



1859

# The Broad Arrow, Vol II

Caroline Leakey

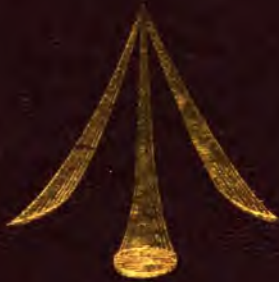
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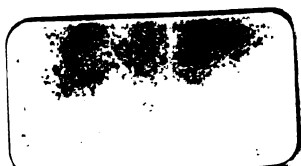
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THE BROAD ARROW.

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VOLUME II.



























From and Edited by A. Herring.

*"Oh, Heaven," cried Maida "my punish'ment  
is greater than I can bear"*

249. 60. 93.

B

BEING

THE  
BROAD ARROW:  
BEING PASSAGES FROM THE HISTORY  
OF  
MAIDA GWYNNHAM,  
A LIFER.

BY OLINÉ KEESE.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:  
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.  
1859.

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249. W. 93.



**LONDON: PRINTED BY W. CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET.**

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# THE BROAD ARROW.

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## CHAPTER I.

### 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 of 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 shudder (induced by suffering) but showed to more advantage the calm into which they speedily relapsed.

Resolving that should scorn await her there, it should be repaid with scorn, severity with coldness,

indignity with defiance, Maida had prepared to commence her life of public disgrace, and had entered the chamber full of proud and determined thoughts.

When, therefore, her eye fell upon the bed, and beheld there a face so sweet that it appeared incapable of scorn, so gentle that it could not assume severity, she felt as if she had done it grievous wrong by her previous supposition, while a keen pang of sorrow darted through her heart as she observed that death had laid unmistakable claim to the fair young creature lying before her. 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, swept up the dust and ashes, she gathered her apparatus together, and arose so 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 down stairs?’

Miss Evelyn wanted nothing, but hearing in Maida's voice a 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 very heart.’

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—'

Emmeline raised herself on one side, and, looking earnestly at Maida, continued—

'Tell me, do you disbelieve me still?'

'No, Miss Evelyn; neither did I disbelieve you. If I started, it was in hatred of that word, which has been profaned until it has lost for me all its hallowed meaning: it has been sounded in my ears till I loathe it; it has been abused until I forget its proper signification; and, when you used it, the word reached my mind not so much associated with your generous proposal, as with objects of vice, which I choose to call my inferiors. On ship-board, and on the "Anson," I was daily either charged *with*, cautioned *against*, or punished *for*, intimacy with creatures I shudder even to think of. *Friendship* it was called—but that relationship

cannot exist between fiends ! For all that I so loathed them, if I only spoke *to*, or was *spoken* to, by one of them, an officer would reprimand me for endeavouring to strike a friendship which could only be for injurious purposes or mutiny. If by chance two of us got together, either she was cautioned against making *friends* with a mate of such known bad character as Martha Grylls, or I was warned not to seek too familiar a *friendship* with her—pah !

And as if the subject was one too disgusting to dwell upon, Maida stopped.

‘That is past now ; let its remembrance make you value more—’

But Maida interrupted.

‘It is not past ! Last night, in this house, the same caution was repeated.’

‘For the last time, though. Mr. Evelyn will not mention those painful subjects again : nor will any one in this family, except your mistress ; and when you have become accustomed to her you will find that habit only, and not a desire to annoy, makes her speak as she does. Ah, Maida, you will have *many, many* things to try you ; ’tis just for that I want you to consider me a friend.’

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 consideration 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 any one.’

Oh, say not so, Maida Gwynnham! thou art womanlike to thine inmost soul; but in the wreck wherewith adversity hath desolated thee, thy nature hath been so convulsed, that thou canst not discover thyself amid the ruins.

‘As I said before, you will find every one 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! O, 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 concealed 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 pro-



longed dying, to which the article of death itself would be a state most blissful. A broken-hearted parent is one of the many untold calamities following the prisoner's career. During the brief silence which ensued, Emmeline opened her little Scripture portion-book, and when Maida appeared calm, she read the text for the morning.

“I will be a father to you,” is God's message to you this morning, Maida.’

‘Oh do not, I pray you, Miss Evelyn, speak to me on that subject. I hate it; not from disrespect, but because the evil of it alone can belong to *me*. I have had it presented to me as something in which I have a fearful interest, having sinned against it, and awakened all its wrath. *You*, lying there with heaven's own peace on your very countenance, with relationship to God apparent in your likeness to Him, may revel in the sweets of religion. How should you not? What can *you* know of the dark side which makes it so terrible to me?’

‘Is there anything very terrible in the promise of a Father to supply the want of an earthly one, Maida? Is there anything to alarm you in those tender words I have just read?’

‘Everything is terrible to those beyond the reach of hope. The very joys of heaven beheld from afar will be a torment to the damned; so those parts of Scripture comforting to *you*, are to

*me* so many messengers sent to torment me before the time; they tell me all I have lost!

‘They are *none* of them lost to you yet.’

‘Our Religious Instructor thought differently; he seemed to see hell-fire already burning within me; happily safe himself, he cared not who else he consigned to the flames. I hated religion before I met with him, *now* I hate it tenfold, as an unnecessary addition to the miseries of a miserable existence. What an abhorred thing must religion be to *Government*, since it deems it a fitting aggravation to prison discipline, and since *such agents* are chosen to administer it! I never met with but *one* who did not dispense it as a deadly drug—never but *one* who did not bid me drink and *die*. Were there more of such men as that one clergyman appointed, there might be less hypocrisy amongst us convicts.’

‘That is very like papa; he will talk to you. Stay, Maida, stay; I am not satisfied. If you will not accept my offer, remember that it is not withdrawn: my stay on earth may not be long. Whilst I *am* here, consider you have one to whom to speak as to a sister.’

‘Miss Evelyn, I had a father; in the days of my childhood he did not love me, but I *made* him. I could not exist without love. In after years I sinned away that love purchased by childish tears,

and that with which I sought to replace it turned to wormwood in my heart, and embittered the principle of love within me. Since then I have lived on unloving and unloved, and will do so to the end. I am no longer a child. I can now exist without love, and I do not need a friend.'

'Maida, you *cannot* exist without love unless its absence be supplied by *hatred*, and the need of a friend by the presence of an enemy. In our natural state we all require a friend or a foe—something to love or hate; either passion *may* fill the heart, but one *must*; who would take the latter that might choose the former?'

'There is no might for me now, it is all *must*.'

'There is *no* must! the irrevocable decree of death alone can fix into certainty the possibilities of life. You do not know the condition of your heart, Maida. I am *sure* you do not; and am as sure that you *never* will, whilst you trust only to yourself to fathom its feelings, to analyse its motives, and to satisfy its longings. We are none of us capable of an unaided search into our own hearts. Such search must always be deceptive in its results. To know ourselves, we need assistance from a power superior to our own.'

'I would rather shun that assistance! It could only show me myself more vile than at present; to fathom my feelings would be to shock me with depths of depravity; to analyse my motives to dis-

cover pollution in them all. No, no, Miss Evelyn, the knowledge I have of myself is sufficiently frightful; spare me closer investigation for pity's sake.'

There was again a silence; it was broken by Maida, who with a slight sneer in her tone, said—  
'Supposing that I desired such assistance, could *your* experience afford it me? You cannot know to what a character you speak in me. You can know nothing of Martha Grylls, if you think there is aught in her experience that can bear comparison with yours; or that the dark meanings of her soul may be deciphered by the pure characters of your heart. What can she have in common with you?'

'God fashioneth *all* hearts alike. Maida, we have more in common than you suppose; were we to exchange the secrets of our hearts, we should start to see how many thoughts we deemed exclusively our own belonged to the other. There is nothing in *me* to prevent my being all that *you* are; there is no impediment to your being all *I* am. *We* see each other and ourselves in the light of circumstance, and therefore never correctly see the true actings of the heart; but God—'

The door 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 doned 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 fritter 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 afeard 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 skittering 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.

'I say, have you seen the new prisoner?' shouted Charlie, pulling Lucy towards the parlour whence he had just espied Maida; wouldn't she catch it if mamma was at home, for sweeping the carpet without covering the pretty things!

'Ought I to cover them, master Charles?' asked Maida.

'Be sure! Bridget isn't half a missus; wait till

mamma comes home, *then* you'll see. Our pris'ner women is all afraid of her 'cept when they's drunk—ah! ah! ah! it's such fun—do you like being drunk? this is the way;' and with a sleepy grimace, the child stumbled about the room.

'Poor little boy! If that is what you've been taught, no wonder we have become a byword.'

'You don't laugh, stupid woman!' then checked by the serious look with which Maida regarded him, he said, sheepishly—'All the others does laugh at it. You mustn't look like that at me. Lucy said you were such a beauty; but you are an ugly old fright, and I hope you'll get into lots of trouble, and be sent to cage; then we shan't have you back.'

Lucy flew indignantly at the child.

'Naughty boy! I'll tell your aunts;' but the little fellow was too sharp, he darted to the door, where, pointing his finger at Maida, he cried—'Crop-py! crop-py!' and then ran off.

Maida turned in silence to her work. The finger of childish scorn touched neither her temper nor mind, but it entered her very heart, and chilled her into a sense of utter desolation. She who had stood the taunts of vice, the sneers of virtue,—she who had received in unflinching disdain the unmerited rebukes of inflated vanity, and had borne uncomplainingly the sentence of the law,—now bowed her head in shamed sorrow over the re-

proaches of a little child. No wrathful thought against the youthful Shimei stirred in her bosom, but every thought and every feeling turned, poignant, on herself, revealing a mark of infamy so revolting and deep-branded as to arrest even childhood's careless eye. She leaned upon her broom, and groaned 'O God! my punishment is greater than I can bear.'

She heard a pattering footstep behind her, and, turning, beheld an infant toddling into the room. It stopped as she turned, and baby's two large bright eyes fixed intently on her, so intently that they did not move, though the little creature plumped flat down on the floor into a sitting posture. After scanning Maida steadily, the child thrust out a crushed flower, and said—

'No kye, no kye—pitty fow-fow—missie's pitty fow-fow—no more kye.'

Maida sprang to the child; and as the small, fat hand smoothed her face, and as the low, sympathising voice hummed—

'Poor, poor—poor, poor—no more kye,' she strained the baby to her heart, and forgot all she had been, and was likely to be, in the delicious respite of the moment.

Baby toddled off, and Maida descended to the kitchen. No one had witnessed the interview. The babe's innocence was not sullied by the embrace of crime; but crime, as personified in Maida Gwynn-



ham, received a softening influence from the embrace of purity; and as she entered the kitchen, there was an expression on her lips that Lucy would have called a smile if she had dared.

‘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 sha’n’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, them others be.’

‘What is this trouble I am always hearing of, Lucy?’ asked Maida, anxious to turn the subject.

‘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, an’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 an'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.

‘He didn’t know that he shouldn’t give the master warning for all that he’d two such hosses to look after; may be he’d sote up for himself;’ with various other large talkings, so worked upon her that the talker became an embryo hero. She admired the amount of courage that could, even in prospect, give the master notice; and as his long, grease-heavy locks flopped about in a manner most contrary to government notions of convict propriety, it seemed to her that the spirit of liberty, antedating Bob’s partial freedom, had gotten into each individual lock, and she began to doubt that government had ever taken the same liberty with his head that it had with other prisoner heads.

How Maida felt when she arose from that her first morning’s meal, we gather neither from her countenance nor from what she says to Lucy; our previous knowledge of her character and case alone informs us of the torture, slow and subtle, which preys on her inner life. When we see her, calm and dignified, move to her menial duties—now sifting cinders, then scouring out the pantry—now following Miss D’Urban to market; then washing Bob’s clothes—we discover by no outward sign that she is wrapped about with burning thoughts that wither up her soul into a hatred of existence. Day after day we see her move to those

duties, clad still in her prison garments; and, perceiving not that pain is in each step she takes, we wonder how she can bear to do so. She goes abroad, and though under the protection of one of her master's family, the men in the chain gang wink to her as she passes, recognising her relationship to them by the brown of the guilty sisterhood. We see it, and wonder she does not sink beneath that badge which, maliciously cruel, proclaims her shame in the public streets; but her power is greater than its malice, and though, unreconciled by habit, its cling to her is the cling of a serpent, it cannot cripple her dauntless tread, nor bow her erect form.

She enters a shop, and it is known to all there for what she comes or will shortly come; a young man leans over the counter, and enumerates the articles which he knows the probationer will first require. He tries to conciliate her with—'A stays, my dear? must have it, you'll look a different figure when you've got a pair; get the master to advance for a pair, then.'

We hear it, and, forgetting that feeling is deepest in its silence, and emotion, firelike, strongest in its pallor, we wonder how blushes do not scorch out her cheek.

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 try to find him a situation against 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. Construing Uncle Ev's silence into conviction, she waits for the result of her eloquence; but on perceiving that results are not likely to go beyond a 'humph' or two, she drops her air triumphant, and assuming a coaxing manner, begs him to agree with her that it is a downright shame to punish genteel prisoners in so many dreadful ways beyond common prisoners, making their misery *begin* again where that of the latter is nearly *over*. 'Now, isn't it? just say *yes*, there's a dear, good man.' But Uncle Ev will not just say *yes*. He only replies that it is one of those upright shames which have puzzled wiser heads than hers, and will continue to puzzle those wiser heads until such time as sin and its penalty shall cease together. He reminds her of the saying, 'If you condescend to sin, you must condescend to its consequences.' Condescension being greater when a gentleman stoops to sin, Uncle Ev thinks that the punishment must, of necessity, be proportionably greater.

