

famous

DETECTIVE
stories

**Blood in
the Bagnio**



A Magpie Selection
No. 74

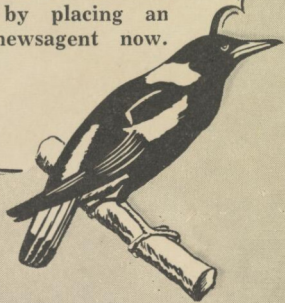
TRUE STORIES OF FAMOUS CRIMES

THIS IS A

MAGPIE NOVEL — READ IT NOW!

IT WILL HOLD YOU TO THE END

Here's your entree into the grim world of crime and criminals. Here's your opportunity of exploring the strange channels of the criminal mind. Perhaps with you lies the clue that will "break" an unsolved murder. Rape . . . arson . . . murder . . . every crime in the Australian crime calendar is covered by "Famous Detective Stories," the new series of which begins with this issue. "Famous Detective Stories" will appear each month in the famous "Magpie Series," bringing you the true stories of crimes that have made their grim impact on the life of Australia. Make sure of getting the next issue of "Famous Detective Stories" by placing an order with your newsagent now.



famous

DETECTIVE

stories

MAGPIE



BOOKS

FRANK JOHNSON PTY. LTD.
350 GEORGE ST., SYDNEY

FAMOUS DETECTIVE STORIES

NEW SERIES No. 1

IN THIS ISSUE

CRIME AT WARANGA BASIN	5
MURDER MEETS MAGIC	59
"LOONEY" McDOULL'S GHOST	66
THE POLICE KILLER	75
WHO WAS HIS KILLER	88
BLOOD IN THE BAGNIO	95
ESCAPE TO TERROR	100
CATTLE STEALERS OF THE BLACK COUNTRY	112
HELL ON HIGH SEAS	124

Contributions dealing with true stories of Crime and Detection should be sent to the Editor of Frank Johnson Publications, 350 George Street, Sydney.

COPYRIGHT

Wholly set up and printed in Australia by President Press, 60-70 Elizabeth St., Sydney NSW for the Publisher, Frank Johnson, Pty. Ltd., 350 George St., Sydney. Distributed throughout Australia by Gordon and Gotch (A/asia) Ltd.

Registered at the G.P.O. Sydney, for transmission by post as a book.

CRIME AT WARANGA BASIN

By C. K. Thompson

His Crime might have gone unpunished only for the fact of a rotting sack at the bottom of a waterhole. An amazing story of the patient investigation that lay behind the trapping of a killer.

ON Monday morning, April 10, 1905, Donald McLarey, a farmer with property skirting an irrigation channel running from Waranga Basin at Girgarre East, northern Victoria, told one of his farm-hands that it was time they attended to certain rabbit-warrens on the property.

So, armed with picks and shovels, they set to work along the bank of the channel, eventually reaching a bridge on the main Girgarre road.

Noticing a bulky object snagged on a floodgate under the bridge on the west side, and attracted by a rather unpleasant smell, McLarey investigated. He found a bran-bag, and when he poked it with his spade he noticed, through a hole in the bag, a human arm.

That was more than sufficient for Mr. McLarey. Suspecting that there had been dirty work at the crossroads, he sought out Channel Guard Crawford. With Crawford, he examined the bag a little closer, and, finding that it contained parts of a human body, sent a hasty message to Sergeant James Slattery at Tatura. The ser-

geant, with Constable Collins, took possession of the gruesome object and removed it to a stable at the Criterion Hotel, Tatura.

That the discovery caused a great sensation in the district is put mildly. Sergeant Slattery knew the job was beyond him, so sent a hasty message to C.I.B. Headquarters in Melbourne. In next to no time Detective A. S. Burvett was heading north, accompanied by the Government Pathologist, Dr. C. H. Mollison.

Experts in their own lines, neither had much to work on. The body in the bag was not complete—the head and legs were missing, though there was a little bit of jawbone to which adhered portion of a red beard. The right hand seemed to have been mutilated, but decomposition was so far advanced that this and other details could not be determined with any degree of certainty.

The fact that the body was clothed only in two shirts—a grey flannel undershirt and a cotton overshirt with a light striped pattern—seemed to suggest that the man had been killed while asleep. The murderer then probably cut the body up at his convenience and, having roughly sewn the trunk up in a bran-bag, took it to the water-channel where it was found. That the head was removed in order to hamper identification was a theory that suggested itself to Burvett.

Early in his investigation, the detective discovered that the body had been stuck in the same spot for at least a week, because it had been seen there by a lad named George Donaldson, who took a drink at the water-channel just below the spot. Taking a cursory glance at the object, he thought it was a dead sheep and gave it no further thought.

Dr. Mollison, after the post-mortem, ventured the opinion that death had taken place about two months previously. Cause of death was probably severe head injuries.

Detective Burvett enlisted the aid of Senior-Constable Faulkner and the blacktrackers Peter and Charlie, but they were of little or no assistance owing to heavy rain that had fallen recently.

The first task of the detective was to ascertain if any men were missing in the district, and he found it to be a colossal one. At Waranga Basin over 700 men were employed. They were the usual navy class, neither better nor worse, prone to quarrel or

hilariously enjoy themselves on pay-nights. Constable Loorham, who had charge of the place and knew most of the men, stated that he had not missed any of the regular employees, and none of the residents were aware of anyone having disappeared. Scores of men, however, came and went without any particular notice being taken of them. The whole of the district, too, was overrun with rabbiters who usually camped in pairs and as a rule had horses and carts.

Life at Waranga Basin was not the wild, lawless existence it had been so often painted. Constable Loorham's opinion was that the men, on the whole, were hard-working, decent chaps. Certainly there were shanties where sly grow was sold, and there were plenty of two-up schools. Drunken fights did occur on pay-nights, but they were by no means common.

Detective Burvett realised that if the murdered man had been a rabbitier his task of establishing identity would be most difficult. Rabbitiers lived roving, irresponsible lives, here today and gone tomorrow, and their movements were entirely disregarded by the more solid type of residents.

The police dragnet was thrown out far and wide. Inquiries were made at Tatura, Burnside, Mirrigum, Girgarre East, Waranga, and Rushworth. The various channels were dredged and searched by the blacktrackers, but all the latter found were a pair of old boots and a piece of cloth which had no bearing at all on the crime.

The first important discovery was made by Sub-Inspector Mooney, of Tatura. With Sergeant Slattery, he was examining the irrigation channel about three miles from where the trunk had been found, when his attention was attracted to a dark object lying on the bottom of the channel in low water. Sergeant Slattery secured a length of wire and managed to drag the object from the mud in which it was embedded.

The object proved to be an ordinary cornsack, the mouth of which was tied with pieces of cord. When the police officers cut the bag open they found inside a pair of human legs, portion of a head, and some clothing. They decided not to disturb it but to let Dr. Mollison examine it.

The spot where the bag was found was seven miles from Tatura,

on the main Rushworth road, where the channel crossed, and about two miles in a direct line from Waranga Basin.

About the same time as the second discovery was made, a farmer named James Culkin told the police that on Saturday, March 18, a man who had been employed by him and had left met him and stated that the police at Waranga were after him. He added that a couple of mates from Waranga were going to join him and they would camp at a spot which he indicated. This spot was close to where the discovery of the upper part of the head and legs was made. The man also told Culkin that he felt sick, and attributed this feeling to his having eaten a large quantity of grapes.

The important point about this was that Dr. Mollison, at the post-mortem, had found a number of grapeskins in the stomach.

The bag found by Inspector Mooney and Sergeant Slattery was opened by Dr. Mollison

It was found to contain a human skull which had been partly roasted in a fire. The face was completely destroyed by fire and decay, but the small amount of hair remaining was distinctly dark brown in colour. The back of the skull had been smashed in with a couple of heavy blows, probably dealt with a sledge-hammer.

Also in the sack were a pair of human legs which had been severed above the knees. Grey socks—a mixture of wool and cotton—were on the feet, and this, added to the fact that nothing but two shirts were found upon the trunk, strengthened the belief that the victim was killed in his sleep. It was a very common habit for navvies and swagmen, who did not carry a large quantity of bedding, to sleep in their socks for the sake of warmth.

The police formed the opinion that, the body having been divided, the killer sewed up the trunk in one cornsack and the head and legs in another. The second bag was weighted down with scrap-iron comprising a 7-lb. hammer-head, a traveller from the shaft of a dray with the back chain-hook attached, a tug-hook from a pair of hames, a 5½-inch bolt, an old screw-wrench, an iron dray-axle washer, and two draught-horse shoes—14¼ lb. of iron altogether. The bag containing the trunk did not contain any

weights, but, as it had burst open, the police thought it probable that the scrap-iron had fallen through into the channel-bottom.

An interesting feature of the hammer-head was the fact that it had been used as a candlestick, because there was half an inch of candle sticking in it.

Next find was made by Constable Faulkner and his black-trackers. This was a pair of blucher boots in good order. They were lying near a fence on the Tatura road about a quarter of a mile from the channel where the bags containing the body were discovered. Not far from the boots was a grey check coat with blood on it.

Mr. Culkin, who had told the police about a former employee of his having disappeared, identified the coat as that of the man in question—William Taylor, known to his intimates as "Nobby." When last seen by Culkin, Taylor was heading towards the spot where the boots and coat were found, intending to camp with three mates. He had not been heard of since. Taylor had a sore on one leg, which corresponded with a sore on the dead man's leg.

Now having something tangible to work on, Detective Burvett began to check up on Taylor's movements. He learned nothing until he was approached by a man named John McMahon, a mate of Taylor's.

"You looking for Nobby Taylor?" he asked.

"I definitely am," said Burvett. "At least, I want to know if it is Taylor who is in the bags found in the irrigation channel."

"Well, it ain't," replied McMahon. "Nobby is safe and well and he's over the border in New South Wales. I've just left him there."

"Then why doesn't he come forward and save me wasting my time?" demanded the detective. "Hasn't he read in the papers that we think he might be the body in the bag?"

"It's this way, Mr. Burvett," said McMahon carefully. "Nobby doesn't want to cause any trouble to anyone, least of all the police, and he also doesn't want to cause himself any trouble, you see."

"No, I don't see," replied the detective testily. "What is all this about?"

"Well, a few weeks ago Nobby was fined three quid for mucking

up over in Rushworth and he didn't pay the fine. There is a warrant out for him to make him do a month's gaol, and he doesn't feel inclined to put in an appearance."

With this clue gone, Detective Burvett was left with hardly anything to work upon. The name of the murdered man was unknown and, what was worse still, his identity could not be established by ordinary means, since the body was quite unrecognisable.

Casting around for a fresh lead, the detective decided to concentrate his efforts on trying to have the scrap-iron found in the bag identified.

Placing all these oddments in a bag, Burvett went down to Waranga Basin and, after assembling 20 or 30 workmen about him, threw the various items on the ground, saying, "Look at these things, gentlemen, and see whether you can recognise any as belonging to your mates." The various bits of iron were picked up and examined by the men and thrown down, one after another, without comment.

Continuing his tour, Burvett addressed another batch of men and got a good hearing. He noticed one man take a very keen interest in a horseshoe; but this fellow said nothing, just throwing it down and walking away with the other workmen.

Quietly the detective followed this man and, when he had got him alone, said, "Well, what about the horseshoe?"

"I can tell you who made it, anyway," said the workman. "A farrier bloke named Edwards."

"Where can I find him?" asked Burvett.

"God knows," replied the man. "Up in the sky or under below."

"Meaning what?"

"He's dead."

"Well, then, can you tell me whose horse this shoe came from?"

"I might be able to find out for you," said the man, and walked away. Burvett saw him no more, and another possible lead went up in smoke.

On the Sunday, a number of people from surrounding districts went into Tatura to church. The tireless detective, with his bag

of assorted ironmongery, waited outside the church and asked the outcoming worshippers to inspect his exhibits. They all did so, but nobody could give him any assistance.

"Blast the luck!" he said heartily, and returned to his hotel to think the thing out again from all angles.

And then there came the first real break the police had had up to date.

On the Monday morning, about 6 o'clock, a Waranga Basin labourer named Daniel O'Rourke visited Constable Loorham's camp at the Basin.

"Something tells me that something is radically wrong with old Billy Skinner, Constable," he said. "I couldn't sleep all night for thinking about him. The idea has become impressed on my brain-box that it is Billy Skinner who is in those chaffbags. I think you'd better make a few inquiries into Skinner's movements."

Constable Loorham knew O'Rourke as a sober, steady, reliable man not given to wild imaginings; so he advised him to see Detective Burvett and tell that officer all he could about Skinner.

"Skinner and I were rather good pals," said O'Rourke. "As a matter of fact, the old chap was a bit secretive and never associated with anybody. I'm one bloke who did seem to be in his confidence a bit. Another thing. I've heard that a horse and dray were sold over at Murchison East. They mightn't be Skinner's; but, on the other hand, they might."

"Go and see Burvett," said Loorham briskly, and O'Rourke did. He found the detective poking around one of the camps and told him that he was worried about Skinner.

"Oh," said Burvett. "Who is Skinner?"

"He's an old cove who used to be about the Basin with a horse and dray. He hasn't been seen for some weeks now. He might be all right, but I feel a bit doubtful about it," said O'Rourke.

While they were talking, a local farmer, Andrew Donaldson, approached.

"I heard you mention Skinner's name," he said. "The old boy seems to have disappeared. He was here on March 4, though,

because I sold him a bag of chaff. He had another chap with him. He didn't take the chaff away, saying he would call back for it that night. I was to leave it near the fence for him. It was still there at 10 o'clock, but had gone between 11 o'clock and midnight."

"What was the other man like?" asked Burvett quickly.

"I didn't take much notice of him," Donaldson admitted. "He came up close to the stack where we were cutting the chaff, but not close enough for me to distinguish his features. It was getting dark, too. Skinner said he wouldn't take away the bag just then, but if I would leave it at the fence he'd pick it up some time that night."

"Well, I know that he was at the two-up school at eight o'clock," said O'Rourke. "He had a good spin, but knocked off playing about ten o'clock."

"The chaff wasn't at the fence when I was down that way between 11 o'clock and midnight," put in Donaldson.

"Has Skinner been working at the Basin all the year?" the detective inquired.

"No," replied O'Rourke. "He worked all last year, from January up to the middle of December, and then he went away into New South Wales. He said he was going to get work on the railway construction line from Tocumwal to Strathmerton. Joe Kennedy went away at the same time to get work on the line."

"Who is Joe Kennedy?" demanded Burvett, not knowing whether to be pleased or annoyed at yet another character coming into the tangle.

"A bloke who worked at the Basin," said O'Rourke. "I saw him around Waranga about the time that Skinner returned from Tocumwal. I don't know where he is now."

"What does he look like?"

"Just an ordinary feller. Tall, muscular, and with a curly moustache."

"H'm," murmured the detective, storing up the information for future reference. "Now tell me something about your friend Skinner."

O'Rourke described Skinner as a small, narrow-chested man

having a brown beard that apparently had never interviewed a razor. He was about five feet seven inches in height, a single man, aged about 60, and of saving habits. It was an anomaly that though a thrifty man, Skinner was strongly addicted to playing two-up and was very lucky at it. His invariable habit was to work steadily until he had accumulated £10 or £15, pay all his debts, keep out £2 for two-up, and bank what was left. If he were lucky with the £2 he ventured, he knocked off playing when he had a good amount in hand, but if he lost the original £2 he stopped playing altogether. He never borrowed from his mates, and he did not play again until he had worked and earned another £10 or £15.

O'Rourke said that Skinner returned from Tocumwal on March 2 and that night won £12 at two-up. He was, at this time, camped near the brewery. O'Rourke could not venture an opinion as to who the man was with Skinner when he bought the chaff from Donaldson.

"This man might have come with Skinner from Tocumwal and camped with him at the brewery," he suggested.

Widening his inquiries later, Burvett ascertained that it was common knowledge around the Basin that Skinner was a man of means. In addition to owning his own horse and dray, he had cash in various banks. Burvett discovered that the missing man had £75 at the Shepparton Savings Bank, had drawn £7 of this on September 20, and had made his last deposit there on October 1. He was worth, in all, roughly £200.

Skinner was particularly well known around Waranga Basin, and among the navy class throughout the northern portion of Victoria and southern New South Wales. His characteristics were described by all alike. He was, in some ways, an extraordinary fellow, remarkable for his high-pitched feminine voice and nervous disposition. He was a most retiring man, making friends with few, and was noted for having a thorough distrust of nearly everybody. He had a great objection to anyone else being in his tent, and the general opinion among those who knew him was that if he did pick up a companion he must have known him very well before he would have had sufficient confidence in him to make him a travelling acquaintance.

Burvett was told that Skinner originally came from Queensland but for the previous ten years had regularly followed horse-driving on contract works as an occupation. He worked his own horse, an aged animal named Toby. Nobody else could drive this horse satisfactorily, but a perfect understanding seemed to exist between Skinner and the prad. Workmen told the detective that the spectacle of Skinner working old Toby in a stiff cutting was as good as a circus. Skinner used to talk and shout at the horse all day. In fact, he worked the animal entirely by talking to it.

A workman named Jones told Burvett that Skinner never failed to visit him when he was at Waranga, but when the missing man returned from Tocumwal on March 2 and never came near the Jones camp the man was greatly puzzled.

Burvett's inquiries about the man Joe Kennedy brought to light the fact that Kennedy had been seen at Murchison in company with a man named "Bowler" Walsh and another person. Kennedy had later left for Western Australia and was even then in that State.

Skinner's dray was described by O'Rourke so as to be readily identified. The old man set a high value on it, too. Independent valuers at the Basin reckoned it wasn't worth any more than £30, but Skinner often had stated that he wouldn't take a cent less than £45 for it.

One of the greatest difficulties in the way of a solution of the mystery from the inception of the investigation had been the total absence of any evidence to connect the crime with any particular locality. The body was certainly found within a few miles of Waranga Basin, but the sacks might have been carried from anywhere and thrown into the channel so as to direct suspicion at the men camped there. The weights could have come from Ballarat or Bendigo as well as from the Basin. In addition to that, not one of the hundreds of residents had been able to identify any of the articles.

The Basin postmaster, Mr. William Thompson, who also ran the general store, said that some of the things could have been bought at his store, but they could also have been bought in Melbourne or Sydney. Pondering the matter over deeply, he said he thought he recognised the screw-wrench.

"Give me another look at it," he said to Burvett, who promptly handed it over.

"It belongs to Mrs. Every at the boarding-house," declared Thompson.

Armed with the wrench, Burvett immediately interviewed Mrs. Every. Yes, she knew the wrench. It was hers, but it had been missing for five or six weeks.

Burvett regarded this as an important piece of evidence, since it showed clearly that the murderer had been at the Basin, even if he had not been a resident there.

The detective now redoubled his efforts to find Skinner or his dray, and struck another lucky patch.

"I've heard that Jim O'Keefe, who keeps the Perseverance Hotel over at Murchison East, bought a cheap turnout not long ago," a workman at the Basin told the interested detective. "It was put up for auction at the saleyards."

"How much was it sold for" asked Burvett.

"Twenty quid, they tell me," said the man.

This was the lead for which the detective had been looking. Skinner was not, from what he had been told, the sort of man who would sell his turnout, horse and dray, for a measly £20. If, of course, Skinner himself really had sold the horse and dray, all the detective's theories would go up in smoke, and his supposition that Skinner was the murdered man was wrong. On the other hand, if the man who sold the horse and dray was not Skinner, then he must either be Skinner's murderer or must know something about his disappearance.

Collecting Daniel O'Rourke, who knew Skinner's dray well, Burvett, with Constable Collins, made straight for Murchison East and the Perseverance Hotel. There they saw the landlord, James O'Keefe.

"Yes," said O'Keefe at once, "I bought the horse and dray and it was a bargain."

"Who sold them to you?" asked Burvett.

"A chap who said his name was William Skinner."

"What did he look like?"

"He was a tall bloke, about 35 years old, and had a fair, curly, sandy moustache and whiskers," said O'Keefe. "He was strong, robust and active, and talked a lot about having been a shearer and a fighting man."

"Doesn't sound like Skinner," said O'Rourke, shaking his head.

"How much did you give for the turnout?" asked Burvett.

"It was put up for sale in the auction-yard, but, as only £19/10/- was bid for them, they were passed in for private sale," said O'Keefe. "All the time the sale was on, this man Skinner was behaving like a damned fool. Personally, I think he was drunk."

"What did he do?"

"Somebody said something about wanting to have a trial," said O'Keefe. "The man then climbed up on the dray and roared out, 'Yes, you can have a trial of the horse and you can also have a trial of the man that owns him, which is me. I'm a bit too good for any of you, and anyone round these parts, either, for the matter of that.'

"Nobody wanted to take him on," said O'Keefe. "Neither did anyone want a trial of the horse and cart. He spoiled the sale by his own silliness."

"What day was this?"

"On March 5," said the publican.

O'Keefe said that, after the turnout was passed in, the man, who had been camping near the saleyards, went to stay at the hotel. He offered the horse, dray and contents to O'Keefe for £25, but the publican refused. The man then dropped the price to £24 and finally, on March 8, agreed to sell the lot to O'Keefe for £19. The man said he was "broke" or he would not have sold at such a low price. He talked a great deal about himself, and said that he had been punting at the Yarrawonga races and had lost all his money. He left the hotel about March 11 or 12, saying he was going to Sydney to buy an outfit to go rabbiting.

When the real Skinner was described to O'Keefe, the hotel man declared that the horse-and-dray vendor was nothing like him.

O'Keefe showed the dray to O'Rourke, who immediately identified it as Skinner's property. The first thing Burvett noticed

was that the traveller and barrel-hook on the near-side shaft were new ones. The traveller found in the second sack (which contained the head and legs) was a broken one. In the dray when it was sold was a tent, a couple of tool-chests, a number of bags sewn together to make a cover for the dray, a Waranga Basin shovel, an axe, an old hat, and a rug. In one of the tool-chests were some 5½-inch bolts similar to the one found in the second bag. In the other chest was a saw.

Portion of the weights found in the second bag was the traveller-bar off a dray-shaft. One bolt-end was broken off this bar.

No sooner had Burvett emptied out a box of oddments taken from the dray than he found the other half of the broken traveller. The portion fitted exactly on the broken end of the traveller found in the second bag.

This, the detective told himself, positively established one of two things—that Skinner had been murdered or was himself the murderer. He inclined to the belief that Skinner had been murdered, because the description of the man who had sold the outfit to O'Keefe was nothing like that of Skinner.

What strengthened this viewpoint was the sale-note produced to the detective by O'Keefe. The name "Skinner" was spelled "Skiner." Surely the true owner of the name would know how to spell it correctly!

"Puzzle your brains and see if you can recall anything else about the man who sold you the outfit," said Burvett. "No matter how trifling you regard the circumstance, let me have it."

O'Keefe pondered deeply.

"Well, he did write a letter while he was staying at the hotel," he remarked.

"Lots of people write letters," said the detective. "Was there anything special about this incident?"

"He asked me for the pen, paper and envelope to write it," said the publican. "Then he went to the travellers' room and got down to it. While I was passing the room he called me in and asked me the best way to send a tenner to somebody or other in some town in New South Wales. I can't remember the name of the town."

Though it was now night, Burvett hurried to the post office and was lucky enough to find the postmistress still there. From her he demanded her duplicate money-order book for the past few weeks. She produced it, and on the date on which the turnout had been sold he came across the item, "James Edwards to George Edwards, Germanton, N.S.W., £10."

"Ha!" exclaimed Burvett to himself. "I must look up this James Edwards."

Next day he issued a warrant for Edwards's arrest and then set about trying to trace him.

Inquiries at Germanton (now Holbrook) revealed that George Edwards was James Edwards's brother. Unfortunately, George did not possess a photograph of his wanted brother, but could give a good description of him to the police.

When it was announced in the Press that the police wanted James Edwards, information about the man began to pour in to Burvett.

He was described as a shearer and a frequenter of racecourses. It seemed certain that he had been picked up by Skinner on the road down from Tocumwal or Strathmerton. A particular phrase, always on the man's tongue, was, "There is no crawfish about me." He was about 45 years of age, tall, well built and of fair complexion, with not much hair on the top of his head. He walked actively with a springy gait, had the gift of the gab, and was continually offering to fight anybody who felt like a spar. It was established that he left Murchison East on March 10 by the morning train.

While in Murchison East, Edwards continually hung around the blacksmith's shop of Messrs. Hawkey and Skate. He made a perfect nuisance of himself with his bragging and blustering—so much so that he drew the eyes of everyone on him. He even went so far as to criticise the work of the blacksmiths.

It was a curious point that though Skinner had a companion on his journey down from Tocumwal to Waranga Basin, that companion was never seen on the trip. From Burvett's point of view, this secret method of travelling—obviously the stranger lay on the bottom of the dray most of the time—meant the contemplation of a subsequent event, and that event was the killing of

William Skinner. That this secret travelling companion was Edwards the detective did not doubt for a moment.

A lot of the information which came to Burvett was useless, but he had to sift it all.

On April 22, the police published the following description of Edwards:

“Shearer, 35 years of age, tall, well built, fair complexion, brownish red to medium sandy beard, stubbly growth- walks actively with a springy gait, talks fighting, fond of sparring, dressed in a brownish tweed check suit, Alpine hat, is a gambler and a heavy drinker. Known to Mr. McGuinness, publican, and Jack Stewart, livery-stable keeper, of Germanton, N.S.W.; Mr. Kelly, publican, Beechworth; Willis Little and Jack Lloyd, of Benalla; and Jessie Edwards, c/o Mrs. Wheeler, Croyton Creek, Euroa. Edwards left Murchison East on 10th March last by train for Seymour, and carried an old brown portmanteau. When leaving Murchison East he stated he would obtain outfit at Seymour and go rabbiting.”

