

THE WORLD OF THE LIVING DEAD & JAIL FROM

VANCE MARSHALL WITHIN



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JAIL FROM WITHIN

THE END OF THE WORLD



JAMES VANCE MARSHALL
as he was in 1917 when M.W.U. Organiser

JAIL FROM WITHIN

by
VANCE MARSHALL



THE WENTWORTH PRESS
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1969

JAIL FROM WITHIN

FACE MARSHALL



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JAIL FROM WITHIN
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FOREWORD TO MEMORIAL EDITION.

The republication of these two books of Australian penal literature in a single volume is a fitting tribute to a great Australian, James Vance Marshall.

Marshall, son of a Presbyterian Minister, was born at Casino, N.S.W., on the 15th July, 1887. He will be remembered for his powerful oratory in defence of liberty and an equally powerful pen.

A few facts on the life and work of the author are necessarily related here to enable readers to fully appreciate the place which should be accorded him in Australian history.

The first book, "Jail From Within", like its author, incurred the wrath of officialdom and for the same reason — Marshall and his book were both outspoken and truthful with a purpose and message. The first edition was set to print when, as Vance stated, "in furtherance of their efforts to silence me, the Billy Hughes Federal (Nationalist) Government confiscated all the metal under the authority of the War Precautions Act. It was not the first time I was silenced and, indeed, as it turned out, it was not the last either."

Undaunted, the metal for a second "clandestine" edition was hastily prepared. The printing press churned out 48,000 copies, all of which were sold immediately.

"Jail From Within" naturally created a political sensation and was instrumental in Marshall being again arrested, charged and sentenced to another term of hard labour in a vain effort to silence him.

The sequel to this second term of imprisonment was another exposure of the injustices, ill-treatment and brutality graphically portrayed in "The World of the Living Dead", a book which a leading Sydney publisher declined to handle with the comment — "It's good, but, in places, too raw — too creepy — too real. From a business point of view the sordid truth is not always the most acceptable." This reaction illustrates the difficulties Marshall met with publishing these works which, he emphatically said, were not written as "business propositions".

The working class press and the Trade Union Movement assisted in publishing and distributing both these works. These were factors contributing to their scarcity in later years, notwithstanding the fact that over 40,000 copies of "The World of the Living Dead" were sold as they came off the press.

The fear of a third book appearing, further exposing the prison system, was responsible, according to Marshall, for him not being charged when arrested in the Sydney Domain after his second term of imprisonment. A then senior police officer said to the young constable, "Let him go — that's the Marshall bloke — we don't want another book from him." However, he did have another dispute with the law — again over his spoken word in public. He avowed that a third jail term was avoided because of support mustered by the Unions in his defence of freedom of speech.

It is fitting to recall, when reading this volume, the actual "crimes" which gave rise to these works of social protest.

When criticising the conscription of Australian youth to serve in the trenches in World War I, he stated, "So far as the working class is concerned, the colour of a flag matters not, so long as that class gets a share of the good things of life." For this observation he was the recipient of four months' hard labour served at Albury and Long Bay jails. The charge — **having made utterances likely to cause disaffection to His Majesty the King.**

His second term of imprisonment, spent mainly in Goulburn jail, was caused by him saying, "Soldiers in this War are the blind tools of the capitalist class." The charge — **having made a speech likely to prejudice recruiting.**

The sentences in both cases were imposed after the indignant Marshall refused to give an undertaking never to speak from a political platform again.

When fellow socialist Paul Freeman was being greeted by a large crowd at Circular Quay, Sydney, in 1919, a stage managed disturbance was engineered amongst the crowd of some thousands. Vance Marshall, again on the stump, was hand picked by the authorities from the vast sea of faces and this time the charge read — **having unlawfully incited persons to riotously assemble to disturb the peace.**

A public outcry this time prevented another injustice being dealt out and thereafter the young socialist was left in relative peace.

Such were the results of the bitterness built up during the two conscription referendums in Australia during World War I.

He was later made a Justice of the Peace in New South Wales, Queensland, and in the later years, Great Britain.

The expunging of his "criminal" convictions from the record by a subsequent Labor Government was a necessary pre-requisite to the receipt of these later honours which Marshall somewhat ironically accepted with a little grin. Being accepted as a patriot in England never ceased to amuse him in later years in contrast

to the treatment received in his own country from a "Nationalist" Government.

Because all the official records of Marshall's "crimes" ceased to exist, much diligent research into the heroic casualties of the great Anti-Conscription campaigns by later eminent historians have failed to give the credit humbly due to Vance Marshall.

It is hoped that the publishing of this volume will, at least posthumously, correct these understandable omissions from a small but rich segment of the labour history of Australia.

Incidentally, notwithstanding the Government of the day ineffectively attempting to silence Marshall and other members of the Anti-Conscription Campaign Committee during the two years that the referendums were in progress — both were decisively rejected by the people of this country as the record shows:

1916	—	"NO" majority	: 72,476
1917	—	"NO" majority	: 166,588

The pathos in almost every chapter of these moving books was a gift of expression so evident in most of Marshall's literary works. His jail experiences left an indelible impression on his mind, just as they did some years before on his mate Henry Lawson. Indeed, Marshall has asserted that the knowledge that Lawson had also trod the cold stone of the jail floor was always a source of comfort to him. He felt that he was in "good company". Knowing Vance Marshall, this attitude was readily understandable — from his early days he was an avid disciple of Lawson and attributed the restlessness in his formative years directly to the powerful influence of those emotional and litting lines of "The Vagabond" —

"A God-like ride on a thundering sea
When all but the stars are blind—
A desperate race with Eternity
With a gale-and-a-half behind . . ."

After a good education at Fort Street Boys' High School in Sydney, Marshall was uncomfortably placed in a clerk's job in a city bank. In 1906 he sailed from Australia as a crew member on a freighter which was blockaded in the Siberian port of Vladivostok where, strangely enough, he had his first experience of jail — for possessing a revolver which he bought to protect himself in that improvised war-torn city.

Subsequent travels took him on an adventurous meander through Canada, China, Japan, West Indies, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and then Mexico where he was a correspondent and ultimately a very unwilling prisoner for a week in the jail of that colourful Mexican revolutionary, Pancho Villa, until he talked his way out and crossed the border into the U.S.A. and on to San Francisco.

Attracted by the desire to participate in the labour and anti-war struggles in his native Australia, Marshall arrived back in Sydney after an absence of eleven years, plunging immediately into the rough-and-tumble of industrial and political activities of those momentous years.

He became an active member of the very old and progressive Darling Harbour Branch of the Australian Labor Party and on the 24th February, 1917, he was appointed, from a list of 79 formidable applicants, as the first Organiser of the N.S.W. Branch of The Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia, also taking his seat as the Union's delegate to the powerful Sydney Trades & Labour Council. These two appointments were directly responsible for the publication of his jail books.

The young Marshall was greatly upset at the death of his mate, Henry Lawson, in 1922, and, as if again following the call in the opening stanza of "The Vagabond"—

"A careless roaming life is mine,
Ever by field or flood . . ."

after declining to stand for Parliament or accept many offers to keep him in Australian politics, left on a two-year rove in out-back Australia and then married Isabelle Sirman, the young Sydney girl whom he met whilst in Albury jail—she being a member of the women's committee which organised visits and food parcels to the political prisoners. He embarked on a second world trip from Brisbane with his wife and young son Vance, and remained in England for thirty-four years.

Whilst in England, the versatile Marshall was able to devote his energies to politics and writing. Many popular plays with political themes for the Left Book Club came from his pen, including "Poison Gas", "By Appointment", and "Physical Fits". The famous Windmill Theatre commissioned him to write a series of twelve very successful reviews. His quick wit and infectious sense of humour brought him further work script-writing for the vaudeville and stage.

Not neglecting politics, he became Chairman of the important Westminster Branch of the British Labour Party, a member of the Westminster City and London County Councils and was welcomed into the ranks of the Fabian Society.

Marshall, appointed as a Justice of the Peace, took his place on the London Bench of Magistrates and during World War II, in addition to his magisterial and council duties, worked in an aircraft factory, the British Civil Service and had a distinguished record of service as an airwarden in the Civil Defence during the blitz. He received commendation for his work for the Board of Trade in salvage recovery and ironically, he was appointed as an official lecturer to H.M. Forces—a

position which he considered finally vindicated him of any charge of being unpatriotic.

He returned again to his homeland in 1958 to work in the administration of various migrant hostels as an officer of the Commonwealth Department of Labour and National Service, retiring at the age of 71 to concentrate once again on writing. He had an immediate success with two best sellers, "The Children" and "A River Ran Out of Eden", both of which have since been published overseas in several languages.

Unfortunately, many manuscripts, including his autobiography, remained uncompleted when Marshall died at Oberon Base Hospital on the 3rd February, 1964.

Deeply affected by the systematic degradation of human beings and the brutal disciplines of prison life, as exposed in all rawness to Marshall personally, his jail books brought the need for penal reforms into the open forum of Parliament. The truth of his written word was officially denied but later admitted and, as a result of his efforts, the lot of the inmate of H.M. Prisons in New South Wales underwent some startling changes. Others have carried on the work to assist the anonymous and forgotten men in grey, but none have had the spontaneous mass support that was given to Vance Marshall in his struggle for justice. Indeed, few would have had the courage to fight in the manner which he did.

The Federal Council of the M.W.U. pays tribute to the work of its first Organiser, James Vance Marshall, by endorsing the publication of this Memorial Edition, in the hope that the work and life of the author will be remembered and appreciated by those on both sides of the high stone walls, who today, are sharing in the fruits of his labours.

DOUG. HOWITT,
Research Officer,
N.S.W. Branch,
Miscellaneous Workers' Union.

Sydney, 19th August, 1968.

DEDICATED TO
COMRADES IN JAIL

for "These are they who came out of great tribulation".
—Revelation, 7-8.

Ye who keep the weary vigil, ye who know the dull despair
Of a life encompassed by a prison bar,
Cheerless army toiling ever bowed beneath thy load of care,
Pause and listen to a message from afar.

Think ye not ye are forgotten; in the watches of the night
I am marching side by side with thee anew,
And, recalling tragic memory, I sit me down to write
Dedicating this, the humble work, to you.

PRELUDE

With the smell of the jail fresh upon me I take up my pen to write these little narratives of the life that has been mine.

The tales that I am about to tell will possess none of the exaggerated embellishments of the orthodox "exposure". I do not urge them to be received as an exposure, but simply as a plain, unvarnished, first-hand depiction of that vague, shadowy form of existence so far removed from the lot of the ordinary mortal—life behind the bars of a prison. I desire only to draw aside the veil for a fleeting moment and reveal to those who care to follow me the tragedy and pathos of a hidden world.

And so I present to you this little record of my own jail experiences. I have nothing to gain in so doing; in fact, it may prove that I have much to lose. I have still my way to battle through life. The incarceration I suffered was due to open denunciation of the prevailing social system. Yet such system continues to exist, and upon its upholders I myself must rely for the privilege of continuing my own existence. A jail record is far from being an incentive to the extension of such privilege and, clearly, I must suffer by its advertisement.

Still further, my offence was the public expression of deep conviction. The treatment meted to me by the tyrannous powers that be has but served to weld the iron of bitterness more deeply into my soul. It must assert itself again, and still yet again. I have been delivered into the hands of the minions of constituted authority once, and I cannot truthfully dwell upon my contact with them, save to their discredit. I may be delivered into their hands again, and experience, actual and tragic, assures me that they in their inherent vindictiveness will not forget.

I take the risk wittingly, but it is mine, and mine alone.

I refer to no authority in order to substantiate the grim truths which I am about to write. I simply recall what my eyes have seen, and in my own humble way trace the picture, dear reader, for you.

VANCE MARSHALL.

Sydney, May, 1918.

THE ARREST

With bars they blur the gracious moon
And blind the goodly sun;
And they do well to hide their hell,
For in it things are done
That son of God nor son of man
Ever should look upon.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.
by Oscar Wilde

At 2.30 of the afternoon of an October day I ended a customary Sunday stroll amid the flower-girt paths of the Sydney Botanical Gardens and turned my steps Domainwards. It was upon arrival at the spot at which I was to officiate in the capacity of chairman of the weekly Social Democratic open-air gathering that I was arrested. The enquiring crowd began to gather quickly, but the two plain-clothes men who fell in on either side of me gave little information.

"At Number Three Station," they said, "we will explain."

They were eager to get me away without the risk of a disturbance, and I assisted their efforts to do so with tactful submissiveness.

Arrived at the station, I was placed in the charge dock. A warrant issued by the Defence Department was produced and drawled through, formally charging me with a breach of the War Precautions Act; to wit, the having given utterance upon a public platform to words apt to cause disaffection to His Majesty the King.

"Have you anything to say?" I was asked. But, like Brer Rabbit, I decided to "lay low and say nuthin'."

"Hold up your arms," brusquely ordered an officer, proceeding to relieve my pockets and person generally of everything to the minutest article.

"Take him away!" The words were uttered in a careless, matter of fact sort of way.

A moment later the overwhelming feeling of hopelessness and helplessness that comes to one with the clanging of the heavy door of a prison cell was mine.

It took me several minutes to fully waken to a realisation of the situation and take stock of my new surroundings. The apartment was rather larger in size than that which I learned later to be the size of an average cell. It was evidently a place of detention designed for the accommodation of few or many unfortunates as a varying supply demanded. The walls were of stone, the floor of cement, and light was admitted through a barred ventilator set close beneath the high white-washed ceiling. The place was absolutely devoid of furniture in any shape or form. Against the further wall, and in direct line with the door, was an unscreened enamel sanitary pedestal.

Unnerved and oppressed I paced the limited space for what seemed to be an eternity. I heard six o'clock strike somewhere out in the city, and then the iron flap which covered a small opening set in the door for communication purposes was pushed roughly aside. The face of a plain-clothes officer appeared at the aperture, while, in the background, I could detect the presence of two other persons.

"Come up here" reverberated a thunderous voice.

I stood closer to the door and was immediately assailed by a volley of questions and cross-questions, interspersed by a series of well-timed assertions. The questions were designed to extract information regarding my connections, political and industrial, and that of my acquaintances. The assertions, relevant and incriminating, were designed to shape my replies. The whole performance was a frenzied application of what is known as "the third degree"—the line of procedure invariably resorted to by the detective geniuses of today in order to secure the damnable species of evidence upon which they solely rely—"information received."

The trio wearied of my disinterested replies and left me. Shortly afterwards the iron flap was again unplaced and a meal—supplied, I later learned, by friends outside—was pushed in to me. It was unaccompanied by knife, fork, or spoon.

The hours dragged away. I was nerve-shaken and weary, but had no place to rest, save upon the uninviting cement floor. I respected my clothing and continued the weary marching. The darkness came up, but the cell remained unlighted. From somewhere along the echoing passage there came occasionally the wailing of a female prisoner, followed by a gruff outburst of official abuse and lurid mandates of silence.

The door grated suddenly open, and a dim light broke in upon the mirk of my cell.

"The magistrate has come and will decide your bail, and your friends are waiting," said a policeman in almost friendly tones.

He led the way to an outer office where my coming was awaited. It was 9.15 p.m. Some moments later I had passed from out the walls of Darlinghurst Station seeking to throw off the oppressiveness which still gripped me and to forget the eerie cries of the wailing woman.

And so began my jail experience.

THE POLICE COURT

For they starve the little frightened child
Till it weeps both night and day;
And they scourge the weak, and flog the fool,
And gibe the old and grey;
And some grow mad, and all grow bad,
And none a word may say.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

I had delivered myself from bail, and, seated at the rear of the dreary hall, awaited the calling of my case. His Worship entered and passed solemnly to the canopied dais as the court arose with a heavy shuffling of large, official feet.

Without delay the business of the day began.

From his place in front of the judicial throne the clerk bawled the name which headed the list in his hand. At one side a sliding door opened noiselessly and furnished a fleeting glimpse of huddled beings.

"Thomas Henderson," reiterated the officer who stood on guard.

Thomas Henderson entered with an alacrity hardly in keeping with his apparent weight of years, an alacrity which betokened an impelling force at his rear. The bar of the dock was raised and fell back into place behind him. The charge was chanted across the room: "Thomas Henderson, you are charged with having been drunk and disorderly on the evening of the 12th instant. How do you plead; guilty or not guilty?"

Thomas Henderson raised his old, unkempt head and looked fearfully around. He returned his dull, pathetic gaze to the bench, and his lips seemed to mumble.

"Guilty, your Worship," interpreted the uniformed representative of law and order at his shabby elbow.

A policeman stepped briskly into the witness-box, and in some dozen words told the tale of a gallant arrest. The magistrate scribbled a few lines on a paper before him.

"Fined five pounds or one month's hard labor," he said.

The sliding door re-opened and shut, and Thomas Henderson had passed from view.

Another name was called, and a girl was led forth from the outer enclosure. The charge against her was intoned—the soliciting of men in a public place.

She crumpled up before the stare of the many and sobbed convulsively.

Yes, she was guilty. No, she had nothing to say. She was a waitress, but there were so many others. Her father was a wharf laborer, but since the strike . . . and the rent kept coming round.

"Three months' hard labor," came the terrible voice, calm and impassive.

The business of the court proceeded swiftly.

A shabby little woman, flat-chested and middle-aged, responded to her name. Her drawn face and shapeless figure told of toil and child-bearing. She listened to the charge attentively, and the light of defiance died from out her eye.

"Guilty, yer Wushup," she moaned pleadingly.

She had abused and assaulted a burly policeman. She had a "down" on the force. Her eldest son had been "pinched" a month before.

"Four months' hard labor"; and somewhere amid the standing throng behind me a child stifled its heart-broken little sob.

And so justice rattled on its course at the Central Police Court. Few and far between were the breaks in the monotonous order of things. At one time an ordinary "riotous" had dared to face them all untremblingly, and in clear, emphatic tones to plead "Not guilty".

"Put him back; put him back!" chorussed the court. "Put him back till later! Next case! Next case!"

And the alleged "riotous" who had dared to hamper the speedy dispensation of justice was jostled away.

Just previous to the midday recess I entered the dock to answer a charge of disaffection to His Majesty the King.

My case was adjourned, and my bail raised with a spitefulness born of fanaticism. Then I, too, passed out to take my place in that vilest of all hells, the detention coop of the Central Police Court.

Over the unextravagant amount of room space were spread some twenty or thirty individuals in a variety of attitudes. It was a Monday morning, and they represented the central city arrests for Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

The apartment was absolutely devoid of seating accommodation, and the wall, if shining with a horrible, mysterious

coating of grease, was the only restful support of the hapless inmates.

The floor was coated with the phlegmy saliva of liquor-parched throats.

In a corner were set two exposed closet conveniences, and over one hung a man who vomited with racking violence.

An old derelict had taken possession of the only patch upon which a splash of sunlight fell through the barred grating above. He was engaged upon his toilet, and had unwound and removed the offensive strips of rags which did service as socks. As they lay spread upon the battered footwear the spotlight glare of sunshine exaggerated the caked filth which lined their folds. He held open the breast of an aged shirt, and with him, peering eyes sought the parasites which dwelt in its seams.

The whole atmosphere was nauseating and revolting.

In a hopeless heap against the wall crouched Thomas Henderson. Despair and grief were written all over his rugged features.

I lounged up with affected unconcern.

"Yes," he replied to my query. "Me fust time. Seventy-five year ole an' still learnin'. Learnin' I ain't no better'n a dorg."

He ruminated for a minute, then continued bitterly:

"If yer wasn't a dorg they'd give yer a chanst ter clean up. It stands ter reason a bloke ain't got no show in the court with three days' whiskers an' jail dirt on 'im."

The lock grated harshly and the iron door swung open. A uniformed attendant entered and singled me out.

"The office is open," he said. "Come on."

And so I left them—left old Thomas Henderson crouching brokenly on the spit-strewn floor; left the wretched man in the corner vomiting into the exposed closet; left the battered derelict to continue his eternal searching; left the whole heart-rending, sordid daily tragedy of the detention coop behind me.

LEAVING THE WORLD BEHIND.

I know not whether Laws be right
Or whether Laws be wrong;
All that we know who lie in jail
Is that the walls are strong;
And that a day is like a year—
A year whose days are long.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

The dismissal of my appeal against conviction was announced across the awesome space of the court with judicial pomp and majesty. A large, heavy hand, bordered by an official sleeve, glided from somewhere and gripped the shoulder of my coat. A voice, surfeited with artificial solemnity, chanted the next case, and I was drawn away — a convicted criminal.

Behind me a blurred, misty court proceeded with its automatic dispensation of justice; over me, dreadful and oppressive, hung the awfulness of my crime; and before me loomed the darksome walls and bars of a mysterious prison world.

Out in the sunshine the hum of the busy city continued with usual wont. The keen-faced office man brushed past in eager haste; the glad-eyed girl, radiant with summer finery, went her happy way; and the dawdling messenger boy gazed listlessly at the glaring maze of window displays.

Never had the everyday world seemed so entrancing to me as it was upon that summer morning as I, in the keeping of two huge constables, with a mind filled with the mingled emotions of fierce resentment and almost pleasurable regret, trudged along the streets of the Sydney of my childhood.

Within the gloomy precincts of Darlinghurst Station my pockets were relieved of their total contents and, without ceremony, I was hustled away to "the yard".

Mention of "the yard" suggests walking space, resting space, air and sunshine, but the grim irony of the appellation is borne home upon one with a closer acquaintance. "The yard" is simply an ordinary cell save for the existence of a few iron bars in substitution of the small portion of the whitewashed ceiling.

It was still early in the day, in the vicinity of ten-thirty a.m., and I was the first of the Long Bay Penitentiary contingent to arrive.

Except for the inevitable sanitary pedestal, the more hideous because of its solitary conspicuousness, no article of furniture adorned "the yard". This studied lack of seating accommodation in such places leads one to assume that it is part of the system to accustom the unfortunate at the outset of his incarceration to the eternal pacing which must serve as his main diversion in the weary hours of solitude before him.

From the standpoint of cleanliness the floor and walls were far from inviting, but weariness and dejection overcame my scruples. I seated myself in a corner upon the well-tramped cement and sought to distract my thoughts from the vague possibilities of the future.

A pencilled inscription scrawled across the opposite wall attracted my attention. It was evidently the work of an underworld professional who believed whole-heartedly in the theory that, irrespective of when or where, it pays at all times to advertise. "Boys, when you get out go to Miss Lottie Beach's, 46 — Street, Paddington, for a good time," so it read.

At about twelve o'clock the sound of angry voices and struggling came drifting in from the outer passage. The door was jerked noisily open. A man sprawled violently across the room and fell into a heap. Three uniformed men pushed in and glanced savagely at him, turned on their heels, and clashed and bolted the door.

My new companion slowly unwound himself and stood up. "I tole 'em wot I thought, an' the cows put the boot inter me," he said by way of explanation.

He was a young fellow about nineteen, and somewhere from beneath his mop of dark, wavy hair a little stream of blood was trickling. We had neither rag nor water, and he leaned over the closet till the plashing drip, drip, drip died away.

"The yard" now began to fill up quickly. Time after time the door swung open and batches of three and four were bundled in by eager hands without, while the general air of bustle and the monotonous grating of a score of bolts told that other pens were likewise receiving their quota of human cattle. Occasionally the shrill voice of a woman rang high above the droning din of the prison.

Owing to the disturbed state of mind which one generally experiences in anticipation of the ordeal of a court trial, I had eaten no breakfast that day, and, upon one occasion, as the door opened to swell our already overcrowded ranks, had enquired of the possibility of obtaining food.

"If yer lucky yer might get a bite at the Bay tonight," said the officer with brutal unconcern.

And so, hungry and depressed, I reseatd myself upon the floor and listened to the subdued and broken conversation of my companions. Some had already been incarcerated for several months awaiting trial, and some were being returned to their cells at Long Bay to wait several months longer ere they would have an opportunity of disproving the allegations against them. Such mockery of justice is allowed by the all-powerful "system".

As the hours dragged past and "the yard" became more congested the atmosphere increased in vitiation. A vile, indescribable odor crept out of the now overtaxed sanitary convenience. Against one wall a long, gaunt, silent individual, with a flush on his cheeks which told its own terrible tale, coughed hoarsely and expectorated huge gobs of crimson-streaked saliva.

At half-past three in the afternoon we were lined up and our names called.

"Right turn. Quick march!" roared the voice of authority.

In the outer courtyard the prison tram, with its glazed windows and brand of "Special", awaited our coming. One by one we entered. Up one side of the car ran a narrow passage, and on to this opened a series of tiny, iron-grated cages, each containing seating accommodation for four prisoners. The one nearest to the entering platform was occupied by four females, and the youngest member of the group sought to hide a weeping face with the sleeve of her blouse.

Impelled from behind I stumbled into an apartment and six others with me. A scramble for seats ensued, and success attended the efforts of four. The place was not constructed to allow for standing room, and the surplus three literally piled themselves upon the laps of the others. The sound of shuffling disorder announced that overcrowding existed all along the line.

The doors were carefully padlocked by an officer, attended by an attendant armed with carbine and revolver.

The tram gave a lurch, and the noise of the great, unseen city was around us. No crack existed through which we might get a fleeting glimpse of the world we were leaving behind.

My companions on the whole were a well-dressed, intelligent-looking lot and, I learned in conversation, had been allotted various terms of imprisonment ranging to ten years.

Beside me, my first acquaintance of the day, he of the wavy hair, now tufted with dry blood, sat crushed against the wall in moody silence. He had deserted from the military. "Couldn't stick bein' bossed about like a kid," he told me.

A young fellow in clothes of fashionable cut had plunged on a certain big race. The "sure thing" had been "pipped on

the post", so he said, and the till at the bank in which he toiled as teller showed an uncountable discrepancy. It wasn't the few years' jail that troubled him—but after. Another, an elderly man, had been brought from a neighboring State charged with implication in the production of valueless notes. "The wife and kiddies" was the theme of his expressions of regret.

The most interesting and loquacious of all was a happy-mannered, bespectacled chemist and alleged adulterator of patent medicines. This gentleman protested his innocence with violent eloquence, and concluded with the sincere hope that God in His goodness would some day deliver the judge into his hands by way of a medical prescription.

There was also one of the number, a gallant lieutenant, to whose prowess, not upon the battlefield, but upon the domestic field, was due his unenviable position. He was a bigamist.

But our eagerness to query and condole was short-lived. At the back of each man's mind was the sorrowful realisation of his own sad lot.

By degrees we relapsed into dismal silence. The armed guard, parading up and down the narrow passage, glared in upon us through the barred partition.

The quiet spread from enclosure to enclosure as if by magic, and soon all that could be heard above the rumble of wheels was the muffled, girlish sobs of the weeping female prisoner.

And so we journeyed on towards the hidden prison world.