But Bridget is controversial. She says that whatever the gentleman convict *deserves* above another, his extra suffering evidently has nothing

to do with his extra deserts ; because the judge who sentences him has never been transported himself to try what it is like, and, therefore, knows nothing of the hundred miseries that form the extra punishment. In giving him seven years, he (the judge) thinks he gives the same as he gives the poor man, little thinking that to the *former* the amount of suffering to be endured in that time is equal to what the latter would endure in a fourteen-year sentence. Here her foot taps most princess-like, and she raises her voice bewitchingly—

‘If he deserves, and is to have more punishment because he is a gentleman, let him have it fairly and openly ; let it be known that there is so much more for him ; and that he has double, because he is a gentleman, and then he will know what is before him. But do not, under cover of *seven years*, let him have the condensed wretchedness of a *life sentence*, bearing unthought-of degradations, whilst his country thinks he is only fulfilling a certain amount of sentence ; all I say is, let it be *known* that he suffers so much. *Nobody* at home knows the horrid things the poor creatures have to bear ! they don’t ! I’m sure they don’t.’

Uncle Ev smiles, and she says she knows he is laughing at her, but she doesn’t care ; she knows she hasn’t explained what she means, but her heart is so full of it, from seeing Maida, that she cannot help saying it all out, whether it be nonsense or



not. She is sure these things *ought* to be looked into, and made known. She takes it for granted that she is the representative of the Universal Nobody before quoted.

Uncle Ev advises her to appeal to the home government on behalf of superior convicts, and state her belief that the over and above suffering of that class should not be so much regarded as *incidental* to their peculiar case, as *accidental* from some oversight on the part of the director, contractor, or whoever is the ruling power of the convict organ. He likewise advises her to suggest that, if the said over and above suffering be unavoidable, it shall be taken into consideration in passing future sentences; but he chiefly urges her to recommend that those who possess the power of transporting others, shall just make a trial of transportation themselves in order to better understand the punishment which they enforce, and to enable them to speak from experience, and not from mere cold formality, when they give their charges to prisoners at the bar.

Bridget does look so pretty, her cheek blooms so peach-like, her head tosses itself so becomingly, that Uncle Ev delights to see her in the controversial state, and (*entre nous*) he delights in hearing her too, notwithstanding that she rattles over an infinity of 'horrid shames,' 'poor dear creatures,' 'disgrace to humanities,' with other exple-

tives, which generally supply the place of argument in young ladies' logic; for through all these superfluities he discerns much to prove that she has been neither a careless listener, an unfeeling spectator, nor become an hardened owner during her residence in Van Diemen's Land. He hears much that is a childish utterance of his own thoughts in regard to the wretchedness of superior convicts before they are debased below the hardened, care-nought point; and he hears much that is a simple expression of his own doubt whether such convicts do often emerge from their sentences better and wiser men, as the formal phrase hopes, or whether they do not more often sink into the lowest depths of convictism, clinging to their chains in the desperation of hopelessness, heaping degradation on degradation in order to smother, with every spark of moral existence, every capacity of moral feeling, so that their life-long punishment, falling upon a body insensate to finer pain, may be defrauded of its chief power of torment.

So Uncle Ev let his niece rattle out all her ebullition of genuine oratory, and when, as if out of breath, she stopped with a series of little pants, he exclaimed—

‘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 propria personâ* before the home government I

am sure those zeal-flushed cheeks will victimise the whole set, and make them grant your request, even to the half of their convict-punishing prerogative.'

'No, no; if I go to any one, 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 a 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 made 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.

Twining her arm around Miss Evelyn, so as to relieve her of her own weight, Maida led her towards her arm-chair. In answer to a look from Emmeline while they were crossing the room, she stopped in front of the window, one sash of which was thrown open, admitting the sweet November air, fraught with freshness, significant of coming flowers. No person but one of a refined mind would have understood the wish conveyed in the slight glance that arrested Maida. Some would have replied to it by hurrying the invalid to her seat; others would only have noticed it as a natural and unconscious movement; but Maida, as she met the upturned eye, comprehended its meaning, and, supporting her dependent burden still more firmly, waited at the open window, that the refreshing breeze might fan the wasted cheek of the invalid, while her eye drank its fill of beauty from the surrounding prospect, from which the resurrective touch of spring had evoked an enhancing loveliness—spreading a gentle verdure adown the slopes, and blending with the dusky hues of the distant hills lines of vitality that added animation to the scene, without depriving it of one of its native grandeurs or solemn characteristics.

From the little child, whose puzzled mental

questioning cannot find relief in words, to the hoary hermit who, having devoted his life to the contemplation of nature, turns dissatisfied from the result, feeling that the something he would understand is a mystery, the 'open sesame' of which has been lost in the ruins of the fall—from child to sage, all feel, in gazing on the face of nature, that there is a strange outgoing of soul towards it, and a reciprocal approaching of its beauties to the soul. There is a sensible communion, but a communion that mysticises, and does not satisfy the yearning of the spirit; it is all in sign and token, that, explaining nothing, makes the longing still more ardent: it is all the still small voice, whose low and scarce-breathed tone thrills through every nerve and awakens every attention, but melts away ere it reaches the spirit's ear, or if there is one breath that can be syllabled into meaning, it is the word Eternity. No one can turn from such a survey without a pang starting through his spiritual frame. In different minds the pang may arise from different causes; but, acknowledge it or not, be it *acute* or be it *dull*, the pain is there. To the soul of the sick girl, so near its loosening from physical thrall—so near taking to itself the wings of the morning and flying to a knowledge of that which it knows not now—to it may be vouchsafed a whisper of that Invisible shadowed forth in visible things—to it may come revealings of the unseen; links

of that mysterious bond of union, felt by all, may discover themselves to her unveiling sight. The still small voice may reach her ear in audible tones; but its message can be nothing distressful, for a smile breaks the stillness of her lips, and, forgetting she is not alone, she murmurs as if in answer to that voice—

‘I wonder where I shall be when next spring comes round!’

‘Where you deserve to be, Miss Evelyn.’

The smile quickly vanished. Emmeline started; then, drawing up with a strength that was only instantaneous, she exclaimed—

‘Oh, Maida, you would have me fix an awful doom upon myself. Give me my *choice*, and I shall be where every poor, self-weary, sin-weary sinner would be; but give me my *deserts*, and I shall be in that place, of which, as a sinner, I dread to think.’

Sinking into her chair, she continued—

‘You *have* given me a theme for meditation! A moment since, gazing out on the pleasant scenery, I was filled with dream-like anticipations of the future, wondering at the fair beauty of a sin-stricken world, and by it trying to picture that land which is very far off, where the King reigns in his beauty; but you have now turned my thoughts into a different channel.’

Maida cast a scrutinising glance at her, and said—

‘ In speaking of *deserts*, I imagine that by virtue of them heaven is as much *yours* as hell *mine*. It is hard to look into your face, and believe you sincere when you call yourself a sinner ; but I am sorry to have distressed you, Miss Evelyn.’

‘ Distressed me ! You have inspired me with rapture and gratitude by bringing to remembrance the wonder of mercy that comes between our deserts and our fate. No, no, Maida, my thoughts of that land so very far off will not be the less pleasing because they remind me it is not mine by claim of desert, but by right of inheritance. In our sure and certain hope of possessing it, we are apt, when viewing it by the eye of faith, to forget the mighty love by which it has become ours—the costly price by which the right of inheritance was purchased for us—the mystery of adoption by which it is secured to us, who are by nature children of wrath ; but of all this you remind me in speaking of my *deserts*.’

‘ There is comfort in hearing you talk, Miss Evelyn ; such comfort as may arise from the worst being known. When one is sure one’s fate is fixed beyond chance of reprieve, one can settle into a calmness that is impossible whilst there is any degree of uncertainty about it. It is hope *deferred*, not hope *destroyed*, that makes the heart sick. When I hear you denounce yourself as a sinner, I feel, if *she* be a sinner, I must be one of so



black a dye that no addition could make me blacker—no cleansing could lessen the stains. And when I hear you speak of *your* deserts, I ask, what, then, must *mine* be? Is there a corner in hell dark enough for me? a spot where the gnawing worm gnaws deeper and more relentlessly? where the flames burn more fiercely? If so, that corner, that spot, is for Maida Gwynnham. You shudder—a ghastly comfort, is it not? But were you in my case, you would find it to *be* one. Were there a fractional chance of reprieve, I might wear myself out in trying to increase the chance into a hope; but seeing there is none, I can but abide my time, waiting for a fearful certainty with such quiet as despair can give: hope and endeavour are useless.’

‘Oh! Maida, not so. There is no such word as *useless* in this precious book; there is no such word as *hopeless* in this declaration of God’s mercy. Love, unutterable love, invites poor sinners, such as we. There is no repelling voice; none to say, “Forbid them.”’

‘But I do not deserve heaven, and I should not like to accept that which I do not merit.’

‘When you love Christ, you will like everything which exhibits His lovely character, and proclaims His glory. The most winning picture of our blessed Redeemer is that which portrays Him the Forgiver of sinners. Every sinner that is saved is

an added glory to His crown, another outdrawing of that divine excellence which can give gifts even to the rebellious. When you love Him, you will be *glad* that heaven is a free gift, so that all the praise, and honour, and glory which might otherwise be yours, may be given to Him, and Him *alone*.'

'I do not wish to love Christ. If I loved Him, I should wish to be with Him, and that is impossible. My doom is fixed, irretrievably fixed.'

'Promise me, Maida, that you will only try to love Him, and I will promise you that you shall be where He is for ever.'

'Is heavenly love anything like earthly love, Miss Evelyn?'

'As like as the type can be to the antitype.'

'Then it is all pain and anguish! I will have nothing to do with it,' cried Maida.

She hastily left the room; then fearing she had retreated too abruptly, she re-entered to inquire if she could assist Emmeline in any way.

A livid paleness had overspread the countenance of the invalid, who had dropped back, almost senseless, on her chair, as the door closed on Maida.

'Miss Evelyn! dear Miss Evelyn! Oh, speak and say I have not killed you!' cried Maida, falling on her knees by her side. 'O God! wilt Thou make me a murderer indeed, and of this sweet innocent?'

It seemed hours, but it was only minutes, ere Emmeline opened her eyes, and smiled on Maida.

‘Yes, it is a great, great pain; but Christ’s love is all enjoyment, and love to Him all peace.’

‘Have you known the pain, then?’ escaped from Maida, ere she could control herself.

‘I have known the peace and enjoyment,’ murmured Emmeline, and the blood shone brightly through her transparent skin.

Bridget entered the room, and Maida retired.

‘That gentle creature should know no traitor love,’ thought the latter, glancing farewell to Emmeline’s frail figure, and yet that she *had* known it, she felt convinced, and the conviction awoke in the prisoner’s heart a yearning tenderness towards 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 nurse-maid 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 of infringing this rule. The altered state of things Rachel set down 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 Hobarton, 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-butt as of submerging an overplus 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 pitty 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 newcomer 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, &c., &c. 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 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.'

In short, though Mrs. Evelyn would sign an anti-slavery document with heartfelt abhorrence of

the system, she in habitual theory was as much a slave-holder as any 'Down Southern;' we say habitual, because the theory was not one of *heart* or *thought*—not one into which she had been drilled—but one she had imbibed: it was *not* a conviction, but a contraction. She did not carry the theory into unmerciful practice, because she was not cruel-natured; she would have been as kind to real slaves, as she was to the convicts—as kind to animals as to either. The casual observer might see little difference between her and Mr. Evelyn's treatment of the convicts, and might award that little in favour of Mrs. Evelyn. Both kept them up to the mark drawn for penal servitude; but the one was actuated by a desire to benefit the prisoner—the other was either actuated by *no* feeling, or by the supposition that those she kept up to the mark neither *had* nor had *any right* to feeling. In the same way that she applied the whip to the horse, so she stimulated her bond servants to an approved pace. Both master and mistress exercised a tight control over their prisoners. But the latter did so in contracted accordance with the convict legal code, and with the convict traditional formula, which says, 'These creatures will do nothing without a bit and bridle;' while the former hoped that the restraining influence would hold them back from evil, and make them strive more earnestly for freedom.

Both were equally sorry to send them away for punishment—the one for fear the effect should work contrarily to the desired end, the other that she lost a good hard-working pair of convict hands; the one felt a pang in using the prerogative the law placed in his hand—he cannot bear to punish his brother man—the other was sorry because she disliked to punish animals whether convict or quadruped. The one from satiric taint, (with which his former existence as a barrister infected him,) could not abstain from exhibiting a few satires, in the form of improper nouns, even on the persons of those whose fate he deeply deplored. The other misapplied nouns in speaking of, or to them, because it was not much consequence what she called them; *one* name was as good as *another*, it did not make *her* less mistress or *them* less convicts. *Sister* or *brother* was the only name she hesitated to use, or deemed an *improper* noun; whatever slight relationship existed before their sin, was wholly nullified by their present disgrace. Both were equally anxious to keep temptations out of their servants' reach—but the one locked away his money, plate, and wine, from a sense of duty, the other for the safe-keeping of her goods. She declared stealing was a part of convict principle, and therefore it went as much against their conscience to miss an opportunity for dishonest action, as it was against her conscience to commit one. So utterly



unconscious was Mrs. Evelyn of having contracted this mode of viewing the prisoners, that she was aware of no inconsistency in warning Charlie against abusing or ill-treating them. She was as earnest as her husband in teaching him correct behaviour towards them, but children are keen remarkers of their elders. Though Charlie could not explain *where*, he soon perceived something in his mother's feelings towards the proscribed race that ill accorded with her instructions to him. He intuitively understood that papa rowed them only when they deserved it, and mamma because they were only prisoners.

