



My Friend The Murderer

MY FRIEND THE MURDERER

By A. Conan Doyle

"Number 481 is no better, doctor," said the head-warder, in a slightly reproachful accent, looking in round the corner of my door.

"Confound 481" I responded from behind the pages of the *Australian Sketcher*.

"And 61 says his tubes are paining him. Couldn't you do anything for him?"

"He is a walking drug-shop," said I. "He has the whole British pharmacopæ inside him. I believe his tubes are as sound as yours are."

"Then there's 7 and 108, they are chronic," continued the warder, glancing down a blue slip of paper. "And 28 knocked off work yesterday--said lifting things gave him a stitch in the side. I want you to have a look at him, if you don't mind, doctor. There's 81, too--him that killed John Adamson in the Corinthian brig--he's been carrying on awful in the night, shrieking and yelling, he has, and no stopping him either."

"All right, I'll have a look at him afterward," I said, tossing my paper carelessly aside, and pouring myself out a cup of coffee. "Nothing else to report, I suppose, warder?"

The official protruded his head a little further into the room. "Beg pardon, doctor," he said, in a confidential tone, "but I notice as 82 has a bit of a cold, and it would be a good excuse for you to visit him and have a chat, maybe."

The cup of coffee was arrested half-way to my lips as I stared in amazement at the man's serious face.

"An excuse?" I said. "An excuse? what the deuce are you talking about, McPherson? You see me trudging about all day at my practise, when I'm not looking after the prisoners, and coming back every night as tired as a dog, and you talk about finding an excuse for doing more work."

"You'd like it, doctor," said warder McPherson, insinuating one of his shoulders into the room. "That man's story's worth listening to if you could get him to tell it, though he's not what you'd call free in his speech. Maybe you don't know who 82 is?"

"No, I don't, and I don't care either," I answered, in the conviction that some local ruffian was about to be foisted upon me as a celebrity.

"He's Maloney," said the warder, "him that turned Queen's evidence after the murders at Bluemansdyke."

"You don't say so?" I ejaculated, laying down my cup in astonishment. I had heard of this ghastly series of murders, and read an account of them in a London magazine long before setting foot in the colony. I remembered that the atrocities committed had thrown the Burke and Hare crimes completely into the shade, and that one of the most villainous of the gang had saved his own skin by betraying his companions. "Are you sure?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, it's him right enough. Just you draw him out a bit, and he'll astonish you. He's a man to know, is Maloney; that's to say, in moderation;" and the head grinned, bobbed, and disappeared, leaving me to finish my breakfast and ruminat over what I had heard.

The surgeonsip of an Australian prison is not an enviable position. It

My Friend The Murderer

may be endurable in Melbourne or Sydney, but the little town of Perth has few attractions to recommend it, and those few had been long exhausted. The climate was detestable, and the society far from congenial. Sheep and cattle were the staple support of the community; and their prices, breeding, and diseases the principal topic of conversation. Now as I, being an outsider, possessed neither the one nor the other, and was utterly callous to the new "dip" and the "rot" and other kindred topics, I found myself in a state of mental isolation, and was ready to hail anything which might relieve the monotony of my existence. Maloney, the murderer, had at least some distinctiveness and individuality in his character, and might act as a tonic to a mind sick of the commonplaces of existence. I determined that I should follow the warder's advice, and take the excuse for making his acquaintance. When, therefore, I went upon my usual matutinal round, I turned the lock of the door which bore the convict's number upon it, and walked into the cell.

The man was lying in a heap upon his rough bed as I entered, but, uncoiling his long limbs, he started up and stared at me with an insolent look of defiance on his face which augured badly for our interview. He had a pale, set face, with sandy hair and a steely-blue eye, with something feline in its expression. His frame was tall and muscular, though there was a curious bend in his shoulders, which almost amounted to a deformity. An ordinary observer meeting him in the street might have put him down as a well-developed man, fairly handsome, and of studious habits--even in the hideous uniform of the rottenest convict establishment he imparted a certain refinement to his carriage which marked him out among the inferior ruffians around him.

