

# **ad Arrow: Being Passages From the History of Maida Gwynnham**

Caroline Leakey

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# Broad Arrow: Being Passages From the History of Maida Gwynnham, a Lifer

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## CHAPTER I. THE FESTIVAL.

'Oh! let the merry bells ring round.'

A JOYFUL clangour is rising from the tower of St. Judas as the cold grey of the venerable cathedral warms itself in the afternoon sun. Our city is very gay. Bustle and excitement jostle one another in the streets. The shops display their rainbow assortments of finery with more than ordinary taste. Carriages throng the thoroughfare, and from the carriages fashion and beauty gaze placidly on the crowd making its way towards the Queen's high-road. Placards announce a ball — and the newspapers hint that this ball is to be a nonpareil.

It is the festival of the assizes! and the ball the 'Assize Ball'!

The bells from St. Judas are made to outswell the prison bell; and, amid the hurry of preparation, the clank of the felon's chain passes unheard through the very midst.

No thinking person objects to pomp and state on all occasions calculated to impress the mind (especially that of the common people) with a sense of superior power. But is there not the pomp of the funeral — funeral pomp? Does not the sight of the plumed hearse fill the breast with solemnity? Does not the crowd intuitively doff its cap before it? Do not the voice of laughter and the song of thoughtlessness involuntarily cease, or drop to softer tones, when the toll of the death-bell meets the ear?

Would the cause that brings our judges to our cities be less hated by the youthful heart were it taught to associate more of the funeral and less of the feast with the onroll of the carriage that bears sorrow, punishment, death in its rear?

We cannot answer for all children, but we know of one who, when hurried forward to see 'the judges come in,' shrunk behind the crowd to ruminate on some mystery, and, unable to fathom it, burst into tears, exclaiming: 'Why do they let those happy bells ring? — the prisoners must hear them!'

The day for the ball arrives. You are invited to attend. Your particular attention is directed to a very elegantly — dressed young man — Captain Norwell — as elegant in person and deportment as in attire. He is unanimously voted a fascinating man by the fair sex, and the king of the evening by the dark. He is surrounded by an admiring group of both sexes. Many a plotting mother opines that he will make an excellent husband, and many an anxious father pictures how well his jewel of a daughter would look in so brilliant a setting; while some elder brother apostrophises him — that is, Captain Norwell — as a 'lucky dog,' and lucky dog means a great deal in fashionable phraseology.

'What happy chance brought you to our part of the world at this season of the year, Captain Norwell — the ball?' The querist is a lady old enough to have three grown-up daughters.

'No,' replies Norwell; 'but since I was here, I could not resist the temptation of mixing with such an assemblage of beauty as Rumour said these walls would witness; and for once I find she has been very humble in her statements, and disappointment has not followed in her train.' A gracious bow to the blushing group around him accompanies this speech.

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'You come to attend the assizes, I suppose?'

'Partly; I heard that a very interesting trial was to come on, and having a little time to spare, I ran down to hear it.'

Several voices ask: 'Oh! to which one do you allude?' Neither fascinated ladies nor scheming parents observe that a slight shade passes over Captain Norwell's fine countenance, and a still slighter tremulousness into his voice, as he replies:

'I speak of that of Martha Grylls.'

'You will put me out of love with dancing if you talk of that woman,' says an animated girl, whose merry laugh belies her words. 'I shall fancy I am dancing to the clank of chains, or waltzing to Pestal, if you talk any more such horrors.'

But the pertinacious mother is not to be stopped. To stop Norwell in the vicinity of her daughters is the only stoppage she meditates.

'Which was Martha Grylls? Not having the honour of such distinguished acquaintance, I do not know each prisoner by name.'

A quick, searching glance at the lady, and Norwell answers:

'The young woman indicted for forgery. I — I mean child—murder.'

'Oh! that beautiful woman? One would hardly think so lovely a face could belong to such a wretch: so calm and innocent, too, she looked.'

'I do not think she did look so very innocent,' interrupts the animated girl; 'there was a flinty hardihood in her face that quite prevented me from pitying her, as I should have done had she cried. My heart was quite steeled against her; I felt no pity.'

'Flint and steel together should produce a spark, or one of the two could not be genuine,' says Captain Norwell.

'She stood so erect, and eyed the court so proudly, as if she would say, \"Sentence me to death and I will thank you!\" Once, though, I did think she was going to break down. Did you observe Captain Norwell, about the middle of the trial, how she faltered: and then, when she turned toward the door, how she started as if she saw something which renewed her courage? She certainly saw some person or thing, for the hard look came back to her face. I wonder what or who it was. Perhaps she saw her father or mother.'

'That would have softened her!' replies a gentle voice, from a pale, interesting girl, whose diminutive stature has hidden her from immediate sight.

'Perhaps it was an accomplice then. The change on her countenance was unmistakable.'

Another in that ballroom had marked the change in the prisoner's manner as her faltering gaze fell on a certain corner of the court. Ay — he noticed it, but not to wonder at its cause. To his heart the change brought at once ease and pain — ease to the diseased part, and pain to what portion of it remained uncontaminated.

'Such stony hardness,' persisted the young lady.

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'There is the stony hardness of despair — a breaking heart may lie behind a brazen wall,' replies the gentle voice from the corner.

These words are uttered timidly, but with great feeling and the speaker, raising her eyes to Norwell, fancies that gentleman agrees with her, for she sees an expression of unutterable anguish momentarily distort his features.

You have been invited to attend the ball on purpose to hear this commonplace, out-of-place conversation — as out of place in a ballroom as a ball is out of time in an assize week.

Fancy how awkward it will look to see in the same gazette, column by column —

'THE ASSIZES!' 'THE BALL!'

Your presence is again required, but in a very different scene. Where you are now wanted there will be no festoon of blooming flowers wreathing a fragrant archway above you: no mimic suns making the decorated ceiling a lesser firmament of glory; there will be no radiant faces to greet you with the lustrous smile of excitement, no sound of music and dancing. There await you a dark, stone archway, and an iron gate beneath it. There will be the relentless grating of its hinges, with the heavy sound of ponderous keys; and a coldness in the aspect of the building you are to enter will communicate itself to your soul, making you shudder to pass within its dreary portal. You must follow the guide along that narrow passage, where your footstep echoes cheerlessly through the dismal corridor. A doubly-locked door swings itself solemnly back, and there is silence, darkness, despair.

— Pass on.

The heavy sigh that just falls upon your ear, as the lock springs from its socket, only makes the silence deeper. The gloomy flicker of the miniature lamp, hanging from the wall, serves only to show you the darkness. The look of apathy fixed on you by the occupant of the cell only reminds you that that despair is deepest which gives no outward sign.

— Pass on.

'Martha Grylls — a gentleman to speak to you.'

The hopeful tone and the earnest glance astonish you, as, energetically raising her hand to shade her eyes, the prisoner asks:

'Who is he?'

Pain succeeds your astonishment as you hear the utter hopelessness of the tone with which she continues:

'I don't wish to see him. I'll see no one.'

And the hand before shading her eyes, closes resolutely over them, as she drops her head, refusing to look at the clergyman, who is the gentleman announced.

It is Martha Grylls you look upon. You heard of her in the ballroom, and are prepared to meet her in the felon's cell. Her real name is Maida Gwynnham; but under the above alias she has been convicted of child-murder, for which crime the sentence of death was passed upon her at the assizes; since then, through the clemency of our lady sovereign, she has been reprieved, and now transportation for life is all she will have to bear. Listen awhile, and you may find that balls and prisons are not always unconnected. The clergyman who speak is the Rev. Herbert Evelyn, not the Chaplain of the gaol. He is admitted at this late hour by special authority of the powers

that be.

'I am your friend, Martha; do not refuse to let me be so.'

'I have no friend; it is all false.'

'Martha, stop — stop and think. No friend?'

'None! none! Though once I madly thought I had.'

There is a tone in Maida's voice which tells Mr. Evelyn he has unwittingly touched the key-note to some part of her history — he wonders how to answer her. Then she continues half aloud, with an absent air:

'Did he send you? then he has not forgotten me!' And her hands unconsciously clasp and go with a tremble to her breast, as though she would hide some treasure there.

'No; he did not. One who loves you still better, bids me visit you with a word of comfort from Himself.'

Maida looks frightened, and with a bewildered air, asks:

'What do you mean? If he did not send, he cannot care for me; and there is no one else in the world to care for me or think of me!'

Mr. Evelyn goes towards her, and is about to lay his hand on her shoulder, but she waves him back, and he perceives that the blood has rushed to her very temples, and that passion quivers on her clenched lips; he has time only to remark this, ere she bursts forth:

'He never loved me! and now he is trying to win some other fond and foolish heart to its own destruction.'

She presses her hand to her burning brow, and proceeds:

'Ay! he will break some other heart when mine is sinking far away. He will tell the same lying tale to some unthinking girl, thoughtless and wayward as I was; and she will believe him, and he will deceive her, and she will be left; and fear or pride will drive her from her home, she will fly to hide her disgrace; she will try to die, but death hates the wretched. She will steal to give her infant bread; she will be sent to prison, and thence across the seas; and we shall meet — two victims to his lies. Ah, how I shall love her!'

She abruptly stops.

'Was he at the ball last night?' not waiting for an answer. 'He was in the court — I saw him. I was on the point of giving way when our eyes met — it was enough: that glance was fire to the dying embers — he understands my eye; he read its promise and seemed satisfied. There was — but was he at the ball last night? there is always a ball to commemorate the assizes. Was he?'

Mr. Evelyn answers not.

'Ah, you are surprised; you thought I spoke of a poor man. No — no! such glories are reserved for the rich; they may sin, and hide their sin in a golden grave; they may break innocent hearts, and the world ignore the fact; it is these sins that fill these cells; it is these sins that will people perdition; and if God sees as man sees —'

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But her voice fails, the blood leaves her temples, and faint from excitement and want of food, she sinks insensible to the earth.

As Mr. Evelyn quits the prison, he sees a gentleman wrapped in a long loose cloak standing opposite the gateway, and gazing abstractedly at the grated window; the moonlight falls on his upturned face.

'If that index be true, all is not right within,' thinks Mr. Evelyn.

Captain Norwell saunters down the street. As soon as Mr. Evelyn is out of sight he returns and rings at the gate.

'Confound it! what a row! I only touched the bell, and here is noise enough to wake Lucifer on his throne. — Can I see — Maida — I mean Martha Grylls — '

'No, sir; past hours long ago, even if you'd a permit.'

'I leave to-morrow; cannot I be favoured as well as that gentleman just gone?'

'Parson, sir. Wonderful, sir, how the ooman 'tracts the gentry. Can't indeed, sir. Gentry round her like bees — 'tracts 'em wonderful.'

'Does she?' Norwell tries to speak unconcernedly. 'She likes that, I suppose?'

'These creatures generally do, but she don't — she don't, and no mistake.'

Norwell looks relieved, and it seems the information is worth money to him, for he drops a crown into the turnkey's hand; that official jerks his cap in recognition of the palmy touch, but shakes his head at it.

'Can't, sir, indeed; it's as much as my place is worth to try on that game. If you was a parson now,' and the turnkey eyes him longingly, as though he would there and then put him into the priest's office for the sake of the crown; but he can discover no priest-like quality in Norwell's dress, so reluctantly holds out the money towards him.

'No, no, keep it,' cries Norwell impatiently; 'it's not for that; mind you gag your bell's mouth before I come again.'

The gate closes after him, and he mutters:

'I've done all I can — I wish she knew it. O Maida, Maida, where will it end?'

## CHAPTER II. MAIDA GWYNNHAM.

MAIDA was the only child of a gentleman possessing a small country property in Essex. She lost her mother at an early age. She resembled her in beauty, virtues, and faults. Affectionate, firm, truthful, ardent and generous on the one hand; haughty, passionate and impulsive on the other. She quite governed her father, who was not strong-minded, but kind, generous, and well-educated. He very rarely controlled her in any thought, word, or deed; no wonder, therefore, that any change was distasteful to her. But when she was sixteen her father took her to a first-rate London school, to receive finishing lessons. With much weeping they separated.

Ay, there may well be weeping! Father, thou art sending a treasure from thy bosom; will it ever lie there more? The star of thy hope will set in a fearful eclipse.

Couldst thou look through time's far-seeing telescope, thou wouldst start at the blackened future before thy child.

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Thou wouldst see her noble purpose, her lofty heart, circumvented by a craft triumphant where strength had failed. We would fain hide from the father the sights this glass reveals. But you must peep in if you would understand the history that will follow.

Look; there is Maida, beaming her loveliest. Her eyes are radiant with joy, as she listens to a gentleman who is talking to her: what he says you cannot tell; there are those who know; let them tell who have learnt how to overcome artlessness with art.

Look again.

As a dissolving view the scene has changed, but the figures are the same. Maida is weeping. Her face depicts great mental agony — his face just such anxiety as a person would feel on seeing a long-sought treasure within hand-grasp.

Now a few sentences reach your ear.

'But why should not I tell my father? You are withholding a joy from him; you cannot know him if you think he would deny me — he never denied me anything; I must tell him, and he shall give me to you, Norwell.'

'No, he would not give you up, and you would be more miserable to do it after he had said nay. If he is so indulgent, he will forgive you. You shall have a letter written all ready to send directly the ceremony is over.'

You hear no more; the sound fades away with the view, which dissolves itself into a moonlight scene. A female in disguise leans on a gentleman's arm. They hurry by; you trace them to a railway-station; they enter a first-class carriage. The whistle is loud, shrill enough to meet your ear; they are whirled off, and the station melts into an upper chamber. But one figure is there — a female; her black hair flats over her shoulders — her eyes glisten; you have seen those eyes before; they glisten, not now with radiant joy; there is a fire in them that you fancy must scathe the object it shall rest upon. A cup is in her quivering hand; you glance involuntarily towards a phial on the table; there is a label on the phial, and on the label there are cross-bones and a skull; beneath the skull is written, in large black letters, 'Poison.'

Her lips seem to tremble forth a prayer; she dashes the cup from her with 'I will be no coward; he shall see I can endure life!'

You must supply the blanks in Maida's history; the blanks which these scenes leave. Happy are you if you cannot do so!

Three years have fled by. The sights that glass revealed as Future have for twelve months been the Past.

And Maida still lives on!

### **CHAPTER III. CAPTAIN NORWELL.**

AT the door of a humble lodging-house, in a country town, stood a gentleman in military undress. After a moment's hesitation he advanced, and ascending the stairs, gently opened the door of a small third-story room, where he perceived the object of his search — Maida Gwynnham, still beautiful — proudly beautiful, though in person the mere shadow of her former self. Captain Norwell soon found that sorrow had not dimmed the fire of her eye.

No word was spoken on either side. Maida seemed to ponder what course of reception to adopt; and Norwell,



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cowed by her haughty, unflinching stare, tacitly owned her superiority by waiting for her to break the unpleasant silence.

During this we will take the writer's and reader's privilege of turning past into present, and glance around the scantily — furnished apartment. A cradle stands by the chair from which Maida has just started on seeing Norwell; and in the cradle sleeps a baby. On the floor, by the cradle, lies a heap of calico; a half-made shirt-sleeve on the table explains this heap. In the farthest corner of the room is a loaf lying, as though it had rolled there by mistake, or had been made a plaything of. The cupboard tells us its own secret, by displaying, as the only occupant of its hungry shelves, an earthenware basin of tea-leaves.

'Is this the way you receive me?' at length said the Captain, perceiving that Maida chose to insist on making him yield. 'Is this the way you receive me, when I have travelled from London on purpose to see you?'

'I did not ask you to come.'

'No!' replied Norwell, with a forced laugh. 'No, I know that; my lady Gwynnham never asks, she only deigns to command. But why is this, Maida? Why did you not let me know of your distress?'

Maida stretched out her emaciated arm, and shaking her fingers, cried:

'Look at these fingers — the skin just covers them. I have worked them to the bone in getting a morsel of bread for my child; for him I could do everything but beg.'

Breaking into a fearful smile, she added in an audible whisper:

'For him I could do everything but beg — for him I could even steal! Do you see that loaf there, in the corner of the room? My boy was crying for food, and I had none to give him; the baker's basket lay in a doorway, and I put out these fingers, worn to the bone' (she shook them again) — 'I put them out and s-t-o-l-e! I rushed upstairs — my baby's cry was hushed. I could not break the loaf. 'Twas like fire in my hand when his cry no longer fell like burning sounds on my heart, so I dashed the cursed thing across the room; and there it shall lie until those who have lost it come to claim it, and take me.'

'But, Maida, you are rash and proud.'

'I know I am, both.'

'Do hear me. By telling me of your situation you would have avoided all this misery, and there would have been no begging in it.'

'Had you wished, Henry, to discover my circumstances, you would not have awaited appraisal from one who hates to complain. Eleven months would not have elapsed since last I heard of or from you.'

'Don't scold, there's a darling!' said Norwell, in a coaxing tone; 'you love me still, don't you?'

The tear glistened in Maida's eye, and he was answered. Once more her aching heart was soothed by perjured lips, whose specious words vowed lasting faith, and her parched spirit drank in the lying tale, surrendering itself to the cruel refreshment.

'But you are pale, Henry, very pale and haggard.' She gazed anxiously at him.

'I am not well, Maida; vexations of which you know nothing make my life a perpetual worry.'

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'I should know them, then, Henry!'

A smile slightly reproachful and full of sadness accompanied this speech.

'I came here intending to unburden my mind; but once here I lose myself in you, and my troubles in your distress. I look ill? what does that face look?'

'Only what it deserves — never mind it. Tell me of yourself — let your griefs be mine, and if I can assist you — O, Henry! need I tell you how wholly I am yours?'

The moment had arrived. The prey quivered within hand-grasp. He then told her that his position was precarious. Pecuniary difficulties pressed upon him so hardly, that were another week might find him, he would not harrow her tender feelings by hinting. He told of feverish excitements which sapped his life energies; of harassing vigils which might deprive him of reason. And when Maida inquired what assistance she could possibly render in adversities so hopelessly beyond her aid, Norwell answered that her affectionate participation in his sorrow was in itself an assistance; because it solaced his desponding spirits. On further inquiry he told her the most beggarly part of the trial was, that a mere trifle would relieve him.

'You wish to help me,' he continued; 'now is the chance for you.' Drawing a letter from his pocket-book, he handed it to her. 'Read this. You see my uncle here promises me four hundred; well, now read that cheque, on the table there. You see it is only for one hundred. What am I to do? Am I to be ruined by the old dotard?'

'Certainly not; only don't speak so. Write at once and get him to rectify the blunder. It is an odd one, though, to make.'

'Not for a man of eighty, just in the flurry of starting for the Continent. As for writing to him, why, before I could receive an answer, I should be — ah! well, never mind where. At any rate, it would be useless to write: he has left England by this. We must act first and wake him up afterwards. We must alter the cheque to the amount intended. That's what I want you to do. A woman's touch is so much lighter than a man's. Look here.'

Taking the cheque, he seated himself at the table, and pointed with a pencil to the figures. 'As they are written, it will be easy to turn the one into a four: the distance readily admits it. See here; a little tail at the end of the one, a stroke through the tail, and it's done. The spelt figures are the plague.'

He scanned them thoughtfully, then continued: 'Twill do famously! See, the one is rather indistinct, put an F before it, there's room enough; and the tiniest touch to the e, and you have a pretty good four. The n is as much a u as an n, thanks to his penmanship.' He imagined Maida was following the pencil in its course over the cheque. Turning his head to make sure of her attention, he saw her standing erect, a look of horror depicted on her blanched features; her hand, uplifted, had stayed itself half-way to her lips, a passion worked beneath that stricken exterior but not a passion to vent itself in wrath. 'Why Maida!'

'Oh, Norwell! do you too spurn me — and with such a request? This is misery.'

In well-affected surprise, Norwell put his arm around her.

'You silly child; what tragedy nonsense is this? Listen to me, Maida.'

All truth herself — strangely enough, through the dark experience of more than two years she had not learned to doubt her deceiver. She listened to his perjured voice, and the rigidity of her features relaxed; her hand reached its destination, and in an attitude of warning she laid one finger on her lip. Norwell went on to say:

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'You may depend it's all right, and that in his book uncle has placed four hundred against my name, or rather against this cheque. 'Tis not the first time he has made so childish a mistake. Excusable, too, poor old fellow! but that won't save me. If you will not help me, I must do it myself. I'm not going to founder for his forgetfulness. Of course I shall write at once and tell him what we've done, and he'll be glad enough.'

'I do not understand money matters,' Maida sighed, resting her eyes trustfully on Norwell. 'If you assure me there is no harm, I will try my best.'

'What harm can there be, when it's from my own uncle? See, here is his name; he'll be annoyed enough when he finds what a trick he has served me. Under a similar error would you not do the same by your father, if you were hard up for money?'

'Doubtless — but he is one of a thousand.'

'And may not my uncle be one of a million?'

His voice was so earnest, his manner so open, Maida could no longer hesitate; the cloud that had transiently obscured her lover rolled off, and all was fair. Another trusting look.

'Mind, then, I lean on you!'

Maida sat at the table and Norwell bent over her, directing her pen.

'There — will that do?' she cried, pushing the cheque forward and herself back with the satisfied air of one who has accomplished a difficult task.

'Will it do, Henry?'

'Bravo! old Rogers himself will be deceived.'

'Deceived, Henry?'

'Oh, any word you like will suit me.' His tone was cheerful — there was no deception in it — she was content.

'Now, then, you must sign your name at the back. No what am I talking about? I am as much Martha Grylls as you. What a lark it is that he always will give a name of his own \"/>composure," as the clerk is said to have said! My name isn't fit to appear on paper, I suppose.'

Maida was puzzled until, taking up the cheque, she observed that it was payable to a Martha Grylls or order. Norwell explained that it was a whim of his uncle to trump up all the odd names he could think of; whether to make him laugh, or because he objected to have two Norwells on one paper, he could not tell.

'However, he never honoured me with the feminine gender before. I'm afraid I shall not do justice to the sex. Let's see, Martha Grylls had better write his or her name at the back; then I, Captain Norwell, shan't be the fair possessor of the melodious title in presenting the cheque for payment.'

Maida smiled, while he took up the pen, as if to write the name; he flourished his fingers a few times and then said:

'Well, perhaps you had better do it. I may not write Martharish enough for the personage. Here; just along there. You are more Martha Grylls than I.'

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'The M.G. is very like your writing, Henry,' she remarked in handing him back the note.

'Now I have become Martha Grylls, I rather like it; it is so peculiar.'

This was spoken playfully. Why did Norwell gaze so sadly on her? Why turn with a face so full of misery as folding the cheque in his pocket-book, he met her large eyes fixed fondly on him, and heard her almost gleeful voice:

'Now, thank God, you are all right! Now, naughty boy, go and renovate that pale face.' . . .

When Norwell reappeared the next morning, his unrefreshed countenance and listless gait bespoke a sleepless night. Maida was grieved and disappointed. The money had not cured him. What else could she do for him? He was too unwell to ride to the neighbouring town. Would she object to go for him to get the cheque cashed at his uncle's bank? He would stay with the brat during her absence. She did not object -- if they would pay her, she would be delighted to go for him. Might the shabbiness of her dress make them hesitate to give her the money? Dear no; who could doubt her authenticity as a gentlewoman? or if they did, they dare not refuse payment at his uncle's own bank. She accordingly set off in the mail, and reached her destination just before the bank closed for the day. Some question from the clerk drew forth the reply that she had written the signature at the back.

'Then you are Martha Grylls, ma'am?'

Maida smiled, she could not help it; she was so amused at her new name. The clerk thought she smiled at his asking her if she was herself: so he politely said: 'We are obliged to be particular, ma'am.' And it passed off. Martha Grylls left the bank, and took her place in an omnibus, the only conveyance going to -- that afternoon.

She found Norwell in her room when she returned. He was taciturn to sullenness. Maida entreated him to tell her what further ailed him; but he shook off her importunities until the night was far advanced. He then sprang to his feet with a suddenness that made her tremble; turning upon her he cried:

'It is no use to hide it. Without a great sacrifice, I'm a dead man.'

'What sacrifice is there I would not make for you, Henry? my love has never failed. I could do anything but sin for you.'

'And you couldn't do that? What, then, if I tell you you have sinned already?' His eye rested piercingly on her. 'Maida, I am about to sift your love for me. Do you know what we have done?'

'No! what? explain, and quickly.'

'We -- have -- committed -- forgery,' deliberately hissed Norwell; 'and it is too late to retract, unless you would hurl me into hell -- for this pistol goes through my heart the instant you decide against me. There -- Maida Gwynnham, I am in your hands; kill me if you choose.'

There was a fearful silence in that little upper chamber. The fiercest tempest of wrath, the keenest lightning-flash -- break forth, rather than that cold, dead stillness. Norwell quailed beneath the dilated gaze that moved not -- yet fixed on him -- while she who fixed it stood breathless, pale, and chill, as though her life-springs had been touched with ice.

'Speak, Maida! oh, speak to me!'

No answer came.

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A gradual change overspread her face — pitying scorn was depicted there. Another change — revenge sat brooding there. Again a change, and anger recoloured her pallid cheek. Yet once more a change. Her features compressed. The colour went back to the smitten heart, and firm determination was written on her face — her mind was resolved; her voice calm.

'Will it save you?'

'Why, why, it shall not get you into a scrape.'

'Do not lie; will it save you?' the same calm voice.

'Yes: if you choose it will save me; otherwise — '

The pistol clicked and supplied the blank.

'I am in your power, Maida.'

'And I in yours?' quietly and unwisely asked she.

But Norwell, too agitated to note the question in its advantageous view, merely replied:

'Why, no, hardly that, because you could implicate me.'

'I would leave that to Captain Norwell,' sneered Maida. 'Yes, to you, Henry. The scales have fallen from my eyes; I see it all too late, as, too late, I have discovered you. Detection is possible: your hand did not commit the forgery; your fame must not be touched, it stands too high; but Maida Gwynnham, that outcast! it matters not how low her fall.'

'Oh, Maida! can you make the sacrifice?'

'If you can, Norwell; there lies the bitterness to me.'

'Oh! do not, do not speak so! Pity, pity poor weak-minded Norwell, who cannot bear the finger of shame. I am the object of pity, not you. Your lofty nature may find happiness in vicarious suffering, but for me what is there?'

'It need not, shall not be.'

'It must, Maida; would you betray me?' his fingers played on the pistol.

'Not whilst I can suffer in your stead. Go, Henry; you have nothing to fear from me. The sin, mine by carelessness, shall become mine by substitution, for I see no other way to save you from punishment.'

'And from death. I would not live a second after disgrace. Oh, Maida! be this your support — you save a soul from death.'

She shuddered; she longed to be alone, and beckoned Norwell to leave; he was not sorry to do so; it was hazardous to remain in her presence. Not venturing another look, he said:

'Then I am in your hands: my life is yours, to spare or slay.'

'I committed the forgery; let that suffice you, Norwell.'

The door slammed on him, and he was gone.

'I am a felon!' thought Maida, and she recoiled from herself as though the brand of infamy already burned on her; then dropping on her knees, she cried, 'O God! lay not this sin to my charge — it is to save one dearer than my life. Do Thou acquit me, and I can bear the lot of shame.'

## CHAPTER IV. THE FELON.

THE morning light shimmered coyly through the closed pane, and fell upon a lovely pair — death in its reality, cold, but void of mockery; life in its unreality, cold, and brimful of subtle mockery drooped together on that couch. But for the low, tearless sob which broke at intervals from Maida, you would have thought that she, too, shared the kind reality of death. She knelt by the couch, resting her face on her dead baby's pillow; her hair fell like a pall over the little corpse, and strikingly the chill pallor of death looked up from the sable covering.

The clock had struck five — still Maida bent over the little sleeper, unconscious that she was watched by Norwell, who had ascended the stairs without noise. Horror-stricken he stood at the door. He came to impart direful news; but in this new grief for Maida everything was forgotten, as the sight of sorrow burst upon him.

For some time Norwell remained a spectator only of the scene, so touching in its passiveness, so heartrending in its reality. He then advanced on tiptoe to the bed, and stooping over the kneeling form, whispered:

'Maida, it is I; look at me, dear.'

She remained seemingly unconscious for a time; then suddenly starting to her feet, and pressing her clenched hand on her heart, as if to keep down by force the choking emotion which was swelling there, she exclaimed:

'Norwell, what brings you — bad news?'

'They are on us, Maida,' hurriedly returned the Captain; 'it is all discovered, and,' wiping the large drops fast gathering on his forehead, 'I fear they have a clue to me; for you they are in full cry.'

'They need raise no cry, for I shall not lead them a chase; but you, oh! you, Norwell, must and shall be saved.'

'Well, then, be careful what you say — when you are apprehended be silent — when obliged to speak weigh well your words, or you — you will betray me.'

Maida shuddered.

'Now haste away, you have been here too long already. I am prepared for them;' and then, as if repeating a lesson, she whispered:

'I — did — it! they will only get those three words from me.'

Norwell was half down stairs when he returned, took Maida's hand, and looking anxiously at her, said:

'Maida, you will hear strange things. I have been hurried on to a point I never thought I could reach.'

'Go, Norwell — go.' He obeyed, but again came back.

'Maida, your punishment will be heavy — it may be — '

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'Transportation for life!' calmly added Maida.

'And I a man — O Maida! Try, do try to escape. I will aid you. I will go with you.'

Again he descended and again he returned.

'Do you — can you forgive me? Can you think in any other way of me than as a cowardly wretch?'

'I can think of you as a martyr!' Norwell understood the searching tone.

'Perhaps we have met for the last time,' he exclaimed, as the door closed upon him.

She started from a deep reverie with the air of one who wakes to a yet oblivious sense of an impending sorrow.

'What is it? Oh! what is it?' Her eyes fell upon the bed, and she was answered. She gazed wildly around the room.

'They will take my babe from me, and I have not even wept over it! No! the scalding drops are fevering my brain but they will not come forth. My babe! my child!' she continued, in the thrilling accents of despair, 'the last comfort is denied thy wretched mother — she may not lay thee in thy grave.'

'Why not?' she quickly added, 'they are not here yet. The morning is yet early — no one is astir. Who will miss Maida Gwynnham's child?'

She stole on tip-toe to the bed, then hastily descended the stairs, bearing her unconscious burden wrapped in the accustomed shawl. About half a mile distant lay a lovely unfrequented spot. Maida had often wished to rest her own weary head there. With a palpitating heart, thither she bent her steps: every sound made her start. But Maida's fears were not for herself.

'Another hour and some rough grasp might tear thee from me, my precious babe, and thou wouldst have a tearless grave — now thy own mother will lay thee down, how tenderly!'

The morning was calm and bright — there was that mysterious silence around that is only made the more impressive by the faint sounds which occasionally disturb it. The very birds had hushed their cheery carols as though they knew that songs of mirth fall heavily upon a burdened mind. Was it the still small voice which spoke to Maida in that gentle scene — the voice which she refused to hear in the stormy blasts that had desolated her haughty spirit? for she wept. Placing her babe upon the turf, she clasped her hands, and looking upwards, exclaimed:

'Oh, God! Thou hast made everything pure and beautiful. Canst Thou look on me, the only evil here? Oh, God! if this be sin, forgive it for the sake of Him whose name I have forfeited to utter.'

Courage, Maida! thou hast breathed a prayer, and prayer was never yet denied, how long soever delayed the answer. It is stored for thee in Heaven's golden treasury, and yet must yield its plenteous harvest. She knelt and tried the mould. It was soft and crumbly, readily giving to her touch. There was a rustle in the bushes. She peered cautiously around. Nothing was to be seen. She continued her labour — another rustle — she sprang to her feet — all was quiet again. She had removed the earth about a foot's depth when a shout was heard. A man leaped from the hedge and clutched her arm.

'Halloo, missus! I've a-watched you this quarter hour — just to be sure what you're up to — if this yer an't seeing with one's own eyes, I'm blessed!'

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Maida stretched her hand towards the child; the man laid his upon it.

'This yer's our article, if you please, missus. By Jingo! you're an old hand. Here we've been after you for one thing -- a bit o' paper business -- and we catches you up to another that beats t'other all hollow, or I ain't Bob Pragg.'

Here two constables appeared, and with a look of disapprobation at the ruffianly man, desired him to desist. Then quietly taking Maida's arms, they requested her to accompany them.

'Take up the child, Watkins,' said the elder constable; whispering, as the other obeyed, 'any signs or marks of violence?'

Watkins lifted the dead body, and, wrapping it in the shawl, carried it bundle-wise under his arm. Even this irreverence failed to attract Maida's attention. She was revolving some yet unfathomed mystery, or moulding some plan that yielded not readily to her wishes.

By an interchange of expressive nods, the constables had remarked Maida's start when they examined the corpse for marks of violence, and had noted it as a proof of guilt.

Ay, she had started, and with the start an intrepid thought had rushed into her mind -- a thought whose purpose was to place Captain Norwell beyond reach of danger, because it should place her at the bar of justice in a different position of guilt.

'I have it!' she at last exclaimed; and a smile of triumph illumined her face. Then the old look of firm resolve stamped its awful though silent fiat upon her countenance. The mystery was explained, the plan moulded, the intrepid thought grappled with; that smile of triumph defied each one.

Arrested for forgery under the alias of Martha Grylls Maida Gwynnham was indicted at the next assizes for the wilful murder of her child, the bill of indictment for forgery being held subservient to the more terrible charge of murder.

In Maida's cupboard was found a bottle that awakened vivid suspicions against the prisoner. It was produced in court, and a shiver ran through the audience as from the skull and cross-bones the dreadful word 'poison' with unmistakable distinctness bore witness to the alleged guilt.

Some laudanum found in the stomach of the baby corroborated the testimony of the label on the phial.

Now comes the explanation of that smile that broke from the disdainful gloom of Maida's face. The same exultant smile burst forth when the foreman of the jury gave the verdict:

'We find Martha Grylls guilty of the wilful murder of her child.'

And, if possible, a still more victorious smile shone on the judge's declaration:

'Having been found guilty of the higher crime, which I shall sentence to the full rigour of the law, it were useless to urge the lesser charge against Martha Grylls.'

Then with solemn pathos, amidst the breathless hush of the Court, the judge drew the fatal symbol on his head, and pronounced the death warrant, which was received by the Court with one prolonged sob of smothered feeling, and welcomed by Maida Gwynnham as the benediction after a tedious sermon.



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Norwell had not known what to understand by the unexpected charge brought against Maida. As one by one the proofs of her guilt were produced, he was staggered; they were unquestionable. The dreadful crime could, without doubt, be traced. True — he had seen the child lying dead, and Maida moaning over it; but may not she have murdered it for all that? and may not the moan have been that of remorse? Thus pondering, he glanced towards the bar — loath, very loath, we must admit it, to believe any harm of Maida; when a slight curl in the corners of her nether lip — a look he well comprehended — convinced him of her innocence more than a verdict for her could have done. When he perceived the fatal termination of the trial, even in the distance — too sick at heart to remain — he hurried from the court; and turning at the door to draw in one long gaze of Maida, their eyes met, and the fuel was added to the fire of her constancy; and its smoke smothered the last thought of restitution which had lingered in his heart.

Assured by a barrister that the sentence would be commuted to transportation for life, Norwell pacified himself with the thought, 'that will seem nothing after such a fright she would have had that otherwise,' and gladly crept out of the loophole opened by circumstance (Providence, he said) and still wider opened by the fair law of England; he crept out into —

The ball-room! No harm either — it was the assize ball.

### **CHAPTER V. THE REVEREND HERBERT EVELYN.**

'The secret of true eloquence is an eloquent heart.'

STILL anxious to try what he could effect towards winning Maida's attention and confidence, Mr. Evelyn applied for permission to visit the prisoner again.

Remembering with apprehension the passionate ebullition she had given way to before Mr. Evelyn, Maida was equally anxious to see that gentleman, in order to ascertain how far she had betrayed Norwell, and her own secret. Remembering also that Mr. Evelyn had spoken of a friend who loved her better than anyone else, and fearing that this friend could be none other than her father, she longed to ask her informant to whom he had alluded. But too proud to ask a favour, she incurred the risk of letting her doubts remain unsatisfied rather than seek an interview with Mr. Evelyn through the kindness of the matron.

Pleasure was, therefore, plainly depicted on her countenance when the object of her wishes entered her cell.

'Well, Martha, I am indeed glad to see you more cheerful; how are you, my poor girl? I have thought unceasingly of you since the night of your conviction.'

Not noticing the question, Maida eagerly exclaimed:

'Oh, sir! do tell me. What have I told you of my past history? I have been so miserable since you were here.'

'Then do not be miserable, you were so excited as to be almost incoherent. I only gathered from what you said that you had been betrayed by some villain calling himself a gentleman.'

'No names then?'

'None. I have not the faintest clue to any particular man.'

'I am anxious to know, sir, of whom you spoke, when you said you brought a message from some one who loved me better than — than — he?' She at last added, with a flushing cheek and with a firm start of her whole frame,

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'Was it my father? — tell me, No — and I care not who else it may be.'

'No, Martha! no earthly —'

'Thank God!' interrupted Maida; 'if he had sent you he would soon be following himself' (hiding her face in her hands) — 'and I could not — oh! I could not see him — it would break his heart to find me in these prison clothes. But perhaps his heart is broken already.'

She rocked herself wildly to and fro. Mr. Evelyn held his peace. Long experience had taught him that a chaplain's most favourable opportunity lies in the brief calm after a violent outburst of feeling. As he watched Maida he hoped the storm was passing away.

'Will you do me a favour, sir?' she asked at last.

'Anything — anything, Martha.'

'I shall have all my hair cut off when I am at Millbank; do you think they would give me two locks for a particular purpose?'

'Perhaps; it depends upon what person you ask: the matron would, I am sure; you must speak to her, and then?'

'Three months after I have gone — that is, left England — will you send one to my father, whose address you must promise not to discover until then, when, by a clue I will leave, you will easily find him — and the other — no, thank you, I will send that myself — will you oblige me, sir?'

'Willingly; but, Martha, you must write to your father.'

'Impossible, Mr. Evelyn! Should his own daughter's be the hand to sign his death-warrant?'

'Yes, Martha! the warrant has to reach him — let it be through his child rather than through the public executioner. I have a daughter; I know a father's feelings. You have also yourself to think of and act for; you have to prepare your dying bed.'

'You do not know what you ask for, sir. Were I to write, he would come to me; and I would rather that he should see me in my coffin than here: it would finish the breaking of his heart; and, surely, you would not bid me do that! besides, it would unnerve me — and then —'

'Would to God I could see you unnerved, Martha!'

Maida grasped Mr. Evelyn's hand, and fixing her eyes intently on him, whispered in beseeching tones:

'For pity's sake, do not talk so, sir; you will undo me — you will ruin me. What good would his pardon work upon a soul unforgiven by itself? For pity's sake, no more of this.'

'It is just for pity's sake that I would and must speak, my poor Martha; calm yourself, and listen to me:

'I have but lately come from that country to which you are shortly to be sent. For more than fourteen years I laboured there as a convict chaplain. I could tell you of hardships, of ill-treatment, of solitude, of home-sickness, of loveless labour, and of unrewarded servitude — all of which you must undergo; but all I could reveal of these, in their every crushing misery, would be insignificant compared to what I could disclose of the unrelenting tortures inflicted under the sentence of conscience — the sentence of remorse! generally reserved for hours of

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solitary imprisonment, or the day of sickness and death. when its victims are unable to lighten it by toil, or elude it by flight.

'From one cruel phase of this torture I would rescue you in imploring you to seek your father's pardon. That knowledge with which you now satisfy yourself will avail you nothing when once the great gulf betwixt him and you is passed.'

'Mr. Evelyn, you will not understand me — let me explain myself — but first, I pray you to believe that neither stubbornness nor pride is now at work in me. As we see an object for the last time, so do we picture it for ever. We may hear a thousand tales of that object afterwards — and we may receive them all — but without altering the impression left upon our minds.'

'I do not ask you to see your father, Martha. Under your circumstances, where there are all the finer feelings of the gentleman as well as the keen susceptibilities of the parent to be consulted, I would not advise a meeting; but you must write.'

A very earnest and steady look into Maida's face accompanied this boldly given, decidedly made assertion; but at the time, neither look nor assertion was noticed; the prisoner's thoughts were preoccupied, and her eyes fixed on the ground.

'You must write, Martha; and I will undertake to prevent a meeting; and also, if it would spare you pain, I would write to Mr. Grylls — (is that his name?) — break the dreadful intelligence, and prepare him to receive your letter.'

'Oh no! thank you, kindly; if it has to be done, I will do it myself. I do not shrink from a penance as just as it is severe, for the news will break his heart. I have brought it on myself. The letter shall be written; but I must be allowed to send it according to my own arrangement, in order to make his coming impossible.'

'The matron will doubtless permit you this indulgence. I only ask you, Martha, to let me know when you send the letter.'

'You shall be informed, sir; and I thank you for showing me this duty.'

'Farewell, Martha; I have already given you a parting benediction in that little book, and for my sake you have promised to read it. Be faithful to yourself in writing to your father. I will pray that you may be supported in the bitter trial, and that he may have strength to endure the impending stroke. God bless you!'

Meeting the governor's wife in one of the passages, Mr. Evelyn made known to her the prisoner's desire respecting the hair. Mrs. Lowe engaged that the wish should be gratified as far as her influence with the superintendent of Millbank extended, but advised the putting possibility beyond all doubt by at once cutting off the two required locks.

'I should not like to be present, sir, when she has her beautiful hair taken off. I am glad to be spared the painful sight. It will be a great trial to her; so peculiar a creature.'

'She will not feel it, I think, Mrs. Lowe; there is no petty weakness in her grief. As a concomitant of her humiliating portion, she may receive it with a shudder, but the shudder would be for herself, not for her hair.'

Mr. Evelyn was right in Maida's case, but generally, convicts are more sensible of mortification in being deprived of nature's best ornament than in almost any other course of penal discipline. In Van Diemen's Land the convicts especially the men, allow their hair to grow to an unbecoming length as an indisputable voucher of respectability.

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The gaoler, who had overheard Mrs. Lowe's remark suggested to Mr. Evelyn in a very confidential tone:

'That woman's hair'll fetch a mint o' money, sir; she wer'n't up to it, or she'd never have brought it in with her.'

A stern frown reprimanded this very natural spirit of speculation, to which the gaoler, misunderstanding, replied apologetically:

'Yes, well, sir, you're right — it is fair it should go to Government.'

But Mr. Evelyn's frown did not accept the apology.

### CHAPTER VI. TOO LATE.

A FULL half-hour before the ——— station opened to the public, a closely-shut vehicle drove to the gate, which immediately unlocked, and as quickly fastened, upon a decently-dressed female, who seemed to conduct rather than accompany three thickly-veiled women that had alighted and entered the platform with her, but their presence was ignored by the G. W. R. officials, and their existence only recognised in the person of her whom, par excellence we designate 'the female.' When she advanced to a carriage, the same secret understanding appeared there as at the entrance. The door instantly and quietly opened. She stood back, and let the veiled three precede her into the compartment, then, seating herself between two and in front of the third, she beckoned to a porter and he locked them in. This being accomplished, she heaved a gentle sigh of satisfaction, and leaning back to repose her exhausted energies, said mildly to the three:

'You may make yourselves as comfortable as you like, now.'

She should have said, and doubtless meant to say:

'You may make yourselves as comfortable as you can, now.'

Neither of the three availed herself of the permission. Indeed, their whole expression of dress and mien gave one the idea of discomfort too sure and certain to admit of the possibility of relief. Though assisted by 'the female' to surmount the stepping-in difficulty, each had displayed a peculiar awkwardness in the act that reminded one of the cramp. Afterwards, as they sat securely pinned in their shawls, one felt inclined to ask:

'What has become of their arms?'

But just then the carriage was made to back, and it had scarcely done so, ere the warning bell rang, and the express down train, snorting over the viaduct, ran into the vacated line.

Dexterously as 'the female' had contrived her entry, two other individuals had benefited by the premature unlocking of the station gates. One a military man, had effected his entrance with a silver latch-key; the other, a clergyman, by virtue of a lofty bearing, and an authority too marked to be gainsaid. Merely acknowledging his entrance by a slight inclination of his head to the wondering porter, Mr. Evelyn walked to a bookstall and purchased Bradshaw. Turning its pages until he arrived at the down trains, he passed his finger rapidly through the hour list of London departures, then, hastily shutting the guide, he murmured:

'Yes — he can be here! Let me see: he received the letter yesterday morning — started for town by next train, and left by night express; he will be here presently, if I read the poor man's heart aright.'

Having thus inferred, Mr. Evelyn paced the platform with a sharp, uneasy step, and occasionally stopped short, to

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look earnestly out on the distance. In doing thus he knocked against a gentleman who was leaning on the further side of one of the broad pillars which supported the canopy. A glance of recognition passed between the two gentlemen.

'Confound the man! He haunts a fellow when least he's wanted.'

With this surly salutation, Captain Norwell once more ensconced himself in his retreat.

Then it was that the down express snorted over the viaduct, and venting the remainder of its fury in portentous puffs, glided swiftly up the line, and stayed itself before the station.

In a moment all was hurry and seeming confusion.

'This door, porter! this door!' wailed a feeble voice from one of the first-class compartments.

The porter threw open the door. A tall, bowed figure issued from it, and stood in the midst of the bustle and packages as though all the bustle and packages in the world were nothing to it. With a helpless and almost imbecile expression, the figure raised its lack-lustre eyes and stared into the motley crowd, searching for some one who should be found in it.

A shrill whistle was the first sound that aroused the isolated figure to a consciousness that it must seek if it would find.

'Guard, isn't there a train leaving soon?' it feebly asked.

'Nour-and-half, sir.'

'Is that the one that is to carry some -- prisoners to London?'

'Just started, sir; see it up the hill there.'

A piteous cry -- a heavy fall -- and two persons, drawn to the spot by sympathetic attraction, bore Mr. Gwynnham, a senseless paralytic, from the platform.

## CHAPTER VII. THE COUSINS.

AT the date of this story's commencement Mr. Evelyn had been one year in England, and six months prior to that date he had lost his wife in Van Diemen's Land. The suddenness of the event preyed on his already impaired health; and listening to the solicitations of his brother and only child, he resigned his chaplaincy in Hobart Town in order to return to England to seek that repose for himself which his jaded energies so much required, and for his daughter those advantages which colonial education but sparsely afforded.

The arrival of their Tasmanian cousin was looked forward to with no small excitement by the D'Urban family. Bridget D'Urban, ever full of fun and drollery, had many a good-natured laugh in store for all the uncouth barbarities she expected in the young colonist; while her mother had secret misgivings that her girls would find no beneficial associate in one who must have imbibed a wrong view of things from unavoidable contact with the mixed and sometimes questionable society of Van Diemen's Land.

Both aunt and cousins were, therefore, sufficiently surprised when, late on a summer evening, Uncle Herbert (as henceforward we shall have to distinguish the Reverend Mr. Evelyn) introduced to them their cousin Emmeline, a

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young lady, who, from ease of manner and grace of deportment, might have done credit to any English drawing-room.

In a quarter of an hour Bridget was as proud of her cousin's appearance and manners as she had meant to be tender with her failings and faults. The contrast between the two girls was very striking — the more so, as they were of the same age — both on the verge of seventeen. The young English maiden was a girl in every sense — a good-looking, bright-eyed, rosy, laughter-loving creature, showing a decided preference for the sunny side of life, and for ever trying to shun the shadowy side; not by any means from a selfish indifference to the troubles of her neighbour but because, in her own words, 'It's so horrid to see wretchedness without being able to relieve it.'

She was the idol of the servants — ever ready to help them over a scrape, or to put her best construction on their worst action: they were never in fear of dismissal when Miss Bridget stood by them. Uncle Herbert told her that she would make a capital convict mistress, and advised her to try her alchymic powers of turning bad to good on a few of the Queen's specimens: on which she clapped her hands, and declared that nothing would be better fun than to go out there and cure a few kitchen rows; and then jumped up to cure uncle and cousin's grave faces by a hearty kiss and a second declaration that that was only her way of saying how delightful it would be to go to Van Diemen's Land. She knew she should be the last to think it fun, and the first to call it horrid to see the poor, dear beings so miserable.

Prematured by a southern clime, and pre-aged by constitutional delicacy, Miss Evelyn had little of the girl in her, but all the appearance of finished womanhood in her gentle gravity of countenance and quiet dignity of carriage. After Mr. Evelyn had remained a short time in his sister's family, he determined on making a tour, partly with the view of renovating his strength, and partly to give himself ample scope for choice of a healthy locality in which to settle. But his daughter's rapidly-increasing ill-health caused him suddenly to return, and on consulting a physician he was advised to take Emmeline back to Tasmania, as much to give her the benefit of a sea voyage as to try what her almost native air might accomplish for her. On the evening of that day, Mr. Evelyn was closeted with his brother-in-law and sister for more than three hours, and when he came from conference with them, it was only to commence another with Emmeline, and then to begin a third with Bridget. The result of the three conferences was that Bridget flew into her cousin's room, and exclaimed, ere the door had time to slam after her:

'I may go! They'll let me go with you!'

Then flinging herself into Emmeline's arms, she forgot the nearer prospect of rows in the kitchen in her joy at being companion-elect to the being she loved best in the world.

## CHAPTER VIII. THE 'ROSE OF BRITAIN'

BECALMED on the tropical sea, two vessels lay listlessly lulling their weary passengers to a noonday sleep — a sleep that had anything but a soothing effect on the slumberers who ever and anon, would start, and in their uneasy rest implore, Dives-like, for a drop of water to cool their parching tongue — a petition that would either never reach the steward, or else be answered with an aggrieved shake of the head.

'Can't do it — had your allowance;' and the steward gulps down a large cupful of cold tea which he has obtained by laying a toll on each cup of tea served at that morning's breakfast.

But the steward has his favourites on board; and whilst his stewardship is inexorably faithful to some, he turns his pregnable side towards others, and this pregnable side holds his not deaf ear; an ear which quickly distinguishes whether the petitioner is one of his favoured few, or one who kicked up a bother about his tureen of soup, or told the captain that his cabin was only swabbed, and not holy-stoned.

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Discerning the cry of a favourite, with stealthy movements he proceeds to quench the cry in a draught of some refreshing beverage; now it may be a glass of cold coffee — now it may be a glass of ale, left over from last night's supper — and then, oh, best of all! it may be bumper of cold, milkless, sugarless tea. None but those who have tried the delights of this draught in tropical extremities can tell how truly grateful above any porter or beer is this cold tea. Steward himself is a regular toper, and yet he declares that give him your tea and he'll give you his tap. But even the pregnable side of steward rarely yields literal water; he will hardly risk detection, and the consequent charge of favouritism, by granting the letter of the petition. He has orders to draw only so much water from the tank, therefore he dares not disobey. 'A drop of something left from meals captain can't swear against;' neither can he swear at steward for generously giving that drop of something away. To steward's honour be it said, young ladies are always his particular fancy, for two reasons, namely, 'for their own dear selves' sake,' and because they don't give so much trouble as the gentlemen — they make their own beds, and keep their cabins tidy. Any young lady with a passable face and an amount of good nature sufficient to make her affable with steward, may have a pleasant voyage. For though captain governs, and mates sub-govern, it is the steward who holds the rein of comfort or discomfort, plague him, and you'll have a hundred annoyances which do not come under a captain's rule, or even knowledge — annoyances which can be so easily traced to natural causes, that of course steward must not be blamed for them any more than you or I.

All ye who value such alleviation as tropical miseries admit of, curry favour with the steward. All ye who appreciate winter consolations, in the form of hot sea-water bottles and aromatic caudles, curry favour with the steward, ere the biting cold of the Horn nip your very heart, and freeze your best feelings into one lugubrious mass of neighbour hatred.

All we have said of petitions, either gratified or denied, applies in the present case to but one of the vessels.

Both lay listlessly lulling their passengers — and the passengers of both were equally willing to be lulled — equally weary and feverish — equally anxious for a breath of fresh air — equally tired of the ardent sky staring down upon them, relentless as the eye of conscience upon the bad man's soul. Here ended the similarity, save that both were outward bound. When the two vessels were within speaking distance, the master of the vessel of which we have been writing hoisted his signals, and displayed his black board, receiving in answer the announcement that the other ship was (from) London (to) Van Diemen's Land (with) prisoners.

Three words, which told a lifetime's tale of sorrow.

The vessels shifted still nearer each other, by lazy, who — may-care degrees, until an unusual state of excitement on board proclaimed that the two captains were about to exchange civilities through their trumpets.

The deck of the prison ship was crowded with prisoners — as a mass of brown serge distinctly visible; but from that mass to distinguish individuals required the help of the mate's telescope, looking through which was recognisable one figure whose tall and dignified form could be no other than Maida Gwynnham.

She stood at the bulwarks near the stern, and leaning on her was one who in the distance seemed a mere child, so small was she in comparison with Maida; yet, small as she was, she had on the prison serge and cap — this fact was discernible without the telescope's aid. On nearer view, her features were those of a young girl of fifteen years. She clung to Maida as an infant clings to its parent, following her with a quick uneasy step whenever she changed her position, and not seeming satisfied unless drawn close to her protector's side by the intertwining of her own and Maida's arm; then she appeared not to care how long she stood and watched the strange vessel.

In the free vessel was a group, which, as a group, was visible to the naked eye — to use an astronomical phrase — but to distinguish the individuals forming it, the captain needed his glass. There were three persons: a tall, slight gentleman, of an aspect decidedly clerical, a young lady, who sat on a camp-stool supported against the mizen, and a second young lady, whose clear, musical voice rang over the water as the trumpets conveyed their

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shrill messages backwards and forwards. So musical a laugh could only be Bridget D'Urban's. It rang right over to the poor child—prisoner, who, all against her will, laughed an answer to the merry voice; and Maida smiled a sad smile as she heard the youthful captive send back that miserable imitation, and yet she felt glad that the poor thing could laugh even such a laugh; the girl perceived the smile and feared it was a rebuke.

'I couldn't help it, Maida,' she said apologetically; 'it came so sweet and different from our women's great noises.'

Maida pressed her arm still more tightly around little Lucy. The Reverend Mr. Evelyn also heard Lucy's response to his niece's cheery heart—mirth, and an expression that Emmeline had learnt to interpret passed over his face; he turned from her and paced the deck for an instant, then, stopping abruptly at her side, he said, in a hurried tone:

'That was a child's voice! That ship is no place for so young a creature — they punish her soul as well as her body. They are teaching her sin by binding her to those who will instruct her well in their trade. And then she will get a series of severer punishments for proving an apt scholar in the school of vice to which she was only apprenticed to learn her own folly. She was put on board with a few years' knowledge of crime — she will come off with the knowledge of fifty years, unless some providence interfere on her behalf.'

Mr. Evelyn was short-sighted, or he would surely have recollected the figure that stood opposite him on the deck of the transport; had he looked through the telescope he could not have failed to discover Maida Gwynnham.

That Maida did not discover him is not to be wondered at, for never once did her eye stay its dreamy wandering into the fervid blue depths that lay, so tranquil, at her feet, until a rough hand grasped her shoulder, and a rougher voice demanded why she was later than her messmates — why had not she gone below with the other women; and it went on to say that she was no fit companion for the girl Lucy Grenlow, and that if she continued such doings she should be separated from her; at which threat the poor Lucy clung still more to Maida, and Maida grasped the trembling form still more firmly to herself.

A breeze sprung up, and every stitch of sail was spread to atone for lost time. The two vessels, though bound for the same port, soon parted company. Shortly after the breeze had come to their relief, the news was spread that the log had been cast and they were going at the rate of seven knots an hour.

Maida had been on board the transport a fortnight before she was able to go on deck. The first morning that she took her place with the other women she noticed a small figure crouched up in a corner between two hen-coops on the leeward side. Her face was hidden low down in her lap; but by the jutting movements of the shoulder it was easy to tell that the little creature was sobbing violently.

'She'm gone to lo'urd because she won't fall no further,' giggled a horrid-looking female, whose appearance was rendered more repulsive by a shock of grizzled hair, which had been cropped, and was now shooting up in perpendicular wires all over her head, making her look something between a withered grown-up tomboy and an ex-lunatic. In defiance of rule she had taken off her cap. The matron was below, making up a recent quarrel with the surgeon-superintendent over a glass of wine, and simultaneously with her departure about sixty caps had disappeared from the multitude of shorn heads congregated on the deck of the *Rose of Britain*.

It was Lucy Grenlow who sat crouched up in the corner she was one of the few who kept on their caps. As she bent her face more and more into her lap, she felt her cap twitched off, or, rather, an effort made to catch it off, but it was tied under her chin, so the twitch only raised her head with a jerk that let it fall more heavily into its covert. 'Let the maid alone, can't ye,' said the man at the wheel 'she's a mere babby, and it's only right she should cry after her mother, the poor thing; darn my living soul if ever I'll come out with a prison-ship again.'

'You hold your — tongue, or I'll give a point at the wheel for your insolence — a point that will set us spinning in a trice.'



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With this the ex-lunatic or withered tomboy grasped the whole of Lucy's cap, together with the roots of her hair and dragged her head up to the gaze of the herd.

'Here's a pretty face for you -- lawk-a-me! shan't she learn a thing or two from me before she leaves these precious boards? Yer, my dear, haven't you got your passage dirt cheap, that's all I only paid five shillings for it, and here I've been working for this lift for nigh thirty year, and haven't got it till now. You'll have to bless your country to the end of your life for such generosity. My husband's been over there this ten year, and I've never been able to get over to un till now; he'll hire me straight away as soon as my probation's out. I suppose I an't been as brave as you, my little darling, for fortin favours the brave, they says, and her an't a-favoured me till now, goodness knows.'

All this while she held poor Lucy's head dragged backwards; the face was wet with tears, but the child tried hard not to burst out afresh; she even tried to smile, an attempt that destroyed her powers of endurance. By force she wrested herself from the brutal grasp, and with one loud wail, 'Mother! mother!' sank upon the boards, cutting a deep gash in her forehead by the fall.

In an instant she was in Maida's arms, and would have been there much sooner had Maida known the cruel tyranny that was being exercised upon her. Absorbed in her own grief, and wasted by her own weakness, she had retreated to the further end of the deck, unwitting that a labour of love awaited her even in that den of infamy. It had not entered her mind that there was a possibility of a child-prisoner's existence amongst so aged a set of convicts; therefore, nursing her own sorrow, she was dreaming away the first morning of her deliverance from sea-sickness, when casting her eyes to leeward she saw the imbruted woman drag back that youthful head. She started immediately to her feet; but, unaccustomed to the motion of the vessel, had to make several endeavours ere she could walk. During the last of those endeavours the girl's cry gave momentary strength to her limbs, and she almost darted to the spot. Her first impulse was to strike down the wretched creature; but by an instant perception of the more effective course, when the first buzz of excitement had died into that perfect hush which generally follows an accident brought on by foul means, she turned to the women, and pointing towards Lucy, said --

'That child henceforth is mine; touch her at your peril!'

No one voice replied.

Maida waited a few moments, and looked with haughty quiet from one to the other of the scowling faces before her, to see if any would dare forbid the act of appropriation. But no resistance was made.

As she prepared to descend with her senseless burden all feared she would tell the matron; and a deputation of women went forward to beg her not to peach.

Maida listened with impatience to the odd mixture of oaths, petitions, threats, promises, by which the deputation beleaguered her and when their vociferations let her get in a word, she said with an air of dignity strangely unaccordant with the tumultuous manners of her rude auditory --

'Telling will not recall the past; and until I perceive a danger of a similar act of cruelty, I shall not demean myself by punishing the offender.'

There was something so different to themselves in the speaker, that none ventured to gainsay her words to herself; but no sooner was she out of hearing, than hitherto repressed wrath broke out in fearful imprecations and vulgar jeers.

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'I, indeed! Who's this mighty I come in amongst us all of a sudden, and all because of that little devil Grenlow?' said one of the enraged throng, envious of a superiority she could not but award Maida Gwynnham in the depths of her heart.

'I guess this lady will have to swallow her gentility in the box one o' these days if she kicks up her guineas to the doctor,' hoped a second.

A volley of curses from a third pretended to show her opinion of the intruder.

'I reckon we shan't be bothered much with her a bit, for the darned hypocrite 'll sure to be ill, and that 'ooman will sure for to scheme to get 'pointed her nurse; you see if she don't get the blind eye of the Chap' (short for Chaplain), exclaimed a fourth.

The ex-lunatic alone remained silent: her grizzled hair stood more perversely erect, like a forest of ill thoughts, from her head. There was a secret vowing of vengeance in her lowering brow and clenched teeth, as she shook her fist towards where the victim of her taunts had fallen. Turning sullenly away, she was about to go below, when the man at the wheel, just removed from his post, after assuring himself that no Argus was near to detect his breach of rule -- first mate being forward, second mate off his watch, and captain at his dinner, called to the women to hearken a moment to his advice, which he gave as follows: --

'If ye be wise, all on ye, this is the thing ye'll do. That woman's a brick -- a real, livin', rantin' brick; and to prove it I'd marry her down straight away for the beauty of her two eyes, or else go down to Davey's locker, if she wasn't a convict. Well, I'd have ye all keep in with her, or ye'll get the worst on it afore ye've done with her. You go straight away and elect her your queen, says I, and ye'll have some un worth standin' by; so good-bye all on ye, wise ones;' with an admonitory flourish off made honest Jack, just in time to save his grog. Now as this advice coincided with the unexpressed feeling of each prisoner, all agreed that there was sense in Jack's 'sermint;' and as there was no good in making an enemy where a friend could be gained, it was unanimously carried that Maida Gwynnham should be convict-queen; though each voter privately hated her for the superiority which all were obliged to own, while they publicly abhorred Lucy Grenlow as the cause of the brawl which had exalted Maida Gwynnham to her honourable (?) position.

The fourth woman's prediction was correct. Maida had no sooner laid Lucy in her berth than she sought the Chaplain, and asked him to use his influence in trying to get her appointed nurse; and the chaplain was successful.

The little convict had been ailing for many days; the morning's accident, therefore, was worse in its effects than might otherwise have been. She lay unconscious for a long time; and when, after a few uneasy tossings and half-sighed groans, she at last opened her eyes, it was only to look bewilderedly about and cry --

'Mother! mother! I am so bad.'

'Are you, my poor child?' said Maida tenderly, as she laid her hand on the sufferer's burning temples.

'That's nice; that's like you did when I had the fever, mother; I was feared you were gone. Don't go, don't go, oh, don't go!'

'I promised to tell the doctor when you awoke, dear; I will not be away an instant,' whispered Maida soothingly.

But the sick girl would not relinquish her hold of Maida's hand; so the convict-nurse knelt down by the berth, and let her hand stay quietly in the fevered grasp of her poor young charge, whilst she kept the other hand on her forehead, now turning the palm, now the back of it, as its surface absorbed the heat from the parched skin of her brow.

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'Mother, you b'lieve about the five shillings, don't you? Them gentlemen to court said 'twas all fibs; you b'lieve, don't you?'

'I believe every word you tell me, Lucy. But you must not talk whilst you are so poorly.'

'Will father beat me again if he catches me?' A shiver ran through her whole frame and lingered at her fingers' ends, until Maida pressed her hands gently between her own in order to stay the nervous trembling.

'No; father will never beat you again. There, lay your head on my arm; now you need not fear.'

'What's this?' cried Lucy, suddenly starting bolt upright, as something trickled down her cheek. She touched it, and found it was blood. She gazed at the crimson stain for a moment, and then asked, in a mysterious voice —

'Is that what I heard tell about to Sunday-school, the blood — what is it? — that cleanses from all sin?'

Maida wiped the trickling drops from her cheek, and said —

'I have heard of that blood; it will cleanse your sin, Lucy.'

'You haven't got no sins to cleanse, mother.'

'It will wash away your sins,' calmly answered Maida.

'Oh, don't, mother, don't! I know I've been very wicked; but I meant, indeed I did, for to put back the five shillings when I got paid.'

'I am sure you did, poor dear.'

Maida's heart was full to bursting; but no outer sign of sorrow was visible in the tutored features that bent over the invalid; pity, almost anguished pity was there, but no single token betrayed the mighty grief which lay buried deep in the sanctuary beneath.

'Say it, mother, that what I heard tell about at Sunday-school — the blood, what is it? — my thoughts are all gone.'

'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin,' said the Religious Instructor solemnly. He had heard the latter part of Lucy's wanderings, and, more with a view to Maida than the delirious patient, seized the opportunity to proclaim the tidings of a Saviour's death to one whom he considered an extraordinary sinner.

The old look of indifference immediately obliterated all trace of feeling from her face.

'Would that I could see some expression there,' thought the Instructor, as he met the passionless marble of Maida's countenance turned towards him.

Did Maida read the thought, that her lips curled into a line of scorn? But only for an instant; the scorn changed into a smile, for Lucy seemed about to speak.

'Tisn't father, is it? Mother, don't leave go; it can't be father, he don't talk nothing about the blood. Who is it, mother?'

The Religious Instructor beckoned that he would answer. Drawing close to the berth, he repeated —

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'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.'

'No, no!' said Lucy, in the fretful accent of delirium; 'no, no! I want mother to say it.'

Maida trembled; there was expression enough in her countenance then.

The sick child looked imploringly at her; she could not resist the silent appeal. Averting her head from the Instructor, with thrilling distinctness she pronounced —

'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.'

'Not yours, mother; you ain't got no sin; you didn't steal five shillings.'

Maida did not answer — but delirious people will be answered; hence the difficulty in treating their whims.

'Not yours, mother! Mother, not yours?'

'No — not mine,' came the fearful reply.

'Cause you ain't got none. Only me that's wicked;' and with a wild, shrill laugh the sick child clapped her hands, and sank back on her pillow, tired with the exertion.

'And why not yours, my poor woman?' asked the Instructor, in a very kindly voice. 'May not the all reach even your case?'

'As one of your charge, sir, I am bound to listen to you; but I do not prefer discussion; it only tends to strengthen the natural prejudice of the heart.'

'I have no wish to discuss, Martha Grylls; that is no part of my duty. I have but one desire, and that is to preach Christ to you and your fellow sinners. Oh, Martha! what would I not give to see you awake to the peril of your soul? The sinner's soul is always in danger; but in your case danger is increased tenfold. What if we had gone down in last week's storm? where would then your soul have been? where would it be now? Martha, you have a weight of guilt — unredeemed guilt — upon your life. Should that life be snatched away, the guilt would sink your soul to hell — yes, nothing but hell is before you.'

'Very comforting!' said Maida, quietly folding her heart's secret still more securely to the innermost recesses of her bosom. 'The chaplain of the gaol had peculiar pleasure in this point of God's mercy, but it fails to win me.'

'"Because I have called and ye have refused, I will also laugh at your calamity." Martha, should death overtake you unawares, this would be your case,' exclaimed the Instructor earnestly. 'Look at that poor child, hers is a small sin compared with yours, yet see how it haunts her conscience. If she has such inward torment, what would yours be if you were laid on a bed of death? How could you face your Judge were you now to appear at His bar?'

'Does He measure sin by its amount, do you suppose sir?' asked Maida, so innocently that the good man hoped he had at last aroused her interest, he did not observe the calm defiance in the eye that watched for his explanation of Divine purpose.

'That is dangerous ground, my woman, it is enough for us to know that all sin is hateful to God.'

'I beg your pardon, sir,' interrupted Maida, very coldly but very politely, 'it may be enough for you to know; my emergency being greater, I naturally wish to ascertain more of future probabilities.'

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'Then go to your Bible, Martha Grylls; you will read there of all that the Lord intends we shall know. Have you a Bible?'

'I have, sir.'

'Then the greater will be your condemnation if you do not profit by it Do you read it? Ah—h—h! — I'm afraid not — afraid not.'

'I do, sir, twice a day.'

'God be praised!' and the dear, zealous man rubbed his hands together as though there was yet hope for the murderess.

Maida's keen discernment perceived sincerity in the Religious Instructor's fervour, or she would not have deigned to reply as she did, to prevent a misconception of her avowal.

'I do not read for my own gratification, but merely to fulfil a promise which I unfortunately made — I read the Bible for no other reason.'

'Poor — poor Martha!' said the Instructor dejectedly. 'It is in that book that you would read Lucy's text. Ah! that blood is quite able to wash even your sin away, black and damning as it is. Do kneel down ere you read again and beg for God's blessing on what you read, and then — '

Maida was becoming irritated; she could not brook what appeared to her sensitive mind an indelicate pressing of an advantage offered by position, and with some abruptness she exclaimed:

'Whether a favour from God or man, I have a particular dislike to blessings which can only be obtained by begging. I cannot seek a favour likely to be denied me — to find acceptance with me it must flow unbidden.'

The antagonistic principle is strong in the human breast, so strong, that in our natural state we would rather walk to hell than be driven to heaven.

In addition to this principle, prisoners have the stimulus of revenge in refusing salvation. They have a notion that Government wants them to be saved, therefore salvation is hateful to them; and did not God force it upon some of them, as He did upon Saul, few of them would be saved. Not for himself, but as a salaried servant of Government they dislike the Religious Instructor or Chaplain. They discern the Broad Arrow in all his pleadings, and accordingly detest them, and hope they are paying him out by marching on to perdition in the very teeth of his threats. There are of course exceptions to this rule — exceptions made by prisoners themselves in favour of heaven, and exceptions in some chaplains, whose correct judgment gives them irresistible power in spite of the Government stigma so jealously regarded by the convicts. Such an exception was Mr. Evelyn, Maida's friend. Such was not the Religious Instructor of the Rose of Britain. (For their dignity's sake the women called him Chaplain.) He was a truly pious, energetic man; but needed judgment and discrimination of character in discharging his important duties; for the lack of these two necessary items of a teacher's qualifications, he often brought about effects wholly contrary to his intentions. He failed as a pastor, whilst he did well as a preacher.

Our Instructor took the Bible for his text (so did the Zealots), while he neglected to take it for his pattern. The voice of inspiration, whether from prophetic, apostolic, or divine lips, attunes itself to suit the case before it. It encourages and invites the timid — 'Come unto Me;' it reasons with the doubtful — 'Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow, though they be red as crimson they shall be as wool;' it persuades the wavering — 'Why will ye die? — Is there no balm in Gilead?' it comforts the broken-hearted — 'I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions — I have found a ransom — Go in peace;'

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while it warns the careless — 'The wages of sin is death — Fly from the wrath to come — What a man soweth, that shall he also reap;' it threatens the stubborn — 'This shall ye have at My hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow — The wicked shall be turned into hell,' and finally condemns the determined — 'And these shall go away into everlasting punishment — Whose damnation is just.' In his zeal for his outcast sisters, the Instructor forgot so to deal with them; he indiscriminately shook the thunders of Sinai around them. As with the ex-lunatic, so with Maida Gwynnham. As with the stubborn, hardened Peg Lodikins so with the little tender-hearted Lucy Grenlow. He would tell of the precious blood shed for the remission of sins, but not until such ones as Maida and Lucy feared their guilt was too deep to be washed out by it.

Then, again, he laid great stress on show of feeling, the maudlin tears of Peg Lodikins went for contrition, while the rigid features of Maida's stricken face were set down as obduracy. Mr. Evelyn had discerned at a glance that all the pride, defiance, calmness, or impetuosity of Maida were only props to the bruised reed within. He felt at once that not the irritating appliances of the executioner, but the tender though firm treatment of the surgeon, was needed there; and had he been her pastor, his ministrations would have tended to the gentle removal of those props by the removal of the cause which made them necessary. His anointing would have been to bind up the broken-hearted, only giving that pain which is inseparable from the healing process, how wisely soever dealt. We have already seen that whilst he lovingly intreated, he also faithfully reproofed her. He despised not, in some cases, to follow St. Paul's example, 'Being crafty, I caught you with guile.'

Before the women Maida listened with a marked deference to all the Instructor said, and she made little Lucy reverence his teachings. She knew that though the driving system was repugnant to her, there were those who would never see the gates of heaven. Were they not scared thither by the whip of small cords, and, accordingly, admired the man who had sufficient nerve to inflict the stripes, whilst she repudiated his indiscreet mode of administering the lash alike to all within his reach. When alone she shunned him in every possible way. She preferred the box, irons, cells, any punishment, to meeting him; but the more she shunned him, the more the zealous man importuned her in every possible way; so that, brought to bay, she had often no resort but to assume an impregnable austerity, or to offer positive resistance, by which she incurred chastisement. In his mistaken zeal he once pronounced her an unfit companion for Lucy, and separated the friends for a season; and might have kept them entirely apart, had not the Surgeon-superintendent wisely interfered, foreseeing no end of irons, cells, and box for Maida, and no end of persecutions, crying, and isolation for poor Lucy, in persevering in a course so distasteful to both.

Peg Lodikins had a facetious aside for the Instructor's frequent interjectional comment — 'It is my duty, ay, and my pleasure, "to be in season, and out of season," in my warnings to you.'

She would nudge the ex-lunatic with — ' "In season, and out of season," pertickler the latter!' and then with sanctimonious up-glancing she would silently laud the beauty of a word fitly spoken.

Lucy, in her admiration of Maida, fancied that the 'Chaplain' dodged her from deck to deck, from sheer inability to keep out of her presence, and quietly determined in her own mind that — 'The Chaplain set a sight on that there Maida;' a conclusion that she stored away in her mental locker for future use.

We must return to the berth-side where we left Maida fulfilling the duties of nurse. For many days Lucy's life was despaired of. The doctor said her illness was not induced by the fall, but certainly hastened and aggravated thereby.

Maida dreaded the moment when returning consciousness should deprive poor Lucy of her new-found parent. 'Mother! mother!' had been the constant cry of delirium. A long and tranquil sleep had gradually overcome the restless invalid, and Maida now knelt by the berth, anxiously awaiting the result. She quite expected that Lucy's dream of maternal proximity would end with the slumber, and was meditating how she should allay the disappointment and revulsion of feeling towards herself which must succeed, when she heard a suppressed sob.

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It was from Lucy.

Whilst Maida knelt there absorbed in perplexity, little Grenlow opened her eyes without turning her head, and for many minutes surveyed the figure before her ere she could understand the mystery of the last week; and who shall blame that young creature, of scarce fifteen years, if tears from her very heart accompanied the recollection that she was a felon — being transported beyond the seas for the frightful crime of stealing five shillings!

She saw by the brown serge that the figure was that of a prisoner, but what prisoner she knew not. She longed to read her future treatment in the face; but the face was buried in the figure's hands.

Lucy longed and longed for perhaps thirty seconds; and then, unable to bear further uncertainty, she stretched out her finger and touched Maida's arm, but the face moved not. Shall we say that Maida Gwynnham, the murderess, continued to hide her eyes because she had not courage to meet a look of disappointment from a friendless child?

But the touch was repeated, and there was an imploring motion in it that Maida could not resist. She withdrew her hands, feeling almost guilty as she submitted her face to the earnest scrutiny of the two widely-opened eyes up-gazing from the berth. The scrutiny seemed satisfactory. Though denuded of Nature's best ornament, though surrounded by a badge of shame in the prison-cap, there was nothing in that countenance that the rarest beauty might not have envied — no point that the most fastidious critic could have desired to rectify.

Gazing on that countenance, Lucy again dropped off to sleep — again to awake; but this time with a smile — a smile that forced its way from her grateful heart through an avenue of sighs and regrets. She raised herself on one elbow, and extending her hand to Maida, whispered:

'Is it you that's been mother all along so kind?'

'I have tried to be, my child,' came the soft, meek answer.

And that proud spirit that had fortified itself against all pity, reproach, or scorn, bent right down to meet a young girl's sorrow, and became child-like in its show of grief.

When the Chaplain looked in at No. 107, to see how she fared, he saw not only her asleep, but close beside her, face to face, another slumberer, whose features, relaxed from their rigid coldness beneath the genial rest, had lost their wonted sternness, and were full of feeling. When Lucy had sufficiently recovered, she told Maida her story — a story of simple pathos.

At fourteen she was a maid-of-all-work without wages, and was induced by an artful woman, as a screen for her own pilferings, to 'borrow' five shillings from her master's till, with the intention of replacing it by instalments. She was detected, charged with the whole series of robberies, and, as we have seen, transported.