At this stage the police were hampered, not by the lack of information, but by too much of it. Australia seemed to be populated by numerous James Edwardses. Like the Scarlet Pimpernel, they were here, there, and everywhere.

The man's appearance, habits and means of livelihood were minutely described by scores of people who claimed to have been familiar with him. But they did not know where he was. No prospector looking for a hidden reef of gold in new country was ever more at a loss for indications to guide him to the object of his quest than the police were at that stage in their search for the elusive James Edwards.

The suspected man had been seen simultaneously in so many widely separated places that Burvett and his colleagues were completely baffled.

A report from Leichhardt, N.S.W., stated that Senior-Constable Nelson, of that Sydney suburb, arrested a man named James Edwards on Christmas Day, 1901, near Corowa, for stealing a horse at Rutherglen, Victoria. Edwards was fined £15 for it. Constable

Nelson was sure that this Edwards was identical with the man wanted for Skinner's killing. He was a pugnacious man and resisted violently when arrested. He had also been fined at Omeo or Bright, in Victoria, for having assaulted the police.

From Adelaide came a report that a man named Swanson had known Edwards at Charlotte Waters, in the Northern Territory, where Edwards had acted as a "buttoner" for the owners of race-course "joints." Swanson said he had met Edwards in King William Street, Adelaide, and hailed him as "Edwards." The man denied that that was his name, and disappeared into the crowd. Swanson stated that the reason why the man had point-blank denied his identity was made clear to him only when he read in the papers that Edwards was wanted on a charge of murder.

Though Edwards was described as a shearer, the police soon learned that he subordinated that means of honest toil to the more or less disreputable occupation of an urger at bush race-meetings.

First bit of valuable information came from a man named Donohue, who told the police that he knew Edwards well and had introduced him to Skinner at Tocumwal. Then Michael Mularvey came forward and said that he had known Edwards and Skinner at Tocumwal, where the three were working. Mularvey said he was camped about 300 yards from Skinner at Tocumwal and Edwards told him he was going with Skinner to Cobram (Victoria) to look for work.

Donohue said that he told Edwards that Skinner would be a good mate and that Skinner would see he had plenty of tucker because Skinner had plenty of money.

Sergeant Simpson, of Berrigan, was the next man to supply a strong missing link. The sergeant had been searching in the vicinity of Ringwood Station for a man who answered Edwards's description, and he traced this man to Colendina Station. There he lost the scent.

Back at Berrigan, the sergeant was called upon by a man who said he had been working with Edwards at Hughes Bros.' vineyard near Rutherglen. This man, who was well known to the sergeant, said that he had known Edwards well for five years. Edwards came to the vineyard towards the end of March and worked there until April 14, under the name of Jim Evans.

On April 14, the informant said, he asked Edwards, who was going into Rutherglen, to buy him a Melbourne newspaper. Edwards did so.

While he was reading it next morning at breakfast, he spoke to Edwards about the death of Skinner and read him a report of it from the paper. Edwards asked him for a loan of the paper and read the report himself. Though the murder was the main topic of conversation during the day, Edwards said nothing, and on the following day announced that he was leaving. He spoke of going to Chiltern and of walking the whole distance. Edwards also said that prior to coming to the vineyard he had been at Albury.

When Edwards left the vineyard, he was dressed in a blue serge suit, soft white shirt, and brown felt hat. He had no portmanteau with him.

Inquiries made by the police at Albury established that Edwards had been there for a short time and had then gone to Culcairn for the races on April 18.

Time marched steadily onwards and all trace of Edwards seemed to be lost. Information as to his supposed movements still reached the police, but it was past history that did not help them much. Mounted police on special duty in places as far apart as Wagga, Corowa and Deniliquin, in New South Wales, and the Strathmerton district of Victoria kept up an intense manhunt, but it was fruitless.

The police were forced to the conclusion that Edwards had gone into strict hiding and was no longer flitting around the countryside like an anxious snipe. Their task, therefore, was to rout him out of his lair, wherever that was. There was a strong possibility that he was hidden in the ranges and being assisted by sympathisers with food and information as to the movements of the searchers. Edwards was known to be a first-class bushman and a good rider. He was born and bred in the mountainous country and had a knowledge of the country possessed by few other men.

Information came to Burvett from a reliable source that it was most unlikely that Edwards was ever at Charlotte Waters, as the man from Adelaide had asserted.

"I've met Edwards at nearly every race meeting and agricultural

show in northern Victoria and the Riverina," Burvett's informant said, "and I'd know the man's hide on a fence. His beat is the Riverina and northern Victoria, and, though he moves around a lot, he has never been in other States. Another thing, he has never had enough cash at any one time to finance travel. As soon as he gets a few quid together, he blows it up. He's a joker who put up a rare bluff, and a bloke who will fight like a thrashing-machine as long as he thinks he's up against a feller who will knuckle down under a vicious attack."

On April 2, the Chief Secretary of Victoria (Sir Samuel Gillott) issued the following proclamation:

"Whereas on or about 4th March, 1905, a carter named William Skinner, who had been employed on the works at Waranga Basin, was murdered under circumstances of unusual atrocity, and whereas mutilated portions of the murdered man were not discovered until about 11th April, 1905, thus affording time for the offender or offenders to make arrangements for concealment or escape, notice is hereby given that a reward of £200 will be paid by the Government for information which will lead to the apprehension and conviction of the murderer or murderers."

There followed a special police notice giving a more detailed description of Edwards and his habits.

The next development was a rather startling report from Sydney that Edwards was in the vicinity.

A railway employee named Albert Ashworth, living at Ashfield, N.S.W., stated that he boarded a second-class carriage on a train at Berry, on the South Coast, and at the same time a man with a swag and a billy entered the compartment. This swagman, according to Ashworth, was under the influence of liquor and very talkative. After bragging a lot and announcing that he was willing to fight any man in Australia, he frightened the life out of Ashworth by stating, "I am the Waranga murderer."

"I've been travelling around in coaches for a long time lately, and I've got a lot of cash and a single ticket from Berry to Sydney," he told the startled railway employee.

When the train got to Hurstville, about nine miles from Sydney, the swagman got out. Ashworth later reported the matter to Sub-

Inspector Roche and Senior-Constable Hickey, whom he met in George Street, Sydney.

Next report was from Mulwala, a border town on the New South Wales side of the Murray River. It was to the effect that a swagman, footsore, haggard and weary, passed in the direction of Bull Plain Station. The man was very furtive and his description tallied so accurately with that of Edwards that the police on both sides of the river were notified. They searched for the stranger, but drew the usual blank.

On May 12, Detective Burvett sat down wearily and drew up a narrative of the murder and manhunt, and studied it.

It was on April 11 that the trunk and arms were found in the irrigation channel. On April 14 the head and legs were found in a channel within a few chains of the spot where the original discovery was made, and it was on April 17 that the corpse was identified as that of William Skinner. Burvett reported on April 18 his assumption that James Edwards was the killer.

Edwards, on March 5, was camped between Murchison and Waranga, where he was seen and spoken to by a party of rabbiters to whom he was known, but he denied that he was James Edwards.

On March 6, Edwards reached Murchison and posted a money order to George Edwards at Germanton. The next day he was at O'Keefe's hotel drinking heavily, and on March 8 he sold Skinner's horse and dray to O'Keefe for £19.

He left Murchison East on March 10 for Seymour with a single ticket, taking with him a balance of £12 or £13 after paying his bill at O'Keefe's. He was at Benalla on March 13, where Jack Lloyd saw him at a hotel and spoke to him, and on that day he left for Wodonga by train.

While in Benalla he received a letter from his brother at Germanton acknowledging the receipt of the money order. He replied, giving his postal address as Benalla.

From March 14 to March 28 he was known to be wandering about between Rutherglen and Albury, and on March 28 went to work at Hughes's vineyards near Rutherglen, staying there until April 14 under the name of Jim Evans. He left there on that date about 7 p.m. after asking a man named Baker for the loan of a strop

to touch up a razor for shaving. Baker declared that he had shaved; but that was problematical, because on the same day another man who carried a swag similar to Edwards's, and whose description also tallied, was shaved by a barber at Rutherglen—a fact that led to considerable confusion.

Edwards was at Corowa on April 15, and left with another man for Ringwood Station, telling this man, on the way, that he had come from Hughes's vineyard.

On April 17, John Slattery and a man named Watson saw Edwards and his companion on the road to Ringwood. Slattery said, "Good day, Jim," and Edwards replied, "Hullo, Jack." Slattery reported that Edwards then had a beard.

On the morning of April 18, Edwards's travelling companion, who also said that Edwards had a beard, left Edwards at Ringwood. Edwards went towards Collendrina Station, on the Murray River. A man answering his description, on April 21, called at a farm near Rutherglen, bought some bread, and inquired after the back road to Barnawartha, "as he did not want to pass any houses." Two days later a man of the same description, but wearing a moustache only, came along a disused road to Barnawartha and asked for the railway station closest to Albury. He then completely disappeared.

A Chiltern barber named E. A. Dale reported that on May 10 Edwards came in for a haircut and beard-trim. During the operation, according to Dale, Edwards said, "Have they got that notorious murderer yet?" Dale replied, "No, and they will never catch him." Edwards smiled and, leaving his swag at the shop, said he was going to buy some bread and meat. Returning later to collect his swag, he said good-bye to Dale and departed in the direction of Springhurst.

On the morning of May 15, Patrick McGrath, of Ryan's Creek, about 12 miles from Benalla, had a bit of business to transact at Moyhu, and drove there in his gig, selecting a back road which ran through Greta.

As he was nearing that township he was hailed by a man's voice. At first he couldn't see anybody, but as the voice came

from behind he concluded that the owner must be behind a tree. So he was. McGrath pulled his horse up, and was confronted by a man who had his hat well down over his eyes.

"Is this the road to Kilfera, mate?" the stranger asked.

"No," said McGrath; "you're going in the wrong direction."

"H'm," mused the stranger. "Say, have you got any idea where a man could pick up some work?"

"Well, there's a chance of you getting some jobs at Moyhu. Hop in the gig and I'll give you a lift," offered McGrath.

"No, thanks," was the rather gruff reply. "Which is the road to Toombullup?"

McGrath told him, and suggested that if he were going there he might get a job at Howe's sawmill. The stranger said he'd give it a trial.

McGrath was highly suspicious of the stranger, mainly because he kept his hat down well over his eyes and also because he preferred to carry on the conversation from a distance. In an effort to persuade him to come closer, McGrath said, "Have you got plenty of tobacco?" All he got to that was some mumbled reply, and the stranger sat down on his swag at the side of the road.

Wishing him a curt good-bye, which the stranger did not deign to acknowledge, McGrath whipped up his horse and drove off to Moyhu. First person he encountered was Mounted-Constable Green, of Milawa.

"Are you looking for Edwards, the Waranga Basin murderer, Constable?" he asked.

"I've been searching for him all over the shop," the policeman said ruefully. "Anyway, you aren't him."

"No, I'm not; but I've been talking to a shifty-looking customer along the road, and if it isn't Edwards I'll eat my hat."

"We can soon prove it, or at least try to," said Green. "I'll get hold of a horse and buggy and we'll go and examine this bird."

Driving briskly along the road over which McGrath had come, the man-hunters came across the mysterious stranger about four miles from where McGrath had spoken to him. Green did not stop the buggy, but drove about 50 yards past him. The stranger

had his hat well down over his eyes and appeared to take no notice of the vehicle.

When he pulled up, Constable Green quietly drew his Service revolver and handed it to McGrath.

"I'm going to walk back and accost the fellow," he said. "You drive back slowly and keep him well covered with my pistol. If he starts anything, you act as you think best."

"Right!" said McGrath briskly.

Springing to the road, Constable Green strolled towards the stranger, McGrath driving slowly behind him. When Green got to within five yards of the suspect, the man looked up and, for the first time, saw Green.

"Good day," said the constable.

"Hullo," said the stranger.

"What is your name?" asked Green.

"Jack Robinson," said the man.

"Where are you going?"

"To get work at the sawmills at Toombullup."

"I suspect you of being James Edwards, wanted for the murder of William Skinner at Waranga Basin," said Green.

"I'm Jack Robinson," said the stranger stolidly.

"Keep him covered, Mr. McGrath, while I search him," instructed the constable, and proceeded to run the rule over the man.

"Let's have a look in that swag first," said Green, and unrolled it. The swag was encased in black oilcloth with the white side out. It contained a new serge suit, several boxes of wax matches, a piece of pickled pork, about half a loaf of bread, some tea and sugar, a knife, a spoon, a billy-can, a pair of blucher boots, a pair of braces, a black skull-cap made of Italian cloth, a towel, a necktie, a piece of soap, a blanket, a coat, vest and trousers (all of different material), a reel of black cotton, a pair of blue dungarees, a soft shirt with a figured pattern, a flannel shirt, and a brown felt hat.

"Where did you get the new suit from?" asked Green.

"From a Syrian hawker in Albury, where I was about 14 days ago," said the stranger.

"I want you to write your name in this pocket-book," said the constable, and the man obliged by writing, "John Robinson."

Green compared the signature with a facsimile of Edwards's which had been attached to a recent police notice. He saw at once that the *J* in "John" was similar to that in "James," and felt justified in believing that the man was Edwards.

"I'm taking you into custody on a charge of having murdered William Skinner," he told the man, who in truth was Edwards.

Edwards made no comment.

"Edwards," Green went on, "you know, of course, that you are not obliged to answer any questions unless you desire to do so. Some time ago a swagman told me that he was camped with you over at Rutherglen. At least, he said he was camped with a man whose description I find exactly tallies with yours. Have you anything to say about that?"

"I was never employed at Rutherglen," said Edwards.

"Have you been over at the Waranga Basin works?"

"Never," said Edwards.

"Well, you are under arrest," said the constable. "Hold out your hands."

Edwards, who up to this time had made not the slightest effort to resist, looked like a wild animal at bay when he saw the handcuffs. For a moment it appeared as if he would start something, but a glance at the revolver in the determined hand of Patrick McGrath made him change his mind. He submitted quietly to the handcuffs, and got into the buggy when Green told him to.

During the drive into Benalla, Edwards talked a lot about nothing in particular, but did not seem to be in the least disturbed over his arrest.

"He is absolutely the coolest customer I have ever come across," Green confided to McGrath later.

When they got to Benalla, Edwards was lodged in a cell and immediately rolled himself up in his blankets.

Green reported to Superintendent Oliver, who at once notified C.I.B. Headquarters in Melbourne and then set out to have the prisoner identified. Two local Benalla residents, Messrs. Page and Lloyd, came along and identified the man as James Edwards. A contingent of people later came across from Murchison and also established his identity.

When news spread around the town that Edwards was in custody, half the citizens crowded to the watch-house to get a look at him. They didn't. He was safe in his cell and would not be on public view until brought before the Court on the following morning.

Edwards appeared before Dr. Nicholson, J.P., at Benalla Police Court, and, in the name of "Jack Robinson," was charged with having murdered Skinner. He stood quietly in the dock and appeared to be taking no interest in the proceedings, but when the magistrate addressed him he started violently.

"You have heard the charge read over to you. Have you anything to say?" asked Dr. Nicholson.

"Eh?" asked Edwards absently and then, pulling himself together, said quietly, "Not guilty, your Honour."

"I ask that the defendant be remanded to the Melbourne City Court one week from today—that is, May 23," said Superintendent Oliver.

"Have you any objection?" the magistrate asked Edwards.

"No, your Honour," said the prisoner.

Edwards was immediately removed to the watch-house cells, where, to make certain that he didn't start anything, he was guarded by Constables Sullivan, Lewis, O'Neill, and Brooks.

His first visitor was Sergeant Keegan.

"Well," said the sergeant, "what is it to be—Jack Robinson or Jim Edwards?"

Edwards looked at him.

"Don't ask silly questions, Sergeant," he said testily. "You know me well enough. I'm Jim Edwards. I thought I was as well known around these parts as any man here."

"Why the 'Jack Robinson,' then?" demanded the sergeant.

"It's as good a name as any other," said Edwards vaguely. "By the way," he added, "that Green is a smart man. You can't give him any points. He knows his work pretty well and had me fixed up so that I couldn't do any harm if I'd wanted to. Anyway, I didn't want to. I carry no weapons."

Edwards chatted freely in the cell to his four watchdogs, and Constable Sullivan decided to improve the shining hour by prising a confession out of him. This caused a great deal of heartburning later on, especially to Detective Burvett; but more of that anon.

"I want to ask you a few questions, if you don't mind," said Constable Sullivan.

"Go ahead," invited Edwards.

"Were you the man who sold the horse and dray in Murchison?" asked Sullivan.

"Yes," replied Edwards. "I'm the man, right enough."

"Where did you get the horse and dray?"

"From Skinner."

"How much did you get it for?"

"I don't remember exactly. I was drunk at the time."

"How did you get the horse and dray from Skinner?"

"Oh, I got it all right!"

"Did he give them to you?"

"No. I done for him in the heat of passion and then took the horse and dray."

"What did you hit him with?" asked the constable.

Edwards did not reply for a few seconds. He seemed to be thinking the matter over deeply. Then:

"We were playing two-up on the road to Waranga," he said in a low voice. "I won about £12 from him. Skinner then went into Waranga and was playing hazard. He lost money and was wild when he came out. I barracked him about my winning money off him and he went for me with a shovel. I picked up an axe and killed him first hit. The mistake I made was in not reporting the matter at once to the police at Tatura."

"What did you do with him then?" demanded Sullivan.

"I put him into the channel where he was found," replied Edwards simply.

The triumphant Sullivan immediately went in search of pen and paper and dashed off an official report to Superintendent Oliver. The superintendent fired it off to C.I.B. Headquarters, and everyone at Benalla Police Station felt on good terms with himself.

It was fortunate for them that they did not know what Detective Burvett would have to say on the matter. Red ears would be the order of the day, pretty soon!

And then occurred an amazing interview with Edwards by a special representative of the *Melbourne Age*. In these modern days, if a newspaperman tried to interview in his cell a person just charged with murder, that newspaperman would be propelled into the street on the back of his neck. If he succeeded in getting the interview and his paper were game enough to print it, writs for contempt of court would be flying thicker than mosquitoes round a swamp.

The interview, incidentally, made Detective Burvett spit more chips. That astute officer was in for a series of rude shocks when he hit Benalla.

The newspaperman was conducted to Edwards's cell by Detective-Inspector Ward, and the suspected murderer was invited to open his heart and speak freely for publication.

"I have no objection at all to relating my movements," he told Ward and the reporter.

("No," said Burvett bitterly later on. "He wouldn't have any objections. It was right up his alley to tell his story and try to win public sympathy before his trial.")

"I often saw the newspapers when I was tramping about," said Edwards, "and read a lot about myself. My movements after leaving Murchison till I arrived at Ringwood were published quite correctly, but I don't know why there should have been any trouble about following me at all.

"I never tried to hide. I just went about looking for work with my swag up, same as I have done for years. There was a time when I used to ride through the country and look for work with a couple of good horses; but I'm being ridden myself by drink now, and it's a long time since I travelled any other way than per boot. I've never owned a horse since I took Drink for my mate—a mate that has driven me to this. My mother and father are dead. Thank God for sparing them this! It would be better if more of my family were dead than they should know I have come to this."

Edwards turned his back for a moment, drew the back of his

hand across his eyes, and, straightening up, paced the cell for a time in agitation. Then he continued:

"I've worked hard, lived hard, drunk hard, and fought hard; but hard work has brought hard drink and hard drink has taught me hard living. I wish to God that I had broken my right arm so I could not have worked for a curse.

"I've worked at everything that's going—shearing, navvying, fencing, sawing, wood-cutting, driving, ploughing, harvesting, mining—any kind of work at all that comes my way I tackle; and I work hard while I'm at it—a horse today, a hog tomorrow."

Edwards lapsed into silence. As the sentimental *Age* man recorded it—"the unhappy man lowered his head, while a flush overspread his face as he thought of the wanton, profitless life to which he had abandoned himself for the sake of drink."

"I can't understand why my movements were ever a puzzle," he said at last. "After leaving Ringwood I went through Yarra-wonga and Mulwala to Bull Plain, where I got work ploughing, and stayed there for some time. I forget the dates just now. From Bull Plain I came down through Howlong, Albury, Chiltern and Wangaratta to where they got me.

"I was then making along the main road to Toombullup, where I wanted to get work at the sawmill. All of this country about the Riverina and the Murray district is like a book to me. I've tramped and ridden all over it since I was a kid, but I've never gone out of either New South Wales or Victoria."

Breaking off, Edwards turned to Detective-Inspector Ward.

"You ought to know me, Mr. Ward," he remarked. "We've been in a tight place together."

"Oh, indeed!" replied Ward, raising his eyebrows. "When was that?"

"Years ago, when you came up here to arrest a man for something or other. We met on the river when she was in a roaring flood," said Edwards. "I was driving bullocks. We both had to cross and we swam together. Remember?"

"By jingo, yes!" exclaimed the inspector. "I remember it well. And you are the young fellow who tackled the river with me that day, eh? Well, well! I'm sorry indeed to meet you again in this

terrible trouble, for you were a plucky lad and worth something better."

Having got that rather theatrical declamation off his chest, Inspector Ward looked sadly at the suspected murderer in a manner reminiscent of the fond father in melodrama who sees his wayward daughter landing home with a suspicious white bundle in her arms.

"All those yarns about me being in other States are lies," proceeded Edwards. "I'm as well known here as the River Murray, and I can't understand how nobody recognised me. It must have been the descriptions that puzzled them. There was too much description. Some said I was all whiskers and some said I had none. The fellers that told the police these yarns about me shaving off at Rutherglen just talked for the sake of something to say.

"I haven't shaved for more than eight years, but a few days ago I called in at a barber's shop in Chiltern and had a haircut and trim. The barber didn't recognise me by description, and I suppose he read all the descriptions. The police gave people some other fellow's photograph to look at, and it ain't much like me, is it? I have never had a photograph taken in my life. I never say, 'There's no crawfish on me'—at least, not that I recollect. If I said it, I must have been drunk, and, anyway, it's not a habit of mine to say it.

"I often heard blokes talking about me," Edwards went on, "and wondering when I was going to be nabbed. I didn't worry. I knew that the one nearest was the one they would least suspect. I felt sure the wrong man would never suffer for me. They were sometimes looking at me at the same time that they were wondering where Edwards was. When I was at Chiltern I met a constable full-face as I came out of the barber's shop. He didn't know me. I wouldn't have been surprised if he had, and I don't think I would have minded much. I didn't try to avoid anyone, and I felt as if I didn't care much what happened.

"I haven't been much in the humour for laughing lately, but I couldn't help laughing at that bloke over in Sydney that fired up in the train and said he was me, and then had to get down when they copped him. He was jolly glad to 'crawfish,' I think.

"As far as descriptions go," he said, "just take a look at my dial.

You'll see things that never went in the descriptions the police published. My nose is slightly turned to the right side, isn't it? You see that, eh? My brother hit me over the nose with a shinty-stick when I was a nipper. He didn't mean to do it, but he missed the nail he was trying to drive in, and my nose, being in the way, copped it. It was a hard clout, the hardest I ever got, and I've stopped plenty with the same nose since.

"See these scars here on my cheek?" he said, indicating the blemishes in question. "A dynamite-cap done them when I was a nipper sinking a shaft at Yea. I was capping fuses and something fell on a cap that was on the brace. I used to have plenty rough times when I was a nipper, but I wasn't a bad kid, and I wouldn't be a bad man now if it wasn't for the damned drink."

That finished the interview, Ward and the *Age* man withdrawing. What their thoughts were are not on record. Ward, being an officer of long experience, may have taken what Edwards said with a grain of salt. Whether the *Age* man believed the sentimental drivel he later published is something that cannot be established.

Enter Burvett. That astute officer, upon whom had fallen 99 per cent. of the investigation, had one thought in mind only—to take Edwards under his wing and make certain that nobody else got at him.

When Burvett arrived at Benalla and learned that Edwards had been interrogated by a local constable and then by a newspaper reporter, he went stone mad. He interviewed the constable and he interviewed the superintendent. He told his superior, Inspector Ward, in a few well-chosen words, what he thought of him. Later on, when he returned to Melbourne, Burvett unburdened himself to the Chief of the C.I.B., Superintendent Sharp.

Exactly what was Detective Burvett's grouch? Here it is in his own words which he recorded in a report:

"I must admit that the District Superintendent and I had not hit it over the case, and there is little doubt in my mind that he tried to beat me in the solution.

"Immediately after the arrest was communicated to Headquarters, a wire was sent back that I was proceeding to Benalla by the first

train to take the prisoner over. In the meantime, however, the District Superintendent instructed a local officer to interrogate Edwards.

"Up to then Edwards had made no admissions but, no doubt realising from what he had read in the newspapers concerning the evidence accumulated against him, told the officer who questioned him that he had killed Skinner.

"But he said that he had killed Skinner in self-defence. He said that when Skinner returned to their camp at Waranga Basin he was in an abusive mood after having lost money playing hazards; a fight had occurred, and in killing Skinner he had done so to protect his life.

