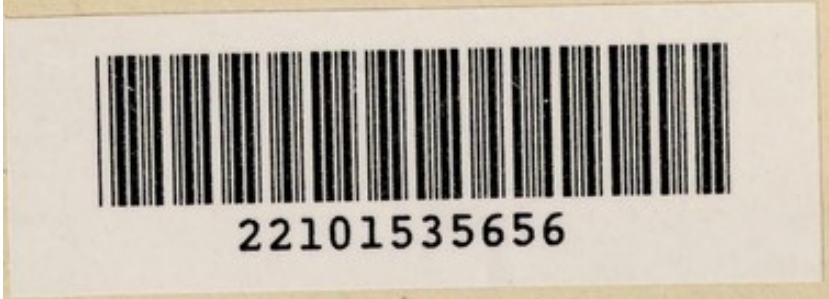
Beyond the hill lies China : scenes from a medical life in Australia / by Herbert M. Moran.



To

C. H. Kellaway FRS

In admiration

and for affectionate ~~[illegible]~~ remembrance

Hebert M. Moran

Figlinol mio

Qui può esser tormento, ma non Morte.

(The Commedia)

BEYOND THE HILL LIES CHINA

To
Frances
at
Santa Chiara

BEYOND THE HILL LIES CHINA

Scenes from a Medical Life in Australia

by

HERBERT M. MORAN

Author of *Viewless Winds*

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WAR ECONOMY

THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN COMPLETE CONFORMITY WITH THE AUTHORISED ECONOMY STANDARDS

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In this narrative there is no caricature and no cap fits. Cockle Creek is dry; its dredged Bay carries another name, and those who walked beside are dead, or had their being only in the fearful mind of one who, in his own enclosure, awaits the adventuring hour.

Begun in Rome 1939
at 170 Piazza S. Ignazio,
in the parish of S. Aquiro.
In Colchester, East Anglia,
completed 1943.

Contents

Chapter I

INITIATION

The old professor looked up at the chemistry class, over his metal-rimmed spectacles, with an air of hopeless irritation. Really, it was too bad. Such a demonstration was most unseemly. A note of defeat was in his voice as he spoke. He would have to dismiss the class and let them get up the subject as best they could from Roscoe's text-book. To this mild threat the only answer was more stamping. The professor seemed at a loss about what to do next.

He was a mild and humble man of science, something like the caricature of an old-fashioned German lecturer. His hair was iron grey and his vision short-sighted. Worst of all, he had a slight impediment in his speech which the students, with childish glee, were quick to greet each time with stamping. Before each vowel he would place the letter n, so that *oxygen* became n . . . n . . . *noxygen.*

Much of the trouble was caused by his classes being too large. Into this amphitheatre of Sydney University were crowded students from the first year in Arts, Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy and Engineering. They were nearly all young and immature boys who had just come up from school. The faculty fights were in themselves a constant source of worry. The " greasers " and the medical students were continuing an ancient vendetta. They only co-operated for mischief during class time. Thus, they would pass ammonia and tincture of iodine in quick succession through filter paper and then surreptitiously spread these filter papers on the floor some time before the lecture. The professor's discourse would then be interrupted by slight explosions as the filter papers dried. Or they would meddle with the reagents spread out for demonstrations on the long broad

counter behind which the professor lectured, and on which were bunsen burners, flasks, retorts and test-tubes. The result was that when he sought to illustrate his teaching with an experiment and added some reagent, the predicted colour change did not take place. A fierce pounding of the feet rubbed the failure in.

The young men in the back seats high up were always the worst. They really were incorrigible. One of them on a recent occasion had even brought in a pigeon and let it loose at the beginning of an important lecture. For a whole hour, the serious as well as the rowdy students had been distracted by the movements of the frightened bird or by shrieks of hilarity when from the beams it let fall its droppings on someone in the class.

Dispiritedly the professor had laid down the long pointer which he used to indicate the equations chalked on the movable blackboard, when from the back seats rose Dominic McGlone. " Professor Livermore, I propose that a Vigilance Committee of ten students be formed to help you to keep n...n...norder." There was a vociferous outburst of applause.

McGlone was a badly dressed country-looking student of dentistry, older than most of his fellows, with long untidy fair hair, and wearing short baggy pants over boots that were rarely polished. Everyone recognised the brazen impudence of his speech, but the professor grasped at the idea like a drowning man at a piece of drift timber. He was secretly afraid of the strong-minded Chancellor who had already criticised his failure to maintain control in the lecture room. He agreed to consider the idea, and he would meet the year-representatives in his room. Meanwhile the rest of the class was dismissed. Before leaving, however, he warned them they were all suffering through the insubordination of the few, and some of them would have cause to regret it all at the end of the year.

The proposal, like others before it, came to nothing. Only the approach of the term Examinations ever sobered them.

Nearly all these " freshers " were under twenty years of age and boyishly immature. Their behaviour generally was that of schoolboys, but schoolboys ape-ing the older graduates. Only a very small percentage were in residence. Each morning just before 9 o'clock the steam trams which ran along two sides of the great triangle of Grose Farm, on which the University is situated, could be seen unloading young men of all sorts and statures. The women undergraduates were at that time few.

Most of these first-year students, because of their youth, were just sheep ready to follow any bellwether. Among the " Dentals ", McGlone was the recognised leader. Next to him in the Chemistry class sat Richard Macleay, one of the rowdy " Medicals ", and next to Mcleay, John Challis, who was a timid, rather shy supporter. Macleay was middle-sized, and lithe. He was cock-a-hoop because he had stepped straight into the University 3rd Cricket Eleven, so that with luck he should, someday, get his " blue ". In the second row, and just behind the girls who were right in front, sat always " Scroggy " Camphin, who was a member of the Christian Union, a heavily built man and terribly serious. He could be seen each morning walking up from the Redfern railway station tram stopping-place, to save the fare for the extra section, his patched black boots carefully polished, and carrying an old shapeless oblong brown bag, the top sides of which had fallen in. It contained his books, his sandwiches in a paper parcel, an apple and an orange, and his Bible.

Of course, the other students made fun of him, and half-affectionately plagued him. He never retaliated and he never got angry. Once when, owing to a shortage of men, he was induced, reluctantly, to play rugby in the Inter-Year Matches, they organised a practical joke on him. " Scroggy " was not much of a player, but he pushed genuinely in the scrum. In the open play he was rarely near the ball, and then not for long. The conspirators therefore had quite a time to wait before " Scroggy " was mixed up in a loose scrimmage. Then

the referee, Reggie Claridge, by arrangement, blew his whistle loudly, and with great ceremony ordered Camphin off the field for " using foul language ".

Reggie Claridge was a much older man than the average student. He had come up to the University solely to play rugby and during six years never passed an Examination. But he had been a State representative in the New South Wales rugby team and was very proud of it. That is why he refereed in his blue New South Wales jersey. He was also proud of the fact that his first Australian ancestor had been a member of the New South Wales Corps, that body of gentlemen who came with the first batch of convicts to the New Colony and grew wealthy out of their privileged monopoly of the rum trade.

" Scroggy ", a little uncertain as to whether it was meant just as a joke or not, had, in the end, left the field without remonstrating, a half smile on his heavy face. On such occasions the University Oval was usually bare of spectators save for a score of partisans who on the touch lines shrieked out savage advice and encouragement to their pals. Now, as Camphin left the field, they all howled in unison at the disqualified player.

They carried the joke still further the next day when a self-appointed Committee haled him before a fake meeting of the Sports Union and solemnly disqualified him for life for " Conduct unbecoming to an University Sportsman ". Camphin bore it all with tolerant cheerfulness, embarrassed only by the reading out of the foul language he was alleged to have used, and most of which he was hearing for the first time in his life. It was all a great joke to his fellow students. They were fond of " Scroggy ", but they had the thoughtless cruelty of little boys.

Yet amidst all this levity the seeds of something more than knowledge were being sown. In the Biology they had their moments of wonder concerning the strange phenomena of life. They watched, with a curiosity never fatigued, the amoeba thrusting out its pseudo pods, and multiplying by fission.

What a simple procedure! The mystery of reproduction at once fascinated and perturbed them. Here was singularity, a distinguishing feature between the living and the dead. They learnt of plants to whom a casual wind blows the little cotton of vagrant seeds in order to make them fertile. And for a lesson in unpermanence they read the words of Swammerdam about the one-day flies. They were in the fairy world of growing men. The salmon's life cycle was now as exciting as in their boyhood the reading of Mayne Reid or G. A. Henty. What a perilous journey!—Disappearing for three years or more into the Pacific, some homing instinct leads it back through fresh water, along its hundreds of miles, upstream. Upstream! Up rapids, over falls, around strange impediments. Upstream and back to the source, back to where it had been spawned, and where in turn it too would spawn and die. And only death would interrupt the mysterious working of the power that calls and drives it home.

These lessons raised disturbing thoughts in private, for all their brave displays outwardly. It was the period of initiation —and a stage of violent change. Not so brutal, to be sure, as that of the Australian aborigine in whom a front tooth is knocked out to the roaring of the bull roarer, who is circumcised rudely, covered from head to foot with blood and mud, his body scored with numerous gashes. Only after all that was he fit to be entrusted with a hardwood spear or a stone hatchet, and only then was he let in to the tricks of ensnaring in a net the emu or the kangaroo, or the secret of a boomerang's flight.

The medical student had to have his minor ebullitions, to lessen the tension and to lighten the discipline of so much learning. So, during First Term, over they went in gowns, still too new and too obviously unmutilated, to the little weather-board Common Room, there to practise songs for the approaching Commemoration. Through most of the lunch hour with more noise than melody they shouted and screamed themselves hoarse in some sort of rough unison.

" O ! Tim Hoolan didn't know that his father was dead !
And his father didn't know that Tim Hoolan was dead."

When Commemoration time did arrive, wearing false wigs and ludicrously garbed, they blew trumpets and waved banners with coarse infantile devices on them, from brewers' lorries hired for the occasion. As the foolish procession slowly made its way down George Street, disturbing the traffic, people looked up disapprovingly from the footpaths as if to say " So this is what the University teaches them". Only the relatives of freshers, dispersed along the route in force, seemed in any way amused. The students were just " acting the goat ", " letting off steam." Some of them dropped off for a moment in the Haymarket to drink a shandy-gaff at Paddy Byrne's " pub " and then catching up the slow-moving vehicles resumed their weary rôle of trying to be funny. The Medical students sang and sang and sang again their Faculty Song with its hundred and more bawdy verses:

" We're Medical Students all
And Andy is our father.
We attend the lectures all
And love the ladies . . . RATHER.

Poor Bacchus et les amours !
Poor Bacchus et les amours !
Yap yap yap, tra la la la la
Yap yap yap, tra la la la la
Yap yap yap, tra la la la
We're Medical Students all ! "

Chapter II

DIVESTORS

Padre . . . Tu ne vestisti
Queste misere carni e tu le spoglia.
(Father: thou didst put on us
This poor flesh. . . . Divest it now)
The Inferno. Canto XXXIII

Those yellow grey figures motionless on the slate-covered tables disturbed Challis. Macleay however affected a cool indifference and an attitude of flippancy.

The two were now partners in the dissection of the human anatomy and had been allotted " an upper extremity (right) ". Not without repugnance, for all the excitement of this new Course, Challis made the first incisions, following carefully the directions given in small print in Cunningham's *Practical Anatomy*, which was balanced, open, upon a small stool beside him. Macleay was usually late in arriving, and always the first to slip away in the afternoon—either to have a knock at the nets or a run on the Oval. But when there it was he who took charge of the proceedings. It was not *his* incisions which merely scratched the surface of the dry leather-like skin. Their new scalpels were quickly blunted by it, and before proceeding to search for the fine cutaneous nerves they had to sharpen them again on a stone over by the windows.

The dissecting room was a shabby depressing place. It was approached through an ante-room crowded with lockers, with wash-basins and with pegs. In the lockers they stowed away the white overalls. On the pegs they hung their coats and hats, taking care never to leave anything of value in them. It was dangerous even to put down a scalpel. Nearly a hundred

students worked in the dissecting room at one time of the day or another, and in that hundred there was inevitably one who was light-fingered.

Most of the newcomers to dissection pretended to be exhilarated and were certainly vain about their promotion to this practical work. It was for them " the real thing ". The first year had been but an advanced school course, a pre-medical stage. Challis never at any time felt quite at home during his two years of dissecting. He hated the surroundings. The odour of the preserving fluid sickened him. It saturated his white coat, and his underclothes seemed always to smell of it. He woke at night nauseated by sudden whiffs of it. Moreover, the hours of practical dissection were long. He hadn't the quick superficial mind of Macleay, who skipped off early on one sporting pretext or another. He had always to " plug away ". And in those long hours of " plugging away " his mind was wont to shoot off into avenues which led him far from the actual task. He found himself at times thinking of Death : what was it? This body he was working on weighed no less now than when alive, yet all was so terribly changed.

Outwardly, the students in the dissecting room seemed perfectly at ease. Some, as if to compensate for any disturbing emotions or doubt, became aggressively agnostic or ostentatiously bawdy. There was always some smart student to make the ancient joke, with the air of its inventor, that the soul was a structure which even the most minute dissection had failed to reveal. But even those others who remained quietly orthodox were being influenced unconsciously by the nature of their work. All the stress was on structure, a material thing. Life was an affair of tissues, set to function like a clock, and out of whose working came movement. There were physiology lectures, of course, but then they too emphasised the mechanical nature of function. No one told them that there were sounds whose frequency did not awaken a response in our deaf ears, or knowledge which awakens no understanding in our limited minds.

On rare occasions the Anatomy professor who lectured them daily at 9 a.m. shot into the dissecting room. There was something of the mastiff about him in his keen scent for research. His lean sallow face with its high cheekbones seemed always tense with concentration. His eyes burned with a fierce enthusiasm for the subject in hand. No one dared, even if he had wanted, to disturb *this* professor's lectures. He was a hard worker himself and he demanded industry from his students. But some students had surprised him in a softer mood, when, pipe in mouth, he was brooding moodily over some problem in his private room.

It was only when he was known to be not in the building that the pent-up spirits exploded. Someone, bored or weary, would start it by hurling surreptitiously across the room a piece of fat or skin from out of the cracked enamel bowls into which the debris of a body was cast. Sometimes the random shot struck a dissector bent in concentration over his " part ". His reactions were immediate and violent. Since he didn't know the particular aggressor, the quarter of the room from which the missile had come was promptly brought under fire, and what began as a private assault became soon a general mêlée. These fierce disorderly " meat fights " sometimes ended in fisticuffs. It was something much more than an ordinary insult to be struck by a piece of greasy human tissue. Challis detested these battles, yet took his minor part in them. There were only two students who never retaliated: " Scroggy " Camphin and his co-dissector Aubrey Foyle, a mild colourless individual. These two spent the time taking cover or dodging the flying missiles. They were also the last pair to leave the dissecting room in the afternoon. Usually they kept at it until Lou-ee, the laboratory attendant, came in to announce that it was locking-up time. Then slowly and reluctantly they wrapped up their half dissected part, carefully tucking round the fluid-saturated sheet, and wearily left the now dark, and still more forbidding, building.

There were twelve tables in the dissecting room. The

bodies for them came from the Old Men's Home chiefly. They were the dead, unclaimed or unwanted, who having been for a time humanity's discards, were now to become humanity's remnants. If they had been failures living, dead they were to serve a useful purpose, as the means for instructing future doctors. The lessons learnt, the divested parts would be burned, but the skeletons, cleaned and beautifully white, would be articulated with string and sold to students wanting to learn their " bones ". They had to know every groove and eminence, sulcus or tuberosity. Hadn't the professor strongly advised them to take each bone in turn to bed, so that even in the dark they could learn to recognise by touch where such and such muscle fibres had their origin or such and such tendon was inserted.

Whenever Challis went over towards the high narrow windows to sharpen his scalpel he would look longingly across the green extension of the University grounds towards the old Gothic structure of St. Paul's College. All this area had once been the Grose Farm, so named after the Governor who from 1792 till 1794 administered the young Colony ; not a wise, or a firm Governor. He had just " let things go ". Foot-tracks meandering haphazardly became in time the crooked streets of Sydney to-day. And he sided, for want of character, with the privileged class of military monopolists who were exploiting and degrading the convicts. But few of the students were aware of this, and fewer still were interested in the period. For most of the University students " Grose Farm " meant no more than the little public house in Missenden Road where they found good beer.

It was during this first year of Dissection that one morning someone spread the news of a great fire in the Haymarket, not far beyond the Redfern railway station. Nearly all the students, Camphin and Foyle of course excepted, downed tools and trooped along to witness the spectacle. Arrived there they found the ever-growing crowd of onlookers breathlessly watching the figure of a man trapped on the top of a high build-

ing. The flames were already licking the highest part of it. Then suddenly, as if maddened by the heat and smoke, the figure leapt. They all saw it twisting and turning in mid-air and heard, even amid the roar of the conflagration, the dull sound of its hitting the pavement below. Some of the firemen had fondly dreamed of catching him on a blanket, for the ladders of the fire-engines could not reach to the marooned victim . . .

The students who walked back to the Medical School after that were in an unusually subdued mood; they were not yet as callous as they wanted to pretend. Their eyes were still sore from the smoke and heat, and they had been awed: awed from being witness to that transition, so quick and so unforeseen, from their own condition to that of the subjects, dry and parched upon the slate tables, whose white arteries pulsed no more and when cut leaked only red ochre of an injected pigment. So short a flight it had been to the slag-heap! That afternoon one of the fiercest " meat fights " broke out, and later a force of medical students made a foray on their hereditary foes, the " greasers ".

The most vivid personality of the Anatomy Department was Lou-ee the laboratory attendant. He appeared to be age-less and un-ageing. A round-headed parchment-faced man he was, with a shaven scalp, and he always had a pipe in his mouth. He was the professor's Man Friday, preparing the slides for the magic lantern, preserving the bodies and specimens, allotting the parts, procuring and selling the articulated skeletons—indeed, there was no activity except that of lecturing in which he did not take part. But above all he was the guardian of the helpless inmates, and the Curator of their home, the dissecting room. A man of few words and no confidences, he did not rate disproportionately high the pretentious newcomers to dissection. He had seen too many come and go. The old graduates, however, who returned to " brush up " their anatomy he respected, and in turn was by them treated with affectionate friendliness.

Challis worked over-diligently and sometimes in his sleep his mind returned to the previous day's work of exposing structures by the clearing away of areolar tissue. One night after the light of consciousness had been snuffed out, suddenly he saw, as on a screen, the horror chamber of the dissecting room. The twelve tables were all there with their stiff half-dismantled figures hidden beneath coverings, stained and saturated with the offensive preserving fluid. Its odour once again distressed him. How loathsome was it all! Were these human remnants no more than the end result of fortuitous mutations?

Then to his amazement he saw the venerable old form on the farthest table throw off its grey lineaments and rising from the prone position signal to his neighbours. In a flash all the other dishevelled tattered and incomplete figures had joined him. The strap of a sartorious muscle trailed after one of them. They all foregathered in the middle of the room and began to laugh immoderately. One, the most complete, imitated a new "fresher" student sharpening his knife on the stone and mimicked his new importance. Shrieks of high-pitched laughter echoed through the room. Another took up in his bony fleshless hand an old Cunningham's *Anatomy*, stained and smelly, then threw it on the floor. Then they all rushed over to see if it opened at a notorious page in the section on the female pelvis. An ancient joke, but they cackled loudly to find their prophecy verified. A third taking up a fibula beat a tattoo on an enamel basin. This was the signal for the grand parade. In and out they went, around the tables. The tanks in the corner opened up at the noise and out came leaping all the old prepared sections, a darker crew, to join the revellers. The dismembered parts moved mysteriously under their own power. A partly disjointed lower extremity brought up the rear, clop clopping on its *os calcis*.

Suddenly someone whispered "Lou-ee"! It was a name they all knew. How often had they heard it resounding along the corridors and from floor to floor of the School. A whiff of

strong overpowering tobacco smoke filled the room and stung the dreaming Challis's nostrils. There was a wild scatter.

Back to its own appropriate place went each individual part. The half dissected subjects re-adjusted their fluid-soaked wrappings. In the twinkling of an eye all had assumed an air of unawareness. Everything was in apple-pie order again. Challis saw his own " body " impassive on its back, the head extended over a block just as the " head " workers had left it.

Then in came Lou-ee, puffing at his pipe, slow, deliberate, and unconcerned. He had the air of one who knew all their secrets, but held his tongue, like the men who see fairies. He was their guardian and their friend, their representative at the parliament of more actively living men. Those nocturnal escapades he knew all about, and all about the other little pranks of their flesh. What was death but a minor extinction to which those students gave undue importance? Did not muscles twitch long after the event, hair grow and nails lengthen? And in men did not the habit of laughter persist longer still? Something within could cackle and croak long after the little pieces fell off like fragments from an ageing tapestry. Challis understood now why Lou-ee always handled these hardened, blackened, almost unrecognisable specimens with something of a loving caress. He was never harsh to muscle or vascular tissue or a dissected nerve. *He* knew: the body passed but the motif carries on.

Waking confused from his freshly remembered dream Challis realised with sudden conviction that Lou-ee was right. The body, however misused, however teased and torn and divided, was holy ground. For the first time he suspected the reverence due to it because of the footprints of something that had passed.

Chapter III

SHADOWS AND STIRRINGS

If dreams sometimes harassed the night, there were also memories which ruffled the placid surface of his day with vague fears or the guilt of boyish truancies.

The visit, at an early age, to the Cyclorama near the Redfern railway station remained unforgotten. From the raised circle of a stage, the sensitive boy looked down on a pictorial representation of the battle of Gettysburg, while an ignorant guide demonstrated the movements intended and the high lights of an action, fixed in the balsam of a moment. Dazzling the gorgeous uniforms, and a little startling the simulated noise of cannons which never knew a ball! Panic-stricken the horses reared and never ceased to rear. The dead lay everywhere on the ground, face-down or staring up at the blue cardboard sky. It was only an artefact battle, a thing of wood and paint and canvas. The meagre story told was full of lurid inaccuracies: and Gettysburg was all those thousand miles away. But, in this crude presentment of a struggle decades old, the young Challis caught, for the first time, a sense of violent hatreds that smoulder within men not alien, and of fires that burn within the volcano of each human personality.

After that visit he had eaten ravenously at Quong Tart's tearoom. It must have been the occasion of some special feast day. They had gone down to the Arcade, in which the Chinese tea-room was situated, by horse bus, by many impatient jerkings and stoppings. Old Quong was a romantic figure moving god-like among his clients. To be sure his hot buttered scones were "bad for boys" because of the nightmare that always followed a surfeit! The very room itself was exciting with its dainty green cups, its little stone jars of

ginger, and its aromatic odour of the East. It all smelt of vague distant adventures, of galleys and hot spices and the piracies of a boy's world.

For Challis as a boy was always wanting to prance and to show off. So, with an older friend, he played at Blondin on a tight thick rope drawn between the wooden pillars of a loft, two feet above a pile of empty flour bags. They had seen Blondin from a suburban footpath, balancing precariously far up, a small figure on a tight wire. They had watched with palpitating hearts, half fearing to breathe lest they disturb his balance. For one awe-inspiring moment he had knelt midway across and had rested his pole on the bent knee! Was it not the very peak of human achievement? What joy to be the focus point of a crowd's eyes!

In the privacy of a flour loft they reproduced that memory, and imitated at least his mannerisms. There, too, they played at circus. A steam tram rattling by was the imagined applause of the absent multitude. They felt the substitute elation of a fancied success. There in a ring, which knew no canvas and where sawdust would have been a crime, they rode the broad back of flour bags that never jumped or reared. Inconsequent clowns, they tickled the crowd to noisy merriment with their faces blackened by a burnt cork or smothered in abundant flour. Then, in more serious mood, and for proof of versatility, they swung by their heels from a trapeze or tamed the savage growling lion which before their gaze retreated, cowed, to a distant corner of the cage. And since they had the sense of a necessary climax, they ended their world-shaking performance by being shot out of a cannon's mouth, on to the copious bags, a full two feet below. O! sawdust dream of little fames!

Sometimes, as if to redress the balance of these secret indulgences, Challis would be taken for an outing to the narrow sandy verge of a bay, an inlet of the vast Sydney harbour, whence they could see, near by, anchored in perpetual penance, the " Sobraon ". Once it had been a sailing

ship of renown, now it was nothing more than a reformatory. Here were sent the boys who played truant from school and disobeyed their parents, the wicked ones who pilfered and whom birchings could not correct. There, lives were tethered, as the white sailing ship itself was tethered; only a little movement permitted. Mothers used the "Sobraon" as an illustration for their cautionary tales. They built stories around it of early risings, of harsh drudgery washing the deck, of hard boards to sleep on, of cold winds whistling through scanty bedclothes and . . . of a cat-o'-nine-tails. A cat-o'-nine-tails! . . .

It all was like an echo, from out the past, of half-forgotten beatings and brutalities and manaclings with iron. But the white ship offered also the sadness of all thwartings. It would sail wide seas no more. For all its beauty it was no more than the old red hulk which a little farther off, rusty and deserted, was awaiting the ship breaker. Both were immobile, targets for the impertinence of the little craft which on Saturday afternoons swarmed with life and laughter around them. Challis was sensitive enough to feel already something of the sadness of furled sails that would never again feel the lash of salt waves or the rudeness of too eager winds, their libertine days for ever ended.

A child, he had seen death at close quarters only once. Perhaps as a necessary reminder of the fleeting nature of existence, his governess had taken the orphan boy, on a late afternoon, after some unsatisfactory behaviour, to the terrace house where the husband of one of her friends was dying. Challis had no recollection of his own parents' deaths. Now, by a staircase that twisted through the fearful darkness, he was led high up to a dying man's room. Strong emotions preserved for ever the details of it; the unpapered walls soiled with dampness, the cheap torn muslin curtains on the window, the big iron bedstead over-filling the room, the enamel chamber underneath, and then—he had quickly averted his eyes after that first look—there on the bed, blowing out his cheeks with lusty

vigour, old Vorn's bearded head. The unconscious man was dying to other prayers than his own. Challis, looking away, had fixed his eyes on a coloured print on the wall: of the Virgin smiling gently and gaudily amid angel faces. The urinous odour of the room was sickening. Two old women kneeling by the bedside were saying aloud the Rosary, their prayers bravely competing with the stertorous breathing of the comatose man. From time to time, their heavy beads struck a metallic note from the framework of the iron bedstead. The boy was kneeling, too, and in fear, yet his eyes strayed involuntarily, indecently. . . Downstairs on the ground floor there was an atmosphere of pious insobriety. Half drunken men, maudlin in their lamentations, were pressing the visitors to drink. All the night after this there had been the flutter of disturbing sights and sounds about his restless sleep. And no sainted face had smiled to comfort him from a cloud of angel faces.

The spirits of a boy are resilient spirits, bouncing up like his own rubber ball. Truancy had its own rich flavour. Now older and a truant, he watched with quickening blood the rush of wild horses clattering along the old West road. Out of the distant country they had come: he knew not where. Sometimes he had to draw into the security of a doorway, once even into Miss Munroe's little shop, to escape their overflowing tide. It was a pleasant tingling fear he felt. Even the mighty steam tram had to come to a halt, losing time, between its stopping places. And those poor harnessed horses of servitude, drawing carts or other vehicles—they had to be pulled over to the kerb for safety.

All the boy knew was that these young long-haired horses came out of the West ; came unbroken, wild-eyed, rebellious, their nostrils flapping, their sides flecked with foam. The dust of a long journey was on their coats, and their shoeless hooves were stirring a cloud of dust in which they moved. Two riders, lean men on lean horses, kept the mob obedient to the course, with great long whips that cracked from time to time.

Sometimes the riders galloped at full speed, head bent forward along a footpath in order to check the sudden rebellious turning of a horse, half anxious to escape yet half fearing to leave the mob.

Up Taverner's Hill they used to come, their pace slackening a little, to meet on the crest the iron rails of their first steam tram. They went on, a thunder of hoofs, past the bare Johnston paddock with its tall pine trees—leafless, men said, since the bad days when convicts were hanged there (at night, you should not cross them for fear of the haunting spectres!) Down-hill now, gathering pace again, the mob crossed the old forgotten creek that was once a boundary. There was always an odd one that wanted to turn left at the Honest Irishman Inn; and again further on to the right at Missenden Road. But the end was near; enclosure was at hand. The horses always made a token show of resisting at the entrance to the sale yards, but soon, all fatigued, thirsty and tremulous, they were corralled within wooden log fences. On the next day they would be horses for auction, and after that, horses broken to harness and the will of a master.

Challis had often watched them being sold at auction in that wooden O, sitting perched up on the top rail of the log fence amidst rough hard-faced men, his toes (for better security) caught in the rail below. He knew the routine ways of a sale, and he knew also the personalities of the sale yards. There was "Wingy", the half-caste with one arm, who minded the vehicles of men present to buy, there was the big fat perspiring man with the voice of a stentor who urged the buyers on, and there was Mick Guinane the horse-breaker, the big kindly man of few words, one side of whose face was palsied. His left eye was always weeping from a red everted lower lid. And Challis came to know something of the moods of the horses themselves. He saw them defiant, fearful, red-eyed in the centre of the ring, moved about with a whip to make them show their parts, and then later he watched them, half subdued, surly and unreliable, in the long shafts of a sulky with a

kicking strap over the hind quarters and a rope halter over the bridle. They were at this stage being sent trotting back over that same old West road with its deep ruts and its top layer of moving yellow dust. They had to be made used to the noise of the steam trams, that grinding noise which at times caused even the tamest of horses to shy. Challis liked to stand near the water trough outside the sale yards and hear the sound of thirsty half-broken horses drinking. There was always a cold green moss at the bottom of the trough which had been roughly fashioned from the trunk of a tree. He always wet his sleeve trailing his fingers along that moss.

It was a world of magic for a truant boy, for nearby was also the blacksmith's forge, a foundry in miniature. The wheels of his first box cart in younger days had come from there. Within a high-roofed interior whose darkness only the wide opening and the fire lit, he had watched the smith's hammer striking white sparks from the dull red, slowly pliant metal. The smell of burnt hooves filled his eager nostrils. For souvenirs there were little treasures of cut leather and broken fragments of iron amid the soot on an earthen floor. The horses here were docile in the turpitude of their surrender, suffering patiently the folly of their masters.

He was older still when once he went for a church picnic to Chowder Bay, the little inlet whose name, at that time, still carried the disrepute of high indecent revels in years before. From the edge of the beach he could catch a glimpse of the fore-shortened entrance to Port Jackson. On a flat grass-covered land, further back, boys and girls under the watchful eyes of their parents were swinging on roundabouts, or playing at games. Then for a coin a fisherman had offered to take some of them out in his row-boat, and Challis had gone with other boys and some girls over green waters, perilously close, to a distant disused wharf where two great sharks, recently captured, were tethered to one of its wooden piles. Death had not wrested from them their power to strike awe. Suddenly fear had prized open the soldered instincts of a growing boy,

and looking up, Challis saw with new surprise the beauty of a rounded breast in the girl seated opposite him, and the grace of her half-disclosed ankle. He felt guiltily uncomfortable with a strange turgescence, and there and then, for the first time, was painfully aware.

Chapter IV

NOVICES

Challis and Macleay survived the annual obstacle of examinations in the first four years, passing without any distinction. Some of those who had begun the Course with them were, by now, left behind, but in each new year they caught up with other stragglers. In their last year, they found, bogged there already for some time, two well-known characters: Bill Freely and Burney. Freely, who was tall, thin and bent, with a weak face and a slightly red nose, had begun life as a schoolteacher. He had been thirteen years *en route* towards graduating in medicine. Burney was older and had been even longer an undergraduate. He was a short block of a man to whom clung the somewhat faded renown of having played for the First XV. He was middle-aged, mild, inoffensive and given to few words.

With the approach of graduation most of the medical students began to put on the stiffness of a self-conscious dignity. They disapproved, now, of the jejune antics of those in the earlier years—mere boyish pranks, unworthy of University men. Even Macleay toned down his boisterous sporting manners, although he was still and forever making his wise-cracks. Any demonstration in a lecture room was henceforth confined to a discreet applause by stamping the feet, a demonstration still anonymous, but never obstructive.

In this manner, during their fourth year they had punctuated with approval some of the Gynaecology lectures, for the Lecturer had his famous stock jokes (of which their predecessors had, beforehand, made them all aware). He was a tall square-shouldered man, this lecturer, with something of the appearance of a State coachman on some official occasion, but armed with a speculum instead of a whip. His best

instrument, however, was his own quiet Cockney humour. When he repeated his hardy annual of a joke at the well-recognised place in his lectures, he never quite succeeded in restraining a smile from twisting one side of his face, even before the students enthusiastically greeted the sally with their foot-applause. His greatest moment came when he enumerated the foreign bodies which strange women-patients hid about their secret parts, like magpie hoards. His voice would then take on a lyrical quality: "Slate pencils and hairpins, safety-pins and writing pens, marbles and broken catheters, knitting needles, even corks, and" (pausing to heighten the effect) "on one occasion a statue of the Emperor Napoleon the First himself." (Sustained stamping.)

Even the most critical student admitted the fairness of this lecturer's examination. He was never out to trick or down them. He was not a vain man and he made no pretence of great academic qualifications. Pathology was then a new subject, and in it he knew himself to be out of his depth. A slightly malicious rumour credited him with describing columnar epithelum where no woman, alive or dead, had ever worn it. But he was a sound surgeon of limited range who kept close to the beaten tracks within a woman's pelvis, and took no reckless flight into territory that was unknown to him. He disclaimed, humbly, any fine knowledge, even of the pelvic anatomy. A good working acquaintance with the whereabouts of the main structures sufficed for his limited purposes. Over a cup of tea, up in the Residents' quarters, after the day's operations, he had been known to be frank and disarming. "Gentlemen, I am not an anatomist. I never have claimed to know all the branches of the arteries or nerves even in my own special subject, unlike you clever fellows" (smiling now) "who have so recently come from Wilson's lectures. *I* didn't have your chance in the old days, and you never can make up for these things afterwards. But, gentlemen, I know where the reefs lie and where the shoals are, and I keep my distance. I steer a safe course and I follow closely the old

chart I use. Better anatomists than me get into more trouble —*you* know that " (and he smiled at the oblique reference, for there had only recently been an " accident " in somebody else's theatre). " I don't get wrecked—or at least very very rarely. Never show off in a pelvis," concluded the safe old navigator. "Keep to the trade routes. They will bring your argosies home."

That fourth year had been full of the experiences that the millions of doctors before them had had and been excited by; yet once again each individual observer felt a gasp of surprise. What a miracle, this crisis in a lobar pneumonia! There was so much more in seeing it than in reading about it. The doctors at this time had no chemical compounds with complicated formulae to cut short the virulence of the disease. It just went on its ordained course while the nurse sought to make the patient as comfortable as possible and the doctor watched—watched anxiously asking himself: " Will the heart survive it all? " Then, in a favourable case, towards the ninth day, with the fever still high on a plateau at the top of the chart, and the patient, dusky-faced, propped up and grunting, victim to a great distress, suddenly came the transformation. Could you blame the student for using the word " miraculous "?

For even while the nurse had been turning her back, the patient had found ease. The long dry skin had shed grateful tears of moisture. His colour was better, his breathing easier. He wanted to coil up and sleep. And when the delighted nurse counted the pulse and looked at her clinical thermometer, the one was slow and the other showed a temperature below normal. Centuries had passed since its first description, but for Challis the marvel of it all had not abated one jot. His text-books offered no satisfactory explanation for this sudden change. As in all their medical education the emphasis was on what the teachers *thought* they knew—little or nothing was ever said to indicate the great ullage of their knowledge.

That fourth year had been a period of adolescent lubricity, as the second year had been one of juvenile materialism. Their prurient curiosity was now more than ever excited. They loved the lascivious incidents. The smallest things tickled them. There was that joke about the University rowing man who was called on by his tutor to make a pelvic examination. A good oarsman, he was not so much at home in these waters. Behind a screen a small group of students crowded round the bed of a little Scotswoman. The tradition of Victorian decency still forbade the unnecessary exposure of a patient. The hand, which held an oar firmly in inter-University races, got lost amid the tangle of unnecessary bedclothes and apparel. It was still lost when the flustered student and his sniggering friends heard a little voice from the top of the bed call out: "A little further forward, Sir, and to the right". . . . The story went round the hospital bawdily embroidered under the title of "the co-operating little Scotswoman".

Yet, even amidst these coarse interludes, these medical students were becoming serious-minded. How could they fail to be so, listening with their newly bought binaural stethescopes (so roundly condemned by the older physicians)—listening and listening—fascinated, to the turmoil of the blood around an incompetent heart valve. And it gave them food for thought, beyond any information in a text-book, when they watched the magic of tissue repair. In the dissecting room the skin, shrivelled and dry like leather, never fought back. Now, with the wrapt attention of a child before its first magic lantern show, they saw in an ulcer the pearly shelving edge grow in, redeeming the raw surface. And day by day, with a sense of partnership in that redemption, they watched the shrinking and drying up of the little ruby lake.

For physical relaxation only a small number played games regularly. Some of the others, as enthusiastic spectators, followed the fortunes of the XV or the XI. At least they were out in the fresh air and had the distraction of healthy sporting interests. Macleay was one of those who played regularly,

but, in the end, he just missed his " blue ". Challis, on the other hand, was a regular onlooker. Both of them now went into town on Saturday mornings and " did the block " for an hour. This meant walking in a prescribed circle which had for its diameter King Street. Along the course they always met men friends and girl friends, stopped for a moment to greet them and then walked on to see others. It was Victorian in its simplicity and in its innocent behaviour.

On Saturday nights it was the custom for the ruder sporting types of young men to flock again into town. In King Street players from all the Clubs congregated in little groups, discussed the events of the day's cricket or rugby, argued and talked and, from time to time, went across to one of the public-houses to linger awhile over a drink. In spite of their limited resources the students frequented the " private bars ", where all the drinks were sixpence—(they were only threepence in the public bars). But there was much more in the ritual of these Saturday nights in town than the taking of a drink. They wandered from Madame Telekey's private bar to the American bar, or over to the more sedate atmosphere of the " Surrey " and then perhaps to the Tivoli. It was a more or less set round and all the time they were meeting with old friends or making new acquaintances. There was a constant exchange of chaff and banter. Ill-feeling was rare. Some drunkenness inevitably occurred, but it was not a vicious drunkenness, and when the bars closed at 11 p.m. nearly all turned home. The medical students who had had such a night in town always felt fresher for work in the following week. It was considered rather despicable to study on Saturday afternoon or evening. One who did it was a " swot ". Only the highest distinction in examination results could cancel such a breach of the conventions.

It was all a period of adjustment. None of these young men was as case-hardened as he tried to make believe. Most of them had become habituated to the ancient impersonal dead of the dissecting room. But now they were learning to know

actual human beings by their pathological physical states. Challis remained, much longer than his fellows, secretly distressed by the spectacle of a man or woman dying, as if, deep in the unconscious layers of his mind, there still rankled and gnawed the memory of the first uraemic death.

His first attendance at a post mortem examination proved an ordeal. Hidden away, like a guilty secret, on the far side of the hospital grounds, was the shabby little mortuary. It was well out of sight of patients or visitors, but conveniently situated for the unperceived comings and goings of the undertaker's vehicle. Its back jutted on the high fence which encircled the University playing ground. Attached to the wall of this mortuary he read as he got nearer the notice of the impending examination: "*Hodie Sectio 4 p.m.*" The use of Latin words painted on the little black board was, itself, evidence of the dislike of publicity. Only the time was written in with chalk.

Challis, wedged uncomfortably in the little gallery, had, for first impression, a sense of the distressing shabbiness of his surroundings. The walls were grimy, and the whole place looked uncared for. The very basins were chipped and dirty-looking. Instead of white cottonwool they used a coarse brown tow. Even the slate-covered table did not look clean and the metal of the water-taps was dull with oxidation. How different from the bright and spotless scene of the surgeons' operating theatre in the hospital! There, hope was still alive, and by its living kept all else luminous. There, men and women spoke softly in whispers out of reverence. It was the sanctum of a cult: let none blaspheme with loud voices against the art that heals and relieves!

But here were repulsion and denigration. Without respect, and roughly, attendants were depositing the white body of a woman recently dead, on the old-fashioned grimy table. They had obviously lost all consideration for it. The doctor was drawing on great clumsy gauntlets like those the motor men were just beginning to use. He had an air of great disdain

and, when he began his work, his manoeuvres were deliberately crude and rough. He seemed to be handling the parts brutally: the great Scots surgeon at his operation had *caressed* those tissues of her, alive. Now vast, terribly vast, incisions were being made with a large wooden-handled knife. Asepsis did not live here and no one thought of the new surgical expression about "toilette" of the tissues. And, all the while, the rust-covered tap was running noisily, and noisily running away down open channels on the table, was a fluid incarnardined. . . .

Challis found himself unable to keep his mind on the comments made by the pathologist carrying out the examination. He was thinking of that problem of transition which had first perplexed him at the sight of a man leaping from the top storey of a burning building in the Haymarket. He was witnessing the dismemberment of a body which had only recently housed warm affections, secreted tears, quivered pleasantly at a man's approach. Now, all was fused—systole and diastole alike—and all the furies of the flesh had abated. Only a white inert mass remained, blanched of the sensitiveness of those who hope and desire.

When the opportunity came he slipped outside, before the end. It was good to breathe once more the fresh air of a sunny day. A sombre-clothed undertaker was patiently awaiting his prize with the furtiveness of his class. From the Oval shouts were coming, and at times a high-punted ball could be seen, between the tall trees and above the wooden fence.

For contrast, he soon had the heartening experience of "doing" his twelve midwifery cases at the lying-in hospital. This hospital was a converted private house, situated on the top of Surrey Hills at the corner of two main thoroughfares, Crown Street and Albion Street. It served a vast area peopled chiefly by the lower middleclass and the poor. In the young city of Sydney there were already, near by, some dreadful slums.

On one side the area served extended as far as the suburb of Redfern, so named after a doctor convict transported far

some trivial disobedience in the affair of the Nore. Not one in a thousand of the residents knew anything about him. Albion Street itself led towards where the old Belmore Park once was. A Chinese Quarter had until recently been near by, with its laundries, its *pak-a-pu*, its Fantan and its dens of vice. In the suburb of Surrey Hills lived many of the itinerant fruit vendors, who bought their stocks at Paddy's Markets in the early hours of the morning and sold them from their carts in the streets of every suburb. Their light low-set spring vans were easily recognised by the flashily painted out-turned sides and the tailboards that could be let down as a counter on which to display some boxes of fruit. Up near the driver's seat were a not always reliable pair of scales and a collection of brown-paper bags. The pony, between shafts which pointed high, was usually decorated with ribbons or tinkling bells. The heavily loaded pony was usually led by the dealer, crying his wares. But, when his stock was exhausted, he drove home at a lively pace, the shafts now horizontal. He was a " loud " type, a " larrikin ", who very often gambled away his good earnings at the two-up schools, of which there were many in Surrey Hills. But his fruit was cheap, if you counted it carefully before handing over the money.

Such was the " district " from which the more difficult obstetric " cases " were admitted to the Crown Street Hospital. The students and probationer nurses went outside the hospital to confine straightforward " cases ", in their own modest homes.

The most important figure on the Staff of this Hospital was the Head Sister—a round-faced very stout Jewess. The lecturer at the University might teach the students the theory of obstetrics. Sister Solly taught them the practice. Fothergill or Jellett was like any other book to her, but for more than a decade she it was who had shown the medical graduates of Sydney University how to confine a woman.

The parturient woman was carried on a stretcher only if she could not actually walk up the winding stairs to the little Labour room on the second floor. No lift was yet installed

in the building. There on the Labour bed she was given a twisted sheet, anchored at its far end to the foot of the iron framework, and she was instructed to pull on it with every pain. Meanwhile, the student and a probationer nurse performed all the minor tasks under the watchful eye of Sister Solly. How this wise old midwife used, by turns, to bully and cajole the women! "Use your pains, Mrs. O'Toole." "Now don't be lazy, like a dear." "Bear down, bear down!" (in a more exasperated voice). The groaning woman meanwhile was hanging on to the twisted sheet as to the rope of salvation.

When the moment of emergence was at hand, all efforts were directed to saving the perineum. A torn perineum was a terrible disgrace, especially in a multipara. "Keep that head well flexed!" the warmhearted but now slightly excited Jewess would shout. This was the supreme moment. "Slowly, slowly, take your time"—with an authoritative voice she kept on warning them. She herself was infinitely patient. She knew those students and nurses—they were always inclined to hurry things, for they wanted to get it over. At last, the occiput was through and the half smothered infant was first spluttering and then crying indignantly. The tension straightaway was relaxed. The mother was quiet and contentedly half-dozing. Solly herself was smiling and patting the woman affectionately. The student was watching closely the fundus, the young nurse taking care of the new-born child. More than one travail ended with that birth.

After a week of such work Challis was sent out on the district to take charge of his first "case". A call had come from Wooloomooloo just before midnight. He was self-conscious walking along Crown Street, a nurse by his side in all her comic dress of a cap with flowing tails. Each was carrying a bag. They were aware of exciting a mild interest in the few passers-by, for their whole demeanour proclaimed their mission.

They got lost for a while amid lanes that ended blindly not far from the wharves, but presently a man unshaven and

smelling of drink found them and led them, through the broken palings of a fence, to the bedchamber. Two neighbourly women had been holding the fort. They had fetched various useful articles: one, a great towel (with the name of a Sydney Hotel embroidered on it), the other a basin. Soon pots and pans were being requisitioned and plenty of boiling water was " on the way ". It was a poverty-stricken room, but the nurse, no longer ill at ease, was fussing about and putting things in some order. Challis's pulse was beating as quickly as any foetal heart. He was always over-conscientious, and now he was scared lest he had forgotten some injunction. . . . Yes, they had remembered Solly's parting instruction about the catheter! . . .

It was all over very quickly and very easily. In the elation of his new experience, Challis did not perceive how entirely superfluous his own part had been. But it was a great event in his life to be tying off the cord of the first case delivered " on his own ". Even as he was thinking of this the great wheel of a placenta came rolling down of its own accord. Its warm sickly odour pervaded the room. The nurse had just found the unshaven man eavesdropping at the door and had ordered him to be off. It was enough for him to know that it was a girl. Now the only remaining anxiety was about the fundus. They had heard terrible stories of cases of post-partum hoemorrhage in which the blood met the urgently summoned doctor on the stairs. So Challis stayed on an unnecessarily long time " hanging on " to the fundus, alternately cheered by its cricket-ball consistence, and perturbed by its relaxation. And all the while he was thinking now of what an old doctor had said to him once, on a tram: " My boy, you'll never have any satisfaction in medicine or surgery like that of a safe delivery."

When they walked home, tired but happy, the bags seemed to have grown heavier. The early light of dawn was coming in from out near the Heads. The trams had begun to run noisily down William Street. A hotel employee was busily

washing down the footpath outside a corner public-house. The smell of stale beer crowded out his recollection of the placenta's sickly odour. As they came near the hospital they caught sight of a bright light burning in the Labour room on the second floor. The stout Jewish Sister would be there once more exhorting and imploring the parturient woman to help herself. Up Albion Street a dealer's cart loaded with fruit from Paddy's Markets was slowly climbing the hill.

Those five years of novitiate in the end had passed very quickly. Challis, Macle y and Camphin all graduated together, each of them, sec etly, feeling himself inadequate for the tasks lying before. Each, too, in his own way had the sense of a pilgrimage beginning, although Macleay would never have admitted it. In Challis's mind there was the confusion of aspiration and ambition, a welter of selfish motives and the dream of selfless service. The urge, too, of a man's sensualism was colouring his emotions. Nevertheless he had no doubt: a pilgrimage was being begun. So, out of their Damascus Gate went all three, towards dim and distant Meccas, uncertain and unaware.

Bill Freely did not qualify for another two years. But in the end he did graduate and, so, unexpectedly, survived the notoriety of having once offered an Arts lecturer who was acting as " bull-dog " during some written examination, a swig from his pocket flask. So grave an affront, publicly made, in the Great Hall, had been considered by everyone as certain to militate against the Senate ever conferring a degree. On that occasion, Freely had some drink taken, and entering the examination hall a little late had given a mere glance at the questions asked—(none of his tips had come off!)—and so, with this friendly gesture *en route* and without even attempting the paper, he had left the Hall.

After graduation he went straight out into practice in a far distant small town, " back of out back ". His nearest medical colleague was over fifty miles away. He lived at the Railway Hotel, the solitary weatherboard public-house which stood

near the little station visited by a few trains. The hotel had a wide verandah with wooden posts to which drovers could tie their horses. In summertime the heat under its corrugated iron roof was intense.