Would that it were unique in the annals of youthful crime!

## **CHAPTER IX. MULGRAVE BATTERY AND 'THE LODGE'**

'THERE'S a ship in sight, papa. Come, look at the flagstaff. Perhaps 'tis Uncle Herbert and cousins. Do let's go and see,' cried Charlie Evelyn, the only son of Mr. Evelyn, senior, of Macquarie Street, Hobart Town, brother of the Rev. Herbert Evelyn, whose acquaintance we have already made. Two days before the above exclamation from Charlie, Mr. Evelyn had received a letter from England announcing the immediate return of his brother and niece to the land of their adoption. Since then Charlie had kept a keen lookout towards Mulgrave Battery, whence up-reared that herald of joy or woe, of hope or despair, — the flagstaff.

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Mr. Evelyn sprang to the window.

'So there is, my boy. Let us try to decipher the signal. There, now, the kind wind has blown it straight out for us.'

'From the south! from the south!' shouted Charlie, frisking from the window to the other side of the room, and thence back with a bound to the window, as the flag displayed the red cross on a white ground.

'That's one go, at any rate,' said Mr. Evelyn, patting the curly head of his little boy, who gloried in being a genuine 'gum tree,' and not a stupid British oak.

Mr. Evelyn quietly reseated himself to a reperusal of the Courier, while Charlie remained faithful to his post.

In a short time a second shout brought Mr. Evelyn again to the window, and, with no less an interest than Charlie's, he watched the flag being hauled down from the top-mast, and the ball running up to the yard-arm.

'A brig; no, a ship!' cried Charlie, as the ball reached its destination at No. 1, on the right.

'Two goes in the right direction,' said Mr. Evelyn, patting his approval of Charlie's good memory.

A little more suspense, and down went the ball.

Charlie was too excited to announce the event, and Mr. Evelyn was too busy to observe it. The flag was hoisted in the place of the ball.

'A beastly, stupid old prison ship!' exclaimed the child, in a tone of extreme disgust, as the prison flag proclaimed fresh cargo of female convicts, ex the Rose of Britain.

'Charlie, Charlie, what will Uncle Herbert say when he hears you use such words? How would you like to have the vessel he comes by called such names, eh, naughty boy?'

'Oh, papa,' answered the curly-headed, petticoated urchin, 'his ship won't bring a lot more of those pests.'

Seeing a frown on his father's brow he apologised.

'Why, papa, Mr. Squire calls them pests. I don't mind 'em, though, except when they come instead of dear uncle.'

Mr. Evelyn looked uneasily at him, and then, humming a tune, walked backwards and forwards on the hearth-rug. He, as well as every other Tasmanian parent had cause to feel uneasiness. His child breathed an unhealthy moral atmosphere, how could he fail to become infected? It was a constant strife between poison and antidote. Parental teachings were undermined by subtle nursery influences. Lessons of morality and piety, listened to with reverence on the mother's lap or father's knee, were contradicted by the practices of convict life, so that Charlie was puzzled to know which was the correct path — that commended to him by precept, or that chosen by the multitude. In fact, he had to decide between seeing and hearing. It was true, he was taught to look on the prisoners as transgressors, suffering the penalty of their sin; but when, instead of one or two individuals, he saw himself surrounded by them at home and abroad he was very naturally led to consider them a class born into the world to as inevitably fill its allotted position as any other great division of the human race. Free — bond — conveyed to his imagination only an idea of caste. Again, when he saw all useful occupations engrossed by this class, he was convinced that they were a very necessary and important people, without whose aid the world could not exist. Two interjectional remarks made by him on separate occasions will show his mental appreciation of this class. When taken by his father to see some public work, which was just receiving its finishing touches from convict labour, he admired in silence for a long while, and then broke out:



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'When I'm a prisoner, won't I build a beauty!'

And on being asked by a gentleman about to return to England if he would like to go too, he made several objections. He could not leave papa and mamma: there were no pretty parrots in England. But these objections were left in the background by the insurmountable climax:

'Why there are no lots of prisoners in that country to do our work. How could I go?'

These remarks were rewarded by a hearty laugh by all hearers save Mr. Evelyn. His brow contracted a frown peculiar to himself, as he heard in his child's voice the certain symptoms of moral disease.

'Oh, but he will grow out of such notions,' said one to the grieved father on that occasion.

'I have not the least doubt of it, sir,' bitterly replied Mr Evelyn, choosing to take the words literally, 'even as the flower grows out of the seed. Notions produce the man not man the notions, I take it.'

'You take it too seriously, then, sir. Convictism is a great nuisance per se; but, ----- me, if I don't incline to that young rogue's way of thinking, and ask, What could we do without our convicts? Should we ever have been what we are without them? Blessings in disguise, eh, Mr. Evelyn? Blessings in Government livery -- ha! ha! ha!'

'King John gave us our noble charter; but I query whether a perpetuity of King Johns would be acceptable, Mr. Bruce.'

'Oh, don't mistake me. I'm not taking the rascals' part. I'd much rather do without them; but, ----- me, if I see how. And, after all, more is made of the evil than there is call for. I confess it's devilish disgusting when a man leaves his office with a ramping appetite, and runs home expecting a ready dinner, to find his wife sweltering over the fire, making a hash, where a roast goose was promised, and the cook lying drunk alongside her, or else gone off either with a constable to the watch-house or to the bush; but, to my mind, with such annoyances the evil ends. I hold the doctrine of original sin, and believe that wickedness don't wait for convicts to put it into our children's minds. The effects of the system are not so injuriously extended.'

'They do not extend to our pies and puddings, certainly, except in parallel cases to yours, sir; but there are dearer interests than those of the palate to be considered,' quietly answered Mr. Evelyn.

'Well, do you prefer immigrants? My wife says, "Give me fifty Government servants before you bring home one immigrant;" that is, Government despatches, of course; private comers are well enough. A viler or more useless set than the contents of an emigrant vessel can't be, in my opinion. There is no managing them: they turn up their noses at the convicts, very often their superiors, and give warning in no time if they are spoken to, or can't perform a certain amount of mischief unproved.'

The speaker waited for an answer, but none came, and he proceeded --

'It is my opinion that Government inflicts a no less evil in pouring on us ship-loads of paupers than in filling our land with convicts. My wife's a witty woman, Mr. Evelyn, and she calls the one Prevention and the other Cure. Then, say I, this black dose of Prevention is worse than the yellow Cure; for in the former we have all the rascals without that badge of rascality on them, by which we are licensed to hold them in terror, eh, sir?'

'There is truth in what you say, Mr. Bruce; and when we remember that emigration is a nation's expedient to provide for those who might provide for themselves in a less respectable way, I do not see how there should not be truth in it; but I am disposed to think that much of our disappointment in emigrants, as a body, arises from an evil existing in ourselves. We have hitherto been much as slaveholders. We have had our fellow-creatures under

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our thumb; without our leave they could neither turn, look, nor speak: to turn was to be refractory; to look was to defy; to speak was to be insolent; and each of these sins met its punishment. We have been served by slaves until we prefer their abject servitude, and our despotic masterdom to the servitude of men who have rights in common with us, and a strong will to assert those rights. Having been long accustomed to the unresisting obedience of the convict, we cannot brook the whys and wherefores of the free. I wish you a very good morning, Mr. Bruce,' and, raising his hat, Mr. Evelyn passed up Goulbourn Street before his statement could be opposed.

Mr. Evelyn had fewer annoyances to complain of than many colonists. Since his marriage he had been blessed with five good servants, four men and one woman. Whether these men were 'good' from his treatment of them, or from laudable reformatory desires in themselves, is for future determination. One fact, however, is very sure, that neither of the four were 'good' from rate of crime, for all were desperate offenders. The woman had entered his service at sixteen years of age, having been transported for boot-stealing. She remained with him until she obtained her ticket; then, obedient to the prisoner's universal yearning for his or her first act of comparative freedom, she gave her master warning: the temptation was too inviting to resist. She changed owners, and in a fortnight, deprived of her ticket, she became the miserable habitant of a Cascades cell!

Little Charlie, a lovely specimen of infant Tasmania — a bright, glowing, bouncing boy of six years — had imbibed as small an amount of evil as possible from the moral contamination; but the amount was small only in comparison.

Interspersed with the five good servants had many scores of hopeless characters discomfited Mr. Evelyn's hearth and nursery. It was nothing rare to Charlie to have three new nurses on three successive days; it was no new thing for him to fall asleep under one woman's eye, and awake under another's guardianship. He was accustomed to these changes and chances, and thought lightly of them. He was accustomed to the prison petticoats and calico caps — they were nothing to him. There was no shudder when the constable marched off his nurse, he would skip to the window to see the 'fun,' as from earliest days he had learnt to designate the bearing away of some unfortunate convict. There was no shudder when a new Anson expiree entered his nursery, clad in the brown badge of crime; he would run to her, and clasping his chubby arms round her legs, ask:

'What are you for?'

And then, if the crime did not equal his expectations, he would seem vexed, and say:

'That isn't very bad! Why didn't you steal a lot?'

The expiree would laugh, and, winking to her sister convict, pronounce the 'chap' 'a regular shiner.'

Had not immediate influence been at work from prisoners who took a malignant pleasure in spoiling the handiwork of parental anxiety, there was in the daily contact with crime an indirect influence as baneful to the youthful mind. Moral sensibilities were imperceptibly weakened by the unavoidable and familiar intercourse.

As we have seen, in Emmeline's case, there was a possibility of so shielding a child, that it should grow up like a lily among thorns; but such growing up was only to be insured by an utter self-abnegation on the part of the parents, and a seclusion so strict on the part of the child, that but few could endure it for the long years necessary to ultimate success. The majority of Tasmanian parents being young, feel it hard to make their marriage-life one of nun-like duration. Apt to look on the bright side, they trust their children to convict superintendence; they listen to the solicitations of the sunny sky or pleasure-loving friends, and go forth to those enjoyments which are considered the privilege of youth, and which are so alluringly displayed in such a climate as Van Diemen's Land. A mother of five-and-twenty, with six babies around her, is no uncommon sight. Such a young mother will look piteously at you, and ask:

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'Is it to be expected, now, that I am to be shut up with these children all day long? I might as well be a prisoner at once.'

When you look at her witching eyes and form, and contrast them with the careworn appearance of an anti-convict mother, you are disposed to decide in her favour.

But when you look at the nursery during her absence, and behold the six morsels of beings either terrified into unnatural quiet or learning lessons of immorality, you are in favour of the gentle parent, who, forgetting all but her offspring, wears out her prime of days in sheltering them from erroneous preceptors.

One sentiment with which the convict evil infects immature principle is one somewhat similar to that which intervenes between slaveholder and slave -- a feeling that appropriates to the Free the first attribute of the verb, and throws the other two -- Doing and Suffering -- for the special use of the Bond. Children imbibe this feeling from their infancy; it grows with their growth, and strengthens with strength at rapid paces. Without having the actual abhorrence of crime, or without sharing the grievances which cause their elders to use the word 'convict' as a synonym for every opprobrious epithet, they apply to prisoners similar terms to those we heard from Charlie, merely as the parrot repeats 'pretty Poll' after its human teacher. The sweetest Christian in the island as unperturbedly announces that her woman has got 'three months,' as an English mistress informs her visitor that her servant has a holiday. A child hears, and draws his own conclusion from the matter-of-fact statement.

Weary of watching the flagstaff, Charlie had fallen asleep on the sofa, whilst his papa partook of an early dinner. Neither of the two, therefore, observed that the pantomime was again exhibiting on Mulgrave Battery, consequently they were both taken by surprise, a few hours after, by a well-remembered voice: 'Stop, coachman, this is it -- "The Lodge!"' And in a moment more a cab drove up the gravelled path, and it was the work of scarcely another minute to bring Mr. Evelyn clean out of the window at a leap, and Mr. Herbert Evelyn from the cab, into each other's hand-grasp; and a grasp it was! such a grasp as only those may know who have experienced what it is to have eighteen thousand miles of ocean rolling between them and their brothers.

By a natural attraction, Charlie bounded into Bridget's arms, exclaiming:

'This is Cousin Bridget, I know.'

And as Bridget kissed and over-kissed the curly-headed beauty, she felt she held a regular armful of roguery.

'This is cousin what I don't know, papa,' cried Charlie, glad that the prolonged operation of hand-squeezing gave him the opportunity of introducing Miss D'Urban to her uncle.

After a hearty kiss or two on her blooming cheek, Mr. Evelyn held Bridget gently backwards, in order to take a fuller view of the half-shy, half-smiling face that reciprocated his embrace.

'Why, Herbert, we haven't a rose that could beat this,' was the result of the inspection.

Mr. Herbert smiled sadly, and, pointing to the cab where drooped his daughter, he said:

'Ah, henceforward, I fear, we must exchange titles, and have the Lily of Tasmania and the Rose of England, instead of vice versa. MY rose has faded! But, George, you go in; I have promised poor Emmeline that she shall be carried to her room to receive your welcome, here it would overpower her too much for after removal.'

As Mr. Herbert Evelyn assisted his daughter up the veranda stairs, the coachman came forward, and, reading permission in Bridget's good-tempered face, asked:

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'Sure, never, that isn't the same Miss Evelyn what went home, come back in that unlikely fashion? the pride of her father as she was!' and a tear twinkled in his eye. 'Me and my mates has blessed her a thousand times, as she passed down along by his side; sometimes us thought whether he didn't get some of his lovesome ways out of her, only that he's natural good in hisself.'

'Who are your mates? Have you been a sailor?' said Bridget.

'Lord love you, miss! you'm a new hand, I guess. My mates is them what I came over with, and them what was ganged with me. I'm Government,' he added, seeing that Bridget still looked mystified.

'Ah, ah!' cried Charlie, clapping his hands; 'she don't know he is a prisoner — they are all prisoners;' and the little fellow seemed to enjoy his cousin's innocence, and so did the man, who chimed in, by way of comforting the fresh arrival:

'Ah! she'll know all about it by—and—by; won't she, Master Charlie?'

'Won't she, that's all!' shouted Charlie, capering with delight, and making a curious attempt to return the driver's sly wink.

'Just come from England, miss?' touching his cap. Bridget hardly knew how to look.

'Somephin' in honour of Old England,' appealed the man, again touching his cap with one hand, while the other performed a series of gesticulations significant of giving and taking.

Bridget dropped a half-crown into his hand, which he received open-mouthed and open-eyed.

'By Jingo, she'm a cracker!' he ejaculated, as he drove off.

'Oh, Charlie, how could you talk so before the poor creature? You won't be my Charlie if you are so cruel!' cried Miss D'Urban, as soon as the coachman was out of hearing.

'Oh! it's nothing being Gover'me't out here, cousin everybody nearly is — I mean all the poor peoples; she's a prisoner, only she's just got her clothes.' He pointed by way of illustration to a maid-servant, who just then ran down the steps to relieve Bridget of her travelling-bag.

'Yes, ma'am, I'm Government,' bobbed the woman, without the slightest tone of self-depreciation. 'I bought my clothes only last week, on purpose for the master's company.'

'And I'm a gum-tree!' called Charlie, drawing himself to his utmost height, in imitation of that straight, tall tree as he stood at the top of the veranda, waiting for the others.

'Well, Bridgy, welcome to "The Lodge"!' exclaimed Mr. Evelyn, coming forward to meet his niece. 'Though I've never seen these blooming cheeks before, I think I am better acquainted with you than with any of my nieces. Miss Em has sent on before, and taken a place for you in my heart. A thousand welcomes to "The Lodge," and all its honours, which have been accumulating for you since your aunt played truant, and ran up the country to pay her annual visit, and introduce Miss Baby to her maternal grandparents. The keys are waiting for you, and doubtless also a few "kitchen rows," which I hear you have a special gift in conciliating.'

'Oh, uncle! that's wicked Lionel! I'm sure dear Em would not have written you such nonsense.'

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'Albeit, I am apprised of the wholesome fact, and congratulate myself that the remedy grows so near the disease. Now let me introduce you to Hobart Town. Here, stand where you are, and look at the landscape. Could England give you anything more lovely? There is our pride, the Derwent, and there is our noble monument to our mother-country's hero, Mount Wellington; it generally has clouds on its summit, but this evening it has doffed them, to salute you, I suppose. There, straight across the harbour, how exquisite is the light resting on those hills retreating tier after tier, until the most distant seems to melt into the sky!'

Mr. Evelyn thought Bridget was listening attentively to him. On turning to her, he perceived her eyes were full of tears. Feelings she had hoped to smother, on being noticed, increased beyond control. Laying her head on her uncle's shoulder, she wept aloud.

Little Charlie slipped to her side, and, softly pulling her gown, whispered:

'Are you crying at me, cousin? I'm so sorry.'

Without removing her head, Bridget drew the little penitent close to her, while Mr. Evelyn replied:

'No, no, Charlie. Cousin Bridget is feeling very thankful to the dear, good God who has brought her over the long, long sea to a country quite as beautiful as her own England. We must let her cry a little bit, persons are not always sorry when they weep, Charlie boy.'

Bridget looked up, and repaid Uncle Ev with one of her genuine smiles, shining through her tears.

'It is very, very lovely,' at last said Bridget, 'but it hardly looks foreign, or unlike England.'

'Nevertheless, it comes from forrin', as the sailor says. But what do you mean by like England? I suppose you, with all the rest of the folk at home, have always considered us a set of semi-barbarians. It is very odd that people having brothers, sisters, and relations of various orders in the Australian colonies, take so little trouble to ascertain the real amount of civilization in these islands. The notions formed of our mode of life are vague as those formed of Timbuctoo. I answer for it, now, you expected a canoe rowed by savages would conduct you from the vessel to Hobart Town, and then that you would be knocked down once or twice by bushrangers, or be carried off by boomers before you could reach my house, eh, Bridget?'

'Not quite so bad, uncle, but I must confess I had no expectation of finding everything appear so English. I did not fancy you would all look like semi-barbarians, as you say, but must plead to a few misconceptions. I thought you would be dreadfully old-fashioned, and that — '

'And that you would blaze amongst us a very comet of fashion,' interrupted Uncle Ev, with a wicked smile.

Bridget blushed, too ingenuous to hide the girlish weakness. She said:

'I thought I should look better than other people, and be immediately recognised as a new-comer by my dress. Having read advertisements in the Times for cast-off clothes for Australia, I naturally — '

'Thought you might discover a few old friends out here,' again interrupted Mr. Evelyn. 'But I can tell you, Miss D'Urban, the young ladies out here make a fine to-do about those said advertisements. There has been serious talk among them on the propriety of petitioning the Home Government to introduce an Act, entitled "An Act for the Suppression of Offensive Advertisements." As to dress, no doubt you bring the newest fashion, seeing you are four months in advance of your sisters Vandemonian. I query, though, whether you will not look the quietest bird in Hobart Town until your home stock is worn out. Hyde Park cannot outdress our ladies! They learn to copy nature — unwittingly, perhaps, but not the less on that account. A style of colouring that would be inharmonious

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in England blends with the ardent hues of the southern world. In England the sober little sparrow, or modest robin, teaches the befitting garment, here the parrot and firetail flutter by on a sunbeam, and lead the fashion. Everything here is bright and glowing, except the foliage.'

'The hills are not, papa,' interrupted Charlie.

'You have arrived at a happy season, Bridget. A month later, and the dust and heat would have done their work on all that now claims the title of verdant. The evergreens bear jealous rule here; it has been jocosely said, to help out the Government notion, that we are fated, even by nature, to have the badge of crime in our midst! But I doubt whether there is not a remedial aptness in the dusky foliage. Were the hills and trees to be arrayed in vivid tints, there would be no relief to the eye. Radiance above, around, and below would be oppressive. Yonder, how exquisite is the wattle! Were that shower of gold to fall upon a bright green, the effect would be to dazzle, instead of to please, as now. Yonder again, the silver wattle, how fairy-like is the delicate tinting, it gives more the idea of the pencil than the brush. But to see the wattle to perfection, you must see it in moonlight, when the beams shimmer through the branches, as though the feathery leaves formed a plaything, and not a barrier.'

'Oh, I shall like it very much, and should be very happy now, if it were not for poor Em,' sighed Bridget.

'Ah, poor Emmeline!' responded Uncle Ev, leading her into the house. 'How does Herbert bear it?'

'Like a Christian, Uncle Ev.'

'Very vague; there are two sorts of Christians.'

'Like Emmeline would if she were Uncle Herbert,' replied Bridget, with much assurance of voice.

'Ah, that is satisfactory. Now, then, you enter the Lodge -- very barbaric, isn't it?' he quizzically asked, as the rich velvet-pile carpet and yellow damask curtains met Bridget's astonished sight.

'Oh, it looks like a dear old friend,' cried Bridget, running over to a small statuette of the Greek Slave that stood the simple and only ornament of a side-table.

'Why, uncle, you've everything, just as we have at home.'

'Ay, and rather more than you have at home.'

This was said with an emphasis that made Miss D'Urban expect an explanation; but uncle vouchsafed only a nod and a hum in reply, and he walked out of the room, leaving her to a quiet survey of the luxuries of a Van Diemen drawingroom.

'Please, miss, the master said as you'd like to be showed upstairs. Everything's sixes and sevens, as the mistress is gone up country; but then, to board anyhow that's on real ground's a blessing.'

The free-and-easy manner of the servant did not at all convey the idea of prison taint. Bridget took for granted that this domestic certainly was not a convict. Her dress was smart, and her appearance not subdued, as had been that of all the others. She did not know that a report had already represented her to the kitchen as a very proper young lady, before whom abject airs were unnecessary. She followed Nancy to an apartment that certainly displayed the want of a mistress's eye. The bed and the rest of the furniture were as English looking as could be, but there was an indescribable something in the whole aspect of the chamber that seemed irreconcilable with English comfort. The floor attracted her notice, perceiving which the sharp attendant immediately exclaimed:

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'Never fear; 'taint dirt, miss; it's the natural look of them boards; all floorses looks dark out here — it's the wood itself.'

Miss D'Urban, disconcerted at having her thoughts thus read, cast her eyes up far from the scene of her detection.

'Can't be helped, miss; 'twould be all the same if the mistress were home; 'tis them beastly flies, everywhere a buzzing and pitching,' again interrupted Nancy, as Bridget's sight involuntarily rested on two pieces of tape nailed cross-wise through the ceiling — tape which had originally been white, but now was nearly black.

Poor Bridget! where should she look from the Argus-eyed abigail, who secretly enjoyed the stranger's discomfiture? On the wall? No, the same fly-marks were thickly dotted on the pink wash, and the same resolute observer exclaimed:

'It's the verminous beasts again, miss; there's no keeping the walls clean for 'em. Lor! miss, they drops into the very tea you drinks, them great, lazy, brown buzzers! and the milk! you should see it! if it's left uncovered a minute, the vermints drops thick into it, so as you can't see what's under 'em.'

Bridget could not wear a disconsolate countenance long; so after a shrug of disgust she broke into a merry laugh which rang through the room and right downstairs, and, as the summons of a silver bell, brought little Charlie up to see what was the matter.

But it did not suit Nancy that the child should remain, so she unceremoniously turned him out, and orl Bridget's looking — Why? the servant's face drew to unwonted length.

'Why, miss, talking of them pests out here brings blessed old England to my mind, and natural-like I feel sad.'

'Oh, don't let us speak of England just yet, I can hardly bear it;' and Bridget's voice faltered in demonstration of the fact.

'Ah, if you can't bear it, miss, think of poor me, who's obliged to! you came free to the colony!'

Bridget started, and, as if she had been guilty of a wanton reminder, crimsoned to her very temples.

The woman understood both start and blush, and determined to reap advantage from each. Shaking her head slowly and measuredly as the toll of a funeral bell, she answered:

'Ah, the likes to you may well start — yes! I'm Government, been in the place five years come Christmas — I've seen better days at home — ' Here she paused from emotion and Bridget, feeling cruel to her fingers' ends, went over and laid her hand on her shoulder.

'I am very sorry! I did not mean to hurt you; I had no idea you were — were — '

'A vile outcast!' finished Nancy — 'say it out, miss, say it out — Nay-ver mind, nay-ver mind' — with a slow up-and-down motion of the head between each syllable — 'you can't hurt me no more than I have been hurted already — you didn't go for to do it.'

Bridget was ready to cry. More advantage still! Suddenly starting from her apron, in which her face had been hidden, Nancy exclaimed, clasping her hands:

'And how was the blessed old country looking? Haven't you never a flower or token to give a poor prisoner to mind her of her home?'

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'No,' said Bridget, uneasily scanning her packages as if she hoped some compassionate spirit might forthwith cause a flower to spring from the dry leathers.

'Ah, all these dear things came from home!' cried Nancy, spreading her arms circuitously over the heap of boxes, etc., as if she would pronounce a silent benediction on the lot. 'I could most fall down and worship 'em, one and all.'

Bridget was now fairly crying — the time had arrived. With a deprecatory smile, Nancy said:

'If you wouldn't think a poor prisoner bold, miss, I'd ask you if you'd any old trifle to put me in thinking of the blessed country, where once I lived as innocent as you — anything — an old dress you've done with on the voyage — ladies never wears their sea things to shore, the muggy feel of the vessel seems to cling to 'em; but they'd be treasures to my poor heart: to look on 'em and think where they come from would be worth a mint!'

In an instant Bridget had taken out and given to Nancy two gowns she had half finished with, light glad to offer amends for the wounds she had inflicted. The woman was making away with her prize when Mr. Evelyn, senior entered to escort his niece to tea. In a loud angry tone he demanded:

'How now, Nancy! have you been fooling this young lady? I guessed your work directly I heard you were closeted with her. Give those dresses back!'

'Uncle, uncle! indeed I gave them her; let her keep them for my sake, do.'

'Let her keep them! yes, for the next half-hour.' There was an inexplicable irony in the word keep, that made Bridget wonder.

Turning to Nancy, who stood cowed and lowly in the door, he nodded her away with:

'To oblige the young lady you may keep them; but mind you do, that's all.'

'I humbly thank you, sir,' dropped Nancy, denuded of all her former non-convict air.

Mr. Evelyn tapped his feet impatiently, but managed to say without impatience:

'Nancy, these tricks do not suit me.'

Bridget thought her uncle a most hard-hearted man. However, Mr. Evelyn's manner had frightened her, so that she forbore to speak out her thoughts.

But Uncle Ev guessed them in her vexed look, and said in a grave but kind voice:

'You must learn a few practical lessons before you will be ready to allow the necessity of scenes similar to that which has just passed between Nancy and myself; those dresses will procure her a dram or two before the night has expired, and by to-morrow you will have a chance of meeting them in Goulbourn Street: keep a look-out for them therefore — they are of so peculiar a pattern you cannot mistake them.'

## CHAPTER X. THE PARACLETE.

WE have seen the signal hoisted on Mulgrave Battery — the signal that spread a universal dissatisfaction through every free breast in Hobart Town. As floated from the flagstaff that announcement that another ship-load of sin



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was about to disgorge itself on Tasmanian shores, a token also appeared to the captives on the transport. Yet no — though seen by all, two only of the prisoners accepted it as a token. To these two was it sent; to the others it was only a natural circumstance.

The convicts were assembled on the decks — every eye strained itself landward, every heart beat alternate throbs of hope, fear — fear, hope. The sun shone gloriously down, when very high in the clear air a pure white speck was seen floating on a long bright ray. It came nearer and nearer, slowly descending, until, poising over the vessel and gently fluttering its spotless wing, a silver-winged dove attracted the gaze of all, and a deep hush of admiration fell on the hardest heart there. Radiant in the sunlight, it seemed to rest a moment; then, gradually ascending, a cloud, that had almost suddenly appeared, received the wondrous creature out of their sight.

'It has gone into heaven,' mysteriously whispered Lucy Grenlow, as she clung to Maida.

Maida spoke not — her eyes had followed the heavenly visitant, and now that it had vanished from view she the more intently gazed on the point at which it had disappeared. She longed to pierce the cloud and trace the dove to its bright abode.

Partly awed by the expression of Maida's face, and partly solemnized by the beautiful vision, Lucy remained silent for some time after her first ejaculation; then, feeling that her companion's eyes (withdrawn from the sky) were fixed on her, she said in a low voice:

'It seemed to come 'most on purpose for us.'

Maida blessed the kindly utterance which granted her a share in the message: her own pride or humility would have forbidden her to claim a part. Had she spoken she would have said 'for you' and not 'for us.'

'It's like the dove and peace of God that's on our church window at home,' said Lucy, very reverently.

'I'm going below, Lucy, for a little while,' was Maida's only answer.

Following her to her quarters, we see her look around to assure herself of solitude; we see her kneel and clasp her hands — one tear steals from the closed lid and bears a weight of sorrow with it to the ground. She takes her Bible from its shelf by her berth, and opens to the fourth chapter of Philippians, and drawing a pencil line through the margin of the seventh verse, she shuts the sacred volume, replaces it upon the shelf, and joins her fellow-prisoners on the deck.

## CHAPTER XI. UNCLE EV, AND UNCLE EV'S NOTIONS.

MR. EVELYN, senior, had been a police magistrate. Disgusted with the duties of this office, he threw up his £500 per annum, choosing rather moderate independence and liberty of conscience, than wealthy dependence and slavery to the whims of every captious holder who chose to send his servant before him. He termed the appointment the 'Wash-tub Coveship,' once having heard himself called 'The Wash-tub Cove' by a party of female prisoners whom he had just sentenced to the Government Laundry. He had also been in the Executive, but weary of the farce justice was obliged to play in dealing with men already sentenced to the utmost rigour of secondary punishment — weary of the solemn absurdities of judicial proceedings as then existing in Van Diemen's Land — weary of the oft-recurring joke of dealing law to outlaws, or of punishing convicts for falling into traps laid for them by the neglect of their officers or the shortsightedness of senators — weary of all these, Mr. Evelyn, senior, resigned his seat in the Council.

He had seen a woman, who was already transported for life for manslaughter, again committed amid the

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execration of the multitude for a similar attempt in Hobart Town; and upon this woman, convicted of her second crime, he had heard passed the original sentence of transportation for life, so that while her former sin was still unexpiated, her latter and aggravated guilt went wholly unpunished. Glad that the poor wretch had yet a space afforded her for repentance Mr. Evelyn was not one to cry shame on the judgment, but, generous as were his feelings towards the murderess, he could not help casting a somewhat jealous eye on the ill-accorded leniency when he paralleled it with sentences he had known: sentences which, had they been pronounced by the injured party, had been set down as the result of implacable revenge — had they been passed by the voice of the people had been attributed to excitement; but uttered neither by the prosecutor nor by the populace, Mr. Evelyn had only to turn with a blush from the bench where justice had dwindled to a heartless form.

But with his public life Mr. Evelyn did not abandon a career of usefulness. Disgusted with the errors of judicial administration, and deploring a system which could never be reformatory until reformation commenced with itself he prepared himself to do what it would be well if every reflecting man would do when disappointed in the performance of acts of public benevolence, namely, to try how most effectually he could serve the little circle drawn immediately around himself. The result of such an effort could not fail to be happy in any homestead. In one chiefly peopled by convicts, whose eyes literally turned more anxiously toward their owner than the day-watchers toward the east, the effort repaid itself in ways unthought of in English homes. Had each colonist followed Mr. Evelyn's example, and exerted his influence over the few convicts under his care, how materially had Government been assisted in its weary plannings for the moral improvement of the prisoner, and how unnecessary had been made the constant change of system, which between the years 1838 and 1852 exhausted the patience of State secretaries, annoyed the free, and oppressed the bond population. Had each holder put his shoulder to this mighty plough, with what comparative ease had Government directed it over the field of evil! How had the assignment system realized both to the assigned and the assignee the benefits it was reported to bestow; how had the terrors of the 'worse than death' system been never needed, save to intimidate the incorrigible few; and how had the nation's treasury held yet within its purse the countless thousands wasted on the probation system.

Mr. Evelyn did not advocate the influx of criminals to Van Diemen's Land; he was as anxious for the promised removal of the penal badge as any of his colonial brethren; but as a loyal subject and a responsible being, he determined, not, as many others, to shun bond labour and employ only free servants, but to take a willing share of the imposition whilst waiting the fulfilment of the long-cherished and oft-disappointed hope of every Tasmanian. He carried out his plan by becoming owner of a succession of pass-holders with whose vices he bore until they either yielded to his unflinching strictness, or drained his power of endurance which power was of unusual stability for one who drew it rather from the natural source of innate superiority than from the fountain of all good and perfect gifts. As a bachelor, he was not allowed a female prisoner, a deprivation he only regretted for the pretext it afforded masters who, too indolent or too incredulous to adopt his course of treatment, asserted that his success in certain reform cases was mainly attributable to the absence of corrupt female influence in his household.

Strictly subject to the penal regulations of the Comptroller General's office, Mr. Evelyn was guided by a theory of his own in dealing with his bond-servants. In selecting his men, he chose from those who were reckoned 'The Troublesome Set.' Though not the worst by rule of sentence or crime, the convicts of this order had frequently blacker police rolls than their more guilty brethren. The latter with brazen front and dilated nostril displayed a comparatively fair page, whilst the former hung their heads before the words 'Stubborn,' 'Obdurate,' 'Disobedient,' denoting the superintendent's opinion of them.

Mr. Evelyn chose from this troublesome set, not from private pique, as some supposed, nor from perversity, as was amiably hinted by others, but because, according to his theory, the men comprising it were, with exceptional cases, more objects of pity than of punishment, and fitter for penitentiaries than for prisons. He divided this set into two classes: — Involuntary offenders and contingent offenders. The troublesomeness of the former arising from an inability to abstain from whatever gratified their undeveloped moral appetites within the narrow scope of

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captivity; whose prison life was only a dumb show of what their free life had been; whose moral questionings extended no further than that point which led the child to ask, 'May I do that?' when her fingers were slapped for doing this.

Mr. Evelyn attributed the troublesomeness of the contingents to a still smarting sense of degradation incompatible with penal discipline. A round of punishments was, therefore, employed to coerce them into a proper state of indifference.

'It is hard for a feller that longs to be an honest man again to take kindly to things that comes easy to your born rogues, who tip their noses and at it again,' said one of this class found by Mr. Herbert in the cells. It appeared a strange oversight to Mr. Evelyn that such offenders should be confounded with the common body of criminals, ana herded in transportation with felons who, but for an adroitness worthy of their calling, had years ago undergone the just reward of their sins.

To these two classes themselves he by no means palliated their guilt, nor censured its chastisement; but in his heart, by action, and by official remonstrance, he charged with short-sightedness or blamed for indolence that system which branded in one indelible infamy the poor wretch pushed into evil by sudden temptation — the unthinking youth hurried on by the impulse of a fatal moment, and the bold outlaw who followed crime as his profession — mingling in one common condemnation the low moral perceptions of Sam Tibbins and the perjured conscience and guilty genius of Mark Knocklofty or Michael Howe.

Having, then, no family ties to divide his time and labours, Mr. Evelyn engaged as many convicts as could find employment on his farm, the average number employed at one time being ten. In the same number of years, no fewer than two hundred prisoners passed through his hands. Several of the involuntaries, as unable to bear the kinder, though not less strict surveillance of their master, as the rigid enforcements of the penal code, absconded at once from his service and that restraint which, in accordance with his doctrine of mental deficiency, he thought proper to impose. Oblivious of past suffering, and unthinking of the future, these miserable beings would go off, to be taken, perhaps, within a stone's throw of the farm, or, after a few days' fasting in the bush, to deliver themselves up to Government for re-imprisonment and increased punishment. Discouraging as were these failures, they strengthened Mr. Evelyn's opinion of the irresponsibility of this class, and of their fitness rather for the mild coercion and competent control of the asylum, than for the vengeance of the law. With others of this class Mr. Evelyn lost all patience, and, after a few months' trial, he returned them to the barracks. To run and not be weary in the race of well-doing is only given to such an one as Mr. Herbert, who, starting not in his own strength, looks to Him who promises to sustain His servants in their moments of weakness and depression. When Mr. Evelyn sent these men back to Government, he thought he had borne with them to the verge of human endurance. It was not until some years later, when he watched his brother's uncomplaining yet deeply-tried patience, that he learned how far is the human standard of long-suffering beneath the Divine rule, as laid down in Matt. xviii., or that he perceived how valuable an ingredient is real and judicious piety in the administrative penal process. With a third portion of the involuntary delinquents, he was obliged to part for the benefit of his little community; they were so thoroughly weak-minded as to become the scapegoats of the flock.

With the fourth section he was successful, and though afterwards through temptation, or the negligence of less careful holders, some relapsed into trouble, many repaid his toil by turning out inoffensive and happy members of society; for, not possessing sufficient sensitiveness to feel pain at loss of caste, they were only sensible of a superiority over their bond brethren still remaining on the Government books.

With the contingent offenders was Mr. Evelyn's grand result. But this adjective must be taken comparatively (we do not pun on the degrees). By those who would use it only to express hundreds it must not be used; but by those who remember that the redemption of the soul is precious, it may be uttered over the small band of prisoners rescued by their master's efforts from the moral wreck of transportation.

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With the majority of this class he found the hardening process had far advanced — with some it had advanced beyond hope of recall: urged on by shame, ridicule, misery, bad example, and severity, it had left its victims 'as bad as they were made out to be.'

In a few the effect of indiscriminate treatment showed itself in mental disease, which yielded neither to genial influence nor medical advice. The moral energies could not arouse themselves from the shock of their fall. Restoratives came too late; had they been applied at first, when the whole head was sick and the whole heart faint, they might have proved beneficial. But the judicial means resorted to having been penal, and not suiting the case, had aggravated it into madness or sunk it to imbecility. With such cases Mr. Evelyn could do no more than see them safely housed in New Norfolk, to rave or drivel out their life in the chief lunatic establishment of the Island.

With the remainder of the contingents was the reward of his exertions, and the result before mentioned.

The moment they entered his service they were warned what they had to expect if they deceived or disobeyed their master; on the other hand, they were promised confidence, assistance, and forgetfulness of past misconduct, if they endeavoured to deserve such indulgence. And finding that neither warning nor promise was idle breath, an understanding arose between them and their owner which wrought advantageously to both. As servants, unless previously trained, or very young, they were not often accessions to domestic comfort.

After a year or two the hostler may become a tolerable cook, but, meanwhile, where shall the family dine? A ploughman in due season learns the duties of a housemaid, but who attends to bedroom comforts, or pays for breakages during the term of his apprenticeship?

The homely cottager who comes in to his rusty rasher by his snug fireside knows nothing more of that rasher than that it once lived as a pig, and now has been cooked by his 'missus.' He devours it, and the rancid taste is orthodox; were it less rancid or less rusty, he would be ready to cry out against witchcraft.

When, a transported felon across the seas, that cottager is told to prepare his master's breakfast from the delicate sides of bacon hanging in the pantry, he shakes his head and supposes that 'that there bacon isn't tanned half enough for the master. See his missus's at home, that's all! Why, 'tis as yaller as though he'd never growed white!' And to the end of his servitude he shakes disapproval at the goodly fitches, inly wishing that his 'missus' at home could get 'a holt on 'em' to tan them so that a Christian could bear to look at them. The rust of home has worked as deeply into his heart as the touch of time into his wife's bacon, and he is too old to change his way of thinking to please even a convict owner, but, fortunately that holder is not one who will scarify his heart, to try if by that means the canker of home longings may be eradicated.

The former blacksmith yearns for the roar of the mounting flame. In his delight at again having fire beneath his rule, he sets his master's kitchen chimney in a blaze, and whilst others rush to stop the warm proceeding, he coolly answers:

'Never fear — 'taint half a-roaring yet!'

But such extravagances were only sources of amusement to Mr. Evelyn in his bachelor days. He knew that to get more efficient servants he must go to a worse class of convict. And (apart from his benevolent motive in hiring the contingents and involuntaries) he argued that the chief difference between them and other servants was, in their mode of dealing with their master's property. They spilled the ale, the others drank it. They spoiled the dinner, the others stole it. They smashed the china, the others sold it. They bruised the plate, the others melted it. Therefore, as in either case his beer, dinner, china, and plate were to meet an adverse fate, he would rather they should meet it honourably from a pair of stupid hands, than in the form of roguery.

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But in after-years, when gentler social interests demanded his first care, and the upbringing of a little family around him made it imperative that servants' capabilities should be equal to household requirements, he reversed his choice of convicts, and selected from those whose crimes were of the worst kind: such men could generally show the best police character.

Looking on punishment as one of the chances of their trade, they were prepared, not only to bear it, but to make the best of it; therefore, they passed their probation with fewer sentences than many who, as the poor contingent said, could not take kindly to these things.

These men were apt and clever servants. It was singular to mark how the extremities of London outlawry had sharpened their wits to encounter the emergencies of private life. Often, when the master turned in despair from some refractory item which refused to lend itself to domestic necessity, the convict factotum, leering over his spit, would exclaim:

'Bless you, sir, that's nothink of a pass; hand 'em over this way, and he's done.'

Returning the refractory item, there would be a cunning twinkle in his eye, which said plainly as any words:

'There, thank my former craft for that.'

Could such men oftener fall to holders of Mr. Evelyn's stamp, they would not so often relapse into crime. Under such masters, it might be with them as with those four of Mr. Evelyn's whose reformation, commenced temporarily at first to save punishment, continued by way of experiment to prove how it would answer in a remunerative point of view; good sense deciding that it might be profitable to themselves, they launched into reformation as they would into any other speculation whose end was self-aggrandisement. Had they tried the experiment under a master who only regarded them as engines of labour, it might have failed; at once disgusting them and strengthening their still secret opinion that 'honesty was not the best policy' for rogues.

But Mr. Evelyn was very careful that the profit should be clear to the sight of these arch speculators, or he well knew, accustomed as they were to the subtle calculations of knavery, they would not cast in their lot with honest men. In saying that Mr. Evelyn chose his men from the worst set, the English reader must not suppose reference to be made to that most unhappy class of all unhappy offenders, too aptly designated, in colonial phraseology, 'Macquarie Harbour-dyed demons' and 'Norfolk Island-made desperadoes.' With the Tasmanian reader there is no fear of such a misapprehension; he knows too well that between the worst set of the Launceston or Hobart Town barracks, and the worst set of Macquarie Harbour or Norfolk Island, there exists a difference as distinct as between the spirits in Hades and the spirits in the place of torment. He knows too well that with a fearful significance, and not in a wanton waste of imagination, has the entrance to the former settlement been called 'The gates of hell,' and 'The devil's tollgate,' whilst not less significantly is the latter still named 'The bottomless pit.'

These are places of which no one likes to speak, or only to speak in that whisper that expresses 'thereby hangs a tale!' No one dares to ask within hearing of a Government officer:

'Why is it said of Macquarie Harbour, "Whoever enters here must give up all hope of heaven"? And of Norfolk Island, "Here a man's heart is taken from him, and there is given him the heart of a brute"?'

How is it that these places, formed for special reformation have not only failed in their purpose, but have been evil in their effect on the felon, changing him from bad to worse from a state of furious resistance to apathetic despair, from fear of death to hatred of life?

English hearers of the question cannot reply, Because you cannot expect men of such character to amend under any treatment; or the Tasmanian inquirer, unsatisfied, will ask, To what purpose then is all this waste? Do we

prepare for results which we do not expect? If we anticipate no amendment, why all these appliances to meet it? The harvestman sends not forth his reapers into a field from which he looks for no grain. The implements of reform stare us in the face in these penal settlements; punishment, therefore, cannot be the only object of the mighty prisons.

## CHAPTER XII. DOUBTS ON MORE SUBJECTS THAN ONE.

SEE all that is to be seen at the earliest opportunity, was Bridget's practical maxim. She had no notion of waiting till ten o'clock, if her curiosity might be satisfied at eight or six. She had seen an evening in the antipodes; she now longed to see a morning. As yet no tokens of semi-barbarism had come under her notice; but might not the darkness have covered them? What might not the light of day reveal? She had marked the sun go down with his wonted glory, no peculiarity distinguishing his setting, save, perhaps, a deeper curtain of radiance drawn upon his exit. But then the sun — who expects peculiarities of him? Is he not the world's own sun, and not exclusively Australia's? She retired to rest, determining to be up at daybreak, in order to see how morning realities bore out evening impressions, and how evening impressions bore on morning realities.

The wonder of being in a new world, the doubt that she had ever existed in another, crossed and recrossed each other in her mind; and when she tried to decide between them, a long line of moonlight shone into the room and seemed to glide in between the wonder and the doubt, playing fitfully on one, and then upon the other, making decision still more difficult; then suddenly retreating it left a question upon her soul, 'Is it all a dream?' and as the question came unallowed yet irresistibly into her thoughts, a silvery acacia waved its feathery branch, and cast a faint nodding shadow, which seemed in dumb show to answer, 'Yes, a dream! a dream! dreamlike as this — vanishing — vanish' and ere the word could finish, Bridget started up — her spirit full of wonders and doubts, moonbeams and shadows — to ascertain what was dream and what reality. The long line of light was not a dream, though withdrawn from her room, for there it lay upon the lawn; and the shadow? It was as much a reality as any shadow could be; for yonder upgrew the feathery acacia still sending it forth in the wake of the fickle beam. Her mental perplexity, nothing satisfied by the discovery set itself to solve a host of other problems. What had wonders, doubts, moonbeams, shadows, and dreams in common, that they should all mingle in her thoughts? but problem brought on problem, until, hopeless of fathoming the least, she exclaimed, 'It is so horrid not to know what anything means.' But the cry brought no good fairy with magic touch to arrange the tangled meshes into a fabric wherewith to clothe her ideas in a presentable form. A moment more and one of Bridget's own laughs aroused herself to consciousness of being neither dream nor shadow, but a fair, well-proportioned substance lying snug and warm in a more comfortable bed than she had known for four months, whilst the self-same moon she had loved at home, and the bright cross that she had learnt to love since it had first looked down on her from southern skies, hung calm and beautiful just overhead, where she could gaze on them without raising herself from her pillow. She then bethought her of her laugh, and feared it had gone in to Emmeline; she well knew what a tell-tale it would be. So she determined to follow it on tip-toe to see what mischief it had done; noiselessly opening her cousin's door, she peeped in, and saw Emmeline sitting up with an anxious expression of countenance, as if listening to some uncommon sound.

'Did I frighten you with my nocturne, Em, darling?' Emmeline only laid her finger on her lip in reply. Then beckoning Bridget to her, whispered:

'I feel rather uneasy. I have a vague sense of something wrong.'

'If it was a laugh that disturbed you, it was mine.'

'No, no; what I heard was hardly to be called a noise — it was more a feeling than a sound — there!' and Emmeline again hushed with her finger, and then pointed to a shadow which passed slowly across the window.

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"Tis the acacia!" cried Bridget in a tone of feigned mirth.

But no one can make merry under the influence of midnight whispers and shadows; and though she firmly believed her assertion respecting the acacia, she by no means relished the few steps she took towards the window in order to prove the assertion. As she stood looking out on the moonlit landscape, she observed a figure dart from behind a tall, ghost-like gum-tree, and spring over the slip rail into an adjoining paddock, where it vanished. She fancied she heard a window shut upstairs, and then a repressed footstep in the room in which the window seemed to be. With a presence of mind she would not have exhibited ere her intimacy with Emmeline, she turned quietly round, and said:

'You are nervous, perhaps, dear Em, after your fatigue and excitement. I'll sit with you a little, as I am not inclined to sleep.'

Em silently acquiesced, for she, too, had observed the figure dart away, her raised position giving her a side view of the lawn; but appreciating Bridget's intended kindness, she forbore to reveal her knowledge.

'It is all so new and strange, I can't sleep, Em. People ar'n't disturbed like this every night in Van Diemen's Land, are they?'

'Like what?' asked Emmeline, smiling.

'Oh, fancying they hear noises and see shadows,' replied Bridget, recollecting herself. 'I hate noises in the night, and fancying one hears them is almost worse than really hearing; it makes one feel so warm, and cold, and horrid.'

'I am not alarmed now, Bridget, I guess what has been going on. Robbers take care not to leave their shadows behind them.'

A tap at the door interrupted her, and Nancy entered.

'A thousand pardons. I feared the dear lady might be affrighted if she heard the queer-like steppings about, as have waked me up. I heard you talking, so just came down to explain, that you needn't be frightened; the loss is all mine — them nasty blackguards have runned off with them two blessed gownds you gave me. I just hanged them up to get a bit of the fust out of 'em, and, sure enough, they's gone! I felt unaisy-like all to a sudden, as I laid in my bed. Fay! thought I, my blessed gownds! I jumped out, and looked from the window just in time to see 'em walked off — the shabby brutes!'

'I am glad to see you bear your loss so well,' quietly replied Emmeline. 'Mr. Evelyn will doubtless try to detect the thieves.'

'Thank you, miss; but I'm unwilling to fret the master about it. He's too good to be troubled with prisoners' losses and crosses. We won't say nothing to him, please, miss. It's the lot of all in this world.'

'Poor Nancy; I'm very sorry; perhaps I may be able to find you something instead,' sympathized Miss D'Urban.

'Miss, you're altogether a saint! To think of the poor convict having a friend like you in this troublesome world! But I won't break in no longer on you, ladies. I shouldn't have done so at all, only I heard you talking, and feared you were frightening yourselves, and might go and wake the master; and I hadn't the heart to let you do that.'

'Thank you kindly, Nancy. Now do go; good-night,' said Bridget.

'Then the master need know nothing about it,' whispered Nancy, putting her head in at the door.

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Emmeline only gravely bowed her head, with a significant and grieved expression.

'Why, Em,' cried Bridget, astonished at her silence, 'from the way you used to speak of them, I thought you would be a very champion for the poor prisoners.'

'Would that I could be! But, Bridget, you would not have me championize their falsehoods?'

'Now I hope you are not going to make out that Nancy's story is untrue. I shall hate this place if I have to doubt everyone's word. What end would the poor thing have in pretending to lose her clothes?'

'It seems she has gained one end already, in the promise of a second present; and I guess she has another; but ask Uncle Ev for enlightenment on this subject.'

'Very well; and in the meantime, Miss Em, I beg of you to remember your own favourite injunction: "Charity hopeth all things."'

Bridget was rather pleased than otherwise to have had so queer a sort of night — it was next best to a decided adventure — and she was almost on the point of commencing there and then her V. D. L. diary, with a description of it, when hearing the watch-dog bark violently, she jumped into bed and tired out with her long vigil was soon asleep, and awoke not until the bright sun shining in through her uncurtained windows startled her to the fact that she was already too late to see how morning dawned in Tasmania, while Uncle Ev's cheerful whistle on the lawn told her that the sun was not the only early riser.

Her first morning in another world! And such a morning! full of fragrance, flowers, sunsmiles, and songs. Bridget stood in quiet admiration, looking out on the prospect — now on the distant Derwent, sparkling in its first moments of wakefulness — and then on the nearer beauties of her uncle's pleasure-grounds — attracted now by the thousand delicate tufts of the golden wattle, as it seemed to bow towards her for the express purpose of welcoming her with its earliest and freshest perfume, and then wondering if by any chance the tall, stiff gum-tree could come down from its would-be stateliness, and bend with the graceful wattle, but at the same time feeling quite satisfied that the said gum-tree should remain unchanged; there was something foreign in its gaunt, smooth, whitewashed-looking trunk, with its eccentric ragged leaves overhanging it from the top, like an old-fashioned umbrella of doubtful colour, torn into shreds. Since she had come so far, it was only fair that some objects should reward her expectations, by giving a touch of foreignness to the country. In the midst of thus feeling and thinking, a commotion in the bushes, and a sudden flight of birds thence to the fence, and from the fence back to the bushes aroused a home-yearning in her breast, and made her contradict her previous wish with a desire that nothing should be foreign, but that everything should look as much like England as possible: she then recollected to listen to the birds which, before unnoticed, had been most jubilant — ever since the first streak of light, and having listened, not critically, but as if entering into the spirit of their joy, she exclaimed:

'Why, they do sing! at any rate as well as most of our English birds.'

'I was to tell you, miss, that Miss Evelyn sleeps, to prevent your going and waking of her up,' spoke a voice that rather unceremoniously disturbed Bridget in her dream of home.

'Who told you so, Pridham?' (The servant she had first seen.)

'The new Mr. Evelyn, miss; he said he'd peeped in and saw her fast asleep — at least he didn't tell me to tell you, but I thought I'd better — as I know'd you waited upon her like.'

'You are very kind and thoughtful, but you shouldn't say that my uncle bade you come if he did not,' replied Bridget frightened at her audacity in venturing a reproof.



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'I beg pardon, miss, 'twasn't meant; please not to mention it to master; really out here a poor girl gets into trouble 'fore she knows where she is. I've had a month at the suds for less than that 'fore now, not by he, though. I've not been here long enough to know his ways; but they say he's harder upon fibs than anything; so I'm 'fraid of my life at every word I speak to him -- not knowing exactly what he counts fibbing -- but I knows what suds are pretty well!'

'And what are the suds, Pridham?'

'One of the factory works; the women hates it next worst to doing of nothing.'

After a few moments' silence on Pridham's part, and uneasiness on Bridget's, the former said:

'I've forgotten now what I came for. I mean, miss, next to telling about the young lady; I wanted to put you on your guard against that there Nancy -- she's the dangerousest woman ever I came across -- and all the while she'd make a body believe she's innocent and after peacemaking. The deceit of her is worth hearkening to. Them blessed gowns! as she kept on about after you'd given 'em her -- precious blessed indeed -- if they was blessed when she took hold of them, they weren't blessed long after; but there, I don't want to set you up against her, only just to put you on your guard when next you gives away, to give where things will be valued. I don't speak for myself, for I have just worked out a new gown for best, and be content with this here brown one till next month, when I've worked out another for mornings. The master isn't hard, though he's partic'lar.'

'What does it all mean? I have got into a hornet's nest indeed,' thought Bridget, and with her natural dislike to the shadowy side of life, she half wished herself home again: these were not the sort of 'kitchen rows' she professed to cure. With a mixture of real and pretended impatience, she said:

'Well, really, I am tired of hearing of those gowns; I shall think twice before I give any again.'

'Oh! I don't want to put you in that mind, anyhow; we all admires your generosity, and hopes it won't be the last of it -- it's only Nancy there we're 'fraid of -- trouble always comes out of what she lays hands to; if trouble don't come out of them gowns, I'm -- but there, I don't want to say no more about 'em; only if you will be so good as to mind if trouble does come, I haven't had a finger in it. I am so 'fraid what the master 'll make out, though he isn't hard, only partic'lar; and no wonder! out here we're obliged to suspect everybody, and if I'm Gover'ment and says it, what must them as come out free say?'

'Pridham, I'm very sorry, but really I don't understand all this; it's all strange to me yet. If I say or do anything to hurt anyone's feelings, I shall be very grieved, and -- '

It was now Pridham's turn to look mystified. What had she said about hurt feelings or grieving? she had only wanted to turn the tide of favour towards herself by closing it to Nancy; and also by making a premature declaration of innocence to disclaim all share in trouble, which with prisoner instinct she foresaw in 'them two blessed gowns.' The convict always fears that which he cannot at once understand, lest it should embody some new evil to himself and always mistrusts that which he cannot immediately explain, lest it should be another means of extending his punishment under pretext of ameliorating it. Though the occasion was slight, this applied in the present case. Through the prisoner instinct, terror quickly followed Pridham's misapprehension of Miss D'Urban's words, and interpreted them into all manner of scoldings, deprivations, and perhaps even the dreaded wash-tub; so clasping her hands and bursting into tears, she besought Bridget 'not to tell on her.'

'Oh! miss; I pray on you not to tell the master. I didn't mean for to offend. 'Twasn't insolence, indeed; no it wasn't! Poor girls like me gets into trouble 'fore they knows where they are. I knows I fibs dreadful; but believe me, miss, I never finds out I have fibbed until they tells me so, and punishes me for it. I will confess that I did hint for you to give me something, so please to forgive me; but indeed I never went for to grieve or hurt you like what you

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said. If Nancy gets a hold on this, she'll make fine work against me out of it.'

The look of penitence and fright in the girl's face was pitiable in the extreme. Bridget wondered still more what it all meant, and wished herself home again with increased violence. Since promise of secrecy seemed necessary to Pridham's happiness, she gave it her, though in utter ignorance of what she was not to divulge as of what there could be to divulge in the long addresses of the distressed damsel.

Thinking as despondingly of the future as it was possible for her hopeful mind to think, Bridget descended to the breakfast-parlour, where sat Uncle Herbert, lost in reverie and the comfortable cushions of a large armchair. She had knelt by his side and kissed his hands ere he perceived her.

'God bless you, my child, and make you a blessing in this strange land! What think you of it? There is not a favourable report on your face. You have not your wonted sunbeam there.'

'Oh! Uncle Herbert; I've been sad and pleased twenty times over since I got up. First I was in raptures with the beautiful landscape over the water; then I was sad to remember it wasn't home; then I fell in love with that pretty yellow tree and with all the flowers -- in fact with everything; and then, one of the prisoner-servants came in, and all my joy went in a moment. I hate seeing people miserable.'

'Where every prospect pleases,  
And only man is vile,'

said Mr. Herbert Evelyn, rising, and drawing Bridget's arm into his. 'Your Uncle Ev has not returned yet; let us take a turn in the garden, and talk all about it.'

'Not about the prisoners; oh! no; I vote we don't; to so horrid! Really, whatever one says or does something comes out about those poor creatures. I didn't think it would be at all like this, and directly I arrived too.'

'Like what? Something has annoyed you, or you would not have had an opportunity of comparing likenesses.'

'You mustn't laugh at me, or I shall get in a flutter and not be able to explain myself.'

'I am in no laughing mood, my love. Go on, and tell me all you mean, and what has happened.'

'I'm afraid I shall never be any use. When I think I've done something right, it proves just the contrary. If I hadn't been quite new yesterday, I am sure Uncle Ev would have given me a regular scolding about those stupid gowns.'

'But, Bridget, you have not yet confided your disappointments to me, nor told me where exists the difference between what you expected and that which you find.'

'Naughty Uncle Herbert; you are determined to make me ashamed of myself. As if I wasn't that long ago! Well, then, what I mean is this: I did not expect that prisoners would so mix with us as they do in every-day life, making us afraid to look or speak lest we should hurt their feelings or get them punished. I knew there would be hundreds of convicts, but thought they would be such dreadful creatures we should only be shocked at them; and I thought there would be dreadful affrays with them sometimes; but I never dreamt of such trumpery annoyances coming out of the commonest sayings and doings, making one uncomfortable in such curious ways. It will be wretched if it is always going to be like this.'

'No, no; it is not always going to be like this. It will only be so whilst Miss D'Urban is learning not to give gowns in exchange for crocodile tears and Judas kisses,' exclaimed Uncle Ev, who, having stabled his horse, had just entered a path of the garden, divided from where his niece lingered by a tall hedge of sweetbriar and geranium

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and he now stood opposite, yet concealed from her. Bridget did not yet understand him, and still harbouring suspicions of his hardheartedness, she felt half afraid that the suppressed scolding of last night might be forthcoming now. But doubt decreased when an instant after his well-whiskered, smiling face nodded to her through a break in the hedge. He then jumped over a lower bush, and, coming to her side, gave her so kind a welcome that she began to think she had only just arrived.

'No, no, Miss Bridget; they are only trying it on. If nobody else obeys Scripture, prisoners out here do. They work while it is called to-day, before the night of experience frustrates their endeavours to get what they want from a new-comer. When you are more up to their ways, they'll leave you alone. In other words, when they've got what they can out of you, they'll forget all their home conceits and predilections.'

'But, uncle, it appears that so much is made out of nothing, just because they are poor prisoners. It seems so very natural to me that Nancy should be affected as she was, and —'

'Well, well, so it is: and something else as natural to convict principle will follow the natural gift of those gowns, or I'm very much mistaken.'

'Then you are mistaken! for they have both been stolen from her. Em and I heard a noise in the night, and shortly after Nancy came in and told us some rogues had taken them off the line and run away with them.'

'And how much of that do you believe?' asked Mr. Evelyn.

'Why, George, I think it is only fair that she should believe it all.'

'On the principle, Let her believe while she can, and don't make a sceptic of her before her time? Well, there is something in that; but at the same time, is it not fair, for her own protection, to teach her the grand cautionary axiom of Van Diemen's Land: "Believe every man a rogue until you have proved him to be honest" — the antipodes of English etiquette: "Every man is honest until he is proved a rogue"?'

'Thank you, uncle; the longer I defer learning that the better. But what you say reminds me of a question Emmeline bade me ask. She says Nancy had two ends in view in pretending she had lost the dresses; one was the hope of getting another present, and the other you are to tell me.'

'Well, the other I pronounce to be decidedly spiritual. Yes, no doubt she had a spiritual end in view, eh! Herbert, does that suit you?'

A look of remonstrance was the clergyman's only answer; and when Bridget's eye asked an explanation from Uncle Ev, he only nodded, 'Time will show,' and proceeded to conduct her to the house. When near the veranda, he stopped.

'A word with you, Bridget. I am very careful how I express my opinion of the convicts before my boy Charlie. He is a thorough little specimen of all ears and eyes. Any point you want cleared up ask me when the young rogue is out of hearing.'

A loud bell rang as soon as Mr. Evelyn's step sounded in the hall. Mr. Herbert exclaimed:

'Ah! It's the voice of a dear old friend. Prayers, George, is it not?'

Uncle Ev nodded assent.

'Shall I commence? Where are the servants? Are they not coming?'

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'No; I don't choose it,' promptly replied the elder brother, in a tone which implied, Ask no questions.

Prayers being over, Charlie followed his cousin into the veranda, to await the breakfast. As soon as he was beyond hearing, Mr. Evelyn said:

'The truth is, Herbert, in not permitting my people to attend prayers, I choose the less of two evils. During the ten years I devoted myself to the prisoners, though I didn't deem it necessary to carry the religious system so far as you, being a clergyman, are obliged to --'

'And wish to,' interposed Mr. Herbert.

'Well, and wish to -- I allowed them all religious privileges that seemed expedient. Now, being surrounded by a different class of convicts, I find I cannot admit them to an indiscriminate use of the family's religious services. I've tried to forego prejudices, but each new trial only strengthens me in them; and I now think it little short of mockery to call in the servants to prayers, knowing as I do that most of them are living in open sin.'

'Papa, isn't breakfast ready?' cried Charlie, peeping in at the window.

'What is the maid thinking about? It's a quarter to nine, and half-past eight is the breakfast hour. Ring the bell, my boy.'

The child's entrance put a stop to the discussion, and brought wholesome thoughts of physical requirements to the gentlemen's minds. But the bell had to give three increasingly loud peals before one answer could be obtained and that came from Pridham, not from cook.

'Please, sir, it's no doing of mine. I've tried to rouse her; she'm reg'lar beastly down. I can't go nigh of her; she vows she'll see you blasted 'fore she gets the breakfast, and she says she'll crack me if I go for to get it.'

'Ah! ah! ah!' screamed Charlie, clapping his hands; 'what fun! Papa, let me come too.'

'Go back, sir!' sternly answered the father, as he prepared to descend to the kitchen; whilst a coarse song, in uproarious bursts, sounded from below.

'What is the matter, Charlie?' eagerly inquired Bridget, feeling frightened enough to be glad of even his small company.

'Oh! nothing. I s'pose she's intosticated. Hark! there's such a row; I s'pose they're fighting.'

And off ran the little fellow to the head of the stairs. In a moment he ran in again, his cheeks flushed with excitement.

'Come, Bridget, come. I can't see them, but I can hear.'

Pale with terror, poor innocent Bridget clung to the back of a chair; but recollecting what Uncle Ev had said, she caught back Charlie, as for the third time he was running out.

'Darling, come in; 't isn't fit for you. What would papa say?'

'I don't care; I will, I will!' shouted the child, trying to get free from his cousin's grasp.

'No, no; be my dear Charlie, and stay.'

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'I won't; I don't want to be anybody's dear Charlie; I want to go down and see it.'

When the two Mr. Evelyns reached the kitchen, they found the cook sitting Turk-fashion on the floor, with a pipe in her mouth; a piece of white tape tied her stunted locks in one matted bunch on the top of her capless head; her dress was half on one side, and from the other hung her prison jacket. Perceiving her master, she staggered to her feet, and squared towards him.

'Come on, my hearty; them that wants their breakfast must fight for it — as the dogs does.'

Another step towards them, and down she flounced — but not so as to hurt herself; then came a torrent of abuse that made Mr. Herbert close his eyes with pain, and Mr. Evelyn stamp in disgust.

'If you move from your place I'll souse you, so please sit still,' at last said the latter, knowing that anger or disgust would be wasted on the miserable being before him.

Thump, thump, thump, went her thick boots, in determination not to be still, though she was obliged to keep her seat.

'I — s'pose — constable's coming?' she stammered.

'Presently,' answered Mr. Evelyn; 'and the less you rave now, the less will be your punishment by-and-by.'

Mr. Herbert had remained a spectator only in case of violence.

'Have you sent for one?' he now whispered.

Mr. Evelyn nodded, and in another moment in walked a constable. He went straight over to the woman, and began to drag her by her arms. She set up a terrible howl, and offered what resistance lay in her power.

'Leave her alone, sir,' commanded Mr. Evelyn, in his sternest voice. 'How often have I requested that, when a constable comes to my house, he will perform his duty in a decent manner? Fetch a cab; the woman does not go without.'

A cab having arrived, the man again commenced to drag the prisoner. Mr. Evelyn again remonstrated, and assisted the poor wretch to the vehicle.

'Now, remember: I'll never have a public spectacle made of such degrading sights when they come from my house.'

'Stay, I'll go with her,' said Mr. Herbert; then, in an undertone: 'It is not right she should be left to his tender mercies. I know him; he should not be in his present position at all.'

The constable's heavy brow contracted extra surliness as the clergyman stepped into the cab; but, unheeding of his anger, Mr. Herbert took his seat by the loathsome, and now almost unconscious, object of his solicitude, and, with his peculiar tact, commenced a conversation irrelevant to the subject before them.

'Well, Bradley, it is a long time since we met. I have been in England since then.'

No answer save a gruff 'Hum!'

'Have you received the news you were expecting from your wife, when I took leave of you all? How is she now?'

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'Gone to the devil, for all I care!'

'Indeed! I am sorry for that.' And Mr. Herbert turned his calm yet searching eyes full into the rough, inquisitive, who-be-you? sort of face, that jerked quickly towards him in answer to this unexpected sympathy.

'Let it work,' thought Mr. Herbert. In a few moments he asked:

'Have you your ticket yet, Bradley?'

'No; nor never shall, if he can help it.'

'What, the old story! We must talk it over.'

Another silence, broken by Bradley.

'I have been in the boat's crew at Port Arthur since you went; got down there for heaving a log at Bill Scroggins. It missed him, or I should have swung for it, the magistrate said; but I'll have a heave at he yet, for all that.'

The malicious tone and grin which accompanied this speech prevented Mr. Herbert from noticing it; he knew it was said on purpose to annoy him. It had ever been Bradley's delight to 'shock the parson's fine notions.'

When Uncle Ev returned to the breakfastless breakfast table, he found Charlie in a sulky fit, and Bridget trembling with the apprehension that her ill-fated gift had had some what to do with the morning's outbreak; she was, therefore much relieved when her uncle told her that cook and Nancy were distinct personages.

'Oh, I am so glad! then Nancy is all right, and it has nothing to do with --- with --- ' she was too tired of the gowns to mention them even.

'I'm not quite so sure of that;' but seeing his niece's look of vexation, whatever might have been his thoughts, Mr. Evelyn forbore to say more. A fourth call of the bell brought Pridham, with a face full of alarm --- for what might not that bell portend to her?

'Let Nancy do what she can towards the breakfast; we must content ourselves with toast this morning.'

'Please, sir, I can't wake Nancy --- I've been tugging at her this long time; she'm dead asleep,' whimpered Pridham.

The storm burst! ---

'It's all a scheme, you are as bad as either of them; tell me all you know of this; hide anything at your peril,' stamped Mr. Evelyn, having controlled himself to the limit of his patience.

'I don't know nothing.'

'It's a lie, you do.'

'I don't know no more than that a man was here late last night a-talking with Nancy, and that he took away a jar with 'im, and left another.'

'You know a great deal more, and you tell me, directly.'

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'How should a poor girl know everything, when she's 'fraid of getting into trouble?'

'Nonsense — no humbug — go on.'

'When the man was gone, Nancy says, "Cook, them gowns smell awful fusty-like; I think a night's airing would fresh 'em a bit." I saw her wink to cook, and cook winked back to her; then when she came from hanging them out-of-doors she shrugs her shoulders, and says:

"I feel awful creamy like, and nervous to sleep alone."

"Shall I sleep with you?" says I.'

'You had no business to offer that,' parenthesised her master.

'No, sir; I know it was wrong, but — '

'No humbug — go on.'

"Why, no," says she: "you sleeps with the young un, 'twouldn't do for you to change beds;" she winked to cook and didn't think I saw her, so cook says: "My humble sarvices to you, Nancy, if you are ill. You'm welcome to me for a bed-feller if you think the master won't hollor."

"No, he'd say ne'er a word, when 'twas for sickness," and she winked again.'

'So they slept together?'

'I s'pose as they did, sir.'

'Nonsense, you know they did, and you know all the rest; but as I've heard enough for my purpose you may go.'

'There won't be no trouble for me, please, sir?'

'If I find you have spoken truth, and have had no further share in the matter, I shall not punish you.'

'I haven't had no share at all.'

'Go — I don't choose to be answered; you took the share of not telling me that they were planning for drink.'

All Pridham's fears of being charged with, and chastised for insolence again bristled up, and she in proportion shrunk down. Humbling her voice and attitude to the very lowest depths of servility, she whined:

'I didn't mean for to say it; telling of them things would be getting into trouble, quite as bad as Government trouble.'

'I repeat — no nonsense, Pridham; remember, wherever you have lived out before, you are now with a master who will not punish without reason. Now, go into Nancy's room and search about for the jar and bring it to me: don't touch the woman; then lock the door and give me the key.'

Pridham left to obey this order, feeling convinced of what before she had only quoted from hearsay, namely, that the master wasn't hard, though precious partic'lar.

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'What, Charlie, you here? how often have I insisted on your leaving the room when you see me engaged with the servants?' said Mr. Evelyn.

He was just at that point of irritation which vents itself on the first object in its way; not even his child could escape. Mortification also had a place in his feelings. He had arranged a particularly nice breakfast to tempt Emmeline's weak appetite, and to display to Bridget the amount of civilization attained in the colonial culinary department and no meal at all was so Paddy-like a substitute, that no wonder he was mortified. He had just sufficient self-control left to prevent his giving the last prick of pain to Bridget, who was already almost crying. He managed to say:

'I am very sorry, dear, that you should be so treated the first morning; it's a poor welcome, but one you will get accustomed to.'

The afternoon was far advanced when Mr. Evelyn unlocked Nancy's door, to see in what stage of recovery and repentance her long sleep had left her. She had not been heard to move, but Mr. Evelyn attributed her silence more to fear than to continued intoxication, and hoped that reasonably protracted suspense might be a wholesome discipline to her. He imagined her sitting most forlorn, and ready with fluent sorrow against he should appear to inquire into her conduct; but the draught which rushed on him, as he pushed open the door, extinguished at once his imaginings, and suggested a picture of Nancy under different circumstances, or rather suggested the thought that he was likely to find no picture at all; a glance round the room confirmed the latter suggestion.

She had bolted through the window!

A constable was immediately put on the track for her; but when the evening closed in she had not been found.

## **CHAPTER XIII. A WALK ABOUT HOBART TOWN AND A TALK ABOUT THE TASMANIANS.**

'THERE, Miss Bridget, how does your name look in print?' exclaimed Uncle Ev, throwing down the Courier before his niece, that she might see herself mentioned as one of the arrivals by the last vessel. 'Now, then, no more retirement for you; make ready for the thousand and one visitors ever prone to avail themselves of glowing advertisements of prettily-named young ladies.'

'Oh! I am longing to see the first people that come. Lionel made such fun of the folks in this colony. I can't fancy they will all be as nice as you. The Hills, who came home, said the men could only talk about cattle, so much so, that the bishop once preached on that text, "Whose talk is of bullocks."'

'You shall make your own observations, Bridget before you hear my opinion. There! it strikes me that alarming rat-tat is from my good friend Dr. Lamb, so you have not long to delay your judgment; apropos of doctors out here, if they differ from the home faculty in no other respect, they do in treatment of their patients' nerves, inuring them to shocks by the free use of the knocker.'

'Dr. and Mrs. Lamb and the Rev. Mr. Walkden,' announced Pridham.

'Right glad to see you back — Oh! but he isn't here, though. I was expecting to see Mr. Herbert. How do, Evelyn? not the less glad to see you. Your niece, I suppose? How do; welcome to Hobart Town. Miss Evelyn! now don't move, I insist now — dear, dear, I am sorry to see you back.'

All this was uttered before Mr. Evelyn could attempt an introduction, so that formality was spared; a warm shake of the hand having already taken-place between Bridget and the company. Uncle Herbert entered, and caused a



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second round of congratulations, condolences, and down-sittings, which over, Dr. Lamb turned to Bridget:

'How is the duke?'

'Which duke?'

'That noble fellow's namesake,' and Dr. Lamb pointed to Mount Wellington.

Bridget looked confused. She did not know that he had been ill. Uncle Herbert came to the rescue. 'He is failing, they say. I have the latest news in the Times of the day we sailed. The paper is at your service.'

'There has been a fresco found in Exeter Cathedral, I hear?' said Mr. Walkden to Bridget.

Fresco! she knew nothing about it. Exeter was so far from London too. 'I beg your pardon?' she answered inquiringly.

'I hear there has been a great excitement in consequence of a fresco recently discovered in Exeter Cathedral,' repeated Mr. Walkden.

Uncle Ev looked deliciously wicked, and watched for her reply; but his brother, more compassionate, relieved Bridget by entering on the subject with Mr. Walkden.

'How do you like what you have seen of this country, Miss D'Urban?' asked Dr. Lamb.

'Very much; but I do not think I shall like being here, everything is so different from home.'

Mrs. Lamb, who was sitting by Emmeline, here bent eagerly forward. Mr. Evelyn seemed in a fidget, and Emmeline manoeuvred to send her cousin an admonitory glance. Had not Dr. Lamb good-naturedly turned the subject, there is no knowing what offence Rattle might have given.

'I like them amazingly,' cried Bridget, as the door closed on the visitors; 'and as for that Dr. Lamb, I'm in love with him. There in an un-English frankness about him, whilst there is no want of English politeness.'

'Well, Bridgy, I'm glad you approve of Dr. Lamb, he is physician-general to this house; and next week he commences with Em, eh, Herbert?'

Mr. Herbert only answered by a look at Emmeline.

'As you please, papa,' she responded, as much with her sweet smile as by word.

'Mamma declared she would never trust a child of hers to a colonial doctor,' whispered Bridget.

'Your mother says a great many foolish things,' rapped from Uncle Ev, ere he was aware. On meeting his brother's look of disapprobation, he added: 'Well, I haven't patience with such foolery! I'd back Lamb with any living doctor. In surgery he is worthy of being called the Tasmanian Liston. He has great advantage over his English M.D. brethren, for professional etiquette allows him free practice in all branches, surgical and medical, and his appointment at the Prisoners' Hospital affords him ample scope therein.'

'Is he a real M.D., uncle?' asked Emmeline.

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'Yes, one of the few truly bearing the title. License, which I suppose we may call poetic, honours all practitioners out here with the Dr. prefix, from the proprietor of the Medical Hall, Elizabeth Street, to the senior physician in her Majesty's service. It's fair, too, perhaps, that the one sharing the profit, the other should share the title. But a word with you whilst I think of it, Miss D'Urban.'

Bridget was all attention.

'If you would avoid giving offence, you must be careful not to express too ready, unless a favourable opinion of the colony; and be still more careful not to draw comparisons between the mother-country and this; and when in mixed company be most careful not to allude to convicts, lest there should be a convict's son or grandson present. Up country several of the most flourishing families are of doubtful origin. There is no published code; but I believe these, with a few others, are the accepted rules of polite society in Tasmanian, or indeed, in Australian life.'

