touch than we with that awful, inviable world all round and between us, of which we only see distorted faces and hear disjointed utterances when we are "suffering a recovery" or going mad.

On the morning of Job's accident, and after a long brooding silence, Doc. Wild suddenly said to Mac Falconer:

"Get the hosses, Mac. We'll go to the station."

Mac, used to the doctor's eccentricities, went to see about the horses.

Then, who should drive up but Mrs Spencer, Job's mother-in-law, on her way from town to the station. She stayed to have a cup of tea and give her horse a feed. She was square-faced and was considered a rather hard and practical woman; but she had plenty of solid flesh, good sympathetic common sense, and deep set and humorous blue eyes. She lived in the town comfortably on the interest of some money which her husband had left in the bank, and drove an American waggonette with a good width and length of "tray" behind; and on this occasion she had a pole and two horses. In the trap was a new mattress and pillows, a generous pair of new white blankets, and boxes containing necessaries, delicacies, and luxuries. All round, she was an excellent mother-in-law for a man to have on hand at a critical time.

Speaking of the mother-in-law, I would like to put in a word for her right here. She is universally considered a nuisance in times of peace and comfort; but when illness or serious trouble comes home, then it's "Write to mother!" "Wire for mother!" "Send some one to fetch mother!" "I'll go and bring mother!" If she is not near: "Oh, I wish mother was here!" "If mother were only near!" When she is on the spot, hear the anxious son-in-law: "Don't you go, mother! "You'll stay—won't you, mother—till we're all right? I'll get some one to look after your house, mother, while you're here." But Job Falconer was fond of his mother-in-law at all times.

Mac had some trouble in finding and catching one of the horses. Mrs Spencer drove on, and Mac and the doctor caught up to her about a mile before she reached the homestead track, which turned in through the scrubs at the corner of the big ring-barked flat.

Doc. Wild and Mac followed the cart-road, and as they jogged along on the edge of the scrub the doctor glanced once or twice across the flat through the dead, naked branches. Mac looked that way. The crows were hopping about the branches of a tree away out in the middle of the flat, flopping down from branch to branch to the grass, then rising hurriedly and circling.

"Dead beast there!" said Mac, out of his bushcraft.

"No, dying," said Doc. Wild, with less bush experience but more intellect.

"There's some steers of Job's out there somewhere," muttered Mac. Then, suddenly, "It ain't drought—it's the ploorer at last, or I'm blanked!"

Mac feared the advent of that cattle-plague pleuro-pneumonia, which was raging on some stations, but had hitherto kept clear of Job's run.

"We'll go and see if you like," suggested Doc. Wild.

They turned out across the flat, the horses picking their way amongst the dried tufts and fallen branches.

"There ain't no sign o' cattle theer," said the doctor. "More likely a ewe in trouble about her lamb."

"Or the blanky dingoes at a sheep," said Mac. "I wish we had a gun; might get a shot at them."

Doc. Wild hitched the skirts of a long China silk coat he wore free of a hip-pocket. He always carried a revolver.

"In case I feel obliged to shoot a first person singular one of these hot days," he explained once — whereat bushmen scratched the backs of their heads and thought feebly, without result. "We'd never git near enough for a shot," the doctor said; then he commenced to hum fragments from a bush-song about the finding of a lost bushman in the last stages of death from thirst:

The crows kept flyin' up, boys!
The crows kept flyin' up!
The dog, he seen and whimpered, boys,
Though he was but a pup.

"It must be somethin' or other," muttered Mac. "Look at them blanky crows!"

The last was found, we brought him round,
And took him from the place,
While the ants was swarmin' on the ground,
An' the crows was sayin' grace.

"Hilloa! what's that?" cried Mac, who was a little in advance, and rode a tall horse.

It was Job's filly lying saddled and bridled, with a rifle-bullet through shoulder and chest, as they found on subsequent examination, and her head full of kangaroo-shot. She was feebly rocking her head against the ground, and marking the dust with her hoof, as if trying to write the reason there.

The doctor drew his revolver, took a cartridge from his waistcoat pocket, and put the filly out of her misery in a very scientific manner; then something — professional instinct or the something supernatural about the doctor — led him straight to the log, hidden in the grass, where Job lay as we left him, and about fifty yards from the dead filly, which must have staggered a few yards off after being shot.

Mac followed, shaking violently. "Oh, my God!" he cried, with the woman in his voice and his face so pale that his freckles stood out like buttons, as the doctor said afterwards. "Oh, my God! he's shot himself!"

