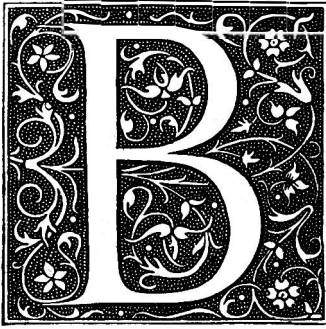


(IX) BOTANY BAY



BOTANY BAY has long been synonymous, to English people, with a convict settlement of the worst type to which prisoners were transported from this country. Actually, no convict settlement has ever existed at Botany Bay itself, although when the first shipload were transported to Australia it was intended that they should settle in this spot. It was found unsuitable for a settlement, however, so the convicts were landed a few miles away at the spot which is now Sydney. Nevertheless, to English people the Australian settlement used in the days of transportation has always been labelled Botany Bay.

How did James Loveless and his comrades, Thomas Standfield, James Hammett, John Standfield and James Brine, fare in New South Wales? On landing they had marched to the Hyde Park Barracks, but they did not remain there long, as they had all been assigned to their respective masters before reaching the shore. John Standfield was the last to leave the Barracks. He was sent to his master, Mr. Jones, in Sydney, who despatched him to one of his farms at Balwarra, on the Hunters River about three miles from the rising town of Maitland, and 150 miles from Sydney. After he had been there about three weeks he received permission from the Overseer to go and see his father, Thomas Standfield, who was on a farm about three miles away. He found that his father had been sent to look after a large number of sheep in the bush. John managed to find him, and thereafter visited him at intervals for about nine months. His father was later transferred farther up country to a station on the Williams River, where the distance was too great to allow his son John to visit him.

John
Standfield
sent to
Balwarra

When English people speak of the bush they think of small trees a few feet high. The Australian bush is of a different character. It is a mass of dense forest composed of tall trees from 100 to 200 feet high. The bush extends hundreds of miles with here and there a small clearing for sheep or cattle grazing.

Thomas Standfield was faring very badly. The eldest of the six labourers, his strength had been sapped by the confinement on board ship and by the dreadful conditions under which he worked. Sometimes prisoners in charge of large flocks of sheep lost their way in the bush and experienced great danger and misery until they were able to find their way back. To the fear of encountering hostile natives was added the suffering caused by hunger, for they were only given one day's rations when they left the farm and, of course, no food could be obtained in the bush. The Overseer always counted the sheep and if one was missing the shepherd was almost certain to be flogged.

Thomas Standfield suffered so severely from his privations that he was covered with sores from head to foot and was as weak and helpless as a child. The pitiable state in which he found his father nearly broke the sorely-trying heart of young Standfield, who would gladly have sacri-

John
Standfield
meets his
father



ficed himself to have saved his father from hardship. The older man described how his only shelter was a hut called a "watch-box," six feet by eighteen inches, with a small bed and one blanket. There was no protection against storms, and he had to walk four miles every night to get his rations.

John Standfield's life at Balwarra was apparently more bearable. At all events he says little about himself until January, 1836, when he was taken in the custody of a constable to the lock-up at Maitland. On his inquiring about his father, he was told that a constable had gone to bring him in also, and that both of them were to be taken to Maitland by order of the magistrates. He was locked up in the Court House, and whilst there his father was brought in from his station on the Williams River. The magistrates declined to give them any information as to why they had been so suddenly recalled, and they were left wondering whether any complaint had been lodged against them.

The two
Standfields
are sent to
Newcastle



NEWCASTLE, NEW SOUTH WALES

marched to Morpeth, some five miles distant, where they were put on board a steamer for Newcastle. On the journey down stream young Standfield appealed to the constable to release his father from the chains, as he appeared to be utterly exhausted from the rude treatment and lack of proper food. The request was peremptorily refused and they remained locked together until they reached Newcastle. Here they expected to obtain food at least, but were cynically informed that none could be given them because they were not officially due to arrive in Newcastle until the next day.

They were kept in jail for three days, when they were told that they were to be sent to Sydney. One morning they were called to the jailer's office and a constable stepped forward to handcuff them. Young Standfield, driven to the point of desperation at the sight of his father's misery, demanded to know the reason why he and his father were to be

During the period of their incarceration father and son were half-starved, being given only bread and water for food and having neither bed nor blanket to lie upon. A few days later they were mustered in the courtyard, and with a number of other prisoners were chained two a breast and