"I'm not on the sick-list," he said, gruffly. There was something in the hard, rasping voice which dispelled all softer illusions, and made me realize that I was face to face with the man of the Lena Valley and Bluemansdyke, the bloodiest bushranger that ever stuck up a farm or cut the throats of its occupants.

"I know you're not," I answered. "warder McPherson told me you had a cold, though, and I thought I'd look in and see you."

"Blast warder McPherson, and blast you, too!" yelled the convict, in a paroxysm of rage. "Oh, that's right," he added in a quieter voice; "hurry away; report me to the governor, do! Get me another six months or so--that's your game."

"I'm not going to report you," I said.

"Eight square feet of ground," he went on, disregarding my protest, and evidently working himself into a fury again. "Eight square feet, and I can't have that without being talked to and stared at, and--oh, blast the whole crew of you!" and he raised his two clinched hands above, his head and shook them in passionate invective.

"You've got a curious idea of hospitality," I remarked, determined not to lose my temper, and saying almost the first thing that came to my tongue.

To my surprise the words had an extraordinary effect upon him. He seemed completely staggered at my assuming the proposition for which he had been so fiercely contending--namely, that the room in which he stood was his own.

"I beg your pardon," he said; "I didn't mean to be rude. Won't you take a seat?" and he motioned toward a rough trestle, which formed the head-piece of his couch.

I sat down, rather astonished at the sudden change. I don't know that I liked Maloney better under this new aspect. The murderer had, it is true, disappeared for the nonce, but there was something in the smooth tones and obsequious manner which powerfully suggested the witness of

My Friend The Murderer

the queen, who had stood up and sworn away the lives of his companions in crime.

"How's your chest?" I asked, putting on my professional air.

"Come, drop it, doctor--drop it!" he answered, showing a row of white teeth as he resumed his seat upon the side of the bed. "It wasn't anxiety after my precious health that brought you along here; that story won't wash at all. You came to have a look at wolf Tone Maloney, forger, murderer, Sydney-slider, ranger, and government peach. That's about my figure, ain't it? There it is, plain and straight; there's nothing mean about me."

He paused as if he expected me to say something; but as I remained silent, he repeated once or twice, "There's nothing mean about me."

"And why shouldn't I?" he suddenly yelled, his eyes gleaming and his whole satanic nature reasserting itself. "We were bound to swing, one and all, and they were none the worse if I saved myself by turning against them. Every man for himself, say I, and the devil take the luckiest. You haven't a plug of tobacco, doctor, have you?"

He tore at the piece of "Barrett's" which I handed him, as ravenously as a wild beast. It seemed to have the effect of soothing his nerves, for he settled himself down in the bed and re-assumed his former deprecating manner.

"You wouldn't like it yourself, you know, doctor," he said: "it's enough to make any man a little queer in his temper. I'm in for six months this time for assault, and very sorry I shall be to go out again, I can tell you. My mind's at ease in here; but when I'm outside, what with the government and what with Tattooed Tom, of Hawkesbury, there's no chance of a quiet life."

"Who is he?" I asked.

"He's the brother of John Grimthorpe, the same that was condemned on my evidence; and an infernal scamp he was, too! Spawn of the devil, both of them! This tattooed one is a murderous ruffian, and he swore to have my blood after that trial. It's seven year ago, and he's following me yet; I know he is, though he lies low and keeps dark. He came up to me in Ballarat in '75; you can see on the back of my hand here where the bullet clipped me. He tried again in '76, at Port Philip, but I got the drop on him and wounded him badly. He knifed me in '79, though, in a bar at Adelaide, and that made our account about level. He's loafing round again now, and he'll let daylight into me--unless--unless by some extraordinary chance some one does as much for him." And Maloney gave a very ugly smile.

"I don't complain of him so much," he continued. "Looking at it in his way, no doubt it is a sort of family matter that can hardly be neglected. It's the government that fetches me. When I think of what I've done for this country, and then of what this country has done for me, it makes me fairly wild--clean drives me off my head. There's no gratitude nor common decency left, doctor!"