Freely saw his patients in the Commercial Room, the florally designed paper of whose walls was peeling under the heat. In the centre was a round table covered with a stained green cloth on which was centred a brown jug and a brown glass, each bearing a brewer's name. The corner entrance of the hotel led to the dead-end of the bar. The side entrance let the visitor in through a passage which ended in the large yard with its great pile of cut wood, its stable, and its distant water closet, half covered by a thin straggling disconsolate vine. A thin cross-breed of a dog was chained near the wood-stack.

In this town Freely's potations grew deeper and more frequent. Sometimes in his carousals he was joined by the only local clergyman, one who had been posted far out because of a like weakness. But unlike Freely he had interludes between his " benders ", interludes in which he mortified himself with savage penances and fierce upbraidings.

Freely's bedroom was upstairs over the Commercial Room. It opened on a wide balcony through narrow doors with long glass windows. In it there was, beside the bed, a yellow chest-of-drawers with a mirror that swung on a red varnished wooden frame, and in the corner a wash-stand with a jug and a basin.

In that room he died, of a low-grade pneumonia with scarcely any febrile temperature, with herpes on his lips, plucking at the soiled sheet, babbling incoherently. The wife of the proprietor had nursed him in between her many duties connected with the house and the bar. But Freely had, before the end, the Sacrament of Lamps and the Sacring Oils. His boon companion of exalted moments came in to anoint and to fortify the dying man. A kerosene lamp placed on the chest-of-drawers, safely out of reach of the sick man, lit the flushed dark face of the one and the blotched tear-stained countenance of the other. Out in the great yard the mongrel dog kept on

yelping. It was a time of drought and the water in the corrugated iron tanks was low. In the little weatherboard church, nearby, they had been offering up prayers for rain.

Burney, on the other hand, never took his degree. He had no loose habits, but after seventeen years he lost the faculty of concentration. He found, at last, that he could no longer memorise. In the 'nineties he had played a vigorous game of rugby, a stalwart among powerful forwards of the First XV. By middle-age he had developed a paunch and, his sociable habits gone, was given to long silences unruffled by any thought. He felt himself out of his element with the recurring intake of youngsters, so, from time to time, he would disappear on one of his fishing excursions off the coast. A favourite spot was a ledge on the rocks at Bondi. Gradually he began to frequent the lecture rooms less and less, and when after some months he had not been seen someone in the Common Room observed, "Oh! Burney's away fishing." Thus, he passed from the sight of men as those whose passings vex no great waters.

No one ever knew his real end, or the manner of it. Perhaps he just kept on dreaming, a pipe in his mouth, upon that favoured ledge, a fisherman's line swaying between his short stubby fingers with each fresh wave. There, perhaps, fishing, he merged into the immensity of a green sea and his own incoming dream.

Chapter V

THE OPEN ROAD

That first appendix was a very tame vestigial remnant. It popped up to surrender itself at the very first approach of the surgical forefinger. For Challis, however, it was a memorable occasion; such trivial events seem important milestones in the career of a young doctor! How ultra-carefully he had washed up for this operation! He had had some difficulty getting the gloves, unwrinkled, on his hand because, under his apparent nonchalance, he was breathing a little more quickly and his heart was beating a little nervously. He was conscious that the eyes of the Theatre Sister were upon him; by this performance his status as a Resident Medical Officer might well suffer—it could not easily be enhanced. That Theatre Sister had seen too many senior Residents come and go, some of whom had shown great dexterity and given high surgical promise.

His first incision had only scratched the epidermis timidly; he had not yet acquired control of the scalpel. It took several cuts to get through a skin hardened by alcohol, and after all he saw that, in spite of his good intentions, he had tailed his incision. He bruised the muscle fibres unnecessarily before he got to the peritoneum and he fumbled in picking it up. But presently he was inside! For the first time, inside an abdomen. For one long moment he felt like a swimmer alone in a vast sea full of terrifying possibilities. Then almost at once, before he had time to search for the longitudinal band, the appendix offered itself up for sacrifice.

Challis knew he had not acquitted himself well in sewing up the abdomen. The needle had turned round twice or thrice in the needle holder. He had felt " all thumbs ". Then he

had caught the Sister's eye, a disapproving eye, for he had torn a good pair of rubber gloves. Thinking it over afterwards he confessed to himself that the "chronic appendix" which someone else had diagnosed had been, really, a perfectly innocent normal one. He felt humiliated when, in spite of all his carefully "scrubbing up", a stitch abscess appeared in the wound about the seventh day.

Those little setbacks were necessary for the good of a young doctor's soul. No one could grudge him a little self-satisfaction in the early days after qualification. Challis had strutted a little as he walked down Macquarie Street to get registered. It had disappointed him to find that the State Medical Registration Office was so unpretentiously housed. The whole procedure seemed no more important than taking out a dog licence at the newspaper shop up the road.

Then there had been the excitement of his appointment to the Southern Hospital ten miles out from the City. But in the satisfaction of that appointment he felt a regret at the dispersal of his old friends. Camphin did not take a hospital, but went straight off to Mission work in East Africa. Macleay, who got a higher pass, was now at the Metropolitan Hospital.

Challis's face fell when he first reported for duty at the Southern Hospital after a long tiresome steam tram ride of one hour. It had no façade at all, that hospital! It stood in very extensive grounds on the edge of the Pacific Ocean and consisted of an unlovely collection of scattered pavilions, some of them still in wood. The equipment of the theatre and the wards was depressingly poor and indeed barely adequate. In other words, this was a Government Institution which successive political parties agreed to starve because it was an unimportant pawn in the political game, or, rather no pawn at all. The hospitals in the City, on the other hand, were all Voluntary Hospitals. In the end, the Government had always to finance them for the most part, but, then, they all had important political connections.

When, however, Challis, having got over the shock of an unattractive exterior, entered the Residents' quarters, he soon found an atmosphere that was warm and sympathetic. The Medical Superintendent welcomed him with more friendliness than he had expected, though, in a gentle yet firm way, he lost no time in explaining how this hospital was *different*. He admitted it was not lavishly furnished or equipped. The new Residents, he said, would find a shortage of many things to which they had grown accustomed in the City hospitals. And then his voice growing a little more insistent he told something about the rules.

" Here the patient always comes first. The convenience of doctor or nurse takes second place. There must be no bullying. The sick patient is often fretful and unreasonable, but then he is a sick man. Patients are never to be considered merely as " cases ". We do not refer to this one as the " typhoid case " or to that one as the " pneumonia in Ward 7 ". For us, the patient is a human being first. He must never be regarded merely as the abode of a disease."

This little sermon took Challis somewhat aback. As a medical student he had been brought up to a different point of view. In the jargon of that time a man or woman with a serious or an unusual condition—it might be Mitral Stenosis or cancer of the tongue—was " a good case ". They all told one another about it. " Have you seen the Lung Hydatid over in Averstone Ward? It's a good case . . ."

But in the Southern Hospital the Residents soon got used to these little homilies, partly, at least, because they were uttered without any pious snuffling or any quavering of the voice. Before a house doctor was allowed to do a major operation, the Medical Superintendent, in a friendly conversational way, would deliver himself thus:

" The surgeon entering an abdomen is forcing his way into the private chamber of sensitive living elements, thrusting himself upon a community of cells. His only justification can be that he comes with clean intentions to quell some local

disturbance or expel some evil. Without that justification he is a wanton aggressor, a marauder. . . . You surgeons must always justify yourself before and after the event."

A story about the behaviour of a former Resident Medical Officer was still common property throughout this Hospital. Sopkins had been obviously suffering too long from a fulminating attack of " Houseman's head " (" cephalic oedema " the jargon called it). Unlike most of his kind he didn't easily get over it, in spite of the rebuffs of the old Sisters or the quietly uttered counsels of the Superintendent. He was quite competent, in his way, but imagined himself much more than that. Then he began to use violent language over his operations in the theatre.

Of course, there had been, not long before, a phase of violent surgeons both in England and in Australia, and the tradition was not yet dead in either country. Operative Surgery had once upon a time been associated with prodigious physical strength in the operator. Without it how could Larrey have performed his amazing number of amputations during the Napoleonic wars? In England, Liston was said to have had the strength of a bull. Did he not once break open himself the door of the lavatory in which a terrified patient (whom he was about to cut for stone) had taken refuge? In this same England there still persisted surgeons who displayed their violent tempers and uttered their coarse expletives during operations. To them, it all smacked of masterfulness. In London there was still operating the surgeon who had thrown a pair of rubber gloves in the Sister's face because they tore as he was putting them on—masterfully. And Sydney had that picturesque good-looking surgical buccaneer who peppered the air with his " bloodys " at a time when such a word was still the private property of bullock drivers, horse-breakers, or flashy young men-about-town. The theatre had not yet claimed it or passed it on to the Women's Clubs. Once, however, even this dashing surgeon—over-wrought in the middle of an abdominal emergency—met his equal. " Give

me the bloody clamp", he exclaimed savagely to the Instrument Sister. "Here's your bloody clamp", she replied handing it to him. A suppressed titter from the students' gallery evoked a smile from the harassed surgeon, acknowledging his first defeat.

But what might be excused in a senior or a senile surgeon spoilt by a little local fame, could not easily be forgiven in the tyro. Sopkins, doing his eleventh appendicectomy, was insufferable. Not that his profanity was great: but he bullied the Scout Nurse and was even rude to the Sister. Contemptuously he threw down two scalpels because, allegedly, they were not sharp enough. He had just thrown an artery forceps across the room because it wouldn't clip, when he heard behind him the soft patient voice of the Medical Superintendent who had entered unobtrusively. "Tut-tut, Doctor Sopkins," he said. "You're making a noise just like a real surgeon."

After that there was calm. The Scout Nurse had had to leave the theatre to suppress a giggle (she had been close to tears before) and the Theatre Sister looked terribly grateful. There was never again in that theatre any outburst from Sopkins, and when later he fell on a foreign field, his pride having abated, he was bearing the nickname of "Tut", baptised in the moment of a folly from which he gallantly recovered.

Robert Hollins, the Medical Superintendent, was a strange solitary brooding figure. He was tall lean and bent, with long black hair prematurely silvering over. His eyes were deeply set in great caverns, above which were bushy eyebrows and, below them, the deep lines of his cheeks. He was no spoil-joy to the young men and did not interfere with their little jollifications, but he watched always the patients' interests very jealously and he preached constantly the Code, both directly and obliquely. Hilton's *Rest and Pain* and Osler's *Aequanimitas*, well-thumbed, and dog-eared, were always to be found in the Residents' quarters. It was he who left them there.

Strange though it appeared to outsiders, his habit of giving counsel or warning to the young doctors never grew tiresome. Perhaps it was that they saw so little of him outside their ward duties. But it was also because of the manner of his approach and his obvious sincerity. For him man was so much more than the sum of many functions. And though he was a good surgeon himself he appeared to hate radical operations. Always before they finished their term at the hospital the house doctors were warned against the idea that prosperity in practice justified all. And he would seek to put them on their guard against the asp of envy which, among doctors, gorges itself on private dissatisfactions. And they must never follow the evil practices at that very moment being exploited by a notorious London surgeon, in which the twenty odd feet of human intestine was regarded as a surgical pleonasm. On such an occasion he would pass on to give his definition of the Good Surgeon:

" In an abdomen that is a thicket of inflammatory adhesions he frees and separates cautiously. He never removes more than is necessary. He handles the tissues always gently, almost religiously. He covers his raw surfaces. He brings his edges together in perfect apposition. He repairs and restores and ever seeks to make whole. He never loiters nor yet hurries incontinently. During an operation he speaks no more than is requisite. He respects the Art that heals, and he acknowledges the Healer."

His own Residents, even long after, remembered him with affection. Those in the City hospitals who did not know him and who did not like his philosophy, made fun of him, parodying his homilies bawdily. Macleay used to warn Challis against the danger of droplet-infection from Hollins's religion. And they ridiculed him as a surgeon, saying with such surgical principles he must get a lot of sepsis. Only to those whom he found receptive and sympathetic would Hollins still further disclose himself, speaking thus: " The way of the true disciple in medicine is this : from love of the Art that heals to love of

those who suffer and are afflicted, and so back to the Source of all love."

These sentiments few of his young doctors ever carried into actual practice amid the rough and tumble of competitive medical work. Indeed they soon came to seem a little precious. It was all very well for Hollins, living a semi-monastic life sheltered within his little community far away from the bustle and worldliness of City life. But young doctors had to face a severe struggle and the problem of ways and means. Most of them had aims and ambitions which were quite otherwise: they wanted to possess, to acquire, to enjoy. They had not yet shed, in consummation, their vulgarities or their coarseness. Rare was the doctor who ever went back, later on, to pay the old Medical Superintendent the homage of an affection which, secretly, many felt. Perhaps it was because they feared those eyes enquiring: "How have you justified yourself before and after the event?" But all knew they had carried away, like vagrant bees which gather the sweet droppings of a lime tree, something that was rich—even though they never returned.

Hollins, for his part, faded out from the scene soon after. It had been darkly hinted that he would sooner or later suffer for mingling too much theology with his medicine—not martyrdom, like Servetus, on a pyre, the fire kindling slow amid the too-green wood which crackled and spat—but relegation to an institution further out. Relegated he was, like outmoded vehicles or old-fashioned coaches, to a distant centre. Progress demands it; new men, new vehicles, new doctrines. The sheen of novelty is all!

Challis now felt himself upon the Open Road. He had left behind that hateful period of subjection to examinations and examiners. But even in this post-graduate elation he could not free himself from sobering reflections on his present environment. To what new enclosure was he moving?

Within the hospital grounds, and an important part of the institution, was the Leper Colony of New South Wales. There,

sequestered, corralled, condemned to the misery of economic security, beyond adventure and without escape, were the untouchables, paying in terrible boredom for their innocent infection. In their hebetude what did they think upon? Did they feed their minds on past remembered lecheries, or did they dream hopelessly of the unattainable: a clean white body? One, at least, whom Challis knew, gloated that he would die of his body leaving no children.

Further along the coast, but still within sight of the hospital, rose the majestic building of the State Penitentiary. The more sick among these criminals were admitted, under guard, to the Southern Hospital. Within their walled little city of repentance men and women were wearing, sullenly and under compulsion, the cowl of uniformity. For landscape they had around them great brick walls, but they could hear the Pacific Ocean in its moods. What were *their* thoughts other than that one which focussed itself upon a distant date? Some, no doubt, were helpless beings, caught and whirled about in the giddy rhythm of an evil heredity. Some, too, were paranoiacs, burying their grievance against society like a dog its bone, and no less savage at any approach to it. But others there were, he knew, who suffered from shame and a gnawing remorse, who murmured their sins to the open confessional of wind and wave, and strained their ears to catch the whispered absolution of the sea.

And only a short distance further away was Laperouse—so named after the French navigator whom Cook had so narrowly anticipated. A few miserable descendants of the original natives were always there to be seen. Once, their forefathers had roamed far and wide over great stretches of the country. Now, tame and domesticated, these half-caste descendants threw boomerangs for an occasional coin for the delectation of overseas visitors. Aliens in the land of their ancestors, they were now cadgers, fawning cadgers, pariahs among their mongrel dogs. Did they have dreams of the big timber and a bell-bird calling?

The presence of all these miseries around him robbed Challis of an easy faith in that way of the Disciple in Medicine which Hollins had so fervently preached. He saw so few signs here of the Love that rises out of the Art, succours the infirm, and turns back to the Source.

There were to be newcomers later on to this same neighbourhood. Almost outside the Hospital door, whose institution remained still warm with Hollins's charity, came stragglers from the First World War, to build their hovels of boxwood and petrol tins. The sandy soil around yielded reluctantly a sour grass. Within ten miles of a rich City, Eldorado banal, they were graciously permitted to live on the pittance from their forgotten valours. After long service they had found the servants' exit from a nation's glory.

Chapter VI

LURES AND THRALLS

In Castlecrag the streets are hilly, but the same blue ocean washes its shore. Challis went to this industrial country town to take up his second hospital appointment. A friend who had graduated earlier, Neil Robartes, was already in practice there, as junior partner to an old-established doctor named Thurlow. Not all Challis's contemporaries "did" a second year in hospital. Macleay after one term at a Sydney hospital had bought, rather expensively, a practice in a Sydney suburb. A month later, to his chagrin, Aubrey Foyle "squatted" in the same street—that is to say he just settled there without buying. From this action a life-long feud developed.

There was no green vista for Challis in Castlecrag. Its Nobby's Head projects out into the Pacific, rearing itself like a pulpit from which no one preaches to the restless congregation of waves. Within the breakwater at this time lay ships of every sort: dirty steam tramps, sailing ships with figured heads at the bow, fussy little coasters, a rare majestic liner, for Castlecrag was an important coaling port The town was dingy—its water-front pockmarked with little public-houses, some with a sinister air about them. Inside, schemes were often planned and potent drinks mixed. Fights, too, began in them, though the quarrellers were usually hustled out into the street to continue their fight outside. In most of them drinking went on surreptitiously long after the closing time of 11 p.m. But, since many of the police were corrupt, they enjoyed a considerable degree of immunity. Along the narrow streets around the water's edge throve the crimpers. These were the last representatives of the old press-gang. Since

sailors died and sailors deserted there was ever an urgent need of one or two to complete a crew. The captain paid, and the crimper provided. Late at night, comatose from their drugged liquor, the necessary sailors were " shanghaied " aboard, under the very noses of the averted faces of the police. Such kidnapped sailors awoke to find themselves at sea, helpless, with the next port of call a hundred days or more distant.

Castlecrag was not a town of high public integrity. More than a few of the aldermen found their municipal duties not inconsistent with the furthering of their own business interests. In public they usually covered their actions with a Gladstonian rhetoric. Ships' chandlers prospered by greasing many palms. Rare the agent of even the most reputable shipping companies who went a week without being approached with offers to his personal advantage. The sailors' doss-house and the moll's house were all part of a great shipping industry. The common people of this town were no less hard-working than those of any other. If they had any private vice, it was gambling. They were passionate devotees of all sport, but above all of horse-racing. They knew it was a " crooked " game, but they were ready to stake their wits against the trickery of trainer or jockey, out of love for the excitement of it all and in the vain hope of financial gain. Only a minority of the owners were above using dishonest methods; among these was the local millionaire. He was a hard avaricious man, but he never had his horses " pulled ". The people hated him but backed his horses knowing they would get a fair run. It was said of him that when a sacked old employee had pleaded in mitigation, " I've given you, sir, forty years of good service," he shot back with a snarl: " And haven't I paid you your wages for 40 years? We're quits. Get out." He was a merchant and shipping prince of whom many spoke evil when he was dead—then only, did they feel themselves safe to speak. But in the racing world, outside his jockeys whom he treated parsimoniously, there were men to defend him, among them Macleay—Macleay, already, had become a race-course fre-

quenter. " Didn't he breed the mare ' Polyphart ' ? " he once exclaimed quite aggressively.

Leaving the centre of the town and walking out into the suburbs a visitor would meet, in the late afternoon, groups of miners wearily returning from the mines to their hovels in long terraces. Their faces were black with coal-dust and in great soiled hands their little lamps were swinging. It was necessary to go much further out before one reached the refreshing hinterland of an agricultural life, the mines being hidden far below.

The hospital, old-fashioned and shabby, was perched on a cliff overlooking a beach where the sea still breaks in with noisy relish on the yellow sands. It had the look of a military barracks, and the atmosphere of a poor-law institution. The walls of its wards were painted—for economy—dull green or dark brown. Even the golden sunlight was grudgingly rationed to the patients through narrow windows set high, as in a prison. At night the feeble illumination from gas beaks did not permit the luxury of reading.

Among the local doctors practising in the town, rivalry was intense. All except one, who kept himself in all things apart, were " on " the Hospital Staff as Honorary visiting doctors, and all did their own rough surgery. But in spite of their private animosities there was never any public display of temper or discourtesy and no scandal came from their quarter. When they met socially they exchanged empty compliments, reserving their bitter opinions for the privacy of the home. They did, however, watch each other's every move, professional or social, with jealous suspicion, seeking the motive even for the purchase of a new horse or a new vehicle; medical transport had not yet been mechanised. All of them made satisfactory incomes from " contract practices ", through the agency of " Lodge " patients who paid quarterly a fixed sum. There was only a small top layer of well-to-do private patients and most of these Doctor Darragh had.

John Darragh was senior doctor on the hospital staff and the dominating medical personality of the district. You

could always spot his figure a long way off; a broad-shouldered man with a pointed grey beard that always needed clipping, he dressed usually in a crumpled grey morning coat with baggy trousers. When you met him he greeted you with a deep gruff voice and a grip of iron. No hands looked less suited to delicate manipulations within an abdomen, yet with them he had performed a wide range of operations and had been known in the absence of an available eye specialist to " do " cataracts. With those same strong hands, too, he drove fractious young colts. Once he had carried to the hospital in his arms a child found in the street, blue from laryngeal obstruction due to diphtheria. On the way, he performed tracheotomy with his penknife and kept the opening patent as he walked.

It was Doctor John Darragh who welcomed Challis on his arrival. A paternal role came easily to him and he was lavish with advice for all the new hospital doctors.

" You've a difficult hospital Committee to work with," he said to Challis. " They're a mixed lot, and jealous of their powers and interests. Remember, you've come here to gain experience, not to reform the hospital. The trouble with some of your predecessors—two of whom in recent times were asked to go—was that they stayed long enough to see the many faults of the administration and defects in the equipment. Zealously they tried to repair those defects, but they only got themselves dismissed by their insistence. It's the fate of many reformers," (he sighed philosophically). " My advice to you is this: If you see any running taps, let 'em run!

" Then there's the medical staff. They're a bit of a problem, too. Each one will watch you very closely, just as they watch one another. Everything that happens here gets quickly known all over the town. If you come to my house more often than you go to Thurlow's, he'll end by thinking you not such a good doctor as he at first imagined. A decent man, Thurlow, with many good points, but you should know at once his chief bugbear is Jefson. Jefson's a cocksure little beggar

with all the self-importance of small men, but he works hard and he goes to Church regularly! One thing you must remember: never to give Jefson's patients morphia. The reason for that is to be found in his own personal experience. It's a long story" (looking at his watch—and reflecting) "but perhaps it's better to tell you all about it now. You're sure to hear a garbled account of it from someone or other, and it concerns both Thurlow and Jefson. Most of it is public property, but the current version isn't quite accurate. The true story reflects no discredit on either of them: rather the reverse. Do you know your Kipling: 'You're a better man than me, Ghunga Dhin'?

"But before I start on that, let me tell you more of the Medical Staff. Buckfield is an energetic and loquacious theorist, a voracious reader. He devours his medical journals from cover to cover and believes implicitly the main article contained in the last number. Then, there's your friend Neil Robartes. A good boy but he goes down too often to the Club and to the private bar on the corner. You'll be doing him a good service by heading him off. I've already given him the tip, and to his credit be it said, he didn't resent the advice. But I've not noticed him following it!

"Challis, in this part of the world, practice is damn hard. It's unremitting. There's no let up. We do pretty well, but we pay dearly for it—a seven days week with Sunday only a little less busy than a weekday. Everyone does midwifery, though I've been cutting mine down of late. This getting out of bed after a hard day's work is proving too much for me. We've little in the way of relaxation—a good Club, though some of the rich business men and the lawyers drink far too much, horse racing, whist—but little else. They'll try and drag you into the race-course crowd. Be on your guard. I've owned a racehorse myself and been through the mill. Keep out of it! Of course, we all go to the chief Race meetings—all except Jefson. But treat them merely as social outings.

" It was in this hard unremitting work of lodge practice some years ago Jefson was noticed to be losing interest. He was becoming different—apathetic and pre-occupied. After twenty years or so we all go through a worrying period: the period when we ask ourselves ' How am I going to get out of this tyranny of practice? ' First, it's the money, then it's the doubt as to whether one could be happy idle, after days and nights so full. Yet few doctors look forward to continuing in general practice, at the beck and call of their patients, right to the bitter end. It's not like general practice in a big city. There, you can slip out gradually into a little specialty, or take a room in the main street, increase your fees and so choke off the bulk of your old patients.

" We all thought, at first, that Jefson was passing through the usual stage of involution. But soon stories began to go round of his being unreliable and forgetful. To be quite honest, I felt at that time an itch to examine his knee jerks. Remember, he is a sanctimonious man and they must always be suspect ! " (Darragh laughed at his little joke). " But after a while the truth leaked out: Jefson was taking morphia.

" How the habit began I've never been able to find out, although I've looked after him in two or three of his illnesses. He has never unbuttoned, in spite of the fact that he is aware everyone knows. He has just shut that period of his life right out. Well, we all have our own selective amnesias!

" Soon, however, he was going downhill at a fast pace. He was obviously stepping up the dose. They tried at first to prevent this by keeping him under constant surveillance, but he is the most dexterous of us all—you know he still does that buttonhole incision for an appendix—damn bad surgery I call it—but then I couldn't do it even if I wanted to— " (and Darragh showed his big hands and thick knobby fingers). " Jefson was so dexterous that he could give himself a hypodermic injection in the presence of a relative without that person knowing one had been given. Have you ever known a morphia addict who recovered outside of an institution ? Well, there

are at least two in this very town! How Jefson recovered I don't know, but he never left the district and was never a day away from practice—so far as we know. You may like him or not, Challis, when you meet him, but take your hat off to him for that.

"I've told you only the first part of the story. Doctors in this town seem to be addiction-prone. We've had a lot of elderly medical superintendents in the past. They either drank to excess, or used the needle or had other vices. Jefson was not yet out of the wood when the whisper went round that his old enemy Thurlow was doing the same thing. How do these things get known? I suppose it's a chemist who first gets an inkling. The addict has to go to *some* pharmacy. At first he may try to be extra cautious and buy what he wants in a neighbouring town—but even that will excite suspicion. Then, as the appetite grows, he becomes careless and gets his drug when and where he can. Getting it becomes his greatest preoccupation. Sooner or later the quantity he buys sets some pharmacist's tongue wagging, even if it is only to his wife. In a place like this, that means everyone knows within a month.

"I know how Thurlow started his addiction, but what I'm telling you wasn't learnt in professional confidence or under the seal. Some years ago, Thurlow fell from his horse and hurt his back. Later on he began to suffer from a left-sided sciatica. It was a real sciatica—with wasting of the muscles, loss of sensation and absence of knee jerk on that side. You can imagine how much he must have suffered for many months—the agony of having to sit on a chair in a consulting room or on a hard seat in his gig, bumping about over our terrible roads. It's bad enough for a healthy strong-minded man to have to face, day after day, that long queue of patients, each with a tale of woe, but for a man in pain to have to act as medical roundsman peddling the cures he has little faith in, while he conceals a nagging pain he can't relieve—that is almost intolerable! It's the chronicity of sciatica that always wears the sufferer down, and as you know, it's the chronicity of

a pain that makes the taking of analgesics so peculiarly dangerous.

"No one knew this better than Thurlow. He kept off them very bravely for a long time. Then, one night, after coming back, exhausted, from a difficult confinement—breech presentation in a primipara—he couldn't sleep because of the gnawing pain in his leg. He had a full day ahead of him and he dreaded having to face it after another sleepless night. So, 'just for this once', he gave himself a hypodermic of morphia.

"After a delightful rest he woke, strong and determined never to repeat the injection. He even convinced himself it wouldn't be necessary. Certainly, he remained comparatively free from pain long after the sedative effect of the morphia had worn off. But, three months later, in somewhat similar circumstances, he yielded to giving himself another injection. He felt quite sure of himself: after all, one injection every three months would never cause any harm! Nevertheless, almost without realising it, repetitions occurred, the intervals shortened, the dose increased. Before a year was out, he was a confirmed addict, an addict still with sufficient insight to cunningly avoid detection by the chemists with whom he dealt, here or elsewhere. It was at this stage that he learnt of Jefson being in worse case, and rapidly going to pieces. Thurlow exulted. For some reason no one has ever properly explained, there is mortal hatred between them—but don't believe any of the rumours current about the cause of it; they are only guesses. Thurlow exulted because he saw Jefson had sunk deep down almost irrecoverably into the bog, whereas *he*, Thurlow, had himself under complete control. Why, no one as yet even suspected his addiction! Obviously, he was a better man than Jefson! Talk of a sacred egotism!

"The sciatica had long ceased to be a valid excuse for Thurlow. He was now taking morphia for its own sake. In spite of all his fierce determination he was drifting fast, when news came that Jefson, by some extraordinary means, had righted himself. The news infuriated him. He took it as a

personal affront! His own doses by this had become so high and his injections so frequent, that his addiction could no longer be concealed. It was his wife who first discovered it, and she rushed off to Sydney to seek advice from a specialist. The circle in the know soon rapidly widened—the methods adopted to wean him off his morphia only serving to advertise his weakness. By this, Thurlow had become indifferent to any gabble of the townspeople. He had also ceased to be cleanly in his personal habits, reliable in his appointments or truthful in his statements. Inevitably, practice began to slip away from him. Some Lodge patients went off his list, others wrote letters to the Lodge secretary. The outlook for his future was becoming gloomy. Thurlow appeared to have lost all his self-respect. Only one emotion was not extinguished : his hatred for Jefson. A single idea kept recurring to hurt him. It was this: that fellow Jefson had saved himself out of the imminent wreck, while he, Thurlow, was drowning.

" It was this thought rankling and searing which finally brought salvation. One evening when Thurlow was in the grey mood of depression between doses, a ship's captain, just prior to leaving the next day for a West African port, came to consult him. From this chance consultation the impulse possessed Thurlow to leave by the same tramp steamer. The captain, though surprised, welcomed the suggestion, for purely personal reasons; to have a doctor on board would be an unusual luxury! Fearing the quick ebb of his good resolution, Thurlow went straight away on board. His first act was to seek out and search for every sedative drug in the little medical panier and throw them all overboard. At daybreak after a sleepless night of torture, of doubt, and of temptation, he watched, half in misery half in hope, the ship clearing the breakwater. It steamed clumsily into a heavy sea.

" Then followed, for Thurlow, a terrible battle. After his first fine impulse, a reaction set in which lasted through weeks of acute agony. There were times when he stood on the deck trying to gather up sufficient momentum to hurl himself over-

board. He spent hours searching, ferreting, among the ship's hospital stores for some overlooked sedative. He was so irritable and so morose that the ship's officers left him for days severely alone, none of them caring what happened to him. For a while he soaked himself every night in alcohol, seeking a substitute elysium. He was mad and knew himself mad. With a hatred like fire in his brain he still brooded over Jefson's escape. For days his mind, detached as if from a distance, watched his own imminent shipwreck, like a seaman watching from the crow's-nest the swing and the sway of his ship with every wind and wave of a storm, yet powerless to control its course. Thurlow's one faint hope was in the calming power of time. If only he could hold on!

" He held on and he reached port. By the time he stepped ashore the fever of his old weakness had departed and a violent distaste had replaced the former craving. A thin, subdued, aged-looking man, he sought out the chemist shop in order to heighten his own disgust and prove himself by meekly peering in at the door. His addiction was ended—what virtue and self-interest failed to achieve, hatred had effected."

Challis left Doctor Darragh's presence with plenty of food for reflection! So these were to be his honorary doctors! This post at the hospital was not going to be any sinecure! Later, he was to learn that it was Darragh's custom to tell this cautionary tale to each new " boy doctor " (as he called them all behind their backs). It was not for the purpose of lessening their respect for his colleagues—malice was not in his nature—but to put them very much on their guard. The thought flashed then through Challis's mind that perhaps Darragh, too, had at some time himself suffered this thrall. No one, however, believed that. Darragh's weaknesses had been gambling in the shares of worthless mines and the backing heavily of " pulled " horses. His interest in the young doctors was genuine and paternal. That was why he was so concerned now for Neil Robartes.

Robartes was a powerfully built, clumsy shy big man who always sought to conceal his shyness with a hearty brusqueness of manner. He had (Darragh commented judicially) a very good surgical future, if only he would eliminate certain faults. One was his making a fetish of speed.

Robartes would come into the operating theatre, untie his wristlet watch and place it on the anaesthetist's little table before scrubbing up. Then, gowned and ready, he would take one look at the upturned watch in order to note the time, before he made his first incision. The operation finished, immediately after the insertion of the last skin stitch he again noted the time. Shortly after, in the doctors' room outside, he would be seen making notes in a little book. He was recording the time taken for that particular operation. This done, he would light a strong cigar and stroll down to the Club. He had sacrificed much attention to detail, disregarded the refinements of surgical toilette, but he had knocked two minutes off his previous best! That was the one little vanity of this big lumbering shy man.

Robartes was doing a minor operation when Challis had his first anaesthetic mishap. A timber cutter had injured his foot with an axe, and it was necessary to amputate the right great toe; quite a trivial procedure. Challis was giving a chloroform and ether mixture on an open mask, lazily sitting on the anaesthetist's stool, when suddenly he became aware that the patient was not breathing. He half rose from the stool to lift an eyelid. The pupils were right " out " ! The colour of the timber getter was that " nasty grey " which meant something much more than a momentary obstruction to the breathing. Quickly he seized the man's arms and began using Sylvester's method for restoring animation. Then he wondered: was the tongue all right ? And hastily looking to see if the throat was clear, resumed the exercises for artificial respiration.

That first quarter of an hour seemed the unhappiest in Challis's life. He was panting—more from suppressed emotion than from the physical strain—as he bent forwards and

backwards rhythmically over the inanimate man. He knew he was doing it a little too fast. Meanwhile, Robartes had left his end of the table and was seeking a pulse in the groin. There was no pulse and that man never breathed again. Together, they kept up restorative measures long after they knew it was all quite hopeless. Few words were exchanged. A controlled serenity reigned in the theatre. Then the fussy elderly be-rouged matron put her head in the door and enquired unnecessarily: "What has happened?" and instead of quickly slipping away she entered to be an embarrassing and useless looker-on. Her final comment as she left was directed to Challis—she hated all these "boy doctors"—"Of course, you'll have to let the Coroner know, Doctor Challis."

Challis had been thinking a lot about that Coroner, all the while he was lowering and raising the dead man's arms. He had been wondering, too, how long that breathing had ceased before he noticed it. Had he been dreaming for a time, or dozing momentarily under the soporific influence of the anaesthetic fumes? He was ready to accuse himself secretly while outwardly maintaining that everything had been done correctly and according to the book. Already he was dreading the idea of appearing before the cold eyes of a Coroner, under a suspicion of manslaughter by negligence. He was shrinking, too, from his immediate task of going outside into the hall and telling all about it to the man's wife, waiting confidently for the husband who was dead—dead under an anaesthetic given for a minor operation! For some moments he toyed with the idea of asking the Theatre Sister—she was a "good sort"—to break the unpleasant news. But, even in his panic emotion this seemed a little too cowardly. Out in the doctors' room Robartes, after wiping off the huge beads of sweat which always gathered on his forehead, was lighting the usual cigar. "They all get them, Challis—sooner or later, they all get them," and then as he left he smacked Challis on his back and said: "Keep your pecker up! They all get them."

Keep his pecker up! It was all very well for Robartes! For though theoretically, as Surgeon, Robartes was responsible for anything that happened in the theatre, Challis knew it was he, he Challis, who would carry all the blame, the harsh criticism and the calumny. He couldn't eat the evening meal, but after drinking two cups of strong tea he put on his hat and made for Darragh's consulting room.

Darragh had already heard of the accident. In Castlecrag bad news spread with the speed of rumour in an Eastern bazaar. He made Challis sit down, and as if it was the stock phrase for such an unfortunate occasion, he, too, said: " Don't worry, my boy, we all get them. Sooner or later " . . . Only Darragh used the first person plural. He was old enough to be honest and admit his own misfortunes.

" The important thing," he went on to say, " is the Coroner's Inquest tomorrow. You've notified him, of course ? Now everything depends on your demeanour and manner in the witness box. You must be firm and dignified, saying nothing more than is absolutely necessary. Whatever you do, don't try to be smart or to score off the cross-examining solicitor. He will try to rile you by referring to your youth and your inexperience. That's his one card. Don't, in any circumstances, let him provoke you.

" There's been an ancient bone of contention in this town as to whether we wouldn't do better by getting older doctors for the hospital. But a high percentage of the old doctors we once got were failures or drunkards or addicts—one even tried to make a harem out of the nurses' home —and they always gave us endless trouble. A section of the population, however, who does not know about these past difficulties, still cry out for more senior medical men. This case is sure to be made, once again, the occasion for reviving the old controversy.

" Tell your story in plain and simple language, explaining how you made the usual routine examination of the heart, telling how much and what kind of anaesthetic you used, and finally, describe how you and Robartes did everything possible

to restore animation, once he had stopped breathing—probably from some idiosyncrasy that it was impossible to detect beforehand. The cross-examining Solicitor is sure to ask you how many anaesthetics you have given in your very short career, and how many accidents you've had. Let *him* bring that out—luckily you've given many and never before had a death on the table."

Darragh then went on to talk of the mistakes that doctors made, of the mishaps which occurred to them. He himself had once lost a boy of seven years with chloroform given for a circumcision. That had been a painful experience. "As you know from your journals, there have been so many deaths from chloroform at one hospital in London that a special Commission of Enquiry has been set up. There are mistakes which can, and some which cannot, be avoided. The practice of Medicine has its traps and its pitfalls for every day in the week. I once put atropine into a glaucomatous eye—but I didn't *repeat* the mistake. I once operated on a boy for hernia and made my incision on the *wrong* side. That too, was an avoidable error. We are all too prone to talk—as if it absolved our consciences—of the other man's mishaps. It's not always easy to be charitable towards a rival who, you think, has not been playing the game over something. The temptation when he has an accident is to sympathise with him to his face with your tongue in your cheek, repeating your sympathetic expressions—generally in strict confidence—to others, until all the town hears of his "bad luck". Now, my boy, learn this lesson from the present unpleasant business: To be charitable towards the next man who has a similar misfortune. It's not the last time you'll be in trouble during your life. You can't, of course, afford to have a second death in this town, no matter what is the cause of it."

He went on musing:

"What troubles the discovery of ether has brought in its train! And yet ether, itself, is nearly fool-proof as an anaesthetic! Have you read the history of its discovery? No?—

They haven't time, nowadays, to sketch even the outlines of the History of Medicine to you students (many of the professors don't know it themselves!) Of the four men who bitterly wrangled over their part in the discovery of ether or its adoption as a general anaesthetic, Long died in obscurity forgotten and overlooked, Morton in poverty and bitterness, Jackson mentally deranged, Wells in gaol and by his own hand. If they had given the world a scourge their ends could not have been more unhappy. As for chloroform, so much more lethal an agent—Simpson the discoverer was one of those clever men who jeered at Pasteur's work and rejected the very principles which make surgery so much safer to-day. There's a moral there too, and an example of defective judgment in one who was a brilliant innovator! But then, Charcot, who was a hero in my student days, also made bitter fun of Brown-Séquard's genial intuition about the endocrine glands. How intolerant we all are of the other man's discoveries! "

Challis, in spite of a selfish preoccupation with his own trouble, realised shrewdly that John Darragh was rambling on like this, merely to distract his mind from the day's tragedy. But though he returned to Hospital late, Challis could not sleep. He kept thinking of the ordeal of the Coroner's Enquiry, for although no charge would be laid, he himself would be virtually on trial for manslaughter.

The Court Room was in an ugly little Town Hall. Challis arriving there early, was grateful to find only a few people present. The group, all in black, occupying the two front seats were obviously relatives of the deceased. At the back two seedy-looking individuals vagrant Court habitués, sprawled inelegantly on the seats. He selected a seat well to the side in the body of the Court. Presently they were all standing up as a little round-faced man, who looked over his glasses at them all, arrived to take his seat beneath the Coat of Arms.

When Challis began his evidence in the witness box he was surprised at the steadiness of his own voice. This evidence

he had rehearsed, God knows how many times, during the sleepless hours of the night before. His self-confidence had been strengthened early that morning by hearing the result of the post-mortem examination made by the Government pathologist. The deceased was found to have been suffering from a disease only lately described, called " Status Lymphaticus ", which as a rule could not be detected clinically by ordinary means, and which predisposed the sufferer to sudden death from trivial causes.

When he finished giving his evidence, a sour-faced aggressive man rose to cross-examine. This was the Solicitor appearing on behalf of the relatives. " Why ", he asked rhetorically and in an unnecessarily loud voice, " Why was it possible for so healthy and strong a man, in the very flower of his manhood, to succumb to so trivial an intervention ? " Challis now had a good answer ready for that, by referring to the findings of the Government pathologist. The Solicitor then changed his tactics. How old was Challis ? How many anaesthetics had he given in the whole of his long (sarcastically stressed) career ? Had he had any other patients with conveniently rare diseases that could not be detected until they came to post-mortem investigation ?

It was extremely irritating, but there was nothing subtle or difficult about the cross-examination. The Solicitor seemed to be chiefly anxious to impress on the relatives present that he was earning his fees. Once or twice the temptation came to Challis to forget Doctor Darragh's advice and to give back as good as was being given. It would not have been hard to score off that sort of Solicitor. But each time Challis restrained himself. The Coroner was courteous, even cordial, but as he left the box Challis felt the hostile glances of that group in black. Sooner than he had expected the Coroner was droning out the verdict of the Court. The deceased had collapsed and died while under an anaesthetic which had been properly administered by Doctor Challis . . . and after the collapse everything possible had been done to restore animation.

Challis was glad to escape into the street ahead of the little crowd of bereaved relatives. Already, the ordeal over, a reaction was setting in. As he walked back to the hospital he began to sympathise with himself for having been so badly treated. Wouldn't the accident have happened to any other doctor in similar circumstances? Yet, indirectly he had been publicly accused of negligence. The more he thought over it the more indignant he became. By the time he reached the hospital, he was aggressively self-righteous.

One of the local newspapers next morning did not, however, view the matter in that light. After recording the case very fully with every bit of the Solicitor's " gruelling cross examining " (as it was described), the writer, in a long supplementary paragraph, called for older and more experienced doctors to be placed in charge of the hospital. The implication, clearly, was that an accident had happened because of the youth and inexperience of the hospital doctor. The reporter who had written the article was well known to have failed as a medical student before taking up journalism. He prided himself on having an inside knowledge of these matters.

Challis could scarcely believe his eyes as he read the prejudiced report. He was still seething with resentment when he attended, that afternoon, a social function organised to raise funds for the hospital. Some of the people seemed cool in their attitude towards him. He was thus more than grateful when one of the local young women, Betty Laird, went out of her way, quietly, to express her sympathy for " the cruel and unfair attack ". At least *she* understood, thought the gratified Challis.

But the attacks did not end with that one article. When a drunken sailor with a broken arm was refused admission as an in-patient, his arm having been splinted in the out-patient department, the local newspaper wrote under big headlines about " inhumanity at the local hospital ". Nothing was said of an attack the sailor had made on one of the nurses during the short time he was being treated. The hospital had no wards-

men and no place in which to treat or control drunken quarrelsome sailors. Challis began to think a vendetta had been started against him.

The wife of that reporter was sent, less than a month later, into the hospital as "an urgent" by Doctor Buckfield. Buckfield had rung Challis, a little excitedly, to say that his patient, who was already on the way in an ambulance, was suffering from Acute Haemorrhagic Pancreatitis and he was going to operate as soon as they could get her ready.

Acute Haemorrhagic Pancreatitis was a subject which lately had been occupying many columns in the Medical Journal. Buckfield, with his eyes ever glued to the last number and the latest article, had been keenly on the look-out for this somewhat rare and usually fatal disease. He was now sure he had found a "case" and had invited Robartes to assist him with the operation.

Nobody knew much about this disease, except that for some unknown reason the pancreas, which was situated in the middle of the abdomen high up, sometimes began to digest itself and from the necrosis grave haemorrhage into the abdominal cavity took place.

When the patient arrived there was no doubt about the diagnosis of internal haemorrhage. She was ghastly pale with a rapid "thready" pulse and sighing breathing. Blood transfusion had not yet progressed beyond the experimental stage; it was still believed that saline solution was capable of making up, at least temporarily, for any blood loss. She was therefore given two pints intravenously before being brought into the theatre.

There, Buckfield was impatiently and restlessly waiting. It was a great moment in his life and he could not help being unnecessarily fussy about everything. Robartes listened, without comment, to a description of the case, with supplementary references to the recent British and American literature. The patient was soon asleep, needing only the slightest amount of ether to send her off. A false flush came to her

cheeks and her breathing became deeper. Buckfield made a midline incision into the upper abdomen. Immediately, fresh blood poured out copiously. It looked as if his diagnosis was going to prove correct. There was free blood everywhere. He mopped it out with large sponges and then tried to get a view of the pancreas and the source of all this haemorrhage.

Meanwhile Robartes was remaining somewhat detached in his attitude. Deferentially, as became a junior man, he suggested that the bleeding might be coming from lower down, from a ruptured ectopic gestation, for example. Buckfield rather testily scouted this idea. Nevertheless he passed a hand right down into the pelvis, just to satisfy Robartes, and almost immediately announced everything to be in order there. The patient's pulse had grown weaker and faster with all this manipulation. Obviously they could do nothing surgically to check the bleeding ; they couldn't even get a proper view of the pancreas. There was blood clot everywhere. So, having filled the ex-sanguinated patient's abdomen with warm saline, they sewed her up and hurried her back to a warmed-up bed with the foot end raised.

The journalist's wife took two days to die—two days during which Challis was never long away from her bedside. The now embarrassed, and no longer caustic, journalist kept muttering something about the heaping of coals of fire on his (the journalist's) head. He was a big loose-boned untidy man with a flowing moustache and irregular shaving habits, whose breath usually smelt of liquor.

His gentle and patient wife gratefully submitted to all the remedial measures Buckfield could think of. She had drugs, all recently popularised, to quicken the coagulation time of the blood. She was frequently given morphia hypodermically. The hot-water bottles were changed as soon as they became lukewarm. Her one complaint was of thirst and her lips had constantly to be moistened. But the hot-water bags failed to warm her up and in spite of all the drugs injected she con-

tinued to grow weaker. Her breathing became more and more shallow, until at times it seemed that all excursions of the chest had ceased. Then a long deep breath would come. No one could find even the flicker of a pulse at her cold wrist. But the moment came when the long deep breath did not return, and she lay immobile with no margin of colour to her lips, a greyer pattern between the white linen sheets. So they took away the blocks on which the end of the bed had been raised high and they removed the hot-water bottles that no longer warmed.

Robartes had remained unconvinced. His was a severely practical outlook. He "had no time" as he would say "for high falutin' diagnoses." Moreover the very argument which Buckfield during the operation had advanced against the possibility of this being an ectopic gestation, namely that she was forty years old and had never had a child, only confirmed Robartes in his suspicion. Wasn't that often the very history one got with a ruptured ectopic?

Unconvinced, then, he returned to the hospital in the evening of the day she had died, to put up to the startled Challis a very hazardous proposal; that the two of them should go down to the post-mortem room where she lay, and, together, secretly do a partial investigation on their own account, "just to make sure what really was the cause of death". They would only need to open up the operation wound and extend it a little. There need be no mutilation.

The suggestion attracted Challis even while it frightened him. Buckfield of course would never forgive them if he ever heard of it. It might well mean Challis's being sent away from the hospital. The procedure was quite irregular and would supply copious material, if discovered, for the vitriolic journalist with which to resume the old vendetta. Nevertheless, after some hesitation, Challis agreed.

Towards midnight, with great secrecy and behind locked doors, they made their partial examination. They had not foreseen, however, how much cleaning up this minor examina-

tion would involve. But the result of it proved the trouble worth while, for it confirmed Robartes's suspicion. The journalist's wife had died of a small ruptured extra-uterine pregnancy, a condition which in spite of its violent internal haemmorhage was eminently curable. Challis recalled his gynaecological lectures on this subject at the University. The lecturer had stressed it in this way: "Provided you get your collapsed patient alive on to the operating table, you should be able *always* to save her." "There is nothing more dramatic in gynecological treatment than the way these patients recover."

The difficulty now confronting Challis was this: how was he to word the death certificate? It would be revealing his guilty knowledge and irregular intervention to put in the correct cause of death. On the other hand he hated putting his signature to anything that was untrue. It was all very well for Robartes to be cock-a-hoop over the business. Challis himself felt worried. In the end he signed his name to what he now knew was false.

At the following meeting of the local Medical Society, Buckfield, in a dinner-coat, and carefully groomed for the occasion, read a learned, though unnecessarily long, disquisition on the subject of Acute Haemorrhagic Pancreatitis, with the description of a local Case.

Darragh, who was not in the secret, moved a cordial vote of thanks, but ventured to point out that without the confirmatory post-mortem specimen the diagnosis might be challenged on purely scientific grounds, though clinically the case seemed proved.

