

W.A. IN THE SIXTIES.

THE LASH AND LEG-IRONS.

WHY TRANSPORTATION CEASED.

From 1861 the colony was kept well supplied with convicts. The closing of other doors to them, and the evident desire of local colonists to welcome them, warranted the despatch of as many shipments as were available. The ships arrived in the following order from 1861 to January 1868, when transportation ceased:—

Date.	Ship.	Convicts
February, 1861 ...	Palmerston ...	296
January, 1862 ...	Lincelles ...	306
June, 1862 ...	Norwood (1) ...	290
January, 1863 ...	York ...	300
February, 1863 ...	Merchantman (1) ...	192
May, 1863 ...	Clyde ...	320
December, 1863 ...	Dalhousie ...	270
April, 1864 ...	Clara (2) ...	301
September, 1864 ...	Merchantman (2) ...	260
August, 1865 ...	Racehorse ...	280
December, 1865 ...	Vimeira ...	280
July, 1866 ...	Belgravia ...	277
December, 1866 ...	Corona ...	306
July, 1867 ...	Norwood (2) ...	254
January, 1868 ...	Hougoumont ...	280
Total	4212
Previous arrivals	5509
Grand total introduced	9721

During these later years it is claimed that a wiser discrimination was exercised by the home authorities in selecting men for transportation than had been the case previously. At one time in 1861 there were

Nearly 40 Murderers

confined in Fremantle prison, besides many men who had been convicted of unnatural offences. But West Australian colonists were generally clamoring for more convicts. The Duke of Newcastle replied in March, 1861, to the resolutions of the Legislative Council concerning the apparent dilatoriness of the Imperial Government in giving the colony a regular supply of convicts. He explained that, owing to the limited number of offenders being sentenced to periods of imprisonment of sufficient length to fit them for transportation, the authorities were

transportation, the authorities were not able to send out the number required by the colony, although they were sensible of its importance to Western Australia. The runaway slave was hunted by dogs; the convict was as relentlessly tracked by blacks. Occasionally he groaned under the discipline of the Establishment and contrived to outwit his guards and escape. He wished to reach Eastern settlements or the islands of the north-west. The fugitive might make a rush for liberty while away from the prison out on public works, or he might be doing isolated duty about the prison and detect his opportunity. A

Warder With a Rifle

stood on sentry duty; he seldom aimed to hit the escapee; it was not necessary. A gun boomed out the news of an escape, and a signal was raised on the hill. A few mounted troopers were on regular duty ready for such emergencies; black trackers waited also. A minute after the report of the gun trooper and native dashed out of their quarters on horseback. They soon picked up the track, and he must be a very clever man who could escape the keen eye of the black tracker. Generally it took but a few minutes to effect a capture. Rewards of from £1 to £5, according to the circumstances, were given for the recovery of an escapee. Sometimes the convict obtained several hours' start. He had little hope of getting clear, for what native and trooper could not accomplish an invulnerable Nature would do for them. Generally it was only newly-transported convicts who sought to escape—older hands understood the difficulties too well. The convict might escape from the prison; he had little chance of getting out of the "prison yard"—the impassable, inhospitable bush. Captain Henderson, in one of his reports, termed Western Australia a

"Vast Natural Gaol."

On one side was a great stretch of ocean; inland, nature denied passage to eastern settlements. The scattered population, the unsurveyed desert stretches, the dangers of life among natives, the distance from South Aus-

stretches, the dangers of fire among natives, the distance from South Australia, were barriers secure as Trojan walls. Viewed "simply as a gaol, the colony appeared as if nature had intended it for no other purpose," wrote one authority. According to Governor Kennedy not a single probationer escaped up to 1862, and only a few lickety-of-leave men. No member of the convict brotherhood flouted the system with impunity. The gallows, additional punishment, the cat-o'-nine-tails, the dark cell, the chain-gang, a diet of bread and water, were the punishments. In a few cases extreme measures were taken—convicts were tumbled into Eternity through a trap-door. The populace could witness the hanging. Sometimes convicts were scourged; the extreme number of lashes at one time was one hundred. The culprit was tied to a triangle by arms, legs, back, and neck, so that he could not crouch or escape the dreaded whipping. The hardest man was made to plead for pity like a little child;

