

guage by him that he had been forced to retire in horror at the end of a few minutes.

"We have done well in getting him sent off," the Squire said, when he heard the result of the interview. "In the first place, the demoralizing effect of these hulks is quite evident, and it may be hoped that in a new country, where there can be no occasion for the convicts to be pent up together, things may be better; for although escapes from the hulks are not frequent, they occasionally take place, and had he gained his liberty we should have had an anxious time of it until he was re-arrested, whereas out there there is nowhere to go to, no possibility of committing a crime. It is not there as it was in the American colony. Settlements may grow up in time, but at present there are no white men whatever settled in the district; and the natives are, they say, hostile, and were a convict to escape he would almost certainly be killed, and possibly eaten. No doubt by the time your son has served his sentence colonies will be established out there, and he may then be disposed to settle there, either on a piece of land of which he could no doubt take up or in the service of one of the colonists."

## CHAPTER V.

THE scene in the convict yard at Sydney, five years after its foundation as a penal settlement, was not a pleasant one to the lover of humanity. Warders armed to the teeth were arranging gangs that were to go out to labor on the roads. Many of the convicts had leg-irons, but so fastened as to be but slight hindrance to their working powers, but the majority were unironed. These were the better-behaved convicts; not that this would be judged from their faces, for the brutalizing nature of the system and the close association of criminals had placed its mark on all, and it would have been difficult for the most discriminating to have made any choice between the most hardened criminals and those who had been sent out for what would now be considered comparatively trivial offenses.

The voyage on board ship had done much to efface distinctions, the convict life had done more, and the chief difference between the chained and unchained prisoners was that the latter were men of more timid disposition than many of their companions, and therefore less disposed to give trouble that would entail heavy punishment. But it was only the comparatively well-conducted men who were placed upon road work; the rest were retained for work inside the jail, or were caged in solitary confinement. Each morning a number, varying from half a dozen to a dozen, were fastened up and flogged, in some cases with merciless severity, but it was seldom that a cry was uttered by these, the most brutal ruffians of the convict herd.

This spectacle was just over: it was conducted in public for the edification of the rest, but, judging from the low laughs and brutal jests, uttered below the breath, it signally failed in producing the desired impression. Two of those who had suffered the severest punishment were now putting on their coarse woolen garments over

their bloodstained shoulders; both were comparatively young men.

"I shall not stand this much longer," one muttered. "I will brain a warder, and get hung for it. One can but die once, while one can get flogged once a week."

"So would I," the other said bitterly; "but I have some scores to settle in England, and I am not going to put my head in a noose until I have wiped them out. The sooner we make arrangements to get back there the better."

"Yes, we have talked of this before," the other said, "and I quite agreed with you that if we all had the pluck of men we ought to be able to overpower the warders, in spite of their firearms. Of course some of us would get killed, but no one would mind that if there was but the remotest chance of getting away. The question is what we should do with ourselves when we were once outside the prison. Of course I know that there are two or three hundred settlers, but there would not be much to be got out of them, and life among those black fellows, even if they were civil to us, which I don't suppose they would be, would not be worth having."

"We might not have to stay there long; ships with stores or settlers arrive occasionally, and if a lot of us got away we might seize one by force, turn pirates for a bit, and when we are tired of that sail to some South American port, sell our capture, and make our way home to England. If we were not strong enough to take her, we could hide up on board her; we should be sure to find some fellow who for a pound or two would be willing to help us. The thing can be done if we make up our minds to do it, and I for one have made up my mind to try. I haven't chalked out a plan yet, but I am convinced that it is to be done."

"I am with you, whatever it is," the other said; "and I think there are twenty or thirty we could rely on. I don't say there are more than that, because there are a lot of white-livered cusses among them who would inform against us at once, so as to get their own freedom as a reward for doing so. Well, we will both think it over, mate, and the sooner the better."

