

"An old joke, but it will pass," laughed the General. "Yes; we may assume that they served to replenish her stockpot. Smith, however, she found to be a man of different kidney. I know Smith well, and there is no end to his resource. He has had to use his wits so often in order to save his life, that he has developed all sorts of tricks for humbugging the simple native mind. Depend upon it, the queen found him too fascinating a fellow to serve merely as human nature's daily food."

"Well," said I, "go if you like. There is one thing you must remember—your boy Jack won't draw any insurance money. No insurance company on earth would have any dealings with a man proposing to take a trip of this kind."

"My boy Jack is going with me," said the General quietly.

I almost leapt out of my chair, but remembered my gouty foot just in time.

"You are going to take a lad of eighteen into a district swarming with cannibals?" I asked.

"The lad of eighteen," said the General, "is six feet high, weighs twelve stone, and can ride a horse and handle a rifle with any man in this country. When he heard that it was my intention to go to Australia, in an emphatic manner that is peculiarly his own, he expressed his intention of going with me. You have never met Jack, have you?"

"No," I replied. "I left the service before you married."

"You will find," said the General, "that he is the most dare-devil youngster you ever encountered,