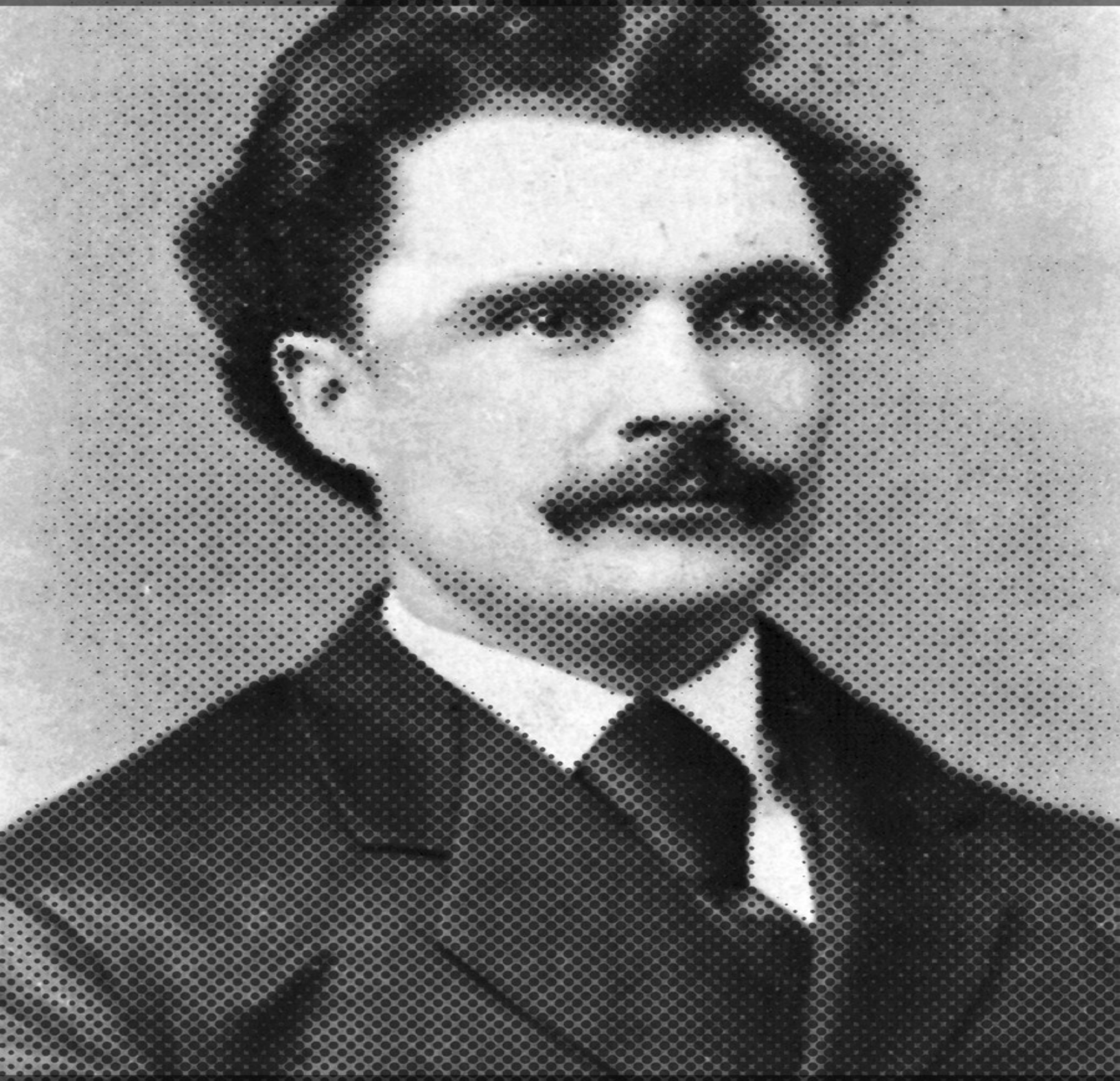
John Boyle O'Reilly



Moondyne

John Boyle O'Reilly

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Table of Contents

The Gold Mine of the Vasse

Table of Contents

The Sandalwood Trade

Table of Contents

Alice Walmsley

Table of Contents

The Convict Ship

Table of Contents

The Valley of the Vasse

Table of Contents

The Land of the Red Line

Table of Contents

Western Australia is a vast and unknown country, almost mysterious in its solitude and unlikeness to any other part of the earth. It is the greatest of the Australias in extent, and in many features the richest and loveliest.

