

want to see your father—I'm—er—in a hurry."

"Dad's over at Kaiti Creek. It's no good, Tony. Drive on, Cran-deck. You'll have to finish feeding the dogs by yourself."

Tony's clear boy-face reddened as she dropped to the tussock. "Well—if you will, I suppose you will. But you won't like it, My Lady. I'm not sorry, and you're not going to make me sorry."

"You can clear, Cran-deck," said Our Lady; and Cran-deck cleared with an inward amazement and an exceeding indignation that led him to ask straight questions of Harton on the very next day, when the answers super-added puzzlement and disgust.

Harton explained very simply that the inwardness of the wild young lives on the plains was known to Our Lady, both through the large, sweet wisdom that comes not with prayers nor fasting, and through the mouths of the men who came to her in their trouble of soul. "Pint-o'-Beer" Dick was an Honorable, and a honeless drunkard in his own right, and Payne's desire for this world's dross had stripped the title of honest man from him before he came over seas. But they stood to the pride of their manhood before Our Lady, and in her innocence she judged her "boys" lives by her own straight standard of right and wrong, and incidentally held them from much unconsidered evil.

"Why not?" demanded Harton—he was re-boarding the side of a cowhouse, and his words came in sections—"It can't smirch her—anything we'd tell her. What? Some bad lots, of course—but we shut 'em off pretty quick. An' there are times when a fellow needs the sort of help—'nother man's no good—and, by George, she knows how to touch us up when we deserve it!"

It was becoming clear to Cran-deck that—man being certainly made for hearth-love and the tend-ing of a wife—it was natural that

he should desire to take Our Lady away from this place, and to hedge her about with woman's gear, and the all-abiding serenity of an Eng-lish life. He did not know this until he learnt that these other men considered that they held a claim to her.

"It's—it's iniquitous," he said; it's—er—Jamison's a fool. She ought to be shielded from all this sort of thing. In England—"

"Don't talk piffle," said Harton, driving a nail home with a steady ponderous stroke; "and don't come to me for comfort if you let out those sort of ideas on Our Lady. We can't get along without her, and she can't get along with-out us. So you'd best take those sheep of yours and be off home, young man. It'll be a snorter of a night."

Cran-deck was filled with dividing thoughts as he tailed his half-dozen strayed sheep over the grey, crawling sea of wind-beat tussock, where the nor'-wester boomed and shrieked through the raw red autumn sunset.

He hated the plain and the life of it beyond words; and he hated the hidden horror that waited him—somewhere—somehow—in conjunc-tion with it. Then he called him-self a fool, and swore at his stiffened fingers and dust-brimmed eyes when they refused to help him give life and light to his pipe.

"It's an unholy place," he said; "and she loves it. But she will have to love me more."

And he set himself to the teach-ing of Our Lady while the winter smote the whole present universe into a tingling vigour of frosty life, and made of the hills a gleam-ing crystal dazzle that took strange unearthly shapes under the white moon.

Cran-deck learnt much regarding the grubbing of turnips, and the straining of wire-fencing, and all the unspeakable weariness of life on a sheep-station. He did some fair shooting in the ice-crisped flax-swamps when the westing was red