

less than fourteen homesteads had been burnt to the ground, and in every instance, with one exception, they were the homesteads of men who had been notorious for exercising the powers given them under the Masters and Servants Act.

There is little doubt but what some of the men employed on the stations were of the worst class: old convicts doubly-dyed and steeped in every rascality. But those were just the men who the squatters were, as a rule, most afraid of. These men, when they earned their wages, received them, or they would have made the reason why very soon known. It was the unoffending classes who were fixed upon to be made the subject of oppression.

In those days what of the newspaper Press there was, was so trammelled and confined to a narrow mission that it was powerless for good. The time, however, was not long before it became an avenging Nemesis.

It came heavy, and hot, and quick upon them in more than one way. The squatters, having the rule of the country and the monopoly of the lands in their own hands, became possessed of large wealth. They lived extravagantly and speculated wildly. They got into the hands of the banks, and the banks in their turn got into the hands of the Colonial Government, which was then seated at Sydney. The local Government was at this period in the habit of depositing large amounts that accrued from the land sales in the several banks of the colonies (which then included Port Philip and New South Wales) and charging interest on these deposits at the rate of four per cent.; but the Governor, Sir George Gipps, speculating on the soundness and permanence of the wonderful prosperity which the two great pastoral centres were exhibiting, and desirous of securing the largest possible share of that prosperity for the State, insisted upon having seven and a-half per cent. as the interest on the Government balances in the bank; and then, as these establishments were working against each other, his mandate had to be obeyed, under the penalty of a withdrawal of the Government funds from the refractory establishment.

Now, to enable them to pay this high interest and to make profits that would allow of favorable dividends, the banks had to increase their rates of discount, and to take security for their advances and cash credits.

Extraordinary facilities had to be given to the banks to bring custom upon such high rates as they were compelled to charge. A rage for speculation set in, not only in country land and town allotments, but in sheep, cattle, and horses; and the most unbounded extravagance of living was in innumerable instances the natural outcome of so artificial a state of things.

Everybody bought land, without in the least idea knowing to what profitable account they would be able to turn it, buying at enormous prices, with the most visionary prospects, and all the while living up to a scale of domestic expenditure proportioned to the prospects they expected to realise. These men gave their acceptances and promissory notes for due payment at the banks, or mortgaged their houses and lands to one or other of the Loan and Trust Companies for sums far beyond their intrinsic value.

One Sydney house had purchased land in the Western district, about Geelong, and between Geelong and Melbourne, to the extent of upwards of £100,000, which, years after, was leased for £150 per annum.

The upshot of all this might have been foreseen, and was experienced at length in full force. There suddenly ceased to be a demand for town lands and country sections. The debts due to banks and other lending companies, as well as to private individuals, fell due; and, as a dire necessity, land and stock and other property of all kinds was forced upon a falling market to meet them.

There was a terrible panic, and cold ruin stared every man in the face. Every description of property declined as rapidly in value as far below the average of former years as it had been raised unnaturally above it. There was universal bankruptcy. And all this brought about by the arrogance, daring, and robbery of the early settlers in their endeavors to monopolise such a magnificent country as Port Philip, and share it only among themselves.

The full crash came. A flock of sheep was actually sold at this time in satisfaction for a comparatively small debt at sixpence per head; while another flock, the property of a merchant, was purchased at one shilling and sixpence per head. The purchaser of this flock afterwards realised £250 more than the amount of his purchase money, for the wool, leaving the living carcasses to increase and multiply to the good of his bargain.

In a somewhat similar case, cattle, which had been bought at six guineas a head, were sold at seven shillings and sixpence; and horses, the produce of first-class blood, that had cost from sixty to seventy pounds, brought only seventeen and eighteen shillings. Business dwellings in Melbourne, which had cost over a thousand pounds to build, independent of the land they were erected on, sold for from £70 to £90. The produce of all kinds sold in proportion. The newspaper Press was but in its infancy, and very weak. One journal, the *Geelong Advertiser*, had the courage to speak, and state why such a panic should come to pass. It showed the gross delusion to which the whole community had fallen in supposing that the real and permanent wealth, whether of individuals or of the colony generally, could be greatly increased by any other means than by patient and persevering industry and

economy. Every shilling that could be raised by any means whatever, whether by loan from private parties, from the banks, or from public companies, was spent in purchasing land from the Government. This money did not return again in public works of any kind, but was wastefully expended in extravagant salaries, and as the receipts frittered through one official hand to another became less and less at each transfer.