When mamma whipped him for kicking Lucy, and calling her nasty beast, he had an undefined notion that he was punished under rule No. 5 of the Society for Suppressing Cruelty to Animals.

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.'

Maida entered.

'Oh, yes, she's a nice height—perhaps I shall turn you into a housemaid—and your name is?—'

'Maida Gywnnham.'

'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.'

'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.'

The child ran to obey his mother, when she stopped him.

'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; 'tisn'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 talked 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. She dared not meet the penetrating gaze of those calm eyes. She bowed her head, and, as often is the case when one emotion is suddenly checked by the rising of another more potent, she wept aloud. She cursed the tears as they fell, but had no power to stay them; hide them was all she could do. 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 may 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. So wondered all the party concerned, when a mutual explanation took place. 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 Emeline'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.

Mrs. Evelyn was not so pleased as Uncle Herbert when she found the servants had been admitted

to family prayer. She considered the one Sunday service enforced by convict regulations quite enough religion for them; but she knew it would be useless to contend the point, so merely vented her disapprobation by a few sniffs and a loud whisper to Bridget when they were seated for prayers, 'My dear, don't you smell the stable?' On which Bob, who was not supposed to hear, replied, giving one of his peculiar side-wise nods—'Very like, missis; I was in along with the hosses when the bell twigged for prayers.'

Maida drooped over her little Bible when, in slow, sonorous accents, Mr. Herbert read the fifty-third of Isaiah. As though it had spoken to her only yesterday, the well-remembered voice came back with its accustomed power; each word carried her along with it: she did not wish to listen—she did not wish to follow each tone, as it varied to suit the subject, but she had no choice—listen and follow she must.

Lucy informed her that she would hear Mr. Herbert, every Sunday, for he preached at Tench, where the servants were expected to attend; and when Maida asked how she liked his sermons, Lucy said—

'Oh! I am sure *you'll* like them; they hurts our feelings so much; he preaches so appleeckable like to us.'

By which Lucy meant that Mr. Herbert's

preaching was what is generally called very *touching*, drawing many a repentant sigh and tear from the eye of the outcasts.

‘The sermon hurt me uncommon to-day, Miss D’Urban,’ was a popular saying with Lucy when she returned from the Penitentiary Church.



## CHAPTER II.

## 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 any one ; 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.

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'm 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! However 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 any one to be desperately in love with me unless I am with him, for I hate vexing any one. 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.

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 watched her light steps retreating for the night.

## CHAPTER III.

## 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 partway through the list, when her attention was arrested by the name of Martha Grylls. She hastened to the post-door and demanded 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,’ &c., &c.—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 on 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 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 bank note, 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 suspectuous 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?

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, specially 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 prisons 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.

‘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 scandalised 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 act 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, Ratchel?'

'I didn't with anybody elses, anyhow,' replied she.

'Lor!' murmured Lucy.

Robert was in 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 worshipment of the money-burner. Robert again appealed to his locks, and advised by them, muttered—

‘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 flopped 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



any one, 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 apologise.'

'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 consequent on 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.'

'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 ear, 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 more 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 your *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.

‘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 to-morrow 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 connexion 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 eighth chapter of the first volume 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.

‘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.

‘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. May be 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 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 tender care was useless; that instant Mrs. Evelyn entered and said, in her quick material 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, Gwynnam! 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 matter-of-fact voice—

'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 IV.

A T. L.

NOT more brilliant the conceivings 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 Rs and Ss, and Ts and Ls, the result was invariably the same, as Lucy discovered after she had spelled out a multitude of Robert Sanders's T. L. from the confusion of characters presented to her; for Robert, not satisfied with merely seeing how his future title *looked*, found greater 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 ’en.’

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 in to perform 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. Lism, 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. Lism.

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 for 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. Lism, 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 second-hand Wellingtons, which, by the help of new soles, had been made to creek 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 pate.

When Robert awoke and perceived that the sun shone no brighter than usual, he felt much agrieved; 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 realised 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. Lism, 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 Maida 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 rung, 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.

'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 this abrupt notice.'

Robert conferred more seriously with his locks, and not being able to elicit anything better, gave answer in a somewhat crest-fallen 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, it 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 spose 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 ’ap-pened.’

‘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.’ 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 a 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 down stairs, 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 monopolise 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.’

‘All right, sir, that’s just it; I’m thinking a comfortable gal may keep a feller’s wits about him. Madda now down stairs, 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 smothered 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 an’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, taint 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’ (another smile at Bridget).

‘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 an'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.'

'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. Lism 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 wont 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 perlite tho'. I ain't said nothin' to Loocy. I'll let it bide over, maybe when I'm gone Madda '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. Lism was again audible.

'Sanders!' cried Mr. Evelyn.

T. Lism 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 mean time 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.

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 apologised, ‘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 fitted 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.’

‘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 arisen pacified by the determination to supplant Lucy in Sanders’ 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 offer 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 an't willin' for to put on you, seein' that I didn't give 'e a ribbin, and I'm down-right 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 pro-

bable 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' 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.

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 blood-vessel.’

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 blood-vessels. 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 ourst 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,’ 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 any how,’ 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 contenting, again dropped from her lips. More jauntily than ever set 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 had not been forgetful of his promise to see what could be done to enable Robert to set up for himself. He had now been nearly five months in possession of his ticket, and having given no further hint of his desire to leave the Lodge, Mr. Evelyn gladly permitted him to stay. Hearing that old Hawkins, Maida's first friend in Hobarton, had met with an accident which incapacitated him for his calling, Mr. Evelyn 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 Maida 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 ac-

knowledged 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.

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 forwards; 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 eye 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, &c. 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 loud, cheerful kiss; and then presenting her hand to Sanders, she said—

‘I wish you happiness in your dear little wife.’ Charlie's hugs were profuse, and baby, who had refuged herself in Maida's arms, seeing kissing going on, stretched out her head to join in the celebration, and then pushed Maida's face towards Lucy, lisping, ‘Midda kiss.’

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.

‘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 finished also his reason for calling her away.

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' 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 V.

### THE CONFLICT.

THE confusion consequent on Rachel's sudden discharge, was partly rectified by placing Lucy 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 housemaid, who entered on her post as *locum tenens* with the utmost good-will. Maida, long accustomed to fold away her feelings beneath an impenetrable depth of surface, 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.

‘ 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, parlour-maid, 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 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; anyone 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,' rewhispered Mrs. Evelyn.

Significant gesticulations passed between them.

‘No particular news from home, then, Sanford?’ 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.’

‘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 calling over school reminiscences with Mrs. Evelyn, when Mr. Sanford’s remark arrested her.

‘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.

Maida listened eagerly.

‘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 Hobarton, 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 dragged 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 eulogise Norwell.

'Maida!' at last out-spoke 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 the Captain Norwell with whom her fate so cruelly blended had been married to Mary Doveton.

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.

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 dis-

turbed; 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 displace 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 mind to his advice. She never so yearned for friendly counsel as in this predicament, when she perceived that a false move might ruin the gentle being she wished to serve, or an indiscreet word have the opposite effect to that which she desired. She could bear to herself all that only touched herself; but now that one, whom she revered in her purity, had come unconsciously into her secret, 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, unsympathised with, and unadvised, she must tear from her heart her last, though unacknowledged, hope in life. 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, Hobarton,  
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 have 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 anger you may suppose me to feel, and in so doing run 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 to 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 vow.

‘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 where-with 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 eye she perused 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 lash 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, so suspects not 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 re-read the letter many times, and being at last convinced that it contained no infliction from which it would be prudent to spare Norwell, or 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 down stairs, and let herself into the garden through the verandah 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 the languidness of her appearance, that she had passed a night of unrest. He regarded her with a peculiar interest, for he, too, had endured hours of suspense and watch, and all 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 agonised belief that she had gone to her 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, coexistent with this spirit, there warred within her a principle of freedom that detested the slavery she endured so 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 were 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 VI.

## 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 prisons, 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 Gooze 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 honor whilst you can get it, mate ; she won’t be long a missusing you,’ said Gooze 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 her into a figure surpassingly grotesque. Every possible texture of material had been pressed into her bodily service. Her black 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, davvered 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 ancles: 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, so 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 common-placeness 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 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





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 appearing shall it 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 erectly, 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.

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, whilst they spread it over the dead bodies. The burial service of course had been performed ; but that invested the corpses with no sacredness to 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 ! What dare you do ? 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 an't a gift of every day.'

With an involuntary shudder and look of ill-disguised disgust, Maida, deeming it useless to interfere with two such men, and yet longing to see the coffins beyond reach of further insult, dropped her voice to a scarcely audible whisper—

\* It is a common supposition among the prisoners that after death their bodies are handed to the doctors for the public good, and that, when the doctors have finished with them, the mangled remains are carelessly thrown into a coffin, without any regard to decency—and carried away to the burying.

‘ They are prisoners.’

‘ They *was*, but I reckon they 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 Gi.

‘ 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.

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 aint 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 took’t 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 bellyful 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 goverment coves—they’*m mighty* partial wherè 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 belly, 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 countenance, 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.

'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 to the spot. The young man was about to join them, but Bob nudged him back with—

‘Go on courtin’ the ladies with them great goglers of yourn, Sam! I should think your lantern-jaws had well stuck fast by the gapin’ they’ve had. But she’s an old hand for the gents, and maybe you’ll do in want of a sprucer sweetheart.’

‘Ha, ha, ha!’ from Giles, and—

‘Froggy would a wooing go!’ from Bob.

And then from Maida so fierce a dig of the spade into the earth, as made both men start, and the youth repeat his interjection—

‘My eyes!’

The men were part way over the field when Bob Pragg called back—

‘I say, Sam, make much of her, for she’s like one rosed from the dead. The grip was most on her neck for that babby of hers. They was in a

mighty good temper that day, or she'd have had a dance on the tight rope! Be blostered! if she wouldn't have cut a few capers worth seeing of.'

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 ?’

The ‘ ma’am ’ came so naïvely 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 the goggles than had the flush.

‘ Be sick, missus ?’ asked Sam, whilst the

immoveable 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 Tench, 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 eye.

‘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 b'isness 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 afternoon she'd sat crying—sims I see her now! and I was nation 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—sims 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 rale 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 an’t back to mornin’, and the folks coms 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 drowned 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 pluckey chap, and never round on ’em ; so they took’t 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 baint bright in my head. Winders is asy work, when they baint 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 smothered 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 took’t 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.

‘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’—

but 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 an't no more than a boy.” “Sir! baint 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 took't 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 'membered them 'tickler.'

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 Mr. Evelyn say to you?’

‘A lot; but I don’t mind much. He 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.

‘’Taint 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 somethin’ 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 baint 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 an’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 best of your time. Eh,

Sam? No blushing, madam; an't going to pry into lover's secrets; tho' I swear taint fair that son of an ape should have all to enself; 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 baint *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 baint 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 an't much more than bush appearantly.'

'Ha! ha! ha! that's in 'em—you'll be constable next, Bob.'

'O fie, Gi; I an't bad enough!' cried Pragg, with a comic-serious shake of the head. 'Must be more like my masters first.'

'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 block-head yonder?’

‘ He an’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.

Gi's admonitory nudge 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! 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 sprung forward, shouting—

'You shan't touch of she!'

'At him, Sam! at him! Show yourself a man,' cried Bob, forgetting all his former plan in prospect

of a fight. 'At him—she'm yours; you must fight for her.'

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 riven 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-safety.

'Who? *You*, and no mistake! But I'll stand by ye, Sam, cos you've never done me no harm; but mind, you don't 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! We must be doing something ’fore Bradley 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 knee.

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, flown 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 charade. 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 Tench 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 crobation.’

‘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’! 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?’

‘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 an'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 natur'l effect of the outrage. The story 'll be somew'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.’

‘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 subserved 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 kick on his spine, 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 head-quarters. But report never reached head-quarters 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 cos-

tume 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 badinage 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 wrung 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 sunk 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 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 charge 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. The lip was firm to uncomplaining, whilst her mind set 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.

The 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 it scorned with bitter scorn, even while preparing to fulfil the cruel demands, and fulfil it 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 on 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, missus?'

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.

'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. Most 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 conviet 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 Hobarton, 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 an'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.

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 an’t government. Off with it, and about your business. You know you look deuced handsome humbugging us. We an’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 spirit 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?’

‘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 forget your duty I cannot mine. I must report you; this is not the first time you have been guilty of betraying your trust in that 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 noble being before her, 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 this noble being 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 stedfast 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 any one'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!

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! 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 closed his eyes, and breathed an unuttered prayer to God that strength and wisdom might be sent him to cope with the spirit of darkness that almost overpowered the victim by his side; for wisdom especially he sought, that while battling with the tempter, he might not wound the poor sufferer herself.

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.

‘ You are impulsive, Maida ; reconsider your words,’ he said at last, as though he had only just heard her.

What magic is in those words ! She starts—stands still—and earnestly scrutinises the speaker of them ; memory works busily, her heart beats furiously, and recollection snatches her away and dizzily sets her down in a little upper chamber, and a voice that she has watched for, and wept for, and prayed for, arises dreamily from an unseen somewhere, and repeats—

‘ Maida, you are impulsive.’

And as though answering the voice with the self-same speech of the days of that chamber, she murmurs—

‘ Forgive me.’

She clasps her hands, her breast heaves tumultuously.

‘ Maida, you are faint.’ Mr. Herbert offers to support her ; but with one hand she waves refusal of assistance, with the other hides her face, while her head shakes drearily as if in last farewell to a departing friend ; then, with a sudden reclasping of her hands, with a wild up-throwing of her eyes as though she heard the door of fate snap on that friend’s retreating form, bursts from her lips a bitter cry—

‘ Would God I had never loved him !’