He brooded over his wrongs for a few minutes, and then proceeded to lay them before me in detail.

"Here's nine men," he said; "they've been murdering and killing for a matter of three years, and maybe a life a week wouldn't more than average the work that they've done. The government catches them and the government tries them, but they can't convict; and why?--because the witnesses have all had their throats cut, and the whole job's been very neatly done. What happens then? Up comes a citizen called wolf Tone Maloney; he says, 'The country needs me, and here I am.' And with that he gives his evidence, convicts the lot, and enables the beaks to hang them. That's what I did. There's nothing mean about me! And now what

My Friend The Murderer

does the country do in return? Dogs me, sir, spies on me, watches me night and day, turns against the very man that worked so very hard for it. There's something mean about that, anyway. I didn't expect them to knight me, nor to make me colonial secretary; but, damn it! I did expect that they would let me alone!"

"Well," I remonstrated, "if you choose to break laws and assault people, you can't expect it to be looked over on account of former services."

"I don't refer to my present imprisonment, sir," said Maloney, with dignity. "It's the life I've been leading since that cursed trial that takes the soul out of me. Just you sit there on that trestle, and I'll tell you all about it, and then look me in the face and tell me that I've been treated fair by the police."

I shall endeavor to transcribe the experience of the convict in his own words, as far as I can remember them, preserving his curious perversions of right and wrong. I can answer for the truth of his facts, whatever may be said for his deductions from them. Months afterward, Inspector H. W. Hann, formerly governor of the jail at Dunedin, showed me entries in his ledger which corroborated every statement Maloney reeled the story off in a dull, monotonous voice, with his head sunk upon his breast and his hands between his knees. The glitter of his serpentlike eyes was the only sign of the emotions which were stirred up by the recollection of the events which he narrated.

You've read of Bluemansdyke (he began, with some pride in his tone). We made it hot while it lasted; but they ran us to earth at last, and a trap called Braxton, with a damned Yankee, took the lot of us. That was in New Zealand, of course, and they took us down to Dunedin, and there they were convicted and hanged. One and all they put up their hands in the dock, and cursed me till your blood would have run cold to hear them--which was scurvy treatment, seeing that we had all been pals together; but they were a blackguard lot, and thought only of themselves. I think it is as well that they were hung.

They took me back to Dunedin Jail, and clapped me into the old cell. The only difference they made was, that I had no work to do and was well fed. I stood this for a week or two, until one day the governor was making his rounds, and I put the matter to him.

"How's this?" I said. "My conditions were a free pardon, and you're keeping me here against the law."

He gave a sort of a smile. "Should you like very much to get out?" he asked.

"So much," said I, "that unless you open that door I'll have an action against you for illegal detention."

He seemed a bit astonished by my resolution.

"You're very anxious to meet your death," he said.

"What d'ye mean?" I asked.

"Come here, and you'll know what I mean," he answered. And he led me down the passage to a window that overlooked the door of the prison. "Look at that!" said he.

I looked out, and there were a dozen or so rough-looking fellows standing outside the street, some of them smoking, some playing cards on the pavement. When they saw me they gave a yell and crowded round the door, shaking their fists and hooting.

"They wait for you, watch and watch about," said the governor. "They're

My Friend The Murderer

the executive of the vigilance committee. However, since you are determined to go, I can't stop you."

"D'ye call this a civilized land," I cried, "and let a man be murdered in cold blood in open daylight?"

When I said this the governor and the warder and every fool in the place grinned, as if a man's life was a rare good joke.

"You've got the law on your side," says the governor; "so we won't detain you any longer. Show him out, warder."

He'd have done it, too, the black-hearted villain, if I hadn't begged and prayed and offered to pay for my board and lodging, which is more than any prisoner ever did before me. He let me stay on those conditions; and for three months I was caged up there with every larrikin in the township clamoring at the other side of the wall. That was pretty treatment for a man that had served his country!

