

Criminal History.

EXTRAORDINARY CAREER OF CRIME.

Under this heading the Sydney Town and Country Journal of the 1st instant publishes the following account of the life of a criminal who is almost as well known in New Zealand history as will be the Kelly gang in the future history of Victoria. Unfortunately our contemporary has got hold of the wrong man in pointing his moral, but more of that anon. Our contemporary says :—

There has recently been published an extract from home papers, giving a brief account of an attempt to break out of Pentonville prison, the chief offender in the exploit being a person named Henry Garret. Fortunately for the safety of society, whether in England or in these colonies, the prisoner failed in his attempt to regain liberty.

We learn from a friend well versed in the history of remarkable criminals that Henry Garrett possessed an Australian biography, as the following particulars will show : but, first, it will be interesting to have a personal description of him. He was, at the time of the narrator's acquaintance, a remarkably handsome man, of large physique, with bright, active intelligence. Nature had favoured him with more than ordinary gifts. With energy and ability such as Garrett possessed, he might have made his mark in any land, more especially had he chosen to adopt a life of honest toil and to await the certain harvest of patient industry. We have known many men without one half his intelligence, brains, and energy, to rise in the scale socially, financially, and even politically. But for the first unfortunate step in his life he might have been one of the foremost of our citizens ; nay, had his ambition drifted in the right direction who knows but he might have filled an important place in some of our Australian administrations ? But fate decreed otherwise. This man of gigantic intellect, noble frame, and of untiring resolve, has become, instead of a great public leader, the hero of many bold crimes and hair-breadth escapes.

Henry Garrett paid the penalty for his first-discovered crime by serving a sentence at Norfolk Island, from which, on the breaking up of that famous penal establishment, he was removed to Van Dieman's Land, as Tasmania was then called and known. Finding the little island did not offer sufficient scope for his genius

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he changed the field of his operations to the goldfields of Victoria, where, in company with kindred spirits, he had not long to wait for an opportunity of proving his skill. In the year 1854 Garrett and party boldly stuck up one of the banks at Ballarat, and succeeded in robbing the bank of a large amount of treasure, with a large portion of which he escaped from the colony, effectually for the time, eluding the vigilance of the police. Having a strong *amor patrie*, he returned to the scene of his early days, doubtless, as our informant has reason to believe, with the intention of settling down to a life of honest pursuits; but in this the fates were again at fault. The argus eyes of the London police soon recognised their old friend, and he was taken up as a returned exile, and while thus held, as it were, in suspense, the hue and cry from Victoria gave the authorities at Home the information that he was wanted in Victoria for the Ballarat Bank robbery, additional proof being found in the fact that at the time of his arrest in London he had upon him a large amount of treasure supposed to be the proceeds of the theft. In the year 1855 the population of New South Wales received a welcome addition to its members by the arrival of the good ship *Exodus*, with two inspectors and

86 picked men from the ranks of the London constabulary. In passing we may remark that one of these inspectors is still amongst us in the person of the present able administrator of that model of prisons—Darlinghurst Gaol—and it may be further observed, without breaking the thread of this story of Garrett's life, that Mr Read, who for some time after his arrival on these shores, filled the office of an inspector in our own force was, and, we believe, is to the present time, the only officer ever attached to the police here that ever held the rank of a London inspector.

Besides this valuable addition to the ranks of our own protectors, there arrived in charge of the gentleman we have just named, the subject of our notice, Henry Garrett, who was *en route* to Victoria for trial, on the charge of being the principal at the Ballarat bank robbery. In due time he was forwarded to Melbourne, there tried, and sentenced to 10 years' hard labour, during the service of which, it is alleged that he was in league with the prisoners implicated in the murder of the superintendent at Pentridge, Mr Price. One would have thought that the certainty of discovery, and the punishment which invariably follows the footsteps of crime, would have been sufficiently demonstrated to a man possessed of Garrett's mental powers, and that he would have been deterred from further

THAT HE HAD BEEN DECEIVED FROM HIS PURSUITS OF LAW BREAKING; but it is hard, after the first step backwards, to retrace the paths of virtue, and Garrett unfortunately did not prove himself the exception to the admitted rule. Finding the Victorian field of enterprise worked out, Garrett sailed for New Zealand, where, after a short stay, he next turned up in Sydney, but soon again the police Nemesis was on his trail, and we next hear of him as being an inmate of the establishment of his fellow voyager in the *Exodis*, for trial, for being concerned in the midday sticking-up of the Paramatta street branch of the Bank of New South Wales; but, although his accomplices were convicted, he escaped, again, however, to be "wanted" by the police in New Zealand, and accordingly he was forwarded across the sea to answer for crimes committed during his short stay in that colony—resulting in another period of penal hard labour. At this stage of his career he took in hand a new line—avowed piety—daily giving utterance to earnest exhortations to his fellow prisoners to turn from their wickedness and live, quoting copiously from the sacred writings, with which his mind appeared well stored. This dodge—known in every prison in England as the "pious move"—is too frequently practised successfully, both in the old country and in the new. Weak-minded chaplains become instruments in obtaining concessions, privileges, and allowances, and sometimes even of shortening the terms of sentence of criminals who play well this part of the rogue's trade. So with Garrett; his apparent repentance and sincere piety soon attracted attention in the proper quarter, and he found himself once more at large, before his time of sentence otherwise would have been served, with a good character, obtained by pious fraud and persistent hypocrisy, and with the assistance of the gaol chaplain whom he had so far used for his purposes.

