

A knife glittered in the moonlight, and with a sharp cry of pain, he staggered back. By this time McQuoid had risen, and picking up his heavy riding whip, he attacked Cyril's assailant with such vigour that he deemed discretion the better part of valour, and fled. Then McQuoid turned his attention to Cyril.

"You've saved my life, Smith, and I shall never forget it!"

"Well, for the matter of that, you've saved mine!"

"Take off your coat, and let's have a look at your wound."

A nasty cut below the left shoulder, from which the blood was welling freely. McQuoid bound it up as well as he could, and then went to look for his mare, who had regained her feet, and stood trembling a few yards off. On his return he saw the device by which she had been thrown—a rope made of flax leaves stretched across the road from fence to fence. He cut it to prevent further mischief, and then made Cyril mount the horse, and so they got home.

As Cyril tried to walk up the verandah steps, he fainted from loss of blood, to the great consternation of the ladies. He was put to bed, and a horseman was dispatched to Gisborne to fetch a surgeon, and to inform the police of the outrage. It may be stated here that the latter succeeded in capturing the miscreants, who took up their residence in gaol for two years.

The surgeon, on dressing his patient's wound, pronounced it not dangerous, and after giving directions as to perfect quiet and diet, took his leave, remarking to Mrs. McQuoid: "I leave him in your hands, and I'm sure he could not be in better."

He was right. She nursed him as if she had been his mother, and his splendid constitution standing him in good stead, he was in a few days sufficiently recovered to listen in languorous happiness to the sweet, low voice of Jessie, as she read to him hour after hour. She never tired of reading, nor he of listening, albeit while his bodily hurt was getting well, the wound inflicted by Cupid was becoming one that Hymen alone could heal.

At the end of three weeks the convalescent was sunning himself on the verandah with McQuoid, when a young man rode up, and flinging himself from his horse, asked if Mr. McQuoid was at home.

"I am Mr. McQuoid," replied that gentleman.

"Then I have much pleasure in making your acquaintance," replied the stranger. "My name's Hamilton—Captain Hamilton, of the 17th Lancers. Here's a letter of introduction from my father."

"My old friend Jock! Give us your hand, man! Eh! what's the matter?"

Cyril had risen, and was shaking Hamilton's hand with a vigour astonishing in an invalid.

"Cyril, old man, how on earth came you here, and what have you been doing all this time?"

"I don't understand!" began McQuoid.

"Neither do I!" rejoined the bewildered Lancer. "What do you mean, Fortescue, by hiding away like this when your lawyers have been advertising for you all over the world?"

"Fortescue!"

"Yes, Mr. McQuoid, Cyril Fortescue, formerly of the 17th Lancers, and now Lord Woodleigh!"

"My brother?" gasped Cyril, falling back into his chair.

"He—he—I grieve to say that he was killed in a railway collision six months ago."

"Look to him, he's fainted!" cried McQuoid, rushing into the house for restoratives.

"Fool that I was to spring it on him so suddenly!" muttered the Captain.

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In due time, however, Cyril came round, and the next day he had an interview with Jessie, the result of which may be inferred from the following paragraph which appeared in the *Hawke's Bay Herald* shortly afterwards:

"On Saturday last, Lord and Lady Woodleigh sailed for England by the *Ionic*. The romantic circumstances which led to their union will be fresh in the recollection of our readers. The happy pair carry with them the best wishes of all who know them."