At last, one morning up came the governor again.

"Well, Maloney," he said, "how long are you going to honor us with your society?"

I could have put a knife into his cursed body, and would, too, if we had been alone in the bush; but I had to smile, and smooth him and flatter, for I feared that he might have me sent out.

"You're an infernal rascal," he said; those were his very words, to a man that had helped him all he knew how. "I don't want any rough justice here, though; and I think I see my way to getting you out of Dunedin."

"I'll never forget you, governor," said I; "and, by God! I never will."

"I don't want your thanks nor your gratitude," he answered; "it's not for your sake that I do it, but simply to keep order in the town. There's a steamer starts from the West Quay to Melbourne to-morrow, and we'll get you aboard it. She is advertised at five in the morning, so have yourself in readiness."

I packed up the few things I had, and was smuggled out by a back door, just before daybreak. I hurried down, took my ticket under the name of Isaac Smith, and got safely aboard the Melbourne boat. I remember hearing her screw grinding into the water as the warps were cast loose, and looking back at the lights of Dunedin as I leaned upon the bulwarks, with the pleasant thought that I was leaving them behind me forever. It seemed to me that a new world was before me, and that all my troubles had been cast off. I went down below and had some coffee, and came up again feeling better than I had done since the morning that I woke to find that cursed Irishman that took me standing over me with a six-shooter.

Day had dawned by that time, and we were steaming along by the coast, well out of sight of Dunedin. I loafed about for a couple of hours, and when the sun got well up some of the other passengers came on deck and joined me. One of them, a little perky sort of fellow, took a good long look at me, and then came over and began talking.

"Mining, I suppose?" says he.

"Yes," I says.

"Made your pile?" he asks.

"Pretty fair," says I.

"I was at it myself," he says; "I worked at the Nelson fields for three months, and spent all I made in buying a salted claim which busted up

My Friend The Murderer

the second day. I went at it again, though, and struck it rich; but when the gold wagon was going down to the settlements, it was stuck up by those cursed rangers, and not a red cent left."

"That was a bad job," I says.

"Broke me--ruined me clean. Never mind, I've seen them all hanged for it; that makes it easier to bear. There's only one left--the villain that gave the evidence. I'd die happy if I could come across him. There are two things I have to do if I meet him."

"What's that?" says I, carelessly.

"I've got to ask him where the money lies--they never had time to make away with it, and it's caché somewhere in the mountains--and then I've got to stretch his neck for him, and send his soul down to join the men that he betrayed."

It seemed to me that I knew something about that caché, and I felt like laughing; but he was watching me, and it struck me that he had a nasty, vindictive kind of mind.

"I'm going up on the bridge," I said, for he was not a man whose acquaintance I cared much about making.

He wouldn't hear of my leaving him, though. "We're both miners," he says, "and we're pals for the voyage. Come down to the bar. I'm not too poor to shout."

I couldn't refuse him well, and we went down together; and that was the beginning of the trouble. What harm was I doing any one on the ship? All I asked for was a quiet life, leaving others alone and getting left alone myself. No man could ask fairer than that. And now just you listen to what came of it.

We were passing the front of the ladies' cabin, on our way to the saloon, when out comes a servant lass--a freckled currency she-devil--with a baby in her arms. We were brushing past her, when she gave a scream like a railway whistle, and nearly dropped the kid. My nerves gave a sort of a jump when I heard that scream, but I turned and begged her pardon, letting on that I thought I might have trod on her foot. I knew the game was up, though, when I saw her white face, and her leaning against the door and pointing.

"It's him!" she cried; "it's him! I saw him in the court-house. Oh, don't let him hurt the baby!"

"Who is it?" asked the steward and half a dozen others in a breath.

"It's him--Maloney--Maloney, the murderer--oh, take him away--take him away!"

