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The *ELECTRIC* GUN

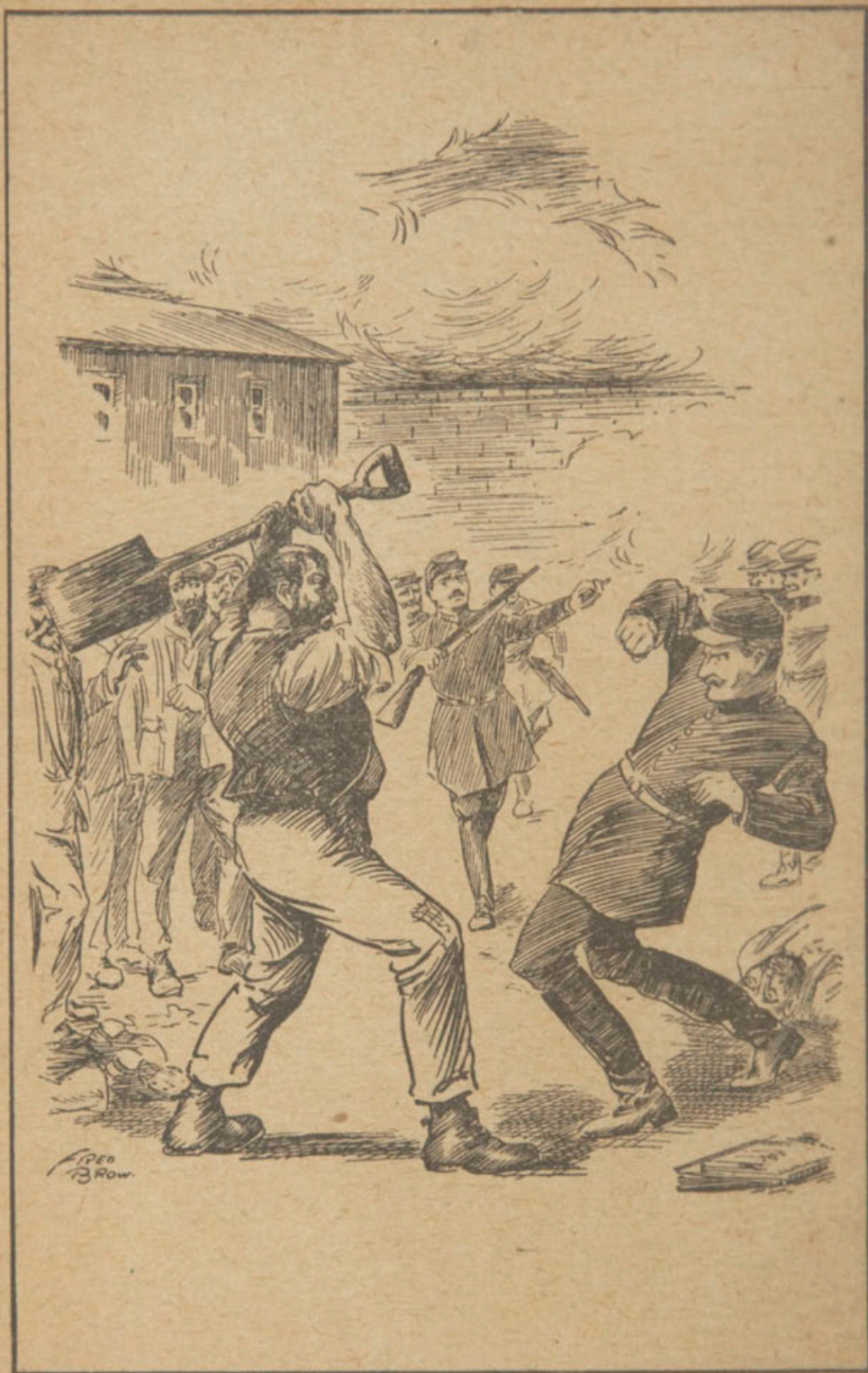


By
Harold Johnston.



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THE ELECTRIC GUN



HE BROUGHT THE SPADE DOWN UPON THE INSPECTOR'S HEAD.

THE ELECTRIC GUN

A TALE OF LOVE AND SOCIALISM

BY

HAROLD JOHNSTON

Illustrated by Fred Brow



SYDNEY

PRINTED BY

WEBSDALE, SHOOSMITH LTD.

1911

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FOREWORD

Do you ever think, my brother, when the Glory Roll
is filled,

When the little play is over, and the villain has been
killed,

When the Book of Life is opened, will your own name
be enrolled

With brave Tell and Kosciusko and the Paladins of
old?

Will your name, in shining letters, stand beside the
Dauntless Three,

Or be marked: "Though born a Freeman, quite
unworthy to be Free?"

Will it read: "He was a Traitor, and he filled a
Coward's grave,"

Or: "This was a Man of Courage—one who scorned to
be a Slave?"

To lovers of liberty, wherever they may be found.

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CHAPTER I.

THE SHADOW FALLS.

“ A thousand years scarce serve to form a State ;
An hour may lay it in the dust.”

—*Byron.*

AT the time of the great change, Edward Bruce was a journalist on the staff of one of the Sydney daily papers. The attitude of the press towards what the Socialists called the “Great Reform” was a curious mixture of friendliness and fear, but Bruce himself was an ardent “reformer,” and his book, “Liberty,” published early in 1924, had greatly influenced the elections, which brought about the downfall of individualism. The tide of popular opinion overwhelmed both parliament and press, and the new system came into force at the beginning of the following year.

Bruce was appointed sub-editor of the “State Daily News,” but his innate love of justice brought him ere long into conflict with the horde of place hunters who swarmed like flies round the Government offices.

Edward Bruce had always strongly advocated equal remuneration for all workers, as he recognized that any other arrangement would lead to infinite trouble when the commission to regulate employment should be appointed. In a community where all

were supposed to have equal rights, he contended that it was absurd to say that the services of one man were of more value to the State than those of his neighbour. He quite failed to perceive, however, that while the amount of money actually paid might be the same in all cases, yet the position of the officials who regulated and controlled production must be very much better than that of the laborers on the farm or in the factory. This must be so, even if all men were industrious and virtuous, and in Bruce's calculations he entirely overlooked the important factor of human nature.

No sooner did the bureaucracy find itself firmly seated than it promptly kicked away the ladder by means of which it had climbed to power.

At this time Bruce was thirty-five years of age, married, with one infant son.

One morning he was politely informed that, as his services were no longer required on the staff of the paper, he would be expected to report himself for duty within three days to the Superintendent of the wheat farm at Temora. He went round at once to the Labor Department, and, after some difficulty, succeeded in obtaining an interview with the Director. But it was quite in vain that he pointed out that his services would be of more value to the State in his present position.

"You may think so," said the Director, with a sneer, "but then your opinion is not wanted on the subject. Don't you, or can't you, see that if choice of occupation were permitted in your case, we should be morally bound to allow everyone to select

his own work? Everyone might decide to become a lawyer or a policeman. The only fair, the only possible, way of allotting tasks is by rote. The farm superintendent at Temora has sent in a requisition for two hundred additional men. Your name happened to be drawn amongst the number. I can do nothing for you; good-day."

This was bad enough, but worse was to follow. When he reached his home, an hour later, he found that his wife had just been served with a notice, instructing her to proceed by the following Monday morning's train to Jervis Bay, to begin work there in the new jute factory.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Bruce, when he had glanced at the notice; "there must be some dreadful mistake. I am being sent to Temora. They cannot intend to separate us!"

The young wife threw herself into her husband's arms. "I will not leave you, I cannot leave you, Ted," she sobbed. "I'll die before I let them take me away."

Bruce soothed her as well as his own emotions would permit.

"Don't cry, Ellen, dear," he said. "I feel sure that it is only the result of a clerical error. I shall go back to town at once, and see the Director again. Don't worry! It will be all right."

Bruce was far from feeling the confidence which his words to his weeping wife indicated. He had already seen enough of departmental tyranny to realize that many of the officials were capable of anything, especially when it meant a demonstration

of their own authority. They could always shield themselves behind the State. "The interests of the State demanded it."

Bruce found, upon his return to the office, that the Director had "just gone out for a few minutes." The great man did not return for an hour and a half, and, when he did come in, Bruce mentally diagnosed the case as "pretty full."

"What's the matter?" asked the Director, as he lurched into his chair. "Oh! it's you, Bruce, is it? What-ye-want? Out with it; can't ye see I'm busy?"

"I wish, sir, to put my case before you again," began Bruce. The Director interrupted him angrily.

"Your case! your case! Confound you and your case! One would think, to hear you talk, that nothing in the world is of any importance but your paltry affairs."

"But, Sir, you stated this morning that I must go to Temora."

"Well, what about it?"

"Only this, that since I saw you this morning, my wife has received instructions to proceed to Jervis Bay," replied the unhappy man.

"Look here!" exclaimed the Minister, thumping the table with his fist, "you understand this. The rights of the State are paramount—paramount. The individual is nothing—less than nothing. If your wife's name is drawn for Jervis Bay, or for Bourke, or for Tim-Timbuctoo, she must go; that's all about it. D'you think, do you really think, that

a department such as this can be administered if I am to be constantly pestered by fellows such as you? Gerout the office!”

“But my wife’s health——”

“Oh! d——n your wife’s health! What I care about y’r wife’s health? She’ll be orright. Plenty men at Jervis Bay. Soon console herself loss o’ you. Plen’y women Temora; you get ri’ side the superin’endent, he’ll fix y’ up. Gerout! I got lot o’ work. Gerout!”

How Bruce reached his home on that dreadful day he did not know.

“What can I say to Ellen?” he groaned. He and his wife, though married for more than five years, were still lovers. Through all the struggles of the past few years he had been supported by the thought that he was working for Ellen. “For Ellen—and now!”

His cheeks burned as he recalled the insulting words of the brute, who, by virtue of his office, had power to inflict such injustice upon unoffending people. And then there was his little boy, whom he had temporarily forgotten. Heavens! Would that poor helpless child be torn from his mother’s arms—taken away, to be handed over to the tender mercies of the nurses at the State Creche? And he—fool! idiot! madman! that he had been. He had been partly instrumental in bringing into existence this iniquitous, this devilish system!

Bruce found his wife at the door, waiting for him. He tried to smile, but it was a very feeble attempt. The little boy uttered a gurgle of delight,

and tried to gouge out his father's eye with his own chubby fist.

"Come in, Ted," cried his wife. "I have been looking out for you for the last hour. How did you get on? Tell me quick—quick. You have good news, haven't you?"

"Ellen, my poor girl," he said, as he took her in his arms, "I have failed—utterly failed. The Director—he insulted me in the grossest manner—he will do nothing. No alteration in the arrangement is possible."

The poor wife bowed her head upon his shoulder, while he stroked the beautiful, chestnut hair tenderly. Presently she looked up, and exclaimed, in heart-broken tones: "But, surely, such a thing cannot be allowed. Isn't there anyone to whom we can appeal? You know all the members of the Government so well; why not see some of the others?"

"My dear girl," he replied, "I am afraid that it is useless to apply to any of the members. I have already made myself obnoxious to most of them by constituting myself the champion of the workers. I feel sure that this is the reason why I am being sent out of the city. Little did I dream that my own case would so soon become even worse than that of those poor creatures for whom my heart has bled during the past six months."

"And this is what you call love!" cried Ellen, drawing herself away from his embrace. "We are to be separated—perhaps for ever—and yet you can talk about the sufferings of others. What do

I care for other people's troubles? My own, and those of my unfortunate child, are quite enough for me."

"Ellen! My God! Ellen!" he groaned. "What are you saying? Do you think that my remorse at having assisted in bringing about such a condition of things, at having handed over thousands of innocent men and women to those devils incarnate—do you think *that* is not enough without your reproaches?"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" she sobbed. "Forgive me, Teddy dear, forgive me! To think that I could say *such* an unkind thing to my own dear boy! Kiss me, Teddy, dear. I'm *so* sorry."

Under the influence of her caresses, Bruce, who was naturally optimistic, rapidly regained his spirits. He would "look up Henson" (one of the members of the Government) in the morning. Henson was always very friendly. Henson would be able to fix matters up. Even if they *were* separated, he felt sure that it would be for a very short time, as he would petition the Government for an exchange to Jervis Bay. They would soon be together again.

Ellen dried her tears, and became comparatively cheerful as she listened to his words.

Next morning Bruce called at Henson's office, but was disappointed to learn that that gentleman was out of town. "How long would he be?" The clerk didn't know. "Mr. Henson had gone to Bourke, in connection with the scheme for locking the Darling River. Any message?"

Conquering his pride, Bruce determined to see the Director of Labor once more, but the clerk, to whom he handed his card, returned in a few minutes, and informed him, with a grin, that "Mr. Lewis requests Mr. Bruce to go to the devil."

The unfortunate man returned home, and began his preparations for leaving the city. Before he left he drew up a statement of his case, and forwarded this to Henson's town address.

Bruce and his wife parted at the Central Railway Station, where he, blinded by his tears, staggered to the train set apart for the Temora farm laborers, after seeing his wife borne, half conscious, into that just on the point of starting for the South Coast.

They never met again.

Almost from the day of her arrival at Jervis Bay, Ellen Bruce, owing to her unusual beauty of face and form, attracted the unwelcome attentions of the factory manager. A virtuous, refined woman, she repelled the fellow's advances with scorn, with the result that she was subjected to all kinds of petty humiliations. Her only solace during this unhappy time was her little son. Jack was a bright little fellow, and just beginning to talk, when, instigated probably by his master, the devil, the manager had the child removed from his mother's room (during her absence at work), and transferred to the State Nursery at Kiama.

When she discovered her loss Ellen Bruce was, for a time, a mad woman, and while in that condition would have dashed herself from the window of

her room to the courtyard below, if she had not been restrained, forcibly, by the other workwomen. After a couple of hours she became quiet, however, and when "lights out" was signalled at 9 o'clock by the factory bell, the bereaved woman was in bed, and apparently asleep.

The next morning Ellen Bruce did not respond to her name at roll call, and the girl who was despatched in search of her reported that the room was empty. A hurried search was made, but the missing woman could nowhere be found.

Some days later the workmen employed on the wharf noticed an object floating in the Bay, and a boat being sent out to investigate, the body of Ellen Bruce was recovered from the water.

"Poor girl!" said one of the boatmen, with a sigh.

"Poor girl!" repeated the other in a tone of scorn. "Happy girl, you mean, to get away from this God-forsaken country. If what the parsons used to tell us was true, this girl is now in Heaven, while we are still in hell—hell, do you understand?—and serve us right, too, for we walked into hell with our eyes open, while poor girls like this were dragged in. I wish to God I had courage enough to follow her example."

Immediately upon his arrival at Temora, Bruce, a man with but one idea for the time being, sought an interview with the superintendent of the farm. Some ten or twelve other workers were present—on similar errands. The officer listened to the tales

of woe with but languid interest, but eventually informed Bruce and the others that he would communicate with headquarters and let them know the result.

A week later Bruce, in accordance with the regulations, had his name "put down" for another interview with the superintendent, at the same time stating, in the prescribed form, the matter he wished to discuss. Before going out to work next morning he was curtly informed by one of the foremen that the superintendent did not consider an interview necessary, as "the matter was under consideration."

He next asked to be supplied with writing materials, in order that he might forward a petition to the Government. The official to whom he applied directed his attention to "Regulation 41." He learned from this that "Workers are permitted to write letters, not exceeding three in number, on the first Sunday in every month, provided that no black marks are standing against their names," and with this he had to be content.

On "Letter Day" he first wrote a long and affectionate letter to his wife, and then proceeded to state his case to the head of the Government. He took infinite pains over this statement, but might have saved himself the trouble, as the correspondence was all submitted to the superintendent before being sent out, and that gentleman promptly threw Bruce's petition into the waste-paper basket. A few days later he was informed that nothing could be done in his case—for the present.

Bruce was not alone in his misfortune. Quite

one-third of the married men on the farm had been separated from their wives and families. It must not be supposed that the whole of these men submitted, without protest, to the arbitrary acts of the officials, but their attempts to obtain justice met with no success. The less scrupulous among the newly-appointed officials naturally forced themselves into the highest positions, and they were aware that they held these positions only so long as they could compel others to acknowledge their authority.

Shortly after Bruce's arrival at the farm there was a mutiny amongst the workers, led by one of the married men, who persuaded the others that, provided they stood firm, the authorities must give way, as they had always done in the old days. The revolt lasted only a few hours. The leader was led out into the yard and there shot dead, while twenty others were put on reduced rations for a fortnight. At the same time the superintendent announced that the Government intended establishing a factory near the farm, and that diligent workers would be allowed to rejoin their wives, who would be brought from the other factories, while workers guilty of any insubordination would be deprived of this privilege. Of course the Government did not intend doing anything of the kind, but the poor workers did not know this, and the combined threat and promise had the desired effect of keeping them quiet.

For the next six months Bruce worked strenuously, hoping to find, in the severe manual toil, an

outlet for the suppressed forces within him. At the end of that time he was handed an official document, wherein he read that some individual, with an indecipherable name, had the honor to inform him that "Female worker Ellen Bruce, employed at the jute factory, Jervis Bay, died on the 10th day of November, 1926."

Nothing else! No word of explanation! No cause of death assigned! No expression of regret! The State was indeed paramount; the individual nothing.

During the four years which followed the death of his wife the only communication which Bruce received from the outside world were the half-yearly notices stating that his son, John Bruce, was alive and in good health. Then these ceased.

When the usual form failed to arrive Bruce concluded that his child was dead, and he thanked God for his kindness in removing the poor child to a better world. But he discovered later, from a remark by one of his fellow-workmen, that no one at the farm had received any notice, and one of the foremen condescended to inform them that the central authority had decided, in order to save unnecessary expense, that, in future, parents would know that their children were alive unless they received notice to the contrary, but that, in case of death, the parent or parents would be notified in due course.

This statement was received with apathy. Why should they—dumb, driven creatures—be a cause of unnecessary expense to the paternal State?

They slouched away to their daily tasks, and from that day until just before he was removed to the Home for Aged Workers at Callan Park, twenty years later, Edward Bruce, the one-time journalist, author and philanthropist, held no communication with any person other than his fellow workers and the farm gangers.

There was a tolerably good library at the farm lodging house, and here, among the books, Bruce spent most of his leisure. The great majority of the workers, however, seemed to think of nothing beyond devising schemes for obtaining more food and doing less work.

Fear of punishment was the only incentive to exertion, and lying the only weapon of defence against the tyranny of officialdom. The virtues which had been created by a thousand years of struggling against oppression vanished at the first touch of the slavery of Socialism.

Honesty, diligence, and truthfulness had disappeared.

The system had destroyed virtue.

CHAPTER II.

DARKNESS.

THE dream of the French communists had become a reality in Australia. For a short time it really seemed that the impossible had happened; that a whole people had been made prosperous and virtuous by Act of Parliament. It was only for a very short time. Then the factory hand, noticing that his fellow-workman was growing careless or indolent, took it upon himself to point out that "this kind of thing wouldn't do." The neighbour resented this, and told him to mind his own business.

Naturally, the diligent one soon came to the conclusion that he would be a fool to exert himself unduly when he could obtain precisely the same remuneration by taking it easy. The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man—Bah! He was beginning to hate his fellow man. Lazy wretch!

He argued thus:—"There are, in this particular State, about eight hundred thousand workers, of which I am but the eight hundred thousandth part. At present, the nominal rate of pay is eight shillings per day. If more wealth is produced that rate may be increased. But, in order that I may

receive eight and sixpence a day, it is necessary that the total production be increased by one-sixteenth. I am willing to do a sixteenth more work than I do at present, provided that every other worker in the State will do the same. But, if I do a sixteenth more, my neighbour may do a sixteenth less, so that, together, we shall have accomplished only as much as before.

“Again, even if I could be sure that every worker in the State would continue at his present rate of production, I could only earn an extra sixpence a day for myself by doing sixpence worth of work for every other worker in the State. This would mean additional work, each day, to the value of twenty thousand pounds, which is absurd, as Euclid used to say.”

It was in vain that the factory manager pointed out that the certain result of idleness must be reduction of pay. What did the factory hands care for such a threat? They knew that the amount of wealth produced in the State depended not upon their exertions but upon the labor of the men engaged in the primary industries—in wheat growing, dairying, wool and stock raising and mining; and what guarantee could they possibly have that, after all their work, the carelessness or slothfulness of the men on or under the land would not reduce the amount available for distribution to perhaps half what they had anticipated? Then there were famine, drought, flood, fire, disease, and accident to be taken into consideration.

In a very short time, too, the man on the land,

finding that, notwithstanding his strenuous toil and care, he got no more than a bare living, lost all interest in his work. The most expensive farming implements and machinery were destroyed, owing to the carelessness, ignorance or neglect of those in whose charge they were placed, and before the new system had been in force for five years almost the whole of the cultivation of the soil was being carried on with the most primitive appliances.

It was the same with the grazier. He had no longer any motive for exertion, nor did he take the slightest interest in the sheep or cattle which belonged to the State. In the old days, if a cow worth five pounds died, some individual was the loser of the five pounds, but, under the new order, the death of a cow, a State cow, might be laughed at. Five pounds! What was five pounds to the State? How much did the eight hundred thousandth part of five pounds amount to?

The river rises, and a thousand sheep are cut off. Sheep are stupid animals. They will stay there and get drowned unless the men shift them to higher ground. But this will mean hours of work on a wet, cold night for half a dozen men. Why should they work, when the other thousands of workers—joint owners—are sleeping in their comfortable beds? D——n the sheep!

The dairyman no longer took any trouble to improve the State herd placed in his care. The simplest plan was to allow the heifers to rear their calves, if they could. Why should he break young cows to the bail? There were too many to milk

now. The cream was ripe for churning, but it was "knock-off time." He had already "put in his eight hours." The churning could wait until tomorrow.

The wheat was left unstripped till half the grain had fallen to the ground. What did the farmer care? He was getting nothing out of it; it was State wheat.

Owing to careless working, the output of coal fell to less than a third of what the sturdy miners in the old days had won. No man would work in wet or dangerous places. Why should he? He got exactly the same rate of pay for safe and dry ground.

Most of the gold and silver mines were closed down, and there were no new discoveries. At first a few prospectors were kept on by the State, but they found nothing, or, at least, they reported no new finds. If they discovered a mountain of gold it would do them no good. The State would grab it all.

While the rate of pay remained at a nominal and uniform eight shillings per day it had been found necessary, from time to time, to increase the price of commodities, and, at the end of five years, all payments in money to the workers were abolished, and they were furnished with food and clothing only, in return for their labor. At the same time where practicable the task system was introduced. The prescribed task was at first fairly easy, and the punishment for non-completion merely the publication of the offender's name in a "Black List."

In a few months it was quite a common thing to find the names of more than half the employees of a factory in this list. This, at length, brought out a new regulation, under which idleness was punished by reduction of rations. A great improvement was noticeable at once, and this continued for a whole week. Then the hands grew lazier than ever. Fifty per cent. of the workers in one of the Balmain factories were put on reduced rations. Quite half of these promptly took to bed, pleading sickness as an excuse for absenting themselves from work. The matter was at once reported to the Director of Labor, who issued instructions that all malingerers were to be flogged forthwith.

Many years ago the statement was made that "Law was only right when it did not deviate from right and reason; otherwise it was not law, but only a species of violence."

The reign of violence had begun. But the spirit of the people had not yet been entirely broken.

The first man led out for punishment was a native of Armidale, named Michael Scanlon. In his youth he had learnt the trade of blacksmith, but leaving New South Wales, Scanlon had gone to South Africa, where he spent some years in gold mining. While he was in Johannesburg he volunteered for active service against the Germans, who landed in force in Natal and Cape Colony simultaneously with their invasion of England. The war ended within two months, as the reader is aware, by the capitulation of the defeated army in the Old Country and the practical annihilation of that in the Dominion.

Scanlon greatly distinguished himself during the campaign, and was decorated for personal bravery on the field of battle. A tall, strong, athletic fellow, he was utterly devoid of fear and superior to fatigue. At the conclusion of the war he returned to Sydney, and marrying a handsome girl from his native town, he settled in Balmain and commenced business as a general smith.

With the abolition of individualism Scanlon was drafted into one of the local iron foundries, while his wife was sent to the Botany Hat Works. There was no great hardship in this arrangement at first, as, in the early days of the system, the workers travelled free by tram or train, and Alice Scanlon returned to her home every night. Then the lodging houses were established, and, at the same time, the trams were taken off. For months Scanlon walked to Botany (a distance of seven miles) almost every afternoon, returning to Balmain before the closing hour. (At this time the regulation restricting workers to their own precincts had not been issued.) Then an unfortunate thing happened.

For some time past Alice had been annoyed by Williams, one of the foremen at the factory, but knowing her husband's violent temper, she had not thought it wise to mention the matter to him. One evening, just after Scanlon had bidden his wife good-bye and started on his long and lonely walk, he remembered some small matter about which he had intended asking her opinion. He turned back at once and hurried after her, but, as he came up, he noticed that she had stopped and was speaking

to a man near the lodging-house gate. He drew back in an instant, his Irish blood on fire at the thought that Alice was playing him false. However, he had no reason for jealousy, as he soon discovered.

"Let me pass. How dare you attempt to stop me?" said Alice quietly.

The man laughed. "I like a bit of spirit," he observed, "but what's the hurry? It's a fine night. You don't want to go in for an hour yet."

"Please stand aside, or I shall report your conduct to the superintendent."

"Ho! ho! I like that," he chuckled. "Report me! ho! ho! All right, I'll let you pass if you give me a kiss. Come, that's a fair offer," and he attempted to take her hand.

"Help! Mick!" cried Alice. Not that she expected any assistance from him, but such is the way of a woman.

There was a rush, a blow, and Williams was down. He was a big, burly fellow, but the blacksmith's blow would have felled a bullock. Scanlon was in a furious rage, and would have stamped all semblance of humanity from the fellow's prostrate form, but Alice, fearful of the consequences, threw her arms about him, and at last persuaded him that it would be well for him to slip away lest he should be recognized.

Williams was off duty for a week after the encounter. He suspected that Alice's husband was his assailant, but did not openly denounce the worker. About a month later the foreman was appointed manager of the Newcastle branch fac-

tory, and he arranged with the Botany superintendent that Alice Scanlon should be one of the half dozen women sent to start the new workshop.

The day after the transfer Scanlon walked out to Botany as usual, but was surprised to find that Alice was not at the usual rendezvous. Fearing that she might be ill, he hurried to the lodging-house, but the portress could give him no information as to his wife's whereabouts. She knew only that Alice Scanlon's name had been removed from the books of her establishment that day. No, she could not say why. Perhaps if he called at the Superintendent's office——

Scanlon was gone before she had finished speaking. He found the clerk just leaving the office.

“Where is Alice Scanlon?” he demanded.

The clerk was astounded. A common workman to address him in the street! He would show the fellow his place. Fortunately for himself he glanced again at Scanlon, and the fierce look in the eyes of the Irish-Australian caused him to change his mind.

“Alice Scanlon!” he repeated, civilly enough. “Alice Scanlon! I'll look the matter up in the morning. She has gone to Newcastle, I think. Be here at 9 o'clock in the morning.”

“Look it up at once,” said Scanlon, grimly. “I live at Balmain and can't come here in the morning.”

“You fellows have no conscience,” grumbled the clerk. “I've been working about two hours over-

time already, and you—— Oh! come along then, if you must.”

He led the way into the office, and lifting up the flap of the counter, walked to a desk at the back of the room. He took up a book, and, placing it upon the counter, began to turn over the pages.

“Here, Jane Thomson, Mary Rush, Alice Scanlon. Yes, I was right. I thought so. Six of them were sent to Newcastle yesterday afternoon. Oh! I remember her now. I heard old Dobson laughing about it. He said that Williams was very anxious to have this Scanlon woman.”

“Who is Williams?” asked Scanlon, in a tone that should have warned the clerk.

“Williams! Oh, he used to be one of the foremen here, but he has just gone to Newcastle as manager. I suppose this Agnes Scanlon or whatever her name is, was one of his fancy—— Ouch!”

Scanlon had thrown out one of his great hands, and grasping the clerk by the arm, he dragged him headlong across the counter, scattering books, papers and ink pots in every direction.

“God’s curse on you!” he roared. “Down on your knees, you miserable inkslinger! You dare to speak of Alice Scanlon in that way again, and I’ll break every bone in your miserable carcase.”

“I—I beg your pardon!” stuttered the astonished youth. “I didn’t know. I only repeated what I heard.” Then, as a light broke on him: “Why, you must be the husband?”

“I am,” said Scanlon. “Now, out with it—every word! What did you hear?”

“The—the, that is, I heard Williams telling Dobson that he’d get square with Scanlon in a better and safer way than by reporting him; he’d get his wife—I—— Oh! don’t!”

“Don’t be afraid. I won’t hurt you,” said Scanlon. “You’re not worth hitting.”

The next afternoon Scanlon presented himself at the Newcastle Hat Factory, and demanded his wife. He had walked the whole distance from Botany, but in his state of mind had felt neither hunger nor fatigue.

“Tell Alice Scanlon that I wish to speak to her,” he said hoarsely to the man who came to the door in response to his knock.

“What name?”

“Michael Scanlon.”

The officer went inside, but returned in a moment.

“Mr. Williams says that you won’t see your wife, and if you don’t clear out he’ll——”

With an oath Scanlon thrust the fellow roughly aside, and strode into the workroom.

“Alice! Where are you?” he shouted.

There was a scuffle, a faint shriek, a cry of joy, and Alice was in his arms.

“Oh, Mick! Mick!” she sobbed. “Take me away! Take me away before I am driven mad!”

“Don’t cry, little girl,” said Scanlon tenderly, patting her shoulder gently with his great hand. “I’m not going to leave you. You’re coming away with me.”

“We’ll see about that,” roared Williams, who

had been at the other end of the workroom when Scanlon entered, but now came forward, accompanied by half-a-dozen officials. "Here, Jackson! ring up the police station! You others! throw this fellow out into the street; the police can pick him up."

Scanlon straightened himself as Williams spoke. Then, putting his wife gently aside, he faced the others.

"Alice," he said, "go out into the street and wait for me till I deal with these animals."

His wife turned and walked out without a word. Then the officers rushed at Scanlon.

"Stand back!" he roared in a terrible voice. "Stand back! Dare to lay a hand on me, and, by the God who made me, I'll destroy you!"

As the first official came forward the ex-blacksmith met him with a terrible blow in the face. The force of the impact was so great that the fellow was hurled half way across the room. The second man fared little better. Catching the officer's wrist with his left hand, Scanlon swung him round and struck him a half-arm blow with his right, under the ear, and the man dropped in a heap. Then, waiting no longer for their attack, he charged at the others. A roar of rage, a curse, a blow, and another of his assailants was down.

"Kill him! kill him!" shrieked Williams, who was keeping carefully in the background himself.

The way was now clear, but as Scanlon turned towards the door one of the officials leaped upon his back. Throwing up his arms suddenly, the furious

worker grasped the man round the neck, and bending forward, hurled the unfortunate official like a stone from a catapult. The man's fall was partly broken by a heap of straw, but he lay where he had fallen, an inert, bleeding mass.

Then the end came. Scanlon staggered towards the door, but before he could win clear one of the officials sprang forward and struck him on the back of the head with a piece of timber (left behind by the carpenters), and the brave fellow went down right in the doorway.

When Scanlon regained consciousness it was to find himself in the gaol hospital. He was placed upon his trial on a charge of attempted murder, but, owing to the intervention of a member of the Executive (himself a South African veteran), he escaped with the light sentence of four months' imprisonment.

A few days after Scanlon's sentence Williams renewed his persecution of Alice, with the result that, maddened by a sneering reference to her "gaol-bird husband," she caught up a pair of shears from the work-table, and stabbed her tormentor to the heart.

At the expiration of his term of imprisonment Scanlon was sent back under escort to Balmain, and only then did he learn the fate of his wife. She had been sentenced to life imprisonment in the Long Bay Penitentiary. Nearly distracted, Scanlon made his way to Long Bay, but was informed that he could not see the prisoner without a permit from the Comptroller-General. After repeated applica-

tions he was granted permission to visit her once a month. He saw her twice only, as during the third month an outbreak of typhoid occurred at the prison, and Alice Scanlon was one of the first victims claimed by the epidemic.

From that day Michael Scanlon was a man who lived only for revenge. His wife had been dead for nearly six years now, but time seemed only to increase Scanlon's bitterness against those whom he designated her murderers.

And this was the man whose name chanced to be drawn first, when the Inspector of Police with the flogger and a dozen armed men arrived. A triangle had been erected in the yard of the lodging-house, and the recalcitrant workers were brought out.

"Attention!" said the Inspector. The policemen brought their rifles sharply to their left sides, swung their right hands round in a half-circle, and looked important as they saluted the great man. The flogger stood beside the triangle, drawing his fingers idly through the tails of the "cat."

The Inspector took a paper from one of the men, and fixing his glass carefully on his nose, began:

"Michael Scanlon!"

The ex-blacksmith looked up at hearing his name.

"Michael Scanlon, you have been guilty of insubordination and idleness, and you have been sentenced to twenty-five lashes——"

"Sentenced to what?" said Scanlon, stepping forward.

"To twenty-five lashes," replied the Inspector,

looking over his glasses at the worker. "To be flogged——"

"Flogged! flogged!" roared Scanlon. "By the Almighty God! no man will flog me! Do you think I'm a Kaffir or a dog?"

"Tie him up!" said the Inspector.

A spade was standing beside the wall. One bound, and Scanlon had seized it, and springing forward, he struck the flogger a blow which almost severed his head from his body. An instant later, and the infuriated worker was among the officers, striking right and left, breaking a head or a limb at every blow, and shouting, as he struck, "Devil! devil! devil!"

"Shoot him! Shoot him! d——n you! shoot him!" spluttered the Inspector.

It was easy enough to say "Shoot," but difficult to carry out that order—at first. The officers had been standing together when Scanlon rushed upon them, and for a few minutes they were fully occupied in dodging that whirling spade. Then one of the officers got his rifle free and fired. Scanlon staggered as the bullet struck him in the breast, but recovered himself, and springing forward, he brought the spade down upon the Inspector's head, smashing that estimable gentleman's skull like an eggshell. At that moment another bullet struck him, and swinging round, he threw the spade, with one last, superhuman effort, at the nearest officer, and fell dead across the body of the Inspector.

While this tragedy was being enacted the other workers stood trembling, white with excitement and

terror. All but one, Harry Fisher, an Englishman, who had come to Australia just before the great change.

“By heaven! Scanlon was a man!” he shouted, “and he died like a man.”

He picked up the rifle which had fallen from the hands of one of Scanlon's victims, and before the others realized his intention, he swung it round his head and brained the nearest officer. Then, he, too, was shot down.

The flogging was postponed, and eventually abandoned, the rest of the workers begging for mercy and promising amendment.

CHAPTER III.

SLAVERY.

ON the fifteenth day of June, 1950, a worker, employed in the local branch of the State Bakery, was walking down the main street of Balmain towards his lodging-house. He had completed his daily task and was at liberty to spend the hours between 5 and 9 p.m. as he pleased, provided that he did not attempt to leave his own precinct, and that he registered at the latter hour. Hundreds of other workers were slouching along the street, or standing in groups at every corner.

There was room enough and to spare. The trams, which in the old days had rushed noisily through the streets of the suburb, had long years ago been taken off as entailing unnecessary expense on the State. The workers had no desire to travel, and would not have been allowed to do so if they had wished. And, besides, they could see nothing in any other suburb that they did not have here, unless they penetrated into the districts where their masters the officials resided, and this was out of the question. Every industrial district had the same State factories, State Stores and State Lodging Houses and Children's Homes. There was no

longer any need for shops, as the State provided everything that was considered necessary—food, clothing, lodging. There was no hotel in the workers' district. The use of tobacco had been prohibited, or, to be more correct, no tobacco was supplied to the workers. The drapery and millinery establishments which had delighted the feminine heart in an earlier age had disappeared. The State barber cut the hair and trimmed the beard of the worker once a month.

