

THE IRON BUSHRANGERS

By "SHARP-SHOOTER."



A vividly-written article of the adventures of the notorious Kelly Gang of Australia, and of how the four outlaws were eventually rounded up by the Mounted Police.

Exciting News!

GREAT excitement prevailed in Melbourne, and especially among the younger members of the Victorian Mounted Police, of which I was a member, when the news came by telegram on Saturday, June 27th, 1880, that the Kelly Gang was at Beechworth. That town was, and still is, the chief one of the Ovens Goldfields district in north-eastern Victoria, and is about twenty miles from the New South Wales border.

It was reported that the gang had just murdered a man named Aaron Sherritt at a place called Sebastopol, eight miles from Beechworth. Sherritt had been a former accomplice of the gang, but had given information to the Mounted Police, and this was the gang's revenge.

A strong body, myself included, of the

Mounted Police at Melbourne was promptly told off to proceed by rail to Beechworth, which was about 185 miles distant, and a special train was requisitioned for us. We were all well armed, and took horses, and we were under the command of Sub-inspector O'Connor.

The Kelly Gang

The Kelly Gang comprised four desperadoes, who had been outlawed and had taken to the trackless bush and ranges of the border. Their names were Edward Kelly (invariably called Ned Kelly), his younger brother Dan, Steve Hart, and Joe Byrne.

Ned Kelly looked rather a handsome man, as, according to the great fashion of that day, he wore a full, flowing beard, which hid the harsh lines of his mouth and

jaw. Joe Byrne had a somewhat square, heavy type of face, clean-shaven except for short "sideboards." I do not recall what Steve Hart's face looked like, although I saw portraits of him. Dan Kelly, if I remember rightly, had a sharp, foxy, hatchet face, the nose and jaw being particularly prominent.

They had terrorised the borders of Victoria and New South Wales for two years, and £8,000 was the reward offered by the two Governments for their apprehension. Nevertheless, all efforts to bring them to book had hitherto failed, owing to their being aided and abetted by numerous family connections and other accomplices, and the wide, desolate stretch of mountainous and bush-covered country affording them at all times a safe refuge.

The father of the Kelly brothers was an ex-convict, who had settled in the district on a small cattle farm and married into a family which was shrewdly suspected of horse stealing and cattle lifting. Ned Kelly became a horse thief while but a boy. His brother Dan was seven years his junior. Steve Hart, who was only 19 or 20, and Joe Byrne, who was 23, were neighbours and friends of the Kellys.

The Kelly brothers first came into prominence by resisting arrest for cattle stealing in March, 1878, when they shot and made prisoner a police-trooper named Fitzpatrick. It was then that they took to the bush and lived the lives of outlaws.

The Fate of Four "Mounties."

On October 25th, in the same year, they surprised the bivouac of four Mounted Police, who were hunting for them in the ranges.

Two constables had been left in camp. The Kellys, Hart, and Byrne suddenly stepped out of the surrounding thicket, covering the pair with rifles, and ordering them to put up their hands. Disregarding the mandate, one of them, named Lonigan, made a dash for his rifle, whereupon Ned Kelly shot him dead. The other constable did not dare to make a move.

Hearing the shot, the two other troopers, Sergeant Kennedy and Constable Scanlan,

came hurrying upon the scene, to be at once fired upon by the outlaws. Scanlan was killed at the first volley, but Kennedy, who dismounted to take cover, put up a desperate fight.

His horse bolted through the camp, and the captured and disarmed constable, McIntyre by name, vaulted upon its neck as it was passing him. He got away, but he had a narrow escape, a bullet passing through his hat, and the horse was so severely wounded from another shot that it was in a dying condition, and he had to abandon it later and continue his journey to the nearest township on foot.

Sergeant Kennedy dodged from tree to tree until at last he fell mortally wounded. He begged Ned Kelly to spare him, and the outlaw promised to send a message to his wife, so that she might be with him before he died. But one of the other bushrangers sent a bullet through his heart even while he was uttering the words: "God bless you, Kelly!"

The Bank Hold-up

Next, on the 18th of December, 1878, in Delatite County, the gang made prisoners of all the inmates of Mr. Younghusband's farm, or "station." This they raided, and then drove in two of the farm vehicles into the neighbouring township of Euroa, where they boldly entered the bank and presented revolvers at the heads of the officials. They secured about 25,000 dollars' worth of retorted gold, notes, and gold and silver currency.

The Victorian Government sent a detachment of colonial militia, with artillery, but the bushrangers eluded all pursuit. It is said that once at least Ned Kelly, who had been a blacksmith, had the gang's horses' shoes *reversed*, so that the police believed that they were riding in the opposite direction, and galloped that way. Had the police had a "black tracker"—an aboriginal and a human bloodhound—with them, or been a little sharper in noting the footprints, they must have detected the trick.