Neil Robartes was not present. At the last moment he had sent a message regretting his inability "because of a midwifery case". Challis had to sit, ill at ease, through the long evening, growing more and more irritated by the consummate self-assurance of Buckfield. No one ever knew if Buckfield offered his paper for publication. Certainly it never appeared. After a short time, indeed, he appeared to have forgotten all

about it and was pursuing with ever fresh enthusiasm his search for a rare skin condition which someone had recently reported in an American journal.

From these and other anxieties, and from numerous petty worries within the hospital, Challis had long since found a haven of calm in the possessive friendship of Betty Laird. She was a comely little old-fashioned woman, ten years his senior, who wore her fair brown hair in a bundle behind her head. She had the gift of quiet appreciation and exquisite sympathy. Gradually more and more he found himself seeking her company, and her guidance. She half divined his preoccupations, smoothed his ruffled temper, restored his damaged self-esteem. . . . She praised him without words of praise and he felt her admiration for him though she never told it. Their meetings at first took place in the presence of others—Castlecrag was a small town and the gossipers were many. But as time went on they met always alone. New sensations and new emotions now crowded out those first feelings of respect and gratitude. Then, on a warm night, with the distant sea pounding on a beach, he found himself, he knew not how, looking down into her blue eyes, with her breast heaving, and a smiling face that did not withhold consent.

It was all a masculine world in Castlecrag. In the months that followed Challis enjoyed the happiness, the wonderful happiness of a new experience. She, who had dominated, became subject to him; his was the ultimate will. Without a thought that he was not giving, he took all. It never even occurred to him in his sublime youthful egoism that she might expect a place in his future life more permanent than this. He imagined himself absolved because, from the first, he had declared himself ineligible for marriage; his career had to come first. In his ears was always echoing the advice of an early teacher: "The doctor who marries young rarely proceeds to a higher degree." Challis was always thinking of a higher degree. He must get out of the ruck.

Betty, for all her worldliness in some things, was gentle, submissive, and silent on the matter. When the time came for Challis to leave the hospital and Castlecrag, he had nothing further to say than his deep and affectionate gratitude. With a brave smile she watched him leave the lazy covert of her guardian love.

Once parted, their correspondence soon petered out, and gradually their friendship passed into the mellowing stage of affectionate reminiscence. She never once displayed a sense of loss or any feeling of grievance. He, with a man's inconscience, went heedless towards his career.

Thirty years later under the insistent compulsion of a remorseful thought, he crept back to the still warm covert of a young man's dream. He travelled, just once, back to Castlecrag, to pay, by the homage of a visit, his too tardy acknowledgment of all she had been to him. She had never married. Her life had passed in works of local philanthropy. There was ever a great disparity of wealth in the town—with poverty and affliction endemic.

During those thirty years Challis himself had passed through the valley of disenchantment, but not she. He found her old, her face wrinkled and white, but in her blue eyes was shining still the sweetness of a spirit in repose.

Castlecrag had grown amazingly ; it was now a large modern industrial town, noisy with the clang of metal on metal. Gone were the crimper and the corrupt police. A vast new building had replaced the old barracks of a hospital. The public hotels on the water-front appeared in the altered conditions dull and respectable—their doors closed securely at 6 p.m. But the port was still busy as of old—full of ships, though none of them in sail—and the same blue ocean washed its more pretentious shores.

Together they had their hours of reminiscence, laughing and grieving a little. John Darragh had long since died, stoically enduring to the end his cancer travail. Buckfield, ever faithful to his medical reading, ended quietly in his bed

with a Medical Journal propped before him. Robartes had sunk lower and lower because of drink, till even his friends were grateful for the final release and none grieved, though all loved him.

When Challis left, he felt more deeply than he showed the sense of finality in their parting. It had been all a hard masculine world. From her house he turned towards the breakwater, moodily pondering over the unsolved enigma of her love. She had given but had never communicated herself. His thoughts were of ships, of ships becalmed in port and the flurry of little waters on the threshhold of untraversed seas.

Chapter VII

SOJOURNERS UNDER THE LAW

> "But not all the Convicts had submitted. He remembered the story of those, who moved by a fierce nostalgia, had burst their bounds. *Beyond the Hill, across the Bay, lay China*! Men whispered the news, their hearts excited. China! The freedom and romance of Cathay."

In Challis's mind, as he left the house of his lawyer guardian, one idea and one idea only occupied the whole spectrum. He was no longer conscious of that first disappointment at having to relinquish his ambition to do post-graduate study abroad. The revelation that his great-grandfather had been a transported felon excluded all other emotion. Unnoticed by him, the night went by, trailing the glory of its moonlight amidst this stirring of old ghosts.

The dinner itself had been a stiff, colourless affair. In other circumstances, its setting on the promontory of Middle Head, looking down towards the narrow guarded entrance of Port Jackson, might have made for romance. Instead, there was a courteous formal hospitality, with the lawyer presiding in his black alpaca coat and perpendicular starched white collar. He had waited till the coffee was drunk before settling down to facts and figures, and to a statement of the assets available. Enough remained of a small inherited fortune for Challis to set up in general practice; no more. It was the lawyer's considered opinion that Challis should do so forthwith. To go abroad seeking a higher degree seemed to him like gambling too much on the future. In any case it was not essential. Was it not wiser to wait and go into practice for, say, five years?

With his resources increased by these economies his position would be more secure. He would also know better his own mind concerning a specialty. Then, in solemn fulfilment of a promise made to Challis's dead father, the lawyer proceeded to recount the family history. Consulting an old notebook, more, perhaps, to cover his own ill-ease than to refresh his memory, he said :

" Your great-grandfather was born in London, 1775. In 1796 he was transported for a minor offence of pilfering. In the new Colony he married late. I have no record of the date or even the event of that marriage, but the birth of your grandfather, the first Australian born of the line, was registered as having occurred in 1828. This one married in 1854. Your father was born in 1856 near Bathurst, New South Wales. He died in 1890, his wife having predeceased him at your birth, seven years before. There were no other children."

Challis made no interruption, with any question, during the recital of these facts, although a dozen queries rushed to his mind. His face remained immobile. But behind the mask a sudden dismay had filled him. Of convict stock! What did the other things matter for him? . . . The lawyer went on methodically to the more prosaic matter of finding a practice. He was prolific with excellent advice. " Above all, be on your guard against dishonest medical agents who will claim a commission later on, no matter what other agent finds the medical practice you buy. That German instrument-seller in Castlereagh is said to be an honest dealer . . ." Challis was scarcely listening.

Of convict origin! The thought smote his brain pitilessly as he walked down the hill towards the ferry boat. Like most of his fellows he had never given any serious thought to the early pages in Australian history. At school sometimes, but very rarely, a joke had been made about it all. At the University the subject had been politely avoided, except by a few students of history under Professor G. A. Wood, who had been so passionately earnest in exculpation. Reggie Claridge of

course let it be known that he was the descendant of an officer in the New South Wales Corps. No one thought the more of him for that, for the New South Wales Corps was having a bad press in these modern times. Then there had been recently that English governor, an Earl, who coming to take up his post had deigned to congratulate the people on their emergence from infamy and had quoted Kipling's lines about "Their birthstains . . ." He had been amazed by the angry outburst which replied to his so generous condescension. But then, he was a very tactless aristocrat, who continued to upset the people by issuing two sets of invitations for the guests of his vice-regal parties: those with blue tickets were allowed to enter here, those with white had admission by a different door. The nickname of "the Seidlitz-powder Governor" remained long after these effervescences had subsided.

But what did Australians care about those first penal years? They were a little bourgeois people frightened of their past, perhaps secretly dreading still the spectre of the New South Wales Corps. Anniversary Day on January 26 in each year was not dedicated to prayer or solemn thanksgiving, but to the little god of Sport. It was noted as the Day of the Handicap at Randwick, when an excited crowd would cheer its fancy home and jeer loudly if the favourite failed. Or as the Day of the Regatta, when the wide stretches of Port Jackson fluttered with the cabbage white butterflies of sail under a hard sun. Or as the Day of the Inter-State Cricket Match, when thousands lolled in the sunlight and watched the play amid reminiscences, mildly diverted by the Cockney witticisms of "Yabba" from the hill or irritated by his too many and too noisy boyish imitators: "You'll never get 'em out" . . . For Challis it was, henceforth, to mean very much more.

Already, as he sat in half-darkness on the wooden bench seats that ring the outer structure of a ferry boat, he was seeking with all the intensity of his mind, under the stress of a great emotion, to piece together the odds and ends of his

knowledge concerning early Australian history. They were passing Pinchgut, the child's toy-train of an island, set in the fairway of Sydney Cove. He remembered having been told how men were once left to hang from a gibbet there, in the early violent days, as a salutary lesson for those remaining. It looked as childishly innocent now as any infant's toy.

The deck-hand was catching a wooden pile of the wharf, with a cunning throw, in his noose of rope, and soon the passengers were crossing in single file by the wooden plank. Even the turnstile had a new significance now. Challis's mind was turning back to that England of the seventeen-nineties. Where had he read that description of the English people—" some gin-sodden, some brutal, most of them fiercely vigorous and courageous, given at the same time to violence and to pious protestations of self-righteousness "? Then out of the hot cauldron of his imagination a phantasy took shape. He saw the narrow streets of London in winter under a fall of snow, and a thin young man shuffling by ill-lit shops, greedily eyeing the copious stores of food. Suddenly, under the pressure of a terrible need, he sneaks into one and snatching a loaf of bread escapes into the half-darkness outside. The street is quickly noisy with cries of " Stop Thief! " There is the hurry and scurry of pursuit. Then the thief, slipping, is taken prisoner, brutally man-handled, thrust into a damp cold cell. The upholders of the sacred rights of private property had been victorious once again. In their victory-cavalcade were hulks on the Thames, manacles, foul deeds, the close unhealthy confinement of a long voyage, the salt smell of blood and a rough sea. Challis felt the wave of a great emotion. He imagined he could see that felon's eyes—fierce red and rebellious eyes, like those of the horses once hounded along the old West road.

He told himself he was now on the very site of that first Colony to which his felon ancestor had been transported. Where was the old Tank stream? It had been recorded as

rising in marshes near Hyde Park and emptying itself into the Farm Cove. Somewhere to the left, in the Domain, the first-sown wheat had failed, threatening disaster to the half-starving Colony. Shrubs and flowers were at this moment growing in rich profusion. Iron rails jealously guarded them. It seemed now as if iron rails had ringed all the parks of his youth.

That young Colony, he knew, had been a natural prison, fettered by hills—North, South, and West. For twenty-five years nature had kept the newcomers shut in. The convicts within had been like those horses coralled in the sale-yards of his youth. He saw again their red frothing nostrils and their uprearings, heard their snortings, watched them in mad terror, yet controlled, stamp the dust along the old West road with impotent, unshod hooves. He witnessed again their surrender : saw them docile, with quiet eyes, submission made.

But not all the convicts had submitted. He remembered the story of those who, moved by a fierce nostalgia, had burst their bounds. Beyond the hill, across the Bay, lay China! Men whispered the news, their hearts excited. China! The freedom and romance of Cathay!

And so, some more daring or more desperate, had saved from their meagre ration or pilfered from public stores, and then set out, with high hearts, to walk. Beyond the hill lay China! And on they went, and on, till failure of supplies or a black's spear halted their dream. Halted their dream? No. No. They had but passed from physical suffering to transcendental joy. Had they not horizons beyond the fickleness of seasons or the illusion of a dawn? What if the casual drover still finds their pitted bones—resistent vertebrae and ribs that once hooped a great breath? These are but the lesser things of the flesh they shed *en route*.

Others still from those who had come, Sojourners under the Law, went out, harnessed to service, into the virgin bush, suffering their passion privily, wizened by heat and worn by great ardours. O! the rich new loam of an alien land! They made new highways, cutting notches upon a tree and chiselling

Roman numerals into a stone that measured thus the mileage of their own dolours. Challis thought of them in the thick scrub sinking wearily to rest on a bed of still warm leaves and there falling to dreams as the fire slept. Alas! those notches all have grown away and dust blurs the sculptured numbers on a stone.

Challis was not willing to believe his first Australian forebear remained docile under the blows. He pictured him, emancipist now, pardoned, though never to be forgiven, galloping with reins thrown free upon the horse's neck. He would not admit that those feet were stirruped now in an ignoble dust.

But when he turned to think upon his great-grandmother's origin, Challis felt the aching pain of uncertainty. Who was she? Whence came she? There was nothing in the record. Was that silence but a charity? Had she been brought to wedlock out of the Reformatory in Parramatta, notorious as "The Factory"? There could be no answer, and he suffered the travail of his unresolved doubts. He was in pain. To his brooding mind came the recollection of team races as run in his youth. Was not a dynasty like that? Each runner took from another the baton, with loss or gain, and after a set course, handed it on, with gain or loss. Some fell behind, and some made up the lee-way, and sometimes from an agitated hand the baton fell to the ground. But always the eager competition was going on.

He must, in schoolboy's language, "crack hardy". He recalled with a certain flush of pride an occasion when he had been called out to take his punishment with the cane before all the others. The master, Mr Huggins, was tall, powerful and red-headed. He never looked so big as now, towering above his victim, cane in hand, obviously annoyed. Challis had stood there, outwardly defiant, ready to take the six cuts on the hand, but his heart was beating faster, and his breath was coming more quickly than usual. He was terribly conscious of all

those eyes fixed upon him, watching—watching for his reactions.

The first stroke fell on the hard horny skin at the root of his fingers and hurt surprisingly little. The second was almost on the same place. The third caught the base of the thumb and pained a great deal. Challis felt himself turn a little pale, involuntarily. Some of the bravado went out of his manner with that stroke and his pupils narrowed, but he gripped his teeth firmly. It was now a matter of sticking out the three more. The next two fell rather obliquely on parts already bruised and swollen. They sickened him a little. But the last cut was the worst of all. It caught the extreme tip of his fingers. But all was over now, and as he turned towards his seat he even contrived to wink at Clifford who was sitting in the row behind. Seated at his desk, he bent forward placing the injured hand in the opposite armpit and squeezing it with the other arm. After two minutes the worst of the pain was over, and withdrawing the hand he examined the weals and felt the swollen board-like skin that was still tender. Writing was difficult all that day, but in the playground he strutted a little with self-satisfaction. He had come through the public ordeal of the cane ; he had " cracked hardy ". . . .

Challis in bed was slow to fall off, and when he did, confused dreams muttered through his restless sleep. They were of men in the bush, men moving vaguely forward towards emergence, men seeking China through impervious nights beyond the Hill, of wild horses stamping with unshod hooves along the Western road, of horses shod and broken to harness and to loads ; then worst of all, of a Women's Reformatory, ugly and troubling him with an unanswered question.

But the night was not all of terror and fear. It was lightened, at times, by the elation of a schoolboy remembering: remembering that in a little Australian school, as in Lacedemon, they keep the tradition of the Spartan Code.

Chapter VIII

COCKLE CREEK

The suburb of Cockle Creek straggles untidily towards Sydney Harbour. It occupies a small quadrant of what was the old Convict Colony. Its main street is long and narrow. Potholes deface the surface. Noisy electric trams jolt along the thoroughfare whose worst ruts an incompetent Municipal Council fill from time to time with unscreened stone fragments known locally as " blue metal ".

The suburb's more important shops are in the neighbourhood of the Town Hall: a pretentious structure on whose front are hung, like a row of cheap medals on a watch-chain spread across someone's waistcoat, the announcement boards of those societies and lodges which hold their regular meetings within: Druids and Rechabites, The Ancient Order of Hibernians, The Holy Catholic Guild, the Protestant Alliance, and the Loyal Orange Lodge. From time to time, to supplement these disfigurements, bills are posted announcing political meetings or charity concerts. At election time slogans are scribbled with chalk or painted in whitewash on the walls themselves. It is a politically conscious little borough.

Further along the main street are tenement houses and weatherboard cottages, interrupted by an occasional vacant allotment carrying an unheeded notice " For Sale ", drunkenly set on a post. Strange! that in a great growing City such delectable allotments should go a-begging! On the exposed side of every house adjoining vacant areas are advertisements. There are also advertisement posters plastered on paling fences, almost cheek by jowl with a warning that " Bill posters " will be " prosecuted ". In times of political ferment even the asphalt footpaths—or those of them sufficiently intact—are

scrawled over with public notices. At nearly every important road-crossing is a public-house, sometimes two. They offer no facility for eating, but infinite opportunity for drinking, to men—standing up against a bar and hidden behind swing doors. The few women who enter have to go to the " Bottle Department " at the side.

The still narrower side-streets run off the main thoroughfare without any plan and in open defiance of any scheme for parallel lines. Sometimes they end blindly; sometimes they turn in a curve and enter the main street again lower down. They symbolise all life in the suburb. Cockle Creek just grew, and growing, out-grew its natural beauty. Its dominant note is one of shabbiness. Only the harbour's water at the foot of Mudie Street sparkles greenly in the sunlight. The Municipal Council cannot touch that.

In this uninviting environment Challis purchased his first practice; purchased it from the deceased estate of a recently dead doctor named Macansh, who " drank ". Burger, the Medical Agent, had strongly advised the purchase. It was cheap. It was close to the centre of the City. " It is a good jump-off place for all the Western Suburbs," he said in his still foreign English. Burger was shrewd enough to foresee that medical practices, with the aid of the motor-car (which was just coming into use), would no longer be confined to small fixed areas.

But what most influenced Challis's decision was the existence there of a small hospital to which he had the right of appointment as a local practitioner. He remembered that someone had said a surgeon without a hospital was like a gardener without a garden, and Challis still treasured ambitions of becoming a surgeon. This was to be but a beginning. As Burger explained: After five years he could sell out at a profit and go abroad for that cherished higher degree. Or at least he could, with increased assets and riper experience, move to a better-class suburb. Surely, he could do better than his dead predecessor Macansh, who had been notoriously unreliable in

his habits. It was an advantage, too, to have Macleay close by in a neighbouring suburb. They would be able to exchange anaesthetics. He felt the need of the breezy practical Macleay as a moral support in the first uncertain months to follow. What matter then if the house Challis had to live in was old and shabby-looking? It had been the domicile of medical men for over fifty years, so it carried a good-will in itself. Certainly, its immediate surroundings were not pleasant: a dusty, noisy, tram-ridden road in front, and next door a tumble-down weatherboard cottage whose occupant was a pigeon-fancier. The flutter of wings was never far away.

For clientèle in the new practice, Challis had a modest number of "Lodge patients", that is, contract patients who went "on his list" and paid a fixed sum quarterly. To a young doctor they were of prime importance since the income from them assured the payment of rent and up-keep. Only in the purchase of a car did he find himself perplexed. It was the period of a gradual change-over from horse-drawn vehicles to motor-cars: the older doctors were obstinately conservative still, opposing the innovation, and for reasons other than the great expense of outlay. Punctures occurred with distressing frequency and were major disasters requiring much labour and sweating on the roadway. There the drivers were subjected to rude remarks from the passing drivers of horse vehicles, and even to the jeers of rude urchins who giggled from a safe distance—for the changing of a tyre and its mending were long tasks and dirty. The old-fashioned grooms had always been cheap servants to hire, but often they were unintelligent and not easily converted to chauffeurs, so the doctor himself, perhaps on the way to a confinement, had usually to turn to and mend the puncture.

For Challis these were days full of a strange exhilaration. He had for the first time a sense of ownership in something more than merely material things. It gave him quivers of self-satisfaction to see his name on a brass-plate, alas, too patently brand-new. He enjoyed framing the little paragraphs

which, for three successive days, he was allowed to put in one local newspaper, announcing that he had " begun practice ". And he was not above slipping out at night to watch, from a distance down the road, the flickering light of the old-fashioned red quadrilateral lamp which swung from a rusty metal arch over the entrance gate of his new home. But what pleased him most of all was the sense of place and power in the lives of his fellow-men and women. He was henceforth to have an over-riding authority in certain households, to be their trustee and counsellor, their resort in moments of distress and danger, their help in infirmity, their confidant and father-confessor.

He felt less happy at the thought of calling formally on his two nearest medical neighbours. Those conventional visits always sobered a little the optimistic newcomer. Challis knew, without any false modesty, that from all he heard locally, these doctors would much rather have had his predecessor for competitor than a steady new man, no matter how young. Sooner or later, a new doctor "cuts in" on the older and larger practices, unless he is completely lacking in ability or given to foolishness.

With some trepidation, then, he knocked one afternoon at the door of the senior practitioner, a North of Ireland man, Doctor Robert Surridge, who had been nearly thirty years in the district. " Come in," growled Surridge, opening the door himself. " I've been expectin' ye " (Challis felt the reproach, for he had been slow in carrying out his conventional duty). Surridge did not beat about the bush, but kept on: " What made ye come here at all? It's a dead end, altogether! Why didn't ye go to the country? What practice there is about here, that fellow, Vorn Phillips, has collared with his mealy-mouthed Welsh ways—I advise ye to be careful in your dealin's with him."

The conversation went on in this strain, with Surridge always taking the leading role. He recalled bitterly the now departed golden era of medical practice in Sydney before the Government started " molly-codlin' " the people, and when

medicine was a profession for gentlemen. " There's nothing in it now! Why, every patient wants to get into a Government hospital and be treated without any fee! And every tradesman's son's becomin' a doctor. That fellow Blewit, who's Dean over at your Medical School, wants to turn them out in droves. He was never in practice himself—that's easily seen."

Robert Surridge offered, in truth, the sad spectacle of a doctor who was passing out of currency, but who was unwilling to recognise the fact, and was obstinately staying on to " do a bit " where once he was the busiest practitioner. He had been in nearly all the houses of the suburb, at one time or another, for he was steady and reliable and, under his rough manner, kindly to the sick. Now he was little more than an onlooker, watching them all drift away to Vorn Phillips—even the young men and women he had brought into the world! That was ingratitude for you! Out of currency! Yet he still held on to the big house which for a doctor had the best situation in Cockle Creek: it was at the junction of the main street and an arterial road which led into the centre of the City—and it was right opposite the busiest hotel! Surridge still kept his lamp alight at night, though he didn't get out of bed except for people he knew. In the evolution of a doctor, he had reached that stage when, like a circus horse, he trotted in an ever-narrowing circle, with a set gait, and with the old familiar tricks everyone knew.

Vorn Phillips, on the other hand, was hearty and effusive in his friendliness when Challis called. He was in a terrible hurry, though, and he asked to be excused for running away. " Do you see my list, Challis? I'm killing myself—much more than I can do. Your coming will save my life, there's nobody else here. You can't count Surridge. The only people who go near him are his cronies from the Bowling Green and somebody from his Church or the Lodge where he was once in the Chair. And even those come to me if they get anything seriously wrong! Why? he hasn't yet heard the rumour about Lister and the antiseptic theory! Do you know, when I first

came here, I was called out by him to a difficult confinement in consultation—he was in a hole—and he pulled his worn old-fashioned forceps straight out of his bag and said: 'Try these. They're quite clean. I washed 'em myself yesterdee'!"

Vorn Phillips finished this story, hurrying down the path to his car, with a general invitation for Challis to drop round one evening after nine o'clock. Then, with a wave of the hand he was off, the picture of a successful practitioner rather full of himself.

Nevertheless, Challis felt better after that visit. He was young enough to take at its face value the friendliness of his fellows. But he was, by now, aware of the hostile camps pitched within this medical territory. Here was none of the armed truce, the outward show of politeness, that he had known at Castlecrag. Instead, the battle was always on, right out in the open. The population took sides and the little hospital was split by it. There, the Matron was an important hostage actively fought for. At this time, she was leaning strongly towards the Vorn Phillips camp, since he was winning all along the line and most of the Committee were on his side. When Challis began his duties at the hospital—he had been allotted one day in the week, during the whole of which he was on call for accidents and urgent admissions—he found the Matron polite but distant and on guard.

It was the same with the two chemists: they were part of the general hostilities. One of them, Tom Foricke, had always 'worked in' with Macansh and Surridge, doctors of dwindling value—from a business point of view—in the district. His opponent-pharmacist had easily the busiest connection because he got all the prescriptions from Vorn Phillips. Now as an astute tactician Foricke showed himself anxious to curry favour with the new doctor and quite early sent round an odd patient or two armed with his large square business card. It was obvious to Challis that there was something in what Macleay had said: "Medical practice", he warned Challis, "is like a game of animal grab, but you've got to grab according to the

rules, otherwise they'll be reporting you to the Ethics Committee of the B.M.A."

In those first uncomfortable days when Challis was cutting his first teeth in medical practice, Macleay was a great stand-by. Macleay had an aphorism or a quip ready for every situation. He knew all the tricks, though he had been in practice but a year, and in that short time Aubrey Foyle had shown him a point by 'starting up' without purchase, in a house only a hundred yards away from where Macleay had bought a fairly expensive old-established practice. Macleay thus had his own local troubles, although as yet Foyle was "scarcely doing anything".

"You should call on all the doctors in the neighbouring suburbs as well while you're not busy," advised Macleay. "When they learn you can give ether, they may get you over for an anaesthetic. They're always afraid of introducing a local doctor to their own patients. You're far enough away not to be a danger to them. There's old Rooney, for example, in Fermoy, he's a rigid narrow religionist, but he has a big practice. And there's Reddle-Reddle, who's as polished as his patent leather boots. He's a power in the local B.M.A. and the women say 'he's just lovely'."

Reluctantly, but in obedience to what seemed good advice, Challis made friendly calls "while passing this way". Rooney eyed him suspiciously, was formally polite, and promised him nothing. Reddle-Reddle was patronising and full of fatherly advice about what he should and what he should not do in "that unfashionable practice over in Cockle Creek". Challis found him dapper and over-dressed, and understood Macleay's description of him as a diplomat who treated disease by negotiation and compromise. The blood-pressure-measuring instrument had just come into practical use and Reddle-Reddle was making great play with it. He affected to be horrified, however, that it was getting him (involuntarily) an advertisement far beyond the limits of his district. Surridge had been scathing in his comments. "I can tell all that with me fingers,"

he assured everyone. Rooney sniffed about those new toys, "those instruments of precision", but he took no risks and ordered one for himself.

Challis was now enjoying to the full his new powers and the novelty of a little authority. It was but natural that he overvalued the gratitude expressed by his patients (always most eloquently expressed by those who did not pay), and the significance of his minor therapeutic successes. But rebuffs were not few—rebuffs from patients who eyed him suspiciously because of his youth and from those who too quickly decided that the treatment given was ineffective. He was learning, too, some of the things that a doctor is not taught in text-books. With curiosity and fascination he began to watch the interplay of human nature and environment, for the conflict was everywhere before his eyes. He saw men and women debased by their environment yet still struggling against it. They came to him and emptied out in the privacy of his consulting room the little store of strange and foolish things which cluttered their minds. He thought of his own first feelings of amazement, as student in a casualty room, at the trivial contents of a dying man's pockets.

But what made Challis resentful was to find himself under the constant scrutiny of those about him. Hostile eyes were watching his every move to discover his weaknesses. Foricke had him under surveillance in order to assess his value as a co-worker—his financial value. The lay people were staring to find out if, like his predecessor, he "drank".

He would have denied (publicly) any sense of disillusionment. But privately he wondered: was this the high mission, the apostolate that Hollins had spoken of? Where was the robust humanitarian outlook of Doctor John Darragh? The voices of those old counsellors still echoed in his mind, but there were other whispers, insistent whispers, couched in terms of gain and expediency, appealing to a latent cupidity. His friend Macleay was an adviser, frankly sceptical and cynical. Macleay had for ethic the code of the sportsman: "Play the Game", a

rough practical code. At the same time he proclaimed that if anyone " put in the boot ", the proper thing was to give it back with interest. Challis's whole world seemed lacking in charity. Scandalous stories were always circulating about his fellow practitioners. Only that morning Vorn Phillips had told him a joke about Rooney, who was quoted as having said, " Sure, no one's the worse for a touch of Tuberculosis "!

It was the evening time which was hardest to bear, for his consultations ended early, and then little doubts and anxieties came creeping into his tired mind. A young doctor must " stick at home "—Macleay was insistent on that. " Your opportunity comes when Vorn Phillips is at the theatre or has taken his wife over to the Hotel Australia for a dance."

It was during these evenings that, tired of reading his Medical Journal, he began the habit of private self-communing, and set up a secret keep as refuge from present discontents and the worry of humdrum affairs. Then, too, he began the practice of reading early Australian history, not with the ambitions of a scholar but for reasons purely personal. It amazed him how wilfully ignorant many were of their country's story. Of course a certain proportion of the people, thereabouts, were comparatively recent immigrants—English, Scottish, Irish, Welsh, with the necessary leaven of the Jew. But most were Australian of two or three generations, at least. Even to these, the place names meant nothing. Not one in a thousand knew why the main street of Cockle Creek was called Mudie Street. Challis had to admit his own knowledge was quite recent. It was only after he had begun practice that he found out from his books the kind and character of man Mudie had been, that James Mudie who, as free settler and magistrate, had inveighed against the leniency of a Governor towards those he called " The Felonry ".

And over in that neighbouring suburb of Balmain, through which he often passed, the main thoroughfare was Darling Street. It annoyed Challis that in a working-class suburb the main street should be so named without anyone ever raising a

cry of protest. For Darling as Governor had been a harsh oppressor. He it was loaded with chains two English soldiers who had stolen a roll of cloth with the deliberate intention of getting themselves transported to the new Settlement about which they had heard romantic stories. The thieves were sentenced to seven years' transportation, but they had reckoned without a Governor in the Colony who was determined to stop such romantic nonsense. On their arrival in Sydney, therefore, he had them first publicly degraded, and afterwards ordered that a spiked collar of iron should be fixed to their necks linked by a chain to iron anklets, a chain so short they could not stand upright.

One of them, Sudds, died inconveniently a few days later—after which a purely academic polemic arose as to what was really the cause of death. In the acrimonious debate which followed it was variously affirmed that the total weight of chains and necklet was 13 lbs. or 40 lbs. There was even a Parliamentary Enquiry later on, and in 1831 Darling was recalled . . . to be knighted. It is impossible now to state whether this was because the chains were really proved to be 13 lbs. or 40 lbs. in weight. That was only eighty years ago, and Challis boiled with indignation that even so drab a street should commemorate such a Governor's name.

At times, he had to suspend his reading, alarmed by the bitterness it evoked. He was still under the emotion of the recent revelation. He even began to feel a resentment against Reggie Claridge as representing the Governing Class of that period. Who were they, anyhow? Was their dust now singular?

Out of it all came, by reaction, the proud acknowledgment of his inherited taint. At first only privately, Challis began to glory in his descent. "This is our own story," he would mutter piously to himself. "Who will deny it? It is scored with violence, ugly with suffering. There is blood on it. . . . Yes, but it is rich in a Samaritan charity when priests passed by. It is bright with hope springing up amidst the harsh spinifex

and with faith that pushed upward through the heavy crust of old shames. Those first-comers fought back against the environment by which they had been debased, though few had a happy end save in the memory of heroism lived."

Poring over these volumes he began to learn humility even in those early cocksure days. He became slower to judge his fellow-men in their palpable weaknesses. Those figures from out the Women's Reformatory in Parramatta were ever on his mind's screen. "Was their sin peculiar?" he would ask himself, and then find himself the answer, declaring "Virtue is no perfect measure that never loses a beat." And then, for second effect, these communings awakened in him a sympathy with the poorer and weaker elements of the people around. What right had he to sit in judgment on them?

But only for some rare hours of his day did he, in his secret keep, have rendezvous with old spectres. The world outside was still fresh and young. It was not yet noon. He followed the track of his own shadow by day, with only the rare accidental fragrance of that recent romance blowing across—blowing across and away. He was not yet himself conscious of any distant hill or of a broken rim of light that, far off, leads and eludes.

So, he went, apprentice to more than Medicine, head-down along the dead soil plains, absorbed within the routine of his undedicated day.

Chapter IX

GLEANING THE BROKEN EARS

The second year of practice was, for Challis, eventful. In February he was called in to attend Foricke's wife; she died in October. For some months the visits of Jarsey Hare, the ex-pugilist, embarrassed him: this punch-drunk boxer was a new phenomenon. Surridge sprang a surprise on his colleagues by announcing the sale of his practice to an American graduate, Doctor Tiberius Borkum. For most of the year the public and the profession alike were excited and puzzled by the affair of Doctor Gaddo Valloni. Because of certain peculiar features it assumed the importance of a *cause célèbre*.

For the rest, Challis was but gleaning the broken ears. He gathered up all those patients dissatisfied with their doctors or uncured by them, the disgruntled and the unfinancial of his own and neighbouring suburbs. He got to know, at first hand, the universal types which make their journey to and from a suburban doctor's waiting-room—the prematurely aged, slightly acid, yet infinitely patient woman with the sallow complexion whose pelvis some surgeon has eviscerated—with or without just cause (who will ever know?) The talkative man whose case no doctor ever yet understood (what strange forms does egoism assume!) The mutilated victim who glories in the fact that she has had eleven abdominal operations and, with the craving of an addict, is still asking for more—her abdomen criss-crossed with old and recent scars like the careless emendations on a faulty text. The hypochondriac young man with pasty face and hot moist hands, pleading with anxious eyes (oh! unpardonable sin!). The paranoiac with a private inquisition forever persecuting him. The sufferer from headaches who knows more drugs for them than the doctor

she is consulting. The short stocky laundress with varicose ulcers on her thick brown-stained legs, who is willing to do everything to get them cured—except lie up. The chronic bronchitic, breathless and wheezing noisily, leaning on the back of a chair to get a purchase for his muscles during a paroxysm. . . . These and many more. It is a procession that drags its way around the world, a parade of people still hoping, whose stories are banners that proclaim our medical ignorance. Who will refuse them the benison of a kindly word or the short illusion of a new recipe, thankful that its commonplace constituents are hidden beneath dog-latin! A pharmacist will add to it his cryptic sign for the amount charged and hand it back into circulation. Challis was young and had the still fresh faith which, communicating itself to the patient, gives, for a day, the flicker of a new hope. In his egoism he imagined that *he* might do something where all those others failed. It is the one thought which keeps him and others, like him, trying. Yes, these were but broken ears, but for the young harvester, was it not a plenteous crop?

The invitation to visit Foricke's wife professionally was a compliment and meant to be a compliment. Surridge, who had attended her previously, was not likely to forgive such a rebuff. But Foricke had burnt his boats and had by now assumed publicly the role of paternal counsellor to the new doctor. He had grown more lavish than ever with his worldly advice. "Never go down to Pinch-gut terrace unless they have the money ready." "Nurse Dunley is always using the catheter; don't go to any of her cases." "In Thompson's Lane they are all bad pays." "Don't believe any of them when they say they'll bring the money on Friday. I would have been ruined long ago if I'd waited for pay-day." "In this district Friday's pay-day for everyone, except the doctor." Challis would listen and thank him for the well-meant advice, then go off to disregard the counsel.

Foricke was a soft flabby untidy old man who shuffled about his shop in carpet slippers. He wore steel spectacles that slipped

down on his bulbous nose, and he looked over them to talk to a customer through a space between wooden parapets and over a glass-case counter. His was not one of those modern pharmacies which are a cross between a grocer's store and a soft drinks department. The show windows outside contained nothing more than two large red and green globes. The inside of his shop had the sombre, old-fashioned and somewhat shabby air of the true nineteenth-century pharmacy. Foricke did not crowd it with glass cases full of proprietary mixtures from all the drug houses in the country. Behind the parapet to which he withdrew to peer at the prescription, he could be heard rattling a glass rod against a beaker or crunching with a pestle in its mortar. From time to time a lean hand would be seen to stretch upward and lift a scrolled bottle from one of the higher shelves. Had the client been permitted to invade that sanctum, he would have seen all the stock equipment: the scales and dozens of medicine bottles, corks galore and of all sizes, glass measures, and sealing-wax, litmus papers and labels, a bunsen burner, and on a short narrow desk the long narrow book in which he entered the prescription, with, near by, Squire's Companion and a Martindale. And he might have seen the dispenser lift with the little finger of his left hand the glass stopper from a scrolled bottle—the left hand still holding the measure-glass—and then with the right hand pour out from the larger bottle the required amount, at the level of his watching eyes—all according to the Art.

It was not a tidy dispensary, nor even a clean one. Often he could not find his stick of sealing-wax. The spatula was never quite free from traces of the last ointment he had compounded. But Foricke knew his compatibles and could put up an elegant mixture, and he had a local renown for the way in which he could cover up the taste of Copaiba, a nauseous but necessary drug, much in demand by the young men of the district. They said, too, he was cunning with women's troubles.

Mrs Foricke kept herself very strictly to the domain of their little home in a side street a quarter of a mile away. There were no children and she did all her own work. She was grossly fat and had suffered from diabetes for years. These were the days before Insulin, and when even the fashion of starvation had not come in. Surridge's method of treatment had been fifty years old, and no better for its age. Drugs were his one card and he had shuffled the pack incessantly, ringing the changes in opiate and codeina preparations. Diet she would not, because she had a child's fondness for sweets. Why couldn't the doctors cure her without interfering with her food? Then she would dissolve in tears and tell the doctor all the little private grievances against her husband, winding up in the end, as she dried her eyes, with the remark, " Not that he's bad, as men go . . ."

She was of that class of women who, till late in the day, move about their homes in a light-weight Japanese kimono. Its absurdly lurid colours exaggerated her gross volume. She wore, on such occasions, perched on hair washed brown with something that Tom brought home, a dainty boudoir cap with blue baby-ribbon running around it. Her blue satin slippers were worn and dirty but very comfortable. On the fingers of both hands she carried, day and night, heavy rings with large stones in them, all without value except for the weight of their low-carat gold. Challis, eager to impress her husband, looked up his text-books, seeking something different in the treatment of a diabetic.

There was nothing, however, in those text-books which quite fitted the description of Jarsey Hare's case—Jarsey, the South-paw pugilist who unfortunately used to drop his guard. Once he had been quite a local celebrity. He had been just short of class, a valuable fighter for a try-out in the first fight of some visiting boxer. He could always be counted on to provide a good mill and to take a good hiding, giving the on-lookers their dollar's worth, for he was " terrible game ". He just wouldn't lie down. Hadn't he gone the full distance with

Bill Lang and lasted seven rounds with Bill Squires in the days before the latter had suffered a sudden eclipse in America? All that is in the record books of the period.

All that was, also, long ago. Jarsey, who with his awkward stance, had worried opponents for a few rounds till they found him so terribly open, was now little more than an automaton—an automaton with a squat nose and a face that seemed to have been flattened in a press. His mental processes had become slow, his self-control was nil, his concentration-powers were gone, and what remained of an inaccurate memory was for incidents long past. He had a habit of pulling out suddenly, in the middle of any conversation, a faded photograph showing a smart young man poised for combat in his unorthodox style, right foot and right hand forward, his oiled hair plastered low on his forehead, his eyes looking fiercely upwards from the slightly bent head. That had been Jarsey at the beginning of his career.

But the several hundred fights and many beatings had changed it all. Now he was a dissolute-looking, prematurely-old man who was always in trouble with the police. After two drinks he became quarrelsome and drunk. Then he would imagine he heard once more the thunder of applause that greeted him at the end of his lost fight, as he lifted with an effort his locked hands above his head in acknowledgement and climbed with some difficulty through the ropes. He had been knocked down so often before and been cheered for getting up. Now, however, there was no one to squeeze a dirty wet sponge between his battered lips. The inconsiderate police were always hustling him off to the jail, where the day following, all indifferent, he heard a self-righteous Magistrate droning away about Jarsey's habitual offences.

Jarsey had got into the habit of slouching—too often for Challis's comfort—into the waiting-room to beg some relief for his headache and of repeating to this new, affable listener his childish prattle and his griefs, which he always ended by

pulling out the old photograph, his one passport to a vanished local fame.

Thus could the contusions of the world change a man! Those little haemorrhages, called petechial, had harmed much more than a tissue. Under those batterings the texture and the colour of his personality had suffered change.

About this time Surridge surprised all his fellow practitioners by bringing round, as his successor, Doctor P. Tiberius Borkum, a good-looking, pleasant-mannered man with an American accent and a tuft of prematurely white hair. Borkum was at pains to explain that he was Australian born though brought up in U.S.A., and that he was doubly qualified in Arkansas and in Edinburgh. He also half apologetically informed them that the only reason why he had come to their little suburb was because this was the only practice he could find which offered him a hospital appointment, unimportant as it was. He was " out for surgery ", and had not realised until coming to Sydney that it was almost impossible for anyone not a local graduate to get an honorary appointment at any of the important hospitals.

Three days later his photograph appeared in the local paper together with a puff paragraph. Borkum denied all knowledge of how it came about, but the Editor was a Bowling-Club crony of Surridge. Vorn Phillips was stirred out of his habitual debonair manner by this so flagrant breach of medical etiquette. " He seems to have thought of everything except the band wagon ", he remarked bitterly to Challis.

Macleay was inclined to make fun of the matter, although he saw in Borkum's coming a much more formidable rival for Challis than Surridge had been. " He'll be taking reconnaissance flights into all your patients' abdomens," he prophesied, teasingly, to Challis, " and after he's cleaned up all the appendices and appendages he'll move on to another field." Macleay's attitude changed when some weeks later he found that Borkum had invited Aubrey Foyle to act as his anaesthetist. Decidedly, this newcomer was stoking up the

fire of medical hostilities. Surridge alone seemed jubilant about everything.

It was while Borkum, somewhat later than usual, was paying the customary courtesy call, and in his own easy confident manner recounting his friendships with Will Mayo and J. B. Murphy, that Challis received an urgent telephone call. It was from Foricke. Could Challis come round to the house at once ? He thought his wife was dead.

Dead she was in truth—lying on the floor of their small sitting-room, still in her diaphanous Japanese kimono. Foricke, returning for tea, had found her thus and placed under her tousled head one of the gaudy cushions from the wicker-work settee—the cushion with an imperfect Union Jack worked on it. The boudoir cap with its blue baby-ribbon had fallen off and was some feet away. A fruity odour pervaded the room. Foricke seemed more agitated than grieved. He was most of all concerned about the death certificate—would it be all right or would a Coroner's enquiry be necessary? To Challis there seemed no reason at all why he should not sign the death certificate. Everyone knew that she had been suffering from diabetes for years, a woman constantly ailing. It was only some weeks after the funeral that the buzzing sounds of local gossip reached Challis's ears. People had become uncharitably suspicious, and even Challis himself began to worry a little. Had he assumed too much? In his surprise at the event, he had made only a cursory examination; he had not even noted the size of the pupils. What if there was an exhumation and some other cause of death discovered? But then the certification of death was a notoriously inaccurate business. Many of the stock diagnoses meant nothing. Myocardial degeneration, syncope, senile decay—they were usually mere words. The important thing was this: Was the death natural so far as the doctor knew? What caused doubt and suspicion was always the unexpectedness of a death. The authorities were not interested in the purely academic questions of pathology. So long as the story was plausible and everything

seemed above board they were satisfied. Admittedly it would be easy to hasten the outgoing of a person known to be chronically ill. Therapeutic deaths must be much more frequent than at present admitted., What if Mrs Foricke had died from an over-dose of morphia? It had become public property that Foricke had been having a little affair with a young woman of the district; those watchful suburban eyes had spotted it, and watchful suburban minds were now busy fitting this death into the framework of a larger scheme. It took some weeks for the tittle-tattle to die down under the greater excitement of another scandal.

But, with his wife's death, Foricke's intimate collaboration ceased and the role of father-counsellor ended. Was it because of dissatisfaction with Challis's treatment? Or was this astute old man making a bid for the custom of the more progressive and pushing Borkum? In any case, Foricke seemed, after the event, ill-at-ease whenever he met Challis.

It was being brought home to Challis that there was much more in the practice of Medicine than a mere knowledge of books. A doctor was often moving along a dark track, blindly, conscious of being close to the edge of dangerous emotions and even, sometimes, of criminal doings. Macleay, to whom he revealed his thoughts, scouted the idea. He recalled the advice of the lecturer of their student days, that wordy doctor-lawyer-musician whose pronunciation of Waggah Waggah in the course of references to the Tichborne Case had always called forth a stamping of feet (he was far too much of a gentleman to comment on their rudeness):

"It is not the part of our profession to assume the duties of a policeman, to do criminal investigation or to lay information. We must not set ourselves up as judges or arbiters of what is either legal or moral. We are pledged to secrecy and to silence whether it be in matters of confidence given or of truth surprised. Disease is our Kingdom; only treatment our duty."

It was not always as easy as that. There was one ever-present pitfall for which even Macleay was very much on guard. It was the problem of the bleeding woman. Somebody would rush up breathless to the doctor's house, or telephone with agitation in her voice, saying, "Come at once; at Number So-and-So in Such-and-Such a street there's a woman bleeding to death." What was the doctor to do? He knew quite well that it was a common trick of less reputable nurses or doctors to "start something" and advise the friends to call in one of the local doctors innocently to complete it. If the woman died, suspicion then attached itself to the Samaritan doctor (for Samaritan he usually was in a poor suburb—what money there had been in the house the illegal practitioner had got).

The pontiffs over at the Medical Association, of course, laid it down emphatically that the doctor should not go. He should get the woman admitted to a public hospital. "If you *do* go, take another doctor with you." Counsels of perfection! Few hospitals would accept such a case and the doctor would spend much time fruitlessly ringing this one and that—the woman still bleeding in the meantime. And as for taking another doctor, that was possible only in the case of rich patients, and did not apply in Cockle Creek. Further, the doctors of a poor suburb could not easily pick and choose, They did not wish to be known as uncharitable, nor did they wish to refuse going to genuine cases: the rent had to be paid! So usually they went and took the risk; after all, deaths were rare. But when they did occur—Even if he were able to prove he had come into the case in the last stage, was not the doctor an accessory after the fact?

The case of Gaddo Valloni brought this problem very much to everyone's mind, though it did nothing to solve the difficulty.

It was all very well for Gaddo Valloni to have been a harum-scarum student in Edinburgh, but in medical practice such irresponsibilities meant trouble. It had been high jinks for this good-looking boy whom women found too attractive, to dine at F. and F.'s or sup at Sam's, hail a four-wheeler in

Princes Street and then, having arrived at the Australasian Club, to throw the driver down the steps of the Club for demanding his fare. Such pranks had excited only an amused comment, or at worst had led to cab drivers refusing to take passengers to the Australasian Club. But they had exasperated his Italian father, a surgeon with the bearing of a Cavalry Officer and the classical culture of a famous European University. That boy, he muttered, needed discipline.

The father had many preoccupations, none of them grave, before Gaddo, tired of pursuing extra-mural courses in gallantry, consented to let his quick intelligence make good the defects of his industry and at last qualified as doctor. The father brought him home to Australia. A few years' practice in a small country town would wean him of these follies, and once mellowed with experience he could join his father in practice.

But Gaddo was not yet grown-up. He took his duties of medical practitioner very lightly. His unconventional ways annoyed most of all the elderly medical men of a neighbouring much larger town, for Gaddo treated them as off-handedly as he had treated the coachman from Princes Street in Edinburgh. In the end, they were ready to believe anything of this typical Australian with the foreign-sounding name.

Gaddo Valloni delivered himself into their hands when, in his own professional rooms, he set out to perform a minor operation on a young married woman, giving the anaesthetic himself. Hadn't he given chloroform on a twisted towel as a fifth year student for Caird at the Infirmary? He found himself, however, with this woman dead on his hands in his own consulting room, and without a witness. The police were not at all sympathetic or understanding when they were called in. They sent for the Government Medical Officer, who was one of the elderly gentlemen Valloni had so much upset. At the post-mortem examination this investigator could not find any sign of the uterus: the organ, then, must have been illegally removed! A criminal operation must therefore have been

performed. On his report, Gaddo Valloni was arrested and lodged, without civility, in the local jail.

The father, stern and pale, came from Sydney to arrange his son's release on bail. Then in the country residence, he spoke, his foreign accent heightened by suppressed emotion, a father delivering judgment. If Gaddo was innocent, every help legal, moral and financial, would be provided. If he were guilty . . . he did not ask for reply, but threw on the table a heavy, loaded revolver. It was an old-fashioned arm. The senior Valloni had kept it polished and oiled since the South African war and all through the interim years of peace. He was a product of those stiff anti-clerical Liberal days in Italy. "The family honour is in question, an ancient and honourable name is at stake. There is a code and a canon for gentlemen. A stroke for a stroke, and in disgrace, a quick way out . . ." and he left. The elder Valloni was a classical scholar and those words from Cicero's *de Officii* must have been in his mind:

> *Nulla timoris Significatio. Nulla mentio pacis. Tanta vis est honesti ut speciens utilitatio obscuret.*
>
> (No sign of fear. Not a mention of peace. Such is the power of Honour that it casts into the shade the appearance of Expediency).

The case unfortunately seemed clear-cut and straightforward enough. So the Coroner found death to have been caused by an illegal operation and committed Valloni for trial at the next Quarter Sessions.

A strange figure now enters upon the stage, the figure of a man short in stature, but of wide learning, more full of humanity than the ordinary University Professor. He held the Chair of Anatomy in another State and his past was dappled with gay adventures as a Parisian student and gallant illegalities, blackbirding on the high seas.