'I shall accept them and be in polite life then, for I hate hurting people's feelings, whether they are free or prisoners,' said Bridget.

'It is a colonial supposition that prisoners have no feelings, and a Government assumption that they ought to have none, save those known as physical.'

'Oh! Uncle Ev, you are joking again; now isn't he, Uncle Herbert? I can always believe what you say.'

'Not wholly, I fear. The supposition is practically expressed.'

'Then I shall hate to hurt them more than ever, that I shall.'

'Speaking of hatred brings to my mind a fearful impersonation of that passion that I once saw in one of the Norfolk Island mutineers. I never hear hatred spoken of, but his awful form presents itself to me. You remember Macguire, George?' inquired Mr. Herbert.

'Much against my will, I do; but how is it? every topic turns to convictism in some shape. The cloven foot is sure to peep out from every possible corner.'

'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. How should it not be so, when the evil is in our very midst, outraging our feelings, exciting our sympathies, imploring our energies, and inviting our prayers?'

'There, Uncle Ev,' exclaimed Bridget, who had been writing in her diary, 'I've made notes of your rules to send home to Mr. Lionel. You must take care how you behave, for everything goes down in this journal.'

'Let's see;' and Mr. Evelyn took the book, added a few lines to it, and gave it back to his niece, saying, 'There, read that.'

Bridget read:

'Rule Four — Never apply the term Colonial to anything but produce. Example: Never say of a young lady — She is quite colonial; nor of any domestic arrangement — It is so colonial. Reason: Though patriotic to a high degree, all colonists aspire to English thoughts, manners, and habits. Whilst COLONIST is a title which makes the honest settler proud, COLONIAL is an epithet obnoxious to his hardy sons, and one over which his pretty daughters pout.'

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'Now then, Miss D'Urban, observe rule four, if you wish to keep a clear account with the natives (don't alarm yourself, I don't mean aborigines). When you wish to gain a crusty matron's heart or please a young husband, say of his wife or the mother's daughter, "Dear me! I quite thought she was English -- she is not at all colonial!" and all crustiness will crumble into the confidence -- "Ah, but my daughter has not been exposed to colonial influence;" while connubial bliss, beaming thrice blessed, will simper the assurance, "My wife, though born in the colony, is quite English in all her notions." The lordly squatter who only an hour before boxed his son's ears for calling England his home, vaunts to the stranger who claims his hospitality -- "My place is so English you'll think yourself at home when I take you round it. There, sir, isn't that English?" The native who to-day raves against the tyranny of Government in turning his beloved country into a moral pest-house, to-morrow mentions his cherished hope of laying his bones beneath British mould. Why, Charlie there, who now glories in being a genuine gum-tree, will by-and-by fight the school-fellow that calls him colonial, won't you, Charlie, boy?'

'What fun! but the colonists don't say such things amongst themselves, do they, uncle? but only when they are with what Uncle Herbert names Anglo-Tasmanians.'

'Don't they, though? Go up country with me, Miss Bridget, and hear two heads of families talk of some new family just settled near them, and you will find that "colonial" is an adjective as objectionably applied amongst themselves as in intercourse with us. In short, colonialism is a sort of national bogie, with which parents frighten their children into good manners, and themselves into domestic properties, as perpetrated in England. But you are not off yet, Herbert? You'll stay for lunch?'

'I have engaged to be at the Comptroller-General's office by one o'clock, and at two the Governor has promised me an interview. I long to get back to my work, and am, therefore, glad of an early appointment with Sir William.'

'Had not Bridget better go with you, when you pay your formal respects to Government House? She can hardly wait for her aunt, or she'll miss the ball.'

Uncle Herbert seemed to think that would not be very much to miss.

'I shall not call there now. I met Lady Denman yesterday, and walked back with her to shake hands with Sir William. It was then that his Excellency fixed to meet me to-day. By-the-by, Emmeline, Lady Denman sends her love to you. She says she will not forget your penchant for strawberries, when hers ripen. She hopes to gather her first on Christmas-day. Her ladyship was most friendly, and knowing of Clara's absence, charged me to tell you George, to bring Bridget to see her, without the usual ceremony.'

'Nevertheless, I shall keep to the code, for fear Mr. A. D. C., not seeing Miss D'Urban's name, should forget the existence of such a person, and that would disappoint me as much as herself. I am quite impatient to see how she looks in the smart gown I know she has somewhere stowed away for this very ball, eh! Bridget, confess?'

'Be quiet, knowing everything, you Uncle Ev! Well, I do own to such a dress -- and a beauty it is too; far better than any I should have had at home; indeed, all my things are prettier than any I ever had before.'

'Now, Miss Fivewits, shall you be ready after lunch to pay your devoirs to the lady governess of the island, by writing your name in her vice-majesty's book? Having performed that ceremony, I don't know that we will not dispense with the further etiquette of not seeing her, and according to her own suggestion, find our way to her drawing-room. If you are a loyal subject, you will be in love with her; she is so like the queen; put her in a state-carriage, and drive her in Windsor Park, and she'd be our sovereign forthwith. I don't remember, though, whether her majesty is shortsighted? Lady Denman is supremely so, for which interesting defect the opticians of Van Diemen's Land owe her a special debt of gratitude. Ah, yes! that's well recollected; you must have an eye-glass, my dear, out of politeness to Lady Denman. Good society has adopted one since her ladyship's sight failed her.'

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'Good society! Wouldn't mamma laugh! She says society here cannot be worth much, because no one would leave England, unless obliged to.'

'Miss D'Urban, for instance. But your mother has made many mistakes in regard to this place. The present is only one of a whole chapter of blunders which she and a hundred other idle folk are content to remain in rather than trouble themselves to bring their opinion to the test of facts. My sister has made no greater error than that which you have just repeated.'

'Now, surely, Uncle Ev, you are not going to make out that society here is as good as it is at home?'

'That depends. When the Lady Geraldine Manners comes out, she may feel at a loss for a companion; or the Duchess of Sutherland might return for want of an equal; but Mrs. D'Urbans and Mrs. Caldridges may come without end; they will meet their equals, and very often their superiors, in everyday society here. Place Hobart Town by any town at home; canvass the inhabitants of each, and compare results; then see if we cannot fairly establish a claim for equality. In the English town, rolling by in their father's equipage, the daughters of a well-fee'd physician head the elite, and make the surgeon's daughter jealous. Here the young wife of a Government officer presides over the mysteries of the Government clique, while the banker's family shines pole-star to professional fashion. We must not include the military in either census, for they are the same everywhere, adding to the gaiety, if not to the glory, of a town. Here, though, the 99th has been so long settled, that it has married down into parental soberness, and so become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, that we shall feel it when they are ordered elsewhere. In the English town the wife of a retired naval captain leads the decorums of the religious world, and stands placard pillar to all solemnities. Here the bishop's wife as ably, and far more appropriately, officiates for the piously inclined.'

'I think you are very hard on poor mamma, uncle.'

'I haven't patience with such idleness in persons who have had relations in the Australias for years; to sit still in contented ignorance of the state of their friends (ignorance which they would be ashamed to acknowledge of a foreign country) is unpardonable, I think.'

'But uncle, it is not only mamma who says such things. The Hills spoke against Tasmania, and the two Mr. Joneses, who came back just before we left England, spread an evil report. They said it was a horrid place, and that the people were rich and rough, caring for no one but themselves, and unable to appreciate quiet worth.'

'Well, well, I suppose we must plead guilty to the charge of the Messrs. Jones. We were unable to appreciate them according to the high standard of appreciation they set upon themselves. They, with hundreds of discarded claimants for British patronage, abjured their native land, thinking they had only to fix their colonial locality, and Caesar's message to the Roman senate would be their motto. They arrived, and were disappointed. They found that the refuse of the professional roll, or the plucked candidates for academic honours, were not more acceptable here than at home. They learned the wholesome, though distasteful lesson, that Tasmania wants not such men as they, but earnest, intelligent men, who forswear England, not because they are too stupid to advance there, but because others have entered and won the field before them. The shipment of bad goods to the colony is a practical joke that Britain — legal, commercial, and parental — is very fond of playing. But ours is a case of Jones versus Tasmanian society in its generally accepted sense, and not of Jones versus colonial immigration. But I expect Miss Bridget regrets having brought forward those worthy gentlemen.'

'Oh dear no! I enjoy your lectures, Uncle Ev, when you don't get fierce.'

'Our drawing-rooms may vie with the luxuries of a British home,' he resumed; 'but whilst we are subject to such disturbances as those you witnessed on your arrival the sanctuary of our inner life cannot compare with English comforts. The visitor who admires his smiling hostess, sees her not when she merges into the distracted housewife

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finding one of her servants has absconded to save the penalty of an expensive breakage, and the other is lying drunk along the kitchen floor. When that gentleman in his turn becomes the host, he knows not that his lively guest will leave him to become the despairing mother, for during her absence her babe has been drugged with opium by her convict nurse, and it is doubtful whether it will ever awake from its profound sleep.'

'Oh! now, Uncle Ev, I'm sure you are taking barrister's privilege, and making a great deal out of nothing.'

'You doubt me? What do you think of that rogue Master Charles? His favourite game is trying to simulate intoxication. After that affair with Nancy, I caught him going over it in the nursery. Pridham was acting Nancy; and there was he roaring it away in imitation of me. When I told him to stop he seemed quite aggrieved, and begged me to wait, 'cause the constable was coming in a minute, and then 'twould be such fun.'

Mr. Evelyn here walked abruptly from his niece — a courtesy that generally concluded all convict discourses.

'Well, I think Uncle Ev is a very funny man: he won't let me speak against the place, and yet he rails unsparingly at it,' said Bridget, proceeding to clear the table for Pridham, who brought in the lunch-tray.

'No, no, Bridgy; he rails neither at place nor people: he only deploras, as everyone must, the system which makes the latter unhappy, and the former an unsuitable abode for children.'

'Well, I think it is very wicked to hate the poor convicts. They can't help being here: they must go where they are sent.'

She was delighted that she had at last puzzled Emmeline; but Miss Evelyn only waited until she became more serious to answer.

Uncle Ev's quick step in the veranda, and he entered, beaming and bright as the day itself.

'What do you think of this for a fine December day? rather too warm for wool, isn't it? Our Midsummer Christmases are charmingly defiant of Thomson's "Seasons," are they not? And yet it's very odd; for all the evidences of the five senses you can't get folks to divest themselves of the mother-country's poetic associations. I suppose they won't, until the British blood becomes too infinitesimal for even homoeopathic discovery.'

Bridget jumped up, and soon forgot the convict turmoil in the beauties of a large nosegay of roses, which Uncle Ev had thrown towards her.

'Now then, peer about for your gowns,' said Mr. Evelyn, as he shut the garden-gate and offered Bridget his arm to escort her to Government House.

'Oh, Charlie, Charlie! come, quick, look at that funny man. It's a juggler, isn't it, uncle?'

Charlie came running back to see the funny man, but he looked about in vain, until his cousin pointed to a man dressed in a piebald suit of yellow and blue.

'Oh, you stupid! he's a prisoner: couldn't you see that in a minute? I s'pose he's a 'sconder, because the constable's got a big gun to shoot him if he isn't good. Ah! ah! ah! what a stupid, Bridget, not to know a prisoner when he's got chains on his feet and hands.'

This little fact had escaped her notice, the grotesque dress and leathern cap having absorbed her attention. As the man passed by, the Broad Arrow on his back showed itself — symbolic alike of Government's claim on the body, and the Evil One's claim on the soul of the poor sinner. Bridget felt half frightened, and clung to her uncle's arm

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as the man raised his head and gave her a sullen side-glance.

'Run on Charlie boy, and find out something better than that to show your cousin.'

Off ran the child, nothing doubting of his father's convict inclinations.

'Oh! I'll show her a lot presently.'

And, true to his word, on turning into the next street he exclaimed:

'There's a whole gang of them -- everyone prisoners.'

He pointed to a party of men, chained and similarly dressed to the piebald they had just passed. Some of the men were working in the road, others drawing carts of stones, and others, more heavily ironed, were assisting their mates by various lesser services.

'Don't fear, Bridget,' whispered Uncle Ev, feeling her arm tremble; 'just follow me whilst I lift the child over this quagmire.'

She picked her path across the broken ground, hardly venturing to turn her head, lest the men should think she was staring at them; but no reciprocal delicacy possessed the gang, for they one and all rested on their spades to gaze at her, and two nearer to her than the others nudged each other, and then the nearest approached quickly yet stealthily, and muttered something which she could not understand, but she fancied it sounded like -- 'Give us a fig.' She hastened forward in spite of the mud; the gang dropped back demurely to their work, for the overseer came round.

Mr. Evelyn laughed as Bridget caught hold of his arm.

'Oh, uncle! they spoke to me:' she was too alarmed to say more.

'Well, they do not seem to have hurt you very much. What did they want of you? something very innocent, I'll dare answer.'

'I couldn't make out what they said; it sounded like "a fig" something.'

'They thought your greenness betokened figs, or, in plain language, tobacco. "A fig of baccy" is the humble form of request; it is left to the donor's generosity to understand it more munificently. But do you know that you might get those men punished for speaking to you, if you were mischievously inclined? Had the overseer heard them, a few days of solitary would have been the consequence; it's astonishing what the poor fellows will risk for tobacco. Here we are at Government House; allow me to introduce you to the abode of vice-royalty.'

Bridget laughed as the lowly wooden building presented itself to receive her homage.

'What a queen-like residence!'

'It's a pretty cottage; but as the allotted dwelling of his Excellency a scandal to Tasmania -- a scandal that is kept in company by the handsome pension of twelve pounds a year wherewith Government rewards Buckley for his valuable services to Australia. However, Government House is more comfortable within than stately without.'

The call of ceremony being over, and Lady Denman not being at home to receive their friendly visit, Mr. Evelyn proposed a stroll through the principal streets.

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'Do you perceive how the habits and arrangements of London are followed in public life here? The street-cries are perpetuated. The cabmen are so determined to carry out the usages of their fraternity that they even imitate their metropolitan brethren in a strike for higher fares. See that rank of cabs: there is no heavy country driver asleep on his box whilst the passenger gets into his neighbour's cab; all is animation and show of arms, as each one asserts his peculiar readiness to "take you in" in more ways than one. A wink would bring half a dozen babblers to your side.

'The incongruous medley of shops, rich and poor together, is London-like. Butcher, baker, grocer, all appear to have served their apprenticeship in the capital; the cut of the meat, the shape of the bread, the adulteration of the groceries, are in dutiful or unintended remembrance of Cockney education.'

'Are all the tradespeople of London origin that it should be so, uncle?'

'By no means. Trades from every part of Britain have settled here. Every county has its representative, every provincial custom its follower. Every grade and every phase of English life meet out here. It is probably this very amalgamation that reproduces the English metropolis.

'To the same cause may be attributed the freedom from peculiarity in the tone and pronunciation of the natives. As children they have no opportunity to contract the nasal twang or gutturals of any particular province; by the constant change of servants, and from an intercourse with a diversity of accents, they are preserved from fixing on any one peculiarity. The Irish brogue heard to day is to-morrow changed for the broad Scotch accent; the Devonshire drawl soon forgotten in the London affectation; the Somersetshire z's are lost in the Yorkshire oo's. If you have not already remarked it, you cannot fail shortly to note how very well the common children speak, even where the parents set them no good pronounciative example.'

A party of children passed by, and as their speech was in bold defiance of Mr. Evelyn's assertion, Bridget looked up rather quizzically at her uncle, who said:

'Of course I do not refer to fresh importations: they have to unlearn home acquirements: I allude to the genuine born or bred Tasmanian. As yet the Australian colonies have given but few contributions to their mother-tongue; doubtless in time they will compile an appendix descriptive of their habits and modes of life. Already the characteristics of a new life begin to develop, and in another generation they will arrange themselves into distinct features. Well, what do you think of Hobart Town? This is about the best part of the city. Look at these houses; they certainly want the substantiality of English buildings; but as to appearance, what could excel them? In some streets relics of the infant aspirations of the first settlers are still to be seen in the form of ground-floor cottages and make-do dwellings; but these only serve to demonstrate the fact that we have put away childish things. The architectural fault now seems to partake of that which is incident to youth. The houses uprear themselves with a speed that suggests instability: and too often a draughty door or shrunken skirting-board intimates that nest time the timber might with advantage, be better seasoned. Whether from the elasticity imparted by the climate, or from the owner's hurry to have a roof over his head, it is certain that structures are raised from foundation to garret with an amazing rapidity. Here a house is planned, built, and inhabited before a similar one at home has passed from the builder's hands.'

But Bridget was tired, and did not appear to care about timber, seasoned or unseasoned. In answer to her repressed yawn, Mr. Evelyn said:

'Come then, let us home! to-morrow we will explore Newtown; its beautiful villas and tasteful gardens will repay research, and atone for the dulness of to-day's expedition.'

'Oh, uncle, I'm only too surprised to express pleasure; I had no idea there would be such beautiful places here. And as to the shops — people wouldn't make so great a to-do about outfits if they could take a peep at them. That

one, now, is almost as splendid as a Regent Street shop.'

'Almost, indeed! Every species of domestic need, comfort, and luxury, is amply furnished by the enterprising tradesmen, who at once make others comfortable and themselves rich. In there is a fellow making his fortune. He will spread a supper or dinner with any London cook. He is our Gunter; come in and test him, by way of refreshing yourself; an ice — or at any rate, ice — is as seasonable here in December as it is at home. An ice-house on Mount Wellington keeps Webb as popular through the torrid weather as his entertainments do through the winter. Literary supplies alone are inefficient; and yet I mustn't say that — small as they are, they meet the present demand. Doubtless, when literary yearnings increase, the means of satisfying them will also increase.'

As they entered the garden gate, Charlie, who had run on in advance, came bounding back, panting with news he was eager to impart.

'She's found! she's found! They had such fun to catch her. Bradley says she fought like a tiger; she's bit his hand drefful. Won't she get a pretty sentence. that's all!'

'Charlie, Charlie, who have you been talking to? you forget papa's orders,' cried Mr. Evelyn.

'Nobody; only Pridham was waiting to tell us. Bradley stopped here to get a drink of water, and Nancy nearly got away again — nasty beast!'

Pridham came forward, and the child continued:

'Here she is — such fun! Come and tell all about it.'

'Go back, Pridham; I will thank you to remember my commands, and not give Master Charles information of this kind. You will get into trouble if you're not more careful,' said her master.

The hint was sufficient. The air of importance vanished more quickly from Pridham's face than her person disappeared behind the kitchen-door. Whilst Mr. Evelyn spoke to her, Charlie drew close to Bridget, and winking a sly childish wink, he whispered:

'She gave Nancy something to eat, but mustn't let papa know; and Bradley got a drink of beer, really — not water — hush-sh he'll hear.'

## **CHAPTER XIV. AUNT EVELYN AND FAMILY MATTERS.**

BRIDGET rejoiced in the prospect of Mrs. Evelyn's return. Curiosity alone did not prompt her joy. She longed to see what sort of an aunt she possessed under that title; but she longed still more to resign the honours of housekeeping. With girlish delight she had entered on those honours; her delight, however, soon changed into discomfort, when she found that more was expected of her as mistress than to jingle her keys, to weigh out the servants' rations, and to order dinner. Dinner-hour nearly trespassed on tea-hour, before the united muddlings of herself and Robert produced the desired effect in turning raw mutton into haricot, and an untrussed fowl into a roast. After such a forenoon's muddle, it was with almost maternal pride that she watched the serving-up of the viands; and many persons will know how mortified even to tears she must have been when an unwitting blow from Uncle Ev struck down her pride. Turning his eyes towards the dish at the bottom of the table, he asked:

'What, in the name of wonder, could be that smoky hodge-podge keeping this tough underdone joint in company?' Mr. Evelyn hired a man to supply one of the vacancies left by Nancy and her bacchanalian colleague.



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Robert Sanders had just become eligible as he applied at the barracks for an able servant. He knew it would be useless to inquire for one who could be recommended as a cook; such men being generally reserved for Government service, or pre-appropriated to families in whom the superintendent had private or politic interest. The list of 'eligibles' was not very startling. A man, willing-minded and sharp, was all Mr. Evelyn expected from it. Such an one appeared Robert Sanders. The brief dialogue which took place prefatory to his engagement will attest his willingness.

'Your name?' asks Mr. Evelyn.

'Robert Sanders, or anything your honour pleases.'

'Your trade?'

'Hostler -- but I ain't partial; I can give a h'ist to aught that's wanted.'

'Do you think you can cook?'

His eyes glistened; he was fond of cookery if not of cooking. Catching hold of his cropped hair, he says;

'Well, I b'lives I'll handle the wittels as well as most on 'em as don't know nothin' about it. Any ways, I'm willin' for it.'

'Your crime is burglary?'

'Es, sure, that's what they calls it; can't say I didn't lift the swag when Sam Tomkins got in and pulled open the door; darned good her did me, though!'

'What is your religion?'

'I ain't partial; don't know as I've choice that way whatever your honour's a mind to 'll suit me. If your honour hires me out, you won't find me stick to trifles in nothin!'

His eagerness to be engaged was so great, that there is no knowing where it would have hurried him; his willingness became alarming, and Mr. Evelyn hastened to put a stop to it by bidding him pack up his bundle and follow him; on which Sanders gave a great gulp of satisfaction, and smothered his roots with his fingers, as though administering salve to his closely-cropped head.

When Uncle Ev presented this new curiosity to Bridget, he told her he hoped she would get him into train against her aunt returned. She stood aghast; not observing the sly twinkle in his eye, she thought he really meant what he said. Turning to Robert, he said:

'Your mistress is from home, Sanders; you will therefore do this young lady's commands for the present.'

Then to Bridget:

'Remember, if Sanders is refractory, I am always at hand.'

'Very good, sir,' responded the man. 'I b'an't much of a hand with the leddies, seeing I've been brought up to hosses but I knows what come means, and I knows what go means; so the young leddy 'll find me willin', darned if she won't.'

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'Well, well, let it be so; and I hope we shall not have to trouble Government much about you, except for the muster report.'

'Very good, sir; I'm willin' as any feller goin'.'

'Give him something to eat, Bridget;' (in a lower tone) 'I'd rather you should than Pridham, or he may overeat himself the first time;' (then aloud) 'there is plenty of cold meat; carve him some, for he missed his dinner at Tench.'

So she cut a plate of mutton, which, with a hunch of bread, and the remains of a gooseberry pudding, she set before him. How his eyes did expand as he sat down! To Bridget's horror, he mixed meat, pudding, and bread into one mess and then commenced to eat it with the iron table-spoon, only giving himself breath to ejaculate 'bootiful!' 'rare!' between the huge mouthfuls. When he had finished he pushed the dish from him, and exclaimed:

'Thank'ee, miss;' then, starting back in his chair, he arose with a suddenness that overwhelmed table, its contents, and all the fire-irons.

'Oh, dear! that wern't a lucky hit. Go up, yer ginger,' cried Robert. 'Never mind, I bain't hurt, miss;' broken crockery was of no consequence at all.

With this man began Bridget's domestic trials. She refrained from worrying Emmeline with many tales of distress; but every now and then even her elastic spirit would be overstretched, and confide in her cousin she must.

Another time, when the meat should have been on the spit, she found not the sirloin, but Robert roasting before the fire. His trousers were tucked above his knees, and he was chafing his stockingless feet, his legs luxuriously expanded to the two chimney ends.

'Robert, what will Mr. Evelyn say if dinner is late again?'

'All right, miss, was just a-thinking if 'tweren't time to handle the wittels; a pretty bit of eatin' in that j'int. I'll be after 'en when I've got a bit of the torment out of these darned legs.'

In one item of domestic service, however, he was particularly expert, and particularly delighted. In the boot and shoe department he was at home, there fondly dreaming the leathern array before him into so many horses awaiting professional attendance. He could not have too many pairs to clean, and the muddier they were the better was he pleased. At the sight of a boot or shoe, down would drop the basting-spoon or saucepan, and off would rush Robert to the prize; and it was no matter who should attend to the cookery so long as he seized the opportunity of flourishing away over an imaginary steed, now admonishing it with a 'Y'up there!' 'Ho here!' 'Still, you beggar!' as the shoe might slip from his hand; then consoling both himself and it with the prolonged sis-s-peculiar to his trade.

Aunt Evelyn was exactly the opposite to all Bridget had pictured her. She was a native, and had the fair skin, slender figure, and long limbs of the Tasmanian, with the not less characteristic, but more painful colonial feature — prematurely decayed and broken teeth. Now thirty guineas refill a mouth with as ornamental, if not as useful, a set as that provided by nature. Then Mrs. Evelyn had to bear tooth-ache and tooth want, until some years later, when an American dentist settled in Hobart Town, affording the inhabitants a chance of transferring their gold from their pockets to their mouths.

At the age of twenty Mrs. Evelyn entered on the duty of mother to a little girl, who, after four years, resigned in death her place in her parent's affection to Master Charles, the bouncing rogue of the present volume. To him succeeded another girl, whose acquaintance Bridget has just made, and who, as she lies crowing in her cot in

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answer to her papa's whistle, numbers seven months to her brief existence but brief as her existence is, it has not escaped the evils incident to convict proximity. There is no such happy fortune for even the youngest who dwells within sound of prison bells. From the hoary grandsire to the latest addition to his race, all must feel the effects of a system which strikes immediately at the root of that tree called olive. Then why should exemption be urged for Baby Evelyn, the tiniest off-shoot of the tree? If parental fondness did plead it, it was not granted; for she was scarcely five months old ere a perilous mischance befell her as follows:

Betsy, the nurse, had been so steady for eleven months that one Sunday her master thought he might venture to send her out alone to give the babe its usual airing. Mrs. Evelyn was unable to accompany her, and the air was too balmy and health-giving to be missed even for once. So Betsy was despatched with strict injunctions to return by noon. proud of this first proof of a confidence for which she had long waited, she set out, determining to obey the command and be punctually home by twelve o'clock. Had temptation under any form but that through which she had previously fallen presented itself, she might have stood morally safe; but on that fatal morning the snare was irresistibly spread. The old temptation produced old longings.

She had not proceeded far before she encountered a shipmate, whose shabby attire was a certain indication that she had not kept out of trouble for long together. An exchange of questions and comparison of lucks ensued, and ended in an opinion on the stranger's side that one who had lived in so good a situation, had such smart clothes, and well-grown hair, could not fail to have a few spare coppers in her pocket. Such coppers evidently had not vanished in spreeing, or Betsy must have been in cage (short for Cascades), and as they must be somewhere, there was no place more likely than her own person. This train of reasoning the stranger pursued in silence for some time; she then startled Betsy with the inquiry:

'Will you sport an odd copper to old times?'

Betsy replied that she had taken the pledge, and hadn't tasted 'a drop of nothing' since she'd been out, and hoped she never should again.

But her companion said a glass out here wasn't like at home, 'twas more genteel; the best — what hadn't known trouble — wouldn't be ashamed of a glass of wine; the best lady in the land would be in trouble if there was harm in that sort of liquor.

Still Betsy refused.

'Well, then,' cried her tempter, 'it shan't be said that two mates met and wouldn't be friendly to past times and luck to come. I'll go and sell this bonnet off my head to fetch a sip between us, though it isn't the perlitte thing to do, as them what's most respectable generally treats the other.'

Betsy's pride and convict vanity were touched, and she said she would willingly stand the treat so long as she was not pressed to drink. The friend agreed — not caring who should go without, provided she did not — and conducted Betsy to a house of the worst description, where, looking upon the wine whilst it was red, Betsy's moral courage succumbed, the cup was taken, the liquor tasted, and further power of resistance gone. Other shipmates came pouring in; the time passed merrily, and when Betsy rose up to go, she promised to return on the following Sunday. She reached the Lodge only just as the clock struck twelve; the master's anger, therefore, was averted. He noticed her flushed cheeks, but accepted the explanation that she had taken the wrong road, and her dread of not being home by the appointed hour had 'flustered her a bit.'

Next Sunday she was again sent out, and it was deemed safe to let Charlie accompany her. During the week she had, in imagination, gone through former scenes of dissipation until her mind became inflamed, and bent on once more giving itself to those unhallowed pleasures which had caused the crime she was now atoning. She promised Charlie all manner of sweetmeats if he was a good boy; a peculiar meaning attached itself to this condition, and he

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was as good a boy as she could desire — seeing all, but repeating nothing. She was again careful to be back before the family's suspicions were aroused. The third Sunday arrived, and brought the same permission; she who had been so steady would surely not disappoint them the third time. Baby alone was confided to her care.

On Mr. and Mrs. Evelyn's return from church, no baby was to be found; however, Betsy might still be home before dinner, they only felt a little uneasy. Dinner was over and uneasiness increased into alarm. From watching at the windows and looking down the road, the parents proceeded to active measures. Tea hour passed, and alarm increased to anguish.

Mrs. Evelyn now remained in the house, in case the infant should be brought in famishing for maternal care. Her friends, Dr. and Mrs. Lamb, who had hitherto been assisting in the search, sat with her, while Mr. Evelyn accompanied by a constable, went off in one direction, and a band of his friends in another.

Charlie was neglected in the general commotion; his existence was only remembered when he came in, cross and hungry, to ask where 'tea had gone to.' But crossness and hunger were both forgotten when he saw his 'own beautiful mamma' in tears. He sat quietly down, and slipped his hand into hers, until, on the point of crying himself, he slid over to Dr. Lamb, and whispered:

'Who's made her cry? nasty people, I'll shoot them!'

Dr. Lamb whispered in return:

'Naughty Betsy hasn't come back, so mamma is afraid poor little sister is lost.'

With an appreciating nod, Charlie reseated himself.

An English child would have commenced calling up 'Children in the Wood' stories as applicable to the present case; not so this young colonist. He lapsed into a thoughtful but not mysterious mood, as though he knew as well as anyone what Bort of being lost this was; and how to get back baby was more the doubtful point than what had become of her. The dreary silence was at last broken by his very demure voice.

'If I could have a constable, p'raps I'd find her. I'd know it by the large pussy-cat on the wall.'

His voice became confidential.

'Only don't tell Betsy; she wouldn't give me any more lollies, and the bogie will fetch me away when it's dark.'

The result of an eager interrogation was a conviction that if only Charlie's description of 'down a nasty street, and up a nasty place,' could be defined, the lost one might be found in the Sunday rendezvous.

'Should you know the house if you saw it, my boy?' asked Dr. Lamb, determined to scour the length and breadth of Hobart Town.

'Oh yes! I'll peep into every door till I see the pussy, then there'll be plenty of prisoners, and fun, and baby lying down inside the other room.'

A cab was hired. Dr. Lamb's simple direction to the driver was:

'Take us to the worst place in Hobart Town, then set us down and slowly follow.'

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Without a comment the man drove them to — street, turned down — street, and then silently opening the door, he gave Dr. Lamb a wink which said, 'Here or nowhere.'

Charlie was quite alive and proud of his mission. He peered into cottage after cottage, until he arrived at the fifteenth whose door alone was shut.

'Stupid!' cried Charlie; 'if 'twas open I think I'd see pussy, and then I'd know.'

Dr. Lamb rapped and entered.

'There's pussy!' cried Charlie, clapping his hands.

'Now then, my boy, jump into the cab, and wait for us; you mustn't go in with the bad people.'

Happily, the scene of vice which met Dr. Lamb's sight is hidden from us. We need not follow him, as pushing his way into an inner room, he discovered the object of his search lying asleep. From the heavy sob which disturbed the babe, it was evident that the slumber had succeeded a fit of unsoothed crying. The tears still rested on its little cheek, and as Dr. Lamb stood over it, it burst out afresh into a piteous wail, unable even in sleep to forget its wrong.

Perceiving that Betsy was not in a state to attempt escape, he hurried off with his tender burden, merely telling the woman of the house that if Betsy was not forthcoming when the constable arrived, she would stand a chance of being taken in her stead. . . .

Relieved of her weight of domestic anxiety, Bridget again became Emmeline's chief attendant, and the happy, unclouded maiden of English days. And as, under the genial influence of summer, her cousin appeared to regain a degree of strength, and a respite from suffering, her happiness increased to merriment, and her uncloudedness into positive sunshine; and save when convict disturbances broke on the family peace, or she heard of prison miseries from Uncle Herbert, or they came under her notice in the form of chain-gangs, recaptured absconders, or the prison van conveying a load of females to the Anson, the flow of her joyous spirits rarely met with obstructions, for all in the house were too well pleased to have so unfailing a spring of gladness in their midst to stay one ripple of its refreshing course. Uncle Herbert experienced unconscious relaxation in his niece's society. When Mr. Herbert returned, overcome by his depressing duties, too weary to seek Emmeline as a friend, listener, or sympathizer, she merely met him with the wonted caress, and then, retiring to her sofa, left the spontaneous music of Bridget's voice to soothe the worn-out mind into repose.

You must not imagine that he was given to spend his evenings in an easy-chair; an evening so spent was exceptional. When his prescribed Government duties were over, he still employed himself in different ways on the prisoners' behalf — now writing to the Home Government to expose some abuse, then to the Comptroller to pray for the mitigation of an unusually severe sentence. Now he would write to the English friends of a convict lying under sentence of death in the condemned cells, and who had, perhaps, that day begged him to break the dire intelligence to a fond mother or a pining wife. Then he would reply to a letter from some prisoner's relative at home, asking him to seek out such or such an one, supposed to be either dead or lost. Or else an annoying correspondence with the heads of the department would occupy his time. Such correspondence was necessarily frequent, while low officials were permitted to lay before interested secular powers charges of neglect or excess of duty on the part of the chaplain, and while such secular powers (of no very high standing) took on themselves the exercise of episcopal authority over him, seeming to delight in circumscribing his prerogative to the smallest possible bounds, and in making him feel himself as much under their control as was any overseer or constable.

The Bishop of Tasmania nominally reckons the convict chaplains among his clergy. They are expected to show themselves at the visitations, and at public meetings convened for special clerical considerations; but here ceases

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the benefit of relationship to their diocesan — not from unwillingness on his lordship's part to admit them to closer intimacy and to the full privileges of their order, but from inability to redress their grievances without an appeal to the Local Government, a step his lordship is naturally averse to, because it cannot fail to cause unpleasantness between himself (as the head of spiritual authority) and the colonial representative of supreme temporal authority. Therefore of all undefined positionists, the convict chaplain is the most unfortunate if he be not 'in with the Comptroller' or the Superintendent of his station.

One would think that all parts of a moral machinery formed for the noble purpose of human reformation should work in unison. And do they not? asks the mere looker-on, who has been admitted to inspect its able construction and varied movements. He is filled with admiration at the wondrous adaptation of each part to its peculiar end, and eulogizes the grand renovator, opining that some obstinate resistance or organic incapacity to receive improvement must exist in the object worked upon if the anticipated aim be missed. He expatiates on the exquisite order in which wheel rotates within wheel, but not having heard, he cannot be shocked by the grating of each as it turns upon its axis for discord sets the primary wheel in motion, and its jarring is felt through the whole machine. Nor when he imputes to the object worked upon a heart hardened beyond relenting, a mind too set upon evil to be shaken by even the concentrated force of this wonderful machine, is he aware that the force is rarely concentrated, the separate portions of the system being too divided among themselves to join their strength for the long pull, the strong pull, and the pull all together; while on that section immediately intended to act on the criminal's heart so heavy a clog is placed that its solitary endeavours are comparatively useless. The stranger knows not of these things. But to speak plainly, is it not strange that one of the most important coadjutors in the reformatory work — one whose position is the most laborious whose task is the most depressing, should have opposition from every official quarter instead of the assistance and sympathy he expects? — and that, too, where his adherence to the penal regulations is so nicely strict that not the most overbearing Superintendent can charge him with irregularity or the most vigilant favourite spy out a fault. Private annoyances of the most petty kind are contrived to draw him into a quarrel.

If the Chaplain be a man who would go down with the Department stream, not caring into what depths of servitude it might drift him, nor into what abuse of duty it might hurry him — if he be content with the name of first-class officer, and suffer himself to be treated as an inferior — if he see all, hear all, do all, and say nothing — and chiefly, if he be not over godly nor too demonstrative in his life, then will he be a man after the Superintendent's own heart; then, and not till then, will he find but few drawbacks to embitter his professional career, even though he be a gentleman by birth and education — even though he be unfortunately guilty of an M.A. to his name.

If you could transport yourself to a penal settlement, and there dwell for six months in the clergyman's quarters, you would perceive that Mr. Herbert did not exaggerate these strange matters. You would perceive that the convict chaplain, if he be what he should be (not else, of course), has unthought-of vexations, which in print would seem mere frivolities, and would be regarded as such by him, were they of fortuitous origin. But when he knows that these vexations are not occasional accidents, but occurrences planned by pique, and worked out by paltry jealousies and official resentments, he learns to regard them as a warning of concealed animosity, and they assume a power (destructive to his peace) to which adventitious misfortunes could never pretend.

## **CHAPTER XV. BEING NOTHING PARTICULAR.**

IT is now eighteen months since the arrival of the transport and passenger vessel. Of the living freight of the former we have lost sight, but anon we may hear of it again when occasion leads us to Restdown Ferry, and thence on board H.M.S. Anson.

Meanwhile, visiting the Lodge, we find the family there going on just as we left them, except that Pridham has been dismissed. She fell so violently in love with Sanders that trouble was foreboded, and the only mode of

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dealing with her was to send her away. Mr. Evelyn asked Robert if he would like a recommendation to marry her, but, shaking his head sidewise, Bob said that 'unless his honour was partial to it he'd rather not; he'd all so soon bide with his hosses as marry a gal he hadn't much mind to.' He supposes when he has his ticket there will be no difficulty in getting a wife to his mind, but there might be some difficulty in laying hold 'on such a pair of hosses as them again.' In Pridham's place another servant has been hired from the Anson. She is called Lucy, and has made an odd impression on Uncle Ev, by having positively shed tears on her leaving the hulk.

'Why, Lucy, most prisoners are delighted to get into service; be grateful to the gentleman,' commanded one of the officers.

'I'm not crying for to go, but for she to go too,' replied Lucy, choking down her sorrow, and throwing a farewell peep at a tall figure that watched her from behind a grated door.

A ring at the Lodge will convince the most incredulous that the present Lucy is the little Grenlow of the transport. She is budding into womanhood, but still retains her childish face. She drops a quick curtsy, and blushes furiously as she thinks her prison clothes attract other notice than her own. She gives a beseeching look that seems to say, 'Please not to stare at me.' She has drawn her hair down to its utmost length over her cheeks, but every now and then a disobliging lock whose ends can rarely reach her ear, falls forward, increasing her confusion and blushes; she hurries it back, and, hoping no one has observed it, curtseys herself out of sight.

### CHAPTER XVI. H.M.S. `ANSON'.

'WELL, Bridget, I must go to the Anson this afternoon. I have been to the watch-house, and there found our lady; she will have three months. As we feared, she made her way to the Labour in Vain instead of to the orphan school. I have refused to appear on her behalf, believing that the punishment will do her good, this being the third offence. Now don't look so vexed; steel that tender heart of yours, or you will never do for out here. You may go with me. Are you a clever physiognomist?'

'Pretty well; but I shall not have much choice on which to exercise my talents, shall I uncle?'

'Every bad lot has its best.'

'Well, I should like to explore the Anson. I suppose it is one of the colonial sights.'

'Ay, ay; I thought so. "It's very dreadful, but I must just see it." That's the way with womankind. At half-past two, then, the cab will be at the door. Very tiresome to have to change servants whilst your aunt's away.' (Mrs. Evelyn had gone up the country to pay her annual visit.) 'We always happen to pick up some beauty during her absence.'

'There's poor little Lucy peeping in, uncle; come in.'

Half anxious and half frightened Lucy entered.

'If you please -- mem -- sir -- is it true that Janet isn't coming back?'

'Yes, Lucy; how did you hear the news?'

'The constable, sir, promised her to call, and told me -- and, and -- sir -- and -- '

'And what, Lucy? Speak out, if you please.'

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'And to beg you'd please to keep the place for her 'gainst she's out of trouble. She knows 'taint a every-day house, sir, as all the rest of us does, sir.'

'There will be time enough to think of that by-and-by. Let this be a warning to you, Lucy: you will find me a kind master if you deserve kindness, but — '

Here Lucy burst into tears, exclaiming between her sobs:

'Oh, sir, if you please, sir — you don't think I'd go for to drink the filthy stuff — indeed, sir, I wouldn't, nor nothing else.'

'Well, well, we shall see, Lucy. I did not mean to vex you; you ought to have learnt by this time that, in this colony, we suspect all persons until they have proved themselves beyond suspicion. I tell you plainly, Lucy, that you have lately appeared more friendly with Janet than I approve of.'

'Oh, sir! sir!' said the girl, almost choked with tears 'I were afraid of her, indeed I were, sir; and it's lovely to think she's gone! I'd a sight rather do all the work myself than have her back.'

'Take care, take care, foolish girl; how do you explain all that anxiety to have Janet's place reserved for her, eh, Lucy? Do not attempt to deceive me.'

'It's easy explained, sir.' Lucy drew nearer to Mr. Evelyn, and glancing around the room to assure herself that she was not overlooked by malignant eyes, she continued in a low tone:

'You see, sir, I were obliged to give you Janet's message; and p'raps, if you see her in factory, you'll be so kind as to tell her I spoke for her, sir.'

'Why, Lucy, what is all this about? I will thank you to be straightforward.'

Lucy drew still nearer.

'When Janet got leave to go out, she says to me, sir "Now, if I gets into trouble, which is as like as not, I'll send and let you know; and if you don't speak a word to the master for me, I'll give you a keepsake, you little sneaking hussy;" and she put her fist to my face, and says "Mind that: I'll find you out by some of my mates." You may think I were frightened, master.'

Mr. Evelyn, giving a long ahem, turned to his nieces:

'In this, our good-tempered Janet, we have harboured a respectable reptile;' then to Lucy: 'Did she ever ill-treat you, that you fear her?'

A second timid search about the room:

'Yes, sir; you remember that black eye I got? She gave it to me; and because I wouldn't promise to tell a lie about it, she went and broke a lot of soup-plates, to make believe that I'd tripped in carrying the tray, and so got the bruise; and as she managed to get first word with missus, I weren't asked no questions; and I were very glad, because she swore she'd pay me double if I told true. She made fine fool to you, sir, and missus, for heeding her lies: she said you was a sweet, peaceable babby, not to know more about fighting than to believe I got my black eye by a fall.'

'Enough, Lucy Grenlow; you were very wrong to let me keep that woman, when you saw such wrong doings.'



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'Oh! please, sir,' sobbed Lucy, 'you don't know how dreadful 'tis downstairs when they hates a body; and they always hate a body that's better than theirselves. I've well-nigh cried my eyes out sometimes when I've seen things as shouldn't be in a respectable kitchen; but what were I to do when Janet swore she'd make a hell for me if I peached?'

'It is over now; I can excuse you: but, another time, remember your duty to your master; the innocent have nothing to fear. I never encourage one prisoner to tell tales against another; but where matters are visibly wrong, the case is altered. Now that will do, Lucy; for your comfort, I will tell you that at present we have all a fair opinion of you.'

Lucy looked her thanks, and dropped a profound curtsy.

'Have you any charge to make against Janet?'

'I don't believe, sir, that she'd ever a child to the orphan school. 'Twas only a make out to get leave sometimes; but please, sir, do not tell her, or there'll be no end on the mischief she'll do me.'

Mr. Evelyn made no reply. Emmeline asked Lucy:

'Then when you looked so anxious you were afraid that your master would agree to take Janet back?'

'No, mem,' said Lucy, brightening vastly. 'I wanted to mention to the master that I'd been reckoning about Martha Grylls, and thinks if she hasn't got into trouble again, her time will be up on the Anson; and if you please, mem,' Lucy stopped, and, colouring up to her temples, looked from Mr. Evelyn to Bridget, and from Bridget to Emmeline — as much as to say, 'Do understand, without giving me the pain of speaking.'

'I guess what you wish to say, Lucy. This Martha Grylls is a friend of yours, and you want to speak for her.'

'Thank you, mem — Miss Evelyn.'

'Come, then, my girl, let us hear something of this Grylls: what can you say in her favour, eh, Lucy?' said her master.

'If you please, sir, she's a 'orrid temper,' commenced Lucy.

'Very satisfactory,' nodded Mr. Evelyn.

'Shockin' to manage, sir.'

'Better still — go on, Lucy.'

'But such a noble creature, sir; and I can't never fancy she's a common prisoner like me. If you only please try her, sir; she was quite a mother to me coming out; the chaplain set a sight on her, and all the women feared her like. She was so grand to 'em, without ever meaning it.'

Mr. Evelyn gave a sly glance at Bridget.

'We'll think about it; where all are alike strange, and all have a character to gain, I would as soon choose one servant as another.'

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'Oh! no; if you please, sir: if you'll excuse me, sir, there's as much difference between they on the Anson as between night and day, sir; there's some as never scarce keeps out of the dark cells, sir; and there's they what never gets in.'

'But before I make any promise,' continued Mr. Evelyn, you must tell me what this great friendship of yours and Martha's is. I do not approve of these prison attachments. 'Are — you — sure — Lucy, that she is not your mother?'

'Lor', no, sir!' cried Lucy, in unfeigned surprise. 'I wish she was, and I shouldn't be out here. She ain't nothing to me in flesh and blood. 'Twas all her kindness coming out that did it. I were the youngest on board, sir; and the women used to make mock on me: so, one day Martha, who didn't 'sociate with none of them, roused up and took my part, and said, 'twas only because I was better than them that they tret me so bad; so then they hated me, but she stood for me all the voyage, and the chaplain was very good to me, because he set a sight on her.'

'Well, well, Lucy, go to your work now; we'll see what can be done.'

'If you please, sir, you won't listen to anything they says 'gainst her? p'raps they'll make her out bad.'

'Never you mind, the officers are the best judges of her conduct; do not presume on my leniency.'

Utterly unwitting of the meaning of the two grand words — presume, leniency — Lucy imagined them the superlative to all former degrees of promise, and dropped a befitting curtsy.

'Thank you, sir!' She hesitated: 'Please, I don't know if she'd be angry; but I don't think Martha Grylls is her real name; they call her so — she let's me call her Maida.'

Mr. Evelyn nodded, and Lucy left the room; in a moment she peeped in again:

'If you please, sir, if her time isn't up, I'd gladly do all the work for a few days, if you'd wait for her?'

'That will do, Lucy; shut the door.'

'The little puss!' exclaimed Bridget.

'What do you think, ladies? though I was obliged to put in a full stop now and then, I rather like her the better for all this,' said Uncle Ev, turning to his nieces.

'Poor little creature!' sighed Emmeline; 'how old is she, Uncle Ev?'

'Seventeen years; hers is a sad story — you must ask her to tell it you some day.'

At half-past two, Mr. Evelyn and Bridget set off for Risdon Ferry, in sight of which the Anson lay. From Macquarie Street they reached the ferry at half-past three; there a boat awaited parties going on board the ship.

'Now then, miss, hold on, and I'll keep close behind you.'

And Miss D'Urban ascended the companion and stood on the hulk. Her uncle beckoned her to follow him below.

A female standing at a high desk by the open door of the first cabin raised her head and bowed a business-like bow as they advanced. She was evidently the monarch of all she surveyed.

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'Is that Mrs. Bowden?' whispered Bridget.

The question was overheard and answered by the ruling spirit.

'No, Mrs. Bowden is in England. I act in her place.' Another, and still more official bow followed. Accompanied by one of the officers, Mr. Evelyn and his niece arraigned themselves at Mrs. Deputy's bar.

'I want a servant—of—all—work; can you recommend me one, Mrs. Deputy?'

'We do not recommend; there are several people eligible, but they will not afford much choice, Mr. Evelyn.'

'Except to friends!' drily suggested that gentleman.

Mrs. Deputy bowed at once dignity and indignity, and repeated, 'There are several prisoners eligible.' True to the daring contradictions of Tasmanian words and their meanings, 'eligible' is not intended to signify aptness or suitability. A woman eligible for service is rarely fitted for service; the adjective only informs the master or mistress that she is ready to be hired.

'Is one Martha Grylls eligible, Mrs. Deputy?'

'Grylls, Grylls, Grylls, let me see?' drawing her finger down the list before her.

The attendant officer chimed in:

'Yes; she becomes so this very day.'

'Thank you, Miss Perkins,' bowed Mrs. Deputy, with an air that plainly said, 'I will thank you not to interfere.'

'Grylls, Grylls,' and her finger travelled on.

'You cannot know whom you ask for, if you want her, sir!' whispered the cowed Miss Perkins.

'Thank you, Miss Perkins, perhaps you will leave the arrangement of this matter to me,' again bowed the commandant.

'Martha Grylls is at your service, Mr. Evelyn; shall I send for her?'

'I will trouble you, if you please.'

'Would not you prefer my calling several women, sir?'

'I will thank you, Miss Perkins, to call Martha Grylls,' responded Mrs. Deputy.

The little officer had no choice but to obey; so bowing obedience, she sidled to the grating which divided the prison from the officers' quarters; and then standing on tiptoe, desired a Miss Snub to send forward 'That Martha Grylls.'

'Ordered forward, Martha Grylls!' shouted a female Stentor; and, uprising from a distant rank, immediately appeared a tall, elegant woman, who, passing Miss Snub with a curtesy, came into Mrs. Deputy's awful presence.

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She had on the usual brown serge skirt (so short as to show a masculine pair of half-boots), a jacket of brown and yellow gingham, a dark blue cotton kerchief; and a prim white calico cap, whose narrow border was kept in frill by help of a thread run through it, completed her dress. The grotesque coarseness of this attire could not hide the inherent grace of the prisoner. Still dignified and beautiful, before her future master stood the wearer of those rough knitted blue stockings and clownish shoes.

Her cap was untied.

'Tie your cap, Martha Grylls,' commanded Miss Perkins.

Martha mechanically obeyed.

'It would better become you, Grylls, to curtsy the same as your mates, than to try to imitate your betters,' continued the little woman, conscious that Martha's obeisance surpassed her genuflecting capabilities.

'The curtsy was meant for me, I think, Miss Perkins,' said Mrs. Deputy.

In consideration of Martha's presence, the rebuked attendant darted daggers at Mrs. Deputy.

Mr. Evelyn put a few questions to Martha, all of which she quietly and satisfactorily answered.

'I will hire this Grylls, if you please, Mrs. Deputy.'

Preliminaries having been settled, Martha was sent to tie up her bundle, and business being over, Mrs. Deputy came down from the tip-top of dignity, and seemed not wholly disinclined for a talk.

'The appearance of the woman decided me at once Mrs. Deputy; to belie that countenance, she must be a monster.'

'With a good master she will not belie it, Mr. Evelyn. Wise management will do much for her. Her police character is against her, and her crimes you are aware --'

'Yes, yes; but I do not heed the amount of crime: indiscriminate association generally makes it theoretically equal amongst prisoners. It is my opinion that both men and females come out of these probations worse than they went in. Reformations rarely, if ever, commence within prison walls; and reformation the more tardily begins in proportion to the length of durance. We have an extra task to perform on a probationer.'

Mrs. Deputy looked much hurt, and exclaimed, 'Here on the Anson surely, Mr. Evelyn, you do not call it indiscriminate association: we have distinct classes -- bad, better and best. Surely nothing can be superior to Mrs. Bowden's excellent system?'

'Than Mrs. Bowden I know no more gifted and prudent Lady-Superintendent; were all officers selected with like discernment, it would be well for the prisoner. Mrs. Deputy may I take my niece through the wards?' asked Mr. Evelyn, anxious to avoid a discussion.

The lady only bowed assent; for she was deeply affronted at an attack on a system of which she was representative in place of the highly respected Mrs. Bowden: perhaps she was the more deeply wounded, because a conviction of the fallacy of the system already worked in her own mind. It is a natural weakness with many persons to be angry with a scruple they can no longer conscientiously resist. She just deigned to say, 'Miss Perkins, this gentleman wishes to see the Anson,' and turned to her desk. The little creature came hopping over with a kind of sidewise movement, not unlike that of an impudent cock-sparrow which can scarcely hop for pertness. Pecking to Mr. Evelyn's side, she whispered, 'Though I pity you, sir, I am downright glad to get rid of

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that woman. The trouble I have had with her!

This was only meant for Mr. Evelyn; nevertheless, it reached the vigilant deputy's ears. 'I am sure I shall be glad, Miss Perkins. Often have I been pained by the foolish complaints made against her and poor Lucy Grenlow, when she was here. You know I am obliged to take my officers' part before the convicts; you ought therefore to refrain from bringing such nonsensical cases for me to judge. Had my duties allowed me time to pay particular attention to Martha I should not have had reason to punish her so much.' As Mrs. Deputy was thus properly delivering herself, Miss Perkins stood a deferential listener; she just hopped off in time to hear a mutter that sounded very like — 'I have as much trouble with the officers as with the women.'

Bridget clung to her uncle's arm as they passed through rows of prisoners, who were variously employed in working reading, and learning, it being their school-hour. Each file arose and curtsied as the party passed.

Ever and anon Miss Perkins issued orders to some unfortunate.

'Mary Gull, tie your cap. What Mary Pike, yours off! The next offence you'll go downstairs.' Mary understood the allusion, and hastily put on her cap.

'Sarah Gubb, you are talking there. Jane Dawson, where's your curtsy? Why don't you rise, Ellen Bracket? Muggins, I shall complain of you.'

'Would you like to walk through the cells, sir?'

They went below. In one cell was a captive, kicking and stamping violently. Miss Perkins thought fit to soothe her by rapping at the door.

'You don't think that's the way to get out, do you, Stooks?'

"'Twas you got me in, you did, you beast!'

'If I wasn't very indulgent, Stooks, I should get you double for that,' said the maternal Perkins.

'Is the devil indulgent, I should like to know, you old cant?' cried Stooks.

With a deprecating smile at Bridget, Miss Perkins stopped at Number 10, whence issued an imploring voice:

'Do beg for me; I'm quite subdued, indeed I am, Miss Love. Oh! it's Miss Perkins. I beg pardon, ma'am I thought 'twas Miss Love,' the prisoner was heard to sigh.

Passing on, they came to stalls where different trades — cobblery, bonnet-making, etc. — were being carried on.

'Do let us go, uncle; it is so dreadful to have these poor creatures made a show of,' whispered Bridget.

'They are accustomed to it,' answered Miss Perkins to the second clause of Bridget's speech.

'As the eels are, eh, Miss Perkins?' asked Mr. Evelyn.

'Oh, they keep each other in countenance. We look at them as a lot, not as individuals.'

Here her eyes fell on Martha Grylls, who was waiting, bundle in hand, at the grating.

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'Follow us, and don't be talking there, Grylls. I don't wish to lose sight of you.'

'Come along, my woman,' said Mr. Evelyn kindly.

'No; walk before us, if you please, Grylls. I don't wish to lose sight of you, I repeat.'

Martha obeyed without a word.

All the women tried to give her a nod on the sly; and many anxious eyes followed the party as the grated door closed, and an audible sigh was simultaneously heaved by those whom it imprisoned. Each prisoner envied Martha and wished it had been her lot to fall to so sweet a looking lady as that bright-eyed girl who smiled on her in passing.

What lay beyond those gates not one could tell. They were as the gates of death — all doubt and mystery beyond. None ever returned to tell of the untried world to which they led.

Strange and vague are the mental picturings the prisoned female forms of the land of bier exile, which she knows lies little further than a stone's-throw from her. Some think, on leaving the Anson, they are to be turned adrift to all the horrors of an unexplored region; others that they will be driven to market for sale. The cunning and malicious amongst them delight in filling the minds of their less gifted associates with the most terrible apprehensions of the barbarities awaiting them on their departure from their probation. It is with a thrill of cruel suspense that such prisoners first plant their foot on Tasmanian ground.

In this respect the male convicts do not suffer so acutely. Their doubts, hopes, and fears are answered, realized, or crushed almost immediately on arriving at the colony. Their probationary course does not add suspense to sorrow. At once formed into gangs, they learn the worst, and are sent to labour in the roads, or work on public buildings. The torture of suspense is not added to it.

Miss Perkins accompanied Mr. Evelyn and his niece to the deck, where she mysteriously beckoned Bridget aside:

'I hope you do not mean to employ Grylls about children.'

She gave a significant wink. 'Of course, though, you don't. You guess why? It is not usual to tell the crime but really I think it my duty to break rule to you. Do you understand me?'

Bridget looked a negative.

Martha had drawn near enough to hear Miss Perkins's friendly caution. Casting a glance of unutterable contempt on little Perkins, she stepped to Miss D'Urban, and herself solved the significant wink.

'Miss Perkins wishes you to know that I am sent out for murder. She would suggest the impropriety of making me a nurse.'

Bridget turned very pale, and cast an imploring look on the little officer, who, boiling over with injured prerogative, was on the point of reprimanding Martha's audacity, when Mr Evelyn called them to be quick — the boat was waiting.

'Good morning, Miss Perky. We are much favoured by your civilities.'

The officer was hurt at the inharmonious name bestowed upon her, and vented her spite by exclaiming, as Martha was on the first step of the companion:

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'I hope you'll behave better now, Grylls, or you'll soon learn the difference between factory and here.'

Martha turned abruptly on her. A second more, and she had been on her way back to the cells, instead of on the road to Hobart Town. The crimson cheek, flashing eye, and quivering lip, a second more had met their chastisement; but Bridget's beseeching gesture once more prevailed. Quietly turning from her persecutor, Martha descended the ladder. 'Good-morning, Miss Perky,' waved Mr. Evelyn abstractedly, as though his voice mechanically embodied his opinion in a name expressive of the little upstart, pecking at him from the deck.

'That horrid woman!' cried Bridget.

A quick nod and frown from Mr. Evelyn stopped what further she would have said.

A slight smile overspread the prisoner's face; but it soon faded into a look of anxious sadness. It mattered not to her whether the coast was beautiful or barren; whether the landscape was rendered vital by the upward wreathing of the blue smoke from pleasant homesteads; or whether its desolate grandeur was made more dreary by the long blank masonry of penal life.

She started as from a dream when the boat jerked against the jetty. A ghastly pallor struck her every feature as she stepped ashore. For an instant she covered her face; then, gradually withdrawing her hands, the Maida Gwynnham of olden days discovered herself in the unabated dignity of that upraised head, and in the strength of purpose outshining from the purple depths of those undimmed eyes.

A strength of purpose that even now was to be tried; and if the trial, surprising an unguarded post, be victorious for a season, who shall exult?

She was prepared to confront the hardships of convict existence. She was prepared for taunts, for jibes, for suspicions, for enemies, and felt that she could face them; but she was not prepared to meet any of these as they were now about to assail her.

## CHAPTER XVII. THE INITIATION -- WITHOUT.

THE cab was waiting for them at the ferry.

'Get up on the box, Martha. Coachman, help her.'

But she had mounted ere the driver could proffer his assistance.

'A likesome un,' winked the man to Mr. Evelyn. 'You've always got your eye-tooth about ye, sir.'

'Now begins my public martyrdom. Now shall I feel the blighting breath of scorn,' thought Maida. 'Would God that it would smite me down at once!'

With an eye of impatient curiosity she viewed this new sphere of future suffering looming in the distance. She longed to hasten it, but with the longing of one that craves to know the worst. She longed to meet the first eye that should witness her disgrace. She longed to hear the first wold that should break the fearful silence of this strange phase of life, but with the desire of one who yearns to learn her fate.

She was soon satisfied.

The coachman, a good-tempered, ruddy-faced old man, looking at her full of wonder, jerked a sentence from the

side of his ample mouth.

'Got in a good berth, young 'ooman -- that you has!'

The familiarity of this congratulation was worse than scorn, and Maida involuntarily shuddered.

'Your hair's a-grow'd nicely.'

He seemed mystified at Maida's tacit disapproval.

'The women likes a bit o' gossip general,' he muttered. A bright thought occurred to him.

'She don't hear me for them rattling wheels. Your hair's a-grow'd butiful, my dear,' he repeated, with a more sidelong and emphatic jerk.

'Worse than three days in the dark cells!' thought Maida.

'You feels queer like, my dear, don't ye?' he persevered, seeing she had turned very pale. 'Never mind! I knows ezac'ly what you feels. You fancies all the folks will stare at ye, so you feels sheepy-like. No such thing, my dear. They sees hundreds of you every day. They won't take no more notice of ye than if you was a leg of mutton. I'm a man, my dear.'

Here Maida ventured to peep at him, and perceived she had mistaken rough kindness for brutal officiousness, and her better sense accepted the civility, so honestly offered.

The old man seemed pleased, and went on to say:

'I'm a man, my dear: yet when I fust came out of Tench with the gang, blast me if I wasn't nigh to fent. Thinks I, every mother's son on 'em 'll be gaping at me. No such thing, my dear; nobody tootk no more notice on me than if I'd been a brisket o' beef. Lots on us is just equal to none on us. Now you feels like me; but there's no call for it. Cheer up! says I. It's fine out here; worth a while to get out any how. Ah! ah! ha!'

Tench and gang were Greek to Maida; yet she fancied they referred to prison days, and that her commiserator was or had been a convict. She wished to ask, but, judging by her own sensibility, feared the question might be offensive; so she merely replied:

'Thank you.'

'Kindly welcome, my dear. A-h! you'll get on fine. You don't seem like to get into trouble very often. Them what takes a drop gets oftenest into trouble out here -- and home too, I'm thinking' (he added thoughtfully). 'Anything that way, my dear? Now keep heart; don't ye mind: they won't look at ye no more than a loin o' lamb.'

A party of ladies passed.

'There now, did 'em gape? Look over yonder; d'ye see that fine dressed 'ooman? She 'm Government. I remember bringing her in from Anson. That gentleman there, what pretends to be -- he's convict, came in last load after I; so you've got fine company. The girls marry like mad out here.' Maida could bear no more; her brain grew dizzy; she grasped the rail on her side of the dicky, and the man's arm on the other.

'That's right, my dear; 'old tight. I loves to purtect ye. Old Hawkins is known out here; he's been a Government man, and knows all about it. 'Old on, you'm queer like.'



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Mr. Evelyn called from the cab:

'Hawkins, I'll thank you not to talk with my woman.'

'All right, sir.'

The vehicle suddenly stopped.

"Old on, my dear. I wants to speak to the master.'

Off jumped the old man, popping his bright face into the cab. He whispered:

'The 'ooman takes on uncommon; she'm nigh to fent; never seed sich; more acute than most on 'em. She'll drop off the box any minute; excoose me, but 'tisin't safe there.'

'Shall she come inside, Bridget? do you object?'

Bridget looked as much as to say, 'Is it likely I should?'

'Here, my dear, you goes in there 'long with the quality.'

Maida hesitated, but only for an instant. Her overloaded heart could not brook the weight of importunate kindness Hawkins would heap upon it.

'That's right, my dear; keep a good face on't. You're nothing to them mor'n a fillet of veal,' winked Hawkins.

Hawkins had been a butcher, and from the dead or live stock of his former trade he drew his not overflattering similes. Glancing her thanks at him, she sank into a corner, and the grateful relief induced another, still more potent, still more needed.

She burst into tears.

That was enough for Bridget. It was a very Bochim within that coach.

Following the impulse of her spirit, Bridget's hand had unconsciously worked its way from under her shawl, and found a resting-place on Maida's, where it lay so lightly, withal so significantly, that it gave the prisoner to understand more by one of its thrills than I could write, or you could read, in an hour. Suddenly remembering her uncle's presence, and peculiar strictness with convicts, she withdrew her hand, turning her head, at the same time, to meet the dread frown of reproof she expected; but Mr. Evelyn was watching the race-running trees with an interest rarely displayed by sober middle-aged men; his fingers were tapping on the glass, instead of motioning displeasure to her, and Bridget was very glad to escape the tokens of an incipient scolding.

'Oh, these blessed tears! but for them I should have gone wild. Since I left England I have only once experienced their power,' said Maida, after a while.

'Do you feel better now, Martha?' asked Bridget, ready to cease crying directly it suited her for whom she wept.

'Yes, thank you, I am greatly refreshed.'

Uncle Ev, being anxious to prevent another scene, asked Maida if she had any question she would like to ask.

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'I thank you, none, but shall be glad of your permission to drop my present name.'

'Oh yes; any name you prefer will answer my purpose; to the Comptroller-General you must remain Martha Grylls. What do you wish to call yourself?'

'Maida Gwynnham.'

Mr. Evelyn's opinion was not discernible on his face, but Miss D'Urban's shone in every dimple of her blooming cheeks.

'I'm so glad! Lucy said so! Won't she be pleased uncle?'

'Lucy Grenlow?' earnestly gasped Maida.

Mr. Evelyn saw that his dignity was at stake; so wisely lost no time in granting a permission that was evidently not about to be sought.

'You can explain to Gwynnham where she is going Bridget. Maida, my niece, Miss D'Urban, will talk to you.'

'We heard of -- of you from a nice little thing' Mr. Evelyn frowned -- 'our housemaid, I mean,' stammered Bridget, correcting herself.

'Lucy Grenlow?'

'Yes; it seems she has been counting the very hours to your release, and she reckoned you would be ready to-day.'

'Dear child!' adding slowly, as if in thought, 'she needs a protector.'

Bridget knew this would not agree with her uncle. She turned towards him half timidly. The trees were racing again: perhaps he was betting on them; certainly he was too busy to notice either of his companions.

'Here we are,' cried Bridget, as they drove into sight of the Lodge, Macquarie Street.

With a pardonable vanity, Lucy had decked herself out in her Sunday attire. It would be such a glory to surprise Maida, who only knew her in prison clothes. She had on a neat blue mousseline de laine gown; a smart white apron the everlasting knitted collar, fastened with an old bow of Miss D'Urban's; and a jaunty little cap, trimmed with pink tarlatan, set off the whole most becomingly.

She was standing at the door, awaiting the expected arrival; but no sooner did she espy Maida through the cab window than she darted into the house, just as a child which, in the coyness of its delight, runs to hide from a pleasure it has been anticipating. Not all the rings at the door-bell could bring Lucy back from her retreat behind the staircase recess.

'Well, Maida, it seems you must go to Lucy, since she will not come to you. Poor girl! I wonder her little brain has not addled by this: she has been in a state of excitement all to-day. This way, Maida; down those stairs, and turn to your left,' pointed Bridget.

Maida was on the last stair, when Lucy sprang into her arms. Great joy was in that meeting -- as great as though the dramatis personae had been ladies, perhaps greater -- they being captives in the captives' land.

There was a rap at the parlour door, and with a smiling face, and after a brisk curtsey, Lucy entered.

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'What time will you have tea, please, mem — sir?'

Without waiting for answer, she continued:

'Please, sir, may I cook a chop for Maida? It'll be a bit of a treat. She's dreadful tired, and wearisome all over.'

'Yes, and whilst you are about it, cook a couple for us. We have had no dinner, you know, and three chops make no more trouble than one, eh?'

'Lor', no, sir, nothing's no trouble; but I thought, sir, to do Maida's right away now; she's faintish. You shall have yours nice and hot, done separate.'

The events of the day had given Lucy a dash of the champion and heroine. Last evening she would as soon have committed murder as have allowed anyone the preference to the master. When she brought in the tea equipage, a dark circle round her eyes told of tears, and she seemed ready for another cry.

'Well, Lucy, did Maida enjoy her chop and tea?' asked Bridget.

Lucy burst out — 'No, mem; she tried for to eat it, and then when I went for to answer the door, I met Rover running out with it, the nasty brute! Lor, mem, I can't go for to tell the master, but I'd as soon see a lady doing of dirty work as she — she'm so grand like — without going for to mean it.'

It was indeed doleful work in the kitchen. Lucy remembered her first cup of tea and slice of white bread and butter, and what angels' food she had thought that meal. She recollected what a paradise the kitchen had appeared in her sight after the dreary scenes of prison — Millbank, the voyage, and the Anson. She remembered the first moment of comparative freedom when, set down to a cheerful tete-a-tete with her fellow-servant, she had almost forgotten that she was still a prisoner. She had looked forward to go through all these pleasant surprises again with her friend, and in the warmth of her affection she had determined that, if the kitchen had been a paradise to her, it should be the third heaven to Maida.

Everything was set with scrupulous neatness. No relic of Janet's filthy administration offended the eye: all was snug. The little oaken round table, the small brown teapot, the dear old willow-pattern plates, and blue cups and saucers bore a decidedly English air: the white loaf, the pat of butter, were almost objects of reverence. No convict heart long estranged from such sights, could be proof against so many accumulated comforts.

But Maida Gwynnham was not a convict in heart, though crushed by convict scorn — though dragged by convict chains. In compassion to Lucy she tried to reciprocate the almost infantile joy of her blithe companion. She tried to smile between each of her apostrophes, glad that they followed each other too quickly to allow of a reply, for reply Maida could not make; her soul was full to overflowing, full of such varied emotions that, had they appeared on paper, they would have appeared a list of contrarities.

Absorbed in apparent reverie, Mr. Evelyn sat in his armchair. Emmeline and Bridget from time to time glanced at him to see if his thoughts were dispersing sufficiently for them to open a conversation with him; but no, Uncle Ev was not in a mood to be disturbed. There was a contraction of his brow that they, well understood, for when that sign of the starfish appeared on his forehead, it was a sure token that his mind was not at home to the public. Both the girls were speculating on what might be the result of the rather sudden appearance of the starfish, when the timepiece warned for nine. Uncle Ev started up, chair and all, and came down with a bounce at the table; then, drawing himself into it by the arms of the chair he had brought behind him, he smoothed the cloth as though smoothing away a difficulty, and uttered the monosyllabic command:

'Prayers.'

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Bridget placed the family Bible before him.

'Ring the bell.'

'We are here, Uncle Ev,' gently suggested Emmeline.

'I know it, my dear — ring the bell Bridget.'

A ray of delight crossed Emmeline's face as she heard the ting—a—tong of the bell, and she met Bridget's inquiring expression with such a smile as one could fancy an angel would give, when it had borne a message of glad tidings to some forlorn sinner.

Lucy appeared in obedience to the summons.

'Prayers,' repeated Mr. Evelyn, without raising his eyes.

'The young ladies is here, sir,' said Lucy, naturally supposing that since her young mistresses sat at the back of her master they had escaped his notice.

'Come to prayers; you, Gwynnham, and Robert,' nodded Mr. Evelyn.

She stared; why, what next? and left the room to proclaim the news in the kitchen, almost stumbling over the stairs in her eagerness to do so. 'There! we's to go in to devotions all in honour of you. I've only been in three times since I've been here, and that was when the master was out of the way, and Parson Evelyn called us in; he don't mind kneeling down along with we, but the master says he won't have no such hypocritical doings.'

When they were seated in the parlour, Mr. Evelyn chose the advice given in the third chapter of Colossians, and before kneeling down, he expounded, not the Scripture, which was too clear to need explanations, but his own intentions:

'I mean, Maida, Lucy, and Robert, to commence with you as I have not lately commenced with any convict. I mean to try you, and if you deceive me, as others have done, I vow in the sight of the Lord I will never kneel with a prisoner again. Do not flatter yourselves that I am prompted to this concession by anything I have heard in your favour; for you have to work for my good opinion. I permit you to join our family prayers as a last trial at an experiment which I have hitherto found unsuccessful, and not as a reward to any character which you may have brought with you. I never heed reports either for or against prisoners whom I receive from Government.'

Maida lingered at the door at the conclusion of the prayer.

'No, not to—night, Maida; you can go to bed now. I will talk with you early to—morrow morning.'

She retired, and seeking Lucy, asked her — 'Does Mr. — what is his name?'

'The master,' replied Lucy, with delicious simplicity. 'I s'pose that's the language out here — so I says it.'

Maida faintly smiled, and continued:

'Does the master generally give orders the first night? — perhaps it is from kindness that he tells me to go to bed?'

'Sure to be to you! he always tells us straight away everything, and frightens us dreadful the very first night — he did me and Janet — and so he did Peg Walters and Susan.'

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Maida returned to the parlour.

'If you please, sir, if it is in consideration to me that you do not give orders now, perhaps I may say that it would be a relief to me to receive your commands to-night.'

'Very well; come in — that will do — shut the door, and stand where you are.'

Bridget managed to stretch before her uncle to reach the snuffers; then, turning towards him, she syllabled:

'Let — her — sit — down — do.'

'No, Bridget,' responded Mr. Evelyn aloud.

The prisoner stood erect against the door, her face directed as though looking at her master, but her eyes fixed upon the ground, as much from weariness as from inward depression; the long, dark lash drooped over them so heavily that they had no choice but to bend earthwards, unless they would close entirely. Just as she stood there she would have made a beautiful variation of the Greek Slave, had Hiram Powers wanted to vary his immortal marble.

Mr. Evelyn was well accustomed to his present labour; nevertheless, there was an audible quaver in his voice that a prolonged 'Ahem!' did not wholly remedy when he commenced:

'Is your health good, Gwynnham?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Your mistress is from home; until her return you will attend to Miss D'Urban's commands. You are to be general servant, and must be ready to assist wherever you are wanted. Your wages will be seven pounds a year, and I shall add a sovereign yearly for seven years, so long as you deserve it. What is your sentence?'

'For life.'

'A lifer! That is against your future prospects, but not so far as I am concerned.'

Several shorter 'ahems!' not unlike grunts.

'You do not seem satisfied, Maida Gwynnham. Speak out — have you been led to expect higher wages?'

'Thank you, I am more than satisfied.'

There was a bitterness in her voice that did not escape Mr.

Evelyn; he stored it by for after-consideration.

'Can you cook?'

Maida's lip quivered. No answer came.

Bridget put herself before her uncle, and whispered:

'Shall I question her? I know how to.'

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Bridget also knew that she would manage it more delicately.

'No, Bridget! I am as much pained in thus talking to the woman as you and she are in listening. Is it not kinder to let her know at once what she is to expect as a convict servant, than to foster hopes which would mock her when she reached her kitchen? Your show of feeling is more distasteful to her than ever my remarks may be. I am not slow to perceive that Maida is endowed with a nature which will double all the sufferings inflicted by law, to say nothing of her former position.'

Maida aroused herself; it was enough for her to know that another was being rebuked on her account. In almost a cheerful voice she exclaimed:

'I pray of you, Miss D'Urban, not to vex yourself. It is kind of Mr. Evelyn -- I mean master to speak so plainly. I am tired to-night, but to-morrow, and I trust ever after, I shall appreciate his directions.'

Her whole manner changed; and, assuming the expression of an interested hearer, she awaited Mr. Evelyn's pleasure, which was to repeat in an undisturbed tone:

'Can you cook?'

'Not much, sir; I have not had practice, but I will do my best.'

'Can you wash?'

'A little; we washed for the officers on the Anson.'

'Are you a good needlewoman?'

'I am considered so. I worked a great deal for Miss Perkins.'

'Are you willing to be told? Your mistress will soon make a good servant of you, if you are obedient and willing.'

'I will try, Mr. Evelyn.'

'Sir, if you please.'

'I will try, sir.'

'Do you drink? -- or rather, were you given to liquor before your sentence?'

No answer, but a flush on her cheek.

'Do you drink? -- I choose to be answered, Maida.'

Bridget was making her way out of the room, looking more flushed than Maida, and far more miserable.

'Come back, Bridget; do not be foolish.'

It was a happy interruption; the colour had time to fade from Maida's cheek, and we suppose Uncle Ev forgot he had not been answered, for he passed on.

'Have you any children?'

'I'm not married.'

'No consequence. Have you any children in the Queen's Orphan School?'

Had this question been delayed a week, Maida would have known the dire necessity of putting it alike to married and unmarried, and that it is one as commonly asked by colonial employers as the everyday inquiries, Can you cook? or, Can you scrub? As it was, she imagined the question an insult directed immediately at herself, and her eye burned, indignant, at the cruelty. What might have been the result of the fire kindling within, and darting from beneath her dark lashes, those best can tell who are learned in prison discipline. That the result was harmless we are glad to report. The imploring gaze of the trembling Bridget for a third time averted an impending evil, and Maida smothered her rebellious spirit in an abrupt 'No.' She dared venture no more.