But the sister colonies of Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland are famous for their treasure of gold. Men from all lands have flocked thither to gather riches. They care not for the slow labour of the farmer or grazier. Let the weak and the old, the coward and the dreamer, prune the vine and dry the figs, and wait for the wheat to ripen. Strong men must go to the trial—must set muscle against muscle, and brain against brain, in the mine and the market.

Men's lives are short; and unless they gather gold in the mass, how shall they wipe out the primal curse of poverty before the hand loses its skill and the heart its strong desire?

Western Australia is the Cinderella of the South. She has no gold like her sisters. To her was given the servile and unhappy portion. The dregs of British society were poured upon her soil. The robber and the manslayer were sent thither. Her territory was marked off with a Red Line. She has no markets for honest men, and no ports for honest ships. Her laws are not the laws of other countries, but the terrible rules of the menagerie. Her citizens have no rights: they toil their lives out at heavy tasks, but earn no wages, nor own a vestige of right in the soil they till. It is a land of

slaves and bondmen—the great penal colony of Great Britain.

"There is no gold in the western colony," said the miners contemptuously; "let the convicts keep the land—but let them observe our red line."

So the convicts took the defamed country, and lived and died there, and others were transported there from England to replace those who died, and every year the seething ships gave up their addition to the terrible population.

In time, the western colony came to be regarded as a plague-spot, where no man thought of going and no man did go unless sent in irons.

If the miners from Victoria and New South Wales, however, had visited the penal land some years after its establishment, they would have heard whispers of strange import—rumours and questions of a great golden secret possessed by the western colony. No one could tell where the rumour began or on what it was based, except perhaps the certainty that gold was not uncommon among the natives of the colony, who had little or no intercourse with the aborigines of the gold-yielding countries of the south and east.

The belief seemed to hover in the air; and it settled with dazzling conviction on the crude and abnormal minds of the criminal population. At their daily toil in the quarries or on the road parties, no rock was blasted nor tree uprooted that eager eyes did not hungrily scan the upturned earth. At night, when the tired wretches gathered round the camp-fire outside their prison hut, the dense mahogany forest closing weirdly round the white-clad group, still the undiscovered

gold was the topic earnestly discussed. And even the government officers and the few free settlers became after a time filled with the prevailing expectancy and disquiet.

But years passed, and not an ounce of gold was discovered in the colony. The Government had offered reward to settlers or ticket-of-leave men who would find the first nugget or gold-bearing rock; but no claimant came forward.

Still, there remained the tantalizing fact—for, in the course of years, fact it had grown to be—that gold was to be found in the colony, and in abundance. The native bushmen were masters of the secret, but neither bribe nor torture could wring it from them. Terrible stories were whispered among the convicts of attempts that had been made to force the natives to give up the precious secret. Gold was common amongst these bushmen. Armlets and anklets had been seen on men and women; and some of their chief men, it was said, wore breast-plates and enormous chains of hammered gold.

At last the feeling in the west grew to fever heat; and, in 1848, the Governor of the penal colony issued a proclamation, copies of which were sent by native runners to every settler and ticket-of-leave man, and were even surreptitiously distributed amongst the miners on the other side of the red line.

This proclamation intensified the excitement. It seemed to bring the mine nearer to every man in the colony. It was a formal admission that there really was a mine; it dispelled the vague uncertainty, and left an immediate hunger or greed in the minds of the population.

The proclamation read as follows:

£5.000 REWARD!

The above Reward will be paid for the discovery of the Mine from which the Natives of the Vasse obtain their Gold.

A Free Pardon will be granted to the Discoverer, should he be of the Bond Class.

No Reward will be given nor terms made with Absconders from the Prisons or Road Parties.

By order,

F. R. HAMPTON,

Governor.

Official Residence,

Perth, 28th June, 1848.

But nothing came of it. Not an ounce of gold was ever taken from the earth. At last men began to avoid the subject. They could not bear to be tantalized nor tortured by the splendid delusion. Some said there was no mine in the Vasse, and others that, if there were a mine, it was known only to a few of the native chiefs, who dealt out the raw gold to their people.

For eight years this magnificent reward had remained unclaimed, and now its terms were only recalled at the fires, of the road-making convicts, or in the lonely slab huts of the mahogany sawyers, who were all ticket-of-leave men.