The two men who were thus talking together were both by birth above the common herd of convicts, and had gained a considerable ascendancy over the others because of their reckless indifference to punishment and their defiance of authority. Few of the men knew each other's real names; by the officials they were simply known by numbers, while among themselves each had a slang name generally gained on board ship. Separation there had, of course, been impossible, and when fastened down below each had told his story with such embellishments as he chose to give it, and being but little interfered with by their guards, save to insure the impossibility of a mutiny, there had been fights of a desperate kind. Four or five dead bodies had been found and thrown overboard, but as none would testify as to who had been the assailants none were punished for it; and so the strongest and most desperate had enforced their authority over the others, as wild beasts might do, and by the time they had reached their destination all were steeped much deeper in wickedness and brutality than when they set sail.

The two men who were speaking together had speedily become chums, and, though much younger than the majority of the prisoners, had by their recklessness and ferocity established an ascendancy among the others. This ascendancy had been maintained after their arrival by their constant acts of insubordination, and by their apparent indifference to the punishment awarded them. At night the convicts were lodged in wooden buildings, where, so long as they were not riotous, they were allowed to talk and converse freely, as indeed was the case when their work for the day was done.

As to any attempt at escape, the authorities had but small anxiety, for until the arrival of the first settlers, three years after that of the convicts, there was nowhere a fugitive could go to, no food to be obtained, no shelter save among the blacks, who were always ready for a reward of tobacco and spirits to hand them over at once to the authorities. The case had but slightly changed since the settlement began to grow. It was true that by stealing sheep or driving off a few head of cattle a fugitive

might maintain himself for a time, but even if not shot down by the settlers or patrols, he would be sure before long to be brought in by the blacks. The experiment had already been tried of farming our better-conducted convicts to the settlers, and indeed it was the prospect of obtaining such cheap labor that had been the main inducement to many of the colonists to establish themselves so far from home, instead of going to America.

As a whole the system worked satisfactorily; the men were as much prisoners as were the inmates of the jail, for they knew well enough that were they to leave the farmers and take to the bush they would remain free but a short time, being either killed or handed over by the blacks, and in the latter case they would be severely punished and set to prison work in irons, with labor very much more severe than that they were called upon to do on the farms.

Some little time after the conversation between the two convicts the prison authorities were congratulating themselves upon the fact that a distinct change had taken or was taking place in the demeanor of many of the men who had hitherto been the most troublesome, and they put it down to the unusually severe floggings that had been inflicted on the two most refractory prisoners in the establishment. When in the prison yard or at work they were more silent than before, and did their tasks doggedly and sullenly; there was no open defiance to the authorities, and, above all, a marked cessation of drunkenness from the spirits smuggled into the place.

Only the two originators were aware of the extent of the plot, for they had agreed that only by keeping every man in ignorance as to who had joined it could they hope to escape treachery. In the first place, they had taken into their confidence a dozen men on whom they could absolutely rely. Beyond this they had approached the others singly, beginning by hinting that there was a plot for escape, and that a good many were concerned, and telling them that these had bound themselves together by a solemn oath to kill any traitor, even if hanged for it.

"No one is to know who is in it and who is not," the leaders said to each new recruit. "Every man will be closely watched by the rest, and if he has any communication privately with a warder or any other official he will be found strangled the next morning; no one will know who did it. Even if he succeeded in eluding the vigilance of his comrades at the time, it would soon be known; for if indulgence of any kind was shown towards one man, or he was relieved from his ordinary work, or even freed altogether and suddenly, he would be a dead man in twenty-four hours, for we have friends outside among the ticket-of-leave men who have bound themselves to kill at once any man set free."

To the question, "What do you intend to do when we get off?" the answer was, "We shall go straight to the bush, so as to avoid a fight with the soldiers, in the first place; then we shall join that night, and drive off all the cattle and sheep from the settlements, take possession of every firearm found in the houses, then move off a couple of hundred miles or so into the bush, and establish a settlement of our own."