'Now, Maida, I have done with you. I make a plan of saying at once all of a disagreeable nature; it will be your own fault if ever you hear of such subjects again. Do make me your friend, and take in good part those precautionary rules which may bear the aspect of privations. Doubtless Lucy has already told you of them. We never allow our women to go out alone, until such time as they have proved their trustworthiness beyond the fear that they may return intoxicated, or be taken by the constable to the watchhouse. Our next rule is equally painful, but not so important. We make our servants wear their Government clothes until their first quarter's wages become due. We have been cheated into this rule by prisoners who, having begged an advance in order to put off their badge of shame, have spent their money at the tavern, and then given Government the benefit of the next three months' labour.

'One word more, Maida. Let me warn you not to renew acquaintance with any of your shipmates, except Lucy. Much of the after-misery of female prisoners arises from a continuance of the objectionable intercourse which, not being able to escape, they learn to delight in during their voyage and probation. You will need moral courage to remain steadfast in this turning from your former associates, for you will everywhere meet them, and everywhere be open to their importunities. They will invite you to spree with them whenever occasion offers, but --'

A smile of a very undefinable description forced its way to Maida's lip, and looking on that smile, Mr. Evelyn felt obliged to stop his exhortation, notwithstanding his dislike to succumb to a prisoner's feelings. He proceeded to tell Maida that she was to go into Miss Evelyn's room at seven o'clock to light the fire, the mornings still being too cold for an invalid; and that, having lighted the fire, she was to attend to any order given her by Miss Evelyn, and finally go down and prepare the breakfast.

On leaving the parlour, Maida tried to drop an orthodox convict curtsy, but that curtsy being a failure, it was followed by one of Miss Perkins's aversions.

We have followed Maida from the bar of justice to the scene of her expatriation. The family has retired to rest; one by one its members have dropped to pleasant sleep. But Emmeline is wakeful. She is not aware that she has a companion in unrest in the occupant of the attic -- one who, although morning has overtaken midnight, still stands at her little window, gazing out on what sky is visible through the narrow aperture. The candle has burnt out, therefore her figure is indistinct; but the dim light of heaven falls on her face, and discovers the features of Maida Gwynnham -- features enigmatic in their calmness of expression, and singularly disregarding of wearied Nature's demands in the unabating vigil which absorbs them into death-like quiescence.

Save during the involuntary solitude of the cells, or the few moments snatched from the surveillance of the officers and the company of her shipmates, Maida has not been alone since she left England. When, therefore, she closes her bedroom-door upon herself, she can scarcely believe she is unwatched, nor that from some unseen corner a voice will not command her to unbolt the door she has dared to lock.

She recalls her interview with Mr. Evelyn; she thinks of what is expected from her, and thinks and thinks till thought becomes impalpable, and merges into one deep reverie.

## CHAPTER XVIII. THE INITIATION. -- WITHIN.

TO Emmeline it was nothing new to expect a strange face. It was not that expectation, therefore, which prevented her from sleeping, but an undefined sense of painful interest in the person who was to appear. She lay awake the greater part of the night, waiting for seven o'clock in the morning. No wonder, then, that when that hour arrived it found her asleep. Having been warned to do so, Maida entered Miss Evelyn's room without knocking at the door. Perceiving that her young mistress slept, she hesitated to advance; but the lovely countenance reposing before her attracted her to a nearer contemplation of the peaceful features, whose transitory quiver (induced by suffering) but showed to more advantage the calm into which they speedily relapsed.

Emmeline moved her lips, and Maida, thinking she was about to awake, turned quickly away; but her own name, murmured softly and dreamily, reached her ear, and again she looked towards the bed.

'Poor Maida -- would God -- poor -- poor -- Maida!'

Emmeline opened her eyes with the last word, and slightly started as she saw a woman of graceful carriage, bearing a faggot on her arm, and all the necessaries for fire-lighting and grate-cleaning in her hand, swiftly but stealthily cross the room, and kneel before the hearth. It needed not a second look to tell her this woman was the object of her dream, nor a second look to attest Lucy's statement that Maida was no common prisoner. It was with curious though mournful interest that Miss Evelyn watched her in this her first act of servitude; and yet she half doubted whether it could be her first, so adroitly and unhesitatingly did she begin and pursue her task. There was no token of helplessness and inability, by show of which, with pardonable vanity, superior convicts often intend their employers to discover that they have not been brought up to menial labour. As though she had been trained to it from her earliest years, Maida leant over the bars and plied the brush with unremitting energy, until the grate shone more brightly than it had done for a long time; and then, having lighted the fire, and swept up the dust and ashes, she gathered her apparatus together, and arose as quietly and unconcernedly, as would any housemaid who had done her duty, and nothing beyond.

Miss Evelyn hastily closed her eyes, hoping Maida would not know she had been awake; but the movement was not so rapid as to escape Maida. Though she did not turn towards Emmeline, she perceived it, and appreciated the delicate kindness. But, proud and determined as she had entered, she could not leave the room without expressing her altered mood in a voluntary offer of her service. She stopped at the door, and asked, in a voice so gentle that no one would suppose it was a murderess who spoke:

'Can I do anything for you before I go downstairs?'

Miss Evelyn wanted nothing, but hearing in Maida's voiced desire to help her, she said she should like to be raised a little higher, and have her pillows beaten up. The request was a proof of confidence that touched the prisoner to the quick; it told her that, whatever indignities might elsewhere be heaped upon her, she would have none to fear from the gentle being whose head, now resting on her shoulder, dreaded no contamination from convict garments. She was again preparing to leave the room, when Emmeline, unable to refrain, stretched her long, thin hand to her, and exclaimed:

'Maida, this hand will, perhaps, ere long, be stiff in death; take it now, as a pledge of proffered friendship. Yes -- do not start; distinctions made in life are useless on a bed of sickness. I repeat, take it as a pledge of friendship, which I offer from my heart.'



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Maida did not approach, and the hand dropped heavily upon the bed; emaciated as it was, it was too heavy for self-support. It rested a moment, and then again presented itself, accompanied by a look that overcame Maida's unwillingness to yield. Those who know Maida will not be surprised that, having once taken the proffered pledge, she clasped it with a fervency that satisfied Emmeline's most sanguine anticipation, but still she did not speak.

'You started at that word friendship, Maida; perhaps you thought I used it on the impulse of feeling, but no. I have lived in this country nearly all my life, and have found that one of the grand miseries of the convicts is having no friend to speak to, no friend to confide in; therefore, when I see one of my own sex newly arrived, I feel deeply for her, knowing what she will have to go through, even in a family where prisoners are kindly treated, and I long to become her friend, so that, when her heart is overwhelmed within, she may feel she has some one to whom to speak her grief. I must be your friend, Maida; something tells me I must be.'

She laid her other hand over Maida's (which still held hers in a warm though tremulous grasp), and fixed an eye so tender, so beseeching on her, that Maida had much ado to hide the emotion which struggled in her bosom. But she did hide it, and that so well that Emmeline heard no trace of it in the calm voice that answered:

'Should I need a confidential adviser or friend, Miss Evelyn, I shall, with gratitude, avail myself of your kindness; but I am averse to promises — they have painful weight with me, forcing me against my inclination. Were I to give the promise, I should fulfil it with as much reluctance as I should with unwillingness break it. It is not in my nature to confide in anyone.'

'As I said before, you will find everyone in this house kind to you, and disposed to assist your views for the future; but when your thoughts revert to home, and the chair by the chimney-corner — when your heart is rent by misgivings, or wounded by reproach — you will want something more than that; it is that something I desire to be. I do not wish to draw a promise from you. What is your sentence?'

'Life.'

'A lifer! Oh, Maida! then you have not even the small hope that buoys up other hearts; you need a better friend than I.'

'Amount of sentence is nothing to me; from the absence of all endearing ties or pleasant memories, locality is a matter of indifference. I have no one in England to wish me back — no one for whom I would wish to return; a despised creature I was sent thence, and a despised creature I remain here; ignominy is stamped upon me, and would be the same in any place. If I might fix on one spot beyond another, the one in which my heart would become the most hardened, and my mind the most forgetful of the past, should be the object of my choice.'

'Have you no parents — no relatives, Maida?'

'I do not know; I fear to know.'

An expression of anguish here compressed Maida's features, and pain was visible in the shudder that caused her to clasp her hand upon her bosom.

'Oh, my father! Poor old man! was that letter his death?' burst from her lips ere she could control her words and bid the grief hide unuttered in her heart.

Though ignorant of Maida's history, Emmeline read the tale of sorrow revealed in that bitter cry. She knew that, the broad world over, heart answers to heart, and that the parent of the prisoner standing by her bed had passed through all the tortures that had stricken other parents to their graves; and if not sunk already, his life must be a prolonged dying, to which the article of death itself would be a state most blissful. A broken-hearted parent is one

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of the many untold calamities following the prisoner's career.

The door was pushed open, and Lucy, unbidden, advanced. Not heeding Miss Evelyn, she exclaimed, with a frightened air:

'Oh, Maida, I'm in such a way; 'tis nigh to eight, and there's a sight to do yet; if the master comes down, and finds it ain't done, he'll be after you, and then there'll be a row, and p'raps trouble, if he finds I've been and done them door-steps for you.' (Dropping a curtsey to Emmeline.) 'I beg pardons, mem. I forgot you was here; you see, mem, I feels in a twitter like, 'cause it's her first day out, and the master'll be sharp on her.'

'And you feel responsible?' asked Emmeline, smiling.

Lucy glanced at Maida to see how she took this, to her delight there was no expression of annoyance on the latter's face.

'Why you see, mem, I told the master of she, and natural like I feels anxious. I wouldn't have them fall out for no amount.'

'Come then, Lucy, I will try to do you credit,' said Maida.

Emmeline gazed at her in surprise; she could not believe that the almost playful tone belonged to the person who a few minutes since had spoken so bitterly.

'Miss Evelyn, I thank you sincerely for your noble intentions, and regret that mine should disappoint them; you will not judge harshly of one who from long disuse has forgotten how to apply confidence or value a friend.'

'Lor', mem, don't she curtsey beautiful! Admiration was in every line of Lucy's face as she turned to Emmeline for co-appreciation of Maida's exit. 'Lor', mem, you should have seen her 'mong our women on the Anson,; she was as grand as Mrs. Bowden any day, and she was grand enough to frighten the wits out of the best of us,' lowering her voice.

'Lor', mem, now she's come I'm half afeared how she'll get on with the master. She ain't like one of us, to take it all natural, and the master won't put up with nothing from no one. Says he last night: "If Maida's a wise woman, she'll bear what she's got to bear, and if she don't, she must be made to;" and that's what she'll never do. I always says she likes bearing of things, but if she don't choose, nobody can make her to; not even Mrs. Bowden.'

Mr. Evelyn's voice on the stairs sent Lucy fluttering away in search of Maida, who to her delight stood in the dining-room enveloped in a cloud of dust sufficient to smother all dread of the master's anger. Order speedily followed Maida's steps, and the breakfast was duly laid before Mr. Evelyn appeared.

'That's Bob,' said Lucy, as Maida glanced at a man washing at the pump-trough.

'Welcome, missus,' answered Sanders, turning with towel in hand and dripping face. 'I guess we shan't always be kept waiting after this fashion -- a fellow wants his breakfast when he's been out with his hosses -- howsomever, glad to see you clear of Gover'ment for a while; I'm hearty glad it's you come instead of a free woman. The mistress vowed she'd get a migrate next time; 'taint many things I'm not willing for, but them free folks is one that I can't 'bide. I likes to have my equals about me; them as won't take airs because they've never been Gover'ment; they'm always getting trouble on a feller, the mothers be.'

'What is this trouble I am always hearing of, Lucy?' asked Maida, anxious to turn the subject.

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'Oh, everything is trouble out here that happens to prisoners.'

'Hang trouble! when a feller wants his breakfast and can't get it; that's trouble enough, ain't it, Madda?' said Bob; 'all I hopes is that you won't know it no more than that, for when trouble begins on a feller, the devil if it don't stick to him like mud. Come now, don't feel shy, Madda, or what's you called, we shall be fine together soon; we don't look to what our mates have done worse than we. Gover'ment mark's the same on all on us, whether it's for murder or lifting; and hang the Gover'ment clothes — a hansom lass is an hansom lass, whether she've got on brown or blue; and the 'air ain't a consideration, seeing he grows in no time.'

And Bob, by way of illustration, drew his fingers through his long, greasy hair.

So the three sat down together, and the meal passed. Bob thought he had never devoured a better, for he had not only 'ate his wittels in peace,' but had been able to hear the sound of his voice in enlightening his new mate on a few points of penal etiquette.

'An't he handsome, Maida?' exclaimed Lucy, as he walked off.

Lucy arose, deceived into a hope that Maida had enjoyed not only her breakfast, but her introduction to Bob; the affectionate little being had forgotten to enjoy hers in the full occupation of watching the effect made by the two on each other. Now she listened to Bob with Maida's ears but with none of her feelings; then gazed at Maida with Bob's eyes. The mutual impression would have been very startling could she have stamped it. Bob was a great person in her sight. He had nearly won his ticket, and his significant hints of what he meant to do when he really possessed it, had not been lost upon her.

A month drags wearily by, and Bridget uses the announcement of her Aunt Evelyn and Uncle Herbert's return as a plea for begging Uncle Ev to relax his rule for only just once, and let Maida put off at any rate her convict gown and cap: but Uncle Ev is inexorable; he abides to the letter of his declared intentions; he abates not his strict discipline one whit for all his niece's rhetoric.

Emmeline knows him of old, and expects no concession. Bridget gets warm, and charges the executors of the law with partiality; and on an explanation being demanded she says that they pretend to have no respect of persons in dealing punishments, whereas they do very exceedingly favour the person of the poor above that of the rich, in awarding him only pain for the same crime of which torture is the award to his more wealthy brother. Explanation second being demanded, Miss D'Urban asks if there can be any comparison between the amount of suffering endured by the two classes undergoing the same sentence of transportation. She instances Maida who, over and above the usual miseries of convict life, has loss of caste, subordination to her inferiors, association with coarse and uneducated minds, and daily, hourly degradation in a hundred points which are neither degrading nor annoying to Bob and Lucy whose moral caste alone is lowered by transportation; who in submitting to overseers and officers, have no fine feelings to be wounded; who, being born to serve and labour with their hands, would as soon, if well treated, work in Australia as in England, could they only forget the little fact that they 'did not come free to the colony;' who, being born to take their meals in kitchens with numberless Sams and Johns, Betsies and Annes, have memories no further taunting in convict association than such as the recollection of bygone Sams and Betsies may bring.

She then instances the case of one Quicke, who had been a physician. She repeats to Uncle Ev all she has heard Uncle Herbert tell of his sufferings on the peninsula, where he got punished for not being able to do as much hard work as men who had been used to manual labour from their infancy; where heartbroken wretchedness was visited as sullenness, and what small show of manly pride he dared manifest was called refractoriness; he outstayed all his contemporaries, because he couldn't be recommended as a servant in any particular capacity, and because most kindly owners disliked to have their fallen equals beneath them; until degraded to a lower standard than those who were his inferiors by birth and education, he implored Uncle Herbert, who met him in the cells, to

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try to find him a situation when he was again eligible, adding, with tears in his eyes, 'I will do anything but cook; that I'm afraid I cannot undertake.' She then asks Uncle Ev if the punishment given to this Quicke is not a thousand times worse than that which (for the same offence) is given to his neighbour, though a beautiful equality of sentence is intended in passing fourteen years on each. After the fashion of Tennyson's Princess, and by way of embellishing the effect she doubts not she has made, Miss D'Urban here taps her kid-slippered foot several times on the carpet.

'Bravo, Miss D'Urban! you plead as one who has her subject at heart, if not her ideas at command. I shall recommend your appearing in propri% person% before the home Government. I am sure those zeal-flushed cheeks will victimize the whole set, and make them grant your request, even to the half of their convict-punishing prerogative.'

'No, no; if I go to anyone, I'll go straight to the Queen. I don't believe she knows half that's done in her name. I got that from Dr. Lamb's servant. The other day I was talking to her, and she said something about the Queen, for which I reprimanded her; when she, poor thing, afraid, I suppose, that I should find some means of informing her gracious Majesty, drew a very long, humble face, and said, "I haven't nothing to say against the Queen. I dare say she's a very proper young lady. Very like there's lots of mischief put off on her that she don't know nothing about. Please, miss, not for to think that I've particular ill-will to her." By-the-by, Uncle Ev, speaking of her Majesty, don't you think it's rather odd to make the prisoners keep her birthday? They must celebrate it with a very bad grace.'

'It's rather a cram, certainly: but it's curious how, with a few exceptions, repugnance to the object of the feast is swallowed in the feast itself. Extra rations cover multitude of animosities for the time. An arch fellow once asked me for a fig to smoke her Majesty's birthday. On giving him a few pence, he put his finger pipe-like to his mouth, and said, mock reverently, "May she never want a feller to smoke her, neither here or hereafter!" Another convict, of whom I asked what share he had taken in the birthday festivities, said, with a sly twinkle in his eye, "I'd got the ringing of the bells — a jolly sweat 'twas of it. It would have made me rather bilious if it had gone down alone, but I drove it down with other victuals, so I believe it digested; at any rate, it hasn't done no further harm than make me feel mawkish hereabout," laying his hand on his stomach. Well. Miss Bridget, away, and make your appeal. Her Majesty's ear is ever ready to bend to the cry of distress; and, notwithstanding all the convicts in this hemisphere, every colonist is ready to pray, God save the Queen! I am inclined to say, with Dr. Lamb's servant, I don't think she knows all that is done in her name, especially to poor Tasmania and Tasmania's convicts. But who is this?'

'Dear old Em, positively, come down alone! How did you manage it? by crawling on all-fours?' exclaimed Bridget.

'No, I have had good assistance' (smiling towards Maida, who, on perceiving her master and Miss D'Urban, had relinquished her hold of Miss Evelyn). 'Don't you leave me until I am settled in my chair.'

But Uncle Ev, having kissed his niece, left the room, and Bridget followed him, fancying Maida would like to be a few moments with Emmeline.

During the month which initiated her into Mr. Evelyn's service, Maida perceived that she had foes as well as friends in the household. The nursemaid had conceived a hatred for her from the very first, the cause of which hatred was twofold — jealousy and disappointment. In the simplicity of her heart, Lucy had confided to Rachel her hope that a match might come off between the hero of the stables and the heroine of the kitchen. This confided hope, together with Lucy's unbounded praise of her friend, inspired Rachel with jealousy, while the rigidity with which Maida enforced her master's rule, that nurse should not go into the kitchen after tea hour, disappointed her of meeting Robert, and supping in his company. In Janet's time, the chief rigidity had been in the constant watch kept for seizing opportunities for infringing this rule. The altered state of things Rachel set down

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to design on the part of Maida, who, she declared, had a purpose in view in thus shutting her out. In prejudicing Charlie's mind, she found one means of venting her jealous spite. Under her tuition, the little fellow's aversion had increased into decided animosity. Taught to associate Maida's name with murders and other horrors, he quite trembled if she happened to come into the nursery after dark. The story of a shocking murder, just perpetrated in Hobart Town, served his nurse for an illustration of what would be his, or his infant sister's fate, if either offended that wicked woman; and Charlie was made to learn the illustration by heart, until he firmly believed that Maida would make as little of tossing him into the water—but as of submerging a surplus kitten. On the contrary, Maida had so gained baby's heart, that the little creature no sooner found the nursery guard—gate unlatched than she would toddle out with, 'Baby go see Midda,' and slide down stair after stair, until she reached the kitchen. Bridget often was privy to such an escape, knowing how Maida delighted in the child; and Uncle Ev himself, for all his scolding of careless Rachel, was once known to be guilty of not stopping baby from going any further when he caught her on the stairs. He excused himself by dwelling on the danger of frightening her when in the act of stair—sliding.

All interested in Maida's welfare rather dreaded Mrs. Evelyn's return. All had a misgiving that they would not agree; though could such a misgiving have reached Mrs. Evelyn, it would have astonished her beyond measure, for she prided herself on being an excellent convict—mistress; the excellence of convict—mistressism, according to her, commencing with liberality in rations, and ending with an unwillingness to get prisoners into trouble. Little etceteras — such as not reminding them of their fallen estate, remembering that they had other feelings beside those of hunger and bodily pain — did not enter into her list of necessities. To the abject notions of most convicts she was a good mistress, for they reckoned by negatives after the primary considerations of appetite had been satisfied. A free servant, in recounting to a new—comer the advantages of her situation, mentions all that is therein done for her: 'Mistress allows me this, and gives me that; she lets me go there,' etc., etc. But the convict hireling tells his fellows — not all that his mistress does for him, but all that she does not do. In trying to cheer his mate, he says, 'This is a better place than you'll get again; she don't get us into trouble; she don't send us for punishment; she don't do this; she don't do that.'

But Emmeline and Bridget felt that Maida would require something beyond such animal kindness. In the desire of favourably impressing her aunt, Bridget wrote several eulogiums on Maida and Maida's skill, intermingling them with a few expressions of pity for her fate, and hope that she would be happy in Uncle Ev's family. Mrs. Evelyn wrote back her delight that the new woman did her work well, and hoped of all things that she kept the door—steps clean. 'As to pitying her, my dear,' she said, 'there is no need of that waste of ink and paper. These Government people can't have much feeling, or they wouldn't be in their present position; what little feeling they once had, you may depend is gone now. I have been surrounded with them all my life, and never met with any who cared for being prisoners. With regard to her being happy, why shouldn't she be, my dear? I give my people plenty to eat, and I don't get them into trouble half as much as they deserve in fact, when I meet with a man or a woman that suits me I'd rather put up with anything than get him or her into trouble, for fear I should not be able to hire them back. P.S. — I hope, my dear, you are not making Maida think too much of what she does.'

Mrs. Evelyn had not arrived half an hour before she expressed a wish to see the new woman.

'My dear, I wonder she did not bring up the tray on purpose to let me see her.'

'Perhaps, she would rather meet you first alone, aunt,' explained Bridget.

'Oh no, my dear, there's not the least occasion for that; I don't object to speaking to her before you. Ring the bell.'

Uncle Ev walked out of the room; Uncle Herbert had not yet entered.

'Let the new woman come up, Lucy; I can talk to her a little while I take my chop — it will save me time.'

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Maida entered.

'Oh yes, she's a nice height — perhaps I shall turn you into a housemaid — and your name is — ?'

'Maida Gwynnham.'

'That will do very well; I like to have pretty names about me. Maida sounds pretty; the other name's rather glumpy. What are you for?'

'I was sent out for murder.'

'Patience me! my dear; whatever was your uncle thinking of when he hired this woman? One would think her good looks bewitched him; he forgets that we may get killed in cold blood.' (To Maida) 'Does the master know what you are for?'

'He has never spoken to me on the subject.'

'How very thoughtless of him! I like him to bring home bad prisoners because they are always clever when they are very bad; but I never bargained to have a murderer about my heels. The idea is not at all pleasant — convicts are so apt to repeat the crime for which they have been sentenced;' (turning again to her nieces) 'there was Louisa Ferris, my dears, she tried to cut off her husband's head at home, and out here she tried to cut off young Turnbull's head, or something very like it. What sort of a temper is she, Bridget?'

Bridget did not answer; Mrs. Evelyn, with a gesture of annoyance, turned to Maida with:

'Well, you are here, and I suppose must stay; but you must mind what you are about; I shall watch your temper, and if I see anything in it I don't like, I shall send you back to Government, which is the proper place for such as you; we don't like having dangerous people about us any more than the English do. You'll be very foolish if you don't behave well, for this is an excellent situation, and the master and myself are very kind to our people. You'll have plenty of food — butter too, which you wouldn't get everywhere — it's eighteen-pence a pound out here, even in summer, and that's too much for convicts to eat — but we don't mind; we expect our Government men and women to work, therefore we feed them well. You find she does very well in the house, don't you, my dear?'

'Yes, aunt,' murmured Bridget.

'What were you at home? You seem to be superior — a dressmaker, or something in that way, I suppose.'

'I have made dresses, ma'am.'

'Have you lived in service before?'

'No.'

'Who did you murder? Your illegitimate child, I suppose; that's generally the way.'

Maida replied not; a line of supreme contempt curled her lip.

'I don't ask for curiosity; but because I should like to know on what particular point to be on my guard; for instance, I should feel especially awkward if you had murdered a former mistress.'

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'These are impertinent questions, and you have no right to put such to me! I shall not answer you, my mistress though you be!' Maida moved towards the door.

'There, now!' cried Mrs. Evelyn; 'have I not need to fear? If the creature can toss herself into a rage just for a trifle, what would she not do for more than a trifle? Charlie, run and tell her to come back; I've no notion of letting her off.'

'And yet, no; perhaps she'll strike you. Really papa shouldn't put one's life in danger in this cool manner.'

'She's such a horrid creature, mamma: Rachel, and Lucy, and me, and baby is all drefful afraid of her.'

'My Charlie, you mustn't call anything horrid creature; 't isn't a pretty word for a little boy to say; but you must keep out of that woman's way. It's a pity we talk so before him; 'twill frighten him, poor dear.'

When Maida closed the door, another on the opposite side opened on her, and she stood face to face with Mr. Herbert Evelyn. Both instantly recognised each other.

'Martha Grylls! Is it possible? Are you, then, the Maida Gwynnham that my niece has been writing so much about?'

He laid his hand on her shoulder; the touch thrilled through her, and, as if by supernatural power, surrounded her with images of the past. Drooping so as to disengage herself from Mr. Herbert's hand, she rushed to the kitchen.

To us who have followed Maida from prison to Tasmania, it would seem strange that Mr. Herbert had never mentioned her to his daughter, or that during the month of his absence no inadvertency had revealed to Emmeline Maida's previous knowledge of her father; nor to Maida, that the Mr. Evelyn of England and the Mr. Herbert of the Lodge were one and the same person. But when we remember that Mr. Evelyn was summoned by Bridget to his daughter just after he had assisted Mr. Gwynnham from the platform to his house, and from his house had resigned him to the charge of an old servant, who arrived by the next train to meet and return with his master — when we recollect that by Emmeline's side it was likely he should forget all but the exertions necessary to bear her from England ere autumn merged into winter — we cease to wonder that the family had not become acquainted with the name of Martha Grylls before Lucy recommended the person who bore it to Uncle Ev's attention. And as for the second wonder, we must content ourselves with recollecting that we should never have wondered it at all had the discovery not taken place. Maida had often questioned whether her young mistress might not be related to the clergyman who had visited her in prison; her quiet yet earnest manner of speaking often reminded her of him, and she fancied she could trace a likeness: but the fear of having her question answered affirmatively prevented her seeking a reply. Much as she respected the memory of that kind friend, she felt averse to meeting him, as, according to her view of things, pain only could accrue from such an interview; and also she wished to have no claim, beyond that which she should win, on the gentle invalid, whom she already regarded with a feeling that anyone but herself would have called love.

### **CHAPTER XIX. BEING ONE ABOUT BRIDGET.**

MR. WALKDEN had been in the dining-parlour with Uncle Ev for more than an hour, when the latter left the room, and running upstairs, told Bridget she was wanted below. She tried to find out who wanted her, but Uncle Ev wouldn't satisfy her; nevertheless he made her promise to appease his curiosity when she returned.

'Oh! it's Mr. Walkden,' she exclaimed, on entering the parlour; 'and Uncle Ev told me that I was wanted.'

'And may not Mr. Walkden want you?' replied that gentleman, with a peculiarity of emphasis which Bridget could

not but notice, though she did not marvel at it.

'Oh, yes! if 'tisin't about frescoes; I've been afraid of them ever since I first saw you.'

'Then you remember when you first met me, Miss D'Urban?'

'I've reason to,' said Bridget archly.

'And so have I,' answered Mr. Walkden, in the same peculiar tone.

Then neither knew what to say, and Mr. Walkden arose and shut the door; on which Bridget said:

'Oh! do you like the door shut? it is so warm.'

Mr. Walkden went over to the window to see the state of the weather, and Bridget supposed he was very short-sighted, since he could not see the sky from where he sat. It only took a half-moment to look out, but that half-moment seemed long to Bridget, who began to feel uncomfortable lest Uncle Ev had been playing her a trick, so she followed Mr. Walkden and asked:

'Did you want me? Oh! I forgot; perhaps you are going to take me to see the Queen's Orphan School, I shall like that amazingly;' and a gleam of pleasure lighted her countenance.

'I will take you wherever you wish to go, Miss D'Urban.'

'You good, kind man! suppose I say I wish to go back to England --- what then? You see with me it is necessary to think twice before you speak once.'

'That has already been done; and I repeat, if you will go with me I will take you to whatever place you name.'

'Whatever does he mean!' thought Bridget: but only for an instant: simpleton as she was, she could not doubt his meaning; her simple thoughts said to her, in words of plain language:

'He wants to marry you.'

Those who know Bridget D'Urban only as the light-hearted, merry-singing girl, will be astonished to hear how calm she became directly her thoughts said those simple words to her; with what womanly composure she listened to Mr. Walkden's proposal; and with what modest dignity she told him that she had left England on purpose to nurse her cousin, and could not, therefore, pledge herself to anyone; nor could all that Mr. Walkden urged make her say more.

Bridget hoped Uncle Ev knew nothing about it; she blushed as she met him on the stairs, but he only pinched up her face, and kissed her, as he had done a hundred times before, so she fancied her secret was safe.

'Where's Walkden?' he called after her, in a careless tone, when she had passed him.

'Gone,' she answered as carelessly; and that little monosyllable told Uncle Ev the result of the interview.

Mrs. Evelyn was very disappointed when she heard it; for whilst her niece had been with Mr. Walkden, she had employed herself in planning a wedding-breakfast, and had just finished laying the last corner-dish on the ideal table, when Uncle Ev told her that he guessed his friend's suit had been rejected.



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The morning's event had taken no one by surprise but Bridget herself. Mr. Walkden had frequented the house too often to leave the supposition on any one's mind that he came without purpose. Had Emmeline been a less-condemned invalid, his great attentions to her might have created the suspicion that she was the magnet; but as the case lay, it would have been an injustice to her, as well as to Mr. Walkden, to suppose that his intentions towards her were more than such as any kind friend of a family would show to a sick member. Bridget, therefore, was the only accountable reason for his almost daily visits.

'Em darling, I've got something to tell you in the evening, I can't tell you before, because I don't want you to see me whilst I am talking,' said she to Emmeline.

When the evening came she nestled down by her cousin's sofa, and laying her face in her two hands, her eyes peeped out from them with a more quiet brightness than usual.

'Em, I wish you knew what I've got to tell you: I'm longing to talk all about it, but it's horrid to begin. I am happy and vexed, and vexed and happy. I'm vexed because I'm afraid I've vexed somebody, and happy because — '

A luxuriously rosy tinting of her cheek, discernible through the twilight, was left to reveal the tale of her happiness.

'Did Mr. Walkden appear very grieved, Bridget?'

'Oh, then you know! How ever could you?'

'I have known it a long time.'

'How? he never told you before he spoke to me?' and without waiting for an answer she jumped up, saying:

'How very disagreeable! what a rude man! I dare say he asked everybody's leave; and now Uncle Ev will be teasing me.'

'Nobody told me, Bridget dear; but I have a pair of steadier eyes than you. Yours have been dancing about, lighting too slightly on every object to discover a fact embodied so plainly in one as to attract the notice of us all.'

'Ah! but, perhaps, if I'd liked Mr. Walkden, I should have noticed. I never once thought about caring for him.'

'That is just because you are Bridget.'

'What you say explains a great many things that I remember. It's so horrid that things only get explained after they have happened, and make one look stupid.'

'For instance: when a gentleman gives a young lady, with whom he is desperately in love, a choice rose that he has bought on purpose for her, and when she takes it, and says, after thanking him for it without a single comprehending blush, "Ah! it's a pity, because we have so many in the garden" — it would be far better if explained to the young lady that he had purchased the rose with silver, and presented it with painful hope — eh, Miss D'Urban?' exclaimed Uncle Ev's sly voice over her shoulder.

'You horrid Uncle Ev, do go along with you; I don't want anyone to be desperately in love with me unless I am with him, for I hate vexing anyone. I was delighted at first to think I had a real offer, the same as I have often heard of; but now I'm sorry, and feel as if I ought to marry him because he loves me so. I'm — ' and Bridget burst into tears.

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To this moment she had disguised deeply-pained feeling beneath a playful manner; but now, too severely tested, she gave way. Uncle Ev was truly sorry he had grieved her: so, kissing her tenderly, he left the two girls to talk out those feelings which it is best for girlish sympathies to exchange.

'I think it is very wrong to make a jest of these subjects — I do, indeed,' said Bridget, resuming her old corner by Emmeline. 'I'm fond of fun, but can never see what fun there can be in grieving others; and if these things are true, there must be grief on one side of the question.'

The cousins had a long and serious conversation on the proposal made by Mr. Walkden, at the close of which Bridget felt more composed, under the conviction that, sorry as she was for the gentleman, duty did not call her to engage herself to him for the sole purpose of what she termed 'unvexing' him.

The fervour of the benison wherewith Uncle Herbert blessed his niece that night made her very happy, she felt that the only fact she had concealed of that day's event was guessed and silently appreciated by him:

'Yea and she shall be blessed!' he ejaculated, as he heard her light steps retreating for the night.

### CHAPTER XX. THE POST-OFFICE.

ON the day in which Maida was sent out under Bridget's guardianship to exchange her first quarter's wages for articles of clothing, the latter called at the general post-office to inquire when the next vessel would sail for England. Outside the office hung a placard giving a long list of prisoners for whom unclaimed letters lay within. Whilst waiting for her young mistress, Maida cast her eye part of the way through the list, when her attention was arrested by the name of Martha Grylls. She hastened to demand the letter; the clerk handed her one, saying:

'Sixteen pence to pay before you touch it.'

'I have not so much; do let me look at the address.'

'Martha Grylls, Post-Office, Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land. To be left until inquired for; or if not inquired for to be returned to,' etc., etc. — she read in characters that she well knew were from Norwell's pen.

'I am Mr. Evelyn's servant, cannot you trust me?'

'Mr. Evelyn's or not, we never trust prisoners, one day here, the next in trouble.'

'Miss D'Urban, will you lend me sixteen pence? there is a packet for me within and I can't get it, having spent all my money.'

'I could, but I dare not, uncle would be so angry, and yet if I know how you spend it, I don't see how he could object.'

'No, thank you kindly, I'll not risk his displeasure for you; with your permission I'll get the person at the shop to take back one pair of stockings; that will just give me the sum I require.'

To the shop they went, Bridget waiting without whilst Maida tried to accomplish her desire; but the attendant was obstinate: he pronounced it against rule to receive goods once removed from the counter. Maida pleaded in a way she would not have condescended to, but for so dear an object.

'What does the woman request of thee, James?' asked the master of the shop, who belonged to the Society of

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Friends, and whose benevolent character, education, and gentlemanlike deportment made him an honour to the excellent fraternity he headed. James informed Mr. Washington.

'Thou sayest truly that thou mayest not swerve from my rule; but thou canst not forbid my doing so, canst thou, James?'

And with a benignant smile he gave Maida one shilling and fourpence, saying:

'It is a small service, but I am well pleased to do it for thee. I hope thy letter will bring thee good news of thy home.'

Maida was leaving the shop, when she felt a gentle tap on her arm.

Mr. Washington stood behind her; he placed a little packet in her hand, at the same time whispering:

'It did not occur to me that these stockings may be necessary to thee.'

As though understanding Maida's look, he smiled:

'Receive it as a gift, or pay for it at thy convenience; I do not bind thee either to thanks or payment. Fare—thee—well.'

He had retired before she could reply.

It were needless to relate the trepidation with which Maida tore open the letter when she reached her kitchen; she trembled with eager suspense until she had read every word therein contained.

'My precious Maida!' she repeated slowly to herself, after she had read it through. 'How does he reckon preciousness? If by endurance the amount must have increased since that time we sat together in the park, when he told me I was his precious Maida; then I had suffered nothing but those pleasant pangs they call first love. Now, ah! but he too has suffered, for he says: "I have not known a moment's happiness since you left." I am glad to hear it for your sake, Norwell; for mine I would it were otherwise — what is this?'

She picked up a bank-note for five pounds that fell from the envelope.

She gazed at it, and then with a gesture of disgust thrust it into the fire. At that instant Rachel entered the kitchen. She had perceived the action during the moment she lingered outside the door, and now seeing Maida hastily put a letter into her bosom, she guessed there must be a secret going on, and determined to make the most of what she had seen, in serving her malicious purpose.

Assuming a very grieved countenance, she immediately proceeded to inform her mistress that she sadly feared the woman Gwynnham was not as honest as folk believed her to be; she recounted the story of the burning of the banknote, and then requested leave just to ask if it was likely that her going into the kitchen should frighten an honest body into burning honest money.

Mrs. Evelyn thought it most unlikely, and Rachel said, to her poor way of thinking, it was more suspicious still that Maida had bought neither cap, gown, nor bonnet, but had spent her money only in such things as would be useful to her anywhere, which seemed exactly as though she expected trouble, for, of course, nobody would buy finery if they were sure of being sent to cage in a few days. Don't that look as if she'd done something she expected to be punished for?

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But Mrs. Evelyn did not think so; she said Maida was so odd a creature, it was as difficult to know what she would not do as what she would do.

'However,' she added, 'I'll have no such freaks played by my convicts: they shall wear prison as long as I choose, but not a moment longer. I don't choose to see the dismal brown about me after the first quarter.'

'Certainly not, ma'am; they's most as bad to see as to wear, especially for the quality.'

'Go down and tell the woman to come up and bring her purchases with her. It's all a part of the same impertinence.'

'It's after tea, ma'am; am I to go into the kitchen?' asked Rachel, innocently demure.

'How else can you call her? -- don't pretend.'

With a glow of malicious delight off glided Rachel to send up Maida, and 'to get a trifle out of Bob's company' during her absence.

'What do you mean by not spending your money properly?' demanded the mistress, ere Maida had time to close the door.

'I have bought very proper articles, ma'am; however, you shall judge for yourself,' answered Maida quietly.

But three pairs of stockings, a pair of stays, a pair of boots, slippers, and a few yards of calico did not convince Mrs. Evelyn. She persisted that there should be print for a gown and some lace, with ribbons for caps. Maida said the money would not spread any further; on which her mistress declared that all those articles should be exchanged for others more suiting to her taste -- she was not going to be annoyed by prison dress after she had secured the first quarter's work. She asked Maida where her senses had strayed, that she should suppose her inner garments were of any benefit to her mistress.

Maida did not reply: after a dead pause Mrs. Evelyn burst out:

'And where did you get that bank-note which you burnt when you heard Rachel coming?'

'It came in a letter I received from England.'

'You must let me see that letter, or I shan't believe you; it would never do for a respectable house to harbour a thief, for whom the constable may even now be searching. It is certain you haven't taken it from us, because we have not lost any money, but how do I know that you did not steal it from the shop this afternoon?'

'Because I tell you to the contrary,' replied Maida haughtily.

Mrs. Evelyn gave a little quick, amused laugh.

'Who is it from, then?'

'From one of whom I'd rather not speak.'

Another little laugh.

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'You really are a very odd woman, Maida, but I must be satisfied when I wish to know anything about my prisoners.'

'Well, then, you shall know!' cried Maida bitterly. 'It is from the man who ruined me, body and soul. He sent me money which I flung in the fire since I could not fling it back to him.'

'No! did you really? well, you are a very odd creature; why, I would have kept it for you until you wanted another dress.'

'I would wear no garment of its buying, except a shroud; and yet, no! not even that; death should not be so scandalized by me.'

Mrs. Evelyn gave another little laugh, and said between her teeth:

'Dear, dear!'

'Do you still wish to see the letter?'

'Oh yes, certainly; I have said so, and mean to be obeyed.'

Maida drew it from her bosom, and approaching the hearth, threw it into the fire, exclaiming:

'There let it burn! It could only fool me if I kept it.'

'You wicked woman! Is that the way you spite me; what will you do next?' cried her mistress.

Maida laid her hand on the poker, she only wanted to push the letter further into the grate; but the movement appearing to be a reply to the question, 'What will you do next?' alarmed Mrs. Evelyn, and suggested the prudence of leaving the matter for her husband's inspection; she quickly dismissed Maida, with the promise that the master should look into the suspicious business of the bank-note. The master, however, never did.

Open-mouthed listened Robert and Lucy to the tragedy of the bank-note. The grandeur of the acc betrayed the latter into an infinity of 'Lors!' while Robert appeared almost choked by it: he uttered 'Crinky me! the woman's a shingle short, or somethin' like it, to go stuffin' the fire with such blessed trade, and I so near my ticket too. I say, you see'd it with your own eyes, Rachel?'

'I didn't with anybody else's, anyhow,' replied she.

'Lor!' murmured Lucy.

Robert was ill close consultation with his greasy locks which flopped and reflopped through and over his fingers.

'You seed nothin' harder than paper go in?' he at last asked.

The words had scarcely dropped from his lips, ere all three wonderers started as if by simultaneous impulse, and falling on their knees before the grate, began grubbing in the ashes, as diggers in a gold creek. In which act Maida caught them when she descended from the parlour. They simultaneously arose.

Rachel glided off to the nursery. Lucy stood in mute worship of the money-burner. Robert again appealed to his locks, and advised by them, muttered:

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'I say, Madda, 'twas a darned shabby trick to go and fume that there money which would 'most have sote a feller up when he'd got his ticket.'

'I had too much respect for you, Sanders, to offer you such money; it would have brought a curse with it, had it been a hundred times as much I should have destroyed it.'

'Lor would she!' admired Lucy.

Bob pulled his hair, and muttering, 'A shingle short or somethin' like it,' departed to mourn the five pounds in the company of his only comforters, the horses.

Maida waited for an official inquiry into her conduct, and doubted not she should be severely punished; but none was made that night, and not until the next evening was she summoned to her master's presence. Mr. Evelyn stood with his back to the fire: she saw at a glance that he was ruffled.

'Maida, what is this I hear? your mistress tells me that you have been very provoking about your clothes, and insists on your changing them.'

Maida explained, and then said:

'Having received no commands, sir, I was not aware that the money was not mine to spend as I pleased; I might certainly have laid it out differently, but not knowing that this dress annoyed anyone, save myself, I preferred to buy necessary articles.'

'Humph! then you should have explained to your mistress, and not have been so insolent.'

'I am aware of no insolence about the clothes, sir: if the mistress complains of any I am willing to apologize.'

'Then she does complain. If you have not been insolent about the clothes, you must have been on some other subject. Insolence is punishable by convict law.'

'She made inquiries which I considered impertinent, and I answered her accordingly, sir.'

All the fire-irons fell clattering down: the noise of their downfall fully accounted for the absence of the verbal storm Maida expected to follow her last speech.

When Mr. Evelyn had replaced them, he asked:

'What did you say, Maida?'

'Then I am to procure the things my mistress wishes me to have?'

'Certainly, if you have the means.'

'I have not, sir, but by changing my former purchases.'

'Bother the purchases; no, you must wear your brown for the next quarter; if you don't want to spare yourself the pain that I would fain spare you, wear it on, certainly. I shall not advance the money, for I clearly see that trouble will be the end of such constant hot water with the mistress.'

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'I can wear the dress to the end of my sentence, sir, and that is to the end of my life,' said Maida, calmly folding her arms upon her breast; 'and as for that trouble which is always being sounded in my ears, I cannot conceive of what it consists worse than that which I already endure, standing at your wash-tub is no worse than standing at another; picking oakum is much the same as picking over potatoes.'

'The cells, my woman, give a rather undesirable opportunity for thought.'

'Ah, there you are correct, sir; the sinner's misery must be aggravated by a prolonged retrospection of the past!'

'A retrospection I have no wish to enforce, Gwynnham. As to trouble being no worse than your present state, you must remember each sentence lengthens the period you have to serve to obtain your ticket-of-leave.'

'Death will grant me that before I am prepared to receive it, I fear, sir!'

'Nevertheless, I hope to see you a T.L. in life. Death can give you conditional pardon, of the conditions of which pardon you hear enough from Mr. Herbert. That'll do — go, I will arrange matters with your mistress, but let me have no more such rows, for I assure you I'm weary of them.'

After prayers, Mr. Herbert requested her to follow him into his study.

'You have had a letter from home, Maida?' he commenced.

'I have, sir.'

'I should much like to know if you have news from your father.'

'None, sir. I fear he is dead, or he would have found means to send me the pardon I so earnestly besought: there can be no doubt he received my letter.'

'He received it, I know that, Maida.'

'And it killed him! it is nearly three years since I left England: it were unfilial to wish him still to live, and yet that he is gone I cannot bear to think. The suspense is horrible!' she exclaimed, after she had been in silent calculation of the possibility of his being yet alive.

'Maida, I can give you a short account of him. I have long sought an opportunity to tell you.'

'Is he dead?' gasped Maida.

'Ah, that I cannot say; my impression is that he must have died shortly after I saw him.'

'Oh! don't, don't, don't say so: he must live to give me one word of pardon.'

'My poor girl, I think with you it were better he should in death leave a grief of which death only could release him.'

'No, no — yes, yes — Oh! which do I mean?' she cried.

'Yes, better,' repeated Mr. Herbert.

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'But then I gave him the grief, I gave him the death. Do not try to make my guilt appear less, it would not comfort me; through all your kindness might urge I should still see the haunting image of my father murdered by me.'

'Maida, I could not lessen the fact, if I dared to try God forbid that I should try. I would have you view every circumstance of your career in the unpalliated light of truth, and God, of His infinite mercy, grant that the same light which shows you your sin may show you your Saviour.'

Had Maida reflected a moment, she might have known that Mr. Herbert was not the one to extenuate her crime in this respect.

'What have you to tell me, sir?' asked Maida drearily.

Mr. Herbert placed a chair, and insisted on her taking it; then standing before the fire, he fixed a penetrating look on her.

'You have had an exciting day, Maida: a letter from home is always exciting. Would you rather wait until tomorrow to hear about your father? I warn you beforehand it will give you pain.'

Ever ready to ward off danger from her soul's secret, had Maida been less absorbed in mental contemplation of her father, she would have been alarmed at the peculiar emphasis laid on the word exciting, in connection with Norwell's letter: now, raising her eyes heavily, she merely said, in the same dreary voice:

'Go on, sir.'

'You will remember, then, that your letter was sent so as to reach your father the day after your departure, in order to preclude the possibility of an interview, which we judged would be a trial too severe for his strength. I felt sure that, too late or not, he would make an attempt to see you. When I found on inquiry that your going had been delayed for a day, I felt as certain that the attempt would be successful, for starting by the first train after the receipt of your letter, I reckoned he would arrive at the station just as your company was setting off. Acting on the belief that he would come, I went to the station to lend any assistance which might be necessary, and to shield him from any publicity into which his parental feelings might hurry him. Thank God I went! His train was a few moments late, therefore the one which was to convey your party was in readiness to start simultaneously with the arrival of the other; consequently, when Mr. Gwynnham alighted, your train had just proceeded on its way.'

Mr. Herbert then recounted the scene given in the sixth chapter of this book, and Maida bowed lower and lower in her misery, until a few moans alone told that she was conscious of it.

'Here, here is the pain!' she at last said, pressing her hand upon her heart, and rocking herself to and fro. 'Here is the pain — large, cold, and heavy, too cold for tears.'

She sat a few moments longer in dreary silence, then turning suddenly to Mr. Herbert, she asked:

'Sir, why did you tell me all this; where was the cruel necessity?'

'It is right you should know it, Maida.'

'Yes, to fill up the heaped measure of my wretchedness!' she exclaimed with bitterness.

'And better that you should hear it from me than suddenly from the lips of a stranger some day,' continued Mr. Herbert, without noticing her interruption.



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'Ah yes, forgive me! forgive, Mr. Evelyn! all is confusion within me. I know not what to say, or think, or feel: I am only sensible of an indescribable weight of misery. I dread the moment when I shall awake to a clear understanding of my guilt and a full abhorrence of myself.'

Mr. Herbert only gave a look full of pity and kindness in answer to this appeal, a look that said he had nothing to forgive.

'If it would be any comfort to you I would write to England, and try to ascertain that which you desire to learn of your father.'

Maida shook her head.

'No, it could not be better; it could not be worse.'

There was something in her voice and incoherent manner that touched Mr. Herbert's heart, and yet he felt thankful that she showed her misery; he always entertained more hope of her when she bent beneath her fate, than when she stood boldly to bear it.

'Wait an instant, Maida; I shall return presently,' said Mr. Herbert, leaving the room.

'Clara, I wish you'd give me a glass of port for that poor Maida: she is so overcome with what I have said to her, that I fear she may faint.'

'Ah, I am glad you have been scolding her, she has behaved shamefully to me; however, she shall have the wine, and yet, don't you fear it may give her a relish for it? these creatures so readily regain their taste for drink.'

'I do not fear,' replied Mr. Herbert, taking the glass from his sister-in-law.

'Mind, I don't grudge it,' she called after him.

Maida sipped the wine and then set the glass on the table, unconscious that she had done either the one or the other.

'Should you like me to pray with you, Maida?'

'If you like, sir, anything you please.'

'A few moments then — '

And Mr. Herbert was not more; he commended her to God in a short earnest supplication; after which he took her hand, and shaking it kindly, said:

'Maida, remember I am not your judge, but your pastor and friend. I thank God for having placed you under my care; speak to me or to my daughter freely of all you suffer in mind or body.'

'Thank you, sir, and thank you for your kind attentions to my poor — poor — '

She could not get out the word 'father.'

'God reward you for it, when He punishes me for my aggravated crimes,' she stammered.

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'No thanks are due, Maida: would that I had been able to be of more service to him! I wished to keep him at my lodging, but the faithful old servant who traced him from the station to my residence said he had received express orders to fetch his master, who, on leaving home, appears to have arranged for some catastrophe; old Roberts would answer no questions. I shall never forget the grasp he gave my hand, as he exclaimed, the tears flowing down his cheeks:

"The Lord Almighty bless you! it isn't because I am close I don't tell you all about it, but because, when my master told me he was called on immediate business to —, he said, 'Roberts, follow me by the next train; my last words to you are, neither ask nor answer any questions about me or mine; many may be put to you, but remember my last words to you, Answer none.'" With that old Roberts took my other hand and said, "Sir, as I grasp your hand now so he grasped mine, repeating, 'Mind! keep your wretched master's secret.' So how can I break my faith with him? but, sir, I will tell you this much, that the rich have their sorrows as well as the poor; when sorrow falls on the rich man's house it falls heavier than elsewhere. Maybe in spite."

'He would not so much as give me your father's address. I gave him mine, and he promised to let me hear the result of the attack, but never did; and shortly after, being called to my own sick child, I had no opportunity to seek further information. I should, however, have made opportunity had I thought of meeting again with you. I might though, and ought to have known that it was likely I should find her here!' continued Mr. Evelyn reproachfully to himself.

The unexpected mention of the old familiar servant overcame the obduracy of Maida's grief; it assumed a gentler aspect, and when Mr. Herbert again turned towards her she was weeping. He therefore continued to talk in a low, soothing tone, to give her a longer opportunity to shed those tears he knew would cease directly they were noticed, but his care was useless; that instant Mrs. Evelyn entered and said, in her quick matter-of-fact voice:

'Oh, my dear' (she called everybody 'my dear'), 'I thought, whilst lecturing this woman, you might forget the time, 'tis past eleven; ah, there you are, Gwynnham I am glad to see you crying — I must send you to Mr. Herbert when I want you lectured to some purpose, I see!'

And she gave one of her little quick, short laughs, as if lecturing and being lectured were one of the most natural incidents of convict life.

Maida was hastily quitting the room: her mistress called her back, and said in the same tone:

'Well now, I forgive you, so you need not cry any more; only mind, next time, really, I must send you to the brickfields; good-night, you can take some supper.'

Then, as the door closed, she turned to her brother-in-law, with another little laugh:

'Whenever these creatures get a row with one person they are sure to have a turn all round; there's you, George, and myself, have been at her to-day; poor thing! I'm afraid she won't like to take any supper, as it is so late. I'll just go and see.'

'I would advise you not to, Clara; she will not care to eat, she is in such deep sorrow.'

'Oh, I'm very glad of that. I dare say she won't behave so again; I hope she won't, for really I can't bear sending the poor creatures for punishment; when they can get a little sorrow at home it's much more convenient. Hark! that's baby crying, I must go; good-night, my dear.'

And off went the comfortable, happy wife, mother, and mistress; she tucked her babe back to the warm, snug bed into which she speedily followed, and in dream went through her routine of house duties. Once in her sleep, she

broke out into one of her little laughs, and dreamily explained:

'Oh, it's only Maida; she's so odd!'

Off went the wretched daughter, prisoner, and servant and after feverish tossings to and fro, she fell into a restless slumber from which, with a deep, deep sigh, a dream of home awoke her, and she heart-brokenly exclaimed:

'My father, oh, my father!'

## CHAPTER XXI. A.T.L.

NOT more brilliant the dreams of the youth who, aspiring to the honours of majority, beholds for the first time the decisive 'Esquire' in enchanting relief upon a letter addressed to himself, than were the anticipations of Robert Sanders when he awoke one morning and found himself a ticket-of-leave. For some time he had vented his impatience for the glorious day in sundry contortions of his pen on numberless bits of paper. Though the contortions varied to every dimension of R's and S's, and T's and L's the result was invariably the same, as Lucy discovered after she had spelled out a multitude of Robert Sanders T.L.'s, from the confusion of characters presented to her; for Robert, not satisfied with merely seeing how his future title looked, found great delight in hearing how it sounded.

'Lor', Bob, can't you write nothing else?' asked Lucy tired of evoking her fellow-servant's name from the chaotic penmanship.

'What else is there to write? A feller likes to see what's before 'un.'

And Robert's eye, falling on the array of T.L.'s scattered on the table, saw a great deal more before him in those letters than we should if we looked until doomsday, unless --- but never mind. A little nettled at Lucy's want of discernment, Robert set to work on a second edition, which he perused in silent enjoyment, until she began to suspect that the scrawling and reading was some necessary process preparatory to the mysteries of T.L.-ism, and her respect for it accordingly increased. In a subdued voice she inquired:

'Do 'e want 'em read over again, Bob?'

Robert only gave a sidewise shake of his locks, which almost annihilated Lucy with its expressiveness; it said most plainly, 'Oh, go along -- you ain't worthy;' and more than ever she believed the process one sacred to T.L.-ism.

But Robert had made other preparations. For more than twelve months his wages had disappeared without any visible reason in the form of wearing apparel. His mistress often inveighed against his shabby dress; but, willing as he was in most things, he evinced no readiness to spend his money; though, in answer to Mrs. Evelyn's scoldings, his 'Very good, ma'am,' 'All right, ma'am,' were as full of willingness as ever. Once, when she declared she would not have him wear that greasy hat any longer, he so far ventured on T.L.-ism as to reply:

'Very like the master would fetch an old hat for the present.'

Where all his money had gone was a question that disturbed Mr. Evelyn; he felt uneasy lest it had been appropriated to an evil purpose. Robert's anxiety, on the contrary, was only to conceal, or rather to parry an answer to the question until his time arrived. He was creating a grand surprise for the whole family, and had, from quarter to quarter, been investing his wages in apparatus for working out this surprise, which was eventually to redound in a burst of admiration on himself. Now he added a gaudy waistcoat to the secret, then a pair of

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second-hand Wellingtons, which, by the help of new soles, had been made to creak an incredible amount of importance. A startling blue cravat was next added to his treasures; and, lastly, he purchased a pot of 'genuine bear's grease' for the due anointing of his anti-convict's pate.

When Robert awoke and perceived that the sun shone no brighter than usual, he felt much aggrieved; he thought it 'a darned shabby trick of the sun to make no difference on Ticket-day, when a feller hardly knew what to do with hisself.'

The robing ceremony, however, soon covered every untoward circumstance.

'Robert Sanders, T.L.!' he ejaculated when, having finished his toilet, he surveyed himself as best he could before the small looking-glass in his room.

He was not disappointed; the sensation created in the kitchen realized his expectations. With slow deliberate creaks he approached the door, then, entering he gave a short, familiar nod.

'Good-morning, gals.'

Lucy stood captivated, and Robert quietly received her admiration as the homage due to T.L.-ism, personified in himself; he applied his dazzling pocket-handkerchief with becoming dignity. Maida's astonishment particularly gratified him; he saw no difference between it and Lucy's adoration; he doubted whether 'Madda could be a shingle short' since she displayed such excellent taste, 'admiring of him in that fashion.' But the parlour was to be the grand scene of triumph. When the prayer bell rang, instead of being the first to obey the summons and to carry in the wooden bench for the servants, Robert lingered and lingered.

'Bob — quick — prayers,' called Lucy over the banisters. She was awe-struck by the answer:

'Can't come for a minute, Loocy.'

All the family was seated, and Mr. Herbert waiting to commence, when creak, creak, creak came Robert. Maida could scarcely repress a smile. Lucy and Rachel exchanged glances of captivation.

'It's the ticket,' whispered the former.

Mrs. Evelyn looked a thousand interrogatory 'My dears?' from her husband to Bridget, from Bridget to the servants, and at last, no one explaining the approaching creak, she exclaimed:

'Why, it must be a thief!'

Sublime and slow, Robert entered, and gave a sidewise nod to the whole room, shaking from his head an overwhelming effect of bergamot and from his waistcoat a strong perfume of boy's love; then, as if he had done for ever with wooden benches, he drew over a chair, and stretching his legs across one corner of it, bent forward over his Bible in a free-and-easy posture. Prayers over, he sent a significant wink to Lucy:

'Now you shall see what a ticket-of-leave can do' — then creaking up to his master, he said:

'Please, sir, I am sorry for to leave you, but I'd be glad if you'd find some one else to look after the hosses.'

'Why, my man, what's gone amiss?' asked Mr. Evelyn.

Bob conferred with his locks.

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'Nothin' as I knows on, sir, howsomever, I'm willin' for to stay to oblige you and the ladies.'

Oh, the chuckling delight with which he accentuated the word oblige!

'No, you have been here two years, and have conducted yourself to my satisfaction, Sanders, if, therefore, you desire to go I would not keep you — you being now eligible for your ticket; but I expect you to give me a reason for thus abrupt notice.'

Robert conferred more seriously with his locks, and not being able to elicit anything better, gave answer in a somewhat crestfallen voice:

'My ticket, sir,' and it conveyed a more cogent reason for leaving than any other he could have assigned, it seemed at once to satisfy his master, who replied quickly and kindly:

'Ah — yes — yes — then you may go this day month.'

Mr. Evelyn knew it would be impossible to try to argue him out of his desire to avail himself of this the only method of exhibiting his partially regained liberty; he knew that not one prisoner in a hundred could withstand the pleasant temptation of choosing a situation for himself when his ticket gave him leave to do so, and he felt sure that to be that one man in a hundred needed more sense than Robert possessed.

On his way to the Comptroller's office, Robert bought a yard or two of ribbon; on his return he cut it into two parts, and threw the one half to Lucy and the other to Maida:

'There, gals, is a bit of ribbin for you.'

He then threw himself back into a chair as though it were the easiest thing in the world to get tickets of leave and buy ribbon.

'Bless my 'art, I forgot Ratchel; I s'pose the gal 'll be wantin' somethin',' he suddenly said.

Lucy had taken her ribbon and carefully folded it back in the paper; Maida's portion lay untouched.

'You can give her this, if you please, Sanders. I can thank you for your kindness all the same.'

'No, no, you keeps it, Madda; I want to see 'e in it; a feller likes somethin' to show what's 'appened.'

'Shall I give her mine?' asked Lucy, fearful he might say yes.

'No, no, don't know for that — I'd as soon see you in it as her. You and Madda wear 'em; they'll last while I'm here.'

'Have you gave notice?' cried Lucy, with a little shrill screech of amazement.

'Told 'e I should; what's a feller's ticket for?'

'Lor'!' Lucy looked to see how Maida bore it.

'Come, Madda, take yer ribbin,' said Robert, in a tone of vexation.

'Thank you, Sanders.'

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She took it and set it by, and Robert gave a chuckle of delight.

'Where do you think you shall go to then, Robert?' asked Lucy.

'Maybe I'll sote up for myself — a keb, now.'

And he fell thinking, probably on ways and means, for he suddenly looked up with:

'I say, Madda, do that cove what sends you tin write often?'

Maida bent over her saucepan and asked, in the quietest possible voice:

'What cove, Sanders?'

'Im that send that five pound that you fumed.'

'He will never send me any more money, Sanders.'

But Robert seemed incredulous, and leaving the kitchen he went straight to his master.

'Please, sir, I'd like a recommend if you'd get 'em for me.'

Mr. Evelyn knew well enough what for, but he chose to ask:

'Why, Sanders, are you ill?'

Robert shook his locks sidewise with a knowing shake and muttered, 'Darned ill, that I be.'

'Oh, a recommendation to the Comptroller!' exclaimed Mr. Evelyn, giving a sly smile at Bridget.

Mrs. Evelyn laid down her work and looked pleased anything to do with marriage interested her.

'I'm thinking I'd like a comfortable gal, Madda, now downstairs, she's a bootiful woman — or Loocy I shouldn't mind, but Madda maybe's the best — she's got friends as sends her a lift.'

Mr. Herbert, who sat on the sofa by Emmeline, suggested that Robert should consult his master in private, but Uncle Ev enjoyed the joke too much to monopolize it, and Bob seemed by no means discomfited by the bright eyes that watched him.

'Well, Sanders, I have no objection to recommend you for marriage as far as your steady behaviour goes; but Government will require more than that, or, rather, I shall require more before I can conscientiously sign your recommendation. What are your prospects — how could you maintain a wife?'

'A keb, I'm thinkin', sir. Madda maybe 'll get a lift from her cove again.'

Mr. Evelyn shook his head.

'Or I'm willin' for anythin'.'

'Remember, Sanders, a ticket is more easily lost than gained.'

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'All right, sir, that's just it; I'm thinking a comfortable gal may keep a feller's wits about him. Madda, now, downstairs, I couldn't find nothin' better — she's a sharp hand — maybe you'll speak to her for me.'

'I can do or say nothing until I know how you propose to settle yourself; going from my house with only a quarter's wages in your pocket, how can you marry? When once you have your ticket, you have no claim on Government unless you get into trouble again.'

Robert smoothed his locks in perplexity; he could not see an escape from his difficulty.

'Very good, sir; then there's no help for it; it must bide over for a time.'

'I tell you what I do recommend, Sanders, and that is, that you quietly work on here or elsewhere for a time — a prisoner is in more difficulty after his ticket than before. You have earned it well and honourably: I should indeed be grieved if you lost it, which you surely will if you hurry into temptation.'

'All right, sir, I b'aint in no hurry so long as I gets the gal to wait for me; this is a quiet place, and she don't see many chaps, but — ' what else he might have been going to say, he dismissed with several shakes of his head.

'Which girl do you really want, Robert?' asked his mistress.

'Well, ma'am, I've sote my mind on Madda, but I ain't partial. I wouldn't say no to Loocy, she's a dapper little maid, but Madda would help a feller out of trouble best.'

'What does Maida herself say?' asked Mr. Evelyn, with a grave glance at Bridget.

'Oh, I haven't said nothin' to her. If the master's agreeable to it, 'tain't likely she'll object. I gived her a smart ribbin, and she took to it famous.'

'I advise you to hear what she says before you think any more of it. I have my doubts on the subject.'

'Gals is always agreeable to marryin'; maybe you'd tell Madda you'll recommend us when we've kept company a bit — she won't go against your wishes.'

'I'm afraid she will in this instance,' said Mr. Evelyn drily.

'O darned! I ain't partial, so long as it's a likely gal — there's Loocy, if Madda won't.'

'Or Rachel?' added Mrs. Evelyn, laughing.

'I don't know as to Ratchel,' replied Bob thoughtfully.

'Well, Robert, you must speak to Maida yourself. I would much rather not — but I advise you to try Lucy first.'

'Very good, sir!' and Robert left the room.

'It is well to have two strings to one's bow, Bridget,' said Uncle Ev.

'Oh, uncle, what a curious way of getting married!'

'It is the orthodox way; but I assure you, Miss Bridget, Sanders has exhibited unwonted patience and decorum. To know anything of the woman he is going to marry is generally the last thing a convict thinks of.'

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'Poor Maida!' said Mr. Herbert; 'I wish we could spare her this trial.'

'I only wonder it has been spared so long, Herbert, the sooner it is over the better. I shouldn't like to be in Robert's shoes when he proposes to her.'

When the servants appeared at prayers that evening three parts of Robert's T.L.-ism had disappeared, there was hardly any discoverable in his voice when after prayers he said:

'If your honour won't take it amiss, I'd like to leave to-morrow.'

Bob had now some other reason than his ticket for wishing to leave.

'How now, Sanders! What has happened since the morning?'

'Why, it's darned awkward to bide with a gal what won't say nothin' to. you. I've spoken to her, and she won't.'

'That is, Maida won't, I suppose, Robert?'

'Es, sure; she was very perlithe tho'. I ain't said nothin' to Loocy. I'll let it bide over, maybe when I'm gone Madda I'll think better of it, and your honour could tell her it's the proper thing for her to do.'

'You are not going, Sanders! You must wait your month. Maida will not give it a second thought, she will not annoy you.'

'Dear me, what an odd creature!' said Mrs. Evelyn.

'I'll go without my wages — I'm willin' for to lose 'em,' urged Bob, in a tone in which T.L.-ism was again audible.

'Sanders!' cried Mr. Evelyn.

T.L.-ism vanished instantaneously.

Mr. Evelyn continued in a kinder voice, 'I have your good at heart, Sanders, in keeping you; if you are determined to leave this place, you can quit in a month, in the meantime I will see what can be done for you; many a poor fellow, with intentions as honest as yours at present are, has purposely fallen back into trouble, just to obtain from Government that livelihood which he could not procure elsewhere. And as for your marrying, I will recommend you with pleasure when I can conscientiously do so. I won't have you say anything more to Maida, mind that; either Lucy or Rachel will suit you.'

This satisfied Robert. Restless to turn his ticket to some advantage, he was just in that state to be pleased rather than otherwise with an embargo that made decision less difficult. Mr. Evelyn had foreseen this, and under cover of authority did a real kindness to the poor fellow, who had only been waiting for such an aid. The ticket-of-leave lay in his pocket like a crown-piece in the hand of a child. What's the good of money if it isn't to be spent? says the child. What's the use of a ticket if 'tisn't to be laid out in a few telling articles? says Robert Sanders. Who'll know that he is a T.L. if he doesn't sport a sign-board and a wife?

'Very good, sir. Loocy's dapper; and when a gal's dapper it's as good as money to a feller. I don't know nothin' about Ratchel — Madda takes care that I shan't neither. Thank'e, sir, Loocy then, if you please.'

And flopping his locks, Bob withdrew to lay his ticket at Lucy's feet.



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Lucy received his offer with unfeigned surprise; she had never dreamt of him for herself — the thought would have been profanation.

'Lor', Bob, I thought 'twas Maida!'

'So 'twas; but what's a feller to do when he can't get the gal he wants?'

It was so proper that no one should be chosen whilst Maida was in the way, that Lucy did not feel at all slighted by the question, and without any meant depreciation of Robert's offer, she gave the pat reply:

'Get the one he doesn't want, I suppose.'

The little maiden scarcely knew which most to wonder at — Maida's refusal of Sanders or her own good fortune. In her simple mind were mixed feelings of fear and pleasure — fear, that Maida resigned him on purpose for her; pleasure, that she, Lucy Grenlow, was actually the bride-elect of Robert Sanders, T.L.

Her fear would not let her rest until she had poured it into Maida's ear.

'Lor', Maida, I didn't go for to make him love me; 'twas all out of his own head. I'm afeard it's sore work to you to let him go for my sake. I'll give him up to you at any moment. Ain't he handsome, though, with his fine hair so long and smart?'

And she heaved a tiny sigh, as though she should find it sore work to let him go, even for Maida. But Maida quieted her alarm by saying, that loving Sanders was so novel an idea to her, it would take her all her life to get accustomed to it; therefore, in the meanwhile, she thought Lucy could not do better than make the poor man happy. She then kissed her plump shiny cheek, and added:

'I am very glad to hand you over to some one who will take care of you. I do believe Sanders tries to do well, and means to do better.'

Lucy, mistaking Maida, replied, 'No, he hasn't done nothing so very bad, either.'

Then, understanding from her friend's grieved countenance that she had said wrongly, she apologized:

'I means that by side of other prisoners he isn't so bad he's a decent man, and only — '

'Hush, Lucy! there are no onlies in sin. Remember that, and you will not fall into fresh trouble.'

Trouble, however, was far from the young convict's thoughts. The only drawback to her joy in accepting Robert had been the dread that Maida would break her heart for him. Now she was as happy a passholder as could be found in the island.

'Lor', Maida, fancy me Mrs. Sanders!'

And, late as it was, she flitted off to communicate the pleasant conceit to Rachel, who sat in the nursery, glum solitary, and by far too disconsolate to think of going to bed. The news imparted by the unconscious Lucy by no means softened her glumness, but the former attributed to extreme weariness the gruff ill temper of the retort:

'Coming disturbing of a body at this time — 'most ten o'clock; what odds who he marries? Precious gaby that he is! I only wonder how he ever got out of Tench; and as to his ticket, that he makes such foolgame of, it's nothing but a chance that any fool may have. I wish you'd shut the door after you.'

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'How dreadfully sleepy she must be!' thought Lucy; but sleep was not in Rachel's eyes, for jealousy was in her heart. In the morning Lucy was more sure than ever that tiredness had caused her ill-humour, for now congratulations flowed, honey-like, from her lips. She had been rocked to rest by perturbations of jealousy, and had risen pacified by the determination to supplant Lucy in Sanders's affections, or rather, intentions, for she felt sure that, whatever it might turn out afterwards, at present the match was one of convenience, affection having small or no vote in the matter as far as Robert was concerned. And she was correct. He wanted a wife, whether a particular Lucy or an unparticular Rachel or Anne was of no consequence.

The particular Lucy known as Grenlow was only selected because she had come more in his way than another girl, and because he had noticed that she was sharp in her movements, and 'dapper with her sewin', which accomplishments Robert highly prized, but then he would equally have prized them in any other Lucy.

Rachel's cunning perceived all this, and, notwithstanding her hatred of needlework, she determined to become a 'dapper sewer,' and with her needle's point to both vanquish Lucy and fasten Robert. He had a whim for white aprons. He had at first been made to wear them for his mistress's pleasure, during his kitchen probation; since then, he had adopted them for his own special gratification, and had, therefore, to purchase them for himself. The two he had now in wear had become very thin and shabby; he regretted one day to Rachel that he had not bought more calico instead of that there ribbins for the gals.

'I wouldn't regret that, Bob,' she replied; 'people mustn't never be sorry for the good they've done. I'll make you three new aprons, any day you please.'

'Darned, will'e?' exclaimed Sanders; 'but I must bide till I've got the stuff for 'em.'

'That's all comprehended in the making of 'em, Sanders. I shouldn't over to make them if I didn't mean giving of 'em too.'

She tossed her head in a pique; she was evidently much hurt. Bob pulled his locks. Here was willingness! — Here was 'dapper sewin'! He pulled and pulled.

'Why, Ratchel, I ain't willin' for to put on you, seein' that I didn't give 'e a ribbin, and I'm downright backed by your kindness. I never guessed you was dapper up to sewin' of apurns.'

'I never, Bob! What's a nurse that can't sew?' And she fell to laughing at his innocence of a nursemaid's requirements. From this time she never entered the kitchen without work of some sort in her hand. If she only came down for an instant just to see how long before Miss Baby's broth would be ready, stitch, stitch went her needle, 'working at once with a double thread' her plans and Lucy's destruction.

Lucy skipped about the house full of brisk 'mems,' 'sirs,' and curtseys. Though no one had spoken to her of Robert she took it for granted that every person possessed and rejoiced in her secret. But by degrees the brisk bobs and bright cheeks disappeared. No one could account for her altered looks. Her 'mems' degenerated into slow 'ma'ams,' her curtseys became drudgeries, only extorted from her by her mistress's reprimand.

'Why, what ails the maid, my dear? she's all in the mopes. I can't bear to have her about me,' said Mrs. Evelyn, when Lucy's wits had wandered further than ever.

'I think she's out of health, aunt; she has been so listless and pale lately,' replied Emmeline.

'Yes, she has been looking very tallowy, no doubt she's been making too free with dripping and suet pudding. You noticed that large piece of pudding that went down yesterday? I quite expected to see half of it again, well, when I went to the pantry this morning 'twas all gone. No complexion can bear that! I'll go and mix Lucy a dose of

gregory.'

Uncle Ev seemed delighted; he turned to Bridget:

'Are you aware, Miss D'Urban, that the Gregorian Chant is a great favourite in this house? Your aunt gives it us on all occasions. They say music cures the madness ensuing from a tarantula's bite, but your aunt cures every disease with the Gregorian Chant.'

'Now, George, my dear, don't be so silly; what would you do without gregory? You'd be eaten up with bile.'

The dose was administered, but no amount of gregory brought back the colour to Lucy's cheeks. It was painful to see the change that one short fortnight wrought in her. As Robert's month increased into two, three, and almost four months, so Lucy's health decreased until it seemed probable it would fail altogether. Both master and mistress questioned her, but she could assign no reason for her flagging energies, save that she felt 'low-spirited like at Robert's keeping on not going; she'd much rather for him to go.' Maida alone guessed the cause, and with redoubled vigilance guarded the kitchen from perfidious intrusion. She had seen nothing yet to give her a fair opportunity of taxing Rachel with her design on Sanders, but she watched with the determination to avail herself of the first that should present itself. Sanders was so open, and Rachel so cunning, that she might have waited until Lucy had pined into skin and bone, had not accident betrayed the secret of her malady by discovering Rachel's treachery.

Had Rachel come before her in any other character than that of rival in her lover's affections, Lucy Grenlow had been the last to use the secret for her overthrow.

Where is the woman, how kind soever her nature that does not desire to rid herself of one of whom she is jealous? — that does not long to tear away an image that comes between her and the object of her love?

Who will blame the dejected Lucy for experiencing a strange sensation of pleasure when she found herself under the painful necessity of informing her mistress that things were not going aright in the nursery? But having proceeded thus far, Lucy heartily wished she had never commenced the complaint; the first thrill of delight over, she blushed ardent compunction, and glanced at the door, fain to bolt from the keen eye of the master, and the complaisant interrogatory expression of her mistress. However, to withdraw the charge was impossible, therefore, plucking up all her courage, before Mr. Evelyn could utter a second solemn 'Well?' she darted out:

'Please mem, sir, I think she've been cutting of sheets to make aprons for Robert.'

'Well?'

'Please, sir, that's enough.'

'And too much! Well?'

Lucy was forced to tell all she knew about it.

It then appeared that Rachel had cut up and appropriated to Sanders's use two sheets which had been some time missing. A small half-burnt strip of sheeting, bearing the household mark, had been found amongst the nursery cinders, and had told the tale. Lucy was in a terrible state of alarm when her master ordered Sanders to come up. She wrung her hands and besought Mr. Evelyn not to say anything to him, for she was sure he had never suspected the origin of the gift.

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After a strict investigation Mr. Evelyn inclined to her opinion, but Mrs. Evelyn would neither be convinced by the man's reasoning nor by the facts of the case; she gave it as her opinion that the knowledge of its having been stolen property had most likely enhanced its value; to most prisoners it would; why not, then, to Robert Sanders? Knowing that if his mistress chose to act on her opinion, no power could save his ticket, the poor fellow stood forlornly before his accusers, a perfect picture of prison lowliness; he pleaded willingness — he pleaded his love for the horses — he pleaded everything but his innocence — that as a convict he knew would be pleaded in vain if not believed by his employers.

Rachel's guilty appearance and examination, however, diverted Mrs. Evelyn from Robert, and with a sharp reprimand Mr. Evelyn dismissed him to his stable.