As Jack Bruce walked along the street with a brisk step and upright carriage he presented a marked contrast to the men whom he passed. The most remarkable thing about them was that they all appeared to be members of one family. Dressed exactly alike, in shapeless trousers, Norfolk jackets, and cloth caps, it was almost as difficult to distinguish one man from another as to identify a Chinese coolie. They seemed healthy enough, but healthy, strong animals of a lower order rather than men.

Yet they *were* men, men who, under the system which boasted that it would raise all to the rank of demi-gods, had become nothing more noble than slaves. The dream of the socialists had been of a people free—free because no man would be of higher social rank than his fellows, a people having under their own control all the means of existence, and supervised by paternal officials, appointed for a specific purpose and removable by the popular vote when they failed to carry out their duties.

The trouble had come about simply enough. The book politicians naturally expected that the most

intelligent, industrious and capable men would be appointed to direct the labors of others. But they found that, although they had changed the form of government, human nature remained the same. The positions of authority were given, in almost every case, to the wire-pullers of the party, and these men determined to hold those positions by the simple plan of depriving the mass of the people of all power.

Under the old despised capitalistic system the worker, if he were harshly treated by his employer, had the option of leaving the factory or workshop and offering his services to another. But with the impersonal State as sole employer the worker no longer had that option. He must remain where the State put him.

When the officials developed in due course into tyrants an outcry was raised by the workers, and mass meetings were convened for the purpose of deposing those who had betrayed their trust. The meetings were dispersed by the State militia, and workers were warned that any act of a similar nature would, in future, be regarded as treason. Nothing daunted, the workers assembled in thousands in the Domain on the following Sunday afternoon, but the meeting had hardly been opened when there was a cry that the troops were coming. Of the massacre which followed, the survivors spoke only in whispers for months to come. One lesson was enough, and although fifteen years had passed since "Black Sunday," there had been no further mass meeting.

With no longer a free press to give utterance to their sentiments and voice their grievances, their trades unions and friendly societies suppressed, without means, arms or organization, the franchise abolished, they were as helpless as a flock of sheep. A generation ago they had given up State Rights at the bidding of unscrupulous leaders, and now they had lost the right to call themselves men.

Every day the power of the official class increased, while the workers became even more incapable of resisting the tyranny of their masters.

Jack Bruce's reading had made him familiar with ancient history, especially the history of fights for freedom. His favorite hero was Wallace, whose exploits he often dreamt of emulating. Jack was a man of such education as was possible under a system where everyone of the industrial class was drafted into the army of workers at an early age. In Bruce's case the age had been sixteen, but now children of twelve were sent out from the State Homes. Every year the production per worker fell below that of the year just closed, owing to inefficiency, waste, and the absence of any incentive to exertion. In addition, there was another reason for reducing the age of recruits. Many of the elder girls in the State Homes had been corrupted by the officials, and cases of abuse were becoming alarmingly frequent. Further, owing to the laxity of the medical officers, the mortality in these establishments was appalling.

Jack Bruce spent most of his leisure in the lodging-house library, poring over the pages, chiefly

history. Of recent history there was, of course, no record. The "State Daily News" had long since become merely a record of official acts and regulations.

As Bruce approached a cross street a number of women came into the main road, from one of the clothing factories, and among them he recognized a girl whom he had first noticed about a month before. She was strikingly beautiful—so beautiful that even the dress of coarse, grey wincey, made in what was formerly known as the "princess robe" style, and the hideous, round straw hat could not entirely hide her beauty.

Jack paused to let the women pass, and incidentally to have another look at the girl, who, in some strange way, had occupied such a large share of his thoughts for the past month. Suddenly a workman lurched forward, and with a grin the fellow caught the girl by the arm and made an attempt to kiss her.

With a sharp cry the girl snatched her arm away, and raising her hand, she struck him a stinging blow on his pasty face.

Uttering a snarl of rage the fellow clenched his fist and struck her on the temple. She would have fallen but for a middle-aged woman who caught her in her arms.

Jack hesitated not a moment. He thrust the other men and women roughly aside, and, springing forward, struck the girl's assailant a smashing blow in the face, knocking him over like a ninepin.

"Get up!" he panted, as he stood over the pros-

trate man. "Get up, you miserable cur! You would strike a defenceless woman, would you?"

But the fellow had had quite enough, and lay there with the blood streaming from his damaged face. Two or three of the man's companions moved forward as if to take his part, but Bruce turned upon them like a wounded lion, and they shuffled hastily out of his reach. Then he turned to the girl, who was still being supported by the workwoman. Her face was deathly pale, save for a crimson mark where the brute's blow had fallen.

"Pardon me!" began Bruce, raising his cap courteously, "I trust that you are not seriously hurt. I cannot forgive myself for allowing such an outrage."

She smiled, such a poor little wan smile, as she replied:

"No, no; I feel better already. I shall be quite well in a few minutes."

"Let me take your arm," said Jack. "Thank you," he added, turning to the woman. "Where do you lodge? Number four! We'll have you there in a few minutes. Lean on me. Oh! the brute!"

She protested, rather feebly it is true, that she could walk quite well alone, but made no attempt to disengage her arm, and, but for his anxiety, Jack Bruce would have been in the seventh heaven of delight. He proceeded to introduce himself.

"My name is Bruce—Jack Bruce. I am employed at number two bakery, Henson Street. I have been there nine years."

"I am Mary Heath," she said, and the introduction was complete. Then she went on:

"I work in the Denfrew Street clothing factory. I have been in Balmain for only about a month, but was in one of the North Sydney factories for four years before I came here."

"Yes—yes, that is, I knew you had been here for only a short time," said Jack, in some confusion.

The girl looked at him in surprise.

"How can you know that?" she asked. "I have never seen you—I mean I have never met you before to-day."

Jack's heart almost stopped beating. The girl's words conveyed the impression that she had seen him—had noticed him before—before this eventful and blessed day. Bruce was rather a modest young fellow, despite the fact that many of the Balmain work-girls had shown themselves only too ready to lay their hearts at the feet of the handsome, fair-haired young Hercules. But *she* was different. He was too generous, however, to allow her to see that he had noticed the slip, and merely said:

"Oh, I have a good memory for faces, and I am sure that I should have remembered yours."

They walked along in silence for a little. Then she burst out:

"Oh, I do hope and trust that I am not going to be ill. It is so dreadful to be sick in those wretched lodging-houses. In the old days, when members of a family lived together, it must have been rather pleasant to be an invalid. Just imagine a mother or sister fussing over one! Wouldn't it be lovely?"

“Do you think so?” asked Jack eagerly. “I am so glad that you take an interest in the old days. I cannot understand how our fathers could have been so foolish as to give up that beautiful family life.”

“Neither can I,” she said, sadly. “Perhaps they were too happy in those days. We are told that no perfect happiness is permitted on this earth, otherwise people would wish to remain here always. However, there does not appear to be any danger of the present generation becoming too much attached to life.”

“No, indeed,” observed Jack, “although I can imagine a case in which a man *might* feel satisfied with the sordid life we lead to-day.”

Mary Heath did not press him to state his imaginary “case.” Perhaps she thought the topic a delicate one to discuss with her present companion.

“You appear to take a great interest in the old days,” she remarked.

“Interest! I live in the past. I spend nearly all my time, my leisure, in the library, reading: reading of those bygone, happy days, now gone for ever. No,” he went on fiercely, “not for ever. There must surely be some manhood in the country still. Oh! for another Wallace to attack the tyrant bureaucracy, which is strangling the land; for another Tell, another Kossuth, another Washington to point the way to freedom! I beg your pardon,” he added hastily, “I forgot myself for the moment.”

Mary had felt the young workman’s whole frame

quiver as he uttered those glorious names of the past.

“Go on; I love to hear anyone speak of the brave deeds of those old heroes,” she said softly. Then she went on, inconsequentially: “Do you know what I regard as the cruellest part of it all, apart, of course, from the loss of home life? It is this hideous uniform which the women are compelled to wear. Ah! you are smiling. You think me foolish and frivolous, I have no doubt, but, to a woman, the question of dress is one of the things which really matter in life. How can a woman retain her self-respect when she is forced to wear such a garment as this? After a visit to the library, where I spend hours and hours, reading accounts of the social events of fifty years ago, and, looking at the illustrations, I invariably cry myself to sleep. I feel that I could just die happy if I were allowed, only once, to wear one of those lovely gowns.”

Jack smiled indulgently at the girl's enthusiasm. He glanced at the flushed, handsome face a moment, and then remarked:

“I cannot see that *you* have much reason to complain. The dress, in itself, may not be—er beautiful, but then the appearance of clothes depends a good deal upon the wearer, don't you think? Oh! you know what I mean, I—— many girls require some aid from art, but you—but you——”

He stopped in confusion.

Mary Heath laughed—a frank, hearty, unaffected laugh.

“Well, I suppose it serves me right,” she cried,

“for introducing such a topic as dress to a man, especially when he happens to be a student of ancient history. But here we are at my door. Thank you so much, Mr. Bruce, for your kindness, and now I must say good-bye!”

“Good-bye! good-bye!” he said, taking the hand she held out. “But, I say, you’ll let me see you again, won’t you? Look! I’ll call on the portress here to-night at half-past eight, to enquire how you are, after the—the accident. You won’t mind, will you?”

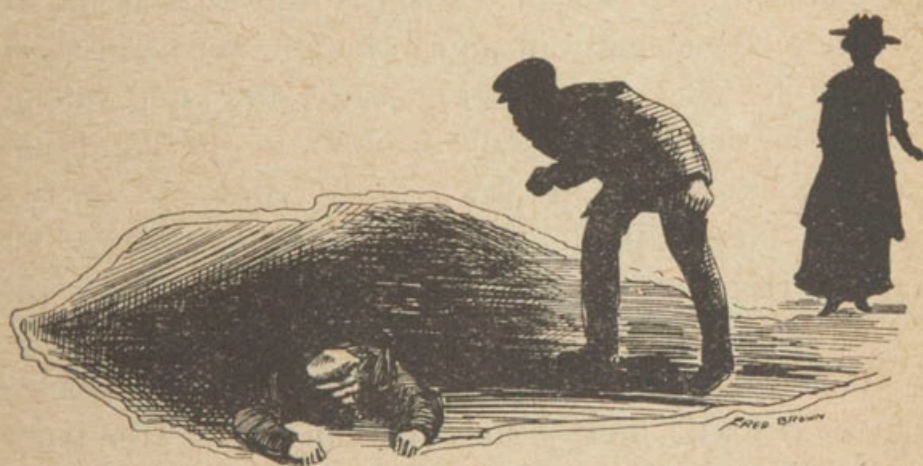
“Thank you! I shall ask one of the girls to let the portress know how I am before I retire. I feel almost well again, though, and I am sure that I shall be able to go to work in the morning as usual.”

“I’ll wait for you in the morning,” he broke in eagerly. “Please don’t say that I mustn’t. That brute may be about—may attempt to annoy you again. By Jove! if he does—— Oh! are you going? Good-bye!”

He raised his cap, and then walked down the road towards his own lodging-house—walked on air. He had forgotten the glorious days of the past, and the dead heroes. There had never been a day like to-day. And to-morrow would be still better, for he would see Mary again. He repeated the name—“Mary.” Mary was a beautiful name. And what a lovely girl she was! But, perhaps, she had a lover! Of course a girl like that—— What a fool he had been. Why hadn’t he found out? He stopped, and looked round. Too late now, she had disappeared. He would ask her in the morning. He clenched his

fist at the thought of one of those soulless, degraded creatures becoming the mate of such a girl. It would be sacrilege!

From which it may be gathered that, after the manner of men, Jack Bruce had fallen in love.



CHAPTER IV.

LOVE.

“Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?”—*Marlowe.*

THE next morning Jack Bruce was waiting at the gate of the women's lodging-house long before the hour at which the employees were accustomed to go to work. Presently the girls began to come out, generally in pairs, though, here and there could be seen one walking with slow step, alone. Most of the girls looked curiously at the handsome young workman; a few smiled, and one or two spoke, but he paid no attention beyond lifting his cap. His patience was at length rewarded by the appearance of Mary Heath.

She was still rather pale, but looked (in Jack's eyes, at least) more beautiful than ever. Her ivory complexion, clear-cut features, dark-fringed grey eyes, and soft, brown, wavy hair seemed to him to be the embodiment of all that was essential to womanly beauty. He had previously remarked her fine figure and springing step, and although just now she moved with less than her accustomed lightness of foot, it appeared to Bruce that the slightly languid air added a new charm to her personality.

She flushed with evident pleasure at the sight of

Bruce, and as he took her hand—large, but shapely and white—in his, he felt that of all the women in the world, surely Mary Heath was the most desirable.

“Good morning, Mr. Bruce,” she said in her low, sweet tones.

Jack at once was reminded of Shakespeare’s words:—

“Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman,”

for Mary possessed that “excellent thing.”

“How are you this morning?” he asked, anxiously.

“Quite well again, thank you!”

“I was very much upset all night,” he said. “I couldn’t sleep for thinking about that cowardly brute. I didn’t give him half what he deserved.”

“Poor man! He would hardly agree with you there,” she remarked with a smile.

“Poor man!” echoed Jack. “Why, if I had broken every bone in his body it wouldn’t have been sufficient punishment for his crime.”

“And yet, in those old days, which appear so good to you, men often ill-treated women. I have read that, in some parts of Europe—in England even—men frequently beat women unmercifully,” said Mary slyly.

Bruce was rather nonplussed by this flank attack, and walked along for a moment without speaking. Then he burst out:

“But you forget that the men you mention only

ill-treated their wives, and, besides, in some mysterious fashion, it was regarded as an evidence of affection. Rather a crude way of expressing affection, I must admit, but then, you see, they were the most ignorant and degraded men who behaved in this manner. Among the Tartars, for instance, a woman would complain: 'My husband never beats me now; he no longer loves me.' But that doesn't apply in the present case—to the fellow who struck you, I mean."

"It certainly seems a peculiar way of showing affection," observed Mary, ignoring his reference to her late assailant.

"Affection! They didn't know the meaning of the word. They had no more conception of love—of real love—than the beasts of the field. Why, I would cut off my right hand this instant if I dreamt that it would ever be raised in anger against the woman I love."

"The woman you love!" she cried involuntarily. Then, to hide her confusion: "Oh! your wife?"

Jack pulled up as if he had been shot.

"My wife! my wife! Well, I never. Why, I have no wife."

"Oh!" observed Mary in an indifferent tone, as if the subject had no interest for her.

"I haven't a wife—not yet," he went on, "and I never desired to have a wife till I met you." Then, taking her hand, he said earnestly:

"Mary, listen to me for one moment. I love you—love you with my whole heart. I have felt, from the first day I saw you, that you were the only

woman in the world for me. Don't take your hand away. What do we care for these slaves around us? I myself am a child of the system, but, so far, I trust that I have retained the right to call myself a man."

"I am sure of that," she said softly.

"Thank you!" he exclaimed. "Now, don't think me hasty, but I—can you love me, Mary?"

"Oh, Mr. Bruce, but you know nothing about me. I may be a most objectionable person. Until you came so bravely to my rescue yesterday afternoon you had never even spoken to me."

At that moment the town clock began to strike.

"I must go," cried Mary.

"One moment," pleaded Jack. "Tell me that you are not angry with me."

"Why should I be angry?" she asked gently. "Angry when a man whom I esteem tells me that he—that he loves me! No, indeed! I am proud—and glad."

"Then you do love me!" cried Jack in rapture. "Oh, Mary, tell me that you love me, that you love me, oh! my darling!"

She raised her face, pale no longer, but blushing like a rose, her fine eyes suffused with tears, and whispered: "I do, Jack, I do; you know I love you," and turning from him, she ran up the steps to the factory.

Jack Bruce went through his task that day like a man in a dream. He made no serious mistake in his work, as his hands performed this mechanically, but his thoughts were with the sweet girl who had

confessed her love for him that morning. Would the day never end? Surely it must be nearly five o'clock. He walked to the door and looked up at the town clock, which was visible from the bakehouse. Half past three! And his daily task was finished! Another hour and a half to wait before he could leave—before he would see Mary! see Mary! He repeated her name softly. Wasn't it a wonderful thing that such a girl should love him? Would five o'clock never come? It came at last, as most things do to those who wait (or to those who don't, for the matter of that), and hastily throwing off his linen overall, he hurried from the workroom.

The clothing workers came into the main street as he reached the corner—hundreds of them. Nearly last came Mary Heath. She was speaking to a delicate looking, fair-haired woman, who appeared to be in trouble.

Mary nodded brightly when she saw Jack. Then, turning to her companion, she said:

“Let me introduce Mr. Bruce, Mrs. Freeman.”

Jack bowed.

“Mrs. Freeman's little girl is in the Home, and has been ill,” said Mary.

“Poor little child!” exclaimed Bruce. “I always feel sorry when I hear of any of the little ones being sick. It doesn't matter so much about men.”

“I must go and see my poor child,” cried Mrs. Freeman. Good-bye, Mary, good afternoon, Mr. Bruce,” and she was gone.

“Poor woman,” sighed Mary.

“Yes, indeed,” agreed Jack. “She is to be pitied.

It must be hard enough for a mother to part with her child when it is in good health, but imagine a poor, suffering infant left to those nurses! Ugh! I know what that means. But come along, Mary, and let us go for a walk and forget unpleasant things for a time."

"Were you born here—in Sydney, I mean?" asked Mary presently, as they turned into the park.

"Yes. My birth certificate, which was with me when I was sent to the State Nursery at Kiama shows that I was born at Randwick in 1925—son of Edward Bruce, journalist, and Ellen McIntosh, his wife."

"Are your parents still living?"

"I am not sure about my father, but I find that my mother died in '26—the year in which I entered the Home. My father may be dead as well. He is not at the Home for Aged Workers at Callan Park. I have made enquiries several times. But then he would only reach the statutory retiring age this year, as he was thirty-five years old when I was born. I am a child of the System, you see, born in the year in which it came into force."

Mary looked thoughtful.

"Edward Bruce," she exclaimed. "Now, that is very strange. I am reading a book at present by an author of that name. How strange if it should have been written by your father. 'Liberty' is the title of it; have you read it?"

"No; I have never even seen it. Is it a local publication?"

Mary looked puzzled for a moment. "Oh! pub-

lished in Sydney! I don't know. I picked it up one day last week, attracted by the title, but it seemed very dry, and I was just putting it back on the shelf when I noticed the author's name and decided to read it."

"Um!" remarked Jack. "But why did the author's name induce you to change your mind? There isn't anything uncommon about the name of Bruce."

"Oh, isn't there? You don't know everything, even though you have studied ancient history."

"But, I say, you are hinting that you knew my name before we met—before yesterday," said Jack, in a puzzled tone.

"Yes, I knew that your name was Jack Bruce the day after I arrived in Balmain," she answered calmly.

"But how?"

"Well, if you must know, because Mrs. Stokes, or rather her husband, told me."

Jack laughed.

"So you know the Stokes's, do you? George is a grand fellow, isn't he?"

"That is just what he said about you," she replied, without answering his question. "He was so enthusiastic that I could not do less than ask him to point out the paragon to me."

"I am afraid that I am very far from that," he laughed. "But I don't know," he added, more seriously, "I am beginning to get quite an exalted opinion of myself since this morning."

Mary smiled happily, and pressed his hand. They

talked of purely personal matters for the next half hour, and who shall blame them? They were young—and in love.

“Oh, by the way,” said Jack, “we have a new man in our establishment. Of course, that is nothing unusual, but the man is. It seems that he came from England only a few months ago to take up a position as inspector in one of the departments. I was speaking to him for a few minutes to-day. He was speaking about the great world—that world about which we never hear. Most of the poor creatures don’t want to hear anything about it, I am afraid. You know what Lytton says:—‘There is no place, however stagnant, which is not the great world to the people who move about in it.’”

“How true that is,” she exclaimed.

“Yes, did you ever notice, when you read or hear something, that it has a familiar sound, just as if you had known it all along?”

“Yes, very often indeed,” she cried eagerly.

“I knew that you must have noticed it,” he went on. Then he murmured in a low tone:—

“The voice of genius speaks; the words ring true,
And, with the sound, there strangely comes to you
A sense of something known, familiar, old;
The words of wisdom are your own thoughts told.”

“Who is the author of those lines?” she asked.

“They are new to me.”

He laughed shortly.

“Oh! those? The words are mine, but the thought was suggested by one of the writers of last century—Oliver Wendell Holmes.”

“Your own verses! Oh! how nice,” exclaimed Mary. “I think it must be just lovely to be a poet.”

“A poet!” He looked at her in alarm. “Oh! I am not a poet, and am never likely to become one. Even if a man were a second Milton he would die ‘mute and inglorious’ in this God-forsaken country. But I am not just. I retract my condemnation of the land which holds Mary Heath.”

“Ah, that was very nicely put, Jack,” said Mary.

Some hypercritical persons may be disposed to blame Mary Heath, inasmuch as she was wanting in that coyness which was formerly regarded as one of the chief attractions of the sex. But it must be remembered that, although Socialism had brought about much that was evil, it had, at least, placed the sexes upon an equal footing. There was no longer any reason, other than mutual affection, why a man and a woman should choose one another. Mary Heath knew that when Jack Bruce gave expression to his love for her it was not a simulated affection which was offered her. Then it must not be forgotten that they had met under unusual circumstances, and this appealed to her woman’s imagination.

In any land—in any society—Jack Bruce would have been a man to attract attention. Here, compared with the brutal, slouching creatures produced by the System, he appeared a very god. The large, intelligent and sparkling eye, the swelling nostrils, the firm, determined mouth and chin, and the athletic figure, reminded Mary of the description of

the heroes who fought round Ilium. And, above all, he loved her! A woman may be temporarily attracted by physical beauty in a man, but, after all, it is the one who loves her who wins her heart.

“It is almost wrong for us to be so happy in the midst of so much misery,” remarked Jack presently.

“Yes, I suppose so,” replied Mary, slowly. “Still, you know, the first duty of any person is to himself—or herself. The Scriptures ask only that a man should love his neighbour as himself. He isn’t expected to love him any better.”

“Then I’m glad that you are not my neighbour, Mary,” he whispered, “for I love you ten thousand times better than myself.”

Jack’s words were, doubtless, very silly and extravagant, though Mary would have resented such a view. She smiled and murmured: “Don’t be absurd, Jack.”

“Absurd!” he repeated. “You little know the depth of my feeling for you or you would not use such a word. Listen, Mary, I’ll tell you what I’ll do for your sake. If it be humanly possible to do so I shall free this land from the tyranny under which it is now groaning.

“I have often thought,” he resumed, “the people cannot really be such dumb, driven cattle as they appear. I have rehearsed speeches, to be delivered some day, fiery, biting words—exhortation—scorn—anything to rouse the souls which must be lying dormant in them. Is it possible that any man of British blood, speaking the tongue that has carried

the message of freedom over the whole earth, that any such man can look back on the noble struggle of a thousand years for liberty, and not feel that blood boil in his veins at the thought that he is to-day a slave?"

"It does seem incredible," agreed Mary.

"Incredible!" he exclaimed. "Surely people whose ancestors won the Great Charter from one tyrant will not be content to bow the knee to another! Gray, the ex-inspector, about whom I was telling you, assures me that no one in England would believe him if he told them that Australians had degenerated so. By one stroke of the pen we have lost all the privileges—it would almost appear all the virtues—that the blood and tears of generations won for us."

Mary's eyes were overflowing as she looked up.

"Oh, Jack!" she said softly.

"Why, what is the matter?" he asked anxiously. "You are crying."

"You foolish boy!" cried Mary, smiling through her tears, "do you think that a woman never cries unless she happens to be in trouble? Your reading should have taught you, if experience hasn't done so, that a woman's tears mean everything—and nothing. A woman may cry with joy, or pride, or emotion, or just for the love of crying. I was crying, partly because of what we have lost, but chiefly because of what we are to regain—through you."

Jack thanked her by a pressure of the hand.

"I have felt lately," he said, "that I could bear the present intolerable condition of affairs no longer,

and I had almost made up my mind to attempt single-handed to break down the System before I became like the rest of the poor creatures around us. But that was before I met you. Now I must be careful."

"Yes, oh! yes, do be careful, Jack," cried Mary, anxiously, all thought of the great deeds to be done vanishing in a moment at the prospect of danger to her lover.

Is there a woman in the world who is truly great who would not deem the "world well lost," provided that the loved one escaped the cataclysm? History records many instances where heroic women sacrificed their children for the sake of country or faith, but there is no authenticated case of a woman giving up the man she loved in order to save a nation from destruction. She would go to death herself, with a smile on her lips, in such a cause; but that is quite a different matter. Mary Heath was a good woman, but above all she was a loving woman.

"Promise me, Jack," she said earnestly, "that you will not take any risks in your attempt."

"I don't know that I can promise that, exactly," he replied. "I am afraid that I must take my share. You wouldn't like me to act the coward, would you?"

"I don't know; I don't want you to be hurt in any way."

Jack smiled. After all, it was very pleasant to know that his life was precious to someone, and that one Mary Heath.

“Now, Mary, you must not be foolish,” he observed. “I promise that I will not rush into danger, but still, if there is danger to be faced (and I do not see how we are to accomplish anything without taking risks), I must not ask others to do what I dare not do myself. But I have a feeling that we shall be successful, and you know that “he can conquer who believes he can.”

“I wish I could do something to help you,” she said, “but, unless it is by stirring up a revolt amongst the women on the subject of dress, I hardly think I could be of much use. If I were to tell them that you are in favor of allowing them to wear frills and ribbons and laces, and nice shoes and pretty hats, and—oh! everything they liked, you would be sure of the prayers and good wishes of all the women, at any rate.”

Jack laughed.

“Well, perhaps they are right, after all,” he remarked. “Many men in the old days appear to have spent their whole lives in efforts to obtain a star or a ribbon. They used to speak of the ‘splendid spur’ of ambition, though, in many cases, their reward was very little more than your women desire.”

“Still, it must have been very nice to be present at some great Court function,” urged Mary. “Just imagine a coronation now, with all the most distinguished men and beautiful women of the nation taking part! The bright uniforms, and the lovely dresses and jewels!”

“It would be very pretty, I have no doubt,” he

replied, "though I must confess that ceremony does not appeal to me. For centuries the great mass of the people believed that the monarch held his Crown by divine right. Indeed, that fiction is still retained, I believe, in certain documents. Then the absolute power of the monarch was taken away, and we had the 'king, with the advice of his Ministers.' After that, in our own case at least, came the apotheosis of the State; next, by the grace of God, we shall have the rule of the people."



CHAPTER V.

RONALD GRAY.

“THE history of persecution,” said Emerson, “is a history of endeavours to cheat Nature; to make water run up hill; to twist a rope of sand.”

Most laws, all good laws, at any rate, have been enacted in order to legalise customs which had previously grown up as a matter of convenience.

With the triumph of Socialism had come the belief that nothing could be done for the betterment of the condition of the people unless by order of the State.

Those who called themselves scientific Socialists had claimed that, with the State controlling all industry, everyone's value as a member of the community could be ascertained by officials or boards. But every man naturally claimed that his work was equal in value to that of every other person, inasmuch as it was essential to the continuance of the State.

There was “no higgling of the market” to determine the prices of commodities; consequently there were no means of appraising the value of the labor which produced those commodities.

The System had been fitted upon the people like

a suit of clothes, and naturally there were many misfits. A boy might possess all the qualities which go to make the successful engineer or architect, but, if there happened to be a vacancy in a boot or clothing factory, that boy became a bootmaker or a tailor.

There were no means by which the workers could change this undesirable state of things, and no possibility of organizing successful resistance to any official act of tyranny.

The children of officials, instead of being drafted into the industrial army, became other officials, new offices being created for them. Officialdom had become a hereditary caste.

The life and liberty of every man and the honor of every woman of the working class were at the mercy of the officials. If a girl among the workers attracted the notice of an evil-minded official she was lost, unless a miracle took place, and miracles were of very rare occurrence.

A worker's wife or sister or sweetheart would disappear, and he would see her no more. If he desired he could lodge a complaint at the office of the district superintendent. If he were very respectful he got—nothing. The State had something more important to do than attending to the morals of its servants. If the worker were persistent he got a flogging, and if he objected to that, a bullet stopped his clamour.

One of the members of the Executive was Robert Gray, at this time about sixty-five years of age. In his youth this man had been a strenuous apostle of

Socialism. He was a man of great natural ability, an eloquent speaker, and quite unscrupulous. He had been deputy-leader of the Opposition in the last Federal Parliament, and had no hesitation in seizing a position of authority under the new regime. He selected the Education Department, and had held office now for some twenty-five years.

Gray's two sons were now filling important offices in the Service, while his daughter had recently married the elder son of Denfrew, the Head of the Socialistic Government, commonly called the "Boss."

Robert Gray had frequently visited England, and upon his return from his latest trip he was accompanied by his nephew, Ronald Gray, a young man of twenty-six.

Ronald was the only son of a London merchant, but showing no inclination for business, he had entered the Army. However, the disappearance of Germany from the arena brought about a big reduction in the Home forces, and Ronald found himself retired with the rank of captain. He was just on the point of starting for Brazil when his uncle arrived in London, but the elder man painted such a beautiful picture of the "earthly paradise" in Australia that Ronald readily fell in with his uncle's suggestion that he should go back with him to Sydney.

Ronald was bitterly disappointed when he realized the true state of affairs in the "earthly paradise."

It is true that he found the officials living in such

luxury as only the very wealthiest of Englishmen could approach.

He was charmed with the beauty of the Harbour and the picturesque appearance of the hundreds of handsome houses which fringed its shores.

He acknowledged the loveliness of the ladies and the excellent taste displayed by them in the matter of dress and adornment.

The handsome electric cars and elegant aeroplanes driven by the higher officials were, he admitted, equal to anything to be seen in Europe.

But, to his astonishment, he found that the official class had monopolized all the beauty and luxury and comfort. The gates of the "earthly paradise" were shut against those who produced all these good things.

In his straightforward way Ronald mentioned this to his uncle, but found that gentleman amazed beyond measure at the statement that the people were unhappy.

"Unhappy!" exclaimed Mr. Gray. "What on earth do you mean? We are the happiest people in the world, and so we should be. We have no cliques as you have in the Old Country. Here we are all equal. There is abundance of wealth. Our hours of labor are short. We have the most beautiful city in the wide world. Where have you seen gardens to compare with ours? You have been to our Race-course. Did you ever see anything finer at Epsom or Longchamps or Chantilly? And the women! Own up now; you never saw so many beautiful women together as there were at the State ball last

night! What about Miss Denfrew, for instance? Ah! ha! you sly young beggar! I had my eye on you."

"But, uncle," said Ronald, "you misunderstand me. I was not speaking of the—well, of the upper classes. They are all that you say, and I am willing to admit all that you claim for the city and its surroundings, but I was thinking of the people—the masses."

"Bah! Those cattle!" grunted his uncle. "They are happy enough. All that they care about is to avoid work and get as much to eat as possible. Don't you worry about them. I'm sure I don't."

It was Robert Gray's boast that he never told a lie in his life. He was not breaking his rule on this occasion. He didn't worry about the workers.

To say that Ronald was horrified would be to put it mildly. He had never dreamt of any distinction or class as being possible under Socialism. Carried away by his reading of the works of visionaries, he had looked forward to finding an ideal State—a Sparta without the helots, and lo, here were the helots or worse. He returned to the attack.

"But they know nothing at Home of the true state of things here," he began.

His uncle interrupted him with a short laugh.

"No, and they are not likely to either. The fellows who come here—(there are not many of them now-a-days; we rather discourage them, as a matter of fact)—well, they see just what we want them to see, and nothing else. Of course, you have gone about, but then, you are one of us. They report

that all the people are happy, which is quite true. As I said before, those creatures you are thinking about are not men and women in the true sense. They are cattle—just cattle, and nothing more.”

“Cattle! yes; but what brought them to that condition?” asked Ronald, sadly.

“Nothing but their own folly, I can assure you,” replied the elder man. “At first every man was perfectly satisfied. Even if he found himself worse off than formerly he could console himself with the reflection that some one he knew had been pulled down from a still more exalted position. And, even now, I venture to say that they are not entirely unhappy. If one of them is without any luxuries he knows that all the others are in the same plight, and he derives a great amount of satisfaction from that knowledge.”

Ronald was by no means convinced by his uncle’s arguments.

He said: “Then you or any other of the officials might have been in the position of one of these poor creatures but for a turn of fortune’s wheel?”

Mr. Gray sniffed scornfully.

“Fortune’s wheel,” he remarked, “is the favourite illustration of the man who is too timid to take hold of the spokes and turn the wheel for himself. I don’t deny that I have grasped opportunities, when they presented themselves, while others—better men perhaps; weaker ones, at any rate—allowed their chances to pass. At one time I was just as much in earnest about equality and—and that kind of thing as you are at present, but I found that,

whereas I had taken the trouble to study these matters for myself, the great mass of the people hadn't brains enough to recognize that two and two make four. The fools actually believe that an Act of Parliament could change human nature; that they could lift themselves into Heaven by the hair of their heads. Ugh! I'm sick of them. Leave them alone. You wouldn't be thanked, anyhow, for rousing them from their slumbers."

"There is no caste in blood,
Which runneth of one hue; nor caste in tears,
Which trickle salt with all,"

quoted Ronald, softly.

Mr. Gray moved uneasily in his chair.

"Look here, Ronald," he said, "don't you go filling your head with nonsense like that. Arnold was a very fine writer, but he didn't understand our conditions. 'Man is of the earth, though his thoughts may be of the stars.' So far you have seen very little of the working of the System. In your inexperience you think that you could devise something better. I know that you could not. I am older than you. When I was young I determined to save the world. My father (in his youth) thought that he would do the same thing. Yet the world is still unsaved. Make the best of the bad old world."

"But, uncle——"

"Half a minute, and I have finished. Young Mason, who was one of my inspectors, was killed a few days ago by a fall from his 'plane. The duties are merely formal, while the pay and allowances are liberal. I offer you the vacant position. Let me

know your decision to-morrow, and, I say, you might consult Miss Denfrew on the subject. She is a sensible girl as well as a beautiful one, and can advise you. I must ask you to excuse me now, as I promised to go for a run with Watson in his new 'plane.'"

Ronald called at Denfrew's Darling Point residence the same evening. As he was ushered into the drawing room by the fawning Cingalese he thought he had never seen a more splendidly appointed establishment, even among the mansions of Park Lane.

He greeted Mrs. Denfrew and her daughters, and was duly introduced to the other visitors—Lamond, Sterton, Kirk, three young men of the official type, looking almost like brothers in blood as well as in service; Miss Parker, a fair-haired, white-eyed, rabbit sort of a young lady, and Miss Burke, a handsome brunette. Then he gravitated towards Miss Denfrew, who made room for him on a settee, to the evident displeasure of young Lamond. Kathleen was a tall, strikingly handsome girl of twenty, with beautiful, nut-brown wavy hair, hazel eyes, a perfectly formed oval face, and a mouth like Cupid's bow. But the principal charm of her face lay in its expression. Meeting her for the first time, one mentally exclaimed: "What a beautiful face!" then, a moment later: "What a good one!"

"Would you like to hear Pachini?" asked Mrs. Denfrew. "He is singing at the Opera House to-night. We can switch on if you wish."

"Pachini doesn't come on for half an hour yet, mother," said Kathleen, "and besides, we must hear Mr. Gray first. You will sing, won't you?" she asked, turning to Ronald.

"If you wish," he said. "What shall it be? I haven't any music with me."

"Oh, one of the old songs, please," she answered "I don't care for any of the new music."

"Very well. What is this? 'Love's Old, Sweet Song!' How did you know that I sang that?" for she was already placing the music on the piano.

"Claude, my brother, was at the Yacht Club concert a few nights ago and heard you," she replied.

Ronald's voice was magnificent, and, in addition, it had been trained by one of the best masters in Europe. The old German had almost wept when his pupil announced his intention of entering the Army instead of the "Profession," the only profession in his opinion. "Gott!" he had cried, "you haf der gift. Not vunce in der hundtredt years does Nature gif mit bot' handts, andt you t'row away her gifts. Any potty do vor shooten mit der mauser, but you—äch!"

At the conclusion of his song Ronald bowed his acknowledgement of the somewhat fulsome thanks of the official young men. Kathleen simply said: "Thank you!"

"You promised to show me the view from the balcony," he reminded her.

"Come then," she said, and they went out.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Ronald, pointing to

the harbour, whose surface, rippled by a gentle breeze, reflected the light of the moon—almost full.

