

Mrs. Lathom came forward with outstretched hand. "This is indeed an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Marsbin. I was so charmed when my husband told me that we should have the honour of your company."

The clergyman bowed over the white hand and murmured something inaudible, though it ended with his usual half-coughed "Hum, ha!" with which he invariably closed even the shortest remark; then the "captain's lady" greeted Haldane (whom she sincerely hated, and who knew it), and then indicated, with a bright smile, the spirit stand and wine decanters on the table.

"Now, Fred, I shall leave you to look after Mr. Marsbin and the doctor until luncheon; I have no doubt but that presently you will all have much to say to each other. To you, Mr. Marsbin, who have so lately been in Sydney, I look to tell me all the latest news. Captain Lathom never thinks of me in that respect. He brings me the *Sydney Gazette* with an air of triumph, and thinks he has achieved marvels, when, as you know, that horrid paper contains no news that is not from four to six months old, and I really dread to open it, for one-half of it is occupied with shipping matters, and the other half with notices of absconded prisoners, and of official reports."

"The mournful exigencies of the condition of this colony—largely populated by a criminal and godless community of persons of innate depravity of mind, necessitate, my dear lady, a dignified austerity of tone in the newspaper press of the colony, an austerity that later on, when a better condition of life prevails, may—and I personally shall not be averse to such a departure—give place to the lighter and less momentous