The cry did not mysticise Mr. Herbert ; neither

did he mistake its import, or misappropriate its application. The secret of female prison life was in his possession, and he rarely failed to read its sad characters in the many tales of misery confided to his ministerial care.

‘ Would God that you did not love him *still* ! Forget him, Maida, he is unworthy of you.’

Ere this fervent admonition had passed from the clergyman’s heart to Maida’s ear, the truant flight was over ; her feet no longer trod the painful though airy realms of dream, but the rough uncompromising earth of a very nether world ; she was no longer the Maida of that desolate upper chamber, battling in scornful solitude a lot that treachery had cast ; she was Maida, the transported felon, expiating by a scornéd servitude another’s guilt, and a crime of which she was wholly innocent.

Forget him ! She remembered that she had undertaken to suffer for him ; endurance was hers by plighted vow, shame by free acceptance. Forget him ! Could she ? Strength was in the mere question.

‘ I feel strong again, now, sir.’

Mr. Herbert turned wistfully towards her ; the words expressed no more than he heard, but the firm, strange tone bore a significance of its own. More earnestly than ever he longed to fathom the mystery that plunged that erring, yet high-minded woman into extravagances so wilful as to create

terror at one moment, while the next it nerved her to heroism so martyr-like as to inspire admiration.

In confirmation of her avowal, she advanced many paces as if desiring to hasten forward.

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.

‘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.

‘Now for the fine airs, they’ll suit the oakum *well*, and the washhouse *better*; linen wants airing a bit once in a while—ladies always airs their clothes, Maida ’ll do it fine—save ’em the trouble.’

‘Let the lass alone, can’t ye?’ interrupted Googe, who had taken advantage of the general disturbance to smoke his pipe in his master’s kitchen instead of by his own fireside; ‘never mind ’em, Maddy, they’s only jealous of you, ’caus the parson’s courting of you; if matters go wrong with the old

cove, tip his reverence a wink, and he'll stop proceedings with a tickle of his brother's ear that'll make him start ginger; the old chap's had his blinkers on, or he'd have shied long ago at what *we* sees every day; cheer up, he won't get the parson's sweetheart into trouble—it would sound so bad!

'But caging her'd be no stop to the courting, John. I fancies I see the reverend gent, taking his Bible so pious and marching to the Cascades. Famous opportunity! shut up there in the cells. No prying to stop their lovemaking; won't he read the lost sheep parable aloud and holy, and then expound it soft and tender to suit the case?'

A loud knock at the fore-door stopped the coarse merriment which succeeded this impudent sally.

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.'

‘When you have talked to her I do not think you will find it necessary; she is quite humbled now.’

‘Heigh, heigh! that’s nice; half-past eleven is a good time of day to turn humble—the humbleness should go before, and not follow after. A pretty chase she’s led me; I’ve been round Newtown, back again, peeped into every corner of Goulburn Street, beaten round Battery Point, and lastly, given the alarm at the watch-house, and now I’m fairly done up; but I’ll see her.’

‘I sent her to bed.’

‘Bother it, Herbert! I wish you’d leave me to manage my own people; if the night passes smoothly over her, she’ll think she’s going to be let off; so if she’s in bed she must just turn out.’

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.

‘It is for me, I will go myself.’

‘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 own as well as for your sake.' 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.'

'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 eye 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 eye again raise itself 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.'

· '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 bonâ 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 Dépôt. 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! 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.'

‘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 the 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 unheedful of results. Man’s judgments too often inculcate unrighteous-

ness, 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 practice, 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.'

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 VII.

H. M. GENERAL HOSPITAL, HOBARTON.

' Here time so heavy dragged with strife  
On wheels of grief move slow,  
Bearing the wretched on through life  
Up paths of human woe.'

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 a whole breathful of little, short laughs.

' 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 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' 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 Mada, 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.

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 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 up stairs. 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 dear 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 mys-

terious 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 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 far more irritated her nerves 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 finger's 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 all so 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.

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 snugged herself within 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 hearing. 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 Gywnnham, *alias* Martha Grylls, pass-  
holder 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 in, pulling at a large excrescence which disfigured her nether lip; searching meanwhile from stretcher to stretcher for traces of 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 the 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 taunting 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 forthcome. 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 blend 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 loud, sharp rap 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, who 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 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 knows 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 any one 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.

'I shouldn't wonder now, if that there ugly lip isn't a judgment straight from Almighty God,' whispered Lucy, when she had taken in as much of the grin as she desired.

From this moment the animosity publicly revived, and warfare commenced. The women shrank into timid neutrality at the first resistance offered by Maida to some usurpation of the Nurse-

They were amazed at the temerity of their comrade in defying the grizzly bear in her own den. But power was on the side of the oppressor; therefore the friendless creatures were also obliged to side with her. Many did so from *choice*, being as corrupt as she: *others*, in the depth of their heart, ranged themselves under the standard of liberty, upheld with unassuming dignity by Maida Gwynnham.

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 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 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 broad, 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 now remembered that Nurse's approach and Sally's cry had always been simultaneous, and she turned again to take a look at the poor woman, over whom Nurse was now bending. Another raising of the lip, followed by a piteous cry, drew tears

from her eye; she quivered in her seat, longing to rush over to the suffering imbecile, in whose cry she alone of all the hearers heard a tone beseeching help. She attempted to stand, but weakness resisted the effort, and she could only listen in sorrowing silence. The large lustrous eyes perceived the attempt, and again manœuvred to arrest her notice, and when they succeeded, they turned slowly and significantly toward Crazy Sal, and then the thin white hands of No. 1 clasped each other in a prayerful attitude, while the large eyes looked supplicatingly upward. Maida was perplexed, and happening at the moment of her perplexity to speak to a convalescent, No. 1 thought she was seeking an explanation of her signs, and, forgetting everything but her own terror, she called out as loud as her low voice would allow—‘Oh! don’t—don’t—I shall get—’ She stopped short, and Nurse turned fiercely on her, ‘I know what you *shall* get, if you don’t cease your bawl.’ She moved her two forefingers so as to describe a square, and then nodding a savage nod, which seemed to mean, ‘Yes *that*,’ she turned again to Sally.

Wilcox, as we shall henceforth designate No. 1, trembled; her long thin fingers worked nervously into each other, but without a word she laid her head sidewise on her pillow, where the tears coursed over the two bright spots which had darted

to her cheeks, when her exclamation was hushed by the sharp voice of her tormentor.

How wildly did Maida watch those tears as one by one they fell and were absorbed by the pillow until it became quite wet! Wilcox then spread her pocket handkerchief to make a dry place for her hollow cheek, and still lying as sidewise as was possible in her upright position, she drew out a little book and commenced to read.

‘Put away that book, trying of your eyes—you ought to be getting asleep. I hate such hypocrisy; if you’d been the saint you makewise to be, you’d never have been out here—fine Sunday scholar! does credit to your teachers.’

‘I don’t feel inclined to sleep,’ answered Wilcox, mildly.

‘You shan’t read for all that, making your head ache for me to cure. Put away your humbugging hymn-book; I hate the sight of en.’

‘Shall I read it to you, Wilcox?’ asked Maida.

Nurse drew back where Maida could not see her, and clenched her fist at Wilcox.

‘No, thank you, Maida;’ but the tone very plainly said, How I should like it! So Maida listened to *it*, and not to the poor faint voice. She had seen the frightened look towards Nurse, and divined its meaning.

‘I shall like to read it myself, if you will lend it me.’

The thin white hand held out the well-worn hymn-book, and before Nurse could forbid, a convalescent passed it to Maida, who took it, and, turning to her companions, said—

‘I’ll read it aloud if you all like.

One and all gave an eager ‘*Yes.*’

‘Which hymn were you reading, Wilcox? I’ll go on with it.’

‘My mark is at the one, I think it is 189,’ she replied, trying to prevent herself from meeting the Nurse’s eye; but the fascination of the snake was at work. The eyes must meet—. The trembling victim crept, unresisting, into the hands of the tyrant, who with a villanous leer again delineated the blister; and what flesh remained on the invalid’s wasted frame seemed to creep in terror as she hastily said—

‘Maida, you are very kind, but perhaps I’d better try to sleep.’

‘The reading won’t disturb you, my dear,’ chimed in the Nurse; ‘it’s a different thing being read to and reading one’s self; go on, Maida.’

How ghastly the grimace she pulled at Wilcox, as, having given this permission, she left the ward to vent her rage on some miserable being doomed by the privacy of her situation to bear unknown cruelties from this official monster!

Maida found Hymn 189, and read the last verse—

‘ Jesus can make a dying bed  
Feel soft as downy pillows are,  
While on His breast I lean my head  
And breathe my life out sweetly there.’

‘ Do those words comfort you, Wilcox?’ asked Maida.

‘ They are my *only* comfort,’ sadly replied the former.

Unbidden, Maida read them again.

‘ A poor sinner like me has nothing else to cling to.’

‘ Than what, Wilcox?’

‘ Oh! than Jesus!’ she replied, clasping her hands emphatically.

‘ Jesus!’ repeated Crazy Sal; and having once pronounced that precious name, which seemed to come back to the imbecile like one long forgotten, no one could stop her. She repeated it louder, louder, and louder—until she quite screamed it—  
‘ Jesus Ja-sus!’

Was it the mystic power of that wondrous name that exorcised the evil spirit within her? Had the spirit of unrest slunk for a while into shamed quiet? Sally fell into a sweeter sleep than she had known for weeks. No opiate had been able to quell her weary tossings, but now the poor tired one slept soundly.

Henceforward she always called on Jesus when her pains were great, or when Nurse approached her.



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 eye as, fatigued with her journey across the ward, Maida dropped into her seat—the edge of No. 1's bed!

'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—and 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.

'Punishment is always just to the sinner, Maida; and to such a dreadful sinner as me, too!'

'I am inclined not to trust your judgment on yourself: you do not seem very guilty.'

Maida put a lightness in her voice which was very foreign to her heart.

'Oh, don't, don't! you don't know my guilt!'

and, as if ashamed of the mere remembrance of it, Wilcox covered her face with her hands.

‘This is a gloomy subject for you.’

‘And yet I feel happy in the assurance of pardon,’ was spoken at the same time, so neither heard the other.

‘What did you say about pardon? have you your conditional pardon?’ asked Maida.

‘I am not even due for my ticket; I shall never need it—perhaps before this month is out I shall be where there is neither bond nor free; where the convict will not be discerned from his master.’

‘I hope you will,’ said Maida, gently.

Wilcox gave a sweet smile, and then continuing her former train of thought, she said—

‘Yes; my *pardon*, I have my pardon; but it is *Unconditional*—signed with my Saviour’s blood, and sealed with the seal of heaven.’

‘Wilcox,’ (Maida bent tenderly over her,) ‘I do not wish to mar your peace, or make you doubt; but I should like to know how you are assured of forgiveness? how do you know it?’

The question seemed to make her thoughtful: she did not reply for a minute; then, the lustre shone out more brightly from her eye. She looked upwards with an expression of rapture, and exclaimed—

‘My Saviour died! ask me no more; that is enough for such sinners as me! *one drop* of His

precious blood would have done ; but he gave *all*. How can I *help* being forgiven ? Oh, Maida ! how could I help it ?

This simple faith at once surprised and pleased Maida, who longed to ask more ; but feared to dim the faith, which was now the all of that dying girl.

Though herself unable to enter into the mystery of that hidden joy which the world can neither give nor take away, she was convinced of its reality, and her generous spirit rejoiced in the happiness of one who had found that pearl of price—peace and joy in believing, as yet unfound by herself.

The Nurse's entrance and grim stare of disapprobation enforced a momentary silence, for which Maida was not sorry. She wanted to think over what she heard. When they were again free to speak, Wilcox turned to Maida, and gently squeezing her hand, whispered—

‘ Dear Maida ! how I *do* love you ! my mistress was kind to me ; but I could only be afraid of her, *you* I love—love—love !’

It was a warm gush of feeling, flowing from a heart to whom affection had long been forbidden ; and however much it was against Maida to make a show of her feeling, she feared she should disappoint Wilcox if she did not ; therefore, bending forward she kissed her tenderly, and then keeping her face so as to be heard only by her, she said, ‘ Wilcox, you will not be here long, I am going to

tell you a secret—perhaps you will be able to assist me. I should like to obtain that pardon of which you feel so sure—no one knows how I long for it! how can I get it?’

‘Jesus will give it you: He gave me mine.’

‘But how can I be *sure* that He will?’

‘Get it first and be sure of it afterwards.’

Maida shook her head.

‘Jesus has pledged himself to give it. Oh, think of His suffering and death, and then you will be sure they could only be for a very great purpose; and then think of His love and pity, and you will be drawn to Him.’

‘Ah, I believe all that—but only for *others*; I cannot for myself.’

‘I am not able to explain. I can only tell from my own experience how precious Jesus is to the sinner; the saint loves Him, worships Him, and praises Him; but oh! it’s the poor *sinner* that *clings* to Him. Dear Maida, don’t look sad, Jesus will give you your pardon, freely, gladly—no one ever wished for it in vain—you *must* have it. I cannot bear to think of your going away from Jesus.’

‘I am always going away from Him. Once I did so willingly—*now* because I can’t help it. Perhaps, as you have been ill so long you don’t know what a prisoner has to contend with.’

‘Yes, I do; I was hired out eleven months, and

though my mistress was as kind as could be, there was much to bear ; but I told Jesus of it all, and that made me happy till I came here.'

'If it will not pain you, I should like to hear your story—it may teach me something.'