CRIMINALS IN THE MAKING

This, too, I know—and wise it were
If each could know the same—
That every prison that men build
Is built with bricks of shame,
And bound with bars lest Christ should see
How men their brothers maim.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

With a protesting screech of brakes the prison tram lurched spasmodically to a standstill.

"Long Bay!" The whispered ejaculation passed from cage to cage.

The line of doors was unpadlocked and from out a murky interior the car disgorged its human freight.

Dazed by the orders and counter-orders of an army of officials we stood fearfully in line, with our faces to the wall of the asphalt courtyard.

Somewhere behind us there came beating the rhythmic tread of marching feet and I dared to turn my head. A grey band of prisoners were swinging by. There was a falter in the stride of its members as they glanced furtively towards us. An oath rattled from the gang warden at their rear, and the regular tramp, tramp, tramp resounded till far down amidst the spreading maze of barred fences, and walls, and compounds they passed from view.

In obedience to a gruff command we filed into the semi-darkness of the long narrow reception hall. The elderly, benevolent-looking individual in charge greeted us cheerily and addressed us as "lads". In an undertone I suggested to the man behind me that he was a "very decent sort of chap". But the man behind me had been there before.

"Decent," he muttered scornfully. "Decent! Young feller, no man can be decent and be a jail warden—an' this ole cow is the worst of the whole bag o' tricks. Don't yer know 'oo 'e is? That's —, the hangman. Just you wait till 'e begins ter roar. I tell yer —."

"Get inter them baths," he was shouting. "Quick an' lively! Chuck yer togs out 'ere an' put on the clobber wot's on the stool."

Eager to escape the surging flow of unwarranted wrath we obeyed with alacrity, and each entered the cubicle before him. With much dint of splashing our ablutions proceeded, and the gentle hangman fumed and fretted outside and glared at our naked bodies over the breast-high partitions. His importunate insistence accelerated our actions, and but few minutes elapsed before we had completed our toilets.

We emerged—but what a revolution in appearance! My companions had entered those tiny bath enclosures bearing the appearance of decently-dressed, respectable-looking, every-day citizens; they came out as criminals. There was a glass fixed upon the wall, and in turning I caught the reflection of myself—the most evil-looking blackguard of the whole lot.

Briefly I will describe the degrading apparel supplied to prisoners of His Majesty under the "humane" jail system of New South Wales; an attire in comparison with which a close-fitting guernseyed suit of broad arrows would rank as purple and fine linen.

The design and workmanship are execrable, and would disgrace a sewing-class of infants.

The jacket is made of drab-colored cloth, and its brevity is such that it barely reaches to the hips. A single trouser button fastens the neck close-pressed beneath the chin. The outside is devoid of pockets, but inside is stitched another piece of cloth to form a receptacle for towel and soap. On a staring circle of white canvas sewn over the left breast is branded the number of the prisoner, and a similar adornment occupies the middle of the back. Sometimes the sleeves succeed in passing beyond the fingertips, but more often end half-way betwixt the elbow and wrist.

The vest, or, better said, the bodice, stretches from throat to waist, and, unlike the jacket, is decorated with a veritable army of closely-set buttons. They, too, are of the trouser variety. In common with the jacket the bodice bears the canvas number brands both back and front.

The shirt is of course striped material, fitted with the inevitable trouser buttons, as is likewise the singlet of yellow irritating flannelette. If a term of sentence is sufficiently long to warrant further disfigurement, these latter articles are stamped boldly both front and back with the number of the prisoner to whom they are allotted.

The trousers are made of rough holland, and supported by braces of like material. On the right-hand side is fitted a crudely-shaped pocket of insignificant holding capacity.

The hat is of coarse-woven straw, the shapeless socks of slaty-colored wool, and the ill-mated boots of the blucher persuasion.

The whole equipment is supplied at random, and is thus grotesquely ill-fitting. Seldom does any portion of it happen to be new. Each and every piece generally bears the frayed and stained tokens of years and years of grim service.

I was hungry. The day was creeping away, and I had eaten nothing. It was now 4.30 p.m. Food had been refused me at Darlinghurst Station, and from the muffled murmurs around me I learned that many of my fellow unfortunates had experienced like treatment.

With sudden clatter a large washing dish was thrust through the doorway, followed by a few spoons, tin dixies, and chunks of dry bread.

A voice from without bawled the one word, "Soup!"

A disorderly rush and scramble ensued, from which a few emerged triumphant with laden tins. There were not sufficient dixies or spoons to supply one-fifth of the number of hungry beings, but those who had failed to secure the implements of attack were nothing daunted. Jail hunger knows no law of decency. With bare hands they seized the huge, uncut, dripping leaves of cabbage and finger-raked the slimy, lukewarm depths for meat which did not exist. The settled dregs were scooped up on grease-smear'd palms and plastered upon the remnants of bread till every crumb and particle were gone.

Again a valley of sharp commands assailed us.

Outside in the courtyard we stood to attention as the doctor passed along the line.

"Venereal cases, one step forward," he said.

One young fellow responded, and was directed to take his place at the end.

A large-girthed individual in civilian clothes now appeared upon the scene. An unwonted display of servile deference and an increased officiousness on the part of the warders showed plainly that he was the governor of the jail.

Unnerved and depressed by the racking events of the day we quailed before his angry gaze.

"Any first-timers?" he thundered.

A murmured affirmative passed down the ranks.

He eyed us up and down. "First-timers!" he roared. "First-time-caughters, you mean. Well, you're a bright-looking lot, I must say. If I was to win the whole bunch in a raffle there isn't one that I'd bother to cart across the street home. Lock 'em up! Lock 'em up!" And his elevating tirade ended.

It was almost 5 o'clock, and the hum and bustle of the prison day had long since ceased. As we marched towards the

grey, gaunt line of halls and ranges the regular ring of our footsteps echoed eerily back from the labyrinth of deserted, iron-picketed yards.

On we went, each to his separate cell, pausing at the iron-bound doorway to pass in the bundled blankets and sanitary tub.

The iron doors and bolts clashed harshly, and into the hateful tomb and into our weary souls there crept through the grated ventilators above the shadows of night.

INITIAL STAGES

Each narrow cell in which we dwell
Is a foul and dark latrine,
And the fetid breath of living death
Chokes up each grated screen;
And all, but lust, is turned to dust
In Humanity's machine.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

How those lines, memorised in days gone by, rang through my weary brain like a funeral dirge as the desolate hours of my first night in jail dragged their fitful course! How vividly it yet comes back to me—that eternity of wakefulness!

Naturally high strung and sensitive, the harassing events of the day reacted upon my mind to an extraordinary degree. In the awful darkness I tossed wretchedly upon the comfortless canvas hammock which sagged from its low-set hooks to the cement floor beneath. Save for the occasional pat, pat, pat of felt-shod feet as the ever-watching, ever-listening guard sneaked from post to post, the silence, soul-wracking in its intensity, was absolutely unbroken.

After an age of agony a tiny glimmer on the narrow grating above told that out over the forbidden world the moon had risen.

It was mid-summer, and the meagre cell space had slowly become a veritable furnace, the atmosphere vitiated, stifling, choking. From their neighboring swamp haunts the mosquitoes drifted up in relentless droves as though seeking to increase the torment of that dreadful night. In despair I arose and seizing the threadbare cluster of blankets swished them violently to and fro above my head. The effort was fruitless of result, and the heat and the droning parasites remained.

When came a tiny patch of grey dawn light, with bedding long since folded, I was pacing the narrow limits of the floor. The coming of a new day, offering as it did but scanty hope for betterment, nevertheless seemed to drive the melancholy from my mind. I began to feel an interest in my surroundings. The type

of dwelling place that was to be mine during the months ahead awakened my attention. Taking a careful look of the cell I found it to be about fourteen feet in length, seven feet in width. I judged the whitewashed ceiling to be ten feet above the floor. The stone walls were painted a sombre-colored brown as though to obliterate the rub of tired shoulders. On the back of the huge sheet of solid steel which did service as a door was pasted a notice warning the inmate to keep the place in the highest state of scrupulous cleanliness and to refrain from defacing the furniture in the slightest degree. Mention of "furniture" naturally inclined me to take peculiar note of the articles referred to. In one corner was fixed a three-cornered shelf, which did service as a table, whose sole adornment was a quart pot containing water. At the far end of the cell were piled in a heap a dustpan, a bannister broom, a highly polished tin dish, and a pair of shovel-like felt slippers. Beside the shelf-table was placed a wooden stool, which, in evident fear that it might possibly be moved to a more comfortable and unoccupied corner, WAS CHAINED TO THE WALL.

The single wall adornments were a typed list of the articles enumerated, a tag of coarse sanitary paper, and a much-thumbed booklet containing seventy-two pages, and marked "JAIL REGULATIONS AND GENERAL ORDERS. APPLICABLE TO BOTH SEXES EXCEPT WHERE OTHERWISE PROVIDED". I took the volume from its place, and in the half light glanced through its pages. A clause caught my eye. It was rule 9, on page 7, and read as follows: "On hearing the cell door open the prisoner will stand at attention on the mark on the floor." This explained the mystery of a huge broad arrow painted upon the floor immediately in front of but well back from the doorway.

During the course of my imprisonment I occupied various cells, but the description here given applies to each and all.

I had barely completed my mental survey and inventory-taking when a clamorous outburst broke suddenly in upon the silence. It was the "get-up" gong. The prison day had officially begun.

Outside was a pandemonium of eager bustle. The warders, their silent footgear now replaced by heavy soled boots, tramped hastily over the echoing courtyards. I heard the faint jangle of keys and the grating shoot of a lock, followed by a sharp command. The sound was repeated again and again, but with increasing harshness and volume. It was drawing nearer. The steel doors were being thrown open. In compliance with rule 9 I took my stand in readiness "on the mark on the floor", till, with a fierce, nerve-tearing rattle, the metal sheet before me swung

upon its creaking hinges and a blaze of glorious sunlight poured unrestrictedly in and dazzled my unaccustomed eyes.

The exultations of my heart were shortlived.

A lusty command rumbled from wall to wall.

"Put our yer bed an' tub. Look alive!"

Hastily I placed the sleeping equipment and battered sanitary convenience where directed, and a sharp, short kick on the part of the warder sent a waiting receptacle containing hominy and the day's allowance of bread spinning in towards me.

Surrounded by a now accentuated gloom I toyed with the coarse, tasteless meal, suggestive of half-boiled sawdust, and appeased my appetite with broken pieces from the regulation chunk of dry bread.

An hour or so later, when had died away the steady tramp of marching feet and medley of vociferous orders which told that the human cattle had been herded from their stalls and driven to their daily tasks, the door of the apartment I occupied again clattered open.

Outside I found my companions of the day before, the contingent of newcomers, standing stiffly in line with their faces to the wall in customary fashion. I silently took my place in the ranks. It was then still early in the morning, but till close on noon we stood there unsheltered from the merciless glare of a scorching December sun, while behind us a warder lounged lazily in the cool shade of a nearby porch. Suddenly he became obsequiously alert and attentive. From beyond the iron pickets of the yard an individual in gold-braided authority was angrily roaring instructions.

"Sort that lot out and get them numbered up and put away," he was saying.

With brand new numbers staring from my drab clad breast and back, I was hustled to the particular hall which included, amongst its occupants, criminals of my peculiar type.

The officer in charge was loquacious. He knew me of old.

"So they got yer on a charge o' disaffection ter the King, did they? I'm a good Labor man, I am. But I don't believe in a workin' man 'avin' no respect fer a King. After orl 'e's the King, ain't 'e."

I murmured assent to his query, and he rambled on.

"I've 'eard yer speak many a time. Yer orl right with me. I'm a good Labor man, I am. All the same I don't agree with you altogether. I believe in conscription, an' I think that strikers ought ter be shot."

Again he assured me volubly that I was alright with him, but, as an afterthought, as though such assurance might have detracted from the dignity of his position, cautioned me with

great emphasis to always salute and say "Sir" when he addressed me.

Leaving me to stand patiently upon the mat he bustled off to attend to other matters. Suddenly his voice came peremptorily from the far end of the hall.

"You, two-thirty-nine," he shouted, with no further token of friendliness. I went briskly forward to where he stood at the entrance of an open cell.

It was the show apartment. He pointed to the polished floor, the shining tinware, and the white scrubbed woodwork with evident pride.

"This is 'B' Hall, the cleanest hall in Long Bay Jail," he said. "If yer don't keep the peter I give yer up to dick like this I'll break yer damn neck."

He turned round and spoke to a waiting prisoner.

"Here y're. Fix 'im up, barber."

The barber swung forward a stool and within the space of twenty seconds a luxuriant crop of hair had tumbled about my feet.

As I arose a Bible was thrust into my hand, and so armed I passed into the shadowy murk of the cell allotted me, and then, with the clash of steel ringing mockingly in my ears, crouched down on to the chained stool nameless, numbered, shaven-headed, degraded and miserable.

THE BREAKING IN

Out into God's sweet air we went,
But not in wonted way,
For this man's face was white with fear,
And that man's face was grey,
And I never saw sad men who looked
So wistfully at the day.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

To me jail was ever a terrible place, but the first days of my incarceration were a veritable hell. It is not good to recall those cruel, year-like hours of tribulation. I try to forget them. Time and again I close, as I think, forever those saddened pages of memory. But, maybe with the harsh call of angry authority in the factory above my office, maybe with the sudden clatter of a falling implement in the workshop below, maybe with the dirge-like tread of passing soldiery, the flood gates are re-opened and the recollection of that wretched term of "separate" comes back with horrible and overwhelming intensity.

At times I sat for hour after hour in the shadowy gloom of the narrow cell; at times I paced its limits, not wearily and brokenly, but with a fierce, surging vigor born of sheer desperation.

As yet my mind had not become reconciled to a living tomb, with walls of stone and door of sheeted steel, nor my eyes accustomed to the dim haze of the ill-lighted place, and so Bible and regulation book remained in their places untouched.

At daybreak, when had ceased the clamor of the call-bell, I would hear the parring bolts shooting and re-shooting, the coarse streams of command and abuse drawing nearer and nearer, till at length, with a rattle of keys which seemed to grate into my very soul, the door of my own cell would jerk open. Blinded by the sudden access of light I would push out my folded hammock and sanitary tub with groping haste. The door would then re-shut upon me and a tin of tasteless hominy which, as yet, I could not touch.

Later on the silence would be broken by the marching tramp of hundreds and hundreds of pairs of feet as the prisoners passed out to their daily tasks.

At ten o'clock, in company with fourteen or fifteen other prisoners also doing "separate", I, putting aside my interminable task of polishing tinware, was led out to a towering wall-girt yard for exercise. Arranged at intervals of six paces apart the order to march was given, and we set off at a quick step. A huge iron-barred gate was locked upon us, and from the outside a burly young giant stood jangling his keys, watching us with a eagle eye, and cursing volubly the one who dared to vary in the slightest degree the allotted space between us.

There was no leader to this weird procession. We formed an ever-moving circle, ghastly, tragic, and pathetic.

Because of an incident connected therewith I remembered best of all my first morning of Long Bay exercise. Overhead the sun shone fiercely. Perspiration streamed down our faces, but still we seemed to go faster and faster. In me the insults and gibes of the warden ceased to awaken resentment. At first, as our pace, instead of relaxing, grew faster and faster, I could not understand the reason of the quickened stride of myself and comrades. Then it dawned upon me. We were almost happy. After the nauseating terror of those hideous cells it was joy to feel the fierce, scorching sunshine, and see the faces of men. We lived to life's full each minute as it came and then slipped away to leave us closer to another period of darksome solitude.

Between the layers of felt in one of my cell slippers I had found secreted a few flakes of tobacco. I had them tucked in the palm of my hand, and, glancing round, made a sign to the prisoner behind me. He was a slight, pleasant-faced young fellow, whom I had seen emerge from the cell next to mine. He understood my gesture, and as I dropped the tiny ball of tobacco on to the asphalt he quickly snatched it up. A minute or so later he fell out of the ranks and crossed over to the row of open closets against the wall. I was watching him in passing and saw a tell-tale wisp of blue smoke creep up from where he was. He, too, saw it, and made a violent effort to smother it with his coarse straw hat—but was too late. With a howl of rage the warden unlocked the gate and hesitated. He did not enter, but shouted a command.

"Come here, you in the closet. You, Number One Forty-three," he said.

Our step had lost its ringing rhythm, but we marched on as Number One Forty-three obediently passed out the iron portal. There came a quick, sharp, heavy thud, and the lad went sprawling across the outer court. He rose unsteadily to his feet

and pressed his hands in a vague sort of way against his shaven head.

From various points a host of jail officials were glancing disinterestedly across, and, as though by way of explanation to them, the fiend in human shape yelled out with lying malignance to his wretched victim: "I'll learn yer to call me a bloody cow."

A low, rumbling murmur of impotent rage burst from our lips as we saw Number One Forty-three hustled unresistingly away towards the cells.

I completed that first sixty minutes of jail exercise filled with an oppressiveness that even the glare of cherished sunlight could not dispel. We filed back to "B Hall" and passed One Forty-three standing with his face to a wall and a trembling hand still pressed against his temple. That was the last I ever saw of him. In the afternoon he was not led forth with us to drill. At a quarter-past four a warder entered, ransacked my cell and person, slammed and bolted the steel door for the night, and then passed on to the cell next mine—the cell of Number One Forty-three.

I heard the key turn in the padlock, and a voice call: "Why the Hell an't yer standin' on the mark at attention?"

There was a moment's pause, then the bullying shout continued:

"By Gawd, I'll break yer in once and fer all. I'll teach yer ter sulk round 'ere."

He called along the outer hallway in still louder tones:

"I say, George, give me a 'and fer a minute."

There came the sound of a violent scuffle, then a muffled cry of pain, mingled with the dull, sickening thud of heavy blows.

As the steel bolts grated back into place the coarse voice sounded cheerily.

"Thanks, George, ole chap," it said.

I placed my ear against the stone dividing wall and listened intently, but could hear no sound.

That night I slept but little. As at midnight I lay upon my hammock watching the moonbeams stealing through the narrow bars above, I heard, in the death-like silence, the low whine of a poor, tortured animal—a boy animal numbered One Forty-three.

THE DOOR TO ETERNITY

**They stripped him of his canvas clothes,
And gave him to the flies;
They mocked the swollen purple throat,
And the stark and staring eyes;
And with laughter loud they heaped the shroud
In which their convict lies.**

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

The first task allotted me to perform outside my cell was as eerie as mortal mind could imagine. It was on the afternoon of my third day in jail that I was led out and told off to scrub the most dismal of all the myriad enclosures which go to make up a first-class prison—the condemned cells.

In the outside world there exists many weird misunderstandings as to the details of an orthodox jail hanging. From childhood I have heard tales of long, solemn processions, headed by a white-robed chaplain, followed by the black-clad governor, the trembling prisoner, and a retinue of braided officials, winding slowly along towards the gallows. Such does not apply to Long Bay Penitentiary, where most of the New South Wales hangings of to-day transpire.

At Long Bay the condemned cells, two in number, are located at the extreme end of the second tier of cells which adorn either side of "B" Hall. They are built to face each other across the hallway, and the only difference which exists between them and their fellows lies in the fact that within their walls, at a distance of three feet from and at right angles to the doorway, each contains a fence of iron bars. It is in the passage-way so formed that the guard sits day and night to keep his watch over the prisoner, sleeping or waking, lest the doomed being should himself attempt to rob the gallows of its prey.

Midway between the facing doorways and at a distance of about four feet from each the expanse of iron floorway is broken by a neat boarded square, above which looms ominously a huge black beam extending from wall to wall. The boarded square is

the gallows trapdoor, and the hideous object overhead is the gibbet itself.

Upon the day of the hanging a couple of trembling steps forward from the cell door bring the prisoner to that terrible platform of death, and a slight shuffle arranges him in position, with a hobnailed-booted foot on either side of the division slit. The noose is slipped over his neck, a lever jerked aside, the double trapdoor flies apart, and the business of the morning is completed.

The furniture of the condemned cells is similar to that of others—the shelf-table, tin dish, floor-worn felt slippers, quart pot, even to the wooden stool chained to the wall upon which the unhappy man may rest his nerve-racked person and gaze out upon the hideous beam and platform awaiting without.

I will never forget the feeling of revulsion and indescribable horror that crept over me as I scrubbed the corners of those gruesome places, and arranged the slippers in readiness for a future wearer. Something even impelled me to draw out the stool to the full length of its clanking chain and, seating myself upon it, count the minutes as they sped relentlessly by. I remembered the cases of two men, Wilson and Benzing, who had just previously been hanged, and, allowing my high-strung powers of visualisation to exert themselves to their fullest, I lived again the last tragic moments of their lives.

The approaching steps of a warder re-started me upon my task, and, gathering up my gear, I went out to clean the boarded square.

Despite all that is said by way of justification, a jail hanging is one thing and one thing only. It is simply a cool, callous, cruel, brutal undertaking performed by cool, callous, brutal men in a cool, callous, brutal, business-like manner for payment received.

Tales are told of prisoners awaiting the fulfilment of the death penalty being allowed whatever they may desire in the way of food. This is an absolute fabrication. While in jail I conversed with many who at the last moment have had a death sentence commuted to imprisonment for life, and from them I learned the truth. A condemned man is not engaged upon productive labor, and so, in accordance with the prison regulations is supplied with Number One ration. Except for Number Five, dry bread and water, this is the very lowest class of ration. If a man awaiting execution becomes greatly perturbed in mind he may make application to the doctor, who has power to grant him a tiny allowance of coarse fig tobacco and an ounce of tasteless brown sugar.

And so I completed the hateful work and turned my back

upon those living tombs, but that night in the darkness I sat grappling with a mighty problem. This was the problem: Which was the greater crime—for a man to rise up in the heat of an overwhelming passion and perform some terrible act, or for several paid officials to combine together to place a human being in a barred cage, to callously gloat over his anguish day after day, and then on the fatal morning lead him forth, bind his knees, his ankles, his wrists before him, his elbows behind him, and shatter his backbone with a jerk which lands him into eternity?

SHIPS THAT PASS

I never saw a man who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
Which prisoners call the sky,
And at every wandering cloud that trailed
Its ravelled fleeces by.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

"B" Hall, of the Long Bay Penitentiary, is a gruesome place. Not that, as seen from the centre court, it differs in outer appearance from the grim fac-similes arranged with mathematical precision on its either side; not that its cell-lined interior, deep, dark, and narrow, differs one whit in design from that of its surrounding fellows. "B" Hall is a gruesome place—gruesome because of a shadowy something ever lurking away down at its further end—a something which greets the eye of the strangely-garbed beings as they enter the iron-grated portals; a shadowy something which dances before them long after the heavy cell door clashes to at their number-branded backs; an ever-present something which cannot be forgotten—the Gallows.

I wish to deal no further with this horror. I simply mention its existence because, to my mind, the accentuated oppressiveness of "B" Hall, occasioned by this ghastly presence, lends a greater pathos to the incident I am about to relate.

The cell occupied by me was directly opposite the head of the stairway of "B" Hall.

To the uninformed I must mention that each and every orthodox prison cell is perforated at a height of about five feet from the floor, with a peephole for the occasional convenience of the guard. This is covered on the outside by a sliding flap fastened by a clip.

It is a common practice of prisoners to release this fastener, and so render the flap movable from the inner side. Stolen waters are indeed sweet. The untold delight of gazing through this tiny aperture into prohibited space till darkness creeps up and obliterates the monotonous array of bolts and padlocks

opposite must needs be experienced to be understood. The possibility of detection is great, but the inexplicable pleasure afforded is considered to be well worth the risk of dire consequence.

The evening upon which I first ventured to regale myself in this manner will ever remain with me—the long, dismal line of brown-painted doors, behind each of which a fellow-being grappled with vain regrets, the eerie silence, the gleam of polished steel, the deserted passage which stretched to that far end where the thing of death cast its awful shadow. And then it was that, as my vision travelled from object to object, I became aware that I was not the only one who found attraction in a morbid survey of the surroundings.

Directly opposite me, but on the floor below, was an open cell with the barred grating in place of the solid iron door conceded upon occasions to long sentence prisoners in the incipient stages of the term of punishment meted to them. To my gaze the head and upper part of the body of the occupant of this apartment alone were visible.

It was a fair head, almost inclined to auburn. Its owner stood motionless in front of the opening, and both his hands rested on the bars before him.

The Sphinx-like attitude of the man attracted and held my gaze. And so we kept our vigil—he staring steadily before him and I peering unseen from my point of vantage.

I do not know how long we continued thus, but suddenly the man below raised his head and glanced at the fanlight through which the last feeble rays of the late afternoon were struggling.

It was only a passing glance, but was sufficient to show me a face I knew—a face I had seen in happier days, illumined by the pent-up emotions of a heart that yearned only for the dawning of a better and brighter phase of existence for the class from which he sprung—the face of Donald Grant.

I wearied of watching, but long after night had enshrouded all I returned to the peep-hole, and down below in the streaky moonlight the outline of a motionless figure was still vaguely visible.

At daybreak I donned my hideous garb in response to the clanging signal, and as I did so resolved, by fair means or foul, to speak with Donald Grant.

The opportunity came sooner than I expected.

The door of my cell grated ominously, and the face of a burly warder appeared. "Here, sweeper," he bawled, "start No. 239 on the locks with emery." No. 239 was I.

It was a coincidence that the lock upon which I commenced operations was the lock of the cell with the grated door

—a coincidence speedily arranged by a few muttered words with the understanding sweeper.

I glanced at the cell information card, fitted in its docket on the wall. It read as follows:—

Division, B.

No. of prisoner, 59.

Date of conviction, 1916.

Length of sentence, 15 years' penal servitude.

Grant had drawn the wooden stool to the full extent of the chain which fastened it to the wall, and was sitting slightly back from the barred door.

"Hallo!" I said. And as I looked across I realised the terrible tragedy of it all.

There was Donald Grant, whose wondrous eloquence and passionate sincerity had stirred the very souls of tens of thousands—Donald Grant, a helpless, listless prisoner.

He greeted me with a query. "What are you doing here?"

"War Precaution—Billy Hughes," was my laconic reply.

His face lighted up with the old fire, and, for a moment, he was the Donald Grant I used to know. But it faded away and left him what he was—Convict B59, of Long Bay Penitentiary.

I busied myself with the emery, and he made a few of the stereotyped remarks which ever pass between prisoners—remarks touching upon food, blankets, and warders.

To encourage reference to his own sad lot, I suggested the possibility of an early freedom. He only smiled in a weary sort of way.

"Yes; in 1931," he said.

I told him about outside determination, about pamphlets, speeches, and agitation. He seemed to think that I wished to please him, and showed no sign of belief.

There was a sudden bustle at the entrance of "B" Hall as the ration-bearers entered. It was 7 a.m.

A loaded sweeper rushed past rattling a tin of hominy and a block of bread on to the cemented floor before each doorway. A warder followed in his wake, and clutched the lock which glittered with the effect of my concentrated effort.