No. XVI.
[By "SNYDER."]

THE WEST COAST FENIAN ALARM.

It will have been observed that I do not carry forward my reminiscences in chronological order. I take them as they come to me, or as I may be reminded of them by some passing event or something I may have chanced to hear.

In my last reminiscence I made allusion to what has been termed (inaccurately enough) the Fenian riots at Hokitika, on the West Coast of the Middle Island. That the law was defied and that there was much alarm at the time there can be no doubt whatever. I know that hundreds of persons were sworn in as special constables and furnished with batons; that they were drilled, and kept watch and guard turn and turn about through the day and night. I know that very many persons went about armed with loaded revolvers, and that not a few hid away what they held to be valuable, and which to them money could not replace. I know that the proprietor of the leading morning journal slept with his family in the Government buildings, guarded and watched over by men hired and paid for the service. But there was no riot nor was there anything approaching an outbreak.

As I was the unwitting author of what brought all this to pass, and as I know all the surroundings of an affair which filled the colonial journals at the time with sensation articles and paragraphs causing great anxiety, I shall here give all that I know of it, when I think readers will learn for the first time the right from the wrong, will have the subject placed before them stripped and divested of all that has been so vague and undefined.

It is now somewhere about twenty-six years gone by that I was a newspaper reporter on a bi-weekly journal in Geelong, a town in Victoria next in importance to Melbourne. Early one morning, as I was leaving the office of the paper to attend the Police Court, a tall, thin, poorly-clad man, with a most melancholy expression of countenance, but with a gentle and most gentlemanly manner, walked in and asked for the proprietor. I pointed to the editor, who was standing near me at the time, saying that was the gentleman. Then the enquirer, taking off his hat, and shewing a high, finely-formed forehead, said that he was a literary man, and would be glad if he could obtain an engagement, it mattered not at what rate of salary, so that it would afford him the wherewithal to live. But there was no engagement open for anyone. The paper was only a small one, and contained little else than what is understood as extract matter. In fact, when I state that in addition to my reporter's duties, I found leisure to attend to a post-office, a stationer's shop, and a general emporium in connection with the journal I represented, and still further found ample time to attend the publishing department, to address envelopes, to fold newspapers, sweep out the office, and occasionally take a turn with the ink-roller when the paper had gone to press, added to the work of collecting accounts, looking-up accidents, narrow escapes, and advertisements, which even then left several spare hours of time on my hands, it will be seen that when the proprietor and editor said there was no opening for any additional literary talent he was as near speaking the truth as in a general way is to be arrived at in this world. And so the applicant, having in a low voice expressed his thanks, walked out of the office and gently closed the door behind him.

Then it was that I said to the editor, "I think that poor fellow looks as if he were hard up." And the editor was a man tender of heart, kind of feeling, and generous in his every impulse, although, upon my word, I don't think I have ever met with a newspaper writer since then who could say such hard things in such short sentences as that man could. But he never attacked individuals unless they were very big individuals indeed, and were well able to fire a return shot. He never—no, not in all the long years I knew him—wrote, or allowed to be printed in his paper, a line that would give pain, or wound the feelings of man or woman. So, when I said to him "That poor fellow looks as if he were hard up," his reply was, "Go and see. If he's really hard up, as I think he seems to be—well, we must see what's to be done."

And I went out into the street, and was not long overtaking him; for he was sauntering idly in the direction of the wharf—sauntering as men saunter who have no special object to seek—sauntering downcast and lonely.

