

THUNDERBOLT'S MATE.

BY E. W. HORNUNG.

CHAPTER IV.

On the evening of Tuesday, September 8, at a quarter past six, Penelope Lees opened the double gates of the Bilbil home-paddock, squeezed through on her pony, shut and fastened the gate behind her, and rode up very slowly to the homestead. There was a good sunset that evening—a sunset on a grand scale, for quite half the sky was tinted pink and amber; but Pen only noticed it when she stopped to give her pony its evening drink at the horse-ank, which mirrored the whole thing. Eastward, however, at the horizon, the sky was grey-edged, and the edge was growing broader; but this Pen never noticed at all. The fact is she had ridden home from the shed this evening with downcast eyes, for the shearing was all but over. It had been such splendid fun all through that it seemed to have flown over in one week, instead of in six. But what was a thousand times worse than the close of shearing was the approach of schooling; for it was settled that when William Lees went down to Melbourne at the beginning of November he was to take his little girl with him and leave her at a school there—hundreds and hundreds of miles away. This had only just been arranged; but the arrangement was final; and it must be confessed that "downcast" does not tell the whole truth with regard to poor little Pen's eyes on her ride from the shed this evening.

She dismounted at the stables, took the saddle and bridle from her pony, and sent him off towards the horse-paddock at a gentle trot. Then she walked slowly to the house, which, with the flaming west behind it, looked like an unambitious carving in ebony. The long bare veranda in front of the store and the dining-room telescoped, as it were, with the Cottage veranda; and before she set foot in the former, Pen could see the square screen of sunset at the far end of the latter, and, blotted like ink upon this screen, motionless figures sitting in silence.

As the child's step rang through the long, empty veranda, some heads turned in the other one, but no one spoke. A vague fear seized Pen, their motionless attitudes seemed so strange. She hesitated; but the reactionary impulse followed speedily, and hurried her forward, with faltering steps, into as queer a Quakers' meeting as could well be imagined.

In the sitting-room doorway stood Mrs. Lees, drawn up to her full height, her pale face cold and proud, and bitterly indignant—but quite calm, with the composure that sometimes, at a crisis, seems to come natural to the last woman you would have expected of it. Robert Ayrton, the overseer, was spread out on the floor, his back against the weather-board wall of the Cottage, his arms folded, and his head thrown forward on his chest. The man who called himself Brown lay in his usual posture in the long chair, and his dark deep eyes were turned upwards with their usual inscrutable stare.

Seated on a chair at some little distance from them was a man whom Pen had never seen before. He wore riding-boots, spurs and breeches, a short neat jacket, and a "cabbage-tree" wide-awake. His face was half turned to the glowing light, which shone upon a clear gray eye, the half of a ruddy moustache, and a sunburnt cheek and chin; the other side of the face was necessarily in deep shadow. The man was smoking a pipe—the smoke hung in silvery puffs upon the screen of rosy sky at the end of the veranda. Penelope advanced shyly, with her eyes fixed as was only natural, upon the stranger. Suddenly she stood still and shivered. The red light glittered upon something bright and steely that lay in the stranger's lap—a revolver.

"Come to me, Pen," said Mrs. Lees, in a cold mechanical voice.

Pen obeyed promptly enough, and slipped an arm around her mother's waist and nestled close beside her. And Mrs. Lees answered aloud—in a curiously scornful tone—the child's upward look of terrified inquiry: "These men are bush-rangers. We are all in their power!"

Pen clung closer to her mother. "Which men?" she whispered. "There's only that man over there with the pistol—is he Thunderbolt?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Lees, in the same dauntless, disdainful tone; "and the one with the broken leg (if it ever was broken)—the man that have nursed and attended to all these weeks—is his accomplice!"

A guilty blush suffused Pen's face to the roots of her hair. She had known this for days, yet kept it to herself! But then she had never suspected treachery of this kind. Was it treachery? She glanced to where Brown lay, hoping to find a reassuring expression on his face. But there was nothing reassuring there. His eyes were still gazing vacantly upward; but the ghost of a smile played over the pale haggard features. This faint smile seemed to Pen a confession of treachery, and she burst into tears.

At this moment, a pleasant voice, singing carelessly, broke upon their ears. The voice came nearer and nearer; then a swinging footstep and the jingling of spurs were heard in the long veranda. The bushranger handed his revolver. A moment later, the storekeeper—a young fellow fresh from England—stood aghast in their midst.

Ayrton the overseer raised his head. "Throw up your hands, Miller," said he coolly, with the true colonial drawl; "up with them, old man or you're a stiff'un! We're stuck up. Let me introduce you to the celebrated Thunderbolt;—pointing to the man with the revolver—"and his mate"—pointing to Brown.