'Pain me, dear Maida ! there will be so much to tell of my precious Saviour's love and mercy, that it will be a great pleasure to tell you—though—

Her voice faltered.

'Ah ! I know ; there are dreary blanks in our lives that no one can fill up—blanks that no earthly pleasure can fill,' said Maida.

'Jesus can,' murmured Wilcox, wiping the tears from her face.

'You'm converted, b'ain't you?' sneered the Nurse, who had drawn sufficiently near to hear the last words.

'I hope so!' meekly answered Wilcox.

'So do I ; but all I know is, that if *you'm* converted, *I* be too !'

'Leave us, woman,' cried Maida ; 'we are doing nothing that comes under your power to hinder. I mean to sit by Wilcox every day.'

'Don't—don't,' whispered the invalid ; 'twill only be worse for me.'

'I've an old score to pay you, Mrs. Martha Grylls ; don't think I've forgotten it, I be only waiting,' growled the Excrescence.

‘ I have only *one* way of dealing with my foes,’ said Maida, calmly ; ‘ as for your *debt*, I’m willing to forgive it !’

‘ Fine ! that’s like the imperance of the woman ; I tell you *what*, you had your day when we couldn’t help ourselves—now I mean to have *mine* when you can’t help yourself, for you’m a mere bantling yet.’

But as far as personal injury was concerned Nurse knew better than to vent her spite on Maida ; all she could do in that way had been inflicted when she lay helpless in bed.

‘ You had better go, Maida, I shall only get worse off by your staying,’ said Wilcox.

‘ How ? what do you mean ? dare she ill-treat you ; let *me* know it, and I’ll—’

‘ Ah, nothing ; we are none of us in the same temper always.’

Maida was not to be deceived : she asked no further question, but determined to watch. She had long been disposed to the opinion that so much fear must have some other cause than the mere offensive manner of the Nurse.

She arose to go, and then sitting down again, said—

‘ I thought you had something to tell me, or something you wanted me to do, Wilcox. I have always so interpreted your earnest lookings at me.’

‘ So I had ; but I forget everything when I can

get any one to speak of my Saviour with me ; and really, when I think of *His* love, and of *my* sins, I feel ashamed of caring for my sufferings ; but when they come they are so very bad to bear, that I grieve to say I forget Him and all *He* bore.'

'If they are the sufferings from your disease, you do well to receive them patiently ; but I fear they are not wholly that—tell me.'

'I'll tell you what I *did* want you to do—to keep an eye on poor Crazy Sal—she made me so miserable, but it's no use now she's removed. I'm sure there's something wrong there, the poor, harmless thing would never screech so for nought ; and then if you could see Nurse's face as *I* have when she stoops over her pretending to be kind ! Oh ! it is dreadful to think of. Poor Sal wasn't so when first she came ; she could then talk a little, but now she doesn't speak only two words, the name of her home, and that name she caught from the hymn. I cannot but fancy she finds a comfort in calling it out. Poor Sal ! she's a shipmate of mine.'

'Poor Sally, indeed ! I shall be very glad to alleviate her suffering, and as soon as I can walk about I will find means to discover the truth of what you say.'

And Maida's eye gleamed. It was well the Nurse was not near to see the flash that darted from it as she thought of the imbecile's wrongs.

'But was she always in that state ?' she asked.



'Oh! no; it seems she pined away her reason. She was never *very* famous, so they who knew her at home said. When first she was put on board with a set of women she looked like one struck; when the ship sailed she stayed upon deck watching the land, and then when it got out of sight she fell down and fainted right away; after that she did nothing but cry all the way out. The matron and doctor pitied her at first, but every one got tired of her crying, and some one put it into the doctor's head that she was scheming, and one woman declared she'd seen her swallow soap pills to make herself ill, so the poor soul had to take an emetic, the doctor said that was always his cure for schemers; but she wasn't scheming, 'twasn't in her. On board the "Anson" they could do nothing with her, and one day a dreadful attack took her all at once, and she's never been better since. Her sufferings *here* have been more than the doctors know of!'

'Then they shall be so no longer! If I can get at her no other way I'll rise in the night and creep in on my hands and knees,' said Maida.

Wilcox shook her head.

'But you haven't answered me about yourself.'

'I have not more than I can *bear* and less than I *deserve*, thank you, Maida. Some things might be better, but I thank God that they are not worse—they might be like poor Sal's.'

‘Wilcox, *do* answer,’ said Maida; ‘I am not strong yet, and the thought of what you may have suffered and may still suffer, 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—’

‘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,' her voice and countenance changed, 'and *my pardon!* you'll remember that?'

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 as 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—

‘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 an’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, an’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.

Number 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.’

‘ Count for it in any way?’

‘She’d a blister last night, sir,’ chimed in Nurse, who, most cat-like, 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 for 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 bed-clothes, 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.’

‘ Thank you, sir,’ dropped Nurse. ‘ What should I want to put salt in a body for ?’

‘ A breast of bacon, perhaps ?’ laughed Dr. Lamb. ‘ What does Wilcox herself say : *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 slushing sound.

‘ “ Let dogs delight to bark and bite,” etcetera,’ 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 protégée into the hand of the enemy.

When Mrs. Cott entered the ward to hear the medical opinion of her 'family,' before Nurse or any one 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.'

'I hope so. A man who had been employed in Tench, told me that once when he was carrying a coffin he heard the bones all rattling about as if they'd been loose in a box.'

'Wilcox, do you think when your soul is happy with Jesus, you will care what is done to your poor worn-out body?'

'Oh, no! foolish me! Oh, blessed Lord Jesus! forgive my folly; only let my soul go to *Thee*, and my body may be thrown anywhere: the meanest corner is too good for me.'

Next visiting Thursday the ward was thrown into pleasant surprise by the entrance of a lady who asked for one Eliza Wilcox.

She could scarce believe that the skeleton called No. 1 was her former servant.

'My mistress!' exclaimed Wilcox.

'Yes, and I should have been to see you before but I've been too busy.'

She sat down and chatted a little; then rising to go, she looked round the ward.

'All very nice and clean here, and Mrs. Cott such a good creature, too; I dare say you are all very happy—eh, women?'

One and all curtsied, and the movement passed for a *yes*.

'Who is her nurse?'

‘I am, ma’am,’ replied Maida.

‘No, ma’am, *I* am,’ said the Nurse, guessing the drift of the inquiry; ‘*I* do for this ward.’

‘You are Wilcox’s nurse, at any rate?’ asked the lady, looking at Maida; ‘well, then, this is for *you* ;’ she held out a half-crown.

Maida took it.

‘I will buy her some tamarinds with it, ma’am.’

‘You vile, sneaking jade, cheating me out of my perkisites in that way. May the money rot in your hand! I’d like to see the tamarinds *you* ’ll buy with it,’ exclaimed the enraged official, when the lady had gone.

‘Maida, don’t,’ whispered Wilcox; ‘’twill do me more harm than good.’

‘Very well, then, I won’t,’ replied Maida, aloud; ‘but *I* don’t want the money; and if I give it to Nurse, she’ll spend it in drink; so it shall go to any poor soul who finds it.’ With that she mounted the top of a stretcher, and raising her arm, flung the coin through the open window; and at the same moment the Nurse flouted out of the ward.

‘She’s gone to spit her rage on Sal,’ whispered the women to each other.

‘God help her, poor soul!’ ejaculated one.

‘Maida, shall I tell you?’ said Wilcox, softly, as her friend took her place again by her.

‘Yes, dear, what you please.’

‘Our Master would not have done that—He

would have soothed the anger even of an enemy.'

'How do you know that?'

'Because it says He was meek and lowly, and did not strive.'

Maida became thoughtful, and then replied—

'You are right, *I* am wrong; I will go at once, and beg her pardon; I should have given her the money: my temper always hurries me into folly. But, Wilcox, you mustn't say *our* Master—I do not profess to follow Him.'

'Then why don't you? you don't know how it would help you, to profess it outright.'

'In what? I'm afraid you sadly mistake me.'

'No, I don't. I know you *want* to be one thing, and your temper makes you be something quite different. Maida, Maida, have I offended you?'

Maida shook her head; and then leaning towards her, said—

'Wilcox, I would gladly exchange places with you, and endure one hundred times over what you have endured, to be as near death as you are, with your hope and peace.'

'*I* would not exchange places with Queen Victoria!' exclaimed the dying girl; 'no! not with the Queen upon her throne. Hark! what's that?'

'Ja-sus! Ja-sus!' came in piteous accents from the closet outside the ward.

‘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 it was with wounds from long lying, Nurse rubbed the body of the imbecile in the fresh straw beneath it, 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 ——! You’ve sought the job, so you shall have it; come and see how you like it: sweet, refreshing, nice! b’aint 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.

‘Jasus?’ whispered Sally, almost in Maida’s ear.

‘Yes, Jesus, He loves you.’

‘Loves me,’ repeated the imbecile; then yielding herself to Maida, she 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.

‘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. H.

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.

Without signifying his intention, Mr. Herbert knelt by the stretcher, and looking reverently upward, said, slowly and distinctly—

‘O Lord, thou Son of David, have mercy on her for she is grievously tormented.’

He remained in silent prayer a few moments, and then perceiving the swollen eyes of the imbecile fixed on him, he arose and stood by her.

‘Does she not speak?’

‘Only two words, the name of her home and that word you heard her call out.’

‘That name, that is above every name! the name of Jesus, is one—’

‘Jasus! Jasus!’ cried Sally, catching up his words.

‘Ay, He will hear you, poor stricken one! He despiseth not the cry of the destitute,’ sympathisingly replied Mr. Herbert.

‘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.

And who will say that when the Saviour of the world shall come, bringing His redeemed ones with Him, poor Crazy Sal shall not be seen among the lowly who have crept into heaven by power of that name which is the only one whereby we can be saved?

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 consequence 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. Maida understood the action, and

forgetting her own vexation, in beholding the anxious glance of her friend, said—

‘Wilcox, *ask* Mr. Evelyn.’

‘Sir, we are troubled with a question; we cannot decide it.’

Mr. Herbert looked kindly towards her, and then to Maida, who asked somewhat hastily—‘Would it be wrong to pray that she may die before I go?’

‘It were better *not*; trust to that Friend who loveth at all times. He will become more precious with the absence of your earthly friend, Wilcox.’

‘It is not *that*, sir; were my absence all, Wilcox would have nothing to dread from my discharge; but there are things which your kind heart never, never dreams of, and which only a prisoner can know; these things make my presence very necessary to her, poor dear!’

‘I dream of them more than you suppose, Maida, and my inability to prevent them is a sorrow only second to my grief for that blindness which perceives not the evil.’

A tear stood in Wilcox’s eye.

‘Wilcox,’ said he, kindly, ‘do you remember those lines—

• “Sweet to lie passive in His hands  
And know no will but His?”

Trust yourself to Him who provides for the needs of His creatures. Be sure that the God who so studies the nature of the dumb animals as to

appoint the rocks for a refuge to the timid coney, will not desert you in your hour of trouble.'

'But He *has*, sir,' interrupted Maida.

'Hush, Maida, you know not what you say,' quickly said Mr. Herbert. 'Think a moment. Has there been no good brought out of the permitted evil of Wilcox's sufferings?'

He turned his eye as though he would read her inliest thought. A smile played on the lips of the dying girl; she exclaimed, 'Oh, sir! I will leave myself to Him. He will be with me when I pass through the waters; He will be more to me than mother, or father, or sisters could have been, had I been dying in my home. Sir, I forget I am a convict when I think of these things. Maida can go, for Jesus will be with me; but *never, never* can I forget her love and kindness. Oh, sir! when I am no more, do be her friend.' She caught Mr. Evelyn's hand, and, gazing earnestly, repeated—  
'*Do*, sir; will you promise me?'

Mr. Herbert gave the promise, and turned to ratify it to Maida, but she had left the ward.

'Farewell, Wilcox. I go to my own poor child, who is very ill, though not so far prostrated as you. Give me a message for her.'

'Make her promise to love Maida,' she promptly replied.

'Is that all?' said Mr. Herbert, smiling through his sadness.

‘If I may make so free, sir, tell her—but it will pain you perhaps.’

‘No, my child, I have long since resigned her.’

‘Then tell her, sir, not to dread *death*. He is gentle as a lamb to those who are not his enemies. Maida is to have my Bible and hymn book; but will you give dear Miss Evelyn this little Prayer book, and say that if she reads the *last* verse of the twenty-seventh Psalm, she will find a text that has often kept up the faith of a poor sinking soul—tell her the Lord’s leisure is the best.’

She gave the little volume to Mr. Herbert; he pressed her hand, but spoke not a word in taking the parting gift.

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 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 should 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!