He took the exhibit of a woman's pelvis, and, out of the now dry specimen, dissected a small unimpregnated uterus. What

could the prosecution say to that? Their case at once collapsed. Gaddo Valloni went forth free. Free, but now morose and taciturn. The father, as became a soldier surgeon, took the vindication with dignity: the safeguarding of the family honour was no fit subject for any cheap rejoicing.

Through all those months of stress the heavy old-fashioned revolver had lain in a drawer neglected, unoiled, rusting. But its mechanism still worked. Gaddo Valloni now took it up and turned it on himself. The bullet flew its short distance, charring the skin. Thus, he cured an insult, and with so small a wound. What is Honour?

Chapter X

LOW-VAULTED LIVES

Drab days, these! Slowly and painfully Challis was fitting himself into the general pattern of the life around him, but even while he adjusted himself to the new surroundings, he suffered the pangs of resistance.

Cockle Creek was a suburb of little people. Most of them were mildly prosperous, but they had no air of prosperity. Some were improvident, but of the extreme poverty seen in European cities there was none. Nor was there any general unhappiness, though of merriness little was evident. The dominant note in the suburb was one of shabbiness. Was it only an external shabbiness? Or was there in their interior lives also something lacking?

It is probably true that many felt acutely a sense of impermanence. They were here, they hoped, only for a time and believed themselves to be but sojourners. Nearly all were seeking removal, aspiring to higher places in the social order, aiming at the greater amenities. They loudly attacked the ruling caste and were openly hostile to the richer classes, yet few there were who did not want all that caste gave and the rich had: possessions and privilege, the satisfaction of having risen where others had failed, the joy of being singular in their neighbours' eyes. This suburb and this way of living they regarded merely as stepping-stones. As a result, they felt no fierce pride in the history of their streets, and no curiosity whatsoever about the past. The more recent immigrants could be excused for such a lack of interest, but the native-born themselves exhibited no knowledge of old events, here, on this

very soil. To be sure, they all had their narrow partisanship for a local cricket team or a local boxer. But apart from this, the residents were either conscious exiles from the United Kingdom or the disinherited from a violent though not unheroic past. It is the tragedy of Australia that if the common man of the great industrial centres remembers any dates they concern the great strikes, while in the far West men reckon years from the Big Drought. Their country's past?—Those of city and country alike turned their backs on it.

But if shabbiness was the dominant note, and the paint was often peeling from little houses run-up by a speculative builder or a journeyman carpenter, there were warm hearts within, and cheerful domestic virtues. The roofs of these houses were most often of corrugated iron, which made the houses hot in summer, but the occupants, save for those whose lives were in disarray, enjoyed none the less a high degree of physical comfort. When, in answer to a call, Challis arrived before the door of one of these little houses, he turned the key of the spring bell which was screwed to the middle panel of the door in front of him. Then he stepped in over a white-washed step and entered the first room. Sometimes this was the main sleeping apartment, and then the next was kitchen and sitting-room all in one. In better homes, however, the entrance led straight to a sitting-room which had the air of never being lived in. It was severely neat with everything kept strictly in its place. Too often it was overcrowded with photographs and knick-knacks. Often two huge photographic enlargements of someone's parents occupied the walls. They usually had wooden frames against which the shoulders of the subject bulged uncomfortably. The eyes of these revered parents too often seemed dull and lifeless. In some cases, a beginner's effort in oils, set upon an easel, held the place of pride. On the small over-burdened round table which centred the room was placed, reverently, the family album, and in some cases, a glass-domed plate of fruit garishly pink or nauseatingly yellow. In rarer cases a horsehair sofa still persisted, but usually the

settee was of cane with embroidered cushions upon it. The chairs were small, frail, and uncomfortably upright. A Japanese hanging screen of little bamboo sticks and beads was often used at the doorway into the kitchen-dining-room. It tinkled musically when moved. Sometimes great sea-shells encumbered a fireplace which was never used, or pieces of pink coral. From the combined dining-room-kitchen a narrow, steep and winding staircase led to the bedrooms above. Decorations there were few. On the walls a silver-grey text hanging from a nail proclaimed " God is Love ". Cheek by jowl with it was often the photograph of a football team or a faded cutting from the Sydney *Referee*—some old photograph of Peter Jackson standing erect, left foot and left hand forward, or one of Trott or Noble or Trumper. Sometimes on the mantelpiece was a glass bottle lying on its side, within which was enclosed the model of a sailing ship cunningly erected.

Those steep winding stairs Challis soon learnt to climb in the half darkness of daytime without stumbling. He also got to know his way out to the kitchen when he had to seek hot water for some urgent occasion. Beyond the kitchen was the primitive wash-house. There, on Monday morning, the ritual day, small chopped sticks were used to light a fire beneath the copper. Beyond the wash-house lay a narrow backyard from which the occupants could issue out into a lane through a paling-fence gate. Coming in from outside they had to insert a hand through the moon-shaped opening and lift the metal latch. The water-closet was placed side by side with its neighbour of the house next door, and both had their backs to the lane for the convenience of the Council's man, who came weekly (except when there was a strike on). The door of the closet stopped short above and below, thus giving ventilation. A honey-suckle vine trailed rather disheartedly over part of this wooden convenience.

The chief function of the yard was to act as drying ground, so a rope crossed it obliquely and was held high up by long wooden props. A plot of neglected grass was commonly

present. Sometimes a sunflower insecurely upright graced the scene, or a narrow bed in which pansies grew. Usually the bed was bordered with broken bottles. Flowers in the house were rare, and music seldom heard. The gramophone was not yet a popular instrument purchasable over years with small deceptive payments. The wireless, unsuspected of the people, had not yet made the world's noise ubiquitous.

For diversion, what was there?—Of intellectual diversions there was none. But sporting pastimes were many. Then there were the hotels, open from 6 a.m. to 11 o'clock at night—continuously, every day except on Sunday. Sometimes the partisanship over the competitions of cricket and football assumed fierce proportions. Gambling was widespread but mostly on a small scale. Only a tiny proportion of those who "followed the horses" could afford to go to a Randwick meeting or up to Moorfields. Many, however, both men and women, placed their bets with a local starting-price bookmaker who usually had his agency in a tobacconist shop. This was illegal but was winked at by the police except when some members of a religious party indignantly drew official attention to what they called a scandal. On Saturday afternoon young men could be seen hanging around outside such a tobacconist shop, waiting for the telephone message which would tell of their having won or lost, with their bets of a "dollar" on the favourite or a "deaner" on the outsider. The numbers who went down to the nearest Oval or across the city to watch the main match in another suburb were, of course, very much greater. On their own local ground "barrackers" would sit or lie on the grass and make jeering remarks about the player who missed a catch or mulled a pass. They were a good-natured crowd, but they were not easily pleased, and they were niggard of their applause.

For all those who worked at ship-yards or at the abattoirs, in factories or in offices, Friday night was a great occasion. They had been paid that day and at night they all "went up the road". There they gathered together within a narrow sector

of the main street, met friends, exchanged gossip and " had a few drinks ". The younger ones talked of women and sport, the older of sport and politics. The women-folk, young and old, passed along, doing their Friday night shopping or meeting their men friends by appointment. The public-houses meanwhile did a roaring trade, with men jostling one another as they passed at the swing doors. The rare women seen in the hotel were at the bottle entrance. Sometimes a fight took place—nearly always as the result of a political argument. Then a great crowd would gather, with supporters urging the fighters on or seeking to make them desist. In a drunken mêlée at times bottles would be thrown. On such occasions the tram traffic became blocked, and to the incessant clanging and braking of the driver, the crowd would answer with cheerful vituperation.

The men of Cockle Creek were fiercest in their political prejudices. Some strife usually prevailed among the local factions. There was, in addition, a fringe of rowdy larrikinism at every political meeting—and young boisterous interrupters who made themselves minor terrorists. But whatever local differences these workers had, when Polling Day came round for State or Federal elections, they all voted as one man for the selected candidate, and had him elected. Then they relapsed once more into carping criticisms and bitter personal feuds. They took little interest in their own Municipal Elections. Rare the man who wanted to be Alderman or Mayor. But they all hated and envied the ruling caste and they all wanted more money. They were an easy prey to rumours and slogans. Politics in truth was a disease blighting many lives. Even on Sunday, that depressing day in Cockle Creek, when the deserted main street had the air of convalescing after the debauch of the night before—broken bottles and rubbish were littered about—even then political discussions continued within the household and over the Sunday papers.

Life in these early days seemed to Challis to possess a harsh rind and an acrid pulp. Of mellowness there seemed none.

Even the people's religions took on a hard and dour practice. There seemed to be no ideal outside the narrow political ideal. Yet the people had fine qualities, as he was later to discover: courage in abundance, a cheerful manliness under an ordeal, fierce and implacable hatred of injustice (though rarely they saw it outside their own class), deep compassions they were too shy to reveal—but above all a hard masculine virility. Unfortunately they were harnessing all these great qualities to puny and unworthy ends. They were men corralled in the appalling crudeness of their own schemes.

Was it that the old harsh adversities of time and place had bruised so deeply men's spirits that even the newcoming immigrant took on and shared the old scars? Or were their values all wrong? Everything seemed based on mere utility. Their lives were low vaulted lives.

* * *

Challis's nights at this time had their disturbing dreams. One evening he had gone to bed discouraged and irritated—there had been that telephone message from the Heggity's Terrace patient telling him not to call again—and his mind had kept revolving about Macleay's early words that medical practice was all a game of animal grab.

In his sleep he dreamed himself immured within a solitary high tower, brooding over a bestial struggle in the world below. The scene was confused and ever-changing. He could hear the snarl of animals and the cry of vultures, and could see men with the glaze of a human likeness that ill-concealed their brute ways: they were upright only as a temporary expedient. Out of the din came the sound of fierce quarrellings and the piteous screams of suffering fear. Fierce imprecations rose, mingled with earnest prayers of supplication. There seemed no purpose in it all; terror had blurred the purpose of all living. In his private chamber, aloft, an impulse to flee possessed him.

Then, with the inconsequence of a dream, he found himself, a boy, wandering through the old Zoological Gardens at the top of Cleveland Street, Sydney. He was staring into a leopard's cage, watching the sulky beast pacing to and fro restless behind its bars. The cage seemed dangerously frail for so savage an animal, and once again he felt the compulsion to flight. Rushing away he reached Moore Park, at the very foot of that miserable hillock ironically called Mount Rennie. It had always been to his childish mind a place associated with sin and shame. The overheard conversation of elders had revealed a story of something vile and bestial done there by a man. He rushed from the accursed place towards the stopping-place where once he waited for a steam tram after leaving the cricket ground—the first good intention to walk home having petered out. It was outside a public-house, and as he waited he heard now the strident voice of protest from a man being thrown out of the public bar, drunk and dishevelled. It was old Belchem and he was shouting "Dribblin' Drunk!" Challis woke from his muddled dream laughing to himself, his fears all dissolved. Only three nights before had occurred the last act of a serio-comedy.

* * *

DRIBBLIN' DRUNK

It was through Mrs Polding, inveterate nuisance though she was, that the Belchems had come their long way across half Sydney to consult him. Let that be recorded for her on the credit side. She was on his lodge list, and seemed never to be long away from his waiting-room. But then she had four children, and an ailing husband, while she, herself, suffered from a wide range of symptoms when she allowed herself the luxury of thinking on them. What greater proof of sincerity and gratitude can a lodge patient give than that of inducing a private paying patient to consult her own doctor?

The Belchems entered Challis's consulting-room with the air of sharing a great occasion. In their demeanour was something of mystery, or at least of the unusual. The old man settled himself stiffly on the edge of a chair, his two hands on the top of an old-fashioned silver-headed stick. His larger and redder-faced wife took up the part of spokeswoman, as if well used to the role. "It's the drink, doctor," she announced with great solemnity. "They call it dipsomania." Her husband was staring straight ahead impassively—leaving it all to his wife. The story came pat from her mouth in a smooth flow of words.

She prefaced it, however, with a touching tribute to her man, as if in mitigation of anything she might say thereafter. He was as good a living man as any woman could wish, a God-fearing man, save only for the terrible curse of the drink.

"It's a disease, Doctor, and he can't help it. Hasn't he held a position of trust as accounts clerk with the same City firm for over twenty-three years? It shows what they think of him that they make every allowance for his little weakness, knowing him to be honest and that he'll make it all up in over-time afterwards. After he gets over it he works back in the big building all by himself with only the cleaner moving about the deserted rooms! And that woman cleaner herself had often paid tribute to his decency—'Never a foul word out of him or a hand misplaced'—No! there was never anything low or sexual about him!"

But all of a sudden, right out of the blue, for some trivial reason or for no reason at all, he "went on it" every now and again. Sometimes there had been "a few words" at the office or a trifling argument at home—"he's so awful touchy," she explained. Then, this decent God-fearing, church-going, harmless little man, who for months had been hating the very smell of liquor and even walking on the opposite side of the street to avoid passing near a public house—all of a sudden he started boozing. The liquor, of which the smell alone would

have made him retch the day before, was now gluttonously poured down his throat. And as he drank his whole character changed. He had sworn, only a few days before, never, no! never again to soil his lips with the foul stuff, and he had at the same time beaten his breast passionately, promising never, never, never to offend any more. And now, he was frequenting the lowest of threepenny bars with all the local riff-raff, and (she was close to tears) *even bringing them back home with him.*

For days, while he was " on it " he did everything horrible except beat his wife. First thing in the morning, after the restless coma of a sleep, he was down to the nearest pub as soon as the door was opened. And the language he used—" why you'd wonder how he even knew the words, and him such a good Chapel man." But he didn't fight, and he never laid hands on her, she repeated magnanimously. " Not like that couple down the road who have their stand-up fights every Friday night."

He would keep on drinking and drinking, sometimes for a whole week, refusing all solid food, getting thinner and thinner, weaker and weaker, going about unshaven, blear-eyed, wild-looking—" just like a madman", she said in an awed whisper. All she could do was to wait, to watch him and to wait for the turn. Then when the turn did come and he submitted, a pitiful babbling child, to her ministrations, she plied him with rich, nutritious soups, coaxed him from his sobs and his depression, wooed back his self-respect, and packed him, chastened, back to the office. Once again he was all neatness, with his polished black boots and his pressed, if somewhat shiny, trousers. The one thing she had learnt never to do was to chide or reprove him. " It's a disease, Doctor—all the Specialists have said that. The powers of Darkness enter into him. It's no more his fault than mine." But for days after each attack his hands would remain tremulous, and he would go about penitent, full of a deep abasement, constantly imploring pardon and once more promising: " This time I mean it—never, never, never again." " And he always means

it," she insisted. " Doctor Challis, my sister says you've just come out of the University and you're up-to-date with all the new ideas. Can't you do something for him ? We aren't rich, but we'll gladly pay what we can."

Interrogation, however, revealed how difficult the case was. Belchem had already received all the usual forms of treatment, everything, indeed, except institutional therapy—" I wouldn't let him go into one of those bat houses," she exclaimed aggressively. Challis elicited that there was a strong hereditary taint. Both Belchem's father and grandfather had been heavy drinkers, and both had been also Australian-born—a fact which Challis was quick to notice. On physical examination, however, Belchem himself was not found to have any gross somatic disease. It seemed rather a matter of exorcising a devil. To offer merely the same old medicinal treatment for alcoholism about which his dull text-books all agreed, seemed dishonest. These had been ineffectual before. But Mrs Belchem kept repeating, " Doctor, there *must* be some cure."

Under this pressure, Challis remembered the rather dramatic cure of a case of hysterical paralysis in a young woman, which old Brenfeldt, the foreign doctor over in Elizabeth Street had recently effected. Reddle-Reddle had had her under his care for nearly two years and had declared her incurable (though he had continued to visit her regularly, her parents being comfortably off). Brenfeldt had cured her by suggestion or hypnotism. Reddle-Reddle had been extremely angry at this and had threatened to bring the matter of " this foreign quack " and his unusual methods before the Ethics Committee of the Association. The case had caused a great stir in all the neighbouring suburbs. Challis reflected: If hysterical paralysis could be cured, why not dipsomania ?

The long consultation ended with Challis giving these new patients a letter to a specialist he didn't know personally—he explained that, carefully. It was a great asset, to begin with, that this doctor was a foreigner. It implied great European learning, perhaps a knowledge of secret mediaeval methods of

cure. The Belchems left, faithfully promising to let Challis know how they got on. They insisted, too, on paying a fee higher than that usual for Cockle Creek doctors. This was the only contribution Belchem himself made to the discussion.

Later on, in that tired hour when a doctor ruminates over the day's events and savours his little successes, Challis's mind occupied itself with Belchem's personal history. There seemed no doubt of the importance of the hereditary factor. It was highly probable, too, that Belchem himself was of Convict origin. For a man of his age to have an Australian-born grandfather was at least strong presumptive evidence.

In that case Belchem's dipsomania might be an after-effect from that dissolute period in the life of the young Colony when the drink evil was as terrible as it was widespread. All drank to excess: soldiery and transported convicts alike. From their harsh environment rum was the easy path to the Elysium of phantasy, at least for a time. The New South Wales Military Corps—that body of English gentlemen entrusted with the moral welfare of the convicts—had, for selfish reasons, exploited their monopoly of the drink traffic. It was in their interest to encourage excess, so they had helped convict and free settler alike to debauch themselves, drawing profit from the transaction. Rum had even been, for a time, the local currency. The first Church and the first Hospital had been paid for in liquor!—with a grog shop, set up in close vicinity to the growing buildings! As a result of all this the average consumption of alcohol under the monopoly of a military caste had in New South Wales amounted to $3\frac{1}{2}$ times that of England. It seemed not unlikely that poor Belchem was a victim of those far-off abuses of over one hundred years ago: if that were so, this, like some other ills, was but a metastasis from old English evils.

The subject of treatment by suggestion set Challis thinking of even earlier events. That curious figure, Valentin Greatreakes, had provoked lively discussion before Mesmer himself, in the eighteenth century, exploited human credulity.

Vienna had looked coldly on Mesmer's first efforts to prove the influence of the planets on our physiological processes; perennial subject of mediaeval times! But in Paris, frivolous, novelty-loving Paris of the eighteenth century, he was taken to the people's heart. There he set up his sensual temple. There, garbed in a lilac costume, he strode among his Zealots, the high priest of a new rite. The light came softly in through the richly stained glass. An odour of orange blossoms was wafted to the palpitating nostrils of sufferers as they knelt tremulous and expectant. From a hidden alcove rose the lascivious pleading of a harp. And then, on to the stage came Mesmer, to touch with his wand men and women already half swooning in sensual delight. To them now he deigned to concede the supreme orgasm of his personal touch.

Humbug and fraud erotically practised! Yes! But Mesmer had realised a central truth about the power of the mind and the art of suggestion. Have they not been ever the stock-in-trade of doctors and charlatans (qualified or without degree), itinerant or resident in every part of the world and in every century? Not all of them, of course, ended like Mesmer, after rich plundering, a fugitive despoiled by a Revolution, dishonoured, dying in obscure want.

The Belchems returned six weeks later as they had promised. They came highly elated at the way things were shaping. That foreign doctor "was a real gentleman". His door attendant had told them (confidentially) he was the seventh son of a seventh son "and you know what that means!" Belchem himself was on this occasion sufficiently animated to join in the chorus of praise for the new Specialist. He declared himself already stronger in will power. He was as if invigorated by a new force. He was certain that never again would he relapse into what he called "the filthy habit of drinking". All those drugs and medicines the other doctors had given him had done him harm—they were really poisons!—undermining his system, lowering his constitution. For twenty minutes the Belchems took up Challis's time and they left without

offering a fee. This was "just a friendly visit". Hadn't they been liberal with their thanks?

Ten weeks later they were back again, but wearing a different expression. Their manner was in truth frankly hostile. Arriving late, just before the end of the consultation hour, they pushed themselves in ahead of an elderly spinster, a new patient who had been awaiting her turn. As soon as the door of the consulting-room opened they rushed in, upbraiding Challis in loud voices which could be heard all over the house. Old Belchem was the more violent in his language; his wife for once played second fiddle. Her part was evidently to support the attack whenever her husband, for want of breath, slackened. But her remarks were no less cutting. "*Your* friend," she kept repeating. "*Your* friend"—in a scathing tone. Then came in the higher-pitched voice of her husband: "When we went there last night *your* friend himself was drunk, far drunker than ever I've been, *dribblin'* drunk." The wife intervened savagely now: "Why don't he use his own cure on himself?" and the old man waved his stick dangerously. He had obviously some drink taken, and even the wife seemed a little under the influence. They kept up their tirade for some minutes before the silent and astonished Challis. A note of exultation heightened all Belchem's contemptuous utterances, as if he now felt himself justified in high places. Those others who set themselves up were no better! They had been his judges, had given him virtuous counsel, had charged him for poisonous medicines that were even now damaging his system. They were just humbugs. He was going to trumpet it out to all the world!

Challis made no reply. He had already learnt how short is the decay period of a patient's gratitude. He knew now that all argument would be useless. He merely went to the side door and opening it let them out, with one eye always on old Belchem's brandishing stick. Even at the gate they turned to fire a salvo of abuse at the house. Challis watching them from the door was grateful for the drowning noise of a

passing tram. But when he went to call in the next patient, the waiting-room was empty. The new patient had flown. On table and chairs were scattered untidily the ragged magazines and the battered illustrated weeklies. That foreign doctor had let him down!

Chapter XI

(i) ANGELS IN HOUSES

Into these placid humdrum days, like a suddenly rising wind, swept romance. Gertrude Spofforth was a year older than Challis, and like him, brought up an orphan. She was tall, with the handsome solidity of a sportswoman, cheerful in temperament, sure of herself, entirely free from the vice of contemplative habits. Within three months they were married. There had been in that short period the interplay of many complex factors.

Macleay, at whose house the young couple first met, took on himself the chief rôle of orator at the intimate little wedding breakfast. Slightly mellow with alcohol, he excelled himself in the parade of his habitual cynicism and "got off" some deliberately smart sayings. What was marriage, he asked, but a contract in restraint of trade, a contract not worth the paper it was written on? Some of the younger women giggled at this. Then, assuming the professional solemnity of a parson (whose presence for the ceremony had been dispensed with) he lectured them all on innocence, declaring it to be no more than a relative inexperience. Finally he gave them his benediction with this advice: "Never give all your heart." There were those who declared they had never heard him in better form.

In the rich voluptuous days that followed they shared the warmth of the running blood. They knew also the lazy comfort of relaxation in fatigue, and they experienced also the private repulsion of the aftermath. Who will deny the reasonable hunger of the flesh?

But Challis was most of all happy in the sense of possession. His spirit was serene: new generosities and fresh sympathies stirred within him. Into his careless life Gertrude brought

the orderliness of the practical feminine mind. She splinted his unstable moments. She rescued him from those solitary evasions into an idealised past.

Instead, they had excursions together. By arrangement now Challis and Macleay "took off" alternate weekends, the one who remained at home doing double duty from mid-day on Saturday. This broke the monotonous round of life in Cockle Creek. Thus Gertrude and Challis would go, sometimes, out towards Port Hacking, stopping at Tom Ugly's point to hear again the shrill voice of a bald parrot, notorious for its invective. Macleay had christened it with the nickname of an Australian politician, because with them both the lingual faculties seemed to be perishing last. Along the coast road further on they would picnic on a cliff, watching in contented silence the thong of a tide coiling and uncoiling upon the yellow sandy beach below.

But on wintry days when the sun no more scorched, they took the West road, that old West road which rises and falls, winds and narrows, hides itself under the shoulder of a mountain or beneath gnarled gum trees, runs a mere wheel of dust across vast plains, and ends a yellow wisp at the very sliprails of a sunset. It was dear to Challis from old associations. Men in irons had beaten down its soft surface. Shoeless hooves had broken it. Misery had made it under a thong and a scourge and beneath brazen skies.

It was now their route to the blue Camarthen hills, and Challis had each time the secret excitement as of breaking an enclosure, just like the first colonists who after the check of twenty-five years had found an issue from their natural prison of sandstone. When they passed near Parramatta, skirting the town, Challis would give a passing glance over his right shoulder towards the spot on which the Women's Reformatory, that infamous "Factory" of early days, had been. He always felt some of the ill-ease which as a boy he had known, passing on the opposite side of the haunted house of a back street. Over there, in that Factory, he sought to explain to Gertrude,

who was only politely interested, both ticket-of-leave men and free settlers went in quest of a wife. Like cattle at an auction sale the convict women would be subjected to the inspection of prospective husbands. Only there was this difference: the Matron who discussed their parts did so in terms less complimentary than an auctioneer! These dishevelled Magdalenes, the ex-convict and the free settler took home, and if they did not wash their feet, restored to many of them the self-respect of antecedent years. Challis felt the relief of talking of their trials and survivals to a patient-seeming ear. Little stories always lightened the journey. Here the parson's mill had worked all the week round, knowing no Sabbath. Those first parsons had been grazing pastors, zealous in the care of their lands and their non-human flocks. Others who followed had been even more rapacious. Benwicke had quoted Doctor Lang as saying that, whereas in the Mother Country the clergy had been often accused of taking the fleece, New South Wales was the only country he knew where they were authorised not only to take the hide also but even to flay their flocks alive!

Challis would explain, too, how no halo of mystical experiences shone above this land. There were no folk-tales. No fairies ever peopled it. No one ever put out a vessel of water for the little people who in the stillness of night went by. What echoes there are out of the past are those of violence, of mad deeds, of men ranging through the bush and pillaging right to the end. And for illustration there was that water-hole on the road to Penrith before they reached the foot of the hills. A ghost haunts it always. If you come by certain phases of the moon you may see it sitting upon the slip-rails in melancholy contemplation of the water that hid a crime.

Gertrude found it hard at times to be patient, for she had no sense of history. She hailed from South Australia, a later arrival among the Australian States and without any crude beginnings. But when once, in an unguarded moment, to Challis wandering through those early conflicts, she com-

mented, "What horrid people for our first settlers!" Challis answered hotly: "If taint there was, it was England's. Australia washed and refreshed and healed their bleeding spirits."

This was his native land. He had become aggressively proud of it. The early dark pages only served to make more luminous the chapters of a rude story. Why should he suffer the perpetual denigration of his country? The written books described it as infertile for the most part: "The soil parched and reluctant, the bush song-less." Such an error arose because its vastness confused little minds. There was always one part flowering, even while the rest lay under the shadow of a drought. And even that desert central part had its sudden moods of grass. To the lover of his country even the spinifex is dear and those grim sand-hills golden mounds upon the landscape. For him who seeks, stunted black oak and the thorn bush will reveal themselves and fragrant sandal-wood will perfume the hot air. Treeless horizons are no more than the reflected mirage of a man's barren soul.

Marriage had softened Challis to gentler moods and kinder criticisms. He watched the flowing Nepean river as it brushed the trailing hair of willows. He dreamed of childish voices in the house, dragging his fingers behind a row-boat on the St George River. Often, around Glenbrook these two fugitives from a metropolitan suburb wandered seeking the wattle which in season lifts its fragile ephemeral lamps. They would spread their picnic basket's contents under some shady tree and boil their billy according to the traditional rite. With the smell of resin in their nostrils, and in their ears the tinkle of cow-bells, they were quietly but richly content. And while she was busy with her little tasks, his own finished, Challis would lie in the grey cloister of gum trees, his thoughts aspiring beyond their tops.

Sometimes by sinuous tracks they went down into the Jamieson Valley, stumbled on old forsaken camps, crossed the trail of fossickers for gold, or passed by the worked-out

terraces of former years. Kingdoms seemed but things of clay, and fortunes but the washings of a creek.

What was the prevailing mood of the Australian bush around him? Challis often asked himself the question. He was sure it was one of defiance. He was sure, too, that this mood was reflected in the Australian character. Australian men were like their native trees: brave and defiant, spare-sinewed with harsh pointed flints for faces. Those first convicts sent to build a bridge over the gully at Lapstone must have quickly absorbed the atmosphere of the bush. Defiantly they had uttered their challenge to tyranny, that same challenge which every growing thing in Australia, sometime or another, has to hurl against a drought which stifles the green utterance of its earth.

Once in their wandering further afield, during the first long vacation, they found themselves following the uncertain marks of an old bridle-track. It led them ultimately to a gully where, regal amidst its attendant court of green and feathered things, the black butt stood. In majesty it over-topped and overspread the lesser growths around. It had an air of power and permanence.

But they had not gone far on their return when the air was rent first by a premonitory scream of distress, and then, after tearing sounds, had followed the earth-quaking thunder of a monarch's fall. Challis and Gertrude went back to gaze in awe upon the mighty prostrate trunk. There had been no high wind. It was a day of halcyon calm. Some hidden disease had gnawed its way into that heart of power. After a first panic flutter, the little birds were coming back to dance and to sing their litanies upon the dead king. The day had brought havoc, but sunlight could now enter lavishly into the matted undergrowth, and lowly ferns, surprised, would see a yellow moon.

But most of all in those days of rapture Challis treasured one moment in the driving home from these holiday outings. It was when on the last hill before the plain he stopped the car

and looked towards the distant lights of the metropolis. As if thinking aloud, he would then mutter: "Upon that old baseness they have built a great City. Surely they have dedicated it to nobler ends than the mean aims of that first Military Corps. Those early felons were but forerunners of a greater Advent."

Back again amid the affairs of his practice, life seemed full of petty and insignificant incidents. Borkum, "that man without anniversaries", as Macleay had dubbed him, was making rapid progress, socially and professionally. His wife, who had private means, was proving a popular agent for his publicity. Already she and the matron of the local hospital were great friends. Mrs Borkum's name had been put forward for membership of the Flinders Club in town. Vorn Phillips had lost something of his tolerant debonair manner. The battle was on. No one was giving any quarter. And all the while about them were Greek tragedies in mean unnumbered streets.

Challis, after that first sudden fire in the spear-grass of his emotions, had more serious thoughts to occupy his mind. He was thinking constantly of his aim to found a dynasty. Macleay's wife, fair, insignificant and unobtrusive, was heavy with her second child. Gertrude, however, was all for postponement. She always had some excuse; first they had to get the house properly restored to something like a woman's home. Then the next year there was the Golf Championship in which she was anxious to compete. Her golf play had never been so good. There was plenty of time. Weren't they both young?

So on they went, frustrating the eager conspiracy of the senses towards creation, but with Challis growing secretly more and more discontented. He could not help thinking at times of the unconscious mechanism in nature around him, and of the wind-born cotton of little seeds, and plants so casually fertile. He had learnt by now of the undisclosed margin of a woman's thoughts, of secret affiliations he would

never know. She was, for motherhood, ideal—strong-loined and well poised. But she preferred to go on living sensuously and unaware within the circle of her sun-warmed day, while he, after the ardours of those first nights, was suffering the travail of hopes unrealised.

* * *

(ii) THE LEGACY OF CLEERY'S LANE

Cleery's Lane begins in a side street between the last of a terrace of houses and a small mixed grocery. For some distance it winds obscurely along the sides of some and past the backs of other houses. Then comes a vacant allotment full of jettisoned rubbish: battered and rusted biscuit tins, broken bottles, and all sorts of unwanted débris from the surrounding houses encumber the ground. But three small cottages face the lane before it debouches after a right-angled turn into another side street. These cottages have few conveniences and are in disrepair, but their rents are low. No shrewd doctor or tradesman enters into professional or commercial relations with their occupants without seeing the money first.

Challis was called to No. 3 Cleery's Lane early one morning, before daylight, by a scared young man who nearly knocked the door down because in his agitation—he could not find the night-bell. *En route*, he recounted how his father, who had been out of work for nearly two years, has taken lysol with suicidal intent. Shortly before losing his last job he had married a second time. The son, who was single, now kept them all.

The old man—he was nearly sixty—had certainly taken lysol. His lips and his tongue were white from the effects of it, and his breath smelt heavily of it. A young woman was holding a broken chamber with one hand and supporting his back with the other, while noisily he tried to vomit into the receptacle. She was the second wife the young man's step-

mother. To savour her not unprecedented passion an old man had faced once more the grim hazard of a woman's love.

Challis had the sick man conveyed to the local hospital where he made a quick recovery. Little of the poison had been swallowed. The chief lesions had been caustic burns of the tongue and mouth. It seemed as if the whole attempt had been no more than a hysterical gesture.

Even in Challis's own life-time he had seen the changing vogue of poisons for those seeking to end their lives. In his youth he had heard from time to time of lovesick young men and women dissolving the red phosphorous heads of wax matches, at that time sold very cheaply in little cylindrical boxes. He had as a child collected the tops of the boxes. They and cigarette cards were a young boy's greatest treasure.

The advantages of this method of suicide were that it was cheap and always available. The disadvantage was that the victims, if they took enough, died slowly and miserably, with fatty livers, jaundiced. Often enough they had time to repent a folly the end-effect of which was seldom to be avoided. Phosphorus poisoning became too easy and too dangerous a house poison, so a beneficent Government introduced legislation forbidding the use in matches of the dangerous form of phosphorus. The fashion then turned to lysol which was neither so cheap nor so universally found. There was never any difficulty at this time in borrowing a fire-arm, for the licensing of fire-arms was not yet strict. That, however, was a more drastic way and its use argued a certain sincerity. Not yet in Sydney had been built a great bridge, from which the desperate on any sudden impulse could take without difficulty their last leap.

For his attempt at suicide the husband had to appear before the Court. Challis was called to give evidence—colourless, non-committal evidence. The people were strangers to him. He could not deny that it all might have been an accident—he had known oxalic acid to be mistaken in the dark for epsom salts—but lysol had a powerful odour and any sober man

should have been able to detect it. The wife told how her husband had been depressed, but she was sure he had had no real intention of harming himself. Challis watched her movements in the box. She was an unpleasant type: a woman lean and lecherous and hard. The son was nervous and a bad witness. With a cynical smile the magistrate accepted the plea of an accident and discharged the accused.

Seven months later Challis was called again to No. 3 Cleery's Lane, this time just before midnight. A policeman was already there when he arrived. A little group of neighbours watched proceedings from the safe distance of the lane. There was blood about now. And this time the out-of-work sixty-year-old man had made no mistake ; he had shot himself through the eye. Everyone knew there was more in it than a tale of despair and unemployment. The policeman, taking Challis aside, told him some of the facts.

Nearly a year before the old man, returning disheartened from a fruitless search for work, had found his son in bed with his wife. After that, rows had been frequent. The noise of bickerings used to go through the thin walls and over the back fences of the neighbouring houses. Grimly the neighbours watched the unequal competition between father and son. The young wife was harsh and exigent. The other women all gave her a bad name. Even in Cleery's Lane they have their standards. It was common gossip that the older man had been to a chemist shop and to a herbalist seeking adjuvants for his declining powers. He paid for them with the son's money, grudgingly doled out by the man who was using his wife. So life went on amidst daily bickerings, the old man encouraging his faint flesh to new martyrdoms of hope at the financial expense of his son-rival. He knew himself doomed to defeat, but he had a plan and he was fighting a desperate rearguard action.

That first attempt on his life had not been serious. He had meant it only as emotional appeal to their better natures, to any residual affection. The son for a time had been upset and

conscience-stricken. He had wanted to go away, but he was in the coils of that woman with the hard gimlet eyes who dominated him. She attracted him terribly, even while he feared and distrusted her. There was talk of still another lover hanging about on the outskirts of her liberal affections. For a time life went on as before—bickerings, an uneven battle—and then with the sharpness of surprise came a relative tranquillity at Number three. The curious neighbours learnt the young woman was with child. But shortly after this lull came the sound of a revolver shot before midnight.

The same Coroner, on this occasion, found that the deceased had taken his life while the balance of his mind was disturbed. That long spell of unemployment coupled with the responsibilities of an unwise marriage was obviously the cause of it all. The son told how for over two years his father had been completely dependent on his (the son's) earnings. He shed some tears, the widow vouchsafed none. This old man whose body had glowed before a woman's hearth, who had fashioned in her image his trivial phantasies—they buried in a pauper's grave.

The twitter of calumnies in a lane did not quickly die down. Whose was the child? That was the common topic which gave rise to many and varied speculations. Who was the actual incumbent of her fluid affections at the operative moment? The matter terminated, as a local affair of any importance, when the young couple left the district—they had told the man at the corner grocery that they were to get married and start life afresh in West Australia. They had not condescended to settle Challis's long overdue account.

The strategy of the dead man was now apparent. He had failed to separate the guilty pair. Let them take the consequences! And so he had set out to prepare his bitter revenge, cajoling his feeble powers to vain repetitions, until he knew his wife with child. Then, like the *Trichinella Spiralis* which performs its function as a male and forthwith dies, its purpose

ended, he terminated his own redundant years. But though dying pauper he had bequeathed something.

His son, he gloated, would go through all his days pinioned by a terrible suspicion. Who had begotten that child? He would ache to lavish on the offspring a father's affection, then draw back, persecuted by a doubt—an ever rodent doubt. He would be forever secretly watching the child, peering inquisitively into the growing features, asking himself, again and again, the question he could never answer.

That was the pauper's revenge: the legacy from Cleery's Lane.

Chapter XII

EPISODES WITHIN A WAR

When the first world-war came to Cockle Creek the people, appalled, ceased for a little while their trivial rounds then slowly resumed the old ways. Two convictions sustained them: one that it was all so far away, and the other, it couldn't possibly last long—why, all the warring nations would rapidly be bankrupt. "What business is it of ours, anyhow?" shouted an aggressive worker in an early morning tram. The others in the compartment fingered their newspapers and said nothing in reply. Down on the docks and in the slaughter yard violent arguments took place. It was all a capitalists' war! But even as they argued many of their fellow-workers were over at the recruiting posts giving in their names. Vorn Phillips was loudly bewailing his age: if only he were a little younger! Rooney's only son, Michael, that one whom he had destined for the priesthood, but who had turned out "a bit of a lad", was already in uniform. First among them all was Macleay. He had quickly thrown up his work, leaving his practice in the hands of an elderly *locum tenens* whom already the people declared to be a drunkard. Aubrey Foyle seemed pleasantly indifferent though he remained mildly patriotic. "Foyle," said Macleay in a parting shot, "has no enthusiasms. He has been gelded by religion."

Challis felt a strong temptation to follow Macleay's example. From a worldly point of view, of course, it was sheer folly. He had no great reserves of money, he was married, he was just beginning to do well. He realised quite well that even if he were not long away, there would be an awful scramble for practice immediately after the war was over. Gertrude, so far from raising any objection to his volunteering, urged him on. She was anxious to have a husband wearing khaki. The

temper of the people warmed up under the monotonous repetition of slogans and the carefully spread rumours of atrocities —already Belgian children had had their hands cut off. That aggressive worker of the early morning tram was, himself, now in uniform. No longer did anyone dare to revive the argument about a Capitalists' war. The disaster of Mons brought apprehension. People began to have their doubts about an ultimate victory. Challis slipped up to Victoria Barracks for his Medical Examination.

There he met with a quite unexpected setback. He had never been medically overhauled before; there had been no apparent reason why he should be. Now he found himself before an elderly grey-haired colleague, and noted with some uneasiness how the stethoscope was lingering rather too long over the apex of his heart. Then it was being drawn towards the left armpit and slowly around to the other areas. A routine question followed which Challis himself had asked others a thousand times: "Have you ever had rheumatic fever?" and presently Challis knew the verdict: he had valvular disease of the heart. The doctor was sorry but the Army would never accept him. It was in that period of medicine when the murmur was reckoned of more importance than the heart muscle. Challis had been defeated by the turbulence of his blood eddying around an incompetent valve.

This setback he took badly. He had the sensation of being thwarted in his first noble *élan* towards an unselfish act. He felt severely, too, the humiliation of the outwardly healthy sufferer—that sense of inferiority in relation to their fellows. Gertrude was scarcely tactful in her own disappointment. To her it had something of the force of a social rebuff. It was like being eliminated in the opening round of a golf competition!

A sudden increase in his medical work saved him for a while from gloomy introspections. All the suburban practices were being thrown into a state of confusion by the number of doctors volunteering, and by their being abruptly replaced with very old or very young practitioners. Meanwhile there was

in the country a constantly unsettling atmosphere of excitement. The newspapers were frequently bringing out special editions. Loud-voiced boys were hawking them through the streets, crying out the latest sensation, too often a disaster. There was much rhetoric from politicians and aldermen, flag-flying and flag flapping. Kipling's poems were in great demand as recitation pieces. Old men were fiercely exhorting young men to go to the war—"If only I were your age". A mass hysteria was being worked up by the tom-toms of the newspapers and the sing-song of politicians. Yet under their strong emotions many men and women acted finely. But while selfish business men redeemed their past with unexpected generosities and even mumbled unaccustomed prayers through ribald lips, there was always the mean sly element turning the occasion to gross profit. When the troops marched off to their ships, great crowds lined the streets and men like Challis felt themselves smaller, their dimensions forever reduced. Then came anguish to teach those left behind little place-names, not marked on any map, but to be scarred for ever in their memories. In Cockle Creek new photographs came to adorn the walls and mantelpieces, and always there was the "likeness" of a man with a touch of bravado in his hard flinted face under a slouch hat turned up on the left side.

War came, a sudden touchstone, to many people's lives. The family which jealously reserved their sons from joining up suffered in local repute. White feathers were constantly sent by mail. The reluctant young men generally had their excuses pat and let them be known. Reggie Claridge, though still in the thirties, had run a little to seed. It was not, however, his girdle obesity which he offered in self-excuse, but his pressing affairs at home—he was deeply committed in land speculations. The descendant of an officer of the New South Wales Corps had no residual martial fire. Aubrey Foyle, single and unattached, did not seem to be aware that an explanation might be expected. After all, it was an Army of Volunteers. Borkum's wife let everyone know that her husband could not be spared;

he was now doing all the major surgery at the local hospital, and nobody could take his place. Gallantly Borkum announced that for the duration of the war he would operate on any of the relatives of those abroad—without fee. Challis said nothing.

In the early days of May 1915 heavy casualty lists appeared, black-edged, in all the newspapers. It was the first time the people realised the high price of their service. In many streets of Cockle Creek there were bereaved families. Men were shining in new and unexpected colours. A mere boy from Heggity's Lane won a high decoration for his conduct at "The Landing". The tone of the press, however, grew more sober. The strident braggart voices were not so loud. For a while the nation's ordeal softened even the bitterness of medical relations; unusual courtesies graced the intercourse of doctors who had been sworn to hostility. Gertrude, busy with her Red Cross activities, at last reluctantly consented to let Nature take its course. At first the War had provided her with another argument for postponement. "Who would want to bring a son into this sort of a world to be mowed down by guns and shells?" With a new briskness Challis went about his daily work, full of expectation for the wished-for dynasty. But as the columns of the newspapers went on being full with new casualties, he found himself for days haunted by the image of a southerly breeze sweeping down Macquarie Street after a day of heat intolerable.

The Moreton Bay fig-trees are still, very still. They scarcely seem to breathe. Men and women go panting by. Even to think is a weary effort.

Suddenly down the street is wafted half uncertainly the faintest stir in the heavy air. It is the first solitary outrider of the storm. A cool breeze follows but quickly drops. Then with a brusque violence comes the Southerly rushing headlong! Ah, blessed relief of coolness after those stagnant sultry stifling hours. In a moment the paths and the edges of the street are littered with great ovoid leaves, and with the

juicy brown fruit of the fig. Battered and still the fruit lies, but like small Catherine-wheels the leaves are bowled along, far and wide. Some are caught, and rest flattened, against the railings of the Domain. There are heaps turning over in changing clumps within the gutter. The wind is blowing a dirge from every tree it strips. Down the street go myriad leaves, like gods overwhelmed, *sidhe*, fugitive and impotent, rabble before the Conqueror. Sometimes there are leaves that dance madly as if in a bacchanalia of the foolish—dancing madly, all sense of purpose and of direction lost. More than one tree is trailing a broken wing. Then comes the rain.

The rain is falling heavily. The wind has dropped. The gutters fill with swirling yellow waters whose passage the leaves obstruct. There are leaves everywhere. They are not all crinkled and yellow, too many are young and green.

So ends the foliage of a tree. The rain is cool and will nourish these leaves to quicker decay! Tomorrow the sweeper will come to free the gutters and clear the drains and hide this evening's disarray. The air is fresher; windows are opening. The heat is over, blessed relief! The havoc of a storm, it too, will pass away.

* * *

(i) BITTER GRATITUDE

Two years before the war Challis had operated on young Bernard Muldoon. He had been called out, in the dead of night, to see a young man groaning with pain, yet afraid to move, in a terrace house in Athlone Place. It had all come on just after a hearty meal. Hot bottles had given a temporary relief and the first vomiting had ceased. But when the pain recurred and continued Mrs Muldoon had gone for Challis. "Doctor dear," she said as he entered the house, "you were never so welcome." The patient was her only son.

Challis had no doubt that this was an appendix case, perhaps a ruptured appendix. The temperature was only a little up. Mrs Muldoon, who had taken it during the first moments

of the attack—for she herself did some rough nursing locally—stated it had been below normal. The abdomen was all rigid and the pain diffused vaguely over it. Obviously a surgical operation was urgently necessary.

Challis knew his limitations as a surgeon; his range covered an appendix, a hernia, and some of the lower abdominal operations in a woman. He went only for the "straight out things". He had done enough of these to be competent. His surgery, if slow, was cautious and conservative. But unconsciously he fixed his diagnoses too often within the narrow scope of his own surgical powers.

Two hours later, in the operating room of the local hospital, he was more than surprised to find the appendix only a little injected. There was some free fluid round about, but through the limited approach of a McBurney's incision he could see nothing more. Perhaps, after all, he muttered to himself, it had been only a case of intestinal colic. He removed the appendix and closed the abdomen effectively, if a little laboriously. Outside in the hall he reassured the anxious mother who had been waiting impatiently. She mustn't worry. Everything should be all right. The patient would be sick for a day or two, of course. "God bless you doctor," said Mrs Muldoon. "I'll remember you always in my prayers."

The next day Bernard Muldoon was not well. His abdomen was a little more distended and he had vomited several times. The Nurse in Charge was a little uneasy about him. He looked worn out and his pulse was "up" a little. Challis was less alarmed; it was all due to reaction following that handling of the bowel. He ordered an enema. Mrs Muldoon was always "hanging about" the bedside, but her confidence was great, and she was praying hard.

During the following two days Challis's patient got slowly but progressively worse. The enemas were ineffective. All the nursing manoeuvres used to deflate a distended abdomen failed to achieve anything. Bernard Muldoon was obviously growing weaker. He was now vomiting frequently a nasty

dark material. His pulse was rapid and thread-like. Macleay, who had come over in a friendly way, was pessimistic. "Get a Consultant over to cover yourself, even if you have to pay him yourself." Mrs Muldoon, now obviously anxious and overwrought, welcomed the idea. "What can have gone wrong?" she kept repeating to the nurses. The idea of someone being to blame was quickly taking shape in her mind.

Macleay, himself, did no surgery beyond a circumcision or beyond guillotining a tonsil or curetting some adenoids. "You can't go halfway," he had always advised Challis. "Half surgeons like half virgins are honoured neither in heaven nor hell." If you want to do surgery go "home" and take a higher degree and do it properly. Challis was beginning to feel the soundness of all that advice.

Possessed now by a concealed interior panic, Challis awaited the coming of the great man. This one arrived an hour after the appointed time in an expensive car, with all the aura of the Great Surgeon about him, and smelling strongly of ether for he had come from operating at his General Hospital. He wasn't long in making up his mind. Any newcomer could see that Bernard Muldoon was *in extremis*. The Consultant was looking down on the tideless sea of peritonitis. Nor was he slow in forming a diagnosis. But since Mrs Muldoon was in the ward, watching from a distance, they spun out their consultation by the bedside. Then they retired to the Board Room to talk it all over.

"You hadn't suspected, I suppose, Challis," the Consultant began, "that this young man had a perforated duodenal ulcer?" There was just a touch of acerbity in his tone. Everyone knew he disapproved strongly of general practitioners doing operations. Wasn't he always being called out to cover up their tracks or help them out of a mess they'd got themselves into? He resented these occasional surgeons and here was a case in point. An experienced general surgeon would have gone down in the middle line when in similar circumstances he had found the appendix so obviously healthy.

Medical etiquette, however, required that the Consultant should (more or less) sustain his colleague. Not, of course, to the patient's harm. It was obviously impossible to do anything for Muldoon now. The dumbfounded Challis heard him tell Mrs Muldoon: "I'm afraid there's nothing more can be done now. These things happen even in the simplest cases. This is one of general peritonitis which has gone on progressively in spite of operation . . ." Challis noted he had said nothing that was grossly untrue nor anything that was grossly unfair to Challis. "Yes, five guineas," he said in a loud whisper to the astonished Challis. Mrs Muldoon had the fee ready with five single shillings wrapped up in five crumpled dirty notes. She placed them in the Consultant's hand and with much bitterness said, "I wish to God, sir, it had been yourself did the operation."