"Get back to your cell," he shouted at me, swinging open the grated door. As I turned to go a heavy boot pushed forward the unappetising meal towards Donald Grant, and once more the bolts were clashed into place.

HARD LABOR

We sewed the sacks, we broke the stones,
We turned the dusty drill,
We banged the tins, and bawled the hymns,
And sweated on the mill;
But in the heart of every man
Terror was lying still.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

It was a joy to escape from the eternal murk of the sunless cell and the incessant tinware polishing of "separate", and so, with a heart almost glad, I one morning found myself lined up for labor out on the prison farm.

Across the courtyards the squad of which I was a unit swung in single file, halting by the huge entrance gates of the prison proper, outside of which the wall-bound cultivation fields lay. Here we were taken charge of by a guard, armed to the teeth with rifle, revolver, and bandolier laden with murderous, lead-capped cartridges.

He gave the order, "New men, one step forward." I and two others responded, and were marched across to the Governor's office to hear read what is facetiously styled the "Riot Act".

A senior warder stepped out, and, staring at us savagely over the top of an unwieldy document, rattled off an unintelligible jargon with parrot-like monotony.

"Yer understand now," he said threateningly.

I dared to make known the fact that I had not quite caught the full context of the oration and he turned livid with rage.

"By God, I'd explain it ter yer if I had my way," he spluttered. "I'd boot a bit o' understandin' inter yer. It's this. If yer leave yer job or act suspicious yer'll get a lump o' lead tangled up in yer guts."

Without further parley we paraded back to the squad, replied to the call of our numbers, and moved out under the iron portal on to the arid waste known at Long Bay by the courtesy title of "farm".

Armed with an iron fork I started in to work. My task consisted of turning up and weeding a huge patch upon which were to be planted tomatoes—not for the prisoners, by the way.

At the end of half an hour I paused to straighten my back. An angry shout from the warder leaning languidly upon his rifle in the shadow of the wall greeted my action.

"Bog in there, you damn loafer."

I obediently "bogged" back in.

The sun crept higher and higher, and, after the days of close confinement, the glare of midsummer became unbearable. Occasionally a hot, dry gust of wind would sweep across, laden with choking, blinding dust. The unaccustomed stooping brought agonising pains into my shoulders and thighs, and a feeling of nausea welled into my parched throat. Around me a hundred other unfortunates bent silently to their tasks, and I, too, plodded on. For days I had turned aside from the repulsive food of the jail, and now a straved weakness took possession of me. I began to grow giddy and ill.

At last, in sheer desperation, I let the digging fork slip to the ground, and pressing one hand to the small of my tortured back and the other to my sweet-soaked brow, I stood oblivious to all.

It was a brutal oath and a sharp jab in the side—the jab of a steel-shod rifle butt—that brought me back to earth.

The guard broke off in his tirade of abuse. He saw that I was ill. He lessened his voice a trifle and explained.

"You cows forget that you ain't at a Sunday School picnic. Don't yer know that's the Guvner's 'ouse on the 'ill? I'm a Labor man, but, by Christ, I can't afford ter lose me job no more than anybody else can."

When twelve o'clock came I could hardly stagger into line.

A husky young fellow, with a freckled face and tokens of hair that may have been red ere it was shaven off, brought me a tin of water. As he proceeded to don his numbered jacket I noticed that his arms were tattooed with designs which smacked of the sea.

"You'll be olright by an' by," he said under his breath. "Yer a bit soft yet, that's wot's the matter. Yer got over yer first four hours, anyway."

I envied him his smart step and the unwearied swing of sturdy body as his branded back danced on before me.

Without warning he stepped suddenly out of the ranks and dived at the lace of one of his ill-shaped prison boots.

A raucous halt was called. With painful deliberation he knotted and double-knotted the apparently offending string. I watched in dull amazement, and marvelled at his temerity.

The warder toyed carelessly with his rifle and hummed the lines of a hymn. His affability was ominous.

The sailor lad stepped towards the place in the rank he had vacated, but the voice of the warder intercepted him.

"Please step this way, if you really don't mind," he said with a sarcastic sweetness. With a frightened look in his eyes the young fellow obeyed.

"Open your hands!" The command came sharp and terse. The grimy, toil-hardened hands were opened and a crumpled piece of frayed cigarette fell to the ground.

The guard picked it up in triumph. "You an' yer bootlace tricks," he said, shaking his rifle but threateningly. "I'll fix yer. I've been waitin' fer a chance ter trim your wings, me 'earty."

We continued our march, but I noticed that the spring had gone from the step in front of me, and the freckled hands clenched till the finger nails seemed to bite into their very palms.

Beside the door of my cell the regulation midday meal stood waiting. I picked it up, and, placing it in a corner untouched, waited till the door clashed to and then lay down upon the cement floor.

TO PASTURES NEW

Silently we went round and round,
And through each hollow mind
The Memory of dreadful things
Rushed like a dreadful wind,
And Horror stalked before each man,
And Terror crept behind.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

I cannot recall to the day the actual length of my sojourn at Long Bay Penitentiary. There was such a gruelling sameness about those monotonous rounds of daylight that now in memory their number defies calculation.

As it was they terminated abruptly. The heat of the morning had been more than excessive, the labor of the farm seemed to have sapped my last atom of strength, and I lay stretched upon the cemented cell floor. The one o'clock afternoon "turn to" bell clamored noisily along the passage ways, and I obediently arose in readiness for the door to open.

The harsh rattle of the shooting bolts drew nearer. A heavy footstep paused for a moment outside, and then the fainter growing lock rattle betokened that the warder had passed on. My door had been left unopened.

I caught the low mutter of comrade convicts as each stepped forth from his murky den and dressed off from the right in the cocoanut-matted hallway. Two minutes later their cumbersome jail boots were striking the outer flags as they trudged back to their toil on the farm.

I stood helplessly awaiting events. I had not the slightest idea as to why I had been left behind. A hundred and one mysterious possibilities presented themselves, and so I waited on in a state of vague trepidation.

At about half-past one the steel door swung on its creaking hinges.

"Grab hold of yer Bible an' hair brush," said a voice filled with the customary viciousness of the jail warder. I seized the red-backed testament and dropsical hair brush. The reason why

this latter article had been supplied me was beyond comprehension. There was a deep irony in the fact that it was placed in my possession immediately after the shaving off of my hair. On the other hand, my respectful request for a tooth brush had been met with a howl of derision.

"By Gwad," I had been told, "yer'll be wantin' a clothes brush soon ter keep the dust off yer numbers. Christ Orlmighty, some o'you toeraggers (short-timers) take the cake."

And so I had had, perforce, to content myself with an unwanted hair brush, which often in the twilight of my cell I would for want of better to do wear down still further by scrubbing it against the shooting bristles of my jail-cropped head.

Passing both Bible and brush across to the prisoner employed as hall sweeper, I strode in solitary state out to the centre court, where I remained standing with my face some few inches away from a high brick wall.

Behind me a man was sweeping. I stole a glance in his direction, and saw that he was old and tottering—evidently well beyond seventy years of age. As he passed a rattling signal sounded in his throat, and a little piece of tobacco fell at my feet.

"Hide it in yer sock, me poor boy," he jerked.

At the end of a full hour I was joined by a squad of eight other prisoners. Shortly afterwards we faced about from the wall to hearken to the utterances of the most autocratic person that it has been my misfortune to come in contact with—the then Governor of Long Bay Penitentiary. He eyed us in his usual scornful fashion, and spoke briefly and to the point.

"Thank God, we're going to get rid of you lot. You're going to get a taste of what real jail is—get the fear of Christ put into you. The whole lot of you will be shipped off to Goulburn in the morning, and this place won't be any the worse off for your loss."

His raucous tones had become like music to my ears. Never before had I felt such a surge of exultation. From the faces of my companions also the look of dull, helpless unhappiness had faded away like the mists of morning. They, too, were glad. We did not know what lay before us. We had no idea as to what species of hell Goulburn jail might be. We did not know, and we did not care. All we knew was that we were to be taken from Long Bay. Long Bay, with its ever-ready curses and ever-ready cuffs! Long Bay, with its blasphemy and brutality! Long Bay, with its toil and turmoil! Long Bay, with its swarm of officials in whom atavistic barbarity is reflected from highest to lowest! Long Bay, that abyss of sin; that gruesome laboratory in which criminals are manufactured! Long Bay, that most terrible and

inhumane of all the hell-holes of the putrid jail system of Australia! We were to leave Long Bay behind, and we were glad.

As we filed off towards the storeroom, where we were to be outfitted with brand new uniforms for the journey, we found the gateway blocked by the old sweeper. He was feebly struggling to free his yard broom from the fence pickets between which it was inexplicably jammed. With a vicious oath the warder seized him by the stooping shoulders and pitched him to one side, and we left him groping unseeingly around, with the tears welling from his old, unseeing eyes.

Some hours after, when the lonely cell had again claimed me as its own, with shapeless, new smelling jacket, trousers, bodice-vest, and shirt folded beneath my head, I lay tossing through the watches of the night.

THE ESCORT

And thus we rust life's iron chain,
Degraded and alone,
And some men curse, and some men weep,
And some men make no moan;
But God's eternal laws are kind,
And break the heart of stone.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

Although upon the morning of the day of the "escort" I received my ration of dry bread and hominy at an earlier hour than usual, I was fated to go breakfastless. Barely had I taken up the ancient spoon wherewith to begin operations when the iron door was clanked open and I was ordered to leave the cell. Down the iron stairway I tramped to find my eight companions of the previous day already standing in line.

The echo of our stride, ringing back from the labyrinth of courtyards still wrapt in early morning silence, reminded me vividly of my first evening of entry into those grim precincts of Long Bay prison.

By the towering gateway, which marked the main entrance, we paused to allow the unlocking of an enclosure, styled in prison parlance a "grill", and into this we stepped one by one. A "grill" resembles in size and construction the cages in which are placed the untamable animals of a Zoo. On three sides it is walled in with heavy brick, while the entire face and top are barred with great closely-set rods of iron.

Three uniformed officials followed us into the "grill" and double-locked the narrow gate behind them, while upon the outer wall a being with rifle on shoulder and revolver at side stood in readiness for some impossible emergency.

On the ground before us lay a pile of heavy rusty-looking iron chain.

At first I did not awaken to the full import of its presence. Then the truth dawned upon me. We were to be chained together, the victims of a sordid display of the atavistic barbarity which characterises the jail system of today.

Standing meekly in line the heavy chair was dragged out beside us. Beginning with the leader the warders laboriously screw-locked the rust-tarnished manacles upon our unresisting wrists. The officer who seized upon me naturally attracted my especial attention. He was very young-looking, evidently a new recruit, and I noticed that, as he fumbled clumsily with the shackle lock, a deep flush of burning red crept into his half-averted face.

At length their work completed the officials drew back to talk in undertones amongst themselves, whilst we, the drab-clad convicts, manacled together in barbarous fashion, at a distance of about eighteen inches between each man, stood listening to the clank of the swinging chain, mortified, humiliated, and degraded.

It was then about half-past six in the morning, and it was not till half-past four in the afternoon, after ten hateful hours of veritable purgatory, that the shackles were unscrewed and the bonds fell noisily away.

At seven o'clock the outer gates were thrown open and a tramcar rattled in across the jail threshold. With eyes enclosed by large, dark gauze-bordered goggles, in order to conceal our identity from possible acquaintances who might catch a glimpse of us while disembarking, we struggled awkwardly with our unaccustomed bonds and crawled into the waiting carriage.

Our destination was Darlinghurst Jail, and, as we journeyed on, the noise of awakening bustle in the unseen city without stirred to a pitch of terrible intensity the craving for freedom.

At Darlinghurst we were placed in a double-locked cell, but our bonds were not removed, and so we lolled against the wall in miserable silence. Already the iron was cutting into our wrists, and, although we had soon learned to grasp hold of the heavy chain and thus lessen the chafing drag, each man displayed an ever-increasing wrist sore.

At length one of the number requested our permission to rest upon the concrete floor, the place being otherwise seatless, and in order to grant him this mighty favor we were one and all compelled to do likewise. The brevity of distance which separates man from man would allow no other course.

Even to the warders, who from time to time stared in upon us, we must indeed have been a sorry spectacle—ahuddled, goggled cluster of motionless humanity.

At last we were led forth and wedged into a prison motor van, to pour forth from its dark interior at the Central Railway Station. The grotesqueness of our prison garb, shaven heads, and disfiguring goggles attracted the passers-by, and through the colored glass we bravely met the curious stare.

The prison car was standing ready, and towards it we turned. Our iron fetters had awakened looks of sympathy in

some of the watchers, and in others ejaculations of horror and awe. In the forefront of the crowd a tiny girl began to weep bitterly.

"Oh, Mummy, Mummy," she wailed, and I can yet hear the tragic ring of pity in her childish voice. "Oh, Mummy, somebody has gone and chained them all up together."

There was a world of pathos in the little incident, and it cut me to the quick. As I marched from view I inwardly blessed the glasses which hid the moisture which dimmed my eyes.

The car we occupied was divided into two sections, one of which was for the accommodation of the guard and the other for the prisoners, the latter being walled in by iron pickets. There was not the slightest possibility of our being able to effect an escape, and yet our chains were allowed to remain upon us. Not only was the metal-girt apartment windowless, but we were well guarded by relays of revolvered officials, who smoked endless supplies of cigarettes and languidly perused the papers of the day, while we snuffed up the unaccustomed aroma and eyed the printed columns with hungry yearning. The request of one of our number for a "look at what was doing on the outside" met with an emphatic refusal on the grounds that it was "against the regulations". However, with a grandiose air of benevolence, we were told that we could have a chat together if we didn't "talk too loud".

And so we talked in subdued tones, each man at first to his neighbor on the chain, but gradually the conversation drifted along the line and developed into a medley of cross-firing. Some were discussing the horrors of the hell we were leaving behind—Long Bay. Some were conjecturing as to what would be the extent of tyranny we would meet at Goulburn. Some whined complainingly about dish-water soup and rat-defiled hominy, and others whispered confidently the details of the court trial that had been theirs.

We were a well-assorted herd of felons. In appearance we were tall and short, rotund and spare, burly and delicate, while our alleged crimes were as equally varied.

The train journeyed on, and swaying to its motion we leaned forward our cropped heads and told to each other the thoughts that were uppermost, and then, when we had naught else to say, we sank back into a dismal silence, broken only by the clink, clink, clink of the swinging chain.

The coming of meal-time broke in upon the gloomy monotony of the day—a "meal" of six ounces of dry bread per man. Like myself, the others in the hurry of the morning had also been deprived of their breakfast, and we gnawed hungrily at the chunks of bread till every crumb had disappeared. We watched the guard eating his lunch from a white serviette, and in

guilty haste he passed us in his two remaining sandwiches, and each man eagerly swallowed his carefully allotted portion.

The afternoon dragged slowly by. Occasionally one of the gang would start up with a look of ashamed apology, and we, understanding, would rise and follow where he went, the while grasping hold of our bonds to lessen their grinding weight. YES, IN THIS TWENTIETH CENTURY, WHILE UNDER A SKY GLOWING WITH THE SUNSHINE OF A DECEMBER DAY THE OUTSIDE WORLD MOVED ON ITS CARELESS WAY, WE UNHAPPY BEINGS, SHORT-CHAINED TOGETHER, CROUCHED DOWN INTO A CLOSELY WEDGED HUMAN MASS IN ORDER THAT A TUGGING COMPANION MIGHT ENTER THE CLOSET RETREAT OF THAT IRON CAGE IN RESPONSE TO THE CALL OF NATURE. There were men in that chain gang delicate and refined, and there were men coarsened and roughened by close contact with the seamy side of existence, but there was not one who did not feel to the fullest the vileness and the soul-destroying mortification of those minutes of waiting.

* * *

At North Goulburn we disembarked. On a neighboring hill-top, gaunt and hideous, we saw the jail walls that were to hide us. The sudden cessation of jolting rumble told us that the police van had passed from the roadway on to the asphalt drive, and that we had arrived at our new abode. A moment later we had alighted and from wrist after wrist the bonds were unloosed and the shackles fell away.

As they did so each man mechanically took hold of his aching arm and gazed stupidly at the livid, encircling welt left by the inhuman and unnecessary bond. Yes, I say unnecessary, for excepting the space of about ten minutes occupied in transfer from iron-bound vehicles to iron-bound train cage, and vice versa, we had been securely closed in behind impregnable iron bars, our every action zealously watched by armed guards, and yet the clanking, galling, goading chains had been left upon us.

It was half-past four in the afternoon and late in the prison day. The sun of midsummer was still high in the heavens, but the quiet of night already hovered over all. The senior warden in charge gave the command, and through the jail garden, whose pathways wound in and out amidst a wealth of blossom, we marched away to join the silent throng of those who pass through tribulation.

GOULBURN JAIL

We were as men who through a fen
Of filthy darkness grope;
We did not dare to breathe a prayer,
Or to give our anguish scope.
Something was dead in each of us,
And what was dead was hope.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

In the dim light of early morning I surveyed the cell allotted me in Goulburn Jail.

It differed in no way from its fellows at Long Bay. My arm was aching excruciatingly, and around my wrist the gruesome memento of the day before showed more vividly than ever the gall of the heavy iron manacle that had bound it. Two months later I could still see the traces of that degrading bruise.

At 8 o'clock, together with my companions of the chain gang, I stood in the storeroom and was stripped of the outfit which had been supplied for the train journey. New clothing was too good for hard-labor prisoners, and so we were re-dressed in garments old, frayed and worn, against which the many staring and new-made canvas number brands showed up in hideous contrast.

One by one we were called away to stand meekly, with hat in hand, before the august person of the Governor.

The official in question proved to be absolute antithesis of his Long Bay contemporary, both in appearance and manner. He was slight of stature, kind in speech, and a genuine compassion for the victims of the system of which he was part and parcel was exhibited in his kindly eyes. He addressed us by name instead of number, and making allusion to each particular case, spoke as man to man. So it was that each one who entered the office of the Governor with either that air of half-angry defiance or fawning obsequiousness which prison air invariably breeds, returned with a countenance expressive of an inexplicable wistfulness.

But we were to learn that it is not the Governor of a Jail that truly governs, but the Book of Regulations. Under the Australian system, Red Tape is rampant, and everyone of those countless official orders must be carried out to the veriest detail. True, the temperamental peculiarities of a Jail Governor are superficially reflected in his inferiors; superficially—but that is all. If the Governor be a cursing, brow-beating bully, then his warders are openly cursing, brow-beating bullies. If he be humane in manner, then his warders do their cursing and brow-beating in secret.

It was on a Monday morning that I took up my new jail duties on the wood-heap at Goulburn, and it was on the afternoon of the following day that I sought permission to see the chief overseer, with hands bleeding and raw from the unaccustomed friction of the rusty gaspipe handles of the heavy mauls. I had worked on till all the nigger-driving tactics of the warders around me and all the peering jibes and insults from the gunman on the wall above could make me go no further.

With hands treated and bandaged by a prison "lifer", I was told off to a so-called easier task, the disinfecting of night tubs.

However, I was not destined to go on with this disgusting occupation. On the morrow an instruction was issued from the Governor's office, and from then till the completion of my sentence I worked as assistant to a comrade who was "doing the whole lot", the head gardener of Goulburn Jail.

ROUTINE

Like ape or clown in monstrous garb,
With crooked arrows starred,
Silently we went round and round
The slippery asphalt yard;
Silently we went round and round,
And no man spoke a word.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

This is the routine of an ordinary day of prison life.

At six o'clock the "get up" gong clangs throughout the jail, both in winter and summer. At half-past six the doors are noisily unpadlocked, blankets and hammocks neatly folded, placed without, and, seizing his "sanitary" night tub, each prisoner leaves his cell to fall silently in line upon the matting of the hall. At a given signal out file the grey, grotesquely armed companies across the courtyard to where awaits a huge iron offal cask.

As each man approaches this contraption in orderly array, he empties his respective tub into the noisome depths and hands it to a waiting prisoner, styled a tubman, who stacks it in place with the others.

The silent march is continued to a long washbench; jackets and bodices are doffed, shirts thrown open, and ablutions proceeded with till the last individual has re-dressed and joined his companions in their ceaseless parade around the yard to the call of a warder's ceaseless "Left, right, left, right". A bell sounds suddenly, the monotonous step cry dies away, and a peremptory halt is called. The armed guards on the wall above stand stiffly "at attention", rifle in hand. The deputy-governor appears upon the scene. The silent squad dresses off from the right in military fashion, and in answer to the number call the reply of "Here, sir", accompanied by a salute, passes down the line.

In hearing me relate this incident of jail life, individuals who know not what jail is have told me that they would salute no man on earth. I have seen that type of person come into jail—good, strong, determined men. Defiantly they have refused to "Sir" or salute. They have disappeared from the ranks, and days afterwards come back to our midst cringing and servile. Let a

prisoner refuse to salute a jail governor, his deputy, or other official who demands such sign of submission, and a finger has simply to be raised in order to set in motion a machine which will crush the soul of any man. Give a man fourteen days, seven days, or even forty-eight hours of the eternal blackness of a punishment cell, with sixteen ounces of dry bread! Let him drag out the moments of unseeing anguish with nothing to do but to tear a button from his branded garb and toss it from him in order that he might searchingly grope to find it—do something to distract, something to occupy his mind, something to keep away the horrible fear of madness which such inhuman treatment must assuredly create!

But let us return to the waiting file of "felons".

The muster declared correct, the prisoners tramp back to the various treble-storied wings, at the entrance of which they pause to secure from a huge tray a tin containing hominy and a block of dry bread. Each enters his separate tomb, the doors clash to, and all is quiet.

At eight o'clock the call to work is sounded and all are led forth to their respective tasks. At twelve o'clock, after remustering for roll-call, the regulation ounces of food are issued and partaken in the solitude of the cell. From one o'clock the tasks continue, and at four sharp the prison working day ceases. Dry bread and hominy is again supplied and carried to the cells. Shortly after half-past four the doors are thrown open and tins and spoons placed outside. It is "search time", and a warder enters to overhaul cell, furniture, and the prisoner himself. The latter, fully dressed, except for his boots and the fact that all buttons must be unfastened, steps forward and stands with his face to the wall. Behind him each nook and corner is ransacked in hopes of locating a sign of tobacco, sugar, lead pencil, books, or extra crusts of bread, and woe betide the poor creature who is detected in trying to secrete such prohibited article. A ladder is brought in to allow examination of the ventilator bars, and the walls are tapped with a long-handled hammer designed for the detection of excavation.

Eventually a gruff order is given and the prisoner faces right-about. Taking off the upper part of his clothing and throwing it, together with hat and boots, out into the passage, he stretches his arms out against the wall, while the warder seizes him, searches every inch of his body, and orders the removal of what more clothing he thinks necessary. Another command is then given, and the prisoner steps to the further end of the cell, where he stands with face again wallward till the searching of clothing and bedgear is completed, and the articles tossed in with the rattling sanitary tub. Then comes the heavy clang of the iron door

and the grating of outside bolts to tell that, although still in the afternoon, the seemingly endless night, with its ghosts of watches, has begun.

I shudder to recall some of those nights in which, gripped by an overwhelming yearning for liberty, victim of a relentless insomnia, I frantically paced from wall to wall. Outside the guard crept past in slippered stealthiness; occasionally the click of the peep-hole flap would tell that an unseen eye was peering in upon me, and then, at the sound of a distant clock, the half-hour, long-drawn watch call would ring out from post to post: "Twelve o'clock; A-1-1's w-e-l-l"; "One o'clock; A-1-1's w-e-l-l", and so on till morning came to gild the unseen skies.

On Sundays and public holidays the ordinary workday routine is altered in such a way as to make life almost unendurable. Each Sabbath an hour of marching exercise is allowed in the morning, and an hour in the afternoon. Sometimes an extra hour for religious devotion is granted, but I found that church-time generally collided with one of the hours set apart for the "Fool's Parade", and so the only difference was that spiritual exercise was substituted for physical.

Each holiday, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and Easter included, a prisoner is confined wholly to his cell except for the two hours of quick marching exercise, "four paces apart and no talking". On Saturday afternoons an hour of marching exercise is also given.

Of the one hundred and sixty-eight hours contained in one week a prisoner spends one hundred and twenty-six locked in his tiny, sunless cell. Should holidays occur his hours of incarceration will be even still greater. Out of each twenty-four hours seventeen hours of the ordinary week-day are spent in solitary, half-light confinement, nineteen hours of each Saturday, and twenty-two hours of each Sunday and public holiday.

Even though a person has been fortunate enough to secure a little readable literature, it barely happens that sufficient light can contrive to pierce the gloom in order that one may read without hurtful eyestrain.

But the greatest injustice of all lies in the fact that the misery occasioned by such unnecessary holiday and Sunday solitary confinement is accentuated by the fact that, as the prisoner is not engaged upon productive labor, his food ration is reduced by almost twenty-five per cent. and to veritable starvation level. This applies even to Christmas Day.

Time after time, in defiance of the watchful warders, I have deliberately hung back in the holiday march, knowing full well that an excess of exercise would only serve to increase the pangs of hunger already gnawing at my vitals.

WARDERS

The warders with their shoes of felt
Crept by each padlocked door,
And peeped and saw with eyes of awe
Grey figures on the floor,
And wondered why men knelt to pray
Who never prayed before.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

Maybe, friends and relations of jail warders will read these pages; maybe, even jail warders themselves will deign to honour them with their glance. I have no desire to go out of my way to hurt on's feelings, yet jail warders never lavished any mercy upon me, and therefore I feel under no obligation to be merciful in the relation of my dealings with them.

As an opponent of all that serves to bolster up the present-day social system, I have but scant respect for the man who follows the occupation of policeman, but yet the ordinary member of the police force is the personification of all that is noble in comparison to a jail warder. At times there lurks the element of danger in connection with the duties a policeman is called upon to perform, whereas a jail warder's duty is simply to use the awful power conferred upon him by walls of stone and bars of iron to terrorise, tyrannise, and oppress his crushed, spirit-broken, helpless fellow men.

Instance after instance I could relate and substantiate to justify my statements, but lack of space forbids, so a few must suffice.

Upon one occasion I was ill—extremely ill. For days and days I had gradually been growing worse, although I had continued to struggle out to the daily task. One morning I felt utterly unable to rise from my hammock, and lay tossing in the throes of a high fever born of colic and influenza.

At half-past six the warder jerked open the door of my cell. "Get up!" he said.

I told him I was too ill to do so.

"Get up," he thundered, "or, by God, I'll boot you up."

I struggled into a standing position.
"Now, chuck out yer hammock and blankets!"
With a great effort I contrived to do his bidding, but, as he slammed and bolted the door, I collapsed into a heap on the floor.

