

"I do not wish for any reward, madam. I shall be glad to serve you if it lies in my power to do so."

"How nicely you speak! Well, you *can* serve me. I want you to tell Captain Lathom that you are sure I am not at all strong, and ought to go away to Sydney. He is so strong himself that he cannot understand any one being weak and ill. And he would think seriously of it if you told him."

The darkening shadows of the day hid the smile of contempt on the girl's face. "It would be great presumption on my part, madam, to speak to Captain Lathom on such a subject as your health."

"Of course it would—if I did not tell you to do so. But I wish you to do so."

"I will speak to him, madam."

"That is right. I am sure you are a sensible girl, and will know exactly what to say. Now let us return to the house."

They walked slowly along the narrow, winding and dusty path that led from Captain Lathom's house to the bank of Waringa Creek. On each side of them was an endless vista of grey gum-trees, from the smooth, round boles of which hung strips and patches of russet-hued bark, cracked and blistered by the summer sun. Presently they came to the outer paddock, a wide, grassless expanse of fifty acres, enclosed in a rough three-railed fence of gum slabs, and entered by slip-rails. The girl stepped before her mistress, and lowered one end of the heavy rails for her mistress to step over; then again fell behind to her usual distance.

Within the larger paddock was a smaller one, in which stood Captain Lathom's quarters and those of the five-and-twenty soldiers who formed the convict