

# For The Term of His Natural Life

By MARCUS CLARKE

## CHAPTER V.

In the prison of the 'tween-decks reigned a darkness pregnant with murmurs. The sentry at the entrance to the hatchway was supposed to "prevent the prisoners from making a noise," but he put a very liberal interpretation upon the clause, and so long the prisoners refrained from shouting, yelling and fighting he did not disturb them.

To one coming in from the upper air, the place would have seemed in pitchy darkness; but the convict eye, accustomed to the sinister twilight, was enabled to discern surrounding objects with tolerable distinctness. The prison was about fifty feet long and fifty feet wide, and ran the full height of the 'tween-decks. The barricade was loop-holed here and there, and the planks were in some places wide enough to admit a musket barrel. On the aft side, next the soldiers' berths, was a trap door, like the stoke-hole of a furnace. At first sight this appeared to be contrived for the humane purpose of ventilation, but a second glance dispelled this weak conclusion. The opening was just large enough to admit the muzzle of a small howitzer, secured on the deck below. In case of a mutiny, the soldiers could sweep the prison from end to end with grapeshot. Such fresh air as there was filtered through the loop-holes, and came, in somewhat larger quantity, through a wind-sail passed into the prison from the hatchway. But the wind-sail being necessarily at one end only of the place, the air it brought was pretty well absorbed by the twenty or thirty lucky fellows near it, and the other hundred and fifty did not come so well off. The scuttles were open, but as the row of bunks had been built against them, the air they brought was the peculiar property of such men as occupied the berths into which they penetrated. These berths were twenty-eight in number, each containing six men. They ran in a double tier round three sides of the prison, twenty at each side, and eight affixed to that portion of the forward barricade opposite the door. Each berth was presumed to be five feet six inches square, but the necessities of stowage had deprived them of six inches, and even under that pressure twelve men were compelled to sleep on deck.

When Frere had come down, an hour before, the prisoners were all snugly between their blankets. They were not so now; though, at the first clink of the bolts, they would be back again in their old positions, to all appearances sound asleep. Groups of men, in all imaginable attitudes, were lying, standing, sitting or pacing up and down.

Old men, young men and boys, stalwart burglars and highway robbers, slept side by side with wizened pickpockets or scunning-featured area sneaks. The forger occupied the same berth with the body snatcher. The man of education learned strange secrets of house breakers' craft, and the vulgar ruffian took lessons of self-control from the keener intellect of the professional swindler. The fraudulent clerk and the flash "cracksman" interchanged experiences. The smuggler's stories of lucky adventures and successful runs were capped by the footpad's reminiscences of foggy nights and stolen watches. The poacher, grimly thinking of his sick wife and orphaned children, would start as the night-house ruffian clapped him on the shoulder and bid him to take good heart and "be a man." The shop boy, whose love of fine company and high living had brought him to this pass, had shaken off the first shame that was on him, and listened eagerly to the narratives of successful vice that fell so glibly from the lips of his older companions. To be transported seemed no such uncommon fate. The old fellows laughed, and wagged their gray heads with all the glee of past experience, and listening youth longed for the time when it might do likewise. Society was the common foe, and magistrates, jailers and parsons were the natural prey of all noteworthy mankind. Only fools were honest, only cowards kissed the rod, and failed to meditate revenge on that world of respectability which had wronged them. Each newcomer was one more recruit to the ranks of ruffianism, and not a man penned in that reeking den of infamy but became a sworn hater of law, order and "freemen." What he might have been before mattered not. He was now a prisoner, and he lost his self-respect, and became what his jailers took him to be—a wild beast to be locked under bolts and bars, lest he should break out and tear them. The conversation ran upon the sudden departure of the four. What could they want with them at that hour?

"I tell you there's something up on deck," says one to the grou nearest him. "Don't you hear all that rumbling and rolling?"

"What did they lower boats for? I heard the dip of the oars."

"Ain't a cove to get no sleep?" cried a gruff voice. "My blood, if I have to turn out, I'll knock some of your empty heads together."