Challis attended Muldoon during his last hours under the shadow of a now hostile mother. The eyes of the patient were terribly sunken, with great black rings around them. The face had become very drawn and the thin-tipped nose seemed to fade into the surrounding air. At the cold wrist no thread of pulse could be felt, yet somehow he lingered on, with a pillow under his drawn-up knees, lucid in mind, and telling them all he was feeling much better. And then shortly his great thirst ceased and his limbs relaxed in death. Mrs Muldoon escaped over to the Chapel of her Church near by, in the Convent of which she had had the Nuns "storming heaven" to save her son.

After that, Challis hated going down to Athlone Place. He felt the people there, as a whole, were actively against him, and yet occasionally he had to visit some of his lodge patients in a big old-fashioned residential only two doors away from Mrs Muldoon's own boarding house. No one could convince Mrs Muldoon that her son had not been murdered at that hospital: wasn't he a fine healthy young man with never a day's sickness before that last one, and a member of the local football team?

All this had been before the War. The Gallipoli Expedition had come and gone with its great losses, and now France like a voracious monster, still unglutted, was consuming young Australian lives. Mrs Muldoon confronted her old doctor one day in the house of a neighbour. She was much greyer and her manner had grown gentler in prayer. Challis felt uncomfortable, but her voice was friendly. "I never thought, Doctor Challis, I'd ever be thanking you and God for taking my boy. But now I know how well off he is. And how well off I am myself. There's Mrs McCawley's boy been killed at Gallipoli, and Mrs Brewster's of Mudie Street is missing in France. They won't be seeing their boys again, and their boys died with hate in their eyes. I have my own boy here, up in the Field of Mars. He didn't die with the hard word on his tongue, and he hurt no one in his lifetime. And he's where no one can hurt him now with shell or shrapnel. And I don't have to be dreading the little telegraph boy coming up the street to Athlone Place with his yellow telegram and the same message of sympathy all the others get. Don't I know it all by heart from the others? A clerk writes it out and what does it mean at all to a grieving mother? And I don't have to be searching through the long lists in the *Herald* half wild with the fear of finding his name I'm looking for. Who'd want my Bernard to be living now? He's up there in the Field of Mars Cemetery and he's with God, too. I can go up there and put flowers on his grave and say my prayers near him, but what can Mrs McCawley or Mrs Brewster do? They'll have a pension, that's all; you can't put flowers on that . . ."

Challis, deeply moved, managed to get away from the lyrical flow of her words. As he reached the door he heard her last message, that she would never cease to pray for him, too. He was drinking the bitter chalice of a mother's forgiveness.

* * *

(ii) THE BLIND MAN OF THE ARCADE

In those heroic and shameful days Challis heard of soldiers dying deaths unlike the men he had known. A subservient clerk at the local bank had, before his heroic end, become the fearless leader of a battalion. The stingy grocer in the next street had given his all generously. And men who had lived in showy pretence had stepped out from behind the screen of their flashiness to show themselves simple and brave before the enemy trenches.

Late in 1917 Challis, whose rounds now took him far afield, was called to a humble home behind Petty's Hotel on Bunkers Hill, to see a woman who had coughed up some blood. She was a war-widow, consciously elated by the heroism of her dead husband, and sanguine with all the optimism of the Tuberculous. When she told her story, Challis's mind slipped back to the days when, as a student, he "did the block" on Saturday mornings. Down George Street and around the Post Office, up Pitt Street, past King Street, and through the Arcade, then back to George Street again. It was a fixed course, and few of the young men and women ever veered from it.

In those days at the George Street Corner of the Arcade there used to stand, his eyes concealed by great black goggles, an unshaven young man. He held, suspended by a strap from his shoulder, a tray on which studs and matches were displayed, and on a tin plate suspended from his neck was the simple notice: "BLIND FROM BIRTH".

Of course he made no direct request for alms; that would have contravened some law. He merely offered the suggestion of misfortune and left open the opportunity. Many hurried by, quickening their pace at the sight of him, but others dropped a coin, and some took without the need of it a box of matches or a stud. On Saturday mornings he did best when men and women were exhilarated by the prospect of release for the week-end from toil and the tyranny of an office. Who could deny

himself the satisfaction of giving a copper? But, also on week afternoons, kind-hearted women took pity on the pitiful figure of a vigorous young man born blind, whose eyes saw no reddening dawn or the self-revealing heart of a flower. His untidy hair, his shabby attire, his quiet submissive attitude before a great affliction won him a quiet pity and heightened his appeal. Men and women threw a coin as ransom for their own sufferings or out of gratitude for their own good sight. Late in the afternoon, when heavily loaded trams had carried away the city workers and the shops were shut, a little woman would come to lead him through the now deserted streets to a distant home: somewhere out of sight and mind of the crowd, beyond Yurong Street, in that companionable suburb where live the destitute and the hunted, their occupations and their habits not self-righteously observed.

In the first months of the War, few noticed the Blind Man's absence from his accustomed post. The young men and women still for a while made their round and "did the block" on Saturday mornings. The Arcade was still full of the aroma of coffee here, and rich with the savour of fine meats from Sylvester's store.

But it was chiefly men in uniform who now swarmed along the paths. The atmosphere of the city had changed. The sporting game to be played in the afternoon mattered little or had ceased to take place. In this upheaval, the blind man of the Arcade was forgotten, and his absence went unremarked.

In point of fact, he too, was in camp. For the blind beggar of the Arcade was a fraud. Under the mask of those black goggles a cunning mind had exploited the philanthropy of his fellow-men, and extracted a very lucrative living from some who were merely sentimental and others who thought a coin might salve their conscious guilt. A lucrative and a lazy occupation. A double life. An existence of humbug with a conniving wife. Once long before there had been some troublesome affair with the police in England and he had escaped, to

adopt the disguise of a blind man after arriving in Australia. Amidst a freely-giving people these two had found it always paid to excite sympathy.

A fraud. A parasite. A refugee from Justice. Yet in his heart of deceit the sounds of war had awakened something better. Instincts of the sleeping English heart? The hibernating adventure spirit of a man? Something in any case had taken fire, and so he left at home the tray, the matches and the studs, placed in a drawer the placard and the black goggles, and in the uniform of an Australian soldier buried his old English and his new Australian shame.

Challis found himself picturing that old familiar figure marching forward, with the adopted slouch of an Australian soldier, conscious that all this meant renewal: all the old evil sloughed away. This was emergence: out of the murk of old unworthiness, out of the groping, into the light, marching forward, with the borrowed cock-sureness of the native-born Australian soldier. How many others had, on the impulse of a noble moment, put off the mask and the old deceit, the vain make-believe, the fleshy ignoble pretence?

The blind man of the Arcade met an enemy sniper's shot somewhere near Hill 60—hurling him back into the gloomy corridor that opens on a wider vision. His period of Service had been short—Liverpool Camp, Egypt near the desert with all the intoxications of Cairo, that landing, one April morning, upon a beach . . .

And now in a room behind Petty's Hotel on Bunker's Hill, Challis was listening to this man's relict telling her story with the exultation of one whose husband has played the hero's part. Even while she spoke she was coughing. Her handkerchief was red with tell-tale streaks. But she would keep on talking, for she was not willing to deny herself the joy of story-telling. Challis leaving her felt all the pangs of one who grieves upon the still-born valours of his dream.

* * *

(iii) MOTHERHOOD—BY PROXY

1918. Monotony. Enthusiasm at low water. The refuse and the little creeping life exposed. Refuse, odour and filth, the sludge and the mud. Disillusionment and discontent. The grinding of the wheels by those who prepared public opinion was still noisy, but had become irritating. Dull resentments were coming to the surface. Petty dishonesties were rampant. Rackets everywhere. Anxiety for the future mingled with disgust at the present. After those great heroisms of the world when the patent right to valour no class or race could claim, chivalry was thawing in a thousand meannesses.

For Challis there was at this time the added disappointment of his own domestic life, the greater because it had to be hidden from the world outside. Nothing had happened to gratify his wish for a dynasty of the flesh. Could it be that nature, flouted, was having its little revenge? His own midwifery practice had grown out of all proportion to his other work. Borkum was constantly declaring himself *not* a man midwife, but at the same time announced himself ready to repair the obstetric damage done by any of his colleagues. . . .

At times Challis had to submit patiently and in silence to the insensitive remarks of the poorer people who crowded the house of a parturient neighbour, especially in that moment of relaxed tension after the delivery. They would jest pointedly at his own childlessness, thinking it voluntary and deliberate. "The better-off people are all like that", or "The doctors know too much", or "Doctor Challis sees too many others to want his own to suffer like the rest." Challis could only turn his back and in silence disregard these gadflies. Gertrude appeared to have lost interest in the matter. Had she not tried?

Half unconsciously, Challis began to note a change in her, a change both physical and psychical. At the Golf Club they whispered: "She is letting herself go"—"She is going off"—both in looks and in her golf. It was true: her robust freshness was passing into grossness. She had recently taken lessons

from a new golf professional. It seems her grip and her swing had all been all wrong, but in spite of her handicap everything got worse and worse. With it her standing as an individual in the Club suffered. Macleay was right, thought Challis, when he said at the bar: "In a Golf Club one ranks on one's golf alone." Those Sunday trips into the country had long since ceased. With Macleay gone and practice ever busier, there had been no chance of getting a substitute for the day. He was now caught on the weary treadmill of the successful general practitioner. Even in Macquarie Street he was getting known as a man with a big practice, working an extensive mine, though mining a low grade ore.

In August of 1918 he found himself, one warm night, near midnight, looking out from the verandah of a small cottage that overlooked the sleeping port. The sky was clear and full of stars. Over across the water the lights of the city still flickered. He could see the outline of a coastal steamer moving gently into its wharf at Darling Harbour. It was a placid scene.

Within the cottage a young woman was in labour and Challis was waiting, with the patience that had won him a local reputation, for the moment when he could help her. The story was an ugly one.

In that cottage lived an elderly maiden lady, of saintly generosities and pious, who ten years before had adopted a girl with spastic paralysis. The child's legs were twisted in scissors fashion. The right hand, held perpetually behind her back, was ceaselessly agitated in purposeless movements. The state of her intelligence was low. Her pointed head and face gave her a lamb-like appearance, but her temper was anything but docile. She was prone to sudden outbursts of crying and screaming. This was the creature an unmarried spinster had chosen for the object of her pent-up love and charity. Her she petted and surfeited with sweets and bon-bons. Her she dressed in fine soft garments. All the hours of the elderly woman's day were at the command of the young paralysed

invalid. All the hours. Yet some male, somehow unperceived, penetrated the fold and left the idiot girl with child. Who and how Challis never learnt: it seemed beforehand impossible of achievement.

Quietly and without fuss, Challis had been called in months before to verify the fact. The elderly spinster was wearing no downcast air. Already she had rejected the counsel of a friend to "have it terminated". Similarly she had resisted, years before, the advice to have the girl's legs operated on. No! Nature must take its course. If ever she knew the individual who had perpetrated the dastardly act, that knowledge she kept to herself. All her devotion had, henceforth, a single aim: the happy and successful outcome of the confinement.

When the moment arrived for Challis to intervene he went inside. The lights over the city were fewer. Darkness enshrouded the tied-up coastal steamer at its wharf. The smell of chloroform was soon pervading the cottage—and, within the bedroom, with an ordered fussiness, the midwife was going about her work.

In the end the obstetric difficulties proved less than had been anticipated. Under the anaesthetic the agitated movements of the patient's arm had ceased and her lamb-like face had grown serene. The newborn infant was well-formed and outwardly healthy. Challis, turning from his duties by the young mother, found the elderly spinster peering with ecstatic joy into the newborn's face, as if in a mirror she was enjoying the consummation of her own thwarted desires. She seemed even to be seeking in the infant's face some likeness of herself. For her this procreation had taken on a sacramental character, and she had long since shut out from her mind all thoughts of the brutal ravishing.

All Challis's medical training had taught him to believe in the wisdom of summarily suppressing such offsprings. Yet who may prophesy the capacity for good or evil in a given inheritance? He found himself thinking of some outstanding examples—of Laennec, son of a neuropath, perhaps himself a

neuropath also, certainly from an early age physically afflicted by tuberculosis; of Charles Darwin, that protected psycho-neurotic, living his isolated dream; of J. J. Thomson of Cambridge—at that very moment immersed in notable scientific work, yet whose own uncle had been found incapable of looking after his own affairs. And after all, what was Life, if it did not mean the will free to procreate?

The confinement over, fatigue now possessed him. He felt unhappy, with the unhappiness of a secret envy. How easy comes this high emprise of motherhood to cottage homes? Here was the young idiot mother, now awake, gazing with dull incomprehension on the infant peacefully sleeping in a basket. The elderly spinster, her face wreathed in smiles, was bringing into the room a bowl of freshly cut flowers.

As wearily he pushed-to the garage door, Challis saw in the sky the flesh tints of a young dawn. Upstairs, in her bed, Gertrude was sleeping heavily, sprawled in a great heap across the bed. Her gold-haired Pekinese raised its head petulantly from a cushion at the foot of the bed where it had been luxuriously reposing. A sudden whiff of anaesthetic from his own clothes sent his mind back to that room overlooking the harbour. Gertrude herself was breathing deeply and regularly like a woman under an anaesthetic. But there would be no infant cry to break the whispered silence of the room. All he could hear was the crool, low and disturbing, of his neighbour's pigeons, making their flagrant love under the eaves.

* * *

(iv) GLORIA—AND HALLELUJAH!

The casualties were mounting. Every small street and lane in Cockle Creek had had its bereavement. Challis was always reckoning the losses among his own contemporaries. Copland was back but had lost a leg. Follet had died in a foreign camp as prisoner. Benford was missing. . . . So the story went on. Civilians, too, had paid in tragedy at home. The German medical agent through whom Challis bought his practice had

committed suicide. It was now impossible to keep up the reinforcements necessary for maintaining the strength of Australian units. The penalty of those childless years was upon a nation threatened with extinction from within and without. There had been recently the spectacle of an empty saddle parade: horses without riders! Then in October 1918 came news of Michael Rooney's death from wounds. He had previously won the D.S.O., and the M.C., with Bar. His father, in the frozen stupor of his grief, could say nothing but "God's Will be done", as if to still rebellious thoughts that wanted to surge blasphemously. Tears had become too mean a tribute.

Challis went out to Fermoy to offer in person his sympathy. He found the now aged doctor, composed, but with his long face hard and bitter, his small eyes burning with a terrible cold hatred. In a level voice he uttered a curse upon the Kaiser who for him was the author of all this holocaust. "May he die slowly, as I have seen better men die," he said, "of a general peritonitis, his abdomen swollen, his legs drawn up, licking with a dry tongue his cracked sordes-covered lips, his eyes sunk in the dark cavern of their orbits, vomiting, vomiting, vomiting . . . asking for water in vain, and haunted in his still lucid mind by the vision of all the horrors his war had brought to others . . ."

Michael had been the one focus of this widowed man's affections: Michael who had smiling impertinent blue eyes and a dare-devil blood. Now he lay in alien, perhaps unconsecrated ground, and in his tomb was all a father's dream.

Like the southerly wind which sweeps turbulently after the intolerable heat of a summer's day, the war just as suddenly ceased. At first the stunned people could not believe the news. Then in reaction pandemonium followed, with childish foolish excesses, incredible licence, extravagant horse-play.

That evening there was no one in the waiting-room. All Cockle Creek seemed to have gone over to town. The six o'clock closing of the hotels which had become law during the

war had changed all—even the character of the ordinary Friday nights in Cockle Creek. Now, men and women flocked into town, where along the crowded streets they jostled one another excitedly but good-humouredly, the police looking benevolently on. Gertrude, who had been asked to a dance at the Hotel Australia, was in bed with a headache. Late in the evening, Challis, restless and a prey to mingled thoughts and emotions, went out to walk, at random, in the cool night air.

Following no set course he found himself presently in the Blackwattle Bay area. Houses had been everywhere built on what had once been nothing more than reclaimed black mud. He had walked on its springy drying surface as a boy. In the water near by he had caught the giant "jelly-fish", hauling them out with sticks, fearful of their sting. He remembered the mud, the slow subsidence, the little creatures that popped in and out of tiny holes, long-legged creeping things, and the heavy foetor over all. If they had reclaimed this earth, why could they not redeem a people? Nearby was the bay on which as a student he had watched the eight-oared crews practising "starts" late in the afternoon, all lectures over. He fancied he saw their oars once again striking a white light from the dark anvil of the water.

It was all so far away, and trivial now seemed all those student revels. Where was Doctor Rooney on this night? Down on his knees, perhaps, repeating that phrase "God's Will be done", seeking to recover his lost mood of surrender, perhaps, too, asking pardon for that fierce outburst of hatred against the Kaiser, or even saying a Salve Regina for the man he had cursed.

Then, turning in a circle through quiet inconspicuous streets, Challis skirted the edge of the city proper, caught a view of blazing lights and heard the shrieking outbursts of the people "celebrating". The trams coming back from the city were already crowded with men hanging perilously on to every possible place where they could get a foothold. The conductors had given up the hopeless task of trying to collect fares.

Challis kept repeating to himself: "This is a great day. I should be revelling, too, making a fool of myself, throwing my hat in the air like any normal man." Instead, he felt himself invaded only by a sense of unquiet and also by the conviction of his own unimportance. He knew himself doomed to imperfect small achievements—he was gravely anxious about his own and his country's future. What was he himself? Nothing more than an inert connective tissue stroma, having no highly specialised part in the social organism. He thought, in self-pity, of his own private disappointments, and with bitterness recalled the first rapture of marriage and those happy days of comradeship when together they watched the dawn visit the blue Camarthen mist with gentle grace. . . . He could find no heart for the present loud-mouthed rejoicings. Yet was it not a great day, comparable with that first date of freedom when his own convict ancestor found himself free, when on a horse he had his first gallop into the bush, the reins thrown loose, the wind in his face, the stirrups long—free! . . .

Depressed, he turned for home. When he reached the corner where his colleague lived, he found Borkum's house gaily illuminated. Obviously a party was in progress. Through the widely open windows men and women in evening dress with paper caps were cavorting and singing. Challis began to consider who would be there among the guests. Everyone knew Borkum's guests and when they were entertained, for in the columns of the *Sunday Times* his parties were carefully recorded. "Doctor and Mrs Borkum's theatre party included . . ." "Mrs Borkum was her radiant self in . . ." For this occasion, now, they would certainly have Horton the Labour Minister whom Borkum had operated on, and John Leery the recently elected Grand Master of the Masons, perhaps also Paddy Cashel the Parliamentary lobbyer "who had the Catholics in the bag", and Flora Beyman the woman columnist whom everyone made a fuss of, at least before her face, seeking the patronage of a paragraph. Perhaps, too, some actress from

the revue at Her Majesty's would have come in late, and, of course, that adulator Aubrey Foyle—the Surgeon's Spaniel as Macleay dubbed him.

It was obviously a wonderful party and worthy of so great an occasion. The revelry was reaching its climax. A surge of envy filled Challis even while he despised his more successful colleague. Borkum's efficiency none could deny. He had brought new methods into suburban practice: who before, had heard of a general practitioner with a complete follow-up system, or with a secretary who filed all the latest articles from the foreign medical journals? Who could blame him for swimming into prominence during the absence of many Australian doctors? The war for Borkum had brought great opportunities and he had used every one of them: social and professional. Already he had a room in Macquarie Street, among the Specialists.

Out of the open windows came a frenzied chorus, shrieked with the heartiness of half-intoxicated men and women. All Challis could catch was a single line: "Hallelujah! you're a bum", the rest was lost in the distance. It was the chorus of a people's thanksgiving. Mudie Street as he tramped along seemed darker and longer, but at least it was silent and no red lamp was burning.

* * *

In England it was Autumn: tumble of yellow leaves in wet country lanes under a lazy fog. Trees throwing to the cold earth their desperate bribe of leaves—for continuance.

In Northern France a mellowed silence over the ruffled earth. Blue smoke rising unshackled from long-forsaken hearths. And like a convent girl's strumming, the Church bells tolling. Bells tolling, tolling for Victory. Tolling for Victory. Bells tolling . .

Chapter XIII

BEHOLD THE VICTORIOUS!

(i) AFTERMATH

In King Street, Sydney, a man in shabby uniform accosted Challis: "Kin yer spare a deaner, Mister, for a digger down on his luck?" The tone of the appeal was obsequious but the manner a little menacing. No one knew better than the soldier that few citizens would face publicly the vituperation which would follow a refusal. Was he not an Anzac? The letter "A" over the flash of battalion colours on his shoulder bore witness to it. He had stormed a beach. What matter if the characteristic soft felt hat with its upturned rim was dirty and deformed—the emblem of the Rising Sun was still there. His face beneath the hat was hard, and deeply furrowed. His mouth was thin and bitter, and those small gimlet eyes which once looked out over parapets had lost their humorous twinkle. His hands were unwashed and tobacco-stained, but they had handled a rifle valiantly. His heart had not faltered in the face of an attack, on alien soil, amid the débris of his friends. Now, his breath smelt of whiskey, but previously he had been a hero under Mars. Because of this the people all forgave him, forgave and excused his untidy whitening uniform open at the neck, his collarless shirt, his dusty uncleaned yellow boots, and his mendicancy. It was still the brief period of a people's grateful acknowledgment. Yes, he was a hero, though in moral disarray. So, men and women, rushing by got rid of him with a silver coin. Close on towards 6 p.m. men hurrying into the corner public-house for a "last one" before closing time invited the uniformed man loitering in the bar to "give it a name, Digger". Then, having appeased one who might have made caustic remarks, and having salved their

own consciences a little, they departed brusquely to catch their trams.

On this occasion, Challis, having given the soldier-beggar half-a-crown, and having received something more than the usual perfunctory thanks, passed on his way up King Street. He always enjoyed in this walk looking over at St James's Church and at the Supreme Court Building, because of their connection with the distant unhappy days. Were they not memorials to our greatest Convict architect?

In Macquarie Street a group of ex-soldiers in uniform were playing musical instruments while one of them took round the hat or caught coins thrown from windows above. Few passers-by dared not to respond. In the late afternoon women walking along the street were greeted at times with rude gallantries or even uncouth pleasantries. Along this street, which bore the name of an early Governor of the young Colony, these same soldiers had marched in arrogant fitness to the cheers of the crowd. Nurses standing on the steps of the hospital had waved "Good Luck" to them. Now they were "spongers", accosting citizens who, in the safe privacy of their homes, railed against this minor form of blackmail.

These were but an insignificant fraction of a numerous and gallant band. The great majority, unperceived in their civilian dress, were fitting into old or new occupations. Some were trying to make good on farms though they had never previously been farmers. Others were living in houses specially built for them at Narrabeen or elsewhere. But the small insignificant fraction of feckless returned soldiers hastened an ultimate reaction, and gave, to the mean-spirited among those who had not served, an apparent justification for the gathering public hostility to militarism.

Macleay had come back, in appearance a much older man than his years, with grey hairs at his temples and a rough speech full of the new slang. His tongue was more than ever ready to castigate those who had voluntarily stayed at home. His bitterness increased on finding his practice scarcely existed:

the old *locum tenens* had not held his patients. There had been a gentlemen's agreement during the phase of vehement patriotism according to which a doctor remaining at home would at once return to the serving medical man those who prior to the war had been the latter's private patients. Few honoured the pact in the cooling-off stage of public patriotism. Few, indeed, could have honoured it fully. The choice remained with the patients, and although these admired the high motives which had impelled their former doctor to go abroad on military service, none believed his knowledge of medicine had been improved by it. Alone, in Macleay's suburb, the colourless Aubrey Foyle had sought to make restitution according to the agreement, but his attempt at "playing the game" savoured too much of patronage and Macleay was infuriated. Was not Foyle the anaesthetist to his *bête noire*, Borkum? Had not both of them swum into prosperity behind the backs of those doctors who served abroad? Borkum indeed had gained some degree of surgical fame over all the City. He had begun cautiously by doing only the safe operations, avoiding all of those in which the operative mortality would be high. He could not yet afford to have many post-operative deaths. He was very fond of opening the abdomen for "adhesions" after some other surgeon's operation, and also of anchoring organs that (he said) had "dropped", especially the kidney and sometimes the stomach. Thus, he fixed, by operative scars, a certain number of patients permanently to his own practice. He had also patented several instruments and given his name to an abdominal retractor which could be seen in the show-case of one of the surgical instrument sellers in the City. Of course he modified Sims Speculum and the Spencer Wells forceps—soon his name, at least in his own hospital, would be permanently attached to them as the original inventor. And all the while he was gaining experience, improving his technique, and becoming expert. The old clumsiness had gone. No one could deny now that he was a good operator. He stayed on, however, in Cockle Creek,

although most of his work was being done in Macquarie, the Specialists' street. He could not afford to sever his connection with the little suburban hospital, his one surgical post, before finding a niche for himself on a Metropolitan one.

In the first five years after the war, priority for the Returned Soldiers was publicly demanded and often given. Sydney's social life was split, during this time, into two distinct factions. A fissure ran, too, through every Trades Union and every professional body. It was caused by the answer to a single question: *Did he go to the War?* In Clubs men seeking membership were not infrequently blackballed because they had not been in uniform. The whole of the Australian Army had remained a Volunteer Army. Twice at a referendum the people had turned down Conscription by a small majority of votes. The serving soldiers therefore considered themselves an élite. But slowly and gradually a reaction set in. First employers became irritated at the behaviour of a small number of their employees to whom they had been forced to give preference. They wanted the old freedom to choose, on merit alone, the men they paid. So, to begin with, they broke the spirit of the Law and then later, and flagrantly, the Law itself. The Returned Soldiers' vote had, at the beginning, been an important factor at every Election. But soon their brief solidarity weakened and Returned Men voted on the old party lines. The fact was that the patriotic motive within the life of the community was fading out. That tiny fraction of ex-soldiers who made a nuisance of themselves in the streets provided a paltry pretext for mean-spirited people. Fewer and fewer of those who had "come back" wore in their lapels the badge of the Returned Soldier. The public did not realise that these feckless "spongers" were victims of the stress in war, no less than those who had lost a limb.

Macleay was not one of those who gave up wearing his badge. He wore it to the end of his days. He kept, too, like a religious festival, the annual reunion of his old battalion. Its numbers dwindled each year. Some died off, prematurely

worn out by their great efforts. Others sought to shut out from their minds the memory of harsh experiences. The urgent call now was to make both ends meet. The old hatred of the Germans, too, had died down. In its place came, subtly at first, an organised propaganda against the French and the Mediterranean races. Then books poured into Australia which preached the doctrine of the cultural superiority of the Teuton. Macleay gave himself up to the narrow local fight of regaining his old practice. "In a suburb," he said sententiously to Challis, "you must be suburban or suffer."

Challis continued to be extremely busy; his monthly returns had never been higher. But he was not happy, and within his own household tragedy was looming. It was the old story of sickness in a doctor's family. Had he not been anxious, he would not have been petulant. Unfortunately, his concern showed itself too often in impatience and sometimes even in irritation. Challis, like many doctors, felt some resentment that he should have the added burden of one of his own being ill. So it was he displayed in his own house none of the tenderness he lavished on the poor family of a back street.

Gertrude had been for a long time complaining of headaches. Her complaints were so constant that they irked, and sometimes his manner with her became brusque. He ordered "something different" when the tablets previously given did not have the desired effect. "Functional" was a handy word and an easy substitute for any diagnosis. She should pull herself together, and "spring out of it".

At the bottom of his mind smouldered, of course, the old resentment over her childlessness. It was Nature that now was refusing to play, but it was on Gertrude that he fixed all the blame. If only she had not lost her chance in those first ardent years. Not that he upbraided her in so many words, but his ill-concealed disappointment coloured all his attitude and chilled his kindly interest in her state. He had worshipped too much in her those physical qualities of vigour and soundness. Now, already, she was "letting herself go"—every one

of her friends said so. She was getting slack about the house affairs. Golf no more held her enthusiasm. She had, in truth, never been very quick in intelligence or highly imaginative, but now she was growing duller. Even her expression was becoming somewhat wooden. She was growing plainer under his very gaze.

What blinded him during all those months? Was it that seeing her too often and too near, he did not appreciate the magnitude of the change taking place in her? Or was it that a growing lack of sympathy obscured his ordinary judgement?

Then, one evening, sitting and watching her, he suddenly grew aware of what, as he later learnt, most of his medical friends had long since found out. She was the victim of an insidious disease. Yes: her face was becoming massive; her lower lip more prominent, even bulky. The nostrils were gaping: once she had had so finely shaped a nose. He recalled, too, the complaint that her tongue was feeling too big . . . "functional" he had then thought it in his private opinion. And those hands, which he thought the swinging a golf club had enlarged somewhat, were now much too large to be so easily explained. He was, at once, almost prostrate with shame for his own heartless indifference. Gertrude, sitting beside the fire, vacantly looking in it, seemed at times inscrutable in his presence. When she looked up, pity and a sense of guilt welled within him as he gazed into her mild uncaring eyes.

Even before he sought the advice of a Specialist he knew there was no hope. The old Consultant who came was gentle and understanding. He spoke of Pierre Marie—a name to conjure with—his own student days—and of that new star amid the galaxy of brilliant North Americans—Harvey Cushing. He also sought to comfort Challis by assuring him that nothing done, even at an earlier stage, could have made any difference. And as for not perceiving it before, was there not the case of a London doctor who had suffered similarly himself, yet had failed to make the diagnosis staring him in the face till years

after all his friends had whispered it privately. Prognosis? Many go on living insensitively for years. Some suffer severely from headaches or from visual defects. And some, mercifully, die unexpectedly early.

Challis resumed his work like a dazed man in a world befogged. As his pity for her grew, so his blame for himself increased in intensity. He showered her now with useless sympathy. Gertrude, wooden and immobile, becoming monstrous, showed no answering awareness. So, this was the end of all his design in life; what served it now to dream beyond the present disconsolate days? At this very moment in his affairs when he was enjoying a material success, she was unconscious of it and he incapable of profiting by it. He looked at her with mingled horror and pity. Hair was growing on her chin. He was grateful she was ceasing to complain.

A decade after the end of that first World War there swept over Australia a flood of blatant materialism. Everyone was caught up in its whirling waters. The people let themselves be swept from the memory of past heroic sufferings towards vulgar self-gratifications. Comfort and ease became everything. As a reaction from the gross self-indiscipline of large families irresponsibly spawned, the vogue changed to a wilful suppression of every instinct for self-multiplication. And, lest their consciences should mutter, a frantic search was made for specious arguments to justify their madness. Those, vain of intellect, supplied them, glad in their task of deriding any works of the spirit. The people turned in a mob, from old stories when heroism was the common habit of young and old, and glory, the trivial incident of the day. Now chivalry was a comedian's jest for the music hall, and they were setting new high values on anything shoddy at a cinema. It was a time of withered faiths, of spiritual marasmus in a young nation.

Challis suffered from the evil of his period. Wealth and material success alone seemed able to supply his needed

panacea. But since he had the farther sight of introspective men he, more quickly than they, perceived the danger.

At times he imagined himself standing on the edge of a stagnant water pool that had shrunk from a once sweet water-hole. Over there was the false beauty of iridescent colours which once had lured him. Near the bank, however, was an offensive thick pale green scum, and a little further out the turbid brown water with its muddy bottom full of dis-integrating twigs and leaves. Torpor was over all.

No, not over all. Further out, on the far side, there was, faintly to be discerned, the pulse of a movement. It was a tiny incoming flow, its trickle scarcely to be perceived, no rustle made. It heartened Challis to believe this trickle would survive the ordeal of stone and the attrition of sand to slowly gather force, till lucent and crystal, later on, its water would sparkle in the richer meetings of a creek.

But, too often, on his rounds and between his house visits, his mind returned to the wide patch of pale green offensive scum, and the turbid brown pool with its disintegrating twigs and leaves. In these moments he felt himself abased and shuddered in revulsion from the foetor of too early decay.

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(ii) SOME LEOPARDS GO UPHILL TO DIE

There were men in this first decade of the after-war years who resembled predatory animals. In the pursuit of wealth they stalked their victims cunningly and slew them brutally. Theirs was the rule of claw and fang, but carried out according to Stock Exchange regulations. Jeremiah Glogan was a case in point. He was the founder of Venerable Morticians Ltd., and now Jeremiah lay dying.

His origin was lowly and obscure; there were many versions, probably none of them authentic. But this was known for a fact: he had begun as the driver of a coach, yet within a com-paratively short span of time had become owner of a little

funeral company. In the expansive era of the after-war days when public Companies were floated easily he turned his little private Company into a big public one. No one credited him with scruples and no one thought that it was all aboard. But few shareholders look beyond the amount of their dividends, and Glogan was always cunning in the choosing of his shareholders. Cunning, too, in his slogans! Was it not he who coined the phrase: "Better and brighter funerals", and he who patented "the only hygienic", "the Zed", coffins?

He was shrewd enough to realise that no sections of the public are more useful to a funeral director than doctors and clergymen. Glogan therefore looked always to them for support. No one better than they knew how lucrative the funeral business was. No one, if so interested, was in a better position to push business for a funeral company. They could always do so in a way that was tactful and even delicate. That was why Glogan financed his own private Company, at the beginning, on loans from professional men (and women). That was why, when having done well in a small way and being determined to succeed also in a big way, he went round personally canvassing doctors and clergymen of all kinds and creeds. An impecunious clergyman in a poor suburb, harassed by the growing cost of living, he would tempt in this way: He would begin by whispering in confidence that the Rev. X.Y. had a large parcel of these shares and the Rev. Z a small one—why then should not even he, a poor clergyman, acquire some, on time payment or on p.ns against his dividends? It would make a nice little nest-egg, after ten years, for the children. The education of his children was always a Minister's anxiety. Usually Glogan would succeed in selling a parcel of his own shares. It was all highly irregular but he knew how to get round the law. And usually too, he managed in some way to keep the control of those shares. Thus he ended by having one more clergyman working quietly as local agent, without pay, for Venerable Morticians Ltd. Glogan himself had once been terribly poor and hungry. That had taught him to be

sly and cunning. But he had long since become a hard rapacious man under his soft approach. He was, indeed, one of the cat tribe in finance.

You can see that new clerical proprietor, heartened a little amid his financial worries by the hope placed in his parcel of shares, saying as he comforted a bereaved wife or son: "Don't let the details of the funeral worry you in your present distress —I'll step round myself to Glogan and get him to do everything as a personal favour to me."

Of course, sometimes he had his setback, this benevolent if impecunious clergyman, as in the case of the badly treated woman now a widow whose husband had been both mean and violent. She wasn't even going to pretend that she didn't feel a great relief. When therefore it was suggested, tactfully enough, by her clergyman that he would arrange matters for her, she snapped out: "Thank you very much, but I am quite able to attend to the matter myself!" And so she was. For she asked a price from several local firms and finally got a cut price for burying *that* sort of a husband. Incineration was much too good for him, and much too expensive. She wasn't that bereaved!

And what was true for clergymen was equally true for doctors. They, too, were in a privileged position to help the firm and increase profits from which they as shareholders would draw dividends (bi-annually). What of course made medical men more attractive to the Company Promoter was first their inability to invest their savings in their own enterprise, like any other business man. They usually had money lying idle and then of course they were such easy dupes for any plausible tale-teller. For years all the "wild cats" of Australian finance had been floated on the hard-earned money of gullible doctors. They were always terribly, pathetically, ready to get in on "a good thing". Glogan's proposition appeared most attractive to them. The only snag (which made some hold back) was the fear of the list of shareholders ever becoming public.

Glogan always reassured them on this point, then clinched matters by saying, humorously, "You know when all you doctors have done your best, I can still do a little more." And, "No matter what you doctors do, it isn't likely that your patients will ever give up dying." "The seasons vary greatly for wheat and wool, but there's never much change in the year's mortality, there's even at times a special bonus after a particularly bad epidemic!"

Jeremiah Glogan was all things to all men. He knew no prejudices of race, religion or politics. It was business first and all the time! He had as shareholders Ministers and Priests of widely different theologies, as well as doctors of every status. He was himself a Roman by religious accident, though few knew it. "A guarded Catholic", some of his own called him scathingly—they said he looked round cautiously before he admitted his affiliation. Macleay used to say that it was one of the several bodily functions Glogan exercised privily. But he was 100 per cent in the priest's house.

His Company shared this broadmindedness and offered every variety of procedure which taste or prejudice demanded. You could have incineration with or without the accompaniment of prayer. You could be embalmed according to the latest chemical rites (though it was expensive—being an old Roman luxury of pagan times). Or you could have a wide assortment of caskets to choose from. Macleay said that Glogan seemed always to be measuring you as he talked with you—as if thinking in terms of your length and girth. One could easily imagine him saying, after the painful episode, to the Executor with something of the professional mourner's voice of tears withheld: "Yes, he would have liked a cedar one—didn't he always like the best? And about the number of carriages . . . You know he was never one to stint himself in anything."

Glogan never succeeded in getting either Macleay or Challis to take up shares. In lighter moments—unhappily too rare nowadays—Challis would picture to Macleay the embarrassment which such a purchase of shares might cause in any legal

process started for some reason or other by a relative of the deceased. A cross-examination might proceed on these lines:

Counsel : You have, of course, Doctor, no pecuniary interest yourself in the death of the deceased?

Challis (weakly): Er . . . No—I think . . . not directly anyhow.

Counsel (brightening up): Indirectly, then?

Challis (embarrassed): I'm not quite sure . . .

Counsel (showing his hand): I notice you are a shareholder registered as holding 538 ordinary shares in Venerable Morticians Ltd. Do you still hold them? (Sensation in Court.)

Challis (bellicose): And why not?

Counsel: Why not? It was you, wasn't it, who recommended this Funeral Company to the deceased's son?

Challis: Certainly not.

Counsel (insinuatingly): If you had recommended it, you would of course be entitled to the usual commission?

Challis (severely): A professional man does not take commissions.

Counsel: There is a bill put in against the deceased's estate for £117 by Venerable Morticians Ltd. You as shareholder proprietor will benefit by the payment of that sum. Do you still maintain that you do not stand to benefit by the death of the deceased? . . .

One of Jeremiah's largest shareholders was the Rev. Father O'Cluse; a priest, but none the less a zealous follower of market movements in Pitt Street. He was a most popular man with all classes and all creeds and shared the same liberality of view on many matters that his friend Jeremiah had. He was an excellent mixer, played a keen game of bridge and was a regular member of a poker school. Though an Irishman, he was also a fervent patriot. So shrewd was he in anticipating market rises and falls that many good judges followed his lead blindly, buying when he bought and selling when he sold—just as at Randwick there are shrewd backers

who watch for the placing of big money when Sol Marcus moves around among the bookmakers. Glogan had let him in "on the ground floor" and his Reverence had made a lot by selling and buying the same shares. He was "in the know". There had even once been some talk of making him a director. But Father O'Cluse didn't know how the Archbishop would take it. . . .

Now Jeremiah, in his turn, was dying and knew himself to be dying. No one except himself knew his right age, but certainly he was very old. Father O'Cluse, his life-long friend, had been called in to shrive him. Who, indeed, would be in a position more sympathetically to review all Glogan's sharp deals? Challis was the doctor in spite of his not being a shareholder. Consultant after Consultant had been brought in during Glogan's long illness. It was obvious now that the end was not far off. He was very weak. Even speech was difficult, but he seemed to be trying to say something. Challis made as if to leave the room, but the priest bade him stay.

"Father Tom," the dying man whispered after a valiant effort at utterance, "Father Tom, sell all those shares at once." He was still thinking of Venerable Morticians Ltd. The effort cost him a lot. "Compose yourself, Jeremiah, and turn your thoughts to God," replied the priest. But the dying man was not so easily to be put off.

Glogan was convinced the shares in his Funeral Company would drop heavily once his own death was known. No one could ever possibly "run" the business like himself. He knew it from the horse days, before the engine made everything at a funeral go more smoothly and more quickly. He kept repeating "Get out," "Get out," until finally as if exasperated the priest said in a loud voice, "Be quiet, Jeremiah—have no thoughts about it. I sold all my holding last week."

After this Jeremiah sank back on his pillow relieved and satisfied. What sincerer tribute to his own importance in the firm than this: that an astute share dealer like Father O'Cluse should sell all his shares before his, Glogan's, demise? He

settled down contentedly to the business of dying, and so, suffused with vanity and in a state of grace, he yielded up his life's holding.

Challis, before he left with the priest, saw the dead man being dressed up in the robes of a Franciscan tertiary. They placed a large Crucifix on his chest and folded, a little awkwardly, the big coarse hands over it. The joints of the fingers were like great knobs and the nails were long and not free from dirt. They had something of the look of claws. But the hard avaricious look which sometimes could have been surprised under his bonhomie, had gone out of his face as if, at last, death had relaxed the spasm of his greed.

"An edifying death. An edifying death," the priest kept repeating, a little absent-mindedly. Perhaps he was already planning to buy in those shares again when the slump touched bottom.

Challis, however, was thinking of the long finger-nails which had looked like claws, and of predacious animals which in the toothless infirmity of old age take the higher track. Some Leopards go uphill to die.

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(iii) LAPSUS

The priest of Challis's own parish was quite another type. His housekeeper was a regular visitor to Challis's surgery. Through her Challis knew much about what went on in the little household.

Josephine Breedy was past middle age, and in stature tall, with many angles. Her trouble was a chronic dyspepsia which coloured all her outlook on life and left her with an acid temper. She was usually taciturn and often domineering. She had a poor opinion of men generally, though she was a loyal priest's servant. The tradespeople didn't like her and children avoided her. Who was it gave her the nickname no one ever acknow-

ledged, but in the district she was "Boadicea" Breedy. Challis suspected it was one of the local school teachers in the Government School near by. This school teacher was of the same faith, but being employed by the State he had a dread of being compromised in sectarian matters, so he didn't sit too close. In his opinion the clergy were always unscrupulous—however high-minded their motives—in the way they dragged in their own public men for their own theological ends.

Father Dominick McSheer, whom Boadicea bullied for his own good, was a big man with a big heart. He stood over six feet in height, with a complexion that was rather too ruddy and some girdle obesity. His hair, like himself generally, was always untidy. He had sandy coloured tufts, too, in his ears and in his nose (which nasal organ was large and fine). The front of his worn coat was shiny from the repeated cleanings by his housekeeper. But then Boadicea had a passion for order and for cleanliness. Indeed, if she didn't put out regularly a change of underclothing her priest-master would have gone on for weeks in his old garments. He hadn't a mind for such things. He was a dirty smoker, too, with his tobacco ash and his dead matches trailing after him around the house. He was also an easy mark for any down-and-out parishioner with a plausible tale. These borrowers used to come to the presbytery at the most inconvenient hours, seeking to avoid the watch-dog defences of Boadicea. Often enough she drove them away, and if the priest, as he nearly always did, surrendered to their importunities and gave a few shillings, she upbraided him afterwards. "That man Beever's been here again, I see; he only drinks the money you give him, Father, and you so short, yourself." But all she got from the priest in reply was: "You mustn't be hard now, Josephine, the poor fellow's in more need of it than we are. . . ."

Father McSheer was a simple good man with fierce opinions only on matters concerning Faith and Morals. The sins of the flesh were the one object of his fiercest sermons. They alone made him intolerant. The other breaches of the Ten Com-

mandments were, by comparison, minor affairs, mere misdemeanours. "Stealing"—he had been recorded by some sinner as saying in the Confessional. "Stealing, was it? Stealing. You mustn't do that, but perhaps you were in need, poor mahn." Or again, "Lying it was! Now that's wrong, but I'm sure you won't do that again."

But if they broke the Commandments of the Flesh: Look out! The puritan in him roared then and he kept them there so long lecturing them that everyone outside waiting his turn suspected the nature of the trouble. And he gave them such severe penances! In spirit he was, indeed, twin brother to his Episcopal countryman in the West of Ireland who once proclaimed all love to be "a very dirty business", and who even went out himself searching the hedges for amorous philanderers with a heavy blackthorn stick in his hands. Macleay said of him (quite unfairly) that Father Dominick half regretted the departure of those days when religion was a blood sport.

The priest was a lonely man in his own suburb of Cockle Creek, even after fifteen years. He admitted no layman to more than the outer ring of his friendship: laymen were so prone to presume on the acquaintance! And he was a bit of a martinet in church affairs. He was their pastor: let the flock obey! He admitted no layman's right to poke his nose into the finances of the parish church, or its administration. Outside the practice of their religion the lay people's function was the organising of appeals for money and the actual giving of money. As a result his parishioners revered and loved him—at a distance. They never felt quite at home with him. But then he was an Irishman and apart from that old-fashioned blackthorn morality which made him forbid dances, he had the old violent political views of his race. These he in duty bound suppressed —except on some rare occasion, such as St Patrick's Day.

The parishioners knew themselves to be fortunate in their parish priest. He was a good-living and a holy man. He was kindly to the poor, especially to the poor who drank too much.

"Who knows," he would exclaim piously, "but for the Grace of God I might have been the same myself." Certainly Father McSheer seemed to eat a little too much. But then a man must have *some* outlet for the senses if he is to keep sane in a poor industrial suburb. It's all so much easier in the strait-jacket of a monastery. If sensory nerves had to be titillated he observed strictly the order of diminishing evil in them and indulged only those least culpable: the gastric.

Sometimes even his most faithful adherents got restless under the constant appeals from the pulpit for more money. But then he had great calls on him, what with the school and the cost of a big church in a poor parish. He was never a money-grabber on his own account: he never sought to accumulate any personal wealth. All he had was that little insurance policy which matured in three years' time and which would give him his long-dreamed-of trip "home" to Ireland. No doubt he was a poor manager of the Church's finances, about which he neither sought advice nor brooked interference. He had so frequently to be appealing to them to "be jinerous" that the irreverent young men of the parish had christened him with a nickname, too—that of "Be Jinerous". Those young "larrikins" as the priest called them were one of his minor worries. They came in to Mass late, stood at the back near the Holy-Water font, and ducked out as soon as the Communion was over. But then what could you expect in a world given to cinemas and dances and with all parental control lost?

Young "Ginger" Doney wasn't one of these "larrikins". He was on the contrary a very pious lad, an apprentice jockey with red hair and strong freckled hands. On Sundays he served as Altar boy at the chief Mass. Father McSheer considered himself as standing *in loco parentis*, for Ginger's parents were both dead (and unremembered)—he had been brought up in an orphanage, far away from the corruption of the world. But even in the dangerous company of racing people he was resisting the temptation to loose talk or filthy language.

There came, however, a time when "Ginger" had something on his conscience, and now at half-past seven in the evening he was kneeling in the queue awaiting his turn to go into the Confessional. Ginger's scruple was this: he had that afternoon had the mount on Mr Michael Skiggaley's chestnut mare "Jenifer" at the Randwick Racecourse, in one of the minor races. "Ginger" was considered a "promising" young apprentice and was reputed to have a pair of good hands. But in the saddling paddock the owner had come up to him at the last moment before the race and whispered peremptorily: "The money's not on. You've got to hold her, and see you don't run into a place."

The owner had been unable to get his price. News of the mare's good performance on the training track had evidently leaked out. Those pimps in the early dawn hours had been out "clocking" her gallops. So, on the day of the race there had been a general rush to get in on a "certainty" and the odds had quickly shortened. The owner's scheme for making a scoop had been thus defeated, and as he said, "he wasn't in the game for the good of his health". So he was going to keep Jenifer "on the ice" for the next meeting at Moorefields in a fortnight's time.

The young apprentice, flustered by these late instructions, and not yet hardened to the ways of the racecourse, had been awkward in playing his part. A little too obviously he got into difficulties at the turn and in the end finished well back. The odium of the whole business of course fell on him. The stewards had seen it all, but as he was young and inexperienced they gave him the benefit of a doubt, although one of them quite casually asked him a few pointed questions later. The crowd, however, made no allowance, and since the man who has lost his money on a racecourse is the worst loser in the world, as a rule, there had been boo-ing as "Jenifer" returned to the paddock. One old man, very irate, had even called him a "bloody young thief".

All this had upset Ginger's conscience. He had told lies to that steward, he had let down his own friends who had backed his mount, "and all the while, Father," he confessed, "I knew they were keeping it for the third race at Moorefields. When I win then they'll have me up before the Stewards."

Now there was much more theology in all this than Father Dominick McSheer could cope with, or Ginger could be expected to understand. But the priest saw his own difficulty and avoided the main ethical issue. He did so by sticking to pious generalities, admonishing Ginger in general terms. He must always act honestly and never tell lies. Then he switched off to the dangers of bad company, and he warned him about bad thoughts and bad actions. He gave Ginger only a light penance, and pushing across the shutter, turned to the other side of the Confessional and the straightforward problems of the flesh. "Ginger" was shrewd enough to know that his own troubles were merely beginning.