The Convict Road Party

Table of Contents

It was a scorching day in midsummer—a few days before Christmas.

Had there been any moisture in the bush it would have steamed in the heavy heat. During the midday hours not a bird stirred among the mahogany and gum trees. On the flat tops of the low banksia the round heads of the white cockatoos could be seen in thousands, motionless as the trees themselves. Not a parrot had the vim to scream. The chirping insects were silent. Not a snake had courage to rustle his hard skin against the hot and dead bush-grass. The bright-eyed iguanas wee in their holes. The mahogany sawyers had left their logs and were sleeping in the cool sand of their pits. Even the travelling ants had halted on their wonderful roads, and sought the shade of a bramble.

All free things were at rest; but the penetrating click of the axe, heard far through the bush, and now and again a harsh word of command, told that it was a land of bondmen.

From daylight to dark, through the hot noon as steadily as in the cool evening, the convicts were at work on the roads—the weary work that has no wages, no promotion, no incitement, no variation for good or bad, except stripes for the laggard.

Along the verge of the Koagulup Swamp—one of the greatest and smallest of the wooded lakes of the country, its black water deep enough to float a man-of-war—a party of convicts were making a government road. They were cutting

their patient way into a forest only traversed before by the aborigine and the absconder.

Before them in the bush, as in their lives, all was dark and unknown-tangled underbrush, gloomy shadows, and noxious things. Behind them, clear and open, lay the straight road they had made—leading to and from the prison.

Their camp, composed of rough slab huts, was some two hundred miles from the main prison of the colony, on the Swan River, at Fremantle, from which radiate all the roads made by the bondmen.

The primitive history of the colony is written for ever in its roads. There is, in this penal labour, a secret of value to be utilized more fully by a wiser civilization. England sends her criminals to take the brunt of the new land's hardship and danger-to prepare the way for honest life and labour. In every community there is either dangerous or degrading work to be done: and who so fit to do it as those who have forfeited their liberty by breaking the law?

The convicts were dressed in white trousers, blue woollen shirt, and white hat; every article stamped with England's private mark—the broad arrow. They were young men, healthy and strong, their faces and bare arms burnt to the colour of mahogany. Burglars, murderers, garotters, thieves—double-dyed law-breakers every one; but, for all that, kind hearted and manly fellows enough were among them.

"I tell you, mates," said one, resting on his spade, "this is going to be the end of Moondyne Joe. That firing in the swamp last night was his last fight."

"I don't think it was Moondyne," said another; "he's at work in the chain-gang at Fremantle; and there's no chance of escape there—"

"Sh-h!" interrupted the first speaker, a powerful, low-browed fellow, named Dave Terrell, who acted as a sort of foreman to the gang. The warder in charge of the party was slowly walking past. When he was out of hearing, Dave continued, in a low but deeply earnest voice: "I know it was Moondyne, mates. I saw him last night when I went to get the turtle's eggs. I met him face to face in the moonlight, beside the swamp.

Every man held his hand and breath with intense interest in the story. Some looked incredulous—heads were shaken in doubt.

"Did you speak to him?" asked one.

"Ay," said Terrell, turning on him; "why shouldn't I? Moondyne knew he had nothing to fear from me, and I had nothing to fear from him."

"What did you say to him?" asked another.

"Say?— I stood and looked at him for a minute, for his face had a white look in the moonlight, and then I walked up close to him, and I says—‘Be you Moondyne Joe, or his ghost?’

"Ay?" said the gang with one breath.

"Ay, I said that, never fearing, for Moondyne Joe, dead or alive, would never harm a prisoner."

"But what did he answer?" asked the eager crowd.

"He never said a word; but he laid his finger on his lips, like this, and waved his hand as if he warned me to go back to the camp. I turned to go; then I looked back once, and he

was standing just as I left him, but he was looking up at the sky, as if there was some'at in the moon that pleased him."

The convicts worked silently, each thinking on what he had heard.

He mightn't ha' been afraid, though," said low-browed Dave; "I'd let them cut my tongue out before I'd sell the Moondyne."

"That's true," said several of the gang, and many kind looks were given to Terrell. A strong bond of sympathy, it was evident, existed between these men and the person of whom they spoke.

