

The Carved Emu Egg.

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all round. The thing I was pledged to do I have not done. Perhaps it is best so, who knows?"

She lay for some little time after with closed eyes, painfully struggling for breath. We watched her, suffering with her, both of us, for mother, too, loved her.

Suddenly Kathie started up in bed with a cry of alarm. "Charlie! The emu egg! It's a danger. Be careful—destroy it!"

A stream of blood gushed from her mouth and stopped her voice. At the same instant there was the sound of wheels outside, and mother rushed to the door and brought in the doctor. A glance showed him that Kathie was past his aid. A minute later he took her out of my arms and laid her gently back on the bed. "It's all over," he said.

Some hours afterwards I was sitting in our own kitchen, a sort of stunned-like, feeling as if all the good had gone out of life for me, when mother came in.

She it was who, in the absence of the aunt, had supplied the doctor, to the best of her knowledge, with particulars about Kathie and her illness; and he, promising to send the certificate of death in due course, had gone away, leaving her in charge of the dead.

Mother, as she came into our kitchen, looked frightened and bewildered. She had the strangest, the most dumbfounding story to tell me. There was no dead girl in the house next door. It was a young man who lay there, pale and quiet, quit for ever of his earthly troubles—a mere boy not twenty.

At first it was impossible for me to believe that the girl who had lived in my thoughts and heart for the last six weeks as my future wife, had never existed. But, bit by bit, many things said and done by him whom we knew as Kathie came into my mind, and I believed right enough. I even began to wonder why I had never guessed the truth before.

Oh! but I was sore and angry at first to think how I had been played with! But afterwards, when I stood looking down on the handsome face that seemed so young and boyish in death, I could not keep any anger against the poor lad. He had been the best of comrades to me, and he counted me dear as a comrade—I knew that. As for the rest—for what he had meant to do that day and would have done had I not stuck to the boy—God forgive him! How was a lad, trained from his childhood in wrong notions of princes and rulers, to understand the horrible wickedness of the thing he had pledged himself to do?—though I can witness for it that at times he had his misgivings. On the other hand, he was quite careless about the fate that he must have known his mad act would bring upon himself.

I was denied the satisfaction of relieving my feelings by "having it out" with the aunt. It did not take us long to realise that that worthy's unaccountable absence meant that she had left the place for good, for the house had been cleared of every scrap of personal belongings, only the meagre bits of fur-

niture remaining. Moreover, mother suddenly recollected that, although she had never noticed Miss O'Brien go out, shortly after noon she had seen, to her surprise, a man leave the house that had so few visitors—an oldish-looking, white-bearded man, who had walked briskly down the street carrying a portmanteau.

"The beard was false, and that was the aunt in her right toggery, she being no more a woman than poor Kathie was!" I cried out at once. And I made all the more certain that this was so, because of the man's head I'd seen shadowed on the blind the night before. I now recognised it for what it had been—the so-called aunt's head without the bonnet and bonnet strings that hid the heavy, cruel-looking jaw.

The old villain had certainly been beforehand in making tracks to be out of the way of trouble. This shows how dead sure he must have been that his young confederate would not fail that day to accomplish his terrible purpose—the purpose that had brought both of them from America.

Oh, it wasn't so difficult for me to piece the whole business out in my mind reasonable-like, for there were lots of things about our next-door neighbours, not understood at the time, that were now as plain as a pikestaff to me. They had, evidently enough, both belonged to some secret Anarchist society in America, and this society had decreed, for the carrying out of its terrorising schemes, that the heir-apparent to the British crown should be assassinated during his colonial tour. The lad who had played such a big part in my humble life for six weeks, had been chosen to do the job—perhaps because he was spirited and enthusiastic, and, in face of the disease that was slowly killing him, quite reckless of death. Auckland had been the place fixed on, no doubt as a nice out-of-the-way spot, where no one would dream of looking for Anarchists or their like. And to Auckland the young chap had come, in company with the elder man, who had evidently been told off to watch him and keep him up to the mark. The pair had taken the disguise of women, posing as aunt and niece, for the better concealment of their designs, and had settled down in our midst as decent householders, to make themselves quite familiar with Auckland and the ways of her folk before the time for action arrived.

Well, that time had come and gone. A great crime had been frustrated, and he who, in his blindness, would have shed innocent blood, had gone to his last account with his conscience free of that.

We buried the poor boy as Kathleen O'Brien. It was the name in which the doctor's certificate had been made out—the only name by which we had known him.

The truth mother and I kept to ourselves. No need to tell, when no purpose could now be served by the telling, what could only create a fuss and scandal and make people say hard things of the dead. Besides, I'd no mind to set myself up as the laughing stock of the whole street, and of my friends to boot, as I should certainly have done if I'd have let it be known that the girl I'd been courting so desperately hard for the last six weeks had turned out to be a young man.

