

newspapers, and working himself into a state of fever because his demands were not attended to.

He was weaker than a little child, else he would have evaded the vigilance of his watchers, and flown back to Braymount, to the assistance of his son—to the assistance of the helpless Desmoro.

Bitterly the Colonel reflected upon the unfeeling behavior of his brother at this time. Percy had deserted him in his hour of sore distress—in the darkest hour he had ever known.

Percy might have aided him much, instead of which he had left him in all his helplessness and affliction, at a moment when he would have given worlds for the presence of a sincere friend.

At length, wearied by her husband's importunities respecting the newspapers he required, Caroline procured several Braymount *Advertisers*, and placed them in his hands, which were eagerly stretched out to receive them.

Propped up by pillows, the invalid's eyes impatiently scanned column after column of the first sheet, then he took up a second and searched that in the same anxious manner, his hands and lips trembling, and his heart beating wildly all the while.

All at once he uttered a cry, a loud, piercing cry, and fell back, amongst his pillows in strong convulsions.

He had read that Desmoro Desmoro had been tried and found guilty of the fearful charge preferred against him, and that he was sentenced to be transported for the term of his natural life, which place of appalling intelligence, like a flash of heaven's lightning, had struck the Colonel down, and stolen away his senses for a time.

Mrs. Symure was perfectly astounded at this strange incident.

"Wherefore had her husband fainted?" she mentally asked herself, as she rang the bell to summon assistance.

Colonel Symure did not recover his consciousness for some hours. And now he fell into a sickness of mind and body both against which he appeared to make no effort whatever. He seemed resigned, nay, wishful, to die; but the Almighty had yet to scourge him further, the Colonel had still more suffering to endure.

They carried him from place to place, but he failed to find rest anywhere, and his old strength refused to come back to him.

And he was very miserable, also, with no one near him in whom he could confide. He wrote, asking Percy to come to him; but that gentleman replied that he had had some twinges of the gout lately, and was anticipating a serious attack of it.

Percy's answer did not surprise the Colonel; indeed, it was only such as he had expected to receive at his brother's selfish hands.

How Colonel Symure moaned over and regretted the past, now—now, when it was too late for him to repair the terrible wrongs that he had done in the past!

If Caroline's suspicious, shrewish temper embittered her husband's life when in health, how little he was able to endure that temper now that he was bowed down by secret sorrow and illness! But he let her say her say, and tried to close his ears to all her sharp words and cruel speeches. He thought that her tongue was one of the punishments to which he had been condemned, and he strove to bear it patiently, feeling that he richly deserved all its stings, and much more besides.

At this time, Caroline repeated to her husband the old, old tale. She was weary of a military life, and ordered him to sell out or retire from it. But the Colonel would not do either one or the other, and so he plainly told his wife.

Then she would leave him, she said. He made no rejoinder. She could do just as she pleased, he would not put any obstacle in the way of her wishes. Perhaps, it would be better for both of them to be separated; they were not happy together; parted, they might be so.

So Caroline left her husband. She had plenty of money; and having, besides, a taste for worldly pleasures, she at once plunged into them.

Colonel Symure felt his freedom, and rejoiced at it; and, thus left to himself, his former strength, by degrees, returned to him. Yes, he was far, far happier alone; he was rejoiced at his present condition, and earnestly hoped that Caroline would never disturb it again.

And time progressed; and at length the Colonel had regained his former state of health, and rejoined his regiment.

And now we will leave him, and return to our hapless hero.

With his white face buried in his clasped hands, Desmoro sat in his cell. He was condemned, disgraced eternally, and banished from his native land for aye—and all this for no fault of his own.

The kind-hearted Jellico had done everything he could in order to prove his innocence of his unfortunate *profrpt*; but all the worthy manager's endeavours in that respect had proved unavailing.

Desmoro was pronounced guilty, and sentenced accordingly.

Jellico, himself, had but little interest to exert in favor of our hero, so he wrote to Ralph Thelford, asking him if he could aid the young convict in any way. But, alas, for disappointments! Ralph was gone to France, and was not expected to return home for some time.

In the course of a few days, Desmoro was to sail—to sail for his home of exile—and his pen-

up feelings had given way, on reflecting how soon he should have to quit his native land—the land in which sweet Comfort dwelt.

He was aroused by the entrance of Jellico, who had come in order to take leave of him.