The bushrangers were next heard of in February, 1879, at Jerilderie, a small place

Aaron Sherritt opened the door, to be at once greeted with a shot which killed him ! It was the Kelly Gang's revenge on a treacherous accomplice.



in New South Wales. There they went quietly in the dead of night to the little police-station and knocked for admittance, calling out that a man was being murdered at a place close by. When the door was opened by a policeman, they clapped revolvers to his head ; then, rushing in, overawed the other troopers in their beds, and locked the whole "garrison" up in the cells.

Dressing themselves up in captured policemen's uniforms, they proceeded to the best hotel, and, describing themselves as relief or extra constables, passed the remainder of the night there.

Next morning they repaired to the bank, which was next door, held up the manager in his bath, and forced him to open the bank safe and deliver up the contents,

amounting to about £1,450. For two whole days they then terrorised and plundered the townsfolk

The Shooting of Sherritt

It was now that the two colonial Governments increased the head money for the gang to £8,000—at first without result. As some months passed without further news of them, it was believed that they had cleared out of that part of Australia and gone northward to Queensland.

At length an old acquaintance of theirs, Aaron Sherritt, and a suspected confederate, came forward, no doubt tempted by the big reward, and informed the police

that they were still in the vicinity. He did not know exactly where they were hiding, but they had visited him at his house at Sebastopol, and wanted him to join them in a raid on Goulburn, the chief town of the county of the same name, just over the border of New South Wales.

They were to let him know later when the raid was to take place.

Consequently four policemen were stationed in Sherritt's house. But the Kellys learned in some way, probably through their numerous "bush telegraphs" or scouts, that they had been betrayed, and on the night of Friday, June 26, 1880, Sherritt paid for his treachery.

A knock came at the door, and, deceived by the voice of a German neighbour named Wicks who called to him, Sherritt opened the door, to be at once greeted with a shot which killed him. Wicks was afterwards found outside, with his hands bound.

The Kellys had forced him, under penalty of death, to call the murdered man to the door.

The four police within the hut did not venture to show themselves or even to fire a shot at the murderers, who sent a volley into the hut and made an attempt to burn it down. After staying outside the hut all night, the gang rode off to Beechworth, whence a telegraph messenger contrived to send word of their presence to Melbourne. So it was that a strong force of police was dispatched.

The Light on the Line

Less than half-way to our destination, the special train stopped at Benalla, 122 miles from Melbourne. There we picked up Superintendent Hare, of the district police, with eight more mounted troopers and their horses.

As it was feared that the bushrangers or some of their numerous confederates might have pulled up the rails somewhere between Benalla and Beechworth, a pilot-engine was in readiness to precede us. On we flew once more through the night, the pilot-engine steaming well ahead to give us

timely warning if the line were tampered with.

A few miles short of Glenrowan Station, which was about six miles due north of Greta, where the Kelly family lived, the men on the pilot-engine saw in the darkness ahead a man with a lighted candle, frantically waving a red shawl.

They stopped, and the man raced up and breathlessly told them that the rails behind him, near Glenrowan, had been torn up by the Kelly Gang, which had come across from Beechworth and were at the time in Glenrowan.

He was, I believe, the schoolmaster of the place, and his name was Curnow.

It was now well into the morning of Sunday, June 28th. Mr. Curnow told Sub-inspector O'Connor and Superintendent Hare that late on the previous day (Saturday) the Kellys had suddenly invaded the village, rounding up the few inhabitants, and herding them together at the Glenrowan Hotel, which was kept by a Mrs. Jones.

Ned Kelly said that no one would be hurt unless resistance was offered. Dan Kelly insisted on a dance, and the utmost conviviality prevailed, Ned Kelly even competing in a jumping match with a wheelwright, who, however, beat him.

The Kellys had brought three of their sisters along with them from Greta.

The Arrival of the Mounted Police

The enforced merriment at the Glenrowan Hotel was still in full swing when the Mounted Police from the special came galloping upon the scene. The bushrangers had evidently counted upon our train being wrecked at the point where they had destroyed the line, and they had no opportunity for a get-away, for we promptly surrounded the place.

It was a wooden, one-floor building of two shacks, one behind the other, the front building having a veranda. A wooden fence partly enclosed the place, and all around the outside of the enclosure were trees and bushes, which provided us with admirable shelter.