I don't rightly remember what happened just at that moment. The furniture and me seemed to get kind of mixed, and there was cursing, and smashing, and some one shouting for his gold, and a general stamping round. When I got steadied a bit, I found somebody's hand in my mouth. From what I gathered afterward, I concluded that it belonged to that same little man with the vicious way of talking. He got some of it out again, but that was because the others were choking me. A poor chap can get no fair play in this world when once he is down--still, I think he will remember me till the day of his death--longer, I hope.

They dragged me out on to the poop and held a damned court-martial--on me, mind you; me, that had thrown over my pals in order to serve them. What were they to do with me? Some said this, some said that; but it ended by the captain deciding to send me ashore. The ship stopped, they lowered a boat, and I was hoisted in, the whole gang of them hooting at me from over the bulwarks, I saw the man I spoke of tying up

My Friend The Murderer

his hand, though, and I felt that things might be worse.

I changed my opinion before we got to the land. I had reckoned on the shore being deserted, and that I might make my way inland; but the ship had stopped too near the Heads, and a dozen beach-combers and such like had come down to the water's edge and were staring at us, wondering what the boat was after. When we got to the edge of the surf the cockswain hailed them, and after singing out who I was, he and his men threw me into the water. You may well look surprised--neck and crop into ten feet of water, with sharks as thick as green parrots in the bush, and I heard them laughing as I floundered to the shore.

I soon saw it was a worse job than ever. As I came scrambling out through the weeds, I was collared by a big chap with a velveteen coat, and half a dozen others got round me and held me fast. Most of them looked simple fellows enough, and I was not afraid of them; but there was one in a cabbage-tree hat that had a very nasty expression on his face, and the big man seemed to be chummy with him.

They dragged me up the beach, and then they let go their hold of me and stood round in a circle.

"Well, mate," says the man with the hat, "we've been looking out for you some time in these parts."

"And very good of you, too," I answers.

"None of your jaw," says he. "Come, boys, what shall it be--hanging, drowning, or shooting? Look sharp!"

This looked a bit too like business. "No, you don't!" I said. "I've got government protection, and it'll be murder."

"That's what they call it," answered the one in the velveteen coat, as cheery as a piping crow.

"And you're going to murder me for being a ranger?"

"Ranger be damned!" said the man. "We're going to hang you for peaching against your pals; and that's an end of the palaver."

They slung a rope round my neck and dragged me up to the edge of the bush. There were some big she-oaks and blue-gums, and they pitched on one of these for the wicked deed. They ran the rope over a branch, tied my hands, and told me to say my prayers. It seemed as if it was all up; but Providence interfered to save me. It sounds nice enough sitting here and telling about it, sir; but it was sick work to stand with nothing but the beach in front of you, and the long white line of surf, with the steamer in the distance, and a set of bloody-minded villains round you thirsting for your life.

I never thought I'd owe anything good to the police; but they saved me that time. A troop of them were riding from Hawkes Point Station to Dunedin, and hearing that something was up, they came down through the bush and interrupted the proceedings. I've heard some bands in my time, doctor, but I never heard music like the jingle of those traps' spurs and harness as they galloped out on to the open. They tried to hang me even then, but the police were too quick for them; and the man with the hat got one over the head with the flat of a sword. I was clapped on to a horse, and before evening I found myself in my old quarters in the city jail.

The governor wasn't to be done, though. He was determined to get rid of me, and I was equally anxious to see the last of him. He waited a week or so until the excitement had begun to die away, and then he smuggled me aboard a three-masted schooner bound to Sydney with tallow and hides.

We got far away to sea without a hitch, and things began to look a bit

My Friend The Murderer

more rosy. I made sure that I had seen the last of the prison, anyway. The crew had a sort of an idea who I was, and if there'd been any rough weather, they'd have hove me overboard, like enough; for they were a rough, ignorant lot, and had a notion that I brought bad luck to the ship. We had a good passage, however, and I was landed safe and sound upon Sydney Quay.