"Come, my lad, break up," said the manager, seeing Desmoro's tears.

"Oh, sir, you still believe me to be innocent of this hideous crime for which I am thus being made to suffer?"

"Let my presence here answer that question," replied Jellico. "Did I think you guilty, I should show you by my acts that I thought you so."

"Thank you, sir, thank you," sobbed Desmoro, the full tide of his grief gushing forth. "And now, sir, yet another question. Have you heard anything of the Shavings?"

"No, not a single word."

Desmoro clasped his hands, and wrung them despairingly.

"They will never learn my dreadful fate, I trust," said he, with a shudder. "It would break my heart entirely, did I imagine that Comfort Shavings would ever scorn my name," he added, his eyes brimming over, his voice choked with emotion.

Jellico was almost unmanned. Desmoro's tears and despair touched the manager's sensitive heart, and made it ache for the young convict's friendless and degraded position.

But Jellico had no power to alleviate Desmoro's troubles, Jellico was a ruined man.

"I wish I were dead, sir!" wailed the young prisoner,—"dead, dead—and at rest for ever! I don't see that such a desire on my part is at all wicked; for what have I to live for now but gloomy and sorrow? I feel that my breast is growing hard, and that many sinful thoughts have crept into it. But I am better in your presence—more likely my old self, sir. Yet, when I am once more alone, those bitter feelings, I fear, will return to me with redoubled strength. I never yet did ill, but I have begun to think that a day will arrive when Desmoro Desmoro will shudder to hear his own name pronounced—when his hands will not be pure as now."

"Desmoro, for heaven's sake, do not let me hear you talk thus!" cried Jellico.

"Sir, I shall be driven to do wrong—I am sure I shall!" was the passionate answer. "I cannot stand in the open face of day now; for men will point at me derisively, and shun me like a loathsome thing. Since such is the case, will you wonder when you shall learn that I have become a desperate fellow, and have taught men to fear me? You don't know, sir, how this cruel injustice has changed my whole nature! I feel full of hatred, and as pitiless as a hungry tiger. Let the world, then, henceforth beware of me; I am only what it has made me!"

"Desmoro, I tremble to listen to your words! Pray—pray to our Father in heaven, and ask Him to grant you patience and forbearance, under this your heavy trial!"

"I have prayed, Mr. Jellico—prayed with my whole heart and soul; and behold my state—behold the reward I have reaped, the——"

"Desmoro, this is impious!" interrupted the manager, in a shocked tone. "I would not see you in tears, full of wailing lamentations, than hear you give utterance to such sentiments as these!"

The young convict gnawed his white lips, and lightly wrung his hands.

"Let them send me across the sea," he muttered, between his set teeth—"let them heap upon my head wrong upon wrong; I will pay them back some day—I will not die their debtor."

Jellico stared at the speaker, unwilling to credit the evidence of his ears. He was beginning to think that Desmoro was taking leave of his senses, for he had never before seen him so fearfully excited—never before heard him utter such despairing and vengeful words.

At length, Desmoro grew calmer, and Jellico bade him a kind and affectionate farewell, and left him.

The convict then threw himself upon his mattress, and there lay, without sound or motion, in a sort of stupor, out of which he was not aroused until the gaoler came to tell him that the prison-car was waiting to convey him to Liverpool, whence he was to sail for Sydney, New South Wales.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

My readers must now leap with me over six long years, and suffer me to conduct them into the presence of our hero, who is now a tall man of Herculean build, with a face full of masculine beauty and softness.

He wears his hair rather long, has a fine beard, and a well trimmed, silken moustache. He is dressed in somewhat rough habiliments; has on huge riding-boots, with jingling spurs; a velvet shooting-coat; and a cabbage-tree hat, which is low in the crown, and wide in the brim. You might take him for a stockman, or for any other honest fellow, did you not see a pair of revolvers in his broad leather belt, and a certain air of watchfulness in his large, violet-tinted eyes.

He is sitting on a hillock, leaning on his gun, the knotty arms of the white gum-trees twisted in graceful and fantastic arches over his head—a thick brushwood to his right and to his left—the highway before him. He is in the attitude of a listener, and is evidently in expectation of some one; for his quick eyes are peering through a network of interlacing vines of various kinds, behind which he is screened from the road and observation.

While he thus employed, I will, as briefly as possible, recount to you all that has happened to Desmoro since we last parted with him, and wherefore you behold him as now.