"This move on the part of the District Superintendent was not challenged by Edwards's defence counsel at his trial, because it suited his defence admirably—that he had voluntarily made a statement at his first opportunity. A different view might have been taken if I could have reached Benalla before this interview took place, because I had no intention of interrogating the prisoner.

"While a suspected person may be interrogated as much as a police officer likes before arrest, it is a principle that once charged—especially in a case of murder—he should not be questioned. Apart from that principle, I admit that in this instance I had no desire for Edwards to make a statement. I preferred to leave that to him at a stage when he would be advised to do so by his counsel. Lawyers never do this until they have heard the evidence against their clients. In the meantime, their instructions are, 'Keep your mouth shut.'"

That night Edwards was removed from Benalla to Melbourne by train, under an impressive escort—Inspector Ward, Detectives Burvett, Rogerson and Fryer, Mounted-Constable Green (who made the arrest), and Detective Ashton. At North Melbourne they were met by Superintendent Sharp, Detective-Sergeant D. G. O'Donnell, and Detective Carter.

But they had an impressive send-off from Benalla. The whole town turned out to see them off. The prisoner and his escort had to fight their way through the crowd of rubber-necks intent on inspecting Edwards at close quarters.

At every station along the route to Melbourne, crowds packed the platform, peering into every carriage and fighting each other for vantage-points. The police party was in a compartment of the leading carriage, and, where it was possible, this carriage was drawn past the platform; but the morbid crowds followed on, swarmed on to the footboard, and loudly demanded that Edwards be exhibited to them. At times, when the uproar outside became too loud, and the savage imprecations and nasty threats of the irresponsible louts penetrated to the prisoner, Edwards grew anxious, but made no comment.

When the party left the train at North Melbourne, Edwards was placed in a cab and whisked away to Melbourne Gaol.

Though Edwards had been arrested, reports continued to arrive from widely separated points that he had been "seen." One of these is worth recording. It occurred at Adelong, N.S.W., on the morning that Edwards was safely in Benalla Watch-house.

Apparently it caused a great stir in Adelong. It appeared that a wood-splitter named Dan Cheetham saw a strange swagman passing through a paddock, and immediately jumped to the conclusion that it was Edwards.

Enlisting the aid of two passing miners named Schafer and Wicht, he set off after the suspect. The swaggie, observing his three stalkers, uttered a curse, threw down his swag, unslung a rifle, and fired two shots at the startled trio, who immediately took to their heels. Cheetham didn't pull up until he reached the town, where he panted his tidings into the ear of Sergeant Duprez. The sergeant, accompanied by Constables Brown and Roche, mounted their horses and galloped madly to the scene, followed at a discreet distance by some civilians.

Reaching the paddock, they discovered a swag. They gave this a quick once-over and discovered some Victorian papers in it. That seemed to indicate that the swaggie, wherever he was, might be Edwards. The police party searched the vicinity and eventually discovered the swaggie perched in the branches of a gum-tree. When they got him down they discovered that he was nothing like Edwards, but they took him in tow for having fired shots Cheetham and Co.

Melbourne City Court was packed to the limit on May 23 when Edwards faced the magistrates.

Though the court did not open for business until 10 a.m., the sensation-seeking public began to queue up hours before that time. At 7.45 a.m. the courthouse caretaker, Mr. O'Connor, was slightly surprised to discover four men reading the morning papers in a back seat of the court.

"What are you doing here?" asked O'Connor.

"Waiting for the Court to start," said one of the men.

"You've got over two hours," said the amused caretaker.

"What does that matter?" said the man. "The two-hours' wait is of small account compared with the certainty of getting a good and sure seat. From here we can get a good look at the bloke the police have been chasing for months."

The Bench comprised seven Justices of the Peace, with Mr. Power, J.P., as chairman.

When Edwards was called and stepped into the dock, he was dressed in the blue serge suit he had bought from the Syrian hawker. He looked well and, after one swift look around the court, fixed his eyes on the floor and did not look up until addressed directly.

A striking contrast was Detective Burvett, who had had charge of the investigations.

Unlike the prisoner, who had improved in appearance, the man who had hunted him showed signs of wear and tear. He looked greyer and thinner and was less brisk than usual in giving evidence. Two months of sleeplessness and anxiety could not be overcome in a week. Detective-Inspector Ward stood by to give any assistance required.

The proceedings were brief. The court orderly announced, "James Edwards, your Worships. He is charged with murder."

Mounting the witness-box, Detective Burvett said, "The prisoner was arrested on Monday week for the murder of William Skinner near Tatura in March last. He was arrested on warrant. I will have to ask for a remand for a week on the understanding that further remand will be applied for."

"The further remand will be at the discretion of the Bench on

that day," said Mr. Power. "Has the prisoner any objection to the remand for a week?"

"No," said Edwards.

"Very well," said Mr. Power. "You are remanded to appear here this day week."

"Thank you," said Edwards, with a nod.

That finished that.

The crowd in court surged outside to join the large throng which had not been able to gain admission. As Edwards came into view between Ward and Burvett and guarded by several uniformed police, half a dozen constables had to cut an avenue through the milling mob. Edwards was not handcuffed. He had asked to be allowed to go unmanacled, and his conduct in gaol had shown him to be a man who might be trusted. But though the detectives had granted his request, they took adequate precautions to see that he couldn't make a bolt for it if he felt that way.

When the gates of the gaol closed on him, Edwards said, "Thank God that's over!"

Edwards remained in gaol until June 15, when he was taken under escort to Tatura for the inquest on Skinner, held by the District Coroner (Mr. E. Notley Moore, P.M.) One of the State's Crown Prosecutors, Mr. Samuel Leon, conducted the Crown case, and Edwards was represented by a Melbourne solicitor, Mr. Freeman.

Thirty-six witnesses gave evidence, and the inquest was conducted in the record time of four hours.

Mr. Leon told the Coroner that the remains of William Skinner had been found in two bags in different parts of the channels of the Rodney Irrigation Trust.

Edwards was introduced to Skinner in February, 1905, and was told that Skinner had plenty of money. On February 14 Edwards was known to be hard up.

Edwards left Tocumwal on February 23 in company with Skinner. He was seen to drive away with Skinner in the latter's cart. Until March 2 or 3 nothing was known of their movements, but on each of those dates Skinner was seen at Tatura and a man was lying down in his cart. Skinner was again seen late in the evening

of March 4 by Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Donaldson, who spoke to him. Skinner left them after buying a bag of chaff.

About 30 chains from Donaldson's house was a bridge, which had an important bearing on the case. Donaldson left the bag of chaff for Skinner and at midnight it was gone.

On the morning of March 5 the horse and cart were gone. Mrs. Donaldson had noticed that Skinner had gone to the cart and had spoken to the man in it. The inference was that the man was Edwards. Skinner was seen up to 11 p.m. on March 4 at Waranga Basin. On March 5 Edwards was seen some distance away from the bridge with Skinner's horse and cart. On the same evening a number of persons saw him at Reilly's Corner. A man gave him some tobacco and asked him if he were Jimmy Edwards. The prisoner said he wasn't.

Edwards, who was in possession of Skinner's worldly possessions, said he came from the railway works at Tocumwal. On the morning of March 6, Edwards went to Murchison Post Office and took out a post-office money order for £10, payable to George Edwards at Germanton, New South Wales. That was 11 days after Edwards left Tocumwal.

On March 6, while Edwards was by himself, he was apparently using the murdered man's money.

"A man, known to be poor a few days before, takes out a post-office order for £10. Skinner is missed and his belongings are found in Edwards's possession, Edwards posing as their owner and trying to sell them," said Mr. Leon.

Edwards, while at Murchison, took to drink, and on March 8 sold the horse and cart to Mr. O'Keefe, of Murchison, in the name of Skinner, and signed Skinner's name to the receipt.

The movements of Edwards could be traced for a month afterwards. He was at Seymour and Rutherglen until the middle of April, where he was known by the name of Jim Evans.

In April the news of the finding of Skinner's body appeared in the newspaper, and Edwards left Rutherglen.

After detailing the finding of the body in two separate bags, Mr. Leon said that the hammer-head and weights in the one bag had been identified as Skinner's property. These established the

identification of Skinner as well as if they had been a large photograph of him.

Bloodstains were found on several articles, and helped to make clear that the hand that struck Skinner was the hand of James Edwards. The hammer-head was known to have been used by Skinner as a candlestick. The human head had signs of charring on the scalp, showing that an effort had been made to burn it. At the back of the head was a hole. A blow on the head would not necessarily have killed Skinner, who might have lived for several hours afterwards.

"I think," said Mr. Leon, "that the man who struck the blow decapitated his victim while he was still alive. It shows the malignity of the attack. Edwards was found on May 15 near Benalla and, when arrested, gave the name of Jack Robinson. He denied ever having been at Waranga Basin, Murchison or Rutherglen, but on May 16 he admitted that he had sold the cart to Mr. O'Keefe and that he had killed Skinner in a fit of passion."

After the thirty-six Crown witnesses had said their pieces, Edwards was asked if he had anything to tell the Court. He said he hadn't.

The Coroner found that Edwards had murdered Skinner, and committed him for trial at the Melbourne Supreme Court on July 17.

In doing so, Mr. Moore lavished praise upon Detective Burvett and added, "Doubtless Detective Burvett will receive from his superiors the substantial recognition his work deserves."

(It may be stated here that Burvett got exactly nothing. McGrath copped the full £200 reward.)

A sidelight of the inquest was the refusal of one witness, William Eames, to be sworn until he was given a guarantee that his expenses would be paid.

All he got was a fine of £1, in default seven days' gaol, for contempt of court.

Edwards was taken back to Melbourne and shoved in gaol to await his trial.

THE trial of James Edwards on the charge of having wilfully murdered William Skinner was before Mr. Justice Hood

and a jury of twelve in the Melbourne Supreme Court. It lasted two days—July 18 and July 19, 1905.

The court was crowded with spectators, while a large number of people collected outside in the hope of catching a glimpse of Edwards as he entered. The horse and dray which figured so prominently in the case were in the quadrangle of the courts and, as Exhibit A, were objects of much curiosity.

Mr. Gurner, K.C., prosecuted on behalf of the Crown, and Edwards was represented by a prominent Melbourne barrister, Mr. Maxwell.

Edwards, who appeared to be in excellent health, was calm and collected. He pleaded "not guilty" in a low voice when the charge was read out to him, and freely exercised his right to challenge, objecting to ten of the panel.

The Crown Prosecutor opened the case at great length, and then called a surveyor, William Henry Sherrard, to give formal evidence and produce a plan showing the situations of Tatura, Waranga Basin and Murchison.

Detective Alfred Stephen Burvett, the man who had organised the hunt for Edwards, was brief.

He said that on April 12 he went to Tatura with the Government Pathologist (Dr. C. H. Mollison) and saw the doctor make the post-mortem examination of the trunk and arms of a man who was subsequently identified as William Skinner. On April 15 he saw the doctor post-mortem examine the head and legs. He saw the bag, containing the latter, opened and took possession of two horse shoes, a broken "travelling" iron and "traveller," a 5-lb. hammer head, a hames hook, a screw wrench, a screw and a washer.

On April 17 he went with Constable Collins to O'Keefe's hotel in Murchison and there took possession of several boxes. Among the contents of one of the boxes he found a piece of iron corresponding with the broken travelling iron found in the bag. There was also a tarpaulin, which he submitted to the Government Analyst (Mr. Wilkinson).

Burvett caused a minor stir among the morbid spectators when he produced the portion of the beard found on the body.

"You have seen a good deal of Edwards?" asked Mr. Maxwell. Burvett: "Yes, I have had him in my charge."

Mr. Maxwell: "Is he a man who is very slow and quiet of speech?"

Burvett: "Yes."

Senior Constable Fortescue, stationed at Tocumwal, N.S.W., said that he knew Edwards and had seen him at Tocumwal on February 14, when Edwards wanted to serve a summons on a contractor for wages due. Edwards told him that he had had to borrow the 4/10 to pay for the summons. Edwards got judgment for £3/13/3, and requested him to pay the amount by cheque as he said he had no money.

Fortescue said that he saw Skinner on February 15 at the Barooga races, 12 miles from Tocumwal, and later saw him at Tocumwal itself.

A carpenter named William Ireland told the court that at Tocumwal on February 23 he saw Skinner putting his belongings into a dray preparatory to leaving.

Shown the screw wrench found in the bag with the body, Ireland said it was similar to one owned by Skinner.

Skinner, he said, had a portmanteau which was "knocked about from here to everywhere." It was that of a man who was moving about the country a lot.

"Skinner was not a quarrelsome man by any means," Ireland declared.

Mr. Maxwell: "Is it not a fact that Skinner was quick-tempered?"

"Yes," replied Ireland.

"And that he gambled at hazards and two-up?"

"Yes, as far as I know."

A Tocumwal laborer, Michael Murarvey, said he had known Skinner for three years, and had been camped about 300 yards away from him at Tocumwal. He also knew Edwards, who told him that he was going with Skinner to Cobram to look for work. Witness had breakfast with Edwards on the day that Edwards and Skinner departed.

John Donohue, a laborer, said that he was working at Tuppall Station in N.S.W. in the middle of February and Edwards was there also. He met Edwards in Tocumwal on the day after the races at Barooga.

"I told him that Skinner wanted me to go away with him to look for work and that I did not care about it," said Donohue. "I then introduced Edwards to Skinner and Edwards told Skinner that he would go with him. I told Edwards that Skinner would see that he got plenty of tucker, because he had money."

Mr. Maxwell: "How long have you known Edwards?"

Donohue: "Six or seven years."

"Is he well known in the Riverina and round about?"

"He is."

"Has he the reputation of being a decent fellow?"

"Yes."

"Do you think he would do anything cruel?"

"No, I do not think so."

John Horne, a Tatura coach-builder, said that on March 2 or 3 he saw Skinner in Tatura. He had a man in his dray and was heading towards Waranga Basin.

Andrew John Donaldson, a farmer, of Waranga, said that he knew Skinner and had been in the habit of supplying him with chaff. He saw Skinner on March 4 about 6 p.m. and left a bag of chaff on a waggon for him. The chaff was on the waggon at eight o'clock when he left home to go out, and when he returned about midnight it was gone. Next day he went to see Skinner, but could not find him.

Mrs. Charlotte Fanny Donaldson, wife of the previous witness, said she remembered a man going to their hay and corn shed about 5 p.m. on March 4. This man spoke to her about chaff and then went and spoke to another man in a dray. This man drove the dray away and the first man went over and spoke to Donaldson.

Patrick Dynon, Tatura carpenter, said that on March 4 he passed the bridge on the Tatura road where he saw a man, who had a horse and dray, boiling a billy. The man looked like Edwards.

Mr. Maxwell: "You passed a remark to this man. Did you get a reply?"

Dynon: "Yes, but I did not catch it."

Daniel Wilson, laborer, said that about seven o'clock on March 4 he saw Skinner in about the centre of the camp at Waranga Basin, and later at O'Halloran's hairdressing saloon, where he was playing hazard. Skinner left the place for his camp at about 10.20 p.m. Skinner was not a quarrelsome man.

Mr. Maxwell: "Do you say he was not a quick-tempered man?"

"I have been gambling with him on and off for 12 months and never saw him lose his temper about a pound for gambling," said Wilson. "Skinner was a good gambler, and never growled if he lost."

"I have gambled with Skinner, who was a good gambler," declared Charles Bunce, of Waranga Basin. "He was quiet as a rule, but sometimes was excitable. He showed his excitability by being a little quick-tempered at times."

"I suppose Skinner did the same work as others?" asked Mr. Maxwell.

"Yes," replied Bunce. "He was a hard-working man."

Mr. Maxwell: "Was Skinner in the habit of gambling?"

Bunce: "Yes, he was a chronic gambler."

"It has been said that he was between £1 and 30/- out on the night of March 4. Would that be accounted a large or a small loss?"

"A small one."

"What would be a big one?" asked the barrister.

"Well," replied Bunce thoughtfully, "it would depend upon whether there was a big pay or not. Sometimes you might lose the lot."

This reply caused a howl of laughter in the court, which riled Mr. Justice Hood.

"Silence!" roared His Honor. "I will clear the court if this proceeding goes on. It is disgraceful when a man's life is at stake!"

Alfred Burls, a rabbit trapper, said that during March he saw

Edwards at Riley's Corner, about eight or nine miles from Murchison. Edwards had a horse and cart with him.

"I asked him if he wasn't Jim Edwards and if he had not worked on Batey's threshing machine at Nagambie. He replied, 'No,'" said Burls.

Witness added that unquestionably the man was Edwards.

George Burls, father of this witness, said that Edwards came to their camp on Sunday, March 5, and at seven o'clock next morning he saw Edwards on the road to Murchison, about three miles from their camp. He later saw Edwards at Murchison. He was at O'Keefe's hotel on March 7 and March 9.

James Murray, Murchison farmer, said he saw Edwards camped between the showground and Murchison township and next day yarned with him at the saleyards.

James O'Keefe, licensee of the Perseverance Hotel, Murchison, gave evidence as to Edwards's visit to the hotel on March 6. Edwards said he wanted to sell the horse and dray and buy a rabbiting outfit. Edwards had a good number of drinks on March 7 and 8.

O'Keefe said he eventually bought the horse and dray for £19 from Edwards, who wrote the name "William Skinner" on the receipt.

Carrie Vinnicombe, employed at the Murchison Post Office, gave evidence of having issued a money order for £10 to a person who gave the name of James Edwards. It was payable to George Edwards at Germanton, N.S.W.

Mrs. Mary Ann Edwards, wife of George Edwards, of Germanton, said that her husband was accused's brother. In the early part of March her husband received a letter containing a money order for £10 from James Edwards.

Evidence as to the finding of Skinner's body was given by Donald McLarty, farmer, of Girgarre East, James Crawford, channel guard of the Rodney Irrigation Trust, and Sergeant James Slattery, of Tatura.

James Dryden, blacksmith, of Waranga Basin, said that in November 1904, he shod Skinner's horse and mended the traveller on his dray. The horseshoes (produced) were the two he had put

Important Announcement

With its inclusion in the famous "Magpie" series, "Famous Detective Stories" commences a grand new series of crime and detection. It has been decided, after much deliberation, that this new series will no longer carry a date-line but will be listed by number on the contents' page. For example, this issue carries the listing, "New Series No. 1".

It is felt that the appearance of "Famous Detective Stories" in this more attractive form will be welcomed by readers. With more pages, it is now in a particularly convenient pocket size, a size that has become increasingly popular with readers everywhere.

The slight increase in price has been more than offset by an improvement in production as well as a reduction in advertising matter with its consequent increase in story material.

Demand for new series "Famous Detective Stories" will, we are sure, be greater than ever before. Place an order with your newsagent today and be sure of getting the best crime reading in the world.

Note to Subscribers:

"Famous Detective Stories" covered by existing subscriptions will be forwarded each month with no increase in subscription rates.

on Skinner's horse. He recognised the traveller which he had welded, and on which he had put a new hook. The broken piece [(produced) corresponded with the mended portion of the traveller.

Thomas McCann, laborer, of Waranga Basin, said that Skinner was accustomed to use a hammer-head like the one produced, as a candlestick.

Thomas Skinner, orchadist, of Riverstone, N.S.W., said that William Skinner was his brother. To the best of his knowledge, the horse and dray outside the court belonged to his brother.

William, he said, was not of a quarrelsome nature. He was generally quiet, but he might get excited at times. He had last seen his brother three years previously, but did not know he was an inveterate gambler.

Charles Jones, Waranga Basin laborer, said he had known Skinner for many years. Skinner was very fond of gambling, but he had never seen the man in a passion in his life.

"I have seen him cheated, and yet he would not lose his temper," said Jones.

Mr. Maxwell: "Was Skinner a teetotaller?"

Jones: "No. He would have a drink occasionally."

"When he lost, was he in the same frame of mind as when he won?"

"He did not say much about it."

Evidence of the arrest of Edwards was given by Patrick McGrath and Constable Green, and evidence of the conversation he had had with Edwards in the cell at Benalla was given by Constable Sullivan.

The Government Analyst (William Percy Wilkinson) said that he found bloodstains on the waggon tarpaulin submitted to him for examination by Detective Burvett on April 27. It was, however, impossible to say whether the stains were those of human blood or not. He found traces of blood on the left sleeve of the coat and the left leg of a pair of trousers. The stains corresponded with those of mammalian blood.

The Government Pathologist (Dr. C. H. Mollison) gave evidence of his post-mortem examinations.

Mr. Gurner: "Have you got the skull of the deceased?"

Dr. Mollison: "Yes."

"Assuming that a man made a blow at the deceased, stumbled into a stooping position and hit him a left-handed blow, was it possible for him to have injured the skull in the way deceased's skull was injured unless he was right behind the deceased?"

"I hardly think so."

That finished the Crown case, and a thrill of anticipation ran through the crowded public galleries when Mr. Maxwell called Edwards to the witness box to give his defence.

"I am a laborer," Edwards told the Court. "I first met Skinner some time in February at Tocumwal.

"Our first idea on becoming associated was to go to the Moe-Walhalla line. I said I was going to Cobram. That was three days after I cashed the cheque I received from the constable.

"We decided to go from Tocumwal to Strathmerton, then to Cobram and Yarrawonga, and thence on to Shepparton, to within sight of the Waranga Basin camp.

"We were nine days on the journey. I had never met Skinner before I saw him at Tocumwal, but I knew that Skinner had worked at Waranga before.

"During the nine days we were travelling, we had been gambling. We started two-up at Cobram, and before we reached Waranga I had won about £12 from him.

"Prior to March 4, there had been no quarrels worth speaking about between us.

"When we got to Waranga Basin it was on Saturday. We camped outside the Basin and I remember Skinner leaving the camp about five o'clock that night. I left with him and we went to the place of a farmer named Donaldson to get a bag of chaff for the horse. Skinner spoke to Donaldson and afterwards he went into the Basin township. I returned to camp, made a fire and boiled the billy. I had some whisky in camp and had been drinking that evening.

"I next saw Skinner at about 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock that even-

ing. There was a small fire still alight at the camp. There was no other light.

"When Skinner returned, he fetched the bag of chaff with him. I was sitting alongside the fire. I asked Skinner how he had got on at the Basin and if there had been any gaffing (gambling). He said there had been and I asked him what they had been playing. He said 'hazard.' I asked him if he had had any luck at it and he said that he had lost.

"I started to laugh at him—poking fun at him—and he lost his temper.

"He caught hold of a shovel alongside of the dray, and made a blow at me. I got out of the road the best way I could, and as I did I reached for an axe which was alongside the tree.

"He made at me again, and missed me, once or twice. He then dodged and I hit him a blow with the axe. The blow killed him. I found that he was dead. He fell immediately he got the blow.

"I was in a terrible state of mind at the time. I was about twenty yards from the channel. My first idea was to go into the township and report myself to the police, but I decided to get rid of the body.

"I had two bags there. Before I put the body in I chopped it up. I did that because I thought it was the best way of getting rid of it. I took the clothes off the body first. I put the weights in the bags and put them in the channel close to where we were camped."

That finished Edwards's testimony in chief. He was then cross-examined by the Crown Prosecutor.

"When you arranged to go with Skinner, who was to find the provisions?" asked Mr. Gurner.

"We found them between us," said Edwards.

Mr. Gurner: "Were you to pay him nothing for the lift?"

Edwards: "No."

"And were you to share his tent for nothing?"

"No. I did not share his tent. I slept out."

"Have you any idea how much you spent in provisions?"

"About £1, I think."

"When you were playing two-up with him, did you have a fresh coin each time, or did you double?"

"We doubled sometimes."

"What was your highest win?"

"About a pound at a time."

Mr. Justice Hood: "You say you won £12 from Skinner at gambling. How did he pay his losses?"

Edwards: "He paid it to me out of the money from his purse."

"How much money had he on him?"

"I won £12 from him altogether, and he had £5/10/- that I found on him."

"When he used to pay you, did he pay the money out of his purse."

"Yes."

John Gay Wilson, a Tocumwal storekeeper, called by the defence, said that Skinner was a quick-tempered man. One day several men were poking fun at Skinner in connection with a black gin. A fellow named Joseph Thompson remarked, "Didn't that black gin say to put the bag of chaff down to Bill?" and Skinner threatened to knock Thompson's head in with a shovel. Skinner fumed and foamed for about five minutes after that, but went on with his work.

Thomas Bowe, a Strathmerton laborer, said he had known Edwards for five years and had been shearing with him. Edwards had a good reputation and was not a quarrelsome man.

Bowe said he had known Skinner for 14 months. Skinner had a very bad temper when put out. He had heard Skinner say that he could not stand being barracked. When Skinner was working on the line he appeared to be a little queer towards the end.

Mr. Maxwell: "As soon as Thompson spoke about the black gin, Skinner got excited?"

Bowe: "Yes."

"Had there been barracking going on on both sides?"

"Well, there was a bit of it going on all around."

"Who took part in this barracking?"

"Well, Thompson and I did."

Mr. Justice Hood: "Can you give any other instance in which you saw Skinner in a temper?"

Bowe: "Not a temper like that."

"In any temper?"

"Yes."

"Give us some instances."

"He got into a temper when he was playing two-up."

"What did he do or say?"

"On one occasion I heard him having a row over a greyhound, and he wanted to fight a man."

That concluded Edwards's defence.