As before said, it was half-past six in the morning, and although at intervals I arose from the floor, and, leaning weakly against the wall, knocked with the handle of my cell broom as long and as loudly as I dared, there was no response. It was not till twelve o'clock that the awful place was reopened and my ration tin tossed in. That afternoon, sick, weak and racked with pain, I crept out to work rather than endure longer the tortured solitude of that dungeon.

* * *

The prison Regulations say that every night the leaden spoon allowed each prisoner must be placed outside the cell door for fear of attempted suicide. When morning comes new arrivals often forget the spoon lying beside the door, and on innumerable occasions I have seen the warder follow them up as they bore their miserable ration cellward, kick the forgotten spoon to one side, slam the iron sheet, and leave the uninitiated newcomer to scoop up the sticky, tasteless hominy with his bare hand or otherwise forego his scanty meal.

The vindictiveness exhibited by warders in their searching of a prisoner's cell and person passeth all understanding. One of the gravest offences that can be laid at the feet of a jail inmate is that of having tobacco in his possession. A flake of tobacco is sufficient to convict a man. Should a warder be so fortunate as to discover a piece of prohibited tobacco, he will invariably break off the minutest portion, pocket the remainder for his own use, and in childish glee rush off to lay a charge against his victim with the tiny wisp as evidence against him.

The proudest moment of a warder's life appears to be when in searching a passing prisoner he finds a few dry crusts of contraband bread tucked away within the breast of his coarse shirt. It is all in the line of promotion, and he knows it. His superiors will note him to be a diligent fellow, and, incidentally, the wretched crust-hider will be sent without the slightest compunction along to the nerve-racking black cells.

For the most part they are an ignorant, uneducated type of man, and cannot understand a desire for literature. I well remember the howl of rage that went up when I was discovered with a copy of Scott's "Fair Maid of Perth" in my cell at a time when I was only entitled to the Bible. For two weeks the threat

to expose my crime in all its heinousness and the contingent possibility of durance vile was hurled at me daily.

Man handling is rampant. Times out of number I have known men to be brutally struck down and kicked, and I myself have learned the weight of a warder's fist.

The galling nature of my surroundings at times inclined me to exhibit a defiance born of despair, and, maybe, from the standpoint of jail morality my conduct merited the blows. Still one instance rankles in my mind. A can containing warm water had been left standing at the door of my cell wing, and I had taken some to drink. The warder who detected me, I suppose, felt quite justified in his mind for the blow that he dealt me, because the jail regulations did not say that I was entitled to the cheering effects of a drink of warm water.

One of the worst characteristics of the jail warder is his grovelling servility towards the Governor and higher officials generally. This exaggerated obsequiousness on the part of these uniformed flunkeys is so pronouncedly prevalent as to awaken a feeling almost akin to disgust even in the hearts of their wretched victims.

As a matter of fact, looking at the matter broadly, the idea of the "humane" jail system of Australia being of a reformatory nature amounts to nothing but a cruel satire when one considers the type of individuals who are employed to do the reforming.

LITERATURE

And never a human voice comes near
To speak a gentle word;
And the eye that watches through the door
Is pitiless and hard;
And by all forgot, we rot and rot,
With soul and body marred.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

After he has completed his "separate" a prisoner is allowed during the first month of his incarceration a copy of the Bible or Prayer Book, together with a book of a strictly religious character.

Upon entering the second month he becomes entitled to a volume styled "educational", which may be still further supplemented from the beginning of the third month by carefully chosen and generally extremely ancient fiction. These books, both educational and otherwise, are allowed upon request to the extent of one each per week.

Generally speaking, the regulations governing the supply of reading matter appear to be passing fair as set forth in the Jail Regulation Book—as actually applied they are execrable.

In the first place, the lighting of a prison cell is extremely poor. Unless a prisoner be blessed with exceptionally good eyesight, save for a brief period of the seventeen hours of the ordinary day which he is doomed to pass within the narrow precincts of his cell, he is unable to see sufficiently well to allow him to read. In Goulburn Jail I took particular notice and marked the exact period of time during which the sunlight directly penetrated my cell. It amounted to ten minutes per day.

The Regulations say that in ordinary cases the night light—a low power electric globe, placed in such an absolutely high position as to render it almost useless as an aid to the perusal of reading matter—will be allowed to remain in the cells till eight o'clock in the evening. Unfortunately the Regulations do not say at what hour the lights are to be turned on. This is left

to the discretion of the warders in charge, and they are generally well content to see that lights are turned on in time to comply with the regulations regarding their turning off.

Always a passionate lover of literature and study, the inability to gratify such passion proved to be the greatest aggravation of my life in jail.

I well remember counting the weary bookless days of the first month as they dragged by until the time came when I was entitled to an "educational". With a feeling of elation I put in my request for the library catalogue and slate. The list contained the names of a few historical works well worth reading, and in joy I recorded them to be transferred by the warder to the card I was now entitled to.

That afternoon as I entered my cell after the task of the day had ended I found an old tattered volume cast in upon the floor. I picked it up and read the title. It was "The Apiarists' Guide, or Hints to Bee Farmers". I had dreamed of the treat in store for me all that day, and my disappointment knew no bounds. A desire to learn the mysteries of bee-farming had never been mine. In my early days the odious comparisons that had persistently been drawn betwixt my own shortcomings and the virtues of the "busy bee" had created within me an angry hatred of the insect. But still I had to read, and by the time another week had trailed away and I was entitled to try my luck in the library tray once again, I had perused that book on bee-farming a score of times from cover to cover.

In the evening no book awaited me. My card lay upon the floor, and across it was scrawled, "'Hints to Bee Farmers' not returned."

Next morning I protested to the officer in charge of the wing. His reply was logical from the standpoint of a warder.

"If the card says yer didn't return it, yer didn't, and that's all about it!"

The affair meant much to me, and I dared to protest against his judgment, whereupon he swung round menacingly and politely advised me to "Go to Hell!"

During the week, devoid of reading matter, which followed, I contrived to make surreptitious enquiry of the prisoner who assisted in the library, and he informed me that "The Apiarists' Guide, or Hints to Bee Farmers" was resting peacefully in its wonted corner of the bookshelf. "But, for God's sake, don't let on I told you," he said.

Another library day came round, but I received no book. In desperation I determined to take further action, and securing a piece of paper I pin-pricked a note to the warder in charge of the library, pleading with him to allow my book to help break

the gruelling cell monotony. I signed the epistle with my number. The following morning the gentleman himself appeared at my cell door.

"Did you do this?" he enquired, holding up the paper containing the pierced wording.

I signified that I had done so.

"Where did you get the pin from?" he foamed. "Give it to me. By the living Jesus, I'll have you in the dark cells if I catch yer with a pin in yer possession again. And, further, yer can go to the devil before yer get another book from me."

The door clashed to and he was gone.

And, so, deprived of my "educational", I pined for the end of the second month to come, and with it my right to a weekly copy of fiction.

In due course the longed-for day arrived, and a new card was filled in under my number. The first book of fiction I received did not tally with any mentioned in my request, nor did that of the second week. They were small books of the Garcician order, and my intention was to save them for perusal during moments of greatest depression, provided the light at such times allowed me to do so. But the book hunger was upon me, and upon each occasion I ultimately threw intention aside and devoured their contents, contenting myself during the balance of the time they were in my possession by reading them over and over again.

The third week brought me a copy of "Gulliver's Travels", but minus the biting satire which has rendered it famous. It was a child's edition. I did not read it, but walked the narrow limits in sorrowing disappointment.

There was an old man in the cell next to mine—a new arrival from Long Bay. On the Sunday morning he was marching in the exercise parade behind me, and I managed to maintain a few minutes' conversation.

I remarked that he must be wakeful, as I had heard his slipped feet padding up and down at two and three o'clock in the morning.

"Yes," he muttered; "I'm too old to hear the bell, and so I gets up an' folds me blankets fer fear they'll find me in bed."

My heart went out to him, and, knowing that he was yet without reading, on entering the wing I seized the large-typed "Gulliver's Travels" and thrust it in under his jacket. A smile of thanks shone from his rugged face.

The old man was new to jail and did not quite understand the position; thus he failed to pass me the book back at afternoon parade. In the evening search it was found. The warder came to my cell and railed and cursed me for having dared to break the all-powerful Regulations. I was fast becoming inured

to such treatment, and so gave scant heed to his abusive tirade. "Report it to the Governor," I said, "and let him do what he thinks fit."

But the matter was not reported. The warden seemed to fear that should the Governor happen to grant me permission to appeal to his better nature possibly my powers of persuasion might have resulted in his overlooking the heinous offence of having lent a poor, old, battered unfortunate fellow a copy of "Gulliver's Travels". He contented himself by spitefully placing the volume in the drawer of his desk, and there, as far as I know, it remains to this day.

Having no book to return, I was unable to secure a further one, and so during the weary weeks that followed till the gates of Goulburn Jail opened to let me pass out from its grey walls, I had perforce to stifle all longing for literature to which I was justly entitled.

Time and again I determined in sheer desperation to lay my case before the Governor, but in mumbled converse with prison companions I was warned to refrain from such action.

Life in jail is bad at the best of times, but when a prisoner once assails the clannish instincts of his guardians by reporting an injustice meted to him at their hands, then 'twere better that he should die than live the tortured life that would be his.

FOOD

The brackish water that we drink
Creeps with a loathsome slime,
And the bitter bread they weigh in scales
Is full of chalk and lime;
And Sleep will not lie down, but walks
Wild-eyed, and cries to Time.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

In Long Bay Jail, unless you happen to be sentenced to a very long term of imprisonment, you are not supplied with a knife and fork to assist in the partaking of food. Of a truth a leaden spoon is daily given the prisoner wherewith to transfer the questionable soup from battered dixie to mouth, but meat and vegetables must be rent asunder in primeval, barehanded fashion.

At Goulburn and other outside prisons, though the knife is frequently devoid of blade and the fork minus its prongs, they are allowed the jail inmates. Nevertheless, upon the completion of his meal, the prisoner must hand them back to the wing sweeper to be carefully checked and placed under lock and key. Under our humane system there is not a prisoner who does not daily contemplate the advantages of suicide, and well the authorities know it.

In jail the morning ration and the night ration are identical—so many ounces of dry bread and so many ounces of hominy. There is a regulation allowing to certain prisoners an ounce of brown sugar per day and a half-pint of weak, lukewarm tea at night, but I did not receive such luxury, although I persistently made application.

The midday diet varies. As a matter of fact, such variations of food plays so great a part in the life of a prisoner that the names of the days of the week are substituted by an appellation significant of the piece-de-resistance of the noon-time meal. These substitutions, as I recall them, were as follows:—

Sunday—Corn Beef Day.	Thursday—Mutton Day.
Monday—Soup Day.	Friday—Boiled Beef Day.
Tuesday—Roast Beef Day.	Saturday—Roast Rabbit Day.
Wednesday—Rabbit Soup Day.	Wednesday—Rabbit Soup Day.

In secret mention of an event that has transpired to break the grey monotony of life, a prisoner will refer to it has having occurred on last "corn beef day", the "soup day before last", and so on.

The bane of existence of every prisoner is rabbit. The longer he remains in jail the more he detests it, but still he continues to eat it, as food is supplied in sufficient quantity only to give him sufficient strength to carry out the daily task allotted him. Rabbit is not mentioned in the Jail Regulation Book, but yet it is supplied twice weekly on account of its cheapness. It arrives in the jail in a frozen state, enclosed in huge blocks of ice. On "rabbit soup day" these are tossed into huge steaming cauldrons, and not cooked but simply boiled down. But whether boiled down or allegedly roasted, it is invariably served out, plus repulsive inward organs, privates, and very often excretion itself. Often on "rabbit days" I have known the whole jail to reek with a fearsome stench whilst cooking operations were in progress. On other days, meat, secured by tender—the worst possible at the lowest price—is given. In serving it up it is weighed out to the minutest fraction of an ounce, and bone and gristle are included in such weight. This is quite in accordance with the "Regulations". Oftentimes I have in the solitude of my cell, with hungry eagerness, removed the lid of my dixie to find the allotted measure of "meat" made up wholly of bone and minus even a remnant of gristle.

Sundays and holidays, including Christmas, are the hungriest periods of all, as rations are reduced on account of a prisoner being confined to his cell without employment. On these days corn beef is always given—corn beef which I have known to be so absolutely rotten and offensive as to fill the cell with a noisome odor.

The vegetables vary in accord with the season, and range from chunks of unskinned pumpkin, seed carrots, stale potatoes boiled in their dirt, ancient unstringed beans, to cattle turnips and uncut cabbage leaves.

I once asked a prisoner who had been in jail for many years if the Labor Party during its administration had not secured prison reform in any direction whatsoever.

"Yes," he said in the vague, jerky manner of the "Lifer". "They made 'em peel the punkin fer awhile, an' they made 'em wash the carrots clean, an'—an'—well, I don't know as they done anything else."

I have no hesitation in saying, and would gladly go before a commission to prove, that the food supplied prisoners in the jails of Australia is not only unappetising to a cruel degree, but

insanitary and extremely deleterious to the poor wretches who depend upon it for subsistence.

Every prisoner at the outset of his sentence, before his stomach becomes inured to such offal life ailment, experiences illness after illness, attended with griping colic, violent diarrhoea, and, at times, even dysentery. In this connection alone there is room for sweeping reform in the prisons of Australia. It is indeed heart-rendering in this land of plenty to think that food supplied to jail inmates, both as regards sufficiency and quality, is far below the standard set by other older and more poverty-stricken lands, yet such is undeniably a fact.

Each day a prisoner is chosen by the warders from among those not employed in the cook-house to act as delegate for his fellows. His duty is to stand by while cooking operations are in progress, and also to supervise the weighing out of rations. Regulations say that this delegate has power to condemn the food because of its quality, should he think necessary. In reality he has no such power, and even if he had he would never dare to apply it. Grim tales are told amongst the prisoners regarding the treatment meted out to delegates who attempted to exercise a right that the Regulations told them they possessed—tales of brutality and black cells.

Regulations say that a prisoner may lodge an individual complaint with regard to his food, should he desire to do so. During my sojourn in jail I knew of only one man who moved in this direction. He occupied a cell directly opposite to mine. We others considered him to slightly deranged, and he surely must have been or he would never have taken the step that he did. It was concerning the weight of food in his tin that he lodged his half-frightened complaint, and the meal was taken back to the cook-house.

A few minutes later I heard the warder's stentorian voice: "It was two ounces over-weight, so it's been taken out. Yer'll be locked up now till Monday, and then we'll see what the magistrate's got to say."

And so day after day the man who occupied a cell opposite mine, and I have taken care to remember his number, remained behind a closed door when we tramped out to work.

Monday came, and with it the magistrate. The guilty man was led before him. The trial could not have lasted for more than three short minutes, for almost immediately he slouched with bowed head through the garden where I was at work on his way to the cruel, torturing, everlasting night of the punishment cells.

PRISON TYPES

For man's grim justice goes its way,
And will not swerve aside;
It slays the weak, it slays the strong,
It has a deadly stride.
With iron heel it slays the strong,
The monstrous paricide!

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

The men I met in jail interested me keenly, and, understanding as I did that they were simply the product of the wretched social system which exists, I had no other feeling toward them than that of warm brotherly sympathy.

They were indeed a motley host, and their alleged offences were wondrously varied. One by one I would pick them forth to their daily tasks. There was the smooth-faced young fellow with the kind eyes—the perpetrator of a brutal murder. There was the burly, thick-set, navy-like man who dug the drain trenches—he was a defaulting bank manager. There was the trembling old Italian who had sold spirits to a sick woman after hours, and muttered in broken English something about having only "three more muns and seben week to do". There was the wild Irishman who had duffed cattle, and, with an inherent vein of humor that even those awful surroundings could not altogether kill, suggested the formation of a union—the Amalgamated Jail Birds—with a yearly picnic to Clontarf.

Yes, there they were—marching past in heart-rendering parade—the garrotter, the bushranger, the house-breaker, the forger, the outrager, the socialist! All manner of crime was represented, the alleged perpetrators counting the hours as they came and dragged away—waiting and longing for the days, the weeks, the months, the years to pass, and then not daring to think of what lay beyond.

In jail life is real, earnest and joyless. Seldom does the flicker of a smile pass across the face of a man. The atmosphere is permeated with an oppressiveness which gnaws like a canker

at the heart of every prisoner. The present is degrading, dehumanising, and the distant future terrible—a future that ever will possess a stigma that in his wildest dreams a man cannot hope to live entirely down.

And so I walked with them, and, when opportunity was afforded me, talked with them and found my way into the innermost recesses of many a broken heart—hearts that yearned for sunshine, for freedom, for the clasp of friendly hands and the loving sympathy of other hearts. It took little time for me to overcome their reticence and have them tell Life's tragic tale and some the cause of their imprisonment. But others, who also told Life's tragic tale, proffered no confession of crime, because they had committed none. As I said before, I walked and talked with these men—walked and talked with them inside the prison walls as a fellow convict—walked and talked with them when there was no conventional restrictions, no reason, no desire for any man to hide his soul, but rather an intense longing to pour out his story to a sympathetic fellow sufferer. And thus it came to pass that I learned the dreadful truth:

OF ALL THE PRISONERS TO-DAY SERVING SENTENCES IN THE JAILS OF AUSTRALIA I AM ABSOLUTELY CONVINCED THAT AT LEAST THIRTY PER CENT ARE NOT GUILTY OF THE CRIMES ALLEGED AGAINST THEM. THEY ARE THERE SIMPLY BECAUSE THE POLICE, FINDING THEMSELVES CALLED UPON TO JUSTIFY THEIR EXISTENCE AND UNABLE TO SECURE THE TRUE CULPRITS, HAVE DELIBERATELY CHOSEN THEM AS VICTIMS. FOR THE POOR THERE IS NO LONGER JUSTICE. IN THE COURTS OF AUSTRALIA ALL THE EVIDENCE IN THE WORLD COULD NOT INFLUENCE THE MIND OF A MAGISTRATE OR JUDGE IN THE FACE OF A CONTRARY ASSERTION ON THE PART OF A MEMBER OF THE ALL-POWERFUL FORCE.

In Goulburn Jail I came into close contact with the "lifers"—that is, men whose death sentence for murder has been commuted to penal servitude for life. They have characteristics peculiarly their own, and in a later publication I intend to deal particularly with them.

My mate in the garden was a "lifer", and a better mate I never wish to have. Gruff in manner, his was the kindest heart that ever beat beneath the breast of either a branded jacket or frock-coat. He told me about the crime he had committed—wife-murder—and yet every morning that mate of mine, previous to our sweeping the asphalt paths of the garden, used to walk round and pick up the ants and place them back upon the

worked soil, and pick up the ladybirds and place them upon the shrubs in order that they might not be mangled by the whalebone brooms.

The "lifers" in Goulburn Jail, and their number seemed legion, appeared to be religious extremists. They took a leading part in the church services, and the devotional fervor they displayed bordered almost on to the fanatical. One day I enquired of one of them the reason for his excess of zeal, and he gave voice to the following logic:

"Well, yer see, I looks at it this way. There might be an 'Eaven and an 'Ell, and there mightn't be. So it stands to reason that if yer religious an' there is an 'Eaven and an 'Ell then you'll be on the right side, and even if there ain't, well, then yer ain't done yerself no 'arm."

He paused for a moment, and then, with a sort of despairing gesture, continued:

"Besides, a bloke ain't got no chance to be anything but religious in a damn 'ole like this."

One day I heard a visiting clergyman say to the same "lifer": "Well, Number So and So, how are things going with you?"

Number So and So placed a forefinger significantly against his chin and replied:

"Look 'ere, sir, I'm right full up of it; full right up to 'ere. I can't stand it no longer."

The minister assumed an air of deep commiseration, and said, "But, poor fellow, you must be punished for your sins. It's God's will."

"That's just what I don't understand, sir," answered Number So and So. He suddenly pointed towards the church. "You tell us Sunday after Sunday over there that God is going ter punish us fer our sins by an' by, and 'ere you are backing this crowd up wot's taken upon themselves to do God's work. If it's God's job to punish us, well, leave it to 'Im—but if it's the job of the Comptroller-General of Prisons—well, sir, tell us straight out and let us know jes' how we stand." And the good parson, with a remark about some things being beyond the comprehension of mortal mind, bade a hurried and frowning "Good-day".

Upon one occasion I listened to a young embezzler and a prisoner employed at carpentering in heated argument about the details of certain tasks. The discussion became rather personal, and the carpenter, who seemed to be getting the worst of the deal, suddenly tossed his head in evident disgust and walked off in high dudgeon with the crushing final rejoinder of: "Well, I may be bad enough, but, thank God, anyway, I'm not a thief." This man, who thanked God he was not a thief, had committed

no greater crime than to murder his wife and two baby children. Another time I heard a "lifer" humbly rebuke a warder who was abusively addressing him by saying, "Please, sir, I'd have you remember that I never came 'ere for stealin', nor for tellin' lies neither."

Instance after instance worthy of mention I could relate while touching upon the subject of "lifers", but must hasten on.

Many of the unfortunates I met had loomed large before the public at the time of their trials. In the press the details of their crime had been printed in bold type under glowing headlines, and then they had passed out of sight, out of mind, and though they still lived on, to the world they had become nothing more than a morbid memory.

no greater crime than to murder his wife and two baby children.
 Another time I heard a "liar" humbly rebuke a warder
 who was abusively addressing him by saying, "Please, sir, I'd
 have you remember that I never came 'ere for stealin', nor for
 tellin' lies neither."

CONCLUSION

Instance after instance worthy of mention I could mention
 while touching upon the subject of "liars," but must hasten on.
 And every human heart that breaks
 In prison's cell on yonder wall
 Is that broken heart that gave
 Its treasure to the Lord
 And filled the miser's miser's house
 With the scent of costliest nard.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

A prisoner in jail is often likened to a caged bird, but the allegory is wrong. When a bird is robbed of its freedom, it is petted and pampered, but a prisoner is systematically tortured. As a foremost Judge confessed in an address delivered at the Sydney Town Hall, the whole aim of the jail system of this land is to perpetually impress upon the mind of a prisoner the fact that he is undergoing actual punishment during every moment of his incarceration.

A man or woman is sentenced to six months' imprisonment. He or she is handed to the jailers, and they concentrate their efforts upon changing that six months into a seeming six years. A prisoner in an Australian jail is subjected to a system of rigid regulation, which exists simply in order to be broken and so allow the infliction of additional punishment.

A term in jail cannot improve a man either physically, mentally, or morally. Physically, he deteriorates in consequence of unnatural suppression of action, the vitiated atmosphere of the darksome cell, and the vileness of the regulation diet. Mentally, he suffers from continual oppressiveness, the forced abandonment of initiative, and the nerve-racking tyranny of official watchfulness. And morally he suffers also. A mysterious force, compelling and inherent, drives him to seek converse with his kind. The cast-iron rules of the prison say he must not; but when the opportunity comes he must—surreptitiously. He is detected, and, in danger of dire consequence, he lies. His palate has been trained to appreciate sweetness. The "indulgence" prisoners receive their tiny share of sugar, and he stoops to begging and bartering. He is detected, and lies. He pleads with a more fortunate fellow

for the taste of tobacco, and, getting it, is detected, and lies. He lies because something tells him it is no crime to speak, or to eat sugar or smoke tobacco when others give it to him. The very savagery of the laws which govern the jails of Australia have made them a hotbed of lying and knavery. But what though the jail system of Australia makes knaves and tricksters of honest men! After all, it but fulfils its mission. And what is its mission? I will tell you. There are hundreds of thousands of pounds of vested interest represented in the over-supply of jail buildings throughout the land, and it is the mission of the jail system to see that so much invested capital does not fall into disuse.

And, finally, there are myriads and myriads of our fellow-men who go to fill the positions of jail officialdom, and these men know full well that it is to their individual benefit to have a flourishing criminal crop on hand. Clearly it is the mission of the system to maintain, not to lessen, the supply of victims.

And now, reader, I will conclude. In my own humble way I have helped you to understand the mysteries of everyday jail life under the sunny skies of Australia—a life which absolutely fails as a reformatory factor, but serves only to breed bitterness, resentment, and habitual criminality, for only too aptly is its true effect portrayed in those haunting lines of Wilde's:

The vilest deeds, like poison weeds,
 Bloom well in prison air;
 It is only what is good in man
 That wastes and withers there;
 Pale Anguish keeps the heavy gate,
 And the warder is Despair.

THE WORLD OF
THE LIVING DEAD

by
VANCE MARSHALL

PREFACE BY HENRY LAWSON

THE WENTWORTH PRESS
SYDNEY
1969

Dedicated to
DONALD GRANT

And what should Ye know of the longing,
Ye who come and who go where ye will —
The dreams born of memories thronging,
Of the yearnings that Time cannot still,
Of the lure of the windspoken stories
Of a Bushland, its sward and its moss —
O! how can Ye treasure earth's glories,
Ye who never have suffered their loss?

The press is printing its smug, smug lies, and paying its shameful debt—

It speaks of the comforts that prisoners have, and the 'holidays' prisoners get.

The visitors come with their smug, smug smiles through the jail on a working day.

And the public hears with its large, large ears what authorities have to say.

They lay their fingers on well-hosed walls, and they tread on the polished floor;

They peep in the generous shining cans with their ration Number Four.

And the visitors go with their smug, smug smiles; the reporters' work is done;

STAND UP! MY MEN, WHO HAVE DONE YOUR TIME ON RATION NUMBER ONE!

* * *

Bread and water and hominy, and a scrag of meat and a spud,
A Bible and thin flat book of rules, to cool a strong man's blood;

They take the spoon from the cell at night—and a stranger might think it odd;

But a man might sharpen it on the floor, and go to his own Great God.

* * *

Rules, regulations—red-tape and rules; all and alike they bind:

Under 'separate treatment' place the deaf; in the dark cell shut the blind!

And somewhere down in his sandstone tomb, with never a word to save,

One Hundred and Three is keeping step, as he'll keep it to his grave.

—From 'One Hundred and Three', by Henry Lawson.

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AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

After reading the proof copy of "The World of the Living Dead", a leading publisher said to me, "It's good, but, in places, too raw—too creepy—too real. From a business point of view the sordid truth is not always the most acceptable."

As I have not yet come to regard my doings in life from a business point of view, and because I feel that the world would be a better world if one and all were forced to cast aside the mask of conventional hypocrisy and face the sordid truth of things, I give, to those of you who care to follow, these chapters in their original entirety, unclipt of rawness, creepiness—of reality.

Superfluous it is for me to say that I am proud of the preface this little work contains. The influence of Henry Lawson has long been upon me. "The Vagabond" it was that first inspired me, when yet in my teens, to launch out upon a world-rove of many years, and yet my blood tingles to the lilt of its lines. In the days of tribulation "One Hundred and Three" ran hauntingly through my troubled brain and soothed it with the memory that the thorny path I trod already bore the footprints of—men. Even as I pen these lines, because I have "the heart of the rebel" that answers "no" to the narrowness of the life that is ours, it is the swing of "The days when the world was wide" that grips me and sends forth a clarion call to still fight on till the world again is wider—and life bigger.