Weary with the long procession of guilty witnesses against themselves, and with their stories of wrongs done, and rules broken, the priest pondered, late that night, on some of the problems raised. Sure, wasn't the racing game in Sydney a dirty business—crooked from first to last? There must be few owners and fewer trainers who go straight. And even when the owner is straight his trainer or the jockey may be crooked. How many of the jockeys who get their mounts from the big racing stables could afford to be honest and run a race according to the merits of the horses? The jockey who never "pulled" a horse must be a rare phenomenon. The pirest being an Irishman loved a horse and he liked a horse race—if only he could have seen one without giving scandal. He disapproved strongly of the clergy who "followed the gee-gees", as they described it themselves. Of course, allowance had to be made for them because so many of these owners and trainers and jockeys were co-religionists. A pity, the priest reflected, that so many of the Faith were mixed up with either selling liquor to unfortunate drunkards or stiffening horses to

make money out of a foolish public. And whoever heard of a sermon directed against these practices? Alas! such men were often valuable parishioners in their suburbs with a high rateable value for church purposes. Weren't they among the most generous subscribers to the Church? There were many complex ethical questions mixed up with these matters. They were all very puzzling to a simple man like himself who distrusted fine sophistries. The old professor at Maynooth had seemed to explain them all very satisfactorily, but then he wasn't a parish priest in a poor suburb having to find a practical solution for his penitents' difficulties. There was that matter of the small business man who falsified his income tax returns. "Sure, didn't everyone do it a bit? Didn't the legislation provide penalties and wasn't it just a battle of wits with no ethical principle involved?" He had been told so, but he didn't like it. Perhaps it was the same with a bookmaker and a bettor. Only a simpleton thought success was a matter of form only. Mother of God! what a sport for kings!

And then there was that young boxer who lay down in the third round of his fight after he and all his supporters had quietly backed his opponent. The boy who did that was known for always blessing himself at the beginning of a fight, as he stood with his back to the ring in his own corner, waiting for the bell to go.

Once again his thoughts circled around Ginger's case. Hadn't he said they were keeping that mare for Moorefields in a fortnight's time? There was the mortgage interest to pay next month. Yes, and the guttering was broken on the corner near the Church entrance. And he needed some more benches to replace those broken. Wouldn't it be a windfall for them all if he could win a bet or a prize in Tattersall's Sweep? There wasn't anything intrinsically wrong in a bet, of course. The Church laid that down clearly. Hadn't they their own chocolate wheels at bazaars? It was only when gambling was abused that it was evil. Sure, wasn't man himself a gaming

animal, anyhow! It was all a matter of motive. The motive in this case would be quite a good one. Hadn't he the tip too, "straight from the horse's mouth" as the boys said? But was it licit to use information he'd got in the Confessional? That worried him. He put the thought of it all out of his mind and knocking the ashes from his pipe out on the carpet, went off to bed.

It rained hard that night. Not that the noise of it disturbed the sound sleep of the tired priest, but the rain-water leaked from a broken gutter near the corner of the Church entrance. But even the grumbling of some of the people didn't revive those thoughts about getting some much needed money by a little bet on his own account. It was only when, all his Masses over, he sat down hungry, aye voracious, after his long fast, with the *Sunday Times* before him, reading all the sporting events, that the temptation returned at a gallop. Never before did he spend so much time over the description of a race or the details about the betting. The argument in favour of doing something seemed now much more plausible. The objections had lost some of their force. But he didn't much like the idea and he kept putting it away from him. By the evening, however, he had lost the battle. It was still raining. There was a pool of water inside the Church door, and he surrendered to the temptation. It only remained for him now to work out a plan that would avoid all scandal. There wasn't anything wrong in the scheme at all, but first and last, he mustn't give scandal. He wasn't one of those priests whose friends a critic once described as "nesting in strange lofts", so he hadn't any intermediary in the racing circles to turn to, but of course there was always Neligan. On Monday evening Father MacSheer would have him up at the Presbytery "for a quiet chat".

Neligan was a minor Civil Servant, a man with no outspoken opinions, a deferential, even a subservient man, a man with his own little weakness for the drink which a strong-minded wife kept in check. When Neligan arrived at the

Presbytery he was at first a little apprehensive. He knew the parish's financial affairs were in a bad way. Perhaps Father Dominick wanted a loan or a donation. His private fear was increased by the warm welcome of the priest who, having made him sit down, pushed the decanter towards his visitor.

"It's like this, Peter, we're terribly short of money, God help us, in this poor parish and there's the interest on the mortgage to be met next month." Neligan was most unhappy and poured out a larger whiskey than he'd meant to. But he waited judicially. Who of the boxers used to say he could beat any man that led to him?

The priest went on: "Then there'll be the plumber to pay for those repairs to the guttering and I haven't settled his old account. And there are the broken benches . . ."

Neligan having taken a swig now interposed: "I don't suppose the Archbishop would help with something to tide us over this crisis, it's no good going to the Bank I know. I remember our last reception two years ago."

The priest raised his hand, then lowered his voice. He had previously taken care to close the door. It was wonderful what the housekeeper heard or thought she heard.

"Peter, I've a scheme. From sources I can't reveal I have every reason for believing a certain horse is going to win a certain race at Moorefields next Saturday week. Now you'll know I'm no betting man but there's no sin in a bet, especially in a bet where the motive's good."

Peter Neligan had almost immediately brightened up—he wasn't to be asked for a special donation after all—his wife was quite wrong and he'd tell her so. He was soon all in favour of the project. By the time he left it was well past the priest's usual retiring time and even Father McSheer himself had taken a nip, which was an unusual thing for him.

By this time they were both optimistic and happy, convinced that the financial difficulties of the parish were halfway towards being solved. The priest handed over the five pounds to be invested on Jenifer for the third race at Moore-

fields. Neligan, flushed with three large whiskies, felt himself heightened in stature as he walked home. Was he not agent in something more than a transaction? He was trustee for the Church's honour. Privately he was going to have a pound on the mare, too, a pound both ways, in fact.

Peter Neligan was a Civil Servant clerk, not a shrewd man of affairs. He thus made the fatal mistake of putting the priest's and his own money on locally. The agent for a well-known City bookmaker was, as usual, the local barber-tobacconist. His saloon was something of a Social Centre. There were always a few idlers, men whose work was finished or hadn't begun, or who never worked, hanging about and talking sport. Only those in the know were aware that a smart façade covered an extensive betting business behind. The passer-by saw only a window-front heavily stocked with dummy boxes of cigars and cigarettes, amidst which, enjoying pride of place, was a photograph of the local cricket team, while scattered tastefully about the boxes were printed white cards with "Best assortment of all smokes", or "Hadley's pipes are best." On the window itself, scrawled in whitewash, was the information that "Four Hands" were available in the saloon.

Neligan entering a little sheepishly, passed the tobacconist's short counter on his left, and pushing open the frosted door of the saloon looked for the proprietor. Neligan was a little abashed to find a tram driver—from his uniform and his empty bag easily recognisable—listening in to his conversation as he intimated that he wished to make a bet. The proprietor, in a coat not strictly clean-white and whose oiled hair was turned back from his forehead like a carpet someone was beginning to roll up, stopped in his sweeping up of the human hair on his floor. He was surprised to find Neligan, whom he knew as a regular client but for a haircut only, wanting to register a bet. When he heard the amount he was even more surprised, though he was too shrewd to show it. He went off promptly to ring up from the telephone in a little back room. Presently he returned to say he had got "tens" for the punter.

That unusual phenomenon of Neligan betting and the large amount laid—half-a-crown was the common bet—excited lively comment after he had left. When two days later Miss Josephine Breedy came in with her acid superior manner to invest five shillings on the same mare, the interest became feverish. By this time the Commission Agent was only prepared to give "eights". He realised something was afoot, for there had been enquiries from other sources. Only Boadicea knew the source of her information—for she had found the priest's betting ticket after it had been delivered by Neligan, carelessly left in the suit she was cleaning. In Cockle Creek the news soon spread far and wide—though usually in strict confidence. Naturally, everyone connected it with "Ginger" Doney, knowing his close association as an Altar boy with the priest. Cockle Creek went solid for Jenifer.

From all this it resulted that when the day of the race came, the owner and the trainer once again found their mare opening a hot favourite. All sorts of rumours were going round the course. It was said someone had "clocked" her to do a record gallop. Another had the information, he boasted, right from the stable. Six to four was no good to the owner, who once again instructed Doney, just as the jockey was saddling up, that he was not to win. Ginger Doney, all unaware of the priest's interest in the race, and to the Church's financial loss, 'stopped" his mount again.

When the favourite failed for a second time and in a far weaker field, there was much more than the usual hooting. The Stewards took prompt action. The owner being a practised hand and very astute, was able, however, to prove, through the witness of a friendly bookmaker, that the stable's money had been on (though really he hadn't laid a penny). He was, in order to exculpate himself, loud in his criticism of the way Doney handled his mare. Doney had no friends. The criticism of everyone around inflamed again his conscience, but the Stewards took no further action.

All that afternoon, as usual, Father McSheer had been hearing the children's confessions. He had been, however, strangely restless and uneasy. He found himself impatiently waiting for it all to be over. Then, just before 6 p.m. he walked over to the Presbytery to look for the racing results in the last edition of the *Evening News*. His hands were shaking a little as he separated the leaves, seeking the column on a middle page headed "Moorefield Races". And then his heart fell! All he could mutter was "God forgive me", and as he slumped in his chair, "perhaps it's a judgment on me after all." He had no appetite for his tea that evening. Boadicea, too, seemed unusually acid and distant. She had seen the same newspaper, but before the priest had left the Church. The result had only confirmed her low opinion of all men. They were a deceitful crooked lot.

Neligan was grumpy when he came into the Sacristy before the Chief Mass on Sunday morning. He was tactless enough to refer to the matter by saying, "We had no luck, Father." The priest merely answered, "Ah, well!" and relapsed into silence. It was his custom always to give a short sermon at this Mass. Never did he feel less inclination for it than now. When he mounted into the pulpit his face seemed older and more careworn, his hair more untidy than usual. He read the Gospel for the day and, for once, with a somewhat distracted air. Then he began his homily, which for a while meandered over well beaten tracks, to end once again in an appeal for their help in the many commitments of the parish. "So I ask you, my dear Brethren, *be Jinifer*". All unintentionally that word had slipped out. Hurriedly he corrected himself, "Be jinerous", and he repeated it several times, then abruptly returned to the Altar.

Few if any of the congregation had noticed the lapse in his speech—many indeed were scarcely listening. They had heard it all so often before, that, with the best intentions in the world, their thoughts were wool-gathering. But privately Father McSheer was appalled. His heart had beaten violently,

and only in the fervent and passionate reading of the remainder of the Liturgy had he been able to find any relief.

In the Sacristy, after the Mass, he noticed how pale Ginger was. "I'm sorry, Jimmy", he said and he tried to appear disinterested and calm. "I'm sorry to see you getting mixed up with that rotten racecourse crowd. You wouldn't try to take up something else before it's too late?"

Jimmy had been on the verge of tears in all his waking hours since that race meeting at Moorefields. He was sobbing now. "Oh Father," he whined, "it wasn't my fault at all. They told me to do it and I got all the blame. Now they're going to keep her for Canterbury Park next month, but they're giving the mount to someone else. . . ."

Father McSheer, however, was not listening. He was hurrying away back to the Presbytery where the harassed-looking Josephine Breedy in the kitchen was vigorously polishing up the dishes while dinner cooked on the stove.

* * *

(iv) JARGON AND SLANG OR WISE MEN IN COUNSEL

Doctor Horace Boggis moved slowly and ponderously towards the lectern. He seemed afraid of hurrying lest he be thought to act under a compulsion. Then adjusting his papers with unusual deliberation he swept his myopic gaze around the audience of congregated doctors and began sonorously: "Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen."

It had been Macleay's idea that he and Challis should make one of their rare visits to a Medical Meeting. The decision had meant some arranging of their evening work, the cutting down of consultations and the provision of a substitute who would "do" any urgent call. Macleay, for some reason, wanted to hear this learned psychiatrist read his paper on "Some Recent Advances in Psychiatry".

The room in which the meeting took place was a large one with a high ceiling, on the first floor of a building in Elizabeth

Street. Electric trams raced noisily past it on their way to and from Circular Quay. Its tall windows fronting Elizabeth Street had therefore to be kept hermetically sealed. The walls of the room on three sides had bookshelves which reached for some five feet above the floor. The library itself was a meagre one for so important a Society, but then there existed no leisured medical class to read the volumes. Above the bookshelves were photographs of former Presidents of the Society, some so ancient as to be fading. They supplied, at least, a historical record of the progress in professional attire. There was also a list of the names of those Members who had served in the War 1914-1918.

On entering the room, which already contained more than fifty members, Macleay and Challis, in the same moment, spied Borkum planted in the second row. He was not one willingly to be excluded from a prominent position, but then he was one of the most regular attendants and also one of the most frequent speakers, no matter what the subject. Aubrey Foyle, "the saprophyte" as Macleay sometimes called him, was at Borkum's side. On Borkum's other side was a leading obstetrician, a somewhat pasty-faced man with shiny fat hands crossed snugly on his prominent abdomen—"the typical man midwife", Macleay commented.

The Chairman was a tired over-worked general practitioner whose turn had recently come for occupying the Chair. Members of the Council moved up to it by seniority each year. For the present Chairman it represented his highest achievement in life, surpassing even his recent elevation in the local Masonic Lodge. By his side, eager to help him out of any difficulty with the Society business, sat the grey-haired Secretary, Doctor Ronald Guffey. He was a great theorist: learned in Medicine which he did not practice, in Law, which he essayed unsuccessfully, and in Music which gave him his only complete satisfactions. Everyone liked him personally, but dreaded his long-winded legal definitions and his verbose exposition of what the memorandum of articles or the by-laws

really did or did not mean. Above all, however, he was the diplomat, almost an ambassador *de carrière* in Medicine, for he spent much of his time calming aggrieved members or settling disputes between rival practitioners in Bungabee or Burradurra. He was a gentleman of the old school, one who kept rumours of trouble or echoes of scandal out of the popular press—"the vulgar press" he called it (lowering his voice). Near the Secretary sat another member of the Council, one whom everyone knew (since no one ever objected to this orderly rotation) was to be President next year. Conway Slythe was a careless untidy man with much unruly auburn hair full of a dandruff which always speckled the collar of his coat. He sat looking blissfully unconcerned about what was going on, grinning at times to himself as if over some secret cogitation. The problems and the difficulties of the life seemed scarcely to touch him. Of him, someone had said, that early in his career he had abandoned his intelligence for Ear, Nose and Throat work.

For nearly an hour Doctor Horace Boggis turned over the leaves of his manuscript. He had been one of the earliest followers of Freud in Australia—at a time when to be a disciple was to incur the hostility of those critics who believed the new doctrines to be a trifling with the sanctity of the obscene. His voice droned on and droned on. Challis for a time tried to fix his mind on the subject matter, but soon his attention faltered and under the influence of the warm stuffy room he dozed momentarily. He awoke to hear a succession of cant terms which meant nothing to him. It was just abracadabra, but an exclusive abracadabra. Boggis seemed at this stage to be carrying on some sort of private polemic, the significance of which escaped Challis. Jung's name and Bleuler's floated upon a dark stream of technical words. There was also a reference to Schizoid and syntonic personalities. Challis's gaze began to wander around the room. A few were keenly endeavouring to concentrate on the lecture. Most were relaxed in positions of ease, dumbly enduring it. Old Rooney,

two rows in front, had early given a loud snort of indignation at some statement about psychoneuroses being due to a "fixation of our sexual emotions at the infantile level", but now he was sleeping soundly, his head bent on one side. Boggis seemed to be sinking more and more into an obscure phraseology, as if like some modern poets he had a phobia for lucid exposition. An eye specialist nearby whispered that he must be colour-blind. Macleay was chain-smoking his cigarettes, nervously, drinking the whole scene in. Conway Slythe up near Guffey kept on smiling beatifically. Guffey alone seemed fresh and undaunted. From time to time he took notes.

At one stage the lecturer stopped to mop his sweat-ringed forehead, drops from which were blurring his spectacles. The room was blue with smoke, the atmosphere hot and heavy. As if in self-justification, Boggis declared, in an aside, that not all these opinions were borrowed from famous German originals. Some of them were original and based on personal observations of frustration in the domestic infelicity of cats. The atmosphere became so intolerable that at last Ronald Guffey pulled a long cord and lowered one of the windows. Immediately the grinding noise of a tram turning the curve swept into the room, drowning the lecturer's voice. But shortly after this, the address finished, so it did not matter greatly. There was a perfunctory and adequate round of applause. Everyone brightened up a little. The President announced that the paper was now open for discussion.

After a moment's interval Doctor Hedley Gamon rose. He it was who only three years before had startled medical opinion by his paper in the local Medical Journal on the essential distinction between the functional organic and the merely organic functional nervous diseases. The new speaker had chosen an excellent corner—to the left and in front. He could thus face most of the audience without discourtesy to the Chairman. He, too, plunged nervously into the use of an elaborate nomenclature. He spoke as if under great pressure

of excitement and in fear that he would not be able to say all he had planned to say (the night before). Boggis he hated intensely, so that his attempts at courtesy were overdone and appeared offensive. He was grateful (he said) to Doctor Boggis for providing this opportunity of publicly demonstrating the confusion of ideas which still unfortunately surrounded an important subject . . . many of the opinions quoted this evening had long since been disowned by their only begetter. . . . Everyone was just getting anxious lest this opening speech of the discussion should degenerate into a second lecture, when with a final gesture, as if he had settled the matter once for all, Hedley Gamon sat down. A few foot-tappings approved this action rather than his contribution.

Various speakers now bobbed up and down with short, mostly unimportant tributes about the value of the paper read. Most of them followed the first of these tribute-payers in using the stock phrase, "I too, would like to thank Doctor Boggis for his learned paper . . ."

It was then that Borkum, scenting the right moment, rose and faced the audience. Immediately everyone was all attention. "I am a practising surgeon," he began with the strong oratorical voice of a man perfectly sure of himself, "and I deal only with the realities of diseased tissue, but I venture to observe, as one who has none of the profound learning Doctor Boggis has displayed this evening, that we must now produce a new version of the old Hippocratic dictum: it is 'Pus and Anxiety: Let them out'——!" Smiles appeared on the members' faces. All this was much more to their liking and nearer to their understanding.

Borkum, knowing now that he had gained his listeners' attention, presumed next to ask a question, before resuming his seat. "Is it true," he asked with malicious emphasis, "that a Freudian psychiatrist declared at the end of the recent 1914-18 war that the Londoners' fear of the Zeppelin was due to their interpretation of its shape as a phallic symbol?"

(Loud laughter, in which Rooney's contemptuous voice could be plainly distinguished).

The Honourable Doctor Eglantine Bilch, M.L.C., the doctor politician, could not let the occasion pass without making some reference to his own social-political affairs, and the future of the community. He was dressed as usual in a grey morning coat and he spoke in a high alto voice with the fluency and mannerisms of one used to addressing Mr Speaker. Nobody imagined that he had any thought to contribute, but like Borkum, though with less intelligence, he was never present without getting to his feet. Of him, Macleay had once said vulgarly, that the peristalsis of ideas had long since ceased, but that plenty of flatus was still coming through. During Bilch's speech Borkum was called to the telephone booth situated in the left corner of the room. He was regularly called to the telephone at least once during these meetings. The other men all resented what they knew to be a worn-out dodge, though secretly they were left impressed by his growing connection as a surgeon.

Suddenly, to Challis's great surprise, Macleay struggled to his feet. With one hand on the chair in front he began abruptly, without any reference to the Chairman, or to the Ladies and Gentlemen. He explained that he was only a lodge-doctor, "a medical yokel", and he didn't pretend to know what many of the "long bastard words" Doctor Boggis used had meant—"any more than most of you fellows around me" (there was a suppressed titter). "But what I want to know," he shouted, " is this: Where is all this business leading us to?" (There was a chuckle from a couple of his old wartime colleagues on the other side of the room—they knew a fight was coming—not the gloved encounter of Hedley Gamon, but a bare-knuckle mill.) "Where is it all leading us?" he repeated, as if expecting a reply. Then, he went on: "When the next war comes, and you can take it from me it's coming, will all this new theory make the 'diggers' fight better

than they did in France or at Gallipoli? Or will it take away from them all the old fighting instinct?"

The Chairman seemed undecided as to whether he should call the speaker to order. Ronald Guffey was obviously uneasy and apprehensive. This was medical fisticuffs: he too knew what was coming. Everyone knew. It was Macleay's obsession. Many of them had heard it all before in the University Club and in the Returned Soldiers' Association. People said that he had a bee in his bonnet about it all, but then he'd been through it all and had had a bad time at the Landing.

Macleay continued: "According to this new teaching, as I understand it, all evil arises from conflict. It's a racket, and a German racket at that. They want to bring our children up in glass-houses to protect them from what they call *traumata* so as to make pink-faced pacifists of them all. They want to tell us that the men who went over the top were either psychoneurotics or mental defectives, yet those men saved the 'shrewdies' who stayed at home and made hay while the sun was shining. Everybody nowadays is trying to dodge having to struggle or to fight. Everyone wants Collective Security so that we can sit down and play games while Ecuador and Venezuela send troops to fight for us in Europe. But meanwhile the poor bloody mental defectives and psychoneurotics who fought our battles in the War are getting a raw deal from the Government and the people, just because a few of them play up and take too much booze.

"Well, I don't believe in Collective Security or in any Security. Australians should be taught to be ready for a scrap at any time and to keep themselves as good as they used to be at an all-in fight. We don't want a race of 'Cissies' and we don't want a new lot of specialists to teach us and the people that it's wrong to struggle and foolish to fight. These specialists are the same silly people who will believe any dirty story a patient tells them. Some of them get their legs pulled every day. Why, you could sell them the sun-dial down in

the Domain as a phallic signal." (There was no laughter.) "I tell you there's another war coming, and don't forget this: The 'dingoes' are going to let us down. They're dingoes, those politicians and pacifist doctors. They are wanting to change our growing men with their theories from Vienna. They are also teaching them not to have children. Well, I remember the time when we had to build up dummy horses and dummy riders with bundles of straw in the Jordan Valley and I remember the empty saddle brigade when we had no more reinforcements. We bluffed the enemy once but they won't be bluffed again. The dingoes are letting us down. . . ."

There was scarcely any foot-tapping when Macleay sank back in his chair. Challis was surprised at his appearance: his lips were bluish and his face congested under the emotion. Ronald Guffey, however, was obviously relieved. The Chairman, looking up at the clock, said the time was getting late and he would call on Doctor Boggis to reply briefly. Boggis limited his reply to a short reference to Hedley Gamon's criticism. He disregarded Macleay's wild outburst as beneath his notice. Everything ended decorously enough. The Chairman announced that supper would be served at a buffet in the corner. Many members scrambled to get their hats.

Challis felt upset by the little incident. He knew Macleay's irruption had excited nothing but derision, at best a good-natured derision. All this new science of psychiatry was obscure, but he himself was sure that it was not all "the skimble-skamble stuff" Rooney called it. Under spurious theories and the sensual over-emphasis of certain symbols there was an important truth, just as there had been beneath the lascivious exploitations of Mesmer.

But he had also come to share some of Macleay's alarm at the reactionary complacency of the people. A panic flight from the desert of that Four Years' suffering into the Babylon of self-indulgence was still going on. Comfort and painlessness were all. Security without and within was being set up as the

Ultimate Good. He himself had come to accept the human vocation of suffering. He distrusted these loudly proclaimed universal panaceas which he feared would seduce the integrity of a virile people. He did not, however, as yet, believe like Macleay in the inevitability of another war. . . .

The coffee was very hot and there were excellent sponge-cakes. Those members remaining seemed to be in the best of humours. The rather heavy-minded Boggis relaxed and was laughing heartily. He was also gorging cake after cake. The smoke had by this time nearly all escaped through the now widely open windows. Only an occasional tram could be heard, for it was after 11 p.m.

The self-starter of the car on which the two friends had come was not working, and Challis, stooping to swing the starting handle in front, suddenly thought of the symbolism with which a psychiatrist would invest that handle. Straightening himself up to listen to the regular purring of his engine he saw the figure of a pavement woman emerging from the shadow of the shops on the corner. She walked slowly and provocatively, swinging her bag, towards King Street. The whiff of a penetrating scent came like a challenge to fill them with momentary disgust. They were both silent. Challis was thinking of that long dimly lit corridor in which phantasies break from out the darkness of the unconscious and in half-lit lanes startle and challenge the unwary senses.

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(v) THE GOLD TREATMENT FAILS

In later years the mention of Charles Deaves's name never failed to recall to Challis that of Simeon Lord, although more than a hundred years separated their lives. Their stories had so much in common. Each from small beginnings had quickly projected himself into a position of wealth and influence. Great energy and considerable ability had once characterised the one and now distinguished the other. Both had, or had had, the same lack of scruple. The one out-

standing difference was this: Deaves had never come into open conflict with the Law, whereas a century and a half before, Simeon Lord had been convicted in London as a common thief. It was as a transported felon that he had come to the young Colony. Deaves was a purely native product.

It had never occurred to Challis that he might one day be called into the august household of Charles Deaves. Such a man was not one to choose his medical attendant, even for the servants, from a poor industrial suburb where fees were *au bon marché*. Costliness for him was all. Yet so it happened that on one of those warm sun-lazy Saturday afternoons when the diversions of cricket call some doctors to the Sydney Cricket Ground, or the attraction of sailing takes others to the harbour's waters, no other doctor in the surrounding suburbs could be got. A telephone call found Challis at home and to his concealed surprise he heard the voice of Mrs Deaves *imploring*. "Oh Doctor," she kept saying, "come at once. Do come at once. My son has had a terrible haemorrhage. . . ." Like a flash Challis drove across to the neighbouring suburb of Fermoy, the absence of traffic making the time of his journey less than even Mrs Deaves had anticipated. The gates of their magnificent home were already wide open awaiting his entrance. Challis felt the excitement of self-importance, even though he knew himself as no more than that humblest of all substitutes: the emergency doctor. But he was too late. The tuberculous son of the local Croesus and wealthy domineering masterful self-made man, was dead.

It had been common gossip, even in Cockle Creek where the father was hated, that this only son lived in a châlet specially built within the grounds which like a land of faery stretched down to the waters of the harbour. A frail ethereal creature, strangely unlike the man who got him, gentle and given to books, young Deaves had been for ten years the object of a lavish and expensive devotion. All the affection a hard paternal nature could secrete or spare had been given to this only offspring. Reddle-Reddle had been the doctor in

ordinary. For years he had been bringing out, in consultation, this specialist and that, as the whim took the masterful progenitor, or the occasion seemed to demand. "Money must be no object," was a phrase constantly in Deaves's mouth. There was no tuberculosis in the family. Why should *his* son be tainted with a disease which afflicted principally the poor and the under-nourished? "An active lesion in the right lung," the first Consultant said. Well, they would have to see that it was made inactive! Nothing need be neglected. The condition just *had* to be cured. It *would* be cured. The man who as Chairman of Directors was feared by other directors nearly as much as by his employees, had a way of forcing things, and he knew it.

So, up sprang a luxurious châlet and in came selected nurses of experience. Radiograms were taken with such regularity and frequency that there was for a time danger of his skin suffering. Then, after long and serious confabulations, an artificial pneumothorax was induced. It was characteristic of Deaves that he himself read up everything on the subject. He ordered from the U.S.A. (by cable) endless books on pulmonary tuberculosis. He studied a volume on chest skiagrams until he considered he could read a radiogram like an expert. He filled his mind with the history of the subject, and liked to display his knowledge, telling his friends (with all the arrogance of the intelligent man) how tar had been praised in the days of Dioscorides and Nero. (They were still using creosote.) He explained to them the vogues in treatment down the centuries—how calcium for injections was still popular on the European continent though coldly regarded in England. He would discuss, with an assumption of judicial fairness, Forlanini's claim to priority in collapse therapy, and the value of J. B. Murphy's work in popularising it throughout North America. He had been quick to seize on the point that the tubercle bacillus could not live in an airless lung. This fact he kept repeating again and again to his wife and to his friends, while his frail ethereal son sat up in bed enduring re-fills with

a sick lung huddled in the corner of the thoracic cage. Meanwhile the richest of foods, brought daily from their own farm on the Hawkesbury River, were pressed on the reluctant and fastidious patient. Was not the dairy herd a prize one? The best of the concentrated easily absorbable extracts were imported. Costliness was all! Could any disease resist so fierce a frontal attack by all arms? The son was meanwhile perfectly happy turning over the leaves of a book of verse with the clubbed fingers of his blue-veined hand.

Then it was that Deaves heard of the gold therapy. At once he ordered all the literature on the subject. The question of its exhibition was posed to successive consultants. Deaves, as Chairman, reserved for himself the right of final decision. Unconsciously he had already plumped for it. Those physicians whose opinions were guarded about it he discounted; they were timid rail-sitters. Why didn't they come out one way or another? Reddle-Reddle, as the rich man's house doctor, was careful always to echo his employer's favourite opinion. He knew full well that if the boy recovered ultimately he would thus be a sharer in the glory and the gratitude of a cure; while if, by any means, all treatment failed, the parents would bear with him the responsibility of defeat. The very expensiveness of the gold treatment appealed, all unconsciously, to Deaves. This was not a method available to every Tom, Dick and Harry. He devoured the scattered notes about it. Yes! it was of ancient lineage. It had had employment in the early centuries, but had later fallen into disuse. The trouble had been always to find a soluble salt of gold. Then in 1814 Chrestien had revived it enthusiastically. The great Koch himself had experimented with it. Alphonse Daudet's *tabes* had been treated with it. More recently Mollgaard had published important and indeed remarkably encouraging results following its use. (Of course, it had never been used alone. Other methods were always used simultaneously.) The very fact that there were difficulties and even dangers merely whetted Deaves's enthusiasm. Was that not evidence that

we were dealing with a powerful agent? It was a magician's wand, but it had to be wielded in the proper way. So used, it could become, so Mollgaard maintained, a *Sterilisatio magna* in the tissues of men and animals.

It is true that after its use young Deaves seemed at first somewhat better. Certainly none of the unpleasant effects set out in the cautionary notes of text-books had revealed themselves. The patient gained slightly more than a pound during the first month—(they were always weighing him). Reddle-Reddle, always deferential, was becoming much more than politely enthusiastic. Ever anxious to agree with the parents, his fuller agreement now heightened their optimism. Some of the Consultants were much more reserved in their prognosis. Others (in the privacy of their own rooms) were frankly cynical. These were old enough to remember other fashions—Coley's fluid for Sarcoma—whoever heard of it now?—and Blair Bell's lead treatment for Cancer. What remained of its inglorious passing? Only a remembrance of the pain it caused.

But reserved judgments and cautious prognoses could not check this father's confidence. At evening-time when at home he would run over the serial radiographs, interpreting them always to his own complete satisfaction. Definitely, the mottling was less here. That soft area of infiltration at the left apex was surely hardening. . . . He would read into the film all his own fancies and then retire, convinced that he himself had saved his son's life—with that same ruthless indomitable will which in business had salvaged half-wrecked public companies.

When all unannounced, the fatal moment came, on a Saturday afternoon, Deaves bestirred himself like a madman to find a doctor quickly. As if to spite his fulminating impatience none seemed at home. Where could they all be at 4 p.m.? he shouted angrily. He stormed and raged about their wretched inefficiency and against the slightest delay of the telephone exchange. This selfish irresponsibility of doctors to go out without leaving their addresses! Then, in face of the un-

disguisable and irrevocable fact of death, he sank into a hard grim mood of silence. He refused to greet Reddle-Reddle, who arrived all hot and flustered shortly after Challis. In the eyes of this hard taskmaster his medical lackey had been guilty of absence from duty. The fault of it all was, surely, his.

When Challis left, Charles Deaves was gazing, his face hard and sphinx-like, across the geometrical rectitude of a green lawn and past the fauns and cupids of expensive statuary which too frequently peppered the grounds. It was as if the ghost of Simeon Lord, after great triumphs, was brooding upon the futility of them all to cure his wound. Lord had sky-rocketed into great wealth and power only a few years after his conviction and transportation in 1791. An officer of the New South Wales Corps had been quick to perceive the felon's capacity as a money-maker and had had him assigned for private service. After a few years the money made smoothed this felon's way to a ticket-of-leave. After that had come many rich exploitings: Syndicates of every kind, trafficking in ardent spirits, whaling and sealing adventures—business activities of every kind. He became in turn auctioneer and pearl-fisher, miner, timber trader, manufacturer of perfumes and of dyes. But had he ever cured his own pain? Of the opulent mansion which he built at Botany Bay what remained a few years after his early death? And of his achievement—? Nothing.

It seemed to Challis that Deaves was suffering the first twinge, the first aching sense of impermanence. There he was, reckoning up his loss, and trying to work out the reasons for this unaccountable setback. For once the Gold Treatment had failed.

Chapter XIV

CLIMACTERIC

"Ich finde Dich Nicht Mehr, Nicht in mir, Nein . . ."
R. M. R.

Was it all worth while? The heaviness of fatigue had settled on Challis and the mood of defeat. His days were long, his work incessant. His short annual vacation he found boring, even while he recognised the necessity of it. During one of these holidays, he found himself for a fortnight haunted by the question which, one time or another, confronts every middle-aged man: Is it all worth while?

What had he to live for? There was always close to him the strange figure of that woman who once was Gertrude: a spectacle at once to provoke his bitterness and excite his remorse. Dull and wooden, unpleasant to look upon, she was ever there to remind him of the short delights of the past, and of his own unrealised dream. Her condition was a constant reproach and an insult to his professional self-respect. Why hadn't he noticed, at an earlier date, the growing clumsiness of her body, the increasing heaviness of her mood and mind? Was all this but retribution? He squirmed with a sense of his own guilt—he tried in vain to settle on her the blame for refusing motherhood. After all, who better than he should have known that Nature never pardons? But even if she had had a child, and even if he had detected the early signs of this rare disorder, would it have made the slightest difference? He knew little of the pathology of the pituitary gland, yet nevertheless he continued to associate her state with that stubborn refusal during the first ardent years of marriage. The burked flesh was taking its revenge, and he, too, must

share the sentence. He was to be disappointed in his greatest hope, maimed in his family, left ever conscious of his inferiority as a male. And for further punishment, his own lot was to be cast in poor, mean houses made warm and bright with young high-pitched voices. A wave of self-pity threatened to engulf him.

He was profoundly dissatisfied, too, with his own professional status. What was he but a medical roundsman, a roundsman with no joyous welcome at the end of the round? There was only one advantage in his being so terribly busy: he had fewer moments for introspection. An annual holiday brought him only the leisure of misery. He had too much time to brood over the failure of those early plans: a higher degree, graduation into Macquarie Street as a Specialist. Macleay could make fun of Macquarie Street as much as he liked, saying that residence there, for the public, seemed to have the significance of a higher degree—but to practise there had always been Challis's secret ambition. Now the higher degree and a specialist's status had slipped beyond him. He had failed to realise soon enough that in a doctor's life there is only a narrow margin, a terribly narrow margin, of time after qualification in which one can play the student. A medical man's future was determined, in the great majority of cases, by what he did with his first five years after graduation.

Now he knew himself to be "only a Cockle Creek doctor", as the people themselves described their own medical man. He was accounted "a successful practitioner"—"for that sort of doctor". He himself was the first to admit that his mind's curiosity for medical knowledge had grown dull. The love for all novelty in medical experience had evaporated. Unconsciously, like Broussais in the nineteenth century, he was reducing all disease to simple terms and a few categories. His stock prescriptions were fewer than a score. He had an itch to prescribe, instead of a thirst for finding out the diagnosis. It was so fatally easy for a tired doctor to pick out the leading symptom and to treat *that* . . .

Once he had had his dreams of being a great surgeon. The theatrical quality in the part appealed to him. To stand the chief actor before a table upon which a man's life depended on the surgeon's knowledge, judgment and skill in manipulation! What an achievement! From that high ambition he was now leagues away, amid the foot-hills, doomed to go on doing the "straight-out" appendix or hernia, with occasional timid ventures into the lower abdomen of a woman. O! long-suffering, and tolerant lower abdomen of a woman! Macleay was right: one should either be a good surgeon or eschew all operations. It was a fault of the Australian temperament in medicine that nearly everyone wanted to "have a go". Yes: half surgeons, as Macleay had said, like half virgins, belong to no recognised order. They were damned alike in heaven and in hell!

At the same time Challis had sufficient insight to realise that temperamentally he himself would never have been suited to large and bloody extirpations. Instinctively he shrank from any gross mutilation of the body. Was it pity or mere squeamishness? Or was it the coward he knew to be active in him which made him play always for safety (safety for himself, even more than for the patient)? He hated death and the professional consequences of a death. He shrank from facing his neighbour's eyes after some relative had died following any operative intervention—no matter what the cause. He stood before them with the same sense of guilt with which he had faced the Coroner after that death from anaesthesia at Castlecrag. . . . So he listened too often to the sibyl voice of temptation telling him to leave it to the *vis medicatrix naturae*—the healing force of nature. The result was he sometimes waited too long. That masterly inactivity of the text-books could be a coward's inactivity.

Why then should he go on putting up with all these anxieties, suffering all these stresses, rising from a warm bed at night to pay some unrewarded visit to a sick child or a woman in labour? Why should he live on, exposed to those flagellations

of the spirit that only a doctor knows? He grew momentarily indignant, recalling instances of ignorant criticism from his own patients, or impertinent comments from some junior house doctor (who after having the patient a month in hospital with all the resources of a laboratory at his disposal, spoke contemptuously about the suburban practitioner who had failed to make the correct diagnosis by candle-light on his only visit).

And from all this fretting and fuming of body and spirit what did he get? Rare satisfactions, an evanescent gratitude, and money. Yes, he was "doing well", he was "making money", a good deal of money out of a low-grade ore. It gave him the only tangible evidence of success. It provided the only satisfaction that never quite failed. But what would his comparative wealth yield him in old age? Leisure? He had come to fear leisure. He had failed to acquire at the right time suitable hobbies. A time would come when he would have to decide whether he sold out and "retired"—to reading and to gossiping in a Club—or made up his mind to carry on to the bitter end—to die in practice, watching his practice daily shrivelling. Of all ends that surely was the worst: after long years of a successful professional career to watch himself passing out of currency . . . No! better, far, the idleness of retirement, watching the clock in melancholy boredom between too frequent sleepings!

There had been, of course, the temptation at times—the sweetly whispering temptation to set up some secret liaison, for sensual diversion. But he had always distrusted sensual indulgence, even while he yielded to it. And then, for one so little adventurous, there was always a shrinking from the consequent entanglement. To be the target of scandalous gossip in a small suburb would have hurt him deeply. So Challis had remained moral, for reasons not moral, and went on thwarted, suffering in secret, the shame of his unconsummated desires.

No! it was not worth while. He was sure of it! And he would not go on indefinitely working upon this treadmill. He dreaded to think the time might come when he found himself propped up upon a back-rest, among strangers, gasping for breath with blue lips, and beating with dusky hands the too-still air.

He told himself he did not fear death as a passing. His horror was for the intolerant predicament of dying, that awful period of uncovering and slow withdrawing. It was so much like the going-out of the tide he had watched as a boy at Blackwattle Bay. Slowly, more and more of the foreshore became gruesomely exposed, yielding up its litter and its curious pitiful rubbish: the rusty tin, the sodden cardboard container and all the little filth of a household. He remembered once again the tiny gurgling holes, the minute creatures which crawled, the black mud and the heavy offensive odour. Dying was like that! Why should he pay that as a penalty for obstinately living on? In the Churches they were always praying for the dead. It was the living who needed prayer that they be loosed from their gyves.

His mind fetched up, out of these trawlings, the story of Ullathorne's visit, in the early convict period, to the depraved colony at Norfolk Island. When the gaoler was about to open the prison door, he asked the prelate to stand aside. Then, the record goes on, out of that dungeon, like the mad rush of fiends from an underworld, came the concentrated foetor of a terrible vileness. In that atmosphere men were living, chained, loaded with iron. . . . Was it to be wondered that those who heard their names read out from the gaoler's list for execution on the following day, praised the forgotten God with lips that had too recently blasphemed? The only curses and maledictions came from those condemned to go on living . . . living and dying at the same time. Their tide was going out with too tragic slowness, the mud black, the filth everywhere, and a heavy stench over all.

Challis decided that he would not let himself live to endure the slow decay of dying. It was so temptingly easy for any doctor to set a term to the sentence of life. He told himself he did not fear the act—he was fastidious only over the manner of his dying! He would like to have chosen a great moment and gone out heroically like that explorer who, knowing himself a burden on his comrades, limped out into the white night and drew upon himself a coverlet of snow and immortality. Challis was still the boy in a loft who wanted to show off to fancied multitudes.

Or he would have liked to finish with some such theatrical gesture as that of Pettenkofer, the Father of Modern Hygiene. There was a dour fighter if ever there was one! He had fought all the epidemics, and also the new ideas that bacteria alone caused disease. Had he not swallowed a pure culture of colera bacilli to disprove the new-fangled theory, and without turning a hair, too? He had been valiant in a hundred polemics. But, 83 years old, at bay, under the pressure of hostile medical opinion, he went out and bought himself a revolver. Then, slowly, muttering to himself, he climbed the hundred steps up to his room in the Residenz at Munich. In that building which faces a square and has the Opera House on its left, Pettenkofer terminated his long career of searching after proofs. What did he now prove?

A gesture of impatience? or of despair? In Challis's own time there had been the tragedy of an Australian artist. He had been full of ambition to storm London. His friends banquetted him before his departure to make another world acknowledge him. Rising to respond to his toast, a little unsteady on his feet, warmly expansive, he raised his arm: "With this hand I shall pull down thrones," he boasted. He pulled down only one: his own. Exuberance peters out in a cold attic. But it was three years before, unrecognised and dispirited, he ended his own life with that same member. Thus did he win his notoriety: for a day in the artists' quarter of a city which is ever the mausoleum of dominion hopes.

Was not the giving of death a gift of charity? Years before Challis had read in an English paper the story of a wild Nubian Ass. For years it had roamed, fleet of foot, proudly agile, along precarious ledges and dangerous defiles. But now it was old. It was old and apprehensive. Panting it stood upon the little height to which, towards evening, with pain it had clambered. Night was near at hand and instinct told that night brought leopard and hyena from sly recesses to prey upon the weak and unready. The once brave Nubian Ass was afraid, and as it sniffed the air suspiciously its legs trembled. It too was a life at bay. Overhead a vulture was circling.

The writer told how, moved by compassion, he had raised the rifle to his shoulder and saved its living body from the quivering pain of claw or talon. Was that not Charity? Why could he not give himself a similar anaesthesia against the rending of his flesh?

No. He was convinced that he did not fear death. He hated and dreaded dying. But, what about After? He was not concerned with youth's grim fairy-tales of eternal punishment. What did give him pause was the thought that it meant annihilation. No! No! it could not mean that. He did not wish to believe that all ended in nothing. The myths of science die harder. Had he not been taught that matter and energy were indestructible? Experiment had proved it! If matter, then why not life? This more-than-matter could not be completely destroyed.

Challis had no habit of logical thought. He was only a doctor, never amidst the hammering-in of facts, taught, as a student, to think. Ideas rose in his mind out of old emotions, bursting irregularly like bubbles of nascent gas from a dark fluid. His beliefs followed more closely than he knew his own effective experience. Now, from the pain of imminent decision he found refuge in the conviction that there was survival after death. There was, too, he was sure, a knowing beyond the growing edge of knowledge. But if there was

survival, then there was purpose in it all, some obscure purpose! Gradually, he began to feel the growing conviction of a purpose even in his own insignificant life. A similar conviction, he told himself, must have kept those first Australian convicts tied to living—so few had practised deliberate self-destruction. Had they known, however vaguely, that their lives were but a phase, moving outward and onwards, towards and beyond a hill?

With gathering exaltation in reaction, Challis escaped from his sombre mood of depression. The idea of a purpose possessed him more and more. This life was but a phase, a dedicated phase, leading to some unimagined end. Forms change, colours fade, odours disperse, things fall apart and are forgotten. The flowers go down to the earth again and the fruit of every tree. And in his heart, now, Challis knew that man deciduous would, somewhere, know renewal.

By this belief fortified, he found henceforth comfort in his own travail, and sometimes even the relish of a boy's private heroism. He came to dramatise a little his own fears, struggles and aspirations. Was not an explanation for his own mission to be found in duty to his neighbour? He asked himself: Who is my neighbour? and found at hand his own answer. It was those who dwelt in mean streets and in lowly houses, in the gaudier mansions of pretentious suburbs, and in vast edifices under the sign—all those, in sum, who suffered of the body or spirit, the cramped and the maimed, those shut in by fear or desire, the men of the country vagrant, and those of the city vagabond amid their senses. And he thought on the cicada which, after long servile years as a grub, enjoyed at last its short luminous hour of flight. So, he came to hope inwardly that his own spirit would yet shed its fetters, and after base servitudes, rise in glory towards the sun, its wings tipped with songs of praise.

* * *

For Challis, this flight into so rarefied an atmosphere was an unusual occasion. He was soon back again on old familiar

rounds or listening in his consulting room to the complaints of a people. They were all his neighbours. And over in Mollusc Bay patiently he heard the threnody of an old man over his youth for ever lost.

You may no longer be able to see the cottage which once stood below the level of a road skirting the water's edge. Its paling fence had long since fallen from the upright, and now slanted heavily towards the lower level of the lawn below. The old wooden gate had slipped from its hinges and had to be half-lifted, half-pushed, before entry.

Stretched on a long wicker-work chair amid a neglected garden an old man lay, an old man havering. Around each cornea of his deep-set eyes was an opaque ring. His voice had taken on the shrill and querulous tone of advanced age. His cheeks were channelled by many furrows; his mouth was short and peevish: he was but the shrunken pelt of a man, a man disconsolate. Age had despoiled him of his one cherished power and brought no compensation.

It was soon obvious to Challis that under the excuse of a trivial passing indisposition his patient was anxious to utter a deep lament, and canvass the possibility of a remedy. He was still seeking that last elixir of old men: a restorative for his lost virility. For women lost beauty, for men the failure of their potency is the final crown of thorns.

He was an Englishman of aristocratic origin who as a younger son had taken a romantic flight from privilege and caste into the new Continent down South—another of those remittance men who in Australia drift rudderless to a profligate end or, from boundary riding, rise to pastoral success. This immigrant had not failed, but now of all his exciting ventures he was prolix only in recalling his extraordinary amours. He was alternately brooding over his palsied lusts and gloating in dissertations about his once prodigious youth. Here at the end of a summer's day he was grieving, even to tears, because the sway of a woman's hip moved his blood no more, and the sharp profile of a young breast awoke no restless vigours. For

with that passing, other things had gone too. The colour of the sky had lost its more vivid tints and the green had gone from the young grass. In early mornings he smelt no more the ennobling scent of the new-turned earth: that which came to his nose now was more like the heavy odour of a grave. And rising in the small hours he caught no more an ecstasy watching, beyond the Heads, the first gallant outriders of the Dawn. Nothing was left to him, nothing but a memory that punished but no longer provoked.

Challis found something at once ludicrous and pitiful in these lamentations from a wizened old man reluctant even yet to admit defeat. His small hands were still delicate, but the skin on the back of them was almost transparent as if it were no more than a crinkled tissue-paper of half dead cells. Great blue veins were threatening to push through it. He was no more than a poor petulant lachrymose and senile man: a man unable to hold his waters, yet babbling still of virile yesterdays.

A doctor's parts are many; this was no grateful task. But his patient's age merited gentleness and a kindly understanding. For ten years and more this one had had many of the doctors from his own and the neighbouring suburbs. Old Rooney had been rude and after calling him "a dirty old man" left abruptly without expecting a fee. Reddle-Reddle had kept him for long on his visiting list, giving him Damiana first and then a succession of expensive French preparations until his patient rebelled against both cost and failure. Borkum had been once and had wanted to operate. He told of the new luminary which, from Paris and Vienna, had flared up to brighten the old man's world. But this old man didn't like those stories of chimpanzees. He merely paid a Consultant's fee and said he would think it over. Then he had turned to unofficial practitioners, to the chemist in a City street, and to German Fritz. He had searched old books and eaten spinach (greatly esteemed by Italians). Challis broke it gently to his patient that all these experiences had left his own armamentarium empty, and suggested that curfew having sounded once

and for all, that no one could call back again the heat of ardent afternoons.

The sun was beginning to withdraw its light from the dishevelled beauty of the garden. Spring would come again and other leaves arrogantly green would vest with majesty the trees and plants. But for the old man, slumped with disappointment in his long chair, there could be in this no new restoring.