Now just you listen to what happened next. You'd have thought they would have been sick of ill-using me and following me by this time--wouldn't you, now? Well, just you listen. It seems that a cursed steamer started from Dunedin to Sydney on the very day we left, and got in before us, bringing news that I was coming. Blessed if they hadn't called a meeting--a regular mass-meeting--at the docks to discuss about it, and I marched right into it when I landed. They didn't take long about arresting me, and I listened to all the speeches and resolutions. If I'd been a prince there couldn't have been more excitement. The end of all was that they agreed that it wasn't right that New Zealand should be allowed to foist her criminals upon her neighbors, and that I was to be sent back again by the next boat. So they posted me off again as if I was a damned parcel; and after another eight-hundred-mile journey I found myself back for the third time moving in the place that I started from.

By this time I had begun to think that I was going to spend the rest of my existence traveling about from one port to another. Every man's hand seemed turned against me, and there was no peace or quiet in any direction. I was about sick of it by the time I had come back; and if I could have taken to the bush I'd have done it, and chanced it with my old pals. They were too quick for me, though, and kept me under lock and key; but I managed, in spite of them, to negotiate that caché I told you of, and sewed the gold up in my belt. I spent another month in jail, and then they slipped me aboard a bark that was bound for England.

This time the crew never knew who I was, but the captain had a pretty good idea, though he didn't let on to me that he had any suspicions. I guessed from the first that the man was a villain. We had a fair passage, except a gale or two off the Cape; and I began to feel like a free man when I saw the blue loom of the old country, and the saucy little pilot-boat from Falmouth dancing toward us over the waves. We ran down the Channel, and before we reached Gravesend I had agreed with the pilot that he should take me ashore with him when he left. It was at this time that the captain showed me that I was right in thinking him a meddling, disagreeable man. I got my things packed, such as they were, and left him talking earnestly to the pilot, while I went below for my breakfast. When I came up again we were fairly into the mouth of the river, and the boat in which I was to have gone ashore had left us. The skipper said the pilot had forgotten me; but that was too thin, and I began to fear that all my old troubles were going to commence once more.

It was not long before my suspicions were confirmed. A boat darted out from the side of the river, and a tall cove with a long black beard came aboard. I heard him ask the mate whether they didn't need a mud-pilot to take them up in the reaches, but it seemed to me that he was a man who would know a deal more about handcuffs than he did about steering, so I kept away from him. He came across the deck, however, and made some remark to me, taking a good look at me the while. I don't like inquisitive people at any time, but an inquisitive stranger with glue about the roots of his beard is the worst of all to stand, especially under the circumstances. I began to feel that it was time for me to go.

I soon got a chance, and made good use of it. A big collier came athwart the bows of our steamer, and we had to slacken down to dead slow. There was a barge astern, and I slipped down by a rope and was into the barge before any one missed me. Of course I had to leave my luggage behind me, but I had the belt with the nuggets round my waist, and the chance of shaking the police off my track was worth more than a couple of boxes. It was clear to me now that the pilot had been a traitor, as well as the captain, and had set the detectives after me. I often wish I could drop

My Friend The Murderer

across those two men again.

I hung about the barge all day as she drifted down the stream. There was one man in her, but she was a big, ugly craft, and his hands were too full for much looking about. Toward evening, when it got a bit dusky, I struck out for the shore, and found myself in a sort of marsh place, a good many miles to the east of London. I was soaking wet and half dead with hunger, but I trudged into the town, got a new rig-out at a slop-shop, and after having some supper, engaged a bed at the quietest lodgings I could find.

I woke pretty early--a habit you pick up in the bush--and lucky for me that I did so. The very first thing I saw when I took a look through a chink in the shutter was one of these infernal policemen standing right opposite and staring up at the windows. He hadn't epaulets nor a sword, like our traps, but for all that there was a sort of family likeness, and the same busybody expression. Whether they followed me all the time, or whether the woman that let me the bed didn't like the looks of me, is more than I have ever been able to find out. He came across as I was watching him, and noted down the address of the house in a book. I was afraid that he was going to ring at the bell, but I suppose his orders were simply to keep an eye on me, for after another good look at the windows he moved on down the street.

