

My Adventures in Australia.

TRAVELING in the Bush one rainy season, I put up for the night at a small, weather-bound inn, perched halfway up a mountain range, where several Bush servants on the tramp had also taken refuge from the down-pouring torrents. I had had a long and fatiguing ride over a very bad country; so, after supper, retired into the furthest corner of the one room that served for "kitchen and parlor, and all," and there, curled up in my blanket, in preference to the bed offered by our host, which was none of the cleanest, with half shut eyes, I grimly puffed at my pipe in silence, allowing the bubble-bubble of the Bushman's gossip to flow through my unnoting ears.

Fortunately for my peace, the publican's stock of rum had been exhausted, and, as I was the last comer, all the broiling and frying had ceased; but a party sat around the fire, evidently set in for a spell of "yarning." At first the conversation ran in ordinary channels, such as short reminiscences of old world rascality and perils in the Bush, till at length a topic arose which seemed to have a paramount interest for all. This was the prowess of a certain person called "Two-Handed Dick, the Stockman."

"Yes, yes; I'll tell you what it is, mates," said one, "this confounded reading and writing, gives plain fellows like you and me no chance; now, if it were to come to fighting for a living, I don't care whether it was half minute time or London rules, rough and tumble, or single-stick, or swords and bayonets, or tomahawks—I'm dashed if you and me, and Two-Handed Dick, wouldn't take the whole Legislative council, the governor and judges—one down, t'other come on. Though, to be sure, Dick could thrash any two of us."

I was too tired to keep awake, and dozed off, to be again and again disturbed with cries of "bravo, Dick!" "That's your sort!" "Hooray, Dick!" all signifying approval of that individual's conduct in some desperate encounter, which formed the subject of a stirring narrative.

For months after that night this idea of Two-Handed Dick haunted me, but the bustle of establishing a new station at length drove it out of my head.

I suppose a year had elapsed from the night when the frame of the double-fisted stockman first reached me. I had to take a three days' journey to buy a score of fine-wooled rams, through a country quite new to me, which I chose because it was a short cut recently discovered. I got over, the first day, forty-five miles comfortably.

The second day, in the evening, I met an ill-looking fellow walking with a broken musket, and his arm in a sling. He seemed sulky, and I kept my hand on my double-barreled pistol all the time I was talking to him. He begged a little tea and sugar, which I could not spare, but I threw him a fig of tobacco. In answer to my questions about his arm, he told me, with a string of oaths, that a bull, down in some mimosa flats, a days' journey ahead, had charged him, flung him into a water-hole, broken his arm, and made him lose his sugar and tea-bag.

Bulls in Australia are generally quiet, but this reminded me that some of the Highland black cattle imported by the Australian Company, after being driven off by a party of Gully Rakes (cattle stealers), had escaped into the mountains and turned quite wild. Out of this herd, which was of a breed quite unsuited to the country, a bull sometimes, when driven off by a stronger rival, would descend to the mimosa flats, and wander about, solitary and dangerously fierce.

It struck me, as I rode off, that it was quite as well my friend's arm and musket had been disabled, for he did not look the sort of a man it would be pleasant to meet in a thicket of scrub, if he fancied the horse you rode. So keeping one eye over my shoulder, and a sharp lookout for any traveler of the same breed, I rode off at a brisk pace. I made out afterward that my foot-friend was Jerry Johnson, hung for shooting a bullock driver the following year.

At sundown, when I reached the hut where I intended to sleep, I found it deserted, and so full of fleas, I thought it better to camp out; so I hobbled out old Gray-trail on the best piece of grass I could find, which was very poor indeed.

The next morning, when I went to look for my horse, he was nowhere to be found. I put the saddle on my head and tackled him for hours; it was evident the poor beast had been traveling away in search of grass.