A sound from the thick bush interrupted the conversation. The convicts looked up from their work, and beheld a strange procession approaching from, the direction of the swamp. It consisted of about a dozen or fifteen persons, most of whom were savages. In front rode two officers of the Convict Service, a sergeant, and a private trooper, side by side, with drawn swords; and between their horses, manacled by the wrists to their stirrup-irons, walked a white man.

"Here they come," hissed Terrell, with a bitter malediction, his low brow wholly disappearing into a terrible ridge above his eyes. "They haven't killed him, after all. O, mates, what a pity it is to see a man, like Moondyne in that plight."

"He's done for two or three of 'em," muttered another, in a tone of grim gratification. "Look at the loads behind. I knew he wouldn't be taken this time like a cornered cur."

Following the prisoner came a troop of "natives," as the aboriginal bushmen are called, bearing three spearwood

litters with the bodies of wounded men. A villainous-looking savage, mounted on a troop-horse, brought up the rear. His dress was like that of his pedestrian fellows, upon whom, however, he looked in disdain—a short boka, or cloak of kangaroo skin, and a belt of twisted fur cords round his, naked body. In addition, he had a police-trooper's old cap, and a heavy "regulation" revolver stuck in his belt.

This was the tracker, the human bloodhound, used by the troopers to follow the trail of absconding prisoners.

When the troopers neared the convict party, the sergeant, a man whose natural expression, whatever it might have been, was wholly obliterated by a frightful sear across his face, asked for water. The natives halted, and squatted silently in a group. The wounded men moaned as the litters were lowered.

Dave Terrell brought the water. He handed a pannikin to the sergeant, and another to the private trooper, and filled a third.

"Who's that for?" harshly demanded the sergeant.

"For Moondyne," said the convict, approaching the chained man, whose neck was stretched toward the brimming cup.

"Stand back, curse you!" said the sergeant, bringing his sword flat on the convict's back. "That scoundrel needs no water. He drinks blood."

There was a taunt in the tone, even beneath the brutality of the words.

"Carry your pail to those litters," growled the sinister looking sergeant, "and keep your mouth closed, if you value your hide. There!" he said in a suppressed voice, flinging the

few drops he had left in the face of the manacled man, "that's water enough for you, till you reach Bunbury prison tomorrow."

The face of the prisoner hardly changed. He gave one straight look into the sergeant's eyes, then turned away, and seemed to look far away through the bush. He was a remarkable being, as he stood there. In strength and proportion of body, the man was magnificent—a model for a gladiator. He was of middle height, young, but so stem and massively featured, and so browned and beaten by exposure, it was hard to determine his age. His clothing was only a few torn and bloody rags; but he looked as if his natural garb were utter nakedness or the bushman's cloak, so loosely and carelessly hung the shreds of cloth on his bronzed body. A large, finely-shaped head, with crisp, black hair and beard, a broad, square forehead, and an air of power and self-command—this was the prisoner, this was Moondyne Joe.

Who or what was the man? An escaped convict. What had he been? Perhaps a robber or a mutineer—or, maybe, he ad killed a man in the white heat of passion. No one knew—no one cared to know.

That question is never asked in the penal colony. No caste there. They have found bottom, where all stand equal. No envy there, no rivalry, no greed nor ambition, and no escape from companionship. They constitute the purest democracy on earth. The only distinction to be won—that of being trustworthy, or selfish and false. The good man is he who is kind and true; the bad man is he who is capable of betraying a confederate.

It may be the absence of the competitive elements of social life that accounts for the number of manly characters to be met among these outcasts.

It is by no means in the superior strata of society that abound the strong, true natures, the men that may be depended upon, the primitive rocks of humanity. The complexities of social life beget cunning and artificiality. Among penal convicts there is no ground for envy, ambition, or emulation; nothing to be gained by falsehood in any shape.

But all this time the prisoner stands looking away into the bush, with the drops of insult trickling from his strong face. His self-command evidently irritated the brutal officer, who, perhaps, expected to hear him whine for better treatment.

The sergeant dismounted to examine the handcuffs, and, while doing so, looked into the man's face with a leer of cruel exultation. He drew no expression from the steady eyes of the prisoner.

There was an old score to be settled between those men, and it was plain that each knew the metal of the other.

"I'll break that look," said the sergeant between his teeth, but loud enough for the prisoner's ear. "Curse you, I'll break it before we reach Fremantle." Soon after he turned away, to look to the wounded men.