Kathleen gazed in silence a moment. Then, turning to him, she exclaimed in a passionate tone: “Beautiful! yes; but do you know, Mr. Gray, its beauty is hateful to me.”

“But why? Surely you have everything that makes for happiness in life—wealth—position!”

“Position! What position? The daughter of a slave driver! Is that a desirable position, do you think?”

“Your father a—a slave driver?”

“Yes, simply a slave driver, and nothing more,” she replied bitterly. “Do you think that we, the wives and daughters of the officials, are deceived—that we are ignorant of the condition of those poor, betrayed people over yonder? She swept her hand towards the city, and went on: “Do we never read between the lines of official reports, or think?”

“I am sure that you do, at least,” he exclaimed warmly. “And I felt sure that you also pitied those poor creatures.”

“No, no,” she cried, “it is not pity, but sympathy. If I merely pitied them I might be content to stay here—on the ‘other side,’ like the priest and the Levite, but I want to go among them—to help them—if possible, to free them.”

“I have had the same feeling myself, ever since I came to Sydney,” said Ronald, earnestly.

“You!” she exclaimed. “And yet you are taking an appointment in the State service.”

“Pardon me, Miss Denfrew,” he said gently, “I

have not yet decided to accept the position. But how can you know anything of the matter? It is only two or three hours since my uncle first mentioned the matter to me."

"Only two or three hours!" she cried in astonishment, "why, my father told me the day before yesterday that you were to have Mr. Mason's position."

"They appear to have taken it for granted that I would not refuse," said Ronald.

"Why should you refuse?" she asked. "As an Englishman, you are not responsible for the dreadful state of things here. If you don't take the position another man will." Then, clenching her hands, she went on hurriedly: "Oh! it is a shameful thing! In the old days the people were poor, but they were free, but now they are just herded together like a flock of sheep. They have no hope in life or beyond it, for even the consolation of religion is denied them; no ambition; no love, and no pleasure. We and such as we are only able to live in comfort and luxury because our fathers betrayed the trust placed in them by a foolish people."

"If I do accept the position it will be only because it will afford me an opportunity of studying the condition of the workers for myself, with the view to doing something for their comfort," said Ronald earnestly.

"Oh! bless you for those words, Mr. Gray," cried Kathleen, clasping his hand in both of hers. "I knew that I could not be mistaken in you. I felt

sure that you were something better than the cold-blooded, selfish officials who care nothing for the misery of others provided that they can enjoy themselves."

Ronald raised her hand to his lips.

"Miss Denfrew—Kathleen!" he whispered, "dare I think that the interest you have shown in me has anything of a personal nature? I have loved you from the first moment I saw you. I had almost decided to return to England, and dreamt that you might accompany me. Will you marry me, Kathleen?"

"Don't—oh! don't ask me yet," she answered wildly. "I couldn't think of happiness for myself while so many of my fellow creatures are living in misery."

"But, give me one word of hope," he pleaded. "I love you—love you. Do you—can you return that love?"

"Ask me that question again when the people are free," she whispered, and with that Ronald had to be content for the time.

Ronald Gray accepted the appointment offered him in the State service, but at the end of the first month he came to his uncle and asked to be relieved of his duties.

"Why? What is wrong with the billet?" asked Mr Gray. "Want more pay? Well, perhaps that can be arranged, although funds are not so plentiful as they were. Those animals won't work unless they are driven all the time."

“No, no; it has nothing whatever to do with the pay,” replied Ronald, “but the fact is that I feel I cannot go on any longer as an official, and I wish to join the ranks of the workers.”

“Wish to join the workers! Do you seriously tell me that you wish to become a worker?” asked the astonished Minister.

“I do.”

“But have you any conception of the life led by the workers?” remarked Mr. Gray.

“I know it only too well, poor creatures!” replied Ronald, sadly.

“Go and join them, then,” burst out the elder man angrily. “You’ll be in the madhouse before a month. But, listen to me! Don’t start petitioning to come back, because if you go among these people you’ll stay there. Do you understand that?”

“I understand,” answered his nephew calmly.

The next day Ronald Gray, late Inspector of the Department of Education became Worker No. 837 in the Henson-street Bakery at Balmain.



CHAPTER VI.

SOME RECENT HISTORY.

RONALD GRAY was sent by the foreman of the bakery to work in Jack's room. The official was extremely polite, doubtless owing to the fact that one of the clerks in the Education Department had informed him of Ronald's relationship to a member of the Government.

"I understand, Mr. Gray, that you wish to see for yourself how the work of our different establishments is carried on," he said with an ingratiating smile.

"Yes, that is so," replied the young Englishman, "but I must ask you to treat me exactly as you do the other workers."

"Certainly, sir," said the official.

"Well, in the first place, you must address me by my number."

"Certainly, s——, that is, number eight thirty-seven. Here you!" he added, turning to Jack Bruce, "show this gen—this man what to do."

As Bruce came forward Ronald noted the fine face and splendid physique of the young worker.

"Surely a unique specimen!" he said to himself.

“Why, this man looks fit to take his place among the best of the old world athletes.”

Jack Bruce was equally pleased with Gray's appearance. During the day the foreman took care to let the other workers know that Ronald had been an official. Jack was surprised to hear this news. He knew the official type well, the heavy, fleshy face, languid tone and sneering expression, but here was surely a variation. Gray's keen, eager face, well set up, though somewhat spare figure, and above all, his manner, quick and impulsive, denoted the man of action.

Ronald was very anxious to have a long talk with the young worker, but, of course, there was very little time during working hours, and for some days after Gray's entry into the workers' ranks he noticed that Jack always disappeared mysteriously about five o'clock. However, he found him waiting for him one afternoon.

“Hullo!” observed Gray, “that you? I say, let us go for a walk somewhere. What do you do with yourself after work?”

“Oh! nothing, that is, I sit in the park or—or read.”

At any other time Ronald might have made a shrewd guess as to the nature of Jack's occupation “after work,” but just now he was too anxious about other matters to notice the young worker's hesitancy.

“I am so glad of an opportunity to have a good talk with you,” he said pleasantly.

“How do you like the work?” asked Jack.

Gray made a wry face.

“Not very much,” he replied, “though it isn’t very laborious. But don’t you find it terribly monotonous?”

“I am used to it,” said Jack.

“I suppose one does get used to anything,” remarked Ronald. Then he went on: “My name is Gray, Ronald Gray. I was formerly in the Army, but have been in Australia for about three months.”

“An Englishman, I thought you were, but wasn’t quite sure,” said Jack, “and I was puzzling my brains to discover why an Englishman should come to this wretched country.”

“It is a wretched country,” agreed Gray. “As a matter of fact, I came here under the impression that Australia was far ahead of the older countries in every way. My uncle, who is Director of Education was on a visit to London, and he persuaded me that your country was a kind of second Garden of Eden without the serpent.”

“I know nothing of the conditions obtaining in any other country, but I have read a good deal about the pre-Socialistic times,” observed Bruce.

“But you have surely read recent history as well?”

“Recent history!” exclaimed Jack, bitterly. “There is no recent history, so far as the workers are concerned. Our latest books bear the date of 1925, the year in which the accursed System was established, and we have no newspapers of later date. And they would not be of much use in any

case, as only a very small proportion of the workers of the present generation can read.”

“Is it possible?” exclaimed Gray, in astonishment.

Jack nodded. Then he went on: “Yes, I suppose the authorities consider that the workers are more likely to be contented with their lot if they have no chance of learning what they have lost. But, think of the infamy of it! In reading of the past one can at least forget the misery of the present, but think of the poor creatures who are cut off from even that relief! Listen. A month ago we had a young fellow of eighteen in our work room. This lad’s grandfather was a prominent man in the pre-Socialistic days, but he was allowed to grow up in such ignorance that he was more like a wild beast than a man. Perhaps you have noticed the manner in which some of our people speak? Well, this lad was worse—very much worse—than any you have heard. I do not believe that the unfortunate fellow knew twenty words altogether. And such words! Collins, one of the officials, seemed to take a delight in teasing this lad in order to hear the strange sounds he would utter when enraged.”

“What a brute!” cried Ronald.

Jack continued: “One day an official from the city came into our workroom. He was leading a very large and very ugly bulldog, and he at once began to relate the wonderful exploits of this dreadful looking beast. Half laughingly Collins offered to back the young fellow I mentioned against the dog. The challenge was immediately accepted by

the animal's owner, and the dreadful contest actually took place, the lad going down upon his hands and knees."

"What was the outcome?" asked Gray.

"The dog tore the man's throat out," replied Jack, grimly.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Ronald. "Do you mean to say that men stood by and allowed a man to be killed without interfering?"

"What worker would be mad enough to interfere with the amusement of the officials? No one who valued his life. I was foolish enough to risk mine."

"What did you do?" asked the other, eagerly.

"Kicked the dog in the neck and killed him."

"Well done!" cried Ronald, warmly. "But didn't the owner resent your action?"

"Resent it! I should think he did resent it. Vowing that he would shoot me, he rushed from the room, with the object, I presume, of getting a pistol from his car, but fortunately for me, he met the District Superintendent in the doorway."

"He prevented him from carrying out his intention, of course," said Ronald.

Jack laughed shortly.

"Well, he did, but not for the reason you imagine. I doubt very much whether the great man would have considered it necessary to send in a report if half a dozen of us had been murdered, but he happened to have a very sore foot, and my enemy, in his haste, kicked it. The official was glad to escape with his own life after this unfortunate collision, and I heard no more of the matter."

They walked on for some time in silence before Ronald spoke again:

“And do you get no news of the outside world at all?”

“Oh! well, that is hardly correct,” replied Jack. “We know, for instance, that China has recently annexed Japan, and that the German Confederation has fallen to pieces. Or, rather, I should say that I know these things, thanks to our foreman, who is fond of talking. I am afraid that he doesn’t often find such an attentive listener as myself—among the workers, I mean, and you know what the officials are. But, I beg your pardon, I forgot for the minute that you had only just left that class.”

“Look here, Bruce, I must ask you, as a favor, not to class me with those fellows. I only accepted a State appointment so that I might see for myself how the workers were being treated. I have no sympathy at all with the Government, and when I tendered my resignation I did so voluntarily.”

“I am very glad indeed to know that,” replied Bruce. “Of course, we frequently have members of the official class sent amongst us, but we can never be sure whether they are being punished or sent to spy upon us. About two years ago one of them came into our factory. Almost from the first day he began to talk mutiny. I disliked the fellow myself, and most of the other workers were too apathetic to do more than listen in silence to his ravings, but a few men (five in number, as it afterwards transpired) were only too ready to become his tools. These six men then actually drew up a

plan of campaign. The scheme was so absurd that no one but the most ignorant man would have looked for success. It was never intended, indeed, that any action should be taken. The five workers were denounced by the official spy, and they disappeared. As the result of guarded enquiries I at length discovered what had been the fate of the conspirators.

“They were brought before the authorities, one at a time, each one being told that one of his fellow workmen had betrayed the plot. Then they were severely flogged and sent to five different factories. By that step, as you will recognize, the Government has ensured peace in not one but five different establishments, as each of the five would be careful to relate the whole story of the betrayal.”

“What a diabolical plot,” cried Ronald, indignantly. “But, knowing all this, are you not foolish to trust me as you are doing?”

Jack laughed.

“Well, perhaps so, but in the first place, if you happened to be a spy, you could denounce me whether I trusted you or not. No further evidence than your bare word would be required to convict a worker. Secondly, although I have grown up under the System, I think that I know enough to recognize a spy when I meet one, and I have not met one in you.”

“Thank you!” said Ronald, holding out his hand.

The young worker had had very little experience in the polite art of hand-shaking, but the heartiness of his grip atoned for his lack of knowledge. After the performance Ronald felt his fingers carefully,

but finding that no bones were broken, he said with a laugh:

“By Jove! I shouldn’t like to be a spy and find myself in your grip.”

“I suppose I am pretty strong,” remarked Jack, “and I should be in good *form*, as they used to put it in the old days. A sound mind in a sound body, I hope.”

“It is a pity that everyone doesn’t go on the same lines,” said Ronald. “Many men appear to think that the outward and visible sign of the possession of intellect is to have a brow ‘sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought.’ ”

“Reminds one of green prawns.”

“Very much,” laughed Gray. “But you were saying that you would like to hear of what is going on in the great world outside.”

“I would indeed,” was the reply.

“All right! Where shall I begin?”

“Begin! Why, at the beginning, of course. I was born here, brought up in one of the Homes until I was sixteen, and have been in Balmain ever since—nine years. I know absolutely nothing.”

“I don’t admit that at all,” said Ronald, with a smile. “However, I’ll do my best. In Great Britain, to begin there, things are very much as they were twenty-five years ago. The Socialists have had a few representatives in the House of Commons for generations, but they make no progress. Certainly, with the introduction of universal adult suffrage a good many Socialists were returned, but very few of them succeeded in holding their seats.

“Forty years ago the lands of the United Kingdom were in the possession of a comparatively few persons, but a great change began in 1920, and to-day there are about five million separate proprietors. With the increase of the rural population the influence of the towns waned, and as the urban vote was largely Labor or Socialist, it followed that the representatives of those parties found greater difficulty in getting into Parliament. It was noticed that as soon as the most ardent Socialist became the owner of even two or three acres of land, he promptly forgot all about his desire for equality.

“The position in France is much the same. Years ago Marx said ‘that nothing great could be done, even in Germany, for revolution, without the aid of England, and the crowing of the Gallic cock.’ The ‘Gallic cock’ has been crowing lustily enough of late, and with good reason, but the effect has not been what Marx anticipated. In fact Individualism is triumphant in that great country, and advanced Socialists regard their cause as completely lost.

“The world’s peace seems to be assured by the new Triple Alliance—Britain, France, and the United States.

“You mentioned Japan. Emerging from barbarism, that nation rose like a comet about fifty years ago, and might in time have become a great power. But their victory over Russia, early in the century, appeared to upset the balance of the little brown men. Otherwise they would never have been guilty of such utter folly as they displayed a few years later, when they declared war against the

United States. That war at once destroyed the prestige of Japan and reduced her to a position similar to that occupied by Turkey for so many years. Domestic strife completed the ruin, and it is perhaps well for the Japanese themselves that their ancient enemy, China, has taken them in hand.

“Turkey has disappeared from the map of Europe, and the Hellenic Empire appears to be doing well. The Cretans are free at last.

“Russia is still struggling towards light and liberty. Great strides have been made, especially during the last five years, though much remains to be done. However, reforms always come when people are ready for them, and the Russians are getting ready.

“As regards Germany, well, there is no longer any Germany. It is true that the same States remain (with the exception of Alsace-Lorraine, retaken by France), and that these States are united for defence purposes, but the great Empire which a generation ago threatened to dominate Europe, if not the world, no longer exists.

“Thornton, a Socialist member of the House of Commons, visited these German States last year, but he regards the position there as quite hopeless—from his point of view, of course. ‘It is true,’ he writes, ‘that the people have broken the power of the nobility, but while agriculture has increased to a considerable extent, manufactures are in a very bad way. The people seem to have lost all their ambition, they are content to live upon the land, and their towns are stagnant.’ ”

“What a glorious country Germany must be!” exclaimed Jack.

Gray smiled at the other's enthusiasm. “Well,” he said, “I am rather inclined to think you are right, although I must confess that, after reading Thornton's report, I thought the German people foolish. However, after a month's experience of the methods of the Socialists, I am not at all surprised at the revolt on the Continent.”

“How did the Germans manage to regain their freedom?” asked Jack, eagerly. “My foreman friend was not too clear on the subject. He said that the Russian and French armies invaded the country. Was that correct?”

“No. You see, in a densely populated country such as Germany, and surrounded by other nations, it was not advisable for the officials to carry matters with such a high hand as yours do here. The attempt at the complete segregation of the workers was strongly resented, and thousands showed their disapproval of official tyranny by promptly bolting over the frontiers into Russia, Belgium, France, and Holland. Belgium and Holland made a pretence of returning these people to their own country, but both Russia and France openly welcomed the refugees, being only too glad, I have no doubt, to have the evil results of Socialism demonstrated to their own people.”

“No doubt they would,” observed Jack.

“The press of Europe took up the cause of these escapees——”

“Ah! if we had a press here, we might do something,” interrupted Jack. “But I beg your pardon! Go on with the story, please.”

“The refugees began to organize at once, with a view to the rescue, first, of their own immediate relatives and friends, and if successful in that direction, to the overthrow of the political despots. With the assistance of sympathisers all over Europe, and aided, it is said, by the Governments of Russia, France, and Great Britain (secretly, of course) armed bodies of men constantly raided the border States. The Socialist militia fought half-heartedly (when they fought at all), and were easily brushed aside by the raiders, who killed the officials wherever they found them, and destroyed or carried off the State property.

“Encouraged by the success of their friends outside, the German workers were in an almost continual state of mutiny, and many attempts were made upon the lives of the members of the Government. Thoroughly alarmed, the Executive made arrangements for bringing black troops from Africa, but before this could be done the final blow fell. That was in '45, I think; yes, in '45.

“A large body of mounted men suddenly disappeared near Inowraslow—about five thousand, as we afterwards learned—and being joined by some twelve or fifteen hundred of the State troops, who had deserted, they marched on Bromberg. They met with no resistance whatever on the march, and upon their approach to the city the inhabitants rose and massacred almost the whole of the officials. The

town guard, together with a few of the higher Government officers, took refuge in the citadel, but surrendered when assured that their lives would be spared.

“The raid had become a revolution. Within two days the insurgent leader had upwards of fifty thousand men under his command. A week later he could have taken the field at the head of half a million, as the whole of East and West Prussia revolted when they learned of the capture of Bromberg. Then followed Pomerania and Silesia.

“An aeroplane sent out by the authorities at Berlin was disabled and captured near Breslau. From its occupants it was learned that the capital was in a state of terror, and that the Government had armed the workers in order to resist the ‘Russian invasion,’ as it was termed.

“Roscher, the elected leader of the patriots, promptly decided upon a rush for Berlin, and his decision was received with frantic cheers by the army.

“Two days later the march began. The leader had the greatest difficulty in preventing the entire population of the revolted provinces accompanying him. He was everywhere received with open arms, even women, even children begging to be allowed to share in the task of liberating their beloved Fatherland.

“About eleven o’clock on the second morning Roscher received a wireless message, and after a brief consultation with his staff, he handed over the command of the army to Von Blechner, and mount-

ing an aeroplane, departed at high speed for the capital.

“The campaign was ended. Late on the previous night several of the Berlin regiments had mutinied, and with tens of thousands of the armed workers had made an attack upon the great barracks in the Luisenstadt, held by the Municipal Guards. Taken by surprise, the State troops offered a very feeble resistance, and an awful massacre followed. It was afterwards found that more than eighty-five thousand persons perished before the blood lust of the mutineers was sated. Six members of the Executive were captured. These unfortunate men were torn limb from limb by the maddened workers.

“Upon his arrival Roscher was requested to form a provisional government. He took immediate steps to suppress rioting and disorder. Within a few days the disarmament of the troops and workers was effected, only twenty thousand guards being retained.

“I must confess (though at the time I considered many of his actions most arbitrary) that, throughout the trying time which followed the overthrow of the System, Roscher displayed remarkable capacity, and in nominating him as first President of the reformed Republic the deputies appointed by the Provinces acted wisely.”

“And your Socialistic friend says that the people have gone back to the land, and that the towns are being deserted?” remarked Jack.

“That is so,” replied Gray. “Thornton admits that the total production of Germany is greater than

under Socialism, but he points out that many more people are now engaged in producing wealth. You see, the officials numbered quite one-fifth of the whole population, and then, of course, the wives and children——”

“Excuse me,” interrupted Bruce, “but do you really mean that one-fifth of the able-bodied men and women were non-producers? I thought that the aim of the Socialist was to get rid of the drones.”

“Well, that was supposed to be one of their objects,” laughed Ronald. “But, as a matter of fact, in Germany, before the revolution, the officials with their wives and families numbered almost as many as the workers. Here the latest returns show that there are about eight hundred and fifty thousand workers, six hundred and fifty odd thousand children (in the State Homes), and about five hundred and ten thousand belonging to the official class.”

“Good Heavens!” groaned Jack, “and I thought, in my ignorance, that there could be not more than fifty or sixty thousand.”

“It does seem a large number of non-producers, certainly,” agreed Gray.

“And are all the other Australian States in a similar position?”

“I don’t think I have made matters quite clear to you,” said Ronald. “Strictly speaking, there are no States in Australia now, although, as a matter of convenience, the returns are kept separate. New Zealand is going along in the old way, and is making remarkable progress too.”

“I am very thankful for what you have told me,” said Jack, after a time. “The task before us here is much more formidable than I anticipated, but I am not to be moved from my purpose of attempting to free my native land by any difficulties in the way. If the German people could regain their lost liberty surely we, of the British stock, can do as much.”

“Have you any plan?”

“Well, hardly a plan,” replied Jack. “In fact, I can do nothing until I have seen the miners. No reliance can be placed in the factory hands.”

“Is that so?” asked Ronald.

“It is. I have sounded them, carefully, of course, and am satisfied that not five per cent. of them would dare to lift a hand against the ruling class. But I have heard occasionally of the feeling amongst the miners—those at the Newcastle coal mines especially—and I feel sure that they would die to a man if they saw even the faintest chance of achieving their freedom.”

“But how can you communicate with these miners?” asked Ronald.

“Simply by going to see them,” replied the other. “It looks rather difficult, I know, but still I think it can be done. My intention is to make my way down to the shore opposite Cockatoo Island some dark night, slip quietly into the water, and swim across to the North Shore—if a shark doesn’t get me. I don’t suppose anyone would miss me—at least I—I——”

He broke off in confusion.

“What?” asked Gray, politely.

“Oh! nothing; I was thinking of something else,” replied Jack, flushing under Ronald’s gaze.

“Ah, ha! my Hercules!” mentally exclaimed Ronald, “I strongly suspect that I could guess what you meant.” Then aloud: “I suppose we had better get along and have some tea. Nice table they have at the lodging-house, isn’t it?”

“It is our own fault if we don’t have a better one in future,” said Jack.

CHAPTER VII.

BY ORDER OF THE STATE.

AS Mrs. Freeman and Mary Heath walked towards the Children's Home the former cried:

“Oh! Mary, dear! do hurry, please. I have a presentiment that something dreadful is going to happen. I had a terrible dream last night about my poor little Rita. I was standing on the bank of a river and could see my little darling on the other side. She seemed quite well and happy, and smiled at me, but in spite of all my efforts I could not cross the river. I opened my arms and tried to call out. Rita smiled and then shook her head and pointed in the other direction. Then she appeared to be moving away, getting further and further from me, and I tried to throw myself into the river, but could not move.”

“Poor girl!” said Mary, sympathetically; “I can imagine what you must suffer, but you must not be despondent. Rita will probably be quite well again to-day.”

“I wish I could think so,” replied the poor mother, “but I feel sure that she is worse.” She stopped and pressed her hand to her heart as if in

pain. Then she went on wildly: "Oh! why am I standing here when my poor child may be dying? Let us hurry."

"Now, Vesta!" said Mary, firmly, "you must be calm. You will make yourself ill, and then I must take you back to the lodging-house."

"You couldn't be so cruel. You don't know a mother's feelings or you would understand my anxiety for my dear little girl," cried the mother.

Mary tried to take the poor woman's mind off the subject of her child's illness, but found her efforts in this direction of no avail. The mother could think of nothing but her little one, and Mary fell in with her humour.

"But Rita has only a slight cold," she said. "She will be running about as well as ever when you see her to-day. Children get over these little ailments so quickly."

"You are a dear girl to say so," sighed Mrs. Freeman, "but I am afraid, oh! I am afraid. Her father was so delicate! I have scarcely slept for the last week, and have eaten hardly anything. Oh! Mary, pray that you may never have to endure what I have gone through during the last six days—and nights; the nights were the worst. What a terrible life I have had!"

"After I left the State House—I was sixteen then—I was happy enough for a time. The comparative freedom of the life seemed like Heaven after the confinement and discipline of the Home. Then, three years later, I married, and for a year, I think, no one could possibly have been happier.

Looking back upon that year of happiness makes the present seem so much worse. The first trouble came when my husband fell sick. He was never strong, but I did not realize that it was anything serious, although he complained of a constant pain in his side, and had a very bad cough.

“One day he was too ill to leave his bed, and when I returned from work that evening I found that poor Fred had been sent to the hospital. Rita was about a month old at the time, and I was far from strong myself, so that I suffered more than another woman would have done.

“A month later poor Fred died, and then I had no one in the world but my baby—my baby! And now I am going to lose her—going to lose her too!”

She burst into a flood of tears. Mary took the poor woman in her arms and soothed her as well as she could.

“I was taken ill again,” resumed Mrs. Freeman, “and but for leaving my poor little Rita I should have been glad to die. I often thought of ending both our lives, but she was growing such a dear little thing that my heart went cold at the thought of hurting her. I could easily have died, but how could I kill my child?”

“Then I got a little stronger, and had to go back to the workshop. I used to leave Rita at the creche every morning, and call for her after work. I don’t believe that any mother ever loved a child as I loved Rita.”

She smiled at the recollection.

“One evening at the lodging-house a woman re-

marked that she thought Rita was sick. I can remember the pang that shot through my heart at her words. The woman had been holding my baby for a minute while I did some little thing, but I snatched her from her like a fury. Poor woman! She had lost her own little one about a month before and understood my feeling, I have no doubt.

“They allowed me to keep Rita with me until she was nearly two years old. Then she was taken from me and placed in the Home. How I suffered! I used to lie awake at night wondering how my poor child was being treated.

“I pictured her being beaten by one of those heartless nurses as I had often seen them illuse children when I was an inmate myself. Then, at last, utterly worn out, I would fall asleep, only to wake with a start, and feel about the bed for my baby, before I remembered that she was gone.

“That was three years ago. Lately I had begun to look forward to the time when she would come out of the Home. How I thanked God when the age was reduced to twelve! Only seven years more, and perhaps Rita would be sent to one of the factories here, and I should be able to see her sometimes. But now she is ill. Oh! here we are at last. I—I am afraid! Oh! What a coward I am! After being so anxious all day, I am afraid to ask for my child—afraid of what they may tell me.”

“You will find her all right, and looking out for you,” said Mary confidently.

“Thank you! I do hope that you are right. I am afraid that you must have thought me very

selfish to keep on talking about my own affairs, but I felt that I must talk about my trouble to someone, and you are always so sympathetic."

The officer on duty at the entrance gate favored the two women with a stare as they approached. He had often seen Mrs. Freeman before, but this was Mary Heath's first visit to the Home, and the unusual beauty of the girl at once attracted the fellow's attention.

"Nice weather, Miss," he said, with what he evidently believed to be a fascinating smile.

Mary bowed, and would have passed on without speaking, but the man barred the way.

"Don't be in such a hurry," he remarked. "Can't you stop and talk to a fellow for a minute? It's pretty stale standing here for four hours at a stretch. I haven't seen you before?"

"This is my first visit to the Home," replied Mary, quietly. "Please allow me to pass. My friend wishes to see her little girl, and she is waiting for me."

"Oh! let her wait. I say, where do you work?"

"At the clothing factory here."

Mary's blood was boiling, but she was too well aware of the power of the officials to openly resent the fellow's insolent tone.

"By Jove!" he cried, with a grin, "I'll put in an application to get away from this place. The clothing factory, eh? I won't forget, my dear. What's your name?"

He stepped forward, but Mary avoided him, and

the next moment had passed the gate and was walking quickly after Mrs. Freeman.

The official turned and watched her as she walked up the pathway towards the Home.

“All right, my beauty!” he muttered; “all right! By Jove! She looked as if she’d like to hit me! Isn’t she a daisy?” he went on, addressing the gate post. “Did you ever see such eyes? And what a figure! I’ll find out what her name is. She’s not going to get rid of me in a hurry.”

Meantime Mary and her companion had reached the Home, and at once made their way to the enquiry office.

“I wish to see my little girl—Rita Freeman,” said the mother, nervously.

“Rita Freeman! She is sick, isn’t she?” asked the girl at the desk.

“Yes, that is, she has been sick for some days, but I was hoping that she was better now,” replied Mrs. Freeman, tremblingly.

“Let me see—ah! I am afraid that you won’t be able to see her to-day——”

“Oh, is she worse? Tell me—is she worse?” cried the poor mother.

“She was taken into the observation ward this morning. If you don’t mind waiting a minute or two, I’ll go and enquire how she is and whether you may see her,” said the girl, kindly.

Mrs. Freeman thanked her, more than astonished at the offer. The young girl was a stranger to her, having only just joined the staff at the Home. Evidently she had not yet learned to regard the workers

as something less than human beings. The girl returned almost at once, her face white with horror. She looked at the poor mother waiting so anxiously to hear of her child for a moment without speaking.

"I—I am so sorry, Mrs. Freeman," she began, but the mother broke in with a cry of anguish:

"Oh! tell me—tell me, is my child dead?"

"No—no!" sobbed the girl. "At least, I don't think so! Oh! the brutes! the heartless, cruel, cold-blooded brutes! Oh! the poor little thing!"

"What is it?" shrieked the distracted mother, clutching the girl by the arm.

"They have take—taken her into the lethal chamber," faltered the girl, between her sobs.

Mrs. Freeman's hands fell to her sides, and for a moment she seemed on the point of falling. Then, with a piercing cry, she rushed from the room into the corridor, screaming:

"Rita! Rita! My child! Give me my child! They are murdering my poor child!"

"Here! Stop that noise!" cried an official, but the distracted mother heard him not. She rushed frantically from one door to another, crying:

"Rita! My baby! Almighty God! They are killing my baby!"

Attracted by the cries a doctor and the matron came out of the ante-room of the lethal chamber.

"What does this mean, matron?" began the doctor, sternly. "I have had occasion to speak before about disturbances in this establishment. You must see that your people keep better order. Is the woman mad, or what is the matter with her?"

One of the attendants spoke to the matron, who turned to the doctor and said: "This is the mother of the child——" She nodded in the direction of the lethal chamber.

The medical officer shrugged his shoulders.

"Her child! Well, it is very sad, of course," he remarked, "but necessity knows no law. It was the only thing to be done under the circumstances."

Then Mrs. Freeman noticed the doctor, whom she recognized as the medical superintendent of the Home, and, throwing herself at his feet, she sobbed out:

"Oh! Sir, give me my child—my little baby. You wouldn't hurt a poor, little, helpless thing like that. Give me my little Rita, and God will bless you."

"My good woman, you must calm yourself," he began.

"Calm myself! Oh! then, it isn't true what they told me. I knew that no one would be so cruel. Let me have my child. She is sick, I know, but she wants only a mother's care. No one understands a child like its own mother. I am sure she will be all right again in a few days, if you will only let me have her. I will bring her back again. I won't keep her altogether. Let me have her for to-night, for only one night."

"You can't have the child," said the doctor, stepping back. "The fact is—er—that, in short, you must control yourself. It was the only thing to do. I am very sorry, of course, but the case was quite hopeless—and——"

“What!” screamed the poor woman. “Is it true then? Have you murdered my poor child?”

“You must not use that word here,” cried the doctor, angrily. “What has been done is strictly in accordance with the regulations relating to such cases—by order of the State.”

Mrs. Freeman looked at the doctor only half comprehending what he said, and he repeated: “By order of the State, you understand.”

“By order of the State!” she screamed. “Oh! you great, hulking, cowardly brute! You Herod! You devil! You murder poor, little, helpless children who cannot defend themselves, and then shelter yourself behind the State——”

“Officer!” cried the doctor, sharply, “remove this woman. Turn her out! And listen to me, you—you woman, before you go. I could have you punished for what you have said, but considering your state of mind I have decided to let you go. Your child was suffering from lung trouble—a very bad case indeed, and might have infected the other inmates of the Home. You are surely not so selfish as to desire that.”

“Selfish! Oh! my God! He talks of selfishness when he has just killed my poor child—my only child. My poor little baby! And I thought you might be better! Selfish! Yes, I am selfish enough to wish that the whole world had died instead of my child.”

“There!” exclaimed the doctor, turning to the matron, and throwing out his hands with the air of one who had done his best and failed. “There!

You see all the thanks we ever get from these people. I sometimes think it would be better to let them die and so get rid of them, instead of working night and day as I do in order to preserve their health. Hello! what's the matter now?"

Mrs. Freeman had fallen to the floor. The doctor stooped over her a moment. Then he said to the matron, who was looking curiously at the fallen woman:

"You had better get the ambulance and have her taken to the hospital, that is, unless you want her to die here."

"Is she as bad as that?" asked the matron.

"Bad! She won't live an hour."

Mary, who had followed the stricken mother into the corridor, now came forward, and sitting down, she took the dying woman's head upon her lap."

"Can I do anything for you, Vesta?" she asked gently.

"Rita! Oh! is that you, Mary. Get Rita, will you? I am not very well, but please bring my little girl, will you?"

"May she have her child?" asked Mary, looking up at the doctor and nurse. They exchanged glances; then the doctor nodded, and the matron, hurrying into the lethal chamber, brought out the body of the little girl.

"Here! in her arms," whispered Mary. "There, Vesta."

The mother strained the little inanimate form to her breast with her feeble arms.

"My dear little Rita," she murmured. "Oh, my

darling. And I thought they had taken you away from me. You are not going away any more, are you, dear? Going to stay with muvver."

God had been more merciful than man.

"Little Rita," she whispered, feebly, "I dreamt that I had lost you—that you were on the other side of the river, and I could not reach you. But it was only a dream . . . a dreadful dream . . . a . . . I . . . I am so happy . . . so happy," and with a smile on her lips she joined her little one on the other side of the river.

"Poor Vesta!" sighed Mary, as, with streaming eyes, she bowed her head and kissed the dead woman's brow.

"It's all over," remarked the doctor, shrugging his shoulders. "The two bodies can be taken to the crematorium together. I don't know what's the matter with these workers, they haven't any stamina."

CHAPTER VIII.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST.

WHEN Jack Bruce met Mary next morning he saw at once that something unusual had happened. The girl was pale, but her eyes were red with weeping. She took his hand without a word, and he enquired tenderly what was wrong.

“Oh, Jack!” she cried, and bowing her head on his breast, she burst into tears afresh.

“My dear Mary, tell me what it is,” he said anxiously.

“Oh, Jack! I have gone through a terrible time. You know that poor Mrs. Freeman with whom I went to the Home yesterday afternoon. Well, they killed her poor little child.”

“Who killed it?”

“They—the doctors at the Home—put her into the lethal chamber. They said she was consumptive.”

“Poor little thing! I hardly know, though, whether one should feel sorry or glad. Perhaps she is fortunate to have escaped so soon from slavery. But the mother; I am sorry for her.”

“She also has escaped,” murmured Mary.

“Why, what do you mean? What has happened to the mother?”

“The shock of losing her child killed her. She died in my arms. Oh! when I think of those brutes at the Home telling the poor, bereaved mother about the necessities of the State I feel that I could kill them.”

She clenched her hands, but then realizing her impotence, she turned to her lover and moaned:

“Oh, Jack! do something to stop it. Think of those murderers. Think of the poor helpless children being left to the mercy of those butchers!”

“I am thinking of them!” he replied, “and trying to devise some plan by which we can put a stop to this killing ‘by order of the State.’ But I must be careful not to make a false step. Do you know that in this State the officials with their wives and families are almost as numerous as the workers? Yes—more than half a million of them.”

“Half a million!”

“Yes, half a million. But I believe there is a deal of disaffection amongst the officials themselves, and that being so their numbers would be rather an advantage to us than otherwise, provided that we could get a revolt started. I was telling you about a new man we have in our shop. Well, I had a long talk with him yesterday afternoon. He is a fine fellow. Do you know, he came voluntarily from the State service into the ranks of the workers! He was an inspector in the Education Department, but became disgusted with the manner

in which the officials abused their power, and threw up his position."

"That was very noble of him, but not very wise, I think," observed Mary.

"Now, you know that you would do just the same, Mary."

"I am not at all sure of that," she replied, shaking her head.

"Well, I am," he said, confidently. "Oh, by the way, such a strange thing happened this morning. I received a letter, the first letter of my life. I was looking forward to telling you all about it, but the story of that poor woman and her little one drove it quite out of my mind. Do you remember speaking about a book (written by an Edward Bruce) a few days ago?"