A sea voyage
in handcuffs

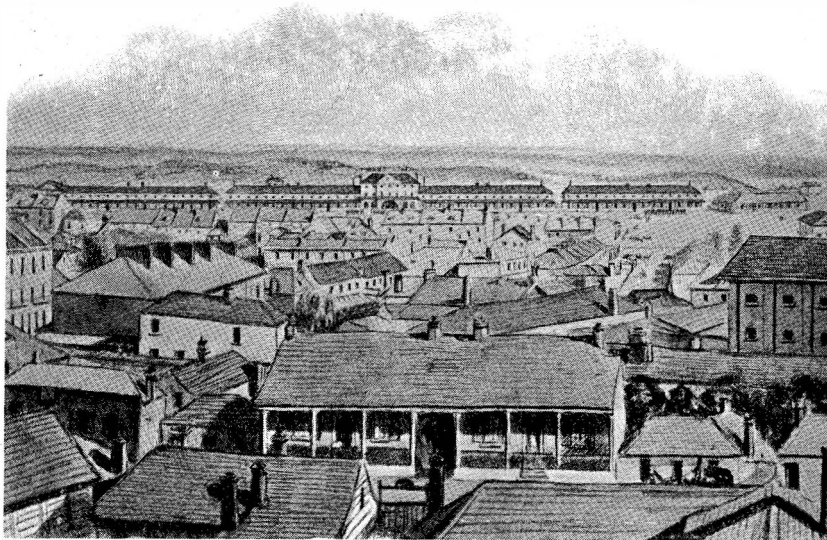
locked in irons. He pointed out that they had never given any trouble to the authorities, and they could be relied upon to conduct themselves properly without being handcuffed. The jailer admitted that he saw no necessity for treating them in this harsh fashion, but said that he must act in accordance with his orders.

They were thereupon put on board the steamer, which set off on its 100 miles' journey round the coast from Newcastle to Sydney. Once again young Standfield implored the constable to remove the handcuffs from his father, as both of them were thoroughly exhausted and dreadfully sea-sick and consequently unable to help themselves. The constable curtly declined and grimly remarked that they might be bushrangers for all he knew.

John
Standfield
pleads for
his father

Weak and dejected they reached Sydney and were lodged in the common jail in George Street, where they remained without either bed or blanket for two nights, sleeping on the cold flagstones. They were put in the court room and some time later a number of constables came in with a long chain. As John Standfield says, "We were all handcuffed to it and marched through the streets of Sydney, like a lot of wild beasts." No charge during the whole of this period was made against them.

On arrival at the convict barracks at Hyde Park they were again locked up, and their request for food was coldly refused with the information that they were not due for food until the following morning. By this time they were thoroughly exhausted and nearly famished. As John Standfield says, "We had thus been ten or eleven days and nights



THE BARRACKS IN GEORGE STREET

without having our clothes off and without bed or blanket, dragged from place to place and suffering under every species of indignity, associated with and handcuffed to the most depraved and reckless portion of the wretched convicts, without the slightest charge having been preferred against us or any explanation offered for such extraordinary conduct. The authorities, it is true, informed us that the reason of our being called in from our masters was in pursuance of orders received from the Home Government to the effect that we were to be employed on Government work only. They did not inform

Maltreated
without
explanation

us why we had been treated in so severe a manner on our way to Sydney. I have, however, every reason to believe that orders were sent out by the Home Government to treat us with the utmost severity."

After remaining in the barracks a few days longer, they were joined by James Loveless and James Brine, who had likewise been brought to Sydney.

James Loveless had been assigned to a master at Strathallan, about 300 miles from Sydney. He had to walk this distance, finding his way as best he could through the bush, carrying his blanket and rations, which consisted of flour and raw beef. After walking for fourteen days he reached his destination, where he remained for nineteen months. While here he received a letter from his brother, George Loveless, dated September 10, 1834:—

Van. diemens Land Sept^r 10th 1834

*We left Portsmouth Sunday May 25th about 4
o'clock in the afternoon and arrived Cape in this
Harbour Wednesday Sept^r 3rd a passage of 101 days—
— I was examined before the Magistrates yesterday
who with threatening me with Penitentiary urged
me to tell them by what sign the "Trades Union"
could operate in bodies all over the Kingdom
at once, I know of no such sign and therefore
cannot tell— fear not Brother he that is for
me is more than all that is against me —
we expect to go on shore to morrow or the day after —
then there will be a prospect thank God of being
separated from the company I have been in for
the last seventeen weeks.*

George Loveless

James
Loveless
walks three
hundred miles

This was the only news he had received from George since they last saw one another in the gaol at Dorchester, but although now nearly 1,000 miles separated them, in spirit they were indissolubly united.

In November, 1835, he was ordered back to Sydney, where, as has been stated, he found the two Standfields and Brine imprisoned in the Hyde Park Barracks. On arriving, he found that no one seemed to know why any of them had been sent for, and they were all confined in the barracks for three months. During this period he was asked whether he would agree to having his wife and family brought out to join him, but he declined whilst he remained a prisoner. He was told that if he would agree he would be granted a pardon, but he wisely said that he would like to have the pardon first. The Superintendent, Mr. Brennan, gave him two days to think things over, but Loveless remained obdurate.