It seemed that the speaker was a man of mark, for the noise ceased instantly. "What's the matter?" roared the silencer of the riot, jumping from his berth and scattering the Crow and his companions right and left.

Just then there came a groan from the man in the opposite bunk.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said the giant. "Here's a pretty go! All the blessed chickens ha' got the croup! Sentry, here's a man sick."

But the prudent sentry answered never a word, until the ship's bell warned

him of the approach of the relief guard; and then honest old Pine, coming with anxious face to inquire after his charge, received the intelligence that there was another prisoner sick. He had the door unlocked and the man outside in an instant. One look at the flushed, anxious face was enough.

"Who's that moaning in there?" he asked.

It was the man who had tried to call for the sentry an hour back, and Pine had him out also, convictism beginning to wonder a little.

"Take 'em both aft to the hospital," he said; "and, Jenkins, if there are any more men taken sick, let them pass the word for me at once. I shall be on deck."

The guards stared in each other's faces with some alarm, but said nothing, thinking more of the burning ship, which now flamed furiously across the placid water, than of peril nearer home; but as Pine went up the hatchway he met Blunt.

"We've got the fever aboard! Head like a fire-ball, and tongue like a strip of leather. Don't I know it?" and Pine grinned, mournfully. "I've got him moved into the hospital. Hospital! As dark as a wolf's mouth. I've seen dog-kennels I liked better."

Blunt nodded toward the volume of lurid smoke that rolled up out of the glow. "Suppose there is a shipload there? I can't refuse to take 'em in."

"No," says Pine, gloomily. "I suppose you can't. If they come, I must stow 'em somewhere. We'll have to run for the Cape, with the first breeze, if they do come; that is all I can see for it." And he turned away to watch the burning vessel.

In the meanwhile the two boats made straight for the red column that uprose like a gigantic torch over the silent sea. The pull was a long and a weary one. Once fairly away from the protecting sides of the vessel that had borne them thus far on their dismal journey, the adventurers seemed to have come into a new atmosphere. The immensity of the ocean over which they slowly moved revealed itself for the first time.

The great sky uprose from this silent sea without a cloud. The stars hung low in its expanse, burning in a violet mist of lower ether. The heavens were emptied, of sound, and each dip of the oars was re-echoed in space by a succession of subtle harmonies. As the blades struck the dark water, it flashed fire, and the tracks of the boats resembled two sea snakes writhing with silent undulations through a lake of quicksilver. At last the foremost boat came to a sudden pause. Best gave a cheery shout and passed her, steering straight into the broad track of crimson that already reeked on the sea ahead.

"What is it?" he cried.

But he heard only a smothered growl from Frere. It was, in fact, nothing of consequence—only a prisoner "giving in."

"What's the matter with you?" says Frere. "Oh, you, is it?—Dawes! Of course, Dawes. I never expected anything better from such a skulking hound. Come, this sort of nonsense won't do with me. It isn't as nice as lolling about the hatchways. I dare say, but you'll have to go on, my fine fellow."

"He seems sick, sir," said a compassionate bow.

"Sick! Not he. Shamming. Come, give way, now! Put your backs into it!" And the convict having picked up his oar, the boat shot forward again. But, for all Mr. Frere's urging, he could not recover the way he had lost, and Best was the first to run in under the black cloud that hung over the crimsoned water.

"Keep wide," he said. "If there are many fellows yet aboard, they'll swamp us; and I think there must be, as we haven't met the boats," and then raising his voice, as the exhausted crew lay on their oars, he hailed the burning ship.

She was a huge, clumsily built vessel, with great breadth of beam, and a lofty deck. Strangely enough, though they had so lately seen the fire, she was already a wreck, and appeared to be completely deserted. The chief hold of the fire was amidships, and the lower deck was one mass of flame. The fire roared like a cataract, and huge volumes of flame-flecked smoke poured up out of the hold, and rolled away in a low-lying black cloud over the sea.

As Frere's boat pulled slowly round her stern, he hailed the deck again and again. Still there was no answer; and though the flood of light that dyed the water blood-red struck out every rope and spar distinct and clear, his straining eyes could see no living soul aboard. As they came nearer, they could distinguish the gilded letters of her name.