The Cat-o-Nine-Tails

descended with dreadful certainty. The convict was laid on his stomach, his raw flesh quivering, his whole body shaking with involuntary shuddering. In a few days the back might be covered with repulsive festering wounds. The dark cell was occasionally as much feared as the cat-o'-nine-tails. Night and day were much alike. The convict could hold as many monologues as he wished with the dim four walls of his cell. The braggart, whose life was dominated by a brutal nature whose ordinary conduct suggested little of the coward, whimpered and prayed for a little light. The cat-o-nine-tail and the dark cell made him as temporarily willing and obedient as a dog. The diet of bread and water usually accompanied the latter punishment. The sight of chained men appealed to every person. The dangerous and most reprehensible were fettered. The weight of the chains was sometimes 28lb.; a blacksmith clasped them on with strong rivets. A convict wore his chains for months and months to-

gether, night and day. If he shifted his feet while asleep the links clanked. It was difficult to walk with ease; it seemed impossible to strike off the rude iron bands, but convicts occasionally did so. To the listener

The Clank of Fetters

as the chain-gang passed by was the most distressful feature of the convict system. The approach to the Convict Establishment at Fremantle often rang with their jangle. Truly, in respect of punishment, the convict brotherhood was grotesque. Meanwhile there were growing up in W.A. numerous monuments of the labor of convicts. From Albany to York to Toodyay, from Busselton to Fremantle to Port Gregory, public works of varied descriptions were reared. England erected these merely for the privilege of being allowed to disgorge, through a conduit pipe, the mire of her overpopulated cities, the slime of her rural inhabitants. The largest building erected by convicts was their prison—there is a touch of irony in their being compelled to construct an almost impregnable cage where they and their companions must be shut in from the world. A great deal of quarrying had to be done to level the ground; the stones thus obtained were used in the walls. The remaining stone was conveyed from quarries at North Fremantle. It was years of labor for hundreds of men to raise this monument. Most of the desperate characters were engaged on it;

The Chain Gang

was a conspicuous feature. It is significant that the discontinuance of convict transportation was due to representations made, not by West Australia, but by West Australia's neighbors. The eastern colonies, particularly South Australia and Victoria, had shown almost since its inception an uncompromising antipathy to convict immigration. Their opposition was sometimes bitter, sometimes unfair, but was justified, nevertheless. They desired that Australia should be inhabited by a peaceable and crime-

habitated by a peaceable and crime-abhorring people, who should enterprisingly devote the whole course and market of their time to developing those resources which their land contained. It was their very natural fear that by a continued introduction of convicts to Western Australia, the whole continent would be overrun with men whose

Crimes were so Heinous

that they were banished from the United Kingdom. Hence they considered that their wishes deserved weighty consideration from the Imperial Government, and they constantly sought to put an end to the influx of corruption. Eastern people also contemplated taking up land in the new northern district, but objected to while convicts were being sent there. Western Australians did not view the matter in exactly the same light, and once or twice they murmured against outside interference. They denied that Victoria and South Australia suffered from an influx of Western Australian felony, and again contended that where conditional-pardon men did migrate they became law-abiding. But generally they took small notice of the eastern movement. Repeated representations of the rights of the Eastern Colonies were finally taken into serious consideration by the Imperial Government, and met with the desired end. Thus, as early as 1864, and irrespective of Western Australians themselves, it was finally decided to

Discontinue Transportation

after a given period. The local authorities had proposed to forward batches of convicts to the new settlements formed in the north, but the Secretary of State refused to grant his assent. In a despatch dated 20th November, 1864, he prohibited such a course, and moreover, said that after a period of three years convict transportation to Western Australia must cease altogether. He explained that the Government was led to this determination in deference to the earnest remonstrances of the eastern colonies. The decision was hardly appreciated at

The decision was hardly appreciated at first, and some doubt existed on the question. The Chamber of Commerce at Perth, with characteristic confidence, made bold

Requests for Compensation.

It resolved that "No time should be lost in asserting the claim of the colony to compensation; that free immigration at the expense of the Imperial Government should be continued for 10 years; that, as the convicts have been employed in the erection of buildings for their own occupation, and that now when the buildings are completed we are to be deprived of that labor which should be available for roads, a grant of £250,000, paid annually in sums of £25,000, from the Imperial funds, be asked for." Colonists and their friends in England also asserted the claims of Western Australia to be treated with some special consideration. They interviewed the Secretary of State and asked what compensation would be awarded. They were vaguely informed that some allowance would be made, but were advised not to ask for money. Confirmatory news of the Imperial Government's intention was soon received. The House of Commons was informed early in 1865 that convictism to the colony would cease in three years time. The resolution was adhered to, and in 1868 the colony ceased to be a dumping-ground for British criminals.—Kalgoorlie "Sun."