"Yes," she replied, wonderingly.

"That book was written by my father."

"Your father! How lovely!" exclaimed Mary.

"Ye-es, I suppose so. I had a letter from him this morning."

"A letter! Then he is alive! Oh! I am *so* glad! Where is he?"

"The letter was written at Temora, but he was just on the point of starting for Sydney. He was being sent to the Home for Aged Workers at Callan Park."

"But why did he never write to you before?" she asked.

"It appears that he was under the impression that I had died in infancy. I don't know how the mistake came about. You know, of course, that

when a worker is being sent to the Home his relatives are notified—by the worker himself if he desires to do so—and this led to the discovery that he had a son.”

“What a dreadful thing to leave the poor man in ignorance all these years,” cried Mary, indignantly.

“He was only a worker,” replied Jack, bitterly. “But it is too late now to regret the past. I have brought my father’s letter with me, and should like you to read it. Last night, as it happened, I came across his book, and spent a couple of hours looking through it. It is well enough written, but apparently he was a man who thought everyone was as sincere as himself. In ten or twenty thousand years, when everyone is wise and unselfish and industrious, Socialism may be a good thing. Writers appear to forget that although man has made great progress in certain directions he is still a savage at heart, and that it is not safe to give anyone unlimited power. My poor father thought he could see in Socialism the dawn of liberty, but most of his contemporaries appeared to see only an opportunity to enslave their fellow men. ‘Licence they mean when they cry liberty,’ said Milton in an earlier age.”

“I read very little of your father’s book myself,” she remarked. “There were too many figures in it, and I don’t care much for politics. I could not help thinking, though, what a dreadful awakening the poor man must have experienced. And—but how did it happen that he became a worker?”

Jack shook his head.

“I expect to learn on Sunday,” he replied, “that is, if I can get a permit to go and see him.”

Edward Bruce, after more than twenty-four years on the State farm, had qualified for admission to the “Home.” His health had not been satisfactory during the past year, and the farm superintendent was only too glad to get rid of him. It was intended by the founders of the new order that workers should retire automatically when they reached the age of sixty. This was to be one of the chief advantages of Socialism. No old men or women would be compelled to work. But gradually, owing to the inefficiency of the workers, the authorities fell into the practice of retaining any worker who was physically fit, only those whose labor no longer showed a profit being sent to the Homes.

It must not be supposed that there were no honest men amongst the officials. At first many of the officials tried to act fairly, but those who objected to any instructions which conflicted with the original regulations soon discovered that they were in danger of being displaced by less scrupulous men. Their feeble remonstrances became still more feeble as time went on, and ere long their whole moral sense became so blunted that they forgot that the workers had any claim to be regarded as human beings at all.

As for the position of the workers themselves,

the transition from comparative freedom to absolute slavery was almost imperceptible. For several years before the final triumph of the Socialists the political leaders had contended that individual liberty was a small thing compared with the welfare of the party. Thus, at first, resistance to official acts was looked upon as disloyalty to the State.

Man is, of all animals, the most adaptable, and, in a surprisingly short time the workers had settled quietly down, resolved to make the best of a very bad job, from which they could see no way of escaping. Slavery appeared to have become the natural condition of the masses.

Here and there a man would be found in whom the spirit of his ancestors survived. He would brood over his wrongs until, stung to madness by the thought that he, the descendant of free men, had become a slave, he would resolve to break his chains or die in the attempt. But all his endeavours to kindle the spark of manhood in the breasts of his fellow workmen were in vain. As well might one have preached mutiny to the beasts of the field. The slaves of the System gazed at him with lack-lustre eyes, only half comprehending his words. The sullen and apathetic creatures still spoke of themselves as men, without realizing that they had forfeited all claim to that noble name. Where the rebel expected to find enthusiasm he heard only contemptuous references to the madhouse, for which, in their opinion, he was qualifying.

The officials held, in the control of all food, the most potent weapon for the complete subjection of

the workers that could have been devised. A man will starve with a certain degree of cheerfulness in time of famine, or when shut up in a besieged city. The pages of history show that both men and women have died of starvation rather than open the gates to the enemy, even in instances where they could have surrendered with honor. But if these men and women died they died in the company of others, while the recalcitrant worker had not even this small amount of consolation, for he was aware that while he was being starved his mates were getting at least sufficient food to keep them in good working condition.

What was the good of "kicking against the pricks"? The State was too powerful! After a day or two of fasting he was ready to submit.

Deceit and lying were the only weapons left to the workers, and the majority of them used these to the best advantage.

Edward Bruce did not fall into quite such a hopeless condition as most of his fellow workers. But the shock caused by the death of his wife, together with the dreadful outcome of his labors in the cause of humanity, seemed to have benumbed his faculties. He had always been a dreamer rather than a man of action, and suffered little from the loss of his personal liberty. Always indifferent to the delights of the table, he hardly noticed the change from the comparative luxury of a well-ordered home to the plain, roughly-served meals supplied at the farm dining hall.

In happier days Bruce had been a man who, like old Doctor Johnson, 'loved to fold his legs, and have his talk out,' but under the strict discipline maintained on the farm he had almost lost the art of speech, and rarely spoke to anyone at the establishment.

When the daily task was completed he would hurry to the library, and there, amongst the books, spend the hours, until the ringing of the retiring bell brought him back to the sordid world in which he lived.

The workers could have slates and pencils, if they chose to ask for them, and Bruce, happening upon some works on astronomy in the library, took up the study of that all-absorbing science. He would devote his attention for weeks—months at a stretch—to some particular star or constellation, and spend his time in working out the position. He gradually lost all interest in earthly affairs, and lived only in the heavens.

About a year after Bruce's arrival at the farm the Government decided to withdraw the subsidies which at first were paid to the various churches. The immediate result was that hundreds of clergymen of different denominations were left without the means of subsistence, and were forced into the workers' ranks. One of these men, who was sent to the Temora farm, had formerly been the incumbent of a fashionable city church. He had previously been regarded as a man of high character, but the harshness of official rule, together with the unaccustomed manual exertion, had destroyed all

that was apparently good in the man, who had shortly developed into one of the most cringing and altogether despicable among the many contemptible creatures which the System had created. Still, withal, he was a most religious man, and had periodical fits of penitence.

During one of these attacks he was led to unburden his mind to Edward Bruce, whom he had known in the pre-Socialistic days.

“I know that you must despise me,” he said. “You cannot realize how I despise myself, but I am weak—weak. It was unfair of the Almighty—God forgive me for saying it—unfair to try me beyond my strength to endure. I know what is right, and desire to do it, but I am a coward—a physical coward. Had I been permitted to retain my position in the church I feel sure that I should have done a great work in the world—a great work, but now——”

“Even now it is not too late,” interrupted Bruce, sternly.

“But when I think of the past——”

“Why think of it? I remember hearing you on one occasion preaching on the subject of looking forward. You reminded your hearers of St. Paul’s exhortation to ‘forget those things that are behind, and press on towards the goal.’ Why don’t you do that now?”

“Forget! Great heaven! I cannot forget! I cannot look forward! Every night I pray for strength to endure—to act the part of a man—to

fight the good fight. But I realize, even while I am praying, that it is all in vain, that to-morrow I shall sin again. And yet I know that some good—some unfathomable purpose—is beneath it all, and that because I have believed, 'He who doeth all things well' will not allow me to be cast away eternally."

"Believed what?" asked Bruce, impatiently.

"Believed in Him, believed that whatever is done is in accordance with the Divine will, believed that 'nothing happens but that which the Irresistible allows,'" replied the ex-clergyman.

"Bah!" exclaimed Bruce. "You talk of believing these things, but you only think that you believe them. You should be thankful that you have been placed in a position where you have an opportunity of proving what your faith is worth, but instead of that you are whining about being tried beyond your strength. Look at the poor creatures around you. Why don't you do something for them? Do you think that you were sent into the world in order that you might rise to a high position in the church and enjoy yourself?"

"I didn't say so," protested the other. "I was always ready to bear my cross."

"Yes, when the cross took the shape of a good income," said Bruce. "Cannot you see that you are usurping the position of the God you profess to follow? God created man, you say; then why are you making a God for yourself? Do you think it matters that you call this creature of your imagination by the name of the Almighty? You act the

part of a coward and a spy, and then have the audacity to plead that what you do is by the will of God! Did God intend that we should be slaves?"

"God allows it."

"Yes," replied Bruce, "God allows it, just as He allows the strong to oppress and enslave the weak everywhere, just as He allows you to degrade your manhood as you are doing. Act the man, and don't make your conduct worse than it is by becoming a hypocrite as well. Try to overcome the evil in your own nature; that is your first duty. Work out your own salvation. Each man makes his own prison and his own God. The one you have made is not a very desirable deity. However, I have something better to do than to preach to you. Do as you think proper, and believe what you like. I don't suppose that I shall be punished for your sins."

And Bruce returned to his study of the stars.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRST BLOW.

DURING the day Jack Bruce made application to the foreman of his workshop for a pass to enable him to visit his father at the Home for Aged Workers on the following Sunday.

When the System was first introduced the workers wore whatever garments they chose and wandered anywhere they liked, provided that they put in an appearance at their workshop at the appointed hour. During the first year, however, it was found necessary to restrict their liberty considerably if any work at all was to be performed. With the establishment of the lodging-houses came the question of dress, but this matter was soon settled. By a stroke of the pen the material and style were decided, and these clothes were supplied by the State stores in stock sizes and at regular intervals.

At the same time each workers' district was divided into a number of precincts, and orders were issued that no worker was to be permitted to pass from one precinct to another without a permit, in a prescribed form, signed by the manager of the establishment where such worker was employed.

In order that there should be no difficulty in identifying a worker brass disks were affixed to the jackets of both men and women. These disks were stamped with the number of the factory as well as that of the worker.

In addition to these precautions each precinct was enclosed by a "galvanized iron" fence, with gates at regular intervals. At each of these gates a small shed or guard house was built, with accommodation for two officers, whose duty it was to see that no unauthorized person passed from one precinct to another. The fence was of a uniform height of eight feet. Observation towers were erected on elevated positions, and each of these towers was occupied by an armed official, so that it was practically impossible for a worker to make his way into another precinct, even if he succeeded in eluding the vigilance of the guards in his own.

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When Jack Bruce arrived at the Darling Street gate on Sunday afternoon he found upwards of a hundred workers assembled there. Of these quite eighty were women. They were all very quiet, speaking in low tones, like people meeting outside a church in the old days. It was then a few minutes past two o'clock, but the gate was still locked, and there was no sign of life at the guard house. Noticing a worker from his own shop, Jack spoke to him.

"At what time do they open this gate?"

"Oh! Just depends upon when the officer feels inclined." was the reply. "Maybe half an hour;

maybe not till three or four—if he wakes up. He's having a sleep after dinner, I expect."

"But my pass states that I may visit the Home between two and five o'clock," remarked Jack.

"Well, so you may—if you can get through the gate. Last time I came out here they didn't open up till nearly half-past four, and then, of course, it was too late to go through, as they turn you out of the Home at five. But perhaps we'll have better luck to-day."

About half-past two one of the guards appeared, yawning and stretching himself. He carried a bunch of keys in his hand and was followed by the second officer, who held a rifle. The waiting workers at once began to crowd round the gate.

"Stand back there!" growled the man with the keys. "None of your rushing, or I won't let you through for another hour. Get into line and come up one at a time! Good Lord! What a crowd! Have your passes ready if you don't want to be turned back!"

Jack Bruce, being rather a modest young fellow, took his place at the end of the line, and the march through began. In the majority of the cases the officer did not trouble to compare the number on the pass with that on the worker's jacket, but, satisfying himself that the pass was in order, he allowed the bearer to go through the gateway.

"Right—you here again, ri', ri'—hurry up, can't you!—ri', ri'——"

About half the workers had passed through when the guard stopped a middle-aged man

“Let me see your pass,” he said, snatching it from the worker’s hand. “Is this the pass which was issued to you?”

“Yes.”

“Is that the way you speak to an officer?” roared the fellow. “Stand back there, and wait until the others all go through. If you are civil then I’ll see about you.”

The man hesitated a moment, then turned and walked back to the end of the line.

Jack Bruce lost no time after passing into the next precinct, and a few minutes later he reached the gate at Callan Park. There was another half hour’s wait here, while the passes were again inspected. Everything being in order, Jack was directed to the men’s quarters. In the hall, behind a desk, sat a clerk.

“What’s your trouble?” asked the clerk.

“I wish to see number R one-eight-four-one,” replied Jack.

“What name?”

“Edward Bruce.”

“Relation?”

“Yes, my father.”

“Right! Um—um—B wing—second landing—room one-five-six. Off you go! Next!”

Edward Bruce was seated at a little table in the corner of the cell (called by courtesy a room) when his son knocked at the door. He was so intent upon his book that he did not hear the knock, which Jack repeated, louder this time.

The old man looked up in a puzzled way. It was long since anyone had troubled to knock at his door. The officials were accustomed to enter the apartments of the workers without any ceremony.

Jack knocked again.

"Come in—yes—come in," exclaimed the old man, and Jack entered.

He saw a feeble old man, who looked quite a decade older than his sixty years. His tall frame was bowed and his hair and beard snow white. His hands were roughened by toil and weather, and his fingers distorted by rheumatism.

"What is it?" he asked mildly.

"Are you Mr. Bruce?"

"Bruce! Yes, that is, my name was Bruce at one time. Now I have no name—only a number. I am number—number something, I forget what it is; it is on the door. But who are you? You are not—no, of course, you can't be—he was only a little boy——"

"I am your son—Jack Bruce."

"My son! I remember now. They told me you were alive, just before I left the farm, and I wrote to you. They let me believe for years that you were dead—dead with your mother. Poor Ellen! You must have been lonely all these years, while I thought you had your little boy with you. I am very glad to see you, my son. Sit down; sit on that form!"

The wooden stool he indicated was the only article of furniture in the cell beside the little table already

mentioned. The bed supplied to the inmates was a canvas hammock and pair of coarse blankets.

"No, no," said Jack hastily, "you keep your seat, I'll sit on the floor."

The old man gazed at him for a moment with admiration.

"What a fine man you have grown," he observed. "You are like your mother, too. You are a worker, I see. What you you do?"

"Baker," answered Jack.

"Baker! I see. It is not what I would have chosen for you, but— Oh, before I forget, do you know anything about astronomy?"

"Not much; I take more interest in earthly affairs," replied his son.

"Ah! that is where you make a great mistake. These things which we regard as of such importance here are only ephemeral after all, but the great universe goes on for ever."

"Yet you didn't always think our worldly affairs unworthy of notice," said Jack, with a smile.

"What?"

"I have read your book—'Liberty.'"

"Liberty! Yes, I wrote about liberty. Fool that I was, I thought I could see the dawn of the Millennium. I was mad—mad! But don't let us talk about it. Look here! I have calculated the distance travelled by Halley's comet during its absence from our view, and I should like you to check my figures. You would not have time, though. I forgot. So you are my son—my little boy, whom I never expected to see again."

“Don’t you have a fire?” enquired Jack. “Not in your room, of course, but in the hall. Wouldn’t you be more comfortable reading there?”

“No—I don’t know. There used to be a fire at the farm, but I always went into the library. I didn’t like the silly talk of the other workers—poor creatures. Here we have our meals brought to us, and we only go out for exercise. I am glad of the rest, and I have more time to read, though my eyes are not very good now. I don’t feel the cold.”

He shivered.

Jack’s heart sank as he watched the poor old man. Even with his experience of the utter heartlessness of officialdom, he had imagined the aged workers as being treated with some consideration. He found them housed in stone cells, without proper clothes or bedding, their condition worse than that of the criminals under the old regime, which had seemed so evil to his father and his contemporaries.

The old man’s eyes had wandered back to his book. He had forgotten his son’s presence, and it seemed to Jack that it would be cruel to bring him back to the world from which he had temporarily escaped.

Jack rose to his feet and moved gently to the door. Turning, he gazed for a moment at the bent form of his father, and then went quietly out.

As he approached the gate leading to his own precinct Jack saw a number of workers standing near the guard house. They were chattering like

a lot of monkeys, and pointing at an object on the ground. Jack pushed his way through them, and found, to his astonishment, that the object which had attracted the other workers was nothing less than the body of one of the guards.

“What is the matter with the officer?” he asked.

The workers stopped their chattering, but no one answered. He repeated the question, with no better result.

“Can’t any of you speak?” he asked, impatiently.

Still there was no response. He took the nearest man by the shoulders and shook him.

“He—he’s killed,” stammered the man.

“Who killed him?”

“He’s dead,” the fellow went on. “He’s dead all right. Turn him over and see!”

Jack stooped over the fallen officer and lifted him in his powerful arms. One glance at the face was enough. The man *was* dead, and had sufficient reason for yielding up the ghost. His skull was smashed, by a terrible blow apparently, and with the blood and dirt his face was a terrible sight. Jack laid the body gently down, and stepping into the guard house he brought out a cloak and covered the dead man’s head.

Then he turned once more to the workers, who had been watching him curiously.

“What happened?” he asked again.

“There’s another through there,” said the man who had previously spoken; “another one there—through the gate.”

He nodded towards the entrance.

Pushing the man aside, Jack sprang to the gate, one half of which was open, the other shut by a bolt at the bottom. About two feet on the further side lay the body of the second officer, on his back, with his arms outspread, and his fast glazing eyes turned toward the sky.

Jack could see no wound, and knelt down to examine the body more closely. As he moved the head he found that the man's neck had been broken. He looked up at the workers, who had followed him.

"Are you all mad?" he asked. "Don't any of you know who or what killed these men?"

A tall man was eating. Jack fixed his eyes on him.

"Fowl!" said the man. "Got it in the guard house. There's no more; wish there was. He had fowl for dinner."

He pointed with his foot at the dead man.

"What killed him?" asked Jack.

"Oh, him!" replied the tall man. "Jones killed him. The other one too," he added, after a pause. Then he grinned.

"Look out!" cried someone. "Look out! Here come a lot o' police!"

"I'm off; not good enough stoppin' here," said the tall man. There was a wild scramble, and a moment later Jack Bruce was alone with the dead; at least, he thought he was alone.

"Hallo!" cried a voice behind him.

Jack turned hastily and saw the worker who had

been turned back earlier in the day. He was crouching near the fence.

“Look out for yourself,” said the man.

“What’s the matter?” asked Jack

“A lot of officers are coming from the Park—there are four, anyhow. Let them come! I’ll give them a surprise. They won’t turn me back again. Look here!”

He showed Jack a rifle.

“I’ve got two of them, and two pistols. Can you shoot?”

“No,” replied Jack, shortly.

“That’s a pity! Hey! Lock that gate, will you? You’ll find the keys on the ground—beside that chap.”

“Why?” asked Jack.

“Why?” repeated the other, scornfully. “To keep those fellows from taking us in the rear—if they get through.”

Jack hesitated a moment. Then he locked the gate, as requested.

“Come over here—behind the shed!” said the man with the rifle.

“Here they come!” he whispered. “Look through that hole. I punched a couple of holes with the butt of the rifle.”

Peering through the hole in the iron fence, Jack saw four officers coming up the road from the direction of Callan Park. They were walking quickly, holding their rifles in readiness, but were evidently at a loss to know what the absence of the guards

meant. They could not see the gate, as it was hidden by the guard house.

Jack touched the worker on the shoulder and whispered:

“You surely don’t intend to shoot without first warning these men, do you?”

“Warn them! I’ll warn them,” growled the other. “They’ll be up among the angels before they know what struck them.”

Jack’s position was a trying one. If he attempted to prevent Jones killing the officers he ran the risk of being shot for his pains. If he were captured by the officers while in Jones’ company he would certainly be shot by the authorities. On the other hand, although he had planned the overthrow of the Government, he hesitated when action meant taking life—even the life of one of the tyrants.

While he was still undecided what to do, there was a sound of shouting behind, and turning round he saw a number of men running down the road towards the gate. At first glance he thought they were all officers; then he saw that there were only five of these, the rest being workers. Just then Jones fired at the officers on the other side of the fence.

“One down!” he hissed, and fired again. “Hallo! Missed him! No, by Jove! Got him too!”

Jack looked through the hole in the fence again. Two officers were standing about sixty yards from the gate; the other two were lying on the road beside them. The survivors turned and dodged for cover. Jones fired again, but though he wounded

one of the men in the leg they both got away. A shot struck the fence near Jones' head. He turned suddenly and saw the officers on his own side of the fence for the first time.

"Hallo! Is that the game?" he growled. "Lie down!—down!—quick!"

A bullet tore up the ground between them. The officers were now within a hundred yards, while the workers had disappeared behind a building about fifty yards further from the gate. Jones opened fire, and his first shot struck one of the officers in the arm. Dropping his rifle, the man grasped the wounded limb with his other hand and began running round and round like a winged duck.

Jack picked up the other rifle. He had often handled the rifle of his foreman friend, and was familiar with the mechanism of the weapon, but, of course, had never fired a shot. Raising the rifle he began shooting. Certainly he did not hit anything but the road, but the moral effect was good, and when, a moment later, Jones disabled a second man, the others promptly turned and ran. The fellow with the broken arm followed the unwounded men at his best pace, but one man lay where he had fallen—too badly hurt to get up. Jones fired a couple more shots after the retreating officers, but did no further damage.

"Hooray!" he shouted.

"We've done it now," said Jack, grimly. "There will be a hundred of them on top of us presently."

"No fear! Not to-night," observed Jones, in a confident tone.

It was almost dark.

Jones went on: "We must get a 'move on' quick. Keep along the wall to the water, and try our luck for a boat. Wait half a minute, though! I must see if there are any more cartridges in the guard house, in case we have to fight again."

He picked up the keys, which Jack had thrown down (after locking the gate), and disappeared into the guard house. He returned a moment later with two belts of cartridges. He handed one to Jack, who took it without a word. He felt that he was committed now, and could not go back, even if he had wished.

In the darkness the two workers made their way to Long Cove, where they had the good fortune to find a motor boat, which they at once commandeered. Jones had no difficulty in starting the engine. He was an engineer, he informed Jack, employed in one of the Balmain shops.

Jones was anxious to get as far away from the scene of their late encounter as possible before morning, and suggested that they should get clear of the Harbor and run up the coast.

"I don't like the idea at all," said Jack. "If the owner misses his boat to-night he will suspect us, and perhaps we should be captured before we could clear the Heads. Even if we got outside we should only be overhauled in the morning. We cannot wander about indefinitely, and I propose that we go to Newcastle and do our best to stir up a revolt among the miners. Let us go up the river a few miles, land at some quiet spot, and abandon

the boat. The tide will carry it miles before morning, and then the authorities will have no clue to our whereabouts."

"All right!" agreed Jones.

In the boat they found half a tin of biscuits, of which they were very glad, as they were both hungry. They took, besides, a sheet and two bags. As they jumped ashore above Gladesville, an hour later, Jones remarked as he pushed the boat out into the stream:

"Now for Newcastle and revolution! God help the man who tries to stop me!"

"Newcastle and liberty, I hope, as well as revolution," said Jack.

And so began the great revolt.



CHAPTER X.

THE AIRSHIP.

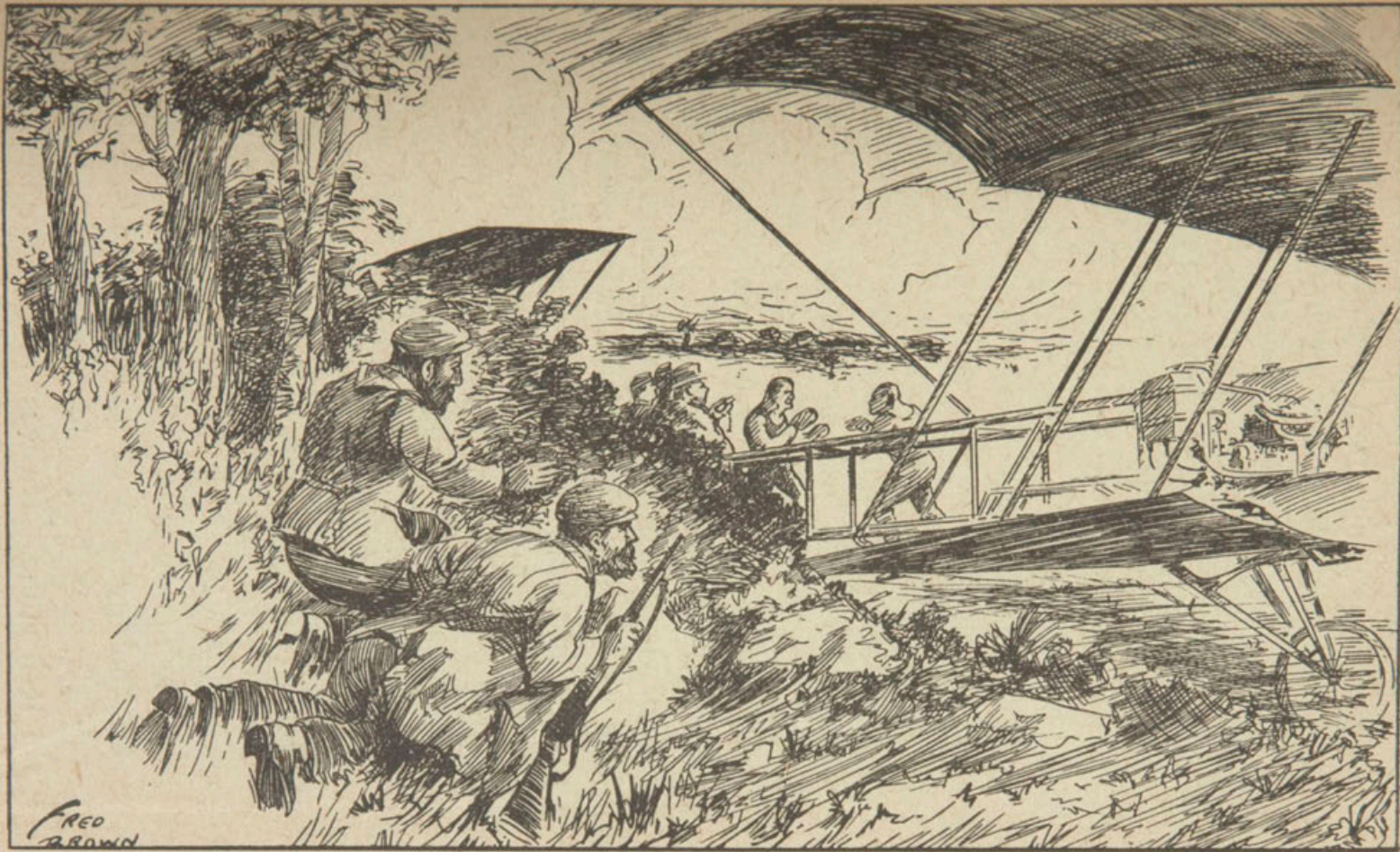
JACK and his companion walked for some hours before they deemed it safe to halt for a rest. They decided that it would be unwise to travel by day. Coming to a creek they had a drink, then crossed to a little flat, on the further side of which they could make out some stunted bushes and vines. Feeling their way among these, they found a clear spot, where they spread the sheet, and getting feet first into their sacks, they lay down and quickly forgot their troubles in slumber.

They slept the sleep of the tired until about eight o'clock next morning, and might have snored away peacefully enough in their retreat for another hour if they had not been aroused by men's voices. They were instantly awake, and grasped their rifles.

"What's up?" asked Jones, in a whisper.

"Someone just beyond the bushes, I think," replied Jack. "Surely they cannot have traced us so quickly. Let us have a look."

They dragged their bodies noiselessly round a thick bush and peered out through the undergrowth. A strange spectacle met their gaze. Within



FRED
BROWN

A STRANGE SPECTACLE MET THEIR GAZE.

fifty feet of where they lay, stood two men, stripped to the waist. They had boxing gloves upon their hands, and each of them was attended by another man, who appeared to be acting (or preparing to act) as his second. A fifth man, muffled up in a sealskin coat, and holding a watch in his gloved hands, was apparently directing proceedings. About twenty-five or thirty yards beyond the group a beautiful aeroplane rested on its wheels. At the sight of the elegant machine Jones swore softly under his breath.

“What a beauty!” he whispered.

“We must have it,” said Jack.

Jones could scarcely refrain from shouting aloud as he realized what Jack’s proposal meant.

“Yes, we’ll have it,” he murmured, “have it, if we have to kill these men to get it.”

The man with the watch was speaking, and from the manner in which his remarks were received it was evident that he was a man of some importance.

“Now, boys! I expect you to make it willing. You, Kelly! I know what you can do—” (this to a beetle-browed ruffian, who looked as if he had been mangled by a tiger at some time)—“I want you to ‘try out’ Wise here, so that I may get an idea how he’ll shape against the nigger next month. A fair go now, mind, or you’ll hear from me in a way you won’t appreciate.”

Both of the men nodded. The younger one, Wise, was a fine-looking man of about twenty-five years, well over six feet in height, and weighing, perhaps, thirteen stone. He was, however, quite four-

teen pounds lighter than his opponent, though he appeared to be in better condition than that ill-favored individual.

"Now," resumed the man with the watch, "as we have no referee, I am going to act. I'm not going to bother pulling you fellows apart when you clinch. I'll just tell you to 'break,' and you had better break when you're told, or there will be trouble. Ready? Right! Time!"

The two men shook hands in the orthodox fashion. Then Kelly, crouching like a gorilla, tried with his left for the head, but Wise blocked, and bringing his right across, landed on the other's iron face. Kelly evened matters by getting home on the body, but in trying to repeat the blow he ran against Wise's left. The round ended without any serious damage.

The second round began with a rush by Kelly, but Wise side-stepped his heavier opponent, and then drew first blood with a blow over Kelly's left eye. Then a clinch. In the break-away Kelly landed a heavy blow in the ribs, but Wise was on the move, and only smiled. Kelly drove his left again to the body, but caught it on the damaged eye in return.

Wise began the attack in the third round, but Kelly, countering, landed hard on the side of the head, staggering the younger man. Then came a fierce mix, during which Wise rather more than held his own, and Kelly was bleeding profusely at the end of the round.

Both were perspiring freely at the beginning of

the fourth session, but Wise, fighting coolly, found Kelly's face twice, and escaped the return on each occasion. Spluttering with rage, Kelly rushed in, and in spite of a heavy blow in the mouth he succeeded in landing twice on Wise's body.

"Shake it up a bit!" growled the man with the watch, and the combatants shook it up. Hit—miss—clinch; then a moment's sparring, and a mix, during which Kelly dropped Wise with an uppercut. He was up at once, however, and boxing well at the end of the round.

For five rounds more the contest was fairly even, although it was apparent that Kelly's want of condition was beginning to tell.

As they came up for the tenth round, Kelly, fully aware that in a long fight his better trained opponent must wear him down, charged furiously, and attempted to beat down Wise's defence by sheer weight. But, nimble as a cat, Wise easily evaded the other's rush, and then, coming in, swung a heavy right to the jaw, knocking Kelly off his feet.

"Well hit!" remarked the man with the watch.

Kelly rose to his feet at "seven," and managed to see the round out, though he was decidedly "groggy" as he went to his corner.

"Old chap's done," whispered Jones. "Next round will finish him. What about the 'plane?"

"Let us creep back and get clear of the bushes," suggested Jack.

Drawing back, they stood up and got ready for a rush.

"Time!" cried the man with the watch.

The workers saw a confused swinging of arms, then heard the impact of a blow, and the fight was over. Kelly lay still, while the others gathered round him.

"Now!" whispered Jack, and breaking from their cover they ran at the top of their pace for the aeroplane. They had passed the group clustered round the fallen man before they were noticed. Then the man in the fur coat looked round.

"Hallo!" he cried. "Where are you going? By the Lord! they're after the 'plane! Here, Jenkins! Wilson! After them! Stop!"

But the two workers had already reached the aeroplane and lost no time in climbing into it.

"Stand them off while I get the motor going," said Jones hurriedly.

Jack raised his rifle.

"Look here, gentlemen!" he observed, "I don't want to hurt any of you, but we want this airship, and if we can't get it without shooting you, well, you must be shot, that is all."

The owners of the aeroplane pulled up at once. Wise had put on his shirt and was holding his coat in his hand. Kelly was walking unsteadily towards the creek, taking not the slightest interest in the proceedings.

The late referee was plainly annoyed.

"You fellows had better be careful what you are doing," he shouted. "Do you know who I am?"

"Haven't any idea," replied Bruce.

"Ha! I thought not. Well, I am Mr. Watson, Head of the Police Department."

“I am afraid the police will have to get along without a head for one day—unless you happen to be a good walker,” said Jack, cheerfully.

“Curse your insolence, fellow! I’ll—— What is it, Jenkins?” This to one of his companions, who had pulled his sleeve.

They whispered together a moment. Then Mr. Watson turned again to Jack.

“Haw!” he began, “I suppose if you must have the ’plane you must, and that’s the end of it. You might let me have my bag, though. It contains only papers and personal effects, which would be of no use to you, while their loss would be very inconvenient to me. The canvas bag—that brown one on the stern seat, pass it down, like a good fellow.”

“Oh! we don’t want your papers,” replied Jack. “I’ll get the bag for you.”

As he turned, his attention was attracted by Wise, who was standing almost directly behind Mr. Watson. The young pugilist frowned and shook his head as he caught Jack’s eye. The great man spun round suddenly and saw Wise’s actions.

“What are you making signs about?” he demanded fiercely.

Wise did not reply in words, but his fist shot out like lightning, and caught the Police Superintendent on the jaw, sending him staggering into the arms of Jenkins. Then, with one bound, the pugilist reached the side of the aeroplane.

“Let me in quick!” he cried. “I’ll put you up to a point.”

Jack lowered his rifle, and Wise sprang in beside him. Then he rushed over to where Jones was wrestling with the lever.

"Let me attend to that," he said quietly.

"Do you know anything about this cursed thing?" asked Jones.

"Yes, yes, I've been driving it," was the reply.

Jones rose without a word and went over to join Jack. Mr. Watson was sitting up, supported by the man he had addressed as Jenkins, while the other man was gazing from side to side as if he could hardly realize the situation.

"New chap's a driver," remarked Jones. "I am jolly glad, too; they've got some kind of a new-fangled motor, and it would have been about judgment day before I could start it. Hello! didn't take him long!"

There was a buzz, and the aeroplane sprang into the air like a bird.

Mr. Watson was holding his jaw with his left hand, but he shook the right in impotent rage at the escaping workers.

Jones raised his cap politely.

"Hope you'll have a pleasant walk," he shouted.

They did not catch the great man's reply.

"Come over here!" called Wise presently, when they had risen to a height of about three hundred feet above the tree tops.

"There is a gun in that canvas bag the old super. was trying to get you to pass down to him," he went on, addressing Bruce.

“A gun! Why, he said it contained only papers and personal effects,” said Jack.

“Personal effects—hum!” laughed Wise; “it’s an Electric Gun—a real infernal machine.”

“I am glad he didn’t get it, thanks to your timely warning,” exclaimed Jack.

“I guess you have reason to be glad,” remarked the other. “He’d have cut your trip pretty short if he had got hold of that thing.”

“It’s a dangerous weapon, then?”

“Dangerous! I should just think so,” replied Wise. “I heard old Watson telling Jenkins about it this morning, when he was showing him how it was worked. He said he could wipe out an army with it in five minutes. It is the only weapon of the kind in Sydney, it appears. He got it from a friend in the States a few days ago.”

“By Jove!” remarked Jack. “Is this a good airship?” he asked, after a pause.

“Best in Australia,” replied Wise, enthusiastically. “Old Watson is a great old ‘sport,’ and he can’t stand anyone beating him in anything. You managed to do it, though,” he added, with a grin.

“I’m afraid the beating would not have been anything to boast about if you had not come to our assistance,” said Jack. “Of course, we could have shot them, perhaps, but that wouldn’t have helped us much if we couldn’t move the aeroplane. But, I say, you must be tired after—after your exertions this morning. Perhaps if you were to explain the mechanism to Jones here, he could manage the aeroplane.”

“Oh! I’m all right,” laughed Wise. “A little bit of exercise like that doesn’t do a man any harm. Want to go anywhere in particular, or shall we just cruise round and have a look at the landscape?”

