

JOE FLICK, BUSHRANGER.**A STIRRING NARRATIVE.**

For many years Joe Flick was known as "the last of the bushrangers" in Queensland; but owing to something like a recrudescence of bushranging a few years ago he has lost that distinction. Flick's career as a bushranger was brief, but very eventful. He shot two men dead, broke gaol twice, escaped from the police on one occasion, stole a number of horses, and was guilty of other audacious acts. Flick was a half-caste, of villainous character. He was the son of a man who worked for Mr. F. H. Hann, who then had a very large run in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Mr. Hann tells the story of Flick, who flourished about 20 years ago, in very interesting style. He says:—

"Flick's father was employed on my run. He had a gin working for him. She ran away, and joined a black boy in the employ of a man named Cashman, who kept the Brook Hotel, some distance away. The old man sent Flick after her; but the hotel-keeper appeared, and abused him roundly. Flick went away, burning with resentment. On the following morning he again visited the hotel, and Cashman once more spoke offensively to him. Suddenly Flick whipped a revolver from his belt, and shouted, 'Put up your hands.' Cashman pluckily grabbed the revolver, and at that moment Flick pulled the trigger, and the ball whizzed past the head of Mrs. Cashman, who had just appeared on the scene. Cashman turned the weapon upon Flick, and fired. The half-caste was trying to get away, and as the shot was fired he stumbled and fell. Seeing Flick motionless upon the ground Cashman saddled a horse, and galloped into Burketown, 16 miles away, and informed the police that he had killed Flick. The police returned with Cashman, only to find that Flick had disappeared. Shortly afterwards he was arrested, and from this time to the day of his death occurred a rapid series of sensational events.

"Flick was legironed and handcuffed, and placed in the Normanton gaol. I was there on my way to Brisbane, and I got permission to see Flick, as I had then a friendly feeling for the lad. I went to see him at half-past 5 in the afternoon. He was in the gaol-yard with two other prisoners. After a brief conversation I left. When the warders went to lock Flick up he had disappeared. It was subsequently ascertained that Flick had secured a horse, and had ridden over to the Hodson Downs River, in the Northern Territory. There he installed himself in a little hut on a station, and obtained a good supply of firearms. It was stated that he had determined never to be taken alive. A warrant was issued for his arrest, and a newly-appointed sergeant at the Antley Lagoon station, taking advantage of the fact that Flick did not know him by sight, resorted to strategy to effect his arrest. With a constable (whom Flick knew) he went to the station on which Flick worked. They passed Flick, and said 'Good day' to him. In early times he replied to the greeting. Then, turning to the manager, the sergeant said, in tones sufficiently loud for Flick to hear him, 'We've got fearful news; all hands have been killed by blacks at Newcastle Waters.' Flick came forward

news; all hands have been killed by blacks at Newcastle Waters.' Flick came forward open-mouthed to hear the news, and the police seized him. Having handcuffed Flick, the sergeant turned to the astonished manager, and explained that the story was a 'take,' and that the object was to arrest Flick without bloodshed. The prisoner was taken towards Roper Bar, where there was a police out-station. The extraordinary cunning and resource of the man are shown by the fact that on the first night out he, by some mysterious means, got away with the leg-irons on him. The constable made a close search for him, and eventually found him hiding in the grass. Flick had not managed to get rid of the leg-irons, but, on being detected, he prepared himself for a desperate struggle. He refused to stand when called upon, and the constable put a ball through his shoulder. He was then secured, and taken to Port Darwin. An order for his extradition was made, and he was taken to Normanton. There he was committed for trial. When the hearing came on in the District Court the case was unfinished at the end of the first day. Flick was placed in gaol with six others. The building was a substantial one, on blocks about 20 ft. high. During the night Flick cut a round hole in the floor, and escaped. A man who was under committal for the manslaughter of a gin informed the police; and the fact that he had reported the escape to the police was tendered as evidence in his case. The judge made some severe comments upon this, stating that it was a disgraceful thing for one prisoner to inform of another, and that, while it was the business of the police to hold a prisoner, it was the prisoner's business to escape if he could. He sentenced the informer to 15 years' imprisonment.

"Then the police went to look for Flick. They found that he had gone to Turnoff Lagoon, where there was a police station. This was at the end of my run, on the Nicholson River. There he stole two police horses. He was detected by a black trooper, upon whom he threatened dire vengeance if he gave the alarm. The boy was much frightened, but on Flick's departure he summoned up sufficient courage to tell Sergeant Wavel of the incident. The sergeant, knowing the desperate character of Flick and having a pre-sense of his own dreadful fate, took a serious view of the matter, and silently set about his preparations. He made his will and wrote to his mother, who lived in the Isle of Wight. He left the keys of the station in charge of a woman, telling her to hand them to Inspector Douglas (who was in charge of the Gulf police district), as he knew that he was going to die, but was resolved to do his duty.

