

Nevertheless the first twenty miles were covered in fifty-four minutes, and the brave horse held on with undiminished speed, until some uneven ground caused Nellie to pull up into a slow canter.

"Get your wind old fellow, for you will want it all before we are through," she said as she slackened pace, and when after a few miles they again reached some good turf, away they went again.

It was a solitary ride for a girl even as roughly brought up as Nellie had been, but she never flinched or hesitated. Now and then a dingo would scamper across their path, and once or twice a kangaroo, but for the most part they were entirely alone, and it would have been a bad look-out had any accident happened to Melbourne. But he was a clever horse, cleverly ridden, and she pulled up at the Kyber stock farm at half past four in the afternoon, having accomplished fifty-five miles in exactly three hours and a half, glorious going you will admit. It was still twenty-five miles to Lonely Creek, but she resolved upon giving Melbourne a bit of a rest, a light feed, and a rub down, while she herself eat her sandwiches and swallowed a draught of milk.

The owner of the farm, Richard Stokes, had been sweet on Nellie at one time, and although refused bore her no ill will. He called one of his men to unsaddle and groom Melbourne, asking Nellie into the house. But Nellie declined the invitation, saying she must be off again directly. She examined her horse carefully and was delighted to see him plunge his nose into the corn mash with an appetite that denoted no exhaustion. She told the man to rinse Melbourne's mouth out, and begged a bottle of good ale from Stokes, which liquor she poured down her steed's throat, observing with a laugh that she had not read Turpin's Ride to York for nothing.

"Has Mr. Dunham passed this way lately, Dick?" she asked of Stokes as her saddle was being replaced on Melbourne.

"Yes, he left a quarter of an hour before you came up," was the reply. "He borrowed a fresh horse as he said he wanted to reach home before nightfall."

"Anyone else gone by to-day?" questioned Nellie quickly.

"Two strangers about an hour previously."

Nellie was in her saddle in a moment, and with scarcely a word of farewell to Stokes, who stared stupidly after her, she dashed off towards Lonely Creek.

"Oh Melbourne," she cried between her set teeth, "you'll have to go as you have never gone yet. Don't think me cruel darling, but I can't—can't help it."

Yes; she broke into a sob, for that wild uneducated girl loved her horse dearly, and yet it was terrible to think she might be beaten and lose the race—the race for a life! But she would not lose it, if it

was within the powers of the best piece of horseflesh in New South Wales to win it. Melbourne gave a snort of defiance as he rushed forward, no longer checked in his slashing thoroughbred gallop. Was it the beer that had roused him to the utmost, think you? No, it was rather his big courageous heart that, beating in unison with that of his mistress, urged him to show what he could do at his best. Cruel? The gallant beast knew better, knew that when he was called upon, the emergency must be great, and that he was not going to be called upon in vain.

"Good horse, good horse!" exclaimed Nellie with tears, aye tears, upon her cheeks, in spite of which I do not think two braver spirits ever travelled that road than she and Melbourne.

Fortunately there were no obstacles to stop them between Kyber farm and Lonely Creek the ground being good pasture land with no stones or bush to signify, and Melbourne tore away without let or hindrance. The sun was at the horizon and it was a little over an hour after quitting Kyber farm that Lonely Creek or rather the hillock on the East side of it rose up before Nellie's straining eyes. The goal was in sight, and looking again she described a single horseman, who must be Bob Dunham, almost turning round the corner leading to the Creek. Nellie's heart gave a great thump and she shouted out, but the wind was blowing towards her, and the horseman did not hear.

Just then Melbourne showed signs that the pace and distance had begun to tell, he made a half stumble, but recovered himself directly and continued his career.

"Only another minute Melbourne," cried Nellie, her face blanching while she loosened the revolver in her belt. "Don't give in on the post old boy."

Give in! The horse was game till he dropped, and had not reached that point yet, though he could not have gone much farther. Nevertheless he carried his mistress far enough to win the race, for as he rounded the hillock into Lonely Creek and was pulled up trembling and panting, there stood Bob Dunham on his horse covered by the pistols of Jake King and Bill Norris a few paces to the right, both also on horseback. A flash and a report and Jake's horse reared straight up and fell backwards over his rider; Bill Norris started, his pistol going off harmlessly in the air, and then followed another report, when he reeled in his saddle and dropped.

"Saved!" shrieked Nellie springing from her horse and throwing her arms round his neck. "Melbourne, you beauty, you have won the biggest race that ever was run."

There is not much more to tell; Bob had an odd sensation in his throat as he recognized how and by whom he had been

rescued. Suffice to say his life was changed from that hour, and after sending Nellie to a finishing school, in the city from which her horse took his name, for two years, he married her, never, as far as I know, having repented his bargain. For the rest, old Tucker died from his accident before his daughter went away. Neither Jake King nor Bill Norris were killed, though they both had a narrow escape, and have not troubled this part of the country since.

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"By George!" exclaimed Grimes when Datchit had finished, "you are right; Dunham could not have done otherwise than make that plucky girl his wife."

"No," replied Datchit smiling. "Do you recollect how Macaulay concluded his poem of Horatius Cocles in his 'Lays of Ancient Rome'? Well, Mr. and Mrs. Dunham are a highly proper and respectable couple, but round many a bush fire 'still is the story told' how Nellie Tucker saved Bob Dunham's life by her famous ride on her thoroughbred horse Melbourne, 'in the brave days of old.'"

The end.

An Alligator Story.

The following story from Eustis, Florida, is vouched for by the Jacksonville "Times-Union": The old legend that "there is nothing new under the sun" was obliterated last Monday by old Uncle Caesar Boggs on the Ocklawaha flats near Buzzard Roost. Uncle Caesar was standing with his old flint-lock musket in his hand near an old-fashioned rail fence, when all at once he heard a terrible rattling and yelping up in the woods near the saw grass, and looking up he saw old Snip, his favorite bench-legged lice dog, making the leaves fly like a whirlwind, and immediately in front of him a swamp rabbit was flying. The rabbit shot through the fence like an arrow, the same instant the little dog darted through the same hole in the fence and all was quiet. Uncle Caesar says that he ran to the spot and saw a huge alligator lying with his mouth open, into which both the rabbit and the dog had run, perhaps thinking it a hole in a log. He at once sent a bullet into the right eye of the 'gator who whirled over on his back, when Uncle Caesar pulled out his old pruning Knife and made a long and deep incision in the stomach of the 'gator, when, to his astonishment, the rabbit and dog both jumped out and flew down toward the water closely pursued by Snip. He has never seen Snip or the rabbit since.

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"It's a funny thing Jones, that we never speak of our poor relations behind their backs." "We don't have to. The poor are always with us."—Pack.