I walked until my feet were one mass of blisters, at length, when about to give up the search in despair, having quite lost the track on stony ground, I came upon the marks quite fresh in a bit of swampy grounds, and a few hundred yards further found master Gray-trail rolling in the mud of a nearly dry

water-hole, as comfortably as possible. I put down the saddle and called him. At that moment I heard a loud roar and crash in a scrub behind me, and out rushed, at a terrific pace, a black Highland bull, charging straight at me. I had only just time to throw myself on one side, flat on the ground, as he thundered by me. My next move was to scramble among a small clump of trees—one of great size, the rest were mere saplings.

The bull, having missed his mark, turned again, and first revenged himself by tossing my saddle up in the air, until fortunately it lodged in some bushes; then having smelt me out, he commenced a circuit around the trees, stamping, pawing, and bellowing frightfully.

With his red eyes, and long sharp horns, he looked like a demon. I was quite unarmed, having broken my knife the day before; my pistols were in my holsters, and I was wearied to death. My only chance consisted in dodging him round the trees until he should be tired out. Deeply did I regret having left my faithful dogs Broomer and Bounder behind.

The bull charged again and again, sometimes coming with such force against the tree that he fell upon his knees, sometimes bending the saplings behind which I stood, until his horns almost touched me. There was not a branch I could lay hold of to climb up. How long this awful game of "touch-wood" lasted, I know not. It seemed hours. After the first excitement of self-preservation passed off, uneasiness again took possession of me, and it required all the instinct of self-preservation to keep me on my feet. Several times the bull left me for a few seconds, pacing suddenly away, bellowing his malignant discontent; but before I could cross over to a better position, he always came back at full speed. My tongue clove to the roof of my mouth, my eyes grew hot and misty, my knees trembled under me, and I felt it impossible to hold out until dark. At length I grew desperate, and determined to make a run for the opposite covert. The moment the bull turned toward the water-hole again, I felt sure I was doomed, and thought of it until I grew indifferent. The bull seemed to know I was worn out, and grew more fierce and rapid in his charges, but just as I was going to sit down under the great tree, and let him do his worst, I heard the rattle of a horse among the rocks above, and a shout that sounded like the voice of an angel. Then came the barking of a dog, and the loud reports of a stock-whip; but the bull, with his devilish eyes fixed on me, never moved.

Up came a horseman, at full speed; crack fell the lash on the black bull's hide; out sprited the blood in a long streak. The bull turned savagely—charged the horseman. The horse wheeled round just enough to baffle him—no more—again the lash descended, cutting like a long, flexible razor, but the bull was not to be beaten off by a whip. He charged again and again; but he had met his match; right and left, as needed, the horse turned, sometimes pivoting on his hind, sometimes on his forelegs.

The stockman shouted something, leaped from his horse, strode forward to meet the bull with an open knife between his teeth. As the beast lowered his head to charge, he seemed to catch him by the horns. There was a struggle, a cloud of dust, a stamping like two strong men wrestling—I could not see clearly; but the next moment the bull was on his back, the blood welling from his throat, his limbs quivering in death.

The stranger, covered with mud and dust, came to me, saying unconcernedly, as if he had been killing a calf in a slaughter-house, "He's dead enough, young man; he won't trouble anybody any more."

I walked two or three paces toward the dead beast; my senses left me—I fainted.

When I came to myself, my horse was saddled, bridled, and tied up to a bush. My stranger friend was busy flaying the bull.

"I should like to have a pair of boots out of the old devil," he observed in answer to my inquiring look, "before the dingoes and the eagle-hawk dig into his carcase."

We rode out of the flats, up a gentle ascent as night was closing in. I was in no joking humor; but I said: "You have saved my life."

"Well, I rather think I have;" but this was muttered in an undertone; "It's not my first I have saved, or taken either, for that matter."