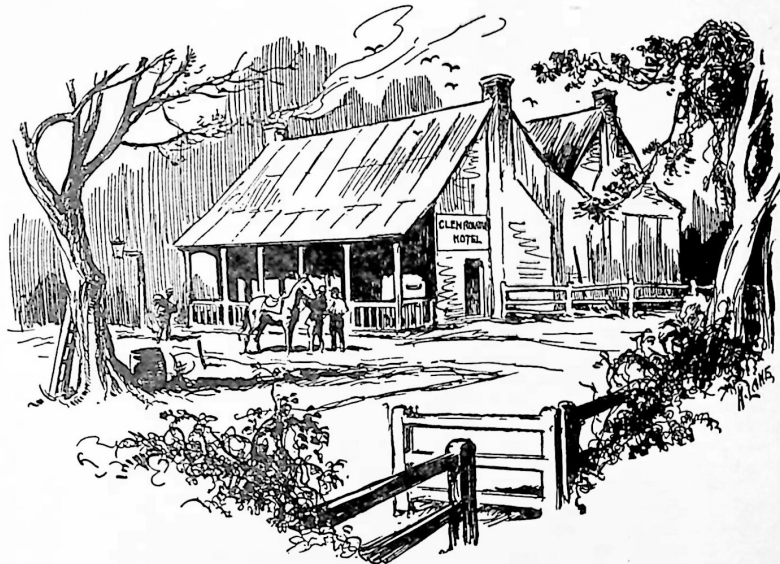
The police force now numbered about

thirty men. Under our chief, Sub-inspector O'Connor, were Superintendents Hare and Sadlier, of Benalla, and Sergeant Steele, from Wangaratta. The two last-mentioned had met us *en route*.

It was still dark, and before we had quite time to complete our cordon, a volley of three or four rifle-shots was fired at us from the front of the building. Superintendent Hare received a bullet through

made prisoners by the bushrangers, and were shut up either in the hotel or in the stationmaster's house near by.

Sub-inspector O'Connor called out for us to cease firing the moment he learned that there were women and children in the house. The echoes of our volley had hardly died away when, to our amazement, a tall, powerfully built man, wearing a long grey overcoat, stalked slowly forth from the



The Glenrowan Hotel, the scene of the Kelly Gang's fight against the Mounted Police, and where three of the outlaws lost their lives.

the wrist, so that he was incapacitated immediately.

We fired a return volley, and were horrified to hear the agonised shrieks of women and children within the building.

Subsequently we learned that an old platelayer on the railroad named Cherry, whom Ned Kelly had forced to take up the rails, was badly wounded.

Altogether forty-seven persons had been

veranda, firing at us right and left with a revolver!

"Come on, you dirty *Joeys, you!" he shouted.

It was too dark to see him plainly, otherwise we must have noticed something peculiar about the shape of his head. Here was an enemy we *could* shoot at, and we

* A "Joey" was the slang name for a trooper of police.

promptly did so. But, to our further amazement, *the bullets which struck him apparently did not have any effect!* He came on defiantly, limping a little, it is true.

As the newspapers truthfully enough said afterwards of us, we "felt a superstitious terror, and began to think he was a diabolical fiend!"

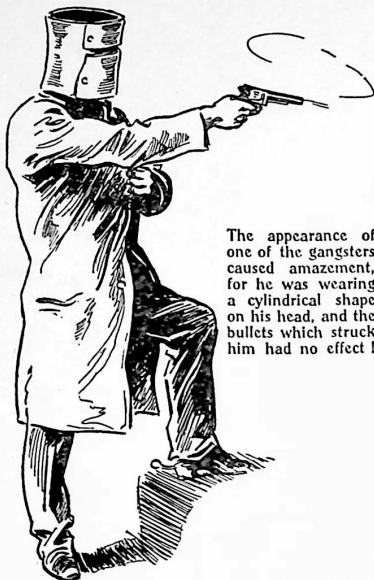
The Armoured Gangsters

Sergeant Steele aimed at his legs, and shot him twice in rapid succession through the right one. He immediately sank down helplessly, and, as there were no shots being fired from the house, some of our fellows rushed forward and secured him, when the mystery of his seeming invulnerability from our body-shots was explained.

On his head was a *rusty cylindrical iron helmet*, completely covering it and his neck, and under his overcoat he had on a suit of heavy plate-armour, consisting of a breast-plate and a back-plate, both being rounded to the shape of his body, and strapping together at the sides. There were also shoulder-plates to hold them together, and attached by straps below were other curved iron plates, protecting the upper half of both his thighs.

Our captive was none other than the fierce and ruthless Ned Kelly himself, the ring-leader of the gang. No wonder he could not jump so well as the wheelwright, with such a load of iron upon him, under his overcoat!

In spite of his desperate resistance, he was bound hand and foot, and taken to the rear of our firing-line, where he was quickly



The appearance of one of the gangsters caused amazement, for he was wearing a cylindrical shape on his head, and the bullets which struck him had no effect!

stripped of his armour.

It was then found that he had sustained four wounds, one of them being in the right foot from our original volley and the cause of his limping.