Challis wondered as he followed the untidy path: Did all enjoyment of beauty arise out of the tension of a fevered body's emotion? Were the enjoyment of melody and the stretching out in aspiration but products of it? He remembered how Turgeniev could write no more once the capacity for love had left him.

As he lifted the derelict gate on its broken hinge he imagined he heard the creak of old tissues under the passionate stress. The shrill voices of boys quarrelling in a boat came from the water below. Challis felt acutely the malaise of his own thwarted nights.

Chapter XV

NEIGHBOURS

(i) DEATH'S EVE OF GLORY

Samuel Copney's story was finished; his life rounded off with a dream. The personality which fills the interstices of any human tissue is as strange as it is intangible. And who has ever seen defined the basement membrane between reality and phantasy?

After twenty years Challis still clearly remembered the first time he had seen Copney. It was at one of those noisy Patriotic Meetings which in 1915 were commonplace in Australia. The crowd present in the local Cockle Creek Town Hall did not quite fill it: too many of the people had felt that it would only mean another subscription and much of what they called "chin wagging". But the local Member of Parliament was there, and the Mayor in all his finery. All the more important tradespeople were on the platform, and the Ministers of every religion except the Irish Catholic priest. Doctor P. Tiberius Borkum was a prominent figure. He was enjoying the distinction of having opened the subscription list with a donation of £25. The audience had just applauded the announcement.

Next in the size of their subscriptions came the publicans: they represented the moneyed section of a small community. Other business men gave more cautiously, and not by prior agreement like the publicans, but with a watchful eye, each on his rival. The doctors, apart from Borkum, made no great show. Then the awkward time came, at last, when subscriptions flagged and the amounts offered were down to five shillings. Suddenly from the back of the hall rose a man, in his forties, soberly attired, who immediately attracted all

attention to himself by the debating-school manner of his address.

"Mr Mayor and Aldermen, Ladies and Gentlemen," he said. "Will you put my name down for £50, and I will give another £50 if nine others subscribe a similar amount." There followed a furious outburst of hand-clapping. The Chairman could be seen asking those around for information about the speaker's name, and since it was not forthcoming he despatched the honorary Secretary (to whom an honorarium by agreement was to be paid) politely to enquire. The speaker was still on his feet, however, making loyal references to the King and paying a compliment to our "grand soldiers over-seas".

Copney thus won for himself another notable success. His technique had been carefully worked out; it was all a matter of timing! In this case his timing had been perfect. Had his subscription been announced before Borkum's, the effect of it would soon have petered out during the stodgy speeches of Ministers and Aldermen. As it was, everyone now insisted he must be a member of the Committee, and they dragged him, quite willingly, up on to the dais and presented him to the great Senator Bulling who was honouring the occasion with his presence. Copney lived in a distant suburb, but his generosity and patriotism were already becoming widely known through all Sydney. The editor of the local newspaper asked for a photograph and was promised one for the next day ("by the afternoon post, without fail"). As a matter of fact it had just come back from the *Bondi Chronicle*, which had had it after last week's meeting in that suburb.

Up till the outbreak of the first world-war Copney's career had been merely that of a fairly successful local tradesman. Those around described him as "all right, but a bit of a gas-bag". He was always trying to edge his way into public life locally. He had stood twice for alderman, but without success. He had no sense of humour and he had broken down under the heckling of young blackguards sent to his meeting by one of the opposing candidates. In spite of his annual subscription

and his attending every annual meeting, he had failed up till then to get on to the Hospital Committee, but then there was some local snobbery over that. The wholesale tradesmen who had their businesses elsewhere drew the line at a local shopkeeper. With the outbreak of war, however, all these fine distinctions disappeared. Copney saw his chance of entrée everywhere—by means of a cheque book—and he took it. His activities were no longer circumscribed by the local Methodist Church and his Masonic Lodge (in which he had not advanced, for all his efforts).

Copney was an Englishman, facile of speech, energetic, a little theatrical in his manner, and sincerely—but also calculatingly—patriotic.

So, early in 1915 he began to attend selected patriotic meetings far and wide all over Sydney. Always he picked some moment to make a speech—one in perfect harmony with the fervently expressed sentiments of the previous speakers, but made much more acceptable by the offer of a subscription, "although he was not a resident of this suburb", or "if the residents of this suburb do not mind a visitor from another suburb helping them in their great effort." None of the suburbs ever minded.

He was worldly shrewd enough to realise that the fifty pounds donation which excited chatter in Cockle Creek or Balmain or Surrey Hills would scarcely be noticed in any meeting at a well-to-do suburb like Rose Bay. He wasn't willing merely to be one of a long list of generous givers, and he was not wealthy enough to compete with the very rich for notoriety. He therefore selected his suburb, giving as a reason the desire to help "the movement" in the less fashionable (he would not say "poorer") suburbs. But even in those unfashionable suburbs, Newtown and Glebe and Erskineville, the moment for intervention, in order to get the maximum effect, was most important. As for a batsman in cricket, timing was everything. By the middle of 1916 he was a "well-known public figure" and "among the prominent people

present" mentioned regularly in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. That was nearly fame. Those in his own suburb called him a "shiner"—it was a rugby football suburb, and to the people a "shiner" meant the player who kept out of the rough stuff or the rucks but intervened at the opportune instant to seize a pass and flashily score the try. Copney *was* a "shiner", but he was getting plenty of tries for his side.

Others called him an "insignificant tradesman"—but this criticism cut little ice even in a country so class-ridden as Australia. In England a "pettifogging attorney" had been called, not without much snarling from some of the lookers-on, to take charge of the Government there in time of war. The insignificant tradesman from a Sydney suburb became in wartime an alderman, was elected to the Hospital Committee, advanced as a Mason and won the affection or gratitude of many Australian soldiers—especially of those who had been wounded or sick. He was always on the wharf to meet those coming home. His days were filled by endless committee meetings. He had even to employ a secretary to keep a time-table of his appointments. Fortunately he had a good manager to look after the shop. And fortunately, too, he had a patient childless wife who in the background enjoyed the reflected glory of it all.

These were days when he savoured the respect of people socially and intellectually his superiors, when he enjoyed sensuously the sweets of patronising someone else than his own employees. He was terribly avid of compliments, ravenously hungry for praise. All the cuttings from news-papers which referred to his "patriotic labours", his "unselfish services", his "now famous generosity", he kept and carried about with him. With them were letters from people very highly placed in Melbourne or Sydney, from politicians of great importance and even from a few Knights-Bachelor. They all wrote to him on terms of equality, sometimes even affectionately. Senator Bulling was by now "his old friend".

It was natural that Samuel Copney, by this, had come to entertain great expectations.

Those great expectations were never realised. When, searching with feverish impatience the first Honours List after the end of the war, he found his name in the list of those appointed to the lowest rank in an Order very lavishly distributed, his indignation surged furiously. Was that the gratitude of a government towards one who had given some thousands of pounds out of his own modest fortune, and all his time for more than four years? Copney made no attempt to hide his disappointment—hadn't Senator Bulling implied (though not in so many words) that he would receive a Knighthood? Instead they had given him only this paltry Consolation Prize, while the Knight Bachelor had been awarded to Bineton Ficks in spite of his dubious financial past. The Rev. James Stickby wrote saying it was all a shame (and at the same time issued a cordial invitation to their next Social in the following month). So many others had graduated through calculated gifts of money to Orders of Chivalry, why should he have been discriminated against? He felt sure there was more in it than met the eye! Some hostile influences were at work. He noticed too, with his eagle eye, that he was no longer in the news. Copney removed his business advertisement from the local newspaper which had made no reference to the decoration.

After that first meeting with Samuel Copney at the patriotic meeting in 1915, Challis had made only rare contacts with him until after the end of the war. Then, following a chance meeting, at the Motorists' Club, acquaintance ripened. Copney, eaten up with chagrin, full of grievances he wanted to air, quickly found Challis to be a patient listener. He so badly needed those who would act as listening posts, echoing back, by their very silence, his own opinions! As a result he began not infrequently to cross the city and present himself at the afternoon consultations, holding up often a roomful of sick people, upsetting Challis's routine.

In those days Copney also became a nuisance at the Club. He was always button-holing anyone of importance with whom he had had the slightest acquaintance. He would leave his place at table in the dining-room to salute ostentatiously the Honourable Mr Fulsh, M.L.C., or some Senator from the Federal Parliament. His old-fashioned manner of dress made him a distinctive figure. He wore a high perpendicular collar with a large tie which, though not flashy, was of inharmonious colouring. On each little finger he carried a signet ring. It was quite obvious from the reception he got from these old acquaintances of the Patriotic Meeting Era that his greetings were not greatly valued. Nevertheless he hung on desperately to the hope that something more would yet be given him. Senator Bulling, who never said or wrote anything very definitely, had implied this in his last note. But even Senator Bulling's letters were getting fewer and shorter, and the now voluminous pocket-book, full of newspaper cuttings and a Prime Minister's brief letter, was at a standstill. Copney was quick to perceive the general trend of it all. Some evil influence was working against him—those Sinn Feiners in Melbourne whom he had once attacked publicly, or the Jesuits (whom he had never spared since they transferred their custom during the war). This sense of organised opposition against him grew every day. He was now sleeping badly. He was "cranky"; in the Club he was continually reporting waiters for their lack of deference, or because they kept him waiting and served others first. He had even written to the President complaining of the Secretary's omission from a letter addressed, not only of the Order to which he belonged, but also the letters J.P., and F.R.G.S., to which he was entitled. (Already before the war Copney had become one of the nine hundred and eighty-three new Justices of Peace who had been appointed shortly after the election of the local Member of Parliament for whom Copney had spoken twice during the Electoral campaign).

Copney was in this state of mind when a motor-car driven by a woman knocked him down. He had always argued against women driving cars. For days after this accident he lay irrational, irritable, curled up on his side, refusing all food, resenting all interference, his pulse slow, his pupils contracted, snarling.

When after a long convalescence he came across to Challis to get renewed "that old prescription for insomnia", Challis found him depressed, morose, easily made emotional. He was surer than ever that "they" were working against him, but he hinted darkly that he would yet "get his own back".

During one such consultation Copney in an access of emotion revealed his early life history. He was the natural son of a drunken woman. Some strange man flitted in and out of his boyhood life only to belabour the timid, fearsome child. At the local school he had been the butt of other boys. They used to accuse him of "sucking up" to the teacher. Finally he ran away and joined a man who taught him to lay bricks—he spoke like an expert of English and Flemish (but not of bastard) bonds. He had laid as a young man "his thousand bricks a day and more" in jerry-built tenement houses. When his drunken mother found out his address, in desperation he joined a ship's crew, deserting at Adelaide. He got a job in an ironmonger's shop, and with his first savings crossed to Sydney to start business for himself in a small way. Society had hurt him, despised him, derided him. And he wanted to "show them".

After his accident Copney went on a long voyage. This was badly informed advice. On board ship he was once again a public nuisance. He had at the first Sports Meeting offered an absurdly high prize for the winner of the Quoits Championship—nearly all the other members of the Committee were far richer than he. It was the old familiar attempt to leap straight into local notoriety. Soon he was "in holts", as he described it, with the Purser. Next he found the first class passengers "divided into cliques and coteries" none of whom wanted him.

He was himself no good at quoits. He didn't play bridge. He thus had no claim for social advancement. He wanted to talk all the while about the war and what he had done in the war, and about the important people he had met in the war. There was no Doctor Challis on board to suffer his confidences. People were forgetting about the war. Cricket seemed now to be all the rage—that new batsman from Bowral was getting all the limelight. Not long after his return home, brown and fit-looking physically, but with all the old wrongs still fermenting briskly, he was picked up unconscious on a footpath with a superficial head abrasion. Mrs Copney at once sent for Challis as a friend, and Challis had him admitted to a private hospital under a surgical specialist and a Neurologist. No one knew how he came to have the second accident. It was of course known that he was very prone to pick an argument on the ferry boat or the tram. No one had robbed him—his heavy gold watch and the shabby voluminous pocket-book full of cuttings were both in his pockets, untouched.

In the half-light of recovering consciousness old terrors returned to afflict him. He cried out against youthful cuffings, blubbered at the violence of his mother, whimpered as a schoolboy before the persecution of his school-mates. He was hearing again all the nicknames bestowed on him by those who said he "sucked up" to the teacher. He confessed to secret meannesses and petty thefts. The unconscious mind was busy muck-raking through the early years. Then he would make public speeches with something of a Victorian flourish. "I rise, Gentlemen, to ask you to give three hearty British cheers for our King." Or he was preaching a sermon at the Rev. Mr Stickby's Church—an egotistical sermon—with special references to his own career as an example of what an upright loyal hard-working citizen could achieve. And then suddenly serenity descended on him. For in a dream he knelt before the King's Representative and received the gift of Knighthood. Copney woke to fuller consciousness as a

Knight—in the Order of Chivalry, Chevalier, and with the heavy effusions of his mind drained all away.

Challis was never long away from this strange tortured mind which had found its peace in delusion. After the first comic reactions in the hospital's day-room, everyone joined in the conspiracy to make-believe. After all, he was but the innocent victim of his surrounding stresses. Challis looked on him sadly and affectionately as one whose history was not unlike that of many convicts transported nearly one hundred and fifty years before. Environment is a hard prism splitting into strange lurid colours the white light of human personality. Who may sit in judgment on the result?

Copney survived only a few weeks to enjoy his fatuous serenity. But they were weeks of a glory too long delayed. He was peaceful, docile, and happy. Everyone humoured him. "It is time now for your draught, Sir Samuel"—"There is a friend to see you, Sir Samuel"—and the friend, firmly warned, kept up the game. Copney would smile indulgently at any praise. He had assumed some of the airs of a *grand seigneur*, now that his preoccupations with a hostile world had ceased. And when he died he lay with something of a seraphic smile on his unwrinkled face: a thin mild figure wondrously wrapped within the cerements of his last dream.

He died, alas! most inopportunely—on a Saturday morning during an anxious period in the current Test Match. Thus his obituary notice was crowded out by the copious sporting news. The only newspaper which gave him any space was the local one which for years he had refused to advertise in. Even it only published an old photograph and that on a back page. But it was the one paragraph which never figured in Copney's bulky pocket-book. For once his sense of timing had failed him. And timing is all.

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(ii) THE FORK IN THE ROAD

The harassed-looking woman, his last patient for the evening, still lingered at the door. "You are quite certain, Doctor?

You wouldn't mislead me, would you? There's nothing at all wrong and she's quite all right?" For the fifth time, and without the slightest show of impatience, Challis repeated his opinion. "Mrs Rowdale," he said gently, "there is no sign of any disease whatsoever. The child is perfectly healthy. There is nothing at all for you to be alarmed about. I can say no more than that." Mrs Rowdale, temporarily reassured, thanked him and left. For nearly two years she had been coming from another suburb to consult Challis, bringing with her a perfectly healthy girl of five years in whom she was always detecting signs of some illness. No sooner was one suspicion brushed away than the mother became preoccupied over something new. There was always an epidemic of this or of that, or gossip in the neighbourhood about some child having tuberculosis of the hip or a rare cancer.

Challis was never anything but patient with her, for he knew the story. Mrs Rowdale was born Josephine Rooney: she was Doctor Rooney's only daughter and she had once been a nun.

Josephine Rowdale was a year older than Michael Rooney would have been had he survived the war—that Michael who had been at once the pride and disappointment of his father. Josephine had spent nearly all her childhood days at a Convent boarding-school. She was at that time an awkward fat pimply-faced girl with a pasty complexion whose only good features were her copious black hair and striking brown eyes. In the Convent they made her tie her black hair in pigtails lest it be an occasion for vanity. She was a girl of exemplary piety, without a trace of the harum-scarum tomboy spirit of many Australian girls. Each year she took among other prizes one for Good Conduct and another for Christian Doctrine. She was the pet of the graceful tall Sister Loyola, a somewhat unintelligent Sister whom everyone admired and Josephine in particular loaded with presents. In her day-dreams Josephine always modelled herself on Sister Loyola and tried to copy her quiet elegance in external piety.

The nun who taught in the leading Class was of much sterner stuff. It was her custom before the end of the year, when most of the boarders would be leaving the Convent for good, to deliver herself of a homily "for senior girls only". But long before they reached that last Class most of the younger girls had heard what it was all about. It consisted mostly of a violent tirade against the world, during which she told a story about the Fork in the Road and the Three Ways.

Yet even though they had already heard much of its contents the lecture stirred all deeply—all except a wilful girl named Cassie Harley, the very same one who had been caught the previous summer enjoying with pagan delight a shower, *totally unclothed*, when everyone knew that it was one of the *strictest* rules, "for modesty's sake", that no one should bath without putting on a bathing costume. "The body is your enemy, my dear children"; they were always being told that both by the Sisters and the visiting Priest. The sin against modesty was the greatest of all sins.

That Sister who told the Story of the Fork in the Road had borrowed some of the fire of a monk denouncing evil at a Mission. Her contralto voice echoing through the small room seemed to take on the tone of an Apostolic Denunciation. All of them, she thundered, were approaching that decisive event in their lives when at the Fork in the Road each must make her choice. On that choice their happiness in this world and their salvation in the next would depend.

There were three choices. The first way home—and the Sister spoke for a monent ecstatically from a wrapt face and with shining eyes—the first way home was the only true and certain way. It led through groves of wooded loveliness, by gardens rose-trellised with happy moments to the vista of eternal happiness. That was the way of a religious vocation—by turning their backs on "this sordid horrible world" with its temptations and seductions, by leaving "this devil's kingdom" to become the bride of Christ. Thus, they would find

the only real happiness here, and have their sure reward, hereafter.

She paused, as if to let the beautiful picture she had drawn fix itself forever in their minds and memories.

Then her voice changed and took on a patronising tone. There was another way, the second way— It, too, could be made praiseworthy, but only—and her deep voice now bellowed—*only* by keeping inviolate the fortress of their bodies. It was a way of the world, terribly difficult, beset with the dangers of defilement. The dragon was ever near, and always lurking in ambush. Nevertheless—and she resumed her lukewarm manner—if—(she emphasised it by repeating) *if* they kept themselves virginal, offering themselves up to Him, they yet could attain to Everlasting Life. But only by perpetual vigilance and ceaseless prayer could they come through all the terrible dangers. It was at best a selfish drab way . . . "Beware, Beware," she stormed in warning. "Beware of the Body: *that* is the Dragon. It is a foul beast but you will see it gleaming in its false beauty of gold and azure and sable. Beware . . ." Cassie Harley, from the security of a back seat, her head bent down, at this stage was heard to snigger. They all knew her snigger and were appalled by it. It was preciously near sacrilege. Their hearts beat faster and they hated her for it.

The third way was the way of Compromise. The elderly Sister spoke of it coldly, scarcely concealing her loathing. No one could help realising how disgusted she was with the whole business. But still, still, the Church in its wisdom permitted it, and (though her voice was cutting) it was not for her to say it was wrong. It was the way of Marriage. She was obviously hostile to the whole idea. It was, of course, the lowest path. But it *could* lead (through hardships and surrenders, humiliations and pain) to a sort of back-door entrance to Heaven. That was, provided they married one of their own Faith and brought up, dedicated to God, all the children they might be blessed with. But it meant defilement and after each

birth there must be Churching. They could enjoy marriage and escape damnation, but it was a hard way and a low way . . . . My dear girls, she ended appealingly, each of you will shortly have to make her own choice. There were few who did not, for the moment, secretly opt for the conventual life.

Unlike the others Josephine Rooney's choice had already and long since been made. Her father's pressure at home had been only a minor factor: it might easily have had a contrary effect. For him the ideal life for a woman was in the Convent. It had been his dearest wish that both his son and his daughter should enter the Church. But what influenced Josephine Rooney most was all that glamour of Nuns' lives as seen by a Convent boarder. Did they not walk in sanctity, revered by the lay people? Were they not free from the cares and anxieties of life? Were they not pure? Pure! That idealised state of purity had been constantly set before her both at home and in the Convent. For years she had been, in secret, identifying herself with the tall graceful nun who moved about in an atmosphere of self-conscious piety, as if under the perpetual observation (and admiration) of the world. With nearly all the others the first sensation of awe coming out from the lecture was quickly lost, and, with their journey home from school, all those temporary aspirations to dedicate themselves to a religious life vanished. Innocent love affairs, half imagined, and clandestine letters to boys formed part of a new phase. But Josephine was not like that. So, in due course, she rent her garments and surrendered her freedom. Doctor Rooney, close as a rule, made a surprisingly generous gift of money to the Convent. In one ambition of his life he felt himself not disappointed.

Life in the early months of her novitiate seemed little different from that of student days. Josephine slipped into it without feeling the irk of discipline older women feel. There had been no break in the life to make it difficult. When it came to taking a name in religion, however, she was grievously disappointed at not being able to take "Mary Loyola", but there were

dozens of "Mary Loyolas" in this particular teaching Order and an excessive number with "Sister Clare" . . . The stern martinet who was Mistress of Novices counselled her to take "Mary Veronica"; at the moment there were fewer with this name—two had recently died. Josephine stifled her first severe disappointment, remembering her vow of Obedience.

When ultimately, after some years of quiet drudgery and submission, she passed out from the Mother House on to the circuit of small teaching day-convents in the country, her enthusiasm became a little damped. In the dreary hard life it was not so easy to maintain her earlier exaltation. In some of the Convents, behind the scenes, there was pettiness and quiet secret bickerings. The nuns were human and, like other women, subject to vanities, jealousies, or fits of temper, for all their positive virtues. Sometimes the Mother Superior was hard and seemed unsympathetic and inconsiderate. The way led no longer through wooded loveliness, although in Chapel, meditating, she still found her ecstasies, and in her prayers surcease. But after ten years in the Western parts of New South Wales—in those parts where the old West road becomes itself like a dried serpent's skin withering in the sun—something in her dried up, too. And something else was erupting. She was now always drinking tea—the nuns seemed to live on tea and bread and butter in those hot parts. She was always tired, and she was always discontented. In the mirror she saw herself yellow-complexioned and drawn, only the brightness of her brown eyes remaining. The abundant black hair had been long since cut. She realised, in herself, that the mask of her patient submission was wearing thin.

It was a slow and painful period from the first indulgence in self-pity to her ultimate release. She had never been able to bring herself to suffer gladly the rude irreverent heedless children of the local publican in one small country town, or to accustom herself to the crude conversations of dairy farmers eternally talking about Daisy having calved or Fanny being off her milk. The Mother Superior, who had never been a

day ill in her life, could not understand, and did not sympathise with, a nun who was now always going sick with vague gastric symptoms; "she was imagining". Josephine's mind was still tethered to small pastures, but emotion was reaching further out. Her discontentedness took voice so frequently that Doctor Rooney was sent for. He was horrified, when in a private conversation, his daughter declared she could not continue. "It will be the death of me", she confessed with tears. Her father remained adamant. Better death than renunciation. Wasn't she the luckiest woman in the world? Hadn't she the grace and gift of a vocation? He upbraided her —scolded her, solemnly warned her. Prayer should be her sovereign remedy. Her Confessor counselled prayer also. The Mother Superior, by this time alarmed, declared her "run-down" and packed her off to the coast—to new surroundings where Josephine felt herself on trial and under observation. She found herself continually distracted in Chapel, saying her prayers mechanically, making of the Litany a meaningless jingle. She, thereupon, took steps to initiate the procedure for her release from all Vows.

At first delaying tactics were used against her, it was surely but a passing mood. There was nothing serious in it all. They had so many of these young women who got hysterical, but in the end they settled down and were the better nuns for it. Rare the religious Sister who did not go through a difficult phase, at one time or other in her convent life. But Josephine was obdurate. She had become not only useless to them, but was disturbing the Community in which she was living. So, in the end her Superiors gave way and she was set free from all her Vows. The old Mother Superior publicly declared that Sister Veronica never had had a vocation. She herself had always suspected it. But the dispensation meant nothing to Josephine's father. He wrote disowning her, in a harsh letter that consigned her to the Judgment of God and the pitilessness of a hard world.

Thus it was that after fifteen years of Convent life Josephine Rooney walked down George Street, Sydney, free, her cropped hair concealed beneath a wig. In her mannerism there was, and ever after remained, the distinctive *something* of a nun. The new freedom excited her with the sense that she was doing something irregular. What an exhilarating feeling to be wearing underclothes no longer of coarse rough material! But a meeting with old friends had its embarrassing side. The high-caste Catholics strongly disapproved of her. Admittedly, there had been no scandal. It had all happened "because of a breakdown in health", they said, but they added severely, "Didn't she take a vow, a solemn vow?" and here she was, gadding about in short skirts, a source of bad example to all. Others of her own Faith were kindly but inquisitive. It was a novelty to know and entertain someone who had been a nun for fifteen years, and they wanted to know all about the life behind a carefully dressed-up stage. There they suffered a disappointment, for all Josephine had to say was that the discipline had been too hard for her, and as for personalities, there were Superiors she loved and Superiors she could not love in spite of sincere prayer. The trouble was that they were all thrown so close together in the Community that existence with those whom one disliked became an ever-present strain.

Josephine knew perfectly well that, with her little dowry, she should have gone to a distant town and sought work as a governess or teacher in a primary school, but she feared to go among strangers. A stigma always remained. She was a failed nun, and that story would pursue her to the ends of the earth. After six months she married, quite impetuously, a middle-aged and sophisticated man who had a modest position in a wholesale warehouse. Her kinder friends suggested that he knew she had a little money of her own. It was nearer the truth to say that a sophisticated man had found something different, something novel, in this ingenuous woman of thirty-five which had attracted him. She, for her part, told her in-

timate friends that she was doing it "for companionship" and "Reginald was so kind". She would have indignantly denied any consciousness of the promptures of the blood. He was not of her Faith, so her high-caste Catholic acquaintances and the Church-pious cried scandal on it all. It had been bad enough to come out of a Convent. To contract a mixed marriage within the first year was much more than dis-edifying. Her stern hard father, Doctor Rooney, solitary and arrogant, pretended to be not interested. He had shut her out even from his prayers, except in so far as he prayed "for all sinners". It meant nothing that she had got her husband to go through the ceremony in her own Church and to consent to all the conditions concerning future children.

Marriage proved a bewildering experience, a series of wonderful excitements and half-repented raptures. It was not possible so suddenly to change an attitude, or to cast overboard grim old teachings first heard as a child. From the first it was a battle to adjust these gratifications enjoyed within the ordered system of her unrelinquished Faith. She could not forget how for years it had been dinned in her ears that all this was unclean. In reaction, at times came back the half-conviction that all sensual indulgence was vile. At the same time she resented the constant disparagement of the flesh by celibate men and women, not free themselves from unconscious envies. Was purity, after all, the final expression of perfection—a dour refusal of the body? She could not now believe it—she did not want to believe it. The old prejudices survived, but survived under different guises. In passionate self-justification, she defended the flesh, the flesh militant in procreation. The bitter disparagement of it hurt her deeply because of its unfairness, its un-charity. Those priests and ministers were too small of stature. Why didn't they teach the people to sanctify the flesh—Christ wore it—and to honour the act of marriage—it had been good enough for the Apostles. Treasure it! Cherish it! Make it sacred, keep it reserved. Their sour and bitter envies had coloured, falsely, an ancient doctrine.

Honour the flesh and men will not debase it. Esteem the act and men will make it much more than a matter of vulgar importunate frictions. Decry, deride, deny, and men will dishonour it furtively. Let those who practise it transmute these corporeal surges into a song that carries far beyond the flesh. The little French priest at St Michael's had assured her all would be well; she must light a candle before the Virgin's statue, from another candle. But even as she plugged it into the iron socket she kept saying to herself: Why cannot our little candles of the emotion burn to a higher end than of mere droppings upon a tray?

But in spite of all this ardent advocacy within herself, a sense of guilt remained. It remained during the first three years, even while she told herself she was pitying all those others their disappointed unabducted thighs. Then, with a gradual disenchantment within her marriage, the old teaching came back at a gallop. Her husband was by this showing himself in his true colours. He was no longer kind or considerate. Worst blow of all: he was not faithful. Could any disillusion be greater? Any cross harder to bear? Then, once, coming home more than mellow with drink from a Lodge meeting, he had joked coarsely about her vocation and called her teasingly "Sister Veronica". Thus, even while she was resenting the attitude of nuns who lifted their own self-ordained sterility to the highest power of godliness, she heard again the sepulchral voice of a Sister telling the Convent girls about the Fork in the Road. "Beware, Beware of the Body. *There* is the real enemy, the dragon lying for ever in ambush. . . ." She was lonely now—lonelier than ever she had been in a Convent Cubicle.

At the end of her first year she had had a child. The little French priest at St Michael's had been at pains to correct her previous false conception about Churching. It was no more than an act of self-dedication. Yet most women had been deliberately left with the idea that it signified a cleansing after defilement.

Her little girl now became the target of all her affections and the source of all her preoccupation. Panic seized the mother when there was talk of an epidemic in the neighbourhood. She was always suspecting something wrong. Wasn't her child limping? And wasn't that left eye squinting a little? Over the sleeping girl the mother bent watching anxiously. Her mouth was slightly open: perhaps she was getting adenoids? Josephine Rowdale, born Rooney, formerly a nun, knew and understood her own lot. She was trying hard to accept it. Thus she would carry on until, with the atrophy of a function, virtue became automatic. Meanwhile, she was always hearing the disdainful voice of the nun telling the fable about the Fork in the Road. Cassie Harley, who sniggered had come to no good. She had been mixed up in a big divorce case. The nuns said severely it was but a judgment on her. Josephine Rowdale dreaded to think of the day when her own daughter, too, must come to the Fork in the Road.

The afternoon of her recent visit once more to consult Challis, her little girl had been "playing at Mothers" in the next door garden, with cheap dolls, "pretending". They were common children she was playing with, and the eldest was a tomboy with something in her that recalled Cassie Harley. The dolls were of Japanese make. The wax had broken away from the nose of one and the rouged cheeks of another. A third had lost its arm, and from an open wound in the thigh was bleeding sawdust.

* * *

(iii) HALOES

The little French priest of Bunker's Hill was dead. Men and women, at first, wished not to believe the rumour; he had so often been dying! But now the phrase had broken in the throat of him who for years had comforted the wayward rich and poor. The shepherd of sinners was no more.

His parish had lain in the heart of the old City. Along his part of George Street North there was in 1788 only a bush

track by which the convicts went, to and fro, to hospital huts and tents on the Western side of the Bay. It included parts still notorious for the roughness of the inhabitants, for sinister deeds, and for acts of violence. Many of the people of Gippsborough had been suckled in a rebel Creed. It was still dangerous for a well-dressed man to loiter, after dark, along the water-front or pass alone through the Argyle Cut. Convict hands and convict labour had hewn that path out of rock. Footpads for long after frequented it, waylaying the careless pedestrian.

But the French priest was pastor of much more than his parish. His charity knew no boundaries. If officially his parishioners were the people of narrow back streets, the publicans and barmaids of that great commercial thoroughfare which is George Street, the small shopkeepers, the elusive sailors home for a spell, and the little women of the street shadows —in actual practice, his congregation was gathered from every suburb of Sydney. Most of allthere came those with the slur of old felonries on them. From mean lives he led many to distant green clearings, disclosing unimagined horizons. He set himself to be their guide, pointing the way beyond the hill.

It was he who when some old roué was dying in a far distant part of Sydney was called in by anxious relatives to administer the Last Rites. Shepherd of sinners, he tempered the wind of his penance to their bleeding spirits. Never did any tale of viciousness and debauch evoke self-righteous surprise. "Anything more, my son?" he would say gently to the embarrassed man confessing. He had heard with sympathetic attention so many last guttural submissions, and he had looked on them with pity in his eyes, when death at last relaxed the spasm of their passions. By the time he left, he had healed more than the dying man. None knew better the labyrinthine ways by which men come home.

Challis had met him often in the humble tenements of his beloved poor: a frail lithe man who ran rather than walked,

with the short steps of those Chinese vegetable hawkers who, years before, sold their goods from great wicker baskets suspended from a bamboo stick borne upon the shoulders. The French priest's face was semitic in caste; suitably attired one might have mistaken him for a rabbi. For all his many years in Australia, he was French of the French, and his English speech never even approached perfection.

Shepherd of sinners; to him went the drunkard from near the Cut, the shamefaced man from a distant parish, afraid to face the fierce blackthorn morality of his local priest, the wife of a mixed marriage troubled in conscience, and some of those tired and distressed poor women who along lower George Street hold out the begging bowl of their flesh. "Poor erring children," he would say. "No real harm in them, only 'misguided' ". For no one ever shocked him and no one ever left him without hope renewed, in spite of the turpitude of one more surrender. Healer of broken spirits, he knew all their wounds—the weak scar which breaks down easily, the sore which resolves by slow granulation leaving a terrible keloid, and those sinus tracks of the soul which never heal completely, but bleed at the touch and weep, by times, their thin watery secretion. From dingy alleys, and sordid surroundings and from distant luxurious homes, the afflicted came crowding humbly into the Church, and waiting patiently for his brief intervention. Their presence in this *milieu* was itself an act of humility.

Once, on a Saturday afternoon, Challis had slipped in to the Church on the Hill, to see for himself the working of these cures. Four confessionals were busy in the dimly-lit Church, and around each were clumped, kneeling or standing, rich and poor, old and young. But, outside one, there was a long queue reaching to the entrance door. That was the little French priest's. There was no high ritual—no loud hosannas or laying on of hands. The silence was broken only by the quiet moving in and out of people. In the Church itself only a few candles were burning; nothing more. Yet the little man,

within a confined space, was strengthening the recidivist to fight once more, and giving hope where hope no more survived. Wasn't the city full of great temptations for men and women? Wasn't a devil lying in wait for us all at every corner? "Yes yes, it was very wrong, but you will try harder the next time." His colleagues thought his methods too quick and his penances too light. Clerical envy always finds its grounds. But the French priest induced more people to make amends, to restore and to repair, than all those who angrily rebuked the sinners. He loosed their sins and later went into their homes, as a friend, making things straight. And so he rescued them from the disreputable rabble of their own thoughts and ways.

It was because he knew all this, that Challis felt the French priest's death as a personal loss. The habit of his own mind was anti-clerical. He disliked the mystical surrender to inertia of some clergy. He had seen some kneeling in lazy somnolent prayer, leaving the initiative in Divine Hands. What was prayer if it did not mean the girding-up of loins and a heartening of the spirit to action? Too many, he thought, passed their time lazily mumbling, self-complacently, the old formulae. Even Rooney had been induced to admit "an exceptional case", remarking: "Man ordains them, only God can judge their vocations."

But there lingered in Challis's mind from previous years an incident, trivial, comical, even ridiculous, which he had never forgotten: It was the incident of a mysterious Light. One night the residents of the quarter found themselves all staring up at a mysterious light which, like a halo, centred above the steeple of the French priest's Church. The news spread rapidly, and soon the pious and the very devoted (mostly women and children) were kneeling on the footpath outside the railings of the Church and proclaiming "A Miracle!"

A Miracle! What more natural a phenomena than a Miracle! Wasn't the saintliness of the little French priest known on earth and in heaven? Who better than he should be the object of a divine manifestation?

Others, whispering in groups, recalled the historical sanctity of this very spot; how in those first terrible days of the Settlement the only priest to minister to the convicts had, all irregularly, thrust himself into the breach. A turbulent man, but gifted with the sense of mission. Then a few years later when driven from the young Colony, instead of destroying them, he had left the Sacred Species in the possession of a transported rebel; one who had made pikes and borne them against the King. His home had been hereabouts. Was this not holy land?

The little French priest had come out of his presbytery to rebuke the crowd gently. He had told them to go into the Church and say a prayer and then return home. He had rebuked them above all for their lack of faith. "The light, my children, is always there if only you will look for it—God's light, that is everywhere." But the people had stayed on curious and elated, some of them feeling the access of a fresh ecstasy. At last Australia had its native miracle, as Naples its Januarius! The crowd had later been increased by curious passers-by and on the far edge of the crowd the sceptics had made great play. It was at this time that Challis, returning from a B.M.A. meeting in company with Macleay, had pulled up his car to find out what it was all about.

Macleay of course ridiculed it all. "Mass Hysteria", he had called it. "Men and women finding what they want to find." "The police should have dispersed the gathering, which was blocking the traffic even at midnight."

Challis with his affectionate esteem for the French priest had said nothing. Have we not all of us our private beliefs which others call superstition? Erasmus denounced astrology, but believed in witches. Giordano Bruno railed against priests and superstitions, but believed fondly in the magic of numbers.

Two days later someone turned off a switch on a neighbouring high building and the reflection vanished. It had all served the wonder of a few days: a good newspaper story. Now it

was a subject for laughter: the miracle of a neglected switch. There had been disappointment in the Rocks area; they still did not believe that the turning-off of a switch was the whole story. Men are so easily satisfied; they watch the miracle of the little grass and think they have solved it all rationally, by finding a seed! But the little French priest who always carried his people on his shoulders, like a bundle of faggots, had reproved them once again. The light was there and everywhere. God's light, if only they would look for it.

Now in the emotion of his loss Challis felt the agony of unexpressed beliefs. There came back out of a distant corner of his mind the recollection of an ancient story:

How the illusion of a star had led the Magi to a stable, there to be enlightened by the rays from the Face of a Child. How, falling on their knees, they had offered gold and frankincense and myrrh.

Scoffers were there, too, peering from the threshold. But all they saw was the darkness of an unswept stable. And they smelt only the hot sweaty sides of the stalled cattle.

Chapter XVI

THE LITTLE SUMMER OF ST LUKE

Ne creator, ne creatura mai, figliuolo, fu senza amore.

Upon an impulse, Challis gave up practice and went abroad. His action was the culmination of many months of spiritual malaise. He had come to dread the little rancours of disease within the coming day. The driving force of his will no longer sufficed to overcome the inertia of lost enthusiasms. And since he was not, temperamentally, one who could coldly plan far ahead, saying, "in six months' time I shall embark on such a steamer", he sought, straightaway, a *locum tenens*, then chose the first outgoing ship for Europe. Macleay readily promised to look after his private affairs and became guardian of Gertrude, now serene in her vacuous indifference within a nursing home.

Little did he then suspect that on this impetuously-undertaken tour, he would enjoy for a brief period the happiness of a younger woman's companionship. Psychiatrists would explain it all on a lower level than ever Challis would have conceded to be the truth. Be that as it may, he had in this experience, the last rapture of his short season, between the dying ardours of a summer unrepined and the cold asceticism of a winter he had ceased to dread.

And if that rapture terminated with an abruptness more in keeping with her character than his own, at least they had not the embarrassment of any farewell. It was to be the one vast and deep emotion of his life, maintaining to the end the first momentum of its passion and the full volume of its flow. It did not finish miserably in the petty troubled waters of recrimination. Nor did it peter out like that great Australian river which, after draining one third of a great Continent, and

keeping with quiet majesty a difficult course through realms of drought, ends between sand-dunes, and, after a paltry shallows, surrenders ignominiously and almost unperceived, in a heaving, disdainful ocean.

Challis nearly left the ship at Fremantle. The first ten days of ship life had been for him both a physical agony and a spiritual loneliness for which the novelty of leisure hours supplied no adequate compensation. It astonished him, however, to find how quickly, between sea and sky, his local preoccupation with the affairs of Cockle Creek vanished. He would not have believed that any man's perspective could so suddenly change.

He spent much of his time in those first ten days asking himself why he was making the trip—he, a middle-aged man with no friends or acquaintances on the "other side". Was there some force, subtle and obscure, pulling him back to that England from which, nearly a century and a half before, the first unwilling pilgrims had gone forth? The idea of such a nostalgia operating unconsciously, fascinated him. It made him think of the strange instinct which led English elvers to cross the thousand miles of ocean, back to the rivers which their parents had left to seek the far Sargasso. Challis had seen pictures of those threads of violent energy, writhing in captivity before being sent to their allotted rivers. These, too, on a dark night of storm, years hence, in autumn time, would hear the call, and turning down their rivers seek the North Atlantic on the long and perilous journey to the Sargasso Sea.

But what made him continue his voyage, far more even than his habitual unwillingness to take positive action, was the recollection of an old teacher's advice that the mind, no less than the soil, needed its rotation of crops. Above all of the busy doctor was this true if he were to be saved from the effects of a cultural erosion. The mind, he was convinced, must lie, for a period, fallow in meditation, wandering, questioning, appraising. Perhaps, it was even necessary that

a doctor should have his forty days in a desert, communing alone.

Fremantle distressed him with its corrugated iron roofs. It had the shabbiness but not for him the warm associations of Cockle Creek. After Fremantle, he became, whether he liked it or not, part of the feverish little colony aboard a ship. Often he withdrew to play the part of critical speculator, watching the desperate efforts of the no longer young to have a "good time". The trivial incidents of the day assumed wonderful proportions. All the vulgarities of tourism spread themselves before his half-amused and half-disgusted eyes. He saw the too obvious pursuits of the sensual adventurer, the vanities of middle-aged and old women, the undisguised ostentations of the newly rich. Worldliness was rampant in a tiny world. Some were working themselves up to feverish states of excitement like aboriginals at a corroboree. Others strolled through the crowd with conscious superiority and a professed boredom—was it their seventh or their eighth trip? they had quite forgotten!

Challis at an early stage gravitated towards the ship's medical officer, and found him a professed cynic who rivalled the purser in sensual opportunism. "You've left it too late," he said didactically to Challis—he was looking dissolute after a late night in the smoking-room—"I bring dozens of doctors across to England—the young going for post-graduate work, the old trying to fill in the vacuum of retirement. But the most dissatisfied of all are those in between these two age periods. They are too old to seek higher degrees. They have postponed their trip until they accumulated more money. They say they couldn't take the time off before, or they couldn't afford it. Nearly all have lost the habit of play, so they stick in the smoking-room drinking too much and lamenting their lost opportunities for travel."

Challis rather mildly retaliated. After all, to be a ship's doctor and travel backwards and forwards over the same course, year after year, must be uninteresting, even boring.

The ship's doctor would not admit it. It was a good post—"very little hard work and the minimum of responsibility." He met a variety of people on each voyage. Thus although the course was the same, the adventure was always different. He was a great believer in "having his fling"—in "brief satisfactions" and "quick partings". "The longest I have a patient, or a friend, is six weeks—" he said gloatingly.

In Ceylon Challis was fascinated but uneasy. The vivid colours startled, and the new odours excited, him. But he was quick to see under the commercial artifices of life there the tragic soul of a section of the native race diseased and debased. We had not imposed on this people the habits of an élite, but rather the practices of our selfish exploiters. Challis imagined he heard Macleay's voice again: "Well, if we've taken away their gods, haven't we given them the gold standard?"

Port Said disturbed and offended him much more. Foetid debaucheries were whispered as a promise in the main street—as if they were expected by the average tourist. So that was the current opinion of local people about their English or Australian visitors! Would that obsequious native be pursuing him furtively to show pornographic picture cards if a small minority did not buy them? Challis remembered the story of the virtuous Currency Lass in the early day of the Settlement in New South Wales who refused the offer of a trip to England, "because that was the place from which the thieves came".

He was very tired of all the ship's company and the too vociferous passengers by the time they reached the Mediterranean, and he felt a curious reluctance to continue on to England. So without any fixed plan he left the ship at Naples. He would dawdle here or there according to the whim, and make his way up slowly to London.

Almost at once he fell captive to a beauty that in all his earlier life had eluded him. Here was poverty, but a poverty made cheerful with colour. Challis wandered along the little unhygienic back streets of this foreign city and did not find them alien to his senses. Within the Museum he caught a

distant glimpse of ancient years, saw the brilliant violence of the Renaissance, its ebullience, the ruthlessness of the individual life. Primitive passions laughed back at him. For the first time for many years he felt himself contented, feeling that he had escaped from the crowd jostling too close about his mind. In spite of his ignorance he became quickly absorbed in the story of ancient times and found in them a new balm.

He toiled up the sides of Vesuvius, plucking the yellow *ginaestra* from its lava-covered slopes. The peasants were labouring in happy disregard of the future recurrence of any disaster. It was as if they said to themselves: "It is not we who shall be buried. Not in our time. Not to-day nor to-morrow, not in our time will it come." They were men whose lives were cast among the obvious records of ancient years. Their eyes were old eyes—that saw too many centuries of change to take seriously the rise and fall of an Empire, the upstart emergence of a leader or a state. They were a cynical people but kindly in their cynicism, sophisticated with old stories, counting the puny dribble of time of little worth. Was not the sun warm? *Pazienza!* Challis caught from old excavations a whiff like that first sensation of eternity he had noticed in the dissecting room, when a yellow parched body, nameless but numbered, on a table had taught him humility and left him conscious of the insignificance of his flesh. And yet it was for the first time, then, that he had become conscious of a continuity unbroken in the spirit.

Before he left Naples he cabled to Macleay giving, for his European address, the Poste Restante care of Thos. Cook and Son. His plans were still vague and unformed, but he knew now he would be lingering longer in the South than he had thought. The colours were warm, the atmosphere soft and gracious. He was rapidly adjusting himself, moving from old fixed prejudices and settled judgments to new appraisements.

Rome was a tapestry full of bewildering figures. His first feeling was of awe. His own ignorance hurt him. Centuries jostling one another, in splendour and misery, rebuked

his neglect of them. The mediaeval era he had been taught to despise as dark; yet it glowed with a mellow humanity he had not suspected. The terrible violence of the Renaissance startled and enchanted him as a period of incalculable mischief.

It was during that very first week in Rome that he met Maria della Valle. He had crossed from the arena of the Colosseo, late one afternoon, to enter by the side door an old Church—the Church of San Clemente. He had already read something of its story and knew that, like a botanical section, it displayed different ages of development. Here you could see the layers of growth in the Christian Church. In this mediaeval basilica dedicated to the fourth Pope, Mithras, wearing his Phrygian cap, had sacrificed a bull to the sun. A thousand years before in the sack of Rome rude hands had despoiled it. Hunted believers had been tracked to this sanctuary. Challis was trying to assemble the broken fragments of his little knowledge.

Presently he found himself joining a group of two ladies to whom an old Dominican was acting as guide. He was relieved to find the ladies understood English, for Challis had no other language and the Dominican himself was Irish. . . . The disquisition went on . . . the priest was speaking in the mechanical way of those who have told it all so many hundred times before—as if speech had become a mere reflex action, short-circuited from the thinking mind. "This was the residence of S. Clemente which once was confiscated and granted to the priests of Mithras. Here on this staircase is his statue. . . ."

The two ladies whom Challis met so casually before the dissection of an ancient basilica were French by nationality and they, too, were making their first visit to Rome. They were teachers, "blue stockings", from a French College, one of them on a month's vacation, the other, Maria, taking a Sabbatical year. With cautious restraint the three joined conversation, the superior education of the ladies revealing itself in their classical knowledge.

When next day by chance the three met again wandering around the Pantheon, they stopped to exchange greetings. They listened, much amused, to a smart guide with exaggerated American accent, making his wisecracks to a group of American tourists whom he was intensively conducting around Rome. He was aware that American tourists love concrete facts. One of them indeed was busy making notes. "Twenty-eight waggon loads of the remains of Christian martyrs were brought here from the Catacombs" . . . "Now, if you pass by here after dark you will see some of the seventy-two cats which are kept to control the plague of rats infesting these ruins." The guide had an irreverent story or two to tell, in order to cheer up the irreligious who might be depressed by the odour of sanctity in the holy place. Shooting off at a tangent he asked them all if they had heard what S.C.V. stood for on the papal cars they saw about Rome. No one being able to answer, he told them. The Vatican meant it for "Stato Città di Vaticano", but the cynical Romans substituted "Se Cristo Vedesse" (could Christ but see!) The guide alone chuckled at his own smartness, then went on to make the ancient quip about Barbarians and Barberini.

The humour of that interlude broke the ice of any restraint, and when the guide moved his flock away in an effort to keep up with his hasty itinerary, the three continued their own examination together. The French women, with their *Blue Guides* and their deeper historical knowledge, took charge. They spoke quietly and without ostentation, of the Third Consulate of Agrippa, of Hadrian's rebuilding the Temple, of Septimus Severus, of Caracalla, of pillage by the barbarians, of its consecration by Boniface the third, and on and on. By the time they separated for lunch, it was with the understanding they should continue elsewhere in the afternoon. The French visitors were staying at a Pension near Sta. Maria Maggiore. Challis, who was at the little hotel of Santa Chiara, offered to conduct them over the famous Church in the Piazza Minerva near by.