Young Miller turned pale; then he stuck his hands deep in his trousers' pockets. He was a very young man—a Rugby boy but a year ago.

"It's a bit of colonial experience for you—a bit worth having," went on Ayrton calmly, slicing a cake of tobacco as he spoke "something for you to write and tell the old folks at home. Look out—you best stand still, I say!"

Young Miller had taken a quick step forward; but he stopped as quickly; for Ayrton's warning was driven home by the cocking of Thunderbolt's revolver.

The bushranger now rose to his feet and stretched himself coolly. "Is this the last of them?" he asked of Ayrton.

"There's the butcher!"

"We can do without him.—Call the cook."

"And there's the groom."

"We won't wait for him. Call the cook, d'ye hear?"

Ayrton obeyed. The Chinaman came. "Tell him to dish up dinner in here—and sharp," said the bushranger, pointing to the sitting room.

Ayrton repeated this order as though it had been an order from William Lees.

"Now, my friends," said Thunderbolt, addressing the whole company, "some find me a man of few words—some 'o'other thing; but anyway it's precious little I've got to say now. You'll have heard of me before, mayhap; and you'll have heard of some 'o' the things I've done when pressed. I've done enough, I daresay, to set a pretty high figure upon myself, alive or dead. Whatever you may force me into doing to-night, it can't make it any hotter for me, when my time comes, than it would be as things stand already." He tapped the butt-end of his revolver significantly. "But really, ladies and gentlemen," he went on in a more insinuating manner, "there need be no unpleasantness at all; all I ask is a square meal; then we'll adjourn, the lot of us, and any more as may happen to drop in and join us—to the store; and after that—I don't promise, mind—but it's very likely I'll be saying good-bye to you.—As for you, ma'am," continued Thunderbolt, bowing suavely to Mrs. Lees, "if you've heard anything about me at all you'll know that you're safe—whatever happens—and the little lady too!"

Mrs. Lees treated this assurance with silent contempt; and the outlaw now ordered them all into the sitting-room, which, as he had been careful to find out first, had no second door, and no windows beyond the two that looked out upon the veranda. The young store-keeper was the last to enter, and he turned on the threshold to shake his fist at Thunderbolt's mate.

"You villain!" he muttered savagely—"you double-dyed, immeasurable!"

Some swift momentary change in Brown's face—to which Thunderbolt for the moment had turned his back—made the young man stop short in the thick of his epithets. It set him thinking, too. And a little conversation between Thunderbolt and his mate, which now took place, made his thinking run in unexpected grooves.

"Can you walk yet?" asked Thunderbolt.

"No."

"Where do you sleep, then; and how do they shift you?"

"I sleep in the barracks; the gentlemen carry me to and fro morning and evening."

As young Miller, and indeed every one, knew, Brown was not carried to and from the barracks; he hobbled on crutches. Miller, moreover, had a shrewd idea as to where those crutches were at that moment; the creepers grew so thickly at the base of the trellis, and the long chair covered so much ground just there, that they could not quite be seen; but that they were within Brown's reach, Miller could not doubt. His ideas became almost too much for him; for none but himself had heard the small conversation between the bushranger and his quondam mate, and Miller yearned to whisper the gist of it to Ayrton, though, happily, he had too much sense to attempt this.

An hour passed. Supper was over; the bush-ranger had eaten heartily enough, if no one else did—and had not touched a drop of anything stronger than tea; and all the while with half an eye upon the veranda and Brown, and an eye and a half upon the room and its occupants. The number of the latter was now materially increased. After dinner had been served, Sammy, the Chinese cook, was not allowed to return to the kitchen. Then the groom had come in to say that a strange black horse was tethered in the pines, and the groom had been detained. Then the butcher had come to see what had happened to his friend the groom, and the butcher had been detained. The maid-servant, also, had surrendered of her own accord, being tired of the dust and discomfort and solitude under her mistress's bed so she was in the room too, in a state of intermittent hysterics. But Mrs. Lees sat through it all in haughty silence; and little Pen, clasping her mother's hand tightly, did her best to follow her mother's example.

"I was once in pretty much the same fix before," Thunderbolt told them good-humouredly, though really the "fix" did not seem to be on his side. "It was at a Queensland station, Clermont way; and I'd bailed up all hands in the store quite comfortably; but they were fools enough to attempt a rush, and—how many was it I shot, mate?" asked Thunderbolt, glancing through the door.

"Three," replied Brown shortly. "So you said—I was not there."

