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RECOLLECTIONS OF A CONVICT.*

BY "Y-LE."

CHAP. X.—MACQUARIE HARBOUR AND ITS INHABITANTS.
—THE PILOT.—A MURDER, AND SUMMARY PUNISHMENT OF THE GUILTY PARTY.—EVACUATION OF THE HARBOUR.—SIGNS OF INSUBORDINATION.—A CONSPIRACY AND PLAN OF ESCAPE.

Although installed as coxswain of the pilot boat, it must be borne in mind that, in whatever situation a convict may be placed at Macquarie Harbour, the stern eye of a task-master is ever over him. There is no rest nor relaxation during the hours allotted to work. No communing with their fellow-sufferers. The day's task accomplished, they are driven like so many animals to their sleeping places. In fact, all interest in the surrounding world becomes deadened, and at last completely dies away. It will not, therefore, be imagined that my position, although called upon to perform the duties of a seaman, was one of an easy nature. The pilot was very much addicted to intemperance, and often, while under the influence of intoxication, he made me suffer some punishment I did not deserve.

When I looked around me, however, I found I was much better situated than many who were probably as good as myself, but whose treatment was far different to that which I experienced. The lash was continually over them; whereas, unless when the pilot had been drinking, I was comparatively easily dealt with. This treatment, as I have before stated, drove some of them to be guilty of offences of an aggravated nature, in order to get rid of life. An instance of this occurred a short time after I arrived. The poor fellow implicated, as I afterwards understood, belonged to a very good family in England, but had paid too much attention to the deceits and frauds carried on at the great races and gambling tables in England. At last he connected himself with a company of notorious characters, and his interest became so much mixed up with their proceedings, that, when two of the company were arrested for a robbery, it came out that he had been one of the perpetrators. For a long time he eluded the vigilance of the officers of the law, till at last he was secured, and ultimately banished to Botany Bay. After his arrival there he met with some of his old associates in crime, who, even in banishment, carried on

their vicious practices, and he became mixed up with their depravities a second time. At this point he changed his master, and was hired as a servant to a gentleman in the country. Here he was guilty of appropriating some articles to his own use belonging to his master, for which crime he was sent to Macquarie Harbour. The usage he experienced, contrasted to his mode of life and the luxuries he enjoyed while at home, wrought so much upon his mind, that one day, while he and another convict were engaged at some laborious work, he took advantage of the momentary absence of the guard, to make an attack upon his neighbour, whom he knocked to the earth with a billet of wood, and then seizing a rough-edged stone, completed his work of murder. So well and fatally had he completed his dreadful scheme, that on the return of the guard, the person who had been attacked was found to be dead. In answer to the guard's interrogatories, all the satisfaction received from the guilty perpetrator was a loud string of execrations; then suddenly recollecting himself, he resumed a calmness in his manner, in the meantime advancing forward to the soldier. His motions, however, were watched, and just as he was about to spring upon the guard, that party levelled his piece and shot him dead on the spot.

Nor was this a solitary instance of poor wretches endeavouring to shake off the tyranny by which they were oppressed, either by self-destruction or a breach of rules, which they well knew would end in their sufferings being terminated by an unnatural death.

In the situation of coxswain I continued till the evacuation of the settlement, experiencing troubles and trials of the most afflicting nature. No night passed over without the pilot being drunk. In this state he would often come to where the men were lying, and the first one he came across he generally struck, or if he had nothing in his hand, the unfortunate object received the full weight of the pilot's body by being jumped upon or kicked. If the poor fellow groaned under the pain of such treatment, he was forced, in order to escape a repetition, to obey some useless command given by the brutal wretch. Nor dared a single person to show sympathy for the wronged man, for fear of being tied up and lashed. This punishment I suffered twice in my attempts to expostulate with the low, brutal, petty tyrant, on account of his cruelty. For our own sakes, therefore, we were obliged to stifle our wrath, which, but for the soldiers on board, would have

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