When I came up to him I placed my hand lightly on his shoulder, and he turned and faced me. I don't know that I have ever seen a face which reflected such a deep and settled melancholy. This I afterwards discovered was native to his nature. Partly, perhaps, constitutional, from one misfortune following on another, but which, after all, in a free and young colony the general run of men would think little of.

I said, "You have just left the office of the paper I am on. You asked employment, and there is none for you. Are you hard up?"

In a still, gentle voice he said, "Yes, I am hard up; but I want nothing given me. I want work, and I don't care what it is—wool dumping, shingle splitting, post and rail fixing—I don't care much which."

"You are an Irishman?" I said, putting my words in the form of a question.

"Yes, I am. Why do you ask?"

"Because," I said, "although an Englishman myself, I have an Irishwoman for a wife, and she likes her countrymen. Will you come home and have dinner with me?"

He pressed me gently by the hand, saying I had said the thing so nicely he would not refuse. And he came to my house, and sat down, and I called my wife aside into another room, and told her what I knew, and that was enough. It was easy to see the sensitive nature of the man. He disliked accepting a favour in the form of charitable help, or of having anything in the way of sympathy shewn towards him.

But a woman's tact seldom fails her, and in two or three hours this man was at his ease. Then he became frank and open and communicative. He had not long been in the colony. He had lived for some three years in one of the Polynesian Islands. He had joined a whaling ship, and when she touched at the island he concealed himself, and she sailed away without him. And he remained just as long as he said, until another ship dropped anchor, and sent a boat ashore for water and fruit. The vessel was bound for Tasmania, and he was allowed to take passage in her upon condition that he helped to work the ship, which at the time was very short-handed through numerous desertions.

Other things he told which, however, have little or no connection with what I may here relate.

The wayfarer remained under the shelter of my roof, and partook of my table for some three or four days, when he engaged himself as a general hand upon a farm some fifteen miles out of town. Before leaving he called on the editor of the newspaper and asked him if he might be allowed to send such contributions as he might write during the blank hours of a bush life which intervene between sundown and turn-in time. And the editor not only gave him permission, but said that he would pay for what was accepted to the extent of what he could afford. Then he took his departure, saying but very little, but shewing in many ways that he felt grateful for the kindnesses which he had received from his countrywoman and her husband.

In something under a month after his absence, my melancholy friend sent a contribution to the editor. It wasn't poetry, as I thought it would be. It was not a tale of disappointed love, resulting in a broken heart and culminating in suicide. There was no description of a Polynesian girl who swam fifty miles from one isle to another to look upon a "pale face," and then fell madly, fatally, ravenously in love with it. There wasn't even so much as a little bit of romance to be found in any out-of-the-way corner of the contribution, but it was one of the most humorous, light-hearted, laughable descriptions of bush life I had ever read. It was written lightly, gracefully, scholarly. There was a vein of rich fun running through the whole, and shewing here and there such a keen insight into human nature, its weaknesses, and its foibles, that the narrative, when printed, took with the public at once. It was re-printed in all the colonial journals, and two years afterwards, looking over a "Chambers's Edinburgh Journal," I found it had been reproduced under the head of "Life in the Australian Colonies." This contribution was succeeded by others, each more lightly and more humorously written than the one which preceded it. They were sketches of character to be found among those who led a bush life, and included "The Master's Man," "The Stock Rider," "The Man with a Swag," "The Squatter," "The Overseer." These contributions brought the paper under prominent notice. They were read far and near, and no one who had laughed over them until stopped by a side ache, ever imagined they were the production of a man of a most melancholy temperament; of one who took no pleasure in existence; of one who was altogether indifferent whether he was of this world to-day or of some other the next. Politics were never touched on; his country was never referred to, and when he dealt with his countrymen, it was only to bring out some piece of broad humour in them, which he never, however, made ridiculous.