Of the nursemaid's guilt there could be no doubt, though there was abundant denial. She vowed she had cut up garments of her own to make the aprons; but search being made in her boxes, remnants of the sheets were found and her falsehood proved. A constable was sent for, and Rachel commanded to hold herself in readiness to be taken away by him. She no sooner reached her room, than she hastily shut the door and hit herself violent blows on her nose, until the blood flowed; she caught the blood in a handkerchief, and then pulled the bell with all her might. Lucy ran to answer the bell, when she perceived Rachel sitting at the foot of the bed, covered with blood, which seemed to be oozing from the handkerchief at her mouth; she screamed — 'She's killed! she's killed!'

Rachel beckoned to her, and said faintly, 'Go and tell 'em I've broked a bloodvessel.'

Lucy was running off. Rachel beckoned her back, and whispered more faintly:

'Beg -- 'em -- to forgive -- me -- and let -- me -- stay on -- till I'm -- a -- bit -- better -- '

The alarm was given. Mrs. Evelyn hurried up to see what could be done, forgetting stolen sheets, and everything but the opportunity of displaying her skill in quackery. Mr. Evelyn followed, and also Lucy, who ran forward like a little dog which hurries back to the scene of danger when it has given the necessary alarm.

'What is it? What is it?' cried Mrs. Evelyn, rushing forward. Rachel turned up her eyes and shook her head.

'I will tell you presently,' said Mr. Evelyn, advancing. 'Get up, woman! that's not the way to break bloodvessels. Get up -- I will teach you.'

He took both her hands and tied them together with a strong piece of list.

'There, now sit down; you are more likely to burst a vessel in trying to untie that knot, than in breaking your nose.'

Rachel saw that simulation was useless, and her faintness flowed forth in a stream of oaths that were more sickening to hear than the blood to behold.

'Now mind, I shall appear against you and have you severely punished,' said her master, when the constable arrived.

'Yes, they were two beautiful sheets,' parenthesised Mrs. Evelyn.

'Not so much for the theft as for your vile reason in committing it; the one is unpardonable, the other I could have forgiven,' continued Mr. Evelyn.

It never entered Lucy's head to harbour resentment against her lover; had she at first felt anger, the danger she had been in of losing him appeased every feeling of an uncomfortable kind; she even talked of her foe as 'poor Rachel'

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and hoped she wouldn't be punished 'very bad'; after all, 'twas natural like she should take to Robert, he was so handsome.

'She'll lose her 'air anyhow,' said Robert, smoothing down his own to reassure himself that his locks, lately so imperilled, were in safe keeping on his head. Lucy even vouchsafed a few tears when she learnt from Bridget that Rachel had eighteen months, part of which time was to be solitary.

Bright, blushing, and full-blown, re-appeared the roses on her cheeks, smiles once more peeped out from her dimples; and mems and sirs brisk to her heart's content, again dropped from her lips. More jauntily than ever sat the little cap on her head, when, peace restored to the servants' quarters, she again basked in the undivided light of Robert's countenance.

Mr. Evelyn was not forgetful of his promise to see what could be done to enable Robert to set up for himself. When he had been nearly five months in possession of his ticket, Mr. Evelyn, hearing that old Hawkins, Maida's first friend in Hobart Town, had met with an accident which incapacitated him for his calling, went to him and found him thankful to let out his cab to Robert. Mr. Evelyn became responsible for the first quarter's payment, but told Robert that he should expect to be repaid by the end of the year. Sanders was fairly bewildered with delight when he learnt that he was to be promoted to a cab and horse of his own; on the strength of the happy news he wanted to wed Lucy directly.

He seemed so to connect his ticket with marriage, that in his sight the one was imperfect without the other. He told Lucy and Maida that he meant to speak to the master about it that very evening; so after prayers to work he went, and with such success that, after an interview of an hour, he stalked into the kitchen, and, with a mysterious flop of his hair, requested Lucy to go up to the master. During her absence he acquainted Maida (whom he now regarded as a dowager, to whom love-secrets might with impunity be trusted) that it was all settled; the recommendation was to be procured, signed, and presented; and that, according to his view of the case:

'There'd be fine doin's, for when the master said Yes to it, Miss Bridget jumped up and clapped her hands; and young ladies don't go clapping of their hands for nothin', do they, Madda, now?'

Maida heartily hoped there would be fine doings, and she promised to try her best to further any plans for celebrating the wedding.

'Now that's what I call 'ansome, Madda! And you have been disappointed too! I tell 'e what: whenever you likes to stop down to our house, you shall find what a feller can't get everywhere -- that's a welcome, and hearty too.'

The recommendation was duly signed, and the banns of Robert Sanders, T.L., and Lucy Grenlow, passholder, were duly published in the church of St. David's. One bright Tuesday morning a little procession issued from the Lodge, Macquarie Street, and entered the parish church. Passing up the aisle, it surrounded the altar, within which stood the Reverend Herbert Evelyn, who, having acknowledged the presence of the party by a kindly smile, commenced the marriage service. In his own rich voice he read the solemn charges ordained by the Church, and then, no impediment being declared in answer to the searching glance fixed particularly on the bridegroom, he proceeded to ask the man if he were willing to take the woman in holy matrimony.

The question seemed to be worded to the man's taste, for he nodded a sidewise nod of approval, replying:

"Es, sure I will."

The Prayer-book's answer did not half express his willingness.

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When Mr. Herbert put the same question to the bride, she dropped a brisk curtsey; the small, soft 'I will' popped out only just far enough to reach the ear of him for whom it was intended.

Mr. Herbert then looked round and asked:

'Who giveth this woman in marriage?'

There was a moment's pause. Who should have given her away was evidently not in the group. No one responded.

Mr. Herbert repeated the question in a tone in which sadness seemed to blend with compassion, and a tall female of noble bearing stepped forward; taking the bride's hand, she presented her to the priest, saying, in a voice that had been distinct had it been less tremulous:

'I do.'

She then drew back into her place, and her large, deep eyes rested sadly on the floor.

'Those whom God hath joined let no man put asunder,' exclaimed Mr. Herbert; then, turning to the company and the few strangers who had wandered into the building, he said:

'Forasmuch as Robert Sanders and Lucy Grenlow have consented together in holy wedlock,' etc., 'I pronounce that they be man and wife together.'

The ceremony over, no one appeared to know what next to do. There was no spontaneous hum of congratulation; there were no fond parents — no tearful sisters — no gratified brothers to exchange affectionate wishes. The bride stood half crying, half smiling, working her little fat hand back into the white silk glove. The bridegroom uneasily flopped his long hair through his fingers. All were feeling uncomfortable, when on the constrained silence broke a voice full of benevolence and sympathy:

'God bless you, my child!'

Ere Lucy could believe from whom the benediction came, the clergyman, 'all in his robes and all!' as she afterwards wonderingly recounted, took both her hands in his and shook them with a warmth that could only have emanated from a father's heart. This was enough; the constraint vanished; a pleasant confusion of voices ensued, during which, forgetful of all convict proprieties, Bridget D'Urban threw her arm round Lucy's waist and gave her a kiss; and then, presenting her hand to Sanders, she said:

'I wish you happiness in your dear little wife.'

When the wedding party returned to the Lodge, Mr. Evelyn himself opened the gate, and begged to congratulate Mrs. Robert Sanders. Supposing that refreshment might not be unacceptable after so much excitement, he announced that a table had been spread for the guests in the back parlour. Poor Lucy was overwhelmed with her unexpected honours; she burst into a flood of genuine bridal tears. Throwing herself on a garden bench, she hid her face in her handkerchief, and sobbed aloud.

Mrs. Evelyn,, who had run down the gravel path in high good humour, gave a little laugh of satisfaction when she perceived Lucy in this plight — she thought crying so effective at weddings:

'Especially, my dear, at convict marriages, because you know they must — '

'Hush! Oh! she'll hear you, aunt,' impatiently whispered Bridget.

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'Oh, never mind, my dear, she knows she's a prisoner; besides, there's quite a pretty breakfast waiting for them. I want her to stop crying now.'

'Well, Lucy -- oh, I suppose I must say Mrs. Sanders now -- and yet, no; Lucy Sanders will do best -- well, I'm very glad you are married. I hope you'll be a good girl, because you know Government won't make any difference for your being married.'

'Clara, just come here a minute,' called her husband.

'I'm just congratulating the girl, my dear; I'll come presently,' replied his wife; but with her congratulations his reason for calling her away also finished.

Emmeline's sweet, pale face smiled its loving welcome to the happy pair, when at twelve o'clock they went together, by special invitation, to her room to bid farewell, and to receive a gift she had prepared for them.

'You must come and see me sometimes, Lucy,' she said.

A faint 'mem' and a quick bob was the only reply.

'Maybe you'll fancy a drive in my keb once in a while -- darned if I sharn't be proud to take you -- darned if I wouldn't crawl down head foremost to fetch 'e,' at last delivered Sanders, who, having been in close conference with his locks, could find nothing else wherewith to ease his burden of thanks. Mr. Evelyn had engaged a room in a respectable cottage in Melville Street.

Thither the wedded couple bent their steps, accompanied by Bridget and the children. On reaching the house they mounted the stairs, and as they approached the door of their room, it opened, and Mr. Herbert stood before them. He raised his hand and blessed them.

He then led them to a small, round oaken table on which lay a large handsome Bible; this he placed in Sanders's hand, saying:

'There, Robert, is something for you to begin life with. Commence with it, and when all things end, it will be your stay and comfort.'

## CHAPTER XXII. THE CONFLICT.

THE confusion consequent on Rachel's sudden discharge had been partly rectified up to the time of Lucy's marriage, by placing her in the nursery, and by giving Maida the double duty of housemaid and cook. Any change involving novelty and activity was pleasing to the little nursemaid, who entered on her post as locum tenens with the utmost good-will. Maida, long accustomed to hide her feelings beneath an impenetrable outward calm, exhibited neither displeasure nor satisfaction at the additional work allotted her for the next month. Her mistress's promise of ten shillings extra for the over-work put no unusual spring into her movements, nor did the extra duties abate her energy. When she had served her dinner she as quietly changed her cap and apron to go into the dining-room, as though to wait table were the express purpose of her existence. So ably and quietly did she accomplish her twofold service that Mrs. Evelyn began to think she might well continue in it.

'Really, my dear,' she said to her husband, 'I think Maida could go on as at present, and save us the bother of another Government woman; she doesn't appear to feel the work too much, nor to mind doing it.'

'But I both mind and feel it for her, Clara,' replied Mr. Evelyn.

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'Ah! but she is a tall, strong woman, my dear. I think if I allowed her a glass of beer once a day, she'd manage to keep up nicely.'

But Mr. Evelyn decidedly objected to Maida's continuing longer than possible in her present position. Maida had acted as housemaid, parlourmaid, and cook for about a fortnight, when one morning her mistress bustled into the kitchen and announced visitors to an early dinner. By way of thoroughly enlisting her servant's very necessary sympathies, she entered into a familiar gossip, telling Maida that the friends she expected were new arrivals in the colony, and that one of the ladies was an old schoolfellow of hers; after dinner the whole party would take the coach to Bagdad, therefore Maida must make the best use of her eyes and ears while she waited at table, if she wished to hear the latest news, and see the last fashions from England.

One of the pleasant chances of colonial life is the unexpected meeting with old friends, and the unlooked-for mention of familiar names and family incidents. In olden days a family secret was considered safe when the person from whom it had to be preserved, or in whose keeping it was, wandered to foreign shores; the death of the party concerned could not render its position more secure. But now, all you who have secrets to preserve from friends distant on Australian shores, or a family misfortune to hide from happily unconscious and absent relatives, be advised — discover your secret, unfold your misfortune, for if you do not others will; you must haste to give the information, or you will not be the first to break it to those who justly expect to share your joys and sorrows. In these days of telegraph and steam, of gold-seekers and gold-finders, there is no spot in the earth except your own breast that can give safe cover to your secret. Everyone has a brother or a sister, a cousin or a friend, or an old servant in the colonies; any one of whom may circulate your news with additions of his own, making those angry whom you might have made pleased, sowing discord when you might have planted peace.

The company arrives; the dinner is punctually served; when, prompt in clean white apron and spotless cap, Maida attends behind her mistress's chair. A heated colour in her cheeks is the only token suggestive of her previous employment. But who cares to avail himself of the suggestion? who wants to prove a fact concerning her? A servant behind her mistress's chair, what is there in that to need explanation? She is supposed to be there and, under the supposition, demands are made on her by the pronunciation of certain unprotected substantives: bread — water — castors. Her actual bodily presence is not ascertained, until one of the guests just happens to look at her in taking the mustard — then, struck by her beauty he looks and looks again.

At an English dinner-table there would be unpoliteness in drawing attention to the servants in waiting; but here, where most domestic sympathies settle around one point. and that point is O.P.S.O., there is no breach of etiquette in doing so; a guest as naturally asks questions about a servant whose superior manners or efficient waiting attract his notice, as he compliments his entertainer on a thriving rose-bush, or his child's improved health.

Notwithstanding his only having just arrived from England, one of the party proclaimed his colonial extraction by an exclamation during Maida's absence from the room: 'What a decent-looking woman, Evelyn! free or Government?' All eyes in consequence were bent on her when she re-entered. The colour deepened on her cheeks as she received the gaze of a dozen pair of eyes.

'A splendid creature,' whispered the gentleman.

'And a dreadful one, too,' replied Mrs. Evelyn.

'No particular news from home, then, Sandford?' asked Mr. Herbert, in order to divert attention which he perceived was annoying to Maida.

'N — no — all very flat; Punch can hardly strike a spark of fun out of the whole nation.'



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'Talking of marriages and old school days, Clara, do you remember a pretty little girl called Doveton, whom we great girls used to pet,' recontinued the lady who had been talking over school reminiscences with Mrs. Evelyn, when Mr. Sandford's remark arrested her. Maida started; that name had been familiar to her in other days.

'Perfectly; you don't mean to say she is married?'

'Yes, she is, and very well married too.'

'What, little Mary Doveton!' cried Mrs. Evelyn.

'She is a very charming woman, I assure you.'

'I don't doubt it; but it is difficult to imagine her a woman -- a slight, fragile fairy as she is, to my recollection.'

'She has lost neither fairyhood nor simplicity: in womanhood she is as fairy-like as ever, and just as simple.'

'Who is the happy man, I wonder? Do I know him?'

'A Captain Norwell; such a handsome man: they make a most bewitching couple, and are all the rage.'

'Norwell! Norwell!' repeated Mr. Herbert, 'the name seems familiar, but I cannot recall the man. I should like to, for I well remember little Mary Doveton, though I have not seen her since Clara was at Mrs. Compton's school.'

'When you used to bring me notes from my friends in Hobart Town, little thinking you were obliging your future sister-in-law, Mr. Herbert!' added Mrs. Evelyn, laughing.

'Norwell! Norwell!' exclaimed another heart in that room, as tumultuous feelings drove the colour from her face and unsteadied her whole frame.

'Well, I hope he will make her a good husband.'

'There is no fear of that, he is a fine, noble fellow; his wife literally worships him,' answered Mr. Sandford. Mrs. Evelyn had for some seconds been giving telegraphic taps on the table in order to draw Maida's attention to the knives and forks, closing one by one on her guests' plates, but without success. Listless and inanimate, Maida's eyes rested on the last speaker, who continued to eulogize Norwell.

'Maida!' at last exclaimed the mistress, with a loud rap on the table.

Maida started -- a deeper crimson rushed to her face, and then, departing, left a livid paleness.

'What ails the woman?' tapped Mrs. Evelyn, as Maida staggered beneath the weight of a tray not over-heavy.

The rest of the dinner was a series of vexed taps and nods on the part of Mrs. Evelyn, and mistakes on the part of Maida. Her manner was perfectly calm and collected, therefore the more unaccountable to her mistress were the strange inadvertencies of her actions.

Maida hastened to be solitary. No doubt existed in her mind that it had been the Captain Norwell, married to Mary Doveton, with whom her fate so cruelly blended.

She longed for night, which alone could bring her an uninterrupted review of all that she had heard, or afford her an opportunity for calm decision in the difficulty before her.

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Night came. With a throbbing heart, as though she were going to an interview of which she dreaded the result, Maida sat herself down to a severe scrutiny of her own feelings, arraigning before her judgment each motive whose promptings she doubted. She remained for some time in deliberation, then looking about as if in search, she remembered she had neither pen, ink, nor paper, and all three were necessary to her purpose. What could she do? she wished not to wait till the morrow, lest opportunity should fail her. There was no book from which she could tear the fly-leaf. She thought of Emmeline — but she must not be disturbed; she then remembered that Mr. Herbert was often in his study to a very late hour. Slipping off her shoes, she crept down-stairs; the action reminded her of that fatal morning, when, seeking to shield her babe from the stern grasp of justice, she crept away to give it loving burial.

The remembrance served to strengthen her in her determination.

A streak of light issuing from Mr. Herbert's study told her that she could get her wants supplied; she knocked, and he opened the door.

'You, Maida!'

'Yes, sir. Will you give me a few sheets of paper, and a pen and ink?'

'It is late for such a request.'

'I have no time by day.'

'Leave it till to-morrow, and I will try to procure leisure for you.'

'No, thank you; I require that concentration of thought which night only can give.'

'These are strange things to say, Maida, and a strange time to say them.'

'But you need not fear my purpose. Will you kindly give me the paper?'

Mr. Evelyn thought a moment, and then going to his desk took out a few sheets, which, with pen and ink, he put into her hand; at the same time, looking her full in the face, he said:

'I will give you them, Maida, but I confess I do so with much uneasiness. As Maida Gwynnham I trust you — but —'

'As a convict you are bound to doubt me, and correctly so, sir. I as much honour you for the one feeling as I thank you for the other; but, Mr. Herbert, you cannot know Maida Gwynnham as she knows herself, or you would trust her as little in herself as in her convict state. However, your trust shall not be misplaced, though I will do my best to dispel your doubt.'

As Maida met the calm, reflective countenance before her, how sure she felt that in Mr. Herbert lay both ability and will to assist her. She longed to open her troubled and conflicting thoughts to his advice. She never so yearned for friendly counsel as in this predicament, when she perceived that a false move might ruin those she most wished to serve, or an indiscreet word have the opposite effect to that which she desired. She could bear by herself all that only touched herself; but now that the happiness of other lives might be at stake she longed to hear from other lips a corroboration of the opinion she had formed, and an approval of the course she was resolved to adopt; but neither friend nor counsellor dared she seek. Alone, alone, must she pass this fierce ordeal; alone, unsympathized with, and unadvised, she must tear from her heart her last, though unacknowledged, hope in life.

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Returning to her room, and placing the materials for writing on a wooden box, which served her instead of a table, she knelt before it and commenced a letter to Norwell but she could not satisfy herself. Fastidious over his feelings as over her own, she destroyed sheet after sheet when she had partly written it. She wished to deal faithfully -- to warn, threaten, promise him; but she would not reproach him. After many efforts she produced the following letter:

'The Lodge, Macquarie Street, Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land

'To Captain Norwell.

'SIR

'I was standing behind my mistress's chair to-day, when I learnt from the conversation at the dinner-table that you had married Miss Doveton. Circumstances unknown to you once made me acquainted with that lady, and awakened in my breast a deep interest in her welfare -- an interest that is much deepened by the report of her marriage to you. The surprise occasioned me an impulse of jealous displeasure, which subsided, on reflection, into the feeling which now induces me to write to you, though against my inclination.

'I pass over the fruitless sorrow I feel for your poor wife. I even pray that her delusive apprehension of your character may continue, seeing that she has acted too far upon it to be benefited by discovering the truth.

'My sole object in writing is to point out to you the moral difference created by your marriage in our respective positions.

'From what I was obliged to hear at the dinner-table, I deem it probable you may become informed of my having heard of your marriage, and I fear you may in consequence write to me to avert the effects of the anger you may suppose me to feel, and in so doing run the risk of exposing truths to your wife which would put an end to the enviable ignorance so necessary to her happiness. To anticipate your fears, and prevent their consequences, I engage by this letter to remain silent, as I have hitherto been; but to this engagement I attach, Captain Norwell, these solemn conditions (and I have the means of observing their performance by you), first, that you shall be kind and faithful to your wife; second, that you write no more to me.

'Do not mistake my meaning, nor misinterpret leniency of expression into feebleness of purpose. I wish you clearly to understand that, if you again risk discovery by committing to paper things intended only for me, or if you fail to be kind and faithful to your wife, I shall no longer consider silence and suppression the best means I can employ for promoting the happiness of one who bears the name I once thought you intended should be mine. To Mrs. Norwell I henceforth ascribe the gratification I experience in bearing that part of my punishment which is your due. This being the last time you will hear from me, I will satisfy your inquiries before concluding, hoping that, at least as to a part, my replies will free you from embarrassment in the moral fulfilment of your marriage vows.

'You inquire, first, whether I love you still? My answer is, No! This answer is not extorted from me by the knowledge of to-day. My love for you has been long since forbidden by the judgment of my conscience, forced into maturity by sorrow and reflection. I sifted with painful rigour the jealous emotion I felt on hearing of your marriage; and I discovered, with joyful truth, that it was due to surprise alone. Recollection returned, and the emotion was gone, leaving no trace of disappointment. You next ask whether I am comfortable. I do not suppose you know the bitter sarcasm attached to the word 'comfortable' in convict language, originating in an anecdote current in the colony, and which I give you as an appropriate explanation of the comfort in question. A gallows having been erected for the simultaneous execution of nine prisoners, was submitted for the approval of an experienced executioner, who gave it as his opinion that the accommodation was insufficient for nine, but that seven could hang there comfortably. Herewith I return the letters I have received from you during my transported

life,

'And remain, Sir,

'Yours faithfully,

'MAIDA GWYNNHAM.'

The letter finished, the rigid discipline wherewith she had controlled her heart into obedience to her reason was laid aside. With a trembling grasp she seized the letter, and with an anxious look she read it aloud. She wondered how her hand had brought itself to pen the cold, stern characters before her. When she came to the question, 'Do you love me still?' her voice quavered, her long lashes fell and concealed the expression of agony that lay beneath. She could not form the round, cold 'No' upon lips so unsteady; it died away in an unspoken murmur. She was thankful that, secured beyond chance of escape, it would reach Norwell in a form betraying neither her regret nor her agitation. She was thankful it was not to be entrusted to her, but to be delivered in a letter. He will look on the answer, and see only in it the prompt and simple 'No.' he will know nothing of the pained power that has been put forth to pen that one short word: he will note only firmness in the deep mark that underlines it into emphasis, and will say, 'Ah, that is like Maida!' He has not witnessed the effort with which the undecided heart was made to draw that final renunciation to a claim that by right of justice was its own, and will not suspect that that one short word is the token of victory after a severe conflict.

She was thankful, too, that the writing to him had not been practicable at the moment she heard the tidings; her impulsive nature might then have hurried her into reproach, despicable to her calmer mood; or might have impelled her to a display of those sufferings of which she scorned to complain.

Having read and reread the letter many times, and being at last convinced that it contained no reproach which it would be prudent to spare Norwell, and no expression that could create a misgiving in his mind, or mislead him as to her intention or the state of her feelings towards him, she folded it, and enclosing three letters lately received from him, she melted together the wax broken from the seals of his letters, then dropped the burning liquid upon her envelope, and stamped it with the corner of the inkstand. The morning had scarcely dawned when she crept downstairs, and let herself into the garden through the veranda of the drawing-room window. Thence hurrying into the street, to the imminent peril of detection, and consequent severe punishment, she glided swiftly to the post-office, and slipped her letter into the box; then, with a lightened heart and slackened step, she returned to the house, not caring by whom she might be met, or whom she might encounter.

When the family assembled for prayers, Mr. Herbert knew by her languid appearance that she had passed a night of unrest. He regarded her with a peculiar interest for he too, had endured hours of watchful suspense and ail on her behalf. Of this, however, she was as little aware as that her haggard and yet determined countenance had seriously alarmed him when she presented herself at his door, and preferred her strange request. She was in ignorance also of the source from which, perhaps, she had derived strength and power to pen that letter to Norwell. She knew not that while she was pining for some one on whose judgment and counsel she might rely, even then that holy man, whose friendship she would not cultivate, whose advice she could not seek, was kneeling for her at the footstool of Infinite Love, and imploring that, though led into temptation, she might be delivered from evil.

She knew not that from behind his shutter he had watched her go out, nor that he had followed her in the agonized belief that she had gone to self-destruction; nor that the only rest he had taken for the night was from the time of her return from the post to the present hour. Believing as he did that Maida was the prey of some great mystery, and that the indifference she exhibited was only a mask assumed to hide the writhings of a spirit, every one of whose fine and complex powers of suffering were daily taxed to torment; and perceiving that, co-existent with this spirit, there warred within her a principle of freedom that detested the slavery she endured so

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uncomplainingly, Mr. Herbert continually dreaded to hear that she had sought the last resource of overburdened and unsanctified suffering, and exchanged the fetters of life for the illusive liberty of death.

When, therefore, so pale and ghost-like, Maida stood before him at that strange weird hour and asked for writing materials, he granted her desire, feeling it would be useless to deny it, and hoping that his concession might touch her into confidence. But when he saw her depart, calm and intrepid as she had come, his uneasiness increased into alarm. Connecting, as he did, her demand for papers and pens with a fatal determination to destroy herself, he feared what the morning light might reveal. He fancied he already discovered the explanatory document written in her firm clear hand, and indited by her proud free spirit. From the peculiarity of her temper, he knew that to follow and charge her with a suicidal intention would only be to hurry her into the act, or to put the thought into her mind. He resolved, therefore, that all he could do was to pass the night in praying for her, and in watching her movements. Having committed his fears and suspicions to Him who alone can order the unruly wills of His creatures, Mr. Herbert retired to his room, and placing open the door, he commenced his anxious vigil, listening to every night sound, as though it was fraught with important results. Several times he went to Maida's apartment, and listened without until some noise within satisfied him that she was there.

When the twilight glimmered through his shutter, he prepared to take the rest so needed by mind and body. Wrapping about him his morning gown, he threw himself on his — couch. He had scarcely done so when he distinctly heard a door unbolt, and a stealthy footstep on the stair. Then he heard the creaking latch of the drawing-room window. He sprang to his window, and in another moment saw Maida hurrying down the garden. By the same exit he followed her warily and at a distance, until he perceived that her errand, though mysterious, was harmless. With a thankful heart he retraced his steps, and cast off the burden of solicitude which had made the night one of weariness and distress.

### CHAPTER XXIII. AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

'Neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost: but with force and cruelty have ye ruled them.'

No sooner had the garden gate closed on Robert and Lucy, than Mr. Evelyn instructed Maida to unlock the waiting-room and conduct thence to their several destinations the servants who had arrived to take the place of the wedded pair. There were one man and two women. John Googe she was to take to an outhouse which Mr. Evelyn had improved into a room for the use of all succeeding ostlers, whose love quarrels might not end so innocently as had the amours of Robert Sanders. Tammy Matters was for the kitchen, and Diprose for the nursery.

Diprose was an Anson expiree, and had been that morning fetched by Mr. Evelyn during the marriage festivities. She was dressed in the prison garb, and had about her that frightened air so characteristic of the novitiate, and her eyes were red with weeping. As the door unlocked she started to her feet, and became so agitated that when Maida entered she stood before her as one palsy stricken.

Tammy Matters and Googe were old hands; they at once recognised in Maida a fellow-servant; but the expiree, mistaking her for her mistress, bowed lowly before her, to the amusement of the others.

'Grab hold of honour whilst you can get it, mate; she won't be long a missus-ing you,' said Googe to Maida.

In leaving the room Tammy punctiliously observed the right of precedence. With a circular jerk of her elbow she edged Diprose back and herself forward: it was not to be thought of, that a new expiree should walk before her, who was almost due for her ticket. Casting a smile of contempt at the Government brown, she smoothed down her own clothes with a smirk of approbation, glancing self-satisfied at the finery which appalled a figure surpassingly grotesque. Every possible texture of material had been pressed into her bodily service. Her black

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bonnet had evidently been an apron; the silk, drawn tightly over a piece of shapeless pasteboard, revealed this secret by exhibiting alternate rows of tiny holes and greasy marks where the folds had lain. A whole nosegay of soiled flowers of every sort hung loosely from one side of the bonnet, and flapped up and down with a constancy that reminded one of perpetual motion. Her gown of bright-coloured muslin barely reached her ankles: it could not have been lengthened but at the expense of one of the five flounces adorning the skirt — an expense that neither Tammy's love of finery nor hatred of needlework could sanction. A relic of the Anson in the form of the prisoners' blue checked neckerchief, pinned shawl-fashion on her neck, completed her attire. The convict petticoat, though looped up to suit the peculiarity of the muslin, was visible beneath the dress.

As Tammy professed to excellence in cookery, and to just the contrary in the house department, Mrs. Evelyn decided that she and Maida should exchange situations. The latter therefore became housemaid, and was consequently brought into more frequent contact with Miss Evelyn, for whom she had long entertained a deep but unacknowledged regard. All portions of her daily duty which had Emmeline for their object were regarded more as acts of pleasure than of servitude. The sweet low voice, ever ready to greet her with a cheerfulness void of levity, and an affability void of condescension, had a sympathy in its tone that came more acceptably than sympathy expressed in words. And when, as was often the case, the gentle voice gave utterance to thoughts full of peace, and bright with the immortal hope that irradiated the inner life of the invalid, Maida would listen and linger, longing to hear more; then, when she could linger no more, she would gather all she had heard into her mind and bear it away; and often during the day, which to her was ever of toil and trial, she would dwell upon the words of peace and love, and bless the lips that had spoken them to her.

With what special interest watched the great Adversary of Souls the spiritual fluctuations of this tempted woman! How perseveringly did he try to hold her back from all that might benefit her! How cunningly devised were the hindrances he placed in her way! When, despite his endeavours, a grain of the precious seed of truth found access to her mind, how subtle in its commonplaceness was the means adopted to defraud her of it, or to destroy its fructifying power! A sharp and undeserved rebuke from her mistress, a degrading familiarity from one of her fellow-servants, a threat, a provocation, were contrivances by which all Emmeline's example and Mr. Herbert's teaching were rendered useless. And yet, we know not why we should specify this as peculiar of Maida's career. A similar strife between the powers of light and darkness is everywhere being carried on. Whether in the person of the aged believer or in the young wavering disciple, whether in the bold confessed outlaw or in the timid youth hesitating over his first crime, Satan is awake the wide world over, everywhere arrogant over what he holds, and rampant for that which is beyond his reach. Imitating God, he despises not the day of small things. But with Maida, and with others in like condemnation, the strife is more apparent, the vacillations are more striking, there not being the restraints and decorums of free life to hide them.

One afternoon, when Maida had occupied the situation of housemaid for three months, Mr. Evelyn determined to try the experiment of sending her out alone (hitherto he had adhered to his regulation, and only let her go out under the guardianship of one of the family). Bridget's bad headache afforded him an excuse for the experiment. Summoning Maida, and assuming that severity of manner which he reserved for state occasions, he told her that he was about to test the sincerity of her intentions, and try if she would be as trustworthy when out of his sight as he had yet had no reason to doubt she was within the immediate bounds of the household. He then cautioned her against shipmates and public-houses; and finally charging her to remain out no longer than necessary, and reminding her how pained he should be if she deceived him, and how unhesitatingly he should punish her if she disobeyed him, he dismissed her with a note and parcel to Trinity Parsonage, bidding her stop on her way there to perform a few errands in the city. When she was ready to go, Mr. Evelyn himself conducted her to the gate, and, shutting it upon her, said:

'It is now three o'clock, I shall expect you home before five — now, mind!'

'I wonder how she feels, going out alone for the first time,' exclaimed Bridget, as her uncle returned to the drawing-room. 'How she must hate me, as the poor unfortunate always made to follow her about; I'm sure I hate

it for her.'

'She doesn't care that for it;' and Uncle Ev fillipped, to demonstrate the that. 'She is the queerest creature that ever came into my possession. I shall be right glad if Herbert does anything for her in the converting line, so as to bring down a little of her pride. Poor soul! I pity her to my heart. By—the—bye, Miss Bridget, you doubt that I have a heart, do you not?'

As five o'clock drew near, a perceptible though unexpressed anxiety pervaded the whole family. Emmeline and Bridget both tried to divert Mr. Evelyn's attention from the waning moments, but without knowing that the effort was perceived by each other. Each hoped she was succeeding to admiration, for Uncle Ev, standing with his hands tucked behind his coat, appeared to answer, or at any rate to acknowledge, by rapid hems! all that they told him of Charlie's precocities or baby's tricks; but as the clock struck five, the direction of his previous thoughts was at once determined; he pulled the bell with a loud click, and then, walking out of the room, called over the stairs:

'Gwynnham home?'

The fatal 'No, sir,' came back, and sent a cold shiver through Emmeline, who, turning silently towards her uncle, saw by his countenance that wrath was determined against; Maida.

Bridget had already left the room, and, forgetting her headache, was putting on her bonnet to go in search of the fugitive. But Uncle Ev, who also seemed to be going out, met her on the stairs, and she knew, by the tone of the voice that bade her return, that resistance or inquiry would be useless. She looked at him; there could be no harm in that, yet it seemed quite the wrong thing to do.

'Go in to your cousin; there's no knowing when I shall be back,' frowned Uncle Ev; and he slammed the door after him with a force that threatened a terrible amount of trouble.

Meanwhile, where was she who created all this excitement? Having performed her commissions in the city, Maida proceeded to Trinity Parsonage and delivered the parcel. Returning thence by that part of the prisoners' burial-ground which faces the town end of Government demesne, she stood to gaze on that final resting-place for her captive brethren. Leaning on the fence, her eye wandered over the field, whose dreary aspect had naught to break its dull monotony save the ridges, which heaved its surface at careless intervals, giving it more the appearance of land prepared for the sower than of that already sown for the human harvest, of which the poet so touchingly writes; but it needed the symmetry of the husbandman's labour to make even outward resemblance to that rude picture complete. The inner picture — ah! who would dare compare? — the contrast strikes too vividly. The husbandman ploughs his acres, and his heart goes with his work; each furrow receives his hope, his prayer, as well as his goodly grain. The grave is prepared with curses; the human seed is sown prayerlessly, tearlessly — for we do not call the formal, grudging service mumbled over the prison dead a prayer — and tears, who expects them at a convict funeral? The eyes to shed them are across the ocean. The seed is sown, the earth is shovelled over it, and who cares to ask or think in what form it shall arise?

Maida leaned quietly for a few moments. The slow movement of her head from one part of the field to the other denoted rather a general survey of it as one object of sadness than a search for a particular spot over which to feel a particular sorrow. She suddenly started, and, standing erect, gazed, intent, towards the furthest extremity of the field. Until this instant three men, partially hidden by the increased height of fence, had escaped her notice. With a quick cry of impatience, she sprang over the barrier and confronted two low-foreheaded, brutal-visaged prisoners, who were wantonly abusing their trust by kicking about and otherwise ill-treating two coffins that had been left them to inter. As Maida now stood before them, one of the coffins was lying edgewise, having rolled off from two graves of unequal size on which it had been tossed; the other, almost raised to an upright posture, was supported by a heap of rubbish.

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The younger man was a simple-looking fellow; he had been an obedient tool in the hands of the other two, who appeared to delight in the matter-of-fact manner in which the youth received and carried out their orders. The burial service, of course, had been performed; but that invested the corpses with no sacredness in the sight of those who were left at once to fill up the ceremony and the grave.

'Who be you?' cried both men, and gaped the third, as, like an apparition, Maida rose up before them.

The fire of bygone days flashed from her dilating eyes, and, in a tone of haughty superiority, she exclaimed;

'I'll report you! How dare you! I remain by you until I have seen them decently buried. Cannot you let their mangled bodies rest in peace?'

'Round away, then, my pretty one! round away on us! Who may you be? Remember we are alone together,' replied the elder man, in a voice of impudent raillery.

'We are alone, but I am safe. The wretch that could insult the dead, would fear to touch the living.'

She fixed her eye steadily upon him, and as she read the brutal characters delineated in his face, she fancied one by one appeared features she had scanned before, but where, or under what circumstances, she could not recall.

'Is it so, my darling? Then how comes Bob Pragg out here? Giles Waddy there can tell to that — can't ye, Gi? He'll warrant ye I've touched the living 'fore now, and that with no chicken-heft, I'll promise ye; a chinker gied by Bob Pragg ain't a gift of every day.'

The name horrified Maida. She knew too well now why she had recognised the face. With an involuntary shudder she dropped her voice to a scarcely audible whisper:

'They are prisoners.'

'They was, but I reckon they are free enough now. Forgery and lifting,' he continued, as if that had been their names.

'And you are prisoners?' said Maida.

'In the Queen's service! Government livery. blue and gold — no mistake. Can you sport a fig of baccy?'

Bob touched his cap, mock reverentially, and winked to Giles.

'Who may your graceship be?'

Another touch of the cap, and wink to the youngest man, who had never withdrawn his gaze from Maida.

'I — am — a ————— prisoner,' said Maida, speaking slowly and distinctly.

The trio started in unfeigned astonishment.

'My eyes!' at last ejaculated the youngest.

'I wouldn't scarce believed it, if I'd seen the brown petticoat,' said Giles.



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Here Maida raised her gown an inch or two above her feet, and with the convict garment confirmed her statement. Bob Pragg stared with a mixed expression of incredulity and delight; then shading his mouth with his hand, he whispered to Waddy:

'Be blostered if 't ain't Martha Grylls! I'd swear to her all the world over! There's pluck enough for she, and too much for any else.'

'We are all prisoners, then,' proceeded Maida. 'Should we not, therefore, show more feeling towards each other? Fancy: to be so treated by their brothers in trouble, and that when they are unable to resist!'

Her eye again began to gather fire, and her speech animation. It was not in her wholly to control the indignation struggling in her breast.

'They have had a life of degradation and misery -- surely in death, when the oppressor can no longer reach them, their own comrades should let them rest in peace!'

'Oh, they tookt it easy -- 'tisn't all takes on as very like you did. Most on us couldn't be worse off than we was in England. Most on us only turned rogue when we couldn't turn a penny from honest work. To them what don't care for the name on it, it's better to be here with full bellies and hard work than 't 'ome with empty maws and idle jaws -- that is when a feller can keep blind eye of the Government coves -- they'm mighty partial where they pleases!'

'Then you'll bury them at once?' interposed Maida, but Giles had not finished.

'Tho' I says it myself, I'd never have been out here, if I'd got work at home. I was as willing to live by fair means as any man going; but honest thoughts won't fill a poor fool's pocket, and, ----- me! if it'll stop his children's bawl. When I frisked a crib the fust time, I'd no thought o' doing it again; but then I found a wideawake sort of feeling come out of the job -- a feeling that seemed to put fresh life in me; so I went on till I'd no notion of toiling a week for what I could get in a night, and joined company with a cracksman, and got lagged after a while -- and now I'm your humble servant.'

The thoughtful tone into which he had lapsed during this retrospection vanished during the last five words, and he appeared, by a sudden and remarkable transition of manner, again to become Giles Waddy, the ruffian. Maida attempted to speak, but Giles again stopped her, on which Bob Pragg commented:

'Gi's on his pet fiddle-string now -- scrape, scrape, he'll go, till you wish hearty you'd never meddled with sober folks in their occupation -- there, scrape, scrape, he goes again.'

'Strikes me -- or I'll be struck stone dead -- if them wise heads don't one day find out there's something wiser to be done than paying police and building gaols. Men don't swag on full bellies, 'xcept when they's had a smack on it, and finds it relishing. The fust time they steals, they steals for hunger -- the second, the deuce knows why.'

'Hold your jaw, you confounded blockhead! Thank your blessed stars you're not one of them wise 'eds -- any day I'd rather be one of the drove than the driver.'

'Anyhow, we'll all roll into hell together! but don't you talk pious there -- you'd no call to turn rogue -- you know you turned because you admired the trade.'

A loud gruff laugh sounded through the ground. Maida stamped impatiently, but speak with authority again she dared not -- not on her own account, but for the sake of the dead. Any burst of anger would be visited on those who lay helpless at her feet, for, with the young man's assistance, she had laid the coffins in a proper position.

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'Now, then, do let us bury them!' she said,

'Us! Heft away, then; but no harm in being merry over the confounded job. Leave alone there' (to the young man) — 'no use to try it; the hole's too small for two on 'em.'

'It shan't be for want of trying, then,' and Giles kicked the topmost off, and jumping on the under one, endeavoured to squeeze it down a few inches by stamping his full weight on it; then, with an awful curse, he called on the young man to help drag it out from the hole.

Maida could witness it no longer in silence:

'I'll report you, and shall glory in the punishment you get. Give me the spade!'

Before Giles could resist, she had snatched the implement from him, and in the strength of excitement had struck it deep into the tough mould.

Giles raised his arm to strike her, but a loud guffaw, and a meaning wink from Bob, arrested the blow.

'Gi, you'll be a fool if you quar'l with her for doing your work. Let her have a heft at it whilst we take a spell over yonder.'

Another wink in the direction of a distant part of the ground made Gi, though somewhat sullenly, let fall his arm, and follow Bob Pragg — for he was the second ruffian — to the spot. The young man was about to join them, but Bob nudged him back.

In the flush that dyed Maida's cheek and temple as the spade drew heavily back, Sam saw only the natural effect of unusual effort — we, who know more of Maida, discern pain in its fervour, and mighty mental conflict in that involuntary closing of the lid, as the inward fire shone lustrous crimson through the transparent skin. A few more desperate onslaughts, and resting, as any wearied delver might rest, one foot on the bottom of the spade and one hand on the top, Maida turned and took her first look at Sam. His eyes were riveted on her so fully that he was obliged to give a number of small twinkles before he could unfix them. It was now for Maida to gaze at him, which she did, in silence, for many seconds, and then, 'Poor lad!' burst from her lips.

'Sam, how old are you?'

But Sam did not answer; he seemed too busy replying to mental queries of his own.

Whatever the replies were, they finally converged into a focus in the form of a question, which, though couched in lowly phrase, appeared to give him infinite satisfaction.

'Let's take a heft on't. Like you'm sweatin', miss?'

'No, Sam, you are tired; let us talk a little.'

'With me, ma'am!'

Wonder added to their former admiration, the glassy blue goggles again took possession of Maida's face.

'Yes — why not with me?'

'Be you a prisoner, sure, ma'am?'

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The 'ma'am' came so naively and so aptly from his lips, that Maida accepted it from the poor lad as a tribute of respect from which she had long been estranged.

'I am your fellow-prisoner.'

'A sight o' difference 'tween us tho'!'

And Sam, as if referring only to personal disparity, deliberately viewed Maida and then himself from head to foot.

'You've got a whole back of fine clothes.'

'Ah, but there is this beneath them!' bitterly said she, again showing the convict brown.

'And I can't keep out of yellows no ways. When I think now for the greys! and I am just on having 'em, something comes along to get me into trouble, and it's a sight o' time 'fore I gets out of the yellows; I haven't been out of 'em yet for more than two months to a time.'

The colour had now faded from Maida's face; the ashy paleness that succeeded could no more escape the earnest search of Sam's eyes than had the flush.

'Be sick, missus?' asked Sam, whilst the immovable goggles remained firm to their watch.

A faint and sad smile found its way to her lips, in spite of the aching load that dragged downwards all desire to smile.

'No, Sam; I'm sick in a way that you cannot understand. You don't seem very suited to those clothes; tell me how you came by them.'

The youth lolled his ample tongue in his mouth in quiet satisfaction that he had permission to talk — a comfort he seldom enjoyed in the crowded desolation of the Trench where older and rougher voices — when any voice was allowed — asserted the pre-eminence both in pitch and in period; while younger ones, fearful the blame of the uproar would fall on them, found refuge from the strife of tongues either in self-enforced silence or sullen moodiness.

'Must I tell how I got lagged, or how I gets into trouble?'

'Tell me all you like; it does me good to hear of other persons' troubles. Tell me about mother, and father, and all.

The prospect of an uninterrupted recital glistening before him, reflected a thin glaze of pleasure on his sickly face, and put a moment's life into the glassy opacity of his eyes.

'I never had no father, as I know on; and mother — the naybors all took shy on her, cos she'd got me; and when I came nigh to 'em they shoved me off, and said I'd no business to be born; I wasn't nothin' to nobody; and mother fretted, and said I was everythin' to her, because she hadn't got nothin' else.'

Here another loll of his tongue, followed by a thick swallow, stopped Sam for an instant; and when Maida glanced towards him the goggles had not removed, but their earnestness seemed subdued by a mist that had overspread them.

'The naybors said she was taking to bad ways, but she told me she wasn't; she used to tell me everythin', tho' I didn't know much what it meant then — but now sims to me I was a jackass for not knowing. Well, missus, one

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afternoon she'd sat crying — sime I see her now! — and I was nater bad hungered. "Mother," says I, "shan't us get nothin' to ate to-day?" Then she gave me the first bad word that she'd ever gave me — sime I hear her now! Her says: "Mother me to-morrow, you young devil, if you can!" "Mother," says I, "never mind, I can bide;" then she fell to crying worse, and then she grabbed me like mad, and bawled: "If mother speaks so to un, who else should speak kind?" Then she throwed up her hands to God Almighty as fine as any parson, and bawled out: "Justice? let 'en come! I lay this sin at his feet. Yes, at yours, Edward Moulston!" "What is justice, mother? Be it anythin' good to ate?" says I. Then she laughed like Old Nick, and bawled: "I believe you! It's good for nothin' else; but it doesn't do for starving wretches — it takes too long a-comin'." I was gettin' most afraid of her; thinks I, the devil's got hold on her. Well, missus, then she went out, and brought me back some rare grub, so that I got a rare bellyful; she looked on at me all the while. When I'd done, she took her bonnet, and said to me: "You won't want nothin' more to-day, Samuel. If I'm not back by dark, go to bed; and if I ain't back to mornin', and the folks comes to ask for me, tell 'em I'm gone out to look for justice; perhaps I'll have to go t'other side of the water to find 'en." And, great jackass, I never know'd what she was up to; so I never see'd her again — and then the naybors said she had drowneded herself.'

The mist condensed into large drops, which, passing over his high cheek-bone, and through the hollow beneath, fell to the earth — the only tear that had moistened that loveless grave, yawning for the lonely dead.

'And you, poor Sam?'

'I was sent to the house, and I ran away; and then they got hold on me, and said I'd do famous for 'em if I'd be a plucky chap, and never round on 'em; so they tookt me for winders, cos I was slim as a black-worm — and warn't I glad to go with 'em! — jist suited me, for I bain't bright in my head. Winders is asy work, when they bain't stiff uns.'

'Who brought you up, Sam?'

'Them cracksmen. They was very good by me; I never got flayed for aught but blundering, and I was a sight happier then than I be now.'

Again could Maida scarce refrain a smile at his simplicity. He told his tale so utterly unvarnished by sentiment, or shamed by compunction, that it was evident the words 'right' and 'wrong' had no place in his moral dictionary.

'But, Sam, don't you think you are better off, even as a convict, than you were, living with those wicked men, and doing their wicked work for them?'

'My eyes! — no.'

And Sam stared, as if the stare should say, 'You arn't half the one I took you for.'

Maida looked intently on him, to discern the source of this reply:

'What! not be on the road to honesty, instead of in the way to certain ruin, as you were then, Sam?'

Figure was lost on him.

'I've been on the roads, ma'am; but I tookt bad in my legs, so I works about Tench now.'

She must simplify. If the goggles could only take in half they tried, Sam would understand a great deal; but theirs was large attempt with small success.

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'Sam, tell me now: don't you think it was very wicked of you to do what those men bade you, and to lead so bad a life?'

'I hadn't no other — 'sides, I was brought up to it fust.'

'But why — why did you run away from the poor-house, Sam? that was your first wrong step.'

'I didn't like it.'

This reply was given in so decided a manner that Sam evidently considered it as much without appeal to others as it had been to himself; he therefore goggled double power (suspicion gaining on admiration) when Maida expressed disapprobation. The poor fellow seemed anxious to please his new-found friend. What could he say? He longed to hear his voice, and yet he would rather lose that pleasure than vex her and involve himself. The convict fear and mistrust, although displayed in the widened gape and gaze, instead of the piercing glance and evasive response of intelligence, were as strong in him as in brighter specimens.

'Dun no that I'd do it again, missus. Parson Evelyn talks about it fine — he found me in cells one day, and he talked till 'most I cried; and then says he: "My boy, if you'd got your time over again, do you think you'd run away from the workhouse, now I've explained why it was foolish of you to do so?" "Drat me if I would!" says I; "sims I were a big jackass for rinnin' — I weren't up to it then; but boys is boys, sir, and nothin' else."

'Then the parson — sims I see him now — rose up, and laid his two fingers on my shoulder; and sims he smiled — for his voice weren't like 'twas 'fore. Says he: "Why, what be now, Sam? You ain't no more than a boy." "Sir! bain't I?" said I; "sims I feels mighty old. A sight o' things comes by every day though nothin' don't sim to happen out of 'em; so I feels like a man."

'Then he sat down again, and says: "What d'ye mean, Sam? Tell me all about it." But though I was full of it, I couldn't speak it out — so I only gaped at 'en. So then says he: "Ah, I know all about it, Sam; so you needn't set your brain a thinking — more things happen than ought to happen to such a youngster." This yer weren't said to me, for he gozzled it out of his throat like; thinks I, I'm in for it! he's going to round on me, sure as fate! And I felt 'most dead o' fright. "When were you flogged last, Sam?" says he, all to a sudden. "Yesterday, sir, 'fore I came here," says I. "What for?" says he. "The bowl of a baccy pipe, picked up after the gatekeeper," says I. "What did you pick it up for, Sam?" says he. "'Gainst I got a fig," says I. "And how many lashes did you have?" "Twenty-five — lor', weren't they screechers! He said, when he tied me up to the triangle: 'I owes you a tickler, and now I'll pay'e.'"

'Parson bolted out when I told un this, and I set up a howl after un; thought I, Won't I catch it if the parson rounds on me! But he came back quiet as a fool; says he, only talking half loud, "Sam, my boy, you'll get into worse trouble, if you make this row." Then he sheered again, and I bawled after un, "Sir! sir!! sir!!!" And he comes again, and says, "Well!" "You got it out of me, sir; don't-'e go and tell 'em. I could not bear another thrashin'. Oh! don't-'e — don't-'e, parson," says I to un. Then he spoke so solemn, he made a feller shake: "Sam, I am God's minister. I tell no one but Him of anythin' that my people tells me. You may always speak out to me, my boy: but mind, I'll have no bad words, nor lies. I can always find out the truth." I pulled bob to 'un; but, for all I wanted, I couldn't say, "Thank your grace." Then he comes in right again, and tootk his seat as if he had never left it, and says, "Sam, why were you so foolish as to pick up the pipe, to vex the overseer?"'

'Were those his VERY words, Sam? try to remember,' interrupted Maida.

'Yes, they were; I remember them 'tickler.'

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Maida well knew that Mr. Herbert used no word idly. Repeating those two words, 'foolish,' 'vex' — she felt sure that they were meant as more applicable to the case than stronger expressions.

'D'ye like it, miss? sims tellin' it out's done me good,' asked Sam, heaving a sigh of satisfaction.

Maida felt there was not much to like in it, as she beheld the poor lean, lank, miserable youth before her; but she was loth to break the slight web of comfort that had unexpectedly wafted across his path; so she replied:

'I like to hear about Mr. Evelyn, Sam.'

'Don't 'e like all about mother and me?'

'We all like to tell our troubles, and I like you to tell yours; what more did he say to you?'

'A lot, but I don't mind much. Mr. Evelyn said, if I'd get out of trouble, and try to be a good boy, then by—and—by he'd get a chap he knows on to hire me out.'

'Well, and I hope you are trying, for Mr. Evelyn will keep his promise. I am sure of that.'

Here Sam's goggles fell considerably, whilst an expression of moody hopelessness weighed down his lantern jaw to its utmost limit of expansion.

"Tain't much use trying along with they there; they's got a way of making a feller like the deuce hisself; when a feller gets into trouble for nothin', he might all so well do somethun' to make it worth his while.'

'This is a sentiment too bright for Sam,' thought Maida, and she had hardly thought it, before Sam continued:

'Bob Pragg told me that 'ere; I ain't clever enough, he's a sharp un; he knows a sight, and he bain't bad to me when I does what he wants; but, my eyes, when I don't! Parson warned me of he; but the parson nor nobody else don't know what a poor feller what isn't clever, and don't know what nothin' means, has got to bear from them sharp uns; be 'fraid of they, missus?'

He turned his head towards the spot from which, preceded by a loud, coarse laugh, the two men were issuing.

'I am not afraid of any one.'

'My eyes! could 'e fight 'em?'

'Women don't fight, Sam.'

But Sam gave a little negative—like shake of the head, as much as to say, 'Don't they, that's all!'

'They's comin', missus! and us ain't buried 'em.'

'I am not going to dig any more, Sam. I shall make those men finish.'

How the goggles expanded! adoration more than admiration holding them firm to Maida's face. He was too rapt even to ejaculate his favourite note, so extra expressive as it would just then have been.

'So, my pretty one! I thought your flourishes wouldn't last us t'other side of the ground. I guess you've been making the best of your time. Eh, Sam? No blushing, madam; ain't going to pry into lovers' secrets; tho' I swear

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'tain't fair that son of an ape should have all to himself; what d'ye say, Gi?'

A nudge from Gi brought Bob to the remembrance of a waning afternoon, and the probability of interruption to the plan he had laid during his absence. When the two were sufficiently remote, by a whisper into Gi's ear, Bob dispelled the sulkiness that had lingered in his slouching movements across the field. A sharp whew-w! was Gi's only answer to the whisper. A consultation ensued for the next ten minutes, and then for ten minutes more the two squatted on the grass, and, chewing certain blades of it, gloated over their plan, and drank imaginary bumpers to its success; for whatever else these brethren disagreed in, they both cordially united in hatred of Bradley, the convict constable, who should now have been superintending their work. That he deserved to be hated is not to our point — that he was hated by the whole gang over which he had control, is a fact more to our purpose. He had a savage glory in mortifying such men as Bob and Giles, by evincing his power to the most annoying minutiae of convict rule; and a still more fiendish delight in dragging to (in)justice the delinquencies of such poor weaklings as Sam. If the reader be a colonist, he will already have asked, 'Where was the constable or overseer, that he was not with the men at their work?' And this very question Bob and Gi determined should be asked by the Superintendent of the Barracks, in order to incur the answer, 'Drinking a dram at the Bird in Hand over yonder'; an answer which would sound unwelcomely to the Superintendent and Comptroller, as they could not in conscience hear it, and let Bradley keep his belt and pistol: and then how grateful to the warm, brotherly feelings of Bob and Giles would it be, to hail him to their gang, and to share with him their parti-coloured clothes!

They gladly agreed to forego the fig, and taste of the tankard promised by Bradley as a reward of good faith; for they hoped to chew a more delicious morsel, and quaff a more refined dram by following their own counsel than in keeping Bradley's.

'Why, man, you don't seem satisfied,' cried Bob, in the course of the consultation.

'Don't see why we can't peach ourselves without getting the woman to report; maybe she'll get us into trouble along with that infernal dog.'

'And wouldn't it be wo'th a spell at the wheel, or a dance in the dark, to get him plucked of his jackdaw feathers! I tell ye I'd bear a flogging without a wince to get him down; and you be — '

'No bullying of me now, Pragg; I bain't he — so keep your jolly thumpers to yourself, or try 'em on your own skull till you can on Bradley's.'

'Hold your humbug and listen to me; I've laid plans before now, and if they don't turn out admeerable, I'm not Bob Pragg.'

'I've heard you once, and I bain't no fool.'

But Bob, ever oracular, must again show forth his wisdom, and glut his vengeance with a concoction of malice. In spite of Gi's protest, he would repeat his scheme as follows:

'She'm quieter now, and don't seem likely to report — that won't suit us; nor Bradley — she must report — and then 'twill out that Constable Bradley don't look after his birds in fact, 'twill be clear that he prefers a "bird in the hand" to three in the bush, for this ground ain't much more than bush appearantly.'

'Ha! ha I ha! that's in 'em — you'll be constable next Bob.'

'O fie, Gi, I ain't bad enough!' cried Pragg, with a serio-comic shake of the head. 'Must be more like my masters first.'

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'Will be soon tho' with a little more of their doctoring.'

'Where was I, Gi? Well, she must report, and pop goes he out of the staff into — cells! the thing is — '

'How to get her to march to head-quarters,' cried Giles getting excited over the rehearsal.

'That's the go, Gi! like to see ye game. How to get her? Trust me for that! I've seen her 'fore now; — me if I don't raise the deuce in her. Never heard Bob Pragg's music? I'll play devil's tattoo on them precious boxes there till I make her fly mad to the Governor; then sharp's the word, Mr. Bradley! Now let's off. When I begins you'll know — there's no mistaking Bob Pragg, always except when he means you shall mistake him; then there's all so much no not mistaking him.'

'But what shall we do with that gaping blockhead yonder?'

'He ain't wo'th a thought; he must come in for it long with us, 'twill do'n good — polish en a bit. When Government condescends to notice such blackguard paupers, and place 'em 'longside of gents, why gents can't do less than condescend too, and train 'em up in the way they should go — should, meaning in the way they are fossed to go; seeing when they'm once in there's no gettin' out till their hedication's finished.'

'And then I s'pose they'm pretty fit for somewhere. '

'Right, man; the place where gents go — the proper place for used-up O.P.S.O.'s, and we'm all that, from Comptroller downwards.'

The loud 'ha! ha! ha!' which chorussed this speech was the sound that brought Sam's treat to an end.

An admonitory nudge from Giles warned Bob to action. Stooping to one of the coffins, he turned it on its side, and swearing a fearful oath, exclaimed:

'Now I'll stand no more nonsense I if they won't get into the hole, I'll throw a spade of earth over 'em and leave 'em; and the devil may come and carry 'em off if he likes; now heave away, Sam.'

Sam raised it at the opposite side; when Bob, feigning mistake, let go his side, and down came the coffin, and tumbled over a grave.

"'Twasn't me, missus!' almost blubbered Sam, as he, with the two others, noticed the pale passion that worked in every feature of Maida's face.

'Catch here, Bob,' cried Giles, approaching; 'catch here.'

And as if playing football, he gave the coffin a tremendous kick; before he could give a second he was lying prostrate, and that by a woman's hand. By a dexterous movement, Maida had collared and thrown him, whilst his foot was upraised to give a second kick.

Another movement, and stunned by a blow from Giles, Maida lay senseless on the ground; as Giles bent over her in savage fury, Sam thought he was about to murder her. Losing all fear for himself, he sprang forward, shouting:

'You shan't touch of she!'

'At him, Sam! at him! Show yourself a man,' cried Bob. 'At him; you must fight for her.'



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Encouraged, bewildered, and hurried on by excitement Sam did 'at' Giles. Wielding the spade with a force as unnatural to himself as unexpected to Giles, he struck the wretched man so heavily, that only his weight in falling disengaged the spade from the grip of the liven skull into which the iron had pierced.

Three heavy groans gurgled from the lips of the dying man, and then a strange solemn stillness spread over the field, chilling the horror-stricken group into a breathless silence.

Neither Bob nor Sam moved, until a shivering sensation in the latter increased to an almost audible quaking of his whole lank frame.

'B-o-b?' at last he quaked out in sepulchral tone.

Bob looked, but did not speak.

'Who -- did -- it, B-o-b?' the large glassy eyes were riveted on the corpse.

The question aroused Bob to a sense of self-preservation.

'Who? You, and no mistake! But I'll stand by ye, Sam, cos you've never done me no harm; but mind, you say a word about me, and I'll do for you in no time.'

'Don't want nothin',' came mechanically from Sam, who had either not heard or not apprehended. He had sunk on his thighs, and now sat crouched up, resting his chin in his hands, and gazing on Giles as if he had neither power nor will to withdraw his eyes from the corpse.

'Sam, boy, rouse yerself I We must be doing something 'fore the constable comes along; keep a good face on it, and let us be the first to make the row. Up, boy! up! the woman 'll wake, and Bradley 'll be along presently; lend a sharp heft or two, and get them plagues buried, then we'll carry Giles to Tench; leave the rest to me; silence is all I wants out of you.'

This was all, the first shock over, that Pragg made of the death of his comrade. How the death might affect him was the only remaining point that engaged his mind.

Accustomed to fear Pragg, Sam tried to stand, but the violent trembling of his limbs made him sink again.

'Get up, lazy-bones, and be a man; you've got guilt in yer very phiz; there's no go for you whilst you shows your game by the fright in that whitewash of yours. Up, I say!' and he kicked him with his foot.

But Sam only raised his large lack-lustre eyes for a second to Bob's face, and then slowly returned them to their ghastly resting-place. Seeing it was useless to waste the now precious moments on the poor boy, Bob turned to the pit with:

'Confound the blockhead; he's no true blood in him for all he gied such a mortal chinker.'

By dint of digging, dragging, pounding, and shoving, he managed to get the coffins interred; but it was a difficult task. He had barely stamped the earth upon them when Bradley jumped over the fence, bringing the promised bribe of tobacco and ale.

A revenge beyond even Bob's malice awaited the official, as, filled with insolence and wine, he swaggered across the field. Brutal triumph gleaming from his hard features, Pragg watched the effect of the scene on Bradley. The hour was his; he was master of the field. Quietly taking the bottle from the latter, he drained it, and flung it in the

air, crying:

'To your health and ticket, old fellow! Did you ever hear of a canary?'

'I've heard of a laughing jackass, and sees one now,' snarled the constable, perceiving that there was something amiss. Glancing around, he quickly discovered that something, and how the case lay. Accustomed to mark tokens of guilt and degrees of crime in different characters, he at once acquitted Pragg, and discerned the murderer in the miserable figure crouching before him.

Had his own situation been less precarious, he would have proceeded with ferocious glee to hale his victim to judgment; but all dream of official consequence vanished beneath the threatening darkness of Pragg's malignant leer. One glance hastily cast from under his heavy brow sufficed to warn Bradley that wrath was determined against him. How to avert it was his troubled thought. Maida was the only unsolved portion of the dreadful puzzle. What part had she acted in it? How came she lying there? Had the fight been on her account? Could she be of any service in making terms with his enemy? were questions that hurried through Bradley's mind as, without moving his head, he surveyed the strange group.

'It must be now or never,' thought he; 'in a quarter of an hour the Trench bell will summon the men.'

Assuming what mastery he could over his quailing voice, he asked Bob:

'Who's the woman? what had she to do with it? Speak out; don't be feared.'

There was a malicious twinkle in Bob's eye as he answered:

'She's only a missis that came along and fented (like all women does when they's wanted to lend a hand); so one can't say she had much to do with it.'

Bradley felt uneasy; he could not discover the drift of this reply.

'Will you swear to it?' he asked.

'Swear to it or anything else you pleases.'

The same twinkle, and Bradley inly writhed.

'Don't doubt you, Pragg; but excuse me as a constable if I ask that youngster a question just by way of probation.'

'Ho! here, you scoundrel' (shaking him roughly by the shoulder); 'hoa, and tell us, did the woman faint?'

'Y-e-s,' said Sam, in the same low, mechanical tone.

'Tell you what, Bob,' cried Bradley; 'there's no use in shamming. I see exactly how 'tis; there's no mistake that he's fixed and you are free; but that won't let us off -- we are all in for it -- me as well as you, so I'll be honest with you, man; give your hand here to a bargain, and with my word to it you're safe.'

Bradley thrust his hand to Bob, but Bob deliberately thrust his into his pockets, giving, at the same time, a side-catch of his mouth and eye, which the constable interpreted: 'Don't you wish you may get it?'

'I like that amazin' I How d'ye make out I'm in for it? You are in a jolly mess of it; but 'xcept I gets into trouble for what others does, Bob Pragg stands as clear as any man. Can I help the dogs from fightin' it out?'

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'Don't doubt you, Pragg; but them Government coves is such a set, one never knows when one's safe; white easy turns to black with them. Don't you reckon on clearness but take my advice, as one who knows a thing or two about them twisters.'

'What's the dodge? -- out with it.'

Bob had no intention to relent; but the longer he could dally with his prey, the better for his spite, and the more certain downfall to his enemy, from the disclosures he might afford by way of bribing silence.

'Strike hands, then.'

'That ain't Bob Pragg; he hears first, hands after.'

Bradley looked on every side, and then pointed to Sam.

'He?'

'Safe as a log; no wits to peach -- no brain for lies.'

Bradley nodded; and drawing close to Pragg, whispered:

'Bolt! I'll make out a case to suit, and turn their noses the wrong way till you're beyond them.'

Bob started; the offer was audacious and tempting; but hiding his surprise, he exclaimed:

'Show my heels like a murderer? Jolly trick! So let yon fool get free, and me be hunted across the island like any brute of a dingo.'

'No such thing, man; guilt's too plain on him; besides take my word that he don't even deny it: bolting and running won't show guilt -- 'twill only be one natural effect of the outrage. The story 'll be some'at like this:

"Constable's too busy with the rascal to notice you -- opportunity offers -- you bolt, as any one of us would if we got such a chance -- constable, of course, 'll be in a decent fluster about it, and eager after you, but all in the wrong scent till you're safe as a wombat in his hole." Trust me! I've been after bolters 'fore now, and knows a few tricks of the trade!

Bradley attempted a laugh, but he failed. As earnestly as he dared he watched from under his heavy brow the working of his proposal; but Bob's hard lineaments showed no working in any way save that the hard mouth rounded for a whistle, and the hard brow contracted a care-nought wrinkle.

Bradley again stretched his hand.

'There's no time to lose -- now or never.'

'It shan't be now, but don't know that it shan't be never. When Bob Pragg bolts he don't ask leave,' and he planted his hands on his thighs. 'I've got an account to settle before I can go: my compliments to the Comptroller, and tell 'em so from me, Mr. Bradley.'

'Then go and be ---- !' roared Bradley, shaking his fist at Bob; 'and if you don't hang for your insolence it shan't be my fault.'

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'You'll be too snug to get a peep at me, anyhow,' sneered Bob, who, looking forward to sure present vengeance, stored up Bradley's threat for future payment. Bob was a tutored ruffian; he could control himself when self-control served his purposes.

Taking handcuffs from his pocket, the constable clasped them on Sam, and, shaking him till he was sufficiently aroused to stand, bade him, with a fierce kick, walk on whilst he and Bob carried Giles to the barracks. At that moment the bell rang, and, from every part of the town, road and building parties were seen returning to their quarters. Bradley, his burden, and victim were quickly surrounded, when, resigning his charge to a brother constable and overseer, the former said he must go and report to headquarters. But report never reached headquarters through him, for, turning swiftly back, he caught what little money he had, and, hurrying through Campbell Street made his way for Kangaroo Point. Rather than meet the disgrace that awaited him, he determined to follow the advice he had given to Pragg, and bolt.

Turning to the barracks, he clenched his fist towards the building as a farewell, and vowed, with a curse, that he would never enter it again alive: he might be taken, but not whilst he had strength to fight, or breath in his body. His official costume carried him to some distance without risk of detection.

Night fell ere Maida came to herself. For many minutes she lay in a dreamy state, wondering why the moon shone so unobstructedly upon her. She could rarely see more than its light on the two-paned window in her garret ceiling. The centaurs, too, large and bright, looked on her. What could it mean? She almost feared to move, lest the pleasant dream should break.

Comfort insensibly distilled from the long, clear, unbroken rays that stretched towards her. She raised her hands and passed them over her eyes, and then, letting them drop, they fell — not on her warm bed, but on the cold, damp grass. The spell was broken. With a shiver she started and remembered all; but the brutal tumult was hushed into a calm that seemed supernatural. She felt stiff and dizzy — so dizzy, that as she looked around, the graves seemed to advance and recede, and rise and fall. The ridges of uneven mounds became more uneven, as, beneath the trembling light, they appeared to heave, as if about to discharge their dead.

Having satisfied herself that she was alone — that no more ruffianly insult could arouse her anger or disturb the scene — she went to the new-made grave, and sat by it. She was already later than convict rule permitted; she had no pass, should it be demanded, therefore she could incur no further penalty by remaining a little longer to think over the strange encounter of the afternoon.

She thought of Pragg; she felt he was her enemy, but for that she cared not. It was only fitting that the man who had torn her from her baby should be appointed to work her further woe; it was only to be expected that he should haunt her to this remote corner of the world.

Her baby! To what a stream of memories did those words give rise. Her home in Essex — her indulgent, ill-requited, and maybe broken-hearted father — Norwell — her life of shame and misery — her crime (the thin smile involuntarily moved her lips) — its punishment. Then, fiercely beating against the dreary reach of future that stayed its onward flow, the stream ebbed, lingering now at one point that awakened tender feeling; then bounding, scornful, from another, until it again sank into quiescence, leaving Maida no alternative but to meet the contingencies of a hopeless present.

She was near her master's house before she recollected that an explanation would be demanded, and that a satisfactory one must be given, or trouble would ensue. She knew that both Mr. Evelyns would credit her story, but she did not wish to tell it for a reason, which was the result of her ignorance of the fearful catastrophe that had put an end to the graveyard quarrel. Her wrath had kindled, not for herself, or against the two depraved wretches, but on behalf of the unresisting dead. The determination to report had been fixed in her mind the instant before she fell by Waddy's hand; but when, on recovering consciousness, she perceived, by the graves, that the offence

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had been atoned for, she annulled her determination on Sam's account, fearing he would get equal punishment with the other two men if she made a report of their misconduct. It did not occur to her to wonder at her having been left so unceremoniously on the ground, for she knew too well that selfishness had induced the men to leave her. To the watchhouse only could they have taken her; and judging her by themselves, she concluded they had thought she would surely 'round upon them' in return for the punishment dealt to herself by way of costs for Government lodging, and had therefore determined to let her lie.

Neither did she wonder why the constable (who, she was sure, had hurried in to conduct his charges to the Trench, after having neglected them all the afternoon) had not paid her due official attention. The same fear that had made the others so ungallant, had also influenced him not only to a similar act of ungallantry, but to one of exemplary self-denial, in resigning his claim to her as a case illustrative of his constabulary vigilance. But the blow that was now smarting on her temple, did that urge no vengeful step in Maida, unaware, as she was, that it had been already avenged by a swift and eternal retribution?

No: as her finger withdrew from the discolouring mark, and as the slight start caused by the unexpected pain subsided, a firm closing of the lip, with a steadier planting of her foot upon the earth, was the only sign that the blow had smitten below the surface, and driven the iron yet deeper into her soul. She was resolved not to complain whilst her mind added the indignity to the accumulated items that make prison life one protracted suffering, unthought of, and maybe unintended, when the sentence of transportation is passed.

Her foot struck upon the earth, not in the impatience of the steed that cannot brook restraint, and longs to rush to freedom, but to steady itself to accomplish the destiny that she scorned with bitter scorn, even while preparing to fulfil its cruel demands, and fulfil them to the utmost, though every nerve should be unstrung, and every power fail in the unequal strife.

Endeavouring to frame an excuse that would involve no falsehood, she wandered into Collins Street, one moment resolving to anticipate the fate she expected, by giving herself into custody; the next instant retracing her steps to go boldly to the Lodge, and meet her master's inquiries with silence.

Her ponderings were dispelled by two shadows that gained upon her.

She quickened her pace. Still the shadows advanced until they overtook and passed before her, leaving by her side two men in the constable's garb.

She heard them whisper:

'No; it's a lady. I'm sure of it. Dressed shabby, because she's out this time. We can't speak to her, Tom.'

'Oh, I've seen prettier birds than that. Ladies wouldn't be out, shabby or not shabby, at this time. I say, got a pass, missis?'

This was said in an undertone for his own amusement. Prisoner or not, Tom thought it fun to see the lady increase her speed.

'Don't fool now, Tom. Remember how Bates took the magistrate, Joyce, into custody.'

'Let's follow her a bit. If we could get a sight of the brown, then we should be sure.'

So the men followed her. Tom got impatient, being a newly-made official, and eager for capture.

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'Excuse me, ma'am, but must do my duty. Are you out on leave? It looks suspicious when ladies are out alone this time o' day.'

'Got a pass?' asked the more initiated constable, on the principle — justice is no respecter of persons.

Maida thought it better not to notice, but let them draw what conclusion they might from her silence.

'Stop!' cried the initiated. Running forward, he laid his hand on her shoulder. 'Come along with us. You can't give no account of yourself; you're Government for all your fine bobbery.'

'You need not hold me; I am willing to go with you.'

'Don't seem in liquor, Tom.'

'Been fighting, though. Got a black eye.'

Both men were now satisfied as to Maida's character, and doubted not they were assisting Government in the suppression of convict vice in taking Maida in charge.

Their belief in the character of their prisoner strengthened, and their desire to further the views of Government weakened, as they approached a public-house, which, like nearly all the one hundred and eighty taverns of Hobart Town, stood at the street's corner — the prominent ally of sin!

The men drew back and conferred together. They shook hands, and then said to Maida:

'Young woman, it's after hours; but that's no hindrance to the chap in here. The pass! let's forget it over a jolly drop We'll be tight about your being out; and, what's more, we'll see you safe home after we've spread it a bit. Under constable's care nobody 'll say a word to you. I often take the women to Brickfield, and they generally sport a swig at the Eagle-Hawk.'

Mistaking the expression on her face, the initiated thought Maida suspected the sincerity of his offer; so taking her arm, and attempting to draw her towards the door of the house, he exclaimed:

'Come, my lassie; I pledge you in a dram. We are no better than each other, when once we get in here — I forget our belts, and you forget your pass.'

'She's up to a thing or two; she doubts you yet,' said Tom.

'I doubt nothing that comes from a convict constable,' replied Maida, wresting her arm from a grasp more hateful than the official one. 'I doubt no breach of trust from men who would never be in office could free men vile enough be found to do their masters' bidding.'

'She ain't Government!' cried Tom, in a fright lest he had betrayed himself in his hurry to exercise his power.

'I am Government,' said Maida; 'and I am out without a pass; and I command you to take me to the Watch-house.'

'She's drunk, Tom; I'll swear to that. We'll get a glass then — me if I don't give her her wish, and something more too, to-morrow: make a note of what she said against Government, whilst I touch up the chap here.'

The initiated went round the corner, and, tapping at a little back window, whistled a signal.

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The back door opened. He went in, and having stayed a few moments, returned with two glasses of liquor. Giving one to Tom, he offered the other to Maida, with:

'Now, come; you can't say nay to that, or you ain't Government. Off with it, and about your business. You know you look deuced handsome humbugging us. We ain't the men to hand over a handsome woman when she'll make herself agreeable a bit.'

Maida took the glass and flung it and its contents into the road. The smash drew an exclamation from the men and the exclamation reached the ears of a gentleman who was crossing at the top of the street. The gentleman stopped and gazed earnestly towards the spot whence the noise proceeded; and then hastening forward, came in sight of the group before the constables could move off in marching order.

'It's the parson!' cried Tom.

'He's been watching us; no use shamming with he,' muttered the other constable.

'It's my master!' cried Maida, moving as if to him.

The initiated pulled her back.

'You've humbugged us long enough, and now wait and take your luck. Jolly trick to bolt as soon as you know your game's down.'

Agitation was visible in Mr. Herbert's countenance as by the clear moonlight Maida distinguished each feature; but his voice was calm and masterly.

'Maida, where have you been? We have been seeking you since five o'clock, when we first learned that you had not returned from Trinity Parsonage. Poor Emmeline is very anxious, and your master disappointed.'

A searching glance accompanied these words. The smell of spirits was strong, and the swelling on her forehead indicative of a brawl.

But though these suspicious tokens puzzled Mr. Herbert, they did not mislead him. There was that peculiar curl about Maida's lip, of which he had learned the meaning since his more intimate acquaintance with her.

He felt thankful that his brother had taken the opposite direction in search of her, for his feelings, already irritated at the notion that he had been deceived by one in whom he had confided much against his will, were in no mood to bear the contest for which, by the cool defiance of her voice, Maida seemed prepared.