Later, when we came to examine his armour, we found that *it had no less than eighteen bullet-marks on it*, and that it weighed 97 lbs. altogether. It was a quarter of an inch thick everywhere, and had, we subsequently learned, been made to his order by two country blacksmiths out of ploughshares and old boiler iron.

As a matter of fact, all four members of the gang were simi-

larly accoutred!

Firing the Hotel

We now received instructions not to fire except when shot at from a door or window, and then to shoot high. But very few more shots were fired at us, and the grey light of dawn stole over the scene. Slowly the hours dragged by, the lull continuing.

At about ten a.m., Superintendent Sadleir boldly approached the house alone, and called out for the innocent people inside to come out, if they could.

A constable and another man joined the superintendent, reiterating his call, and some thirty or more persons—men, women, and children—came rushing forth, casting themselves prone on the ground. No shots were fired during this scene, but as soon as the mob of released prisoners were hurried to our rear, shots began to rattle out vigorously from different parts of the house.

Among those who had come out were the

three sisters of the Kellys—Kate and Rose Kelly and Mrs. Skillian.

We learned from some of the people we had freed that Joe Byrne was lying dead in the building, killed by one of our first bullets, but that Dan Kelly and Steve Hart had sworn that they would resist to the last.

They had retired on the first alarm to another room to put on their armour, and were unaware of the capture of their leader—could not understand where he had got to.

It was decided to send to Melbourne for *artillery* to blow the wooden building to pieces, and I understand that a 12-pounder gun was dispatched to us; but the fight was over before it could reach us. One of our fellows, Constable Johnston, contrived, under cover of our continuous fire, to ignite some straw, soaked in kerosene, against one of the wooden walls.

The flames quickly spread, and half the building was on fire when some of the people who had been confined in it called out that the old platelayer, Martin Cherry, was still inside, too badly wounded by our first volley to come out with the others.

On that, a priest named Father Gibney* fearlessly rushed forward, holding up a crucifix, and entered the building. Mrs. Skillian, one of the sisters of the Kellys, also wanted to go in and call on her brother Dan and Steve Hart to surrender. But Superintendent Sadleir intercepted her, and would not permit her to do so.

*The priest's name was also given as Tierney.—AUTHOR.

The End of the Kelly Gang

No shots had been fired from the hotel for some little time, and a few of the police, who had got up close, followed Father Gibney within. They and he came out, bearing the expiring form of Cherry and the corpse of Joe Byrne. The fire had got such a hold upon the hotel, however, that the attempt to find Dan Kelly and Steve Hart had to be abandoned, and we all stood around helplessly while the building was consumed.

Mrs. Skillian and her sisters, Kate and Rose Kelly, kept weeping bitterly, moaning and wailing, and calling us murderers.

When at last we could enter the smouldering ruins, we found the dead bodies of Dan Kelly and Steve Hart, much burnt, lying close to each other, with their armour, *all twisted by the heat*, close alongside them. It was the general supposition that they had put aside their armour owing to the intense heat of the burning building, and then, realising that escape was out of the question, agreed to simultaneously shoot each other rather than surrender.

Ned Kelly was taken in the special train to Melbourne in a state of collapse from his wounds, although these had been promptly dressed. It was thought that he would die on the journey, and he had to be given repeated doses of stimulants to keep him alive. He lived to be tried on the capital charge before Mr. Justice Barry, and was found guilty and sentenced to death. He was hanged on the morning of November 12th, in the same year as his capture, 1880.

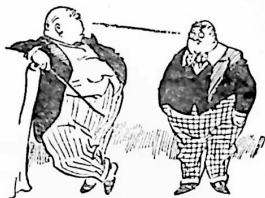


A TALE OF WOE!

A DOZEN TARTS ARE
MISSING FROM THE PANTRY!

NOW, I DON'T WANT

TO SUGGEST

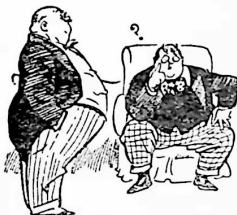
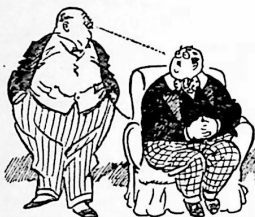


THAT A SON OF MINE

WOULD STEAL PASTRY

OR RAID THE LARDER.

YOUR SISTER, BESSIE, WOULD NOT DO SUCH
A THING!



SAMMY DID NOT HAVE THEM, ?
JUST TELL ME WHO DID?

NOW THEN, QUICK
ABOUT IT, WHO?

"LITTLE MARY!"



It is well known that William George Bunter's great weakness is tuck-hunting, but in the cartoon above he gets little sympathy from his father, even though, metaphorically speaking, he told the truth for once!