When he arrived in that colony, he was placed in the prisoners' barrack, Hyde Park, herded with hundreds of other degraded and unhappy men, many of whom had resolved to seize on the first chance of reformation afforded them, while others were only awaiting opportunities of committing further wrong—of increasing the already long list of their wicked deeds.

During a five months' voyage, in the close society of three hundred convicts, Desmoro had learned many sad lessons, and had become familiarised with many revolting scenes as well. But, notwithstanding all he had heard and witnessed, his mind received no evil impressions; his lofty spirit kept him aloof, and preserved him from all taint—from all ill.

He spoke to none, unless he was compelled so to do, and he was always quiet and well-conducted; and, although he carried himself proudly, and with the air of a prince, he was ever ready to lend assistance in cases of sickness, or where his aid would be appreciated.

The captain and the other officers of the ship remarked the gentle bearing of the young convict, and felt much interested in him.

It was strange, but, despite his repelling ways towards all, nearly every prisoner on board sought Desmoro, and made friendly advances towards him. But Desmoro was like a man of stone—cold, and hard, and inaccessible to all.

His brother prisoners wondered at him, but they did not blame him for thus keeping himself apart from them. Indeed, Desmoro had become a source of considerable speculation amongst his fellow-captives, whom he had inspired with a great deal of curiosity, and with some respect and admiration as well.

"It's strange," one would say, when talking of our hero, "but I can't make out how he's come to be a sinner. He's so young, and so much of the gentleman, too!"

"Have you seen his red hand?" asked another. "They say that was evidence against him, and caused his condemnation."

Desmoro's number was two hundred and sixty, but amongst his brother prisoners, from one end of the vessel to the other, he was known only as "Red Hand."

Desmoro no longer quailed or showed displeasure, as heretofore, at the mention of that *soubriquet*; no, he seemed rather to like it now. But whether he liked it or not was a matter of no consequence whatever, since he could not have controlled the speech of three hundred men.

"What can you do?" inquired one of the prison officials, soon after our hero had arrived in Sidney.

"Nothing," was the brief rejoinder, spoken in calm, indifferent tones.

"Nothing!"

"Well, I can read and write; I understand Latin, and know something of Greek; can speak French and read it; am well versed in——"

"That will do!" returned the official, brusquely. "We've had quite enough of that sort of rubbish, which will be of no earthly service to you here, where you'll maybe be employed on the roads or in breaking stones."

Desmoro shivered slightly, and smiled a grim smile, and the man went on, in taunting accents.

"And if you should chance not to like such work, and should turn rebellious, you'll very likely get a cool fifty!"

"Fifty—what?" uttered Desmoro.

"Why, fifty lashes!"

"Lashes!" flashed the convict, his cheeks flushing, his eyes seeming to dart living fire.

"Ay, a good flogging now and then often does many of your sort a great benefit; it helps to cool their impudence and keep down their pluck! Take my advice, youngster, and subdue yours, else you may live to rue it!"

Desmoro was silent. The iron in his bosom was becoming harder and harder.

"It strikes me that you are one of the obstinate ones," pursued the official, fixing his keen eyes on the convict.

"I'm just what I've been made," was the muttered and dogged rejoinder, made in a voice too low to reach the officer's ear.

"Now, look here, youngster, here's a carpenter in want of an assistant. Do you think you could manage to use the saw and the plane? Such will be easier labor than breaking stones on the highway."

"Very likely," replied our hero, haughtily.

"Well?"

"My hands have had no acquaintance with such articles as saws and planes."

"Indeed!" sneered the official, making a mocking bow to Desmoro. "Well, here's a tailor and a shoemaker wanted; what says your high mightiness to one of these trades?"

The convict's lips curled scornfully, but never a word did he reply.

"It occurs to me, young man, that you'll be getting yourself into a worse position than your present one. Take care! This is not a place where men can presume to give themselves any airs! You are government property now, you must remember! You belong to your country, which same country won't stand any nonsense, I can tell you!"

The prisoner made no answer to the official's vulgar and unfeeling speech.

"Now, here's a gardener required," pursued the man, reading from a written list in his hands. "Well?"

"I'll dig the earth cheerfully, sir," answered

Desmoro, "for none can feel disgraced by such an occupation."

The man looked into the speaker's face with amazement written on his own.