I saw that my only chance was to act at once. I threw on my clothes, opened the window softly, and, after making sure that there was nobody about, dropped out onto the ground and made off as hard as I could run. I traveled a matter of two or three miles, when my wind gave out; and as I saw a big building with people going in and out, I went in too, and found that it was a railway station. A train was just going off for Dover to meet the French boat, so I took a ticket and jumped into a third-class carriage.

There were a couple of other chaps in the carriage, innocent-looking young beggars, both of them. They began speaking about this and that, while I sat quiet in the corner and listened. Then they started on England and foreign countries, and such like. Look ye now, doctor, this is a fact. One of them begins jawing about the justice of England's laws. "It's all fair and above-board," says he; "there ain't any secret police, nor spying, like they have abroad," and a lot more of the same sort of wash. Rather rough on me, wasn't it, listening to the damned young fool, with the police following me about like my shadow?

I got to Paris right enough, and there I changed some of my gold, and for a few days I imagined I'd shaken them off, and began to think of settling down for a bit of rest. I needed it by that time, for I was looking more like a ghost than a man. You've never had the police after you, I suppose? well, you needn't look offended, I didn't mean any harm. If ever you had you'd know that it wastes a man away like a sheep with the rot.

I went to the opera one night and took a box, for I was very flush. I was coming out between the acts when I met a fellow lounging along in the passage. The light fell on his face, and I saw that it was the mud-pilot that had boarded us in the Thames. His beard was gone, but I recognized the man at a glance, for I've a good memory for faces.

I tell you, doctor, I felt desperate for a moment. I could have knifed him if we had been alone, but he knew me well enough never to give me the chance. It was more than I could stand any longer, so I went right up to him and drew him aside, where we'd be free from all the loungers and theater-goers.

"How long are you going to keep it up?" I asked him.

He seemed a bit flustered for a moment, but then he saw there was no use beating about the bush, so he answered straight:

My Friend The Murderer

"Until you go back to Australia," he said.

"Don't you know," I said, "that I have served the government and got a free pardon?"

He grinned all over his ugly face when I said this.

"We know all about you, Maloney," he answered. "If you want a quiet life, just you go back where you came from. If you stay here, you're a marked man; and when you are found tripping it'll be a lifer for you, at the least. Free trade's a fine thing but the market's too full of men like you for us to need to import any."

It seemed to me that there was something in what he said, though he had a nasty way of putting it. For some days back I'd been feeling a sort of homesick. The ways of the people weren't my ways. They stared at me in the street; and if I dropped into a bar, they'd stop talking and edge away a bit, as if I was a wild beast. I'd sooner have had a pint of old Stringybark, too, than a bucketful of their rot-gut liquors. There was too much damned propriety. What was the use of having money if you couldn't dress as you liked, nor bust in properly? There was no sympathy for a man if he shot about a little when he was half-over, I've seen a man dropped at Nelson many a time with less row than they'd make over a broken window-pane. The thing was slow, and I was sick of it.

"You want me to go back?" I said.

"I've my order to stick fast to you until you do," he answered.

"Well," I said, "I don't care if I do. All I bargain is that you keep your mouth shut and don't let on who I am, so that I may have a fair start when I get there."

He agreed to this, and we went over to Southampton the very next day, where he saw me safely off once more. I took a passage round to Adelaide, where no one was likely to know me; and there I settled, right under the nose of the police. I'd been there ever since, leading a quiet life, but for little difficulties like the one I'm in for now, and for that devil, Tattooed Tom, of Hawkesbury. I don't know what made me tell you all this, doctor, unless it is that being lonely makes a man inclined to jaw when he gets a chance. Just you take warning from me, though. Never put yourself out to serve your country; for your country will do precious little for you. Just you let them look after their own affairs; and if they find difficulty in hanging a set of scoundrels, never mind chipping in, but let them alone to do as best they can. Maybe they'll remember how they treated me after I'm dead, and be sorry for neglecting me, I was rude to you when you came in, and swore a trifle promiscuous: but don't you mind me, it's only my way. You'll allow, though, that I have cause to be a bit touchy now and again when I think of all that's passed. You're not going, are you? well, if you must, you must; but I hope you will look me up at odd times when you are going your rounds. Oh, I say, you've left the balance of that cake of tobacco behind you, haven't you? No; it's in your pocket--that's all right. Thank ye, doctor, you're a good sort, and as quick at a hint as any man I've met.