VANCE MARSHALL

Sydney, Australia,

5th November, 1919.

PREFACE

Vance Marshall, the author of "Jail From Within", has asked me to write a preface for his new book, and because of the sad many of whom he writes, and of whom I, too, long ago, have written, I gladly accede to his request.

I am pleased to introduce him from the inky stage (which, after all, is rather better than any gaol) and leave him to again draw aside the curtain of cant and hypocrisy in order that you good folk—"good" perhaps unconsciously for your own comfort—may see the hideous hopelessness of those who fill the narrow wall begirt world of gaol.

I read his "Jail From Within", from cover to cover, in one reading to-day for the first time, and wish I had read it before. Perhaps I did not do so because of some inexplicable latter day prejudice or bitterness I may have developed against this young man and his class—the very army I marched with when I was even years younger than he is now.

You must put aside all such prejudice for the sake of the book. It made me feel something of the same fire of revolt against things as they were, and, as he describes them yet to be, that blazed again as I wrote the "One Hundred and Three" he quotes. Some of its lines, he tells me, are known, and oft-repeated by the grey-clad outcasts of society.

Some of those outcasts in grey were very kind to me, whenever they could be (as were also some of those other prisoners, the warders) and, when I last left them, on a moonlit winter's night, my waiting friends heard voices calling cautiously "Catch step, One Hundred and Three".

"Catch step" is, I believe, the correct gaol expression, but "Keep step" sounds, of course, better in verse.

Vance Marshall also asked me to give some detail concerning the composing of "One Hundred and Three" in gaol. There was no "composing"; the idea, and the body of it came in very short time—probably in one night, as a thing of its kind might come to any writer in a state of high mental tension.

The jotting down of what I call "key-lines", or notes of the subject matter of the verses (for we are not allowed pens and ink or pencils—or even lady typistes in our cells) and the

smuggling of those notes out is a matter which, for obvious reasons, I cannot dwell upon.

The difficulties to be overcome will, perhaps, explain the crudities of "One Hundred and Three" as compared with that other thing of mine in the same metre: "The Star of Australia". But the passing of the verses of "One Hundred and Three" through my mind, together with the tobacco smuggled to me by the aforesaid felonious friends in grey, probably saved my reason during a period that helped to turn my beard white, which might now have been as red as the beard of any of my Viking forefathers.

Amongst those felonious friends was one—Joe Love—the pantryman in the gaol hospital, a most cheerful and lovable character, serving a sentence of fourteen years. Joe had only killed his wife, but he told me that he had done it under great provocation. There was "Previous Convictions", a harmless little fellow, so-called because he always said that "his previous convictions was agin' 'im".

The last time I saw "Previous" he was tramping west on the Hay line, probably with the idea of getting away from his "convictions". At the time he had with him a mate called "Doty", whose trouble, "Previous" told me in gaol, was "thievin'—allers thievin'."

Then, too, there was a growling old burglar, a sweeper, always complaining that the place was going to rack and ruin.

The laws of the land should be amended to provide against:—

(1) The girl or woman with the glib, lying tongue against sweet-heart, brother, father—anyone, who has been gaoling, aye, and hanging men and boys like she of Mount Rennie fame. She is said to have died raving mad in a Chinese camp with the gallows scene dangling before her. (2) The growing number of hysterics—married women often, and well and kindly and generously-treated married women, too—the viciously insane and cunningly calculating harpie, who is continually being "pulled out of bed by the 'air of her 'ead, and chased round the yard with a haxe".

(3) The hag next door; the Great Australian Nag, and the woman and girl with the morbid craving for police court notoriety. The wretched gang of police-court solicitors, who foster and encourage all these things, fill the columns of the press with the domestic miseries of honest, sensitive men, and the public bars with the ruined wrecks of once good citizens, and supply a big sub-percentage of those who go to make up Vance Marshall's thirty per cent. innocent of those in gaol. And, lastly, my brethren, the smug, comfortable-living, narrow-worlded magistrates, happily growing less and less in number, with their large

ears ever ready to take in tales that are as old as, and older than, Captain Potiphar's wife—he of Pharaoh's body-guard.

I have had a warder cling to the door of my cell as long as he possibly could at closing time, not to sympathise with me, but to get sympathy for his own domestic miseries.

And, I might mention here, that, in spite of cowardly, political Red Tape lies to the contrary, inebriates were, and probably are, treated precisely as ordinary prisoners, and go for months without tobacco and sugar, while sugar, above all things, is necessary to restore the drink-destroyed tissues.

You know little and care less of the world of the living dead, but because it is a part of your bigger world, you must learn to feel the sadness, misery, the madness, and, above all, the flaming injustice of it.

Did you every try to realise, for one little passing moment, the tragedy of those in gaol, or even the greater tragedy of those who wait without—wait, and slave, and suffer?

I remember the days when I had no beard at all to turn white, and letters came to a neighbour of ours who had a member of the family in gaol **with the name of the gaol and the gaol-marks outside on the envelopes**. Even now the O.H.M.S. is enough on the small blue gaol-made cover. And what of the family of the hanged? Are they not ostracised on the same gallows, and is this not a reason in itself why capital punishment should be abolished?

One more word, and it is for the "women who wait"—both good women, and others good only in the way of Mary Magdalen, who rounded up the low companions of the city and crept with them, in fear and darkness, to take down from the Cross the tortured body of the Christian Christ who had suffered for such as these.

There's a thought that sends a lump to my throat
And cuts my heart like a knife,
'Tis the woman that waits at the prison gates—
And the woman is not his wife.
Not his wife nor his mother, or sweetheart,
Nor his sister or daughter she;
But only a friend to the bitter end—
And she carries the cross of three.

HENRY LAWSON

North Sydney,
November, 1919.

YARD No. 20

Speak up, my men! I was never the man to keep my own bed warm.

I have jogged with you round in the Fools' Parade, and I've worn your uniform;

I've seen you live, and I've seen you die, and I've seen your reason fail—

I've smuggled tobacco and loosened my tongue—and I've been punished in jail.

—Henry Lawson.

A dozen cells find outlet into Yard 20 from Range 4, Long Bay Jail. I was the "Sweeper" of Yard 20.

I recall the morning well, a morning in August, bleak and cheerless. Only three of the dozen compartments remained with closed iron doors, contrasting grotesquely with their fellows, which, at the clang of the work bell, had emptied forth their dismal humanity, and now gaped hideously open.

Beside each threshold lay sprawled in the damp, wintry air an awkward wad of blanket, whose cleanliness was doubtful, but whose wear and tear were beyond all doubt.

With emery and oil rag I passed from bolt to bolt and made glitter again the steel which the night had coated with incipient rust. Over the lock of closed cell Number One, I lingered long and polished assiduously. From inside came the muffled pacing of a slippered inmate. He was a "Reception" awaiting "classification"; the unfilled spaces on the card in its docket by the door told me that.

I polished on, for across the Circle braided Officialdom stood watching.

A diversion occurred and the opportunity was mine.

Over the way a "trial" man had tossed a "chew" to a "toeragger". Ever-watchful Officialdom was quick to see, and swept down upon its prey. With head sunk upon his breast the "toeragger" was hustled off to be hoarded away for the weekly

"beak". It would take minutes to make him secure, for he must deliver up his braces, his boots, his books, and be "ramped" to the skin.

Officialdom was occupied, and the opportunity mine. Swiftly I slid back the peephole cover. Inside the closed cell the man halted in his pacing, aware of the gleam of light and scenting Officialdom. I peered in and could not see him, for even in the heart of summer Range No. 4 is notoriously dark.

Reassured by the grating emery, he stepped over.

"How long?" I muttered. The old-timer was betoken in the jerky fluency of the reply. "Stretch—two drags—coomyerlative. Three charges agin' me—righteous, vag, an' resistin'. Fitted on first two—turned up on third. Bastard, ain't it! Fer the love o' Gawd, give us a taste o' snout."

From its hiding place behind the canvas number brand on my breast I drew a tiny chunk of "contraband" and passed in a few broken flakes. His thanks—a delighted oath—was good to hear.

Swiftly I passed along the row. The man in the next closed cell was no new arrival. I had seen him before—a poor rusted fellow, with no chin, and hair bleached prematurely white.

"Nine months' hard labor," blared the information card. One day at muster he had told me that he was in "fer beggin'," and glancing curiously at him I had marvelled at his temerity in even recognising the right to beg.

"What's wrong, Two seventeen?" Pushing aside the flap I made the whispered inquiry.

In the cold and the damp of the far corner I heard him scramble to his feet. His story came through to me as I worked. "I'm locked up, Sweeper," he wheezed asthmatically. "They got me with a bit o' 'kite'. It 'ad blown in over the wall, an' I finds it down on the job, an' whips it inter me shirt on the orl chance o' gittin' a bit o' snout fer a fag, an', Gawd's truth, I clean fergits about it till they digs it out at search time."

He paused for a while as though there was nothing else to say, and then suddenly spoke again with an impetuosity almost surprising.

"As true as Gawd's above, Sweeper, I couldn't o' read it if I wuz paid. Me eyes is been too week for noosepapers this last ten year, an' the only reason I kep' it wuz becorse in orl the time I done never wunst yet 'ave I tore me Bible."

A savage anger had taken possession of me. "Here!" I said fiercely, pushing through the remainder of my tobacco stock. "You'll be tried the day after to-morrow, and

will get seven days' bread and water in the 'Punishments!' Take this and use your Bible or anything else you can get hold of, but smoke it, every bit, before they have a chance to 'ramp' you again."

I slipped quickly away, for the heavy steps of returning Officialdom were ringing back across the Circle. The present demands of the Regulation God had been appeased, and from their eerie his braided eagles again took up the watch for victims.

Till almost noon the biting wind howled in from what I knew to be the direction of the sea, banking up the big, black clouds overhead. At length the rain came in stinging, freezing drops. Down it poured, beating on the dreary stretches of asphalt and against the barred fences with demoniacal fury, till even Officialdom had to forego its watchfulness and crouch for shelter into iron-bound doorways.

Drawn by the social instinct in man which so asserts itself when forbidden utterance I edged across to the iron sheet of closed cell Number Three.

A quick, agitated "Yessir" came in response to my low hail, together with an awkward shuffling as the occupant gathered himself to attention.

"It's all right; I'm only a prisoner—the sweeper," I explained, adding rather superfluously, "first timer, aren't you?"

"Yes," said a husky voice, "first timer. This is Hell, ain't it, Eighteen months'll just about drive me mad."

I tried to speak cheerfully. "Oh, you'll be all right. You look after Number One all the time, and don't let them bluff you too much. They'll take advantage of you being a new hand if you stand for it. Eighteen months! Why, that's only a sleep compared to some. There's a pack of fellows here doing the whole lot. Eighteen——"

I broke off, aware that back in the gloom the man was sobbing.

"It ain't the time so much," he muttered brokenly, "but nuthin' like this 'as 'appened ter me before. It ain't meself wot I'm botherin' about—it's the missus an' the kids—five of 'em—the baby only three weeks. Ter think that their own dad 'ud shame 'em like this. Ter think uf orl the street pointin' their fingers at 'em. . . ." He began to amble aimlessly from corner to corner, and spoke on as though to himself. "But, after all, what could I do? Wot could a man do? Trampin' an' trampin' the city week after week an' not a job o' no kind to be 'ad—an' them jes' starvin' ter death—an' 'er starvin' in 'er very trouble—wot could a man do? Thievin' they call it—I wuz driv to it. A

man couldn't stand by an' wotch 'is own flesh an' blood die. Somethin' tole me they 'ad a right ter live, an' wot could a man do—wot could a man do?"

He seemed to recollect my unseen presence. The whine died from his voice, and he coughed harshly.

"Yes, lad," he said with a brutal oath, "I'll take yer advice an' look after Number One. Her an' the kids'll 'ave ter find fer 'emselves now. Ter Hell with the lot of 'em. They've made a bloody criminal o' me, an', by the Holy Christ, I'll be a proper 'un."

The gale had veered and its rain was pelting in upon me and the line of sprawling blankets. Not even a cheering flake of my "contraband" remained. I had nothing to offer, nothing to say.

The peephole flap slipped through my listless fingers back into place, and I left him, left him alone with the good within him already withering and wasting away.

JAIL BIRDS

"A criminal face is rare in jail, where all things else are ripe,
It is higher up in the social scale that you'll find the criminal
type.

But the kindness of man to man is great when penned in a
sandstone pen—

The public call us the 'criminal class', but the warders call
us 'the men'."

—Henry Lawson.

There is a bird that wakens me each morning from broken
slumber with its glad notes. For weary months I have listened
to its call.

At first I used to wait for its coming, for the cold, grey
winter was here, and I had long since risen from my lowly couch
ere the daybreak bade it sing. But now the summer has come,
and the clammy dark has crept away before the bell clang re-
echoes through the silent halls.

Year long it follows the day, the bird that wakens me.

I used to wonder why it should give its dawn song from the
wall outside. I understand now, for its story has been told by
comrades to whom the years have made it sacred. An English
bird, a blackbird, escaped from captivity, it comes to sing to us,
its fellow birds—grey birds, with numbered breasts and backs—
jail birds.

They say that this land by the Murray—for I write from my
cell in Albury Jail—is the heart of the bird world. True, it may be,
but we task men, except from hearsay, know it not because ours
is a tiny wall-girt world beyond which we never go.

Yet far above in the blue freedom we can see the white
hawks hovering and the long-legged cranes drifting by.

The farm gang which trudges out to work beyond the asphalt
courts has told us tales of a score of little nests, and even under
the wall ledge of the yard in which we exercise a swallow has
hatched her clamorous brood.

We are fond of our fellows of the feathered species, we jail
birds.

I have seen a "Willie Wagtail" drop down, as it were,
from the skies, and, skipping on the sill of the workshop window,
send his lilted chirp in through the closet bars. Then the hammer
of the burglar has rested on the last, and the needle of the forger
has remained poised in the air, and even the old "lifer", who
long ago killed his mate, has ceased to ply the awl which has be-
come part of his being.

"Hush!" they say. "Let him be, and he might come back
again."

And when the little black and white vision has whisked
itself away, the shaven-headed garotter will slip across and
spread the crumbs of contraband bread from the depths of his
single pocket; for, who can tell, he might come back again.

Before coming here I passed weary weeks in the big, grim
penitentiary at Long Bay, and there, that is apart from the
human variety whose name is legion, I saw but few birds.

Only in the evening, when the bolts had clashed and the
prison day was done, the sparrows would come to croon amongst
the eaves; at midnight the curlew would sometimes send its
mournful cry up from the marshes, and the swallows would
twitter unseen as the glimmer of day flecked the dingy cell walls.

Then, with the bang of the signal gong, all token of bird
life would fade away.

Sentiment finds but little room amid the tragic turmoil of
"the Bay".

All is bustle—and oppressiveness. The courtyards ring to
the tramp of marching feet, and the air is filled with the voice
of Authority.

The farm workers plod forth to their hoe; the task men
be off to the work bench; the sweepers pass hither and thither
with their brooms; the "Receptions" line up in scared uncertainty
and unaccustomed raiment; the "discharge" men step briskly
gateward with crumpled clothes. The trial yards are thronged
with a motley array, the "Committed" pace the limits of their
barred cages, and the rule of "Regulations" is supreme and
dominates all.

Truly, sentiment finds but little room amid the tragic turn-
moil of "the Bay".

But one who has "passed through the innermost portals"
could never forget the birds of a country jail, which lend a gleam
of sweetness to a life of monotony, gruelling and grovelling.

How well I recall the birds of Goulburn—from the magpie that attacked with unaccountable ferocity the "Trial" men who had as yet not donned the convict garb, to the beautiful goldfinches fluttering fearlessly amid the cornflower beds of the garden where I delved!

Beside the hospital was caged the brilliant Rosella that whistled "Pretty Joey", and spoke to all and sundry with a variety of noises only understandable to its "lifer" owner who had "learned" it.

High up in the shade of the church front the swallows rode the big brass hands of the clock with laughable unsteadiness till the hour boom precipitated a transient outburst of dismayed twittering.

And then along the line of workshops, in whose back walls the flogging rings were deeply driven, were ranged the aviaries, where the canaries reared their young and whose trill rang the day long above the racking clang of the anvil, the sullen drone of the grindstone, and the dreary rip of the saw.

How they loved the little birds, these unnamed men! Convicts, criminals, outcasts, whose very souls were seared with the burning brand of social contumely! How they loved the little birds! When I have watched them take the fluffy young in the palms of their tainted hands, and have seen the tiny things croon responsively content against their lips, I am proud to think that MY name, MY finger-prints, and MY record stand inscribed in the annals of crime with theirs. It warms my heart to still recall the innate goodness which they were not, and still are not, ashamed to express.

And it was not because of their golden glory that the canary birds were cherished, for equally so were the brown-coated sparrows amongst them—perky little beings, who with youthful precocity had fluttered down from the cave nests ere their wings were strong enough to lift them out over the high walls.

Thus they came to join the family of jail birds, hopping unafraid on the very work benches and suffering themselves to be tenderly taken up at will by the toil-worn hands that had fostered them. But even their brother sparrows, who at a maturer age had drifted into the grimly peaceful precincts as though weary of the fretful existence of the world without—they, too, had lost all fear.

I have seen them at the woodpile preening their drab splashed breasts upon the logs being sawn, and out in the garden where I worked cluster around me like tame chickens, heedless of the jolting spade.

Yesterday was Sunday, and the door of my cell was left for a while standing open. As I sat listlessly upon the chained stool, a chirping pair hopped in from the silent iron-bound passage. For a moment they eyed me enquiringly, and then fluttered on to the white scrubbed table, picked up the crumbs that had broken from my frugal bread allowance.

Such bird faith is good to see, and even better is the token of unashamed nature love in those who bear the outcast brand. It is not confined to birds, this yearning tenderness, but extends to the hills, the rivers, the trees—all that is no longer part of our lives.

I have smuggled the crimson carnation from the beds I weeded through to comrades whose toil was unsurrounded by beauty; I have watched it pass from hand to hand, have seen the shaven heads bend over it till its fragrance has been inhaled by all.

Nature, Mother Nature! She is the only friend in whom our faith remains unshaken beyond these walls which crush our manhood from us.

Written, as it was, in a prison cell by the pen of a genius, "De Profundis" rings with the pathos of many sad truths, but the greatest of all and the most applicable to us of the criminal world is that expressed in its final passage.

"All trials are for one's life, just as all sentences are sentences to death; and three times have I been tried. . . . Society, as we have constituted it, will have no place for me, has none to offer; but Nature, whose sweet rains fall on just and unjust alike, will have clefts in the rocks where I may hide, and secret valleys in whose silence I may weep undisturbed. She will hang the night with stars so that I may walk abroad in the darkness without stumbling, and send the winds over my footprints so that none may track me to my hurt. She will cleanse me in great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole."

CHAPEL IRON BARRED

PART I

"The great, round church with its volume of sound, where
we dare not turn our eyes—
They take us there from our separate hells to sing of Paradise.
In all the creeds there is hope and doubt, but of this there
is no doubt:
That starving prisoners faint in church, and the warders
carry them out."

—Henry Lawson.

An hour has not yet passed since I heard the lines of an
old Mission hymn sung by embezzlers, and horse thieves, and
highwaymen—yes, and by murderers, too—convicts all.

"Strange we never prize the music
Till the sweet-voiced bird has flown!
Strange that we should slight the violets
Till the lovely flowers are gone!
Strange that summer skies and sunshine
Never seem one half so fair
As when winter's snowy pinions
Shake the white down in the air!"

In fact, I helped in the singing, for I also am a convict.

"Strange we never prize the music
Till the sweet-voiced bird has flown!"

As we sung, the deep significance of it all gripped hold
upon me.

The braided officer, erect at his post, did not understand.
Possibly the mere idea of even attempting to understand had
never entered his mind. No doubt he was thinking of the bell
that would free him from duty, of the child running to meet
him at the gate by the roadside—of the happy hearth of home.

The sweet-voiced bird, the violets, the summer skies and
sunshine—the joy they all brought was still his. How could he
understand its loss?

My glance strayed towards the preacher, nervous and
young. Neither did he understand. His mind was reverting to
the sermon he had delivered to us by way of practice, wondering
how it would be received later in the day by the outside con-
gregation for whose edification it had been prepared.

Also the quick, ever-shifting gaze told that in odd moments
his trend of rumination diverged. Then, for a transient space,
he seemed to realise what a desperate pack of outlaws we were,
to be sure. Our close-cropped heads and uncropped chins ap-
peared to fill him with a furtive terror, and possibly occasioned
him to feverishly calculate as to how long he might hope to
continue his existence should the braided guard suddenly vanish
from the scene.

I needed not to seek the expression on the faces of my
comrades, whose numbered breasts rose and fell to the cadence
of the haunting air. They DID understand, even as I.

"Strange that we should slight the violets
Till the lovely flowers are gone!"

Yes, strange that we should fail to prize—not only the
bird music, the flowers, the sunshine, but the houses with the
little children playing about the doorways, even the horses, the
carts, the tram-cars, the cries of the street, the bustle of life—
strange that we should not prize the world itself until it had
been taken from us.

The warder and the preacher still had the world. They did
not understand.

We, the criminal element, had lost the world. We under-
stood.

An hour has not yet passed since I heard sung the lines of
the old Mission hymn of which I have spoken, but its lilt stays
with me, and it is that which inspires me to write of jail and
its church.

Within the Bastilles of to-day, be he orthodox or heterodox,
Christian or Confucianist, theist or atheist, believer or infidel,
the prisoner files off without demur to the service of the denomi-
nation he has cared to express as his.

At times I depart from the faith which stands recorded as
mine upon the card beside my cell door, and, because of a desire
to learn and to know, my shaven head is wont to appear before

both pulpit and altar, both parson and priest. Thus I speak not for one side alone when I say that to receive the gospel without money and without price is, I feel assured, not the only motive which gathers us into jail worship without a vestige of hesitation. There are minor incentives and there is the greater.

The break in the biting monotony of things, that is one incentive. There is the brief hour of Authority a trifle relaxed; there is the chance to "word" a mate whom maybe one never sees elsewhere; there is the "contraband" which may come your way; then there is the greater incentive—the singing, the music.

From the elevated dais the hymn is called in solemn tones. The organist, whose classification brand tells of a long, long sentence, bends over his music, and a flood of harmony breaks the silence.

The opening lines are finished; the notes die away in a throb, and the warder on guard rises smartly to attention. His action is the signal for us, the congregation, to stand.

The deep voices of the prison choir take the lead, and, raising ours lustily in unison, we give vent to the volume a week of silence has pent.

And so we sing, the Christian deep from his heart a hymn of praise to his God, the sceptic deep from his heart a simple melody of joy, and way at the back the little group of Chinese gamblers, and the Aboriginal sheep-stealer, with hymn books opened at random and upside down, dissemble with hesitating sounds of gladness strangely pathetic.

How the flood gates of memory open to the singing of those old-time hymns!

It is indeed the music which gathers us into these barred walls of church without reluctance.

The old-time hymns! "The sands of time are sinking, the dawn of Heaven breaks!" "Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom, lead Thou me on!" "Nearer my God to Thee, nearer to Thee!" "Abide with me, fast falls the eventide!" How their solemn sounds encompass me, even me, an unbeliever—encompass me like a mighty wave sweeping me back on its crest to Sundays long ago.

In jail the mind becomes intensely impressionable, and sometimes in the singing of a single hymn I live each Sabbath day of my life again. The canvas number brands fade off me and I am a child once more, learning parrot-fashion to recite the lines for Sunday school, or, of a hot, dreamy morning, adding to the strain of the closing Doxology my shrill, unbroken treble, happy because the dreary service, redolent of hellfire and brimstone, has at last dragged its course.

Again, I am the youth in whose spirit the Truth had suddenly been made manifest—a veritable Marcus Superbus, who has

"also found the Light", seeking to exceed in the earnestness of my devotion some maid Mercia, pouring forth her radiant soul in the choir—my heart filled with a wild, spiritual emotion, an insatiable desire to worship, which I knew not to be only a boy love, or "calf" love, if you will, seeking to express itself for the girlish goddess, divine and unaware.

In strange lands I am still a youth, fast learning to know my world, but clinging, desperately clinging to the beliefs of boyhood—drifting into a church here, drifting into a church there, but drifting—always drifting.

That gnawing pain of transition—it lives with me yet! Onward I go till I know my faith to have been definitely shaken by a love for ancient philosophy and doomed to destruction by an increasing reverence for modern science, till at length its tattered remnants fade away and doubt has triumphed.

Then, to-day, here am I, a young man still, back in my native land, my name inscribed in the records of crime, a convict and an unbeliever, singing hymns of praise dedicated to a God I have ceased to know.

I feel the air of sanctity that permeates the place; I hear the thrill of earnestness ringing in the voices of my comrades, but I scorn not. Maybe, it brings a joy into their poor broken lives—so let them be.

There is a tragic beauty in it all which drives home all that it cost to relinquish my faith as the storm clouds of life grew thicker overhead.

From the pen of B. J. Romanes, the thinker, fell words more expressive than aught I could piece together.

"I am not ashamed to confess," he wrote in soliloquy upon his renunciation of Christianity, "that, with this virtual negation of God, the universe has lost for me its soul of loveliness; and although from henceforth the precept 'to work while it is yet day' will doubtless but gain an intensified force from the terribly intensified meaning of these words that 'the night cometh when no man can work'; yet when at times I think of the hallowed glory of I must, of the appalling contrast between the lonely mystery that sacred creed which was once mine, and the lonely mystery of existence as now I find it—at such times I shall ever feel it impossible to avoid the sharpest pangs of which my nature is susceptible."

CHAPEL IRON BARRED

PART II

"The old church service swells and swells where the tinted
Christs look down—

It is easy to see who is weary and faint and weareth the
thorny crown.

There are quick made signs that are not to God, and they
march us hellward then.

It is hard to believe that WE knelt as boys to 'for ever and
ever, Amen'."

—Henry Lawson.

A lady friend told me of the old man who worked at the bench below the window of her office, and, as he worked, sung songs of praise to a God.

He was an exceptionally hard working old man, she told me, toiling away early and late, and piecing together his articles of trade with marvellous dexterity for one so old.

Then he disappeared. He had gone, and, missing, the rip of his saw and the lilt of his aged treble, my lady friend enquired.

Yes, he had gone, they told her—had gone back to jail. There he had already spent intermittent years.

It seemed strange, my lady friend had seemed to think, that he, being a jail bird, should sing hymns the day long.

It was not strange. For years his music had been confined to hymns. They had become part of his being—part of his routine. He had learned the business of hymn-singing in jail as he had learned the business of carpentering—even as he had learned the business of getting back into jail.