I was too much worn out for thanking much, but I pulled out a silver hunting watch, and put it into his hand. He pushed it back, almost roughly, saying: "No, sir, not now; I shalln't take money or money's worth for that, though I may ask something some time. It's nothing, after all. I owed the old black devil a grudge for spoiling a blood

filley of mine; besides, though I didn't know it when I rode up first, and went at the beast to take the devil out of myself, as much as anything. I rather think that you are the young gentleman that ran through the Bush at night to Manchester Dan's hut, when his wife was balled up by the Blacks, and shot one-eyed Jackey, in spite of the Governor's proclamation."

"You seem to know me," I answered, "pray, may I ask who you are, if it is a fair question; for I cannot remember ever having seen you before."

"Oh, they call me 'Two-Handed Dick,' in this country."

The scene in the road-side inn flashed on my recollection. Before I could say another word, a sharp turn around the shoulder of the range we were traversing, brought us in sight of a shepherd's hut.

The dogs were out barking; we hallooed and cracked our whips, and the hut-keeper came to us with a fire-brick in his hand.

"Lord bless my heart and soul! Dick, is that thee, at last? Well, I thought thee weren't never coming;" cried the hutkeeper, a little man, who came limping forward very fast with the help of a crutch-handle stick.

"I say, Missis, Missis, here's Dick, here's Two-Handed Dick."

This was uttered in a shrill, hysterical sort of a scream. Out came "Missis" at the top of her speed, and began hugging Dick as he was getting off his horse; her arms reached a little above her waist, laughing and crying both at the same time, while her husband kept fast hold of the stockman's hand, and muttering, "Lord, Dick, I'm so glad to see thee." Meanwhile, the dogs barking, and a flock of weaned lambs just baa'ing, made such a riot, that I was fairly bewildered. So, feeling myself one too many, I slipped away, leading both of the horses to the other side of that hut, where I found a shepherd, who showed me a grass paddock to feed the nags a bit before turning out for the night. I said to him, "What is the meaning of all this going on between your mate and his wife, and the big stockman?"

"The meaning, stranger; that's Two-Handed Dick, and my mate is little Jemmy that he saved, and Charley Anvil at the same time, when the blacks slaughtered the rest of the party—near a dozen of them."

On returning, I found supper smoking on the table, and we made a regular "bush" meal. The stockman then told my adventure, and when they had exchanged all the news, I had little difficulty in preventing man and wife from telling the same story at the same time. However, by judicious management, I was able to gather the following account of the Two-Handed Dick's fight and ride.

"When I first met Dick, he was second stockman to Mr. Roland, and I took a shepherd's place there; it was my second place in this country, for you see I left the old country in a bad year for the weaving trade, and was out of the first batch of free emigrants that came out—the rest were chiefly Irish. I found shepherding suit me very well, and my Misses was hut-keeper. Well, Dick and I got very thick. I used to write his letters for him, and read in an evening, and so on. Well, though I undertook a shepherd's place, I soon found I could handle an ax pretty well. Throwing the shuttle gives the use of the arms, you see, and Dick put it into my head that I could make more money if I took to making fences; I sharpening the rails, and making the mortice-holes, and a stronger man setting them. I did several jobs at odd times, and was thought very handy. Well, Mr. Roland, during the time of the drought, five years ago, determined to send up a lot of cattle to the north, where he had heard of plenty of water and grass, and form a station there. Dick was picked out as stockman; a young gentleman, a relation of Mr. Roland's, as head of the party—a very foolish, conceited young man, who knew very little of bush life, and would not be taught. There was eight splitters and fencers, and two bullock drivers."

"I go leave to go because I wanted to see the country, and Dick asked. My Missis was sorely against my going. I was to be store-keeper, as well as do any farming and work, if wanted."

"We had two drays, and were well armed. We were fifteen days going up before we got into the new country, and then we traveled five days, sometimes twenty-four hours without water, and sometimes had to unload the drays two or three times a day, to get over creeks. The fifth day we came to very dry land; the grass met over our horses' necks, and the river was a chain of water-holes, all full, and as clear as crystal. The kangaroos were hopping about as plentiful as a warren; and the grass by the riverside had regular tracks of the emus, where they went down to drink."

