



A Playlab *New Vintage* Title



The Bushrangers

by Henry Melville



Edited by Prof. Richard Fotheringham



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1. *The Bushrangers*
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Characters

(In order of appearance)

MR NORWOOD, a settler

MARIAN, his daughter

MURRAHWA, an Aboriginal tribal elder (variously, 'Native', 'native chief')

ELLEN, a servant

FREDERICK SEYMOUR, Marian's lover

BILL FELLOWS, a bushranger

HARRY FAWKES, a bushranger

CHARLEY HOODWINK, a bushranger

Settings

ACT I

Scene 1: MR NORWOOD's hut in rural Van Diemen's Land

Scenes 2, 3, 4: A lean-to beside the hut

Scene 5: A camping area with a cooking fire in the bush

ACT II

Scene 1: The bush, as I. 5

Scene 2: A wooded area, nearby

Scenes 3, 4: The hut, as I. 1

ACT III

Scenes 1, 2: The bush, as I. 5

Scenes 3, 4: The hut, as I. 1

TIME: The 1820s

The Bushrangers

ACT I

SCENE 1. *A Settler's hut, interior.*

MR NORWOOD It pains me, Marian, to see you so much altered; before we came to these wild woods, your cheeks were as ruddy as the rose, and your step as lively as the grasshoppers: but now are they pale and wan, and your very feet tell you are unhappy.

MARIAN Nor can it be wondered, dear father, when you recollect the changes we have undergone.

MR NORWOOD True! — many are they indeed. But it matters not, Marian, about the past, it is the future which must occupy our attention. Of what use is it that I should tell the world that I had once wealth and influence — that my friend cheated me, and that my fortune was wasted, and that from affluence I am reduced to comparative poverty. Heaven be praised, I am now secure from the schemes of deceitful friends. Heaven be praised that I am in a land where honesty and perseverance will triumph — where the industry of the meanest labourer is sure to find a competence.

Pause.

Nothing can interrupt the harmony of the vale of Norwood, nor will the deceitful encroach on our solitude, for our apparent poverty will keep all interested visitors from our doors.

MARIAN But of security, we cannot boast, when my servant Ellen every day tells me of outrages committed by the runaways, infesting the bush; and who can tell whether they may not, ere long, approach our neighbourhood. Oh! that — that we were back in England.

MR NORWOOD Silly girl, back in England! From the bushrangers you have little to fear— but from Frederick Seymour you had much — the gay, the profligate — talk not to me of danger, when he is distant from you. The bushrangers, thank Heaven, are by this time, nearly all safely lodged in gaol at camp, and I am proud of having taken a share in their capture, through the information I have given of their movements to Simon Stukely, the Police Magistrate of the district¹ — but I must be gone to the enclosure, down by the creek, to see how the fencing is proceeding. *[Exit.]*

MARIAN *[Solus.]* Oh unhappy Marian! Is there more danger to be apprehended from Frederick Seymour than from a host of bushrangers? My father judges harshly, the very name of Seymour is sufficient to call forth all his latent feelings — it was Seymour's brother that almost ruined him, but he little thinks my happiness is staked — he little thinks what I suffer when submissively I bear his violent bursts of passion — when I hear Frederick Seymour called gay and profligate, it chills my very heart, for I know well how little he deserves such a character.

Pauses.

But time, which overcometh all things, may, perhaps, work a change.

Takes a letter from her bosom, and sitting down on a chair, kisses it and reads.

"Dear Marian — You will be surprised to find me following you so near — I cannot help — I am not my own master and my attachment to you encreases with absence. Here have I followed you thousands of miles over an ocean which could not separate us; and in spite of your father's dislike, I still have hopes. I am on a visit to Simon Stukely, who was acquainted with my

mother's family in England; I am not above seven miles from you, and shall be at Norwood Vale soon after this 'reaches [you.]² Marian! do not forget the vow you made; remember that you promised to be mine — you will keep your promise, and I shall again have the happiness of calling you my own dear Marian. — Your's, Frederick."

How often could I read this letter, and think of former times, when Frederick, in our infancy, entwined his arms round my waist, and called me his own dear Marian. [*Exit.*]

SCENE 2. *Skilling, or out-house³ — a male NATIVE⁴ standing at the door way — servant girl, ELLEN.*

NATIVE Lady, bit baccy and bredly.

ELLEN Come in, old Murrahwa, and let me know your wishes — you would make a charming suitor for a pretty girl, with your long matted, red-ochred hair all hung round your pole⁵ like a bundle of carrots; fancy him kissing one! Oh! but come in, blackey, tell me what you want?

NATIVE Me want baccy and bredly — me had none long time — me got very old blanket.⁶

ELLEN Well, blackey, you shall have both, if you will dance a corroboree!⁷

NATIVE He, he! corroboree?

ELLEN Yes! corroboree. No baccy without corroboree.

NATIVE sings and dances the corroboree.

ELLEN

Well now, blackey, I'll sing you a song.

SONG.

'Tis said to Beauty's dwelling
Will lovers ^aoft repair,
To win with sighs and tearful eyes,
Th' affections of the fair.
If this be true, — altho' as yet
The truth I cannot see,
'Tis very strange my state to change —
No lovers come to me.

'Tis said where'er we wander
They gather round about;
And vows, and oaths, and such like things,
Are plentiful no doubt.
But here I've been for twelve long months,
And here I'm like to be,
For very strange my state to change
No lovers come to me.

ELLEN

There now, will you promise not to send begging here, any of your gins and piccaninies.⁸ if I give you what you want. [*Aside.*] I do not mind looking at a man, though he be a black; but I like not these gins. [*Aloud.*] There — there is a damper⁹ for you, and some baccy as you call it. I don't know which is worst, the bushrangers or you natives — the one obtain from us what they want without leave, whilst the other ask permission first — there, take your bread and tobacco, I have got no blanket for you.

NATIVE

Bushranger rob, steal, kill, murder — little make them savage — black native love white man, till murder wife, piccaniny.

ELLEN

Come be off, here comes a stranger.