While so engaged, the private trooper made a furtive sign to the convict with the pail; and he, keeping in shade of the horses, crept up and gave Moondyne a deep drink of the precious water.

The stern lines withdrew from the prisoner's mouth and forehead; and as he gave the kindly trooper a glance of

gratitude, there was something strangely gentle and winning in the face.

The sergeant returned and mounted. The litters were raised by the natives, and the party resumed their march, striking in on the new road that led to the prison.

"May the lightning split him," hissed black-browed Dave, after the sergeant. "There's not an officer in the colony will strike a prisoner without cause, except that coward, and he was a convict himself."

"May the Lord help Moondyne Joe this day," said another, for he's chained to the stirrup of the only man living that hates him."

The sympathizing gang looked after the party till they were hidden by a bend of the road; but they were silent under the eye of their warder.

Number 406

Table of Contents

Some years before, the prisoner, now called Moondyne Joe, had arrived in the colony. He was a youth—little more than a boy in years. From the first day of his imprisonment he had followed one course: he was quiet, silent, patient, obedient. He broke no rules of the prison. He asked no favours. He performed all his own work, and often helped another who grumbled at his heavy task.

He was simply known to his fellow-convicts as Joe; his other name was unknown or forgotten. When the prison roll was called, he answered to No. 406.

In the first few years he had made many friends in the colony—but he had also made one enemy, and a deadly one. In the gang to which he belonged was a man named Isaac Bowman, one of those natures seemingly all evil, envious, and cruel; detested by the basest, yet self-contained, full of jibe and derision, satisfied with his own depravity, and convinced that everyone was secretly just as vile as he.

From the first, this fellow had disliked and sneered at Joe; and Joe, having long observed the man's cur-like character, had at last adopted a system of conduct toward him that saved himself annoyance, but secretly intensified the malevolence of the other. He did not avoid the fellow; but he never looked at him, saw him, spoke to him—not even answering him when he spoke, as if he had not heard him.

This treatment was observed and enjoyed by the other prisoners, and sometimes even adopted by themselves

toward Bowman. At last its effect on, the evil nature was too powerful to be concealed. With the others he could return oath for oath, or jibe for jibe, and always came off pleased with himself but Joe's silent contumely stung him like a scorpion.

The convicts at length saw that Bowman, who was a man capable of any crime, held a deep hatred for Joe, and they warned him to beware. But he smiled, and went on just as before.

One morning a poor settler rode into the camp with a cry for justice and vengeance. His hut was only a few miles distant, and in his absence last night a deed of rapine and robbery had been perpetrated there—and the robber was a convict.

A search was made in the prisoner's hut, and in one of the hammocks was found some of the stolen property. The man who owned the hammock was seized and ironed, protesting his innocence. Further evidence was found against him—he had been seen returning to the camp that morning—Isaac Bowman had seen him.

Swift and summary is the dread punishment of the penal code. As the helpless wretch was dragged away, a word of mock pity followed him from Bowman. During the scene, Joe had stood in silence; but at the brutal jibe he started as if struck by a whip. He sprang on Isaac Bowman suddenly, dashed him to the ground, and, holding him there like a worm, shook from his clothing all the stolen property, except what the caitiff had concealed in his fellow's bed to insure his conviction.

Then and there the sentence was given. The villain was hauled to the triangles and flogged with embittered violence. He uttered no cry; but, as the hissing lashes swept his back, he settled a look of ghastly and mortal hatred on Joe, who stood by and counted the stripes.

But this was years ago; and Bowman had long been a free man and a settler, having served out his sentence.

At that time the laws of the Penal Colony were exceedingly cruel and unjust to the bondmen. There was in the colony a number of "free settlers" and ex-convicts who had obtained land, and these, as a class, were men who lived half by farming and half by rascality. They sold brandy to the convicts and ticket-of-leave men, and robbed them when the drugged liquor had done its work. They feared no law, for the word of a prisoner was dead in the courts.

The crying evil of the code was the power it gave these settlers to take from the prisons as many men as they chose, and work them as slaves on their clearings. While so employed, the very lives of these convicts were at the mercy of their taskmasters, who possessed over them all the power of prison officers.

A report made by an employer against a convict insured a flogging, or a number of years in the terrible chain-gang at Fremantle. The system reeked with cruelty and the blood of men. It would startle our commonplace serenity to see the record of the lives that were sacrificed to have it repealed.