A couple of months after narrating his experiences, Wolf Tone Maloney finished his term, and was released. For a long time I neither saw him nor heard of him, and he had almost slipped from my memory, until I was reminded, in a somewhat tragic manner, of his existence. I had been attending a patient some distance off in the country, and was riding back, guiding my tired horse among the boulders which strewn the pathway, and endeavoring to see my way through the gathering darkness, when I came suddenly upon a little wayside inn. As I walked my horse up toward the door, intending to make sure of my bearings before proceeding further, I heard the sound of a violent altercation within the little bar.

My Friend The Murderer

There seemed to be a chorus of expostulation or remonstrance, above which two powerful voices rang out loud and angry. As I listened, there was a momentary hush, two pistol shots sounded almost simultaneously, and with a crash the door burst open and a pair of dark figures staggered out into the moonlight. They struggled for a moment in a deadly wrestle, and then went down together among the loose stones. I had sprung off my horse, and, with the help of half a dozen rough fellows from the bar, dragged them away from one another.

A glance was sufficient to convince me that one of them was dying fast. He was a thick-set burly fellow, with a determined cast of countenance. The blood was welling from a deep stab in his throat, and it was evident that an important artery had been divided. I turned away from him in despair, and walked over to where his antagonist was lying. He was shot through the lungs, but managed to raise himself up on his hand as I approached, and peered anxiously up into my face. To my surprise, I saw before me the haggard features and flaxen hair of my prison acquaintance, Maloney.

"Ah, doctor!" he said, recognizing me. "How is he? will he die?"

He asked the question so earnestly that I imagined he had softened at the last moment, and feared to leave the world with another homicide upon his conscience. Truth, however, compelled me to shake my head mournfully, and to intimate that the wound would prove a mortal one.

Maloney gave a wild cry of triumph, which brought the blood welling out from between his lips. "Here, boys," he gasped to the little group around him. "There's money in my inside pocket. Damn the expense! Drinks round. There's nothing mean about me. I'd drink with you, but I'm going. Give the doc my share, for he's as good--" Here his head fell back with a thud, his eye glazed, and the soul of wolf Tone Maloney, forger, convict, ranger, murderer, and government peach, drifted away into the Great Unknown.

I cannot conclude without borrowing the account of the fatal quarrel which appeared in the column of the West Australian Sentinel. The curious will find it in the issue of October 4, 1881:

"Fatal Affray.--W. T. Maloney, a well-know citizen of New Montrose, and proprietor of the Yellow Boy gambling saloon, has met with his death under rather painful circumstances. Mr. Maloney was a man who had led a checkered existence, and whose past history is replete with interest. Some of our readers may recall the Lena Valley murders, in which he figured as the principal criminal. It is conjectured that during the seven months that he owned a bar in that region, from twenty to thirty travelers were hounded and made away with. He succeeded, however, in evading the vigilance of the officers of the law, and allied himself with the bushrangers of Bluemansdyke, whose heroic capture and subsequent execution are matters of history. Maloney extricated himself from the fate which awaited him by turning Queen's evidence. He afterward visited Europe, but returned to West Australia, where he has long played a prominent part in local matters. On Friday evening he encountered an old enemy, Thomas Grimthorpe, commonly known as Tattooed Tom, of Hawkesbury.

"Shots were exchanged, and both were badly wounded, only surviving a few minutes. Mr. Maloney had the reputation of being not only the most wholesale murderer that ever lived, but also of having a finish and attention to detail in matters of evidence which has been unapproached by any European criminal. Sic transit gloria mundi!"

My Friend The Murderer