"What is it, men?" cried Frere, his voice almost drowned amidst the roar of the flames. "Can you see?"

Rufus Dawes, impelled, it would seem, by some strong impulse of curiosity, stood erect, and shaded his eyes with his hand.

"The Hydaspes!"

Frere gasped. The Hydaspes! The ship in which his cousin Richard Devine had sailed! The ship for which those in England might now look in vain! The Hydaspes, which—Something he had heard during the speculations as to this missing cousin flashed across him.

"Back water, men! Round with her! Pull for your lives. The Hydaspes! I know her. She is bound for Calcutta, and she has five tons of powder aboard!"

There was no need for more words. The single sentence explained the whole mystery of her desertion. The crew had taken to the boats on the first alarm,

and had left their death-fraught vessel to her fate. They were miles off by this time.

The boats tore through the water. Eager as the men had been to come, they were more eager to depart. For ten minutes or more not a word was spoken. With straining arms and laboring chests, the rowers tugged at the oars, their eyes fixed on the lurid mass they were leaving. Frere and Best, with their faces turned back to the terror they fled from, urged the men to greater efforts. Already the flames had lapped the flag; already the outlines of the stern-carvings were blurred by the fire. Another moment and all would be over. All it had come at last!

A dull rumbling sound; the burning ship parted asunder; a pillar of fire, flecked with black masses that were beams and planks, rose up out of the ocean; there was a terrific crash, as though sea and sky were coming together; and then a mighty mountain of water rose, advanced, caught, and passed them, and they were alone—drowned, stunned and breathless, in a sudden horror of thickest darkness, and a silence like that of the tomb. The splashing of the falling fragments awoke them from their stupor, and then the blue light of the Malabar struck out a bright pathway across the sea, and they knew that they were safe.

On board the Malabar two men paced the deck, waiting for the dawn. It came at last. The sky lightened, the mist melted away, and then a long, low, far-off streak of pale yellow light floated on the eastern horizon. By and by the water sparkled, and the sea changed color, turning from black to yellow, and from yellow to lucid green. The man at the mainmast hailed the deck. The boats were in sight, and as they came toward the ship, the bright water flashing from the laboring oars, a crowd of spectators hanging over the bulwarks cheered and waved their hats.

"Not a soul!" cried Blunt. "No one but themselves. Well, I'm glad they're safe anyway."

The boats drew alongside, and in a few seconds Frere was upon deck.

"No use," cried Frere, shivering. "We only just had time to get away. The nearest thing in the world, sir. They must have taken to the boats."

"Then they can't be far off," cried Blunt, sweeping the horizon with his glass. "They must have pulled all the way, for there hasn't been enough wind to fill a hollow tooth with."

"Perhaps they pulled in the wrong direction," said Frere. "They had a good four hours' start of us, you know."

Then Best came up and told the story to a crowd of eager listeners. The sailors having hoisted and secured the boats were hurried off to the fore-castle, and the four convicts were taken in charge and locked below again.

"You had better go and turn in, Frere," said Pine, gruffly. "It's no use whistling for a wind here all day."

Pine took a couple of turns up and down the deck, and then, catching Blunt's eye, stopped in front of Vickers.

"You may think it a hard thing to say, Captain Vickers, but it's just as well if we don't find these poor fellows. We have quite enough on our hands as it is. The fever has broken out."

Vickers raised his brows. He had no experience of such things; and though the intelligence was startling, the crowded condition of the prison rendered it easy to be understood, and he apprehended no danger to himself.

"It is only in the prison, as yet," says Pine, with a grim emphasis on the word; "but there is no saying how long it may stop there. I have got three men down as it is."

"Well, sir, all authority in the matter is in your hands. Any suggestions you make I will, of course, do my best to carry out."

"Thank ye. I must have more room in the hospital, to begin with. The soldiers must lie a little closer. And you had better keep your wife and the little girl as much on deck as possible."

Vickers turned pale at the mention of his child. "Do you think there is any danger?"