"The Crown," said Mr. Maxwell, addressing the jury, "has set out the case that Edwards is guilty of murder for purposes of gain. Edwards is a man who has been pre-judged before ever he stood in the dock. He has been judged and condemned even before he was arrested. The Press of the community has judged and condemned him, and referred to the tragedy as a ghastly crime.

"Edwards has started out with a heavy handicap, but bearing in mind the British sense of fair play, and knowing the oaths you gentlemen of the jury have taken, you will judge solely on the evidence, which in no way discloses any premeditation or malice on the part of Edwards."

Mr. Maxwell told the jury that it was open for them to bring in one of three verdicts. The first was that of murder, as put by the Crown; the second was that of manslaughter, and the third was a straight-out verdict of not guilty.

"The concensus of opinion," said counsel, "seems to be that Skinner was a first-rate man, and Edwards has himself described him as 'a decent little fellow.' Skinner was, however, an inveterate

gambler, who would play to his last shilling, according to one witness.

"In my opinion," Mr. Maxwell went on, "there has never been a case put before a jury in the way this one has. The Crown has gathered every tittle of evidence possible to bring against my client. Edwards is a hard-working man, whose one failing is drink.

"The whole of the evidence is against the idea of Edwards associating himself with Skinner for the purpose of murdering him. They travelled from Tocumwal to Waranga Basin, were nine days on the road, and gambled together. Edwards knew that Skinner was well known at Waranga Basin, and if there had been any premeditation, it is hardly likely that the killing would have taken place there.

"With regard to the actual killing of Skinner. It rests with you gentlemen of the jury to say whether it was done with malice aforethought, or not. Certainly the killing was done by Edwards, but was it done in such circumstances that renders the act one of wilful murder?"

Mr. Maxwell said that Edwards had told the constable at Benalla that he had done the thing in a moment of passion, and in his own words had said, "Skinner made at me with the shovel, I made at him with the axe, and the blow killed him." Edwards had gone into the witness box and had given his version of the affair.

"Was Edwards's demeanour like that of a man concocting a story, or that of a man stating facts as they occurred?" asked defence counsel. "I ask you gentlemen of the jury to say that Edwards impressed you as a man who was truthful. The way in which he gave his evidence, I think, bore the impress of candor and truth."

Commenting upon the evidence at great length, Mr. Maxwell said that on the night of March 4, when Skinner returned to the camp at about 10.30 p.m., Edwards, who had been drinking, was not sober. Skinner was. Edwards said something that put Skinner in a passion and while defending himself, the one blow by Edwards had killed Skinner.

"For the consequences of that one blow, gentlemen, Edwards is responsible to you today," counsel told the jury. "There is no evidence at all to show premeditation. The theory of gain has not been supported by any evidence. The killing was brought about by Edwards in self-defence."

"Just a moment, Mr. Maxwell," interrupted Mr. Justice Hood. "How do you reconcile that with the answer given by Edwards, 'I struck him because my temper was up. I could have got away if I had liked?'"

Mr. Maxwell: "I think that answer shows Edwards's candor. Would not any man's temper get up if he were attacked by another man with a shovel? A man, when attacked by another, does not, at the moment, think of getting away, although it might occur to him months afterwards that he could have got away. We have to remember, too, that Edwards had had whisky that night."

Dealing with the mutilation of Skinner's body, Mr. Maxwell urged the jury not to allow that fact to weigh unduly with them.

"After a man is dead, his body becomes a piece of lifeless clay. Edwards knew that Skinner was dead, and he was consumed with a great fear. When he resolved not to give himself up, he resolved to conceal the thing as best he could. He did not mutilate the body just for mutilation purposes, but for concealment, and he had put the remains into bags in order to avoid discovery.

"Edwards," continued Mr. Maxwell, "is a man who has led the hard life of a hard laborer, earning his bread the hard way from day to day, and because he is not a man of elevated sensibilities, he should not be condemned on that account by you gentlemen of the jury.

"He has called God to witness that he had given a truthful account of what happened on that night of March 4 at the lonely camp fire, and I would ask you to consider the evidence fully and carefully. I ask you to take the view that Edwards struck the blow in self-defence and the deed was therefore justifiable.

"Failing that view, gentlemen," wound up counsel, "I ask you to say that Edwards was attacked by another man and struck him in a passion; and is, therefore, only guilty of manslaughter."

The Crown Prosecutor did not spend much time in addressing the jury.

He led off by asking the jury to weigh carefully the evidence for the defence and consider the motives which persuaded Edwards to tell what might be an utterly false story. Donohue, who had introduced Edwards to Skinner, had told Edwards that Skinner had plenty of money. Until Edwards received the cheque from Constable Fortescue, he had been broke.

After starting on the road, they played two-up, and if Edwards was to be believed, he had won £12 from Skinner. That was a fair amount to be won in nine days, and it was to be assumed that Skinner by that time had been well broken in the losing.

While Skinner was an inveterate gambler, the jury had been told that he stood his losses well, and was not irritable over them. The only thing that showed Skinner to be warm-tempered was the incident in which the dead man had been "chaffed" over a black gin, and Skinner had then only used some bad language.

"Edwards was stated to have consumed a quarter of a bottle of whisky on the night of March 4," said Mr. Gurner. "His counsel has represented him as being under the influence of liquor. A quarter of a bottle of whisky, represents three nobblers. It is for you gentlemen of the jury to determine whether that would make a man like Edwards drunk."

At this stage, Mr. Gurner produced the upper portion of Skinner's skull and waved it at the startled jury.

"Look at this, gentlemen," he said. "Skinner must have been either in a sitting or stooping position when struck, and was hit from behind. That is inconsistent with the story told by the accused.

"Edwards has told us that he was in a terrible state of mind, and that he was stricken with fear over his fact," said the Crown Prosecutor. "If he had done the thing in a moment of passion and was fearful of his act, would he callously cut Skinner's head off, chop his legs off, disfigure the body beyond recognition and throw the parts into two sacks?"

"From the time he left Waranga Basin, Edwards went under

assumed names, and it was only when he was identified at Benalla that he admitted he was Edwards. The story he has told bears the appearance of a concocted one, and I think you gentlemen of the jury will be incapable of accepting it as the true version of what really happened.

"It is your painful duty to consider whether a dastardly crime has been committed. If so, the accused is guilty of murder. If you really think the accused's story is true, then you might bring in a verdict of manslaughter. If the defence has not satisfied you, then Edwards is guilty of murder," Mr. Gurner concluded.

Mr. Justice Hood told the jury in his summing up that they could bring in a verdict of not guilty if they thought fit, but his opinion the only possible verdict was murder or manslaughter.

"The prisoner has admitted that he killed Skinner, and it is for you gentlemen to determine what was in the man's mind when he killed Skinner," said His Honor.

"You have in evidence what Edwards said and did. The defence has been put admirably by counsel, but if Edwards killed Skinner in self-defence, it is reasonable to assume that he would rush away to the police and say, 'I killed him in self-defence—if I had not killed him, he would have killed me.'"

After explaining the definitions of murder and manslaughter to the jury, Mr. Justice Hood, dealing with manslaughter, said,

"You will have to consider whether the prisoner was so provoked that he killed Skinner in the heat of passion, or whether the story Edwards told is a pack of lies.

"It was the duty of the prisoner to say why he did this act, and if you are not satisfied with his defence, you will find him guilty of murder.

"Edwards wandered about the country for a couple of months and when arrested near Benalla and questioned about Skinner's horse and cart, said, 'Skinner lost his life through them.' That was the statement of the constable, and Edwards, when asked, did not contradict this statement.

"If his story as to killing Skinner in the heat of passion is accepted, then you will find him guilty of manslaughter.

"There are some facts that are very significant," the judge went on. "Edwards, when he killed the man, acted with the utmost deliberation. He took steps to render identification of the body almost impossible. Having done that, he appropriated the man's property and his name. He represented himself as William Skinner. Having sold the man's property, he drank about the place and then went to other townships. Ultimately he was recognised at Benalla and arrested.

"Was his story a true account of what took place that night, or was it an invention?"

Mr. Justice Hood told the jury that they had to return their verdict according to the evidence placed before them and they had to disregard anything they might have read in the newspapers.

"That you have your duty to do, gentlemen, you know full well," said His Honor. "You will be the rankest cowards in the world if you allow yourselves to be frightened into not doing your duty. It is competent for you to consider the various verdicts put before you, even as to acquitting the accused, but the only possible verdict I think you can come to is one either of murder or manslaughter."

The judge concluded his summing up at 2.35 p.m. and the jury retired to chew it over. They returned into court at 3.15 p.m. and asked for the skull of the dead man and also the axe.

Edwards was asked by the judge if he recognised the axe and he replied, "It is something like the one I hit Skinner with."

Having retired with the axe and the skull, the jury deliberated until 3.30 p.m. and then came back into court with a verdict of not guilty of murder, but guilty of manslaughter.

Mr. Justice Hood remanded Edwards for sentence and Edwards was allowed to stew in gaol for 10 days before he heard what was coming to him.

On July 28 he came before His Honor and in reply to questions, said he was 47 years of age, a laborer, and lived at Germanton.

Asked if he had anything to say why sentence should not be

passed upon him according to law, Edwards remarked, "I am sorry for what happened. I had no intention of killing Skinner."

"Skinner met his death at the hands of the prisoner, and on the facts in the case, there was ample justification for the jury to have convicted him of wilful and deliberate murder," said the judge.

"Owing largely to the ingenuity and eloquence of the prisoner's counsel (Mr. Maxwell) the jury accepted the prisoner's version of the way in which Skinner had met his death, and returned a verdict of manslaughter.

"Looked at even in that light," said the judge, "it was a brutal and horrible offence. On the prisoner's own showing, it appears that Skinner returned to camp where they were staying, after a night of gambling, and seemed irritated over his losses.

"Prisoner commenced to tease and annoy him. Skinner struck at him with a shovel, but he was in no real peril. The blow was over; it had missed its mark; but then, according to his own view, passion seized the prisoner and he struck Skinner a tremendous blow on the head with an axe, killing him on the spot.

"The next act was to rob the body of the dead man. The head was then cut off with an axe, and the lower portions of the body having been removed, the remains of the unfortunate victim were put in bags and thrown into the water. The dead man's property was sold and his name assumed, and it was only owing to the ingenuity of Detective Burvett that the prisoner was caught.

"There is nothing whatever in the crime, or in any of the circumstances connected with it, to warrant leniency," said Mr. Justice Hood. "I will therefore sentence the prisoner almost to the limit allowed by the law.

"Prisoner," he said, "you are sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment with hard labor."

Edwards took it calmly.

There were one or two interesting coincidences in connection with the Waranga Basin case.

The Waranga laborer who told Detective Burvett that the horse shoes found in the bag had been made by a farrier named Edwards was incorrect. They had been made by a blacksmith

named Dryden. There had been a farrier there named Edwards, but he was no relation to the man who killed Skinner.

But the most remarkable coincidence happened at the Criminal Court itself.

When he opened the Crown case against Edwards, Mr. Gurner, K.C., remarked that many years previously a 'possum shooter living at Strathmerton was murdered and his body cut up just as Skinner's had been. It was known that Edwards was a familiar figure at Strathmerton, and the suggestion was that he had got the idea of dismembering his victim's body from that crime.

A day or two after Edward's' trial, a man was put in the dock under the name of Arthur James Campbell, on charges of cattle stealing, and he was instantly recognised as the murderer of the 'possum shooter. This man had escaped the gallows and had served a long term of imprisonment with remissions for good conduct, but apparently had taken advantage of his release from custody to commit other crimes.

BE LUCKY IN LOVE

MARRIAGE, Health, Lotteries, etc. Have with you always a LUCKY CHARM as carried by the Ancient Hindus of the Mysterious East for protection against EVIL and UNHAPPINESS. A Talisman to influence life between MISFORTUNE and HAPPINESS is no myth. The Wise Men of The East knew of the MYSTERIOUS and INVISIBLE POWER which a Talisman of Charm could influence for GOOD or EVIL. Money back guarantee if CHARM fails to bring you GOOD LUCK. Specially imported from the Bazaars of India. Price 10/- posted. RUSSELL BROWN, DEPT. BC. Box 2209T, G.P.O., Melbourne.

After Edwards had been found guilty and remanded for sentence, Campbell was tried for the cattle stealing, found guilty and also remanded for sentence. Both men were taken away in the Black Maria, and in due course were brought back to court in the same vehicle to receive their respective terms of gaol. Later they were taken away in the same vehicle again to serve their sentences at Pentridge Gaol.

The curious point about Campbell was that by some extraordinary oversight, the papers supplied for the information of the court did not disclose Campbell's identity with the individual who, under another name, had served a sentence for the manslaughter of the 'possum shooter.

When he was brought up for sentence, the judge asked if anything were known against Campbell.

"A good deal is now known about him, but unfortunately he was not recognised in gaol until it was too late to establish his previous record," said the Crown Prosecutor (Mr. Finlayson, K.C.)

Without comment, the judge sentenced Campbell to two years' imprisonment.

Mr. McGrath received the full £200 reward for the arrest and conviction of Edwards. A constable at Chiltern missed the prize. During the hunt for Edwards, Edwards had called at a hair-dressers saloon in Chiltern and as he was leaving, the constable went in.

On the spur of the moment, the constable said to a youth, "Keep an eye on that man while I have a shave."

But when the shave was over, Edwards had disappeared and so had the constable's chance to earn a £200 windfall.

It should be mentioned in explanation that in those days in Victoria the police were entitled to reward money if they were responsible for arrests.

MURDER meets MAGIC

By S. M. Mudaliar

India, the home of magic and magicians, offers this grim story, revealing the manner in which black magic played an important part in the solution of a revolting murder.

A crime story with a difference.

THE scene of murder was a suburban locality in the vicinity of a cantonment in the city of Hyderabad, one of the largest States in India.

This murder, which took place some years ago (actual date unknown), on the face of it was a very ordinary case.

A little girl of about nine, Sonia by name, had disappeared at a nearby cantonment during broad daylight about a week previously.

As she had been wearing a lot of jewellery, robbery and murder were naturally suspected by the local police.

It was the custom in India for the head of a family not to put his savings into banks or stocks and shares, but into jewellery—rings, ear-rings and necklaces, anklets, etc.—with which he bedecked his wife and daughters.

In Hyderabad it was quite common to see youngsters of six or seven wearing hundreds of rupees' worth of solid gold and silver—a terrible temptation indeed to the needy and unscrupulous, and also the cause of many tragedies.

Well, Sonia having vanished, the police started their usual systematic check of all strangers and a search of likely hiding-places, such as wells, gardens and patches of jungles near the

cantonment. Such cases were usually solved in the end—perhaps weeks or months later—by the missing persons' trinkets being traced to a receiver.

As hoped, the news that an arrest had already been made in that instance was very satisfactory indeed; but the mention of "Black Magic" naturally aroused the Chief's (Mr. Jolm's) interest. It was known that magic was extensively practised in the State.

When the report was submitted the Chief studied it very carefully.

The document stated that, while the police were proceeding in the usual routine fashion, Sonia's parents had visited a local wizard and obtained from him information which led to the discovery of the missing child's body in an old well and her jewellery under a small culvert. They had also learned the name of the guilty person—a woman who lived next door—whom the local police had promptly placed under custody.

This being the first occasion on which the Chief of Police had heard of a murder case being solved by magic means, he decided to make the long journey to Aurangabad—the scene of the murder—and look into that queer happening personally.

So the journey of 300 miles of beautiful highways was at once made, and on arrival at Aurangabad the Chief was welcomed by his subordinate, Inspector Karim, a tactful and brilliant police officer whose dealings were said to be very faithful with his fellow men, thereby encouraging them to help him in the ceaseless war against law-breakers. He was also a perfect production of a Western civilisation. Nevertheless, according to the best of information, he had solved a murder mystery with the aid of magic.

On the Chief's request that he inform him how he came to accept Black Magic, Inspector Karim said: "I don't believe in magic, sir, and did not seek its help. But when you've heard my story I think you will agree that mysterious forces of some kind did come to our aid, and that I could hardly have acted otherwise than I did." With that he related the following mystifying narrative:—

The household of the little Sonia, the murdered girl, included her father, mother, two young sisters, and a boy of fifteen, a sort of cousin who was staying with the family.

The father made and renovated cane furniture in his small workshop for his village folks, and the mother was leading the simple life of an Indian woman of her class.

Betrothed at twelve, married at sixteen, and now at the age of 24, she was mother of five children—three living and two dead. Plump and middle-aged-looking, she was kept busy with her housework and kiddies, of whom Sonia alone was old enough to help her. The boy cousin, Jeewan by name, was an orphan who had been adopted and brought up by his kind and generous uncle, spent most of his time hanging around the parade-ground looking at the soldiers' drill or listening to the melodious band.

On the fateful morning, Sonia's father was out to deliver a chair he renovated; Jeewan was out on his own somewhere. The mother was busy in domestic duty at home, little Sonia assisting her by bringing water from the well. With her slight figure wrapped in a bright red cotton garment very erect under the black earthen pot she balanced on her head, the child made a lovely picture. One slim arm with its heavy gold bracelet was raised to steady the pot; the other daintily held her skirts clear of her silver-encircled anklets.

When all the water-pots were filled, Sonia, with her mother's permission, sauntered off towards the distant music of the band. From that moment she was never seen alive again—except by her murderer. When she did not appear for the midday meal, the anxious parents asked Jeewan and the neighbours' children if they had observed the child near the band. None of them had, and after a couple of hours' fruitless search the worried father went to the police. They at once turned out every available man and started a search of all likely places. These were many, and by nightfall there was still no trace of Sonia, who, everyone now feared, must have met with foul play.

Tossing sleepless in bed, the distraught mother bethought herself of a wonderful wizard she had heard of in Aurangabad City. Normally she would scoff at magic; but in the circumstances she was willing to try anything, and she repeatedly begged her husband to seek the advice of the soothsayer. After a while, more to satisfy her than from any hope, he consented. The following morning the pair started out, accompanied by the boy Jeewan, who begged them to take him because he had never met a magician and wanted to be able to say that he had seen one in action.

The sun had only just leapt up from the eastern horizon when the trio approached the high crenellated walls built by a Mogul emperor a century and a half previously. The narrow streets all thronged with traffic.

Sonia's parents soon found their destination; everyone knew the wizard's abode. He received his three visitors seated on a gaily covered mattress in a shady courtyard, and gravely acknowledged their deep obeisance. A fine-looking old man with dark, piercing eyes and long silvery hair, carefully brushed down on his shoulders, he was dressed in a snow-white cotton shirt and trousers.

After hearing the couple's story and their fervent appeal for help, the old man pondered in silence for some time, meanwhile studying the trio intently. At length he spoke.

"I am always willing to utilise my gifts to prevent or punish evil, but I have never tried to discover hidden crime. That is work for the police; I doubt if I could be of any help."

"Please help us!" cried the mother, throwing herself at his feet. "All we ask is that you will try. You shall name your own reward if you can tell us what has happened to our beloved child."

The wizard frowned cogitatingly for a moment; then he replied, "Perhaps there is a way. Let the boy sit before me here on the mattress."

But Jeewan tried to shrink away. "No, no," he cried, greatly agitated. "I don't want to sit there; I want to go home." However, finally he was persuaded to obey the old man's behest.

The soothsayer looked deep into his eyes; then he made some passes with his hands and asked the boy, "Where is your cousin Sonia? Tell us where we can find her."

To the utter astonishment of the parents, Jeewan answered in a dreamy, sing-song voice, "Sonia is in the old disused well near the parade-ground."

"And where is her jewellery?" queried the wizard.

"Under the little bridge near the well," replied the boy.

"One more question," continued the old man, waving his hands in front of the lad's face again. "Who killed the child?"

At this juncture Jeewan first stirred restlessly and then sprang to his feet.

"I do not know!" he cried in an agonised voice. "I want to go home. Please, let me go!"

Again the parents coaxed him to resume his seat in front of the old man, who pressed him to say who murdered Sonia. Finally the boy muttered sulkily. "It was Rani, the woman next door." Then, leaping up, he ran wildly from the house.

With deep distress the bereaved couple took their departure from the magician and, with alternate hopes and fears urging them onwards, they hastened back to the local police station and related every detail of their strange interview to the Inspector, who lost no time in mustering a gang of men at the old well with grappling-irons.

Sure enough, before long the body of poor little Sonia was lifted up. It was covered with green slime and bore no visible injuries. The discovery of the child's jewellery concealed under a culvert nearby inevitably led to the arrest of the woman Rani, who—loudly protesting her innocence—was at once confined behind iron bars.

This was the story Inspector Karim told the Chief as they sat there in the coach, and it must have certainly sounded very fantastic as at the end of the narrative they both looked at one another in silence. The Inspector was, no doubt, wondering whether he would receive sympathy or ridicule; the Chief was striving to switch his thoughts off the occult side of the business and bring everyday common sense to bear upon it.

Finally he broke the tension by asking, in the most matter-of-fact tone he could assume, "Rani, I gather, was neither poverty-stricken nor a criminal. The murder of a child by a normal woman requires some tremendously powerful stimulus."

"You are right, sir," replied the Inspector. "The question of motive has worried me quite a lot. As you say, Rani is neither poor nor of bad character. But she is childless—the greatest disgrace that can befall an Indian woman. Perhaps envy of the happy family next door sent her temporarily out of her mind."

"I am afraid the theory isn't strong enough," the Chief told him, shaking his head. "Was she seen with the child that morning?"

"No, sir," he said. "But she can't prove what she was doing during the time that matters."

"Few of us can do that on any given day, Inspector," he pointed out, "particularly if we are suddenly arrested and thrust into a cell. Anyway, let us drop surmises and try to get down to hard facts. Like you, I've got no use for magic; but I do believe in hypnotism and telepathy, and I fancy they played a part in this business. There were four persons present at this meeting in the wizard's house. . . . Right! Well, leaving magic clean out of it, let us assume that the information about the crime given by the boy Jeewan came from the knowledge that was either in his mind or in the mind of one of the other three. I think we can safely eliminate the father and mother—which leaves us with the wizard and the boy. What about the wizard? Ignoring the apparent lack of motive, could he have gone to the cantonment, committed the murder, and returned home without being seen?"

"It is impossible that he could have gone there at all," replied the Inspector quickly. "The old man is paralysed in both legs."

"That certainly rules him out," agreed the Chief. "Then our suspect must be the boy, Inspector! He had the opportunity and the motive; he probably wanted money. Send for him at once, and I'll come over and see him directly he is brought in."

Looking as though a heavy burden had been removed from the Inspector's mind, and delighted to be doing something which accorded with everyday routine, the young officer saluted and hurried off.

The Chief next day tramped the half-mile under the Indian sun, accompanied by a stalwart constable who escorted him, and was very glad to reach the cool verandah of the police station.

Here the unfortunate Rani was brought before the Chief, and promptly threw herself on the matting imploringly.

"Oh, Sahib!" she wailed. "I have done nothing! Let me go; let me go!"

"Of course," he told her consolingly. "You are quite free, but we want you to wait and see the person who falsely accused you."

This was not to be, however, for presently a constable dashed

up on a bicycle and reported that the "wanted" boy had disappeared. A hue and cry had been raised in the bazaar.

"Wire all the neighbouring railways and police stations at once," ordered the Chief. "He may try to get right away."

Meanwhile Rani was released to return to her home. The following morning the fugitive Jeewan was arrested while trying to board a train at a small station some fifteen miles distant. When brought before the Chief, he calmly confessed to the murder of little Sonia. He had wanted money to go to Bombay and see life there, he said. He knew that the path the child usually took when she went to listen to the band passed through the thicket surrounding the old well. Meeting her there, and putting his arm round her in an affectionate way, he suddenly thrust part of the poor girl's cotton garment into her mouth and suffocated her. He then removed her jewellery, afterwards lifting the body over the low parapet of the abandoned well. . . . It must have been rather trying to sit there and hear the wretched boy cold-bloodedly describing so horrible a crime.

Jeewan never came to trial. In the train on his way to Central Gaol, his handcuffs were removed when he went to the lavatory. Seizing his opportunity, he squeezed through the window and jumped out. At that moment the train was passing through a girder bridge 90 feet above the river. But the culprit was not drowned; the hot weather was still in existence and the bed of the river was completely dry.

By the time the escort pulled up the train at the end of the bridge and clambered down the steep bank, the keen-eyed vultures had already discovered the corpse.

So concludes our murder-and-magic mystery.

"LOONEY" McDouall's Ghost

by **F. J. Lynch**

What strange hypnotic spell was cast over murderer John Wood to draw him back to the scene of his ghastly crime and surrender him into the waiting hands of the law? Was it the mysterious compulsion that drives a slayer to return . . . or was it something more?

CONSIDERED as a murderer John Wood suffered from a curious deficiency. Naturally one tends to regard the professional taker of human life as a being as devoid of feeling as a cannibal, but Wood supplied the exception that disproved the rule. Wood saw ghosts—the ghosts of his victims. You will, of course, admit that was a handicap, but it entailed an even worse one. Wood's ghosts called to him from the grave (if they got one); but they called him, anyway. In truth, the shades of his victims haunted him, beseeched him—and Wood returned. There follows the story of the occasion on which he returned once, just once, too often.

Just here let me lighten the general morbidity by stating that Fate played it rather low on Wood. Sardonicly, as I think, the fickle jade chose the ghost of "Looney" McDouall to lure him to his doom. In that Wood had quite an opinion of himself, the joke was rather keen.