"We had been among signs of the blacks, too, for five days, but had not seen anything of them, although we could hear the devils cooling at night-

fall and calling to each other. We kept regular watch and watch, at first—four sentinels, and every man sleeping with his gun at hand."

"Now, as it was Dick's business to fall (follow) the cattle, five hundred head, I advised him to have his musket sawed off in the barrel, so as to be a more handy size for using on horseback. He took my advice; and Charley Anvil made a very good job of it, so that he could bring it under his arm when hanging at his back from a rope sling, and fire it with one hand. It was lucky I thought of it, as it turned out."

"At length the overseer fixed on a spot for a station. It was very well for water and grass, and a very pretty view, as he said; but it was too near a thicket where the blacks would lay in ambush, for safety. The old bushmen wanted it planted on a neck of land, where the waters protected it all but one side, and there a row of fence would have made it secure."

"Well, we set to work, and soon had a lot of tall trees down. Charley put up his forge, and his grindstone, to keep the ax sharp, and changed with him. Dick went tending the cattle, and the overseer sat on a log, and looked on. The second day a mob of blacks came down on the opposite side of the river. They were quite wild, regular *myats*; but some of our men, with green branches, went and made peace with them. They liked our bread and sugar; and after a short time we had a lot of them helping to draw rails, fishing for us, bringing wild honey, kangaroos, rats, and firewood, in return for butter and food; so we began to be less careful of our arms. We gave them iron tomahawks, and they soon found out that they could cut out an opossum from a hollow tree in half an hour with one of our tomahawks, while it took a day with one of their own stone ones."

"And so the time passed very pleasantly. We worked away. The young men and girls worked for us. The chiefs adorned themselves with the trinkets and clothes we gave them, and fished and hunted, and admired themselves in the river."

"Dick never trusted them; he stuck to his cattle; he warned us not to trust them, and the overseer called him a blood-thirsty, murdering blackguard, for his pains."

"One day the whole party were at work chopping and trimming weather-boards for the hut, the blacks helping as usual. I was turning the grindstone for Charley Anvil and Dick was coming up to the dray to get some tea, but there was a brow of a hill between him and us; the muskets were all piled up in one corner. I heard a howl, and then a scream—our camp was full of armed blacks. When I raised my head, I saw the chief, Captain Jack, we called him, with a broad ax in his hand, and the next minute he had chopped the overseer's head clean off; in two minutes all my mates were on the ground. Three or four came running up to us; one threw a spear at me, which I half parried with a pannikin I was using to wet the grindstone, but it fixed deep in my hip, and part of it is, I believe, there still. Charley Anvil had an ax in his hand, and cut down the first two fellows that came up to him, but he was floored in a minute, with twenty wounds. They were so eager to kill me, that one of them luckily, or I should not have been alive now, cut the spear in my hip short off. Another, a young lad I had sharpened a tomahawk for a few days before, chopped me across the head; you can see the white hair. Down I fell, and nothing could have saved us, but the other savages got the tarpauling off, and were screaming with delight, plundering the drays, which called my enemies off. Just then Dick came into sight. He saw what was the matter; but although there were more than a hundred black devils, all armed, painted, bloody, and yelling, he never stopped or hesitated, but rode slap through the camp, fired bang among them, killing two, and knocking out the brains of another. As he passed by a top rail, where an ax was sticking, he caught it up. The men in camp were dead enough; the chief warriors had made the rush there, and every one was pierced with several spears, or cut down from close behind by axes in the hands of the chiefs. We, being farther off, had been attacked by the boys only. Dick turned toward us, and shouted my name. I could not answer, but I managed to sit an instant; he turned toward me, leaned down, and caught me by the jacket and dragged me on before him like a log. Just then Charley, who had crept under the grindstone, cried "Oh, Dick, don't leave me." As he said that, a lot of them came running down; for they had seen enough to know that unless they killed us all, their job would not be half gone. As Dick turned to face them; they gave way but flung spears; but they could not hurt him; they managed to get between us and poor Charley. Dick rode back a circuit, and dropped