And this man was Mr. James Manning. After the lapse of some months he came down

again to Geelong, and received good payment for his contributions. He stayed with me for a few days—the same melancholy, low-voiced, gentle-mannered man. He loved a child as a mother might love it, and by some instinct unknown to us—for we have seen the same thing happen before—a child always drew towards him and nestled against him to be fondled. He spent the most of his money in presents—absurd, ludicrous, incomprehensible presents. He bought my suckling baby, but a few weeks born, a plum-cake which would have turned the scale at fourteen pounds. He purchased a box of carpenters' tools at auction, and sent them home in a cart for a son just rising eighteen months, and this was accompanied by a six-bladed penknife so stiff in the joints as to require machinery to open it. By a series of curious coincidences he bought just what was of no manner of use or amusement to a child, and never bought what might have been. As a case in point, I may mention he bought a heavy double-barrelled flint-striking gun for my eldest born, then not three years old. It was after remaining with me some ten days that on going to his room early one morning I found his bed vacant. He had gone I knew not whither, and twenty years elapsed before I beheld his face again. That was at Hokitika, on the West Coast.

How it was he came there, and what followed, I shall have to relate.

BY SNYDER.

No. XVI.

THE FENIAN ALARM.—(Concluded.)

More than a quarter of a century had passed over without my hearing anything of Manning. He had, in fact, quite dropped out of memory, when early one morning, towards the close of 1867, while sitting in my office, absorbed in the contents of the morning journal, I glanced upwards from the sheet, when, standing full before me, was John Manning, the man who so many year back had, by his humorous and comic delineations of character, convulsed the people with laughter; whose droll phrases, rich pleasantry, and curious insight into the lighter side of human nature made his writings eminently readable, and certainly not uninteresting. There he stood before me, but little different in appearance to what he was nigh upon twenty-six long years ago. The same settled melancholy upon him, the same sombre but intellectual cast of countenance, the same attenuated frame. He had not altered so much as a little bit. We shook hands, and then in a few sentences he gave in brief and rapid outline what had happened him since he left me in Victoria without note or intimation. He had gone into the bush and engaged as tutor in a squatter's family. After a time he left and sailed away for Sydney, where he gave a series of lectures upon Irish wit and humour, which were well received and much appreciated. Then he sailed back to Victoria, and went on to the diggings, where he took a leading part in the Eureka Stockade riots against the military. Here he was wounded, a musket ball having lodged in his right arm. He was taken care of by some diggers, and carefully nursed and tended. When sufficiently recovered, he wandered far into the interior of the country, where, in long unoccupied hours of the solitary evenings, he devoted his time to writing a novel, which, for want of means and friends, he was unable to get published. Then he once more took ship to Sydney, and went inland some 300 miles, where he started a bush school, which he retained for some time, until, having saved a small sum of money, he went back once again to Victoria by way of Tasmania. He had engaged in various occupations—had been shepherd on a sheep-station; had done splitting and post-and-rail work. Went teaching again. Went once more to Sydney, and was now for the first time in Hokitika. He had heard that I edited a newspaper. He was glad of it. Could I offer him any literary employment? I said I could not, and he looked grieved. He had a little money, but not much. Living on the West Coast was expensive, and it would soon go.

Then it was, after reflecting a few minutes, I said, "Manning, why don't you start a newspaper? An Irish paper you know; one that will make your countrymen laugh, and keep them in good humour. It's bound to pay, with the amount of funny devilment you will be able to infuse into it. Start a paper, my dear fellow, and your fortune's made." And as he sat opposite, his mild blue eyes settled on me, he said, "I thank you for your suggestion. My capital is a few

shilling have a shilling start a very ex you kn column That's v But per do this family r and giv support well if two hi blood, resting right to him furnish full of o liveries plenty a start a editoria looking see it al Five pos five shil But wh don't do down c know. special turn fo It was v sat on n "Man of woul say. I own, bu many and wel that th to gro He wen a fortun success! anticipa religion cient m newspa printing venienc was so was d and att details, would. paper, a my min a journ yarns, a journal matter- thought and lear "Wh it the s He sh "Wel Bragh." Anoth "Wo you say Anoth Then were get I sugg Cushta The n did not of them Then asked n anything had son It The C I said name w enough Now agreeme me to j they ar these la the prin to print sider lib And I In a j much e for the to look seer of t see any too stro perhaps see it?" two hot six or ei Thund mounta hination