'Where I have been I cannot tell you, sir; but now I am going to the Watch-house. I have desired these men to do their duty; as they refuse, I go to surrender myself to Government.'

'She's drunk, sir.'

'And you would make her more so. I relieve you of your charge.'

'Please your reverence, I must take her on, for she's out without a pass,' interposed Tom.

'Leave her,' said Mr. Herbert sternly, 'and go learn what your duty is before you attempt to perform it. What means that broken glass lying there, and that bottle thrust into yonder window?'

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'You won't be hard upon us a cold night like this, sir? 'Tis often cold here, sir.'

'Ward, I'm ashamed of you; if you forgot your duty I cannot mine. I must report you; this is not the first time you have been guilty of betraying your trust in this shameless manner.'

'Please, sir, wouldn't you like to hear our charge against the woman?' persisted Tom.

'Go!' repeated Mr. Herbert, waving his hand indignantly.

'You had better hear it, sir,' said Maida.

'I will hear it from no one but yourself, Maida.'

Again waving his hand, he watched the crest-fallen officials move slowly down Collins Street, and then, turning to Maida, he looked steadily at her, and asked an account of her strange disappearance.

The scornful smile had faded from her lip during Mr. Herbert's interview with the men; her judgment had had time to work, and it convinced her that wherever blame might rest, it could not on the clergyman, who had done more than his public duty in going to seek her, and who would only be doing his public duty were he to arraign her for infringement of convict discipline.

She felt that he regarded her not as a prisoner who had absconded, and must be found for the mere purpose of receiving due punishment, but as a fellow-creature who was in danger, and therefore to be rescued. He had sought her, not vindictively, but sorrowfully; he was now anxious to hear her story, not that he might form a case for the police-court, but to ascertain what had befallen herself. Generally she would prefer that the negative in each of the foregoing suppositions should be the case; her haughty spirit would choose rather the chastisement than the pardon, the anger than the sympathy of most persons. Not so with Mr Herbert; though her impulsive temper often made her grieve him, and though the deep-seated sense of injury which burnt within, making her careless of results and scornful of pity often caused her to reject his proffered sympathy, and turn coldly from his ministerial exhortations, yet she revered his earnestness, and her soul paid secret tribute of admiration to the unflagging zeal that remained steadfast and self-possessed in spite of opposition.

She sometimes found the thought, 'What will Mr. Herbert say to this?' exerting a restraining influence on her actions. She would imperiously shake the thought from her with the inquiry, 'Can my state be bettered or made worse by anyone's opinion of me?':But, to her infinite annoyance, the thought would come creeping back, when to fortify herself against it by turning more coldly from his kindness, and by increasing her rigidity of demeanour, was her only resource to again rid herself of it.

The time had not come for the bowing of Maida's soul before the cross borne so meekly, yet upraised so fearlessly in her sight. Courage, O man of God! Think not with the Religious Instructor of the transport that there is no hidden meaning in that compressed lip and haughty exterior; think not that within that icy surface all is cold and lifeless as it would have you deem. The troubling of the waters commences deep within, then upward, upward, till the whole leaps in trembling vitality beneath the potent touch. There may burst no response from the forbidding stillness of that spiritual night, but may it not be that all its powers are rapt in the mighty question, 'Are these things so?' and can find no space or mood to solve thy lesser importunings?

'Well, Maida,' gently said Mr. Herbert, having waited for a reply, 'can you not confide in me? I am anxious to hear what has happened, before you meet your master.'

Maida longed to tell him all, in order to ease the disquietude apparent through the gentle voice and calmly-searching gaze; but poor Sam — ah, he was friendless!



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The lean, pale visage, and the fixed, staring eye of the miserable lad came before her. She felt she was the more capable of enduring punishment — or worse than punishment, Mr. Herbert's and Emmeline's patient disappointment — than Sam of bearing an additional weight of sentence, stripes, and sorrow.

'Can you trust me, sir?'

'I can and do, Maida; but I hope this trust is not to be instead of an explanation of that blow disfiguring your brow. You will not keep my poor child in suspense?'

'Miss Evelyn would not wish to get a poor, wretched, friendless creature into trouble.'

'You are not friendless, Maida, if you are wretched.'

'I do not speak of myself, sir; I could not tell you what has occurred without getting a poor lad into trouble. You should know sir, that chastisements are administered both hastily and indiscriminately on convicts; though the poor fellow had nothing to do with either my absence or this blow, he would doubtless be dealt with as a party in the offence which I should be obliged to report, were I to account for my absence. Can you trust me with my secret, sir?'

'I repeat I trust you, Maida, and half gladly. To have a struggle between duty and inclination is a disturbance to a minister, and your confidence might produce that effect in me; but my brother — your master — how will he permit your silence? He is strict where he considers convict discipline has been wilfully infringed.'

'He may send me before a magistrate, but he cannot force me to speak.'

'Maida, I must be plain with you' (Mr. Herbert's voice trembled). 'I fear my brother will do that. He is determined to take extreme measures, for he thinks you have deceived him; and how is he to know to the contrary if you persist in making a mystery of your conduct? You were sent out at three o'clock in the afternoon, and now it is ten o'clock at night.'

'Mr. Evelyn does not disbelieve me any more than you do, sir; but he will not own that he believes me, because he is a proud convict-holder, and will not condescend to those whom the law places beneath his feet. He finds in me a spirit as proud as his own, and he delights in trying to wring a confession from it.'

'Maida! Maida!' cried Mr. Herbert, shaking his head sadly; 'have you not too much delicacy to speak thus to me of my brother?'

'Delicacy! what delicacy? You mock me, sir. A debased, degraded convict, who daily adds to her debasement and degradation — what delicacy should be found in her? Would Government allow it to remain in her? Would it be fitting, I ask?'

'Most unfitting! therefore, as a debased, degraded convict, I command you not to speak thus of so kind a master who bears with whims that others would punish as sins and who never punishes but where punishment is deserved.'

The stern quiet of his voice struck into Maida's every nerve — she felt the justice of the rebuke — she wished she had not provoked it — she wished she could forbear to provoke it further, but she was aroused, passion quivered in her breast and formed itself into speech almost against her will.

'Then I am ready to bear my deserved punishment. Let him send me to court, there my silence shall be as unbroken as before my master; for not in opposition to any particular person, but because I choose it, I shut

myself to inquiry.'

'Then I must leave you, Maida; I cannot become a party to your wilfulness. You must go to the punishment I begin to think you deserve, and on which I am sure Mr. Evelyn will insist, if you appear before him in your present state.'

'I shall rejoice to go to court and receive the infliction that will follow. I shall glory in the punishment as another means of concentrating to one supreme evil the mass of degradation that has accumulated in me. I yearn for the completion that shall leave me no possibility of further infamy -- when there shall be no more convictions to stifle -- no sharp compunctions to blunt -- no more hopes to disappoint -- no feelings to wound -- no heart to suffer -- no soul to save; when I am all this, then shall I be what convict law has sought to make me I then, having borne all, braved all, and become all, its demands will be satisfied, and it will bid me go in peace to that place where peace never comes.'

Mr. Herbert shuddered. He remembered that she had worked herself to a similar frenzy on the occasion of his first visit to her in prison, and dreaded a similar result; but looking earnestly at her, he perceived that the pallor of her cheek was the blanching of fierce excitement, and not of approaching exhaustion.

He purposely delayed his movements, walking slowly, and occasionally stopping altogether, to give Maida more time to recover her equanimity, and himself longer opportunity to reflect how to act.

When they reached the Lodge, Mr. Herbert held the knocker as a last delay before ushering her into his brother's presence; he threw an inquiring glance; she received it with a quiet smile.

'You need not fear, sir; I can meet my master now.'

'But can you meet the trouble which may ensue; or have you determined to avert it by satisfying your master?'

'There will be no trouble, sir; my master's displeasure will be all I shall have to bear.'

She laid a peculiar emphasis on the word all, an emphasis which Mr. Herbert understood. He knew that while meaner souls would slink away congratulating themselves that they had escaped so easily 'master's anger,' their only punishment, her proud spirit would suffer more in bending itself to conciliate that anger, than in encountering the active strife of bodily penance; and he believed that had not her will been stronger than her pride, and her purpose mightier than both, she would have chosen rather to take on herself the consequences of a continued resistance, than submit to her master's interrogations, which she knew would be at once austere and cutting.

'Is your master home?' asked Mr. Herbert eagerly, as Tammy opened the door.

'No, sir; he came home once with a constable, and then went straight out again and 's been out ever since.'

'Then make haste to bed, Maida; I will explain to Mr Evelyn to-night; since we have arrived first he will not expect to see you, and you are faint and fatigued.'

'I am neither, thank you, sir; I will see the master to-night.'

'No -- I wish you to go to bed; I take all responsibility on myself.'

Maida retreated, but with no intention of retiring to rest.

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'Won't you catch it! The master's ramping like a great mad bull; he'd bellow if his rage would let him,' was Maida's salutation from Tammy, as she entered the kitchen.

And as she spoke a summons was heard on the street door.

The women started, Gooze sheered off, and Maida seated herself to await in silence the event of that knock.

Mr. Herbert issued from his study to meet his brother.

'She is home, George.'

'Did she come, or did you bring her?'

'I brought her.'

'I wish you hadn't then! I'm tired of the pranks of that woman; punished she must be, and I'd rather she had got it from others than from me. I detest appearing against the poor wretches. I must send her though; she's riding it a trifle too high, and wants a little reminder.'

He pulled the bell violently: all the household knew the meaning of that bell, and winks, with shrugs of shoulders, conveyed unutterable telegrams from one convict to another, when Maida herself arose to go and answer the summons.

'Send her up,' said Mr. Evelyn, as the door opened.

'I am here, sir.'

'Shut the door and listen to me. Do you remember I warned you that it would be your own fault if ever you heard more of what I told you when I hired you from the Anson? When standing just as you are standing now you promised obedience to my commands.'

'Perfectly, sir.'

'Now, don't answer in that manner, it is treating me with a disrespect I will no longer bear; for my forbearance harms you without benefiting me. You have deceived me, Maida, and I now mean to show you how I deal with those who abuse my leniency, and with what power convict law invests the master and controls the servant. I was unwilling to exert that power; you have defied it, and now you shall feel it; though still unwilling, I consider it my duty to exert it.'

Not a muscle of Maida's face moved.

'Two hours ago I should not have been unwilling, for I was irritated at your abuse of my confidence. Had you then come back, I should have handed you over to Government without hesitation, and without compunction. I am glad you did not, for my sake as well as for your own.'

Still not a muscle moved.

'What have you to say for yourself? how do you account for this freak? speak, Gwynnham -- speak --'

'I have nothing to say, sir.'

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'No nonsense, and no lies, Maida. Convicts don't run risks for nothing. I won't be made a fool of. If you can't give an explanation to me, you shall to the police magistrate.'

The large eyes that had till now been fixed calmly on his face sent a hasty glance to Mr. Herbert, and then dropped to the floor.

Mr. Herbert lounged on the sofa, hiding, in a careless posture, the anxiety he felt for the issue of the conference. From between the fingers that were pressed to his forehead, he was intently watching the struggle. He dreaded punishment for Maida. It might undo all that he hoped was working in her. It might ruin her, body and soul. He perceived that his brother inclined to clemency, now his first rush of anger and vexation had subsided; but if Maida should become impetuous, how might not her impulse hurry her to provoke her own destruction? With what thankfulness, therefore, did he see the large eyes again raised calmly, and hear her say, in—a submissive voice:

'Will you spare me, sir, and hear from Mr. Herbert all I dare tell by way of accounting for my strange behaviour?'

Mr. Evelyn turned to his brother with a look that said:

'Well?'

'May Maida leave the room, then, George?'

'No, I am sick of such humbug. I am not going to be so tender over her. Anything that is not too bad for her to do, is not too bad for her to hear. She's got into trouble, I suppose, and now's ashamed of it.'

'She is so far in trouble that she cannot account for herself, without involving a poor creature, who is not guilty.'

'Lucy, I suppose, who abetted her attempt to escape. I must forbid her the house.'

'No, sir, Lucy had no part in it.'

Maida was really alarmed, and spoke quickly and warmly:

'What Mr Herbert says is true, sir. If needs be, I'll bear any punishment, but cannot bring trouble on a poor friendless lad.'

'Your punishment will involve no one,' said Mr. Evelyn drily.

'Then I am willing to receive it, sir.'

'No humbug, young woman! You are not more willing than I.'

'As a favour to me, George, if even you do not forbear to punish her, will you forbear to question her?'

'Supposing I oblige Mr. Herbert, Maida, by ceasing to inquire how you occupied yourself during your absence you have still the absence itself to be charged with. Are you aware of the heavy punishment incurred by an absconder?'

'The punishment is great, but I had no intention of absconding.'

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'A fair excuse, since your intention of not being found is frustrated! How will such pleasantry influence the magistrate? Out here we do not punish for intentions so much as for acts. Your intention might have been laudable, but since your act did not agree with it, we must give you a hint to let it do so for the future.'

'Your hint will be more easily given than understood, sir.'

'Go to bed now; you shall hear more to-morrow. I wish no uproar to-night.'

'There will be no uproar to-night, sir, beyond that which, I hear, has been already.'

'Go! do not add insolence to your obstinacy.'

It was a fortunate dismissal. On both sides the elements were gathering for an outbreak.

'Strange, strange mortal!' exclaimed Mr. Evelyn, as the door closed upon her. 'There's no working her into a bona fide convict, try what you will. The deuce has hold of her, unless something much better has. She is either a masterpiece of conscienceless deceit — or —'

'She is a mystery, George, that neither you nor I can fathom.'

'Hang your mysteries, Herbert! they are plaguy hard to handle.'

'You will not give her in charge, then?'

'Not this time; but I think I shall send her to Brickfields just to frighten her. She must be taught submission before she gets other masters, or she'll never get her ticket — never be out of trouble.'

'If it be only for my Emmeline's sake, let me implore you not to send her away to the depot. Em will quite fret to lose her, and the poor woman herself could never obtain so good a situation. As you say, endless miseries would ensue.'

'Oh, Wilson would reserve her. I'd let him into the secret. Em shan't lose her; and as to the woman herself, I only wish to —'

Mr. Herbert shook his head, and Mr. Evelyn asked:

'Well, what would you do? I own I'm puzzled by her. During all the ten years I tried my hand at reforming prisoners, I never had such a difficult bargain I Cases handed over to me as desperate have become manageable if not reformed. I abhor the Government system of heaping punishment on punishment, and sentence on sentence, and have always resisted it as a hardening, debasing process; but a little well-timed severity, or judicious correction, I found beneficial in showing my convicts what they had to gain by reminding them what they had lost.'

'I quite agree with you, both as to the brutalising effect of incessant coercion, and the impossibility of wholly foregoing stringent measures in convict treatment; but I doubt George, whether in Maida's case of to-night judicial severity would be well timed, or correction judicious.'

'Your grounds of doubt?'

'Another doubt — namely, that severity is merited, or correction deserved.'

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'Humph! Then you believe that her attempt to escape was not premeditated, but only induced by sudden temptation?'

'I believe that no attempt to escape has been made.'

'Does she deny the attempt? If so, I'm inclined to believe her. Somehow I cannot think she lies, though — '

'She neither denies nor asserts anything; she merely begs that her conduct may be punished or passed over without a confession.'

'Yes, but she begs after the fashion of a highwayman — "Give, or I'll take!'"

'Her spirit has not been trained by gentle influences. If I mistake not, it has been tortured into unnatural developments, and being of a temper too lofty to sink in mean submission, and too courageous to be trampled upon, it has sprung from its tormentors, and now defies with haughty scorn the fate it cannot vanquish, and makes a proud triumph of bearing that beneath which others would droop despondingly, or yield servilely. The effect of God's affliction is to subdue, not to crush; to break to meek contrition, not to drive to desperation. But man can rarely take punishment from his fellow-man, and not be hardened by it for man lays down one code of vengeance, and abides by it, irrespective of character, and unheeding of results. Man's judgments too often inculcate unrighteousness, because erring in themselves. God's judgments teach righteousness, because founded on righteousness; He knows the frame ere He deals the blow. The leprosy of Miriam is not as the leprosy of Gehazi.'

'True, Herbert, true. Maida shall have the benefit of our doubt. I had her good alone in view in desiring to chastise her, and that I only meant to do by a good frightening. On my honour, though, I think we should try to prepare her for the exigencies of convict life. She does well with you and me, but any day she may change owners; then what would become of the poor thing? Who would brook her haughty manner and imperious replies? So soon as one sentence expired, she would get new trouble for insolence and refractoriness.'

'But if we patiently and prayerfully continue our work of forbearance with her, may not she gradually acquire the power of self-restraint, so necessary to her as a prisoner?'

'Ah, it's very fine for you to preach! It is your profession, and easy for you to practise, for you can control yourself.'

'It was not always easy, George; once my will controlled me, and not I my will.'

'I hope it will be once upon a time with me too, one day. I know your prayers drive that way; you can't wish it more than I do. But I suppose Miss Em would tell me "Idle wishes catch no fishes," eh, Herbert?'

But Mr. Herbert had left the room.

'Herbert,' called his brother, following him into his study, 'Maida is not in bed, I hear. I shall just have her down, and give her a caution, and so let the absconding mystery drop. She must have a touch or two on the subject of her supercilious speeches. 'Twon't do to let her off scot free.'

'Will you reprove the speeches of one that is desperate — which are as wind?' said Mr. Herbert, pointing to the twenty-sixth verse of the sixth chapter of Job.

'Bother it! you've always Scripture ready to defeat me.'

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Uncle Ev swung round on his foot, and out of the room. He did not disturb Maida that night, or rather morning, for it was on the stroke of one o'clock; and when Maida should have appeared to receive her master's decision it was found that she was too ill to leave her bed. The chill night air had entered her prostrate frame, as she lay unconscious on the earth, and the heavy dews had moistened her limbs, to stiffen them into the poignant cramps of rheumatic fever.

### CHAPTER XXIV. H.M.GENERAL HOSPITAL, HOBART TOWN.

DEAR no! Mrs. Evelyn cannot think of allowing Maida to be invalided in her house; the mere mention of so ridiculous an impossibility calls forth the habitual little short laugh.

'Fever, too! dear, dear! how very amusing George can be when he likes, or rather, when the girls put him up to such nonsense! Really, though, illness is too serious a matter to make fun of — it might come upon one of us at any time — George should know better.'

And that George does not know better Mrs. Evelyn soon discovers in looking at his forehead. His face is grave as grave can be, on perceiving which she puts the question to him as a man of sober sense. Is it reasonable, or does Government expect holders to be bothered with sick convicts when there is an hospital expressly for their reception? This she will do if Mr. Evelyn likes — she will lend the blankets in which Maida has already slept (no others, on any account!) to wrap her from the air during the removal from the house, but even this she can only do on condition that he will faithfully promise to deliver them to a laundress on his way back, to have the infection washed out of them. She is sure that this is all that can be expected from her; why, even English masters and mistresses send away their servants when they are ill. Mr. Evelyn suggests that the poorest servant in England has her friends to go to, but the convict in sickness is desolate and friendless. To go back to Government is the only resource of the unfortunate sufferer, and he considers that the objection to this resource is one entitled to respect and not to censure.

However, Mr. Evelyn does not insist that Maida shall stay; he thinks it is only right his wife's wishes should be consulted, as she would have the chief responsibility and trouble; at the same time he says he shall be very glad if she will consent to let the poor thing be laid up in the house.

Mrs. Evelyn dearly loves to please her husband, but really the present mode of pleasing him is so odd an one, that she cannot bring herself to adopt it. If the complaint were anything else, now, she might not mind so much; but rheumatic fever is so painful and disagreeable, she must have Maida taken away — and that at once.

Bridget thinks her aunt's reasons go exactly by contraries; to her, the very painfulness and disagreeableness of the disorder are reasons why Maida should not be sent among strangers. However, she holds her peace, having learnt by experience that Mrs. Evelyn's view of convicts will never be altered by means short of a new pair of mental eyes.

So Sanders's cab is fetched, and when it stops at the Lodge, and he is informed who is his passenger and whither bound, he declares:

'Lucy'll be darned sorry for to hear of it — most as sorry as I be.'

Followed by many kind wishes, the cab drives slowly down Macquarie Street, Sanders hardly daring to touch the reins, for fear 'the horse should jerk Maida, seeing he wasn't brought up to carrying of people to the hospital.' Turning into Liverpool Street, the handsome frontage of the hospital appears in sight, and relieves Sanders of a load of anxiety, which has oppressed his countenance as well as his heart; so much so, that had he been mounted on a hearse, he could not have looked more dolefully apprehensive of misbehaviour on the part of his horse.

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The porter issues from the tall iron gates.

'All right!' says Sanders, preparing to drive past the man.

'But all is not right,' chooses to think the porter; he is not going to be so easily baulked of gratifying his curiosity, which, under the name of official inspection, he always pampers, to the annoyance of visitors.

Popping his head into the window, he quickly pops it back again; a nod from Mr. Evelyn has settled the difficulty. Without venturing a word he touches his hat, unlocks the gate, and admits Sanders, who has dismounted in order to lead the vehicle through the garden. The building before which he stops is the Female Hospital, the entry door of which stands open, displaying a broad staircase. From some invisible corner the matron comes forward, and is quickly surrounded by a bevy of brown-gowned, white-capped women, who have issued from equally invisible sources.

Orders are given to take Maida Gwynnham to ward No. 4, and put her into bed No. 10. Whereupon two women dive into the heap of blankets lying within the cab, but they can only draw groans from the heap.

Mr. Evelyn thinks he can manage to lift out Maida, if he may be permitted to carry her upstairs. The matron smiles assent, and Mr. Evelyn leans into the cab, and speaking in a kinder voice than many would suppose him able to produce, he says:

'If you can only get your arm round my neck, Maida, I'll carry you to your bed.'

Maida makes the effort, and her master raises her gently and bears her steadily to No. 4, then, whispering words that bring a faint smile of recognition to her lips, he bids her farewell; but ere he quits the ward he looks about him, and asks:

'Who is nurse here?'

A grizzly haired, middle-aged female curtseys 'I am.'

Her disappointment is extreme when Mr. Evelyn merely says:

'Then remember that patient is my servant.'

'The poor creature shall be well minded, sir,' she answers stowing away her disappointment where she hopes it will not be observed.

Mr. Evelyn knows there is no necessity to recommend Maida to the matron's special care, the kindness of that worthy woman being well known in the colony, and ever warmly attested by all who, in the misfortune of illness, have had the good fortune to find themselves under Mrs. Cott's protection.

The house surgeon visited Maida shortly after Mr. Evelyn's departure. He questioned her, and made notes of her answers; then, giving the nurse sundry directions, he left the ward. In the course of the afternoon a mysterious personage entered, and marching straight to Maida's bed, stuck into the wall above her head a ticket about three inches square; then conning it through in mysterious silence, and nodding a mysterious nod, he marched straight out again, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left.

As soon as he was gone, the nurse stepped over to read the ticket, and having read it she gave a dissatisfied grunt. From that moment, or rather from the combined moments of the fixing of the ticket and the grunting of the grunt, Maida became a part of the establishment. Several of the convalescent patients tottered across the room to elicit



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what small subject-matter of gossip the square white card might afford them; then, gathering round the fire, they began to discuss the probabilities of the new-comer's career, in a suppressed humdrum voice, which irritated her nerves far more than a reasonable amount of sound would have annoyed her head.

It is known to all how unexplained trifles worry an invalid, even one who in health may be the last to be affected by extraordinary occurrences. Maida, though distracted by the racking pains in her limbs, felt a sensation of terror overcoming her as one by one the women crept over to her bed, read, and crept back again. She had just enough consciousness to suppose that the attracting object was similar to that which drew her attention to the heads of all the other stretchers in the room; but then, 'What is written on the square marks?' she asked, and 'What can mine be about?' Her thoughts perplexed her and her pains tortured her, until, being unable to bear both perplexity and torture, she tried to raise herself to find out what Government could possibly have to say about her in connection with the hospital, but the attempt failed, and with a scream she sank on her pillow.

'Nurse, do tell me what's on the ticket,' she murmured, when, in answer to the scream, the nurse approached, and, as though anodyne issued from her fingers' ends, gave several small pats to the bedclothes, smoothing away wrinkles that only existed in her own brain.

'Tell 'e what?'

Maida repeated her wish.

'Trumpery!' and the nurse turned away.

Maida groaned. The square white cards seemed to enter into her as a part of her sufferings; her head ached in trying to explain the mystery; the cards grew larger and shrunk smaller as her bewildered senses watched those which were exactly opposite; and then, for a moment wandering altogether, she connected them with the ticket-of-leave of which she had heard so much, and stretching her hand to receive it, a sharp pain restored her to consciousness, when with feverish impatience her mind again set in to work out the problem of the card.

'Nurse, I shan't sleep to-night if you don't tell me what it is,' she at last said.

'Curse the ticket! you won't a-get any sleep otherwise, don't 'e flatter yerself.'

'I say, you might as well tell her, nurse; it's mortal bad to be mazing over anything when a body's sick,' interposed a patient.

'Bad or good, I won't have her told! she shall learn that I'm missus here, as much as somebody else was coming out in the Rose of Britain.'

And the nurse clenched her fist, but whether at Maida or at an unpleasant recollection of her own, is a question open to dispute.

From the submissive air with which the pleader dropped her cause and herself into a chair, it was evident that the nurse was correct, and that whoever was mistress elsewhere she was mistress there -- in ward No. 4 of her Majesty's hospital.

Twilight dimmed the room and all within it into indistinctness, but with painful clearness the cards still loomed on Maida's distorted vision. They appeared to have drawn so close to her that she thought she had only to put forth her hand to grasp one, but the inability to put it forth was equal to the cards being at a distance.

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There was now a general movement among the women: each went to her stretcher, and, sitting at its foot, prepared to take her place for the night; the last lingerer had just wrapped herself in the bedclothes, when the matron's kind but careworn face shone in amongst them to take her third official survey of her family, as she called the patients.

The nurse went round with her, showering expressions of pity as she went — pity which she hastily scoured off the patients' minds the instant Mrs. Cott was out of healing. Stopping in turn at Maida, she raised her hands.

'Lor' 'a mercy! this new poor creature suffers dreadful — and so demented too — she keeps on about her ticket.'

'Ah! poor thing.' And kind-hearted Mrs. Cott bent down and consoled her, thinking it most natural that a prisoner should be anxious for her ticket-of-leave. 'Don't you fret now; this all goes in your sentence; you are not losing time; so cheer up, there's a good girl. You'll soon be better.'

'Do tell me what it means?'

'Poor soul! I'll tell you all about it to-morrow,' replied the matron, passing to the next number.

Maida closed her eyes with an audible groan. All about her were equally cruel.

When Mrs. Cott and nurse were at the farthest end of the ward, the woman who had before pleaded leaned out of her stretcher — which happened to be next to Maida's — and whispered:

'Don't you fret; the ticket's nothing; it's only to say who you are.'

The nurse stepped outside with Mrs. Cott, and the woman, whom we shall call Baker, hastily snatched the card from its frame and showed it to Maida.

'Here, quick; this is all; I'll read it to you: "Maida Gwynnham, alias Martha Grylls, passholder 24; Rose of Britain; Protestant."'

'Is that all?'

'Yes, except a Lattern word, which means what's the matter with you; that's all, on my word. Nothing about your ticket, you see; you won't have that till you're half done.'

'I don't care about my ticket,' groaned Maida, almost fretfully. 'Are you sure my crimes are not written there?'

'Bless me, no! more like your doctor's stuff would be down. What's your crimes to do with what you'll have here?'

Maida's mind again wandered in a confusion of past, present, and future. In a dreamy tone she whispered:

'Norwell isn't mentioned, is he?'

'Nor — what? No; nothing's there, I tell you. That Lattern word, I'll spell it out for you to-morrow; but I know it don't mean more than what I say; it's the doctor's way of writing your sickness — rheumatics, I take it to be. She's coming, quick, down!'

But the caution was needless Maida being already as prostrate as pain and fever could lay her. Baker had barely time to slip the card back into its groove, ere, Argus-eyed and suspicious, nurse walked about the ward, pulling at a large excrescence which disfigured her nether lip; searching meanwhile from stretcher to stretcher for traces of

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the treason that she doubted not had discovered itself during her momentary absence; until resting on No. 10, her eye seemed unwilling to search beyond. She stood still, and lapsed into a profound contemplation — alternately darting emphatic malignity at the new patient, and tugging energetically at the superfluous flesh, which always suffered more or less in proportion to the amount of suggestive aid required to mark out her plans.

But for this unsightly excrescence, Maida would probably have recognised in the nurse of ward No. 4 of her Majesty's general hospital her former enemy, the ex-lunatic of the transport. The alteration in her dress, too, may have served to obscure her identity. The shock of grizzled hair no longer stood erect from her head, but lay in heavy masses on her gaunt cheek-bones, which seemed to protrude for the express purpose of supporting the burden imposed upon them. A convict in the midst of convicts. she alone was exempt from the prison badge. Grizzled and gaunt, therefore, as she was, she became the cynosure of the sick world within the dreary precinct over which she ruled. If her movements were not worshipped, they were watched by two distinct classes incarcerated within those walls: the admiring, or prisoners who had never yet been out of Government; and the aggrieved, or prisoners who, in accepting the advantages of the house, had been obliged to resume the abominated serge — an obligation which deterred many of the better disposed from availing themselves of medical treatment, as afforded in her Majesty's hospital, until the latest moment, when, perhaps, the symptoms of their malady had seriously developed, or had progressed above the power of professional skill. A cap of white net, with generous border, and a print gown, was the dress that at once distinguished nurse from her bond-sisters, and invested her with a superiority beyond the imaginings of a 'free' mind. The eyes that noted the changes of her cap from blue to pink, from pink to orange, were eyes long weary of the perpetual brown — eyes that had little to divert the sameness of their occupation. Sweet and fresh came in the air through the open casement; but the sweetness made yet more ardent their longings for green fields and flowers, to a sight of which the tallest of their community could not aspire, for hopelessly beyond the reach of all the prisoners were the windows that admitted the tantalizing message from the outer world.

Visiting-days, that generally bring pleasant variety to the tenants of an hospital, here were rarely guilty of such kindness. Visiting—Thursday came: the utmost hope it raised was that a mate might look in, or an unusually indulgent mistress, who had expressed a wish to have her servant reserved for her, might drop in to know how much longer she would have to wait. Visiting—Thursday passed: the only disappointment it left was that such a mate or such a mistress had not come. Had the mate appeared, ten chances to one that she had been too drunk to speak, or that her visit had been delivered in haste, it being only one of necessity, the fag end of an outing which she had extorted from the master under pretext of a visit 'to poor so and so a lying sick down there.' Here looks in vain the pining mother — no daughter, with tearful affection, appears to soothe her dying pillow. Never comes the sister to whisper words of love and comfort to her sister drooping on a bed of pain and death. Weary is the little child of watching for the kind, tender smile that erewhile made it forget its sorrow. It watches and wastes, but never more draws nigh the step it strives to hear; it wastes and wastes, and soon it is missed from its little stretcher.

Here, in solitude, frets the old man. He knows he is wished dead by the nurse, who throws her services at him as you would throw a bone to appease a troublesome dog. He dotes, and calls upon his daughter, but she answers not; he reproaches her, but his reproaches do not move her; all he gets for them is a sharp rebuke from the nurse's hard, dried lips; so he sinks into puling silence; and when the last breath sets him free, the only announcement is to Government, which gladly numbers one less to the living stock within its pale, and to the chaplain of the house, who unless he be a Mr. Herbert Evelyn, grumbles that the old man did not apprise him of his intention to die, that he (the chaplain) might have arranged for his burial at a more convenient hour.

As we progress, we shall discover that nurse is wrapped about with attractions more potent than the net and print, whose changes have so great an interest for captive eyes. Grim as is her smile, we shall find that it has a peculiar value; while her frown, independent of that which is natural to so fierce a contortion, has a terror of its own — a distinct, substantial terror. By rule of the old adage, the intrinsic value of her smile is easily estimated; but her frown! who dares to calculate the amount of evil consequences condensed therein? Woe to the unfortunate who

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has the experimental computing thereof! woe to the ward and the inhabitants thereof! When a cloud gathers on nurse's brow, it is as if a thunderbolt threatened the whole community. None know where the storm may burst, or where the shock will be most keenly felt, but all know that none can escape; the flood of vengeance sweeps along, scathing all, destroying some.

The rod of office becomes a snake within her hand — a snake whose malice all must feel, whose subtilty all must dread, and whose fascination none can withstand.

When nurse stood, as we have seen her, contemplating the new victim that had come beneath her snake, how writhed that reptile within her grasp, eager at once to dart upon its prey! Its instinctive craft alone kept it back. How gloated its malignant eye on the prospect of malice lying with Maida on the bed!

But Maida was unconscious of its gloating eye. During the fortnight of pain which succeeded her admission, when sufficiently herself to connect cause and effect, she attributed the extreme discomfort she experienced wholly to her illness, which she knew to be one of the most distressing disorders. She suspected not the cruelty which, by every device, was heightening the tortures of acute rheumatism. When she implored to have her bed smoothed under her, because every crease gave her pain, nurse hastened to her help; but Maida knew not that her haste was the result of malice, glad of another opportunity to vent its spleen. And when, in the fretfulness of fever, she still complained that she was not more comfortable, nurse told her that the cause was in her own poor racked limbs, and not in the bed; and Maida believed her, not perceiving, though sharply feeling, the reason in a large, thick leather, dried into uneven folds which had been slipped in between the under sheet and blanket, for the fiendish purpose of turning her discomfort into positive suffering.

When the fever abated, and the pains gradually subsided, Maida began to look about her. Lying weak and silent, she made quiet observation of all that took place around. Then was it that she first beheld nurse with an interest, in which some past, though unremembered incident, bore a part. She felt sure the grizzled hair, the dusky brow, and uneven eyes, were not strange to her; but the excrescence puzzled her. She had never known anyone with a lip like that. How could she, therefore, have seen nurse before? — the fancy must be a freak. Quieted by this conclusion, she tried to forget the being who, without a definite reason, had become obnoxious to her. But nurse would not be forgotten. Her prim figure, like an evil genius, was ever on the dead march before her, and ever with it came back the thought to Maida that the face should be familiar, notwithstanding the conclusion, notwithstanding the lip.

'Nurse, surely I have seen you before; can you tell me where?' she asked one day, after a long endeavour to reconcile the excrescence with the face.

'The devil may care! All I know is, we've met once too often. Where I shall meet you again, I'm pretty sure of,' replied the nurse, getting uneasy under the perpetual watch of Maida's eye, fearing what it might discover if its vigilance were not checked. The women only knew her as Anne Watts — her colonial alias — and could not, therefore, assist in the search for her identity with the vague some one of Maida's recollection. But Lucy Sanders, who came to see her friend on a visiting–Thursday, at once cleared up the doubt by exclaiming, the instant she saw the nurse, 'Lor! Maida, if that isn't she that 'most killed me coming out.'

A quick glance of recognition took place, and Maida wondered how she had failed to recall the ex–lunatic in the barbarous features now grinning before her.

The first time Maida was permitted to leave her bed, she became an object of general attraction. Prison clothes dared to rival the free habiliments that had hitherto borne off all regard; and yet Maida felt friendless and desolate. She experienced that worst form of desolation — spiritual loneliness. She was surrounded by human beings; sisters in flesh and blood were very kind in inquiring how she felt after her exertion, but she was lonely amidst them, for not one heart in all those twenty forms beat sympathy with hers. Weakened by her long illness, and

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exhausted by so unusual an effort, despite her self-control, a tear worked its way to her eye. Turning to brush it off, she observed a pair of large, lustrous eyes gazing intently at her from the end of the ward. The stretcher from which these eyes looked up was on the same side as her own, therefore she had never before been able to obtain a clear view of the woman who went by the name of No. 1, and whose tearing cough and laboured breathing had excited her tender pity. The lustrous eyes were evidently trying to convey a message to her, and when Maida sent back a smile in answer to their silent appeal, they closed, as if satisfied with the present result of the interview, and No. 1 leant back on the pillows which propped her. The card above her head, in the one brief word 'phthisis,' told the story of her suffering; and what that story is, they best may know who have marked the slow fading of their dear one beneath consumption's sure decay. It was the doctor's name for her disease, but Maida, from her distant seat, could not read it; therefore she asked a neighbour what was the matter with No. 1, and received the laconic answer, 'Frettin'.'

A word as short as that on the card; but how descriptive in its brevity! how much it told of heart suffering and pain -- of hopeless longing and craving for affection -- they best may know who have heard the sighing of the prisoner, and watched the slow breaking of an anguished heart.

Seeing Maida's compassionate look, her informant continued -- 'No. 4, Crazy Sal, there, is another frettin' case in one way or another, most of them that's brought in here is Fretters, unless they's scheming.'

Maida had often been disturbed by Crazy Sal's wild cry which was so like the bray of a donkey, that, during her delirium, nothing could persuade her that one of those animals was not in the room; but being in a line with her also; she had never fully seen the poor creature, who now presented at once a pitiable and unsightly object. From the absence of hair, which had been closely shorn, every part of the road, distended face was exposed to view, the thick frilled night-cap only half covered her head, and completed the deformity, by showing to what extent it had enlarged.

As Maida turned towards her, Sally, with a horrible distortion of countenance, raised her upper lip over her large teeth and sent forth a series of brays. Maida shuddered, and asked if that cry was caused by pain. Her neighbour said she believed 'it was not; it was a noise somehow she had taken to make whenever nurse went near her -- perhaps because she wanted something "out" of her, or perhaps because dressing of the wounds hurted her -- but whichever 'tis,' she added, 'we shan't be bored with her no longer, for she's going to be removed to a closet handy, so that she may be nigh nurse, and yet out of the way of teasing us.'

Maida was soon able to get up a little every day. The first time she could walk across the room she went over and sat by Wilcox, for the gaze of whose lustrous eyes she now regularly looked directly she stepped out of bed. A secret understanding had sprung up between these two captive sisters. Maida longed for the moment when she should hear from Wilcox's lips the message that her eyes had long since delivered. But not more than Wilcox longed for the opportunity of speaking to one whom she could not but believe God's kind providence had sent to relieve her of the remediable portion of her sufferings. She felt sure that she should find in No. 10 a friend who would make the last few days of her life as easy as they might be made, by protecting her from the cruelties of the nurse; and she prayed God that her days might close before Maida's discharge again left her friendless, to what she was sure would be the redoubled malice of her enemy. She had been a silent observer of all that had taken place, and had determined, when Maida's convalescence permitted, to appeal to her on behalf of Crazy Sal and herself. She was certain the kind and fearless voice which had so often spoken cheering words to an unknown individual in the stillness of the night was one that would assert the right of a helpless idiot and dying fellow-creature.

How fervent, was the grasp with which she caught hold of Maida's hand before she had come quite close to her stretcher! How grateful became the lustrous eyes as, fatigued with her journey across the ward, Maida dropped into her seat -- the edge of No. 1's bed!

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'Are you only twenty-two, Wilcox?' asked the latter in surprise, as she read the card over her head.

'Barely that. Sickness has made me look old; sorrow, older.'

Maida pressed the hand lying within hers.

'But I deserve it all!' she added slowly; 'all, all — yes — an a great deal more.'

This was something new to Maida, so accustomed to hear convicts rail against their punishment, and term their crime the error for which they were sent out.

'You speak after my own heart, Wilcox. I like to hear of just punishment — its justice is so generally disclaimed.'

There was a bitterness of tone with great seriousness of manner in this speech. The latter only was obvious to Wilcox.

'The thought of what you may have suffered, and may still suffer,' continued Maida, 'makes me quite ill; and you know,' she added half smilingly, 'nurse will make out I want some more of that nauseous stuff if I look flushed or tired. Do tell me in what way she has it in her power to annoy you.'

Had Wilcox been in a smiling mood, the word annoy would have drawn a smile from her; but as she was far too anxious to think of anything but nurse, she raised herself and looked around. No one was nigh; the convalescents were grouped around the fire; the bed next her was empty and the oppressor had gone into the next ward.

Lowering her voice, she replied:

'She has ways that you would never dream of, and such natural things that if the doctor or Mrs. Cott find them out they only think it's all right. One thing, though, isn't so but that has never been found out. When I've offended her very much, when all the others are asleep, she creeps over and shakes me — shakes me till I'm 'most dead — and then the cough comes on, and doesn't stop for the night. I dread this shaking most of all, for it terrifies me so; and then next morning the doctors come, and she says I've had a shocking night; hadn't I better have another blister? And they say yes — and oh, my chest is most eaten away already, yet she gets me another whenever she's angry.'

'Wretch!' stamped Maida; 'where is she?'

But Wilcox's imploring face stopped her.

'And pray what have you done to merit all this at her hand?' asked Maida, in a haughty tone, forgetful in her anger to distinguish between the offenders and the offended.

'When first I came I resisted some of her wicked ways. She offered to burn the blister that was ordered for me if I'd give her my glass of wine, but of course I wouldn't; 'twas then she began, and ever since it's been dreadful.'

'I suppose she knew me too well to attempt such tricks, but I have suspected some foul play of the sort with some of the patients.'

'Oh, she carries on a regular trade; half the physic is thrown out; those who are not fond of drink gladly exchange their wine or beer for leave to throw away their medicine or escape a blister. Those that don't yield she pays out by telling the doctor that they require something or other that they dislike. Oh, Maida! I feel very down sometimes when I think that I ought to do my best to stop these things. Satan puts it into my mind that I can't love my Saviour because I don't — but — '

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'God knows what would ensue, and does not expect it of you, I should think. Is there not a text that says, "He knoweth our frames"?' interrupted Maida.

'Ah, yes; thank you for remembering it. Now do go, and mind — mind not to speak of what I have told you; I've made up my mind to bear it — it can't be for long.'

'And it shan't either!' Maida answered indignantly. 'However, you may trust me,' and her voice and countenance softened.

Wilcox smiled; then, very fatigued, Maida tottered back to her chair just as the rattle of panikins announced tea.

One morning, shortly after her visit to Wilcox, as Maida lay waiting for her summons to get up, which was now always given at ten o'clock, she fancied she heard a stifled sob proceed from No. 1, over whom nurse was leaning to dress her blister. She sat up and listened; another muffled sob. Without a word she slid out of her stretcher and crossed the ward; she stood behind nurse, and saw Wilcox lying (so that she could only look at the ceiling) with a handkerchief stuffed in her mouth. Her chest was bared, and on it there was the sore of the blister from which the skin had been taken clearly off, the raw, irritated flesh beneath was laid open and raised in uneven lumps. Nurse was strewing salt over the fresh wound, and as the salt fell she asked in a whining voice:

'Does it hurt you, my dear? It's only the flour I'm putting over it just to suck up the water 'fore I put on the plaister.'

Another sob was the only answer.

At the same instant Wilcox felt the handkerchief drawn out of her mouth, and nurse felt herself dragged backward.

'Coward! Wretch! Tyrant! You shall leave this place!'

The nurse was bewildered for a moment, and then bristling up, she asked:

'And pray what's all this about? Go back to your place you bad woman! Fine for a rheumatic patient to be out without socks or shoes!'

'Finish dressing that poor creature's blister; then you shall know what it is about. How will you get off that salt you've rubbed into her?' haughtily demanded Maida.

'Salt? You barbarous hussy! Don't 'e, for love's sake, talk in one breath of salt, and that poor mortal's sore flesh — it's enough to make one's heart leap out.'

'How will you get it off?' sternly demanded Maida, at the same time raising Wilcox on her pillow.

'What the deuce does she mean?' wondered nurse, looking from one to the other of the women, who, in the different stages of dressed, partly dressed, and not dressed at all, had gathered round the disputants.

'Very like she mistook the flour for salt,' suggested one.

'To be sure. Fool I was for not guessing that!'

Then, turning to Maida:

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'If 'twern't that that thought was enough to riz your bile, I'd make you beg pardon for your insolence; but I'll look it over — only mind your own business for the future. People that meddles is always in the wrong. Salt! Me — I can't get over it!'

'Was it salt or flour, Wilcox?' asked Maida imperturbably.

'I only felt something cold falling. The sore always smarts, so I can't tell.'

'Here, woman, if you ain't satisfied, look for yourself; what's this?'

Without doubt it was flour that nurse displayed in her hand; she passed it round for the inspection of the crowd, who not only touched it, but tasted it. The verdict was unanimously given for nurse.

'Then I beg your pardon, nurse. I withdraw my accusation; but certainly my eyes never more deceived me,' said Maida.

'Well, now, just to show I'm not affronted, here's my hand.'

But Maida refused it, saying:

'Thank you, I have not done yet.' (To the women:) 'You had better go and dress; the doctors will be here before we are ready.'

Her voice was that of command, and all, except nurse's allies, turned to obey her. She then demanded what explanation could be given of the handkerchief.

'Bless us! what's the woman after? What handkerchief d'ye mean?'

'I put it in my mouth, Maida,' muttered Wilcox, faint with terror.

'Did you, poor darling?' replied Maida.

'No patience with such cant! Fine pity yours is, keeping of a dying creature, 'most naked, in the cold! Here, my dear, let me finish you; you are starved, ain't you?'

Wilcox shuddered when operations recommenced, but this time without cause; for almost tenderly did nurse complete her task, for some reason or other substituting a piece of fine carded cotton for the sperm-plaister. Though nonplussed, Maida was by no means convinced, and she determined to say something to the doctors which should make them ask to see the sore.

When they appeared, to her delight, Dr. Lamb was among them. He was a general favourite with the women. If any favour had to be sought, it was always reserved for Dr. Lamb's day.

She seated herself by Wilcox, so as to create less surprise by the remark she had prepared.

No. 1 was soon surrounded by four of the fraternity, and four pupils.

'How d'ye feel, my woman?' asked Dr. Lamb kindly.

'I had a very bad night, sir.'



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'Can you account for it in any way?'

'She'd a blister last night, sir,' chimed in nurse, who, most catlike, watched Maida.

'This blistering seems everlasting work,' muttered Dr. Lamb to Mr. Ferris, the house doctor; 'I doubt whether one night's rest isn't worth a hundred of 'em.'

Mr. F. only clicked his tongue against his teeth.

'Why, Maida, my friend, you look as if you were longing or a touch-up,' said Dr. Lamb.

'Touch-up' was a favourite expression with Dr. Lamb, in connection with blisters; therefore Maida understood it, and rejoicing at this unexpected opportunity, so much better than her own plan, she answered:

'Oh no, sir! I saw poor Wilcox's dreadful chest this morning. The sight is enough to last my life. Oh, so shocking!'

'Let's see, my woman. I don't want to punish you in that fashion.'

And, in his own quick way, Dr. Lamb pulled down the bedclothes, and opened Wilcox's chest, before nurse had time to do it for him; but the carded cotton had by this stuck in so tightly that, without inflicting great pain, it could not be removed, so Dr. Lamb did not attempt it.

'Whatever did you put that on for? I have always said I won't have it used,' said the house doctor.

'I think I could tell you, sir,' said Maida, now sure that salt had been used.

'Why, sir,' hurried in nurse, 'the flesh looked so sore and bumpy, I thought it couldn't bear much fretting, so I clapped on a bit of cotton to soothe it a bit. It looked so bad (didn't it, Maida?), that they thought I'd been a-putting salt on it.'

'And you did, woman!' ejaculated Maida.

Dr. Lamb turned quickly to her with:

'Here, I say, you mustn't rub up people like that. I've never found nurse in the wrong yet.'

'What should I want to put salt in a body for?'

'What does Wilcox herself say?' laughed Dr. Lamb. 'Have you been pickled this morning?'

Wilcox attempted a smile — how miserable an one!

'I don't know, sir,' she feebly articulated.

Maida clenched her teeth impatiently, with a grating sound.

'"Let dogs delight to bark and bite," et cetera,' said Dr. Lamb, passing on, and creating a laugh, which, in his good humour, he meant should be fun. for he always tried to amuse his patients with some drollery. He knew not the bitterness that fell from nurse's lips in the form of that laugh.

Maida, baffled in one point, would not without another struggle resign her protege into the hand of the enemy.

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When Mrs. Cott entered the ward to hear the medical opinion of her 'family,' before nurse or anyone had time to put in a word, she stepped forward.

'Mrs. Cott, I have a favour to ask.'

'Well, my dear?'

'I am pronounced convalescent; and as I believe the convalescents are expected to take charge of a bed-patient, will you give me Wilcox?'

'What does she say to it?' said Mrs. Cott, approaching the stretcher, and taking No. 1's thin hand.

'Oh, ma'am!' was all she could reply. She had endured enough; that one drop of joy overcame her; she wept aloud.

'So she shall, then,' said Mrs. Cott soothingly.

'Nurse, Maida Gwynnham 'll take Wilcox; she must therefore change stretchers. You'll be No. 2 now, Maida. You'll be relieved of all your patients by-and-by, nurse; you must turn matron. Where is she? I thought I was speaking to her all this while.'

But nurse had vanished.

How smoothly now glided by the numbered days of the dying girl! How quietly did she enjoy her little library, which, before hidden beneath her pillow, now ventured into light of day; and, arranged on a little stool, over which Maida had spread one of her own pocket-handkerchiefs, her Testament, Prayer-book, and hymns were always within reach.

The first time Maida arranged her bed, she found a new flannel petticoat tucked away behind the mattress. Inquiring why it was there, Wilcox explained that she had brought it on purpose to be buried in; but as nurse was always covetous, she had hidden it out of her sight.

'I'd have given it her, Maida, only it's so dreadful to think of being buried with no decent covering; but I'll gladly give it you -- you may take it at once, or when I'm gone.'

'I will see it put on you, dear,' said Maida, as calmly as though only talking of dressing her the next morning.

'And you will close my eyes? Oh, I hope you'll be near when I die, or else you won't be let to do for me.'

'Maida,' she said, after a moment's pause, 'you'll think me very childish, but something troubles me. Do you think it's true that they cut up prisoners, and throw them any way into their coffins?'

'Yes; cut up as small as mincemeat,' called out nurse, who was passing at that instant; but Maida quickly answered:

'I know strange things are reported, but I do not believe one of them. In order to certify to Government that the patients really die of the complaint stated in the books, the bodies are always examined after death, but that is all.'

'Ja-sus! Ja-sus!' came in piteous accents from the closet outside the ward.

'What noise is that?'

'It's poor Sal!'

'Jasus! — oh, Jasus!'

Maida started.

'Go, Maida, go; she is getting rubbed in the straw.'

'Oh! oh! oh! Jasus! Ja-sus!'

A fierce nod was Maida's only answer.

'There, you senseless beast; the sooner you're rotted away the better!' reached Maida's ear as she stepped into the closet. 'There!' and all covered as she was with wounds from long lying, nurse rubbed the body of the imbecile in the fresh straw beneath her, just as you would rub a rolling-pin into dough.

'Jasus! Jasus!' cried Crazy Sal.

'Leave her!'

Passion and feeling would let Maida say no more.

'Leave her!'

The words were scarcely articulate for rage.

'I tell you what now, Mrs. Martha Grylls, if you come meddling with me, I'll find a means to make you wish you'd never darkened my path. You've sought the job, so you shall have it. Come and see how you like it: sweet, refreshing, nice! ain't it?'

'I meant to take it, and I mean to be Sally's attendant for the future. If you say one word against it, you shall be turned out of your situation.'

Fury grinned in the woman's features, but she feared to obey its dictates, another complaint from Maida might be followed by worse consequences than was the former. With a daring oath she left the closet, slamming the door after her with such violence as to make the whole suite of wards shake.

When Maida approached Sally, the imbecile shrunk in terror, and cast at her a timid side-glance such as a dog, accustomed to ill-treatment, will shrinkingly cast towards some doubtful person who attempts to pat him.

'Never mind, poor Sally; I will not hurt you.'

She wiped the tears from the swollen face, and then, loathsome as it was in its cadaverous whiteness, she stooped kindly over it and kissed the scaly forehead.

Then, yielding herself to Maida, the imbecile submitted to the painful dressing and cleansing operation, without further complaint than an occasional groan, as some very tender wound came in contact with the prickly straw.

Maida had just finished, and, in clean cap and jacket, Sally lay back on a clean pillow, when, with a tap at the door, Mr. Herbert entered.

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'They said I should find you here, Maida.'

He shuddered as his eye fell on the imbecile, who, fatigued with the late exertion, had sunk back completely exhausted, looking more ghastly than ever.

Maida explained her case.

'She's faint! what a strange colour she has become give her a sup of water, quickly,' said Mr. Herbert.

Before it could touch her mouth the lip went up, and then, protracted to an unusual length, came the bray, discordant and soul-piercing.

The nurse, knowing that Mr. Herbert was there, ran in to tell him that the noise was nothing to be afraid of; Sally was a poor, harmless creature.

'Jasus, Jasus!' screeched the girl when she saw the nurse.

'Go out, woman! your presence troubles her,' beckoned Maida.

'Jasus! Jasus!' she once more repeated, and then appeared to faint; but it was the faint of death. She opened her eyes and gave one look towards Mr. Herbert and Maida, then closed them for ever upon her sufferings.

Maida wished to stay and lay out the body, but Mr. Herbert would not allow her to do so: he bade her follow him into her own ward, where going over to Wilcox, he sat down on stretcher No. 2, and the lustrous eyes looked up gladly at him from No. 1. After a while he told Maida he brought what he feared would be bad news to her. He said Emmeline had expressed a strong desire for change of air, a request so unusual for her, that the doctor had granted it, though doubtful of the consequences of the journey; but if that passed favourably, there was every hope the genial climate of Port Arthur might benefit her.

'Am I not then to return to the Lodge, sir?'

'Oh yes, Mr. Evelyn has left word that you are to be taken there when you receive your discharge. I thought,' he continued, smiling, 'that you would be disappointed to find my daughter absent; she longs for you very much.'

'Miss Evelyn is very good: I shall be sorry to miss her sir,' was all Maida said, but she felt much more, and had a secret misgiving that she should not see her young mistress again.

'If we can get permission, we mean to send for you to come after us; you must not be too sanguine, though.'

'I am sanguine of nothing, sir. I am to be discharged in a fortnight; before then, perhaps, the master will make me acquainted with his wishes, which I shall be ready to obey.'

'A fortnight,' thought Wilcox; 'shall I be gone by that time?' and she examined her thin hands to see how much thinner they must become ere she could reckon on her release — they had only a skin over them; as far as their emaciation could bid him, Death might come as soon as he pleased; disease could extort nothing more from her save a few sighs, a few more laboured breaths; a few more days of distress.

From this moment the bitterness had passed. There were yet eight days to Maida's discharge; she strove to be cheerful, and her companion was so in reality; one Sunday more were they to spend together. That Sunday was to be a special one, for the bishop was to address the females of the establishment, or as many of them as could assemble in Number Four. A half hour before his lordship arrived parties of invalids issued from all parts of the

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hospital, and occupied the extra benches. All free persons who could be spared from their duties attended to hear the bishop, who, precisely as the clock struck three, entered, fully robed, and followed by the superintendent and house doctor.

'Nurses at the beds, and all convicts at the benches,' said the doctor. With a malicious grin the nurse of Number Four took her place by Wilcox, and pointed Maida to a seat at the opposite end of the ward. To dispute were useless. In silence Maida obeyed and she had only just taken her seat, when his lordship's solemn voice commenced the service. But the service was nothing to her; she sat eagerly watching Wilcox. The sermon commenced; but not the touching parable of the Prodigal Son could divert her thoughts from No. 1. She saw the invalid put out her parched tongue and try to moisten her lips; she beckoned to the nurse to give her something to drink; but nurse was too intent on the sermon to receive the signal. So Maida arose, and despite his lordship's piercing eyes, which followed every step she took, walked to No. 1, and put a teaspoonful of liquid to her dry lips. She was about to return, when, casting a second look, she saw Wilcox raise her arms, give one smile — bright with anticipation — one breath, soft as the flutter of a tiny bird, and the soul of the convict was free. Hastily, ere nurse could perceive the event, dropped Maida by the couch; tenderly and reverently she bowed her head an instant, then, stretching forth her hand, she fulfilled her friend's last wish, and closed the eyes, which still looked upward, hopefully, longingly!

She was aroused from her meditation by a pause in the sermon, it was over. Raising his hands, the bishop turned slowly round, at the same time saying, with peculiar distinctness, 'The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God.' By this time he stood with his hands toward Maida, then he proceeded — 'And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always.'

It seemed that the bishop had read her thoughts. Maida sank upon her knees to receive the benediction; clasping her hands, she uttered a loud, fervent 'Amen,' as the last word fell. And the recollection of the incident which had once before brought that text to her mind, came with a comforting power, and she felt there was neither irreverence nor superstition in connecting it with the present occasion. But the time had not yet come. The tranquillity she experienced vanished with the bishop. The door had scarcely closed upon his lordship, ere the nurse rushed over and thrust her arm into the stretcher where Wilcox lay. Thence she drew out the coveted treasure with so sudden a jerk that the head of the corpse bounced back with a heavy fall. Exhibiting the petticoat to the view of the women, she shouted, 'This is mine!'

Maida, gently as she could, laid hold of the flannel, and said, 'I do not wish to quarrel, but I must have this. I promised she should be buried in it.'

'— if she shall; if you can get it, you shall have it: not else.'

Maida continued to hold on with a firm but gentle grasp.

'Matron's a—coming, better let her have it,' joined all the women.

'What'll 'e give me then? quick!'

'Nothing,' said Maida, quietly folding the garment.

Once in the dead-house, the corpse was beyond her care so Maida could never ascertain whether the flannel formed its shroud. She feared not, for Mrs. Cott told her it belonged to the Queen. Now she cared not how soon her discharge might be. There were other cases of interest interspersed with the many that were only schemers — as the convict phraseology denominates a certain class of patients — but she did not wish to undertake another whom she must desert in a few days.

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On the Tuesday she learned from Mrs. Cott that Mr. Evelyn's family had removed to Port Arthur, Mr. Herbert having exchanged duties with the chaplain of that settlement; but that Mr. Evelyn remained ill town, having been unable to make suitable arrangements for leaving the Lodge, which was without a man-servant. Googe had been apprehended as chief party in an extensive coining fraud that for some time had baffled the police, and cheated the tradesmen out of their legal money.

Mrs. Cott told Maida that she believed her master was waiting to put her in the place of a man; on which Maida said, that as far as guarding the house went, she should not at all mind the charge. Thursday arrived. Maida received her discharge, and bade good-bye to the patients. When it was nurse's turn, she offered her hand, but that worthy refused it, saying, 'she had only one hope, and that was, that she should still be in the hospital when Maida came in to die: wouldn't she make a frightful corpse of her, that's all! she'd stretch her eyes wide open instead of closing them like a Christian.'

'I'll forgive you if you do,' said Maida, forcing a smile; 'I am afraid you would close them in self-defence after a while. I should look so frightful.'

Ere descending the stairs she peeped into the closet where Crazy Sal had lain, it was still empty. She pitied the next object who should be there exposed to the unchecked malice of the wretched being chosen as nurse for the ward and its dependencies.

## CHAPTER XXV. PORT ARTHUR -- O.P.S.O. -- THE 'KANGAROO'.

HIS Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor having duly and formally signified his approval of the admission of the Reverend Herbert Evelyn and family into the sacred regions of Port Arthur, and the Comptroller-General having promised to apprise the Superintendent of the settlement of their visit, in order that the waggons might be in waiting for them on their arrival, one bright morning in the month of February, Emmeline, accompanied by her father and cousin, took her place on board the Kangaroo, the Government steam-boat plying between Hobart Town and the Peninsula; and shortly after, a second cab set down Mrs. Evelyn and her children on the jetty, when Charlie speedily found his way to his uncle, and became vociferously jubilant at the prospect of a trip down the river, as the water route to Tasman's Peninsula is denominated. The free passengers were ready to start. A young lieutenant just bearing away his still more youthful bride to the ungainly solitude of Eagle Hawk Neck, was fast increasing his impatience with the increasing moments, when tramp-a-tramp, chink-a-chink along the road, and chained two together a gang of second-sentence men drew near. Ere they could reach the wharf a band of armed soldiers drew up on each side of the jetty, and at word of command, as the gang approached, they pointed their muskets, forming a guarded pathway for the convicts, who two by two passed through it and hobbled on board the steamer, where crowded together they had to stand out the passage. Quickly followed a band of probationers, bound for the Cascades -- and then the soldiers divided -- part marching into the boat after the men, the others returning to Hobart. It was now half-past seven the captain mounted the paddle-wheel, gave the signal, and in another moment the Kangaroo was off.

Not having been told that the vessel was a prison-transport, Bridget had looked forward with much delight to the scenery which makes a sail down the Derwent a sine qua non to the beauty-seekers of our shores. With the sight of the felons vanished all her dreams of pleasure, for she could not with one eye view the misery of her fellow-creatures, and with the other dwell admiringly on the landscape; she must feel all, pity all, or admire all, or else shut her eyes altogether.

'Can we never escape from them?' she whispered to Emmeline, as winding round the wharf moved slowly onwards the alternate tramp and clank. There was a time when Bridget would have turned from the spectacle which the deck presented as one not so pleasant to behold as that which lay before her in the distant hills; but now in vain opened to new magnificent scenes from the coasts of Frederick Henry Bay; in vain upreared the Iron Pot

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its grotesque dimensions, it awoke in her no curiosity; nor did the surf which boiled around its base attract her attention. The grand tumult of Storm Bay, the quiet farm of Slopen Island, were nothing to her so long as chains dragged down the hands and oppressed the feet of those with whom she was forced into contact.

The day was fair and cloudless. The breeze tempered the heat into a bearable degree; so that when the glare of the sun was excluded by an awning, it was luxurious to sit yielding to the gentle sway of the vessel, and watching the ever-changing, yet ever-lovely, pictures which one by one disclosed themselves from unexpected nooks and windings of the river.

Mr. Herbert, Emmeline, and Bridget, unable to join in the hilarity of the free passengers, abstracted themselves from the general party and occupied the sofa on the lee-side of the skylight, where their seclusion was only occasionally disturbed by the onslaughts of Charlie, desperate with scraps of news, or colonial legends inflicted on him by the mate.

Irrespective of anxiety for his daughter's comfort, Mr. Herbert was little inclined to talk.

He had discovered among the second-sentencers several of his flock, who only the Sunday before had listened to his admonition from the Penitentiary pulpit. His spirit yearned for them; he was aware what they would have to go through in the fierce retributive process of which he knew Port Arthur to be the furnace. Hard they were sent down -- but harder they would return; perhaps again to be sent down -- again to be returned hardened and only fit for Norfolk Island, where the process would be carried on to a greater perfection, because detached from the public gaze, and more distant from the chief authorities, who were never known to approach the shores without timely notice, to afford opportunity for the hurrying into corners of all that might offend their judicial eyes, or call for their judicial interference.

Mr. Herbert was not long on board before his eye had scanned the gang, and selected thence two men, who, for desert, were more fit for the penal settlement than half who were condemned there.

The savagely sullen brow and heavy eye of Bradley, the constable, were unmistakable, for all that his hair was closely cropped, and his head covered by the leathern cap of the convict.

By some strange caprice or thoughtlessness, he had been chained to Bob Pragg, who, notwithstanding the discomfort of his situation, secretly gloried in being the means of annoying his enemy by sticking as close into him as possible. Every now and then, with a sudden shove Bradley would push him to the extent of the chain, when back would stick Bob with the tenacity of a bull-dog. Mr. Herbert perceived this, and kept his eye fixed on the pair hoping to stop a proceeding which he feared, though almost laughably trifling in itself, might end in a court of justice. The heavier gathering of Bradley's bushy brow increased his fears. But Pragg was out of the parson's parish -- nothing was to be gained by hearkening to him -- nothing was to be saved by not crossing his foe; so averting his head he continued to irritate Bradley. Mr. Herbert then asked an overseer to unchain the two and bind them to some other prisoners; but the overseer refused, supposing 'they were only sparring it a bit; maybe in fun, for it takes the deuce to get their tricks out of them -- or more like in spite, which nobody expects to kick out of them.'

Mr. Herbert asked if any known spite existed between the men -- and learnt that they were sworn foes, perpetually bent on worrying each other.

'The last offence between 'em,' said the officer, 'had something to do with that burial-ground murder, for which Sam Tomkins is to be hanged. When Bradley was caught, he vowed vengeance on Pragg, and made out a case against him; but the evidence wasn't very clear, so the bench let him off with three months at Port Arthur. You see, sir, till the men have had a taste of down there, they don't know how to value Tench privileges.'

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'It is a dangerous precedent to give a man a taste of poison to make him appreciate simple medicine,' replied Mr. Herbert, despairing of making an impression on the overseer, who was a devoted disciple of the stringencies of the penal code.

Bridget was very glad that her cousin required her attention, for brooding over the brightness of day was a mass of human suffering to which she could not choose but turn whenever her thoughts were at her disposal. It appeared to her an unnecessary strictness to keep the men chained hand and foot when escape was impossible; and she watched her opportunity to tell the captain so, for though she knew they were not bound by his command, she hoped he might have some power in giving them at any rate a temporary freedom of limb. Jocosely and heartily, the captain came round to pay his devoirs to the parson's daughter and niece, and Bridget, long in wait for his approach, came forward blushing for an attack on the humane principles of the well-proportioned sailor.

'Your servant, miss,' he bowed, laying his hand upon his heart.

'Oh! Captain Jolly, can't you let loose those poor creatures?' burst from Bridget's lips ere she could acknowledge his gallantry.

'Well — don't see how; they might fly overboard, and that would be awkward, seeing they are paid for. Go down in the cabin if they annoy you, miss.'

'They don't annoy me — they make me sad.'

'Well, I never viewed it in that light, Miss D'Urban; it seems to me rather comfortable to hear them piping away like six o'clock; if they don't pipe us to supper they remind us of it, and that's next best. On my honour, I don't know what we poor sea-dogs would do without our poultry.'

'Oh, captain! I meant the prisoners.'

'Bless my heart alive, miss! let them loose? We should be in Davy's locker, sure as fate, before we'd spun much farther and they'd be on their way to California. Did you never hear how they overhauled the bishop's frigate? and — ha! ha! — bless my heart alive, miss, as my name's Jolly, 'twould be jolly to strike the darbies off that precious lot: we might as well leap overboard at once.'

'Horrid creatures! Whatever is it, captain?' inquired Mrs. Evelyn, who, baby in arms, just crossed the deck in time to hear the last words.

'Nothing, madam; only miss proposes we shall change places with the gang; and, on my honour, I've no inclination that way.'

Seeing Mrs. Evelyn look mystified, he explained:

'Miss is begging of me to cut away their cables, and I tell her they'd overhaul us before we could cry "Mercy!"'

'Really, Bridget, my dear, you do make yourself very silly; you mustn't listen to her, Captain Jolly: she has the most romantic notions about the convicts. I do believe she'd set them all free if she could: yes, and I believe you would, too, Herbert,' added Mrs. Evelyn, as she observed a quiet smile on his face.

'I should certainly give liberty to a great many,' replied Mr. Herbert, very gently.

'On my honour, parson, you take the Queen's money to some purpose. What would they do with their liberty if you gave it them?'



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'Get into trouble again as fast as they could,' answered Mrs. Evelyn. 'In fact, it's my opinion they are never happy unless they are in trouble.'

Bridget looked into the assembled gang for one single sign of happiness: not one appeared; desolation, despair, or defiance sat on all the sunburnt, blistered faces.

Mr. Herbert noted his niece's silent comment on her aunt's observation, and involuntarily following her example, his eye also wandered through the human indices for some reference to the imputed happiness; but none was visible in the dreary blank of countenance, or in the darkly-written page of crime, whose physiognomy was full of meaning: but of what sort?

'Well, now, parson, supposing you had Government permission to uncage a few of those precious birds, which of all those now before you would you let out? Yonder are two likely lads — those there — that keep spurring it like game-cocks.'

'I should be cautious in giving liberty to any man who had once entered a penal settlement. I consider all who have once been to Port Arthur, or other places of second punishment, most dangerous characters; but I should be glad to arrest the progress of half who are on their way there.'

'Well, I don't know anything about that: I'm paid to take 'em backwards and forwards — the deuce I care how many or how few get aboard, so long as my pay don't shift to suit the rise and fall of 'em.'

The captain took a turn to and from the paddle-wheel, and then, coming to Mr. Herbert, asked:

'But I say, parson, if we locked our penal settlements, what could we do with our second-sentencers if we'd no place to send them to? a hang they'd care for the Judge and all the Bench: they'd point their fingers at us, and off again to their tricks. Without our Port Arthurs we should have a constant repetition of that jolly farce of Louisa Ferres.'

'I would not do away with our penal settlements, Mr. Jolly, until some well-digested plan were formed for the better lodgment of our men; but I would have the settlements conducted under a different system. It is not wise to trust the best men with unlimited power; the heart's vanity cannot stand it. Abstracted from the inspection of the public as these settlements are, there cannot be too much care in the selection of fitting instruments to work the system. Where there are several hundreds of men all at the mercy of one free man, what is to be expected if that free man be one of ferocious temper or ambitious views? This man, though ostensibly under the supervision of colonial authority, rules supreme over his miserable dependents; for what can comptrollers or governors, not being omniscient, know of the daily occurrences of a place seventy or a hundred and fifty miles distant?'

'Oh! there's a regular correspondence kept up between them; everything is reported.'

'Yes; the representations which reach Hobart Town present a fair account of matters progressing to the satisfaction of ——— the Superintendent! There is no dissatisfaction or maltreatment of the convicts to blot the seemly foolscap. The Comptroller reads, approves, and applauds the judicious officer, who so skilfully manages to keep five hundred rebels in subjection, at once un-irksome to themselves and beneficial to the colony in general.'

'But then the Comptroller goes down to see for himself.'

'Truly! The authorities visit the settlement and examine the police reports, which are all entered by a paid and, most likely, convict clerk, who, if the latter, must obey the orders of his superior unquestioningly and willingly, or be turned into the chain-gang; or, if a free man, can only deviate from the injunctions of his master at peril of a

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nod of dismissal procured for him from the official head by a single word whispered by the Superintendent. The reports, duly examined and commented upon, display praiseworthy vigilance; for entries of all punishments inflicted have been conscientiously made. The Comptroller reads that one man has been chastised for misconduct, another for insolence; but whether such misconduct or insolence was provoked out of them, or was a wilful fault, does not appear in the entry.'

'Ha! ha! parson, anyone can see you've been amongst convicts; you've grown suspicious; can't trust your neighbour.'

'Well, really, captain, we must be suspicious in self-defence; with rogues on all sides, what should we do if we placed confidence in our people?' said Mrs. Evelyn, for once agreeing with her brother-in-law.

'I speak of free, madam; Mr. Evelyn looks suspiciously on all.'

'Do not misunderstand me, Mr. Jolly; I make no personal reference; the present Superintendent may be an excellent commandant.'

'You only refer to them as a lot: well, they are a rum lot; but for all that, what fault can you find with Port Arthur?'

'No: I'm sure it's a delightful place, all so clean and nice; really it's like a fresh-scrubbed room. If it was a dirty place I couldn't take the children there if you'd pay me for it, my dear,' chimed in Mrs. Evelyn to Mr. Herbert.

'Nothing is fairer than a whited sepulchre, Clara; nothing sounds better in the many books which have been written of travels in our island than an account of visits to the prison-stations: the cleanliness is lauded, the healthful appearance of the place noted, until one almost longs to become a convict, to dwell in so delightful a spot, and to be under treatment of so kind, so hospitable, so humane a man as the Superintendent — in the book. The traveller is bewitched; he sees through a false medium, and notes accordingly. Not knowing that one of the strictest penal rules is that the convicts shall touch their caps to their superiors, he observes the simultaneous movement to the Superintendent, and mentions it as a gratifying proof of the men's affection, or, at any rate, of their esteem for their governor. And I do not blame him; the rod is hidden from his sight; how should he discover it? All is fair; why should he not rejoice in it?'

'Well, parson, so long as I'm not meddled with I'm as willing as any man alive to have a change, but as to what you want, we may stick in the mud till kingdom come if we wait for it; the deuce knows when your well-digested plan will be formed, and I also guess his satanic majesty 'll try to put it off as long as he can. Government has been playing battledore and shuttlecock with the system for many a long year, and, for all I see, been making ducks and drakes with the money, excepting my salary.'

'I agree with you there, Mr. Jolly. I do not believe the well-digested plan will ever be formed, for while we have sin to battle with, the strife must continue. Colonel Arthur's words, "What God hath made crooked, man cannot make straight," appear to me the correct solution of the convict puzzle; however, let us go on availing ourselves of such improvements as experience shall suggest. Having seen that there is danger in giving to one man unbounded authority over his fellow-creatures, let us circumscribe his power by placing others to share it with him. Having seen that transportation, as now carried on, is a punishment of revenge and not of reform, let us use our individual efforts to practically convince the prisoners that, in banishing them from their native land, Government has their best interest at heart, that England sends her unhappy sons from her, not as outcasts so much as penitents.'

'Now, parson, tell us, would you be Superintendent if you could?'

'I would not, sir. I could not trust myself. I might commence with every good intention, but unrestricted power would soon make a despot of me.'

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A heavy fall on the other side of the deck prevented the captain's answer: he went across to see what had happened, then returned, whistling till he reached his party.

'It's nothing; only one of the gang has fainted, tired of standing in the sun, I suppose, and, in falling, he's played the deuce with his mate, overhauling him head uppermost.'

Mr. Herbert hastily went to the unfortunate men. The overseer, seeing the commiserating expression of his face, said:

'Only scheming, sir, take my word for it; pity's lost on them; why should one faint more than another?'

'That livid countenance does not look much like scheming sir. I insist on your unchaining him, and giving him the assistance he requires.'

Sulkily went the overseer to work, muttering:

'We shall have the whole gang a-fainting if this is what they get for it.'

Bradley, who was close by, and had marked the whole proceeding, made a note of these words and his heavy brow lowered portentously as he stowed them away in his imbruted mind.

It was not long after that a second heavy fall was heard and looking to the spot, Mr. Herbert saw that Bradley had fallen and Pragg lay sprawling on the top of him.

'I s'pose we must undo them too,' grumbled the overseer, 'mustn't be partial.'

'No, just extricate Pragg from Bradley; but I would not have the chains removed from either,' said Mr. Herbert, who had heard the grumble, though it was not meant for him.

But just out of spite the overseer would release them: he had barely done so, than, with the roar of an uncaged lion, upstarted Bradley, knocked him down, caught up a handcuff and struck Pragg a blow that felled him to the deck and made the blood flow from his head. Bradley then flung himself on his hands and knees and lapped up the blood.

'I swore I'd never rest till I'd spit your own blackguard blood in your face; now, here it is!'

All this took place in a moment, ere anyone could stop the ruffian or overcome the first shock of surprise. All free hands now rushed forward, the enraged overseer amongst them. Bradley, surrounded by his bond brethren, whose fettered limbs prevented their laying hold of him, kept his opponents at bay by hurling at them such missiles as he could seize hold of.

'Grace to the man that catches him,' shouted the captain.

'Conditional pardon to him,' out-shouted the overseer.

'Death to him,' growled Bradley.

And the men who had tried to raise their arms to clutch him let them drop with a clank that rang through the boat. There was a simultaneous click of musketry.

'Surrender, or we fire!'

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A moment's awful silence.

'I surrender!' cried Bradley, dropping his arms to his side.

There was a general move towards him.

'But not to you!' And dashing through the crowd of prisoners he sprang overboard, and far splashed the waters into the air as the body cleft them asunder and lost itself beneath them.

Mrs. Evelyn declared she could not proceed, but, with the children, would be put out at the next settlement. Mr. Herbert was not averse to this, for Emmeline, though uncomplaining, suffered from the frightful shock that had shaken the stoutest set of nerves on board. He was anxious to get her ease from the excitement which it was impossible to escape whilst on the scene of the catastrophe. Though his feeling was only one of deep and awed solemnity, commingled with sorrow, and though he did not participate in his sister-in-law's fear of being murdered in cold blood if he remained on board, he considered it desirable to afford his child a respite from a fatigue, for the endurance of which the appalling occurrence had wholly unfitted her; therefore, when the steamer stopped at Impression Bay, he agreed to disembark and go with Mrs. Evelyn to the house of a friend, the Religious Instructor of the settlement, and there remain during the week which must elapse ere they could proceed by the Kangaroo on their journey to Port Arthur.