"Of course, we shall take horses and clothes and any spirits and food we may find. If the soldiers pursue us, we will fight them; but as there are only three or four companies of them, and we shall be eight hundred strong, we shall very soon show them that they had better leave us alone."

"Oh, yes, no doubt they will send more soldiers out from England, but it will be over a year before they can get here; and we propose after we have done with the fellows here to break up into parties of twenty and thirty, dividing the sheep and cattle among us, and each party going where it will. The place is of tremendous size, as big as a dozen Englands, they say, and each party will fix on a place it fancies, where there is good water and a river with fish and so on, and we may live all our lives comfortably, with just enough work to raise potatoes and corn, and to watch our stock increasing. Anyhow, we might calculate on having some years of peace and freedom, and even if in the end they searched us all out, which would be very unlikely, they could but bring us back,

hang a few, and set the rest to work again; but we think that they would most likely leave us alone altogether, quite satisfied with having got rid of us.

"Those who liked it could, no doubt, take wives among the blacks. The convict women who are out on service with the settlers would, you may be sure, join us at once, and an enterprising chap who preferred a white woman to a black could always make his way down here and persuade one to go off with him to his farm. That is the general plan; if many get tired of the life they have only to come down to Sydney, hide up near the place on some dark night, and go down to the port, seize a ship, and make off in her, compelling the officers and sailors to take them and land them at any port they fancy, either in Chili, Peru, or Mexico, or, if they like, sail west and make for Rio or Buenos Ayres or one of the West Indian islands. As to when it is going to be done, or how it is going to be done, no one will be told till it is ready to be carried out. We have not settled that ourselves, and thus one who was fool enough to risk certain death could tell the Governor no more than that there was a plot on hand, and that the man who had sworn him in was concerned in it."

So one by one every man in the prison was sworn by a terrible oath to secrecy, to watch his companions, and to report anything that looked suspicious. Many joined willingly, the prospect of relief, even should it only be temporary, being too fascinating to be resisted. Some joined against their will, fearing that a refusal to do so would be punished by death; and the fact that two or three men were found strangled in bed had a very great effect in inducing others to join in the plot. These deaths caused some uneasiness to the authorities. Their utmost endeavors failed to discover who were the perpetrators of these murders; and even when everyone in the same hut was flogged to obtain information, not one opened his lips.

One night the word was passed round that the time had come. One only in each hut was familiar with the details, and he gave instructions to each man individually as to what he was to do. The date had been determined

by the fact that the time which they had been sentenced to wear irons had terminated the day before, and their unusually subdued and quiet demeanor having carried them through the interval without, as usual, fresh punishments being awarded them before the termination of the former one.

In the morning the whole of the convicts were drawn up to witness the flogging of the inmates of one of the huts, where a man had been found strangled the morning before. The first prisoner was taken to the triangle, stripped to the waist, and tied up. There was a dead silence in the ranks of the convicts, but as the first blow fell upon his shoulders there was a loud yell, and simultaneously the whole ranks broke up, and a number of men sprang upon each of the warders, wrested their muskets from them, and threw them to the ground. Then there was a rush towards the Governor and officers, who were assembled in front of the stone house that faced the open end of the square. Firing their pistols, these at once took refuge in the house, three or four falling under the scattered fire that was opened as soon as the muskets of the warders fell into the hands of the convicts.

Directly the doors were closed the officers appeared at the windows, and opened a rifle fire upon the convicts, as did the guards near the gate. As comparatively few of the convicts had muskets, they began to waver at once. But, headed by the two ringleaders, the armed party rushed at the guard, shot them down, and threw open the gate. Then an unexpected thing occurred. The soldiers from the barracks happened to be marching down to do target practice on the shore, and were passing the convict prison when the firing broke out. They were at once halted, and ordered to load, and as the convicts, with exultant shouts, poured through the gate they saw a long line of soldiers, with leveled muskets, facing them.

"At them!" one of the leaders shouted. "It is too late to draw back now. We have got to break through them."