“We wish to go to Newcastle.”

“Newcastle? Right-oh! We can be there in about half an hour. What are you going to do when you get there?”

“That is the question,” replied Jack, “but how long can we go on, without having to descend for oil or whatever drives the motor? I am very ignorant of these things.”

“Electric motor—storage battery; go for about forty hours at moderate speed.” Wise looked at the indicator. “Yes, about forty hours. We could go to Capetown if you wished.”

“Thanks,” said Jack, “but Newcastle will suit us very well at present, but we must first decide what we are going to do when we get there. Our present intention is to endeavour to stir up a revolt amongst the Newcastle miners. If we can get possession of the arsenal and arm the miners we ought to be able to capture the town, and after that the whole district. Then a rush for Sydney. If that succeeds the whole country would rise, I confidently believe, and the System is doomed.”

“Down with the System!” hissed Jones, “and with the tyrants as well!”

Wise looked at the speaker with a smile.

“I’m with you there,” he said, “more especially the tyrant part, but it won’t be such an easy matter. Once you get the thing started properly I

believe that it can be done, but it is the first step that costs, they say.”

“We took the first step yesterday,” observed Jack.

“Yesterday! Why, you must be some of the Balmain men!”

“Yes, we are the Balmain men. You heard about the affair then?”

“Heard old Watson talking about it,” replied Wise. “He said about a hundred of the workers made an attack upon two of the officers at one of the Balmain gate-houses. The scoundrels, that’s what he called you, had killed the two gatekeepers and about a dozen other officials before they were overpowered by his brave fellows, who captured the whole of the mutineers. It seems that he made a mistake, as his ‘brave fellows’ didn’t capture the whole of them. Two of you got away, apparently.”

“There were only two of us all through,” said Bruce.

Here Jones broke in:

“Two! There was only one at the beginning.” He looked at Jack a moment, and then went on: “I didn’t tell you what started the trouble. You were there, I think, when the gatekeeper turned me back. Well, after you had gone I again approached and asked permission to go through. The official was a stranger to you, perhaps, but I knew him. Curse him! I knew him, only too well. Listen! Five years ago I had a daughter—a worker in the clothing factory. She was a very pretty girl, and attracted the notice of this fellow, who was one of the

factory foremen. My daughter disappeared! I was half mad for weeks. Then I found out that this man—Morris—had taken her away. I lodged a complaint at the District Superintendent's office. That official heard my story, and threatened me with a flogging for 'making a false statement.' I bided my time! It came yesterday.

"As God is my judge," he resumed, "I did not kill the man in cold blood. He refused to let me pass. I was turning away when he made use of an abominable expression about my daughter. Then I struck him. He raised his rifle to shoot me but in an instant I had torn the weapon from his grasp. I don't know that I would even then have injured him further, but he drew his pistol, and I struck at him with the butt of the rifle, intending to disable him. As I struck he turned, and the blow fell upon the back of his neck. I saw at once that I had killed the man, and then I realized that I must escape. The other guard was coming out of the gatehouse as I rushed through the gate, and—and you know the rest."

"And the other workers, what did they do?" asked Wise.

"There weren't any present then," replied Jones, "and when they did arrive they did nothing, as Bruce can tell you. We were attacked on both sides by the police, but succeeded in beating them off, and got away."

Wise held out his hand.

"Shake!" he said. "I'm with you to see it

through. But, about this Newcastle business, how are you going about it?"

"I was thinking," replied Jack, "that we had better make for the mountains at present, and wait there until after dark. Then we can travel to Newcastle, where you can drop me. I must then trust to luck. How many men will the aeroplane carry?"

"Twenty-five comfortably; thirty at a pinch," replied Wise.

It was arranged that Jack should be dropped in the Newcastle Reserve (the position of which was well known to Wise, who had been Mr. Watson's driver for some months) at about eight o'clock that night, and that Wise and Jones should then go back to the mountains. Next night they should return to the same spot to meet Bruce, who, in the meantime, would endeavour to get a force of miners to volunteer for an attack upon the arsenal. It was believed that twenty-five men could carry the position, especially as they now had the Electric Gun, which they would test later on. If the attack succeeded they would at once distribute arms among the miners, and rush the barracks in the town.

"How about something to eat?" asked Jones suddenly. "I could eat a horse, as we used to say in the old days."

"Have a look in that hamper," said Wise, pointing towards the stern of the aeroplane.

The hamper was found to contain a roast fowl, about four pounds of ham, an ox tongue, and a couple of loaves of bread, besides butter, cheese, mustard, two bottles of champagne, and half a dozen

of ale. Mr. Watson, the Head of the Police, was evidently a gentleman who believed in treating himself well. There was also a box of cigars. Jones pounced upon this with a cry of delight.

“Cigars!” he exclaimed. “Oh, you beauties! I haven’t had a smoke for about a hundred years. Matches, quick! Here, boys! have a smoke!”

Wise took a cigar, with a grin.

“Well, it isn’t quite so long since I had a draw,” he observed, “but it is a good while. Old Watson used to have me watched pretty closely. Afraid I’d lose my condition, I suppose.”

Jack declined the weed.

“No thanks,” he said. “Fortunately for me I never knew the joys of tobacco, so the regulations of the System did not hurt me in that respect.”

“All the more for Wise and me,” chuckled Jones. “By Jove! Puff! Puff! I live again.”

“I thought you were hungry!” said Jack.

“Not now; not now,” murmured Jones. “You can have all the fowl and ham. I’m all right. All right! I’m in Heaven!”

CHAPTER XI.

A CAPTURE AND A RESCUE.

MARY HEATH heard nothing of the fight at the gate until Monday morning. She had retired early on Sunday night, and although she noticed that there was a good deal of excitement amongst the girls at breakfast next morning she did not learn the cause.

She was standing at the lodging-house gate when Ronald Gray came along on his way to work. She bowed and smiled pleasantly as the young Englishman raised his cap. He looked rather surprised to see her so cheerful.

"Pardon me, Miss Heath," he said, "but have you heard anything—anything about Bruce?"

"About Jack!" she exclaimed, paling in an instant. "Where is he? What is the matter?"

"Haven't you heard?" he asked in astonishment.

"I have heard nothing," she answered in a trembling tone. "Is he ill?"

"Come along, and I will tell you all I know," he said gently.

As they walked up the road he related as briefly as possible all that he had learned of the fracas at

the gate-house on the previous afternoon, finishing up with a declaration that, in his opinion, the young worker would succeed in getting clear away.

“You do not think he has been captured then?” asked Mary.

“I feel sure that he hasn’t,” replied Ronald. “Bruce is a very resourceful fellow, and it will surprise me very much if they get him. I have made enquiries about his companion, but he lodges at number Six, so that none of our people know much of him. But I understand that the gate is only about half a mile from the Harbour, and I believe that they have both got away from Balmain by swimming across to the North Shore.”

“Thank you so much for saying that,” exclaimed Mary, giving him a grateful look. “Jack told me of his plan of escape, and that he thought of swimming across the Harbour.”

“Bruce is a fine fellow—a very fine fellow,” observed Ronald, “don’t you think so? I beg your pardon—of course—I——” He broke off in confusion.

Mary smiled.

“There is no need to beg my pardon,” she said, pleasantly.

They walked on awhile in silence. Then Ronald spoke:

“If there is anything I can do for you, Miss Heath, I hope that you will not hesitate to ask me. Come to me as you would to your own brother. I feel that a great change is about to take place. I

have every confidence in Bruce. If he gets clear, and I am firmly convinced that he has succeeded so far, I believe he will reach Newcastle. The miners are ready to rise at any moment, and only want a leader. If there is any fighting I shall be with Bruce. Mr. Denfrew is the head of the Government, but his daughter is on our side. She is a noble girl. I wish that you knew her."

"It is very unlikely that we shall ever meet," replied Mary. "But I must not say that. It seems almost like disloyalty—to Jack," she added in a low tone, but Ronald heard—and understood.

"I may be leaving Balmain very soon," said Ronald, "that is, when I am sure that Bruce has got away. In case the projected attack upon Newcastle fails I may be able to protect the workers. I am in rather a difficult position, as I can hardly take up arms against my uncle, but, at the same time, I will do all that I can, in honor, to assist the workers to overthrow the System."

"But will you be permitted to leave Balmain?" asked Mary, in surprise.

"I have a pass," he replied. "It was placed in my hands by an officer—a stranger to me—shortly after I sent in my resignation. I hesitated about bringing it with me when I came here, but was persuaded to do so later on."

Ronald did not consider it necessary to tell Mary that he had made up his mind not to accept the pass, and that he was about to leave his uncle's house when Miss Denfrew's brother Claude, a lad of seventeen, put in an appearance.

“Hallo!” exclaimed the lad, “so you are going to chuck it?”

“Yes,” replied Ronald, “I’m leaving to-day.”

“Bully for you! old man,” said the boy; “wish you’d take me with you. You’ll see me over there one of these days.”

Claude had been walking about the room in his impetuous way while he was speaking, and presently noticed the pass, which Ronald had left upon the table.

“Aren’t you taking this?” asked the lad.

“No—at least, I think not,” was the reply.

Claude pulled a long face.

“By Jove! there’ll be trouble if you don’t. Look here, Gray, I sent this.”

“Thank you very much for your kindly thought,” began Ronald.

“Oh! kindly thought be hanged,” cried Claude. “It wasn’t my kindly thought. The fact is, I didn’t think of the thing at all, but someone else did, and made me promise—— Oh! dash it all, Gray, you’ll have to take the pass. Kathleen got it for you and made me send Tuck with it. She made me come along now, too, to make sure that you didn’t leave it behind. I forgot, though; she told me not to mention her name. Anyhow, it’s done now, and can’t be helped.”

Needless to say, Ronald took the pass. It had become something sacred, since he learnt that he owed it to Kathleen Denfrew.

“I wish that I had a pass just now,” murmured Mary, “though I don’t suppose I could do very

much. Many things have changed since the old days, but the position of woman remains the same. She must still be content to wait—to wait and hope.”

Ronald stopped suddenly.

“Miss Heath,” he said, earnestly, “I shall go at once. I’ll go back now to my lodging-house, get my pass, and go over to the city. I know what you must be suffering. If I can enlist Miss Denfrew’s sympathy, and that is certain, I believe that some arrangement can be made so that you may come away. Keep up your courage. Everything will be all right.”

He raised his cap and then ran swiftly down the road.

It still wanted a few minutes of the hour for starting work when Mary Heath reached the factory. The affair of the gate-house was the sole topic of conversation amongst the workers.

“They’re sure to be caught before this,” said a sad-faced woman. “I remember, about nine or ten years ago, two men got away. They were out all night. The police found them down by the water next morning, near Peacock’s Point. They shot one, but the other jumped into the Harbour and started to swim across. The police fired at him, but missed, and then they got a launch and started after him. They didn’t get him, though. No, just as the boat got close the poor fellow gave an awful scream and disappeared. The men in the boat saw a lot of blood in the water; sharks, you know. Oh!

there's no chance of these two getting away, no chance at all."

Mary felt her heart sink as she listened to the sad-faced woman's tale. Then a girl spoke:

"Might as well stay here, I say, as get eaten by a shark, though I don't suppose the sharks are much worse than some of these official beasts. I hope these two get away, all the same."

"Well, I don't," said another girl.

"Why don't you?" asked the other.

"Why! 'Cause I don't reckon it's fair, in the first place, and besides, if they get away it will only make it worse for us. It's bad enough now, the Lord knows."

The ringing of the factory bell put an end to the talk for the time being.

Mary Heath was, generally, a brisk worker, but to-day she could not fix her attention upon her task. Amid the buzzing of the machines and the clicking of the scissors she was listening—listening. Once there was a clatter outside, and in her terror she thought she could hear Jack Bruce's voice. It was only the delivery car with material for the workshop. She bent her head over her work again.

The day seemed interminable, but even the longest day ends at last.

As Mary turned into the main street one of the girls overtook her.

"I am so sorry," began the girl. "I have been watching you to-day."

"It has been a very trying day," sighed Mary.

“Oh! I don’t know how you could endure it; you must be brave!” said the girl, admiringly. “I should have screamed.”

“I’m afraid I don’t feel very brave,” replied poor Mary.

At that moment a motor car dashed up, and was brought to a standstill close to the two girls. Two men leaped out.

“That’s the one! the girl with the dark hair! Quick!” shouted a man, who was still seated in the car.

In an instant, before she realized their intention, the men seized Mary, and sprang towards the car. The other girl stood for a moment, then rushing forward she grasped Mary’s skirt and attempted to drag her from the arms of her captors.

“Knock her over!” shouted the man in the car.

Releasing his hold of Mary, one of the men turned and struck the fair-haired girl in the face. She fell without a word.

“In with you, now!” cried the man at the driving wheel. “Stand back!” This to a number of workers, who were running up to see the cause of the disturbance. “Johnson! you hold the girl! Riley! you get your gun, and shoot anyone who tries to stop us.”

There was a buzz, and the car was tearing up the street at a furious rate.

Johnson, the man who held Mary Heath, was a powerful fellow, and after a moment’s ineffectual struggling she became quiet.

“What do you mean by this outrage?” she demanded.

Johnson grinned.

“That’s a bit better,” he remarked. “My word! you’re a pretty strong girl. Took me all my time to hold you at first.”

“Let me go! Let me out at once,” said Mary, bravely enough, although she knew that her appeal was not at all likely to be successful.

The driver of the car here turned round.

“Hallo, my beauty!” he remarked. “Don’t you know me?”

Mary recognized the man as the official whom she had seen at the Children’s Home.

“Ah! I see you know me again,” laughed the fellow. “I flattered myself that you wouldn’t forget— By Jingo! Close shave that!”

The car swerved and was almost into the kerbing.

“Here, Riley!” he said, “climb over here and drive. I want to have a talk.”

The exchange was soon effected, and taking the seat vacated by Riley, the man leaned forward, with his hands on his knees, and stared at Mary.

“How do you like me?” he asked with a grin.

Mary made no reply in words, but her look would have abashed anyone excepting an official.

“Stare away!” he chuckled. “Feast your eyes upon my classic features. I don’t mind in the least. I say, didn’t I do it well, though? Just like a knight of old with his lady love, eh?”

By way of answer Mary turned her head and gazed persistently at the back of the driver.

The bridge from Glebe Island to Pyrmont was regarded as unsafe for traffic, so that the only road to the city was round the head of Rozelle Bay. As they reached the bridge over the stormwater channel at the mouth of Johnston's Creek, another car came round the bend of the road, down the hill. The road had been recently metalled, but not rolled, and the cars approached each other slowly—ploughing through the heavy ballast.

As soon as she noticed the other car Mary Heath determined that she would make an effort to escape.

By a sudden movement she wrenched her hand from Johnson's grasp, and springing to her feet she cried: "Save me! Save me! I am being carried off by these men!"

The new car pulled up at once.

"What's the row?" asked the driver, peering forward. In the dusk the figures of Mary and her abductors were indistinct, though her tones had been clear enough. There was a hurried exclamation, and a man leaped out of the new car and ran across to the other.

"Miss Heath!"

"Oh! Mr. Gray!"

"Stop that car at once!" shouted Ronald.

"Go on, Riley! Run over him!" called the owner of the car, while Johnson, throwing an arm round Mary's waist, clapped his hand over her mouth.

"Out of the way!" growled Riley.

Ronald sprang at the man. "Here, Denfrew!" he cried.

Riley pulled the car up on the instant.

“Did you say Denfrew?” he asked, anxiously.

Claude answered the question in person.

“Yes,” he said, coming forward, “my name is Denfrew. What does this mean?”

There was a muttered exclamation from the back of the car; a wild leap, a crunching of road metal, and the other two men were running down the road. Riley turned his head and listened for a moment.

“D——n them!” he said bitterly. “They have left me to face it out. Look, Mr. Denfrew, I give you my word that I did not know there was anything wrong. I didn’t, honestly.”

Ronald was already assisting Mary out of the car.

“Oh! thank God! thank God! that you came, Mr. Gray,” she cried.

“I trust that you haven’t been very much frightened,” he said, rather lamely. “But let me take you to Miss Denfrew. She is waiting in the other car.”

This was not quite correct, as Kathleen was almost at his elbow as he spoke.

“Miss Heath! What has happened?” she asked, anxiously. “I heard Mr. Gray call your name. Oh! you poor girl!” she went on impulsively, throwing her arms round Mary.

Mary Heath had borne up under the trials of the day bravely enough—the sickening dread that at any moment she might hear of the death or capture of Bruce; the weary waiting; then her abduction and fortunate release—but she broke down

under Kathleen's caress, and burst into a flood of tears.

"Come to my car," said Kathleen, gently.

Meanwhile Riley was in a state of abject terror.

"I didn't mean any harm; really, Mr. Denfrew, I didn't. White, the chap who owns this car, asked Johnson and me to go for a run with him this afternoon. He said he'd been mashing one of the work girls in Balmain, and had arranged to take her away to-day. He swore she was willing to go with him, but would show fight, just for appearance sake, you know. The cowardly cur!"

Claude imitated as well as he could his father's dictatorial manner.

"There is too much of this sort of thing going on," he said sternly, "and it must stop. I shall have to report the whole matter to the—to my father."

"Don't do that!" cried Riley, tremblingly. "For the Lord's sake don't report me to the Boss. He'll have me shot, as sure as you do."

"Quite likely!" retorted Claude.

"But—but——" stammered the man.

"Where are you employed?" asked the lad, shortly.

The fellow hesitated a moment. Then he answered:

"In the Labor Office—in the Boss's own office."

Claude whistled. He was really enjoying the situation immensely, and would have liked to prolong it, but just then his sister called.

"Why are you waiting, Claude?" she asked.

"All right! I'm just coming," he answered. Then, turning to Riley, he said: "See here! I am going to overlook your conduct this time, as I believe that you have told the truth, but you take my advice and keep clear of fellows like White, or you'll be dying in a hurry one of these days. I'll make a note of White's name and see that he behaves himself in future. Get!"

Riley needed no second bidding. The car was moving almost before the lad had finished speaking. Claude looked after the vanishing car, then he walked across and joined the others.

"This is my brother, Claude," said Kathleen. "Claude—Miss Heath!"

Mary held out her hand.

"Thank you so much," she cried, warmly.

"Oh! that's all right!" replied the lad, airily. "Rather enjoyed it, to tell you the truth."

"Claude!" cried his sister, sharply.

"Go on! Go on! Give it to me!" said Claude, in an aggrieved tone. "Sisters are very encouraging, aren't they, Gray?"

"Isn't it time to make a start?" asked Ronald, diplomatically.

It had been arranged that Mary should be taken to the house of Mrs. Munro, at Bondi. When Ronald arrived in the city he had, first of all, gone to his uncle's house for a change of clothing, and then made his way to the Denfrew mansion. Kathleen at once entered heartily into the conspiracy.

"First of all we must bring this poor girl away

from Balmain," she declared, "but the question is where shall we take her?"

"Bring her here," said Claude.

"That would hardly answer, I think," remarked Ronald. "We could not very well ask your father to shelter an escaped worker."

"Let her come here after dark, then," cried Claude. "She can be introduced in the morning as a school friend of Kathleen's. The governor never questions anything she does, and wouldn't suspect her."

"And for that very reason I am not going to deceive him," said Kathleen. "But I have an idea. I'll go and see Lorna Munro and ask her to take Miss Heath. She'll do it, I know."

Mrs. Munro was an intimate friend of the Denfrew family. She had been married about two years before, but her husband was killed within a few months of the marriage. The young widow still kept on the home to which she had gone as a bride; the pension allowed by the State being sufficient to support a modest establishment.

"Bring her here, of course, Kathleen," she said. "I am half inclined to be offended with you for not doing so without asking me. Poor girl! What a dreadful life she must have had!"

When the car reached Mrs. Munro's house Kathleen dismissed Ronald and her brother.

"Come out for me about nine o'clock, Claude," she cried, as she took Mary's arm and led her towards the door.

Mrs. Munro came forward with outstretched hands as the two girls entered.

"I have been quite anxious about you, Kathleen," she exclaimed. "And this is Miss Heath? I am very glad to see you and will do my very best to make you happy here."

She kissed Mary's pale cheek. Poor Mary! She was quite incapable of uttering a word. She had met with so little consideration during her life that, coming on top of Kathleen's affectionate concern for her welfare, Mrs. Munro's kindness was almost too much for her in her present overwrought condition. The widow turned to Kathleen.

"You are a dear, good girl," she whispered, giving her a hug. "Isn't she lovely?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Kathleen, "and when she is properly dressed——" She paused, as if the prospect were beyond what any words could express.

"I have some of my things ready for her," whispered Mrs. Munro; then, aloud: "But let us have tea now; Miss Heath must be just starving."

Kathleen and her hostess were too much excited over the all-important matter of dress to do full justice to the dainties provided at Mrs. Munro's table, while Mary, although she had eaten nothing since breakfast, contented herself with a single slice of bread and butter and a cup of tea, but such tea!

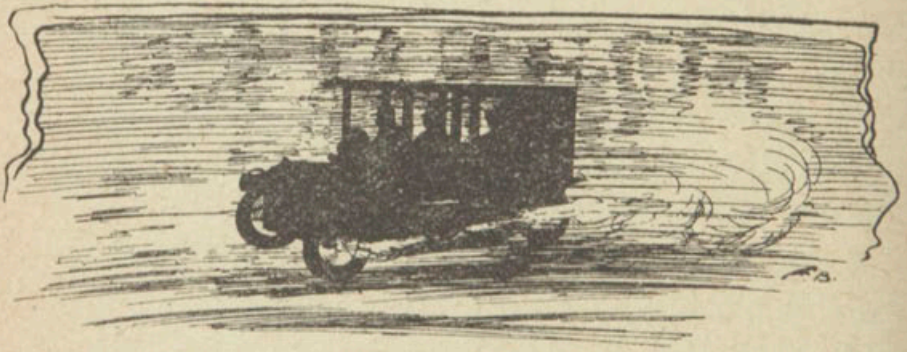
The next two hours formed an era in Mary Heath's life. She was initiated into the mysteries of modern clothes and hairdressing. It was half-past

eight before the transformation from a work girl to a fashionably-garbed young lady was completed. When they descended to the drawing room they found Claude and Ronald.

Claude gazed at Mary a moment in silence. Then he burst out in his impetuous way:

“My word! Miss Heath, I never wished to be grown up so much before.”

“You are becoming quite gallant, Claude,” said his sister, with a smile.



CHAPTER XII.

AT HEADQUARTERS.

MR. DENFREW was annoyed, and when he was upset he let those in his immediate neighbourhood hear about it. The report of the trouble in Balmain awaited him when he reached his office on Monday morning. He immediately gave instructions that Mr. Watson, the head of the Police Department, should be summoned, but was informed by the telephone attendant that that gentleman had not yet arrived at his office.

“Ring up his private residence,” said Mr. Denfrew, shortly.

In a few minutes the clerk returned.

“Mr. Watson is not at home, sir,” he reported.

“Not at home!” growled the great man; “where is he?”

“Mrs. Watson doesn’t know, sir. He left home in his aeroplane early this morning and hasn’t returned yet.”

Mr. Denfrew’s remarks, upon receipt of this information, were quite unfit for publication. When he recovered he said:

“Call up the Police Department again, and tell

Mr. Jamieson that I want to see him at once; do you understand? At once."

The deputy-superintendent put in an appearance a few minutes later. He had motored from Katoomba that morning, and was reading an account of the Balmain affair when the Dictator's message arrived.

"What does this mean, Jamieson?" asked Mr. Denfrew, pointing to the report which lay upon his table.

"I was just reading it myself, sir, and was about to ring up the Balmain office——" began Jamieson.

"You were about to ring up! Why the devil didn't you ring up?" snorted the chief.

"I did not have time to do so."

"No time!" said Mr. Denfrew, irritably. "And Watson away too! What does he mean, I should like to know, by going away at a time like this? Flying about the country instead of attending to his duties! Find out whether the Balmain police have captured or shot those two scoundrels yet, and if not, why not. And listen, give them to understand that there will be serious trouble if those fellows get away."

"Yes, sir."

"Two men to defy the whole police force of a district! I don't know—I do not know what kind of men you must have at Balmain to allow such a thing. Let me know what the local officials have to say, and request Mr. Watson to call at my office as soon as he condescends to return to town. That will do."

Mr. Jamieson vanished.

Mr. Denfrew lay back in his chair. He was a methodical man, and as such he was annoyed that anything should be allowed to upset the strict order he had always insisted upon. The shooting of a few police was a small matter in itself, but that workers should dare to defy his authority! That was a serious matter.

He kept one of his clerks in constant communication with the Police Office all the morning, but could learn nothing of the fugitives.

An hour later it was reported that a motor launch belonging to Langley, manager of the Balmain Clothing Factory, had been found near Rodd Island in Iron Cove, and that the country round Five Dock was being scoured by the police. Mr. Watson was still absent.

Mr. Denfrew went to lunch in a very bad humor.

He found Mr. Jamieson waiting when he returned shortly after two o'clock.

"Well?" he asked.

"I have just heard from Mr. Watson, sir."

"Heard from him! Where is he?"

"He was speaking from Parramatta, sir."

"What the deuce is he doing at Parramatta? And has he caught those two scoundrels?"

"I am afraid he hasn't," replied Mr. Jamieson, answering Mr. Denfrew's second question. Then he went on:

"Mr. Watson says that he has had a mishap and has lost his 'plane. He is coming on by car, as he couldn't find an aeroplane in working condition in

Parramatta. He asked me to say that he will call upon you as soon as he arrives.”

“Um!” grunted Mr. Denfrew, and the deputy took his departure.

Mr. Watson had reached Parramatta; reached that town after hours of walking. He declared afterwards that he had walked at least twenty miles, but this was probably an exaggeration.

Kelly, the defeated pugilist, had kept with the others for the first half-hour, but then, saying that he must have a drink, he left the road, and did not rejoin them. Jenkins drew his superior's attention to the defection, but was gruffly recommended to mind his own business.

Mr. Watson was boiling with rage. He did not like walking exercise at any time, and besides, he was out of condition. The sun was very warm, even although it was midwinter.

They stopped for a spell about eleven o'clock, but when he attempted to resume his walk Mr. Watson found himself so stiff and sore that he declared he could go no further.

“Jenkins, you must go into Parramatta and bring out a car,” he said. “Here! stay where you are, Wilson,” he cried sharply to the other man, who was moving off.

“Right, sir,” said Jenkins, and walked briskly down the road.

Wilson produced a pipe, tobacco and matches, and proceeded to “light up.”

Mr. Watson at once made an examination of his own pockets. He groaned.

“Not a single cigar!” he muttered. He turned fiercely upon Wilson.

“What do you mean by smoking in front of me?” he asked angrily.

“I beg your pardon, sir. I forgot,” he said, humbly.

“Give me that thing!” cried Mr. Watson, stretching out his hand and seizing the pipe. “Hand over your matches as well.”

The man silently obeyed. Mr. Watson took out his handkerchief and wiped the mouthpiece of the pipe carefully. Then he put it in his mouth, struck a match, and blew out a cloud of smoke.

“Um-um!” he grunted.

“Well, I’m—dashed!” murmured Wilson.

“Got any more tobacco?” asked Mr. Watson.

“Yes, sir; plenty,” was the reply.

“All right, you can have a smoke, when I have finished.” Puff—puff!

Jenkins returned with a car about one o’clock. He brought some food and liquid refreshment as well, and after a hasty meal they made a start for Parramatta, where they spent some time in a vain attempt to get an aeroplane. It was after four o’clock when the car drew up before the Police Offices in the city. Mr. Watson proceeded at once to his room, but came out an instant later and made his way to Mr. Denfrew’s office.

“This is a pretty business, Watson!” began the great man. “Here I have been worrying all day

over that affair at Balmain while you have been out enjoying yourself. Where have you been?"

"By Gad! Denfrew, I have had a terrible time," said Mr. Watson, with a groan. "I'm stiff and sore all over. Got my jaw nearly broken into the bargain! I got hold of Kelly; you know 'Smut' Kelly who beat the Frenchman a few months ago?"

Mr. Denfrew nodded.

"Well, I've matched my driver, Wise, with that nigger Dobson brought over with him, and I wanted a line to go upon, so I got Kelly to 'try out' my chap this morning. We went out in the country a bit. They had a real good go, and——"

"Who won?" interrupted Mr. Denfrew.

"Wise; knocked Kelly out in the eleventh round. He had too much condition for the old fellow, and fought better, besides. However, that is not what I was going to tell you about. Just as Kelly went down two fellows—workers—rushed out of the bush and collared the 'plane, my new 'plane, took the cursed thing away, and left us there, miles away from anywhere. We had to walk to Parramatta; at least, Jenkins had to. D——n them!"

"But surely you didn't let them get away with the 'plane without a fight," said Mr. Denfrew.

"Fight! Why, the two blackguards had rifles," retorted the other.

"By Jove! they must have been those two Balmain brutes," observed the Dictator. "Things are beginning to look serious. We'll have a job to capture them again. But I say, did you not tell me

that you had a new style of motor in the 'plane? How did those fellows manage to start it?"

"That infernal Wise started it for them," replied Mr. Watson.

"Wise! Your driver?"

"Yes; a scoundrel, whom I took out of one of the factories. He went with them. I tried to stop the beast, and he knocked me down. Look at my jaw!"

"He hits pretty hard, does he?" asked Mr. Denfrew, with a smile.

"Like a mule kicking," replied Mr. Watson, earnestly.

"It was a good fight, then?" observed Mr. Denfrew.

"First rate!" replied the superintendent, enthusiastically. "Wise will 'eat' the nigger. I'll give old Dobson a surprise."

"I thought you said your man had cleared out," said Mr. Denfrew, quietly.

"Yes, but I'll soon have him back again. By Jove! I'll give him something to remember when I do catch him, that is, as soon as the match is over."

"Better catch him first," advised the other. "Where do you think they'll make for?"

"Oh! the Lord only knows. They may be half way to New Zealand by this time. Let me see, eight hours; they'd be very nearly there by this if they went in that direction."

"Hope the 'plane will break down and drown them," said Mr. Denfrew, piously.

"Hope not; it's my 'plane."

“Looks very much as if it had changed owners,” observed the Dictator.

“How are things at Newcastle to-day?” asked Mr. Watson presently.

“Bad enough,” was the reply. “Only about half the miners ‘turned to’ this morning. I’m afraid that I shall be compelled to try the effect of a little machine gun practice upon them. Confound the brutes! They are never satisfied. They have caused more trouble than all the other workers put together. I have half a mind to close down the mines altogether and shift these fellows to the farms. I would do it in a minute, too, only things are getting pretty tight, and to give them their due, the miners *do* work better than the other lazy wretches.”

“They needn’t kill themselves to do that,” remarked Mr. Watson.

“These Newcastle miners have always been a great anxiety to me,” resumed Mr. Denfrew. “They are difficult men to deal with; always asking for something, although they have privileges which no other workers enjoy. Only recently—within the last year—I have departed from my rule so far as to permit them to re-occupy the old houses. The filthy brutes prefer to ‘hog’ it in those old tumble-down shanties rather than occupy the clean, roomy quarters provided by the State. And now what do you think they are asking for?”

Mr. Watson murmured that it was quite impossible to guess what extravagant demand the degraded miners were capable of making. Nothing would surprise *him*.

“They want to be supplied with food from the stores,” said Mr. Denfrew, nodding his head as he uttered each word, as if to emphasize it. “Food—from—the stores! What do you think of that?”

Mr. Watson was horrified, and said so.

“They haven’t a particle of gratitude,” went on Mr. Denfrew, “not an atom. Here am I, doing my utmost to make them comfortable, devising schemes for their welfare, and what thanks do I get? You know what the old days were like, Watson. The workers could starve if they didn’t have the wherewithal to purchase food. If their wives and children fell sick they had to let them die for want of proper medical attention, and then they had to pay heavy fees to an undertaker to bury those whom they couldn’t afford to keep alive.”

“Quite true,” agreed the other.

“Then, remember the condition in which they lived—the dirty, insanitary houses—the adulterated food—the way in which they were robbed and cheated by grasping landlords and sweating employers, and swindled by butchers and bakers and grocers and tailors. I cannot understand how the poor wretches could sleep at night, knowing, as they did, that the merest accident might throw them, together with their wives and families, into the street—into the street, to starve.”

“That happened frequently,” observed Mr. Watson.

“Yes, I know it did, and yet these ignorant fools to-day believe, or pretend to believe, that the condition of the workers in those days was preferable

to the comfortable and easy life they enjoy under *me*.

“Why just look at what we have done for the children! In the bad old days people were reluctant to bring children into the world, naturally so, since they could have no guarantee that the poor infants would get enough to eat. Now”—(Mr. Denfrew paused)—“now the workers know that their children will be cared for by the State, that they will be fed, clothed, educated, that they will be attended when sick by our highly-skilled medical officers and trained nurses, in short, that they will be taken in hand by a paternal Government from the hour of their birth to the day of their death.”

“It is indeed an admirable system, and one that might with advantage be followed by the whole world,” said the Police Superintendent, warmly.

Mr. Denfrew nodded. Then he proceeded:

“The workers of to-day have no care, no worry, no anxiety. In good and bad seasons alike they have abundance of good, wholesome food. If sickness or accident overtake them they receive the best medical advice free of charge; no deduction is made from their food or clothing allowance. The State pays for all. Yet for *me*—for the man to whom, as the representative of the System—they owe all this, they have not a good word; not a kindly thought. Bah! Ungrateful brutes!”

“Still the satisfaction of knowing that one is doing right is in itself a reward,” remarked Mr. Watson.

“Oh! I know all about that,” replied Mr. Denfrew, irritably, “but all the same one likes to see that his work is appreciated. But instead of appreciation I get nothing but abuse and vilification. Anyone would think that I had injured them in some way!”

“I don’t know how they can think that,” murmured Mr. Watson.

“They’d think anything,” snorted Mr. Denfrew. “Only last week one of the mine foremen met with a nasty accident, if it was an accident. I’m very doubtful about it myself. It appears that there is a tool box outside one of the blacksmith’s shops. Well, the foreman was getting something out of the box when the heavy lid fell upon him—nearly broke his neck. A worker was passing at the time, but he made not the slightest attempt to release the unfortunate official. No! He just stood there with a grin on his face, and when one of the clerks remonstrated with him the callous brute remarked that it was ‘good enough for the’—you know, and that he was ‘only sorry it wasn’t Denfrew’s neck.’”

“Abominable! I hope they had the fellow severely punished,” exclaimed the Superintendent, warmly.

“Punished! How could they punish him when they didn’t know his number?” replied the great man. “The clerk could not remember the number, and had also forgotten what the man was like. Very convenient memory he appears to have. The fact is that the officials are afraid of the miners.”

“It is a dreadful state of things!” said Mr. Watson. “Have you thought of any plan to—to quieten them?”

“Yes; I shall give them a lesson shortly,” replied Mr. Denfrew, grimly. “I think one lesson will be enough. On Saturday I sent up a dozen machine guns and five thousand rifles to the Newcastle arsenal. In a day or two—as soon as I can get them together—I am going to send along the men to use the weapons—a lot of clerks from the city.”

“Clerks?”

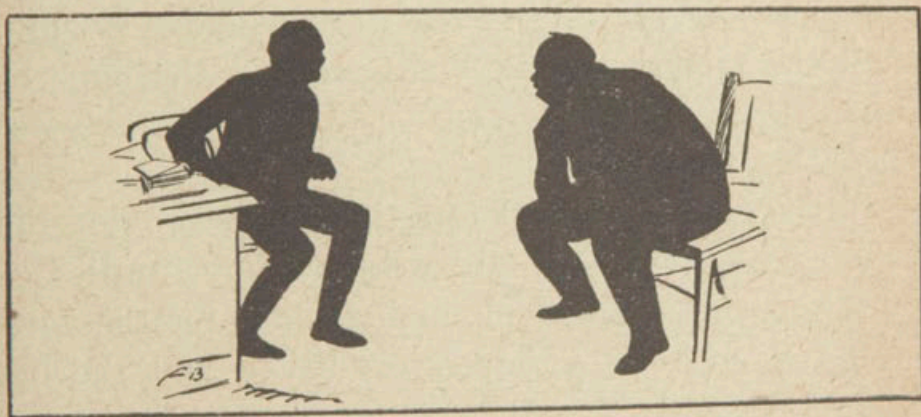
“Yes, clerks. I don’t want to make use of the regular troops, as, between ourselves, I am not too sure that they would do what I want, and the clerks will. As soon as everything is prepared, the mine manager will make things pretty hot for the miners. Then, at the first murmur, these clerks will be turned loose on them. My idea is that, after the shooting match, these clerks will be so detested by the workers generally that they must remain loyal to the Government.”