"There is, of course, danger to all of us; but with care we may escape it. There's that maid, too. Tell her to keep to herself a little more. She has a trick of roaming about the ship I don't like. Infection is easily spread, and children always sicken sooner than grown-up people."

Blunt, hitherto silently listening, put in a word for the defense of the absent woman. "She is right enough, Pine," said he. "What's the matter with her?"

"Yes, she's all right, I've no doubt. She's less likely to take it than any of us. You can see her vitality in her face—as many lives as a cat. But she'd bring infection quicker than anybody."

"I'll—I'll go at once," cried poor Vickers, turning round.

(To be continued.)

### Profit and Loss.

"I'm afraid," said the doctor, "you did not profit by my advice."

"Of course I didn't," growled the sick man. "That's where you come in, with your charge of \$2 for giving it."

### His Proposition.

She—I will become engaged to you for two weeks.

He—Make it a week. I don't think my money will last longer than that.—Judge.

### Curdling Affairs.

Mandy—Yeou don't use those colored supplements around your milk bottles any more, do you, Cynthia?

Cynthia—Goodness, no! The news was so sensational it curdled the milk.

### Startling Rumor.

"I hear," said the sarcastic friend, "that you are engaged."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Miss Elderleigh, excitedly. "Is it to any one I know?"



### Crested Fowls Not Popular.

The crested breeds of fowls, such as Polish and the French varieties, are excellent layers, but during the winter season, or during damp weather, the crests become wet, which is a drawback. Sometimes one or two Polish, when closely confined, will easily be induced to pick the feathers from the crests of the others, which vice soon becomes general in the flock. The crests of the males suffer more particularly, on account of their topknots being more open. One should separate them until the feathers are sufficiently grown to hide the skin. When the topknots are very large, and in wet weather it is a good plan to confine the feathers with an elastic band, but the surer method is to keep the birds under shelter during such periods.

### Points on Making Hay.

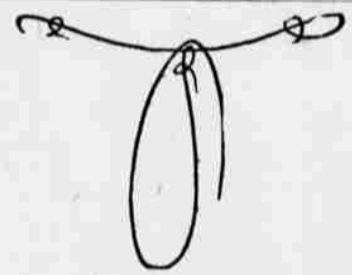
This is what a Canada farmer says: If a first-class article is wanted do not leave it exposed to sun and air too long. Wild hay should be raked at once after cutting and put into cocks. Being green and heavy it will settle quickly and will not be blown around by the wind. Do not be afraid that it will spoil. I have raked it right up after the mower in the rain, and it made bright, sweet hay. I believe that farmers generally let their hay cure too much and thus lose a large amount of the substance. This plan may mean a little extra work, but I believe it pays. Try it and see.

### Don't Sell Inferior Hogs.

Cull and cull closely. If there is any doubt remember that if sold for pork the hog is worth in most cases what it cost to raise it. If you have pigs to sell for breeders keep in mind that a worthy specimen, a better hog than was described to the buyer, will become a walking advertisement for your herd and you as a breeder. But much as such a pig and such a polley can do for you is little compared to what a poor pig cannot do for you and your business. To ship an unworthy specimen under false representations is to buy trouble in abundance for the future.

### To Handle a Big Hog.

An easy way for one man to handle a large, vicious hog is by means of a 3/4-inch rope 10 feet long. Cut off three feet and tie a loop in each end, as



NOOSE FOR HOGS.

shown in cut. Now tie the remaining seven feet to the center of the short rope midway between the loops. Pass the loops over hind feet of hog, then draw long rope between front feet and over nose, then back again over short rope, pull forward over nose and back again as before and tie. With this arrangement the hog is in complete control.—Charles C. Bower, in Practical Farmer.

### Poultry for Market.

Probably no article marketed from the farm sells on so wide a range of prices on account of condition and appearance as poultry. The market calls for undrawn stock. The reason of this is that drawn poultry sours in from twenty-four to thirty-six hours, while undrawn will hold from a week to two weeks without tainting. Another fact should be remembered, that the crop of the bird if filled at time of killing will sour very soon. For this reason the bird should be kept from all food (if possible) at least twelve hours before killing. But if filled, do not remove it.