Many of the convicts ran back into the yard; but those armed with muskets, the more desperate of the party, followed their leaders. A moment later a heavy volley

rang out, and numbers of the convicts fell. Their two leaders, however, and some twenty of their followers, keeping in a close body, rushed at the line of soldiers with clubbed muskets, and with the suddenness and fury of the rush burst their way through the line, and then scattering, fled across the country, pursued by a dropping fire of musketry. The officers in command, seeing that but a fraction had escaped, ordered one company to pursue, and marched the rest into the prison yard. It was already deserted; the convicts had scattered to their huts, those who had arms throwing them away. Dotted here and there over the square were the bodies of eight or ten convicts and as many warders, whose skulls had been smashed in by their infuriated assailants as soon as they had obtained possession of their muskets.

Close to the gate lay the six soldiers who had furnished the guard; these were all dead or mortally wounded. The Governor and the officials issued from the house as soon as the soldiers entered the yard. The first step to do was to turn all the convicts out of the huts and to iron them. No resistance was attempted, the sight of the soldiers completely cowering the mutineers. When the bodies of the convicts that had fallen were counted and the roll of the prisoners called over, it was found that eighteen were missing, and of these six were during the course of the next hour or two brought in by the soldiers who had gone in pursuit of them. The rest had escaped. The convicts were all questioned separately, and the tales they told agreed so closely that the Governor could not doubt that they were speaking the truth.

All had been sworn in by one of two men, and knew nothing whatever of what was intended to be done that day, until after they were locked up on the evening previous. Each of those in the huts had received his instructions the night before from the one man. There were eighteen huts, each containing fifteen convicts. Of the men who had given instructions six had fallen outside the gate, together with sixteen others; five had been overtaken and brought in; altogether, twelve were still at large. Among these were the two leaders.

The next day six of the prisoners were tried and exe-

cuted. The rest were punished only by a reduction in their rations; sentence of death was at the same time passed upon the twelve still at large, so as to save the trouble of a succession of trials as they were caught and brought in.

The two leaders had kept together after they had broken through the line of soldiers.

"Things have gone off well," one said as they ran through. "Those soldiers nearly spoilt it all."

"Yes, that was unlucky," the other agreed; "but so far as we are concerned, which is all we care about, I think things have turned out for the best."

Nothing more was said until they had far outstripped their pursuers, hampered as these were by their uniforms and belts.

"You mean that it is not such a bad thing that they have not all got away?"

"Yes, that is what I mean. It is all very well to tell them about driving off the sheep and cattle and horses, and going to start a colony on our own account, but the soldiers would have been up to us before we had gone a day's journey. Most of the fellows would have bolted directly they saw them. As it is, I fancy only about a dozen have got away, perhaps not as many as that, and they are all men that one can rely upon. One can feed a dozen without difficulty—a sheep a day would do it—and by giving a turn to each of the settlers the animals won't be missed. Besides, we shall want money if we are ever to get out of this cursed country. It would not be difficult to get enough for you and me, but when it comes to a large number the sack of the whole settlement would not go very far.

"My own idea is that we had best join the others to-night, kill a few sheep, and go two or three days' march into the bush, until the heat of the pursuit is over. We are all armed, the blacks would not venture to attack us, and the soldiers would not be likely to pursue us very far. In a week or so, when we can assume that matters have cooled down a bit, we can come down again. We know all the shepherds, and even if they were not disposed to help us they would not dare to betray us, or report a

sheep or two being missing. Of course, we shall have to be very careful to shift our quarters frequently. Those black trackers are sure to be sent out pretty often."

"As long as we are hanging about the settlements there won't be much fear of our being bothered by the blacks. Of course, we shall have to decide later on whether it will be best for us to try and seize a ship, all of us acting together, or for us to get quietly on board one and keep under hatches until she is well away. That is the plan I fancy most."