me among some bushes on a hill, where I could see all. Four times he charged through a whole mob, with an ax in one hand and his short musket in the other. He cut them down, right and left, as if he had been mowing; he scared the wretches, although the old woman kept screeching and urging them on, as they always do. At length, by help of his stirrup-leather, he managed to get Charley up behind him. He never could have done it, but his mare fought, and bit, and turned when he bade her; so he threw the bridle on her neck, and could use that terrible left arm of his. Well, he came up the hill, and lifted me on, and away we went for three or four miles; but we knew the mare could not stand it long—so Dick got off and walked. When the blacks had pulled the drays' load to pieces, they began to follow us, but Dick never lost heart—"

"Nay, mate," interrupted Dick, "once I did; I shall never forget it, when I came to put my last bullet in, it was too big."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, "what did you do?"

"Why, I put the bullet in my mouth, and kept chewing and chewing it, and threatening the black devils all the while, until at last it was small enough, and then I rammed it down, and dropped on my knee, and waited until they came within twenty yards, and then I picked off Captain Jack, the biggest villain of them all."

Here Dick being warned, continued the story: "We could not stop; we marched all evening and all night, and when the poor creatures called for water, as they did most of the night, and as often as I could fill my boots I gave them to drink. I led the horse and traveled seventy miles without halting for more than a minute or two. Toward the last, they were as helpless as worn-out sheep. I tied them on. We had the luck to fall in with a party traveling, just when the old mare was about giving in, and then we must all have died for want of water. Charley Anvil had eighteen wounds; but, except losing two fingers, is none the worse. Poor Jemmy, there, will never be fit for anything but a hutkeeper. As for me—I had some scratches—nothing to hurt; and the old man lost an ear. I went back afterward with the police, and squared accounts with the blacks."

"And so you see, stranger, the old woman thinks I have saved her old man's life, although I would have done as much for any one; but I believe there are some gentlemen in Sydney think I ought to have been hanged for what I did. Any how, since that scrimmage, they have always called me 'Two-Handed Dick.'"

Reliability.

If you are fortunate enough to know a truly reliable man, make him your friend at once, if you can. You can only do so, however, by assimilating his character. The reliable man is a man of good judgment. He does not jump at conclusions. He is not a frivolous man. He is thoughtful. He turns a subject over in his mind, and looks at it all round. He is not a partial or one-sided man. He does not have to talk a great deal. He is a moderate man not only in habits of body, but also of mind. He is not a passionate man; if so by nature, he has overcome it by grace. He is a sincere man, not a plotter or schemer. What he says may be relied on. He is a trustworthy man. You feel safe with your property or the administration of affairs in his hand. He is a brave man, for his conclusions are logically deduced from the sure basis of truth, and he does not fear to maintain them. He is a good man, for no man can be thoroughly honest and truthful without being good. Is such a quality attainable? Most assuredly so. It is not born—it is made. Character may be formed; of course, then, its component parts may be moulded to that formation. To gain a spotless reputation is a prize worth trying for.

A Disappointed Speculator.

Some eighteen months ago a London newspaper informed its readers: "The two islands known as the Barker Islands, which suddenly disappeared a little while ago, persist in declining to be found. It may be remembered that a Tasmanian capitalist named Fisher bought from the Australian government the right to remove guano from these islands, and that he dispatched three vessels for guano cargoes to the latitude mentioned; but when the ships arrived, no trace of the islands could be discovered. It was supposed that they, together with their inhabitants, had disappeared through a volcanic eruption. Mr. Fisher had unfortunately paid for his guano in advance; and now that the islands are nowhere, the guano is in exactly the same place. The worst of it is that the Australian government does not seem to have the smallest intention of returning the money paid by Mr. Fisher, who also lost a large sum in fitting out the vessels."