to consult me about, that the time slipped away unobserved, until it was so late in the evening that I consented, very willingly, to remain all night—the more so as Alice added her persuasion to her brother's saying—

“You know, Mr. Flakman, you might meet the Black Forest gang, and surely you would not prefer their society to ours.”

Little she thought the meeting was so near, or what an important part she was to take in it.

Before dark, Arthur and I went to look at some young horses he had bred, which he had got in from the run for the purpose of breaking in; and as they were rather wild, we drove them into the stockyard to examine them at our leisure. After duly admiring and criticizing them, I noticed a very handsome horse—a dark, nutty chestnut, long, low, but very compact, with fine sloping shoulders, round barrel, powerful quarters, and great thighs, well let down, and one of the neatest heads, on a good but rather thick neck, I ever saw. This grand-looking horse stood on four of the shortest, flattest legs, with great big joints, you could imagine. He looked like carrying a man for his life, and, with his well-bred look and evident good condition, could no doubt