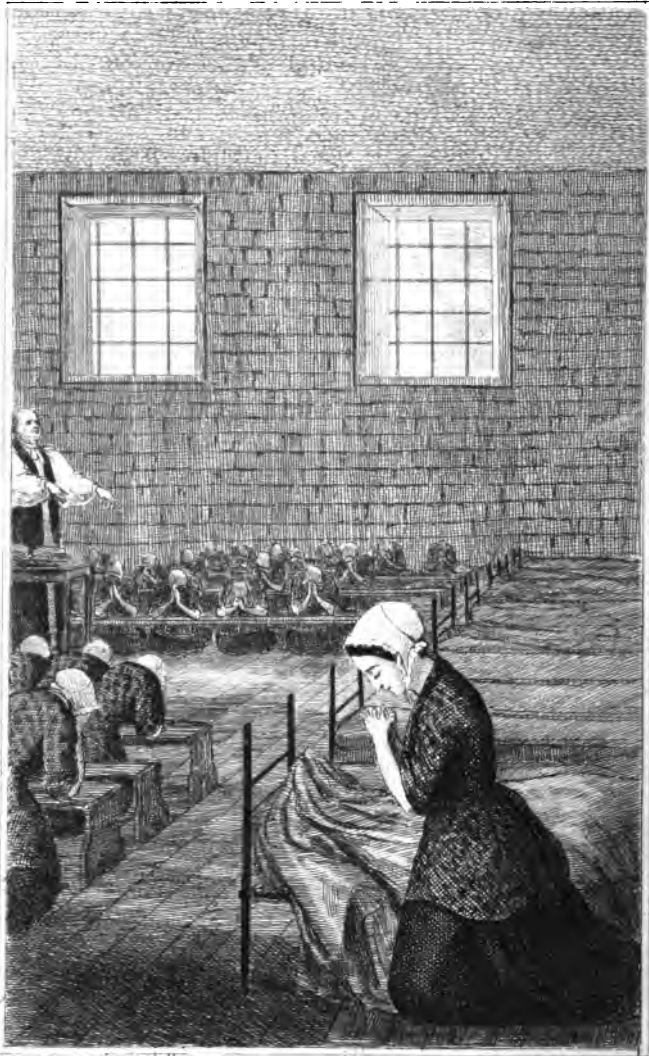
‘Thank God!’ she murmured, rising from her knees. The Nurse turned round, and Maida pointed to the lifeless clay with an expression that *would be* triumphant through all the solemnity of the moment. She sat herself by the corpse, and strove to listen to the earnest appeal the bishop was making to the prodigals arranged in sombre brown before him; but the attempt was vain; her thoughts wandered over that brief chapter of her life in which the dying girl had formed so striking a part. ‘Yes,’ she mentally exclaimed, ‘Mr. Herbert is correct, good has worked out of the evil of this poor creature’s suffering; it has taught me that which I craved to learn, that *a convict can* be saved—to doubt it were treason to the King of kings.’

This had long been a question in Maida’s mind. She had listened eagerly, though unavowedly, to Mr. Herbert’s and Emmeline’s teaching; but she feared they who had never fallen could not rightly answer for the salvation of those who had yielded to sin, and she therefore yearned to meet with an example of convict salvation. In Wilcox she saw one who from equal condemnation, had been received into paradise.

‘Hast thou but one blessing, oh, my father! bless me, even me also,’ she cried with her spirit’s voice, as she watched the blessing that had fallen upon her who a few moments since was a captive pining for release.







Drawn and Etched by A. Harvey

"It seemed that the Bishop had read Maidie's thoughts. She sunk upon her knees, and clasping her hands uttered a loud, fervent 'Amen!'"

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 sunk 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.

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 in 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 Sál 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.

Does the reader wish to ask any question ere Maida's departure shuts the hospital to his inquiry?

‘Why did the convicts bear such persecution without complaining to the proper authorities?’ In all politeness may we be allowed to suggest that you wait for a reply until you become a prisoner; *then* you will know why, far better than we can explain.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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 Hobarton 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, pattering on her way, most unlike her namesake, which with a hop, skip, and jump, gives chase to the fleetest huntsman.

Not having been told that the vessel was a prison-transport, Bridget had looked forward with much delight to enjoy the scenery which makes a sail down the Derwent a *sine quâ non* to the beauty seekers of our antipodistical shores. With the sight of the felons vanished all her dream 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 look all, 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 view magnificent scenes from the coasts of Frederick Henry Bay ; in vain upreared the Iron Pot, its grotesque dimensions, it awaked 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 sky-light, 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 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 unmistakeable 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 frisking 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 prisoner; 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 Tonkins 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.’

‘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.

Jocose and hearty 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 principle 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?' bustled out 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 all so 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 that madam looked rather 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?'

'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; de-

solation, 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.'

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 Hobarton



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 down 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 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, any one 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 foul-eyed 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 of 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 their systems for many a long year, and, for all I see, been making duck and drake and young ones with their 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.'

A loud flop 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 commiserative 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 flop 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 to hell 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 any one could stop the ruffian or overcome the first shock of surprise. All free hands now rushed forward, the enraged overseer among 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.’

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.

All was commotion, but none dared venture after him. Up rose the body at a short distance—again to sink—the waters, gurgling, closed upon it, and the ripples spread as calmly onward as though no immortal soul had perished beneath them. Who dares that soul to follow in its dreary progress—downward—downward, ever downward—for the pit is bottomless, and the doom eternal. The voice of inspiration hath pronounced it so—downward, ever downward—who may stay the doomed spirits?—falling—falling—falling! They gnaw their tongue and look upward, but all too late comes the upward glance, for the eye of love beholds it not; the cry is bitter, and the torment cruel, but relief comes not; the ear of mercy is deaf. God forgetteth to be gracious for the day of grace hath passed.

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 in 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 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 pass out 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 into 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 than it, so off ran Bridget, carrying baby under her arm. An overseer's wife seeing her panting on, opened her door, and begged her to come in. Nothing loath, 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.'

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 for 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' friend; 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 'tisin'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.'

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, bustled at once into the inquiry—

‘Uncle, what has become of all the Aborigines? I 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 in that way.

'Bless your heart alive, miss; talk of irons! you should go a-board 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 living 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 sure 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.’

\* This Cascades must not be confounded with the female house of correction, Hobarton.

‘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 any one; they make 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 to dangerousness; 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 three last.

‘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! G’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 in 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 flash 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. G'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.

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 as it bandied about from officer to officer. The eighteen pair 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 wise 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 spoke a dozen words to any one 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—’

‘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,’ tapped 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 eye 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 planted his arm round Emmeline and drew her to himself; the overseer jumped up behind Bridget.

‘G’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 gray 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 outline 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 any one who chose to listen—

‘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;

\* Except Norfolk Island.

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 hum-drum.

'Here at last! we had all given you up for to-night. Where is brother Evelyn?'

And the spare, elastic figure of an ecclesiastic bustled up to Mr. Herbert, and shook both his hands at once.

'Ah, Father 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 père 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 into his.

She was, however, too tired to advance a step; she fell together with 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 eye; then seeing that Mr. Herbert looked pained, he muttered—

‘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 leave 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 turned to Emmeline—

'Be asy, my dear? grab on neat as you plase, so long as 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 catty 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 civilised structure of this island.'

'Really, Mr. Evermore, you are very compli-

mentary. 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-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 tales traditionary 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.

‘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 on 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 Harellick.

Mrs. Evelyn began to frown on the culinary probabilities; but Mrs. Harellick 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. When he left the room, Mrs. Evelyn ex-

pressed wonder and displeasure that Mr. Herbert should allow Bridget to talk so freely to a Roman Catholic, and that he should permit himself to be called brother by one.

‘When you know Evermore as well as I do, Clara, you will deem it a privilege to be called sister by him; he is of the true Church of Christ, and that is all I care to inquire. An humble, earnest, hardworking member—still toiling on when others would rest—he only seeks to be approved of his heavenly Father, to whose kingdom he will find admittance before many who vaunt themselves on names.’

‘But he is a Roman Catholic, my dear,’ persisted Clara, with an unconvinced air.

‘And my dear friend is a Protestant; yet, through our blessed Lord, I hope to meet him in heaven,’ lisped the priest, folding his aged hands together and laying them on the back of Mr. Herbert’s chair. Then turning to Mrs. Evelyn he said, ‘And I hope I may still call you sister through our Lord Jesus Christ.’

He again left, having only returned for his stick, and Mrs. Evelyn exclaimed impatiently—

‘Really, my dear, it’s quite dangerous to have Roman Catholics about us in this manner.’

Ere Mr. Harellick returned, Mrs. Evelyn had gone off with the children, and Bridget with Emmeline. His countenance bore that peculiar,

tried 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. '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. Harelick.



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 ear-shot 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.

No one who looked at his countenance would have thought that these things made any deep im-

pression upon him, much less that he felt them so acutely; his friends were therefore taken by surprise to hear him say—

‘My experience is, that it is far more difficult to receive meekly one such indignity from lay under authority than to make a great sacrifice for our Lord; it is easy to be a hero, an officer of the cross, but how arduous to become a common soldier! Setting these trials of my position to the account of that love which beareth all things, I am able, through grace, to take them quietly—would God I could say joyfully! otherwise I could not take them at all.’

‘Stop, Evelyn, I only partly agree with you there; one may go on submitting until one licks the dust, trampled on by men who by right of office are only our equals—by right of education and birth often our inferiors. I would not quarrel, but I would object; and if that were useless, I would resign, and I *shall*, too, some day, Julia, for all that you made me tear up that letter yesterday.’

The comfortable smile disappeared, and the upper lip fell demurely over the large white teeth, while Mrs. Harelick shook her head at her husband. ‘No-o-o.’ She then asked Mr. Herbert his opinion of resigning.

‘Had I consulted my natural heart and my wounded feelings I should have resigned long ago,’ he replied, in a decided tone. Then throwing one

arm over his chair, and leaning his head back on it he continued—

‘But, oh! my friends, it is a dying, dying, dying world. The department worries me with some ungentlemanlike treatment, and I feel inclined to resent its conduct by tendering my resignation, since appeal is of no service. Then I go into the hospital, and find some poor dying creature eagerly watching for me: he grasps my hand and prays me, for the love of God, to warn his fellow-sinners not to neglect their immortal salvation, as he has done; I go to another ward, expecting to see one whom last night I besought to fly from the wrath to come, but the screen is drawn around his bed, death is there, fixing his eternal state. I go to the condemned cells, and death is there—death, moral and spiritual. I return to my home, and there is my own child dying; and then all my resentment turns upon myself for having encouraged impatient feelings. Let us look upon eternity, and we must forget all, save that we are surrounded by dying men, ourselves in the same predicament.’

The earnest voice ceased, and closing his eyes, Mr. Herbert sat for many minutes in silence; then arousing himself with a long, yet scarcely audible sigh, he added: ‘I am puzzled to know what to think of those men, who throw every possible hindrance in the way of God’s servants, instead of helping them in a labour so wearing to mind and

body ; it must be that having only to deal with the bodies of their bond brethren, they know nothing of the obstinate, life-wearing soul-strife *we* have to wage day after day, year after year. Death, which relieves them of their responsibility, makes ours the more terrible and laborious. What say you, Mrs. Harellick, must we set down their opposition to the sin of ignorance ?

‘ But that neither makes it easier to bear nor exonerates Government for permitting such a state of things,’ answered her husband.

‘ I quite exonerate Government, Harellick ; I do not lay at its door one of the annoyances which fret the convict chaplain from heartfelt attention to his duties. Where I deem Government is culpable, is in not better protecting its clerical servants from abuse, since their being under secular rule is unavoidable.’

‘ Perhaps it’s the sin of *ignorance* there too,’ said Mrs. Harellick.

‘ And I believe it. Reports of us reach Government only through its own agents, who colour the case according to their view, which view is nearly always a prejudiced one, giving colour prejudicial to ourselves ; we are represented as the molesting and not the molested party.’

‘ It is my opinion, that from the way we are represented, we have been long since set down with the incorrigible. “ A dissatisfied, trouble-

some set, are the convict chaplains," were Turbot's very words of us, Evelyn.'

Another quiet smile was again the only answer. 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 the same if called before Government to-morrow.'

'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. Harelick.

‘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. To me, the remembrance is a fountain, whence my eyes draw tears, and my soul prayer and humbleness before God.'

'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! 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; for 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. Harelick, tracing out a large B with his finger on the table.

## CHAPTER IX.

## 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, 'Oh, 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 fitting 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 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. Harellick 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, unescapingly conspicuous on a prolonged survey from the bow-window.

A low verandah, 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 enchantery 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 verandah, 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 stream of yellow 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. Harellick was one concerned, and ere the loud, quick bell ceased, Bridget heard the fore-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 glimpsed the breaking 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 rung. Then louder, sharper, and quicker than it, several voices of command were given. The mass of pied yellow separated into sections, and to the 'G'ups' and 'G'ons' 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 was 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.

Bridget hastily snapped 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 the teeth of 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.

‘ 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 them 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 Harelicks 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 Harelicks 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, 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 store-room 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 depôt, 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 small 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 cook, and prior to his second conviction had received thirty shillings a week at the best confectioner's in Hobarton.

'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 chaingang 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. Harelick only laughed.

‘ You musn’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. Harelick 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 a washing of the clothes with lime or a 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 forebore to express her feelings, determining that her child might after all fare worse in a maiden's arms.

The out-houses 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 civilisation. 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 of 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 Phillis never owns him more, and as for his home, he has a government lodging down there in the station; but hell may all so well be home as *that*. His home? ah! where is it? the place thereof knows him no more. 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 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 main land, 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 ever is found one 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 byewords 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 mistressly 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 ministration.'

He remained silent and in deep thought, then shaking his head as if to negate some mental suggestion, he exclaimed—

'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 diffi-

culty 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,' &c.

'Yes, that, with the confession and a few other prayers, would be well chosen to express the feelings 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 re-

form, 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 of 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 any one ; 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 verandah,’ 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 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 heart-broken 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 toward 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 an 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?

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 man-

ner 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 screeches of the unfortunate crew were pronounced to be audible to every one, 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 to the intent the 'Kangaroo' was laid up and unfit for service.

'How ever then shall we get back?' 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 way over the bush.'

To Uncle Ev, all alone in Hobarton, 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 suspenseful anxiety, crushing upon his heart—a weight for which he could not account. His daughter *seemed* to account for it, yet why he could not tell; there was no reason, the doctor said, that the winter of Port Arthur should not agree with her as well as the winter of Hobarton; the probability was that it would the better suit her.

