

"What am I to do?" she asked, tragically. "If I were not so unpopular with the parents of this Heaven-forsaken spot, I would complain to them, but really when one has slapped half the infant community, and is only waiting an opportunity to slap the other half, it complicates matters."

"The clergyman——" began Miss Wildon, but Miss Crayley made an impatient little movement with her hands.

"My dear! he is personally affronted that I have time to cultivate flowers. He is willing to employ me in many more useful matters, and would consider my appeal beneath notice. Besides which, he only comes here once a month, and is already too distressed at the backslidings of the adult population for me to worry him about the infant offenders."

"Why not get a dog?" suggested Miss Wildon, handing her cup for some more tea. "A nice big dog with an expression and a bark."

"Not if I know it!" said Miss Crayley, with energy; "I don't pretend to be able to train dogs, or to make them obey me when they have been trained. I don't know how it is," she went on in a sweet, vexed voice, "but the dogs in the Forty-mile Bush are different to the dogs one used to know at Home. They are independent here—and critical. I got one shortly after I bought this place, and he was the most self-opinionated beast you can imagine. He approved of nothing I did, and my method of gardening struck him as being inferior. He put up with it for some time, and then decided to give me a lesson himself. I woke one morning to find the patch, I had dug over night, a large hole with the scraped-out earth distributed impartially over my seedling bed. I whipped him," continued Miss Crayley, with an air of firmness, "I whipped him with a cabbage-tree leaf, but it did not do any good." Miss Wildon looked surprised. "From that time onward

he seemed to think that what I really wanted in my garden was an artesian well. So I gave a tramp a shilling to take him out of the district. I heard afterwards that he sold him to some shearers for ten shillings—so he could not have been altogether the mongrel I thought him. He wasn't a sheep dog, either, so I don't know what use he could have been to shearers."

Miss Wildon did not know either. "As far as I can see," she said, rising to say good-bye, "you are reduced either to philosophy or the local policeman."

"Oh! I will not let it be as bad as that," said Miss Crayley, accompanying her to the gate, "I must think of a way out of the situation."

## CHAPTER II.

Miss Wildon did not go to see Miss Crayley for quite a long time after her last visit. She was painting a panel of nasturtiums in her spare time. One morning, returning from an early stroll by the river, she noticed, growing over Miss Crayley's fence, just the particular spray of these flowers she wanted. Now, Miss Crayley's flowers or any of her possessions were always at her disposal when she wanted to paint them, so, standing on tip-toe, she reached and grasped the dew-spangled spray. Horror! what had happened? Her hand was secured in a firm grasp, and a distinctly masculine voice said extulingly:

"Now, then! what do you mean? Naughty little girl! Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

For a moment Miss Wildon felt exactly like a naughty little girl, and her hand struggled wildly to escape. Then a feeling of astonishment awoke in her. Her unseen captor was a gentleman! How did she know? By his hand and his voice, and lastly by the scent in the air of a tobacco not usually smoked in the settlement.

In her bewilderment she allowed