

everywhere, in mechanical heaps and lines, broken by deep pits where granite had been quarried by grumbling convicts for their sins. These pits were now half filled with water, for it was spring, and the country was in flood. There was neither tree nor blade of grass; no bird nor insect. Only the great cold prison arising out of the wetness, built of the stone on which it stood, a melancholy mountain, the travail of which had broken many a man body and soul. The yellow gaslight from the narrow windows cut fantastic shafts into the dripping night.

"Inspiration refuses to thrive on stale bread and cigar-ends," said Krum, frowning at the gibbous moon as he replaced his pencil and note-book. "Nor is this raw cold in the least conducive to the true poetic spirit. Unfortunately, it is useless to abuse the weather. The elements listen to bad language so cynically. And, unlike Xerxes, I have no mood to flog the sea."

He drew himself up and stared along the uneven trail. The rock gave out the echo of footsteps, and he perceived a man, clad in the thick uniform of an official, swinging down towards him.

"Evenin'," Krum called pleasantly, as a black-bearded warder approached. "Sorter splashy walkin', ain't it?"

This gentleman of fortune cultivated two vocabularies and two distinct styles of speech; and exhibited a nice discrimination in the use of them.

The warder drew up abruptly, and regarded the wayfarer with marked disapproval.

"What you doing here?" he demanded, in bullying tones. "We don't want no loafers around here. This is Government ground. Seems you want a spell of free board. What's yer name?"