"Oh, you'll undertake the situation of gardener, eh?"

"Yes, although I know nothing at all about the business. I can scarcely distinguish the difference betwixt a plant and a weed, and I know not one seed from another."

"But you'll try to learn, I suppose?"

"Perhaps!"

"You'll be compelled; else, as I told you before, you'll be sent to break stones!"

"Perhaps!"

"What do you mean by that?" fumed the man, reddened with anger. "I'm not going to stand here to be browbeaten and insulted by you! I can tell you, you red-handed thief you——"

But there the official's speech stopped short; a heavy blow from Desmoro's hand had checked his cruel words, and stretched him prostrate on the ground.

The convict did not stir. He knew well what he had done, and how he would be punished for this act of violence.

He was already surrounded and seized by some men, who had been near at the time when he dealt the blow. Desmoro could not escape from their hold, nor did he attempt to do so. He stood apparently quite collected and defiant, heedless of everything.

He was soon put in irons and thrust into a dark, loathsome cell, where for a time he was left to his own sorrowful and harassing reflections.

What had he done? This time, at least, his manacles were deserving. What would they do to him? Perhaps the blow he had just dealt might prove fatal; if so, what would be Desmoro's fate?

The unhappy young man sat on his litter of straw, and beat the stone walls of his narrow prison until his hands were bruised and wounded all over, his eyes burning, his bosom brimful of apprehension all the while.

Oh, how his proud soul had been stung and goaded almost into madness! Well, perchance he might live to avenge all his manifold injuries. He was longing that he might do so—longing with all his strength.

Well, hour after hour passed away—a whole night, during which by turns he dreamed of his old grandfather, the village-schoolmaster; of the clown and his fair daughter; of Jellico; of the wretch Pidgeon; and of the dead Mrs. Polderbrant. Comfort was weeping, he thought, and avoided the touch of his proffered hand; and Jellico and Mrs. Polderbrant looked angrily upon him, and then turned aside their heads as if they wished to shun him; while Pidgeon was grinning in fiendish glee, and rubbing his knotted fingers according to his wont.

In the eyes of the law here Desmoro's late offence was regarded as one most grave, and a heavy punishment was adjudged him for it. He was sentenced to receive fifty lashes and to be shut up ten days in solitary confinement.

Desmoro heard his doom with white quivering features and a shrinking heart. He was not fearing the bodily pain that was about to be inflicted on him; he was thinking only of the humiliation and disgrace which would soon be his. But he would be firm through it all; he would not give utterance to a single cry.

And the young convict maintained his resolution; and blow after blow descended on his shoulders, drawing from them the warm purple stream of life. Yet he did not once shrink, or wince, or even sigh. He was mute and motionless in his anguish.

After this cruel abasement Desmoro was once more thrown into his cell, and there left, with smarting flesh and aching breast, a prey to a score of rebellious and frenzied thoughts.

Oh, the weariness of those long, long days of darkness and lonely bondage! Would they never end? Was he never to see the blessed daylight more—never to breathe the fresh, pure air again?

"Patience—patience!" a voice seemed to cry in his ear. "A time will come when thou mayst avenge all these sufferings and wrongs of thine!"

Was not this an evil choice—the voice of Satan himself? Assuredly it was. But whosesoever voice it was, Desmoro listened to and heeded it.

The time of his solitary imprisonment having expired, our hero was now assigned as an undergrounder to a certain Dutch naval captain, now retired and living at his ease, who had a wife many years younger than himself, and whose name was Volderbond—Carl Volderbond.

Desmoro managed to dig and delve, and to follow the instructions given him by the head gardener, and matters went on pretty smoothly with our hero now. But his bosom was full of gloomy thoughts and unhappiness.

Captain Volderbond was a rich man, and his government servants were not condemned to retain their hideous prison garments, but were allowed comfortable and becoming wearing-apparel. He was a rough, sailor-like, honest-hearted, generous-souled being, who had a wish to see contented faces all around him. His wife was an East Indian, with a dash of negro blood in her veins, and a countenance and figure truly beautiful, but owing a temper and disposition full of grave faults and ugly deformities. But unable to see those faults and deformities the old captain petted and indulged her to the utmost of his power—humoring her caprices and gratifying all her extravagant and fantastical whims, never grudging his gold or his pains, so long as he could but succeed in ministering to her desires, and in satisfying her.