Songs of praise whirr mechanically through the brain of the time server.

There is a hymn called "Forever with the Lord, Amen, so let it be". It is the song, they say, that is sung on the Sunday afternoon previous to a Monday morning nine o'clock hanging.

Because of its gruesome association it is a favorite of the long-time men.

"Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home,"

they croon over their task, and in their mind's eye picture the yearning stare of the waiting "condemned"—see the greased noose, the canvas night cap, the shooting bolt, and they shudder to ponder on the head pitched sideways, the knees drawing slowly upward—the horrible end.

It is an anomaly that in jail the chapel should be a popular institution and the chaplain an unpopular.

The music, the singing—even to the unbeliever, such as I—it is they that make church worth while.

The most devout of criminals—and criminals behind the walls of prison can display a devoutness sufficient in its excess to equal that of many a smug-faced criminal untrapped without—find but little appeal in the sermons, cold and devoid of relevant colour.

Delivered by men who totally fail to grip the temper of their felon congregation, the average prison sermon is fraught with a studied lack of frankness painfully apparent.

This ill-concealed effort on the part of the preacher to avoid the faintest illusion to our actual lot is suggestive of a latent fear that such a slip might awaken a lawless wrath, possibly culminating in the shedding of his innocent blood.

In private interview the pharisaical attitude is maintained by the adoption of a tone of conciliatory patronage, as though a little humouring is essential to divert catastrophe.

We jail inmates cultivate characteristics peculiar to ourselves. We become far more intense in our sensitiveness than the most impressionable liver of life normal. We are morbid; cell solitude renders us vehemently so; and even though we smirk and smile, or weep bitter tears in response to his solicitations, yet we are ever conscious of the mental barrier which separates us from the parson and the priest.

The grim setting of jail environment shows up in bold relief the black-coated clergy, but much to their disadvantage. Smug, shallow, plausible, well fed, well content, their God may be the God of us, but their world is not our world.

"The greatest hangman in the jail is the parson; never trust him"—the admonition is trite within the walls of prison.

Countless are the tales told of sacred admissions made by woe-burdened convicts to their religious advisers, of traitorous repetition to Authority, of cruel punishment. But prisoners are long-suffering and forgiving. They explain away this unchristian-

like trait in the parsonical character by saying, "Well, if HE ain't conscientious, who in the world could you expect to be?"

A man who is in jail cannot forget for one waking moment that he is there, and one does not delude him by speaking to him as though he were not. The mind of the prisoner becomes strangely responsive to direct allusion to his fate. He appreciates its mention. Despite the possible atrociousness of his crime it is easy to reach his heart, and it does good to touch the more tender chords of his being.

And there it is the clergy fail.

One occasion I do recall upon which the speaker left his pedestal of artificiality, and, becoming human, spoke as one aware of what we were.

It was Christmas day in Goulburn Jail—a bad day—a hungry day, "hungry" because it was a holiday, and so, being unemployed "on productive labor", our rations had been officially and viciously reduced by order of the Department. Even jail birds object to being deprived of food on Christmas Day, and as we filed into church an angry, defiant lack of reverence was evident in all.

Next to me was a young Scotch marine, convicted because of mutiny aboard ship. I had sat beside him before at service, and in a vague, hungry way had envied him his solemn joy; but to-day Christmas hunger had filled him with righteous revolt.

The hymn was intoned from the pulpit, "Nearer My God to Thee," and in his rich Glasgow brogue the mutineer muttered fiercely, "Uf thus hungry hole is in any wa' nearer to Gawd, ba Chr-r-rist Ah want ter keep as fur awa' fra' Heem as Ah can."

As the service continued his recriminations, blasphemously relevant, became more and more frequent. When was being sung the anthem, "He shall set the joy bells ringing in your soul," I caught the suggestion that the setting of something a trifle more digestible than joy bells in our stomachs would, under the circumstances, be better appreciated.

The address began. The speaker was not eloquent, but his voice had the ring of genuine sympathy.

"Men," he said, "You poor unfortunate men! This is Christmas Day—supposed to be a day of gladness, and you are left to drag it drearily away in your numbered tombs, unwanted, forgotten—branded as criminals."

I heard a sob, and, half turning, saw two big, unashamed tears creeping down the jail-bleached cheeks of the boyish seafarer.

I do not remember the gist of the words that followed, but memory of their simple directness is mine yet. The sorrow they expressed rang true.

The speaker reseated himself. Again the convict organist turned to his organ, and, Christmas hunger forgotten, all thought of its painful presence banished by a few kindly words, his prison comrades took up with unadulterated fervour, to the glorious setting of Mendelssohn's "Songs Without Words"—

"Brightest and best of the Sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid."

Beside me rang the loud, deep voice of the Scotch boy-mutineer, who till now had savagely refrained from participating more than was necessary to satisfy the ever-watchful guard.

And I, do, joined in with my fellows and sang—sang with them from my heart.

THE JAIL STRAW

PART I

"You get the jail-dust in your throat, in your skin the dead
jail-white;

You get the jail-whine in your voice and in every letter you
write.

And in your eyes comes the bright jail-light—not the glare
of the world's distraught,

Not the hunted look, nor the guilty look, but the awful look
of the Caught."

—Henry Lawson.

"C 176," the electrician's busker and rouseabout, was engaged in steadying a long ladder whose base rested in the bed of purple pansies. High up, where the sun splashed fiercely against the wall of Wing "D", the officer-mechanic was winding the insulating tape round the connection he had made.

"C 176" was a murderer—the whole jail knew the horrible details of his crime—but, nevertheless, "C 176" had big, dark eyes, girlishly tender. He had murdered long ago, and, because he was a mere boy, they had not hanged him; perhaps also because of his eyes—big, dark, and girlishly tender.

The warm gaze of "C 176" followed the post warden along the asphalt paths of the garden, and, drifting back, fixed itself upon the pair of brown gripping hands. When he spoke in low tones it seemed to be the hands that he addressed.

"What do yer think o' that there war—think she'll end soon?"

Realising with peculiar suddenness the urgency of work in another quarter, I crossed over from the violet border and plunged a weeding-fork into the bed of purple pansies.

"I give it another couple of years," I spoke into the broad arrow painted weed-bucket at my side.

"She can't end too soon for me," was the soft confidence of "C 176". In quality the voice of "C 176" blended strangely with the softness of his eyes. "How much longer yer gotter do?"

Still to his hands he spoke the stereotyped enquiry of the convict to his fellow.

Over by the gate the post warden, a notoriously bad "screw", was in his element. He had scented a breach of "Regulations", and the rasp of his abuse came to us across the maze of dahlia beds.

The post warden was occupied—the coast was clear. Relievedly I tossed the weed-fork into its companion bucket and made my answer direct.

"Not long. Only a few weeks—just on eleven."

"God!" said "C 176".

He had turned his gaze upon me, and his eyes, so pathetically expressive, were filled with a hungry yearning as he ruminated for a while ere continuing.

"I'd do that on bread an' water, upside down in a hole in the ground, if they'd let me loose at the end of it."

Superfluously, I reiterated his own query.

"How much longer yer gotter do?" Jail diction and phraseology are catching.

"Me?" "C 176" chuckled mirthlessly. "Mine's a Kathleen Mavourneen—maybe fer years an' maybe fer ever. Done eleven year orlready—eleven year."

He glanced quickly about him. The post warden was still engaged with his victim. From high up came the faint click of busy pliers among the labyrinth of wires.

"Say! will yer do us a favor when yer get out?" The request of "C 176" was not unexpected; the outgoing prisoner has ever a hundred and one commissions entrusted to him.

Assured of my readiness, hurriedly he impressed upon me the exact location of the maternal abode, and proceeded to "drum me up" with the message.

"Just tell her she can bet on me bein' out as soon as that there war is over. Tell her I'm dead sure of a free pardon. Tell her I'll be gettin' a job right off, an' she won't have ter go out orfice-scurbin' no more. An' tell her"—the voice trembled a trifle—"tell her I'm as happy as a king an' doin' fine. Tell her orl the 'kid stuff' wot'll please her. You know the sort."

He laughed apologetically, but a brown hand moved from the ladder rung, and I knew it had stolen to the now averted eyes. Not that he was embarrassed by his tears, for men in jail—even strong men and bad—are easily moved to the depths by the memories which cling in spite of all.

"Leave it to me," I said, and went on reassuringly "You're on a good wicket. Everybody's just about fed up of war. In every country they're beginning to ask what it's all about. It can't hold out much longer—maybe it will end all of a sudden—say, within a stretch."

"I hope you're right," said "C 176". "It's 'ard ter get the proper strong of it here, but judgin' be wot the parson said last week in his sermon, there won't be a German left above ground ter carry it on before long. By God! She comes as a God-send to us fellows. There'd a been no chance fer the likes o' me if it 'adn't o' been fer her. Before she started I used ter wish they 'ad o' dropped me through the hole in the floor an' been done with me; but now a bloke 'as got a chance ter get out. Why, look how——"

The harangue of "C 176" had abruptly ceased. With remarkable alacrity and an intense display of interest he had jerked back his head to follow the operations of the electrician high up on the ladder, whose base rested in the bed of purple pansies.

Dissembling humbly, I grabbed the branded bucket and bore it towards the rubbish dump, as though heavy laden. The post warden's returning step had sounded on the asphalt path.

THE JAIL STRAW

PART II

"Ay! clang the spoon on the iron floor, and shove in the
bread with your toe,
And shut with a bang the iron door, and clank the bolt just
so,
With an ignorant oath for a last good-night—or the voice
of a filthy thought.
By the Gipsy blood you have caught a man you'll be sorry—
that ever you caught."

—Henry Lawson.

The heat of midsummer lay stagnant in the windowless "canary cage" compartment of the prison van.

There were nine, all told, in the escort gang—a brace of two wedged on either side of me, while facing us, across the narrow space where ran a division barrier of iron bars, was huddled a companion batch of four.

The angry grumbling of the man at the further end half held my vagrant attention.

Apart from the insistency of his muttering, which droned above the sleep-provoking rumble of wheels, and the melancholy clank of swinging chain, there was naught about the man at the further end to demand for him especial notice. In close-cropped facial appearance he differed but casually from us, his comrade convicts; in grotesque travelling garb, painfully new in order to meet the stare of the morbidly curious, gathered at points of embarkation and disembarkation, he differed not at all.

A coarse straw hat, brand new, lay fallen beside the brand new blucher boots he wore. They were motionless, these brand-new blucher boots—the only immobile portion of his person, suggesting in their immobility that they had solidified into the sockets of discolored iron that encircled their untrimmed uppers.

Above the heavy anklets, the pantaloons of crude cloth, brand new, and, still higher, the weirdly shaped raiment of his body proper, grey and dingy in spite of its newness, swayed evenly to the rhythmic clink of the doubled coils of chain hanging from his wrists.

It was toward this superfluity of chain that the man at the further end of the batch opposite directed his mumbled tirade. The shackle equipment had been designed to accommodate, or disaccommodate—for the opinion of authority and its victim is apt to differ on certain points—a chain gang of ten. As said before, there were nine, all told, in the escort gang, and upon him at the further end of the batch opposite had fallen the weight of the unclaimed allotment of hideous, rusted links.

"He didn't kick about the double set o' darbies an' the leg-irons, but, by the holy smokes, this extra chain business was comin' it a bit too strong. He wouldn't mind bettin' a day's bread wack that, if a bloke could only get a hearin', it 'ud be found ag'in the Regulations ter pile on a double weight o' chain. He'd make a complaint, he would—run the risk of a charge o' 'frivolous'. He'd done lots o' basement, lots o' bread an' water, an' it hadn't killed him—could do a lot more yet."

The man at the further end paused to rattle his manacles savagely ere raising the double locked hands to wipe his sweat-streaked brow. Again he took up the thread:

"It was all part of the 'snout' they had ag'in him. He'd been 'set' for the last three year—ever since he got the four years coomyerlative fer dishin' a screw, an' made a break for it at Bathurst. They'd been doggin' him ever since. Look at the welt over his eye, look at the dint in his jaw. But, by the holy Christ, they hadn't had it orl their own way—not be a long chalk. He'd left his mark on a couple of the pet 'footballers' when they come at the kickin' game down in the Parramatta basement—marks that they'd take with them right down to hell. Bloody bastards! that's what they were. Bloody bastards!"

At first we had sympathised. The man next him, who had "maliciously wounded, with intent to kill," had taken the blue kerchief from off his own neck, and, as well as his own manacled hands would allow, had wrapped it with womanly concern about the wrist most galled. Even the sullen-faced youth, whose crime had been a sexual act of hideous perversion, even he had raised his lust-laden eyes to gaze sorrowfully upon the excessive fetters.

But the whining plaint of the man at the further end had become wearisome, and expressions of sympathy had died away. His was now the only voice that helped the wheel whirr to disturb the hush that grew heavier and more pall-like as the hours dragged. We, too, were feeling the gouging bond chafe; we, too, were oppressed with a sense of injustice, and conjured in our hearts, amid the thronging fears and hopes and yearnings, a host of grievances which remained unvoiced.

But the mind of the double-shackled man at the further end refused to treat with sorrow in the abstract. It was his immediate

trouble, all too sufficient in itself, that obsessed him. "A breach of the Regulations, it was. He'd lay his blinded soul on it. What the hell would they come at next? Makin' a man lug a double weight o' chain. Might just as well jag a bloke's hands orf right away, an' be done with it—damn an' blast 'em—"

We stirred expectantly. From the next compartment an officer's voice had called. The guard on watch yawned languidly, and, tossing his short-barrelled carbine on to the seat beside him, reached down from the shelf above our meal ration of bread. In a moment the chain jangle, losing its measured swing, had quickened into a racy rag-time as, double-clutched of a necessity, the measured portions were raised to hungry mouths.

The man at the further end of the batch opposite tore angrily at his share, and continued to grumbled gulpingly: "Takin' a man for a fool—that's wot they was doin'. Of course it hadn't been arranged. Oh, no! Of course it was only be chance that the gang was made up a man short, an' he come to get the missin' man's share o' iron. Oh, yes! The domn dorgs! They'd been puttin' in the dirt long enough. Never mind, there'd come a day. A feller 'ud be sure ter meet some of 'em on the outside—maybe a whole lot sooner than they expected. The war couldn't last fer ever. There'd be somethin' doin' when the war was over. They'd have ter let a man out then, whether they liked it or not. The war pardons signed by the King hisself, not be no blanky Comptroller-General, would make 'em sit up. The King 'ud see that the gates was opened an' everybody got a noo start."

A sudden straightening of backs showed that a new interest had been awakened by the man at the further end. All eyes turned full upon him, and even the hastier eaters who had already completed their frugal repast relaxed a covetous watch upon the remaining crusts of the more fastidious.

The war—yes! It was upon the war that everything hinged—the man at the further end was quite right. The war couldn't last for ever. No war ever had—each and all agreed upon that. The frail-looking forger, ex-bank manager, opined in hesitating voice that "the beastly business might be over any minute, you know," and a gloomy safe-blower suggested in heavy tones that "P'raps she was over orlready, an' they hadn't cracked on a word about it." This latter idea was received with derision, and the safe-blower was glared at with a contempt that caused him to shrink back into his gloomy self as quickly as he had emerged. News of the war being over—that was something that walls, no matter how high, could not keep out when it came. So came the medley of muffled argument.

And then, with the remaining remnants of an Oxford inflection, the embezzling army paymaster spoke: "His bally friend,

at college, in a letter received just prior to—to—to——” he held up his braceleted hands, jangled his fetters significantly, and continued—“just prior to this most unfortunate business, told me that the Germans couldn’t possibly hold out another twelve months from then. That was well over six months ago—six months, three weeks, and four dyas, to be exact; so the end couldn’t be so very far off now, for Colonel So-and-so was no bally fool, but a man right in the know.”

The chain gang was decidedly impressed. This was reliable information—professional opinion; not often to be had was the likes of this. The sexual pervert told the floor that a colonel of the army ought to know, if anyone did. The thick-set hold-up man hadn’t seen a kite for close on three years, and didn’t know nothing about what had happened of late; still, he was quite willing to take a colonel’s opinion on this here war. The race-course urger figured that any guy’d be safe in laying the odds on a straight tip of this sort, direct from the stable as it were.

And so opinions were given utterance. This was the dinkum stuff—straight from one of the heads. The embezzler, ex-army paymaster, had become the man of the moment in the tiny iron-bound world. He was the intimate of a colonel, moreover, a colonel who said the war must end soon. Why, any day a cable might come through, saying it was all over, and with it a free pardon for all from the King. Why, any day——

“Hello! What’s this bunch in for?” The race of thought was brought to a muddled halt. From a wayside platform the local representative of law and order, cloaked in the uniform of a mounted trooper and importunate officiousness, had stepped in to stare. Ignored by the armed guard, he leant against the bars, and eyed us closely. The man at the further end of the batch opposite shook his double weight of chain resentfully. Attracted thereby, the interloper fixed him, and demanded, peremptorily: “What are you in for?”

The man at the further end snorted savagely, “Fer killin’ a fool of a bush policeman who wouldn’t mind his own bloody business,” he said.

The guard watch grinned, for it loves but little the “force”, for reasons unknown to the world unless under the all-embracing heading of “professional jealousy”. The discomfited constable withdrew; the train jerked across the side-line points, and picked up its swaying pace. Well pleased with “the dirty one he had give the cop”, the man at the further end of the batch opposite, momentarily oblivious to the Regulation breach and consequent goad of extra iron, chuckled contentedly to himself. And we others of the chained escort gang relapsed back into silence, to mingle with the melancholy of our thoughts the dreams of a day of deliverance at hand.

THE JAIL STRAW

PART III

“They have smuggled him out to the Hospital with no one to tell the tale,
But it’s little the doctors and nurses can do for the patient
from Starvinghurst Jail.
He cannot swallow the food they bring, for a jail-starved
man is he,
And the blanket and screen are ready to draw—(Keep step,
One Hundred and Three!)”

—Henry Lawson.

One Hundred and Seven was his number—his name—and beyond all doubt he was sick even unto death. The ravage of some cruel malady was manifest in the wasted gauntness that lurked beneath the unclipped fuzz of a yet boyish face.

Still, even though it had not been so fatally betokened, the mere fact of his occupying one of the long line of broad arrow branded cots was sufficient in itself to convey the gravity of his infirmity, for such must indeed have become evident ere he had graduated to the position of hospital inmate.

In jail a season of sickness has its phases. Firstly, the sufferer must pass through that racking stage, when, no longer able to face the drudgery of the task bench, he crouches on the floor of a bolted cell and writhes the hours away in secret agony. Gradually, as evidences of his suffering increase sufficiently to impress even his jailors, ever inhumanely suspicious in their eagerness to detect the malingerer, the use of a canvas hammock or floor mat is conceded him. Thus accommodated, both night and day, he tosses in the grim, murky silence of his numbered tomb.

Prescription Day arrives, and with it the visiting medico, sleek, well-paid, and generally remarkable for his indifference. It takes a jail doctor to dispose of a big batch of “cases” in record time and with record unconcern. Upon the arrival of the doctor the iron door is thrown open, and the sick man ordered to parade for inspection. If he be

unable to totter out and fall in line a perfunctory cell diagnosis will be made, but even then the recommendation of "transfer to hospital" is extremely remote. Apart from the establishment of an extra guard to watch both night and day, the occupancy of the hospital damages the jail health record. In jail the sick man is regarded with no compassionate eye; he is simply a wrecker of averages.

In cases of sickness the ill to whom is denied the right of entry to the prison hospital do not rate as ill in the prison log. Thus it is generally through the barred roof cleft of a dingy dungeon that death comes aseeking the suffering sinner with its grim pardon. Seek for yourselves, ye readers, and ye will find that it is mostly to the regular "All's well" night cry of the guard-watch that, unseen and unattended, the dying criminal convulsively gasps his last; that it is mostly the grating open of the iron doors which follows the clang of the "rise call", which reveals the huddled, distorted corpse—the sordid, silent tragedy of the night.

But to return to where our convict lies motionless beneath the coarse sheets, abundantly stamped with the hieroglyphic of jail.

One Hundred and Seven was his number—his name—and beyond all doubt he was sick even unto death.

"Cell consumption!" It had been the whisper of his felon comrades, as, stretcher borne, he went forever from their midst. "Cell consumption!" The hushed surmise had passed from one to another. "Cell consumption. They'd give 'im eight years to do, an' half of it had just about done 'im. Cell consumption! It was that all right that had got him—the same as it had got old 73, an' 213 the nigger, an' 345—that young Jew lookin' chap, yer remember. Cell consumption! Yes, that's what it was beyond a doubt."

And so they whispered on their kindly comment, and, remembering the careless swing of his gait in the Fools' Parade before he was "took bad", remembering the crooning drone of his muffled song at the work bench, "Poor bugger," they said.

Beside his particular cot it happened that I had straightened from the crouch of floor scrubbing, and, chancing to glance at his lonely wanness, had instinctively felt the pity of it. The pleasure glint in his eye told that my passing presence pleased him, and, even with his death sickness upon him, weakly he turned upon the straw-packed bolster to locate the watchful guard.

From the bottle locker far down came creeping the faint aroma of surreptitious cigarette, betokening the recruit destined not to pass beyond probation. Catching the fragrance, One Hundred and Seven sighed his relief.

"Say," he said, addressing me, "would yew like to do a whole lart fer me?"

It was the first time I had ever heard the voice of 107, and its soft, drawling intonation gripped hold of me, sweeping me back to the days of my world rove. Mine was not a ready assent to the quaint query of 107, for momentarily the window bars had melted from their concrete sockets, the grey walls behind them, too, had faded and I had caught the fancied vision of a blue grass-land, the glint of a shining Mississippi—a memory of Dixie.

As sneakingly I worked the window still higher than the standard, precisely narrow, set by its line of iron girt fellows, till it allowed a fuller view of the tiny prison world beyond—an act which constituted the "whole lot" desired—I echoed back his half-muffled speech.

"How close to New Or-LEANS do you hail from?" I hazarded.

"Noo OR-luns?" he queried correctingly, and with interest. "Gee! I come a long ways from thereabout—right up the ol' mill stream—Memphis, Tennessee; 're yew acquainted around that par-r-t?"

"I guess I am." The correction of emphasis, the intoned drawl, the almost Irish rolling r's, brought back the Yankeeisms of my "whitewashed" days. "I guess I am. What Memphis! The Levee! Front Street! Poplar Avenue! I was LOcated there for ha't a year. Many's the time I've crossed over from there into Arkansas on the Rock Island."

The eyes of dying number 107 blazed. The grip of his homeland was upon him.

"D-I-X-I don't know how to spell it, But I'm goin', you bet, I'm goin'."

To my home in Dixie land."

His southern tongue gaspingly lilted the lines. On the task bench 107 had been known as a singer of subdued songs.

"Say!" he whispered thickly. "There wuz a noo sarn, 'I wish I wuz in Dixie.' I got the tune, an' have been trying to get the words now for over four years. I'd do an extra twelve months ter have them words right now. Yer don't know it, do yer?"

107 was safe in offering to do an extra "twelve months". The pallid "drawn" of his face told that he would have been safe in offering to do an extra twelve days. I did not know his song of Dixie, but in our subdued tones I talked it to him—of the river boats, giant mules, nigger lynchings, and barrel houses—of 'coon hunts, corn-bread, and sycamore-lined stream banks.

Taking up my cloth I recleansed the floor patch surrounding his cot, for still the fire of longing burned in his eye, and still he murmured on the broken home town tales of his—tales of Memphis, Tennessee.

With cloth and bucket I kneelingly edged away, when a sudden ring of deadly earnestness in his tone caused me to turn again and face his burning gaze.

"Say, sweeper," he had remarked, "how long yer gotter do?" I told him, and he went on.

"Say, listen, Kiddo! Will yer sure do me some favor?"

He coughed raucously, and his speech became disjointed. I took advantage of the break to again note the trickle of smoke sneaking out above the door of the bottle locker. Our warden was an "easy screw".

"My name outside is Cass—Heber Cass. Call at the General Post Office—there'll be letters fer me—three of 'em—she writes every six months—the ol' mother——"

A jolting attack of coughing seemed to rack him in twain. The floor-cloth slipped from my grasp, and as I clasped his shaking shoulders he leaned over with weak, wagging head to spit great phlegmy blobs into the bedside convenience.

The desire to give me his message gave him strength.

"She don't know I'm in here—they refused me permission to write, except on jail paper, an' it'd kill her stone dead. Jest read what she says—then you write back. She figures I got a farm. Say the drought an' bush fires has been terrible, an' that's why I ain't been back ter bring her out."

Pausing to catch his choking breath he read the question I had not formed.

"It's all right," he rushed on. "Jest write it bad, an' she'll think it's from me, because I'm a fierce hand at writing. It won't be no lies yer telling her, because I got it from one of the "screws" that——"

107 fought hard to stifle the rack of his cough, and where the coarse sheet touched his flat, wasted body, it rose and fell in short jerky waves. When he spoke again the foam fleck of his mouth was discoloured in the twisted corners.

"——That the—United States—is out fer keeps—in that big war—an' she's goin' to win it. That's a cinch fer us Yanks. It's sure pardon, boy. It's——"

His voice trembled into a low groan. He had drawn the back of his hand across his mouth, and, with startled, bulging eyes, was leering horribly at the tell-tale streaky crimson in the moisture it left.

THE JAIL STRAW

CONCLUSION

"What are you doing, One Hundred and Three?" and the answer is 'Three years' hard, And a month to go,'—and the whisper is low; 'There's the moonlight out in the yard.' The drums, they are beating far and low, and the footsteps light and free, And the angels are whispering over his bed: 'Keep step, One Hundred and Three!'"

—Henry Lawson.

One by one the spoon scratched tally strokes upon my cell wall, which told the dragging months and weeks and days, were crossed away. At last it had come—the time of my going. In the dull dawn of an autumn morning the iron gates clashed to behind me, and freedom once again was mine.

Respite from tribulation, alas! was brief. A wave of alleged disloyalty was sweeping the land. Examples were deemed essential by a tyrannous Parliament. My record made in me an easy victim and my merciless exposure of things as they are behind the walls of jail had born a desire for revenge. And so, a care-fully chosen scapegoat, within too few weeks, the steel bracelets once again snapped to upon my wrists.

Thus I was again in jail when came the clamorous joy of peace.

Wearied with the gruelling grind of the prison day I lay on the floor of my tiny cell, when out of the night came the mocking clang of bells and the muffled shout of people.

At those sounds the tomb-like hush of the jail itself was broken by the sullen stir of convicts awakened from reverie and fitful slumber. Then, as the realisation of what it all might mean gripped hold, a great choking throb of suppressed excitement swept down the line of numbered sepulchres.

There was no doubt as to what tale those bells and shouts from out the unseen streets were telling, for even through the

towering walls of jail had been creeping the muttered rumours of wondrous possibilities in the world outside.

