

JULY



Joining in the festivities

Ulverston Creek is not the sort of place in which one would expect a romance to happen; and yet, in the year, 1892, when I accepted the secretaryship to the Mechanics' Institute, occurred a series of circumstances which had in them all the elements of the wildest French fiction.

The unwonted impetus given to social relations, which was affected by the "opening up" of the Great Daylight Reef, brought together those incongruous particles of adventurous humanity which are to be found floating about the gold-mining centres of Australian population, and in six months the quiet village-up to that time notorious for its extreme simplicity-had become a long street, surrounded by mounds, shafts, and engine-houses, and boasting a Court House, a Mechanics' Institute, half a dozen places of (variously conducted) religious worship, and some twenty public-houses.

The thirst for knowledge which attends upon worldly success soon made my office a laborious one, for, in addition to my duties as Librarian, I was expected to act as Master of the Ceremonies, Conductor of Conversaciones, Curator of a Museum of Curiosities, and Theatrical Manager. The Committee of Management were desirous that no attraction which

might increase the funds of the institution should be passed over, and when Mademoiselle Pauline Christoval (of the Theatres Royal, Honolulu, Manilla, Singapore, and Popocatapetl) offered a handsome rent to be permitted to play for six nights in the great hall, I was instructed to afford every facility to that distinguished actress.



Mademoiselle Pauline was a woman of an uncertain age—that is to say, she might have been two-and-twenty and was not improbably three-and-thirty. Tall, elegant, self-possessed and intelligent, she made her business arrangements with considerable acuteness, and, having duly checked all items of "gas" and "etceteras," announced that she would play the Green Bushes, as an initiatory performance. "*I always act as my own agent,*" said she, "*and my Company is entirely under my own direction.*"

Upon inquiry at the Three Star Brand—where the Company were lodged—I found this statement to be thoroughly correct. Miss Fortescue (the wife of Mr. Effingham Bellingham, the "leading man") had already confided to Mrs. Butt, the landlady, several items of intelligence concerning the tyranny exercised by the lady manager. Mr. Capricorn, the "juvenile man" (husband of Miss Sally Lunn, the charming danseuse), had hinted vaguely, with much uplifting of his juvenile brows, that Mademoiselle was not to be trifled with, while I found that old Joe Banks, the low comedian (the original "Stunning