"Looney" owned a speckled-leather complexion, a regular water spout of a beard, and eyes that faced the world out of step, as it were. His claim to fame consisted principally of a knowledge how *not* to lose sheep. Indeed, the district held not his equal as a shepherd. In all circumstances he handled the animals with circum-

spection. Let the season be as dry as cremation, out in the arithmetical centre of Howlong Plains, where the hot winds are generated and droughts prepared for general distribution, or should the country disappear under a sheet of water six feet deep, "Looney" turned up with a full house, so to put it.

"Looney's" raiment fell considerably short of Melbourne Cup standard. His trousers were so patched with patches so large that it was arguable whether the patch was put on the trousers or the trousers on the patch. "Looney" wasn't interested. "Just have it your own way," he'd say.

Out in the infinitudes of silence of mid-western New South Wales in the '60's, where the climate so often consisted of an ocean of sunlight, on occasion varied by wind and dust and ashes, and the crows croak the lay of the dead, raiment, or even its complete absence, mattered not. In their hells of monotony, engaged in an occupation that was more an exhibition of patience than work, nothing apart from feed, water and rations mattered to the lonely shepherd. One would think that even the shepherds themselves must have been pleased when at length the introduction of fencing put an end to their terms of "solitary."

As perhaps you noticed, I have not bothered to explain "Looney's" nickname, for the excellent reason that it explains itself. "Looney's" intelligence was bounded, north, south, east, west, by—sheep. The Australian national animal sadly lacks inspiration. He spoke in jerks, as though his speaking apparatus was driven by little plugs of dynamite. His years were 23.

The youthful shepherd had a bad habit: invariably he carried his money about with him. Particularly was it a bad habit in view of the fact that after visits to Carcoar "Looney's" appearance commonly suggested that he contained a good deal of beer. Add the first, which was no secret, to the second, which was obvious, and you have the deadly combination which has unlocked the door of Eternity for many a man. "Looney" was last heard of alive on the night he called at a hut not far from Rothery's run, where he wrote a letter to his mother in Sydney, enclosed a £1 note, and said that he would walk in to Carcoar to post it. It was a lonely walk, and a man who was yarning when "Looney" called

said that he also was bound for Carcoar and that he would accompany him.

When it is stated that the man was John Wood you will understand that poor "Looney" McDouall was never again heard of alive. A discovery about three weeks later went to prove that even electricity wouldn't have downed him more suddenly. John Wood doubtless knelt by the side of the body, hastily rifled the pockets of their gold, notes and silver content, spent perhaps an hour in the struggling moonbeams' misty light excavating a receptacle in sandy loam a bit off the track, therein dropped "Looney's" earthly remains, filled the grave in, "bliaded" the spot as well as he was able, and hurried off in the gloom as fast as possible.

Hereabouts but for one additional fact the story of John Wood's brief but fatal transaction with "Looney" McDouall might have given out for want of material. John Wood fled through the darkness, but he fled not fast enough. "Looney" McDouall had become a ghost, and the ghost of "Looney" McDouall kept even pace. Even after the murderer entered a hut, therein secured a saddle and bridle, and on a stolen horse travelled northward, he could not outpace the ghostly horror that pursued him.

When the Last Trump sounds and the final scuffle for Heaven or the place opposite is on in parts frequented by John Wood in the exciting days of gold and for long thereafter, many a patch of Australian wild will present a busy sight; for wherever his footsteps led this awful man wholesale murder was a certainty. The fact that his activities added to his army of ghosts doubtless worried him, but seemingly the thought of honest labour worried him more.

It might be wondered how this wholesale practitioner went free so long. The restless nature of the times helped greatly to screen him. Hasty departure for fresh fields of golden promise was a daily occurrence. Thus men were never missed, nor even inquired about. Worked-out claims, or "duffers," supplied a ready-made cemetery. Literally it was murder made to order! And for long Wood prospered. But it crossed his murderous brain to kill "Looney" McDouall, and thereafter he never drew peaceful breath. "In wondrous ways—!"

The ghost of poor dead McDouall amounted to a real presence, and it alarmed Wood beyond telling. He could see it behind his

eyes, wherever he went—could see it dangling its legs in elfish glee, like a child on a window-sill, or chuckling to itself as it slouched across his thoughts. No dark alley of Wood's gloomy mind that the ghost of "Looney" McDouall didn't explore!

That this particular ghost should choose the slum area of Wood's mind was against the rule. A majority of the species prefer spots high in the ranges to camp in, and thus render them haunted and famous and feared by every kiddy in a wide district, as well as more than half the grown-up population. But this was the ghost of "Looney" McDouall, and otherwise than in the company of sheep "Looney" was a very debatable being. Clearly he had been outfitted with a ghost to match.

The fact that his sheep were found wandering unattended over the range at the back of his hut soon advertised McDouall's departure from the scene of his labours. But whence, also why? For this man to so act was unprecedented, particularly as there was money owing to him. Search and inquiry failed to produce him. The man of the hut at which the shepherd had called, and which he had left in company on his way to Carcoar, had gone off in the precipitate way of the times. The only information concerning the missing man came from a lad of 13 who had seen McDouall writing a letter and enclosing a pound note. "He left the hut with another man," said the lad to a questing Trooper.

| "Did you know the other man?" queried the Trooper.

| "No," replied the boy.

| "Would you know him again if you saw him?" asked the Trooper.

| "Yes, I think so," came the reply.

Thus doubtfully the chase opened. But if the Trooper was temporarily disconcerted, the ghost of "Looney" McDouall wasn't! That energetic shade was working ceaselessly and with certainty to the end that one day his murderer would be informed in advance of the date and manner of his death!

Meanwhile Wood wandered north as far as Mudgee. There, partly from natural inclination, but more in an effort to escape the looney presence which had come to dwell in his brain, Wood commenced to invest the money poor dead McDouall had earned

in large quantities of beer. One night, whilst insufficiently sober for such a risky undertaking, he burgled and stole some clothing from a Mudgee shop, was caught in the act, and later handed six months' tough employment in Mudgee Gaol.

Just what the ghost of "Looney" McDouall thought of this can't be determined, but there was evidence, I submit, that it kept company, and possibly was pleased at having dropped Wood into such an awkward fix!

Three weeks after "Looney" McDouall lost the run of his earthly existence the shepherd who replaced him saw a flock of crows, some hung up in the air, others making off in various directions; and the laboured beat of their wings told him that their beaks of steel had not been idle. The carrion crow and his anthem of death! The man thought to investigate, but then remembered that the slatey rocks of the hillside had on a previous occasion cut his horse's unshod feet about, and held on, excusing himself by crediting the "party" to a dead sheep. He could have walked, but he was too lazy! And as that was the measure of his shepherding his services were terminated.

A crow in the sky has led to the discovery of many a man—dead in the bush, with the cause of his death thick upon him. Poised above the "banquet" below, the carrion crow has oft provided the first link in the chain of evidence that finally led a murderer to his death six feet above ground, and to a grave of disgrace six feet below.

The next shepherd had been a prospector, and the gold-hunter's instinct clung to him like wet trousers. Whilst he audited the sheep on the latest principles, he also spent considerable time checking up on the district's golden possibilities. And the day came when his eyes fetched up on a spectacle that momentarily left him short of breath, and for a space deprived his legs of their accustomed force of character. It was a human skull—surely the whole world holds few more heart-chilling sights! There was no visible skeleton, but only a skull, upright on its neck, peering from vacant eye-sockets—northward!

Of course, the man soon recovered from his first shock, and made closer inspection. The body of a man had been buried in

a shallow grave face downyard; and the surviving skeleton gave an odd impression that it had raised itself on its elbows and stretched its bony head-piece forward, as if to get a better view over the edge of the excavation!

The simple explanation of the ghastly disarray was that, as well as the crows, a dingo or two had been busy.

The shepherd reported the discovery, which led to police inspection of the remains. The partly rotted clothing, and two brass buttons which still adhered, assisted to establish identity. Beyond any reasonable doubt, bones and skull represented all that was left of poor "Looney" McDouall. The deeply fractured skull showed where death had knocked.

Everything was removed and taken into Carcoar, where an inquest was held. Checkmate! A doctor gave it as his definite opinion that the skull was that of a man of at least 45 years. McDouall was only 23.

Since McDouall had joined the list of the missing it had come to be noted that a man doubtfully known as John Wood had also disappeared from local ken, and as the 45-years estimate about fitted him some thought that the skull proved that man's murder.

But Dr. McInerney of Bathurst looked in on the Carcoar situation and applied much better-informed eyes to the skull. He pointed out the slight depressions which he thought would react to limit mental development.

"What colour was McDouall's hair?" he asked.

"Sandy, or even yellow," replied witness after witness in quick succession.

"Then we'll see if we can find some of it," said this energetic doctor.

The skull, of course, was as bald as a—skull!

The process of sieving soil at the grave in the wilderness yielded strand after strand of hair, and every strand could be described as sandy or yellow. "At that, they are the hairs of youth," commented the doctor.

Sandy McDouall!

The boy at the hut wherein McDouall had written his last letter now came forward, and said that he remembered that someone

had once addressed the man who left the hut with McDouall by the name of Wood. "And I'd know him again," he added.

A warrant charging Wood with suspicion of having murdered McDouall was issued at once, and a wide search entered upon. It was found that a man of that name, and answering his general description, was known on every field for miles; but every inquiry ended similarly—nobody had seen the man for months. The reader, of course, knows why! John Wood was under lock and key in Mudgee Gaol, working his way through a six-months sentence. The authorities of the time never even thought of searching their own gaols!

In the '60's news didn't travel worth mentioning. Country newspaper circulation was limited to its immediate vicinity. Wood had not heard of the finding of McDouall's body, nor that he was suspected of the murder of that man. He had no idea that the policemen he saw about the gaol, and with whom on occasion he talked, left the gaol to scour the countryside looking for him!

Came at last the day of Wood's release. With good advice from the gaol governor, accompanied by a hope that he would not see him inside the gaol again, John Wood was turned loose.

That northward-looking skull on the rim of Carcoar! Can it be thought that from staring eye-sockets it directed an insanely hypnotic gaze clear into the mind of Wood, and that the man, even in his dreams, had to look upon that picture—had to see continually those eyes, and feel them drawing him southward, ever southward, southward to Carcoar, southward to the illicit grave in the bush?

By all standards of common sense that spot, above all spots, was a place to be avoided by him. Northward, eastward to Sydney and the coast, westward into the loneliness of the wide-spreading plains—Wood's possibilities of choice were nearly limitless.

Wood travelled—southward!

The chase was practically given up. After all, it was in the bushranging sixties, and the rising colony of New South Wales had many other quarries for its Police Force. In the slang of today, Wood was put on ice! This was good sense, though at the time the authorities did not know it. "Looney" McDouall was attending to Wood! Had they but known it, all that was wanted was for

a trooper to make a comfortable camp for himself close by McDouall's last resting-place and wait for Wood.

One night Troopers Sutherland and Sanderson were out after possums. From high in the ranges Sutherland caught sight of a momentary glimmer perhaps a half-mile distant. "I'm sure of it," he said to the other man, who said that perhaps a shooting-star had caught his eye. "It was in the vicinity of the spot where we found poor McDouall. I'm that damn certain that I'm going down to look around." Of course, the other accompanied him.

When within perhaps 150 yards of the spot they aimed at, the sharp sound of a breaking stick reached the ears of the pair. The sound came from ahead of them.

Now certain that there was a man in the vicinity, the Troopers became very circumspect. At the end of a couple of minutes they resumed their slow advance, using the cushioning grass to deaden sound. At length they came within sight of a sitting man. It was John Wood, nodding his head in sleepy stupor on the grave which once held all that was mortal of "Looney" McDouall!

When stirred to life Wood acted with surprising swiftness—of course without avail. He denied strenuously that his name was Wood. "Let your name be as you will," said Trooper Sanderson, "you're coming with us. We'll soon find out what you're called. Do you know this man?" he queried of his fellow Trooper.

"Not by name," said the other, "but I now remember him as a man who was not seen on Cowra Rocks the night after a man was killed and robbed. And he went missing on Braidwood field very shortly after Jack Lawton was found at the foot of his own claim, dead. Looks funny, don't you think?"

Whilst held at Carcoar, questing gold-rushers often dropped in and were given a look at the bird in the cage. With ghastly frequency they remembered him as a man who wasn't on hand shortly after a mysterious tragedy on many a field.

At first jaunty enough, Wood later drooped badly. "I won't see any of these men. They're like crows on a fence, waiting for a beast to fall," said he one day.

"You should be well informed on the habits of crows," replied the Trooper addressed.

The trial of Wood was brought on at Bathurst. The police could

have provided a regular convention of witnesses, but three of good quality were deemed sufficient for the business in hand.

And it was even so. In the face of such opposition the defence was poor to the verge of bankruptcy, and in due course the man whom the shade of poor "Looney" McDouall had called back to meet his doom listened to the sentence for which it might be said he called tenders.

After a little consideration I have decided that hanging must be a very tough shock to the system; and after a little further or additional consideration I have come to the conclusion that in Bathurst Gaol on June 7, 1865, the hanging of Thomas Wood supplied that man with less than 50 per cent. of the shock he deserved.

It may sound callous, but it pleases me to be able to record that the fate of men who, in the gloom of the long-dead past, vanished from life in regions but little known was avenged at last. Also that the ghost of "Looney" McDouall brought Wood to his death by the rope.

THE POLICE KILLER

By C. F. O'Neill

A remarkable chain of circumstances linked a house-breaker with the brutal slaying of a policeman in a crime that for 12 months figured prominently in Melbourne's criminal courts and political arena.

A POLICEMAN'S lot, says the tuneful ditty, is not a happy one, but none would have contested the claim more emphatically than young Constable George Howell.

Tall, strong and a vigorous 26, Howell was a personable man with a future in the Victorian Police Force. He was enthusiastic—but not officious in his duty—intelligent, ambitious, liked and respected by colleagues, and engaged to marry an attractive girl. In the course of time he might have anticipated promotion, a home, family, and a fair measure of worldly wealth.

In short, the lot of George Howell, a policeman, was a happy one, popular theory notwithstanding.

Happy, yes, but uncertain too, as indeed is the future in some degree of all law-enforcing agents.

So it was that George Howell paced a beat on the night of January 30, 1952, in the comfortably respectable Melbourne suburb of Caulfield. His patrol took him near the Crystal Palace Theatre, where the parked cars of cinema patrons had been subjected to a wave of petty thieving. Howell was especially assigned to prevent interference with the vehicles.

On any of a hundred such routine duties Howell might have courted no more danger than a harmless drunk. But at 10.35 that summer night swift death struck at the constable.

From behind parked cars Howell gave chase to an intruder. There was a sudden scuffle and the suspect, powerfully built, fended his pursuer off. The pursuit followed past a plantation under a darkened viaduct, where the athletic Howell caught up with his man and the struggle resumed.

Then in the shadows with startling suddenness there was a sound like a can dropping, followed immediately by a solitary shot. A pained cry for help brought Misses Edna Jean Wilkinson and Lorna Doreen Bailey, who had left the theatre minutes previously. They found Howell writhing in his death-agony with a bullet-wound in his stomach.

Police quickly on the scene removed the weakening constable to Alfred Hospital. There he described his assailant as about 28, solidly built, chubby-faced, having worn a brown sports coat.

George Howell lingered painfully for two days before his death.

Meanwhile his colleagues had been feverishly active in detection of his murderer. Near the scene of the shooting they found Howell's cap, a nickel-plated torch, and a small tin containing three car-keys. Also located were a black felt hat, a tan satchel, other car-keys, a screwdriver, and a pair of tin-snips.

The satchel, tin-snips and torch were all spattered with red, white, green and cream paints. But, despite an intensive search by dozens of police, there was no trace of the most incriminating clue of all—the gun.

Nevertheless, while it was perhaps not immediately realised, the assorted articles were to establish a strong chain of circumstantial evidence and, in the words of the Solicitor-General, Mr. H. A. Winneke, Q.C., "identify the killer with the clarity of a flashlight photograph."

The story now takes a flashback to April 30, 1951. On that day, returning to his Toorak home, Philip Hart Carney, a sharebroker, discovered the theft of a narrow-brimmed black felt hat and other

property. Evidence of a cigarette stamped into a carpet told of a burglar's visit.

Yet another victim about that time was Miss Winsome Tadgell in the residential district of Malvern. Her loss was a tan satchel.

A third robbery which was to be linked with the crime occurred on November 24, before the shooting. Kenneth Littlejohn Dowling, estate agent, was cementing a garage floor at his Glen Iris home. In the street his Holden car carried a wallet of six keys and a *Morgan's Street Directory*. When Dowling went to his vehicle late in the day, the directory and keys had vanished.

These and other thefts had remained unsolved on C.I.B.'s files for some months. But now the similarity of the articles found at the murder scene and those taken from the two homes and the car obviously carried more significance than the usual house-breaking offences.

Logically, the thief of the hat, satchel and car-keys would have some explaining to do.

Accordingly police visited a small seaside bungalow at Bon Beach four days after Howell's death. The house was occupied by William John O'Meally, a flashy, strongly built 28-year-old labourer, and his wife who was expecting a child. O'Meally appeared of modest means and rented the cottage.

Their visit was fruitful. Property of dubious ownership included a *Morgan's Street Directory*, a radio, wallet, pearls, ear-rings, necklace, bed-lamp, women's handbags, and a pair of rubber-soled sandals.

Detectives quickly took possession of these articles, together with three paint-tins, a suitcase, 13 books on motor-vehicle mechanism, a hat-box, and an overnight-bag.

More damaging were the tests of medico-legal chemist Harold Graydon Wignall, who on February 7 took paint samples from the walls, fittings, window-frames and doors of O'Meally's freshly painted home.

The samples, he was to testify, compared in constituency and shade with the paint discovered on the satchel, torch and tin-snips found near the murdered Howell.

Under prolonged police interrogation O'Meally made significant admissions. Did he have a black hat? He had owned one but accidentally burned it with acid and later destroyed it.

Yes, said police, he admitted breaking into Carney's home but did not take the black hat. An accomplice named Campbell stole the hat and threatened to shoot police rather than be captured.

Yes, he was also in Miss Tadgell's home but knew absolutely nothing of the incriminating satchel, bearing paint-stains.

Confronted with the theory of how the killer wore his hair long and the observation that his own was newly cut, O'Meally allegedly said that he had cut it after reading of the shooting in the Press because he believed police might suspect him.

O'Meally clung to his denial of ever having been on the fatal scene. He was, he declared, home with his wife on the night of January 30, suffering from the effects of burnt feet.

Campbell, he allegedly suggested, was the killer, and he offered to help bring him to justice.

But the Law, unfortunately for O'Meally, had other views. O'Meally, it contended, was the real villain, and accordingly charged him with Howell's murder.

To that stage the evidence, while strong, was certainly circumstantial, and the identity of the slayer was obscure; but the subsequent court drama revealed just how meticulously police had prepared the case.

William John O'Meally stood trial in Melbourne's ancient and historic Criminal Court on May 12, 1952, observed by a packed public gallery, ambitious law students, a large Press bench, and numerous court officers whenever free from their duties.

The Crown lined up more than 40 witnesses and the defence about a dozen.

Mr. H. A. Winneke, Q.C., the Solicitor-General, with Mr. F. R. Nelson, prosecuted, and O'Meally was defended before Mr. Justice Coppel by Mr. J. F. Moloney and Mr. J. A. Lewis.

Under the skilled interrogation of Mr. Winneke and Mr. Nelson,

the Crown unfolded a tragic story. There was indeed a sound case; but how was O'Meally to be identified as the killer?

The link was supplied by an important if somewhat emotional witness in Walter Albert Feltham, a Thornbury taxi-driver. To a tense Court he told how he collected a fare at Caulfield and returned towards the city about 10.30 on the fateful night.

Obviously agitated, Feltham declared: "I opened the door and a man jumped in alongside me. He was all out, breathing heavily, gasping and very excited. I said to him, "You are all out, mate."

"He started jumping round the cab like a madman. He was jumping like a kangaroo all over the seat and out the window. When we got to Hawthorn Road he asked for a cigarette. I gave him one and he lighted it.

"As we got beyond Hawthorn Road I smelt cork burning and I told him he had lit the wrong end. He broke the burnt end off and threw it out the window. Then I put a car light on and he said, 'Put that —— light out!'"

Feltham told how a police car passed his vehicle, travelling rapidly, and to his comment that they would kill someone, the speed they drove, his passenger replied, "I wish they would kill themselves, the ——!"

Near the Victory Theatre in St. Kilda, continued Feltham, the cab stopped for a red light and his fare, jumping out, threw five shillings on the seat and "ran and half-leaped across into Belford Street."

The excited passenger, according to Feltham, spoke with a Lancashire or Yankee brogue and frequently brushed back his shaggy hair with a hand. He was clean-shaven.

When asked if he could identify his strange passenger, Feltham dramatically pointed towards O'Meally and exclaimed, "I can identify the man. There he is in the dock."

This was the man, claimed witness, he could never forget, "the mongrel who was in the cab."

Severely cross-examined by Mr. Moloney, Feltham declared that O'Meally was the worst passenger he had ever driven.

Mr. Moloney: The first thing you did when you came into court today was to look at O'Meally?

Feltham: No. Well, yes.

Having got into the box, the first thing you did was to look at O'Meally? — I suppose you can say yes. Don't try to bamboozle me.

Mr. Justice Coppel: Let us take it more quietly.

Feltham, continuing, described his passenger as about 30, without a moustache, having "long shaggy hair" and wearing a top-coat.

Mr. Moloney: When you went to Russell Street Police Station you thought you might see the man who answered that description?

Witness: Yes.

Did you pick him in the identification parade? — No. He was camouflaged.

Did you pick anyone like the accused? — I stood near the accused and gave him the benefit of the doubt.

Did you ask anyone, other than O'Meally, to take off his hat? — Yes.

The reason you asked another man to take his hat off was because, with the hat on, you couldn't be sure of the man you had chosen? — The man who took his hat off was taller than the accused.

Feltham declared that he had his eyes on O'Meally throughout, but did not identify him in the line-up because "the camouflage stopped me." O'Meally's hair, moustache and eyebrows were as black as counsel's cape. He did not want to put an innocent man in.

Mr. Moloney: When O'Meally came out of the Watch-house, that was the first time you identified him? — Yes.

O'Meally was the only one brought out by police? — No. There were a number.

A succeeding witness, Miss Tadgell, told how she discovered the theft of a tan satchel, two handbags, four bracelets, brooches, pearls, and a compact.

Confronted with the satchel, found near Howell's body, Miss Tadgell said: "I would say that was my satchel. I identify it by a crease and nail-polish stain inside it."

The Crown laid heavy emphasis on the black hat, also found

near Howell. Phillip Carney, its owner, was called to tell how it was stolen from his home, how its brim had been trimmed, and a witness was called to testify to having done the trimming years previously.

Did O'Meally ever own such a hat? Emphatically yes, claimed the Crown. Moreover, he wore that precise garment on January 30.

Proof? Well, it called the Rev. Charles Maxwell James Dunse, O'Meally's brother-in-law, to substantiate its claim.

Mr. Dunse related how before his marriage he had seen O'Meally often at his wife's parents' home in Normanby Road, Oakleigh. He recalled seeing O'Meally wearing a black hat in April, 1951, or before O'Meally was married on May 5 of that year.

Mr. Dunse said his wife drew his attention to O'Meally's black hat because it was being worn with a light-coloured suit.

Also, a month or so before the shooting, when he had last seen O'Meally, the accused's hair was worn long—longer than it then appeared in court.

"I have seen him with a moustache," added the clergyman. "I can't recall if he had one on Christmas Day before the shooting. Sometimes he wore one, sometimes not."

Yet another witness, a Mrs. Dorothy Amelia May Kay, of Ballarat, told of having seen O'Meally wearing a black hat while painting his house fence.

On the afternoon of January 30 O'Meally was wearing a moustache, witness stated, but at Ballarat on February 2 he was clean-shaven and had had his hair cut.

Slowly and firmly the Crown was forging a strong case. Figuring prominently in the drama was the much-debated black hat, but also other facts, such as whether O'Meally really burnt his feet before the night of January 30, thereby rendering his struggle and dash from Howell impossible, did he wear long hair and a moustache when the shooting occurred, and what role, if any, did the man Campbell play in the tragedy?

Detective-Sergeant William Charles Tremewen supplied some of the answers to the jury. He testified that an entry in O'Meally's diary for January 30 indicated that the accused had burnt his feet stamping out a backyard fire in rubber sandals. An examination of his feet showed small blisters under the toes.

But, Tremewen continued, he told O'Meally that the diary entry did not give an accurate weather report for January 30, to which O'Meally replied: "I wrote the diary for a while, then stopped. After reading of the constable's death I thought it fitted me. When the constable was shot I brought it up to date."

When O'Meally's yard was searched, no sign of a fire could be found, added the detective.

Tremewen went on to say that at Russell Street Police Headquarters on February 5, soap, water and petrol were necessary to remove a painted moustache on the accused. At police request, O'Meally tried on the black hat and it was "a reasonable fit."

Detective Tremewen denied police pulled the hat down over O'Meally's eyes or that he told the prisoner police were looking for a man with long fair hair named McKay.

As for O'Meally's allegation that Raymond John Campbell was the murderer, Campbell himself disposed of that theory. His evidence that he was at the Pacific Hotel, Southport, Queensland, on January 30 was corroborated and went unchallenged.