"Ah, three; so it was; three. Now, they could only hang me once for them three. What's more, if I was to shoot three dozen more to-night—supposing there was three dozen here to shoot—still, they could only hang me once. That's where I've got the bulge, you see!"

Thunderbolt puffed his pipe complacently. He seemed enamoured of the situation, and glad to prolong it. Suddenly, however—quite suddenly—he turned to the young storekeeper.

"You sing, mister—eh? I heard you as you came along the veranda. Give us a song now."

Young Miller, though his eyes met the bushranger's, saw a white face nodding to him through the open door; and the reluctance with which he went to the piano was only feigned. Then and there he sang to his own accompaniment, a song that fell agreeably upon Thunderbolt's ears, but sank like lead into all other hearts, save that of Thunderbolt's mate. The song ended, the bushranger said authoritatively: "Give us another."

Young Miller glanced inquiringly at Mrs. Lees. The circumstances had not quite robbed him of his English manners. Before the first song, he had asked permission in the same mute way, and received a nod. It was almost a pity she did not confine herself to a nod this time for it only amused the bushranger when she said sarcastically: "Certainly, Mr. Miller. Pray, do not be murdered for the sake of a song!" Miller struck up a lively jingle, reminiscent of burnt cork and the banjo, and straightway plunged into a song that purported to be comic. It was highly appreciated. Thunderbolt beat time with his spur-

red heels, joined in the chorus, and, at the end, rapped out his applause upon the door-panels with the butt-end of his pistol. He had laughed uproariously at least once in every verse, and faint echoes from the veranda had further encouraged the singer.

In high good-humour, the bushranger now asked Miller to play one of the old English ballads. Miller got out the book; and a strange scene followed. Thunderbolt—this bloodthirsty desperado—stood up, revolver in hand, and sang "The Lass of Richmond Hill;" moreover, he sang it with excellent expression, and in a full manly voice that only just missed being sweet into the bargain. None of the party ever heard the song again without recalling his singing of it. It was greeted with loud applause from the veranda, to which Thunderbolt had turned his back while singing. The merry rufian's spirits rose still higher, and he undertook to give "Tom Bowling" as a wind-up.

He looked really very handsome, and taking, and good-natured, as he stood up there framed in the doorway. The light of the lamp on the table and of the candles in the piano sconces fell upon his tall athletic frame and strong regular features; his teeth, as his mouth opened—like a true singer's—in a perfect circle, were white and even; and he sang that tender old song of Dibdin's with a rough effective tenderness of his own; though the revolver was in his hand and his finger on the trigger!

Never before or since, one ventures to assert, has "Tom Bowling" been rendered under such very exceptional circumstances. It occupied some minutes. Your rough-and-ready singer's tendency is ever to overdo the andante, and this one had a particular weakness for rallentando. So the song, which was sung much better than the previous song, took up some little time; and when it was over, there was no applause. The leader of the applause was silent. Thunderbolt turned round quickly, almost before the last note had died away, and uttered a sound that seemed to come from another throat, and a wild beast's, for it was a roar of rage. His former mate—the helpless man with the broken leg—was gone!

Thunderbolt strode out, but only a yard from the door, and stood listening and peering through the darkness. He could see nothing; he could hear nothing. Wheeling round, he stalked back into the room, livid and furious, and clapped his revolver to young Miller's ear.

"You young rascal! he yelled, 'I've a mind to blow your brains out where you sit! You've had a hand in this!'"

And Tom Bowling had not been thirty seconds "gone aloft!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Who Discovered Fire?

The Revue Scientifique prints a curious paper by Professor Joby in which the inquiry is made, by whom and when was fire first discovered? Alluding to the fable of Prometheus it is found to be of Indian origin. In the Vedas, the god of fire, Agni (compare with the Latin, Ignis) is concealed in a secret place whence the god Metharshivan forces him out and makes him communicate the celestial fire to Manu, the first man. The very name of Prometheus is traceable to the Vedas and calls to mind the process employed by the ancient Brahmins to obtain the sacred fire. For this purpose they used a stick called a pramatha, which they ignited by friction. The prefix pra gives the idea of taking by force, a circumstance which strengthens the evidence afforded by the resemblance of that word to Prometheus.

There are several ways of obtaining fire by friction. The most primitive one consists in rubbing two pieces of dry wood against each other; but this was improved on in course of time. Next a stick was made to slide, very fast up and down in a groove; then came the "fire drill," consisting of a piece of wood having a cavity in which a stick was inserted which was pressed by the operator, who at the same time made it turn very fast, after the fashion of a wimble. The Brahmins made this drill, but with a cord wound about it by pulling which they gave an alternate, rotary motion to the stick.