Finding the outward piety had succeeded so well in tempering the winds to the shorn lamb while in gaol, Garrett determined to continue in that line of business. Henceforth he was to appear to suffering humanity as "the brand snatched from the burning," determined to go forth preaching salvation to the world at large, and to the people of New Zealand in particular. Through the continued assistance of the weak-minded gaol chaplain Garrett joined one of the dissenting sects as local preacher and burning brand, and soon became noticed for his good deeds and eloquent discourses. Had he pushed his talents in this direction there is no doubt whatever that he would have reached a pinnacle with the sect to which he had become attached.

But the police, those wretched scrutineers of men, those searchers after iniquity, would not let this pious man continue in his labour of love. It appears there had been many robberies, and not a few daring burglaries, but no trace of the delinquents could be found, until a police officer—not the gaol chaplain—just fancied that Garrett's conversion had been too sudden to be sincere, and ventured upon inquiry and search of the pious man's residence, with the astounding result that while the converted man had preached peace! peace! he had discoursed upon his favourite text of "Owe no man anything;" while he had worn sackcloth for his early transgressions, and broadcloth for his disguise, he had been systematically carrying on his old game. The police found at his house the most complete set of burglar's tools ever found in the colonies. Further inquiries led to the fact that, in one month of his service in the church, he had committed no fewer than 48 robberies. For these trifles he again became a Government employe, and served, without any further attempt at piety, a full sentence, wisely dropped by the gaol chaplain and the well-meaning sect, whose cloak he had worn so successfully to cover his crimes. How he passed from New Zealand to London, the scene of his next labours, our informant is in ignorance, and he had passed from memory until the news reached us of his attempted escape from Pentonville and fortunate failure—fortunate in every way for the people of this country, as it was more than likely, under the loose immigration system which prevails at our Agent-General's office in London, this notorious and clever scoundrel would have succeeded in appearing in our midst to swell the ranks of the unemployed under the new garb of an assisted emigrant.

If any youngsters just venturing to embark on the perilous voyage of crime should read this biography, they would do well to remember that the system of police supervision existing in England and all the colonies is such that, aided by science—the electric wire and the use of the photographic lens—there is no sure footing for him on the slippery path; that if able, bold, determined men—mortals possessed of large brain and genius—cannot escape the vigilant eye of the police, what chance can inexperienced youth have? Perhaps in the mind of such an one the conviction may be developed and strengthened to a course of honest toil and peace. If this good result, the writer's labour in condensing the life and failure of a clever criminal will not have been in vain.

For the information of the very graphic and sensational writer of the above biography of the notorious convict Henry Garrett, alias Rouse, we may inform him that he was, until Friday last, a prisoner in Dunedin Gaol, under a sentence of 20 years' penal servitude, from 1st December, 1868, for burglary in Dunedin. On the grounds of old age and failing health, he was removed to Lyttelton gaol, to a warmer climate, where he is at present confined. He has been in Dunedin gaol, in the Province of Otago, since 1862, with the exception of a few weeks in 1868, when he was extradited to Melbourne as a ticket-of-leave absconder. On his return from Melbourne he worked at his trade—a cooper—for a few months, when he commenced his old career of thieving. Garrett's name is Rouse, and he is a native of Harby, Leicestershire, near Belvoir Castle, the baronial seat of His Grace the Duke of Rutland. He is one of the most dangerous class of convicts in the

Southern Hemisphere—one whom no kindness could conciliate, and no discipline tame. He graduated in the Home and Colonial prisons, where he obtained his education, which was very much neglected in Leicestershire, as he much preferred the exciting life of a poacher in the well-stocked preserves of His Grace the Duke of Rutland, in the beautiful valley of the Vale of Belvoir.

The late notorious murderers Burgess and Kelly, executed at Nelson in October, 1866, were Victorian and New Zealand companions in crime of Garrett's, but always detested him as a "cur," and a low, despicable ruffian, and not one fit to rank as a first-class professional burglar. Burgess states in his autobiography:—"He is one of the greatest cowards that ever lived; he is a big man—he is just as bad in proportion to his size. His tenets of manhood belong to the Jonathan Wild school, for he is a conglomeration of deceit—not one manly act did I ever see him do. Garrett, I trust the authorities will prevent you disseminating your unprincipled conduct to the ill of any of the prisoners. I am not writing this in an antagonistic spirit, for you know what you would have received at my hands if I had been spared to run my vicious course. No, it is not with any animus I thus speak, for I have known you some years now, and I never knew you to do a manly act towards your fellows yet; but many bad ones. You have no respect for any living being, and you glory in your Atheistical belief—when at heart you're craven. I have not mentioned you as you deserve, but I hope through what I have said, the guiltless will avoid you as a poisonous reptile. Those godless principles entertained by you will show your hollowness of principle—even to your fellows. I write this that you may not do any further harm than what you have; it's not against your person I am speaking, but against your unhallowed principles. The frame of mind I am in now—on the verge of the scaffold—bids me forgive you with a righteous forgiveness, because I am looking to Him whom you pretend to despise and mock. How your latter end will be in this world I will not prognosticate. This I say, repent while there is time, and injure not your fellows."