After more than a week, the Crown's 40-odd witnesses had presented a mass of detailed, carefully related evidence against O'Meally. Every relevant exhibit except the murder weapon (which could not be located) had been tendered. It was a masterly handling of a complex and difficult brief.

O'Meally from the outset denied knowledge of the shooting and denied being on the scene. Had the defence admitted O'Meally's participation in the shooting but claimed the weapon discharged during a desperate struggle a manslaughter verdict may have been possible. However, with an alibi of absence, the jury was virtually faced with the duty of declaring innocence or guilt of murder.

O'Meally's young, attractive wife, Lois Irene O'Meally, testified that, the night Howell died, her husband did not leave home and at the fatal hour prepared a cup of tea after having cared for her during her pregnancy.

Added Mrs. O'Meally: "It was well after midnight when I went to sleep. My husband got up frequently during the night to get fresh ice from the ice-chest."

While acknowledging her husband's ownership of a black hat, the headdress produced in court was "definitely not" O'Meally's.

On the ninth day of this exhausting trial highlighted by brilliant examination and merciless cross-questioning, the accused man stood in the dock to declare his innocence before the jury.

In an almost eerie atmosphere, O'Meally declared: "On the night of the constable's death, I was at home with my wife. I could not and would not have left her. Nothing would have dragged me away from her. I love my wife dearly. That night I massaged her back and legs. We both thought our child might be born that night.

"Moreover, I had burnt my feet and I could hardly walk. I could not run as the man at the scene of the shooting is said to have run."

In reference to Feltham, the taxi-driver, O'Meally said: "When police told me a taxi-driver had identified me as a passenger in his car, I was in a detention-room at Russell Street.

"I asked them there and then to bring the man in front of me. That was how confident I was of proving my innocence."

O'Meally denied Feltham's allegation that he had smoked in the taxi, claiming that he was a non-smoker. The property found in his home, he stated, he bought from a man named Samuels in good faith, not knowing it had been stolen.

The accused admitted owning a black hat but said it was not the one exhibited. He burnt his hat when acid fell on it because he knew that if he wore the hat the acid would eat through it and ultimately permeate his hair.

To his alleged implication of Campbell in the shooting, O'Meally gave a flat denial. He said: "Although they (police) wanted me to make a deal about Ray Campbell, I could not assist them. They told me they would not charge me with receiving if I told them where Campbell lived. . . . It was at Russell Street that police told me Ray Campbell had broken into Carney's home, cut his hand on a window, and bathed his hand in Dettol."

Continuing, O'Meally claimed that, when questioned, police tried a black hat on him but it almost fell over his ears. They accused him of dyeing his hair black after the shooting, claiming his hair was really fair on January 8. They were then looking for a fair-haired man, and so was the taxi-driver.

"I dyed my hair black," he added, "but long before I was married. Why? Because I was grey through illness.

"Gentlemen, you have got to believe me. My wife knows I am innocent. Our baby son knows I am innocent, and the Lord above knows I am innocent. I could not and would not hurt anyone.

"Gentlemen of the jury, I ask you to read my diary so you will have a personal picture of my real self. I am sure you will draw your own conclusions."

The jury knocked at ten minutes past eight at night—on the tenth day of the trial—three hours and fifty minutes after retiring.

The crowded court was taut and silent as Mr. Justice Coppel, in his scarlet robes, took his seat on the Bench and the jury filed into court.

O'Meally, breathing heavily and scanning the jurors closely, clenched the edge of the dock as the foreman quietly said, "Guilty," in answer to the question put by Mr. Justice Coppel's associate.

Asked by the associate if he had anything to say why sentence of the Court should not be passed on him, O'Meally, gasping and sobbing, said: "Yes. I was charged. I was innocent. I couldn't do a thing like this. I couldn't.

"I was fond of my wife and child. . . . I couldn't. . . . I am innocent. . . . I couldn't I couldn't."

When his wife, weeping and looking towards O'Meally in the dock, was escorted from the court, O'Meally called, "Cookie . . . Cookie."

As Mr. Justice Coppel finished passing the death sentence, O'Meally, who had been supported by two warders, crashed senseless to the floor of the dock and was carried down the narrow steps to the cells below.

Many women spectators wept as the large gallery in court moved out into Lonsdale Street. Several gathered round the iron gates through which the prison van passed bearing O'Meally to Pentridge Prison.

Meanwhile, on a dismal, stormy night in the deserted court, the exhibits of the 10-day trial lay in a neat heap at the foot of the witness-box.

On top, with its badge shining brightly, reflecting the overhead lights, lay the cap of the late Constable George Howell.

The condemned man's legal advisers appealed against the death sentence barely within the 10 days permitted by law. Several grounds of appeal were listed; the chief ones concerned the trial judge's charge to the jury.

They first attacked as a misdirection the judge's words, "There is not a shred of evidence to support that suggestion," when dealing with a suggestion that there might have been a second or third man at the scene of the crime.

The Court of Criminal Appeal held that the passage must be read in its context and that, when so read, it appeared that the trial judge "in the plainest language told the jury that they were the tribunal to decide the particular matter to which he was referring."

In its ruling the Court held that the trial judge was quite free to make any comment he chose provided he made it clear to the jury that it was for them, and not for him, to determine questions of fact.

In the Court's opinion the trial judge had done this.

O'Meally's second major appeal claimed that the judge was guilty of misdirection in dealing with the jury's view of the scene of the crime when he said: "You have, of course, viewed the scene, and you will rightly take what you observed into account."

This statement was accurate, the Court held, and if it was coloured by its context the appeal judges were unable to see, in the circumstances of the case, that any harm could come of it.

They could not see what the jury could have taken into account, which they would not in any event have been entitled to.

Principal appeal number three concerned evidence tendered by the Crown with regard to articles found at or near the scene of the shooting. This evidence included evidence of three robberies which the Crown said O'Meally committed.

The Court ruled that the trial judge had clearly indicated the purpose for which this evidence was presented—to prove that the accused was the man who committed the crime.

It said it knew of no rule of law requiring a judge to warn a jury that such evidence was not to be used to show the accused was a man of bad character or one who was likely to have committed the crime with which he was charged.

And so the appeal judges—Sir Edmund Herring, Mr. Justice Lowe, and Mr. Justice Gavan Duffy—unanimously dismissed the appeal.

O'Meally still had the avenues of the High Court and the Privy Council open. In due course the Public Solicitor, on his behalf, made application in the High Court for special leave to appeal.

But on October 6, 1952, ten months after the shooting, the High Court rejected the application because it could find no flaw in the evidence.

The long drama took another turn soon after. O'Meally's advisers, in a petition to the Victorian Governor, sought a fresh trial on the ground that renewed police investigations had disclosed fresh evidence in his favour.

What that evidence could have been is difficult to fathom. One suggestion was that detectives finally located a sawn-off pea-
rifle in Caulfield and several .22-calibre cartridges, similar to the one taken from the dead constable.

Also discovered, it was stated, were more than a dozen car-keys and a dagger. The rifle allegedly had the stock and most of the barrel sawn off, reducing the weapon's length to eight inches—small enough to fit a man's pocket.

Whatever these discoveries would have meant in the complex pattern of the tragedy is sheer conjecture, since they were never subjected to independent inspection or submitted as exhibits in evidence.

But while hundreds were debating the significance or otherwise of the reported discoveries, yet another development was taking place.

After O'Meally's petition to the Governor had been lodged, electors went to the polls for a State election. Till then a coalition Liberal and Country Party Administration had held office and a Liberal Government was not necessarily opposed to carrying out the death penalty. It had, in fact, done so in Victoria not many years previously.

Whereas a man condemned to death under a Liberal regime faced the possibility of hanging, the Labour Party's platform

opposed capital punishment and had never hanged a man in the State.

And while William John O'Meally, sentenced to death, was awaiting finality in his terrible ordeal, Labour won the day in Victoria.

Within a few days of the elections the Governor rejected the petition for a new trial. Then almost a year to the day after the fatal shooting State Cabinet, in accordance with political policy, commuted the death sentence to imprisonment "for the full term of his life without any remissions whatsoever."

So ended a drama-charged trial which had been characterised by intense public interest, careful scrutiny by legal students, and masterly prosecution and defence.

And before the final act the Governor presented a posthumous award by the Queen for Constable Howell's gallantry. The Queen's Police and Fire Services Medal was given to the dead constable's father, Mr. Ernest Howell.

The citation said that Constable Howell died in the course of duty while attempting to arrest a criminal.

WHO WAS HIS KILLER

by R. M. McKay

How many people through the years must have known and spoken to the mysterious strangler whose deeds once held the City of Wellington, N.Z., in the grip of terror?

The amazing story of a clueless crime.

THE telephone rang insistently, urgently. Detective Cassells reached out and picked up the receiver beside his bed. It was three o'clock Sunday morning, December 27, 1908.

"Body of unidentified man found near His Majesty's Theatre! Looks like murder. You'd better come at once," came the voice of the Inspector across the wire.

"I'll be right along," said the detective, and hung up.

"As if we haven't enough troubles right now," he remarked to his wife as he prepared to leave the house. "Well, well, we'll see what this is."

For some weeks past Wellington had been in the grip of an outbreak of garrotting, the perpetrators of which had so far eluded Justice. There was a feeling of tenseness in the capital as fresh victims were discovered. For the police it meant work day and night. Cassells himself had been on duty 20 out of 24 hours of the day most of the week. Now he was to have another disturbed night. . . .

Less than half an hour later he had begun inquiries on one of the most baffling mysteries of his career, a crime which,

despite intensive investigations by some of New Zealand's ablest detectives, was forever to remain unsolved.

At one stage Cassells thought he had come close to succeeding, but the evidence, he realised, fell just short of justifying a warrant for arresting the persons he felt were the most likely culprits.

Briefly, the facts given Cassells on that Sunday morning were that at 2.35 Constable L. T. Moore had found the body lying up the alleyway on the eastern side of His Majesty's Theatre at Courtenay Place, in the heart of the city.

A quick examination by the constable, who had been on beat duty at the time of the gruesome discovery, failed to disclose any apparent marks of violence except small cuts on the forehead, a couple of scratches alongside the nose and, significantly, on each side of the neck.

The man could not be identified, as he had no papers on him—nothing that would give a clue as to whom he was. A motive for the crime appeared to be robbery, as his right-hand pocket had been ripped out.

Moore saw, too, that the victim's clothing had been disarranged; his coat and vest were unbuttoned and were open. A leather belt, evidently worn by the man, was lying about 18 inches from his body. There appeared to be no signs of any struggle having taken place. The constable thought the man had been put there by his assailant or assailants.

A doctor called to the scene carried out a perfunctory examination and then ordered that the corpse be removed to the City Morgue.

"No clues left, no means of identification, a puzzle," summed up the detective when the facts had been given to him. "It seems to me that those marks on the neck will provide the key to this mystery. It looks like another case of garrotting," he said grimly to the Inspector, who was standing nearby. "The swine!" he muttered.

News of the discovery spread throughout the city by the morning, and public interest—and alarm—rose to fever pitch as rumour followed rumour, each one more sensational and startling than the other, as to events of the past few hours. The latest outrage was looked upon as a disquieting sequel to recent unsolved crimes

in the capital. People were frankly perturbed at the inability of the police to cope with the new menace.

Monday morning's newspapers did little to allay public fear and consternation. "The recent cases of garrotting in various parts of the city," said one newspaper, "were climaxed yesterday by the sensational discovery that a man—as yet unknown—had been murdered right in the heart of the city.

"The town awoke to the thrilling rumour of robbery and murder," went on the report. It went on that indications were that the man had been garrotted.

A preliminary inquest was opened on the Monday, and the doctor who had conducted a post-mortem said that it had been established beyond question that the man had been the victim of foul play—probably strangled.

Deceased was organically sound, but there were suspicious marks on the neck—although no direct signs of fingerprints. He was a strongly built man, about five feet five inches, with dark brown hair and a rather heavy moustache and brown eyes.

As to his true identity no one had any idea. Indications were that he was, or had been, a seafaring man. Both his arms had tattoo-marks.

On the right arm was a full-rigged ship, while on the left was a blue-and-white design of a shield and flags. The man wore a bracelet on each wrist. He was dressed in a dark blue serge suit. . . .

Constable Moore said that on him he found a pipe, a newspaper, three pieces of pencil, a comb, a white handkerchief, two shillings in money, and a train ticket, partly used.

Who was the mystery killer or killers? Why had this man been singled out as the next victim? Or was there no connection between previous happenings?

And, equally baffling, who was the victim? From whence did he come? Was he a visitor to the city? Those were questions debated in every home in the capital and beyond. People asked, too, who would be the next victim?

Police circulated a description of the man throughout the country. The response was encouraging, if not altogether helpful. From

various parts of the Dominion came telegrams and messages from people who claimed to know the man.

It was said he was a man missing from Auckland; according to another person he came from Rotorua; some said he had been seen in the South Island.

A steady stream of people came to the City Morgue to try and identify the man. They came in their scores and went away unable to supply the police with the information they wanted. Checks were made on the claims received from outside Wellington, and all were disproved.

To Detective Cassells was assigned the task of establishing identity of the victim. "There must be someone who knows this cové," said the Inspector a few days later when Cassells made his report. "Damn it all, he must have come to the town—must have stopped somewhere!" he went on irritably. "Surely someone knows something about him."

"Well," said Cassells patiently, "I've checked every report, and it has been negative every time."

Then on the Saturday morning—a week after the occurrence—he got a hint that the body was probably that of a man who had been employed as a seaman on the Union Steam Ship Company's vessel *Dartford*, which had arrived in New Zealand the previous October.

The detective had been walking down Manners Street in the city when he was approached by a seaman whom he knew, a man named Grant.

"I saw that photo in the paper the other day, and I think I can help you," he told Cassells. "It's a bloke named McCormack, but I don't know his Christian names. He was a shipmate of mine on the *Dartford*. I was coming to see you," he told the detective.

"That's the best news I've heard for a long time," said Cassells. "But are you sure?"

"Positive," said the man, "and so are three other ex-seamen who were also shipmates."

The pair had a drink in a city hotel and inquiries looked more hopeful.

The public, avid for details of the crime and the victim's identity, were told by Monday morning's newspaper that the previous day

—just one week after the murder—the body of the victim of the mysterious Courtenay Place tragedy was at last positively identified.

The report said that on the Saturday Detective J. Cassells got a hint that the body was probably that of a man who had been employed as a seaman on the *Dartford*. The able detective, said the report, diligently followed up the clue, convinced that at length he was on the right track. At 10.30 a.m. yesterday he finally succeeded. The man's name was McCormack, though up to the time of going to press his Christian names had not been ascertained.

The body had been identified by four shipmates of the deceased from the *Dartford*, all of whom were now on other ships.

The report went on that the *Dartford* had arrived at Wellington from Newcastle on October 5 to be fitted out as a training-ship. About a month ago the hands had been paid off and had since become widely separated.

One of the seamen seen by Cassells, a man named William Mullen, told the detective that he had met another ex-*Dartford* sailor, named Braidford, about 7 o'clock on the morning of December 26. Braidford said that he and McCormack had arrived the previous morning from Lyttelton and that both stopped in a room in Courtenay Place. Braidford's intention was to visit Auckland on a holiday.

He had left his bag at the wharf, and when he found his mate was missing from the room he thought that possibly McCormack had decided to go away for a few days. They had been drinking quite a bit lately. But a visit to the wharf luggage office showed that the bag was still there.

Following this clue, Cassells went to the wharf and confirmed the story. McCormack's bag was still there. It had been there since Christmas Day. Braidford had since gone to Auckland.

Examination of the bag and its contents failed, however, to yield any useful information. It contained no papers or letters. There was some clothing which was identified as belonging to the unfortunate seaman. "Well, one must be thankful for small mercies, I suppose," remarked the detective to another police officer. "Anyway, I'm satisfied we have shown who the victim was."

Further inquiries by Cassells shed some light on McCormack's movements following discharge from the *Dartford*. It appeared he

had signed on a schooner *Annie Hill*, from which he was paid off at Lyttelton a few days before his ill-fated visit to the capital.

He had approximately £8, according to what Cassells was told—that was the money paid him when he left the schooner.

Evidence at the resumed inquest failed to establish the circumstances of McCormack's death, but was wholly confined to confirming his name—Sydney H. McCormack.

Seamen said that McCormack took liquor freely when he had money and was easily led. He was not a quarrelsome type of man, they testified.

The Coroner's jury returned a verdict that the deceased came by his death by means of violence at the hands of some person or persons unknown. It was the only verdict possible in the circumstances.

Investigations to solve the murder were pursued day and night for weeks. Sensational rumours circulated throughout the city that McCormack had been robbed and assaulted by another seaman and left to die.

Public consternation increased as the weeks went by and the police appeared to be no nearer a solution. Further cases of garrotting and assaults fired the public imagination, and police methods came in for a good deal of criticism.

Was there a homicidal maniac roaming through the streets in the hours of darkness, people were asking. And, if so, why hadn't the police found him.

Every story and rumour, however improbable, was probed by the investigators, but each time they came up against a blank wall.

WIN AT RACING

Secure Good Yearly Income with the LANARK SYSTEM.
Level stake betting won £27/10/- one meeting. FREE—NO
CHARGE. Send stamped, addressed envelope (air mail re-
plies 9½d) for YOUR copy to :—

R. BROWN, Dept. B., Box 2209T., G.P.O. Melbourne, Vic.

The McCormack file had begun to collect dust when one day a few months later Cassells received a mysterious telephone call to say that McCormack had been murdered in a house of ill fame, the owners of which were named. The caller then hung up.

After consultation with his superiors, the detective interviewed the people named by the telephone caller. They denied all knowledge of the affair. Persistent questioning by Cassells, however, elicited that in fact the man had been to the house on the Saturday night. Beyond that they would go no further.

Despite inquiries in the vicinity, he was unable to find anyone who could say in what condition the man was when he left, or the time he left. At most, the case was hazy and indefinite.

To his bitter disappointment, Cassells realised that unless he could get more positive evidence he would be unable to take the case any further. That vital evidence was not forthcoming, and the crime remained an unsolved mystery. The fact that it went into that category was no reflection on the zeal and enterprise of the police officers concerned in the case. They had done all they could.

BLOOD in the BAGNIO

by Frank Bruno

Who was the killer who sought his victim in the house of ill-fame? What savage bloodlust sent the murderer's weapon slashing across her lifeless body? The questions are still unanswered.

ONE crisp October morning in the early Hungry Thirties, when the Queensland spring day was still in its shirt-sleeves, and the billies of the "midnight horror" rattler-jumpers wisped fragrantly over small fires, those of us who, transiently, were in the "flying bo" jungle at Ayr—the dry river-bed in the Town of Windmills—were intrigued to hear an excited fellow rattler-jumper named Little Skullin telling of murder most foul—and most near.

"Strike me dead! Some cromo got done in, dinkum," thus his racing tale. "Carved up by a —— dago, she was. Cheeses! the joint was like a butcher's flamin' shop, they tell me. Some dago's cromo, she was and she cops it with one of them —— stilettos! Betcha it's the Black-bloody-Hand mob!"

No one took his bet. For one thing, it was two days ere we could collect travellers' ration cards and swap them for a part of their value in cold cash; and for another, North Queensland at that particular time was the centre of lurking Black Hand activities; and the stiletto and home-made bomb were no fanatic novelty in the cane-growing areas.

It seemed, though, that this "doing-up" of the luckless "cromo"

was something out of the ordinary. The story grew. The girl had been pretty near cut to pieces; had been crazily stabbed more than 36 times with a razor-keen stiletto. Not so far from Plantation Creek, either, where the "boongs" camp sometimes. Listen, mate; I heard up town . . . etc., etc.

So the story grew; and in the course of time became the red history of "Stiletto Jean" Morris.

* * *

A sprightly and accommodating—for a consideration—brunette in her early twenties, Jean Morris had left depression-stricken Sydney, where the bordellos had fallen upon lean times indeed, for the more promising territory of the northern cane towns; and in the course of time had come to Ayr, under the benign wing of a saturnine Italian gentleman.

Here Miss Morris paid some £5 for the—er—goodwill of a solo bagnio about an easy half-mile from the centre of the town, and plied her pleasurable profession among the Italians.

More especially those Italians, it seemed, who were members of, or had something to do with, the Black Hand Society, as it was popularly known.

The house was small, neat but not gaudy, just off the main road to Home Hill; and somewhere around 2 o'clock on the last morning of her life pretty Jean Morris had a visitor.

This was no occasion for remarks of normal occasions, the Oldest Profession being what it is—but this was no normal occasion.

It was—though she was not to know it—the end of the road; a somehow inevitable end for the gay associate of cold-blooded blackmailers and the killers for cold cash who disgraced the name of Italy . . .

* * *

The first sudden stiletto-stab had killed her; but the blood-crazy maniac ripped at, stabbed at the twitching white body with an insensate fury that argued something more than mere hot-blooded murder . . . ripped and stabbed and slashed with a purposeful savagery that might well have contained more than a mere hint for those whom it concerned . . .

After which, he departed as silently, as anonymously, as he had

come, the whole gory affair having taken not more than five quiet minutes.

Around 10 o'clock on the spring-bright morning following, an electrician arriving at the silent bordello to read the meter, getting no response to his belated knocking, enlisted the help of a nearby girl neighbour to go in and see if it was all right for him to come in and read the meter.

The girl pushed open the door . . .

"There's blood all over the room!" she cried, wide-eyed and ashen, as she rushed back to the waiting meter-reader. "There's somebody dead in there!"

With all speed the meter-reader made for the police station; and the arrival of the Law revealed a sanguinary scene indeed.

On the red-soaked double bed slumped the sadistically slaughtered nude body of "Stiletto Jean" Morris. Blood splashed everywhere in dark crimson ribbons—but there was no sign of a struggle.

Bright above the head of the professional double bed hung the deadly dagger that gave to the wandering Sydney girl the name of "Stiletto Jean."

A close search of the room revealed an expensive gold ring, pearl-set; a wedding ring; a handbag with some thirty shillings in small change; and two bank-books showing pleasing credits approximating £280.

On her right wrist, an expensive gold watch. On the third finger of her left hand, a ring a-sparkle with sapphires.

All of which, added to the insane mutilation of the girl's nude body, definitely ruled out robbery as a likely motive.

* * *

The first—in fact, only—clue to the murderer's identity came from a footloose "rattler-jumper" who, having unrolled his "bluey" in the comparative comfort of the loco-shed, had gone up that night into the township. He was just passing the Burdekin Hotel, he said, when he saw a stranger ahead of him, hurried after him to "put the bite on him for a smoke," and saw him turn suddenly into Jean Morris's small brothel, sliding in and shutting the door swiftly behind him. This, he guessed, would be about 2 a.m. or so.

The man he followed? Well, he might be about 30 years old,

mebbe; about 5ft. 7in. or 5ft. 8in.; black trousers, a greyish coat a bit too big for him, and a grey felt hat pulled down over his eyes.

Which could have been the description of any number of "Stiletto Jean's" patrons and friends in the cane-belt.

And that was that, also.

* * *

During the course of searching police investigations into the vicious slaughter of the "Night Butterfly"—as Jean Morris was known—it transpired that Jean Morris was known to the Sunny North a little more than somewhat, and on considerably more than mere nodding acquaintance with criminal big-shots.

Significantly, the names of Francesco Femio and Vincenzo Dagostino, two known Black Hand leaders, kept cropping up as investigatic. . . wore on.

It seemed, in fact, that both of them had visited her at her two-roomed cottage a fortnight before she had set up in business as a *filie de joie* in Ayr.

Further developments surprisingly connected the Sydney street-walker with the inner circle of the cane-belt Black Hand—and the dagger that gave her the grim nickname was a Black Hand stiletto!

But the alibis of Signors Femio and Dagostino were blandly unshakable, as were those of the numerous other suspects grilled by the patient police. Though the deed was so patently a Black Hand assassination.

Bit by bit it transpired that "Stiletto Jean" had learned some secret of the Black Hand previous to the split in that darkling organisation (when strong Sicilian rivals threatened to form an opposition society to that of the vested Femio and Dagostino), and had imprudently gone in for a little personal blackmail herself.

There was, though, one alleged Black Hand member whom the Law very much wished to interview, with a view to throwing considerable light on the mysterious killing.

He, however, had left for foreign parts. Maybe coincidentally, immediately after the murder of the ill-fated "Night Butterfly" he was smuggled on to an Italian ship that called at Townsville on its Naples-Brisbane run.

But today the world has shrunk to the confines of radiotelegraphy, and on leaving the ship hurriedly at Port Said he was arrested by waiting police and speedily shipped aboard the first vessel bound for Sunny Italy. He arrived in Naples in June, 1933.

And from the bloodstained bordello in Ayr the hand of Nemesis reached out to tap him on the shoulder.

As a result of the Queensland police putting the matter to the Italian Consul in Innisfail, the authorities in Italy were enlisted, and the suspect promptly arrested just when he had imagined himself safe in Naples.

Forty-eight hours later he was found hanging in his cell—and the red slaughter of "Stiletto Jean" Morris is still officially "Unsolved."

ESCAPE TO TERROR

by Allan Brennan

A President of the United States of America assists in an Australian gaol-break. The amazing story of a man's desperate struggle for freedom over an escape route that carried him around the world.