Under this law, it came to Joe's turn to be sent out on probation. Application had been made for him by a farmer, whose "range" was in a remote district. Joe was a strong and willing worker, and he was glad of the change; but when he

was taken to the lonely place, he could not help a shudder when he came face to face—with his new employer and master—Isaac Bowman.

There was no doubting the purpose of the villain who had now complete possession of him. He meant to drive him into rebellion—to torture him till his hate was gratified, and then to have him flogged and sent to the chain-gang; and from the first minute of his control he began to carry out his purpose.

For two years the strong man toiled like a brute at the word of his driver, returning neither scoff nor scourge.

Joe had years to serve; and he had made up his mind to serve them, and be free. He knew there was no escape—that one report from Bowman would wipe out all record of previous good conduct. He knew, too, that Bowman meant to destroy him, and he resolved to bear toil and abuse as long as he was able.

He was able longer than most men; but the cup was filled at last. The clay came when the worm turned—when the quiet, patient man blazed into dreadful passion, and, tearing the goad from the tyrant's hand, he dashed him, maimed and senseless, to the earth.

The blow given, Joe's passion calmed, and the ruin of the deed stared him in the face. There was no court of justice in which he might plead. He had neither word nor oath nor witnesses. The man might be dead; and even if he recovered, the punishment was the lash and the chain-gang, or the gallows.

Then and there, Joe struck into the bush with a resolute face, and next day the infuriate and baffled rascal, rendered

ten-fold more malignant by a dreadful disfigurement, reported him to the prison as an absconder, a robber, and an attempted murderer.

Bond and Free

Table of Contents

Three years passed. It was believed that Joe had perished in the bush. Bowman had entered the convict service as a trooper, but even his vigilance brought no discovery. Absconders are generally found after a few months, prowling around the settlements for food, and are glad to be retaken.

But Joe was no common criminal nor common man. When he set his face toward the bush, he meant to take no half measures. The bush was to be his home. He knew of nothing to draw him back, and he cared not if he never saw the face of a white man again. He was sick of injustice and hardship sick of all the ways of the men he had known.

Prison life had developed a strong nature in Joe. Naturally powerful in mind, body, and passions, he had turned the Power in on himself, and had obtained a rare mastery over his being. He was a thoughtful man, a peacemaker, and a lover of justice. He had obtained an extraordinary hold on the affection of the convicts. They all knew him. He was true as steel to everything he undertook; and they knew that, too; He was enormously strong. One day he was working in the quarries of Fremantle with twenty others in a deep and narrow, ledge. Sixteen men were at work below, and four were preparing a blast at the head of the ledge, which ran down at an eagle of fifty degrees, like a channel cut in the solid rock. The men below were at the bottom of the channel. A pebble dropped by the four men above would have dashed into their Midst.

Suddenly there was a cry above, sharp, short, terrible—

"Look out down there!"

One of the half-filled charges had exploded with a sullen, mischievous puff, and the rocks at the head of the ledge were lifted and loosened. One immense block barred the tumbling mass from the men below. But the increasing weight above grew irresistible—the great stone was yielding—it had moved several inches, pressed on from behind. The men who had been working at the place fled for their lives, only sending out the terrible cry to their fellows below—

"Look out down there!"

But those below could only look out—they could not get out. There was no way out but by the rising channel of the ledge. And down that channel would thunder in a quarter of a minute the murderous rocks that were pushing the saving stone before them.

Three of the men above escaped in time. They dared not look behind—as they dung to the quarry-side, out of danger, they closed their eyes, waiting for the horrible crash.

But it did not come. They waited ten seconds, then looked around. A man stood at the head of the ledge, right before the moving mass—a convict—Moondyne Joe. He had a massive crowbar in his hands, and was strongly working to get a purchase on the great stone that blocked the way, but which actually swayed on the verge of the steep decline. At last the bar caught—the purchase was good— the stone moved another inch, and the body of the man bent like a strong tree under the awful strain. But he held back the stone.

He did not say a word—he did not look below—he knew they would see the precious moment and escape. They saw it, and, with chilled hearts at the terrible danger, they fled up the ledge and darted past the man who had risked his own life to save theirs.

Another instant and the roar went down the ledge, as if the hungry rocks knew they had been baffled.

