

"A little wild" they admitted he might have been, but that was all. Such of the whispered stories as came to their ears were not credited. But I knew them to be only too sadly true. They believed he had disappeared because he could not bear the shame of being falsely accused; I knew that fear of his personal safety was a much more potent reason than any feeling of shame. I knew also what had

This, then, was the man of whom I set out in search. This was the man on the finding of whom my happiness in life depended.

One thing alone was in my favour. I had some colonial experience. When I first left school, at my earnest solicitation, I had been sent to a New Zealand runholder as a cadet, at a premium of £100 a year, for which that gentleman allowed me to do a shepherd's work



"I CAN NOT, WILL NOT, MARRY YOU UNTIL THE UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FATE OF MY UNFORTUNATE BROTHER IS CLEARED UP."

been the most powerful factor in his downfall—that, cleverly as he had concealed the fact from his relations in the short visits he had paid them during this period, he was little better than a confirmed drunkard. If he had sunk thus low before leaving England, what must he be now after knocking about the Colonies for three or four years? I could hazard a very fair guess.

without his wages. Old Forty per-cent, as he was appropriately nick-named, a retired money-lender, ran his station entirely with cadets, of which a sanctimonious-looking friend of his at home picked up for him a constant supply. His system had many advantages one of these being that the rise or fall in the price of wool affected him less than his neighbours, for he took care that his cadets' pre-