“What a man you are, Denfrew,” cried Mr. Watson, admiringly. “You think of everything—everything. Not a point escapes you.”

“Well, well,” said the dictator, good-humouredly, “someone has to think of these things, you know. It wouldn’t do if everyone were so devoted to sport as you. Ha! ha! I can’t help laughing when I think of you—so intent upon the fight that you let those beggars get away with your ’plane. Ha! ha! ha!”

“I didn't feel much inclined to laugh at the time, I can tell you,” replied the other.

“Oh, never mind, Watson,” chuckled Mr. Dolfrey. “It might have been worse, you know. That fellow might have broken your jaw altogether, instead of only half doing it. I wish I'd seen the performance. Ha! ha!”



CHAPTER XIII.

PLANS.

MR. DENFREW had spoken of the Newcastle miners as "difficult men." They were "difficult men" from the point of view of the tyrant. The factory hands, being constantly under the eye of an armed guard, had easily been reduced to abject slavery, but, of course, such supervision was not possible where men worked under ground, and the miners had never abandoned the hope of one day regaining the freedom which they had lost in such a simple manner.

When they secured the privilege of occupying the old houses, they had still greater opportunities of forming or rather of discussing plans for the amelioration of their unhappy condition, and the demand that they should be supplied with food from the State stores, instead of being compelled to take their meals at the public rooms, was part of their plan of campaign. It was felt that if this were granted it would only be a question of time when they should once more have the custody and training of their own children. The women were naturally anxious on this point.

The refusal of their request regarding the food

had been communicated to them on the day before the outbreak at Balmain, and the leaders had succeeded in inducing fully half the miners to refuse to "turn to" on Monday morning.

On Monday night at about a quarter past eight o'clock two miners were standing outside one of the "houses" talking earnestly, in low tones. The "house" stood on the edge of the reserve—towards the Harbour.

"Well, Jim, I suppose I must be going," said one of the men. "It seems that we have failed again. I suppose you are going to 'turn to' in the morning?"

"It is the only thing to be done, Bill, I am afraid," replied the other. "It is no use two or three of us standing out when the others are going back. Curse them! the white-livered curs!" he went on fiercely. "I really thought we'd have settled the matter once and for all but—hist! what was that?"

"Only one of the fellows making for his hut, I expect," replied the other carelessly. "By Jove! he'll be into that old hole if he doesn't mind where he is going. Hello there! Keep to the left," he called to the man, whose form could be dimly seen against the skyline.

The stranger stopped, and then turned to the left as directed. A moment later he stood beside the two miners.

"Forget about the hole?" asked the man who had warned him of his danger.

“Didn’t know there was any hole here,” replied the newcomer, with a short laugh.

“What pit do you belong to?” asked Bill.

“I don’t belong to any; I am not a miner,” answered the other.

He had hardly finished speaking when the two miners hurled themselves upon him. There was a brief struggle; then the miners staggered back—thrown off by the newcomer as if they had been children.

“Stand back!” said the stranger, in low, fierce tones. “I have escaped from your cursed tyranny once, and I’ll never go back to it alive. I warn you that I am armed, and that I shall kill you both if you attempt to lay a hand upon me again.”

“Ain’t you—ain’t you an officer?” stammered Bill.

“A what?” asked the stranger.

“Ain’t you one o’ them official dogs?”

“Well, well,” said the other, with a laugh, “this is a pretty mix-up. I made sure that I had dropped upon a couple of the guards, while you appear to have mistaken me for a spy.”

“Who are you, then?” asked Bill.

“My name is Bruce. I am, or rather I was, a worker, but another of the men and I escaped yesterday from Balmain.”

“Yesterday! That doesn’t sound very much like the truth, to begin with,” remarked the other miner, who had hitherto remained silent.

“It is quite true all the same. But what is the

use of quarrelling over trifles like that when so much remains to be done?"

"What is to be done?" enquired the other.

"First of all," replied Jack, "I suppose I had better let you know how matters stand at present."

He told them in a few words of the fight at the gatehouse, of their escape from Balmain, of the capture of the aeroplane, and then of the plan, which he had discussed with Jones and Wise, of an attack upon the arsenal.

"Now," he said, "are you two men willing to risk your lives in the attempt?"

"It's a pretty big contract," observed Bill, "and if we fail——"

"If we fail," said Jack scornfully, "we shall be in no worse position than we are now, unless we get killed, when we shall be in a better position. That sounds rather paradoxical, but you understand what I mean. Are we to remain slaves for ever? Are you men satisfied to see your children grow up to despise their fathers for hesitating when they might have won their freedom at a blow?"

"Say no more!" cried both men in a breath. "We're with you to see it through."

"Listen to me, then," Jack went on. "It isn't a matter of killing a few of the officials—that is easy enough, but of breaking down the whole System. Is there any organization amongst the miners? Have you any leaders?"

"Jim here is one of our leaders," said Bill.

"Yes, I am one of the leaders if you can call a man a leader when he has no followers," muttered

the other miner. "My name is Duncan. About half of us went on strike to-day, but one day of fasting appears to have taken the spirit out of the rebels. We had decided to return to work to-morrow, unless——"

"Yes, you must go to work to-morrow," said Jack.

"What do you mean by talking about breaking down the System in one breath, and then telling us to submit in the next?" asked Duncan, angrily.

"Don't be impatient," replied Jack, quietly. "I advise you to go to work to-morrow, because, in the first place, you will disarm suspicion by that course; secondly, you must have food; and finally, you would otherwise have no opportunity of discussing the plan with the other men."

"That is true," murmured Duncan.

"Go to work to-morrow," Jack went on, "but go on strike again the next day."

"Next day?" cried Bill, eagerly.

"Yes, or rather, to-morrow night; a strike at the arsenal."

"So we will, so we will," they cried.

At that moment there was a clanging of bells, and Bill started up.

"Hello!" he remarked. "Nine o'clock! I must be gettin' a move on. I belong to the other side." (He pointed somewhere into the darkness, and Jack nodded.) "Good-night, Jim! See you to-morrow night, Mr. Bruce," and off he scuttled.

"Aren't you going too?" enquired Jack, turning to Duncan.

“This is my house,” replied the other, nodding towards the tumble-down shed beside which they were standing. “Come with me; we can talk over matters inside.”

Jack followed him round the end of the building, past the wooden chimney, through the cracks of which he could see a glimmer of light. There was no verandah, and the door was apparently the only opening in the building. Duncan knocked, and then pushed the door open. It had no lock nor fastening of any kind.

“Come in,” he said, and Jack entered.

There was a small fire burning, and seated upon a wooden block beside it was a woman, who looked up as the two men entered.

Duncan walked up to the fireplace, and stooping, he threw some pieces of bark upon the coals. There was a sudden spurt of flame. Then he turned to the woman.

“Maggie, this is Mr. Bruce—my wife, Mr. Bruce.” He went on: “Mr. Bruce is an escaped worker. He has a plan for overthrowing the—the System.”

Mrs. Duncan rose and bowed. Then she turned her gaze once more towards the fire. By the fitful light of the burning bark Jack could see that she was a woman of about forty-five years of age. He decided that she must have been very handsome in her youth. Even now she would have been an attractive woman in spite of her dress and surroundings but for the air of settled melancholy upon her face.

“Will you sit down?” she asked pointing to the block from which she had risen.

There was indeed no other seat of any description in the “house.” The room was about twelve feet square, and was shut off from what was evidently the sleeping apartment by some bagging in the last stages of decay.

Jack declined the seat, and the woman took up her former position, gazing into the fire, her lips moving as if she were communing with herself.

“Don’t you want to hear Mr. Bruce’s plans?” asked Duncan, gently.

He was a man of medium height and spare build, with regular features and steely blue eyes, which softened, however, as they rested upon his wife’s face. She raised her head at the question.

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Bruce,” she said, in a refined voice. “I am afraid that I—that I—— I shall be very glad to hear of your plans.”

As he related his story Jack noticed that Mrs. Duncan (who at first seemed to listen with an effort) became more and more interested. When he told how, by the aid of the captured aeroplane, he proposed to make an attempt upon the arsenal as the first step towards freedom, she sprang to her feet, and clasping his arm, cried:

“Thank God! Oh! thank God! for answering my prayers. I shall see my little girl again before I die,” and then, turning to her husband, she threw herself into his arms and burst into tears.

“Calm yourself, Maggie dear,” said Duncan, tenderly.

“Oh! Jim! Jim!” she sobbed. “I could not help it. Just when I felt that I could not live another day without Eileen, God has taken pity on me.”

“I know, Maggie, what you have suffered through all those miserable years,” he murmured, soothingly. “You have been so brave through it all, too.” He turned to Jack. “You are a young man. I don’t know whether you are married—No! You are fortunate. What am I saying? Not to be free would I give up one hair from the head of my dear, faithful wife.”

He kissed her cheek, now flushed with excitement, and resumed:

“Let me tell you my story—our story. I daresay you have heard plenty tales of misery, but I will not detain you long. There are very few incidents in the life of a slave worth relating.

“When the accursed System came into force I was a mining engineer in the employ of one of the big coal mining companies. I had been married a year then. My wife was the daughter of a local doctor. For about twelve months I was allowed to retain my position under the State, then without an hour’s notice I was sent into the coal pits as a miner. I was not greatly distressed. I was young and strong—and hopeful.

“For three years longer we were happy enough—my wife and little boy and I. Then he died. Two other children were born to us, but came into the world only to leave it. Then—years after—our little girl came, and we almost forgot the troubles of the past as we watched her grow and listened to

her baby prattle. She was nearly six years old when we lost her. No! she did not die; she was taken away to one of the State Homes."

Duncan glanced at his wife.

"You don't mind me telling Mr. Bruce, do you?" he asked.

"No! no! tell him all," she replied.

"How we managed to survive the next seven years I do not know. I counted up the days which must pass before we should see her again. She had been taken to the Maitland Home, so that of course we could not visit her. At that time the age limit was sixteen. I calculated the hours—seven thousand odd, the minutes—five and a quarter millions—which must go by before we could even hope to see her.

"Then the age was reduced to thirteen. Only twelve months now instead of four years. We were almost happy. The last year passed, and now any day we might learn that Eileen had come out into the world. . . . The days grew into months, and still we heard nothing. Then I went to the office of the District Superintendent to make enquiries. He, Ludlow, had been a fellow student at the University. He had also been a suitor for the hand of the girl whom I married—my wife here. Humbly enough I asked for news of my daughter's whereabouts. Ludlow listened with an evil grin on his face. I knew only too well that I should fail, even before he spoke.

"'Jim Duncan,' he said, 'I told you years ago that I should get even with you. I think you will

admit that I have been as good as my word. Your daughter! Yes, she has been sent to Sydney, and there she is going to stay.'

"I restrained myself somehow. I asked that we might be allowed to see her, only once, but he only laughed in my face.

" 'Let her mother see her then,' I pleaded; 'never mind about me, but her poor mother has no other child now.'

" 'Neither you nor you precious wife shall see her,' he said with an oath. 'You can rest assured on that point.' Then he laughed. 'By Gad!' he went on, 'Maggie Stewart made a great match when she married you. I'm not sorry, though. I saw her the other day——'

"Then I think I went mad."

"What happened then?" asked Jack.

"They flogged me," replied Duncan, bitterly; "flogged me as if I had been a dog."

"Don't! don't! Jim!" pleaded his wife, covering her face with his hands.

"Why not?" he asked. "The wounds on my back have healed long ago, but that in my soul remains. After the flogging I was sent to another lodging-house, away from my poor wife, whom I did not see again for more than two years. Then, about a year ago I heard that any miners who chose to do so could occupy the old huts, and I came away with the rest. They appeared to have forgotten me. I learned afterwards that Ludlow had been transferred to Lithgow."

"And your daughter, what of her?" asked Jack.

“Nothing! absolutely nothing! We do not know whether she is alive or dead. But let us get possession of the arms and shoot these fellows first. Then I’ll find Ludlow, find him even if I have to go to hell in search of him. Only give me Ludlow, that is all I ask. Don’t let anyone else hurt him. I want him all to myself. Give me Ludlow!”

“Only give me my child—my little Eileen,” sobbed the mother.

They talked for some hours longer, discussing plans for the great adventure that was to be undertaken on the morrow. It was decided that Jack should remain in Duncan’s hut until the following night. The miner was confident that he could easily get the necessary volunteers for the attack upon the arsenal. Hitherto they had been fighting the air, but now that something definite was to be done he felt sure that the miners would rise in a body. No! there was no danger of any miner betraying them to the authorities. As to the mode of attack, several of the mine carpenters had been working in the arsenal within the last week, and he would bring one or two of these men as guides.

“Let us get arms,” he said in conclusion, “and we can sweep these officials out of our way and capture the town. Then the district will rise, and even if we are defeated by the troops from Sydney we shall at least have the satisfaction of dying like men.”

“Be careful not to let the officials suspect anything,” warned Jack. “Impress upon the men the necessity for patience, until we are prepared to

strike a blow. They have waited a long time. A few hours more can make little difference. I am glad that you can bring some guides. I was afraid that we should have to trust to luck, but now I am satisfied with our prospects."

"Let us have some sleep," said Duncan. "We have work to do to-morrow—to-morrow. I hope Ludlow is still alive. I shall start after him to-morrow."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ATTACK.

DUNCAN found a few old bags, and with these Jack made a bed upon the floor of the hut near the fireplace. During the last thirty-six hours he had met with the only real adventures of his life, but neither the recollection of what he had gone through nor the prospect of what had to be faced on the morrow troubled him for long. What was gone was gone for ever; what was coming no man knew. To gain anything worth gaining something must be risked; he would risk all that he had—his life. If he lost he could pay as well as another; if he won there was Mary Heath as a reward. He murmured a blessing on her head, and fell asleep.

But it was far otherwise with Duncan. A highly-strung, nervous man, he had been excited by the tale of Jack's escape, with the visions of all it might mean for himself and his wife. He pictured the arsenal already in the hands of the workers, with the tyrants' power broken, the System at an end. Eileen, his little daughter, would be free. He could not think of her as a woman. She was still the little laughing, golden-haired, blue-eyed girl. Perhaps

she had been ill-treated by the officials! He clenched his hands and sprang half out of bed at the thought. His wife spoke.

“What is the matter, Jim?”

“Nothing, nothing,” he answered. “Oh, will it never be morning? But I am a brute to disturb you.”

“I haven’t been asleep,” she said in a low tone. “I have been just lying here thinking, thinking of Eileen.”

At dawn Duncan rose and stole quietly into the outer apartment. Bruce was sleeping quite calmly, regardless of the fact that the great day had arrived. Duncan stooped and touched him on the shoulder. Jack sat up and rubbed his eyes. “What is the matter?” he asked.

“The day has dawned,” replied Duncan. When Duncan and his wife went to breakfast in the dining-hall Mrs. Duncan managed to secrete several slices of bread, which she brought to Jack before she went to her own daily task.

The day was a very dreary one, but the System had taught the workers patience, if no other virtue, and Jack Bruce consoled himself with the reflection that he would probably have enough to occupy his mind in future.

It was after six o’clock and quite dark when Duncan returned to the hut. He was accompanied by four miners, amongst whom Jack recognized Bill, whose acquaintance he had made on the previous night.

“The others will drop in presently,” said Duncan, “and most of the miners will be in the reserve within an hour.”

“Are they ready for the venture?” asked Bruce.

“Yes, the only difficulty arose when we asked for volunteers; they all wished to come. This man, Thompson, has lately been working in the arsenal, and knows the locality well. He thinks that the airship should land twenty or twenty-five men in the drill yard, while a couple of hundred should attack the front gate. What do you think of that plan?”

“That would be all right,” replied Jack, “if the men were armed. As it is we shall have two rifles, two pistols, and the Electric Gun. Unless it is absolutely necessary we must not use the firearms at all. Our only hope of success lies in a surprise attack. The Electric Gun is practically noiseless, but its effect is tremendous. We experimented with it yesterday afternoon. At a distance of over a mile one discharge killed six out of eight cattle standing within a radius of about twenty feet.”

“By Jove! that’s something like a gun!” exclaimed Bill, admiringly.

Jack went on: “It is not the question of taking the position that causes me any anxiety, but of holding it. I believe, however, that five and twenty men can do that long enough to allow us to bring up reinforcements.”

At that moment there was a gentle tap on the door of the hut. Duncan went outside, but returned at once.

“The boys are all ready,” he announced, and they went out to begin the great enterprise. Led by Bill, they moved like a procession of ghosts towards the head of the reserve. They had hardly reached the rendezvous when there was a whirr as of an approaching flock of swan, and the aeroplane could be made out, circling over their heads. Then a soft, double whistle, to which Jack replied, and the great plane settled gently upon the ground.

“That you, Bruce?” asked a low voice.

“Yes, all right!” replied Jack. “Now boys! get in quietly.”

A number of others could be seen dimly, making their way towards the spot. Jack desired Duncan to let these men know that everything was prepared.

“What are we to do?” asked one man in an excited whisper.

“Nothing at present,” replied Duncan. “Mr. Bruce says that the airship should be back within an hour. If we succeed there will be arms for a couple of hundred of you sent; if we don’t, well, good-bye!” and they were gone.

Jack made his way to the driver. The man Thompson whom Duncan had mentioned as being familiar with the interior of the arsenal and grounds was already beside Wise.

“Where is the drill-yard?” asked Wise.

“On the further side, straight behind the arsenal,” was the reply.

“Right! We’ll go round and come at them from

the rear," said the driver. "Any fences or sheds in the way?"

"No, asphalted yard—about an acre," was the answer.

Ten minutes later the little band alighted silently in the drill-yard. The men had already removed their boots.

"This way," whispered Thompson. "The gate is just at the end of the shed—to the right. Hope it isn't locked."

At that moment they were startled by a sudden outburst of music. For an instant they believed that the garrison had in some way discovered their purpose. Then Duncan laughed.

"Concert!" he said.

"What did you say?" asked Jack.

"Concert! The guard is having a concert."

"That's a bit of luck," broke in Thompson. "The hall is just at the back of the arsenal. That's the arsenal with the door opening this way. Confound the thing! The gate's locked!"

"Here's a bar," whispered Bill.

Jack took the bar, and inserting it in the padlocked chain, broke it with one fierce wrench. The uproar in the hall continued, but the noise of the lock falling upon the asphalt attracted the attention of the two guards who were walking up and down in front of the arsenal.

As these two men stood peering into the shadows, Jones raised the Electric Gun. There was a swish like the sound of a whip cutting the air, and the

two guards fell, their weapons clattering upon the pavement.

“Now, boys!” whispered Jack, and with a rush they were across the square. Bill picked up one of the rifles dropped by the officers. Thompson secured the other.

“Quick!” said Jack. “Get weapons as soon as you can. In there! Then switch off the light. Hush! What was that?”

“Someone coming,” muttered Jones.

“I’ll fix him,” hissed Bill, raising his rifle.

“No shooting!” said Jack sternly.

They heard a footstep, a jaunty step it seemed, then round the end of the arsenal came an officer. What he thought of the state of affairs may be guessed, but he said nothing. In fact, he was given no time to speak. Thompson was crouching near the building with clubbed rifle, and as the officer appeared the miner brought the heavy butt down upon **his skull**.

The loaded rifles of the garrison were in racks just within the door of the arsenal, and scarcely a minute elapsed before the rebels were armed.

“Half a dozen of you stay here—in the square,” said Jack. “The rest come with me,” and rushed for the hall.

The concert was a brilliant success—up to a certain point. About two hundred officers and men of the guard were present, and they were at that moment shrieking with laughter at the antics of Sammy Barnes, their comic singer and buffoon. Sammy was in great form. Clad in a striped dres-

sing gown and red night cap, he was strutting up and down the platform, singing to an imaginary baby in his arms.

“Go to sleep, my little cherry-erub, go to sleep, my little baby boy,” he sang. “Daddy loves his—ow!”

He stopped, and the audience noticed that his eyes were fixed upon something at the back of the hall. With one accord their heads turned to see what had attracted Sammy’s attention.

Standing just within the porch were a number of men; workers, by their dress, and, worst of all, they were armed.

For a moment no one spoke. Then the Commandant found his voice.

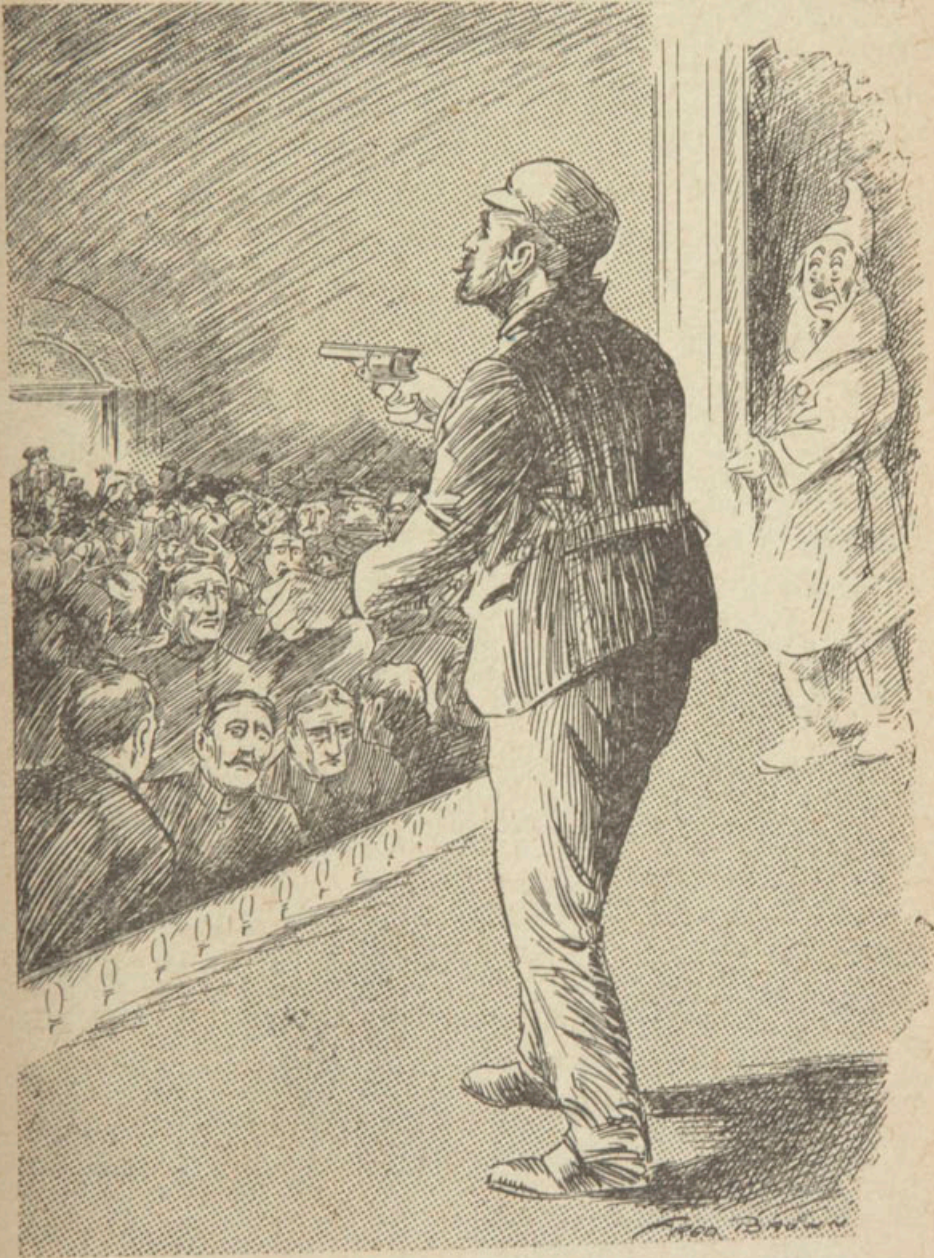
“What does this mean?” he shouted angrily. “I don’t like practical jokes, and——”

“It isn’t a joke, as you’ll find before we are through,” remarked Jones, who was standing slightly in front of the others, with the Electric Gun pointed towards the guard. “Sit down!” he shouted, as he noticed a move amongst the officials. At that moment Jack Bruce stepped upon the platform from one of the wings.

“You had better surrender quietly,” exclaimed Bruce. “The arsenal is in our hands. My men are holding the square, and although we don’t wish to shed any blood unnecessarily we are going to either kill or capture every man of you.”

It looked for a moment as if the victory would be a bloodless one. Then an officer on the left side of the hall drew a pistol, which he had by some mis-

chance brought into the concert room. Springing to his feet he fired at Jones. The shot missed him, but struck the door close to his head. Then Jones



“YOU HAD BETTER SURRENDER QUIETLY,” EXCLAIMED BRUCE.

got his blow in. Swish! swish! swish! and men fell in swathes, like corn before a scythe. Jones would undoubtedly have destroyed the whole force, but Jack called upon him to stop. At least a fourth of those present lay dead, killed in an instant, as if by a stroke of lightning. The survivors were trembling like a lot of children. Against ordinary weapons these men would have been brave enough, but here was something which they did not understand.

“I am very sorry for what has occurred,” cried Jack, “but you must admit that you brought the trouble upon yourselves. Any man who surrenders will have his life spared. Of course he will lose his liberty for a time, but that is all. What are you going to do? Make up your minds quickly.”

“We surrender; we cannot do anything else,” replied the Commandant, speaking for his men.

“All right, stay where you are for a few minutes,” said Bruce. Then, turning to Wise, he whispered:

“Take two or three men and load up the aeroplane with rifles—as many as you think it safe to carry. Distribute these among the men in the reserve, but ask them to be very careful what they do. Bring twenty or thirty of the miners back with you. We must have four or five hundred men in here in case of attack.”

“Right oh! Governor,” observed Wise. “By Jove! it was great, wasn’t it? What a day we’ll have to-morrow.”

By midnight Bruce felt that the position was safe. Within the enclosure he had about four hundred men. The State troops were under lock and key in the gaol quarters. He found that most of the older men had served in the State army in pre-System days, and felt that he could muster enough to man a few of the guns which the forethought of Mr. Denfrew had provided.

Wise reported that he had distributed somewhere about three thousand rifles among the men in the reserve.

“I took the cartridges separately,” he remarked, “and told them not to load their rifles until the morning. I didn’t want to get shot before my time.”

“I suppose a night attack upon the town would be the proper thing,” observed Jack, “but I am afraid to risk it.”

“Oh! I don’t think there would be much risk,” replied Wise. “I guess most of the officials will be looking for a place to hide as soon as the shooting begins. I know them pretty well.”

“It isn’t the risk of defeat that I meant,” said Bruce, “but what may happen after a victory. The poor beggars could hardly be blamed much, perhaps, but there is to be no general massacre if I can prevent it. The women and children must be protected, and this would be a difficult matter at night.”

“Who is to lead the attack?” asked Wise.

“I am, I suppose. Why?”

“Oh! nothing. I was only thinking that the leader would be pretty sure to be killed no matter which way the fight went. If the enemy missed him, some of his own men would manage to put a bullet into him. I reckon some of them don't know which end of the rifle hurts.”

“Oh! come,” said Bruce, with a laugh, “it isn't quite as bad as that. Many of them have been trained.”

“Don't think much of their trainer,” remarked Wise, with a grin.

Jack laughed.

“Well,” he said, “I admit that as a fighting force my army could be improved upon, but I don't look for much trouble in the morning. All of our prisoners, with the exception of the commander, are willing to join us.”

“Are you going to trust them?” asked Wise, quickly.

“Yes, I think it is perfectly safe. I find that there is a good deal of disaffection amongst the troops; amongst the rank and file, at any rate. It appears that they are in a very little better position than ourselves. Besides, there are some eighty prisoners in the cells here.”

“Workers?”

“No, troops. They were locked up over a week ago for objecting to the quality of the food. They are sure that most of the men in the central barracks will join us if they are given the chance. “No, I don't think we are running much risk. We shall

have our own men—four thousand or so, in a position to attack. I shall send three of our prisoners into the town at daylight, and offer terms to the troops.”

“What about troops coming in? From Sydney, I mean,” asked Wise.

“I have provided for that,” replied Jack. “Thompson will take, say, 400 men out in the morning, and occupy a hill overlooking the railway. He will have a couple of machine guns, and will block the line.”

“H’m! Sounds all right,” remarked Wise. “What about Maitland?”

“I don’t anticipate any trouble there, if we are successful here. I understand that there are about 800 or 900 men in Maitland, but the chances are that we won’t have to fire a shot.”

“Oh! I say!” exclaimed Wise, “this is going to be a tame affair. And I was looking forward to having some sport. Oh, well, I suppose I’ll get my governorship all the sooner.”

“What?” asked Jack.

“My governorship. I expect to be made State Governor at the very least, when the people elect you king.”

Jack laughed. “I didn’t know what you meant for a minute,” he said. “I think it would be as well not to allot the positions until we have turned out the present occupants.”

“On second thoughts,” remarked Wise, with a grin, “I don’t think I’ll be a Governor. I’d have

to be too respectable. I'll just be aide-de-camp or whatever you call it to your majesty."

Shortly after six o'clock next morning the State troops were assembled in the square in front of the barracks. Bruce's envoys had no difficulty in passing the sentries at the gate, as they were well known. Making their way to the officer in charge—a red-faced man—they saluted.

"Well, what is it?" he asked sharply.

"Have to report, sir, that the arsenal has been surprised and captured by the workers," replied the spokesman of the party.

"What?" exclaimed the officer in astonishment.

"Arsenal captured by the workers, sir. They have armed the miners, and are just going to open fire on the town."

"Who—who——" stuttered the officer. "Where is Major Hopkins?"

"Locked up in the cells, sir."

"And his men?"

"All killed or taken prisoners. The leader of the workers sent us to ask you to surrender, sir."

"What? Submit to those d——d workers? Here, sergeant, arrest these fellows for daring to bring such a message."

"One minute!" cried the man. "Look here, boys!" (this to the soldiers, who were staring open-mouthed) "if you haven't had enough of the infernal System I have. Let us join those brave fellows up yonder, and we'll pull the tyrants down inside a week."

“Hear, hear!” from the men.

“Look out, Jim!” cried someone. The man who had been addressing the troops turned his head, then side-stepped just in time to avoid a sword thrust. The officer was foaming with rage.

“Shoot him!” he roared. “Shoot him! someone.”

A dozen men raised their rifles. There was a rattle, and the officer himself fell, shot through and through.

“Down with the tyrants!” cried a stout little man at the end of the line.

“Let us make a clean sweep of them,” shouted another, and a rush was made for the officers’ quarters. The affair was over in a few minutes, but the sneers, the insults, the petty tyranny of months and years were all paid for in those few minutes. The men had “got their money back.”

Someone suggested killing the women and children as well, “wiping out the whole brood,” but more moderate counsels prevailed.

By ten o’clock all men capable of bearing arms, whether factory hands or miners, were supplied with weapons. The insurgent army, now numbering upwards of eight thousand men, were paraded in the reserve during the afternoon, and accustomed as they were to discipline, and with the workers stiffened by more than two thousand trained men, they made a gallant display.

The artillery comprised six batteries of field guns, manned by their old crews, together with a score of machine guns.

A stream of workers was pouring into the town from the adjacent villages. They reported that the officials were everywhere panic stricken and fleeing in all directions in search of safety. A few of them found it.

Late in the afternoon Jones, who had taken a small force to Maitland, rang up to say that the town was in his hands. There had been no fighting. The men had shot their officers and thrown in their lot with the revolutionists.

A single day had seen the overthrow of the System in the Hunter district; the work of a generation undone in a few hours.

CHAPTER XV.

RUMOURS OF WAR.

WHEN Mary Heath awoke next morning in her luxurious bedroom she was puzzled for a moment by her strange surroundings. The cosy room with its beautiful appointments was indeed a change from the bare cell, with uncarpeted floor, to which she had been accustomed at the State lodging-house. Mary snuggled into the warm bed clothes and shut her eyes in an ecstasy of pleasure, forgetting in the enjoyment of the present hour all her past troubles, and (it must be confessed) even forgetting her anxiety on account of Jack Bruce.

After an early cup of coffee and a biscuit she rose and dressed leisurely, with that keen delight in putting on clothes which no man understands.

"I trust that you slept well," said Mrs. Munro, coming forward as Mary entered the breakfast room.

"Indeed I did," replied Mary, warmly. "After our wretched beds at the lodgings I could scarcely make up my mind to rise at all this morning."

"We must try to make you forget all about that miserable place," said the widow, as she kissed Mary's cheek.

"You have already done so. I am fortunate in having found such kind friends as Miss Denfrew and yourself."

"Ah! Kathleen is a dear girl," cried Mrs. Munro, enthusiastically.

"She is coming out to-day, is she not?" enquired Mary.

"Yes, and she is sure to come early. Let us have breakfast now, please."

The breakfast was such a one as Mary Heath had only read or dreamt of hitherto. She was, however, a strong, healthy girl, and did full justice to the various dishes. Just as they finished breakfast the telephone bell rang, and Mrs. Munro took up the receiver.

"Some one enquiring for you, Mary," she said. "Will you come here, please."

"For me!" exclaimed Mary, in astonishment.

"Yes, it is Kathleen. She wishes to know how you are this morning. But come and speak to her yourself."

"Is that you, Mary? Quite well! I'm so glad. I thought you might be a little upset; I should have been. We are coming out presently. Yes, in about an hour. Good-bye for the present, dear!"

Shortly before ten o'clock Kathleen arrived, accompanied by Claude and Ronald Gray.

"Are you sure you feel quite well?" she asked, turning to Mary, after greeting Mrs. Munro.

"Quite," replied Mary, with a smile.

Mary Heath's temperament was what might be termed placid, and her previous life had taught her

self-restraint. Kathleen, on the other hand, was enthusiastic. As Mrs. Munro watched the two girls she whispered: "Did you ever see a more beautiful pair, Mr. Gray?"

"No, indeed," he answered heartily, "I must confess that I never before realized the power of dress. Miss Heath in her worker's dress was good-looking, of course, but now she is nearly—that is, she is——" He broke off in confusion.

Mrs. Munro laughed gently.

"Ah! well, I'll excuse you, under the circumstances," she said.

Kathleen was speaking, apparently in reply to a question addressed to her by Mary.

"No, we don't know for certain. Ron—Mr. Gray made enquiries this morning, and learnt that two men in workers' dress had surprised the Superintendent of Police and taken his aeroplane. It is almost certain that they were Mr. Bruce and his companion."

"Didn't the Superintendent describe the men who took his airship?" asked Mary.

Claude found his opportunity here. He had been hovering round trying to get a word in, but hitherto unsuccessfully.

"What's Kathleen telling you, Miss Heath? Oh, about the Police Johnnie! By Jove! I wish I'd seen the show. As soon as I heard about it I hunted up old Jenkins, and got him to give me a full, true and particular account of it. Just fancy that old pig of a Watson keeping all that fight to himself!

Selfish old brute! I got old Jenkins to give me a full description of the two men. I thought perhaps you might be interested, Miss Heath."

"Thank you, I am," Mary admitted.

"Thought so. Nearly always hit the mark, don't I, Kathleen? Well, one of them was a fierce-looking, oldish chap of about fifty or so, Jenkins says, but the other—the one who kept the police crowd off with a rifle—was a young fellow; very big chap, Jenkins says. From the description he must have been eight or nine feet high, a chap with fairish hair and steely-looking blue eyes, a determined-looking—hem—gentleman, old Jenkins says."

Kathleen laughed merrily at her brother's tale. "How does the description fit?" she asked Mary. "Is he a determined-looking—hem—gentleman?"

Mary blushed—then *whispered*: "I feel very happy," and Kathleen understood from that little speech that Mary was satisfied about her lover's safety.

