

The death-pang of the thought so weakened him that his knees trembled under him. He sat down on a stone beside one of the pools passed in the morning, and with eyes that did not see the shadows deepening upon its surface, although they stared fixedly upon the transparent water. He re-lived his boyhood, his early manhood, with its one fatal hour of weakness blasting all its promise—branding him and his with shame.

The sun drew in its last gold lance; the ruddy glow faded in the west, and inquisitive stars peeped over the peaks; mist-scarves wound round the mountain's shoulders, and the reeds and flax bushes were ghostly on the margin of the pools before Frank Osmond stirred. A stray mongrel had crept up beside him and licked the hanging hand, which presently lifted, and unconsciously stroked the shaggy head. At this encouragement a stumpy tail beat the turf.

"Another disreputable—eh, vagabond?"

The vagabond whined with comprehension.

Frank fed him with the last of the sandwiches, and the dog lay at his caterer's feet, resting his head on a dusty boot, with a sigh of beatitude.

"I am not disgraced in your eyes, eh, Pakeha? In prison, or university, or pulpit I should be alike here to you?"

Thump, thump, answered the approving tail, but no human response.

At length the moon arose, coming up from the under world, round and yellow in its autumn effulgence. Matamata-harakeke demonstrated its name. "The tips of flax leaves" were picked out in silver as far as the eye could reach. Wherever the moonlight touched the rock or water in this primitive waste the ebon was silver chased.

Frank Osmond, with the stray dog at his heels, walked on through a wilderness of mist and shadow, without landmark or definite termination. The wildness and indefiniteness of the scene was an image of his own consciousness, and his imaginative and impressionable mind was influenced by the indescribable melancholy and loneliness of his surroundings. He gazed into that

inner life of his, and found there no vicious discord, but harmony with peace and purity. He—ex-convict 99! The great expanse of heaven spread overhead, dusted with countless worlds; the wide free plains of earth stretched out to meet the limitless horizon, and a son of this inheritance was chained in thought to a small stone cell, where he had paid man's toll to fellow man. He did not know that he was free; that in the eternal justice of things there was no unsettled score against his name. He owed no man anything; he had loved for love; been loyal in friendship; clean in body, and had served his term for his sin against the law. He was free. Payment had set him free; honour released him—yet socially he was an outcast for ever and ever—unless—? Unless—oh! had he the power—? Unless he could rise from his death triumphant creator of a new world! He knew the small, mean, paltry spite of small souls; the mockery and disdain of men not large enough to risk the world's opinion even in loyalty to a dishonoured friend. The vagabond dog was more of a gentleman!

He fought an unequal battle with his strife—to-night it conquered him. For months he had been benumbed, but the coming of Howard Grey, keen and eager from a world of live men, made by comparison his own living death, too ghastly to be accepted.

When he reached the river he lay down with his face in the damp sweet grass, and as he lay there called himself a coward that he should chafe under the death sentence he had pronounced upon his own life.

The dog pawed him distressfully, and ran from the water a little way as though to entice him, but finding that he did not move crouched down beside the man he had elected to serve.

Time and place were unheeded in that trance of pain; the face of old companions looked at him out of the darkness; he heard old greetings and adieus, in voices of honest joy and regret. He was contending again in the student's race, experiencing the worker's enthusiasm, anticipating the