Risen to my feet, I circled swiftly the stone floor with bare, pattering feet, and knew that, each in his narrow cell, my comrades were dumbly doing likewise. We are never normal, we inmates of jail.

Somewhere on the upper tier a man began to beat wildly the iron door with his tin-dish, and the muffled cry of "Peace, Peace, the war is over", came echoing down. It was Forty-three in Number nineteen—Forty-three, the neurotic, who spoke to no man, and had five more years to go.

Something seemed to tell that the simmer of irrepressible excitement was to break forth into a foam of hot, scalding, ebullient demoralisation. Shrilly above the increasing medley of gabbled muttering could be caught the boyish treble of the sixteen years old "dwelling dancer" in Number twenty-three.

Through the range a thunderous voice came ringing, mingled with the savage rattle or iron. The man awaiting trial on the murder charge had taken up the cry, and, unrestricted, his maniacal calls swelled out through the bars of the grill door observation cage that held him.

Then was hell let loose. The tension snapped, and each clambered and yelled and groped unseeingly in the inky night blackness that bound him.

It had come! It had come!—Peace! Peace! The straw that for four long years had been held out! The straw that was to open jail gates and let men go back to life again. The straw that was to mean pardon to all! Peace! Peace! The straw we had clutched so long—the jail straw.

Across the asphalt courtyards rang the hurried tread of extra guard, followed by quick volleys of mandatory curses; and, ashamed of a forgetfulness momentarily displayed, filled with the old sense of helplessness, in sneaking silence back we slunk to the lowly floor mat beds.

Without the walls the roadways still resounded to the tramp and shout of the merry-makers; but, within, where silence had re-established itself to the utmost intensity and reigned supreme, we drifted back to dreams, both sleeping and waking, of Peace and the joy it meant to us.

* * *

In attentive expectancy we stood stiffly at attention to hear read the officially-gazetted Peace Remissions.

Through the maze of iron gates flying open at his approach, with lay clothes contrasting sharply with the glittering braid of officialdom and the drab of convict grey, came briskly stepping the Governor of the Jail, the momentous documents in hand.

Carelessly he cleared his throat, and with machine-like unconcern poured forth the words that seemed to shrivel up our very souls.

"The Minister for Justice has announced that the Government has decided to make the following remissions in sentences in recognition of the signing of peace.

"Fourteen days on sentences not exceeding six months.

"One months on sentences over six months and not exceeding twelve months.

"Two months on sentences over one year and not exceeding two years.

"Three months on sentences over two years."

The sickening hush that followed was broken by the customary commands. With lifeless steps and vacant stare the others dragged to the toil and moil of the task room.

The thread of work was taken up where we, joyfully expectant, had dropped it; but now the click of the tools had grown hollow and dead.

Peace had come, and with it, in place of pardon, a paltry concession of days.

Filled with a fierce resentment I brooded on, wrapped in a personal disappointment, the nag of which was eating like a canker. I had dreamed of this Peace—of the immediate release and glad, welcoming hand-shakes it was to bring. It had come—what had it brought?

A harsh rattle grated from the throat of the man next me. It was Forty-three, the neurotic, who never spoke. I watched the two tears trickle across his jail-blanching cheeks and splash on to shapeless convict boot he made. I watched the cruel twitching of his lips, the quiver of his chin, the despairing droop of his shaven head; and as I watched my own trivial plaint faded into insignificance.

What was my suffering compared to that of such as he? I thought of C 176, the electrician's busker, the murderer with eyes so girlishly tender—thought of the man at the further end of the escort gang loaded down with the double weight of chain—thought of the five, of the ten, of the fifteen, of the twenty year men, whose hearts had been big with dreams of a nation and consequent PARDON from the kindly rulers of a nation flushed with victory—thought of the ghastly tragedy of their shattered hopes. And then I thought of dead One Hundred and Seven of Memphis, Tennessee, whose consumptive corpse had rotted in the damp earth beside a jail wall, and I felt glad to think that he had never lived to know the frailty of the straw to which he, too, had pinned his yearning faith.

THOU SHALT NOT KILL

PART I

"With the frame of a man, and the face of a boy, and a manner strangely wild,
And the great wide, wondering, innocent eyes of a silent-suffering child;
With his hideous dress and his heavy boots, he drags to Eternity—
And the Warder says, in a softened tone: 'Keep step, One Hundred and Three!'"

—Henry Lawson.

The jail silence hung thick and heavy where the blaze of midnight lighting made glitter again the padlocked bolts of the "B Hall" cells.

"Twelve o'clock—Al-l-1's well!" The mournful drawn-out call had told the change of watch. There came the jar of heavy keys and then, felt-slippered, the extra guard sneaked stealthily up the iron stairway. At the further end of the uppermost tier his brother officer drew to perfunctory attention, in short, disjointed whispers, transferred the orders of the night, and, relieved of further responsibility, sneaked away as silently as the other had come.

The faint click of steel travelled up from the reclosing gates below, and for a moment the newcomer stood peering curiously at the crouching occupant of the barred cage before him.

"Why don't you sleep?" he said cautiously, as though fearful of the sound of his own voice.

The man in convict grey raised slowly his shaven head and showed full his boyish face with its swollen, sleepless eyes. He made no reply. Why didn't he sleep? Somewhere and sometime he had heard of a man passing the night before his hanging in peaceful sleep, of eating his morning ration with relish, and stepping on to the gallows with fearless unconcern. In a vague sort of way he wondered who had told him all about it. He couldn't exactly say as he had read it, because he was no kind

of a scholar. Perhaps his Mother had told him—she used to tell them all sorts o' things when they were kids. He couldn't quite understand how he had come to remember it, anyway. He never seemed to remember nothing much for long. Even now he could hardly remember just what he was thinking of—sleep—gallows—breakfast—

Despairingly, he pressed his hand to his forehead and rose jerkily to his feet.

The relieving guard stirred uneasily at his post, and furtively shifted further away from the barred dividing fence.

The man within the cage lounged hopelessly against the corner wall, and twitched nervously the canvas strips that bunched the waist line of his coarse pantaloons in place of brace or belt.

What fools they were to take a man's braces from him. Why should he hang himself when they were paid to do the job? Why the bloody hell should he try to hang himself, when by letting them do it a man would live longer and have it done proper. Why—they had things specially made to hang a man with—just outside there—through the bars. Hadn't he sat there and seen o' Whiskers, the second-class "screw", touchin' 'er orf a matter of four yards away—there with the big black beam across on top and the little square wooden trap-door in the floor under it. A thing like that had cost money to build. He knew something about carpentering. A man'd be a fool to hang himself with his braces, even if they did give over watchin' for five minutes an' let him. Look at the trouble. A man'd have ter break his braces in two pieces, fix them round his neck, climb the bars, make them fast, an' then let go. Even then it'd be hard because they wouldn't be enough slack to make a proper slip-knot, and most like, a man before he choked proper would grab back at the bars and would hang on like hell. It was torture waitin', and waitin', and countin', and countin'—but, after all, it was best, even if a man did have a chance to do away with himself before . . .

He stopped, for a moment his soliloquy shattered. From one of the numbered tombs below a sharp, hideous wail came ringing to die away in muffled, choking sobs. His pause of thought was momentary. It was only the agonised night cry of old Number Sixty-five, the wife-killer, who was still awaiting the "King's pleasure", as he had awaited it for seventeen years. As it broke the awful silence, the guard, too, had shuddered perceptibly, but with recognition of the familiar wail, his face betokened strange relief. It had become part of the night itself, the eerie, despairing call of Number Sixty-five as he nightly lived again the fateful moments of his life. It froze in terror the blood

and rushed the heart-beats of the newcomers, but others, grown to know it, when perchance disturbed from out their broken slumber, found in it an almost homely ring.

He had grown to know it—all through the weary months he lay awaiting trial, he, the man in the "condemned", and now it was not fear, but anger, that blanched white his twitching lips.

Old Number Sixty-five—he knew him already. Why, that very afternoon, as he had trudged away the last hour of exercise he would ever know he turned his wistful gaze from the blue patch of sky overhead to watch old Sixty-five pottering about on a rough-up painting job. And in a few hours' time, down below there, after they had dropped him through the floor and had pushed him up by the stiff, twisted legs to free the knot and slip it off his jerked, waggling neck, and had dragged him away like a crooked log with his swollen tongue and staring eyes—had dragged him away in a basket to the morgue where they kept the quick-lime barrel, old Sixty-five would again be let out to potter around in the sunlight on the same old rough-up painting job. . . .

A blind, impotent rage had seized hold upon the weak mind of the "condemned", and with quick jolting gait he lurched heavily up and down the narrow limit of his cage.

It wasn't right—it couldn't be. Old Sixty-five had killed—had murdered, and yet they let him potter harmlessly about year in and year out on rough-up painting jobs. He, too, had killed—had murdered, the same as old Sixty-five, and yet here they was just waiting for the time to shoot him feet first through the hole in the floor. They said he had killed, but they couldn't say he had done worse than old Sixty-five. And, after all, he had only done what they had told him to do, had taught him to do across there on the other side—Gallipoli—Pozieres and the rest of them places. He'd been paid to do it then—when he was in the khaki—told to do it—to hop "over the top" and kill men he'd never seen before till he found them sick and huddled in the blind ends of their trenches. He'd been paid to kill 'em, to stab 'em, to shoot 'em, to bayonet 'em. Why, many's the time he bludgeoned out their speckly white brains with the butt end, and wiped the stickiness off on the leg of his shorts. By God, a man had to keep his gun clean over there, no matter how bad his clobber got. You could have blood on your clothes there, but you mustn't have none on your gun, by God!

Over there he'd earned his wages, done his share of killing alright, and they hadn't wanted to hang him—back here he didn't know just what he had done. He didn't want to know—didn't want to think. All his life he never wanted to think much—because he never could. Only yesterday, when his mother came tottering up to grip the bars and turn her blurred eyes in upon

him, and they had took her by the shoulders to draw her away, he heard her moaning to them about his poor head never having been no good—and now he was to be hanged like a damn dog. It wasn't right. Even if he had killed—he had killed quick without knowing it, but here they was killing him by degrees—they'd been killing him for weeks now—killing and kidding him—kidding him that he would get off just so as he'd keep on eating and not die otherwise. Only last Sunday they had took him down to chapel and sat him behind a curtain and kidded him to sing: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." Yes, even the parson was in it—parson, warders, judges, police—they was all mixed up in it—all hangmen—every bloody one of them.

The pacing of the condemned had ceased, and hopelessly he hunched against the wall and pressed the lids above his burning, blood-shot eyes.

He didn't want to be hanged. There was plenty others that wasn't hanged. They could "black cell" him for life on "starvation"—bury him alive down there in the basement, like "Ratty Sam"—he wouldn't care what they done so long as they just let him live on—just let him breathe, and eat just a little, and sleep just a little, too, and work his fingers to the bone for them.

What a fool he'd been to listen to the lies they told him just to keep him quiet. All along they'd told him he would be reprieved—had even told him when they come to take his weight and test the galls just outside the door there that it was just "a matter of form". It wasn't right to hang him on top of all them lies. They told him that old Sixty-five howled out in the night because he wished he was dead—it was a lie—a damn lie. It was good to live—to breathe—to feel. Old Sixty-five was glad to be alive—old Sixty-five—was . . .

A violent ague seemed suddenly to take possession of the youthful "condemned". His pent-up emotions, strained to breaking point, had at last given way, and crumpling into a pitiful heap upon the cement floor, and burying his streaming face in the hollow of his convict-coated sleeve, in racking sobs he gave vent to the turmoil of his tortured soul.

Then, even to the furthest cell, the inmates, wakeful and oppressed—save old Sixty-five, whose troubled dreams had passed to child-like slumber—counting out the final hours of the life that was to cease, and living to its full each speeding minute, faintly caught the sound that ever comes at some time during the night before the day they hang a man—the frightened, broken weeping of the spirit doomed.

THOU SHALT NOT KILL

PART II

"Agape like a strangled bird in the sun, and I wonder what he could see?"

The Fleet come in, and the Fleet go out? (Hold up, One Hundred and Three!)

The glorious sea, and the bays and Bush, and the distant mountains blue—

(Keep step, Keep step, One Hundred and Three, for my lines are halting too.)

—Henry Lawson.

A creeping calm seems to hover over the jail on a hanging day. The "get up" bell sounds its iron music with a more ghastly clang than customary. The hominy tins are rattled in readiness beside unopened doors of iron with a hollow clatter, and the face of the felon "sweeper" is strangely tense and drawn.

"Have you seen him this morning?" is the whisper he catches from the spy-holes as he unburdens his piled chunks of bread. He mutters the affirmative, and "How's he taking it?" they ask.

"Quiet like, but white as bloody snow and shaking like a leaf, poor bastard."

At eight o'clock the doors are bolted, for Regulations say, without exception, prisoners must be under lock and key for one hour before till forty-five minutes after the victim has been dispatched.

So we crouch, or creep, or circle in the narrow compass of the cell—count away the seconds dragging by, feel the red, pulsating anguish of the doomed comrade waiting alone in the barred cage which opens on to the death trap at the further end of the upper tier.

From somewhere out across the maze of stock-yards in which are daily drafted human cattle, there comes thundering the single half-hour stroke.

An eternity passes by, and then the sickly silence is broken

by the bolt rattle of the barred main door. It is "fifteen minutes to". "B Hall," all correct Sir!" The voice of the officer in charge is hushed and hoarse.

We hear the felt-shod feet go trooping by, and can almost count their owners as they pat upon the iron stairs—the governor, the sheriff, the deputy, the chief, the watch—then the untrained trudge of hangman, and his assistant, and doctor, and the faltering step of the chaplain of the jail, who dare not tell his conscience what he is about.

The foot-thuds cease, for they have halted where the extra guard, drawn stiffly to attention, makes his salute. "Condemned cell, all correct, sir!"

In the darkest corner of the cell a pair of eyes are glittering, but their light is wild and stupid. So at last it has come—the time of his hanging. In a dull, helpless way he wonders if he will go mad and fight or—well—just see it out.

Already the assistant is well at work with hands a trifle unsteady by the brandy he has drunk. The long, greased rope, with its calculated amount of "drop" is coiled in place, and the bolt socket is fitted with its connecting lever.

By the cage door the hangman, beetle browed and brutal-faced, stands fingering with unconcern the pinion straps and "night cap" of canvas.

The governor glances at his watch, and ceases to discuss proposed promotions with his deputy.

"Carry on!" The command is loud and clear.

The sheriff takes his cue. "Open up!" is the order he gives, and shooting bolts rattle out the word that the dreadful work has begun.

In through the barred gate-door, into the murky cubicle that has staged so many cruel tragedies, they pass in rapid file—the sheriff, the hangman, and the guard. Unwittingly, their victim cringes still further back against the wall.

"Stand close! He might make a rush." The muttered hint merits heed, for has the hangman not seen such things done before?

There is the rustle of red-sealed documents, and in clear, steady tones the sheriff reads out the awful mandate of the Government to its hangman: "I, _____, sheriff, on behalf of the Government of this State hand to you the body of this man Frederick Wills, in the vigour of life and in sound sense, in order that, in compliance with the order of his judges, you hang him by the neck till he is dead."

A low moan breaks from the dry lips of Frederick Wills, and again the ague-like shuddering seizes hold upon him. A mist creeps up before his eyes. He wants to see—wants to brush

it away, but somehow his arms refuse to function. With the realisation that they have been deftly pinioned to his side, there comes a faltering determination to show these men the way to die. After all, they're paid to kill him, just as he was paid to kill others when he went "over the top". From the cord around his neck there falls away behind, the canvas cap, inverted and grotesque. Around his legs the binding straps are straining tight about the knees, but hobble slack above his prison slippers.

Thus equipped he stands at the mercy of his executioners, a lonely, pathetic, drab-clothed being, torn by the conflicting emotions of fear, defiance, and uncertainty, heedless of the chaplain's tremulously intoned words of consolation.

Again the governor eyes his watch. "Five minutes to nine."

The doorway is cleared, and, escorted on either side by members of the guard, with short-hobbled hesitating steps the "condemned" shuffles out, and towards the boarded square above which sways to and fro the drooping, well-greased halter.

It is now he struggles fiercely with the haunting spectre of the ghoulish death before him. He doesn't want to die. He's too young—only twenty-three. Why did he let them lash him up? He might have made a fight for it—might have dished the lot an' got away. They had let old Sixty-five live, and here they was going to jolt the floor from under him, and send him, all tied up, falling, falling, falling—till—o-o-o-h!

The idea was hideous. He swayed violently backward; the guard clutched hold more savagely, and the mumble of the chaplain following on behind faded into a gibbering whine.

With an effort the "condemned" collected his stunned senses, and stood erect upon the gallows. Swiftly the thongs about his ankles were whipped to breaking tightness, and the hempen collar fell around his neck. He shrank beneath the clammy, creeping chafe, as it touched upon his twitching flesh.

The first stroke of nine came crashing through the air till the very walls of prison seemed to draw a long, hissing breath. Instinctively, the watchers fell back from him, and unseen, his suffering comrades started at the thudding of their palpitating hearts.

Two—A foam fleck crept out on to the lips of the "condemned". He sobbed convulsively, and again the filmy glaze blurred the vision of his eyes. It was when the Three was sounding that the governor spoke.

"Frederick Wills," he said, "say what you have to say. Speak!" The mandate—the gallows' ruse—had its effect. It brought the doomed man back to life, and avoided his collapse. Yes, speak—that's what he would do.

Four—Five—Six—had boomed already when his voice

rang out—almost void of tremor. "It ain't right"—Seven—"to hang me"—Eight.

His head was erect, his eyes flashing and manly bright, his young face radiant with vigour. "Ever since"—Nine!

Leaning swiftly forward, the hangman tipped the "night cap" up an across the transformed face. Simultaneously he jerked the lever back.

There was a click, a sharp hissing sound and half-choked scream as Frederick Wills passed down and out of view. Down the aisles and corridors and into the frightened souls of men echoed the crash of the swinging trap, but yet it could not smother the rendering, crunching jerk that followed where the wretched carcass of Frederick Wills spun spasmodically round and round, and his being passed beyond further condemnation.

HIS HONOR AND HIS VICTIM

PART I

Flogging, still allowed by Statute, is being more and more resorted to as a form of punishment in the various States of the Australian Commonwealth.

—News Item.

"I've seen the remand-yard men go out, by the subway out of the yard—

And I've seen them come in with a foolish grin and a sentence of Three Years Hard.

They send a half-starved man to the court, where the hearts of men they carve—

Then feed him up in the hospital to give him the strength to starve."

—Henry Lawson.

His Honor the Judge, dissimulating, raised the crime sheet well before him to hide the undignified yawn which persisted in forcing apart his grimly-set lips.

His Honor had hoped for an early rising of the court, and was half angry to think that this, the final case upon the list, had dragged so tediously.

It had been a tiresome day; in fact, the only redeeming feature of its doings lay in the fact that they brought to a close the Quarter Sessions, and ushered in the long, midsummer recess.

The jury had retired to confer, a proceeding rendered perfunctorily necessary by the amount of evidence called by the youthful inexperienced Counsel graciously supplied the accused.

Of course, the verdict would be "guilty", and ten minutes at the outset, the length of deliberation. His Honor would stake his law-bound soul on these points. He had grown to know the type of jury before him—know it to a man. To-day, as he had seen them file in one by one and remain unchallenged by the man—or boy he seemed to be—who hunched listlessly against the bars of the dock to hear intoned the charge against him, His

Honor knew just what the verdict of these jurymen would be. They represented conservative age, and at their hands fiery youth would receive but short shrift.

Yes, to His Honor, the evidence, both for and against, had been superfluous, and its repetition had almost ruffled the customary complacency of his legal mind.

In summing up, His Honor had advised the jury to convict; why, he hardly could have explained.

Perhaps the boredom had created an element of prejudice against the individual whose alleged offence had produced such a harvest of useless, argumentative verbiage.

Perhaps His Honor, knowing as he did, his jury, assumed the line of least resistance.

As before spoken, was His Honor not quite aware of the fact that his summing up would in no way influence a decision palpably pre-determined from the outset of proceedings?

His Honor knew full well the opiniativeness of his jury, and also knew full well that to have stressed the possibility of innocence would in a measure have made it incumbent upon the stodgy, well-fed gentlemen concerned to dally bitterly ere pronouncing the result of their ponderous consideration.

Anyway, even though in summing up he had suggestively accelerated the returning of the verdict, the sweltering heat of the court room afforded sufficient moral sanction for having so done.

Personally, His Honor cared little whether the accused arraigned before him was proven guilty or not. The educated element of the underworld was prone to describe His Honor as "a biassed odd sod", but really in his business of life it cost him not greater effort to declare a case dismissed than it did to sentence a man to death. It was the duty of the jury to deliver judgment, his it was to allot the punishment.

Again, the crime-sheet was requisitioned to preserve the dignity of the Bench.

His Honor almost wished he had retired for the brief interval to the cooling beverage-laden freedom of his own lordly sanctum. The case before the court had tired him to the point of irritation. Throughout, his thoughts had turned to matters of another world. There was the question of the tennis court adorning the precincts of his palatial home—the tennis court whose angle must be altered to better catch the sun effect and satisfy the caprice of a beautiful daughter.

The tennis court did not concern His Honor overmuch, but the possibility of its encroachment upon a certain preserve peculiarly sacred to himself, most assuredly did. There was that little snuggery adjoining the eastern netting where, on summer

afternoons in recess, forgetful of the criminal world that afforded him existence, he sipped his wine and smoked his fat cigars.

It was really wrong of Eloise to show such scant consideration. Still, if it pleased her, after all. . . .

His Honor started. To his right a door had opened, and in solemn, straggling fashion, the jurymen returned.

Instinctively, His Honor's face assumed its expression of professional melacholia, before which men had learned to quail.

With shuffling importance, the foreman scrambled to his feet:

"Your Honor," he snuffled raucously, "My fellow jurymen and me have took full consideration of all the facts, and find the prisoner guilty."

His Honor the Judge wiped the moisture from the brow-line of his horse-hair wig, and gathered up his judicial robes preparatory to leaving. Apart from passing sentence, the work of his day was done, and before him lay the long laziness of recess.

Hastily, he wrote upon the record register, while, with an interest not before displayed, the prisoner gripped hold of the bars, and waited in tense expectancy.

His Honor turned his bland gaze upon the occupant of the dock.

"Five years hard labour."

His Honor caught the flashed defiance in the eyes that met his own. Again he took up his gold-clasped pen. At times the educated element of the underworld was right in its assumption. His Honor, though most emphatically beyond bias, nevertheless, upon occasions, could be vindictive, and now his calm, unemotional voice broke the hush of the court once more.

"Also a flogging of twenty lashes," he added, and, descending from the judgment seat, passed majestically from view.

* * *

A huge official seized not unkindly the curiously twitching shoulder of the shabby little female who stared from the public gallery at the cage from which they had led forth their new-made convict.

"Come on, ma'am," he said. "The court's adjourned."

The woman heeded not. Peering down, he saw the foam specks oozing from between her quivering lips, the vacant, useless stare of her blood-shot eyes, and so he gathered her up in his strong arms.

"It's that last bloke's old mother, I think," he told the uniformed doorkeeper. "It's a ambulance job. She's gotta stroke."

HIS HONOR AND HIS VICTIM

PART II

"The brute is a brute, and a kind man kind, and the strong heart does not fail—

A crawler's a crawler everywhere, but a man is a man in gaol!

For forced 'desertion' or drunkenness, or a law's illegal debt,

While never a man who was a man was reformed by punishment yet."

—Henry Lawson.

It was a Saturday afternoon, and Number Three Hundred and Seventy-five was waiting tremulously for the door of his cell to be thrown open.

Three Hundred and Seventy-five had had no official announcement, but, nevertheless, was fully aware of what lay before him. The hour of his flogging had come—he had known it from the moment they had come to lead him from the task bench to his cell, and had left him arrayed in a newly-boiled, coarse, white calico shirt.

Three Hundred and Seventy-five was quakingly afraid and hated himself because of it. This feeling of dread was new to him. Since his arrival at the jail the convicts, trudging past the exercising yard in which he, yet in "separate", performed his solitary parade, turned on him their morbid glances of curious concern.

"Poor cow!" they would ejaculate, one to another, and Three Hundred and Seventy-five, dissembling, would hold high his head and quicken his foolish marching.

And now he was afraid—fearful of it all. He wished that they had rushed the business through days ago—before he found the chance to hearken to the whine of "Skinny the Rat", who cleaned the bath-house out—wished he had splashed about so as not to have heard when, in mumbling sympathy, "Skinny the Rat" had told the tale of a flogging that had been his—his first—how he had vomited and screamed. He

wished more than all that he had refrained from looking when "Skinny the Rat" had jerked up his numbered shirt to show the scarred wales, almost obliterating the Crucifixion scene tattooed across his mottled back.

"I weren't no use to 'ave a regiment o' Virgin Marys painted on yer when 'Slugger' Rose was flogger," had muttered "Skinny the Rat", between the spasmodic swabs described by him as "moppin'."

"Yer see that there picter? She corst me 'arf a jim ter git put on be a sailor cove after me first release, an' then I thort I was safe fer life so fur as floggin's went. In them days I was a wild young coot," had continued 'Skinny the Rat', "an' 'adn't done three months o' me second laggin' afore they 'as me triangled up agin. 'You an' yer bloody crosses,' says 'Slugger' Rose, as 'e lays it on. 'I'll cut the livin' Christ out o' yer flamin' soul, let alone a tattooed Jesus out o' yer dirty 'ide.' An', by Gawd, 'e jest about done it, too."

"Skinny the Rat" had paused to see if the coast was still clear, and signified his satisfaction by spitting into the nearest bath.

"There wuz wunst a time, boy, when a fit o' spewin' used to scare 'em into cuttin' short the count, and so we got chewin' chunks o' soap ter turn our guts up. Then some pimp puts the pot on, and they starts awashin' out yer mouth be noo reg'lations—but now they don't do nothing 'cept see that yer pulse keeps movin'. Why, a pore dorg could go black in the face and spew his soulcase up—what the blinded 'ell would one o' them sods care, so long as 'e could keep on drawin' 'is . . ."

With a half-stifed sob, Number Three Hundred and Seventy-five sprang to his feet, and fiercely paced the narrow limits in a vain effort to obliterate the horror of its memory.

Sharply he came to a halt. A cold sweat broke out upon him, and his nostrils dilated like those of a startled beast. Outside, the iron key had been plunged gratingly into the huge padlock of the iron door.

* * *

The sun of summer ate into his nakedness as, stripped to the waist, Three Hundred and Seventy-five hung waiting for his torture to proceed.

Somehow, the dread of it had gone from him, and now he only wanted the horrid dream to pass away. With all his talk "Skinny the Rat" was still alive; and, if a rat like "Skinny" could stand it, surely to God he could do the same.