‘What makes you so sad, papa?’ said Emmeline, as, leaning on his arm, she walked up and down the verandah; ‘are you wanting to get back to your people at home?’

‘No, my child; any part of my Master’s vineyard is the same to me. A heaviness has fallen upon my spirit, wherefore I cannot tell.’

His eye unconsciously rested on the Isle of the Dead. Passing his hand quickly across his face, he appeared to dash away a distressing thought; his daughter, too, looked on the isle, and fancying her father only cleared his sight to obtain a better view of it, she said—

‘It is a lovely spot,’ and drew him gently on.

A few days after that, Mr. Herbert received a letter from his brother, and without assigning a reason to any one but Emmeline, he signified his intention to start overland for Hobarton. 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 on that score 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 either find them murdered, or stuck up by the absconders. 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 verandah 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 an able 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 pains-taking 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 X.

## A DAY DREAM AND NIGHT VISION.

MEANWHILE Mr. Evelyn remained in Hobarton. 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 any one 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 any one else.'

So Maida was turned adrift in the Hiring Depôt, 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, 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 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, ’taint 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, same time making his locks to pass through his fingers.

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 consulted with his locks, and 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 flown with T. Lism, 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 perpetrated, 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 sidewise 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 tepot,' as he called the depôt.

‘ 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 any body’s.’

Another stroke of approval, but Lucy exclaimed, her bright face clouding with shocked disappointment—

‘ O, 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 ?’

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 any one 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.’

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.

‘ Any one is welcome to a convict that leaves my house! sure to be mere refuse if *I* send them off.’

She vanished within the depôt, 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.

‘Bother it; what’ll Herbert and Emmeline say!’ muttered Mr. Evelyn, as he rode from the Brickfields.

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 needle-woman.’

‘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 down stairs—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 hot 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—

‘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.

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.

'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 depôt 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.

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-by 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 up stairs, 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, that I think your punishment a disgrace to every one 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 funning 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 restarted 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 bed-clothes, 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 to hurry on his freedom by this unceasing turmoil no one could discover. Silent and irritable he vented one favourite word on all occasions, at all out of the usual course. He had a peculiar way of snorting out this word between two thick breaths, driven, smoke-like, from his nostrils.

‘Fussy, the master’s a roaring after you,’ would say one of his fellow-servants.



Snort, 'Precious,' snort, his only answer.

'I say that there Sam Tonkins was hung up to-day.'

Snort, 'Precious,' snort. Fussy's sole appreciation of the fact.

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 'Precious, 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 cicadæ, whose never-flagging whir r r r seemed almost to distract poor Fussy. He anathematised them more than twenty times a day.

'Why, what is it, Fussy?' asked some one, observing his uneasiness.

Snort, 'Precious,' snort, 'to think I've come out all this way to hear nothing but them critics a whizzing their nonsense all day long; precious tongues they've got to keep on that way!'

No persuasion could make him call them *crickets*. 'No, no, he'd heard tell of critics at home, and knew well enough that they was famous for their keeping on when everybody else had done talking.'

It was the master's peculiar delight to listen to his crusade against the 'critics.' Had he been a more educated man, Mr. Evelyn would have suspected him to be a disappointed author, but the poor fellow was, happily, innocent of letters.

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.

'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 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 home 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 woe-begone 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 'Kan-

garoo'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.

But Fussy pronounced it very precious that he should be left to lock up the gates at night, a post of which he had entertained a decided dread from the time of the bushrangers' attack on the house during Maida's imprisonment.

Since her return to the Lodge she had always gone down to lock the out-houses and garden gates;

for Fussy, thought far too preciously 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 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 knows 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 knows 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 desperation 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,’ gibbered 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, '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 belly? 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 any one, 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 down stairs, 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—

‘ 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 up stairs; she heard his door lock, his shoes fling 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 a gaping 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 pinched 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.'

'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 'twernt 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.'

‘Oh, that Mr. Herbert were here!’ groaned Maida.

‘Don’t fetch of he! he’d bring the very light of hell long with him.’

‘Bob, he’d bring his Saviour with him.’

‘Ay, woman, ay; his Saviour, if you like—but where’s mine? Oh, where’s mine, I say? where’s *mine*?’

‘There he is, Bob; look up!’

And Maida pointed up to where shone calmly down the bright, bright moon, untouched by the stormy blast.

Bob turned up his glaring eyes—a cloud drove past and hid the moon. Bob threw down his head and cried—

‘You lie, woman—you lie; ’tain’t mine—he right hides himself when *I* look up.’

‘Bob, I am a poor sinner myself, and therefore a bad one to talk about such things; but *this* I know—that Jesus came for sinners, and not for the righteous. He died for men and not for angels. He died for *you* and *me*, just because we are sinners—bad people—so He will save us.’

Bob moaned aloud, and once more looked up to the heavens.

‘Bob, are you sorry for your sins?’ asked Maida.

For an instant—through all his begrimed, haggard and fleshless form; through all his

famished and sunken features—for an instant he looked like his old self; he winked a twinkling wink which came horribly from his glaring eye, and he said in his own familiar voice—

‘That ain’t the word! Sorry! I b’ain’t sorry for them; but they be sorry for me—ay, sorry, woman! shoving me headermost into the brimstone that I’ve heard tell of—Hell! I smell it nigh.’

Maida was bewildered; for all that she had heard the gospel so faithfully declared—for all that she longed to receive it herself, her tongue now seemed to cleave to the roof of her mouth. She knew that the Redeemer bled for sinners; but as she looked on the ghastly object before her, dyed in his fellow-mortal’s blood, she feared whether she had any right to speak comforting words to him; whether, by so speaking, she should not be deceiving him to his double despair.

‘Can you pray, Martha Grylls?’

‘Yes, Bob; for any one but myself.’

‘Pray then—quick.’

Maida knelt, and commenced a few words—when Bob tore down her hands.

‘Don’t pray, I can’t bear it; it’s worse than hell, because it’s hell before its time.’

But 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 up stairs. I'll sit up all night, and watch it that I may leave it safely open.'

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 down stairs and 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 stedfastly 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 eye-balls 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 countenances 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, heart-sick, 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 XI.

## 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 chain-gang.'

When asked where she would like to go, Emmeline replied—

‘ 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 grave-yard 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.'

'Then, dear father, you can wait calmly till the moment of the undrawing of that veil?'

'I can, my child! thank God, for my dear ones are safe within it, once THERE no harm can reach them, no foe molest.'

Emmeline buried her face in her hands, and then suddenly raising it she exclaimed—

'Ah, papa, but is there not one still dearer within that veil? Oh, think that HE is there, and then what sorrow your dear heart must still feel will all, all go.'

'My love, He is not within the veil, or we bereaved ones could not forget our grief, even knowing, as we do, that our treasures are safe. What says our blessed Saviour?'

Emmeline looked; she did not remember.

'Lo, I am with you alway; we are not with Him, but is He not with us?'

By this the carriage had arrived at the avenue, and Charlie rushing out upon them prevented further converse.

Emmeline stayed up later that night; she ap-

peared 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.

‘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?

‘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, my everything that my Father and my Saviour have not been, and yet they have been all these; you, then, have been my own, own Bridget.’

‘What does it all mean?’ sobbed Bridget; ‘everything is so strange to-night.’

‘But still so happy—Oh, happy, happy!’

‘Happy things don’t make people cry,’ answered Bridget, for want of something else to say.

‘Em, darling, tell me,’ she at last outburst, ‘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. Oh! I must, must thank you. I feel as though I could not sleep without, nor without praising God for having brought us together. How little I thought, when we first met, that God had prepared you for me, you bright, happy one.’

‘Em, *you* have made me all I *am*, that is better than what I *was*.’

‘Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord. That is the text I give you, Bridget.



When you are in doubt remember it, and quietly observe God's ways; and though they may seem confused and intricate, watch, and surely as morning breaks out of night, so surely shall you find "that the end of the Lord is full of mercy." Good night, darling, papa is coming.'

'I don't like to leave you.'

'Why not? No person shall stay to-night; I am sure I shall sleep soundly.'

But 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.

Emmeline seemed to read her thought.

'Do you remember when we first met?'

'Indeed I do, Miss Evelyn; heaven has gradually opened to me since that moment. Can you forgive me my evil treatment of you?'

'Of me! My dear, watchful nurse, what do you mean?'

'We will not speak of it, then, if you please; for all you may kindly say but shows me more what I detest to see. This much I will say, that in time my debt to you and Mr. Herbert can never be known, but'—she stopped short.

Emmeline listened in thrilling eagerness; Maida had never said so much before.

'But what?'

'I was going to speak hastily; I should say, it will be known if ever I am found in heaven. Your look of delight pains me, Miss Evelyn; there is too small cause for it: I am uncertain; in fact, I have not even yet decided for Christ, because I am such a torment to myself, perpetually wishing one thing, as poor Wilcox said, and acting another. I cannot decide for Christ until I can clear up my

own misgivings, and reconcile my own inconsistencies.'

'Never mind yourself, Maida; thank God you have nothing to do with any one but Christ. The victory is *given*, not *won* by you.'

'You excite yourself, dear young lady; we must not talk any more.'

A bright flush lay on Emmeline's cheeks.

'Oh, no, no! to hear *you* speak of these things does me more good than all the sleep in the world.'

'I who have been so vile!' exclaimed Maida, with some bitterness; 'to hear *me* speak so!'

'I have had one doubt happily settled to-night, and I forgot that I had yet another before I could say that the Lord had heard all my prayer. Maida, will you set that doubt at rest?'

An expression of pain was her only reply.

'Maida, only tell me one thing, and I could die this moment.'

'Do not torture me, Miss Evelyn; I cannot tell you what I do not feel. Would you have me lie? Would you have me say I possess that which I know I have not got?'

'Maida, I would have you say what you *do* feel—and that is, that you long, you crave, you thirst for peace, and peace is Christ. Won't you satisfy me? Maida! Maida! won't you?'

There was almost a wildness in her energy, with

a vivid radiance in her countenance, that was unlike her usual serenity. She waited a moment, and then softly said—

‘Won’t you, Maida?’

‘What must I tell you, Miss Evelyn?’

‘That you long for the peace of Christ.’

‘I do: but that is not enough—it is not having it.’

‘It is enough for *me*. I have heard sufficient to make me very happy. Go now, dear Maida; I can sleep sweetly on what you have told me. Good night, Maida; won’t you kiss me?’

‘I have never done so, Miss Evelyn; why, then, to-night?’

The colour rushed to her cheeks as the old look flashed one instant across her features. It passed; and stooping, she printed one long kiss on Emmeline’s brow.

A smile, so rapt that it might have lighted an angel’s face, repaid her, and she yearned to fall on her young mistress’s neck and there vent her feelings; but she arose, calm and quiet as ever.

‘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.

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 lip, 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 !' screeched 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.'

Obeying the impulse of her heart, all unaware of what she did, Maida wound her arm round Miss D'Urban and led her up stairs.

‘ Oh, no! she only sleeps. This cannot be death. Emmeline, my own one, look up and speak to me.’

But never answer came.

\* \* \* \* \*

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.'

One two—one two. There must be no delay. The procession moved slowly though 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 neither from 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!’

All is over! the moment comes when grief may no longer feed its infatuated sight on the visibilities of death—when, as though it had never been, the joy of years is buried out of sight and death in fiction is all they may gaze upon. Oh happy they, who in this moment of darkest bereavement, of keenest woe, may look up from mortal to immortality, from corruptible to incorruption, and behold life ‘pre-eminent o’er all!’

All is over! threading down the narrow defile the lessened band reappears, the measured plash once more is heard, and the three boats draw landward. But one is empty now and slowly as before is towed by the other two. Unbidden, Maida enters her master’s boat, and unforbidden, sits there.

There have they left Emmeline alone in that desolate yet lovely Isle. There is she left surrounded by convict graves, from which hers is only distinguished by its flowers and freshness. Here and there a headstone peeps from a cluster of trees, announcing the grave of one who has never been galled with chains; yet these exceptions make still more pained the painful show of graves, unmarked, uncared for, and barely seeming more than the natural roughness of the mould.

Over one such a heap droops a withered branch of acacia, which, torn from a neighbouring tree, has there been planted in stealthy haste by some more kindly hand, who was fain to leave over his comrade's grave a token whereby to recognise it. Nor all in vain the rude memorial—life is within that apparently withered branch and is timidly budding from the lowest stalk. It is a wonder no overseer has discovered that *In memoriam*, and jealously pulled it from out the earth. But there it still lowly blooms, and when years have swept by, and that mound is trodden from view, it shall rise in its fragrant verdure, and none shall know the origin of that fair acacia. There shall it bloom an enduring memorial of that convict grave, a fitting emblem of that resurrection power which shall call beauty from ashes, joy out of sorrow, life out of death. Of the further secrets of this sea-girt grave-yard few are known, and those few

are, alas! too often the records of despair; but this is known, that many a convict stops on his path to cast a sigh towards the shore of the lonely Island. Many a captive pines for its hallowed rest, to attain which some have laid violent hands on themselves.

All yearn towards this peaceful spot, for it is known of all that here is heard no more the voice of the oppressor. Here the prisoners rest together and the servant is free from his master; 'Here the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.'

## CHAPTER XII.

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 experience a luxuriant 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 neither to be found in the kitchen nor in the outhouses. Opal said, 'He had seen dat leddie come in fast, quick, big, and go up stairs, 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 up stairs 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.'