### Wire Hoops.

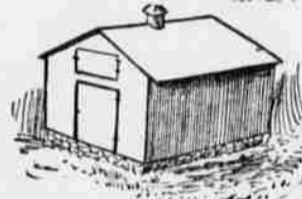
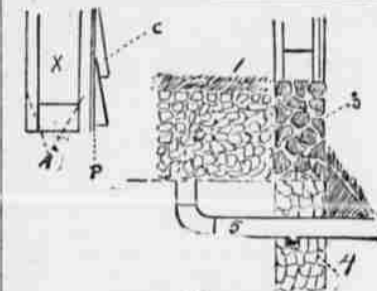
A useful substitute for hoops on tubs, vinegar barrels, etc., is a piece of galvanized wire, No. 12 to 15. Overlap the ends about eight inches, twist tightly with splicer, and drive into place. When hoops are inclined to slip, whitewashing the barrel will hold the hoops.

### Horses Overfed.

A good ration for the horse of any kind of feed is about a pound of grain and one and a half pounds of hay to each hundred pounds of horse. And this would apply to alfalfa. In fact, the horse should do better on the alfalfa than with the other hays and with less grain. This might be the opportune time to say that the majority of farmers feed too much hay of all kinds to their horses. In fact, the horse barn is where one of the greatest wastes of the farm can be found.—Husbandman.

### A Practical Icehouse.

The plan here suggested for a small but complete icehouse will be found not only useful but decidedly a reliable guide to builders. The manner of construction is as follows: Figure 4 in the illustration shows that part of the wall extending two feet under the ground and is composed of loose stones

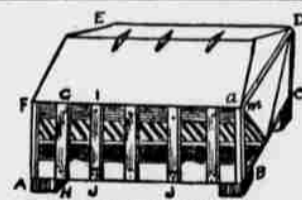


PLAN FOR SMALL ICEHOUSE.

rammed into a trench. The top of the wall, figure 3, is built one foot high with stone and cement in the usual way. Stones are filled in to the depth of a foot to form the floor of the house, figure 2, and above these is a 12-inch layer of sawdust, tramped down to give a level surface. Figure 5 shows the drain pipe. The smaller diagram shows how the lumber is put together. The boards of common lumber both inside and outside are indicated by A, while X shows the air chamber between. P indicates a layer of paper, and lastly, on the outside, the clapboards are shown at C. The illustration is plain, and will serve as a guide for building in any dimensions desired. On the farm where poultry, milk and fruit is raised an icehouse is a necessity, and if one is near a body of water that freezes, the ice obtained is worth all it costs to haul it and to build a house for it.

### Sheep Hay Rack Feeder.

This sheep hay rack and grain feeder can be made any size; four pieces of scantling, FA, MB, DC, EX. Join by four pieces more, AB, BC, etc., and there is the frame. Build floor of common, strong boards. Along center of floor run a piece, BO. From FM and DE run slats a, b, etc., two inches apart; there is hay rack. Get two boards, AS, B, for bottom, nine inches, and one for top, FM, and run pieces six inches apart, GH, IJ. Attach with hinges to AB. Do same at other side and board up ends. The sheep put in their heads through spaces and pick hay out of rack, floor holding waste. For grain open FB and clean out the trough, put in grain and close up. The



RACK AND FEEDER.

advantages are no crowding and no waste. Sheep waste at every other rack.—Exchange.

### Root Cutter.

A convenient implement for cutting roots for cattle is made by riveting a piece of an old hand saw or cross saw to a fork shaped piece of steel and fitted with an old shovel handle. The cost is only a few cents and the device is of considerable service in working up small quantities of cabbages, beets and turnips where there is no regular root cutter.

### The Bacon Hog.

It is predicted that the agitation for the bacon hog will ultimately change the character of the United States hog. The all fat hog of the past will in the future be partly replaced by the bacon hog, and the fat or lard hog as a whole will in the future more nearly approach the bacon hog in form. Of course there will always be a demand for lard; consequently there will always be a place for the fat or lard hog, but the bacon hog will occupy a more prominent position in the future than in the past.