

« This looks like a prison » murmured one of the party joyfully (?), and his comrades agreed.

At the gate stood a stern figure in khaki, with a black band bearing the mystic letters M. P., worked in beautiful red characters, adorning his coat sleeve. Inside the gate was a splendid red brick building, with broad, snow-white steps leading up to the main entrance. The strangers were dazzled by its splendour, but to each one it seemed as if the sign « Abandon hope all ye who enter here » was hung over the highly polished plate glass doors. But, nevertheless they entered, and were introduced to the Lord High Executioner. He was an imposing figure, with a curious V-shaped white strip on both arms.

« Are you those desparate criminals from beyond the seas » he demanded in tones of thunder. And the seven unhappy victims could only murmur « We are ».

« There are your beds » shouted the Great One, pointing to a corner of the Grand Hall, which was, unfortunately too dimly lit, for the seven victims to see whither he was pointing. But they were weary with much carrying of heavy blankets, and slunk towards the corner indicated. After much, scrambling and knocking of limbs against hidden obstacles, the desired haven of rest was reached. There in the corner was a row of soft downy mattresses, each of which must have contained at least four straws. They lay on a floor of beautiful soft wood, which looked so inviting that the poor wanderers who were doomed to occupy them felt like going to rest at once. But it was not to be. The High and Mighty ruler of the Execution chamber had need of their attention. And, then and there, he discoursed to them on all the benefits of the new and wonderful cure for laziness, late-sleeping, and lead-swinging. The rules and regulations were duly read out, and then the seven captives were allowed to go free, until the call of « Lights Out » at 9.15 p.m..

We will draw a veil upon the scene until the next morning, when at six-thirty the voice of the Ruler of the mansion aroused the victims from their bowers of ease. A sumptuous breakfast, A l'Armée Anglaise, awaited them, but with base ingratitude they hied themselves to visit a mysterious personage known as « Cap », leaving the provisions of the Lord and Master of the torture chamber, to others more unfortunate than they.

And as the days passed the seven poor wretches lived on at that mansion, and grew in wisdom and in stature. But a strange habit grew