James Brine, the youngest of the party, a boy of twenty, had been sent first of all to a farm at Glindon, Hunters River. Like the others he had to walk to his destination, being given, on starting, a small bed and blanket, and 1s. for expenses, besides a suit of clothes. While he was asleep in the bush one night, bushrangers robbed him of everything except his old clothes. He arrived at the farm thoroughly spent, having had but one meal in three days. His employer, Robert Scott, Esq., a Magistrate, would not believe that the bushrangers had robbed him, and called him a "liar" and threatened him with a "damned good flogging." "You are one of the Dorsetshire machine breakers," said he. "But you are caught at last."

James Brine
robbed by the
bushrangers

Brine was given nothing to eat until the next day, and although he was so exhausted and weak that he could not do any work, he was forced to dig post-holes with feet cut and bleeding owing to his having walked so far without shoes, on the threat of being sent up for punishment at the first sign of "slacking." For six months he was given no clothes or bedding, and he lay on the bare ground at night. Being sent to wash sheep, he worked for seventeen days up to his breast in water. As a result he caught a severe cold, and became thoroughly ill. His employer, with a callousness which passes understanding, still refused to give him anything to cover him at night. Scott questioned him about the Union, but Brine said that he was unable to give him the required information. "You damned convict," was the retort, "if you persist in this obstinacy and insolence I will severely punish you. Don't you know that not even the hair on your head is your own? Go to your hut or I will kick you." This from a Magistrate!

At the end of 1835, a constable took him to Maitland, where for two days and nights he was locked in the dark cells, with twelve ounces of bread and half a pint of cold water for food and drink in twenty-four hours. On the third night he was chained to fifteen other prisoners, and they were compelled to lie down together in the open yard until morning, when they were put on a steamer for Newcastle about forty miles away. He was not brought before the Magistrates at Newcastle; yet, although he had committed no offence, he was put into prison and kept there a fortnight. Then he was put on a vessel

Brine in the
dark cells

bound for Norfolk Island, the most dreaded of the penal settlements. Of this inferno, George Loveless wrote: "All that are sent thither are sentenced for their natural lives; so that every hope is cut off of ever obtaining deliverance, or of enjoying any other society, or seeing any other but their miserable companions in infamy, wretchedness and woe. Thus they are left to drag on their miserable existence until they sink to rise no more. I have seen and conversed with men that have been at all places of punishment except Norfolk Island, but I never saw one returned from thence."

James Brine had heard it described as "the worst and most terrible of all the penal settlements where only those of the convicts who have committed some heinous offence are sent, and where punishments, the most inhuman and cruel, are daily practised by the authorities upon the unfortunate and wretched prisoners." Yet without being charged with any crime, this boy was to be sent to the dreaded Norfolk Island. Who was responsible for this outrage? The authorities knew at the time the order was given that a conditional pardon had been granted to the Standfields, Hammett and Brine, who were to be liberated after they had been two years in the colony. This period had elapsed. What then was the justification for the order for James Brine to be sent to a penal settlement where he would have been associated with the most infamous and desperate characters in the whole colony? Fortunately, the order was not carried out. A gale sprang up and the ship was driven by the heavy seas back to Newcastle. He was sent to Sydney,

where to his great joy, he found all his comrades except James Hammett awaiting him.



Why James Hammett was not there remains a mystery. Indeed, less is known concerning his experiences than of any of the others. All his life a silent, thoughtful man, he communicated little in letters and speech of the terrible experience he had passed through. Only on one occasion did he publicly refer to all he had endured. This was on the occasion when in March, 1875, at Briantspuddle, he was presented with an address by Joseph Arch, on behalf of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union. There is no authentic record of that speech, but according to George Howell, who heard the speech, Hammett said that he was "sold like a slave for £1. The convicts'

Brine ordered
to Norfolk
Island

names were written on slips of paper, the agents drew lots, each man at £1 per head." Hammett's name being one of those drawn, the agent told him the name of his master and the place where he lived.

James
Hammett
"sold like a
slave"

Before he left Hammett was kept three weeks in quarantine, and during that time saw something of the treatment that was meted out to the down-trodden creatures around him. One of his fellow-convicts, for some offence or other, was strapped across a barrel and received seventy-five lashes, fifty on his bare back and twenty-five on the calves of his legs. With this picture of the blood-bespattered convict strapped across the barrel, before his eyes, Hammett set out on his 400-mile journey from the coast, finding his way as best he could over the rugged country, through dense forest in the blazing heat of the sun, and sleeping at night under the trees.

We can imagine something of the hardships he had to endure, with rations sufficing only for twenty-two days; looked upon with suspicion by any chance stranger from whom he inquired the way. For those were lawless days, when outlaws were ranging the country and instilling into dwellers in lonely homesteads a fear of every one who came near them.

Footsore and weary, without money, and with scarcely strength to drag himself along, he, at last, arrived at his destination. He did not complain of harsh treatment and, in the absence of more definite details, let us hope that the dour straightforwardness of his character and his known industry touched the heart of his employer, and that his lot during the fateful years he spent in Australia was relieved by something to restore his shaken belief in the humanity of his fellow-creatures.