"The few days following were replete with sensation. With the cool audacity which was his principal characteristic, Flick stole two more police horses. Sergeant Wavel and two troopers obtained fresh horses and tracked him up. They started on a Friday. On the following day they came upon Flick watering the stolen horses, about eight miles from Lawn Hill Station. As soon as he saw them he abandoned the pack-horses and jumped his mount into the river. The sergeant and the troopers fired at him repeatedly, but he succeeded in crossing unharmed. Then, with a wild shout, he clapped spurs into his horse and galloped off at top-speed. In the evening his pursuers camped upon his tracks. On the following morning they came to my station at Lawn Hill for breakfast. One of the gins came in, her teeth rattling with excitement. She yelled, 'Flick is in the paddock trying to catch a horse.' Wavel and the troopers mounted hastily, and, galloping down a hill, found Flick in a

and the troopers mounted hastily, and, galloping down a hill, found Flick in a small paddock. He got through the fence and rushed up to the men's hut with bullets peppering round him all the time. He did not fire in return, and it was soon seen that he had no cartridges. There were none in the hut, and he ran from there to a building formerly used as a dining-room. Here he obtained 100 revolver cartridges of the bore he required, a rifle, and 100 rifle cartridges. He settled down there, making a barricade of the substantial table and a form. There were six men on the station at the time. Wavel came up the hill and called upon Flick to surrender. He made no immediate reply. Then the sergeant rashly attempted to cross an open space in order to get to the shelter of the store. Flick opened the window of the room and, taking careful aim, shot Wavel through the heart. The sergeant fell dead. This was at 11 o'clock in the forenoon. Consternation fell upon the black troopers. They wanted to clear out, but a neighbour who happened to be on the station threatened to report them to Inspector Douglas if they did so, and they remained.

"While these events were happening I was out after blacks, who had been killing a lot of cattle. I returned unexpectedly at 3 o'clock on the Monday afternoon. Some of the gins came to meet me screaming 'Murder!' I had a young white man with me. I galloped up the hill, rifle in hand, and there I saw Wavel lying dead outside of the old dining-room. I called upon Flick to surrender.

"Flick said, 'Is that you, Mr. Hann?'

"Yes," I answered.

"Well," he said, "I'm not coming out, but you can come up."

"I then walked up to the window, and he shook hands with me through the open-

ing. I said, 'This is a terrible thing for you to do, Flick.'

"He replied, 'If I had not shot the sergeant he would have shot me. I suppose I'll swing for this.'

"Foolishly enough I assured him that he would. After further talk he said that he would surrender if I would undertake not to put irons on him. I made no reply, but walked round to the door of the building. I opened the door, and as soon as I did so he fired. I felt a dreadful stinging sensation in the chest, and for a moment seemed to lose consciousness. The men who were watching the negotiations say that I fell to my knees, but I do not recollect that. The ball went into my chest and passed out between the shoulder-blades. I had a shot at him, but the ball struck a post. I ran over to where my neighbour was standing, and he took off my shirt, and bound it round the wound. I then ordered all hands to bombard the place, which they did. Towards evening a fearful storm arose, and we thought that Flick would slip away under cover of the storm. During a lull, however, we heard a tin fall inside the building, and I ordered a general fusillade. Quietness reigned after this, but it was thought he might be in the hut still. During the night poor Wavel was buried. I did not sleep. I was in much pain, and did not know whether I would live or not.

"In the morning we went into the building. Flick had vanished, but extensive blood-stains showed that he had been badly wounded. I had a black boy named Nym—a splendid boy—and I sent him with others to track Flick. It was easy work owing to the blood-stains. Nym found him standing in the river, between two tin-trees, washing his wounds. Flick fired and Nym fell, badly wounded. The other boys came and reported to me. I went down, and Nym, to whom I was strongly attached, crawled up to me and said, feebly, 'I'm bad, boss.' He died in my arms, and I sobbed like a child. I ordered the troopers to bombard the sheltered place between the tin-trees, and at about noon one

troopers to bombard the sheltered place between the ti-trees, and at about noon one of them said, 'My word! I've shot him through the brains.' Still he had not the courage to go down and make sure. In the afternoon I burned the grass, so as to give a clearer view, and, as we heard no more from Flick, when night fell I felt sure that he had either been shot or had escaped. The next morning I sent a white man and two troopers to see if he had shifted. They saw him lying on the ground, but, to 'make sure,' they fired two bullets into him. Then they went up and found that he had been shot in the head, evidently on the previous day, as stated by one of the troopers. There were nine bullet wounds in his body.

"A handsome stone monument was erected over Wavel's grave, the people of Queensland contributing £1 each to it. I was bad for a long time, but there was a happy outcome to my trouble. I had had a dispute with a neighbour of mine living 50 miles away; in fact, it came to a rough-and-tumble. Hearing that I had been wounded he got a good horse and did the 50 miles in record time. He was a good surgeon, and he fixed me up splendidly. We are now the firmest friends."