Another mode of obtaining fire was that of striking two flints together. After considering these various modes of obtaining the ever useful, Professor Joby reverts to the question as to whether prehistoric man was in possession of fire. Some have gone so far as to say that it was an element in use by man of the Miocene period because charcoal and vitrified sands have been found along with bones of the mastodon. This, however, has not been sufficiently proven. It is known that quaternary man did use fire, many fire places with ashes, cinders, broken pottery, etc., having been found in caverns pertaining to the period of the reindeer, the cave bear and polished stone.

419,000 Square Miles of Coal in China.

Cheok Hong Cheong, a Chinese gentleman who superintends a mission for the benefit of his countrymen in the colony of Victoria, delivered a lecture on Tuesday night to members of the House of Commons, assembled in one of the committee rooms of the Palace of Westminster, on the intricacies of the opium traffic. He said that instead of cultivating this drug to the ruin of the Chinese, Englishmen ought to exploit the coal-fields of China and develop its regular commerce. It has 419,000 square miles of coal fields, or more than 20 times the aggregate of the carbon strata in Europe. The prospect of being independent of "strikes," play days, and panics in England is an enticing one, except that the Chinese have a habit of "removing" from coal or other terrestrial fields to the ethereal fields of Elysium all persons without pigtail who attempt to do anything in Cathay. Sir Joseph Pease presided over the meeting, which thanked the lecturer for the information he had given them.

Full Stock.

Customer—"Have you any rare old cheese?"
New boy—"Yessir. Got all sorts—rare, very rare, raw, or alive."

A lady writes the simple truth as follows: Barrie Island, Ont.—"I have been a great sufferer from neuralgia for the last nine years, but, being advised to try St. Jacobs Oil, can now heartily endorse it as being a most excellent remedy for this complaint, as I have been greatly benefited by its use." MRS. JOHN McLEAN.

A STRANGE STORY OF JOHNSTOWN.

Husband and Wife United After Each Believed the Other Drowned in the Flood.

At the time of the Johnstown horror James Agnew was in the employ of the Cambria Iron Works, which were destroyed by the flood. Just below the ill-fated town lived Agnew and his wife Elizabeth and three children. Mrs. Agnew and her children were among the human waifs cast up by the flood homeless and hopeless. They were taken by kind people from their house of refuge and cared for, but Mrs. Agnew would as soon have died, except for her children, for with the wreck of the Cambria Iron Works her husband was lost, and though she searched as far as she could down the river, the cruel waters refused to give up his dead body. She was widowed and beggared, one of the many.

She was sinking in despair, when there came a letter from Louisville, Ky. It was from her brother, John Pritchard, a well-known machinist at the Louisville and Nashville shops. He bade his sister come home to him, and her mother sent her the means to come. Here she lived quietly, grieving for her lost husband, while her little ones, with the happy forgetfulness of childhood, found in Uncle Jack another father. For a long time things went on quietly, and the poignant first grief melted into the latter sorrow of widowhood. One day not long ago a letter carrier stopped at the Pritchard house. The letter bore the stamp of Allentown, Pa. With nervous fingers Mrs. Agnew opened it. She read it partly; then a great joy came upon her, for her husband was alive. When the destroying waters swept over the works Agnew was swept away in the wreck. Down the river he floated and thought he was lost.

Darkness and the agony of death settled upon him, and he knew no more for a time. When he recovered kind hands were lifting him from a tangle of wreckage and dead bodies, and he was carried to a Red Cross tent. There he lay many days unconscious, shattered in mind and body. At last the flickering flame of life began to burn more briskly. Reason came back and the bruised body regained strength. Then he inquired after his wife and children, and for the first time he learned the extent of the disaster. He lived because he could not help it. For a long time he went on thus; then, through the inquiries of a good priest, it was learned that the Pritchards lived in Louisville and with them the lost wife and children. James Agnew and Elizabeth Agnew are reunited, but they will never forget the Johnstown horror.

Peter The Wild Boy.

Peter the Wild Boy was one of the wonders of the last century. He was found in the year 1725, in a wood near Hameln, about twenty-five miles from Hanover, walking on his hands and feet, climbing trees like a squirrel, and feeding on grass and moss, and in the month of November was conveyed to Hanover by the superintendent of the house of correction at Zell. At this time he was supposed to be about thirteen years old, and could not speak. This singular creature was presented to George I., then at Hanover, while at dinner. The King caused him to taste of all the dishes at the table; and in order to bring him by degrees to relish human diet, he directed that he should have such provision as he seemed best to like, and such instruction as might best fit him for human society.