Moondyne Joe escaped—the bar saved him. When the crash came, the bar was driven across an angle in the ledge, and held there, and he was within the angle. He was mangled and bruised—but life and limb were safe.

This was one of several instances that proved his character, and made him trusted and loved of his fellow-convicts.

Whatever was his offence against the law, he had received its bitter lesson. The worst of the convicts grew better when associated with him. Common sense, truth, and kindness were Joe's principles. He was a strong man, and he pitied and helped those weaker than himself. He was a bold man, and he understood the timid. He was a brave man, and he grieved for a coward or a liar. He never preached; but his healthy, straightforward life did more good to his fellows than all the hired bible-readers in the colony.

No wonder the natives to whom he fled soon began to look upon him with a strange feeling. Far into the mountains of the Vasse he had journeyed before he fell in with them.

They were distrustful of all white men, but they soon trusted him. There was something in the simple savage mind not far removed from that of the men in prison, who had grown to respect, even to reverence, his character. The

natives saw him stronger and braver than anyone they had ever known. He was more silent than their oldest chief; and so wise, he settled disputes so that both sides were satisfied. They looked on him with distrust at first; then with wonder; then with respect and confidence; and before two years were over, with something like awe and veneration, as for a superior being.

They gave him the name Of "MOONDYNE," which had some meaning more than either manhood or kingship.

His fame and name spread through the native tribes all over the country. When they came to the white settlements, the expression oftenest heard was "Moondyne." The convicts and settlers constantly heard the word, but dreamt not then of its significance. Afterwards, when they knew to whom the name had been given, it became a current word throughout the colony.

Towards the end of the third year of his freedom, when Moondyne and a party of natives were far from the mountains, they were surprised by a Government surveying party, who made him prisoner, knowing, of course, that he must be an absconder. He was taken to the main prison at Fremantle, and sentenced to the chain-gang for life; but before he had reached the Swan River every native in the colony knew that "The Moondyne" was a prisoner.

The chain-gang of Fremantle is the depth of penal degradation. The convicts wear from thirty to fifty pounds of iron, according to their offence. It is riveted on their bodies in the prison forge, and when they have served their time the great rings have to be chiselled off their calloused limbs.

The chain-gang works outside the prison walls of Fremantle, in the granite quarries. The neighbourhood, being thickly settled with pardoned men and ticket-of-leave men, had I been deserted by the aborigines; but from the day of Moondyne's sentence the bushmen began to build their myers and hold their corroborees near the quarries. For two years the chain-gang toiled among the stones, and the black men sat on the great unhewn rocks, and never seemed to tire of the scene.

The warders took no notice of their silent presence. The natives never spoke to a prisoner, but sat there in dumb interest, every day in the year, from sunrise to evening.

One day they disappeared from the quarries, and an officer who passed through their village of myers, found them deserted. It was quite a subject of interesting conversation among the warders. Where had they gone to? Why had they departed in the night?

The day following an answer came to these queries. When the chain-gang was formed, to return to the prison, one link was gone—Moondyne was missing.

His irons were found, filed through, behind the rock at which he worked; and from that day the black face of a bushman was never seen in Fremantle.

The Koagulup Swamp

Table of Contents

We arrive now at the opening scene of this story. Eight days after his escape from Fremantle, Moondyne was seen by the convict Dave Terrell, on the shores of the Koagulup Swamp. In those eight days he had travelled two hundred miles, suffering that which is only known to the hunted convict. When he met the prisoner in the moonlight and made the motion to silence, Dave Terrell saw the long barrel of a pistol in his belt. He meant to sell his life this time, for there was no hope if retaken.

His intention was to hide in the swamp till he found an opportunity of striking into the Vasse Mountains, a spur of which was not more than sixty miles distant.

But the way of the absconder is perilous; and swift as had been Moondyne's flight, the shadow of the pursuer was close behind. No tardy step was that of him who led the pursuit of a man with a terribly maimed face—a new officer of the penal system, but whose motive in the pursuit was deadlier and dearer than the love of public duty.

On the very day that Moondyne Joe reached the great swamp, the mounted pursuit tracked the fugitive to the water's edge. A few hours later, while he lay exhausted on an island in the densely-wooded morass, the long sedge was cautiously divided a few yards from his face, and the glittering eyes of a native tracker met his for an instant. Before he could spring to his feet the supple savage was upon him, sending out his bush cry as he sprang! A short struggle, with the black hands on the white throat; then the