And the carved emu egg? Not much of an emu's egg; was that when you came to examine it closely. An egg-shaped contraption of polished steel, coated thickly with nicely-tinted wax, which had been all carved and graven in the way I've told before—that's what it was. Cunningly done it was too, so that, unless you handled it, you could have sworn it really was a carved emu egg like those sometimes to be seen in a curio shop. But, for all its innocent look, a regular devil's contrivance, arranged, as I guessed, to go off, with ghastly results, by the mere force of the concussion when thrown at an object.

It was my duty to destroy the pretty, deadly thing, but it had to be gone about with caution. The day after we laid the poor, deluded boy in his grave I went across to Lake Takapuna. Borrowing a boat from a friend there, I went for a row on the Lake. When I got to that part where folks say it has no bottom I took the seeming emu egg from my jacket pocket and gently dropped it overboard. Down it shot through the clear water like a streak of light, and was gone beyond my sight and knowledge. A burden was off my mind—that was the end of the evil contraption. But, as I pulled back to the bank, I could not but think of the very different end for which it had been fashioned—the end that, sudden and swift as a thunderbolt from heaven, carried death to the innocent and unsuspecting. And, for the hundredth time, I was filled with wonder and thankfulness that it had been given to me, a plain workman of New Zealand, to keep that death from our King's son and his wife, and so spare the Empire a great catastrophe.

(The End.)

OBITUARY.

THE LATE M. J. A. EWEN.

The late John Alexander Ewen, whose death in London was announced to us by cable last week, was one of the senior members of the well-known firms of Sargood, Butler, Nichol and Ewen, Australia, and Sargood, Son and Ewen, New Zealand. He was born at Laurencekirk, Kircardineshire, Scotland. At an early age he was apprenticed to a draper at Montrose, where he stayed for a time after his apprenticeship. A little while later he secured an appointment with Messrs. Bainbridge and Muschamp, Newcastle-on-Tyne. After about three years spent with this firm he decided to visit Australia, and landed in Melbourne in 1852, where he was almost immediately engaged by the late Mr. F. J. Sargood, then senior member of the firm of Sargood, King and Sargood. Shortly after this he was appointed Victorian representative of the firm, and eventually, in 1863, was admitted as a partner. A little later he went to Dunedin, and in 1864 he established the business of the firm in that town. In 1868 he removed to London to take over the management of the firm's business in that city, and has resided there almost entirely ever since.

Mr. Ewen was a Justice of Peace for the County of Middlesex, also a member of the committee for the Con-

gregational Union, had a seat on the board of the Union Steamship Company, and was also connected with the London Board of the Bank of New Zealand, and various other colonial institutions.

Though a man of retiring and unostentatious disposition, he had always a kind word and helping hand for any colonials who visited London and came within the sphere of his influence, and many colonials who were in the habit of visiting the Old Country periodically will miss his kind and genial welcome.

He took a great interest in all matters appertaining to the welfare of the colonies in general, and as an employer of labour was loved and respected by all who came in contact with him. He was universally esteemed by all connected with the trade in which he had spent so many years of his life. He lived in a quiet and retired manner at Potter's Bar, Burnet, near London, in the bosom of his family, to whom he was deeply attached, devoting his spare hours to the care of his garden, in which he took a great interest.

Through the death of Mr Ewen a blank will be left in the ranks of the old colonial merchants residing in London, with whom he lived on the best terms.

His success in life is another illustration of a young man, who, though beginning in a humble manner, by dint of perseverance, strict attention to business and sobriety, raised himself to affluence and an honourable position in the world.

THE LATE MR. JAMES MACKIE.

The death of Mr James Mackie, coachbuilder, which took place yesterday morning, removes from our midst another of our old identities. Mr Mackie arrived in Auckland from Tasmania in 1859, and joined his brother, Alexander Mackie, in partnership as coachbuilders. The firm were large contractors to the Imperial Government during the Maori war, and at about the same time undertook the carriage from the Manakau to the Waitemata of the steamer Maori Chief. The work presented many difficulties, and there were not wanting many persons who predicted that the attempt would end in failure; in fact, some friends of the owners of the steamer advised them to cancel the contract, as the vessel would certainly be ruined. A specially constructed waggon was built, to be drawn by horses, but owing to the great weight of the load and the difficulty in getting all the horses to pull at the one time, bullocks had to be called into requisition. By these means the journey was successfully completed without any mishap. Mr Mackie went to the Thames in 1869, and carried on business there till 1878, when he re-opened in High-street at the corner of Victoria-street East. Here he continued till a short time ago. The deceased was very fond of music, and for years was a member of St Mary's and St Paul's Churches. He will be greatly missed by a large circle of friends and acquaintances, on account of his generous and genial disposition.

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