QUEERLY though it may sound, Australia's most illustrious lawbreaker never even saw the country! He was George Washington, first President of the U.S.A., and he inserted an interfering paw in the legal arrangements of the convict settlement of Sydney on February 17, 1795. On that date the great American's instructions to get Thomas Muir out of the custody of the New South Wales authorities and aboard the American ship *Otter*, specially outfitted for the purpose, were successfully carried out. The "transfer" was effected with such neatness and despatch that the authorities suspected nothing, and the *Otter* sailed out through the Heads unquestioned. By the time Muir was missed the American vessel, literally buried in canvas, was busy putting the Pacific Ocean in its place—astern!

The name of Thomas Muir lives on as one of the Scottish Martyrs, of whom the other four were Palmer, Margaret, Skirving, and Gerald.

One of my theories is that this world of muddle holds nothing better than a good Scot! Any of the five were Scottish enough to have had plaid complexions; but on their native heather they

had collided with the fact that he who suggests that theories grey and old have outlived their time is always regarded as a vertebrate of a very low order, and hence should be got rid of. Transportation! Even in our day it is lost sight of that progress has consisted largely in proving Grandfather wrong, for in Grand-dad's opinion innovations are dangerous and poison lurks in teachings new. And so I think it will always be, for as years creep on so the young firebrand slowly becomes the aged conservative, steadily resisting progress till all endeth in the grave!

Thomas Muir was born in Glasgow, and in that his growth ended at 5ft. 2in. he varied both in length and breadth from the powerful average of his countrymen. But if he lacked in these respects, he yet owned all the courage and indomitability of the best of his race.

At school in his native town young Muir soon showed out from the competition. So rapidly, indeed, did he assimilate knowledge that at the age of 10 he was passed on to the Glasgow University. There in due course he commenced the study of Law, and also acquired a working knowledge of several languages, one of which later reacted to save his life.

In time he left Glasgow and went on to Edinburgh University, where, at the age of 22, he was admitted advocate. Soon young Muir was busy proving once again that the true height of a man is his measurement above the chin, for in his chosen career he showed swift and commanding ability. Certainly it seemed that his life was destined to be one of easy sailing over smooth seas. In truth, even as success seemed assured young Muir was gazing his last on happiness, or even a pallid imitation thereof!

The people of France, spurred by the truly awful conditions of their existence, were driving on to Revolution. In broad perspective this Scottish youth saw that conditions in his native Scotland, also in Britain, were little, if indeed any, better than those which the people of France were so desperately determined to alter, and to which, in one of the most successful and well-managed revolutions in history, they succeeded in applying the closure.

As an honourable man Muir was affronted by the perfidy of the younger Pitt, who got into power by promising a Parliamentary

Reform Bill and then used every dishonest means to prevent any reform.

And the sum of his dissatisfactions was that he joined one of the associations which were being formed in Britain to rescue the country from absolute despotism. Summed up, the aim was merely to secure, by constitutional means, the wider measure of suffrage which a Reform Bill afterwards granted. But, as I have written, it is villainous sacrilege to lay interfering hands on anything which bears the impress of Time; and so Muir, leader of his association, soon learned. Persecutions became general, and on January 2, 1893, Muir was arrested and charged with sedition.

Bail was granted.

In the meantime the French Revolution had broken out, and Muir went to France openly to see the truth for himself.

When on February 25 the trial came on, Muir was not there to answer the charge, whereupon he was declared an outlaw. It mattered not that he had tried to get back to Scotland but, owing to the state of war which now existed between France and Great Britain, he was unable to do so. It did not matter that he was still trying to get back. The only thing that mattered was that Muir was not an honourable man, and outlawry might teach him that honesty was *not* the best policy.

Muir at last reached Scotland on an American-bound vessel, via Belfast, and at once set out for Edinburgh, only to be arrested on the way. That was in August, and his trial came on at once. He was found guilty. The Court saw to that! It had the appointing of the jury, and Muir was not allowed to lodge an objection. Every one of those 15 jurymen was a known member of an organisation which had publicly denounced and opposed the principles Muir had advocated; but that was, so the Court averred, no ground for objection.

The charge was a criminal one, and in Scotland in those days there could be no appeal against the finding of the Criminal Court that tried him. This was, of course, comforting—for the Court! There was no power to question its findings.

Muir was imprisoned on a vessel off Leith. He was an only son, and the sight of him as a felon was too great a blow for his old

father, who was struck with an illness that left him a cripple for the rest of his life. Little did this trouble Pitt. Parents would have to take the responsibility if they brought into the world desperadoes who declared that only honest men should be in Parliament.

But if Muir's dad could visit him no more, the little mother still rowed out whenever possible, even through November's icy weather, to get a glimpse of her poor laddie, until, on November 15, the vessel sailed for London, with Muir in irons. Although a reader of all revolutionary literature, including the works of Thomas Paine, through all Muir kept the pocket Bible which his broken-hearted old mother had passed on board to him.

Various members of Parliament protested against the sentence; but a majority, perhaps remembering Muir's dictum about honest men, decided that he was too dangerous to let loose in the British Isles, and in due course the *Surprise* bore Muir off to the convict settlement of Botany Bay.

Trials of about similar quality had ended wrong side up for Muir's fellow battlers of Scotland—Palmer, Margaret, Skirving and Gerald aforesaid—and all five were aboard the *Surprise*.

On September 25, 1794, the *Surprise* reached Port Jackson, and her "passengers" were added to the 100 people who at that distant date constituted the population of the settlement later known as Sydney.

Fortunately for Muir and his companions, a resolute Scot, Captain Hunter, was at the head of affairs, and he treated the unfortunates kindly. Indeed, they found more kindness in the settlement by the shores of Port Jackson than they had found in England or even in their native Scotland.

In an effort to pick up a seaman who had fallen overboard in the English Channel, Captain Hunter once lost a vessel. His reply, when asked at the inquiry why he had manoeuvred his vessel in so dangerous a position: "Because I regarded the life of a British seaman as of more importance than any vessel in His Majesty's Navy." Honourable acquittal!

And that was the kind of man into whose hands Muir had now fallen. Hunter allowed all reasonable liberty, and offered

Muir a large tract of land whereon in our day stands the Sydney suburb of Hunter's Hill. Muir commenced to farm it.

Meantime, the circumstances of Muir's travesty of a trial had been published in the United States of America and in France, then the two homes of freedom. Some friends of Muir's saw George Washington about it, whereupon the First American placed at their disposal the ship *Otter*, and saw to it that she was completely outfitted for a voyage of rescue from Botany Bay. Captain Dawes, a friend of Washington's, was placed in command. "Get Muir aboard somehow," said the President to Captain Dawes at departure; "but if you find it impossible, then see Hunter personally. I sailed with him when I was a midshipman in the British Navy, and no better man ever walked."

The voyage to Botany Bay was comparatively uneventful, and on January 25, 1795, the *Otter* blew into Port Jackson.

Captain Dawes explained his presence in the port by saying that he had run short of water. Including Dawes, only three men aboard the *Otter* knew the true reason of the long voyage.

Visitors in Sydney at the fag end of the 1700's were at least one thousand times as welcome as the flowers in spring you have heard about. Even the moon, hung out in space, was not more lonely than the fingerful of "Possibles" in the convict hell of 1795, when the only connection with the world's far side was something that in very truth the wind had blown in—another shipload of convicts, to the number of four or five per annum. If there was one thing that the men of the *Otter* were sure of, it was a welcome, and a round of festivities was entered upon.

Of course, Captain Dawes never forgot his mission; but it was not until the twenty-third day that he managed to get Muir aboard, just before sunset.

There was no time for any preparations, but just as Muir stood, in ragged clothing, so he went aboard the vessel that had come to see him.

On the following morning the settlement received perhaps its greatest shock up to that time. Notwithstanding that factories have been built in the middle of it, as well as all round its shores, and that it is ringed with tomato-sauce announcements and intima-

tions concerning whisky and other beverages, also giant tenements miscalled flats, Sydney Harbour still is lovely. In 1795, encircled by primeval forest, its many islands an even number of beauty-spots, it doubtless greeted the eye like the lovely liquid park that it was. But on the morning of February 18, 1795, there was something missing from the scene. The *Otter* was not in sight! With Muir safely on board, her skipper had taken advantage of a favouring slant and slipped out through the Heads just before daylight. Muir was free!

Just here a queer thought arises. Nearly all ground allotted to better-class convicts later became their private property. Many Australian fortunes of today subtend from the fact that an ancestor was "sent out." Muir was the potential owner of the Sydney residential suburb of Hunter's Hill! There was, of course, no time to arrange for the disposal of his "farm," even had it been possible,—but it is unlikely that Muir gave it a thought. He could not foresee that prosperous Sydney suburb that in time would grow on the site. All he knew was that he was exchanging a hated land of bondage for one of freedom—the great United States of 1795. Through poor Muir's eyes, as the *Otter* stole out through the Heads, the Fates doubtless looked very kind.

Through a tatter of mist that reminded him of his native moorlands, some four months later, he saw a rocky headland. Almost in the same second a speeding on-shore wind drove at the ship, and shortly Muir became aware that the *Otter* was fighting for her life. The seamanship was of the best, but such was the fury of the gale that instead of gaining she lost ground. Solid water poured across her deck, whilst the stricken vessel heeled so steeply that her sails lost their grip of the wind.

Even through the white hailstorms of spray that bombarded the doomed men like frozen shot, and the shrieking of the gale in the shrouds, soon the crash of breakers on a rocky shore reached their ears. A wilderness of foam and foul-fanged peaks of rock closed about the ship, and in less than one minute encompassed her ruin. The *Otter* had joined the phantom fleet of Davy Jones.

Some 50 years later, French fur-trappers found pieces of sawn timber on Vancouver Island, and searched for other remains of

the vessel that shed them. They found all that was left of her, and among other relics unearthed the ship's bell. With a little difficulty they read her name; and so it was that the last resting-place of the *Otter* became known. She was wrecked at Nootka Sound, on the Island of Vancouver.

Only three men managed to get clear of the wreck and reach land—Muir and two seamen. They stood by for two days, and when the wind abated they searched the wreck for possible survivors, also for anything in the way of food that they might find. But so thoroughly had the *Otter* been pounded to pieces that little of use survived. Muir and his two companions faced an unknown world in a state of destitution.

On the second day some Indians crossed from the mainland, looked the wanderers over, and by their chief's instruction promptly killed the two seamen. At this distance of years it would seem that Muir was spared because he showed no sign of fright and looked his captor straight in the eyes. Perhaps the Scot's notably aquiline nose commanded respect. Then he at once fell in with their customs, and when flesh and oil were offered him he ate them as if they were the most accustomed delicacies. He painted himself as they did, and fell in with other customs, but above all he didn't seem to be the least afraid of them. Savages have always admired courage.

This state of affairs continued for about three weeks, during which period the party crossed to the mainland.

So thoroughly did Muir identify himself with the savages that he came to be accepted as one of themselves, and he was no longer watched. But of course the stranded Scot had no thought of becoming a Red Indian by adoption, and one night he escaped. He had but little idea in which direction civilisation lay, but he started out to look for it!

The walk that followed stands at the head of the world's endurance tests. The first "leg" measured 3000 miles, and the second added another thousand—4000 miles of trackless wild, sans preparation—indeed, sans everything that a big well-equipped expedition would regard as essentials on such a traverse, such as firearms, powder and shot, stores a-plenty, cooking utensils, tents and bed-

ding, and so on through an extensive list. Scotsman Muir was plentifully supplied in one department only—courage.

Four thousand miles—think it over, remembering that Muir was no child of Nature's wilds, but a man of the city's pave, and also picturing the wild wide land of the U.S.A. in 1795. When in 1849, more than a half-century later, California sent forth its call of gold for the digging, there yet was no trans-American track worthy the name. Thirst and the watchful Indian waited on the luckless, and many a party left its bones on the desert. The safer and swifter way from the East to California was via that malevolent snag of the oceans, Cape Horn, and it was this trade that called into being the remarkable sailing-machines known as the clippers.

I just then digressed to throw into stronger relief Thomas Muir's superhuman performance 'way back in 1795. His clothes in tatters, his boots wrecked, his food limited to that which he could catch with his hands and eat raw, the man yet held on. The United States is a land of rivers, but Muir's inability to carry even a drop with him meant that thirst oft attended.

In that long-drawn 504 days there must have been times when poor stricken Muir, on his terrific journey, stepping out of one infinity only to enter another, every movement of his worn-out limbs an agony, his existence, whilst in turn the seasons passed, one of solitariness, sweat and sorrow, till one would think that he cursed himself for living, must have felt as slow and ineffectual as a grain of sand per century.

Even today the U.S.A. is a beautiful land; but before the white man arrived to mar its beauties with smoke-belching steelworks, coal-mines and logging camps it must have been lovely enough to serve as an understudy for Heaven. But I doubt if Muir appreciated its loveliness, the peaceful lights and shadows of the forest, the lakes, as smooth as good glass, that mirrored in finest detail the everlasting hills that ringed them. Instead, I think it likely that he came to regard his situation as some awful story which had no end, and of which he could not remember the beginning, other than that it was as depressing as the present. But ever this dogged Scotsman held on, across areas now known as the States of Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Utah, across a corner of Mexico

into Texas, clear across it, and so to Panama, then Spanish territory. And the day came when a half-naked man, so buried in hair that his eyes loomed like holes in a doormat, struggled into a Spanish settlement.

Back in his native Scotland, it seemed 1000 years ago, he had learned enough of the language to make himself understood, and thus he was able to explain himself.

The Governor of the town was sympathetic. He put the wanderer in hospital, where rest and food soon restored him, and started him on the road back to health. When he fully recovered the authorities provided him with a guide across the Isthmus; and Muir set out, again on foot, for the Mexican port of Vera Cruz, 1000 miles distant, in the hope of getting a passage to the United States.

Through mosquito-infested tropical country Muir now travelled, with the result that he reached Vera Cruz—only to go down to yellow fever, which left him a constitutional wreck. The Spanish Government again treated him humanely, and as there was no boat sailing for the United States he was put aboard a boat sailing for Havana, where he would have a better chance of reaching the United States. But an official at Savannah doubting whether Spain would care to have this man, whom Britain had seen fit to deport, roaming about her colonies, cast the wanderer into Castle Prison, La Principe, on the North Division of Cuba, and there left him to acquire acute rheumatism and an unnamed loathsome disease from the damp and filthy bedding provided.

Through all Muir held to the Bible which his old mother had passed to him on board the vessel before he left Scotland. Muir said it saved him from going mad on the long traverse of the North American continent.

After four months in Castle Prison, more humane counsels prevailed. Muir was released and shipped aboard the frigate *Nymph*, with instructions that he be allowed to work his passage to Spain.

In company with another frigate the passage across the Atlantic was accomplished in comparative comfort, and when Muir at length sighted the coast of Portugal he doubtless thought that the worst of his troubles were over. He remembered having read that the

longest straight line possible in Spain measured slightly under 500 miles; and 500 miles across a civilised land was as nothing to the man who had travelled 4000 miles over a tangled wilderness. If grim necessity dictated, he could even walk to the beloved and friendly land of France. Wasn't he almost next door to it now?

But (that depressing word!) between Spain and Britain a state of war existed—and of which fact, of course, Muir knew nothing. Off Cadiz two British frigates appeared, under John Jarvis, and, greatly to the Spaniards' astonishment, opened fire. Though greatly handicapped by the shock nature of the attack, the Spaniards went into action and returned the fire.

"Three times armed he who hath his quarrel just, but four times he who gets his blow in fust," runs the old adage; and so it proved in this instance. So to speak, it was a handicap fight, and though the Spaniards fought bravely they never made up the leeway consequent upon the initial broadsides from the British vessels. After two hours of fierce fighting it was obvious that the Spaniards were beaten.

During the battle Muir remembered that if he were found aboard and recognised as a British subject he would be shot as a traitor. The Bible, his name inscribed, to which with Scottish doggedness he still adhered, would identify him, and fatal results would be automatic. Of course, he could throw it overboard; but he didn't.

Suddenly darkness literally crashed down on the deliberating Scot. A cannon-ball had carried away an eye and mutilated the left side of his face. A scant two inches and it would have missed him! Of course, Muir fell to the deck.

Following the Spanish surrender British officers came aboard. Spanish sailors were busy throwing the dead overboard, and they were in the act of laying hold of Muir's seemingly lifeless body. Possibly it was the agony consequent upon violent movement. Whatever the reason, poor beleaguered Muir sighed. That sigh saved his life! A British officer, bending to pick up the book that had fallen from the supposedly dead man's coat pocket, caught the faint sound and ordered the sailors to desist.

Opening the book, he saw that it was a Bible, and inscribed

therein was a name—Thomas Muir. He remembered an old school friend of that name; and he also knew some of his story, back in his native Scotland. Using his handkerchief, he wiped the blood from the prone man's features, and recognised him as a brother Scot of his schooldays.

Aware that Muir's life was forfeit if the truth were known, the officer had him sent ashore as a sick Spaniard.

After two months in Cadiz Hospital Muir made a marvellous recovery, and was able to speak and write. He wrote to Thomas Paine, then a member of the French Convention.

Through Paine the French Director heard of Muir's presence in Spain, whereupon a special messenger was despatched to Cadiz with money and an invitation to the martyred Scot to be the guest of the French Nation; and in September, 1797, through French negotiations with Spain, Muir was once more a free man, on his way to Paris and friends, with a possibility of again seeing his mother in Scotland.

Bordeaux was the first French town of importance through which Muir passed, and on December 4 the citizens gave him a municipal dinner of welcome. Five hundred guests drank to his health! Muir, who had a good working knowledge of French, arose to respond.

The effort proved too much for him. Muir fainted—and that was practically the end.

The mother in Scotland heard of his arrival in France, and doubtless looked forward to the day when she would again see him. Instead, Fate worked off its last ironic jest. With demoniac glee it had tossed Muir to the world's Antipodes, permitted him to survive the long-drawn agony of the walk of 4000 miles down the North American Continent, the manifold miseries of incarceration in the Spanish colony of Panama, the battle off Cadiz and the frightful wound he sustained there. Again and again had it tested him, and ever and always the grand little man's iron will rose to the occasion, however awful, and sustained him in the conflict. Now, when it seemed that Peace, Liberty, even some slight measure of happiness, was almost within his grasp, Fate, that sardonic jester, again, and this time for ever, closed the gate.

Thomas Muir died in Chantilly, France, on September 27, 1793.

Some time afterwards, with the respectful compliments and sympathy of the Government of France, Mrs. Muir in Scotland received her great son's Bible—the Bible she had given him in Scotland.

In the 1700's and for long afterwards world news was all a matter of wind and water, by way of the lumbering vessels of the period. Thus it was that away in the infant United States President Washington heard nothing of unfortunate Muir's troubles till after death had ended them; and when he considered the depressing catalogue of disaster he was heard to mutter: "I could wish that I had not interfered. He'd have been better off with Hunter in Botany Bay."

CATTLE STEALERS OF THE BLACK COUNTRY

By A. B.

This story was originally published in the May, 1948, issue of "Famous Detective Stories". That issue has, however, been out of print for some time and, as we have received many requests for it, we have decided to reprint some of the stories that appeared in it.—Ed., "Famous Detective Stories".

IT has been alleged that Australian history is commonplace. Our history commonplace! The conquest of a continent, the heroism of the explorers, the unspeakably sad story of the aborigines, the continual fight with the bush and the drought—these things commonplace! Commonplace the epic of pastoral development, the lyric pages of pathos which sing through the settlers' stories, the glowing drama of gold and the gold-hunters. Eureka's stirring story! And there was the tragedy of the convicts. Themes a-plenty await the writer.

Strictly, the story of the convicts is not Australian history. Rather is it English history, continued on the shores of Botany Bay and Port Jackson—gaolers, gaoléd, "cat," gallows—all English. But the long-drawn tragedy was played out on Australian soil, and so has come to be regarded as the first chapter of the book of Australia.

Like that other inhuman horror, war, the Convict Era yields much interesting literary material.

Written down as a miscreant or written up and lauded as a hero, north, south, east and west you will find stories of that natural development of convictism, the bushrangers. Tried, convicted, long ago hanged, and all dead, anyway, you will find records of their doings in nearly every bush home. Whether they fell riddled, in contests with the troopers, or ended their days on the scaffold, yet they are not dead. That is to say, their memory still lives. It is to the point to state that there has just come from the press a new edition of that sixty-year-old classic of bushranging, Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms*. Hence it is that I make no apology for dredging the dusty pages of the past to see what I might turn up. Cattle-stealers! Sing hey for the Robin Hoods of Lagland Romance!

South Australia appears but little in bushranging history. The Victorian Kellys, and Ben Hall, Johnny Gilbert, the Clarke Brothers, and Thunderbolt, of New South Wales, appear to have monopolised the Australian market. But, as I shall show, South Australia also had its share of highwaymen, cattle-duffers, and similar desperadoes.

Just on a century ago settlers in the Black Forest came to suspect that they were losing cattle. Cattlemen know their beasts, and stories were exchanged of splendid animals that, so to speak, turned up missing. Doubts became certainty, and Government was informed. Government acted by detailing Henry Alford to capture the cattle-stealers and put an end to the trouble. Let the marauders of the wild be who they may, desperate convicts from across the Strait or from New South Wales, as skilled and competent as unscrupulous and dangerous, the authorities doubted not that Sergeant Henry Alford could attend to them. Oft-mentioned his name in South Australian criminal annals, from the early 'forties right through to 1883, yet seldom was failure marked against him. Zeal, courage, restless energy—these attributes and others as useful helped him to victory over many a lawless gang.

The task allotted the man seemed impossible of solution. The country about Adelaide 100 years ago was heavily timbered, hilly, and intersected by steep-sided gullies. Including even the tangled ranges of the "Kelly country" of Victoria, it would be difficult to

find a land more suited to the business of illicit cattle-slaughter. Cattle-tracks led in all directions, laid down by the animals as they "walked for water," or outward to favoured feeding-grounds. Out and back is the invariable habit of grazing cattle. In his efforts to find along which ones the animals had been driven to slaughter, the indefatigable Alford followed tracks for miles. But one after another they fanned out, as the cattle spread over the country; or they led to water. It seemed like checkmate, for well the man knew that unless he tumbled squarely on a killing-yard in the forest he could pass it unseen at fifty yards. Indeed, but that I am writing about Henry Alford, hereabouts this story might have ended. Difficulties only stirred the man to greater activity.

Because of the necessity for secrecy, Alford worked single-handed. Had the thieves become aware that he was definitely out after their scalps, they would have gone into recess, or even left the area for other hunting-grounds. Only one other man, Inspector Tolmer, knew that Sergeant Alford was a man with but one objective—the apprehension of the cattle-thieves of the Black Forest.

One day Alford reported to his inspector that he intended to go bush. "You won't hear from me till I've something to report," he said.

"You'll find it damn cold at night," warned the inspector.

"I'll be too busy and annoyed to feel cold," rejoined the sergeant.

The two men arranged the important matter of supplies, and Alford disappeared into the bush.

Just seven cold nights later, the "moo" of a beast stirred the dozing man in the forest. Cattle have their own language, and very expressive it is. That "moo" was a compound of discontent, annoyance, and extreme doubt. Plainly the animal had been disturbed, and it was now being driven. With "cupped" ears Alford listened to the good news that floated through the trees. A clue at last!

Keeping a reasonable distance behind the cavalcade in the darkness, and about one hundred yards off the line of march, Sergeant Alford followed the sounds. There might be a watchful scout bringing up the rearguard, or a wary dog might give the alarm. Alford was a very careful man.

Oddly, there was no sound of voices. Either the drover was alone or the quarry was as careful and painstaking as the hunter in the darkness astern. Voices carry!

At length there were indications that the movement through the forest had ceased. Shortly afterwards there came to keen listening ears the sound of a knife being steeled, which fact afforded a whole dictionary of information. Away in the backblocks of space, paling stars supplied a hint that the earth's eastern elevation would soon be wearing an expectant look.

Certain that he could return to the spot, and well satisfied with his night's work, Alford commenced to slip away. Three hours later he reported to Inspector Tolmer, and outlined his plan of battle, which was to return with a sufficient force of men to capture the whole gang literally red-handed.

"Then you'll have to take it easy for about a week," said the inspector. "A party of convicts from Botany Bay has been playing the devil among the settlers, and I've turned on every available man to deal with them. Sergeant N. is the only man left on the station."

"With surprise on our side two men could gather in the small number concerned in the actual killing," rejoined Alford. "Sergeant N. is a good man, as he's often proved."

"I don't half like it," said the inspector, "but I'll leave it to your judgment."

Sergeant N. jumped at the chance of accompanying Alford, and the two men discussed plans.

A queer distinction attaches to Sergeant N. He volunteered for police service at a time when murderous escapees from Van Diemen's Land and Botany Bay rendered such service very dangerous, said that his name was his own property, and refused to divulge it. The man looked as competent as he proved to be, and was duly enlisted. In a long career he shirked neither work nor danger. He reached the end of life's road in 1883, and to the end he preserved his anonymity. "'Tis an odd fact," said a police inspector at the stately police funeral; "here we are following the remains of as fine a fellow as ever stepped, and we don't even know his name."

The two men secured fresh horses, and shortly after midnight they set out. They carried provisions for three days. Their intention was to leave their horses at a distance, approach the killing-ground after cattle had been driven in, there await dawn, and surprise and overpower the men at work.

Everything worked to schedule—except a wary dog. Perhaps some drifting breath from the men waiting outside the enclosure reached his questing nose. Be that as it may, the dog barked. There is a lot of “education” in the bark of a dog. That solitary note in the darkness was all the information that six men required—four inside the enclosure, and Alford and Sergeant N. outside. The men of law were the least surprised. Soon after starting out Alford had mentioned the possibility of an alarm, and discussed how they should act in such emergency.

