

but, in justice to Charley, must hold on. Come over for a few days if you can; it will be better than wasting your time among the cockatoos. And write me at once to say how you both are, and what news there has been lately from Tulse Hill or Mincing Lane.

A postscript followed the signature:—

Address to F. Stephenson, Criterion. I had quite a job to get clear of the governor, who actually pursued me unto Deal, and only baffled him at length by taking my mother's name. Just fancy, he had that fellow Pollaky, from Paddington, after me. And the name has managed to stick to me still, somehow, without the help of the *Heralds' College* or the *King at Arms*. But if you will only come over, I shall tell you the yarn of the whole business.

"Mysterious, Nell, isn't it?" I remarked, folding up the letter, which bore an enormous joint-stock-company sort of seal. "He seems to have made himself at home sharply enough, and has picked up all the brokers' slang more quickly than I fancy is good for him. I don't like that sailing under false colours, though. What do you say?"

Nelly's blue eyes had opened very wide as I read, and now she scarcely seemed to hear my question. At last the enigma that was agitating her found utterance.

"Criterion Hotel! Where's that, Harry? I never heard of it before."

"Very likely not. It's in Collins Street, on the south side."

"But where's Collins Street?"

"Collins Street runs from Spring Street, parallel to the river, and crossing Elizabeth Street. Is that satisfactory?"

"Yes, if I only knew where Spring Street was. Is it anywhere near Spring Gardens?"

"About thirteen or fourteen thousand miles, according as you get the trades. But that's not the point. The Criterion is the head-quarters of all the most reckless mining speculation of the Colony. Master Fred has got himself into queer company, I fancy, and will have burnt his fingers before he knows where he exactly is. And the notion of his offering me a straight tip in gold-digging! What does he take me for? I wouldn't touch one of his Associations,—no, not if the dust was lying loose about the cradles."

This was no exaggeration, for I had a sovereign contempt for the unminted metal, or rather for any such schemes of achieving its discovery. I pinned my faith on copper, and laughed to scorn the more alluring temptation. And, as will be seen presently, was just then deep enough on my pet mineral to leave me no thought for anything less promising, and resolved to remonstrate with Lockyer on his imprudence, and if possible entice him down to see the error of his ways. Meditating this, I became conscious of an interruption from Nell:—

"I'll write to the poor fellow to-morrow, and give him all the news I have of Charley. But I suppose he does not want me to tell her his