

THE GREEN DOOR.

A NIGHT IN MELBOURNE.

A winter night in Melbourne; it had been raining all day, the wind from the south blew chill and raw. As I wandered down Great Bourke street I saw, drawn up in a line some fifty men standing in the gutter. Each man had his eyes fastened on a green baize door directly in front of them, as if their last hope depended upon its opening. The men were of all sorts and conditions, the sundowner from the back blocks, the costermonger without a barrow, the new chum who had deposited with his gracious uncle, the professional free lunch rounder and the decayed gentleman. One wretched creature in particular drew my attention. At one time, some time, heaven knows how long distant, he had been a gentleman. The fragments of a Prince Albert coat were buttoned tightly up to his very chin. I should have said pinned, for every button was gone. His hands blue with the cold were clean and there was something in his very attitude which said, 'I am not to this manor born.' I beckoned to him and when he came up I said, "Come with me my friend." He followed at my side but spoke not a word. Entering a private room in the Coffee House I called for a glass of hot beef tea. While he was drinking the tea greedily but shivering between each gulp I ordered a hot dinner. He ate the dinner with the voracity of a starving man. Then I handed him a cigar. I closely watched him and saw, written on his face an unsatisfied longing. What is it?" I said.

"Opium," came in a hoarse tremilo from his throat.

"I have it" I said drawing a half ounce bottle of laudanum from my pocket. I had purchased it for a prospective trip.

"Quick, six glasses," he whispered.

The waiter brought the glasses. My strange companion placed them in a line and then said, "Divide it into six parts," pointing to the laudanum.

I complied with his request. He seized the first glass, drained it and closed his eyes. Taking up the *Herald* I