They spent the day quietly. Kathleen stayed to lunch, but Ronald and Claude returned to the city in order to learn, if possible, whether anything further had been heard of the fugitives. They came out again in the evening, but had nothing fresh to report. The two workers had disappeared, and beyond that no one seemed to know anything. Mary was naturally anxious, but still she had so much confidence in Jack's judgment that she felt sure he was in some way preparing for the great work. She did not expect to hear of anything being done

for several days, as she realized the enormous difficulties he must encounter.

Claude had attempted to pump his father, but Mr Denfrew was very much annoyed by recent events, and promptly told the lad to mind his own business.

“My word! he did go off the handle,” said Claude, when describing the interview with his father. “The Governor is generally all right with me, but he shut me up this time all right. He let out something, though. He was cursing old Watson for his stupidity, and said ‘it wouldn’t have been quite so bad only the old fool (that’s Watson, you know) must let those brutes get hold of the Electric Gun he had just got from America.’ I wanted to hear something more about it, but he nearly jumped down my throat.”

“I can’t see that that was much to find out,” observed Kathleen.

“Oh! of course you can’t,” said Claude, scornfully. “Girls always jump at conclusions, or jump where they think conclusions ought to be, anyhow. I made it my business to find out all about this precious gun. Jenkins says that the man who has it can beat an army. It’s worse than a hundred machine guns rolled into one, and a fellow can carry it about under his arm.”

“I saw some experiments with a weapon like that just before I left England,” observed Ronald.

“What happened,” asked Claude, eagerly.

“The War Office decided that it meant putting an end to war altogether,” he replied, “that is,

when some minor defects had been remedied. It was reported that the United States had an even better weapon, though——”

“This one came from the States,” cried Claude. “Jenkins says a friend of Watson’s sent it to him. He only got it a few days ago, and was going to try it yesterday morning. I reckon next time he sees it he’ll be standing at the wrong end of it.”

Promising to come out early next morning, Kathleen and her escort then took their leave.

It was after eleven o’clock when they reached Mrs. Munro’s house next morning. Claude had gone into the city early in search of news. He returned in a state of great excitement, but declined to say anything for the present.

“Miss Heath must hear it first,” he remarked. “You and Ronald must wait till then. Jump in at once. Don’t stay to decorate yourself.” This to his sister.

“I suppose we must wait till he condescends to enlighten us,” observed Kathleen, shrugging her shoulders.

When the car pulled up in front of Mrs. Munro’s house Claude was out before his sister and Ronald quite realized that the journey was over.

“Where’s Miss Heath?” cried the lad. “Oh! that you, Miss Heath? How are you, Mrs. Munro? Great news.”

“What is the matter?” asked both ladies in a breath.

“Revolution in Newcastle! Battle, murder, and sudden death!”

“Who is killed?” asked Mary, faintly.

“Oh! only a few blessed officials. Not Bruce, no fear! By Jove! no; he’s all right, and going strong.”

Kathleen took her brother by the arm.

“I think you might let us know what has happened, Claude,” she said severely. “Do you know,” she added, turning to Mary “this boy hasn’t told us a single thing? I have a good mind to shake him.”

Claude turned to Mrs. Munro with an injured look on his face.

“There,” he remarked, “there’s gratitude for you. I told her she couldn’t hear the news until I had told Miss Heath first, and she goes on like this. It just shows you all a girl’s pretended friendship is worth.”

“Do go on with your story,” cried Kathleen, “and don’t forget that you are keeping Miss Heath waiting all this time.”

“I beg your pardon Miss Heath,” said Claude. “I quite forgot for a minute that you must be anxious to hear the news. Well in the first place, there has been a great ‘burst-up’ at Newcastle; revolution, you know. It seems that the workers captured the arsenal; then all the troops mutinied and joined them. It appears that the rebels got into the arsenal yard by means of an airship and killed about half the garrison with some kind of infernal machine.”

“That must have been the Electric Gun,” observed Ronald.

“Yes, I think so, too. The last message that came through said that there were thousands of armed workers, but no shooting was going on then.”

“Did they know who is—that is, if——” stammered Mary.

“The leader,” said Claude, “appears to be a determined—hem—gentleman named Bruce. Why, what is the matter, Miss Heath?”

“Nothing, thank you,” she replied in a low tone. Then she looked up with her fine eyes suffused with tears at the lad. “Thank you so much for your news,” she said. “You are very kind, Mr. Denfrew.”

“Oh! I say, come, I am not Mr. Denfrew,” exclaimed he. “Claude is my name, Miss Heath.”

“Very well, Claude, and remember in future that my name is Mary,” she answered, holding out her hand to the young fellow. He raised it to his lips.

“I am sorry that I teased you, Mary, but I couldn’t resist the temptation. Yes, the last message sent through was to my father from Mr. Bruce. The governor *was* wild, I can tell you. He is threatening all sorts of things, but most of the others are in a terrible state of funk. Jenkins reckons there will be a scrum here before long.”

“I do wish that you would speak English, Claude,” remarked Kathleen, severely.

Claude gazed at his sister in astonishment for a moment. Then he grinned.

“Oh! I see,” he said. “Well then, most of the officials are terribly alarmed, and old Jenkins—Mr. Jenkins, I mean—thinks that there will be an outbreak in the city. That is all for the present. I am going back to find out if anything else has happened. Coming Ronald?”

“I wish I could get into communication with Bruce,” exclaimed Gray, taking no notice of the lad’s question.

“Want to communicate with the rebs., eh?” cried Claude. “Well, that’s easy enough. We have a wireless installed at our house. By Jove! what a lark! Let us be off! How do you address a rebel chieftain? I suppose that depends upon whether he is likely to win or not, though. What about your royal highness?”

“What a capital idea!” exclaimed Kathleen enthusiastically. “You—Lorna and Mary—must come too. We must let the leader know that a certain lady in whom he takes an interest is being taken care of, mustn’t we?”

Mary silently pressed the hand of her friend. Then she said: “But what about your father, Kathleen? It seems hardly fair to hold any communication with his enemies from his house.”

“I thought of that,” replied Kathleen, “but so far from intending any treason I was selfish enough to think that the fact of your being with us might be some protection to him if the workers are successful. Poor father!” her voice faltered.

“Don’t fear for your father,” whispered Mary.

“If a hair of his head is injured I’ll—I’ll never speak to Jack Bruce again.” And she meant it, too.

Meanwhile a meeting of the Cabinet was being held in the city.

Mr. Denfrew was furious at the reports from Newcastle, but confident that the revolt would be crushed without delay.

“By to-morrow night,” he declared, thumping the table with his fist as he spoke, “by to-morrow night these fellows will be running back to the shelter of their kennels; at least, those who are left will be.”

“I am not at all sure about that,” remarked Richardson, Director of Military Affairs. “If the rebels mean business they will blow up the Hawkesbury Bridge, and in any case it will be a matter of some days before we shall be in a position to recapture Newcastle.”

“Couldn’t we send a force by sea?” asked Gray.

“Can’t be done,” replied Richardson. “We haven’t a decent boat here, and to send troops in unarmoured vessels would be to invite disaster. The position is just about as serious as it can be. My advice is to get into communication with these mutineers or rebels or whatever they call themselves, and propose that arbitrators be appointed to settle the grievances of the workers if——”

“If what?” snapped Mr. Denfrew, who had been listening with ill-concealed impatience to Richardson’s remarks.

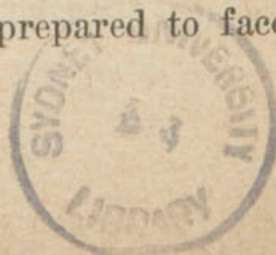
“If it is not too late,” replied Richardson.

“Too late!” roared Mr. Denfrew. “It will be too late for those fools to-morrow. Do you know that I received a most insolent message from the leader of these d——d rebels this morning? Yes, the fellow had the audacity to speak in the third person, too. ‘Mr. Bruce’—it seems that his infernal name is Bruce, I won’t forget it at the proper time—‘Mr. Bruce has the honor to inform Mr. Denfrew that the people of the Newcastle district have thrown off their chains. He warns Mr. Denfrew that he will be held personally responsible for any ill-treatment suffered by the people of the State from this day until the System is finally overthrown!’ What do you think of that?”

“Puts you in an awkward position,” said Richardson. “Perhaps I shouldn’t have said that. Look, Mr. Denfrew, the outlook for the whole of us—the members of the Government—could not well be worse. There is nothing to be gained by deceiving ourselves on that point. The fact is that we are hated by workers and officials alike; I mean, of course, by the rank and file of the officials. As regards the army, I don’t believe that ten per cent. of them are loyal.”

This statement was hardly calculated to inspire the members with confidence, and after a hurried whispering two of them asked the Chairman to excuse them for a moment, and left the room. Richardson watched them go out, with a half smile on his face.

“That is what you must be prepared to face,” he observed.



“What?” asked Mr. Denfrew.

“Desertion. The rats will naturally desert what they regard as a sinking ship. Lowe and Ramsay are off to make their ‘calling and election sure’ by joining the revolutionaries.”

“By heaven! I’ll soon put a stop to that game,” roared the Dictator. “They can’t play tricks with me.” He touched a bell, and a uniformed official promptly appeared.

“Two members of the Government have just gone out,” said Mr. Denfrew, sharply. “Take a couple of officers and bring them back—by force, if necessary.”

The official saluted and went out. Ten minutes passed. Then a knock was heard, and the man presented himself.

“Well?” enquired the Dictator.

“Took two officers as instructed,” began the man. Mr. Denfrew interrupted him impatiently.

“Did you arrest the members?”

“No, sir,” replied the fellow. “We found Mr. Lowe and Mr. Ramsay addressing a crowd in the street, just outside there. You can hear the crowd cheering now—that’s them. They were telling the crowd that the System is broken down, and that an army is coming to attack the city. Just as we came up they jumped into a car and cleared out.”

“Why didn’t you arrest them, as I ordered?” demanded the Dictator.

“They wouldn’t let us. I wish, sir,” went on the

man in a whining tone, "that you'd let me off duty for the rest of the day. I've got a terrible headache. I believe it's an attack of influenza coming on."

Mr. Denfrew looked at him a moment in silence. Then he said shortly: "Go to hell!"

"Thank you, sir," said the officer, and backed out.

"That's the sort of thing you must expect," remarked Richardson again.

"A lot of curs!" growled the Dictator. "I'll straighten some of them up in a day or two, when we get this little affair at Newcastle settled."

"When!" echoed Richardson.

"Do you think we could get some troops up from Melbourne?" asked Mr. Denfrew, ignoring Richardson's remark.

"The Military Director shook his head. "I am certain they wouldn't send a man," he replied. "Street was telling me, only a few days ago, that he is getting anxious about the position, but did not care to worry you while there was a prospect of pulling through. It was a great mistake to break up the States. The country is too large to administer. Why, North Queensland is practically independent of us. However, we must do the best we can. I shall get what troops I think are to be trusted, and with the police and clerks we ought to have from fifteen to twenty thousand."

Mr. Denfrew smiled. "Come!" he said, "things are not so bad, after all."

“That part of the scheme looks all right, but I am afraid to think of what may happen in this city when the army goes north,” replied Richardson, gloomily.

“Oh! cheer up!” exclaimed the Dictator. “We’ll be laughing at this paltry affair at the end of the week. I am sorry that Lowe and Ramsay got away, but never mind! I’ll give them a double dose when I *do* catch them.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE JUSTICE OF THE STATE.

MR. LUDLOW, District Superintendent at Lithgow, sat in his office. He was a large, fleshy man, with a heavy jowl and deep-set, vicious eyes. Some time before he had been transferred from the more important district of Newcastle to make room for the son of one of the members of the Government, and his naturally bad temper had not been improved as the result of the slight put upon him. Perhaps he had some good points in his character, as we are told that no man is altogether bad; if so he was a consummate actor, as no one had discovered those points so far. On this particular day he was in a particularly savage mood, when a clerk entered.

“If you please, sir,” began the young fellow.

“If I please! Well, I don’t please. What do you want? Out with it; can’t you speak?” snarled Mr. Ludlow.

“I—I beg your pardon, sir,” said the clerk, humbly, “but Mr. Griffiths wants to know if you will kindly go across to the Justice Chamber.”

“Tell Mr. Griffiths to go to the devil,” snapped the Superintendent.

“Very well, sir, thank you, sir,” said the clerk, moving towards the door. Mr. Ludlow looked at him a moment, then he roared: “Where are you going?”

“No—nowhere, sir,” gasped the clerk.

“Well, stay where you are until I tell you to go. You’re a fool! What does Griffiths want with me?”

The clerk swallowed hastily.

“One of the men at the ironworks has been insolent, sir. Mr. Griffiths wishes you to deal with him.”

“Insolent! eh! Insolent—hum! I’ll teach him manners. I’ll deal with him. He’ll be polite enough when I’ve finished with him. Here! Get out of the way, for heaven’s sake, and let me past;” and pushing the clerk aside he pulled his hat fiercely down upon his forehead, and went out.

As the door slammed behind Mr. Ludlow the clerk threw himself into a fighting attitude, and delivered a variety of blows upon the body of an imaginary enemy.

“Oh! you great, hulking cow!” he muttered. “How do you like that, eh? In the jaw that time. I’ll smash your face to pulp.” He let his hands fall to his sides, and nodded at the vacant chair. “By heavens! I’ll do it, too—some day.”

When Mr. Ludlow arrived at the Court House he found Griffiths, the manager of the local ironworks, and three police officers waiting. They greeted the Superintendent respectfully. Mr. Ludlow acknowledged their salutes by a curt nod.

“What’s up?” he asked.

“One of my fellows playing up a bit,” replied Griffiths, a little mean-looking man, with blistered face and sandy hair.

“Been playing up, has he? We’ll stop his playing for a while; teach him another step or two; what do you think?” remarked Mr. Ludlow.

Griffiths grinned, while the three policemen laughed outright.

“Trust you for that, sir,” observed one of the latter.

The Superintendent smiled. “Well, well,” he chuckled, rubbing his hands, “we’ll see. Let me have the particulars. Who is the fellow?”

“One of those Yankees the Government brought here four or five years ago,” replied Griffiths.

“One of those devils! I thought they had all been shot long ago,” exclaimed Mr. Ludlow.

“This chap escaped somehow, but ‘it is never too late to mend,’ ” said Griffiths, viciously. “This Yankee has caused more trouble than fifty ordinary men, but he is as cunning as a dingo, and I could never get a chance at him before. But I found out that he is sweet on one of the clothing girls here.”

“Yes, yes,” murmured Mr. Ludlow.

“Well, I thought of a plan to fix him,” went on Griffiths. “I got one of the other men to—to try to cut him out with the girl, you know. This chap, Mosely, would give his eyes for whisky, so I gave him a glass——”

“The end justifies the means, eh?” chuckled the Superintendent.

“Yes; I thought so. I promised Mosely a bottle of whisky if he ‘beat’ Farman, the Yankee, for his girl, and two if he gave him a hiding into the bargain.”

“Yes; how did he get on?” asked Mr. Ludlow.

“Bah! the useless brute!” replied Griffiths, disgustedly. “The girl wouldn’t have anything to say to him, for one thing. Then he started in to thrash the Yankee, but Farman took the contract out of his hands. He nearly killed Mosely.”

“By Jove!” exclaimed the Superintendent, “this American must be a good man. I thought Mosely was a great fighter!”

“So did I, but you ought to have seen him when the Yank was done with him, or rather when I stopped them.”

“Oh! you stopped the fight, did you?”

“Yes, I stopped it,” answered Griffiths. “I had to threaten to shoot Farman. The beast! He said he could whip the big dog, and then the little—the little cur, and when I asked what he meant he told me to go to h——l and find out. I will find out, by—by gosh!”

“Insinuated that you were a little cur, eh? Ha! ha! By Jove! that is good,” roared Mr. Ludlow.

“It seems to amuse you, sir,” said Griffiths, sullenly.

“Amuse me! What do you mean?” cried the Superintendent. “You forget yourself! The

Yankee called you a little cur, did he? So you are; a d——d, dirty, little crawling cur!”

“I beg your pardon, sir,” whined Griffiths. “I didn’t mean any harm.”

Mr. Ludlow glared savagely at the little manager for a moment.

“Bring the fellow in,” he snarled. “I can’t stay here all day. I have other more important matters to attend to.”

“Bring the fellow in,” echoed Griffiths, turning to the officers, who saluted and went out.

A few minutes later there was a sound of struggling and shouting in the passage, and the door was thrown open to admit the American and his gaolers. The prisoner was a tall, fine-looking man of seven or eight and twenty, or rather he would have been fine-looking under ordinary circumstances. Just now his hair was disordered, one eye was nearly closed, and blood was trickling down his face from a cut on the cheek-bone—a recent wound. He was handcuffed, but wore a defiant air, and despite his bruises and his fetters he was the most gentlemanly-looking man in the Justice Chamber.

“I protest against the brutality of these officers,” he began, addressing Mr. Ludlow.

“Hold your tongue, fellow,” exclaimed the Superintendent sharply, but Farman went on:

“I shall appeal to the consul; I am an American citizen. I demand justice!”

“You’ll get justice, don’t you be worrying about it,” said Mr. Ludlow, grimly.

“I have been assaulted by these men while my hands were tied, and I——” began Farman again.

“Will you hold your tongue, or must you be gagged?” roared Mr. Ludlow. “What is your name?”

“George Denvers Farman.”

“Occupation?”

“Ironworker.”

“Where are you employed?”

“Lithgow Ironworks—unfortunately. I was brought here from Sydney forcibly, and was led to this country by means of false——”

“Shut up, curse you!” shouted Mr. Ludlow. “Don’t dare to say another word, excepting in reply to questions. If you open your mouth again I’ll have you flogged. You are charged with insolence, and I’m not surprised. Mr. Griffiths, we’ll have your statement, please.”

Griffiths stated briefly that he had found the prisoner and another worker fighting, and that, when he ordered them to desist, the prisoner had made use of objectionable language, and had even threatened him, the manager, with violence.

“Have you anything to say?” asked Mr. Ludlow, addressing the American, who looked from one to the other before replying.

“Yes,” he answered, “I wish to ask Mr. Griffiths who induced Mosely to make the attack upon me.”

“What?” roared Mr. Ludlow, astonished at the temerity of the man, but Farman went on doggedly: “I have reason to know that Mosely was simply the

tool of the manager in this matter. I can bring evidence to prove——”

“Stop!” bellowed the Superintendent. “You infernal scoundrel! Do you dare to make this false accusation against a trusted officer of the State? I can plainly see that leniency would be a mistake in your case. Here! sergeant! remove the prisoner. Take him into the yard and give him a dozen lashes. I’ll teach you manners,” he added fiercely to the prisoner.

“You dare not flog me; I am an American citizen; I claim the protection of my consul,” exclaimed Farman, boldly enough, but paling, nevertheless, at the threat of the tyrant on the bench.

“I’ll soon show you how much power your precious consul has,” sneered Mr. Ludlow. “Give him two dozen,” he said, turning to the officers, “and you, Farman! listen to me, if you say another word I’ll make it three dozen. Take him away!”

As the prisoner was led out of the room Griffiths approached the Superintendent and spoke in a low tone. The great man sniffed impatiently; then he smiled.

“By Jove! That’s not a bad thought of yours, Griffiths,” he observed. “Tell them to put the Yankee into one of the cells for a bit, and bring a few of your fellows down.” He rubbed his hands. “It will be as good as a sermon to them, and put the fear of God into the hearts of the swine. I’m half sorry I didn’t order the Yankee three dozen. If he makes a fuss, please heaven he will, I’ll give him an extra dose.”

Griffiths grinned. "He has earned it all," he said, and went out.

He found the officers already preparing the American for punishment. They had fastened his feet, and were removing the handcuffs, preparatory to stripping the unfortunate man.

"Put those handcuffs on again," ordered Griffiths.

"But, sir——" began one of the officers. The manager interrupted him fiercely.

"Don't argue with me!" he snarled. "Take him into one of the cells."

Farman uttered a sigh of relief.

"I knew the Super. didn't mean it," he said, with an attempt at a smile.

"Oh! did you? You know a lot, don't you?" sneered Griffiths. "Well, you'll know a bit more before I have finished with you. I'm going to complete your education." He struck the defenceless man in the face. "Take that to go on with," he said. "How do you like your first lesson?" He kicked Farman savagely in the shins.

The American raised his manacled hands, and wiped the blood from his face, but said not a word.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Griffiths. "You're dumb now, are you? I'll find a way of making you speak."

He turned away, and went into the telephone office, while the officers took the American into the cells.

An hour later Farman was again led out into the yard. This time there was no reprieve. He was

quickly tied up, and the flogger—a brawny ruffian—got ready. Mr. Ludlow was present, as well as Griffiths and about a dozen armed guards.

“Got your fellows down?” asked Ludlow.

“Yes, in the shed,” replied the manager.

“All right! bring them out and make a start. It’s getting on for lunch time.”

The door of the shed was opened, and a number of workers appeared. They looked apprehensively at the triangle, with its victim, and huddled together, as if for protection—all but one. He walked up and looked curiously at the prisoner. He was a little shrimp of a man, with a vacant, expressionless face.

“Why, it’s George!” he exclaimed. “What is the matter with George?”

“Get out!” growled the man with the cat.

“Knock him down,” snorted Mr. Ludlow.

One of the guards caught the little man by the arm and jerked him back amongst the other workers.

“Now, you men!” began Mr. Ludlow, pompously, “this fellow has been insolent to Mr. Griffiths. Do you understand? And the next man I hear any complaints about will get twice as much. Begin!”

As the cruel weapon, with its tails of knotted cord and thin wire, fell upon the white back of Farman, he shivered slightly, but made no sound. He clenched his teeth and waited for the next; it fell unexpectedly across the small of the back. The first blow had been across the shoulder blades. After the sixth blow Farman’s back was ridged with livid weals from neck to loins. Then the flogger

took the instrument in his left hand. Mr. Ludlow nodded approvingly.

“That’s the style; cross the cuts,” he said.

And the flogger crossed them; then began again with the right hand. As blow after blow fell on his back, cutting the skin and flesh, Farman strained at his fetters, and tried, by turning his head, to see his tormentor. The little man was crying in a pitiful fashion.

“Don’t beat George,” he pleaded, “George is good. Please don’t beat him any more.”

Mr. Ludlow turned upon him savagely. “Hold your tongue, or I’ll give you a taste of it,” he roared.

As the flogger swung his whip for the next blow a little bit of flesh flew off the tails and struck the Superintendent on the cheek. He brushed it off hastily, and spat in disgust. “Clean your cat! curse you!” he shouted to the flogger.

“Beg pardon, sir,” said the man humbly.

“How many is that?” asked the Superintendent as the cat fell again.

“That makes two dozen, sir,” replied one of the officers.

“It is only twenty-three,” said Griffiths.

“Give him another,” ordered Mr. Ludlow, and the cruel whip fell once more on the lacerated back of the unfortunate American.

“That will do; throw him off,” said the Superintendent. As the officers came forward the little man again whined: “Don’t beat poor George any more. Poor George.”

“Didn’t I tell you to keep quiet?” snarled Mr. Ludlow. “Stand back! Here! tie the little fool up and give him half a dozen. Perhaps he’ll hold his tongue then.”

“You’ve done it now,” said one of the officers, as he took the little man by the arm and dragged him forward.

As Farman was released from the triangle he trembled violently. His face was pale as death. As he turned his eyes fell on the little man.

“Well, Jimmy!” he said. Then, as he saw them preparing to strip the poor little fellow he said: “Good heavens! you are not going to flog that poor creature, surely?”

“That is just what I *am* going to do,” replied Mr. Ludlow, viciously. “What have you got to say about it?”

“I say it’s a d——d shame!” said the American, fiercely; “a shame to touch a poor, half-daft fellow like that.”

“You insolent dog!” roared Ludlow. “I’ll—I’ll——;” he choked with rage. Then, as a thought struck him, he said: “Look here! I’ll tell you what I’ll do. As you are so fond of this little object here, I’ll give you his dozen, and let him off. How does that arrangement suit you, my independent American citizen?”

Farman shuddered. He had already suffered more than he had thought any human being could bear. Begin it over again? He felt that another blow would kill him; but then, there was poor little Jimmy.

“You will let Jimmy off?” he asked.

“Yes; he can go to the devil for all I care,” replied the Superintendent graciously.

“All right! Tie me up again,” said Farman, holding out his hands for the fetters. The brave fellow took the extra dozen (or rather thirteen, for Griffiths made another mistake in the count) without uttering a sound beyond a low, gasping wheeze, and was then released and dragged half fainting into the lock-up.

“What about putting him in Number Twelve, sir?” asked Griffiths.

The superintendent looked at him a moment with a half smile on his face. “By Jove! Griffiths, you’re a spiteful little beggar. All right! Put him into Number Twelve. Perhaps a few hours in there will cool him down.”

Number Twelve cell was built on a new plan. The floor was six inches below the level of the corridor, and could be flooded with water by a pipe through the wall. Farman was thrust into one of the other cells while the “water cell” was prepared; then his boots were removed and he was bundled into “Number Twelve” and the iron door slammed behind him. Stumbling blindly into the cell, and knowing nothing of the difference of levels, the unfortunate American fell upon his face at the first step. The shock of the fall and the contact with the icy cold water restored him at once to full consciousness. He sprang to his feet, and began beating with his hand upon the door of the cell. The warder opened the slide,

“What’s the matter?” he growled.

“There has been some mistake. There is a lot of water in this cell. Let me out quick; I’m freezing—quick—quick,” cried Farman.

“There ain’t been no mistake,” said the warder, chuckling. “I was told to put yeh in Number Twelve, and that’s Number Twelve o’right. Bit cold, hey? Yeh’ll get used to that. Ta-ta!”

Then Farman broke down and wept—wept and shivered; wept at the thought of his own helplessness; wept with rage at his humiliation. He had been flogged—flogged like a dog, though he had endured the punishment like a man hitherto; like a man and an American. America! would he ever again behold that loved land of freedom? God’s own country! But he must not give way. He had still something to live for—revenge! He would dissemble; his chance would come—God help Ludlow and Griffiths on that day. He stood on one leg, and swished his other foot rapidly through the water. Ah! that was a little better. Then the other. An American took a lot of killing. He had been flogged. Nothing could alter that, but he was still alive, as some of them would find out before long. Ludlow and Griffiths had had their turn, but his was to come. . . .

It came sooner than he expected.

CHAPTER XVII.

TURNING THE TABLES.

THE insurgents had gained possession of a number of aeroplanes by the capture of Newcastle, and by the aid of these Bruce determined to make an attack upon Lithgow. If he succeeded in capturing that important town he would not only strengthen his force by several thousand men but would gain possession of the small arms factory, and what was of still more importance, he would cut the metropolis off from the Western district.

Muswellbrook and Singleton were already strongly held, and two thousand men had been pushed forward to the Hawkesbury River on Wednesday afternoon. The same night a picked body of five hundred troops penetrated as far as Hornsby and mined several railway bridges and culverts. Bruce at once instructed the pioneers to entrench, and despatched troops to their assistance as fast as they could be entrained. By noon on Thursday there were between seven thousand and eight thousand men at Hornsby and Pennant Hills, blocking the passage of the State forces to the North Coast.

Meanwhile arrangements had been completed for the despatch of the Lithgow attacking force of eighty men. These were sent in five aeroplanes; twenty in each of three large airships, and ten each in the other two. The large 'planes carried, in addition, three hundred rifles in each, while the smaller ones were supplied with a dozen bombs.

The attack was timed for five o'clock in the afternoon, when the miners and ironworkers would be "knocking-off" for the day. Several of the Newcastle ex-officials had previously been stationed at Lithgow, and one of these accompanied each aeroplane as a local guide. Jones, with his Electric Gun, went in one of the large aeroplanes, while Duncan and Wise were in charge of the two smaller machines.

Shortly before five o'clock some two hundred guards were assembled outside the gate leading to the principal mines at Lithgow. It was the duty of these guards to escort the miners to their quarters, when tools were "downed" for the day. As the men stood chatting they were startled by a loud explosion in the town. Then, crash! crash! crash!

"Hallo! What's wrong at the barracks?" cried one of the officers.

"Can't make it out," said another. "By Jove! they're exploding bombs!"

They were still staring in wonder when there was a hissing sound, as of escaping steam, from the hillside, above the road, and a dozen of the guards fell, without a word. Another gentle "swish," and a score more were down. Then it stopped.

“Throw down your guns!” called a voice. “Drop them at once!”

A hundred and fifty rifles clattered on the road.

“Now! In through the gate with you,” cried the voice, and they hurried through into the mine enclosure. As the discomfitted guards entered, the officials connected with the mine, attracted by the noise of the explosions, came running round the tool shed. They pulled up in astonishment at the sight of the guard, with their hands still held above their heads.

“What’s the matter?” called out one of the foremost.

“Throw down your arms!” shouted Jones, at the top of his voice. “Down at once!” The officials looked perplexed, but at a nod from one of the officers near the gate, they dropped their weapons.

“Join the others!” called Jones. “Line up on the side of the road! That will do.”

At that moment the miners came slouching round the shed. They stopped short as they saw the mine officials and guard standing unarmed near the gate. Then their eyes took in the weapons lying on the ground, but fearing a trap, they still hung back.

“Hallo! boys!” called Jones. They looked up, and Jones came out into the open. “Pick up those rifles, some of you; the rest come up here, and get some more.”

“Who are you?” cried the miners, amazed.

“Workers from Newcastle. We have ‘wiped out’ the officials over there. If you are men——”

“Men!” roared a thousand voices, as they surged up the hill.

The weapons brought from Newcastle were quickly distributed, and Jones now found himself at the head of five hundred armed men, but quite three times that number were still without guns. He thought a moment.

“Haven’t you an arms factory somewhere about here?” he asked.

“Yes, just over there,” cried a dozen voices, pointing to a large building about a quarter of a mile from the gate. “That’s the new factory.”

“Away with you and take it then,” cried Jones. “About half of you will do; all right! Go on, then. Don’t kill anyone if you can avoid it.”

There was a wild rush—the thunder of thousands of feet—a sound of smashing timber, and the factory was in the hands of the miners.

Jones beckoned to one of the guards, and the man came forward tremblingly.

“Here,” said Jones, “will you take a message to the commanding officer at the barracks?”

“Yes, yes, of course, sir,” replied the man.

“Only a verbal message. Tell him that he can please himself about surrendering. He can choose between that and sudden death. You have seen a little of this plaything’s work.” He tapped the Electric Gun, and the man shuddered. “We have a dozen more like it.” (“Wish we had,” he muttered.) Then aloud: “The System has broken down. Let them understand that clearly. Do you hear?”

“Yes, sir, I’ll go at once,” said the man.

“Wait half a minute,” exclaimed Jones. Then turning to his own men he went on: “Two or three of you take one of the ’planes, and let Wise know what has been done. Tell him not to drop any more bombs for a while.” Then to the official: “Now you can go. If the troops haven’t laid down their arms in twenty minutes I’ll blow them all to kingdom come,” and the man ran down the road like a greyhound.

A quarter of an hour later a white flag was hoisted at the barracks, and Jones, at the head of four thousand men, was making his way to the square, where the State forces were piling their arms. The District Superintendent was one of the first to come forward.

“Who is the leader?” he asked.

“I am, temporarily. What’s the matter?” replied Jones.

Mr. Ludlow grasped his hand, and shook it warmly. “I am very pleased, very pleased indeed, with the turn of events,” he exclaimed unctuously. “I may claim some small amount of credit, I think, for bringing these men to realize the—ah—futility of resistance. As District Superintendent I have, of course, carried out the instructions of the central authority. Indeed, I could not do otherwise, but I can assure you that my sympathies have always been with the workers—ah—with the workers.”

He puffed out his cheeks and looked complacently at the disarmed troops.

“Just as well you did advise them to surrender

promptly," was Jones' comment. "Hallo! That you, Wise?"

The pugilist nodded. "Gave these fellows a bit of a scare by the look of things," he observed.

There was a hoarse roar of anger, and before either Jones or Wise could interfere, Duncan flung himself upon the Superintendent, and despite the bulk of that official he was borne to the ground.

"Where is my daughter?" hissed Duncan. "Give me my little girl. I'll choke the life out of you if you don't tell me where she is at once."

Wise stooped over the infuriated man, and lifting him in his powerful arms set him upon his feet. "You're choking the man," he said.

"Let me go!" panted Duncan. "Let me get at that devil!"

Mr. Ludlow had risen, and was feeling his neck carefully. "Who is this madman?" he asked.

"He knows me well enough. My name is Duncan. He had me flogged at Newcastle. Flogged me because I asked him where he had sent my little girl," screamed Duncan.

"It is a lie," said Ludlow, sullenly. "He tried to murder me at Newcastle, but I had nothing to do with his flogging. That sort of thing is altogether outside my—ah—province." He turned to Jones. "You promised to spare the lives of all who surrendered. I claim your protection against this man."

"Where is this man's daughter?" asked Jones.

"She is here in Lithgow—in the clothing factory," answered Ludlow.

“You told me she had been sent to Sydney,” cried Duncan.

“Well, ah! yes, of course. So she was, but she came to Lithgow quite recently—quite recently.”

“What lodging house?” asked Duncan.

“Number—ah! let me think. All the girls in that factory are lodged at number four,” replied Ludlow.

Jones turned. “Here, Duncan!” he began. “Hallo! he’s off. What are we going to do with all the prisoners?”

“What about shooting them?” cried one of the miners. Let us have a go at them. We want a bit of practice.”

“You’ll have plenty of practice when we start for Sydney,” said Jones quietly. “Isn’t there any enclosure where they can be kept?”

“Yes, the compound,” replied the man.

“Look here,” cried Jones, suddenly turning to the prisoners. “Will you join us? We’re bound to win whether you do or not. The State troops are deserting in thousands. Our army of twenty thousand men was at Pennant Hills at noon to-day. They’ll have Parramatta to-night, and the City the day after. You can come in if——”

“We are with you,” cried the soldiers, pressing forward. A tall, stout man stepped out and touched his cap.

“It’s this way,” he said, “we’re all full up of this tyranny. It’s all right for the bosses, but we are treated like dogs. Give us a chance at them, that’s all we ask. That man,” pointing to Lud-

low, "is one of the worst. I'll be glad to show my opinion of him if you'll let me."

The Superintendent moved hastily to Jones's side. "I claim your protection," he reiterated.

"All right!" exclaimed Jones. "That's settled. Now, listen to me. There is to be no more shooting. Every man is to have justice, strict justice, and a fair trial." He turned to Wise. "Let us see about something to eat."

"Come up to my house," began Ludlow, eagerly, "you and Mr.—ah—I didn't catch your name" (this to Wise).

"I think not; we can get a snack here in the barracks I suppose. You can come with us, Mr. Ludlow.

The Superintendent opened his mouth to offer a protest, but thought better of it, and merely said: "Very well!" Then he said suddenly: "Oh! by the way, there are a couple of thousand rifles up at the railway station. They were going to Sydney to-night. I suppose you'll keep them, though?"

"Thanks," replied Jones, "I reckon we want them more than they do in the City. I say, Wise, perhaps you wouldn't mind having these rifles brought in here."

"Right you are!" he replied briskly, and departed.

Duncan had rushed into the street as soon as he heard Ludlow mention where his daughter was to be found. He had already forgotten the existence of his enemy. Grasping the arm of the first man

he saw, he cried: "Lodging house number four! Where is it?"

"Number four is in the next street," replied the man. "Go through that lane. It is just opposite."

Without waiting to thank the man Duncan rushed away. Two minutes later he had reached the door of the lodging house. The light had just been turned on, and groups of girls were talking excitedly near the entrance. A dozen men were standing in the main hall. Each one appeared to be anxious to give his opinion on the probable movements. The noise was deafening. Duncan brought the butt of his rifle down with a bang on the floor, but no one took the slightest notice of him. A young girl came out of the dining room, and noticing him standing at the door, asked: "Are you looking for anyone?" She was a slight, fair-haired girl, about seventeen years of age, with a refined, delicate face and soft blue eyes.

Duncan looked at her curiously, but did not speak.

"What is the matter?" asked the girl, anxiously.

"I am looking for my daughter. Do you know if Eileen Duncan is here?" he asked, in a husky voice.

"Eileen Duncan!" cried the girl, "why, that is my name."

Letting his rifle fall Duncan held out his arms.

"Eileen! oh! Eileen, my little girl! Don't you know me?" And with a little cry, she rushed into his arms.