It was only a black, revolting nightmare he had to pass through—a hideous misfortune, which, strangely enough, he in no way connected with the deed they said that he had done. It was fate—not punishment.

Already, the bonds that lashed him to the ringbolts above the triangle were cutting to the wrist-bones, and his hands, swollen and purple by the body-drag upon them, were filled with a scorching numbness.

He wished that they would begin in order that they might finish. He didn't much mind now just what they did, for the full agony of it seemed already upon him. The sun-glare darted daggers into his throbbing temples, and, despairingly, he tried to turn towards where his jail-made hat lay carelessly tossed upon the newly-boiled, coarse, white calico shirt that he had shed.

Nearby the flogger was dilating upon the merits of a variety of "cats" for the edification of the waiting guard.

"In the Navy," he was saying, "they wouldn't allow a set o' things like these with this 'ere end-knot. Beresford abolished them when he was Admiral—reckoned they was too cruel. The Navy Reggerlations says there is to be three inches o' lash at the end of each."

Through the nerve-fretted brain of Three Hundred and Seventy-five there flashed a fevered picture of the fingered "tails" and the peculiar effect of each particular end-knot when applied. He shivered at the thought, and a cold, clutching ache gnawed at the pit of his stomach.

"Shon!" The Senior Warder bellowed out his command, and a dozen heels snapped together with a click.

A hand, podgy and beringed, came within range of the vision of Three Hundred and Seventy-five, and took a pulse-hold upon a discoloured wrist.

He heard the watch ticks, heard them in the intense hush grow seemingly louder and louder, and, mentally, he counted the beating strokes with frantic zeal.

"All correct. Carry on!"
Three Hundred and Seventy-five, wedged tightly, shut his eyes and strove to brace himself upon his hobbled feet.

Carefully measuring his distance from the naked target before him with the heel of his boot, the flogger raised above his head the thick, short-handled "cat" from which drooped down in murderous array its knotted "tails" of hide.

As from a catapult, the bared arm shot backwards, and, with a whining whir, the dangling lashes leapt savagely upwards.

There came the sharp, sickly, hissing splash of the raw-hide of the beast, as its knotted plaits cut into the raw flesh of the man.

Strike one! The flogger had leaned forward to allow the thongs to lie where they had fallen, and round their knotted girths the broken flesh crept slowly up on either side.

The man numbered Three Hundred and Seventy-five, save that he jolted high his shaven head and tautened straight his trembling limbs simultaneously with the falling of the flail, had made no sign.

The whine rang out again. Stroke two! Dexterously, the scourge had been trained to cross the livid welts left by the previous stroke, and from the points of intersection there spurted forth and crept downward little streams of warm, bruised blood.

And still the man hung stiffened back, immobile, with eyes now open and staring wildly at the grey expanse of blank wall before him.

Stroke three! Stroke four! The frame of Three Hundred and Seventy-five had grown more rigid still, and the fingers of his purple, swollen hands had slowly drawn apart in stiffened impotency, to so remain above the straining wrist bonds.

Stroke five! It was then that the manhood of Three Hundred and Seventy-five snapped asunder—or maybe, rose within him to assert itself.

Till now, with gaping mouth, and lolling tongue, and staring, blood-streaked eyes, his breath coming in short, thick gasps, his terrified brain had seemed incapable of realising to its full the horror of the agony that physically was his.

With the falling of Stroke six, Three Hundred and Seventy-five lunged desperately forward, and, with a howl of savage anguish, hurled his uttermost strength against the shackling gyves.

Stroke seven! Already his body had become a welted mass of lacerated flesh, and, as the thongs wheeled upward once again, the guard backed off to clear the flecks of blood. A youthful probationer shuffled stupidly from the ranks to turn his blanched face from the ghastly spectacle. The officer-in-charge glared full upon him, but voiced no reprimand, for well he knew that there and then the probationer has ceased to function in so far as "the service" was concerned.

Squirming, pitching, biting, and cursing, with a strength made herculean by the goad of brutality, the maddened victim fought to tear down his mauled body from the structure which girt him to where the flame-like blows rained in all their fury.

* * *

The struggling ceased. An eerie deadness had stolen upon him, relaxing the tautness of his muscles. Above him he heard the whine of a pending blow, but only faintly felt its scathing fall. A sickness seized him for a passing moment, and, between great gulping sobs, his stomach rose in violent vomituration.

* * *

Stroke seventeen! The whine resounded. Convulsively, Three Hundred and Seventy-five rebraced his mutilated, gore-reeking back to meet the sullen thud, but ere it fell a lurid flame had seemed to blaze before him, the lash-whine to turn to the thunder of thousands and thousands of far-away drums, and, sinking, sinking, he drooped limply forward to swing to and fro by his blue, distorted wrists—a crumpled, mangled, senseless, hanging heap.

FATALISTS

" 'Tis a ghastly travesty of drill—or a travesty of work—
But One Hundred and Three he catches step with a start,
a shuffle and jerk.
He is silenced and starved and "drilled" in gaol—and a
waster's son was he;
His sins were written before he was born. (Keep step! One
Hundred and Three.)"

—Henry Lawson.

One day I chanced upon a man I had come to know in jail. He was adorning the sidewalk of a fashionable street, and the indolent lean upon a fragile walking cane, together with his raiment of the purple and fine linen of a block "flapper pirate", bespoke the lucrativeness of his profession.

He greeted me warmly by number. "I've been following up your writings of late," he said.

"What—card-sharpping still?" was my query to him.

The question was brutally direct, but, one to another, we jail-birds dissemble not at all. Why should we?

And so my friend tendered his reply without demur.

"No—not just now. My partner—you remember him, Number Fifty-two?—he's in the hospital. The "boob" has knocked him all to pieces, besides ruining his nerve. I'm working a special line just now, all on me own." He paused; when he spoke again his voice had taken on a sorrowful ring. "Times are mighty hard, too. You've gotter keep up appearances or else you're gonner million."

With the pained air of one striving to maintain the semblance of respectability, he drew the blue silk-bordered kerchief from his hip pocket, and daintily flicked an imaginary speck from off the cuff of his fashion shirt.

I left him then to continue on his struggle for existence in his own peculiar way.

Because they take themselves and their lives so seriously, they interest me, these erstwhile comrades of mine, who help to constitute what you better people are prone to style the "under-world". They interest me even as do you goodly serious folk,

whose crimes against society in the fierce competitive struggle, though perfectly legal in accordance with the ethics of such society, are no milder, or, maybe, no worse than theirs.

When we delve down to bedrock, there is little better in the make-up of you than there is in that of the man with a "record". More often the greater goodness lurks within him. Herein lies the difference. He has been stripped bare beneath the magnifying glare of prejudiced opinion—you have not. He has been CAUGHT—you have not.

Just take hold upon yourself, strip yourself, and, deep in the recesses of your inner being, creep naked beneath the searching focus of a mental magnifying glass ere next you smite your breast and say, "Thank God, I am not as other men."

* * *

The friend of whom I spoke was an accredited "card-sharper"—if "card-sharpers" can lay claim to being accredited. As such, he, no doubt, regarded himself an aristocrat of the circle in which he moved and had his being; for there is status even in the world of proscribed action.

The "hook", or, as you would say, the pick-pocket, is also of the higher strata, although, because of the technicalities of his calling, he is compelled to function with mediocrities of lesser import. He acts as chief amongst his "push-up" and "break" men, associates skilled in their way, but unpossessed of his dexterity. The "hook" picks out a likely looking "kick", or pocket and flashes indication to his "push-up" follower. Jostlingly, the latter jamps back or forward the obstructing arm of the "mug" victim. Crowding suddenly forward to cover up the operation, the "break" man receives the "poque" from the swift fingers of the "hook", and falls just as suddenly backwards and away.

Seize hold upon your jostler or his blase chief, and on them you will find nought but the dignity of injured innocence.

The "donkey-dipper" is another kind of pick-pocket. He works alone, and his methods are to grip, to rip, and to run. "A dead rough-up"—thus the more scientific of the fraternity designate him in their scorn.

The truly light-fingered gentry, the racecourse urger (tip slinger), the magsman, and even the household barber or dwelling dancer (the transient lodger who "tears up" the whole abode) never hesitate to express their contempt for the more roughly inclined of the profession.

"Why, him!" they exclaim witheringly. "He's only a burglar on the outside. Carries a gun and all that sort o' thing. Does

damfool heavyweight jobs where a man's liable to get shot. Pooh! There's nothing clever about him!"

And the Knight of the Jemmy and his comrade in arms, the safe blower, unperturbedly will shrug their shoulders and impute to their branded criticisers a lack of "guts".

I have hearkened to whispered tales of desperado Morgan, Jimmy Clarke, dare-devil Ned Kelly, and others who have helped to make Australian history, falling from the shrivelled lips of an aged convict born and bred in the heart of the bushranging country. Absorbed, I have leaned forward to better catch the stories of wild, red life—of adventure—of the fierce joy of living—and I have turned away to see the look of ineffable disdain which curled the lip of a dawdling sweeper, whilom member of a bank-note gang.

There was nothing equivocal in the expression of his face. Bushranging—a job for pick and shovel men! Bushrangers, burglars, garroters—"mugs", every mother's son of them. A set o' "mugs" of one sort in search of a set o' "mugs" of another. Why, even the ordinary "nob-spinner", the double-headed penny flipper of the two-up school who takes a chance of being kicked to death—even he would merit more respect.

Almost beneath the bottom rung of the social ladder there is a type which seems to evade comradesly condemnation; in fact, it seems to evoke a common commiseration. This type consists of the "hum", the unskilled derelict or derelict-to-be who stands upon the "pub" corner kerb, "bites" all and sundry, and, at regular intervals, succeeds in getting lumbered for "vag".

But, despite all captious discrimination when ways and means are tried in the balances of opinion, there is ever the deep affinity born of a common suffering. In this respect the allegedly "proven" criminal section of the community at least is truly "class conscious".

I have watched the face of the "three card" man brighten perceptibly at the mention of his release at hand, and just as quickly cloud in response to a question regarding his future intentions.

In jail bath and jail church, those two points of congregation which afford most facilitations to commune, the problem of the nearer after-life is often times discussed.

"I dunno exactly what I'll do," will grumble Eighty-nine in the closing stages of a "sixer", "but I'll only be drawing three half-dollars, so I'll have to break it quick."

"Try the races up Dingo Creek way," will suggest the cheque forger, who would most emphatically not touch a played-out caper like the "three-card racket" with a "forty foot pole". "They say she's an open slather up there. Not a demon in the burg."

And the grisly "toe-ragger", who is doing a "sleep" of three months for "righteous"—forgetful of the fact that he, because of the brevity of his sentence and the length of his "record", will go out with no three half-dollars, with nothing but the jail crumple on his tattered garments and the hunger gripe of missed meals before him—will tell him of the best road to take if it comes to "hoofin' it".

Then, cleansed in body or spirit as the case might be, back they trudge to the solitude of the cell to reckon up the days, the hours, the minutes of incarceration left for Number Eighty-nine to serve, for, in jail, each felon lives and does the closing days of those who go before out into the world to live again.

* * *

Among the dull drab of it all there sometimes shows grey splashes of tragic humour.

I have heard the youth, with "previous convictions" sufficient to constitute a speech when enumerated in court, refer all and sundry to the "lifer" heads for recommendation as to character when the insinuation is that he might explain the mystery of a missing "chew" from the woodhouse "posse".

I have seen the bush doctor, graduated to Convict Seventy-two and first-aid man of the jail, most solicitous in his oft-repeated "Does it hurt? Does it hurt? I mustn't hurt you." And yet the victims of his murderous career had included little, wailing children.

As the "confinées" filed past to spade and hoe to liquidate their burden of unpaid maintenance, the savage mutter of the comrade beside me has been audible. "The dorgs, wife-starvers every one of 'em. They ain't fit to live." His own crime had been one of wife murder.

There, too, are the recounted sayings allegedly of warders of the Hibernian persuasion. Of one who said to Number So and So, "If yer dawnt kape step there, I'll lock ye oop wu-r-r ye starn'd." Of another who, upon reading the inscription "To be taken in water" on a bottle of physic, delivered it to the prisoner for whom it was designed with the remark, "Here ye are. Now hop over to the barth and git it down yer as quick as yer loike."

The gallows and its victims afford a theme for much conjecture, and one cannot pass through jail without learning much of ghastly hanging bangles, of strangulation instead of dislocation, of miscalculated "drop," of the virtues of trapdoors of iron compared with trapdoors of wood, of gallows fights and shattered orations.

I recall one day a man escorted by two officials halting outside the bars surrounding me to let pass a marching gang. Some-

how he seemed to lack the sprightly carriage of a prisoner on parade. The air of overwhelming melancholia was so apparent in the listless droop of his shoulders that I drew closer to gain a fairer view. As I did so, he slowly raised his head and faced full upon me. I will never forget the sickening surge of blood that flooded to my brain.

It so had happened that the day before, in bathroom converse, a "remand man" had told the tale of the doings of his yesterday. "There was a poor sod," he had related, "who come up from the Sessions with us, just sentenced to death—to be hung in three weeks. You might have caught a glimpse of him acrossin' the Circle—a long, country-looking chap with fair hair, a scar across his chin, and one eye bandaged up."

So I will never forget the sickening surge of blood that flooded to my head, for the face that turned full upon me was that of a long, country-looking chap with fair hair, a scar across the chin, and one eye bandaged up.

The gang passed by and, with the canvas grips upon the waistband of his pantaloons, buckling spasmodically to the drag of his gait, the "condemned" went on and out of view.

After all, it is not good to dwell too long upon these things my eyes have seen. They lead their narrow lives, these sometime comrades of mine, in the only way that such lives can be lived. Fatalists they are who reason not that they are being punished. They have played a losing card where others have won—and jail, to them, is simply part of a destiny over which they have no control.

AS MAN TO MAN

An Open Letter to William Arthur Holman, M.L.A., Premier of New South Wales (by Grant Hervey).

(Grant Hervey, the writer of this letter, was a journalist of the period who was jailed for two years for sending a forged abusive letter to his ex-employer, John Norton, then proprietor of the Sunday newspaper "The Truth.")

Sir,—Now that the shower of congratulations, with regard to your record Premiership, has somewhat abated, I come forward quietly—I come with an appeal to your higher self. For there are two men in you, and well you know it. There is one man, and he is a very little man; but there is also another man, and he is potentially a very great man—a man of high ideals, of pluck and inspiration. It is to him I speak.

Sir, you are the Premier of a great State, and I am an ex-prisoner. When last I addressed you, I wore the garb of a serf. I was merely a number, not a man. But I take heart of grace to speak to you as freely now as I spoke to you then. Because the need is great. Because it is the imperative duty of some thoughtful person to address you with courage, for you are a man surrounded with pitfalls, and you seem to be determined to dig some more for yourself.

Stop! Stop right here and listen. Sir, there is a man in your State who has written a book. The man is called Vance Marshall, and "Jail From Within" is the name of his little volume.

Sir, I entreat you to buy a copy of that book. Get it. And get it now. Read it from cover to cover. Read it thoughtfully; read it sincerely. Then, sir, when you have finished, take a backward glance to the days when you were yourself a prisoner, and ask your higher self this question: What have you achieved for Justice in your State?

Sir, I wish to distinctly say that I know nothing whatever about this man, Vance Marshall. I do not know whether he is a good man or a bad man, a glad man or a sad man. I do not know exactly why he went to jail, when he went to jail, or how he behaved in jail. But he has written a book, I repeat—"Jail From Within"—and that book deserves an answer.

Sir, you are a clever man, and an acute man. Go back in thought, I ask you, then, to the days you spent at Darlinghurst—days when you were yourself in jail, and when the Premiership of the State, I think, must first have gripped your soul as a great objective. What were your sensations then? When you were first a prisoner did you not suffer like Vance Marshall? Did you not thrill with indignation to your heart's core. Did you not in your soul determine that this convict system should come to an end?

Sir, what has become of those great and noble resolutions, that sprang within your breast, when you yourself were a humble cipher in jail? What have you done with the higher self, and why? Was it for you a supreme misfortune to have so soon and so honorably returned to an external world? These are questions that I commend to the great man who slumbers within you—the great man who keeps a little politician, as it were, upon the doorstep of his intellect, perpetually on guard.

Sir, you are a student, and a man with knowledge of many things. Do you know, then, that passage of Treitschke's, in which he indicts the English system of justice? What is it he says? "The necessity is clear that the administration of justice should be accessible to all. Not only in name, but in deed. In this respect England stands as far behind the Continent as it has outstripped us in other things. A lawsuit in England is so dear that it is only possible for the rich man. In this aristocratic distortion of life lies a fundamental fault of the English State organisation. For it is obvious that such a state of affairs is a radical error, and that the State must intervene with its means to make it possible for the poor man to carry on a law-suit. Where the administration of the law is not approximately accessible to all, its effectiveness cannot be sound."

Sir, what would Trietschke have said of Justice had he studied its workings in New South Wales? What would he say of that moral cowardice which plays so great a part in our trial-by-jury system, which places a premium upon the services of the Crown perjurer and sends the innocent man to jail?

Sir, I have been through the mill, and I know. In my own small case, I have stood in the dock and been convicted upon the evidence of Crown perjurers who went scot free, and who yet were as guilty as hell. I allude to the matter of the forging of a telegram, in which the actual forger simply walked out of court as a criminal accomplice of the Crown.

Sir, when a man remembers experiences of his own, like that, it makes him think. And when he reads these stinging pages of Vance Marshall's, he thinks again. In God's name, Premier Holman, what have you got to say in reply to Marshall's scathing indictment of Justice in your State?

Sir, I have no space to quote his charges seriatim. I will simply content myself, just now, with a statement of my own ex-

perience in regard to a couple of facts. And prominently there figures one certain horror in this book. It is the account of the prisoners being chained together, in transit from Long Bay to Goulburn Jail. The thing is too nauseous to give in detail—read it for yourself. As you read it, remember this: When I, Grant Hervey, was sent to Goulburn I was chained to two Chinamen.

Sir, were you ever chained to a Chinaman in your life? If not, why not? Because, if you had been, you would have realised that your White Australia idea is a dead letter in New South Wales.

Sir, there is the additional question of violence. Vance Marshall describes how men are beaten, behind closed doors, in jail. Well, I have seen a man kicked the length of a prison yard in broad daylight. It was done by Warder M——— in No. 7 yard in Goulburn Jail.

Sir, do you stand for that? Maybe the man who was kicked deserved to be kicked — I say nothing about that. But kicking is bad in principle, and I do not know that it forms any part of a warder's official duty. It is bad when it is done in the dark, but it is worse when it is done openly and in the sight of men. Yet I have seen it done, and so I say again do you stand for that?

Sir, there is the question of sickness. Vance Marshall describes what happened to himself. For my part, I have seen a man locked up for the offence of being ill. One sabbath morning, at 7 o'clock, I saw that man stagger out of his cell after water. He had then the glaze of death, I saw, upon his eyes, and before noon he was dead. He died like a dog in B Wing at Goulburn, away back in October, 1915. But it was hushed up. There was the usual perfunctory certificate; the warder who practically murdered that man, by locking him up in a dying condition, and in an ice-cold cell, was quietly got rid of; and that was the end of No. 55.

Sir, there were others. But I do not intend to pile up horrors on horror's head. I simply cite a few facts. I accuse nobody, except where I give a specific name. But I give those names and facts for a reason. I want you to realise that it is worth while to listen to Vance Marshall. Not that I vouch for one single word of his. No, let his testimony stand by itself, and let mine stand by itself.

Sir, it is the fashion to scoff at German writers like Treitschke. But I am going to apply, in a paraphrase, to you certain things that this Prussian thinker has said of another William, whose name was Hohenzollern. It is to be recognised in humility, then, that it is an unsearchable dispensation of Providence if you, an ex-prisoner, in particular, have been raised above all others in the State. The Premiership, of course, has need of party devoutness, in a very especial degree. For the idea that he stands and has so long stood, so high above all other men, may actually unsettle the brain of the ruler, unless he is filled with pious humility, and recog-

nises that he must submit himself, with his power, to the dispensation of God.

Sir, it lies, moreover, in the exalted position of the Premier to see further than ordinary men. The ordinary man surveys only a small circle of real life. As Treitschke himself is careful to say, we can recognise this with especial clearness in the voluntary class prejudices of the average man. There are prejudices, in particular, of the middle classes and of the learned professions — the class from whence the State's supply of barristers, and ultimately of judges, is recruited. They do not see the whole of society, but only a small section.

Sir, it is clear, upon the contrary, that a wise Premier will learn to know more of the aggregate of the national life. That is, than the individual subject. He is in a position to judge the relations of the different forces in society, much more correctly than is the case with the average man. And remember this. A wise policy must reckon far into the future. Now, such a policy will be possible only for him who really stands at the centre, cognisant of all the facts.

Sir, are you shutting your eyes to one great section of the political facts? Are you doing well to ignore that higher menace which stands behind Vance Marshall and his book? Of Premiers, it holds good in the highest degree that they may themselves become their own worst enemies. I must insist on this. You, yourself, have felt, and have partly yielded to that immense temptation — I mean towards arrogance of all kinds. You know that imminent danger, the danger that the personality of the Premier of the moment, with his caprices and his human limitations, may be confounded with the political power itself? That a condition of self-deification may thus arise, which will have a demoralising effect? If everything which passes through the mind of such a Premier must forthwith become law, the whole system of government becomes at once a caricature. Agitation begins. It begins among all free and noble spirits. It spreads everywhere, and such a Premier must then rely upon his enemies, for he is already forsaken by his political "friends".

Sir, in this issue which the bayonet of Vance Marshall has levelled at you it is no use to fall back upon the old excuse. I mean the excuse that the right of the State to bring all its forces into the field, no matter whether they are barbarians or not, cannot be disputed. Parties can say the same thing. More, they can act upon it. That idea of Treitschke's resolves itself, in fact, into the practical Prussianism of all parties, and I do not need to warn you that parties, in New South Wales — and most especially your own "party" — are in a state of unstable equilibrium. Montesquieu declares that the ruling spirit of a constitutional government must be distrust. Well, you are distrusted, and that is the plain English of it — distrusted by the country producing interests as embodied

in the Farmers and Settlers Association upon the one hand, and distrusted by the organised city industrialists upon the other. What real satisfaction can a man of spirit derive from a position of political fortuity and artificial elevation such as that?

Sir, you are acquainted, I have no doubt, with Dahlmann's Theory? He says that political freedom, in constitutional States, has less to fear from honest mediocrities — than from the genius of great men. But I urge you to be great. I urge the higher Holman into action. Then, if the higher self is sufficiently alive in you, take up Vance Marshall's challenge upon the question of the administration of justice, and thus you will defeat the junkers who are manoeuvring for the elevation of the Crown "Quince."

Sir, New South Wales demands your best. It demands, and I demand — because I am still technically a serf of the State of New South Wales — it demands that you take up this greatest issue now. The State, according to the German school of thought is power. Now, I define the State as Justice — organic justice, is power. Now, I define the State as Justice — organic justice, moving towards great and nationally reconstructive ends. Are you upon the side of Justice, or are you not? That is the crux of the whole question. Is your State organised for political purposes of merely oppressive power, or is it organised so that justice may be established, even in jail, as between man and man? Your whole future depends upon the moral integrity of your answer to that.

I am committed to no party, and not to be labelled by any name. But where Socialists are just I will stand with Socialists. Where men have suffered I will stand with the suffering. Where a great engine of the State seems to intelligent men to be wrongly directed I will demand an inquiry. And so I ask you, Sir, quietly and with great deference — I ask you to read this book of Vance Marshall's, "Jail From Within," and then Justice herself will demand to know whether you are satisfied that all is well in New South Wales' Jails.

EPILOGUE

These two small classics are presented as originally published in their first editions. The only corrections incorporated are those odd few typographical errors altered by the author himself at the time first impressions were to hand.

"Jail From Within" was first published in 1918 under the auspices of The Social Democratic League, Sydney, and printed by The Worker Trade Union Print in St. Andrew's Place, Sydney. The second (1919) edition, from the same printery, bore no publisher's impress for reasons mentioned in the foreword to this memorial edition.

Likewise, "The World of the Living Dead" had no official publisher, save the author and his friends. It was printed in Sydney by W. J. Anderson & Co. in the latter part of 1919.

James Vance Marshall was silenced and behind bars for the second time before he was aware of the success of his "Jail From Within" and it is fitting that his impressions of this period are recorded here—by quoting, in its entirety, his own foreword to the second ("clandestine") edition under the dateline of 7th January, 1919:—

"Many months, and weary months to me, have come and gone since the blurred, tired glare of midnight oil fell upon the scrawled MS. of 'Jail From Within', yet it is only now that I learn of its sensational reception. Simultaneously with its appearance, I, for the second time, disappeared per medium of a prison van.

"I was depressed when I pieced together my sad memories. The morbid recollection of prison was fresh in my mind, and ere I had gone far the shadows again closed in upon me.

"With a more thorough grip of the position I come out of jail a second time a hundred more times more emphatic in my denunciation of a system which serves only to crush the manhood out of man. The methods adopted degrade, demoralise, and—achieving their purpose—keep full the prisons.

"It is only one who has passed through the innermost portals, who has seen the system beneath its golden braid, seen it naked and horrible, who can speak. Only I myself know—and, I suppose, care—how much I have suffered at the hands of the powers that be, but yet I am not vindictive. It is in sorrow, not in anger, that I write; in the interest of others, not of myself.

"I wish 'Jail From Within' to be read, because of the good that is to be done for the sad army in branded grey.

"Jack London wrote of a certain book: 'It will be laughed at—some; jeered at—some; but most of all, worst of all, the most dangerous treatment it will receive is that of silence.'

"This little tale of tragedy has, I find, already been laughed at—some, jeered at—some; but I mind but little so long as it does not receive the treatment of silence.

"Laugh at it, jeer at it, decide and denounce it as you will. But READ IT—that is the point—and perhaps there are some among you who will help me to fight the battle of a fallen brotherhood whom iron bars and stone walls will not allow to fight for themselves."

The Press of the day could not ignore the impact of Marshall's first book as witnessed by these two examples from contemporary reviewers—

"Vance Marshall wields a powerful pen. He is possessed of a superbly humanitarian quality, which, joined to a keen and discriminating mentality, enables him to get a wealth of meaning into a phrase . . . It is a radiant flashlight upon the whole wretched system generally."

—*"The Socialist"*

"It is an unlovely picture. If there is even a reasonable measure of truth in the story, the gaol system is a mighty long way worse than quite a lot of people suspect it of being."

—*Sydney "Bulletin"*

Let the pen of Vance Marshall be not forgotten. This fast-moving world tends to overlook and forget the tragedy, pathos and grimness which is still the inheritance of that same army of grey and likewise, is the same lot of those outside who wait.

—DOUG. HOWITT