"So do I. In the first place the chances are that in the next two or three months at least half the fellows will be picked up. To begin with, several of them are sure to get hold of liquor and make attacks upon the settlers, in which case some of them, anyhow, are sure to get killed. In the next place, most of them were brought up as thieves in the slums of London, and will have no more idea of roughing it in a country like this than of behaving themselves if they were transported to a London drawing room. Therefore, I am pretty sure that at the end of three months we shall not be able to reckon on half of them. Well, six men are not enough to capture a ship, or, if they do capture it, to keep the crew under. One must sleep sometimes, and with only three or four men on deck we could not hope to keep a whole ship's crew at bay."

"Then there is another reason. You and I, when we have got a decent rig-out, could pass anywhere without exciting observation; while if we had half a dozen of the others, whatever their good qualities, they would be noticed at once by their villainous faces, and if questions were to be asked we should be likely to find ourselves in limbo again in a very short time. So I am all for working on our own account, even if the whole of the others were ready to back us; but, of course, we must keep on good terms with them all, and breathe no word that we think that each man had better shift for himself. Some of those fellows, if they thought we had any idea of leaving them, would go straight into Sydney and denounce us, although they would know that they themselves would be likely to swing at the same time."

As none of the convicts were acquainted with the bush, they had been obliged to select as their rendezvous a hut two miles out of the town, where the convict gangs that worked on the road were in the habit of leaving their tools. On the way there the two men killed a couple of sheep from a flock whose position they had noticed before it became dark. These they skinned, cut off the heads, and left them behind, carrying the sheep on their shoulders to the meeting.

"Is that you, Captain Wild?" a voice said as they approached.

"Yes; Gentleman Dick is with me."

"That is a good job. We had begun to think that the soldiers had caught you."

"They would not have caught us alive, you may take your oath. How many are there of us here?"

"Ten of us, Captain. I think that that is all there are."

"That is enough for our purpose. Has anyone got anything to eat?"

There was a deep growl in the negative.

"Well, we have brought a couple of sheep with us, and as we have carried them something like a mile, you had better handle them by turns. We will strike off into the bush and put another three or four miles between us and the jail, and then light a fire and have a meal."

Two of the men came forward and took the sheep. Then they turned off from the road, and taking their direction from a star, followed it for an hour.

"I think we have got far enough now," the man called Captain Wild said. "You had better cut down the bushes, and we will make a fire."

"But how are we to light it?" one of them exclaimed in a tone of consternation. "I don't suppose we have got flint and steel or tinder-box among us."

"Oh, we can manage that!" the Captain said. "Get a heap of dried leaves here first, then some wood, and we will soon have a blaze."

His orders were obeyed. Some of the men had carried off the warders' swords as well as their muskets, and now used them for chopping wood. As soon as a small pile

of dried leaves was gathered the Captain broke a cartridge and sprinkled half its contents among them, and then dropped the remainder into his musket. He flashed this off among the leaves, and a bright flame at once shot up, and in five minutes a fire was burning. One of the sheep was soon cut up, the meat hacked in slices from the bones, a ramrod was thrust through the pieces, and, supported by four sticks, was laid across the fire. Three other similarly laden spits were soon placed beside it, and in a short time the meat was ready for eating. Until a hearty meal had been made there was but little talking.

"That is first-rate," one of the men said, as he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "Now one only wants a pipe and bacca and a glass of grog, to feel comfortable."

"Well, Captain, are you satisfied with the day's work?"

"It would have been a grand day had it not been for the soldiers passing just at the time. As it is, Gentleman Dick and I have been agreeing that as far as we are all concerned it has not turned out so badly. There would have been a lot of difficulty in finding food if we had all got away, and some of those mealy-mouthed fellows would have been sure to go back and peach on us at the first opportunity. A dozen is better than a hundred for the sort of life we are likely to lead for some time. We are strong enough to beat off any attack from the black fellows, and also to break into any of these settlers' houses."