"My dear little girl!" he whispered, patting her

head. "My dear little girl! Thank God that I have found you! And you have grown up. I always thought of you as a little toddler, and you are almost a woman. Your mother——" He paused.

"Come with me, Eileen."

He picked up the fallen rifle.

"Where are you going, daddy?" she asked.

"To see your mother; to see your poor mother, who is waiting for you."

"My mother! Is mother here?"

"No, no, not here; at Newcastle. But let us go at once," and hand in hand they left the lodging house and walked up the street to the barracks.

Jones looked up from the table as Duncan and his daughter entered.

"I am going back to Newcastle," began Duncan. "This is my daughter, whom I lost years ago. Eileen! this is Mr. Jones. He and Mr. Bruce released us at Newcastle."

"Pleased to meet you, Miss Duncan," said Jones, with a smile, as he rose and came forward, holding out his hand.

"Eh! Eh!" he exclaimed, for Eileen had thrown her arms round his neck, and kissed his grizzled cheek.

He patted the girl's head affectionately; then turned his own away to hide the tears which had sprung to his eyes as her caress brought thoughts of his own daughter—lost to him alas, for ever.

"Good little girl!" he said gently.

Then he turned to Duncan. "All right!" he

remarked. "Take any 'plane you like excepting Wise's—the one we got from the boss policeman. I don't think any of these chaps can manage it. But what about some tea?"

"I don't care for anything," replied Duncan, "but perhaps Eileen would like something."

She shook her head.

"Half a minute," said Jones. He went into a room off the dining hall, and presently returned with a greatcoat and some rugs. "Here! you'll want some wraps. Who are you taking with you, Duncan?"

A dozen of the Newcastle men stepped forward eagerly.

Jones smiled.

"They've grown very fond of Duncan all at once," he muttered. "Three of you will be enough," he said aloud. "You three nearest the door. Good-night, Miss Duncan! Good-night, old man! See you to-morrow," and sat down to finish his tea.



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE JUSTICE OF THE PEOPLE.

MR. LUDLOW had discreetly withdrawn to the back of the dining hall when he heard Duncan's voice, but he came forward again as soon as he was sure that his enemy had finally departed. He was very ill at ease. He had suddenly remembered the American, Farman, whom he had punished only a few hours before. Good heavens! He was lost if the unfortunate man were found in that accursed cell! He must get away! What excuse could he make?

"Ah! Mr. Jones," he began, "I think if you will excuse me a moment I'll just slip across to the court house. There are some papers; some most important papers, which you should have. They may be destroyed by the—by someone ignorant of their value. I won't be five minutes."

Jones looked at the ex-Superintendent curiously.

"Now, I wonder what is the matter with that fellow," he muttered. "He is in a great funk over something, whatever it is. Oh! dash him! Let him go; I'm sick of his company, anyhow, and can't see that he can do any harm. "All right!" he said aloud. "Don't be long!"

“Not a minute—not half a minute,” cried Mr. Ludlow over his shoulder, as he rushed from the room.

As he hurried through the gateway into the street the ex-Superintendent ran almost into the arms of Wise, who was returning from the station. The pugilist was at the head of about a thousand men, and immediately behind him came four workers carrying a stretcher, upon which lay a man covered with a blanket—all but the face.

Ludlow felt his hair rising, for by the light of the lamp at the gate he recognized the features of Farman, the American.

“Hallo!” cried Wise, “where are you going?”

“I’m—I—” stammered Ludlow; “that is, Mr. Jones has given me permission to go across to the court house. He wishes me to secure some papers for him.”

“Don’t let him go!” shrieked a little, freckled-faced man, who was himself held by two stalwart miners. “Don’t let him go! Don’t let him get away! He had that man flogged this morning! I tried to stop him, but he wouldn’t listen to me! He’s a devil! I can tell you about lots of men he’s had murdered.”

“Who is this madman?” asked Ludlow, making an attempt to brazen it out.

“He knows who I am well enough,” screamed the little man. “I’m the manager of the Ironworks. Everyone knows me; my name is Griffiths.”

“Griffiths!” groaned the man on the stretcher.

“Don’t let Griffiths near me. He had me flogged this morning; he and Ludlow.”

“Come with me,” said Wise sternly, taking the Superintendent by the arm.

“But Mr. Jones gave me permission to go——” began that official.

Wise turned impatiently to his followers.

“Get hold of him, a couple of you, and bring him along. Carry him if he won’t walk,” he said.

Jones looked up in surprise as Ludlow was hustled into the dining hall. He was even more astonished when he noticed the stretcher procession. He took the cigar from his mouth, looked at it affectionately, and then laid it upon the table in front of him.

“You weren’t long,” he remarked to Ludlow.

“I claim your protection, Mr. Jones,” cried that gentleman. “I told your man here,” pointing to Wise, who grinned, “that I had your permission to go across the road to get some papers, but he refused to allow me to pass.”

Jones looked at him with a twinkle in his eye.

“I guess Mr. Wise had a good reason for acting as he did,” he observed. Then his eyes fell upon the man on the stretcher. “Hallo! he’s alive! I thought you had been shooting someone. What is the matter with him?”

“He—he—he had him flogged,” cried Griffiths, struggling to get free from his own captors, and nodding his head towards Ludlow.

“I must request you not to believe a word this man utters,” exclaimed the late Superintendent. “I had occasion, only recently, to censure him for neglect of duty, and he takes this method of—ah—of getting even with me. I knew nothing of this man’s punishment until—until a few minutes ago.”

“Oh! the infernal liar!” screamed Griffiths. Ask Farman! Ask the man on the stretcher. He knows. Ask him!”

“Lift me up,” groaned Farman. “Ah! that’s better.”

One of the late officers hurried to a cupboard at the back of the hall, and came back carrying a bottle of whisky and a glass. He poured out a liberal dose of the spirit and held it to the American’s lips.

“Gee! I was cold!” said Farman, when he had managed to swallow the whisky.

“How did you get so cold?” enquired Jones.

“We found him in a cell in the gaol,” said Wise, answering Jones’ question. “A cell with about six inches of water in it. No wonder he was cold. These devils had thrown him into it after flogging him.”

“He did it! he ordered it!” cried Griffiths, nodding again at Ludlow.

“I—I——” began that gentleman, but Jones interrupted him impatiently.

“Hold your tongue—for the present. I have been a bit suspicious of you all along, and I mean to get at the bottom of this affair. One of you two men is lying, perhaps both. I’ll hear what this

poor fellow has to say first"—pointing to the American—"and then you can give your version."

Then the whole pitiful tale came out. Farman commenced in an even, dispassionate tone, but his voice faltered a little as he told how he, a free American citizen, had been tied up and flogged like a cur. As he narrated the incident of the assault by Griffiths, Wise clenched his fist and started forward, but at a sign from Jones he halted. Then Farman told how the Superintendent had ordered his minions to flog the little half-witted worker, only allowing him to escape on condition that he, Farman, bore the punishment in his stead; and, finally, how he had been thrust—faint and bleeding—into the water cell.

This was altogether too much for Wise. With an oath he tore off his coat and flung it upon the floor.

"Let them go!" he roared to the men who held Ludlow and Griffiths. "Stand back the rest of you! Now, you two fiends from hell! You'd flog and kick a defenceless man, would you? Do the same to me—hands or feet; I bar nothing. Put up your hands, you spawn of the devil, and give me a chance to send you home to your father! I wish there were twenty of you."

He sprang at Griffiths, who was closer to him than the other, but the little ironworks manager dropped upon his knees and began to whine. Wise spurned him with his foot, and turned to Ludlow.

"What about you?" he asked fiercely. "Are you a cur too?"

“Strike me, if you wish,” said Ludlow. “I admit that the American has told the truth so far as he knows. He does not know, however, that it was all the fault of that little—beast.” He nodded at Griffiths. “I am willing to pay the penalty for my own misdeeds, but I must ask you to be good enough to keep Griffiths out of my sight. Bah! He makes me sick!”

Jones had risen from his chair and was speaking to Wise. The pugilist at first shook his head angrily; then he shrugged his shoulders, and said with a short laugh:

“Oh! all right. Anything you like.”

“Take them away,” began Jones, turning to the miners.

“And shoot them?” cried one man.

Jones shook his head, smilingly, at the man’s eagerness.

“No, no,” he said, “not yet. Lock them in the cells for to-night. Stay! Not in the water cell, mind. No more of that sort of thing. Bad as they are they must be treated as if they were human beings. From this day every man is to have strict justice; not the justice of the State, to which we have so long been accustomed.”

There was a sudden commotion in the yard outside; then the rustling of a woman’s dress, and a girl appeared in the doorway. At sight of her Griffiths shrank back, and tried to efface himself behind one of the miners. The girl was without a hat, and her long hair had fallen upon her shoulders

like a black mantle. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes wide open with horror and apprehension.

"Where is he?" she cried. "They told me he had been brought in here."

"Who? Who?" asked those nearest to her.

"George—George Farman." Then, as the men fell back, she saw him. He held up his arms, and dropping upon her knees she hid her face on his breast and burst into a flood of tears.

"Oh, George! George!" she sobbed. "I only just heard about it. Oh! my poor, poor boy!"

Then she remembered, and springing to her feet she turned to Jones, whom, by some intuition, she recognized as the leader, and cried:

"Justice! I want justice!"

"What about?" asked Jones, lamely.

"What about!" she repeated with fine scorn. "These—these devils flog and half kill a man—a better man, a thousand times better, than themselves and you want to know 'what about.' I want you to kill them."

Jones rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Well, Miss——"

"My name is Enid Staunton."

"Well, Miss Staunton," said Jones, "you see it is like this. Although I am the leader of this particular expedition, yet I am responsible to Mr. Bruce. I had decided to lock these men up to-night, and have them taken to Newcastle for trial."

"You promised to spare our lives if we surrendered," screamed Griffiths.

“Gag him, somebody,” exclaimed Jones, impatiently. “Of course, Miss Staunton, if you insist upon it I’ll have them tried here; or how would it suit you if I were to leave their punishment to Mr. Farman?”

The girl was about to speak, but checked herself at a sign from the American.

“Mr. Jones,” he said, “if the matter is left to me, I must let them go. Not that I don’t think they deserve punishment, but I cannot sentence any man to death. I should have pleasure in killing them both in a fair fight, but not in cold blood.

A man stepped forward.

“If you don’t mind, sir,” he said, addressing Jones, “I’ll kill ’em both as the gentleman doesn’t like to do it. Or I’ll give ’em a taste o’ the cat, if you think that would be any good to them.”

“Who are you?” demanded Jones, fiercely.

“He’s the flogger!” cried a score of voices. “Kill him! He flogged me, and me, and me.”

“Get out!” said Wise, with a look of disgust. “Take your filthy carcase out of this—quick!”

“I’d like to have you tied up,” growled the fellow, as he turned away.

“Oh! you would, would you?” cried Wise, as he sprang forward and caught the man by the arm. “Will you have a try now—with your fists?”

“Wouldn’t mind,” replied the flogger.

A space was quickly cleared. Butler was a heavily-built man, weighing not less than fifteen

stone, and he smiled confidently as he faced his much lighter opponent. The contest was over almost before those present realized that it had begun. Butler rushed blindly in, only to meet a straight left on the nose, followed by a right uppercut which nearly jolted his head from his shoulders. He fell forward upon his face—down and out. None of the men would touch him. He rolled over and then sat up.

“Clear out! You are not wanted here,” said Jones.

Butler stared at him stupidly for a moment.

“Where am I to go?” he mumbled.

“Anywhere you like, so long as it is out of the town. Your office has been abolished.” Then, turning to the miners, Jones said: “Take those two men away and lock them up.”

Farman held out his hand to Wise.

“Shake!”

Wise shook.

“Won’t you shake hands with me too?” asked Enid Staunton. “Thank you so much,” she added warmly. “I feel ever so much better now, and so does George; don’t you, George?”

“I think I *am* feeling better, now that you mention it, though I wish this little performance had been staged yesterday,” replied the American with a grim smile.

At that moment a wild cry of terror rang out upon the night air. This was followed by a shot.

“Wonder what has gone wrong outside,” remarked Jones.

“Nothing much; I can hear them cheering,” said Wise, indifferently.

There was a sound of running feet upon the asphalted yard, and a dozen men burst into the hall. Among them Jones recognized the miners whom he had sent to lock Ludlow and Griffiths in the cells.

“What’s the matter?” he asked.

“Prisoners got away,” replied one of the men, with a grin at his mates.

“What was the shooting about?” demanded Jones.

“We didn’t do it,” replied the man. “It was a clerk chap. He shot the fat bloke.”

“Why did you allow anyone to shoot him while he was in your charge?” asked Jones sternly.

“He didn’t ask our permission. He just ran up with a gun and told us to stand clear, and we stood clear, quick and lively, you bet your life,” answered the miner.

“Do you mean to say that you were afraid of one man?” enquired Wise.

“My oath!” was the reply. “I know I wasn’t taking any risks; not for old Ludlow, anyhow. Might ha’ done, if he was a decent sort, but not for him. No good to me.”

“What happened then?”

“Well, this clerk chap, as soon as we stood clear, he just lets drive and close up blows old what’s-is-name’s head off.”

“What about the other man—Griffiths?”

“The last I see of him,” replied the miner, with a chuckle, “he was doin’ a ‘flutter’ down the road with about a hundred o’ the ironworkers after him, yellin’ like—” he paused and glanced at Enid—“like the doose. They was gettin’ pretty close to him.”

“Did they catch him?” asked Jones.

“I reckon they did; we didn’t wait to see,” was the reply.

“There must be no more of this,” said Jones, sternly. “No more violence. I’ll have the next offender shot.”

“Hallo!” cried a man near the door; “Scotty is singing. I’m off out.”

There was a rush for the front. Doors and windows were thrown open, and then, from the square, came the stirring words of “Scots wha’ ha’ wi’ Wallace bled.” The crowd listened in silence, and the singer went on:—

“ By oppression’s woes and pains,
By your sons in servile chains,
We will drain our dearest veins
Or they shall be free—— ”

Then the long restrained feelings of the workers burst out in frantic cheers. “Scotty” made no attempt to finish his song, or if he did, no one heard him. *They* were free, but others—their fathers, their sons, their brothers and sisters—were still in bondage, still in “servile chains.” They would free them too! Down with the tyrants! To Sydney! To Sydney!

Jones touched Wise on the shoulder.

“What do you think of our prospects?” he asked, with a laugh.

“If we can keep them up to that pitch I reckon the System is in for a bad time,” was the reply.



CHAPTER XIX.

THE END OF THE SYSTEM.

TWO days after the capture of Lithgow Mr. Denfrew was seated in his office in the city. He had notified the members of the Government that an important meeting would be held at eleven o'clock, but although it was now more than half an hour after the appointed time, only Robert Gray and Richardson were present. Lowe and Ramsay had not been seen in Sydney since the last meeting, while the other members of the Executive excused themselves from attendance on the ground of ill-health.

"A lot of curs! A lot of miserable, snivelling, cowardly curs!" he declared the absent members to be.

The Director of Education stroked his beard thoughtfully and looked across at Richardson.

"I am afraid the end has come," he said at length. "I intend to get away—while I can."

Mr. Denfrew glared at the speaker.

Then he groaned: "You too, Gray!"

Mr. Gray looked uneasy for a moment. Then he shrugged his shoulders.

“Look here Denfrew,” he protested, “it will do no good to blink the facts. If we could possibly get any assistance from Melbourne or Brisbane I should certainly say ‘Hang on!’ but you know as well as I that, even if they could send any troops, we could not trust them. Ask Richardson.”

Mr. Richardson nodded.

“Gray is quite right. The game is up. My wife and children are over in Wellington, and I intend leaving for New Zealand this afternoon. Come with me, Denfrew.”

“Never!” exclaimed the Dictator, vehemently. “I’ll stay until the finish, no matter what happens.”

There was a knock at the door, and a clerk entered. He handed a note to Mr. Denfrew, looking curiously at him the while. The Dictator took up a paper knife and opened the envelope carefully. Gray and Richardson leant forward, watching the deliberate movements of their chief with ill-concealed impatience. Mr. Denfrew read the message slowly. Then he turned to his colleagues and said, with a bitter smile:

“That settles it!”

“What? What is it?” asked the two members together.

“Our army, our beautiful, brave army, has surrendered without firing a shot, apparently,” groaned Mr. Denfrew.

“It is time to go,” said Richardson.

“Go! go! What is the good of talking about going? Go away, and leave everything behind!”

Go away, to begin life over again in another country!"

"I'm not leaving much," remarked Richardson. "I transferred all my 'get-at-able' possessions to Wellington the day before yesterday."

"So did I," said Gray. "Didn't you do the same, Denfrew? No! Well, it is a great pity. I am afraid it is too late now. I was speaking to Hislop, of the State Bank, this morning, and just remember now that he told me it was a bank holiday. I quite forgot to ask him the reason, but I strongly suspect that he has received instructions from the rebels to suspend payment for the present. The whole service is seething with treason."

Mr. Denfrew looked from one to the other, but said not a word. The two members rose to go, but before leaving they made a last appeal to him to seek safety in flight. He shook his head, but silently extended his hand to each in turn, and they went softly out, leaving him seated there, gazing at the ethergram which had conveyed to him the news of the downfall of the System of which he had been so proud.

He was still staring at the fatal message when, an hour later, Claude entered the room. The lad spoke to him, but he made no reply. Claude touched him on the shoulder.

"Coming home, father?"

"Home! home! Yes, I'll go home," was the reply.

Claude helped him into his overcoat, handed him

his hat and stick, and they went down the steps together. Not a clerk nor messenger was to be seen.

A man was addressing a crowd in the square, where the statue of Queen Victoria formerly stood. As Denfrew's car came along past the hospital the orator caught sight of the occupants.

"Here he comes!" he shrieked. "Here comes the tyrant himself!"

"Pull him out! Tear him to pieces!" roared the crowd, surging forward to intercept the car.

Mr. Denfrew looked straight in front of him, with unseeing eyes. He was apparently unconscious of danger. Claude set his teeth firmly and increased the speed of the car.

"Stand back! Out of the way!" he shouted.

There was a roar of anger, a wild scramble for safety, and they were through the crowd and away, followed by the wild curses and yells of those who, only yesterday, were ready to lick the boots of the great man. To-day there was "none so poor to do him reverence."

Kathleen met them at the door as they drove up to the house.

"I have been so anxious," she began. "We have heard all kinds of rumours, and besides, I have noticed two men watching the house in a very suspicious manner for the last hour."

Mr. Denfrew kissed her affectionately.

"Pooh! pooh!" he said lightly. "There isn't anything to be anxious about. Everything is going splendidly—splendidly!"

“But——” she began. She caught her brother’s eye and stopped.

“I’ll just slip up to my room for a minute before lunch,” said Mr. Denfrew.

He patted Kathleen gently on the shoulder, and then went slowly up the stairs. The girl’s eyes filled as she noticed his bent head and despondent bearing, which accorded so ill with the brave words he had just uttered. Then she turned anxiously to her brother, who was fumbling uneasily with his watch chain.

“Tell me what has happened, Claude,” she said, laying her hand upon his arm.

“Father has had a bit of a shock, I fancy,” he answered. “I heard a fellow down town shouting out something about the army having surrendered. I expect it must be those beauties Richardson got together. I guess the other chaps are not likely to throw in the towel, knowing what they’d get if they did. Have you heard from Gray?”

“Yes, about ten o’clock; just after you went out. He said that the workers’ army was moving forward, and that he expected it would come into touch with the State troops in about an hour. I sent a message to Lorna, asking her to bring Mary in here. Poor girl! I know she will be anxious until she hears the result of the battle.”

“Battle! There won’t be any battle,” declared the lad, confidently. “I was speaking to old Jenkins this morning. He reckons the State army couldn’t fight a healthy frog. He was getting ready to clear out himself. Said he wasn’t going to stay

here to be crucified, and he supposed it would be that or something worse for any officials the rebels got hold of. What's the matter?"

"Father—poor father!" cried Kathleen. "I was thinking of his fate."

"Don't cry, little girl," said Claude, soothingly. "Father will be all right. Ronald will fix it up with Bruce. I'll run up and see what is keeping him."

"No, you go in and talk to mother and Grace. Arthur is with them. I'll go upstairs."

When Mr. Denfrew went to his room it was with the full intention of ending his life. He would not live to face humiliation and disgrace. Better to end it at once. He was too old to begin life over again. He had failed, but death would cover up his failure. He would not live to grace the triumph of the rebellious workers. Gray and Richardson might run away, but it should never be said that Denfrew had fled from a pack of workers. He was growing old, anyhow. It seemed at least twenty years since he rose that morning. He pulled out a drawer in order to get the little bottle, a few drops from which would place him beyond the reach of his enemies' vengeance. As he leant forward he noticed a framed portrait on the cupboard.

His hand dropped to his side. He had forgotten her—Marcia, his wife. Great heaven! And his children! What a coward he had been! He must live to protect them! He must get them away to a place of safety at once.

"We are waiting for you, father," said Kathleen, from the doorway.

He took her by the arm, gently.

"Kathleen, you are a brave girl, I know. You will need all your courage. The workers have won. All is lost. Our army has surrendered, and the enemy will be in the city this afternoon. We must go away before they come."

"Where shall we go?" she asked.

"Anywhere! anywhere away from Sydney, for the present. Where is that fellow, Joe? He must get the big 'plane ready."

He rushed downstairs, and into the dining room.

"Marcia," he began, addressing Mrs. Denfrew, "I must ask you to get ready to leave here as soon as possible. Well, Arthur, I suppose you have heard the news?"

"Nothing definite," replied his son. Mrs. Denfrew and Grace came forward with clasped hands. Claude was standing with his back to the fire, one arm resting on the mantelpiece.

Mr. Denfrew told them briefly what had happened.

"I am scarcely surprised," remarked Arthur, as his father concluded. "Mrs. Gray was round to see Stella last night. She told her that they were all going for a trip to New Zealand to-day. She wanted Stella to go with them, but she wouldn't go without me, and of course I said that I couldn't get away."

"You had better bring Stella here at once," said his father, "and also what money and jewellery

you may have in the house. We must leave everything else behind."

"Very well, I'll go at once," responded Arthur, and went out, followed by Claude.

"I say, what do you think of the position?" asked the lad.

"I am not so much afraid of the workers as of the officials," was the reply.

"The officials?"

"Yes, there will be a mob of them out here as soon as they hear the news. I don't intend to wait for them."

Claude looked after his brother as he ran down the steps and across the lawn to the gate leading to his residence, which was only about a hundred yards from the family mansion.

As the lad turned to re-enter the house he saw a car sweep through the archway and come rapidly up the drive. Claude at once recognized Mrs. Munro's automobile, and knowing that the occupants must be the widow and Mary Heath, he started forward to meet them. To his astonishment he noticed the driver pull the car up with a jerk, about half-way between the house and the gate. A moment later he saw the reason. Two men suddenly appeared from a clump of shrubs, each holding a pistol pointed at the unfortunate driver. Then one of the men, a tall, powerful fellow, handing his pistol to his companion, threw open the door of the car and seized Mary Heath, picking her up as if she had been a child. She

screamed lustily for help, but the fellow paid not the slightest attention to her cries.

“Come on, White, I’ve got her!” he shouted, and ran with great strides down the path towards the gate.

Claude took in the situation at a glance. With a cry of rage he sprang forward. As he did so White turned quickly and fired, and the lad, throwing up his arms, fell headlong. Then the ruffian turned again to the trembling driver.

“You stay here! Don’t dare to move for ten minutes, or you’re a dead man,” he hissed.

“I won’t move for half an hour,” exclaimed the chauffeur earnestly.

“See that you don’t,” snapped White, and then, waiting no longer, he ran after his companion.

Mary’s abductors had left their own car just beyond the entrance gate. The affair had been skilfully planned, and looked like being successful, but just as the man rushed through the arch he found himself face to face with four men, who had, apparently, descended from the aeroplane which rested beside the deserted motor car.

There was a hurried exclamation, then a cry of recognition, a fierce blow, and Mary was in the arms of Jack Bruce, who, with Ronald Gray, Jones, and Wise had arrived so opportunely.

“Look out!” cried Jones. “Here comes another of them!”

As he spoke White ran through the gateway into the street.

“Quick, Bolton!” he panted.

Wise held a rifle in his right hand, but scorning to use it against a single foe, he struck White flush in the face with his left before the astonished ruffian could raise either of the pistols he carried. The blow knocked the man clean off his feet. Wise walked over calmly and picked up the fallen pistols and threw them across the road.

Ronald was already hurrying towards the house, while Jack Bruce—but what could Jack do but gaze with admiration, and a little wonder as well, at the beautiful girl he held in his arms?

“I scarcely knew you, Mary,” he whispered. “The work girl has disappeared.”

“And what has become of the workman?” she asked, with a smile, as she touched the officer’s uniform he wore.

Jack laughed.

“They made me wear it,” he protested. “I wanted to retain my working clothes until the end, but they disappeared, and—and I found these in their place. I wasn’t really very sorry. But what is the matter? Is someone hurt?”

“Oh! it must be Claude!” cried Mary. “He ran down to meet us just before that man”—(she pointed to her late captor, who was gazing as if fascinated at Jones)—“before that man dragged me out of the car. Poor Claude! I hope he is not badly hurt! I must go to him.”

“I’m coming too,” exclaimed Jack. “I say, Jones, give these two fellows a start down the road, will you, when they are fit to travel. Now, Mary, I am ready. I am not going to let you out of my

sight again. Someone else may be trying to run off with you. My word! I am not surprised that they want to," he added, with an admiring glance at her handsome, flushed face.

"Don't be foolish, Jack," she said in what she vainly attempted to make a very severe tone.

They found Claude conscious, but very pale. His father and mother were anxiously awaiting the result of an examination which Ronald was then making.

"Nothing very serious," he announced, as Jack and Mary, followed by Wise, drew near. "The bullet seems to have struck him a glancing blow on the ribs, knocking him out for the time, but I feel sure that he will be all right again in a day or two."

The lad's father and mother and sisters heaved four separate sighs of relief as Ronald concluded, while Mary knelt by his side and pressed her lips to his pale cheek.

"My brave boy!" she murmured, "and you were wounded in trying to rescue me!"

"Didn't suc-succeed very well," said Claude, making an attempt to laugh.

"Let me do something," cried Jack, coming forward. "I'll carry him up to the house. Tell me if I hurt you," he added as he lifted the lad gently in his arms.

Mr. Denfrew gazed in astonished silence as the tall, uniformed figure strode up the path.

"Who is he?" he asked, turning from one to another.

Mrs. Munro shook her head. She had heard of Jack, of course, but did not connect him with the handsome officer, whom she supposed to be in charge of some of the State troops. Mary had gone with Jack. Ronald and Kathleen were talking earnestly as they walked slowly towards the house, while Wise, who could have enlightened Mr. Denfrew, was so lost in admiration of the young widow that he quite failed to hear the question at all.

"I don't understand what it all means," exclaimed Mr. Denfrew, with a touch of his old-time impatience. "How did Claude get hurt? And who is that officer who is carrying him up to the house?"

"That officer!" replied Wise, waking up. "Oh! that is General Bruce!"

"General Bruce! Bruce!" repeated Mr. Denfrew. "What Bruce? Not the——"

"Yes," said Wise, with a nod, "*the* Bruce, the Commander-in-Chief, and Lord High Admiral and all the rest of it."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Mr. Denfrew; "why, he looks like a gentleman!"

"Yes, something like one," said Wise, dryly.

"And who are you?"

"Me! Oh! I'm nobody in particular. Kind of aide-de-camp to General Bruce. Wise, my name is, Hubert Wise in full, but I—— Hallo! What's that?"

There were several sharp reports from the street. As he ran down towards the gate Wise began to fear that Jones must be in some trouble, but just then he heard the now familiar swish! swish! of

the Electric Gun, and knew that all was well. When he reached the street he could see no living man excepting Jones, but down near the bend of the road a number of still forms were lying.

“What’s the matter?” he enquired.

“Nothing much,” replied Jones. “You know those two fellows we caught trying to carry the girl off?” Wise nodded. “Well, Bruce asked me to give them a start down the road, so I started them. They were inclined to argue the point at first (it seems that car belonged to them), but I wouldn’t stand any of their nonsense, and they got a move on. They had gone about a hundred and fifty yards when a lot of men came round the corner—coming out to serenade old Denfrew, I expect—and they turned back with the crowd. It wasn’t my fault. I told them to keep off, but they began to shoot; nearly got me, too, one bullet hit the wall just beside my ear. As they wouldn’t listen to reason I was forced to turn “Old Sudden Death” loose and——”

“Drowned old Pharaoh’s army, hallelujah.”

“That’s it.”

“How many?” asked Wise, pointing down the road.

“About forty or fifty, I suppose,” replied Jones, indifferently. “Got our two friends first shot. I guess the survivors will give this neighbourhood a pretty wide berth for a while.”

“I’m off up to the house,” said Wise, suddenly.

“Got an appointment with the Dictator?”

“No, but I must go and attend his Excellency, the Commander-in-Chief,” replied Wise, with a wink.

He found Mrs. Denfrew and Mrs. Munro engaged in earnest talk. The widow looked up and nodded brightly as he approached. Then she said:

“Oh! I know you now, Mr. Wise. Claude told us all about your exploits.”

Wise appeared to have forgotten the existence of the “Commander-in-Chief” as they stood chatting, but Mrs. Munro started for the house, and he mechanically followed.

Mr. Denfrew was speaking as they entered the hall. He paused for a moment, and glanced at them, then he went on:

“You came here, I presume, for the purpose of effecting my capture? I shall make no attempt to escape, but with regard to my wife and family——”

“Stay!” cried Jack, raising his hand. “You are quite mistaken, Mr. Denfrew. I have no intention of injuring you in any way.”

“What? Am I not to be sacrificed?”

“Not by me,” replied Bruce. “Indeed, my object in coming here to-day—one of my objects, at any rate—was to protect you, if necessary. Your noble daughter, in befriending one who is dearer to me than life itself, has placed me under a deep obligation to you and every member of your family, and I am only too happy to be in such a position that I am able to discharge some portion of that debt. Mary! Let me introduce Mr. Denfrew; Mr.

Denfrew, this is Miss Mary Heath, who will, I hope, shortly become Mrs. John Bruce."

Mr. Denfrew looked puzzled.

"Heath!" he muttered; "Miss Heath of——?"

"Of the State Clothing Factory," said Mary.

For a moment Mr. Denfrew looked as if he doubted that he had heard aright. Then he laughed.

"By Jove!" he cried, "it seems almost a pity that the System has come to an end. It couldn't have been so bad, after all, when it produced such a charming lady"—he bowed to Mary—"and such a gallant gentleman"—turning to Jack—"as I have had the pleasure of meeting to-day."

CHAPTER XX.

NOONDAY.

IT is five years since the "Great Revolt," but as he steps from his car at the door of his house, Jack Bruce seems hardly a day older than when we last saw him. Mary comes forward to meet him as he enters. She looks more matronly than of yore, but is even more beautiful than she appeared when, on that never to be forgotten day, Jack met her in the Balmain street. He tells her as much as she lifts her face to meet his kiss, and she smiles happily at his words.

There is a pattering of little feet, and Jack Bruce, the younger, claims his father's attention. Behind the boy comes the dreamy-eyed astronomer, Edward Bruce. Happy in the possession of a well-equipped observatory, the erstwhile farm laborer seems to grow younger.

"We have some visitors; guess who!" cries Mary.

"The Wisers?"

"No, come along and see," and leads him to the drawing room.

"Gray! and Mrs. Gray, too!" exclaims Jack. "Well, I *am* pleased. And who is this?" as he notices a fair-haired little girl.

“That,” replies the proud father, “is Miss Kathleen Mary Gray.”

Ronald and Kathleen had been in England for upwards of four years. Mr. Denfrew accompanied his daughter and son-in-law to London, but died shortly after reaching the old land.

“Yes, Claude is coming home next month,” said Kathleen, in reply to an enquiry from Jack. “He always speaks of Sydney as home,” she added, “although we have done our best to persuade him to settle down in London. He is now a ‘full-fledged civil engineer,’ as he calls himself. He intended coming with us, but managed to break his collar bone at football a few days before we sailed.”

“Everything going all right, I suppose?” asked Ronald a little later, when the ladies had retired to discuss some purely feminine matters.

“Splendidly!” replied Bruce, with enthusiasm. “As you know, we had some trouble at first—for about a year. A few of the officials appeared to think that the State should keep them in idleness for the rest of their lives, in return for what they were pleased to call their ‘services,’ while some of the workers were rather disappointed that we allowed their former masters to live at all, but that is all forgotten long ago.”

“Your population has greatly increased, I understand?”

“Yes, we must be well over the fifteen million mark now, I think. You see, we are able to offer

many inducements to people in Great Britain, especially to men of the farming class, and they are coming in at the rate of about twenty thousand a month. We have quite elaborate systems of water conservation and irrigation, and we now consider that we are independent of the seasons. Our flocks and herds, which under the System had almost vanished, are now greater than ever—much greater; the estimated area under crop for this year is upwards of twenty-five million acres.”

“And the Government?” asked Ronald.

Jack smiled.

“I believe that we have a good Government,” he replied. “You know, of course, that we have fifteen States in the new Federation. We have greatly extended local government, and the people manage practically all their own affairs. In fact, the duty of an Australian Parliament to-day may be described as one of our members recently put it: ‘To leave the people alone.’”

“Have you any Socialists here now?”

“I believe there are a few, chiefly foreigners, but no one takes them seriously excepting themselves.”

“I see. But don’t your people here ever get restless? Don’t they want advanced legislation, as they call it?”

“Well, I think I may say with safety that they don’t,” laughed Jack. “They have too keen a recollection of their sufferings to desire any more experiments. In any case, the women would not allow them to make any change. The mothers remember

only that the System took their children from them."

"By the way, how is Jones?" asked Ronald, "the man with the Electric Gun?"

"He will be here this evening," answered Jack; "but don't you know the Jones Gun? I think the British Government is about our best customer."

"I know it well."

"He is the *Jones*. Of course the new weapon is a great improvement on 'old Sudden Death,' as Jones called it."

"An old friend to see you, Mr. Gray!" cried Mary, gaily.

"Mrs. Munro!" exclaimed Ronald, springing to his feet.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Wise!" called a voice from the doorway.

"You are a very fortunate fellow," said Ronald, warmly, as he shook hands with Jack's old companion-in-arms. "And I must congratulate you as well, Mrs. Wise. You have every reason to feel proud of your husband."

"That is just what I am always trying to make her believe," remarked Wise, with a smile. "I suppose Bruce has been holding forth about his glorious country?"

"A little."

"Oh! well, things are rather better than when you met him first. I often dream that old Watson is after me, to have me executed for assaulting him."

"Now," cried Mary, shaking her finger at him,

“you know you are not allowed to say anything about those dreadful days in this house.”

“Those dreadful days are gone for ever,” said Jack, solemnly, “but their shadow serves to make the light of the present appear more bright. No one values liberty so much as the emancipated slave. We have passed through the black night of sorrow, but the morning of joy has dawned. The morning! Nay, the noonday has arrived—the Noonday of Freedom and the Rights of Man!”

THE END.

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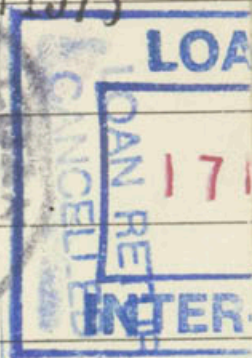
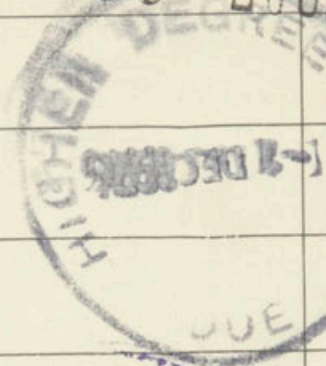
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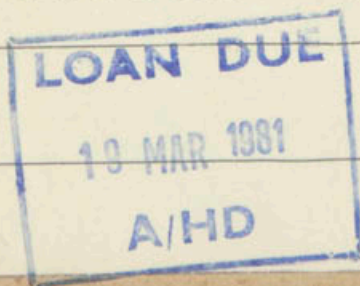


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