

ON THE BREAST OF THE
WATERS

By H. M. Egbert

The prisoner in cell 45 was fortunate, for he had an unobstructed view of what was called the finest view in the world—the great stretch of the river by moonlight, and the high buildings opposite, lit like fairyland. But what are city views to a man who is serving a sentence of 15 years?

Fifteen years! Dent's blood had run cold when the judge pronounced that inexorable verdict. And Dent was considered lucky. He had killed a man whom, in his insane jealousy, he supposed to have betrayed his young wife. Before he went to the penitentiary he knew that Lucille had forgotten him. Later he learned of the child's coming.

Fifteen years! He had watched Lucille's face that last time they met and in the forgiveness he had seen no love. He had killed that forever. When he learned the she was seeking a divorce he bowed to the inevitable. Fifteen years means the best part of a man's life at any time.

Then he learned of her divorce, later news came of her remarriage. They had ceased to correspond and all the convict's hope of life shrank to that spot of future freedom, unbelievably small and distant. There were twelve long years still to be served. And he seemed to have lived through a life's agony already.

Dent looked down through the slit of a window. It was just wide enough to admit the passage of a man's body—if any man was willing to risk a leap of 70 feet into the flood tide of the river below. Dent occupied that cell temporarily. It was the quarantine cell, but there was an overflow of prisoners in the cells underneath and he was trusted—trusted not to commit suicide. He smiled.

The rusty bars were more a pretense than anything else. Dent had

worked them loose from the masonry. He had resolved that night to make the leap—not for freedom but for eternal sleep, under the waves.

He looked up and down the river. A steamer from the coast was putting into port. Dent could see her in the distance, her brilliantly lit windows looking like eyes. He saw, too, that she was belching smoke from her funnels, as if burning soft coal. But he did not think long about that.



Dent Removed the Bars

The river below was tempting in its promise of peace.

Dent removed the bars one by one and flung them upon the floor of the cell. He wanted to finish the leap quickly, for his mind was full of unhappy thoughts. What sort of man had Lucille married? Was he good to her? Did he care for the child whom he had never seen? It was well that very soon no thoughts like that would come to trouble him.

He squeezed his body upon the narrow ledge and crouched there, measuring the distance. Even now