'They are, and ever will be the Christian's words, Maida. O 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. They arose. Then was there joy in heaven. Then the glad shout of triumph proclaimed another heir born into the world of glory. And may it be that the shout passing from Angel to Angel, at last reached that Paradise where wait the gathered saints their entrance into the celestial regions, and there proclaimed the welcome tidings to one who through pain and disappointment had still hoped for Maida, who had yearned over her in life and had prayed for her in death. These mysteries we know not of. But we do know that one sinner gathered into the bundle of life is worth a worldlong trial, is a treasure beyond the toil of ages, and cost a Saviour's blood.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### BRIDGET AGAIN

Is all of a fluster. Uncle Ev tells her that Mr. Walkden has once more found his way to Hobart, and is waiting below to renew acquaintance with her.

Bridget hopes to 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 every-day 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 Hobarton; and he means to try how Bridget feels, or at any rate how she *looks* now her former objection has for months been dead and buried. 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 stratagising 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 XIV.

## THE AWAKENING—MORE VICTIMS.

IN an elegant drawing-room, in one of the West End houses of London, sat Mrs. Norwell, or Mary Doveton, as, laying aside the proprieties of wedded life, we are still fain to name her, for we cannot reconcile ourselves to her union with him whom she fondly and proudly calls her husband.

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 pretended to diligence over a dainty heap of muslin and lace: now drawing forth a garment so small that it could only be meant for a doll or a baby, then ruffling it altogether back into the basket, she would raise her head and listen.

There came a brisk rat-tat in double-singleness 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!'

But her pout of disappointment gives us pleasure not because her delicate lip peeps so prettily from its wonted line of beauty, but because it tells us that which we have been longing to hear, namely, that Norwell makes her happy. The letter lay unnoticed for half the evening. Mary was too engaged in accounting for her husband's silence to care about opening it. At last, she heaved a little sigh, and whispered, 'Ah, well! now it's a pleasure to come; only I shall not sleep in waiting for the morning.'

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 shaméd 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, stared 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, shook her head, how drearily! 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 refresh-

ment 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?'

'Very, very!' and Mary drooped 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 re-sealed 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.

No sleep had closed her eye, 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 morning after a second note from Norwell announced his return within two hours of her receipt of his announcement.

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 sat 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 not longer resist.

She fell upon his neck and wept piteously.

‘Oh, Henry, Henry!’ she said no more.

Could those tears have washed his guilty soul, Norwell had stood pure and spotless; but tears, crystal tears, what are they, though an angel should shed them, when it has taken the blood of Calvary to wash out the stain of sin?

That night the nurse and doctor were summoned, and ere morning they placed an infant in Mary’s arms.

But all said the babe was dying. It feebly wailed throughout the day, and in the evening

none could doubt that it fluttered its little wings for flight. The servant was hastily sent for a clergyman to baptize it.

Despite all remonstrance, Mary would have the ceremony performed by her bedside. Her husband asked what name she would like: she whispered—

‘I—have—one.’

The clergyman came, the preparatory prayers were read, he received the child from the nurse, and said—

‘Name this child.’

Norwell turned to Mary.

Looking fixedly at him she said—

‘Maida Gwynnham.’

‘Maida Gwynnham, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’

Norwell stole to Mary’s side, and kneeling by her strove to read in her countenance some explanation of the strange proceeding; but the eyes were closed, and the pale features were mute; there was neither speech nor utterance in them; he only gazed on a sweet blank. He recollected, with poignant grief, the time when those same features, angelical and admiring, had sought into his face as he now sought into hers, and then he remembered, with a rush of pain, the artless words—

‘I have loved you, Norwell, since that day’

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 eye; there was that in it 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 gasped 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 folded itself into 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 XV.

### MAIDA.

' Oh, sweet surprise of heaven,  
Go forward, timid soul,  
The Master's word is given,  
No wave shall o'er you roll.

\* \* \* \* \*

' Oh, sweet surprise of heaven,  
One answer to all doubt,  
"Come in, your fetters riven,  
Why linger ye without?  
Come in, ye free forgiven,  
No hand may shut you out,  
To you the kingdom's given,"  
The joyful angels shout.'

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 much 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 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—



‘What are you about there, Gwynnham, idling your time, or rather my time?’

‘Bother it, Clara! I wish you’d let her alone; see, she is coming over, and there’ll be a row, and I shall have to scold her, which you know I detest.’

‘Oh! you needn’t fear, my dear; she bears things a great deal better than she used to.’

‘For that reason she should have less to bear; *there*, I shall leave you to finish what you have begun; but mind, I’ll not be appealed to.’

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 sewing.’

‘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.’

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?'

'Oh! it's no odds to *me*.'

'Maida, I rejoice to see you steadfast 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.'

'Your comfort, Maida, must not be in the struggle but in the victory.'

‘ Ah, sir, the victory being imperfect the consolation can be but slight.’

‘ The time of perfect conquest is not yet, Maida, nor will it be till we lay our bodies in the dust; not till then may we put off our armour. The conflict is one of flesh against spirit and only to end when our course is finished; then, Maida, may it be ours to triumph with the apostle, “ I have fought the good fight.” ’

‘ O, sir! Mr. Herbert, you?’

Mr. Herbert smiled sadly.

‘ Why not me, Maida? Do you suppose I have no warfare to accomplish?’

‘ Oh, yes, a mighty warfare, but for CHRIST, not for yourself.’

Mr. Herbert shook his head.

‘ Maida, my battle is with myself more than you know of, the last enemy to be destroyed is self.’

A look of perfect delight irradiated Maida’s face, and clasping her hands, she cried—

‘ Oh! then *I* well may struggle on: if *you* have conflict, how should not I?’

But the bright glow of pleasure vanished. She observed Mr. Herbert press down his eyes with his two fingers, in a manner that indicated mental pain; his lips moved, then removing his hand from his brow he fixed his eye steadily on her—

‘ Ay, Maida, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.’

‘ I wish you could have a little rest, sir ; your duties wear you out.’

But Mr. Herbert did not seem to hear her, he was deep in thought, and she hesitated whether to leave him or not. She stood still, leaving him to advance alone : this arrested his attention. He turned suddenly to her, and in a quick, earnest voice, said—

‘ 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 ?’

‘ O, Mr. Herbert ! 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 paralysed her, she became rigid and statue-like.

'Have you no secret, which, as a Christian woman, you have no right to keep to yourself?'

She stood speechless, dreading yet breathless to hear more.

'No secret for the preservation of which you stake your peace of mind?'

Maida tried to shake off her terror, but it was impossible; making a desperate effort, she exclaimed—

'Sir, you speak in parables. What right have you to try to frighten me thus?'

'I have the right of God! By His permission, and as His minister, I ask you, have you no confession which should long since have been made?'

'I understood, sir, our church had no priestly confession. I thought a confession to God was sufficient.'

There was a slight sneer in her tone.

'A confession to God without a corresponding action to our fellow-creatures is useless—it is more than useless—it is a spiritual *lie*!'

'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 be yet 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 to 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 help or alleviation, setting yourself rashly and determinately to bear it. No effort of mine has been spared to discover your secret.'

'Supposing I have a secret, is it necessary, sir, to *you*, or to any one, to become acquainted with it?'



‘As a Christian yearning for peace of mind, it is necessary to *yourself*, Maida! believe me you can neither enjoy the peace of God nor communion with Him whilst you are not true to yourself. You start, but I have told you before, that much of my life has been spent in hearing tales of sorrow from my bond brethren and sisters. I have heard of miseries that have wrung my soul,—of crimes which have revolted me. I have heard of infatuations and of fallacies that have excited my pity, of injustices which have called forth my indignation; but amidst all these, I have found that mystery is never used where it is not needed, that there is never mental (*mind* I do not say spiritual) conflict without a cause, a something yet undiscovered by law or unthought of by justice.’

‘Sir, pardon me, I cannot let you proceed. have never troubled you with my story, how, then, can you know either that I have wrapped myself in mystery or experienced mental conflict?’

She tried to speak calmly, but her voice shook.

‘Maida, do not deceive yourself, your whole transported life has been one long conflict; eyes less watchful than mine have discovered that; *I* have seen far more.’

‘Sir, give me but one instance, that I may know what you mean; this is very cruel.’

‘So must ever be the piercing asunder of the

soul and spirit, for the clearer discovery of the intents and purposes of the heart.'

A new light burst upon Maida. It was as the light which struck Saul to the earth, and from it came forth the question—

'Is it a lie? Canst thou brave God with a lie?'

She could have fallen to the ground; a chilling sensation oppressed her, but she battled with it and repeated—

'An instance, sir?'

'Do you remember that night in which you came to my room for writing materials? was there no conflict that night? no mystery of pain and grief that turned those few brief hours into an age of suffering, and ere morning added years to your appearance?'

'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 sorrows; 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 any one upon earth to interfere with my private actions, harmless to every one 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.'

Maida interrupted him.

'Sir, you needed no proof; yourself first told me of a seducer, and I have never sought to hide my shame!'

'You are impatient, Maida. Shall I tell you

why I preserve this paper? 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 are. 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!'

When Mr. Herbert returned to the drawing-room, Mrs. Evelyn, still ruffled with what she considered the scolding she had received on Maida's account, exclaimed—

'Really Herbert, my dear, you shouldn't let that woman talk to you so. George and I have been quite amused, or rather annoyed in watching

you walk up and down the garden. She really seemed to talk to you as her equal.'

'I beg to renounce all claim to either amusement or annoyance on the subject,' said Mr. Evelyn.

'Yes; but, my dear, don't you think it makes Gwynnham vain, and the others jealous? People will begin to talk by-and-by.'

'What do you say to *that* Herbert?' asked Mr. Evelyn, putting up his eyebrows.

'Persons may talk of me as they please,' he answered quietly.

'Well, I *don't know*, when she gets her ticket,' laughed Uncle Ev, unable to resist an opportunity of quizzing. But his brother bit his lip with so grieved an expression, at the same time sending him so reproachful a glance, which seemed to say, 'And you too?' that he changed his manner and inquired—

'What were you talking about? I'm always glad to see you pitching it into that Maida, she gets on so well after!' (Then more seriously) 'There is a great change in her, the lion has become a lamb.'

'My dear, she looked anything but lamblike just now. You should have seen her! a tigress—I should say,' replied Mrs. Evelyn.

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 up stairs. 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, pish, pish, Maida ; get your mistress to give you a little gregory, and you’ll be right to-morrow !’

‘ 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 a 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.

‘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 withdrew to admit 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 amend our ways and doings, I hope, Maida. If I never get hold of a



worse paw than yours I shall count myself a happy man. 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 in her teeth 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, owing former hospitallers of Ward No. 4.

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 stark 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, arising, 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 any one 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, from Maida’s mouth, dyeing her pillow in its fatal stain. But Nurse saw none of these, and when, started 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 signalized 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 eye of the stranger in its turn raises itself, and fixes on him a long, deliberative 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 unaware wandered in the direction of the voice that had uttered the name of the miscreant prophet.

Norwell knows not that he has become a byword on board, nor that he is a marked object to all—not so much by his mourning garb, which proclaims him a desolated man, as by a forbidding investiture of 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 the sound of 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. It was only O.P.S.O., and could therefore be nothing requiring immediate attention; he laid it down. 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 came round and picked up the paper his brother had dropped. It was an official despatch from H. M. G. Hospital. 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 ye of *that*? Read it.’ Mrs. Evelyn obeyed.

'H.M. General Hospital,

'5th February, 18—.

'The Bodies of the undersigned now lie at this Establishment waiting interment.

Name.	Age.	Ship.	Description.	Religion.	Date of Death.
Mary Ann Crawford	17	Anna Maria	Prb.	Protestant	4 February
Eliza Brown . . .	46	Do.	T. L.	Do.	4 February
Martha Grylls <i>alias</i> Maida Gwynnham.	26	Rose of Britain.	P.	Do.	5 do.

'To the  
'Rev. H. Evelyn,  
'&c. &c. &c.'

'JAMES CURGENVEN,  
'Superintendent.'

'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 XVI.

## 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 discharge itself. 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 determin-



ing 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 appearantly. He’s he that frisked the Bank.’

Norwell looks, and the man exhibited shrinks agonisedly, 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.’

‘G’up here!’

The harnessed men had stopped to take breath; at this word of command they trot off again, and Norwell groans aloud.

‘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, an’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 tenant, 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. Iv’e 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 depôt 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 Madda Gywnnham 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’ perplexities, 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 Madda 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.

'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 herefrom 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 contrairey 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—

‘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 was enough to see; it 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.

The dull yellow of his bloodshot eye turned slowly upon her.

'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, every power of his soul was harrowed on it. Harrowed! was there aught in those noble features to alarm?

The coarse envelopments that shrouded Maida disfigured her not. As she lay there she had never looked more beautiful,—of what loveliness 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.

No, no, closed, ever closed those depths so rare, and dream-like in their beauty; so brilliant and quenchless in their fire; they may not bless thee now; rejected once, they mock thee evermore. 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!’

There was a stern despair in his bloodshot eye, as folding his arms, he drew his cloak about him, and waited what Mr. Herbert should say; but there came no reply.

‘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, sir. Let them declare your doom. They will be merciful if they dare.’ Mr. Herbert pointed to the corpse. ‘Would God





Written and Etched by A. Harrison

"Mr. Herbert having pointed to the corpse exclaimed: would to Heaven! Capt. Norwith, that every dissolute man could stand where you do now."

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, sir, 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. Chains should never have galled these hands.'

The bloodshot eyes started wildly, and he broke into a low, hissing laugh:

'Were *these* hands made for murder! then there is murder in heaven, and I shall go there as well as she.'

His voice gurgled in his throat and he fell unconscious to the ground.

\* \* \* \*

We would not have you follow him, his dark, despairing eye 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 glooms 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 assume a murmured wail.

‘O God! O God!’

When 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?’

But 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, ’twas 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!'

THE END.

