Expected or unexpected friends are always welcome on penal stations. Isolated from the rest of the world, the officers are glad of any interruption to the monotonous routine of their stationary life. The inundation of the Evelyns was therefore an event productive of much enjoyment, both to the Instructor and his wife, who managed to stow away all the family except Mr. Herbert and Charlie, who were obliged to seek shelter in the doctor's quarters.

Impression Bay is an invalid station where the incapacitated convicts end their lives in such rest or labour as their case demands or their strength permits. To Mr. Herbert there was nothing new either in the settlement or neighbourhood; but when Emmeline was well enough to be left, he made Bridget run out with him to take a peep at the densely-wooded country around, or to look out on the bay as it appeared from land.

The gardens delighted her. Summer's bright flowers lay with a languid, luxurious ease that imparted, or would have imparted, to her a dreamy sense of pleasure, had she been any other than Bridget D'Urban. But there was no dreaminess in her pleasures: they were real, they were earnest. When her uncle preferred to stay with her cousin, she would snatch up the baby, summon Charlie, and be off to the gardens for a frolic amid the roses. One day a thunderstorm overtook them there. Baby had not yet learned to fear thunder, but as peal clashed on peal, Charlie clung tightly to Bridget to hide himself, and to wish 'that God's many drums didn't play so drefful loud.' Hurrying back with her young charge, the heavy rain obliged Miss D'Urban to stop under the roof of a deserted constable's hut. She had not been here long before she and Charlie were terrified by a howl that seemed to come from within a wall near, and yet was despairing enough to have issued from the infernal regions. It was repeated again and again. The drenching rain was more endurable, so off ran Bridget, carrying baby in her arms. An overseer's wife, seeing her panting on, opened her door, and begged her to come in. Nothing loth, she entered, when Charlie promptly declared to the woman that they had heard 'all sorts of drefful wild beasts over there.' Thinking he only meant the thunder, she took him upon her lap and told him, though they had devils and wild cats in the island, they had not any lions or tigers, so he need not fear. But when Miss D'Urban told her that, wild beast or not, they had been alarmed by the most doleful wail that ever mortal heard, the wife began to wonder whence the noise could have proceeded, and wondered on until her eldest boy burst into a laugh.

'Oh! 'twas nothing, mother; 'twas only from the Cranky Yard.'

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Bridget asked what undesirable yard that might be, and was informed it was a portion of the station appropriated to the insane, and the cries thence were often heartrending.

"'It's nothing but the Cranky Yard" is what they all tell us, miss; but I'm thinking that the nothing's a great deal, only we mustn't say these things,' said the wife.

Perceiving that her auditor appeared interested, she drew her chair over, and sending Charlie to play, continued, in a low tone:

"'Twas only last week, miss, that one of these poor creatures behaved bad, and was put in irons. Well, he was taken ill, and died. When he was near death he begged hard to have his irons taken off, that he might die unfettered, as any one of us would naturally wish; but his keeper wouldn't free him, so he breathed out his soul, lying on his face, with his hands chained behind him. God have mercy on his poor dear soul!"

Bridget stamped with indignation.

'There's no help for it, miss; we mustn't speak out our minds on these things, only just to each other; then each of us pretends not to believe them -- but -- ' she shook her head.

'Why are these cruelties permitted?' at last asked Bridget.

'They are not permitted. I doubt whether they ever reaches the Superintendent's ear in a way that shows cruelty. 'Twas the officer of the yard that was to blame for that poor dear creature.'

A tear glistened in her eye; wiping it off with the corner of her apron, she said:

'Faith, miss, I call everything dear that's suffering. I tell my husband sometimes that my very bread chokes in my throat that goes down with such money. There's only two ways of getting on out here, and them are -- to make one's heart hard as quick as possible, or to get out of Government work altogether. My husband's been through nearly all the stations, hoping what was in one wouldn't be in another; he's tried this last, thinking as 'twas invalid there couldn't be anything against one's feelings here; but now -- ah, there! -- it's no use talking, and I shouldn't say so much to you only it's known the colony over that Parson Evelyn's family is all the convicts' friends; and I've heard say that if the convicts rose they'd be as safe as Goshen in the midst of it, and Squire Evelyn, too, for all he holds on for discipline. Ah, miss! the men knows who's who.'

In her delight at hearing her uncles so praised, Bridget nearly forgot the Cranky Yard; but Charlie came running in to say, not only that the rain had ceased, but that the beasts were making their noises again:

'Come and hear 'em then.'

'There, miss, you'd hardly believe, though I hears them every day I'm not a bit better pleased with it; I can't bear to know there's suffering going on; and 't isn't only because they are my own flesh and blood; I was just the same time back, when I was young, when the aborigenes was served so shameful.'

Bridget, supposing rightly that she meant aborigines, asked to what treatment she referred.

'Oh, miss! they was shot down like rabid dogs; hunted on their own grounds just like kangaroos. I don't know the rights of it; I suppose it was needful, or 'twouldn't have been done: but, child as I was, I couldn't like it better on that account.'

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Bridget resolved to consult Uncle Herbert on the subject, and thanking her hostess, she made hasty way to the Religious Instructor's quarters. Uncle Herbert and Emmeline were alone, the Instructor having gone to his duties, and his wife being elbow-deep in culinary hospitalities. Bridget, therefore, still irate with her subject, rushed at once into the inquiry:

'Uncle, what has become of all the aborigines? haven't seen one of them ever since I have been here.'

'They are confined in Oyster Cove, and supported by Government; the all consists of but twenty-three; poor things! it is sad to behold them. They bequeath us a legacy for which we shall have to answer when God makes inquisition for blood. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," is a denunciation as true of nations as of individuals; and to them who mark these things, retribution is clearly discernible in national records. Thoughtful readers of Tasmanian history must tremble to think how and where the retributive stroke shall fall on England or her dependencies. When they read of barbarities disgraceful to a Christian people; of murdered women; of tortured children, they can only turn and pray the anticipating prayer: "Lord, in judgment remember mercy, and visit not these sins on the head of innocence."' "

But the Wednesday again came round, and with it duly appeared the steamer, puffing its goods into the bay, there to exchange them after the fashion of Aladdin's lamp-merchant. A few weak, miserable-looking men were delivered to an overseer, and Mr. Herbert's party embarked in their stead.

Captain Jolly hailed Bridget as an old acquaintance, and vowed himself her humble servant so long as she required no more chains struck off from his men. She informed him that last week's catastrophe had by no means lessened her inclination that way.

'Bless your heart alive, miss; talk of irons! you should go aboard the Lady Franklin when she's on for Norfolk Island: you'd have double chains, cross chains, deck chains — chains enough to last out the term of your natural life, as the law has it; though what or where the other life is, the deuce knows, for I'm sure I don't. Yes, you must see the Lady Franklin — nothing complete without her; though it's a beggarly compliment to her ladyship to turn out her name in such a rigging as that.'

Bridget was very glad when the garrulous captain was needed forward, for he was not her style of thinker. The day was fair and cloudless as the sky of a last week in February could make it. The Kangaroo pattered briskly on, stopping to take a short breath at Salt Water River, and a longer at Cascades, in order to deliver some probationers to the Superintendent, and to take in a few second-sentencers for Port Arthur. Then steaming round Expectation Point, and passing Woody Island, it soon brought its journey to an end in Norfolk Bay. Here fresh disappointment awaited Bridget, who, having watched the debarkation and marching off of the chain-gang, looked for some approaching vehicle that promised the safe conveyance guaranteed by the Comptroller-General. She had heard so much of the waggons which were to be in waiting at Norfolk Bay, that in looking far ahead for the teamed bullocks, which she expected to see toiling up the hill, she failed to note nearer preparations.

'Come, my dear, come,' at last said her aunt; 'make haste and look here before your uncle returns; he mustn't see it. Take this and put it on the seat of the waggon behind you; and when you get in, just point to it and nod to the men, and then you'll be all right and safe. I wouldn't venture in without, or those fellows would of course upset us.'

She opened a little basket, and gave Bridget a half-pound of tea and some tobacco.

'Why mustn't Uncle Herbert see it? He'd be delighted to give the poor fellows a few comforts.'

'Nonsense, my dear; as a Government officer he couldn't allow us to break the rules, which are strict against rewarding the convicts, especially with tobacco; but I wouldn't go without giving it to please anyone; they make

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nothing of upsetting a person they dislike. Why, my dear, they pitched the Comptroller over, and he trundled down the hill for ever so far.'

'Now then, we are ready,' said Mr. Herbert, stepping back to the jetty.

Bridget's wonder increased, for she saw no sign of readiness save in a number of low carts that looked like luggage-trucks with very long handles, and seats for more delicate parcels. Her wonder abounded when she saw Mr. Herbert lift Emmeline into the foremost cart. Thus, then, had her rustic waggons dwindled into a conveyance rough and dangerous, how she trembled as she remarked the small rickety iron wheels! Mr. Herbert then packed her in behind Emmeline, reserving the seat next his daughter for himself. Mrs. Evelyn and the children were stowed away in the second waggon, three other passengers in the third, and the boxes in the last three.

'What an odd way of doing things, to get in first and yoke the horses afterwards,' thought Bridget; but in the act of thinking it she heard a shrill whistle.

'All right! Go on there!'

'Is the sick lady easy before we start, sir?' asked a convict of Mr. Herbert, who with no slight anxiety was watching proceedings.

'Quite, thank you,' smiled Emmeline.

'Where are the horses?' said Bridget.

A queer grin passed from lip to lip as each prisoner spat into his hand and pressed a firm downward hold on the shafts of the vehicle. But one man turned on Bridget a face so full of shame and misery that she felt ready to cry for having asked the question. There was something in this man's appearance wholly different from the others; a low melancholy settled on his not unpleasing countenance, while his bearing was that of superior birth. A smart whack on his shoulders from the Overseer's thong made him withdraw his eyes from Bridget, and sent a flush of indignation to his sunken cheeks; his fingers snapped audibly in the palm of his hands in their longing to repay the insult; but he must bear it in silence — nay, even with respect — for he is a convict and the other a free man.

'To your place with your impudence, staring at the lady,' cried the overseer.

The man again laid hold of the shaft; a bar was placed across it, and preparations were complete.

'He is not equal to the exertion,' whispered Mr. Herbert to the officer.

'Must get equal to it, then, sir; he knows where to look for pity, and finds it's no use to show off down here, where magpie is magpie whether it feathers a gentleman or a snob. Go on here!'

Another touch of the human horses, and off they trotted; now down, then up, as the inequalities of the very unequal road required. Five miles of ground had thus to be run over; warm work beneath the heat of summer! The velocity with which the waggons rushed over the declivities by its reaction partly impelled them up the succeeding eminence, but for this assistance their progress must have been alike wearisome to the passengers, and exhausting to the runners. Now a nervous excitement supported the spirits of the former and a fierce excitement the energy and strength of the latter, while toiling, tearing on by the wooden rails, they guided the trucks over the tramroad, and that without stopping for nearly three miles, when the halfway station allowed the panting, perspiring steeds a rest. Here a relay awaited those who were too done up to run out the journey to Long Bay.

'Now get up your steam, and quick, for we're late,' commanded the overseer.

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This order was unnecessary, for the men were steaming with a vengeance. Their respiratory organs worked vociferously. There was a general play of chests, and amid the loud, quick breathings of eighteen it was difficult to hear the word of command bandied about from officer to officer. The eighteen pairs of hands could scarcely relax their clutch of the heaving sides to wipe off the perspiration streaming from under the leathern caps and over the blistered faces of the runners.

'Old hands take places -- relays forward, new hands back,' shouted the overseer.

Six convicts retired and six others joined the twelve old hands. The man who had attracted Bridget's attention remained.

'You back, you haven't done steaming yet,' motioned the driver; 'back I say, you Forbes.'

Forbes refused by a gloomy shake of the head, and then laid hold of the shaft.

'Back!' repeated the overseer, raising his arm, 'you'll burst by the way, and, that's what you're after I expect, making believe to be a martyr.'

'There are other means,' muttered Forbes, resigning his hold, and receiving a grin from his comrades, he turned morosely away, and Mr. Herbert followed him.

'Forbes! I am very grieved to meet you here.'

'I am sorry for nothing that helps to kill me.'

'For what are you here?'

'I declined obedience to a brother convict appointed constable over our set. Constable Bradley it was; but, sir, don't question me -- my teeth are set on it all, and I am determined to bear on till --'

He pushed from Mr. Herbert ere the latter had time to reply. The overseer commented:

'Sour as a crabstick -- you'll get nothing but vinegar out of he -- he hasn't spoken a dozen words to anyone since he's been down here, and he won't look a body in the face. I tell you, sir, I'd rather have a gang of these here men than I'd have one such as him.'

'Undoubtedly,' replied Mr. Herbert quietly, but in a tone that silenced him.

'I should like to see how he'd bear it!' burst from Bridget's overboiling indignation, as the driver moved off. 'If that isn't giving double punishment to gentlemen, I don't know what double punishment is.'

'Hush!' whispered Emmeline.

'Well, why should he have more just because he's a gentleman -- it is a great enormous shame, it is.'

'I don't suppose these things which make the punishment so severe are known at home; but do hush -- see, the men are staring at you -- and nothing is more displeasing to them than to hear a superior convict pitied above themselves.'

'I pity them too -- yes, to my heart I do; but then they are all punished alike. Nobody agrees with me about the worse treatment of --'



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'I agree with you,' said Uncle Herbert, looking over his shoulder, 'but it is easier to agree as to the disease than to discover a remedy.'

'Then it ought not to be,' cried Bridget; 'they ought not to go on tearing out one man's heart while they only cut a limb off another — maiming this man, but killing that one — such cruel, unequal treatment.'

'Ah! it's a theme full of doubt and difficulty,' thought Mr. Herbert half aloud, and his eyes unconsciously wandered to Forbes, who with folded arms, drooping head, and a despairing fixedness of countenance, leaned against a bark hut, yielding one leg to a convict constable who was preparing to clasp the cross irons upon it, now that freedom of limb was no longer required for the tram. The chains being fast set upon his legs, he was ordered forward to a carrying gang.

'What's the delay, my men?' asked Mr. Herbert, turning with a sigh from Forbes.

'Naught, sir, only there's a tug a-coming there that'll take the wind out of us; hold on, ladies, or you'll be flunked right overboard when we shies off the top.'

'But there's 'most a mile to get to it,' growled a second.

A steep ascent lay before them. Mr. Herbert placed his arm round Emmeline and drew her to himself; the overseer jumped up behind Bridget.

'Go on here!' and, with a desperate shove from the hinder men and a corresponding pull of the foremost, the waggons were again in motion, the snorting puffing of the runners serving the wooden railway for the noise of an engine. The ascent was gained: the hill on the other side drew forth a universal shudder as the order, 'Steady! — jump up! — and away,' was given. There was a swift, simultaneous movement of the hind men. Without stopping, they sprang on the backs of the vehicles — where, tucking themselves up, they depended, drag-like, from the bar to which they clung; then with a shout from each overseer away dashed the loaded cars down over the frightful steep. As the danger increased with the accelerating motion, the runners one by one jumped on the sides of the cars, till all were perched up; and the waggons had nothing save these human drags to stay their headlong progress — then, heedless of all impediments, on dashed the rumbling train, now quivering on the brink of a jagged precipice, then seeming to gather speed to the music of children's screeches and frightened passengers' cries for mercy. One by one the men dropped off when, nearing the goal, the waggons ran on more level ground, shortly to stop at the jetty of Long Bay, where the penal boat's crew waited to row the tired party to the settlement beyond.

It was almost dark. The Southern Cross already faintly showed itself from the grey sky, and ere the three miles of water brought them to the last jetty every bright star was out, and the lights of the station blinked in the distance.

'My poor child, you are quite worn out!' said Mr. Herbert, as Emmeline leant upon his shoulder.

'Yes, I'm tired; but rest is near,' she pointed to the Isle of the Dead which they were just passing.

Mr. Herbert pressed her to his heart and whispered:

'He giveth His beloved sleep.'

The dark outlines of the ponderous buildings loomed into sight. For all that it was summer, there was not one in the boat who would not have liked to be warmer. Mrs. Evelyn shivered outright, and exclaimed to anyone who, chose to listen:

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'My dear, I feel quite uncomfortable, just as if I were going into prison; really everything to do with convicts is so unfortunate.'

The party landed. Save in its own vicinity, there was not a sound to be heard. Mrs. Evelyn shivered, still less at ease; the silent as well as solitary system seemed to pervade the place, which, in the uncertain light of stars and glimmering windows, appeared little more than a village of unusually large substantial houses. It was difficult to know in what part were stowed away the five hundred prisoners existing under the darkest phase of transported life.

Mrs. Evelyn's shivers increased.

'My dears, I wish you'd all speak louder; there's not the least occasion for whispering so — really it's quite doleful, as though 'twas against the law to hear one's voice.'

'Comes natural down here, ma'am, astonishing how a feller gets to croon that's been here a while,' answered one of the boat's crew.

In spite of this unpromising assertion, a brisk, cheerful voice came pleasantly through the darkness.

'Here at last! we had all given you up for to-night. Where is brother Evelyn?'

And the spare, elastic figure of an ecclesiastic hurried up to Mr. Herbert, and shook both his hands at once.

'Ah, Fathur Evermore! is it you? Your presence both alarms and pleases me.'

'All right, my good friend, all right at the parsonage; I am only here instead of Harellick — he has been called to Norfolk Bay.'

'Clara — Father Evermore, of whom you have heard me speak so often.'

Mrs. Evelyn inclined slightly and shortly; she owed the priest no debt of gratitude, save for his having broken the dismal silence; a bow was sufficient to liquidate that debt. But Bridget was already in love with the venerable man whose benevolent countenance and long silver hair stamped him, to her mind, a veritable 'bon pere Raffre.'

The silvery courteousness of his voice enchanted her.

'I need not ask which is our sick charge; bless you, my child! No, no; I am stronger than I look. Your weight will not crush me if I may share with your father the pleasure of leading you up the settlement,' insisted Father Evermore, kindly drawing one of Emmeline's arms through his.

She was, however, too tired to advance a step; she fell back after the attempt. In an instant two of the boat's crew crossed their arms into the lady's cradle, and bending before her, said, 'If the master would be pleased to allow them, they'd shift her so easy as not to shake a breath out of her.'

Mr. Herbert thankfully accepted their offer, and when his daughter put one arm over each neck, their satisfaction seemed complete. They lifted her carefully, and trotting off, they only rested once; on which one of them took the opportunity to turn his head and rub his cuff across his eyes.

'Are you tired, my friend?' inquired Mr. Herbert.

The man shook his head, and again rubbed his eyes; then seeing that Mr. Herbert looked pained, he muttered:

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'I left a daughter at home, just like this yer, dying away; I expect she's gone 'fore now, without a last look of her poor father. Ah, sir! these be the bitters such as you don't know the taste of.'

The tears, now licensed, flowed apace; but he would not let go to wipe them off — he shook them from his face, and said he was trying to feel 'twas his own maid he was heaving of.' After trying thus for some time, forgetting everything save that he was a father, he tunned to Emmeline:

'Be asy, my dear? grab on tight as you plase, so long a 'you'm asy.'

'A second sentencer has feelings, you see, Miss D'Urban,' whispered Father Evermore, as again the soiled yellow cuff sought the ferret eyes of the prisoner.

'Through the avenue or up the gates, your reverence?' inquired the younger man.

The priest advised the latter to avoid at once the chill of the heavy foliage, and the strong smell of the blue gum then exhaling to perfection its perfume in the still, moist air.

'How beautiful!' cried Bridget, when, having passed through the iron gates, all prison feelings vanished with prison reminders. To some purpose are placed there those tall gates, if to their sentinelship is due the quiet beauty lying onward and overwatched by the ivy-grown church, which, striking the eye of the party as they entered the long line of shrubbery, drew forth Bridget's encomium.

'Beautiful as it is, it was sown in blood, Miss D'Urban, as indeed we may say of the whole civilized structure of this island.'

'Really, Mr. Evermore, you are very complimentary. I don't know anything of this church; but I should be sorry to mix blood with my thoughts of my country,' said Mrs. Evelyn.

'It is nevertheless a very necessary diluent, dear madam, though in great measure I speak allegorically. Where real life-blood has been wanting, the groaning of the prisoner, which we call heart's-blood, has copiously flowed from every part of the colony.' Spreading his hands courteously to attest the fact, he added, 'But the foundation of yon church was literally the scene of murder, and the Port Arthur legend is, that the victim's blood still gurgles in the trenches, and causes your bishop to delay the consecration of the building.'

'Ay, and that isn't all, neither; the leads up there could tell something if they'd tongues; they'd tell how many dollars was pinched out of 'em by Jenkins a-sitting up there a-moulding of money,' joined in the younger convict unable to repress an active interest in the settlement traditions.

But traditionary tales were speedily forgotten in one more cheering to weary pilgrims — one that was English in its utterance and colonial in its warmth: a tide of little Harelicks rushed down the grove, shouting a gleesome welcome; and then, smiling and matronly, the chaplain's wife ran over the steps to conduct her friends to the parsonage, of which, together with the clerical Protestant duties of the settlement, Mr. Herbert had undertaken to relieve her husband for three months.

'I'm half glad you're too late for dinner, for not my means nor Opal's invention could have produced a more substantial meal than that you see before you, for even which you must thank the soldiers: just at the last moment, when I was despairing of anything but navy beef for your reception-feast, they brought in two fine trumpeters.'

But the large kind smile of their hostess was a reception — feast in itself, as, presiding over the tea-table, she dealt out the fish, which, fair, fresh, and solid, had not left the bay many hours before those who now preyed on its dainty flakes

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'Short commons down here in hot weather, Miss D'Urban,' explained Father Evermore, on seeing Bridget exploring with some curiosity what appeared a log of boiled wood, but which, on closer inspection, turned out to be a lump of navy beef, of age unknown.

'They don't look much like famine, at any rate,' she laughed in answer, nodding to the tribe of sleek, ruddy Harelicks shining around the board, and smiling, large, and comfortable as their delighted mother, who, in her turn, smiled, extra pleased at the compliment to her children.

'No; thank God we manage very well. When it's too hot for the boats to bring in any meat, we can always borrow fish, eggs, or fowl; then the store-beef is a never-failing resource.'

'But it's so nasty, mamma; the storekeeper told me the last piece was older than papa,' ventured to suggest the boy Harelick.

Mrs. Evelyn began to frown on the culinary probabilities; but Mrs. Harelick assured her that alarm was needless; the borrowing system practised by the officers subserved all necessary purposes, and rendered the absence of shops of less consequence. She showed that A., who keeps a cow, lends B. a pound of butter, and in return borrows a dozen eggs. C. borrows a bottle of rum, and lends in return a wallibi, which her husband has snared; while the soldiers are too happy to exchange the fish they spend half their time in catching for any trifle the cupboards of their neighbours may afford. Bridget thought it would be much better fun to buy and sell in this primitive way than with money; on which her aunt said, really her niece was so childish in her notions that no one could suppose she was a young woman of twenty; but Father Evermore gave Bridget to understand by a kind smile that in such matters he approved of childishness even in young women; and to further signify his approval, he told her he hoped she would consider his quarters at her service whenever she required a nosegay or dish of fruit.

Ere Mr. Harelick returned, Mrs. Evelyn had gone off with the children, and Bridget with Emmeline. His countenance bore that peculiar, tired expression so characteristic of the convict chaplain, though in a slighter degree than that on Mr. Herbert's face.

'They'll worry me out altogether soon, Evelyn,' he said, after a brief comparison of grievances with his clerical brother. 'I wrote a resignation yesterday, but my wife made me destroy it; she wouldn't let me show them how they had annoyed me; she thinks we can watch how matters go during the time you are here, and then act when the way is clear.'

'They must worry me quite out, or I shall not leave the department,' replied Mr. Herbert.

'Oh! you needn't fear, you are a visitor down here, and will find everything to your liking.'

'The redemption of the soul is preciOus, and it ceaseth for ever,' murmured Mr. Herbert, following out to himself his train of thought.

'Yes; would we could think more of those poor fellows and less of ourselves! I always tell my wife, that humbly and weakly as I preach it, I know they have the Gospel whilst I am here, and therefore, not knowing who may come after me, we ought to bear on to the last moment: if you, now, Evelyn, would take my place, I'd leave to-morrow.'

Mr. Herbert shook his head; he had his own flock to care for. He encouraged his brother to endure in all patience the trials of his ministerial course. It might be distressing, to have the rod of lay office so domineeringly shaken over them by uneducated, and, too often, irreligious men; but their eyes should be toward the Chief Bishop, who, wielding the pastoral staff, would guide them into righteousness and peace.

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'To strive to hear that Bishop's voice,' he said, 'and then to follow it, should be the aim of our lives. It is good to hear it, better to follow it.'

'Ah! so we say every evening, don't we, Julia? but the next morning, when I find some fresh petty annoyance prepared — yes, prepared — for me, I lose courage, and feel it's hard to set to work against wind and tide, and without knowing, too, how I have offended. The last time the Comptroller was down, he was as cool as could be; what for, I've never yet discovered. Well, when he had gone something he had said to the Superintendent was conveyed to me as an order from himself. Being a first-class officer I refused to receive second-hand commands, so no more was said about it; but they found means to pay me out, by keeping me so short of wood that we could only have one fire in the house for several days. When I complained blame was shifted from shoulder to shoulder, until it was made to rest on the poor carriers, who were threatened with cells if they neglected the parson again.'

'The apples, too, Tom — that was very shabby,' said Mrs. Harellick.

At mention of the apples, in spite of his former vexation, good-natured Mr. Harellick burst into a hearty laugh.

'Yes, indeed; these things are so ridiculous that persons who haven't daily to encounter them would think them too foolish to repeat.'

'Foolish or not, these things are only bearable as they are borne for the love of Christ. It requires great grace to bear small trials; natural heroism goes far in enabling us to support heavy troubles,' replied Mr. Herbert, gently but firmly.

'Why, Evelyn, surely up in town, within earshot of the Comptroller, you have not to face any of these annoyances?'

An expressive smile was the only answer.

'Oh! you needn't fear my wife, she's safe, and awake to these matters; aren't you, Julia?'

A large, benignant smile at once rewarded his opinion of her, and brightened the dark subject which lowered over the trio.

Mr. Herbert said he had not thought of Mrs. Harellick as an obstacle to free speech, he considered that the more such grievances were talked of the more they withered up the heart's best feelings. He found them difficult enough to battle against in reality, without making imaginary attacks upon the enemy's camp.

Wishing to avoid further exposition of 'stationary' grievances, Mr. Herbert asked, 'How is it down here between master and men?'

'Oh! the same as ever, and the same as it ever must be whilst — '

'Now, Tom, do take care what you say,' said his wife.

'There, you see she wants to pay you off, Evelyn, because you would not trust her just now.'

'Now, Tom, don't; I only want to put you on your guard. You never know what ears there may be about. That was why you stopped, wasn't it, Mr. Evelyn, and not because of me?'

'That which I have to say I would not stop for any ears. I would say it if called before Government to-morrow.'

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'Do let us hear what you have to say then, for I'm sure if you up in Hobart have cause to speak, we down here may fairly have more cause.'

'In finishing your former speech for you, I believe I comprehend all I have to say, and that is, that no improvement in convict difficulties and evils can be expected till a different class of men is chosen to work the system, nor while so much irresponsible power is vested in one man.'

'Why, you've been foraging in my paddock! Those were almost my words this morning, weren't they, Julia?'

'Would that I had been there trespassing, then there had not been two witnesses to the evil; but, unfortunately, my mind has gathered its sentiments from an original field of observation, widely extended and darkly diversified, and has long ago arrived at the conclusion, that half the systems which have been tried and found wanting, have been so not so much from deficiency in themselves, as from some defect existent in their coadjutors, in other phrase from an erroneous choice of hands; the heads of the system have generally been well chosen.'

'Take off the head, then, and there is nothing but rottenness below,' laughed Mr. Harellick.

'Oh, Tom!' his wife was thoroughly alarmed; hastening across the room she bolted the door.

But Tom would not be quiet, it was so great a treat to have some one to talk to.

'I think, though, the heart of the system is not so much amiss; it means well, and if it could accomplish its intentions our convicts would do famously.'

Mr. Herbert shook his head gravely and said:

'The remembrance that more than one hundred and nineteen thousand of our fellow-creatures have been subject to the experiments and failures of systems in these colonies affords no matter for light words.'

'Too true, indeed. The delight of at last hearing my own thoughts echoed by others more deeply based, makes me appear light when lightness is far from my heart. We agree so well, Evelyn, that I feel I have a right to speak to you of the grievous subversion of power as practised in many of these stations. Ah I it's a responsibility from which, good Lord, deliver me.'

Poor Mrs. Harellick sat distractedly in her chair, alternately looking from window to door, from door to chimney, for the ears she dreaded. Because a Government House she fancied it must be full of not only ears but eyes, and her search for them continued, till, with a desperate gesture, she implored Tom to be quiet; however, he would go on.

'Yes, with few exceptions, it has always appeared to me that the hands of the system, from first to last, from first-class officer to convict constable, are ill appointed. Now there's Turbot, except severity of temper, what fitness is there in him to recommend him for the important position he holds?'

'Severity of temper, perhaps,' repeated Mr. Herbert, with the least touch of Uncle Ev curling in his lip.

'One would hope that where the good of so many hundred souls was at stake, not even a third-class officer would be elected without an almost solemn scrutiny of the man; but how can appointments, resulting more from favour than from conviction, be otherwise than erring?'

'Dear, dear, when we know the power that such men, so chosen, have of making their prisoner subjects wretched to desperation, what non-importance falls on the little show of power wherewith they seek to intimidate us!' and

Mr. Herbert arose to put an end to the distasteful question.

'Not if we view the show of power as part of the plan on which they have fattened into vanity! They have exercised uncontrolled authority so long over one Class of their brethren that their minds pall, and they desire to stimulate their depraved appetites with a taste of the free.'

'Tom! Tom! do mind what you say,' once more despairingly urged his wife.

A loud rattling at the door did more towards stopping her husband than all her 'Tom's.' It was with a redundant smile that the distressed wife welcomed back Mrs. Evelyn and Bridget, for now she was sure the dangerous topic would be discontinued; the chaplain wanted not prudence when he was in unassured company.

'How is Emmeline?' asked Mr. Herbert.

'Tired out, poor dear; I've only run in to say good-night, and I'm off to bed before she goes to sleep.'

'Talking of bed, my dear, how unnecessary of the department to give us such very disfigured bedding, just as though Government feared we should make away with their blankets. I really shall feel like a convict sleeping between those Broad Arrows, and great ugly B.O.'s, too, all over the things in that manner,' said Mrs. Evelyn.

'Alas, madam, all is B.O. down here! no one has a right to himself, nothing is its own. You'll see the O.P.S.O. written on every man's brow; even where the Broad Arrow is not visible on his back. The serpent himself, as well as his trail, is perceptible in this natural paradise.'

'No need, at any rate, to have him in the house, coiled up in such great black B.O.'s on my little Charlie's blankets; the poor child was quite frightened to get into his cot. He said: "Mamma, does B.O. spell bogie?" and feeling rather cross, I answered, "Yes, of course, my dear," when he set up such a roar that I have been ever since trying to quiet him; even now he is sobbing in his sleep.'

'I congratulate you, ma'am; he is a fortunate child to retain his horror of a bogie in sight of which he has lived all his life. My best wish for Master Charles is, that B.O. may always spell bogie to him. I fear it has long ceased to convey that meaning to my children,' replied Mr. Harellick, tracing a large B with his finger on the table.

## CHAPTER XXVI. PORT ARTHUR. -- THE SETTLEMENT.

IT was many days ere Emmeline could leave her room. Her little modicum of strength had been so drawn upon by the journey that it required every tender appliance with perfect rest to restore her to her former position; and long, very long, to give her a semblance of improved health. But when the semblance did appear, it was so true to nature that even the father was deceived by it, and a faint shadow of a just possible joy cast on his heart a sensation long forbidden; and resting with grateful delight under this slight shadow from the wayside heat, he uttered a prayer that before he had not dared to breathe, 'O my Father, if it be possible!'

Then the joy became less possible -- the shadow faded -- once more it approached, again to withdraw; until the father perceived that it was a mere mockery flitting before his path to delude his steady progress from the well-beaten track of sanctified sorrow; and once more with stricken but uncomplaining heart he resigned his child to the Unseen Hand that was beckoning her step by step from this nether world. 'Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done.'

Devoting himself to her, he was thankful when comparative strength and freedom from pain enabled her to enjoy the passing sweets of a softly passing summer, which, balmy and restorative, swept over the sunny region of Port

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Arthur, preserving it an Eden of fertility and luxuriant beauty; while other less favoured parts of the island drooped and withered prematurely into the dusky tintings of autumn.

To spare Emmeline the fatigue of a rather steep flight of stairs, Mrs. Harelick had devoted to her special service a large front parlour on the ground-floor. It opened on the station, and had by no means the pleasant landscape which enlivened the upper apartments. The lovely Bay, and the Isle of the Dead were not to be seen; but some gardens intervening, beguiled the more immediate sight from the prison apparatus, unescapably conspicuous on a prolonged survey from the bow-window.

A low veranda, covered with multiflora rose, extending the length and sides of the house, shielded the lower rooms from the scorching sun, and gave the parsonage (otherwise bare and unfinished-looking) a rural, picturesque appearance.

The first few days succeeding their arrival, there was no tempting Bridget from her cousin. Not all the enchantment of the Government gardens to which the young Harelicks invited her could entice her from 'dear old Em.' Let them bring her the rare flowers which in rich, if not in wild exuberance wasted their sweetness on the garden air; until Em could go with her she should not go in search of them for all the pink acacias and ixias in the world; not she! In vain smiled Father Evermore's courteous face; not even respect to his silver locks should draw her to see more than she could see from the window; and that was neither much nor pleasant, unless she sat very sidewise to get a peep at the church and avenue descending from it. For after she had watched the children playing in the veranda, there was nothing but the settlement before her. We all know that distant life attracts the eye more than nearer beauty. Whilst there is one living object moving on an eminence before us, we must look at it, in spite of more inviting objects. So it seemed to Bridget that she must overlook the cheerful patches of cultivation just outside the parsonage to watch the ceaseless yellow stream of life clanging drearily either to or from the buildings beyond.

The first morning she was startled from her sleep at five o'clock by a loud, quick bell that, being rung from the prison, peremptorily sounded through the whole settlement, bidding all concerned hasten to their day's duty. Mr. Harelick was one concerned; and ere the loud, quick bell ceased, Bridget heard the front-door slam, and a step run down the grove. She was not concerned, but for all that she could not return to her disturbed sleep; besides, she wanted to know what could be going on at that early hour.

Twilight mists had long dispersed leaving pendant over all a faint splendour that gave promise of a speedy outburst of dazzling glory. Her heart leaped within her as, gently pushing aside the shutter, she saw the rising sun. She felt as if something ought to happen on so bright a day; and glad thoughts fluttered within her, impatient to take rosy flight from their narrow bounds. How beautiful everything must look in this summer weather! Last night, in the darkness, it was fair enough, she said to herself; and opening the shutter a little more, she peeped out. There hung the silent splendour, but over what? — a plain peopled with living misery — a surge of human suffering heaved the settlement into a life so slow, so heavy, that all the brightness of the day could not stimulate it into more than lethargic movement — still slow and cold and heavy, it moved in one unbroken mass; the sun might shine or it might lower for all that dead vitality seemed to care. But slow movements neither suit prison stations nor penal servitude. What sun or cheerful weather cannot do, must be done by other means.

Once more a bell rang. Then louder, sharper, and quicker than it, several voices of command were heard. The mass of pied yellow separated into sections, and to the 'Get up' and 'Go on' of constables and overseers diverged to the four outlets of Port Arthur. The boat's crew passed to the water's edge; the wood-fellers to Opossum Bay; the road-gang towards Safety Cove; the settlement servants to their several masters; and one party, harnessed to carts, wag driven up the main road, through the grove, and by the parsonage, when Bridget, still peeping out, recognised Forbes in the last of the men. He could not go so quickly as the others; he was therefore assisted on his way by alternate bruises and shoves — these from his fellow-prisoners when pushed against them by the cart — those from the cart when repelled by its onward movement.



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Bridget hastily closed the shutters, and sighed:

'There's no good in anything beautiful! Oh how I wish — '

She stopped, remembering her cousin; but Emmeline was awake, and had been watching Bridget's varying countenance as she discovered wretchedness where she sought for happiness, and darkness where she had looked for light.

'Oh, Em -- Em -- if "Thy kingdom come" means an end to all these things, I'm sure I'll cry it with every breath I have. Fancy, five hundred convicts, all miserable! I feel as if I had no right to be happy. It shows we are wicked, or we couldn't enjoy ourselves. Angels couldn't if they lived here; that's why they don't, I suppose.'

A sudden stop to the up-and-down clanking of the chains and rumbling of the carts, together with a sort of scuffling sound, brought Bridget once more to the window.

The party had drawn up just above her; she saw Forbes drop his hands, and lean resolutely back on the cart.

'I can't go on -- I'm not used to it.'

'Go on, you -- schemer!' shouted the overseer.

'I can't; I shall drop if I move another step.'

'Go on there, and leave him to follow.'

Bob Pragg was the leader; he attempted to move, but the two men behind him, resisting his effort, pulled him back. They would not run down a fellow-creature and a comrade for all that he had been a gentleman; one of them turned and said:

'Sir, we shall pull him down, and we can't do that.'

Forbes tried once more to get on; he gave a few short steps, and again dropped, whispering to his fellows:

'I would if I could. Don't mind me; go on.'

But not a man, save Pragg, would stir, and his attempt was futile against a dozen drawbacks.

Again Forbes made a desperate effort; his hands fell, his knees tottered, and then he sank to the ground between the shafts of the cart.

"'Twould serve the ----- rascal right if I drove you over him," growled the overseer.

Pragg seemed to think it would; but a low curse escaped from the other men. Forbes was unharnessed and made to stand, while Pragg, loosened from the party, was sent for a constable to take off the unfortunate man.

Mr. Herbert, who had also been aroused by the prison bell, having heard the scuffle, came out to inquire the cause, and just at that moment Mr. Harellick issued from the avenue on his return from morning prayers.

'This man should not have been sent out this morning; he had work enough yesterday to fatigue a stronger frame,' said Mr. Herbert.

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'It's his own fault — he's scheming; of course he's weak to-day because he wouldn't eat his rations last night or this morning, so he's come out to look after his appetite; he'll find it on the road somewhere 'fore the day's out, I reckon.'

Mental pain writhed not only in every feature, but also in every muscle of Forbes's attenuated frame. Wounded sensitiveness seemed to ooze through his long, slim fingers, as, nervously twitching them, he worked them into each other. He once or twice tried to raise his eyes to the two clergymen; but the glance was so furtive in its haste that both hoped he would fix it anywhere save on them.

'Is this true, Forbes?' said Mr. Herbert.

'True, sir — true? Do you know it's against the laws down here to question an officer before his men?'

'I beg your pardon; I should not think of questioning you. I spoke to the prisoner, Forbes,' said Mr. Herbert, politely inclining his head, and then in the same quiet voice: 'Is this true, Forbes?'

'Sir, it's against our rules.'

'I follow no rules but those of humanity, Mr. Overseer. Is it true, Forbes?'

'I could not take my rations, sir. I've asked to go into the hospital, but they say I am malingering, and refuse to admit me.'

'The cell shall be your only hospital; take him off; these are my notes, give them at the office,' bellowed the overseer.

The constable bore him off, and he was arraigned at the bar of penal justice for insolence, refractoriness, and attempt at mutiny; his punishment was accordingly heavy. Those who had refused to stir on his account were likewise punished as mutineers — Pragg exulted; his praiseworthy support of the overseer met with its reward in the credit-book.

But much had to be done that day. The family of Harellicks would leave to-morrow, when Mr. Herbert must enter on the external, and Mrs. Evelyn on the internal, duties of the parsonage; before then, both must be duly inaugurated to their respective posts. The latter were more novel to Mrs. Evelyn than were the former to her brother-in-law. Morning prayers at five, cells, prison, hospital, school, and evening prayer, formed his daily routine, weekly diversified by the Sunday services in the church, a ride to Eagle Hawk Neck for a service with the soldiers, and to Norfolk Bay for the same purpose. Mrs. Evelyn went round with her friend to learn the various modes of domestic existence in the unfeminine district of Port Arthur, where the total absence of female servants made the position of the lady of the house one of real work. The two eldest girl Harellicks had been the little housemaids, one going her regular round with pail, broom, and duster, the other making up the B.O. beds with all the gravity of an old nurse. Clothes-washing, scrubbing, cooking, and such labours were performed by the men. The ironing and bread and butter making fell to the mistress, and woe to her in the summer heat if no friendly assistance was near to lend a hand at the heavy fortnightly ironing!

The storeroom perfectly delighted Mrs. Evelyn. It was a spacious apartment intended for the drawing-room; but as the withdrawing of stores was a more frequent occurrence than the withdrawing of company from the dining-parlour, Mr. Harellick's predecessor had turned the said room into a victualling depot, where now Mrs. Evelyn's eye rejoiced over every imaginable supply, necessary to life if not to luxury and that in a degree of abundance which made her think little of her own pride at home. Mrs. Harellick said she was fortunate in leaving her friend a treasure in the form of a cook, by the name of Opal — a Chinaman prisoner, whose present sin was that of absconding, whose former crime had been a passionate attempt to murder his master. He was a professed

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cook, and prior to his second conviction had received thirty shillings a week at the best confectioner's in Hobart Town.

'You have only to give him the materials,' said Mrs. Harellick, 'and without further orders dinner after dinner will come up without your knowing how. It is wonderful to see the nice dishes he makes out of the roughest materials and not a scrap wasted. Let us go into the kitchen to him.'

'Opal, here is your new lady.'

'All light den -- Opal welly glad -- hope she nice lady, no scold, no give poor chain-gang trouble.'

Mrs. Evelyn proceeded to open the cupboard, when, emitting a noise as if he had been driving pigs out of a potato-yard, Opal hurried over, shut the door upon the shelves, and put the key in his pocket. Mrs. Evelyn looked both offended and surprised, but Mrs. Harellick only laughed.

'You mustn't pry into his mysteries! He won't do anything if you do. In there he has innumerable little plates full of what would only seem useless scraps to you; but wait and see. He'd as soon throw a scrubbing-brush at you as look if you meddled with his dishes -- not out of disrespect, though, or anger, but because he thinks that is the shortest way of showing his disapprobation.'

This did not please Mrs. Evelyn; she thought a made dish by no means compensated for a scrubbing-brush at her head. But Mrs. Harellick pacified her, saying there was no fear, Opal was the gentlest creature so long as his cupboard was safe from intrusion. He never grumbled at his work, whether it was washing the clothes with lime, or digging in the vegetable-garden. A few materials to turn into condiments always put him in a good temper and in capital spirits.

Mrs. Evelyn learnt that Government allowed two servants; the other, therefore, was employed as nurse, walking about the settlement with the baby and younger children as demurely as any female. Mrs. Evelyn was thinking she should not like this at all, when the man in question entered the kitchen, and the babe clung so fondly round his neck, and kissed and smoothed his tanned face with such unmistakable tokens of good will, that she forbore to express her feelings, determining that her child might after all fare worse in a woman's arms.

The outhouses were visited in the evening, when the live-stock -- comprising three cows, three goats, one horse, some fowls, a cat, kitten, and three large dogs -- were bodily delivered to Mrs. Evelyn. The goats' milk was dedicated to nursery use, the cows' to house consumption, butter, and barter. The parsonage being considered the second dairy in the station, the officers were too glad to borrow its delicious contents on any article they could produce; but Mrs. Harellick said she always reserved some of the butter for the soldiers, who in return gave her the choice of their finest fish. The cows and goats were daily taken out to forage near Safety Cove. Opal had merely to leave them at the Government dairy at seven a.m., when the former, joining the cowherd's drove, and the latter the goatherd's, were led out to pasture, and no more was seen of either until the evening, when the low of the one and the bleat of the other at the back gate announced milking-hour and tea-time. A stranger dropping into Port Arthur, and coming suddenly on the picturesque herdsman reclining under the shade of some flowering tree, dreaming away the long hours of the day surrounded by his seventy goats, may fancy he has alighted on some Elysian sanctuary of the shepherds which has escaped the general ruin of the fall, or at any rate the destructive march of civilization. But, questioning the happy dreamer, his own dream dissipates before the everlasting O.P.S.O. of the herdsman's talk, and the Broad Arrow on his back. He finds that the man's thoughts dwell indeed on love and home, but not of a sweetheart whom the shades of evening will restore to him, but of one for ever sundered by rolling miles of ocean and insurmountable depths of degradation. His Phyllis never owns him more, and as for his home, he has a Government lodging down there in the station; but hell may just as well be home as that. His home? Ah! where is it? The place thereof knows him no more.

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The stranger may inquire, if all this be true, why does Government trust you with so much unguarded liberty? When your home longings burn within you in your solitude what is there to prevent your escaping through the tempting opportunity offered by the unfrequented bush before you?

The herdsman, sure at last that he is not being mocked, looks up and asks, with a grin of hopelessness:

'Do you know your maps? Look at Eagle Hawk Neck; and if it isn't marked down, just ride over to it this afternoon, and you'll soon find out WHY they trusts me.'

The stranger may take the hint, and devote the afternoon to a solving of the goatherd's problem. After a ten miles' ride he reaches the Eagle Hawk Neck, and finds it is neither falsely named nor a luring bait to the chain-weary captives of Port Arthur. He returns from the fiercely-guarded bar of sand, which, stretching to the mainland, forms the only possible outlet from the peninsula. He returns, no longer wondering why the lonely convict does not escape, but more fearfully wondering that one is ever found so reckless of life so utterly despising death, as to venture into the certain detection, if not destruction, awaiting him at the Neck, where, if he elude the military watch — or, more dread and vigilant, the ferocious dogs chained across the isthmus — he has still to fling himself on the mercy of the pitiless surf, and dodge the hungry shark. And yet he is told that many desperate men have thus attempted escape, and of them one or two have emerged from the jaws of death, and, landing on the other side, have become bye-words in the annals of crime and infamy.

When the station-gates closed on her friends, Mrs. Evelyn entered at once on her own plans and alterations: all traces of the recent out-turn soon disappeared before her finishing touches. Opal was given fairly to understand that his cupboards would be subject to inspection, and that no scrubbing-brushes were to be thrown at the children. Danby, the nurseman, was cautioned against kissing, or permitting kisses from the little girl (still the baby of the Evelyn family); then supreme and happy Mrs. Evelyn moved glibly about, satisfied even with the B.O.'s peeping from every corner, for they served to remind her that she enjoyed the large house rent free.

The station-gates had scarcely closed upon his friends ere Mr. Herbert locked himself into the study and there passed the morning in earnest prayer for his penal flock, that a blessing might attend his labours among them. He then sallied forth to hold his first service in the new cells chapel. Returning thence to the parsonage, he went to his daughter's room, and seating himself by her, she soon discovered that some perplexity worked in his mind; he promptly answered her look of inquiry by saying:

'It has always been a surprise to me, that our Church, having so tenderly provided for all estates of her children, should have overlooked the prisoner. Never have I more painfully felt the omission than this afternoon, when, holding a service in the cells chapel, I had to read the Liturgy as prepared for general worshippers, to a congregation, who, if they felt at all, must have felt how much of what they heard was inapplicable to themselves.'

Taking up Wilcox's Prayer-book, which lay on Emmeline's table, he turned over the leaves and read the titles of the different services.

'Here we have anticipated every position of fallen man, save that which is so painfully brought before us in these penal states.'

'It cannot be that our Church rejects this unfortunate class?' said Emmeline.

'God forbid, my child! not while she professes to be the messenger of Him who came to seek and to save that which was lost, nor while she re-echoes that blessed voice, "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But it appears that she has forgotten there must ever be a portion of her family excluded by sin from the family altar, and therefore requiring a separate administration.' He remained silent and in deep thought, then, shaking his head as if to negative some mental suggestion, he exclaimed.

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'I cannot see a clear way before me. In my own church where the free unite in equal proportions with the bond, and parts inapplicable to the latter may be supposed to be addressed to the former, I do not so much perceive the necessity for a special service; but here the necessity must be obvious to all, and where I have officiated this afternoon, where the congregation is composed of outcasts from the worst outcasts, the necessity for a special service becomes paramount. It is a difficulty that increases on my conscience, and will eventually lead me to renounce the public cell service, unless the authorities permit me to compile from our Liturgy a form for the use of those prisoners and captives so touchingly prayed for in the Litany; and a very beautiful form could be extracted with but little trouble.'

'Beautiful, indeed,' said Emmeline, a bright recollective glance kindling in her eye. Then, folding her hands and shutting her eyes, in a low voice she repeated that exquisite prayer in the Litany, commencing, 'We humbly beseech Thee, O Father, mercifully to look upon our infirmities,' etc.

'Yes, that, with the confession and a few other prayers would be well chosen to express the feeling of those who have visibly and outwardly strayed from the right way. God knows, when we come to speak of that spiritual way marked out by the Saviour's blood, we have all need to look to ourselves and pray with redoubled earnestness those prayers we would put into our fellow-sinners' lips.'

'But, papa, what is there to prevent your using your own discretion in selecting prayers for the convicts?'

'In visiting from cell to cell, of course nothing — I am at liberty to suit my teaching to the case; but in the public services, much. Our position is as unfortunate as undefined. Any attempt at reform, even in our own province, is regarded with a jealous eye by the secular powers, and we cannot appeal to the bishop without giving an offence which I am unwilling to give — for a house divided against itself cannot stand. I have often thought of submitting to his lordship a compilation from the Church Prayer-book for my prison use, but have hitherto refrained, hoping the necessity for such a form would present itself to the convict rulers; it has not, however, done so here, whatever improvements may elsewhere have taken place. You are weary, dear. It is naughty of me to come troubling you, is it not?'

'Very; and more naughty of me to wish to know what harasses my father's mind.'

'If I tell you what troubles me now, will you promise to assist me out of it?'

Emmeline smiled ready acquiescence.

'Bridget informs me you are thinking of going to church on Sunday?'

'Oh! that is unkind. I had made a nice little plan for creeping into the pew unseen by anyone; that is treachery, Bridgy.'

'Only to you, though, and in a right cause. I'm not going to let you kill yourself for all the churches in Tasmania.'

'It is only just outside the veranda,' pleaded Emmeline but she quickly yielded on seeing her father's anxiety, and Bridget undertook to be all attention in order to bring back a correct edition of her uncle's sermon, which he had told them was to be from the text, 'By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.'

On the Sunday morning the bells chimed out cheerily as though they called a free population to a sabbath rest but the holy day afforded no respite, though it varied the weekly routine.

Very sorrowful was Mr. Herbert's face as, gazing around the church, he perceived how the insignia of crime and force darkened the sanctuary of God into another form of prison. Here, at his right hand, stood the armed guard of

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soldiers, pointing their muskets in solemn mockery of the peace that he should declare. The peace of God, he had to preach. What peace? silently sneered the musket's mouth. Bridget had not yet dared to look up — she feared what she should see. But when her uncle commenced the service, 'I will arise and go to my father,' there was so sudden, so tremendous a rush of chains, that she had no choice to refrain from looking. She hastily turned and beheld some hundreds of her fellow-creatures arrayed in the vast amphitheatre before her. There stood the hardened ruffian; there stood the heartbroken penitent; there stood the gray-haired criminal side by side with the mere youth; there stood every degree of guilt mingled into one dingy mass of yellow. Her heart sickened at the sight, yet she could not withdraw her eyes from the closely-cropped sea of heads, until, with one simultaneous movement, down they all dived to the confession. Again they all uprose. The hum of the responses blended with the occasional clank of fetters, or every now and then was wholly drowned in the combined rattle of the many hundred irons. Bridget no longer wondered that Mr. Herbert felt the impropriety of the service, it was a pain to hear it even.

'Holy! holy! holy! Lord God of Sabaoth,' devoutly exclaimed Mr. Herbert.

'Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory,' replied the several hundred voices under dread of punishment, and several hundred chains prolonged the response in one dull vibration, which conveyed but a faint idea of the majestic glory spoken of.

'That it may please Thee to bless and keep the magistrates, giving them grace to execute justice and maintain truth,' prayed Mr. Herbert.

'We BESEECH Thee to hear us, good Lord,' one-voiced responded the men, glancing, with peculiar earnestness, towards the magistrates' seat, as though grace would fall acceptably in the direction of that large green pew. The service concluded. While Mr. Herbert changed his robes, the hymn was given out and commenced. It was adapted to a Hallelujah chorus. Just as he appeared in the pulpit, the first verse finished, and the leader of the choir began the chorus; then from those hundred convict lips burst forth that lofty strain wherewith angelic hosts sound their great Creator's praise — louder — still louder — and yet more loud at each new breath arose the Hallelujah, but louder than the loudest chorus outpealed a deafening clangour of chains, as in their energy to outvie each other the men threw back their heads and shook their ironed limbs. Outswelled the heavy clangour, and a fearful mockery of the enraptured song smote upward, lingering in the roof like the rolling bass of distant thunder. They were about to begin the second verse, when Mr. Herbert raised his hands, saying, 'Let us pray.' The chains clattered down and once more arose. Mr. Herbert waited till the last rattle had died away. Then instead of the text Bridget expected, came a deep, rich voice, as delivering a message from another world:

'The spirit of the Lord is upon me! He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.'

Swift with a message from his God, the iron of those chains had entered his heart; and who should stay his lips that he declare it not?

Once launched in settlement life, no variation broke the wearying sameness of Mr. Herbert's ministerial routine — cells, prison, hospital, sin, sickness, strife, and he had gone through his work for the week. Monday morning brought the same list of duty, the same cheerless ground to be trodden, the same tale to be told, the same difficulties to battle, the same discouragements to bear up against, but through these all there was the same God in heaven, saying 'I am thy strength and thy shield;' the same Jesus whispering, 'Lo, I am with you alway;' the same Holy Ghost the Comforter, invisibly refreshing the streams of grace; the same bright crown o'erhanging, 'Be thou faithful unto death;' and — alas! that he must drop from the mount of glory (but so it is ever in this fickle world) — the same immortal souls living in death and dying in life, sinking, sinking, sinking. So, how should not the cloud oppress his brow, for all that his own eternal prospect is clear as the morning without clouds?

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The family, too, had few interruptions to its quiet monotony — churning and ironing days were the grandest changes; these, however, occurred so regularly that they were hardly to be recognised as changes. The disappearance — or, rather, the non—return — of Danby, the nurseman, from the muster—ground caused a little excitement, and afterwards a great deal of extra work, for it was found that his absence was involuntary, being occasioned by an award of three days' solitary, amount due for five minutes' lateness at the muster. In like manner Opal disappeared for a week, one of his cows having chosen to break through penal rule and run home through the Government garden instead of through the appointed road; she, of course, would not have understood cells, so the Chinaman became her substitute — both were B.O., bodily distinction was unnecessary.

These excitements involved creature—suffering, therefore they were not agreeable to the parsonage family. Once a reported shipwreck really did bring some earnest blood into the pale face of the settlement, all was hurry and bustle when the screams of the unfortunate crew were pronounced to be audible to everyone except the individual speaking. All the available males of the station turned out for Safety Cove, the scene of the catastrophe, and the boat's crew was sent off to assist the foundering wretches. Meanwhile, the vessel, quietly rounding Cape Pillar, was wholly innocent of the imputed wreck; the cries of her crew could only be traced to a set of station urchins, who were concluding a spree among the ruins of Point Puer, by exhibiting their voices in the form of echoes amid the deserted buildings. And they who had ridden out to the cove one mass of benevolent feeling returned singly to the station, dropping in at slow intervals with feelings no longer benevolent, but such as it may be supposed possessed the fox which was invited to supper and sent supperless away.

At last, however, a substantial surprise came upon the family — a surprise that made them feel somewhat in the position of prisoners. One steamer—day, Charlie ran in with the unwelcome tidings that the boat's crew had just brought word from Norfolk Bay that the Kangaroo was laid up and unfit for service.

'How ever shall we get back then?' cried Mrs. Evelyn.

The answer could only be: 'Here you are, and here you must remain, unless you brave the Neck, or venture in an open boat.'

'How shall we get Maida down?' thought Mr. Herbert and inquired Emmeline and Bridget.

Answer not more hopeful: 'She can't come unless she go the land route with the postman, or except she turn horseman and make her way over the bush.'

To Uncle Ev, all alone in Hobart Town, the news was equally unpleasant. He wearied of bachelor life, and became impatient for the end of May, which was to restore his family to him. But to Mr. Herbert it came fraught with suspense and anxiety, crushing upon his heart — a weight for which he could not account.

When Mr. Herbert had to return for a short time to Hobart Town, Mrs. Evelyn declared it was a shame to leave unprotected women; she would not stay alone in the parsonage when it had been announced that absconders were out, and among them that notorious Bob Pragg, whose cold—blooded ferocity was known to all. Mr. Herbert told her that she need not be alarmed, Pragg having effectually escaped through the Neck to the mainland, whilst his companions had been recaptured. Though her fears were overruled, it was with no good grace she saw her brother—in—law depart; she foreboded that on his return he would find them murdered. Nevertheless, Mr. Herbert arrived in town, and thence back to the peninsula, without any notable occurrence having taken place, except we mention that Opal, out of pure love to Emmeline, had managed to spin one pound of gravy—beef into such a multiplicity of sausages, that every person connected their number with the loss of the kitten; but no confession could be extorted from him; he merely giggled with a cunning leer, and said he 'didn't tink nothing too fine for dat nice laddie wid de vely light face, what smiles so sweet on dis poor chaingang ' — his mode of pronouncing prisoner. He made no secret of his attachment. Much to Bridget's delight and Mrs. Evelyn's annoyance, he would frequently say: 'Opal luff dat plitty light laddie vely much.' His mistress would correct him with: 'Love isn't a

proper word for you, Opal;' on which, with troubled countenance, he would confess his ignorance of correct language, and apologize by explaining that what he felt was 'great, big, large, there,' laying his hand upon his heart to show where. Nor was his love all idle vaunt. Emmeline owed much of her enjoyment at Port Arthur to this her Chinese worshipper. One day when she was fatigued with a short stroll in the Government gardens, Opal chanced to enter the room. He surveyed her in silence for some time, then, giving one of his peculiar grunts, he started off to the lumber-house — shortly returning to the veranda with four small wheels and the spring of a child's carriage. Presenting these to Mr. Herbert, he asked leave to make his lady a coach. Mr. Herbert assented, willing to gratify the poor youth. In the course of a week he produced a most primitive little vehicle, which was no less than a packing-case laid on the wheels; but, simple as it was, this original conveyance became a valuable accession to Emmeline's comfort, for with the help of shawls and cushions she made it a means of moving from place to place among the beauties of the country. Never shone Opal's ample gums and tiny teeth more brilliantly than when he was appointed to the honour of drawing his ladye-love. He had a few set phrases by which he inquired into her state of ease; beyond these he never ventured on familiarity. A smile from Emmeline repaid him for the most elaborate journey or painstaking pull; a word was payment towards the next debt. He was at first disposed to regard Maida's subsequent arrival with suspicion, but after some days, on finding that there was room enough for both he recovered his equanimity; and perceiving, by a sort of intuition, that her path, though parallel, was widely removed from his, he contentedly classed her with Bridget as a claimant on his young mistress's affection.

In fact, Maida was a myth to him; he kept at a respectful distance from her, and would persist in calling her ma'am, giving it as his private opinion that 'she was a bigger ma'am than the other ma'am,' which other was Mrs. Evelyn.

## CHAPTER XXVII. A DAY DREAM AND NIGHT VISION.

MEANWHILE Mr. Evelyn remained in Hobart Town. The family had been gone just three weeks when Maida, having received her discharge from H.M.G. Hospital, was sent to the Lodge under a constable's care. Stephens, the new servant, opened the door and refused to admit her; he said 'he didn't know nothing about a Government woman called Maida Gwynnham, and he wasn't going for to let anyone in while the master was out. If she'd like to wait till four o'clock to speak to him she might, but as he had gone to Kangaroo Point 'twas a chance if he'd be back; certain he wouldn't after four.'

So Maida was forced to wander about the garden under the constable's eye, while every now and then Stephens would peep out to see that she was a true woman, and no spy on the master's property. Four o'clock struck, and, no Mr. Evelyn appearing, he insisted that the officer should take her away to the Brickfields. The man argued that she might be let by the morning, and then Mr. Evelyn would kick up one of his rows which everybody felt from his Excellency downwards. But Stephens said 'twas past hiring hours, and very like if the master was really minded to have the woman Gwynnham, he'd step over to the Brickfields and hire her out before she could be let to anyone else.'

So Maida was turned adrift in the Hiring Depot, and once more made to put on the prison clothes that she had only that afternoon exchanged for her own. In an instant she was surrounded by her old shipmates, of whom about twenty were congregated in the yard. Their bloated, hardened faces told her how much they had improved by transportation and association with crime. One extolled a spree she had enjoyed with the constable on her way to the Brickfields, and another shamelessly declared that she had been in 'Cage' for two children, and she expected very soon to go in for a third, only she hoped to be hired out till it was quite time. Disgusted and fatigued, Maida asked if she might retire to rest, and, on plea of her having just come from the hospital, permission was granted. But there was no rest in the ward from either the filth or strife of tongues — the torrent of contamination flowed freely — the better disposed were obliged to hear what the vicious chose to relate. In the morning Maida was put to some labour, and then with the other women was turned into the yard. She retired as far as possible from her



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companions, and sat down on a stone to feel more vividly than ever the utter degradation of her lot; yet more calmly than ever to shut her feelings within her breast. Drooping thus, she was aroused by a sudden cry of pleasure.

'Why, Maida! you here?' and Lucy ran over to her. Sanders was with her; he approached, equally pleased to see his old mate.

'Well, Madda, 'tain't trouble, I hope, that brings you here? us is come to look out a woman!'

There was no small inflation of vanity in his voice and person as he made this declaration.

Lucy explained:

'So long as one of us is T. L., you know, we can have a servant — Lor', Maida, think of me having one! but Bob says he will, and nothing shall stop him, and that, too, before baby is born.'

She suddenly blushed and looked so exactly like the Lucy of olden days, that Maida kissed her forthwith. What plunged her in so sudden a confusion was only confided to Robert's ear.

She beckoned him over to a corner of the yard and whispered something. Bob listened awhile and seemed to share his little wife's confusion: he then told Lucy he thought 'twould 'do first rate — but darned if he could propose it.'

'Oh, Bob, I couldn't! you'll do it beautiful, you says everything so clever and nice; besides, you are Ticket and I'm not.'

So, in the pride of T. L.-ism, strode Robert Sanders over to Maida; Lucy following timidly and on tiptoe, for fear she should disturb her husband's grand intention.

'I say, Madda, we've talked at it, and if you've a will to it, we'll hire you out and give 'e just what the master did. Us'll get on fine together, darned if we won't!'

Whilst this was being uttered, Lucy peeped shyly from between her hands, but directly it had gone forth beyond hope of recall, she bent eagerly forward, and every bright feature said, 'Will you, Maida? Will you?'

Maida waited a moment, and then, smiling kindly, replied:

'Do you ask, or command me, Sanders? I believe I dare not refuse if you choose to hire me.'

Bob seemed enchanted! his T. L. was glorified beyond his fondest ambition; he stroked his hair in quiet enjoyment, and, nodding sideways, answered:

'Well, believe I could, but I won't foss you — don't like foss, it's darned hard to bear; if you don't like it, us won't ask up to the depot,' as he called the depot.

'Then, thanking you for your very kind offer, I think I had better decline; but as for going with you, I would as soon be your servant as anybody's.'

Another stroke of approval, but Lucy exclaimed, her bright face clouding with shocked disappointment:

'Oh, Maida! not our servant, I never thought of that; I meant you to come along and be one of us; we both love you, don't we, Bob?'

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Bob only shook his locks, and uttered his expletive, 'Darned!'

A carriage drove into the yard, and the friendly talk was suspended, for an officer called for Maida Gwynnham.

A lady leaned from the carriage and surveyed her from head to foot:

'Are you a needlewoman?'

'I can use my needle, ma'am, but I am engaged; I believe my late master will be here for me presently.'

'We have nothing to do with late masters; if I choose to take you out, you must either go with me or to Cascades.'

Turning to the matron:

'The woman's insolent, I'm afraid she wouldn't do for me; that sort of nose is always a sign of impudence.'

At this moment Mr. Evelyn's loud 'Ahem' was heard, and turning round, Maida saw her master hastening up the path. He raised his hat to the lady.

'I beg your pardon, but this woman is my servant; I have come to fetch her out.'

'Not if I choose to take her, sir; she says the same thing, but it is entirely contrary to convict rule.'

'I'm afraid, sir, the lady is right,' whispered the matron; 'the more so as Gwynnham came in without even the pretence of belonging to anyone else.'

'I have paid for her at the hospital for two months, in order to secure her to my family,' replied Mr. Evelyn.

'No matter, sir,' bowed the lady, 'she came in here to be hired by the first comer.'

'I cannot contend with a lady; if, therefore, I renounce my right to her, will you concede her to me?' asked Mr. Evelyn courteously.

'It's enough to spoil the creature!' ejaculated the grandee, falling back in her seat.

She was selfish, and thought a servant worthy of so great a fuss must be worthy of her; she pondered a moment, and then inquired in a superciliously playful tone:

'Well, sir, who is to have the woman?'

'It is for you to decide; I would not disappoint a lady.'

There was more anxiety in his manner than he cared should appear; this was not lost either upon Maida or her would-be mistress.

'Well, then, since the gentleman declines you, jump upon the box, you Gwynnham,' said the lady with a forced laugh; 'and I suppose I must go into the hiring-room and signify my wishes.'

She stepped from the carriage; Mr. Evelyn assisted her to the office-door, and then firmly but politely said:

'Understand, if you please, that I have not declined the woman, but that you have taken her from me.'

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A haughty bow was the only answer.

'And I must beg, if you do not find her what you wish, that you will favour me by letting me know before you dispose of her,' continued Mr. Evelyn.

'Anyone is welcome to a convict that leaves my house! Sure to be mere refuse if I send them off.'

She vanished within the depot, and Mr. Evelyn returned to Maida, who was now seated on the box.

'Maida, my woman, I'm sorry for this; you've slipped through my fingers.'

'Do not distress yourself, sir; I thank you for your interference, though it has been unsuccessful.'

The lady now appeared, and Mr. Evelyn hastily whispered:

'Remember you are mine, if you leave your present mistress.'

The carriage drove on -- a last and sinister bow the only further acknowledgment of Mr. Evelyn's presence.

Maida was borne away to one of the many elegant villas surrounding New Town.

A footman opened the door, and Mrs. Patterley consigned her new servant to his care, saying:

'Take this woman, and after she has cleansed herself, send her up to my dressing-room.'

Shortly after Maida went to her mistress, who abruptly commenced, 'You'll soon find out what your work is.'

'I understood I was engaged to be needlewoman.'

'I want sewing done; but that is only when you've nothing else to do -- you are to be parlour-maid; in fact, you are to be anything I choose -- I never allow any airs.'

Maida was retreating.

'Stop, woman; don't be so impatient; I've something to say to you -- are you paying attention? Well, then -- I've a son downstairs -- mind I see no improper conduct towards him, or you'll go off to Cascades. I've sent away ever so many Government women on his account -- they're such a vile set; it's quite a nuisance to have them about -- go -- that's all, only mind what you're about. You don't bear a very good character in that way already.'

Maida hurried out, for indignation burned within her.

It was some days after this that her young master came into the dining-room when she was laying the cloth; he whistled about the parlour for a minute or two, and then, standing at the other end of the table, said:

'I say, where did you get those splendid eyes of yours?' Maida answered not.

'I only want you to look at me -- you're so handsome.'

He went towards her, she laid down her tray and walked to the door; but it being nearer to him than to her, Mr. Patterley sprang over and placed his back against it, then tapping her on the cheek, he said:

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'Now, give me a look, or you shan't pass.'

Maida did look; he did not wish for a second.

'Oh! I say, I don't mean like that; that isn't what a feller calls pleasing -- look at me with those rare purple eyes of yours, the same as I've seen you star-gazing sometimes, enough to make a feller wild.'

'I warn you, sir, not to provoke me too far, for I am passionate, and might be tempted to strike you.'

'Strike away, then, pretty one!' said Mr. Patterley, bending his face forward.

And Maida struck him a real, good hard blow, sufficient to arouse both rage and redness.

'You contemptible wretch! I'll have you punished.'

As he uttered these words, his mother sailed into the room.

'The old story! Really these Government women are the pests of one's life. Edward, surely you must give them encouragement?'

'Of course I do, mother; what man resists the -- '

'What have you done to your face?' interrupted Mrs. Patterley.

'I struck him, ma'am; and I shall again if he comes near me.'

A loud ring at the bell was the only answer.

'Fetch a constable! this woman's going -- '

'To the Brickfields, ma'am?' bowed the footman.

'No, to the police-station.'

Maida was locked in a room until the constable's arrival, and then duly given into charge -- she was marched off to the Court.

'But, I say, mother, it will be awkward for me to appear against her: I must acknowledge that I teased her before she struck me.'

'Oh, never mind, my dear, you needn't appear; I'll go for you.'

So on the morrow, Maida was brought up, and Mrs. Patterley appeared against her, accusing her of insolence and improper conduct; on the strength of which complaint she was sentenced to a month's imprisonment with cells.

'I have nothing to say against the charge, except that it is all a lie -- nor against my punishment, except that it is unjust!' exclaimed Maida, when the magistrate advised her to avoid trouble for the future.

In reply to which speech the magistrate thought it would take quite another month to cool the prisoner properly down and, therefore, amidst the laughter of the Court, he sentenced her to a second month with hard labour.

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Mrs. Patterley was then driven back to her luxurious home, and Maida was conveyed in the prison-van to the Cascades, there to be lowered by skillet, wasted by severe labour, and worried by every species of indignity, but not all this until she had first been subdued by a protracted confinement in the dark cells.

She had been in the establishment about seven weeks, when, for some distasteful answer to one of the petty officers, she was ordered three days' solitary; she was just at the end of the second day when the door suddenly unlocked, and Mr. Herbert stood before her — he could not at first see her.

'Maida, are you there?' he asked: his voice was low and tremulous. Maida did not reply.

'Why don't you come forward, there?' said the officer who accompanied Mr. Herbert; 'the light will shine in presently, sir, then you will see her; she's the most troublesome case we've got.'

Maida came forward, trying to look unconcerned; but the light caused her to close her eyes.

'Can I be left with her?' inquired Mr. Herbert.

'Well, sir, I suppose as you are a clergyman I must not object,' and the woman withdrew.

By this Maida had retreated to the end of her cell, and as she crouched up in a corner, her eyes looked like two large brilliants set in darkness.

Mr. Herbert entered, and, having closed the door, he said:

'Shut your eyes a minute, for I am going to strike a light.' He drew a little case from his pocket, ignited a match, and then lighted a wax taper. 'Now then, it will not pain you; look up, and tell me how you came here.'

'Pray, sir, tell me first, how you became aware of my being here.'

'Your master wrote me word, and I also saw it in the Courier.'

'And what brought you up from the peninsula, sir? no bad tidings, I trust?'

'Very bad, Maida; even your being here!'

She laid down her head, and groaned.

'For me, sir! all that way for me!'

'For you, Maida; and I mean to wait in town until I can either take you to Port Arthur, or see you under Mr. Evelyn's care.'

'Oh, sir; don't, I pray you! I can bear anything but kindness; that breaks what little heart I have left to me.'

'My poor Maida, none of us believe you guilty of the immorality assigned. We think, perhaps, you were hasty, and even violent.'

'I was both; but both were deserved, sir — I am weak and ill, and cannot bear your kindness — I am shaken in mind and body. If you talk so to me, I shall weep.'

Her voice became unsteady, and Mr. Herbert remained silent.

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'All last night, sir, I was with my poor father, and that has unnerved me; as you speak words of kindness, I fancy I hear him. Oh, sir! you will think me a coward, when I tell you that I dread such another night, because I dread again to meet my father.' She covered her face with her hands, and then broke out in her old wild way: 'Hell is kinder than this, for hell has light! there was a time when I did not care for the cells; but now -- I do not know how it is, I cannot endure them. Sir, do you think my reason is going?'

'Far from it, Maida; I think it is returning. You are, perhaps, accepting God's terms, offered in the first of Isaiah -- and so Satan is doing all he can to terrify you.'

'Sir, I do not wish to put anything off on Satan, all I suffer is from my own wicked spirit and guilty conscience.'

Mr. Herbert smiled.

'Never mind what it is from, Maida; sit down and let me tell you about Emmeline and the baby -- they both send their love to you.'

He talked to her some time, and then read the Twenty-third Psalm.

'That is a strange passage to read to me, sir!'

'Why so, Maida? it is a sweet collection of thoughts, if nothing else, and I see no objection to your thinking them over.'

The overseer entered and announced closing hours, whereupon Mr. Herbert arose and whispered to Maida that she should not remain another night in the cells -- he would appeal against further solitary confinement. He accordingly requested to see the Superintendent, and to him stated his belief that it would be injurious to keep Maida longer in the cells.

The Superintendent said she had but one day to accomplish; of this one day, however Mr. Herbert would not hear: the prisoner's nerves being already irritated and disordered, he insisted on the necessity of releasing her, and was at last successful in obtaining a remission of her sentence. Having ascertained at what day and at what hour she would be free, he directed that she should be promised to no one, but be sent straight to the depot, where he or Mr. Evelyn would appear at the given hour to hire her out.

Six days from that period the brown van was again in waiting at the gates of Cascades, and amongst many other women Maida was conducted to it; the door was then locked, the key given to the constables in charge, and the dreary van drove off to the Brickfields. The women had scarcely been delivered to the Superintendent, ere Maida saw Mr. Herbert descend from a cab and enter the hiring-office. In another minute she was called forward, and in five more was on her way to the Lodge.

'Now, Maida, you are to have rest until your strength has returned: for this reason, I am going to leave you in Hobart. At Port Arthur you might be pressed into the general service; at home, there being only your master, you will not be required to work.'

Mr. Herbert tried to smile cheerfully, but Maida appeared listless and reserved. He continued:

'Necessity has partly decided me, for, except in an open boat, I do not know how I should get you down; the steamer is still laid up. Are you tired, Maida? you look so.'

'Do I, sir?' and she sat upright.

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Mr. Herbert laid his fingers on her wrist.

'I must doctor you; you know my prescription? Miss Bridget calls it the everlasting quinine and wine.'

'I have been plentifully dosed, thank you, sir. Government is generous with its medicines when there is any chance of losing a convict.'

'Here we are at the Lodge; we'll forget the prescription for the present. You will only find Diprose within; Tammy has been sent away.'

Mr. Herbert went to his brother, who lounged in the breakfast-room.

'Is she come?'

'Yes, but in a weak, low state, poor thing! I can hardly venture a word to her.'

'By which you mean I am not to venture any. Ah! I'm up to you, Herbert; well, I'm not going to worry her, she's had enough, and too much already.'

Maida entered to learn her master's wishes. Mr. Evelyn arose, and Mr. Herbert left the room; his brother was always kinder to her when he was not present.

'Well, Maida, here you are at last! I think I may say I'm glad to see you back, but not in that doleful plight: look up, my woman, what ails you?'

'What ails me, sir? Should you wish information on that point I would advise a visit to the Cascades.'

'Well, don't let's rub up old grievances; all I can say is that I am sorry to my heart for you. I only wish I could lay hold of that young scamp, Patterley, and I'd teach him something, darned if I wouldn't, as Sanders says.'

