

going to give you a last chance. If I provide guides to take you to the coast, where you can get a berth on a whaler, will you promise to leave New Zealand and never come back? You have only one alternative, and if you refuse my kind offer, well——” and he shrugged his shoulders. Jack was a brave lad, and looking the cur full in the face, he answered: “Rather than resign her to an inhuman brute like you, I’ll accept the alternative!”

“Nearing mid-day, Morgan again approached, and making Jack the same offer, met with the same answer, though I had tried to persuade the lad he could perhaps save Kitty by taking the chance, and then when he was safely away from Morgan, he could return to Barrytown and p’raps make things alright, and thwart Morgan’s plans. But he was inflexible. Half-an-hour after Jack was taken away from me, and a few minutes later I heard a shot, and instinctively knew what it meant. I never saw Morgan again till now. After being a long time a prisoner at that *pa*, and being compelled to fill cartridges for the wretches, I managed to escape again, and this time I got clear away, and here I am. Just in time, too, it seems, for I’ve stopped that cursed scoundrel from adding another crime to his record, and saved a woman from being married to the hardest-hearted devil going! If you doubt my word, look at him!’

“Morgan was by this time ashy pale, and had to support himself against the box that served as a table. Everyone had listened with breathless interest to the stirring narrative of the stranger, and when he had finished and cleared up the mystery of the fate of poor Jack Leuwin, whom everybody

liked for his own sake as well as Kitty’s, a threatening murmur arose which boded none too well for Morgan. At the news of Jack’s cruel murder, Kitty had swooned away, and been taken back to her father’s shanty to receive proper care and attention.

“‘Have you anything to say, Morgan, to the story we’ve just listened to?’ said Wilkins, but the guilty man seemed speechless. At last he muttered a few words, then, before anyone had time to realise his intention, he drew a revolver from his pocket, placed it against his breast, and pulled the trigger. That was the end of Morgan. We picked him up, dead as a door nail, and he was buried in the shadow of the great totara, beneath which he was to have been married; and old gray haired Wilkins, instead of the marriage read the burial service.

“Kitty was unconscious for some time, and when she came to her mind was completely unhinged, and the only thing she seemed to remember was her sweetheart, Jack Leuwin.

“Her father died a broken-hearted man when he found his child had lost her reason, and all through that accursed scoundrel, whose only redeeming point was that he loved the girl.

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“That, my friend, is the true ungarished tale of ‘Mad Kitty,’ and I don’t think a sadder case was ever known.”

My host knocked the ashes from his pipe, and extending me a kind invitation to “drop in” whenever I was feeling lonely, wished me “Good-night,” and left me to return to my hotel and ponder over the fate of the poor lonely woman who enquired for “a letter from Jack.”