“In the darkness every dog is a hunter,” he said. “Scent is his strongest point. A horse uses his ears, and devilish keen they are. Should anything happen to upset our plan of waiting till we can see the men at work, and holding them steady with our guns, we’ll go into action at once. I’ll rush the near side of the enclosure, yelling instructions to surround the yard. You’ll make your best speed in the circumstances around to the opposite side, also yelling a demand to surrender at once. In the excitement and noise the men won’t know how many or how few we are, and we should catch one or two of them, anyway. The rest will be easy.”

Because of doubts as to whence the danger threatened, and the precise nature thereof, for a long second the men inside the enclosure hesitated. Hence it was the daring pair outside got the best of the “start,” and but that darkness aided the cattle-thieves, the four of them would have been arrested. Instead, only one was detained, while the other three fled into the safety of gloom and the forest.

“He’ll do for bait,” said Alford, as he and Sergeant N. waited for the man to regain his senses, temporarily dismasted by the smashing blow with which N. had floored him. “Did you make anything of the others?”

“Yes,” replied Sergeant N. “I think I recognised Dick Fenton

and a man named Gofton. I'd suggest we get after them as soon as this fellow comes round. There—he's coming to now."

The prisoner gasped, realised what had happened to him, but said nothing. Indeed, when fully recovered, he refused in the most definite terms to supply any information whatever.

"Behave yourself and you'll be shown favour," counselled Alford. "Continue as you've started and it will be bad for you."

Investigation showed that the night's work consisted of the killing and dressing of four beasts. They were cut up, and the beef was lying on tarpaulins. The hides were rolled neatly, ready for transport.

"There's more than four men in this," hazarded Alford. "There's an accomplice, and if I mistake not he's playing a double game—quite the gentleman in Adelaide, but a receiver of stolen goods at other times. Our escaped birds will ere now have warned him, and I think that there will be no packhorses turn up here this morning. I've better ways of wasting time than hanging around to see. Quick march for the barracks."

It was still dark when the party arrived at the queer "pocket" in the hills in which the horses were tied up. There Alford parted company, and rode off in the direction of a shanty in the wilderness. The shanty had a bad name, and deserved it, but Alford was used to taking risks.

Sergeant N. drove his prisoner along in front of him. "Try no tricks," he advised. He soon noted that the man was veering away to the eastward, and straightened him with a pistol-shot.

Alford knew that the grog-shanty was a resort of Gofton's, and hoped that he might catch that man unawares. As he approached the place a wisp of smoke from a chimney told him that already somebody was astir. The time was 6.30 a.m. when he knocked at the front door. The door was opened promptly, and just as promptly an effort was made to slam it shut again. Mrs. Brodrip had expected quite a different caller! Alford burst into the place, and soon discovered Gofton lying on a couch in the tap-room. "I've been on the spree," said he.

"So I see," replied Alford. "Moleskins blood-soaked, also your

shirt-sleeves. And you haven't a coat. Prisoner, hold out your hands." There was no fight in Gofton, and handcuffs clicked into position.

Gofton was next mounted on his own horse and taken to Adelaide Police Barracks. Commented Inspector Tolmer, "If ever I take to crime for a living I'll leave Adelaide first thing."

Alford, the indefatigable, started out again with the intention of returning to the killing-ground in the Black Forest. It was a longish ride. When within perhaps a half-mile of his objective his mount suddenly pricked its ears, "focused" them straight ahead. Alford stopped dead, dismounted, tied his horse in a dense patch of saplings, where he would be screened from view by undergrowth. Then, using similar leafy screen for cover, and fallen timber when it offered, with every sense at concert-pitch, Alford approached the killing-enclosure. At a distance of about one hundred yards he saw a man walking towards his horse. "Stand, Stagg," he called. "Stand still, or I'll wing you."

Stagg could not see his challenger, but he knew Alford's voice, knew, too, that that determined man would act, and perforce stood as instructed. Alford approached him. "If you have any firearms about you," he said, "throw them on the ground, and I'll say nothing about them. If I have to search you, and find any, I'll use it against you."

Stagg proved to be unarmed.

And in due course Alford turned up at the barracks with yet another captive. "Thought you had better sense, Josh," said Inspector Tolmer as Stagg was charged.

Alford then turned all his energies on the task of locating and arresting Fenton, nor was Sergeant N. any less zealous. "These men at the barracks don't know a thing about the business-side of the killing," said Alford one day. "That would be Fenton's concern. Get him and we'll lay the story bare."

But Fenton got clear away, and eventually the case had to go on without him.

Gofton and Roberts were each handed a five-years sentence. Stagg submitted an alibi, and, though questionable, it held just enough strength to throw a doubt into the minds of a complaisant jury, and he escaped.

But, having missed Stagg on the cattle charge, inquiries were made concerning a horse often seen in his possession. Alford found that some time previously the South Australian Agricultural Company had lost a horse somewhat answering the description of Stagg's mount. "The animal disappeared shortly after we landed him," said the manager of the company.

Alford applied for a warrant for the arrest of Stagg on a charge of horse-stealing, and waited on him at the public-house of Anthony Best, an ex Van Diemen's Land convict, where Stagg was known to lodge. But he did not at first produce the warrant. Alford was a painstaking man! "Stagg," said he, "our inspector, Mr. Tolmer, wishes you to call on him. You may as well walk to the station with me."

"I'll do nothing of the kind," returned Stagg. "Anthony, bring round my horse while I settle my score."

Best did as he was bidden. As Stagg took the horse from the landlord Alford acted, declared the animal to be a stolen one, and instructed Best to return him to the stable and hold him for the Government. He then turned to Stagg. "You are my prisoner on a charge of horse-stealing," he said. "Now you must take a walk with me."

Alford liked to be certain!

Stagg drew from his right pocket a pistol, but before he could get it into action Alford sprang at him, got his arms around the other's neck, and started to choke him into insensibility. Stagg was the heavier and much the more powerful man, but that initial grip he could not loosen.

Those present offered no assistance to either man. The reputation of Sergeant Alford steadied them! Both men fell to the ground, Alford a-top. At that moment another constable entered, and Stagg was secured.

The horse was claimed by the manager of the Agricultural Company, and Stagg again appeared in the Supreme Court. The manager of the company was no doubt a competent man of business, but his knowledge of horses and the bush was inferior. Cross-examination exposed this, and threw doubt on the animal's identity. Stagg escaped a second time.

One day Gofton escaped from Adelaide Gaol. The guards—
a man at each corner of the yard—failed to fire at him. Nor were they any more zealous when Gofton stopped to mount a horse standing outside the fence. Yet to have shot man or horse would have been an easy matter. There were people in Adelaide who said that if any of the four had even pointed a gun at the fleeing man, let alone discharged it, he'd have lost his position!

The cattle-stealers of the Black Forest had friends in high places, and while Gofton was in custody they were afraid of possible developments. For it was known that Gofton was "weak."

The man got clear away, and, though the country was scoured, his aforetime haunts watched day after day, there never was track ... trace of John Gofton. Stagg was often enough sighted, riding about the country in a seemingly aimless manner. At length Alford asked for more men, and as a result of discussion he headed one party, and Inspector Tolmer another.

It soon came to be noted that Stagg's riding excursions had ceased. Alford deduced that he had been carrying supplies to Gofton but had to cease because of the presence of so many police. This tireless man "plotted" the entries of the points at which he had been sighted, noted that the series boiled down to a line between Hindmarsh and Dry Creek, and announced that Gofton would be found in the last-named vicinity. Even as he made his announcement, there came evidence of its truth, and of the probable truth of his earlier deduction. Forced by starvation, Gofton had applied at an out-station for food, for which he paid with a sovereign.

Next day a large party centred about the Dry Creek area. The district was in truth a tangle of creeks, so that parties often found themselves on different banks. Suddenly a blacktracker on the opposite bank hailed Alford excitedly. As that man and two constables came directly opposite him, he raised a dead body so as to exhibit the shoulders and bloodstained head. John Gofton had been run to earth in the grimmest sense of the words. A bullet had entered his head at the left ear and passed out at the base of the skull.

Alford waded across the creek and examined every detail. The

body had been dragged some short distance to its present situation. The pockets yielded twelve sovereigns, three half-sovereigns, a newspaper containing an account of the horse-stealing charge against Stagg, from which a corner had been torn, also a strip of a silk handkerchief. "It would seem that robbery wasn't the motive," said Alford. Just then Inspector Tolmer came up, and at Alford's suggestion he despatched Constable Lomas to arrest Stagg on a charge of murder.

Search of Stagg's effects disclosed many damaging facts. Lomas said that wrapped around two bullets he found a piece of paper. That it had been torn from a page of the newspaper found on Gofton admitted of no doubt whatever. Two pieces of a handkerchief dovetailed nicely with the scrap found near Gofton's body. It had been torn into strips to tie two ends of a piece of hessian in which two guns had been wrapped. It was thought the wisp on the ground at the scene of the murder had escaped Stagg's notice.

The trial consisted of the steady weaving of the trifles above enumerated into a hangman's rope. Stagg denied everything. "Why should I turn and shoot a man whom I had risked my liberty to shelter and feed?" he asked.

"That is best known to yourself," replied the judge.

Yet reference to the files of the day shows that there was considerable editorial objection to the hanging of Stagg. Capital was made of the admitted fact that the search of his effects was made after he had been lodged in a cell, and that it was performed by a solitary constable, Lomas.

Much queer evidence came up at the trial. It was shown that considerable money had been subscribed by persons who couldn't be named, for the purpose of getting Gofton out of the country. Growing despair as the watchful police rendered attempts to get him aboard a foreign-bound vessel ever more difficult was alluded to. "I can't put my finger on anything definite," said a witness, "but it is common knowledge that prominent people in Adelaide became very worried as all chance of success seemed to be fading. They were afraid that Gofton would turn informer and so cause many lofty heads to topple."

"Somebody was paid to shoot Gofton," said another. "I don't know who got the money, but I don't think it was Stagg."

Stagg was hanged, and that seemed to be the end of the matter, but it wasn't. Some twelve years later there came from the Secretary of State for India (to which country of his birth Lomas had returned) a signed and witnessed confession by the ex-policeman that he himself had shot Gofton, and that he had been paid to do it.

"Lomas is now in a lunatic asylum," wrote the Secretary of State, "but his account of the murder of the man Gofton, and of his share in that murder, is so circumstantial and connected that I feel I can do no less than forward it."

In his confession Lomas said that he had been sent to Adelaide for provisions, that he had met and shot Gofton on the way.

The matter was referred to Alford. He admitted that Lomas had been sent for provisions, and added that on going over the ground he found that the line Lomas would follow would carry him three-quarters of a mile from the point where Gofton's body was found. "Therefore, I say that Lomas could not possibly have shot Gofton," he concluded. Weak! An entry on his record proved that Lomas was a poor bushman, from which it follows that he could easily have veered off his line to the extent of a mere 1300 yards in a 20-mile trip through virgin bush. Still, the matter dropped. After all, what was the use of following it up? Lomas a lunatic, and Stagg a dozen years in a gaol grave.

Remarkably, full 30 years after the hanging of Stagg, another incident stirred the old case to life once again. Long since retired from the Police Force, Alford had become a successful businessman in Adelaide. One day in Hindley Street he saw a man short of a leg, on crutches. It so happened that he got a full view of his face. "Hello, Fenton," he said. "Where have you been?" Recognition by the other was just as prompt.

"I've been in America ever since, Mr. Alford," he replied. "I was put aboard an American boat at noon on the same day that you jumped us at the yard in the Black Forest. I lost a leg in the war in 1862. Thought I'd like to see Adelaide again, and here I am. What are you going to do about it, Mr. Alford?"

"Nothing at all," replied Alford. "It's too old a story, and,

besides, it's no longer my business. By the way, did you know that John Gofton was murdered shortly afterwards, and that Stagg was hanged for it?"

"First I've heard of that," was the reply. "Anyway, Stagg wasn't the man to shoot anybody. Stagg and me was sent out together. I knew him for thirty years, and take my word for it, Mr. Alford, whoever shot poor Gofton, it wasn't Josh. Stagg."

Tot up newspaper opinion of the time, the Lomas confession, Fenton's definite statement, and the sum of the matter would appear to be a doubt if the right man was hanged for the murder of John Gofton in the Black Forest almost a century ago.

Hell on High Seas

By Stuart Burton

The ghastly story of a slave-trafficking expedition in which simple savages were cold-bloodedly shot down in what must have been one of the most inhuman massacres of all time. No more sinister tale has emerged from the South Seas.

IT is not often that a murderer, after escaping the gallows with a gaol sentence for manslaughter, is allowed to go free because of a technical legal point and then, when it is found that the original sentence was just, the guilty party cannot be found and doesn't go to gaol after all.

Yet 80 years ago that was the happy experience of two Australian "blackbirders" who coldly and deliberately helped to usher violently from this world well over 50 South Sea Islanders.

The ringleader in the exploit, a worthy doctor, got off scot free because he turned informer. Two others, who took a comparatively minor part in the wholesale murders, were hanged out of hand.

In April, 1871, St. Kilda, Melbourne, numbered among its residents a doctor named Murray, who apparently could not make

enough cash selling pills in Melbourne, so decided to go in for slave-trafficking in the Islands. He purchased a brig named *Carl*. She was 110 feet long and 164 tons register. To assist him in his questionable trade, he enlisted the aid of two bright customers, William Charles Morris and Henry Clarke Mount. The brig's captain was Hardy and she carried a crew of six.

Murray announced to the general public that he intended to start a cotton plantation on one of the South Sea islands in partnership with Mount, Morris, and four others, but he told the crew that he was going pearl-fishing.

In June, 1871, the *Carl* sailed away from Melbourne carrying a general cargo which included a number of rifles and revolvers, two swivel guns, and plenty of ammunition to fit them. In the hold was pig-iron.

The ship got as far as Queenscliff Heads when the captain had a row with a seaman named Flynn. Murray, instead of backing up his captain, sacked him on the spot and appointed Flynn to the command. When they arrived at Levuka, Murray sacked Flynn because some of the passengers complained about his conduct, and the mate, Armstrong, was made captain. A seaman named Dowden succeeded Armstrong as mate.

There was almost a mutiny at Tanna when the crew refused to go ashore to try to get native labour for the ship. They told Armstrong that he should have got the Kanakas at Levuka if he wanted them. Mount and Morris were annoyed at this insubordination, while the mate, pulling out a pistol, told the crew in no uncertain terms that if they wanted fighting and shooting they'd get it. Armstrong calmed him down and there was no fight. Neither was any native labour secured.

The *Carl* sailed from island to island, and, when it reached Apia, Murray, Mount and Morris, with some of the passengers, went ashore and purchased three square miles of the place. They divided it up into three parts and drew lots for it.

The ship was then converted by the crew into a floating prison for native labour. They did this by fitting up the hold with saplings to make beds for the captives. It was then that the crew woke up to the fact that they were not going pearl-fishing.

It was at Palma that operations commenced in earnest. Murray suggested that if they all disguised themselves as missionaries the islanders would think that the *Carl* was a mission ship and would be easy to lure on board. Everyone thought this was a fine joke, and a good laugh was had by all. Armstrong put on the mate's jacket back to front and shoved a book under his arm. Mount selected red overalls, a Chinese cap and slippers, and carried a book and an umbrella. The rest of the ship's company dressed themselves in anything ludicrous they could find.

Mount paraded up and down the deck in full view of the shore about 200 yards away, and must have intrigued the islanders. Then a boatload of men rowed ashore and by various means succeeded in luring a number of the natives on board the *Carl*. When these deluded creatures desired to return to their island, they were prevented forcibly. Words led to blows, and shots and arrows were exchanged. One native stopped a bullet in the leg, and Murray got an arrow in the arm. The angry white man wanted to throw the wounded native to the sharks, but Mount and Morris stopped him. The native was sent ashore in a canoe and his fellow islanders, numbering about a dozen, were thrown into the hold.

Murray's method of securing native labour at Poonah Island was novel, to say the least of it. With his wounded arm in a sling and a revolver in hand, he waited until two canoes containing natives paddled close to the side of the *Carl*, and then he said to the crew, "When I count three, jump into the canoes and swamp them."

No sooner said than done. Under the weight of the jumping seamen, the frail canoes disintegrated, hurling their native freight into the water. At Murray's command, boats were lowered and a dozen natives were dragged on board. One misguided islander who retained his bow and arrow took a pot shot at the mate, Dowden, who calmly dropped him with his revolver.

From island to island cruised the *Carl* collecting natives in a similar manner, except that heavy weights were thrown on to the canoes to swamp them instead of the crew having to do gymnastic stunts. They got nine at one island, 17 at another, a dozen at a third, and at Bougainville caught 80 in three days. Murray kept the crew in a good humour by plying them with grog.

In those days the recruiting of native labour on the South Sea Islands was permitted by the Government, but certain conditions had to be observed. For instance, the natives had to be willing parties, were to be engaged only for three years at £1 a year, and be provided with food, clothing, and lodging.

And now we come to the night of September 13, 1871, when awful deeds were done by the three black-souled villains, aided and abetted by others almost as vile.

About 9 p.m. there was a fire alarm and the natives set up a loud clamour. The crew contented themselves by standing by the main hatch and bellowing to the natives down in the hold to keep quiet. Murray, Morris and Mount, however, had their own methods of enforcing peace.

As the terrified blacks made frantic efforts to break out of their prison, Murray, Mount and Morris coolly and deliberately shot them down. Again and again they fired into the seething, terrified mass of howling black humanity, ceasing when the poor wretches were quiet, shooting when they made the slightest noise.

Next morning the hold of the ship was a terrible sight, as can be imagined. A ladder was shoved down among the battered human wrecks, and between 20 and 30, all wounded, managed to drag themselves on to the deck. Down below among the corpses were others whose wounds were so serious that they could not climb the ladder. Murray had ropes lowered, and these people were hauled on deck.

"What are we going to do with these wretches?" asked somebody.

"I'll show you," replied Murray, and deliberately pushed overboard a native lad who had only a wrist-wound.

Several other islanders immediately jumped into the sea on their own volition. The others were told to do likewise. Those who wouldn't, or couldn't, were immediately thrown overboard on Murray's orders.

An examination of the hold revealed 35 dead bodies. These were hauled up, one by one, and thrown into the sea.

When Murray proposed that they should proceed to other islands and replenish their supplies of natives, Mount objected, saying that he had had enough of the bloody work. Morris and the others backed him up; so Murray gave in and set the remaining islanders

to work to clean up the ship and to remove all traces of the slaughter. The poles that had been used as beds in the hold were thrown overboard and the hold itself was nicely whitewashed. The natives were ordered to jump into the sea, wash themselves, and return on board. They did this, and soon everything was in apple-pie order.

As it was, Murray and Co. had acted just in time, because *H.M.S. Rosario* came up, ordered the *Carl* to heave to, and sent a boat's crew to board her. Captain Armstrong conducted the naval officer in charge all over the *Carl*. He saw nothing suspicious, so returned to the warship and sailed away. Murray and Armstrong had spent a lot of time teaching the remaining natives how to give the right answers to questions that might be put to them.

When the *Carl* reached Apia again, Murray and 12 of the natives landed, taking with them all the equipment necessary for cotton-planting. Mount and Morris sailed to Levuka, where they discharged the balance of the islanders. The British Consul, Mr. March, questioned the natives, who gave the answers drummed into themselves previously by Murray and Armstrong, and the Consul was satisfied that all was well.

Mount and Morris left the ship at Levuka, but they did not prosper, and in due course they returned to Melbourne, broke.

With Armstrong still in command and Dowden as mate, the *Carl* did some trading, and, when they reached Apia again, picked up Murray. The three could not get on together, and when Murray took sick they landed him at Levuka.

It was then that the delightful doctor decided to rat on his companions. He sought out the Consul, March, said he was stricken with remorse and, "for the honour of God," had to confess his misdeeds. The truth was that he gave his former friends away because they had turned on him.

Murray made a long statement to March in which he admitted some of his crimes. The confession implicated Morris, Mount, Armstrong and Dowden, and though this confession clearly branded Murray as the vilest of the whole bunch, March decided that he should be allowed to turn Queen's evidence and thus escape the consequences of the actions.

Arrested and taken to Sydney for trial, Armstrong and Dowden came before Mr. Justice Fausett and a jury. Convicted of murder, they were sentenced to death and duly hanged. Murray was allowed his freedom and given an important government position.

A few days after the trial of Armstrong and Dowden, Mount and Morris were arrested in Melbourne, and in due course appeared in the Melbourne Criminal Court before the Chief Justice, Sir William Stawell, on the unusual charge of having murdered a man unknown on the British brig *Carl* on the high seas on September 13, 1871.

The two men were defended by a famous barrister of the day, Mr. R. D. Ireland, Q.C., who commented strongly upon the Crown witnesses, chief of whom were three sailors from the brig—Mathias Devescoc, James Fallon, and George Heath. He referred to them as informers and trenchantly criticised the Crown for not calling the arch-villain, Dr. Murray, to give evidence. The Crown, Mr. Ireland said, lacked corroboration by independent witnesses, and he questioned the sufficiency of proof that Mount and Morris had actually fired weapons into the hold and killed the natives.

Sir William Stawell told the jury that the issue was a simple one. They had to decide if any man had been shot on the night of September 13; also, were Mount and Morris present, aiding and abetting the commission of the crime? If Mount and Morris had fired shots, that was evidence against them that they were present. If they fired no shots, there were still other facts from which the jury could draw the inference that the two men were present.

If the jury thought that when the natives were forcing their way through the hatches the lives of the persons on board were in imminent peril, and that taking away the lives of the natives was the only way in which these persons could save themselves from peril, it was just possible that the jury might consider it an element in reducing the charge from murder to manslaughter, said the judge. His summing-up was completely adverse. It was quite clear that he, personally, considered that Mount and Morris were guilty of murder.

The jury thought otherwise. After a retirement of four hours, they returned a verdict of manslaughter.

Sir William gave each man the maximum sentence for manslaughter—15 years. He could do no more. There was a public

outcry against the verdict, and many stinging comments were written and published in the Press. Disgust swept the community owing to the fact that the arch-villain, Murray, was a free man because he had ratted and given Queen's evidence against Armstrong and Dowden.

From the public's point of view, however, worse was to follow. Counsel for Mount and Morris (Mr. Ireland) appealed to the Full Court for the release of his clients on the ground that the Act which gave a judge power to gaol persons for homicide committed on the high seas also laid down that the place of imprisonment had to be appointed by the Secretary of State of Great Britain, and this had not been done.

Upholding this contention, the Full Court ordered the release from prison of Mount and Morris. The pair was duly released and proceeded to disappear instantly and most efficiently.

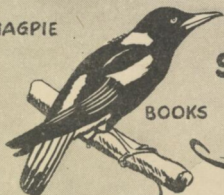
There was a sharp howl of indignation from the community at large, and the Attorney-General was accused of having bungled the whole affair with gross completeness. Even the *London Times* had a lot to say editorially about this gross miscarriage of justice.

The Crown, stung into action, appealed to the Privy Council in London against the decision of the Victorian Full Court. The Privy Council held that the Full Court had been wrong in its decision and that Mount and Morris should be rearrested and made to serve their 15-years gaol sentence.

But nobody knew where they were, except Mount and Morris themselves, and they kept discreetly silent.

They were never traced.

MAGPIE



BOOKS

READ THESE
SELECTED **MAGPIE**
STORIES!

- No. 29 **DOPE ISLAND**, by Stewart Howard.
No. 57 **FAR CARAVAN**, by E. V. Timms.
No. 58 **DEATH OF A FAN DANCER**, by John Carlshon.
No. 59 **THE BIG GAMBLE**, by Chuck Headley.
No. 60 **FIRST UP**, by Chuck Headley.
No. 61 **IOLE STEPS OUT**, by Frank Walford.
No. 62 **MURDER ON MT. CAPITA**, by L. W. Martin and N. S. Lynravn.
No. 63 **SINNERS IN PARADISE**, by Max Afford.
No. 64 **GONE A MILLION**, by Frank Walford.
No. 65 **BULLETS BITE DEEP**, by John Carlshon.
No. 66 **WHEN COBB AND CO. WAS KING**, by Will Lawson.
No. 67 **BRIDE FOR SALE**, by G. Vardy.
No. 68 **THE DOLLS OF DEATH**, by Max Afford.
No. 69 **WAGES OF DESIRE**, by Jean Devanny.
No. 70 **THANKS FOR THE MEMORY**, by Stewart Howard.
No. 71 **OLD MAN MURRAY**, by Will Lawson.
No. 72 **EXCUSE FOR SCANDAL**, by W. S. Howard.
No. 73 **AN EAR FOR MURDER**, by Max Afford.
No. 74 **FAMOUS DETECTIVE STORIES**.
No. 75 **MANIA FOR MURDER**, by Dixon Rice.

THERE IS NOTHING
LIKE A **MAGPIE** TO MAKE THE
HOURS FLY!



MAGPIE SERIES

A SELECTED STORY

These books have been chosen by
selected judges to cover all aspects of
fiction for every type of reader.

ADVENTURE!
ROMANCE!
MYSTERY!
SCIENCE!
HUMOUR!
SPORT!

THEIR STANDARD IS HIGH, BUT THE PRICE IS LOW

MAGPIE BOOKS AVAILABLE AT ALL NEWSAGENTS