Soon after this, the boy made his escape into the same wood, where he concealed himself among the branches of a tree, which was saved down to recover him. He was brought over to England at the beginning of 1726, and exhibited to the king and many of the nobility. In this country he was distinguished by the appellation of Peter the Wild Boy, which he ever afterwards retained. Peter the Wild Boy, has been denominated the human brute; but when space admits it, we think we can, through anecdotes of this remarkable being, furnish proof that his deficiencies were entirely owing to the want of early culture, and that he belonged to the family of man as certainly as did his detractors.

Jewels in the Grave.

Occasionally in the United States the body of a deceased person is belted with the jewels worn during life, and the jewelry buried with the deceased. The largest amount of jewelry known to be in a single grave is said to have been buried several years ago in Brooklyn Cemetery. The undertaker who had charge of the funeral protested against it, but was severely snubbed for his interference. The family had its way, and in that grave there are fully \$1,000 worth of diamonds, with which the body was adorned when prepared for burial. Sometimes families who desire to bury their dead in the clothing worn in life—in evening or wedding dress for instance—substitute less costly imitations for the jewelry worn in life, partly from a superstitious fear that anything taken off a body when it is ready for the tomb will bring ill-luck to future wearers.

Neither Grammatical nor Otherwise.

A school teacher in Toronto who believes in giving pupils practical illustrations asked little Johnny Filkins if he was possessed of any keys.

"Yep," said the boy, "I got one."
"Now, I want to ask you," said the pedagogue, gravely, "whether she sits or sets?"
"She dont do nuther," said Johnny, with animation; "she only puts on airs on and cackles."

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What He Had Been Trying to Explain.

The professor had talked to the class an hour and a half on the question of the tariff. "There is one little point still unsettled in my mind, professor," said one of the pupils, a thoughtful young man, whose intelligent face and close attention had greatly pleased the instructor. "It is this: Who finally pays the tariff on imported goods—the foreign manufacturer, the importer or the consumer?"

The professor sat down profoundly discouraged. That was the precise point he had been trying to explain.

Hadn't Trained for It.

Seeker—"So old Dwaale is dead, eh?"
Sage-man—"Yes, poor fellow. He died a victim to a misfit disease."
Seeker—"Why, what do mean by that?"
Sage-man—"Simply this. All his life he had been the most inert, slothful of men, and when hasty consumption tackled him it was so altogether adverse to his usages that it just tired him out in short order."

"August Flower"

How does he feel?—He feels cranky, and is constantly experimenting, dieting himself, adopting strange notions, and changing the cooking, the dishes, the hours, and manner of his eating—August Flower the Remedy.

How does he feel?—He feels at times a gnawing, voracious, insatiable appetite, wholly unaccountable, unnatural and unhealthy.—August Flower the Remedy.

How does he feel?—He feels no desire to go to the table and a grumbling, fault-finding, over-nicety about what is set before him when he is there—August Flower the Remedy.

How does he feel?—He feels after a spell of this abnormal appetite an utter abhorrence, loathing, and detestation of food; as if a mouthful would kill him—August Flower the Remedy.

How does he feel?—He has irregular bowels and peculiar stools—August Flower the Remedy. @

A Poor Nurse.

Mamma—"What is the matter with my little pet?"
Little Pet—"Nurse is so ugly, she won't do a sing to 'muse us. We jes asked her to make a toboggan slide, an' she won't."
"But what could she make a toboggan slide of my dear?"
"Zat big mirror."

One on the Teacher.

Teacher—"Your answer to the problem about two men building a fence calls for six days too much."
Bright Boy—"Six of the days was Sundays, an' they don't count."

Knowing and Thinking.

Mamma—"Can you pass me the cake dear?"
Little Dear—"I finks you's had all 'at is dood for you."
Mamma—"How do you know?"
Little Dear—"I don't know, I only fink, like you do wen I wants fings."

A Boy's Idea.

The following conversation reported by a friend was recently overheard between two brothers, aged four and six years:
"Say, Winny, what is the difference, anyway, between a bicycle and a tricycle?"
Elder (with patronizing air)—"Why, Ray, don't you know that? If a man takes the thing home to see how he likes it, it is a tricycle, but if he buys it outright it is a bicycle."

THIRTY YEARS.

Johnston, N. B., March 11, 1889.

"I was troubled for thirty years with pains in my side, which increased and became very bad. I used

ST. JACOBS OIL

and it completely cured. I give it all praise."

MRS. WM. RYDER.

"ALL RIGHT! ST. JACOBS OIL DID IT!"