"No, he hasn't," said the doctor, deftly turning Job into a healthier position, with his head from under the log and his mouth to the air. He ran his eyes and hands over him, and Job moaned. "He's got a broken leg," said the doctor. Even then he couldn't resist making a characteristic remark, half to himself: "A man doesn't shoot himself when he's going to be made a lawful father for the first time—unless he can see a long way into the future." Then he took out his whisky flask and said briskly to Mac, "Leave me your water-bag"—Mac carried a canvas water bag slung under his horse's neck—"and ride back to the track, stop Mrs Spencer, and bring the waggonette here. Tell her it's only a broken leg."

Mac mounted and rode off at a break-neck pace.

As he worked, the doctor muttered, "He's shot his horse. That's what gits me. The fool might have lain here for a week. I'd never have suspected spite in that carcass—and I ought to know men."

But as Job came round a little Doc. Wild was enlightened.

"Where's the filly?" cried Job suddenly, between groans.

"She's all right," said the doctor in a tone that might have been resentfully envious.

"Stop her!" cried Job, struggling to rise. "Stop her!—O God! my leg."

"Keep quiet, you fool!"

"Stop her!" yelled Job.

"Why stop her?" asked the doctor, "She won't go far," he added.

"She'll go home to Gerty," shouted Job. "Stop her! stop her!"

"Oh—ho!" drawled the doctor to himself. "I might have guessed that; and I ought to know men."

"Don't take me home!" demanded Job in a semi-sensible interval. "Take me to Poisonous Jimmy's, and tell Gerty I'm on the spree."

When Mac and Mrs Spencer returned with the waggonette, Doc. Wild was in his shirt-sleeves, his Chinese silk coat having gone for bandages. The lower half of Job's trouser-leg and his elastic-side boot lay on the ground, neatly cut off, and his bandaged leg was sandwiched between two strips of bark, with grass stuffed in the hollows, and bound by saddle-straps.

"That's all I can do for him for the present."

Mrs. Spencer was a strong woman mentally, but she arrived rather pale and a little shaky; nevertheless she called out as soon as she got within earshot of the doctor:

"What's Job been doing now?" Job, by the way, had never been remarkable for doing anything.

"He's got his leg broke, and shot his horse," replied the doctor. "But," he added, "whether he's been a hero or a fool I dunno. Anyway, it's a mess all round."

They unrolled the bed, blankets, and pillows in the bottom of the trap, backed it against the log to have a step, and got Job in. It was a ticklish job, but they had to manage it; Job, maddened by pain and heat, and only kept from fainting by whisky, groaning and raving and yelling to them to stop his horse.

"Lucky we got him before the ants did," muttered the doctor. Then he had an inspiration. "You bring him on to the shepherd's hut this side the station. We must leave him there. Drive carefully, and pour brandy into him now and then; when the brandy's done pour whisky, then gin; keep the rum till the last." The doctor had put a supply of spirits in the waggonette at Poisonous Jimmy's. "I'll take Mac's horse and ride on and send Peter, the station hand, back to the hut to meet you. I'll be back myself if I can. This business will hurry things up at the station."

Which last was one of these apparently insane remarks of the doctor's which no sane and sober man could fathom or see a reason for—except in Doc. Wild's madness. The doctor rode off at a gallop. The burden of Job's raving all the way was of the dead filly:

"Stop her! She must not go home to Gerty! God, help me shoot!—Whoa! Whoa, there! Cope—cope—cope! Steady, Jessie, old girl." Jessie was the filly's name. "Aim straight—aim straight! Ah! I've missed!—Stop her!"

"I never met a character like that inside a man that looked like Job on the outside," commented the doctor afterwards. "I've met men behind revolvers and big moustaches in California; but I've met a derned sight more men behind nothing but a good-natured grin here in Australia. These lanky sawny bushmen will do things in an easy-going way some day that'll make the Old World sit up and think hard."

He reached the station in time, and twenty minutes or half-an-hour later he left the case in the hands of the Lancashire woman, whom he saw reason to admire, and rode back to the hut to help Job, whom they soon fixed up as comfortably as possible.

They humbugged Mrs Falconer first with a yarn of Job's alleged phenomenal shyness and gradually as she grew stronger and the truth less important they told it to her; and so instead of Job being pushed, scarlet-faced, into the bedroom to see his first-born, Gerty Falconer herself took the child down to the hut, and so presented Uncle Job with my first and favourite cousin and bush-chum.

Doc. Wild stayed round until he saw Job comfortably moved to the homestead; then he prepared to depart.

"I'm sorry," said Job, who was still weak—"I'm sorry for that there filly. I was breaking her into a side-saddle for Gerty when she should get about. I wouldn't have lost her for twenty quid."

"Never mind, Job," said the doctor. "I, too, once shot an animal I was fond of—and for the sake of a woman; but that animal walked on two legs and wore trousers. Good-bye Job."

And he left for Poisonous Jimmy's.

HENRY LAWSON.