"We can, when we have a mind to, take a stray sheep now and then, or even a bullock would scarcely be missed, especially if our pals in the settlement will lend us a helping hand, which you may be sure they will do; in fact, they would know better than to refuse. Then a large party could be traced by those black trackers at a run, while a small one would not; especially if, as we certainly will do, we break up into twos and threes for a time. First of all, though, we must go well into the bush; at daybreak to-morrow morning we will drive off twenty sheep, and go right away a hundred miles, and wait there till matters have settled down. They will never take the

troops out that distance after us. Then we can come back again, and hang about the settlement and take what we want. The wild blacks don't come near there, and we shall be safer in pairs than we should be if we kept together; and of course we could meet once a week or so to talk over our plans. We must borrow some whisky, flour, tea, tobacco, and a few other items from the settlers, but we had better do without them for this trip. I don't want to turn the settlers against us, for they have all got horses, and might combine with the troops to give chase, so it would be best to leave them alone, at any rate till we get back again. Another reason for treating them gently is that even if they did not join the troops they might get into a funk, and drive their sheep and horses down into Sydney, and then we should mighty soon get short of food. It will be quite time enough to draw upon them heavily when we make up our minds to get hold of a ship and sail away. Money would be of no use to us here, but we shall want it when we get to a port, wherever that port may be."

"That sounds right enough, Captain," one of the convicts said, "and just at present nothing would suit me better than to get so far away from this place that I can lay on my back and take it easy for a spell."

There was a general chorus of assent, and there being neither tobacco nor spirits, the party very soon stretched themselves off to sleep round the fire. In the morning they were up before daylight, and half an hour later arrived at one of the farms farthest from Sydney. Here they found a flock of a hundred sheep. The shepherd came to the door of his hut on hearing a noise.

"You had best lie down and go to sleep for the next hour," the leader of the convicts said sharply. "We don't want to do an old pal any harm, and when you wake up in the morning and find the flock some twenty short, of course you won't have any idea what has become of them."

The man nodded and went back into the hut and shut the door, and the convicts started for the interior, driving twenty sheep before them. During the first day's journey they went fast, keeping the sheep at a trot before them,

and continuing their journey through the heat of the day.

"I tell you what, Captain," one of the men said when they halted at sunset, "if we don't get to a water-hole we shall have to give up this idea of going and camping in the bush. My mouth has been like an oven all day, and it is no use getting away from jail to die of thirst out here."

There had been similar remarks during the day, and the two leaders agreed together that it would be madness to push further, and that, whatever the risk, they would have to return to the settlements unless they could strike water. As they were sitting moodily round the fire they were startled by a dozen natives coming forward into the circle of light. These held out their hands to say that their intentions were peaceful.

"Don't touch your muskets!" Captain Wild exclaimed sharply, as some of the men were on the point of jumping to their feet. "The men are friendly, and we may be able to get them to guide us to water."

The natives, as they came up, grinned and rubbed their stomachs, to show that they were hungry.

"I understand," the Captain said; "you want a sheep, we want water;" and he held up his hand to his mouth and lifted his elbow as if in the act of drinking.

In two or three minutes the natives understood what he wanted, and beckoned to the men to follow. The tired sheep were got onto their legs again, and half a mile away the party arrived at a pool in what in wet weather was the bed of a river. A sheep was at once handed over to the natives, and when the men had satisfied their thirst another sheep was killed for their own use. After a great deal of trouble the natives were made to understand that the white men wanted one of their party to go with them as a guide, and to take them always to water-holes, and a boy of fifteen was handed over to them in exchange for two more sheep, and at daybreak the next morning they started again for the interior, feeling much exhilarated by the piece of luck that had befallen them. They traveled for four days more, and then, considering that the soldiers had ceased their pursuit long ago, they en-

camped for ten days, enjoying to the utmost their recovered freedom and their immunity from work of any kind. Then they returned to the neighborhood of the settlements, and broke up, as their leader proposed, into pairs. They had been there but a short time before the depredations committed roused the settlers to band themselves together. Every horse that could be spared was lent to the military, who formed a mounted patrol of forty men, while parties of infantry, guided by native trackers, were constantly on the scent for the convicts.