But Maida was not inclined to laugh. Raising her eyes to her master, she said:

'I thank you, sir: by-and-bye I hope to appreciate your kindness; now I feel cross and bewildered; to escape from observation is all I want -- I shall only get into trouble again if I remain in my present state of mind.'

'Well, keep clear of me if you like, for I'm not in an over good temper either; I never am whilst there are pale faces about me, so go and get up your looks before you have anything to say to me.'

'As to the rest which Mr. Herbert promised me, sir?'

'The devil he did! why, I've been waiting here this long time to be rid of some of my cares -- the garden, for instance; there are all Miss D'Urban's flowers requiring attention: I wanted you to be after them; and there's Diprose upstairs, up to all manner of mischief. However, if Mr. Herbert promised you rest, go and take it, as much as you like of it. I don't think you'll ever get fat on it, though.'

Maida was obliged to smile in spite of herself; her master had never been so queer before.

'I was about to remark, sir, that I neither wish for rest nor need it.'

'Oh, humbug, yes, you do; you don't suppose I don't know what convicts want.' Dropping his voice to his natural tone -- 'I tell you what it is, Maida, if it will not be a comfort to you to hear, it is a relief to me to let you know,

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that I think your punishment a disgrace to everyone concerned. Yes! that's from me, late a police magistrate. Go and make what use you please of it.'

'I shall, then, make two uses of it, sir, the one to convict myself, and the other to force me to seek your forgiveness.'

Mr. Evelyn put up his eyebrows: his joking fit was over and he now viewed the case in sober sense as it stood before him in painful reality.

Maida did not understand the raised eyebrows to mean 'Go on,' so her master nodded, 'Well?'

'Your kindness, sir, convicts me of deep ingratitude; you can never blame me on that point so much as I blame myself. Believe me, sir, I am not so by nature. I am proud, wicked, and resentful, but not ungrateful. I have been goaded into rebellion and perversity, until --'

'There now, that'll do; you need not tell me you are proud -- that I've found out long ago; and as to your being wicked, you can grant that if you like, but as to your being resentful or ungrateful, it's not a true bill, or, by George --'

But Mr. Evelyn stopped with an *ahem*; he was on the punishment ground again, and therefore checked himself.

Mr. Herbert started for Port Arthur on the following day, and Maida was left to a season of genial quiet, for none in the house were disposed to interfere much with her. Her master purposely avoided her as much as possible; and her fellow-servants had received secret commands not to seek her assistance. The man, Stephens, was an odd being, and would have had but little to say to her if he had not been laid under ban.

He seemed in so perpetual a flurry and excitement that he had incurred the sobriquet of Fussy.

From morning to night he was never still; it would be flurry, flurry to the last moment, when he would prepare for bed by dressing himself for the morning. Then, resting one leg on the floor and tucking the other under the bedclothes, he would ensconce himself in discomfort, ready to start at the first sound, or earliest sign of morning, again to go on flurrying until night. Whether he supposed he hurried on his freedom by this unceasing turmoil no one could discover.

He had also a favourite notion that the facsimile of everything pertaining to luxury or comfort had once been possessed by himself or his wife. When the lady governess of the island called, he would duly announce her, then banging the door, he would mutter:

'Shawl just like my wife's!'

Having the master's travelling-cloak to brush, he would set at it with, 'Not a bit better than the cloak I had at home, just the feller b'lieve it's the same.' He had, too, a favourite dislike, and that was of the cicadae, whose never-flagging whir-r-r seemed almost to distract poor Fussy. He anathematized them more than twenty times a day.

Diprose, too, had no inclination to molest Maida; she was absorbed in her own sorrows. Though a convict, she was still a mother, and possessed the yearnings of a mother's heart. Day and night she fretted over her four children dead or alive. She had buried two: one little child of five had been left in Scotland; the other, an infant, was in the Queen's Orphan School. When first she went to see her little son, she was doubly hurt; in the first place, because no one in the school seemed to know her baby from all the others.



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'What! not know my little Abel!' she exclaimed, bursting into tears.

'Get along with your Abels; who be he more than anybody else's Abel?' was the comfortable rejoinder.

And secondly, because little Abel himself did not recognise her.

'Come to his own mammy, then!' she said maternally and straightway the child stretched his arms to a mother not his own.

She confided her story to Maida, whose ever-ready sympathy invited the outpouring of the deserted mother's heart.

She told her she had never known sorrow or a dishonest penny until the winter of 18 -- ,when everything was scarce and work still more so; sickness fell on her children, and her husband emigrated to America to build a nest in which he could put his family. She never heard of him again and was left to struggle with three children and a fourth expected. Two sickened, and in one day she laid them both in one grave; she said the neighbours came from far to see the bairns, they looked so heavenly in their coffins. After the first flow of pity had subsided, she was again left to poverty and misery; one night, when a half-crown would have saved her from immediate ruin, a bad man came round and tempted her with illegal money, which she passed, was detected, apprehended, and transported. This was her simple tale, and its truthfulness none could doubt who looked at her weebegone face and heard her constant sigh. She fretted on and on, until her master thought the hospital would be the best place for her.

As another case of 'Frettin',' she was therefore admitted to that establishment, and never left it more until she was carried thence to the prisoners' grave-yard, when her little Abel was cast on the world a despised child of a despised race.

A month passed, and still there was no chance of remitting Maida to Port Arthur. The Kangaroo's ailments were obstinate, and required still further professional treatment.

The family had now been four months on the peninsula. The winter had set in, it being the latter end of June, and in a week or two would be too far advanced to allow the possibility of sending Maida. One day when she had nearly given up all hope of being summoned, Father Evermore trotted up the lawn and left a note for Mr. Evelyn, requesting that an answer might be left at the Vicar-General's before the next evening.

The note contained a message from Mr. Herbert, saying that Father Evermore, having occasion to go to town, had consented to bring back Maida if she were not afraid to venture in an open boat. Mr. Herbert added that there would be no other opportunity, the Kangaroo having been tried and found unequal to the trip, and another steamer could not be ready until the spring.

It needed no persuasion to induce Maida to get ready; she was as anxious to go as Emmeline was to have her.

Since her return to the Lodge she had always gone down to lock the out-houses and garden-gates; for Fussy thought far too much of his brains to risk having them dislodged by venturing outside the door after dark; he considered that once in his life was quite sufficient to have a pistol held at his head. Now Maida quieted him by saying that she should see all right for two nights more, and then, perhaps, the master would either undertake it or let Diprose. It was her last night. Being engaged in preparations for her departure, Maida forgot the gates until ten o'clock, when she hastened down the lawn to close them for the night. The moon shone so gloriously that in spite of the keen wind she walked up and down the grove path, and was soon in one of her dreams of the past. Turning towards the thickest part of the grove, where a hedge of tea-shrub joined the trees into a continuous chain, she saw the hedge divide and a scarecrow figure approach her. It was that of a man whose famished look and tattered

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garments proclaimed him to be a wayfarer of no common order.

'Martha Grylls,' said the gaunt figure.

She started.

The voice was so hollow, and the eyes glared so spectre-like upon her, that for an instant she doubted it to be more than a phantasy, but it repeated, in yet more sepulchral tones:

'Are you Martha Grylls?'

'I am; what do you want of me?'

'To save me! there's no one else I know of that will.'

'Who are you?' Maida felt a cold terror creeping over her; she imputed it to the bleak wind, and shrugged herself together, repeating, 'Who are you?'

'Bob Pragg. I'm out, and there's a free pardon offered on my head, and money to the bargain.'

'Pragg!'

'Yes! I know no one but you that'll save me.'

'Me, Pragg! what do you know, then, of me, that makes you say so?'

'That you ain't the one to send off a poor dying wretch like me, to make gold of my blood.'

There was a dead silence, during which the chattering of Pragg's teeth, and Maida's hard, quick breathing, were the only audible sounds that interchanged with the wailing of the wind. A loud fitful gust swept down the grove, and by its suddenness forced Maida against Pragg; he stretched out his hand and clutched her; she shuddered as she felt the bony grasp that clung to her with the energy of despair.

'I say, Martha Grylls, can you forgive an enemy? Can you? can you?'

'I can, Bob -- so help and forgive me, God.'

'Oh, those be solemn words,' muttered Bob.

'They are true words, Bob.'

'Give me your hand to it, then.'

He put forth a long clawlike hand, and it pounced on Maida's, grasping it, cold and deathly.

'Can you feed an enemy, Martha Grylls? I'm starving! I 'scaped from the Neck, and I've wandered in the bush till I'm 'most eaten up alive with the rot, and I'm 'most dead of hunger; I ate a dead guana five days ago, and nothing but a sup of water's gone down since -- I say, woman, can you feed an enemy?'

His claws almost pierced her skin as he shook her, repeating:

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'Can you? woman, can you?'

'I can, Bob, but only by giving you money. I've no food of my own, nor could I get any without betraying you.'

'MONEY!' he laughed a wild shrill laugh. 'MONEY! will that feed a starving man? curse your money and give me bread!'

He lowered his voice, and glaring at her, muttered:

'Bread, for the love of God! you, the woman I've injured and would have injured more if I could, give me food --- give me food!'

Maida clasped her hands in agony.

Pragg drew closer to her and hissed into her ear, 'A fine plea, ain't it? but I swear before --- '

Maida laid her arm upon him.

'Bob, don't swear before anyone, for God is up there listening to you.'

'It is just before He that I'm going to swear, for it's the only true word of my life that I'm now speaking, and that is, I know that it's just the plea to go down with you. Ah, I know you, Martha Grylls, better nor you think! Ah, I know all about it.'

His teeth chattered beyond control; he could only mumble incoherent words that Maida could not understand but her alarm was aroused. She shivered with fright as she said:

'Tell me what you mean; for pity's sake, Bob, tell me.'

'Give me food first; food, I say, food, and then I'll tell you that if I'm taken, I'll proclaim your hinnocence from the gallows --- ah! that I will, or blast my living soul. Oh Martha, Martha!' the tears rolled down his hollow cheek, 'Oh, Martha, when Bob Pragg's brought to tears the devil's out of 'en. I never thought to see the day when I'd blubber before a woman, and she you. I always swore I'd die game. But ah! there's no game in dying, no, not whilst there's Hell! HELL! HELL!!! Food, woman -- food, I say!'

Maida recollected the little basket of stores, supplied for her journey. It was truly hers --- she might give it.

'Bob, I can give you food; go back into the hedge and I'll run and fetch it; I must talk to you more by-and-by.'

She glided into the house; the light shone from the drawing-room window, telling that her master had not yet retired for the night. She slipped up to her bedroom and was returning with her basket when Mr. Evelyn came out of the room.

'You, Maida! where are you going with that basket? fine preparation for your journey!'

'I'm going downstairs, sir.'

'Well, well, I'll wait till you come up. Why, how's this, Jags isn't brought in yet? Mind, if the rangers come I shall declare you are in league with them.'

Maida rejoiced to hear him speak so, because it showed that he was in a good humour, so she laughingly replied:

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'Very well, sir, I'll plead guilty; but if you'll trust the house to me, I'll ward off the rangers; my pistols are always loaded.'

'Well, then, good-night; I'll leave it to you, only don't come creeping up when you have done, but give a good, brave step that I may know you are safe.'

Therewith her master hummed himself upstairs; she heard his door lock, his shoes flung off, and then she knew he was safe. Having brought in Jags, the terrier, and let him loose in the hall, she barred all the front doors of the house and let herself out into the lawn by the back door, and, locking it after her, she put the key in her pocket. The two sunken eyes were glaring out for her from the thicket. She sat down by Bob and opened her stores; the long, bony palm snatched up the first eatable she drew forth. He bolted a few mouthfuls and then threw it down, shaking his head.

'I'm sick, woman — I can't eat now it's before me.'

'Try, Bob; let me feed you.'

Bob shook his head, and a flood of tears extinguished the glare of his eyes.

'Oh, I say, woman; can you forgive a dying wretch? can you? can you?'

He laid down his head between his knees and moaned.

'Can you? can you? This ain't Bob Pragg, is it? Oh! can you? can you?'

'Bob, don't torment yourself; I can, and do — and pray God to forgive you too.'

'Do you? then, pray on, quick — for hell's agaping wide and I'm 'most gone down. There! what d'ye think of that? I pulled it off a tree where they'd stuck it.'

Bob plucked a soiled, torn paper from his breast, and threw it at her.

'There's money for this poor skinned carcass! Worth it, ain't it? You go and claim it, and the gibbet 'll be a happy death to me. Read it, woman, read.'

Maida opened the paper, when, distinct and horrible, three large black words appeared; the light was quite enough to exhibit them in all their horror.

'Murder! Murder! Murder!!! Free pardon and £30 reward.'

Every word of the fearful advertisement was visible. Then came a description of Pragg, with the above reward offered for his apprehension.

As Maida read out 'Round and ruddy,' he grinned a death's-head grin.

'Like me, ain't it? look here — round, ain't it? ruddy? ay, as the grave!'

'What am I to do with this, Pragg?'

'Go and get your pardon and your money home out of it.'

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'Do you mean it, Pragg? I thought you said you knew me.'

'I know you; but I know myself better, and I know 'twould be a blessed relief to me to be delivered up by you; — I want to feel paid out, I do, woman, I do; pay me out — do, do, I say.'

Maida tore the paper into shreds and trod it underfoot.

'There, Pragg; I'll deliver you up to God, but to no one else.'

'To God!' shrieked Pragg; 'to GOD!'

The wind wailed down the grove, and his tattered garments fluttered on him like rags upon a gibbet.

'To GOD, woman! 'tis He I'm most afeared to meet; if twern't for He I'd give my own self up, for death would be a grace to my rotted body. But, Martha Grylls — you that I dragged away from your own baby's grave — you that I swore on, save me from He, as you would save your own soul.'

Quietly, though trembling in every limb, Maida again clasped her hands, and uttered a short prayer for pardon for the wretched man before her.

'Oh, oh!' groaned Bob, and the wailing wind bore on and prolonged the oh — oh — oh!

The dogs set up a loud, fierce bark, which was snapped up and reverberated by the terrier within doors. Maida started.

'Bob, I must leave you; creep into the shed, and cover yourself over with this; I'll be out in the morning before it is light. Oh, Bob! I grieve to say it; but hadn't you better give yourself up? You must be caught, for you are weak and can't crawl far — poor, poor Bob!'

She burst into tears, and crouching down by him, said:

'Bob, I'd save you if I could; but I'm only a prisoner myself. I'll never give you up; but leave you I must, for I'm going to be sent away to-morrow.'

'Maybe I'll be dead of cold 'fore morning! oh, it's freezing, ain't it?' and his teeth chattered and his whole frame shook.

The dogs sounded a second and louder alarm.

'Creep into this shed, Bob; the master'll be getting up. Quickly as you can.'

Bob crept in, and Maida covered him as well as she could.

'Martha, is the gate free, 'sposing I makes up my mind to crawl away?'

He turned a look so piteous on her, that she wrung her hands.

'That little gate there shall be free. I can see it from a window upstairs. I'll sit up all night, and watch it that I may leave it safely open.'

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Without venturing a second look, Maida glided into the back door, speaking low and soothingly to the dogs to keep them quiet. She passed swiftly into the nursery, and locking the door, took her station at the window to watch the gate. She heard her master go downstairs to make the round of the house — as he always did when the dogs were vociferous.

She also heard him fire off a pistol from the lobby window, and then all was peace again for the night.

She watched for two hours, when she fancied she perceived a slight movement of the gate; but the moon rays glancing about gave an appearance of motion to every object; therefore, she looked long and steadfastly ere she could decide whether it opened or not. It did open, and just then the moon rode out from a cloud and a baptism of cold, clear glory fell around, making every dim outline give out distinctly the form it before had shrouded in uncertainty. It fell extra bright and clear over the little gate, when Maida saw a heap of rags crawling along the earth and pushing its way through the open gate. Softly as possible she slid up the sash. Bob heard her and turned towards the window; the large, white eyeballs rolled up and stared very ghastly towards her earnest face. Bob slowly raised his long arm thrice, he had not strength to wave it; but the shreds hanging from it fluttered his farewell. Maida threw up her hands in an attitude of prayer, and then closed the window. The moon again was overcast, and all once more was shadow and twilight.

In the morning Maida hurried down the grove; a vestige of Bob in the form of a tattered kerchief, together with the shawl with which she had covered him, was all that remained to attest the reality of that terrible night vision.

She heard no more of Pragg; but when on her way to the boat with Father Evermore a cart, guarded by two armed constables and drawn by four chained convicts drove slowly by her. The cart was covered by a rug — its contents were not, therefore, revealed. Yet, with a shudder, Maida turned from it, for the middle of the rug was arched pointedly, as though forced up by two sharp knees. There was an awed gloom in the countenance of each of the driven men, and a mysterious expression in the faces of the constables.

That night, when Maida was sleeping at the station, on her way to Port Arthur, the dead-house of H.M.G. Hospital was opened and a collapsed and stiffened corpse was laid there. The very doctors, accustomed to death in its most horrible appearance, turned, heartsick away as the wide, staring eye and distorted figure of Bob Pragg met their sight.

His body had been discovered by a road party, on its progress to the bush, behind Macquarie Street.

## CHAPTER XXVIII. THE ISLE OF THE DEAD.

'I went her lily hand to take,  
Its coldness made me start'

THE winter passed cheerfully. The mild climate of Port Arthur had only once or twice yielded to the stern control of winter. Snow had fallen on Mount Arthur, but had not dared to show itself further. Again had the sweet month of November opened on the imprisoned family. Again came the flowers bursting from their leafy folds. The afternoon was fresh and fair, and Emmeline said she had not felt so well for a long time; she should enjoy a little draw in her primitive carriage. Opal, therefore, was ordered to hold himself in readiness to obey his young mistress's pleasure, and brightly shone his olive face as from his full lips came the answer:

'Opal leady always for she; nice lady, me luffs her wely much; always got a smile for poor chaingang.'

When asked where she would like to go, Emmeline replied:

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'Let my little carriage be drawn in sight of the Isle of the Dead, and there let me rest and look out on the lovely spot.'

And there she stayed, Opal waiting reverentially at her side, until her father feared that, gentle as the air was, it might be too strong for her.

'Very well, papa dear, I will return. I have enjoyed my journey or my rest — which is it? — more than I can tell you.'

Mr. Herbert smiled — but how subduedly! — and softly inquired:

'Enjoyed it? That sea-girt graveyard always makes me feel sad.'

'Ah, papa, you think of the many poor creatures lying there, far from their home and friends. That is sad; but as I sat gazing on it, I only thought how peaceful a rest it would afford my aching frame, and how much, if you approved, I should like to be laid there.'

She pressed his hand fondly, and watched for when he should turn his face to her.

'My child's wishes are mine. What makes you speak so, my Emmeline? You just now said you felt better.'

'And I do; but still, papa, we won't talk of it — it makes you low-spirited.'

'My daughter, I would not keep you one hour beyond God's time; His blessed will be done. I have resigned you, and only hold you from Him day by day, as His tender mercy grants me a longer delay. Time once seemed long to me. Now the Invisible and Eternal are near, and divided only by a veil so transparent that my eye beholds what lies beyond.'

Emmeline stayed up later that night; she appeared so unwilling to retire that it had struck nine before Mr. Herbert reminded her she had exceeded her usual hour.

As she bade him good-night she said almost lightly:

'To-morrow I shall be alive for a trip to Stuart's Bay!'

'To-morrow is God's!' replied Mr. Herbert somewhat solemnly.

There was something in his daughter's manner and appearance that perplexed him. He returned her long embrace fervently and fondly, but a vague sensation of near sorrow mingled with his farewell, as he clasped her in his arms.

'I shall like to sleep alone to-night. I am sure I shall require nothing. Maida shall sit up a little, and then I shall send her to bed.'

She looked over the stairs and repeated:

'Good-night, papa; God bless you.'

'And you, my precious,' replied her father.

Bridget assisted her to undress, and then sat by her until it was Maida's time to come in.

## Broad Arrow: Being Passages From the History of Maida Gwynnham, a Lifer

'Bridgy, when I am gone, which shall you do: go back to England, or stay here?'

'I don't know, Em — I don't want you to go, therefore I put off thinking of what it would be best to do; I hate talking about anything that has to take place when you are no longer here. I can't spare your dear face; it has become a necessity to me.'

She laid her head on her cousin's pillow. and, by half playfully smoothing her thin cheek, tried to hide the emotion that made her voice unsteady.

'Has it ever struck you, dear Bridget, to be thankful that I'm not a prisoner?'

'How funny! No! Much they'd find to make prisoner of in you!' and Bridget started up, quite amused at the idea.

But Emmeline was serious. She continued:

'Instead of being what I am — a poor, helpless girl, waited upon by a cheerful, loving sister as you are to me; instead of having a tender parent to love and feel for me, with Uncle Ev, and all the other dear ones around me, I might have been not only helpless, but friendless and uncared for. Oh, what am I, that I should have so many mercies above my fellow-creatures — above poor Wilcox and Sally?'

As Bridget listened to her cousin, and observed the holy expression of her countenance, she was puzzled to imagine, had Em been a convict, what sort of crime she would have committed. She was just going to say as much, when Emmeline turned on her a look so wistful that she could not help asking:

'What is it, dear?'

'There is only one question that troubles me — no, not troubles, that is not the word, for I cast my cares on the Lord — but only one point I should like to have settled, if it be God's will. Who will be with papa when I am dead?'

'Oh, my Em, can you doubt? I would never leave him if I would do for him, but,' she added sadly, 'I'm afraid I'm too giddy, too thoughtless for him.'

'No, Bridget, you are not giddy. You are happy and gladsome, and he loves you as his own, so be his daughter. I have given him only pain; you must try to give him pleasure.'

There came a gentle tap at the door, and Mr. Herbert entered to tell Bridget it was time she should retire to rest. She arose and kissed him, and the tears were in her eyes. He knew not wherefore, neither could he account for the extra warmth of her embrace, for he knew not of the compact that had just been made between his child and niece.

'The Lord love you, my daughter!' he said as he smoothed her hair.

A glance of surprise passed between the cousins; it was the first time he had ever so called her.

'Baby is rather troublesome to-night, therefore Maida will be delayed a little, so I am going to remain by you until she is ready. I shall return presently.'

'Good-night then, my sweet Em; I must be gone before he comes back,' said Bridget.

Why was that unwillingness to part? why did they so cling to each other? why did tears so blend with the farewell smile of the two cousins?



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'Bridget, my own one,' said Emmeline, still holding her, 'I cannot tell you what you have been to me. My sister, my friend, my nurse.'

'What does it all mean?' sobbed Bridget; 'everything is so strange to-night.'

'But still so happy.'

'Happy things don't make people cry,' answered Bridget, for want of something else to say.

'Em, darling, tell me,' she at last exclaimed, 'you're not going to die, are you?'

'I think not; I never felt better.'

'Then don't talk of these horrid things.'

'You will be glad by-and-by to know what a comfort you have been.'

'Em, you have made me all I am, that is better than what I was.'

Maida entered with Mr. Herbert. The baby had fallen asleep, and she was free to relieve her master, whose frail strength needed all the refreshment that rest could impart to fit him for the early service with the men.

'Maida, you are only going to stay until twelve, and only that because I know you would be disappointed not to remain at all; but I need nothing, so lean back and sleep.'

Maida obeyed as to the reclining, hoping that Miss Evelyn would sleep if not spoken to. She closed her eyes; but opening them suddenly, found her young mistress gazing fixedly at her. They both smiled, and Maida raised herself.

'You see I am very obedient, Miss Evelyn, but I hope you will remove your injunction, and let me talk to you; I looked forward to it all day.'

'Dear Maida!' and Emmeline stretched her hand to her.

'Ah!' thought Maida, 'I little dreamt the time would ever come in which I should hear myself called dear.'

And little, too, did she once think that she could ever again allow herself to be so addressed, much less that it would afford her pleasure, and that she should acknowledge that pleasure.

'One word, Maida, and you shall go. Say what you will, I feel sure that there is some strange mystery in your tale. I have no inkling of it, so do not fear; but I am sure there is a something that should not be as it is. When I am gone, if ever you should need a counsellor, or be unable longer to bear your secret alone, remember my father is your friend.'

'That time will never come, Miss Evelyn. If I have a secret it is one that I can keep. But don't send me away -- do let me stay, Miss Evelyn; I have given you pleasure, now repay me.'

'To-morrow you shall sleep here with me -- to-night I wish to be alone: once more, good-night, dear Maida;' and the door closed.

## Broad Arrow: Being Passages From the History of Maida Gwynnham, a Lifer

In a few moments all was silent in the parsonage: all weary eyes were closed in sleep, and sleep, sweeter than she had ever known, hushed Emmeline in calm repose.

In the early morning, as was her wont, Maida entered Miss Evelyn's room on tiptoe. She still slept, so Maida as she had often done before, crept over to look at her.

Last night's smile still lingered on her lips, which had fallen gently apart, disclosing two pearly teeth; one hand lay beneath, and partly supported her cheek, and the other lay upon the bed. Maida bent to kiss that hand — its coldness made her start.

She stood before Death disarmed of his terrors, for Emmeline was in heaven.

How long she stood entranced she knew not. The door shutting upon Mr. Herbert as he left the house for his duty aroused her.

'Dear creature! O God! I thank Thee that Thou didst give me power to place that smile upon those precious lips, now hushed for ever. I, who have given her so many pangs, am not worthy of a mercy so great.'

Bridget was dressing when Maida, with a faint tap, entered her room.

'How pale you are! what's the matter, Maida?'

'I am cold, Miss Bridget. You are up early.'

'Do you know, I awoke with such an uneasy feeling about Em, that, goose that I am, I was obliged to get up. Directly my dressing-gown is on I shall run up to peep at the darling; she was so extra exquisite last night that I can't forget her — that's why I'm up so early, Miss Curiosity.'

'I will go with you, Miss Bridget.'

What meant that trembling voice? Bridget looked at her. Involuntarily upturned the large eye, over which now quivered an undropped tear.

'Tell me, or I shall think she's dead!' exclaimed Bridget, catching both Maida's hands and shaking her. 'Tell me — I can't bear suspense — tell me, tell me!'

'She — is — not — dead — but — sleepeth,' came the slow and solemn answer.

'And I can't shed a tear,' whispered Bridget.

'Miss Bridget, let us go; one will be here presently who must go alone to that room of glory.'

Obedying the impulse of her heart, all unaware of what she did, Maida wound her arm round Miss D'Urban and led her upstairs.

'Oh no! she only sleeps. This cannot be death. Emmeline, my own one, look up and speak to me.'

But never answer came.

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## Broad Arrow: Being Passages From the History of Maida Gwynnham, a Lifer

No weeds funereal lay scattered about — at once chilling the heart with their dreary aspect, and calling for energies which, though given reluctantly, relieve the burdened mind. There was no hurry of preparation. In the dim twilight, accompanied by an overseer, two convicts were seen approaching the house, bearing on their shoulders a plain deal coffin. Then, stealing in through the back door, they made their silent way to the chamber of death, where Maida awaited them; and ere the father knew what was taking place, Emmeline was tenderly laid in her last resting-place, and smiled the pale face up from that simple bed, as sweetly and calmly as though it had been wrapped in costly cerements.

But the men would not depart; they said they must see the parson, no one else would do.

'Well, my men, you wish to speak to me?' asked Mr. Herbert.

'It's gone abroad, your reverence, that the free is going to offer to carry Miss Evelyn. Your reverence will never take from us the last sight of her that's been the pride of the station. Sure, sir, you shall find us steady, and all so willing as them that's got wills of their own. There isn't a man in the gang that won't feel hurt if they sees her go by on other shoulders.'

'You shall carry her for had she been asked she would have chosen you. I will see to it, and thank you.'

Mr. Herbert shook them by the hand.

'God bless your reverence, and them that's left! You won't say we've had a word with you, sir; it may go wrong with the Gov'nor.'

Mr. Herbert bowed, for his voice failed him.

The man who had not spoken before now said:

'It's bad to our feelings to put that there rough timber over against her that should have the best of everything; but your reverence knows there is no help for it down here, where it's all for prisoners. I know the best in the store was picked out, but bad's the best.'

The father could almost smile: he had not observed the coffin — the gentle sleeper reposing in it absorbed his every thought.

A solitary boat, in which was discernible the convict yellow, returning from the Isle of the Dead, was the only other indication of an expected funeral. The last moment arrived, and yet no Uncle Ev appeared.

'He cannot be here now,' said Uncle Herbert, when a distant sound, as of a horse at fullest speed, was heard, and in another moment the well-known gray came dashing down the avenue, and Uncle Ev, alighting at the church, led his horse slowly towards the house. At that instant out struck the church bell, one, two — one, two. Mr. Herbert approached his brother, and in silence they grasped each other's hands.

'I can't see her?' at last whispered the elder brother, in choking utterance.

'Not until you see her there!' replied Mr. Herbert, pointing upward.

'Herbert, I have but one wish, and that is, that when yon dreary bell tolls for one of my children, that child may have your Emmeline's hope, and I may have your comfort.'

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One, two — one, two. There must be no delay. The procession moved slowly through the settlement. As officiating minister and chief mourner, Mr. Herbert walked first, bareheaded, and in his surplice. Then, borne by six prisoners in white blouses, came the simple coffin, Mr. Evelyn, Bridget, and Charlie following close after, and then, forming a part of the procession, and yet isolated from it, succeeded a solitary figure, wrapt in a lonely grief that it was striking to behold; beyond her lingered Opal, his eye wistfully following the mournful band as it wound through the settlement and stopped at the bay, where three boats awaited it, one of which was empty, and attached to the second by a stout rope. In the other two sat the boat's crew in white jackets; they bent reverently on their oars as Mr. Herbert passed by them and took his place in the first boat. Mr. Evelyn, Bridget, and Charlie entered the next; then the coffin was lowered into the third boat, and the bearers retired to the jetty. There was no room for Maida — she must be left behind. She watched the signal for departure being given with a look of anguish, which Mr. Herbert perceived as he just raised his head from the folds of his surplice to take a last look at the coffin ere it was towed onward. He no sooner met that anguished eye than he motioned her to step into the third boat. 'What, with the dear creature herself! He cannot mean it,' thought Maida; but Mr. Herbert beckoned again, and with a trembling foot she entered, and almost flung herself at the coffin's side. Plash! plash! with measured strokes the oars beat solemn time, and alternately with them out-swelled the full, deep bell. Save these all else was silence; not a sound broke on the stillness. The station had hushed its many voices into one breathless tribute to her who had passed through it for the last time.

The plash of the oar has ceased; Mr. Herbert stands on the Isle of the Dead. His white robe flutters in the air as he turns to the death-freighted boat. Involuntarily, once or twice, his arms stretch forward when, tottering over the narrow plank, the boat's crew bear his child across.

Now all have landed; Mr. Herbert turns, and in the same order the procession threads its way up the narrow defile.

One, two! one, two! one, two! swings rapidly from the steeple rising from yon knot of trees. The vibrations die away, and all again is silence, when, swept onward by the gentle breeze, a voice bursts from that solitary spot:

"I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

At first the tone is tremulous, for it is a father who speaks; but lofty it swells, and yet more lofty, till, like sweet music from a distant shore, is wafted over the quiet bay that Christian hope and holy aspiration, triumphant over pain and death.

But now the funeral disappears, lost amid the foliage.

Unseen, it moves on until two chained prisoners waiting at an open grave mark the resting-place it comes to sanctify.

Hitherto, in compassion to the father, there has been but slight outward show of grief; all have controlled their feelings; a very muffled sob has been the only audible indication of the heart's sorrow. But when the bidding word is spoken and falls the heavy clod upon the cherished form, one loud and bitter wail rings through the quiet of that desert isle, startling the wild goat from his rock and making the bird wheel, frightened, from his nest.

The cry comes from neither parent nor relative, but from that lonely captive, into the desolation of whose soul the fallen clod has struck and aroused a mighty echo of despair.

None tries henceforth to hide that sorrow it is a strife to hold within. The father alone weeps not. The bitter cry for a moment subdues his voice into a murmur; but it again breaks forth in holy rapture — 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord!'

## CHAPTER XXIX. ACCEPTED.

IT was now the Sunday after the funeral. The congregation, free and bond, were surprised to see Mr. Herbert take his accustomed place in the desk, and still more surprised were they to see him enter the pulpit to preach his own child's funeral sermon. All waited for when the stricken father should arise from his knees and commence that lament over which all had prepared themselves to weep. All looked forward to experiencing a luxurious tenderness when the minister should merge into the parent, and yield himself to sorrowful recollections of the past. A sensation of astonishment, therefore, ran through the whole people, when in a voice loud, clear, and, if possible, more sonorous than usual, Mr. Herbert, looking calmly around him, thrice repeated slowly and distinctly, no funeral text, but Agrippa's words -- 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.' Then dropping his voice into a low, earnest tone, he said:

'My friends, I thank you all for your kindness to my departed child. I am about to leave you; to your care I commit that grave lying in your Isle of the Dead. To your attention I commend her who lies within that grave. My bond brethren, you who are the same flesh and blood, heart and soul, I implore you to note that grave. I do not by this ask you to keep it in order -- your own kind feelings will prompt you to do that unbidden; but this I do ask you, to attend to that grave as a voice from God, as a voice from heaven, bidding you go to Christ. And, oh, would God that the answer of your hearts might be, not ALMOST, but "ALTOGETHER thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Could but one such voice reach my ear, I should bless God for my child's death in this place. I should bless Him to eternity that in this far-off isle, on which mine eye may never rest again, I leave her to the stranger's care.'

An earnest appeal succeeded, in which he implored weary souls to pine not for the rest that island could afford, but for the rest wherewith the Saviour can refresh the heavy laden.

It was in the midst of this appeal that a tall, stately figure was seen to rise up, and with low, bent head to leave the church; her footsteps lingered near the door, and then Maida passed out; but not until the fervent voice had once more pleaded, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.'

Mrs. Evelyn said it was like a prisoner not to care more for such an affecting sermon than to go out just for a little headache. But Mr. Herbert discerned more than physical pain in the lowly dignity of Maida's carriage; he knew it was no common feeling that could weigh down that head, so erect and noble in its bearing. He sought her directly after the service. The rest of the family had proceeded to take a quiet walk in the Government garden; he, therefore, feared no interruption in seeking an interview with her whom he considered one of his flock as well as one of his brother's family. But she was to be found neither in the kitchen nor in the outhouses. Opal said, 'He had seen dat leddie come in fast, quick, big, and go upstairs, but he hadn't seen her since.' (He would persist in calling her a lady, for that she was a prisoner could not be brought to his understanding.)

In going upstairs Mr. Herbert had to pass his daughter's room. He thought from within he heard a suppressed voice; he listened and entered; Maida knelt there. On seeing Mr. Herbert she arose, and approaching him, extended both her hands, exclaiming:

'It is over, sir! not ALMOST, but ALTOGETHER. The moment of decision has come. With dying lips Miss Evelyn persuaded me, you have decided me. Her God shall be my God; her Saviour my Saviour!'

'Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord,' said Mr. Herbert, clasping his hands and looking upwards, his pale, careworn face bright as had been his dying daughter's.

'Sir! those were Miss Evelyn's very words to me.'

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'They are, and ever will be the Christian's words, Maida. Oh, Maida! I bless God for my child this day, I bless Him for the sorrow I have had, I bless Him for YOU, my daughter. Come, let us thank Him together.'

They knelt, and ere their praiseful prayer concluded, a third joined with them. Bridget had stolen back to weep in her cousin's room; entering on tiptoe, she beheld her uncle and Maida, and immediately bent silently beside them.

### CHAPTER XXX. BRIDGET AGAIN.

BRIDGET is all excitement. Uncle Ev tells her that Mr. Walkden has once more found his way to Hobart Town, and is waiting below to renew acquaintance with her.

Bridget hopes in her heart that he will make no allusion to days past, and the something that passed in them.

Mrs. Evelyn hopes he will, and that her niece will not make a simpleton of herself, for a real M. A. is not an everyday catch in the antipodes. Episcopal hands there rarely find true Oxford or Cambridge heads on which to exercise their ghostly function. Poor Mr. Walkden, too, has given so very decided a proof that, renouncing all other, he will either go without a wife or have Miss D'Urban, that really she ought to accept him. Her former refusal of him and his resignation of the comfortable living of Clarence Plains had occurred together, or rather on one and the same day. But in resigning his living he had taken care to accept the wardenship of Bishopbourne, where to the present time he has been trying hard but uselessly to forget Miss D'Urban in the scholastic duties of the college. So uselessly trying, that yesterday the Launceston coach brought him into Hobart Town; and he means to try how Bridget feels, or at any rate how she looks. As she enters the room, he determines that whatever she feels, she certainly looks none the worse. Her cheeks, if possible, are of a richer carnation; and her eyes as full of light — less merry, though not less cheerful; in fact, they are more suitable than ever to a clergyman's wife.

However, she has not entered alone. Uncle Ev comes, too — for Bridget declared she would not go down unless he accompanied her. The visit ends in Mr. Walkden being invited to dinner — an early, friendly dinner — after which, by some 'horrid' chance, Bridget finds herself left alone with him. She gives an imploring look towards Uncle Ev, as she sees him making for the door; but he only shuts his eyes wickedly at her, and departs, when Mr. Walkden asks her if any persuasion of his may prevail on her to change her mind, and revoke a sentence that makes him the most miserable of colonial clergymen.

She says she has undertaken to be Uncle Herbert's daughter, instead of Emmeline.

Mr. Walkden inquires if it may not be possible to unite the relationships of wife and daughter. But Bridget seems to think — no.

So the matter drops for that afternoon. Mr. Walkden, beseeching her to consider it, and let him know the result of her thoughts, dejectedly leaves the house, but not, as she supposes, to go to his hotel. He walks straight to the prisoners' barracks, and there watches for Mr. Herbert; whom he no sooner espies returning from his duties, than he joins him, and renews the matrimonial suit.

Bridget is out watering her plants after tea, when she sees Uncle Herbert approaching; she is quickly at his side; and then he tells her that, as far as he is concerned, nothing would give him greater pleasure than to marry her to Mr. Walkden; but he would on no account bias her against her wishes. Entirely off her guard, Bridget exclaims, 'Oh, uncle! I like him very much; only —'

She stops and looks vexed.

'Only you are divided between love and duty,' says Uncle Herbert kindly.

She, still more vexed, and somewhat hurt, replies, 'Uncle, if I am divided at all, it is between love and love. If it be a duty to fulfil dear Em's last wish, it is one of so much pleasure that I am loath to resign it.'

Nevertheless, she did resign it, and shortly became Mrs. Walkden, to the infinite satisfaction of her aunt, who, in kissing her after the wedding, said, with one of her little quick laughs:

'Of course, my dear! what else do you suppose your mother sent you out for?'

## **CHAPTER XXXI. THE AWAKENING. -- MORE VICTIMS.**

IN an elegant drawing-room, in one of the West End houses of London, sat Mrs. Norwell.

Now she arose and flitted about the room for some time as if in search of something -- and then she resolutely nestled into a couch, determined to patiently await whatever it might be that she expected -- her fairy fingers pretending to diligence over a dainty heap of muslin and lace.

There came a brisk rat-tat at the front door; and we know for what Mary had been watching. She walked to the door, and, holding it open, wished the servants would not be so long.

Her pale face tinted with the gentlest rose as she took a letter from the silver tray handed her by the footman. She nestled back into the cushion, held the letter up, and then threw it down. 'Dear! -- it is not from him. Naughty man that he is!'

Presently she took up the neglected letter, and for the first time observed it was from abroad, and for Captain Norwell. Supposing it was from one of his Indian relatives, whose communications had always been equally intended for herself, and as Norwell invariably flung them over to her unopened, with, 'There, dear; it's more yours than mine,' she broke the seal; and in a few brief moments all Maida's care, pain, and tears were nullified. The shameful secret was in his wife's possession.

Mary withdrew the envelope, and her husband's own handwriting met her sight. She read, 'My beloved Maida,' and repeated the name over and over again, but could not remember where she had before heard it. Then came the name Martha Grylls -- then Maida's own letter -- when through all her sweet simplicity, through all her unwillingness, started out on Mary a truth she would have died to make false -- a lie she would have given her life to abrogate. But the awakening had come -- there was no reprieve -- no room for doubt -- the accusation was from Maida -- the confession from himself! Poor Mary! you must depart from your paradise, for the evil one is there. The canker is at the root of your gourd, and it perishes before you. Your sun goeth down while it is yet day. She was not one to show either grief or joy by ecstasy. When the array of servants filed silently in for evening prayer, and when the butler laid before her the Bible and Prayer-book, she merely raised her eyes to him, and shook her head, how drearily I and faintly articulated, 'I can't to-night!'

And more silently the servants glided from the room -- each mystified and sorrowful at what should ail their gentle mistress.

There was the same dreary refusal of the refreshment tray, when it was wistfully presented her by her own maid -- for all the others had feared to disturb her.

The maid waited; but Mary spoke not until looking up she saw tears in her servant's eyes; she then smiled a smile more touching in its misery than could have been the bitterest display of grief.

'My dear lady, are you ill?'

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'Very, very!' and Mary dropped her head, but she shed not a single tear.

'Allow me, ma'am; you should not pass the night alone. The nurse was here to-night, and I gave her your message, saying you did not expect to want her for three weeks.'

"Tis not that, Fanny. I do not want her. My illness is all here.'

She folded her hands at once upon the letters and her heart, for she had resealed the former and laid them in her bosom.

'I would rather be left, Fanny; I shall go to bed presently.'

But her pillow brought no rest; her tortured mind could see but the one picture of her unmasked husband (in his threefold baseness), and Maida, beautiful and anguished, as she had appeared in the prison where, when Mary Doveton, Mrs. Norwell had visited her.

No sleep had closed her eyes, when she arose and descended to the parlour, again to await the post. The knock came; a thrill shivered through her, but not of joy, the paleness of her cheek became yet more deathlike as she received and mechanically opened the expected letter. Each endearing word called forth a desponding moan, and with each word the pain gathered more closely to her heart. She once more broke the seal of Maida's packet, and placing Norwell's within, she closed it again for ever. Then putting the whole in another cover, she sealed it, and, after a few moments of anxious thought, wrote on it, with a trembling hand:

'For dear Henry, with Mary's love and -- prayers.'

The struggle was ended; she flung herself into her chair and wept until she could weep no more. Faint and shadowlike she moved about all that day and the next. The third morning a second note from Norwell announced his return within two hours.

Not knowing that the servants had, after united consultation, agreed to send for their master, Mary wondered at his change of purpose; she had not expected his return for another week. Now one dull emotion of suspense numbed her into a cold quiet. She heard the loud rap at the door, and then her husband's voice sounded through the house; the well-known airy step was on the stair, but she moved not; another instant, the door flew open and Norwell entered. A glance at his wife's face sufficed to tell him that the alarm of her illness was not unfounded. He was shocked and startled, but the servants had begged him not to let Mary know that he had been summoned.

'Why, what ails you, darling? Are you ill? Surely not, or you would have sent for me.'

She had approached to meet him; he now folded her in his arms; but the form he held yielded itself so lifelessly to his embrace that he was terrified. He set her gently back on the sofa.

'Mary, love, what is it?'

He leant her head upon his shoulder, but she raised it again -- not loathing, it was not in Mary Doveton to despise, but she felt she had no right to lie there.

'Mary, love, speak to me; what is it?'

She could no longer resist.

She fell upon his neck and wept piteously.



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'Oh, Henry, Henry!' she said no more.

He observed that one hand rested firmly on her heart, as though it would arrest a pain. He laid his hand upon it, and Mary pressed it more firmly down.

'Mary!' he whispered.

She opened her eyes; there was that in them which made a cold terror fall upon him.

'Oh, Mary! we are not going to be parted --- are we? My life with you has been heaven upon earth.'

'Yes, Henry; and when I am gone, forget that you have ever loved me, and do your duty to --- '

Norwell bent over her for the last word, but it was a mere breath that passed and left him desolate.

The hand relaxed, the letter fell, and he who should have received it earlier, all too late read his fate and the cause of his Mary's death.

That evening the fair fragile flower, with its tiny bud, were folded in repose; both lay together in one coffin, the mother and the babe, for the Destroyer had breathed upon them.

It was but a few days after that that house in the West End was seen shuttered and disfigured with bills announcing a prompt and unreserved sale, the proprietor being about to leave England.

### **CHAPTER XXXII. MAIDA.**

MAIDA had just entered the fifth year of her transported life, of which she had now to experience but two more changes --- the ticket-of-leave and the conditional pardon. Both were still distant. According to the regulations then in force, she had to serve yet three years (together with the two months abstracted from the reckoning by reason of her punishment in the Factory) before she would be eligible for her ticket, and she must then hold that ticket a given period ere she could claim her conditional pardon. But all save her mistress had given up speaking to her of either the one or the other. To both these indulgences she displayed so utter an indifference that her master deemed it useless to encourage her with the hope of them, and Mr. Herbert considered it more a mortification than otherwise to her, to have either of these presented as incitements to good behaviour. Mrs. Evelyn would still threaten her with a protracted term of involuntary servitude, when the quiet curl of Maida's lip alone showed how little the threat affected her.

She had dropped into a peculiar position in the family --- a position of her own forming, one on which her fellow-servants dared as little to encroach as to question its existence, though to spite it they persecuted her in every possible way; a position which her master did not choose to molest, for all his wife's protestations against convict upstartism.

'Clara,' said he, on one occasion, 'the woman is quiet, orderly, and for work is worth two servants; so long as you have no fault to find in these respects I must beg you to have the rest left to me.'

'But she is not orderly, my dear; look at her now, when I'm sure she ought to be in the scullery cleaning her knives.'

Mrs. Evelyn pointed towards the garden with one hand and with the other tapped violently at the glass; then stepping forward, she called out:

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'What are you about there, Gwynnham, idling your time, or rather my time?'

Mr. Herbert, who had been reading at the table, looked anxiously up as Maida mounted the steps and stood in the balcony.

'Did you call me, ma'am?'

Mrs. Evelyn, annoyed at her husband's tenacity, snappishly asked:

'What business have you in the garden at this hour?'

'I was tending my flowers.'

'Then you ought to have been scouring your knives.'

'I have done them already, ma'am.'

'Then you've your master's boots.'

'They are also cleaned, ma'am.'

'Then your

'I have none, ma'am.'

'Such nonsense! you know that's a story; there's always plenty of work in a large house.'

Maida's lip quivered and her eye flashed.

'Now I hope you are not going to be insolent. I haven't seen that face put up for a long time: I was in hopes you had left it off since you professed religion.'

Maida fixed her eye haughtily on her mistress, who went on to say:

'The thing is, I plainly see, we've been too indulgent to you; you forget what you are; and that'll never do: your own will mustn't be allowed as it has been.'

'I pray God that my will may never again be my guide, ma'am. To be left to my own devices would be to be given over to evil,' exclaimed Maida, the fire fading from her glance, and an expression of pain gathering on her countenance.

'What does the woman mean?' turning to Mr. Herbert: he arose and approached the window.

'Once, ma'am, my own will was the rule of my life, now God's word directs my actions, or I could not, in silence, hear you so speak, CONVICT though I be!'

'I wish it would teach you not to be insolent.'

'It teaches servants to obey their masters in all things, and I humbly desire to do so.'

'Yes, indeed! or you can soon be made to.'

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Maida clenched her teeth and remained silent.

'You can go now; but really it's very hard a mistress can't speak a word to her own prisoner—woman without such a to—do, and that after I have kept you three years and a half.'

'I am ready to fulfil your wishes, ma'am,' said Maida meekly.

'Go along, Gwynnham! I haven't patience with such nonsense, making a goodness out of your duty, which you either must fulfil or get into trouble; you know it's only because Mr. Herbert is listening to you that you talk such cant.'

'I acknowledge it, ma'am. Had not my master's reproachful look reminded me of the solemn vow I made, I should not have borne with you, for grace has not changed my nature, though it has subdued my temper.'

The calm dignity of her voice and manner at once irritated and awed Mrs. Evelyn. She hastily replied:

'Well, I don't believe in convict piety; go and act it, then perhaps I may.'

'Where shall I find the needlework, ma'am?'

'If you can't get it without troubling me, leave it alone.'

'Then I may continue my work in the garden?'

'If the master chooses; but remember I don't choose to have you speak of the flowers as yours — it's a piece of insolence in a convict that I cannot stand.'

Maida stared.

'You did! you said you were tending your flowers. If the master allows you to work in the garden, that does not make them yours.'

'I beg your pardon, ma'am; the flowers I spoke of are mine.'

'You must have stolen them from us then!'

'I brought them from Port Arthur. They were dear ——— '

She stopped and cast a look at Mr. Herbert, who averted his head for an instant, and then, with a smile, inquired:

'My Emmeline's? I must go and see them.'

Mr. Herbert went out, and Maida prepared to follow him, but her mistress called her.

'Gwynnham, come back, you bold woman, I'm ashamed of you: do you think a father — '

Mr. Herbert turned, and, in a decided voice, bade Maida accompany him.

She hesitated.

'You permit her, Clara?'

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'Oh! it's no odds to me.'

'Maida, I rejoice to see you stedfast in the path you have chosen. It is a perpetual struggle,' commenced Mr. Herbert.

'It is, sir; but no more so than I expected. I, as a convict, have not the same comfort in it that a free person has, the contest being the result of my sins, and not of my being in the narrow path.'

'Maida, one thing disappoints me. The impression you made on my mind the first time I visited you in prison has increased with my knowledge of you, until it has almost become a conviction, and I am disappointed that with your open profession of religion you have made no acknowledgment of that which, as a Christian woman, should trouble you — '

'Sir! what do you mean? explain yourself.'

Drawn to her full height, she was the Maida of olden days, but only for a moment.

Grasping his arm, she exclaimed hurriedly, 'Forgive me, sir; but, in pity, put an end to my distress.'

'What distress, Maida?'

'Oh, Mr. Herbert I do not play upon my feelings! What acknowledgment have I to make?'

'Maida, listen to me, not to me as Mr. Herbert, your master's brother, not to me as your appointed pastor; but listen to me as one who has watched you, and prayed for you, and — and — and cared for you; as one who would deliver his own soul by speaking faithfully to you.'

Maida trembled in every limb. Mr. Herbert laid his hand upon her shoulder, when, as though the touch had paralyzed her, she became rigid and statue-like.

'Have you no secret which, as a Christian woman, you have no right to keep to yourself?'

'Are there no occasions, sir, on which we may throw ourselves on God's mercy without exposing ourselves to man's weak judgment?'

'Doubtless, God searches the heart; but you misapprehend me perhaps. Simply, I would say, it is no use to kneel to our heavenly Father, and say, "I have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight," and then, arising, continue that sin we have just confessed — confession and restitution must succeed each other; I deal faithfully with you.'

'And you must yet be more faithful if you would have me profit by your candour, sir. I do not understand anything you have spoken, save that you are torturing me; yes, by cruel degrees.'

'Then I will be plain, Maida.'

She longed to say, 'Oh don't, don't,' but she said just the reverse:

'I pray you go on, sir.'

'In the days of your rebellion against God and man, I perceived you hid some mystery in your heart; I perceived that, with a mighty power of self-control, you crushed your every thought, word, and deed, in subservience to that mystery; you appeared to hug a perpetual dagger to your heart; you smarted beneath its wound, and yet resisted

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help or alleviation, setting yourself rashly and determinately to bear it. No effort of mine has been spared to discover your secret.'

'You must have watched me very narrowly, sir.'

Without noticing these words, Mr. Herbert drew a torn half-sheet of paper from his vest; slowly unfolding it, he held it towards Maida.

'Was there no conflict when this solemn adjuration was penned to that base man who worked your ruin, and who must have eternally destroyed you but for God's tender mercy -- God's unceasing love?'

He held the paper towards her, but would not resign it.

She read part of one of the letters she had written to Norwell. It was the very one she had considered most violent and earnest -- the very one that showed too much of her feelings and sorrow; fortunately it mentioned not his name; the cold 'sir' at the commencement alone told that it was addressed to a man.

The writing swam before her eyes; she had been pale before, now the pallor of her cheek was deathlike, livid; but suddenly a deep purple colour rushed over her whole face, and she clenched her hand upon Mr. Herbert's arm.

'Tell me, sir, how came you by that paper? I defy the right of anyone upon earth to interfere with my private actions, harmless to everyone but myself; by what means did you possess yourself of it? I insist on being satisfied.'

'I will satisfy you, Maida. The night referred to I could not rest -- your whole appearance alarmed me; now I may tell you I feared you were meditating suicide; I passed the night in prayer for you. In the early morning I heard you leave the house; I followed you, and by the way I picked up this paper, dropped by you in your flight, and since carefully preserved by me as a proof of what has long been established in my mind, that there is some grand mistake in your conviction. I do not believe you wholly guilty of the crimes for which you are in this colony.'

'Then why have you not made your thoughts public, sir? an endeavour should be made to clear an innocent person!'

There was a strangeness of manner and voice in the enunciation of this, that made Mr. Herbert look hastily at her.

'Because, Maida, the time has not fully come.'

'It has not!' (The same strange voice.) 'Sir, you would be deemed a mere enthusiast to found a plea of innocence on the ravings of a disappointed woman -- a felon maddened by her punishment, as all felons sore. But I must leave you, sir; I am in pain, great pain. My heart beats as though it would burst.'

'Then go, and may God assist you into a solemn duty!'

Maida excused herself from attending prayer that night; and long after all the others were in bed, Mr. Herbert, who still read in his study, heard her moving about upstairs. The next morning, when she had removed the breakfast, she turned quickly to her master and said:

'Sir, I am ill; I must go to the hospital.'

'Oh, nonsense, Maida; get your mistress to give you a little gregory, and you'll be right to-morrow!'

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'I wish to go, if you please, sir; I am ill.'

'Well, then, put on your bonnet, and I'll take you to Dr. Lamb; he'll soon settle the point.'

'My dear, if Maida's ill she had better go to the hospital; I am quite pleased to see her so reasonable as to request it,' urged Mrs. Evelyn.

Mr. Evelyn nodded.

'Bonnet, Maida, bonnet,' and both mistress and servant knew it was useless to contend.

'Just tell me what you complain of, and then make haste and be ready.'

'I am only sensible of a strange fulness at my heart, sir, with a general feeling of indisposition. But I cannot be ready for half an hour. As I do not wish to return here, I must put up my things before I go to the hospital, for I am sure Dr. Lamb will order me there.'

Mr. Evelyn laughed.

'You've made fine plans for yourself, at any rate. Well; perhaps, though, you want a little holiday.'

Maida did want a holiday, and she was about to have one.

Leaving her master, she went straight to Mr. Herbert's study, and scarcely closed the door ere she said:

'Sir, do you mean to say that I cannot have God's forgiveness unless I confess my history?'

Taken by surprise, Mr. Herbert started.

'I dare to say no such thing, Maida!'

'What do you say then, sir?'

'That you cannot expect the Christian's peace while you do not act the repentant's part.'

'Then peace of mind is all I shall lose by telling my tale to no one but God?'

'This is not the proper way to talk of subjects so deeply important: if you wish to speak of these things, first seek the Holy Spirit's aid by prayer.'

'I have been praying all night, sir, and I am driven to distraction by the alternate light and darkness which follows me. As to propriety of way, opportunity must sanctify that, I may not have another.'

'What do you mean, Maida?' exclaimed Mr. Herbert rising; 'your words are strange, your manner stranger.'

'I am ill, sir; Mr. Evelyn is going to take me to the doctor, and then I mean to enter the hospital.'

'I'll speak to my brother.'

He went towards the door; she stretched her arms towards him.

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'One moment, sir. If you will wait for my dying hour, then shall you hear all you seek to know; till then, since peace of mind is all I must forego in keeping my secret to myself, I commit myself to God, and resign my present peace on your solemn promise that in so doing I shall not resign my eternal happiness; for that no mortal has a right to do, and I have no wish to resign it. Mind, sir! I rest on your promise that I shall not lose heaven by my silence.'

'Maida, Maida!' cried Mr. Herbert but she had left the room. As she had her bundle to prepare, and as Mr. Evelyn was impatiently calling for her, he had only to return to his study to pray for his convict charge.

Dr. Lamb prescribed perfect rest with quiet; and strongly advised her to enter the hospital. He privately told Mr. Evelyn that she was in a very broken state of health; on the morrow he would see her at the hospital, and report further particulars.

The gates of H.M.G. Hospital once more admitted Maida Gwynnham. Once more her master consigned her to good, kind Mrs. Cott. On parting he shook hands with her; he had never done so before. Observing her gesture of surprise, he smiled.

'It's never too late to mend our ways and doings, I hope. Maida. Mind one thing, Gwynnham — just this: I shall be as glad to see you back as I am sorry to send you in. You know we married men can't be comptrollers—general, or you should have been laid up at my house.'

He shook her hand the second time, and walked down the path; then turning, he called out:

'I'll send Mr. Herbert to see you on Thursday; you'll like that, shan't you?'

She was ordered to Ward No. 4, there to behold the Excrescence still bearing the iron rod.

There was a grin of satisfaction on her lips as she hailed Maida back to her clutches.

'Why, woman, what ails you? death's in your very face; are you come in to die?'

She should have known Maida better than to suppose this apostrophe would terrify her.

Seating herself on the bottom of a stretcher, Maida replied:

'Nurse, if you can tell me that you see death in my face you will tell me better news than I have heard for years.'

'You don't b'lieve in hell, I suppose.'

'Yes, and in heaven too; and, nurse, I can say from my soul I hope to see you there.'

The Excrescence grinned incredulity and malice, and then sniffed.

'Yes! I think if ever you gets there, you'll find me there before you.'

During Maida's absence the nurse's ill-will had increased rather than diminished, the former having resolutely forbade, her her master's kitchen, into which she had several times endeavoured to intrude under pretence of visiting her old patient. In this way she carried on an extensive traffic among the pantries of masters owning former hospitallers of Ward No. 4.

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Maida tried to avoid quarrelling, but in vain; something occurred in the course of the evening that aroused her anger and forced her into a dispute. Nurse was a little the worse for drink (how bad, then, must she have been?), and, clenching her fist at Maida, she swore a fearful oath to the effect that, instead of closing her eyes and folding her arms if she died within her reach, she would make her a corpse so frightful as to make the devil himself take to his heels. She would fix open both eyes and mouth as though she were 'a-calling for mercy that was never a-coming.'

In spite of herself a cold shiver ran through Maida as she heard the malignant threat. She dropped her head, and sent a silent prayer to God, and then, rising, prepared to undress for the night. She lay still for two hours, when the oppression at her heart became unbearable. She sat up in the stretcher, and begged the nurse to allow her to sleep semi-recumbently, and received the pleasant answer:

'She might sleep in hell if she liked.'

Mrs. Cott came round, showing her kindly face at the bedside of every poor, weary patient. When she arrived at Maida's she exclaimed:

'Go for the doctor; this woman's worse!'

The house-doctor came and prescribed for her; he requested that some one should sit up with her, and that he should be called if certain symptoms appeared.

But sitting up with a convict is a dissimilar operation to sitting up with a free patient; there is an obvious want of that comforting confusion, of soft treadings, murmuring voices, and thoughtful appliances which love alone can produce. There may be muffled steppings to and fro, but then list slippers and not affection is the cause — list must be quiet. Surly and gaunt the Excrescence took her place near Maida. Then, throwing off her cap, and rumpling her grizzled hair, she became, in the dim light of the lamp, the ex-lunatic of the transport magnified into double deformity.

'Nurse, do you think Mrs. Cott would send for Mr. Herbert Evelyn?'

'I am not going to try; you must bide without the parson for to-night.'

'Nurse, I think I'm dying; I feel so strange.'

'The devil may care, I don't. He's more concerned in it than me or anyone else.'

Maida tried once more.

'Nurse, do send for Mr. Herbert; I'm sure he'll come. I must, must see him.'

'If you are worse I'll send for the doctor, and nobody else.'

All was silent for a while.

'I'm dying!' whispered Maida; but the nurse heard not: she was heavy with drink bartered from the patients; and soon her thick, bull-like snore was the only lullaby that soothed the dying convict to her last rest.

For Maida Gwynnham was dying! Had the nurse been awake she might have heard a low, gurgling sound working its way up Maida's chest; she might have seen her raise her hands and gently shut her own eyes; and then she might have seen her arms fold upon her breast. Ere long she might have seen the stream of life ooze, crimson,



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from Maida's mouth dyeing her pillow in its fatal stain. But nurse saw none of these things, and when, startled up by an extra loud snore, she took the lamp and held it over the bed, with a shriek she let it fall: the victim was beyond her power. Laid in the decency of death by her own dying hand, Maida Gwynnham needed not her services. It was as though an angel had descended and touched her with heavenly calm.

A vessel lies beating about in Storm Bay. God's ban seems on it. It has been signalled since morning, yet cannot approach the land. The captain laughingly says there must be a Jonah on board; and as he speaks, his eye rests upon a tall figure wrapped in a mourning cloak, standing aloof from all, gloomy and taciturn, watching the contrary sea. The deep-set eyes of the stranger in turn are raised, and fix on him a long, deliberate stare.

'No offence, I hope,' says the captain.

The eyes drop quickly back to their watch of the striving waves.

Well, now, I shouldn't like such a welcome as that every day,' thought the captain, turning with a sense of uneasiness from the yellow of those bloodshot balls.

But Norwell knows not that he has turned such a look on the speaker; it came up from the darkness of his soul, and unawares wandered in the direction of the voice that had uttered the name of the miscreant prophet.

Norwell knows not that he has become a bye-word on board, nor that he is a marked object to all — not so much by his mourning garb, which proclaims him a desolate man, as by a forbidding countenance, which hints at a troubled conscience. He has been shut up four months with his fellow-passengers, yet has made no friend, formed no acquaintance.

The children have shunned him; the sailors declare he is bewitched. With one consent the wind side of the poop has been accorded him, and his measured tread has become an accustomed sound on board. It ceases not in storm or calm, in the tropical heat or the cold of the Cape; he seems to be walking out a penance, which he dare not stop at the peril of his soul.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next day Mr. Herbert sat at his seat, poring as usual over his book, when a large letter was handed him. When the tea was brought in he took the letter and opened it.

'Herbert, what is it?' cried Mrs. Evelyn. 'My dear, he's faint.'

But Mr. Herbert, waving his hand, signified No. Mr. Evelyn picked up the paper his brother had dropped. It was the following official despatch: —

'H.M. General Hospital,

'5th February, 18 — .

'The Bodies of the undermentioned now lie at this Establishment waiting interment.

NAME .

AGE .

SHIP .

DESCRIPTION

RELIGION

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Mary Ann Crawford	17	Anna Maria	Prb.	Protesta
Eliza Brown . . .	46	Do.	T.L.	Do.
Martha Grylls alias Maida Gwynnham.	26	Rose of Britain.	P.	Do.

'To the

'Rev. H. Evelyn,

'etc. etc. etc.'

'JAMES CURGENVEN,

'Superintendent.'

The brothers exchanged glances of surprise. Tears suffused Mr. Evelyn's eyes as, walking to the window, he used his handkerchief with that doubtful sound that may equally serve for cold or emotion.

Returning to the table, he threw down the paper before his wife.

'There, Clara; what think you of that? Read it.' Mrs. Evelyn obeyed.

'Well, who would have thought it, my dear? I'm quite sorry. I've lost the best servant I ever had.'

'Poor, poor Maida! caught like a rapture from our sight!' said Mr. Evelyn, dashing down into a chair.

'Well, George, my dear, how could one know she was going to die?'

'I should have known it, then!' exclaimed Mr. Evelyn impatiently. 'It was like herself to steal ahead of us in the dead of night.'

He dipped his teaspoon up and down a few times in his tea; then pushing the cup untasted from him, he left the room.

But Mr. Herbert had left the house.

## CHAPTER XXXIII. NORWELL.

'An end is come. -- The end is come. -- It watcheth for thee.  
Behold it is come!' -- EZEKIEL.

BUT the vessel is at last in harbour. The port-officer has been on board, and all the passengers are free to land. Boats in all directions push from the wharf to bring back their living freight. The poop is quickly deserted of all, save one passenger, and that is Captain Norwell. It seems he does not know his own mind, for more violently than ever he paces the deck, until reminded that he must leave the ship, the cargo being about to be disgorged. A boat in watching for this last chance of an engagement is stoutly hailed by the mate, and in another moment Norwell steps into it, and anon he lands on Tasmanian shores.

'Where shall I take you, sir?' asks the cabman, who happens to be Robert Sanders.

'Anywhere,' replies Norwell.

'Darned asy!' nods Sanders, mentally determining to set him down at the Macquarie Hotel, which having done, he flops.

'Straight from home, sir? Fine country this for them that's free.'

Norwell shudders. Simple as are these words, they tell him he has reached his goal, and is once more near Maida.

'Very like, sir you'd find a drive round agreeable. I'd learn you up a bit of what's worth -- the gentry in general likes it.'

Anything is preferable to being left to himself, so Norwell re-enters the cab, and Sanders drives slowly on, stopping occasionally to point out surrounding beauties.

'The gaol, sir. Rare wall that. Darned fool that would clim' 'em.'

The bloodshot eyes frown on the heavy wall.

'Canaries, sir, just fledged.'

Norwell looks up, but the butt-end of the whip is pointing down at a road-gang clanking by in their yellow clothes.

'Do'e see the toppermost of them that's harnessed to the cart -- he there looking desperate bad of the weakness -- he's a rale gentleman -- a new hand; he takes darned shy to the pick apparently. He's he that frisked the sank.'

Norwell looks, and the man exhibited shrinks agonizedly, perceiving that he is the object of attention.

'Confound it!' mutters Norwell. 'Is that the way?'

'Es, sure -- all alike -- why, they'd clap them there irons and things on you, if you was Government.'

'Get up here!'

The harnessed men had stopped to take breath; at this word of command they trot off again, and Norwell groans aloud.

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'Prisoners' hospital, sir.'

'Go on, can't you!'

Sanders obeys, but again out goes the whip, as they turn up Campbell Street.

'Prisoners' barracks, sir — us calls it Tench.'

Another movement.

'Prisoners' burial-ground. Darned ugly, ain't it?'

'Confound the man! Can he show me nothing but prisons?'

"Es, sure; sure, sir. Over there, straight along's the female barracks.'

This Norwell stands up to see, and Sanders, delighted that he has at last interested his fare, continues:

'Government women what's out of places, or from Anson or Cage, bides in there till they'm hired out. Drive 'e round if you like, sir, and turn back New Town way.'

But there is nothing in the low, scattered buildings that tempts Norwell. With an abrupt 'No,' he throws himself moodily back into the seat. Pulling the check-string shortly after, he asks where he must inquire to find any particular convict

'Government books, sir; 'bliged to report ourselves once in six months; or mayhap you'll find your man at Tench. Can I assist you, sir? The new gentry's generally got a prisoner they wants to find out for somebody at home. I've helped out a lot.'

But learning that it is a woman Norwell is in search of, Sanders advises him to try first at the Brickfields. To that depot they accordingly drive, and are there told that Martha Grylls, under the alias of Maida Gwynnham, is at a Mr. Evelyn's, the Lodge.

'Darned! my old place!' cries Robert. 'Then it's Mada Gwynnham you'm after! an old mate of mine — a darned fine woman; but she's had no end of trouble. Her and my wife is fine together.'

They arrive at the Lodge, and to Sanders's perplexity, the gentleman will have him ring at the back-door, notwithstanding that he is warned of the certain salute there awaiting every unfortunate interloper from the mouth of Jags, the terrier.

'Take your fare, and leave me. I'll find my own way back,' says the Captain, delaying to ring.

'If it's Mada you'm after, she's an old sweetheart of mine, and very like she'd be pleased for me to bide 'long with you, to ase the shyness a bit.'

'Curse the man! How he worries me! Go about your business.'

And aggrieved, though Norwell has given him half a sovereign, Sanders drives slowly off.

As the key turned in the gate, Norwell caught hold of the handle. What if it should be Maida herself? His heart sickened, and his brain swam dizzily. But it was a man who appeared.

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'Round to the other door, sir.'

'No, I only want to inquire for a person called Gwynnham, said to be at a Mr. Evelyn's.'

'This is it, but Gwynnham went away from here sick yesterday. She's at hospital. You won't see her to-day, sir -- to-morrow you may; it's visiting-day there.'

But Norwell could brook no to-morrows. Be his doom what it may, he must know it to-night. Inquiring his way to H. M. G. Hospital, he sought admittance of the porter. That official subjected him to a course of interrogations, until through the gloom of Norwell's countenance broke a fierce light.

'Confound the man! Will you admit me or not?'

A gentleman who had just entered without hindrance turned and looked on him, as from his clenched teeth hissed these angry words.

'Who are you, haunting me thus?' thought Norwell, when, meeting Mr. Herbert's eye, a rush of memory brought back to him the English prison and the scene at the railway station.

'That man blends with my fate. I hate the sight of him. I haven't been a day in the place ere he rises, like a ghost, before me.'

He turned to the porter, and asked:

'Who's that just gone up?'

'Parson Evelyn. You can follow him, if you please, sir.'

The porter had taken Mr. Herbert's look as intended for himself, and hastily granted a permission that otherwise might have been forced from him; for twice again had Mr. Herbert turned, and each time the official appropriated the look.

Norwell waited and waited, but no one appeared to inquire his message. He did not wish to ring, for fear he should re-encounter Mr. Herbert.

At last a woman passed down the stairs. He beckoned her out, and made known his request. She pulled at an excrescence on her under-lip, and seemed to think he asked impossible things.

'Quite contrary to all rule, sir. If I'd ever such a mind to oblige you, there'd be no getting at the key -- and at this time, too!'

'Key! Do they lock her up?' muttered Norwell.

'Stop where you are, sir, and I'll be back presently.'

There was something in her manner which gave him to understand that her services were purchasable.

'If it's money that you want -- '

He said enough. The Excrescence was his humble servant. After a few moments' absence, she again appeared, but from a different door. She signalled Captain Norwell forward, and then whispered:

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'Can't be a better time, sir. The key's in the door, and there's nobody about. Come along, sir.'

She laid her finger on the excrescence, and with a prolonged 'Hush—sh—sh!' led him through a narrow passage at the back of the house.

Stopping at a small door, she peered cautiously around, and then motioned to him to enter.

'It's as dark as night, woman!' started Norwell.

'Not when you'm in and used to the light, sir. I'll go round and slide away another bull's eye.'

A cold tremor ran through him. He could not advance.

'You don't mind going in alone, sir? I can't for my life go in too. If I was caught 'twould be certain trouble. That's her over there, right along by the wall. Shut your eyes a minute, and then open them, and you'll see famous.'

Norwell did so. The outer day excluded, a long line of dusky light stretched athwart the room from the bull's-eye, and rested on a row of narrow benches. As his eye gradually accommodated itself to the misty twilight, a strange horror rooted him to the spot. Suspense and dread smote heavily at his heart. He scarcely dared to look to the right hand or to the left.

A flash of a terrible truth struck through him as a bench shaped itself into a coffin, and then another, and another, and another loomed out of the dim forms before him, until he found himself surrounded by coffins of every size; but they were empty, waiting for their prey.

In unconscious terror he advanced.

'Oh, God! Maida, are you here?'

He spread his arms wildly around, groping — for what?

From without, the nurse pulled back a second bull's-eye; another line of light rushed in, scattering the darkness before it, and made way towards Norwell. He need look no further, for Maida was at his side. His long black cloak swept over the coffin.

'Sir! sir, do'e come out, it's mortal cold in here,' at last murmured the nurse, tired of waiting for the gentleman. But he neither moved nor answered; she was getting frightened; the tall black figure keeping silent watch in the dead-house aroused every superstitious feeling in her wicked heart, but more terrible to see was the speechless despair of that tranced face. She would rather look at the corpse than it.

'Sir, sir, do 'e come along out!' her teeth began to chatter.

'Woman, this is a foul trick to play upon me.'

But how guilty soever elsewhere, here nurse was innocent. Taking for granted that he knew of Maida's death, she had never supposed but that he had sought admission to the corpse. That voice, heaved up as from a sepulchre, was worse than all: vowing she'd never again let strangers into the dead-house, she fled from an apparition so fearful; she cared not who met her so long as she escaped the dreadful place.

Lost in his own dark thoughts, Norwell looked not beyond the second line of light, or in the remotest corner he would have seen a man intently watching; but Norwell saw nothing save the one object before him.

## Broad Arrow: Being Passages From the History of Maida Gwynnham, a Lifer

The coarse envelopments that shrouded Maida disfigured her not. As she lay there she had never looked more beautiful, the loveliness of which pain and sorrow had deprived her had been restored by death.

'Could I but cry aloud, would she raise those lashes and speak forgiveness to me?' groaned Norwell.

The line of light was obstructed by an approaching figure that had emerged from the darkness of the remote corner. Norwell's thoughts were still at work too busily, confusedly, poignantly, to notice it. The figure stood by him; still he observed it not, till a calm, low voice thrilled through him, and made him start, again to meet Mr. Herbert's piercing gaze.

'Her first rest, sir!' He pointed to the coffin, spellbound, Norwell had no choice but to face his adversary.

'Who are you, sir, in God's name?'

There was no defiance in the speech; it was spoken tremulously, almost beseechingly.

'As you will answer at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, I adjure you tell me what you know of this woman,' exclaimed Mr. Herbert, letting his hand fall audibly on the side of the coffin.

'Sir, rather tell me what YOU know of her?' said Norwell, shrinking back a step or two.

'I know she died a victim to some base man! and I would seek that man, sir, and show him what a destruction he has wrought. Would God I could bring him here, and face him with his crime!'

'You have your desire, sir. Behold the man! I only wait for vengeance, sir. I have crossed these seas to seek my just reward. I can bear myself no longer. I crave the avenger's hand.'

'You can know no judgment swifter or more keen than that which those pale features pass on your conscience. Let them declare your doom. They will be merciful if they dare.' Mr. Herbert pointed to the corpse. 'Would God that every dissolute man could stand where you do now; could look around this house and count the coffins yawning for their victims — for here are many who had been still in peace and health but for the seducer's art.'

'Do you know no more than that, sir? Tell me, what know you more of me?' said Norwell huskily; the bloodshot eyes lured darkly, terribly, and he almost stayed his breath to hear the answer.

'I know where your crime commenced towards this woman, and there it ends. But what intervening guilt has helped to fill your measure of sin, I cannot tell, and now before the living God — before this murdered woman — I charge you reveal what more you know of her.'

Norwell laid his forefinger on Maida's hand, and murmured as if in a dream:

'She lived, she suffered, she died for me, and in my stead; go and tell them so, and bid them find in me, Captain Norwell, all they sought of guilt in her. Were these hands made for murder? — then there is murder in heaven, and I shall go there as well as she.'

His voice ceased, and he fell unconscious to the ground.

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## Broad Arrow: Being Passages From the History of Maida Gwynnham, a Lifer

We would not have you follow him; his dark, despairing eyes would haunt you evermore. His oft-repeated question none can answer; he would ask it you, for his voice finds but one utterance, and that is full of woe.

'Is she coming? Maida, Maida, is it you? O God! O God! It was I! It was I!'

The door of his cell draws back, and he gazes out upon you as a spirit lost. One alone can soothe him; one before whose tall and solemn figure the raving maniac cowers into silence, until, reassured by Mr. Herbert's sad but kindly voice, the bloodshot eyes look up, and the lips utter a murmured wail:

'O God! O God!'

Then Mr. Herbert secretly pleads that the wail may become a prayer in the ear of Him who willeth not the death of a sinner, no, not of the vilest. As he prays the eyes of the maniac fix earnestly on him, and the lips whisper confidentially:

'Did you love her? did you love her?'

Put ere Mr. Herbert can answer, the patient returns to his raving and breaks out:

'Is she coming? Is she coming? O God! It was I, it was I!'

Stories so strange are hinted of the patient known as No. 12, that visitors to New Norfolk Asylum are fain rather to hurry by than to enter his cell. It is said Government takes particular interest in this patient and is most watchful over him: it is well it should be so, but, alas!

'Care comes too late when is the mischief done!'