"This is just what I expected," Captain Wild said to his lieutenant. "It was the choice of two evils, and I am not sure that the plan we chose was not the worst. We might have been quite sure that these fellows would not be able, even for a time, to give up their old ways. If they had confined themselves, as we have done, to taking a sheep when they wanted it, and behaving civilly when they went to one of the houses and begged for a few pounds of flour or tea, the settlers would have made no great complaint of us; they know what a hard time we have had, and you can see that some of the women were really sorry for us, and gave us more than we actually asked for. But it has not been so with the others. They had been breaking into houses, stealing everything they could lay their hands upon, and in three or four cases shooting down men on the slightest provocation."

"The money and watches were no good to them, but the brutes could not help stealing them; so here we are, and the settlement is like a swarm of angry bees, and this plan of handing over most of their horses to the military will end in all of us being hunted down if we stay here. Two were shot yesterday, and in another week we shall all either be killed or caught. There is nothing for it but to clear out. I am against violence, not on principle, but because in this case it sets people's backs up; but it cannot be helped now. We must get a couple of horses to ride, and a spare one to carry our swag. We must have half a sack of flour and a sheep—it is no use taking more than one, because the meat won't keep—and a good stock of tea and sugar. We must get

a good supply of powder, if we can, some bullets and shot. We shall have to get our meat by shooting.

"There is no time to be lost, and to-night we had better go to that settler's place nearest the town. He has got two of the best horses out here—at least so Redgrave, that shepherd I was talking to to-day, told me—and a well-filled store of provisions. If he will let us have them without rumpus, all well and good; if not, it will be the worse for him. My idea is that we should ride two or three hundred miles along the coast until we get to a river, follow it up till we find a tidy place for a camp, and stop there for three or four months, then come back again and keep ourselves quiet until we find out that a ship is going to sail; then we will do a night among the farmhouses, and clean them out of their watches and money, manage to get on board, and hide till we are well out to sea. We must get a fresh fit-out before we go on board; these clothes are neither handsome nor becoming. We must put on our best manners, and tell them that we are men who have served our full time, and want to get back, and that we were obliged to hide because we had not enough to pay our full passage money, but that we have enough to pay the cost of our grub, and are ready to pull at a rope and make ourselves useful in any way. If we are lucky we ought to get enough before we start to buy horses and set ourselves up well in business at home."

"I think that is a very good plan," the other agreed, "and I am quite sure the sooner we make ourselves scarce here the better."

## CHAPTER VI.

WHILE arranging for young Bastow being sent out with the first batch of convicts John Thorndyke had been introduced to several of the officials of the Department, and called upon them at intervals to obtain news of the penal colony. Three years after its establishment a Crown colony had been opened for settlement in its vicinity. As the climate was said to be very fine and the country fertile, and land could be taken up without payment, the number who went out was considerable, there being the additional attraction that convicts of good character would be allotted to settlers as servants and farm hands.

Six years after Arthur Bastow sailed the Squire learned that there had been a revolt among the convicts; several had been killed, and the munity suppressed, but about a dozen had succeeded in getting away. These had committed several robberies and some murders among the settlers, and a military force and a party of warders from the prison were scouring the country for them.

"Of course, Mr. Thorndyke," the official said, "the Governor in his report does not give us the names of any of those concerned in the matter; he simply says that although the munity was general, it was wholly the work of a small number of the worse class of prisoners. By worse class he means the most troublesome and refractory out there. The prisoners are not classified according to their original crimes. A poacher who has killed a gamekeeper, or a smuggler who has killed a revenue officer, may in other respects be a quiet and well-conducted man, while men sentenced for comparatively minor offenses may give an immense deal of trouble. I will, however, get a letter written to the Governor, asking him if Arthur Bastow was among those who took part in the revolt, and if so what has become of him."