After this they made many daily excursions together and their acquaintanceship ripened rapidly. Together they risked the roystering behaviour of the crowd gathered in the Piazza Navona on the great day of the Befana. Moving about this citadel of Christianity, Challis felt himself never far away from pagan times. In this ancient stadium of Domitian, now a piazza, great open-air sports had once been held, the surface being flooded for the occasion, with water fed by the aqueduct (twelve miles long) which Agrippa had built. But where once these aquatic sports were held, and where Roman nobles later drove in ornate carriages or rode high-stepping horses, there was now nothing more than a cheap and noisy carnival, with much license and many little permitted indecencies. A mock Befana went by riding on a brown stick. From a corner of a neighbouring street old Pasquino watched the revellers sardonically, his bust moth-eaten by the centuries.

Challis acted as a guard for the ladies on such occasions, and also when they penetrated into the little "bad" streets of the Via della Pellegrina or the Via della Pace—notorious quarters yet not without their tarnished Madonnas at the street corner, though the flowers on the statues set above a muddy thoroughfare were faded.

Together, too, they went to the Campo dei Fiori, where the French women gazed again with unconcealed pride at their own Embassy in the Palazzo Farnese. They had chosen a day when the square was crowded with poor vendors, mostly Jews, who were trying to sell old books and fresh green vegetables, embroidered cloths and cunningly wrought metal shapes. In this *campo* where once Julius Caesar had fallen at the foot of Pompey's statue, they now looked on the hastily erected statue of Giordano Bruno with its inscription: "Qui arse il rogo". For the funeral pyre had been lit here and, with it, the old fierce antagonisms.

Easter time, too, they spent together. And who that has known Easter in Rome can ever forget it? There were the gorgeous ceremonials of the Vatican, festivals of music and of

colour. There were the feasts in which they ate ravenously of young lamb highly flavoured. Then there were the Viole di Pasqua, the Salame, the coloured hard-boiled eggs. They even took tickets, in their three names, in a Tombola, consulting the Dream book for the key number of their secret dreams. Who dreams of fire should bet on number 9. For mice it is number 11. Challis, because he had dreamed, in a nightmare, of Vesuvius boiling over, chose number 90. And, as they left the *bottega*, they laughed like schoolchildren to see chalked upon the back of a motor lorry, broken down:

Donna e Motore
Gioia e Dolore!

A few days later they were in the Venetian square for an oration from the Balcony. Suddenly they saw the curtains drawn aside and a squat figure with round head standing with his feet wide apart. Then came forth in thunderous tones a denunciation and a warning. Maria, who knew the language because of her Italian father, translated fragments from the short phillipic. "Woe to the unarmed," he kept repeating, "Woe to the unarmed." And when he asked if they were ready to make sacrifice *Vivas* rent the air, and not merely those ordered by the guards. Mothers held up their infant children as if in offertory towards the Leader.

Maria Benedetta della Valle, who had begun a wander year through Europe with her friend Geneviève Boisserie, was thirty-two years old, of medium height and in build severely slender. Her expression in repose was somewhat stern. She brushed her hair straight back and "did" it somewhat mannishly. In manner she was a little brusque. Her opinions were strong and clear-cut. She disliked coquetry and affected a certain negligence in her dress. Her companion was more typically the Parisian young woman, acutely conscious of masculine eyes. Maria was known for a scarcely veiled hostility towards men, especially those of the Latin race. These were the two young women who now felt at home with the somewhat *gauche* man from the Antipodes. They had

come to like him because he had not the too enterprising manner of some of their own countrymen. He was for them a bulwark and a protection. And since all three disliked the patronising ignorance of professional guides, they now constituted themselves a regular party complete in itself, with each member rigidly paying a third share of the pooled expenses.

These days of quiet enjoyment, of little trips made, and of knowledge garnered, were interrupted, it seemed all too soon, by Geneviève's return to her College duties in Paris. The two left behind nevertheless felt no awkwardness by now. Their friendship had matured without the hothouse precocity of boardship life. Sentimentality did not, openly, enter into it. But with only two to make their little journeys, confidences were easier to give and take. Quite early Challis, ever on his guard, had told of his own marriage state, and of his invalid and childless wife at home, stifling the ever-present temptation to self-pity. Now with Maria, alone, he went further and told of his own humble origin, teaching her, in the course of it, something of the early history of transportation to Australia. He painted in harsh and sordid colours those early years of the New Colony lest, unconsciously, he should be guilty of social false pretences.

And since confidence begets confidence, this tightly self-held woman with the stern lips revealed without emotion, though not without a trace of bitterness, something of her own family history. Her father, an aristocrat of Italian origin, the bearer of a famous name, had early dissipated their comfortable fortune in gambling. Worse still, he had consistently displayed a coldness and indifference to his own family. Apparently he had had little human feeling for any human being, and even before his death, Maria, the only child, had sought the warm covert of her mother's love and felt a growing hostility towards egoist males. Her judgment of all men had been influenced by her experience as a daughter. All this she told as if in self-justification, out of the need to explain her own severe

attitude towards men. On both sides this cautious approach to friendship ended by heightening the intensity of it.

Maria Benedetta della Valle, at this stage, would have declared emphatically that their friendship was a purely intellectual one. Challis she knew was not an educated man, but he had a cultural curiosity which she admired and which she thought it her duty (and found it a pleasure) to stimulate. He was of a type new to her, one whose very reserve thawed a little her own chilly attitude, one, too, whose strength of character was not such as to threaten her own personality. She felt her own character to be the stronger, and so was not afraid. Because of this they felt at their ease together, and perfectly at home.

They were so much at home together that in their moody silences the other felt no ill-ease. Thus it was that when they stood on a terrace at Tivoli looking across the valley, above where silver jets break against a green foliage, they had no need of words. Each felt that speech would but desecrate the harmony. Yet in such silences their intimacy was growing closer than either realised. Their intercourse was no longer based on that small congealed portion of the emotions we call intellect. Perhaps already, far back in the reaches of Maria's unconscious mind, she was recalling the old stories of romantic love, of the ennobling passion of the troubadours who sang of pain and a necessary separation. She would have known their belief in suffering as the necessary oil of a hot flame, and in death as the one fulfilment. In any case, these two creatures, so strangely different in their ways of life and thought, continued, unheeding, an intimacy that was ever growing warmer. Only on a neutral soil, distant from the local associations of both, could such a partnership have flourished. It would have been inconceivable alike in Paris or in Sydney. And then on a warm night, returning from the Pincio in the gathering darkness, they heard from an unseen arbour the laughter, passionate and unrestrained, full-throated and unashamed, of a girl in her lover's arms. All the unsaid things and the wordless responses

of voluptuous bodies, echoed in their ears out of that simple incident. That sound had been like the cry of a bird, whose voice before the storm startles the feathered dreaming in green trees and leaves, after the first panic flutter, a deeper stillness.

It was after this trivial experience that Challis, suddenly uneasy, invented a pretext for continuing his journey farther North. Maria had been long talking of a voyage to Athens from Naples. They both agreed it was high time to move on, each in a half-planned course. Maria saw him off as he boarded the train for Florence at the Stazione dei Termini. At their parting they relapsed in the stiffer formalism of earlier days. They would write, of course. Who knows they might meet again sometime? No single word of a sentimental character had yet been spoken and yet both knew perfectly well the pretence of mere intellectual companionship was a sham. The passionate laughter of an unseen lover on the Pincio had made them both painfully aware.

Challis was no adventurous lover. Why should he have fled like a coward? Was it that he had the old fear of hurting and of being hurt? Or was it that in this alien *milieu* he lacked the virile courage to take a foreign woman, his better by birth and education, passionately in his arms, and enforce his will?

Yet after those months in Rome he could not ever be the same man again who left Australia, disoriented, dreading the rancours of the coming day. Into his being had passed something from out the spirit of the place. All unconsciously, he had emerged from states of exaltation in the presence of physical beauty to a belief in the immanence of a Creator amid the beautiful work of His creatures. For who could stand in awe before that Baldacchino Bernini had reared under the high dome of Michelangelo and face the world thereafter unchanged? Maria had read out to him from a book that the baroque period "took for granted a belief in future perfection and in transfigurations". And he had come to share the joyousness of fantastic and grotesque shapes. Out of that long flat dull period of living he was now welcoming the florid

opulence of light and colour even amid the present miseries. Beauty and sanctity for the first time seemed no impossible harmony, for all the garish palaces of high prelates, their forms incongruous, and their gilt ridiculous extravagance.

* * *

It was Ascension Day soon after his arrival in Florence. He noticed that everyone seemed to be going out to the Cascine, so he let himself be swept into the throng, and going, learnt the old tradition. This day was the Festival of the Cricket, the day when the shy and inarticulate lover had his great chance of easy self-expression. For, out there in the Cascine, the timid lover could purchase a tiny wicker-work cage snd go forth in quest of a cricket, for preference a cricket hat was richly black and beautiful and a good singer. This, sent to the beloved one, would say the things he could not express —and much more than any ordinary protestation of love. But, since some were poor hunters, at every street corner there were vendors willing for a few *soldi* to provide the wished-for cricket. Some of these, alas! were destined never to chirp, and some in spite of the little leaf of green salad at the bottom of the wicker-work cage would soon be found still and inanimate. But after all, wasn't that poetic justice? Weren't they good enough for the lazy unenterprising lovers who never had the spirit to go out hunting in earnest?

In Florence, too, he learnt for the first time the philosophy of the Lupini. They told him the story of an old man who growled, as he ate them on a street corner, at having to eat Lupini. Lupini were so cheap they were given away abundantly for a *soldo*. As he complained, the grumbler threw away, over his shoulder, the hard indigestible parts, till turning he saw a man behind him picking up even these rejected parts to eat. The story of the Lupini has a moral every Italian knows and Challis perceived it.

But amid all these new experiences Challis was feeling a sense of deprivation. He refused at first to admit its true

cause. But after some days he did write to Maria as he had promised and he did tell her amusingly about the quest for crickets, and re-tell the story of the Lupini, describing himself humorously as the man to whom life had offered thus far only the hard and indigestible rejects of the Lupini.

To his surprise a reply came almost by return of post. Maria had not left Rome. The contents of her letter startled him with its frankness. It read:

"My dear Friend,

"I have had your letter in which you say you have missed my companionship amid the rich surprises of Florence, and that you have been lonely. I, too, have missed you very much. That is a bold thing for a woman to say, but I am going to say more. I would like to be near you always, above all when your spirit feels loneliness.

"I know you are trying hard to be loyal and that the effort of restraint gave you at times here the mask of indifference. You are the plaything of conflicting forces in a battle that never ends. But whatever you may think of my forwardness in writing this letter, I wish you to know that I am anxious and desirous of sharing your fortunes by your side, at once a vigorous amazon and a healing companion.

"I want you to answer me frankly and tell me your true feelings. I do not want politeness or make-believe. But also I do not want your words to be fettered, if your true feelings are, as I suspect, like my own. I want them to come to me from the unguarded moments of the heart, such words as spring forth in the hushed hours of midnight when old conventions sleep deeply and little secret dreams come out to play.

"Bien aimé, in your happiness dances mine.

"Maria."

Rapture seized Challis's mind. Ardour filled him. This was so generous a confession. He read and re-read Maria's letter, finding it difficult to fit such an avowal within the pattern of the character he thought he knew so well. It was all so unlike her—so unlike that severe uncompromising young woman who had wished to have their relationship solely on an intellectual basis. Her offering now bewildered and ravished him. But he wanted time to think. He was afraid to reply

hastily. Leaving the hotel he made for the Boboli gardens, there to ponder it over. How well, already, he knew the scene around him! There was Giotto's Campanile to the left, to the right Arnolfo's tower—it seemed like his own ecstasy bursting forth in florid extravagance. Then lifting his eyes he caught a distant view of olive trees and cypresses grey and green upon the girdling hills. And there, looking upon them, wrapt, he felt a passionate desire for Maria, a desire unchecked, unchallenged, not to be denied. The panorama of love at last lay stretched before him.

When they met in Venice, each sought to conceal a certain embarrassment beneath a forced and animated conversation about trivial things. There was a new pallor in Maria's olive face, but her brown eyes were dancing. She was unusually loquacious. In the crowded train, she related, she had found a cushionless seat of the third class between a young soldier going North, all unwillingly to do his military service, and an old peasant grandmother of the Campagna on a visit to see a new grandchild in the Veneto. Amid the general badinage the old peasant woman dominated the whole carriage. Someone said "What of war?" The old grandmother forcibly expressed her pessimistic convictions. She was all against that Milanese who was Pope—he was "a good man but obstinate" and he had brought all his fellow Milanesi to fill the jobs at the Vatican. And then continuing her gloomy talk she exclaimed despairingly: "Ah, the good Lord is old, too old . . . the world has got beyond Him. . . ."

After they had dined the two lovers wandered aimlessly around Venice. They were both exalted and excited. Crossing the square of St Mark's they saw the Byzantine Cathedral as but an ornament in their own great happiness. They followed the jostling crowd along the Merceria, losing themselves in a thicket of little roads, crossing and recrossing out of sheer childish play the tiny bridges. Then in the shadows of a little Church, which later they knew to be the Santa Maria dei Miracoli, he took her in his arms like any Venetian lover and

kissed her passionately. And passionately did she return the embrace. In the darkness he saw the rich pomegranate of her lips and the fierce brightness of her eyes.

The night porter with indifferent air saw only the habitual lovers when they returned. On that night he came to know the soft texture of her skin and the beauty of her little feet. Old angularities were smoothed away of form and manner. He vested her with a new grace. She was gentle and shy, fearful yet wishful in her blushing acquiescences. She was docile and in her virgin's innocence subject to his wish.

The days and nights which followed were feverish with ever new surprises. Together linked they would watch from their bedroom, late into the night, the gliding lights of gondola and launch. They came to know the calls of the canal, shrill and raucous calls, with echoing notes of menace and of melancholy.

By day, they wandered, arm in arm, through old palaces now re-burnished with a sudden gold. They were likechildren romping. Old bitternesses and envies evaporated from their lives. With heightened sympathies they gave alms to the mendicant poor. They shared a common grief for old prisoners who had passed under the Inquisitors of State. Like children, too, they jumped one afternoon on a launch just as it was leaving the Fondamenta Nuove. It took them first to Burano and then on to the little Isle of San Francesco nel Deserto. Maria told him how the Saint had once stopped there on his mission to the Sultan, and how all the little birds had gathered round to give a greeting of song.

These were nights of dreamless sleeping and mornings of joyous awakening.

* * *

The weeks that followed brought into Maria's attitude a happy sense of proprietorship. She took him jealously into a mother's care, was scrupulous for his health and appearance, and tactfully mindful of his wishes. With greater insight than

he himself possessed, she perceived the little weaknesses of his temperament. But one night she scattered his scarcely won complacency with passionate pleading for a child.

Then, and for ever after during all his remaining life-time, Challis's mind sought to analyse the motives behind this sacrificial offering. Had she come to dread the end of an ardent relationship she must have known to be sooner or later inevitable?—Was she wishing to save this ephemeral adventure from its ultimate extinction, all passionate longing dispersed? Her mind was far too logically balanced not to have understood sooner or later *he* must return to a distant country, and *she* to the routine of teaching of a French College. Was this then but a lover's pretext for perpetuity, since their union could never be a sacramental one? Or was she merely appalled by the thought of the sour barren years after the *vendemmia* of this short season? Or, again, was it that her ancient fear of man's egoism led her to make a further offering—she had sacrificed so much to have, she would sacrifice more to hold—to keep at least some pledge of their perpetual relationship. If that were so, then a child was but the ransom she was asking for his release.

Whatever the motive, the effect of such a request was to startle Challis greatly. It might flatter his man's pride, but consent would raise awkward problems. All he had hoped for in those lost years of his marriage in Cockle Creek was now being offered in open generosity without the sanctity of marriage. "Exige de moi tout" she kept repeating, night after night, relapsing into her native French under the stress of her passionate longing. She asked no other pledge, no other responsibility beyond paternity. It was a woman's desperate plea for preservation. And all he could think of doing in reply was to kiss her still more passionately—and to refuse. He who was not by character strong, remained in this one thing adamant. He was most keenly aware of his own renunciation. He had always dreamed of such a moment—longed for it—craved for it—that moment when a man's blood leaves upon a

woman's lap the mortal thing which will not die. And yet he must refuse—refuse, not for his own or her sake.

For, there was deeply burnt into Challis's consciousness the memory of those other outcasts from whom he himself had been sprung. It was all very well to enjoy this anonymous romance in a country alien and far distant. But Society would transmit the penalty to any casual child wherever he might go. That child would bear the stigma in perpetuity and live for ever in dread of his neighbours' eyes. Only recently in Rome Challis had been shown the old Ruota—the wheel on which once upon a time unwanted infants were secretly deposited—the *espositi* they called them. One turn of the wheel and the unmarried mother passed the living fragment of her flesh into the anonymity of a monastery. But the mark and brand always remained. That was an ancient story; the Ruota was there but swung no more upon its axle. And Challis remembered that only so late as 1918, in England, had Nursing Associations and Maternity Societies begun to relax the rule preventing their nurses from attending the birth of any illegitimate child. In spite of the more generous outlook, the outlook of the child born out of wedlock remained still precarious. Challis loved Maria more deeply than ever before he had loved a living creature. That was reason enough why he should refuse, out of their passionate improvisation, to create an Ishmael. The blow of his refusal was greater than he knew.

Once she realised he was adamant in this decision Maria's mood and attitude changed. At first the change was almost imperceptible. An air of gentle melancholy, however, now came to pervade all their relations. Not that she showed any lessening of the jealous protective care with which she enveloped him; rather the reverse. The great ardours had by this time gone and the fierce raptures. The dominant note now was one of mutual kindliness, of sympathetic understanding, of unselfish devotion. But no more did she utter with passionate

intensity, beseechingly, "Exige de moi tout." Yet always in her eyes remained the ceaseless, silent, petition for maternity.

Then one morning, returning from the solitary walk he had made a habit of taking each day, he found her gone. The concierge, used to the strange behaviour of these foreign tourists, handed a letter to Challis expressing the hope that Madame's bad news which had called her away was not so bad as she had feared. In the privacy of that hallowed room in which she had offered her first virginal sacrifice, he read the short message:

"Good-bye, dear."

That was all.

Strange, strange woman. She had climbed into his life and now out of it. Out of it into the mists. Challis knowing her character, understood quite well that it was for ever.

* * *

Gone! His mind could scarcely grasp the reality of it all, under the disablement of the first shock. He had taken so much for granted. But when after some hours came a reaction of calm, under the operation of fatigue, he began piecing together all the little bits of evidence which might explain some spiritual disarray. Never, never once, had there been any disagreement between them except over that one vital question of a child. Never had passed between them a word in harshness. They had shared, each for the other, an exquisite consideration. Had she, he wondered, under the pall of lassitude, suffering from the usury of those passionate nights, heard such whisperings in her conscience as "Is this right?" and "Where will it all end?" Had she come to look upon herself as one voluntarily defiled—old prejudices surging back? Challis recalled how often, as if to still such old recurring thoughts, she would repeat in self-justification the saying of some doctor of the Church that "to be chaste is to have the body in the keeping of the heart." Both had declared, with passionate intensity, that by all this no one could be more chaste than they. By love avowed and felt they

deemed themselves immune, secure beyond convention or commandment.

Or had she come to believe that only with a deliberate act of creation could the things done be consecrated? Or had his own love been found in character inadequate, given the enormity of her own sacrifice? Hers had not paled, for even as he had watched the fiery opal of her passion grow duller, he saw revealed other richer and deeper colours. What dream, then, had taken shape in the mould of those passionate moments?

She could not have resented his daily solitary ramble—it was she who had always encouraged it. Challis even amidst his new-won happiness had always wanted his hour of solitude, his own silent self-communing, craving ever for that secret moment alone when little thoughts hop timidly about, like sparrows shyly coming to hand.

And then he recalled how, only one week before, on one of these solitary walks, he had stopped to enter that little Church under whose shadow he first had kissed her: the Church of Sta Maria dei Miracoli. Both of them had come to cherish the place and the Church from old association. Stealing in reverently, once again, Challis had first looked up at the curious barrel-shaped roof and then, his view impeded by no column, had gazed at the Sanctuary, when to his surprise he espied Maria on her knees in a front bench, her head bent forward in prayer. He had crept out noiselessly, fearing she might be unhappy at being surprised in a secret act of devotion. Now his mind turned back to what at that time had seemed the trivial incident of a day. What supplication had she, then, been making? What did it all mean? The significance of it appeared much greater now. That famous little Church which someone (he could not remember who) had built in thanksgiving for the deliverance of Venice from the plague, that little building with its octagonal dome and its bizarre carvings of birds and flowers and dolphins, from this onward grew in importance for other reasons than that first sentimental one.

Challis, threshing the incidents of other days, also remembered how, on the night before her going, there had been tears in her eyes as she kissed him good-night. He, with a man's easy complacence, had deemed it but a part of that rhythm which leaves on heights or casts in depths the emotion of every woman.

And now it was all over. He never doubted but that it was all over. He tried to find comfort by telling himself it was better so: "Was this not the ideal way out of a blind passage?" Had not sensual satiation been close at hand for both of them? Soon they would have burst into little half-apologised-for acts of irritation. He was middle-aged and realised the shortening lariat of his own desire. Yet even as he sought thus falsely and unjustly to disguise his past emotions and his present attitude, he was acutely conscious once again of the ivory decoy within her flesh. It was borne in upon him, too, that out of that season's cult of Eros a greater love would be born. Her memory might some day shrink until it was no more than a little wisp upon the clouding horizons of the world. But something that was not of this earth was shining through that threadbare fantasy of the senses.

There were nights after this in which Challis heard again in dream, her voice passionately imploring, imploring continuance, pleading for something permanent out of this too short carnival of the senses. She seemed then to be snatching at immortality for their love, seeking desperately to have his spirit re-living in tissues of her own. And for this she had been willing to endure the heavy burden of *enfantement*, the swollen integuments, all the suffocating discomforts. She had shown herself so brave before the dolours of a great mystery. In deep abasement Challis waking knew himself to be unworthy. He had been indifferent before this high emprise of motherhood—afraid, timid, inconsiderate. . . . With deep emotion he wrote a letter to Maria care of Geneviève at the only address he knew. In it he craved humbly, almost pitifully, a reply to Naples. He was going back home. His journey was over.

All his letter was a cry, "Why, oh why? How have I hurt you? In what have I failed?"

He wanted to leave the door for ever ajar—like those peasants of Connemara who in the proper season of the year keep open their little entrances and set before them a lighted candle, out of a pious hope that it might guide another Mary, bereft and homeless, from the dark night into the trivial hospitality of their fire.

Yet, for all his words, he never for a moment doubted but that it was all over. More than his journey was ended. In those, his later, days he had been vouchsafed a little summer of St Luke, but with a man's careless egoism he had missed the bright significance of the day.

* * *

And yet for a while he stayed on in Venice as if half hoping still for her unexpected return. The colours of Venice were fading now. They were grey and even menacing. The water of the canals seemed to have become more oily, more unwholesome; a heavy odour as of rankness rising from them. At dusk, St Mark's loomed up like a brooding pile of ancient feuds and modern faithlessness. The discontent of the submerged poor suddenly afflicted him. What was the Casa d'Or but a gaudy monument set in autumnal dampness? All those old palaces along the Grand Canal had about them the aura of old treacheries. The miasma of a past was upon the City.

To his ears once more came the memory of Maria's voice telling the Republic's history: how it had risen from the mudbanks of a lagoon, first as a haunt and refuge from Turkish pirates. Then later, a great sea power making even distant nations pay tribute. It bore the Cross in valour against the Crescent. It prospered and prospered, another Spain, till glutted with its riches the will to struggle failed, and from relaxed hands the trident dropped away. The Council of Ten had created around the people an atmosphere of suspicion and accusation. Men and women feared betrayal even from

within their own families. At the name of the Inquisition citizens were accustomed to become pale. Whose turn was next? In this City of wealth and beauty there had once been underground passages, lit by flaming torches, where men died, strangled or slowly tortured. Into the Canale dei Marani victims beyond counting had been hurled and left to suffocate in its foul waters. Fear went by *rio* and by *calle*. An adventurous people bemused in luxury, bewitched by beauty, in comfort seduced, slowly slackened then failed. On the decks of their ships which no more put to sea the sails rotted, and the spirit of their men decayed.

In vain, to dissipate his gloomy thoughts, Challis tried to revive the rapture of old associations with Maria. He went out alone to the Lido, for which they both had had at first a repugnance because of the vulgar ostentation of its lazy rich descending from their hotels. But, together, the soft wind had led them to disregard the crowd, stars had decoyed them, and soft touches betrayed them to forgetfulness of all around. The season of the Lido was now over: those hotel residents had fled before the first touch of the cold. In vain, along the deserted promenade Challis invoked the spirit of the past five months. All he heard was the cry of waves, like sea-horses whinnying for the vanished sun. Moodily retracing his steps to the ferry boat he was conscious only of the heavy foetor rising from marshes unredeemed and of the desolation of receding tides.

* * *

Without enthusiasm he turned South. He must get back to work, to the discipline of a daily round. *En route* he stopped for a few days in Rome, still subject to that unconscious power which made him want to sun himself, right to the last moment, within the *loggia* of old associations. Not twice can glow the rapture of the once bright fire! A kiosk on the Corso reminded him how once he had bought mimosa there, and back to his mind came lines that had been widely quoted, in his youth

during the South African War. The sight of wattle had then excited a nostalgia among the Australian soldiers.

"It was all Australia to me,
Riding in from Lichtenberg,
Riding in, in the rain."

Perhaps, he mused, he had been false to his own native land. For months he had forgotten Australia and its story. Had he not gazed on the Bridge of Sighs without a thought for that war-weary troop who in the far-off years had crossed gangways to the prison colony of a convict settlement.

"Say, have you seen a troop go by
Way-weary and distressed . . ."

Verses and memories were flowing in upon him again, out of the past; his own land was claiming him.

There was still sun in Rome by day but the evenings were growing cold. He passed by the spotted, greying old basilica of S. Ignazio. On the steps, in the far corner, an old man was bending over his feebly-lit brazier roasting chestnuts. Challis could not escape the symbolism of it. Was not he, also, crouching over his still flickering fire, dreaming of hot flames now gone?

Along the Via del Seminario he went towards the Pantheon, lifting his eyes once again to the Madonna before whose statue, on a corner, a lamp was burning always. A cat came stealthily towards him from the direction of the Pantheon, furtively seeking food. A harsh man from a garage nearby threw his broom at it. He thought of the seventy-two cats in the American guide's talk and of that early meeting with Maria in the Pantheon.

He reached Naples in the afternoon. He had long since ceased to hope for any reply, but he called at the poste restante care of Thos. Cook and Son for the mail which from Australia had been accumulating for over five months. He had not wished to keep contact with Cockle Creek. He wanted to forget the newspaper sensations of sporting matches and the

little social gossip of his native town. Who would wish to write to him? Macleay was not one given to correspondence.

The little pile of letters rather surprised him. Two *Sydney Bulletins* proclaimed themselves by their gaudy coverings. Then with impetuous haste he found himself opening a letter which, alone, bore a foreign stamp. It was from Geneviève:

> "In reply to your letter received, I am to say for Maria that she has gone away to a post as lay teacher in a Convent, outside Paris. She does not wish anyone to know where, and she does not wish you to write, but she wishes you always well."

That letter contained the final message. In it he saw her last gesture. She wanted all that had passed to be destroyed, as in the Eastern Church they destroyed the linen beneath a Chalice. Never again must it be used, and never laundered; in smoke it must be consumed. But for Challis even in the ashes her memory was to be perpetually reserved.

He returned to his hotel, dispirited, unhappy, though not at heart surprised. He had not noticed a cable—from Macleay he had no doubt. He opened it slowly, and then found himself reading and re-reading its laconic message:

"Gertrude died suddenly yesterday."

It was dated four months before.

* * *

It was all in vain now, but his mind kept on ceaselessly threshing that little straw. He felt no emotion of grief or any sadness for Gertrude's passing. She had too long been numbed to insensitivity. Once upon a time this would have meant for him relief. Now the knowledge merely hurt, hurt deeply, with the realisation of what might have been had he but earlier known. All those unnecessary frettings of Maria's spirit and his! There had been a time for such a message—a time when it would have transformed all his world. He thought in sadness and in pain of Maria, of the fearful summons of her flesh, of the immortal cravings at her breast, of the untenanted castle of her loins. Love—she once had quoted it from old writers—

was in suffering. Only in death, had said the troubadours, could there be fulfilment. He, the timorous lover, had nothing other left but a memory hallowed for ever by that condescension of her flesh.

He drew his chair to the window overlooking the Bay. As he brooded, time, unheard, went creaking by. Full of a vague fear and aching, he watched the shifting colours on the sea, so like the changing of a guard. Slowly a grey mist fell upon a twilight which had stayed, too long tethered to the retiring day. Vesuvius to the left was now but a silhouette, its summit extinguished by a cloud. Then, with the suddenness of pain, a lacerating pain, all was blotted out. Sky and sea mingled. There was no more any border and no horizon any more.

Challis kept staring into that darkness. Over there, high up and unseen, a volcano never inactive was fuming morosely. The conviction of impending evil possessed him. His mind recalled the thunder-like warnings of that leader from a balcony: "Woe to the Unarmed!" Woe, indeed, to man unarmed, with the spirit weaponless! The forces of eruption were gathering, gathering fast, yet few the men who wanted to see or to believe.

Challis kept staring into the darkness, staring fixedly, seeing always only the panorama of disaster. Time, unheard, kept creaking by. His thoughts were running in a circle. He was thinking of the volcano fuming morosely above, of the blue uncertain sea below, of peasants harvesting their easy grain, and of the yellow *ginaestra* ever dauntless and bright amid the lava and the ashes.

CHAPTER XVII

ELDORADO BANAL

(i)

DURING the voyage back to Australia Challis threw himself with desperate energy into every social activity. The old timidity had left him; he was surer of himself and he was aggressively hearty. It was as if he feared those solitudes of the sea when little scars grow tender and old scleroses ache. He wanted, by tiring out his muscles, to keep his mind away from backward glances at that lost chance of happiness.

When upon an early summer morning his ship passed those dour sentinels of the Sydney Heads and he saw the harbour unfold before him, he felt a sudden access of native pride. The blue waters sparkled in beauty unspoilt; at least, they had not as yet hired *this* out for advertisement hoardings. Only man could mar such a scene. Across there, in Middle Harbour, still lingered signs of that old rugged terrain which for long had baffled the early settlers. Men seeking water had once been lost for days in dense bush and tortuous ravines. He regretted that they had changed the name of Careening Cove to Lavender Bay. H.M.S. "Sirius" had been overhauled there after the arrival of the First Fleet. But it seemed part of a set policy to destroy all the old reminders. Somewhere in Berry's Bay was the old "Sobraon", which as a clipper had won fame, making Cape Otway only 60 days out from London. First, they had made of it a reformatory. Now, as H.M.S. "Tingira", lately a training ship, it was but a decaying hulk under an alias that signified nothing.

Pinchgut swung into view—looking as innocent as a toy train floating before Circular Quay. He recalled once again its sinister reputation in the early days. This little pyramid had once carried a gibbet from which the first convicted

murderer swung, for days, in his chains, a lesson and a warning to those who survived. There were no public executions now in Sydney, nor even public floggings, he reflected, but in the great City men were still being assigned under other schemes and a different system.

They were painfully slow coming alongside. During these impatient moments Challis thought once again about the old Tank Stream, remembering that night of emotion, when he had returned from the house of the solicitor after learning his family's secrets. The stream, which Captain Phillip had found so welcome because of its sweet water, once flowed from the high level of marshy lands—now Hyde Park, Sydney—down towards Bridge Street, there, from a height of twelve feet or so, dropping into the salt waters of the Harbour. That, too, they had covered over, and left without a name. It was but a dry bed now, and forgotten. It was a characteristic of Australians to be always turning away from, as if fearing, their past—those grim days when on the shores of Port Jackson flourished best, and remarkably, the pigs!

They were alongside now, and on the wharf Challis espied Macleay, a Macleay looking much older for the short year which had elapsed. He was breathless after coming up the gangway. His blue lips were tinged with excitement. There was much local news to relate. Gertrude's death he mentioned shortly, making no pretence of regret, paying no compliment to mere convention. For both of them it had been but a happy cessation of the dolorous period of un-living.

Borkum, of course, was flourishing apace. He was now practising in Macquarie Street only, and living there. Through the help of a political friend he had got, at last, an appointment on one of the Metropolitan hospitals. He had registered his cable address as "Gastric, Sydney", because he was specialising in the surgical dyspepsias. Foyle, still swathed in his mother's love, was showing some girdle obesity. Borkum had dropped him for another anaesthetist from a more fashionable suburb, one who could bring in some lucrative work as a *quid pro quo*.

Rooney had died only a few days before. For nearly six months he had gone about with an open colostomy wound, the operation having been performed to relieve an inoperable cancer of the colon. He had borne it all with fortitude—uncomplainingly "offering it up". His cancer had progressed very far before being diagnosed, but then as Macleay said, "diagnosis had never been Rooney's strong suit". His last days had been extraordinarily serene. He had humbly and publicly retracted his curse uttered against the Kaiser (who all unperturbed was still cutting up trees in Holland). For some three years before his death Rooney had even found consolation for Michael's loss. It had all followed his being called out to see another soldier, one who had survived a gas attack in Belgium. This patient's eyes had been severely burnt, and now each cornea was showing rough scars upon the white porcelain base of the sclerotic, and only a meagre perception of light remained. Rooney had dropped on his knees and asked pardon of God for his murmuring. Michael had been spared that! Death had been the lesser thing. And his exaltation, later, gathered force, when he thought of Michael having to survive in a world so patently God-heedless.

But these local jottings were but a preface to the argument dominant in Macleay's mind. In an intense whisper he asked Challis, "Are they arming in Europe?" "Do they think there will be war soon?" "What did you learn about it all on the Continent?" He seemed disappointed that Challis had so little first-hand news in spite of his travels. "We here are not prepared," he kept repeating. "War is coming," and then passionately, "War is *necessary*."

For, Macleay's anxiety had changed only in emphasis. He still believed in the inevitability of war, but now he saw, with fierce conviction, that it was necessary to save the race, his own British race. Their old incentive to high adventure had been lost, and their habit of heroism. He, therefore, pinned his faith to the effectiveness of an ordeal, and so this man who never prayed in formal prayer was to be heard constantly

crying aloud, among his intimate friends, "Send war in our time, O Lord!"

What a change from the old Macleay! There had been a time, long after the last war, when no gathering of friends took place without his turning to old feats or exploits of the cricket field. He had always had a remarkable memory for sporting statistics. "Do you remember that Test Match of December 1924 at the Sydney Cricket Ground when Collins nursed the young Ponsford, and kept him away from Tate's end?—Tate was at his best on that fiery Sydney wicket. Yet against him in Australia's second innings, 'Johnny' Taylor, the little man with the big bat, did not shorten his style with the approach of his century. He was 91. Tate was at that moment the best bowler of his kind in the world, and from four balls of this great bowler, Taylor scored 4, 4 and 3. Ah! that was cricket. . . ."

Men at the University Club loved Macleay best when he was in that mood. In detailed recollection of past sporting events he was surpassed only by Darsey, a man of over twenty stone, who would flop into a seat, order a double whiskey, and then recall the bowling average of Turner or Ferris in the 'nineties, or how long it had taken Trumper to hit that century at Redfern Oval, or where "Tonga" Moulton scored some amazing try. Now in the University Club members scattered at the approach of a Macleay wearing, as usual, almost aggressively, his Returned Soldier's badge. They all liked him, but he "had a bee in his bonnet about the coming war".

It was soon obvious to Challis that Macleay's health had greatly deteriorated. It took much persuasion, however, to make him see a physician. A week later, Challis was reading the result of the only medical investigation Macleay had had since he was examined for the First Great War. The report shocked even Challis. He found himself repeating fragments from some of the findings of radiogram and electro cardiogram. "A thickened aorta uncoiled"—"the left ventricle enlarged"—this with a blood pressure of 200/120 had a sinister

significance. "T_1 and T_2 inverted" "Evidence of commencing failure" . . . In spite of it all, Macleay refused to lie up. The most he would do was to give up certain lodges and cut down the number of his visits. He obstinately refused to omit reading or talking about international politics, yet every time he did so he became livid with excitement. His temper could not brook disagreement or contradiction.

Challis took a long time to recover from the first impressions of Sydney registered on that day of his return when he and Macleay drove up Pitt Street. The din of its life had staggered him as much as the advertisement hoardings on the water-front had offended. Both the din and those hoardings must all have been there before his going abroad, but he had then been unconscious of them. He was aware now of something that displeased him with his own fellow Australians. They certainly had *not* gone "soft"—he felt sure of that! The Continental rumours of British decadence did not at least apply here. There was a hardness and a ruggedness in their features which a hearty cheerfulness could not conceal. He recognised now, however, that they had something about them at once naïve and sardonic. Assertive, of course, and cocksure in their own self-reliance. But something was lacking in him and them—what was it? He felt this still more when at night he saw his native city bedizened like a harlot, horribly lurid with Neon lights, and out of the open windows was coming a corroboree music. . . . Something was here that needed redemption. He remembered the water-frontage of Black-wattle Bay undergoing transformation from those days when as a boy he tested the drying mud gingerly to see if it would bear his weight. Now there were houses with gardens and narrow winding streets, all upon that reclaimed area. Could they not in like way reclaim the people? He sought to reassure himself, saying: The growing edge of the race is in the country, only at the tumour's centre, within the city, is there decay.

In the year after Challis returned New South Wales celebrated with great display the 150th anniversary of the Settle-

ment on Port Jackson. With smug complacency the inhabitants pointed to their great achievements, emphasising exclusively the material progress. With pride they pointed to the conditions that existed at the time of their coming. The aborigines had not cultivated the soil—"look at *our* vast cultivations." They had made no elaborate canoes—"look at *our* shipyards and *our* ships." "Infanticide was a universal practice." Well, "*our* birth-rate is not entirely satisfactory but . . ."

Macleay in a bitter mood had once called the teachers in a local Convent "holy improvers of history". The phrase now came back to Challis's mind. "We, too, make our private emendations," he thought.

Self-satisfaction in Australia was everywhere rife. Of the first convicts as little as possible was said, but there were gentle mitigating words for the first monopolists of the New South Wales Corps, for the first usurers, and even for the first clergy, who had been rather more successful as graziers than as pastors. Challis's indignation swelled. The great builders of this State in early days had all been convicts, assigned or free on ticket-of-leave. Yet no plinth bore their name. They had been brave men, practising fortitude, and if some had been wanting in virtue, had they not gone the Augustinian way of purification?

With giant effort they had built, upon old baseness, a great city. Their relics were underneath the altar-stone of every achievement. They had given to the soil the passionate caress of their energy and their hot indignant tears. They had gone far out into wide strange spaces. They had survived the bridle and the gag, their own infirmities, the malice of authority. They had conquered an environment, possessing the earth and being in turn by it possessed. They had broken out of that sand-stone prison which for twenty-five years had enclosed them all. They had pushed beyond the hill and across the bay over ranges of stringy bark. But they remained men pardoned

but never forgiven . . . not even after one hundred and fifty years.

Challis's access of emotion found expression in the rhetoric of passionate invocation:

> "O Ye who first came Sojourners Under The Law, forgive if we have felt the shame of your names' mention. You are one now with those who stood steadfast in the gathering darkness of Bullecourt or at Nek charged into a wider dawn. Consecrate our race, O Lord, that we who here remain, still in the unfinished travail of the spirit, may also fight through waterless scrub or in the iron conflict of arms, until at last we reach the kingdom beyond the hill and the impediments of this poor flesh."

These words spoken, Challis felt in gentleness the secret benison of his uttered prayer.

* * *

(ii) ALBATROSS

"Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées
"Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher."

Challis knew the little wine shop on the hill which leads to the Cross of Seven Ways. He knew, too, the man who, in the early nineteen-thirties, could often be seen, between five and six o'clock in the evening, making towards it. He was a powerfully-built man with an old ulster, even in summer time, thrown over his broad shoulders, and with his luxuriant black hair brushed back over a leonine head—for he wore no hat. He walked with the detached air of one not mindful of the multitude. Hundreds of cars were rushing by at this time, rushing out of town towards homes in the Eastern suburbs. Their drivers, jockeying for position at the Cross, had no time to notice a figure on the footpath going in the same direction. Even had they heard his name it would have meant nothing to nearly all of them. For the walker was Charles Maginn, poet and philosopher, lately a professor at the University of Sydney, and by the grace of its puritan senators

recently dismissed. But then, he was not one of them. He was a dreamer in the perpetual conflict of his exile.

About this time he had a severe gastric haemmorhage which terminated those daily visits to a wine shop. Challis sent him to the neighbouring hospital, where a young medical coxcomb soon affixed the easy label of a diagnosis. It was "Cirrhosis of the liver"; wasn't the patient a man given too much to alcohol? And with the superiority of his caste, being the uneducated product of a medical curriculum, the young doctor sent his patient off home with a moral lecture. No medicine was necessary. The cause and the cure lay in the patient's habits. Charles Maginn died six months later from a cancer of the stomach, of which that haemmorhage had been the first public manifestation. So ended the tragedy of the most scholarly man who had till then graduated from Sydney University.

His life, in review, falls easily into four phases. There was that first period of laborious study when the literature of many peoples became his kingdom. Mallarmé was then, and remained always, the greatest single influence in his life. Although he had studied long in Germany, France was the native land of his mind. The temper of his spirit was Latin and mystical. This was the period of greatest production and of a growing influence among young Australian intellectuals. He had the power to make smaller minds radiant, as Radium makes glow a lesser mineral like willemite. But, unlike Radium, his half-decay period was short, though his fame may remain long.

The outbreak of the First World War marks the beginning of the second phase. His verse now took on the terrible thunder of his hatred against the invader. His emotion was too new, and his learning too deep. Those verses seldom rose from the ground. His influence on the cultural life of the people around him, during and shortly after the war, reached its highest peak. But never again did he catch that early note of song in the first dawn surprise of his own powers.

With the third stage came the premonitory shadow from over the hill. Disharmony at home, irregular habits, a love of red wine, the perpetual disquiet of his spirit—who will assess their operative parts? But his behaviour as a social unit deteriorated. The University authorities watched disapprovingly his frequent presence in the wine shops of the City. There an old battered woman of the streets, out of her mother-love, took him for a while in care, steadied his course, rationed his drinking, put him clean and sober upon the tram for his daily lectures. Two blows fell within a short span. The University dismissed him because of his irregular conduct, and she who had felt herself to be acquitting—not with silver—her own improper past, was inopportunely killed in a street accident. In her place came friends and admirers, first to sustain him by their voluntary and anonymous contributions, later to bury him.

Maginn was, by origin and upbringing, Irish and Catholic. And like so many others of Irish blood born abroad, out of his secret pride of race he secreted within himself that antigen making him sensitively hostile to most things Irish. He early ceased to be *pratiquant* as a Catholic ; at times, like Baudelaire, he almost ceased even to be Christian. But if he was not, like Verlaine, one who fluctuated between the bordel and the confessional, none the less, in later years, he reverted to the old Catholic ways. Often he could be seen slipping into the Cathedral by a side door and there unseen prostrating himself. He loved the ritual of great occasions—as Mallarmé, too, had loved the pomp and circumstance of the Church. But Maginn resented fiercely that attitude of some who believe there is no salvation except for men who pray in the local dialect of Erse. His was never a bawdy mind. He was not given to lewdness. His one weakness was a fondness for steeping in cheap wines. There was much of the mediaeval monk about him: a monk wayward with great learning and wilful in little disobediences to the rule, who loved the high discourse of table and a good wine.

But those Fridays were now gone forever when he used to preside at lunch in Paris House. Spoken French was then *de rigueur*, and they ate bouillibaisse. Fortunate young visitors from the University on such occasions heard the extemporaneous expressions of his great scholarship. He was now living on the bounty of his friends, a bounty he accepted magnanimously with the quiet sense of its all being due to him (as, indeed, it was). There was never any subservience in his poverty. There had never been any lamentation over his great misfortune. He was a poet who always wore the dignity of his great learning even in shabby clothes and on unsteady feet. And just as he showed magnanimity in his material distress, he displayed fortitude in his physical sufferings. With manly bearing, he abdicated to his God.

When the priest was shriving him behind the screen of a sunlit ward, Maginn's Latin responses came forth clear and surprisingly vigorous for a dying man. The end had come sooner than was usual in such cases. There had been, mercifully, no slow shrivelling into decay. The song in him had long since ceased; only the echoes lingered. The shriving was soon over, and over too the long disquiet; He had been awkward in the heavy medium of this world. Now, loosed from the sin of exile, his wings resumed their flight.

* * *

(iii) MEASURING FAILURE

"Io ho quello che ho donato."

Richard Macleay was dying. Propped up on a back-rest he gasped with difficulty through blue lips. The plaintive flute of his dyspnoe distressed Challis. For some days the man's mind had been wandering. Random echoes from the past filled his speeches. He had been heard to mutter breathlessly: "Keep a straight bat," and "Put two hands to it," as if once again he was coaching the youngsters on Wentworth Park. And then again, with savage bitterness, through his suffocations, came: "The Dingoes"—"The Dingoes"—

"They've let us down." It was thus always that he referred to the politicians. But his mind was not always swerving from the true. Challis, distressed that he should die without the sacring oil of spiritual consolation, sought, in the few lucid moments, to turn his thoughts to prayer.

The specialist, there that morning, had shrugged his shoulders to express his hopeless view of the prognosis. "You know he has knocked himself about," he said to Challis. There had indeed been, in earlier years, extravagant stories about his casual amours and his affective life as a whole. Once when twitted in public about it, Macleay had retorted "And wasn't St Augustine promiscuous?" He made no pretence of living religiously as Borkum did. He disliked dogma in anything but sport. Once he attacked the innocuous Foyle apropos of something quite innocent: "In your Church they hold conclaves behind locked doors while all the world awaits the momentous reply to the question: Is it a sin or a syllogism?" But if his life had been for a time irregular, he had been for some years past beyond the urgent importunities of the flesh. He had never pretended to be other than what he was. The mire of this sad world had stained him, and Paschendaele mud. But he kept his own simple code and he had fierce loyalties. Above all he loved England—loved it as a myth with the dour integrity of one by blood half Irish. He had battled, ever since the end of the war, for some sort of justice to its forgotten survivors. He had dispersed and given to the poor. Who will say he did not follow a star, even if it were but the inverted image seen in the turbid mirror of the world?

Challis could find now only the rare and irregular flicker of a pulse. The end was near. In a corner of the room a faded insignificant wife shed her ineffectual tears of self-pity. Then suddenly the strain of living relaxed. The head slumped forward, and a hand slipped from his lap on to the crumpled sheet. Slowly the pewter colour softened to a lighter grey.

Tiberius Borkum, when he heard the news, strove hard to be generous. It was all very very sad, he remarked, especially

for Macleay's wife. Of course, Macleay had always *meant* well, but the truth was that he had been a failure—a failure in medicine as in sport. Never once had he made any contribution to medical knowledge or written an article for a journal. Also, in cricket, he had been never better than a change bowler and a batsman who went in No. 8 or 9. Challis, who fumed in silence, biting his lip, recalled how during the First War Borkum had slightingly said of Macleay that "he was holding a retractor somewhere in France". Holding a retractor in a Field Ambulance up near the Front Line had been no sinecure. But then Macleay, himself, had always hit hard with epithets and had been ever ready to suffer the inevitable retorts. No one better than he liked the promiscuity of words. He hated the adjective which called imperatively for its noun-mate. And it was he who had said publicly at a gathering, in Borkum's hearing, that Borkum's standard of success was a gold bar of measured length and thickness at a given temperature, deposited in the vaults of the Bank of England; an international standard.

The funeral at Waverley was surprisingly large. A conspicuous element were members of the sporting fraternity, strange horsey-looking men, gamblers, race-course pimps and young men whose faces had been well tanned on a cricket field. Some of those present in humble attire had obviously sacrificed a day's pay they could ill afford, in order to attend. But most of all Challis noted the solid phalanx of men with iron-grey hair whose bearing had still something of a military stamp upon it and there was a Catholic priest among them—he was rough-looking and unshaven. These were the remnant of the old battalion, companions in arms, men with whom he had jested coarsely, drunk hilariously, or stood grim and tense awaiting the order to go over the top. Others would have been there, too, had they not outstayed their leave upon a tumbled field in France or on those rough slopes that skirt an uncertain sea. They had been the young men (most of them) who after short impatient mornings had known nightfall at

noon. They, too, had failed if measured by the golden standard. Challis, a prey to deep emotion, did not hear the droning words of the preacher's discourse. He was thinking of little migrant birds which seek to fly over a vast desert, and losing sense of direction, falter, falter and drop to the parched earth, there at best to creep into the cool hollow of a rock and await release.

It was right and proper that Macleay should have been buried at Waverley, in a grave to which came the muffled tones, here too, of a smooth-tongued sea. . . . The old soldiers were staring fixedly ahead, for they were at that awkward moment after the lowering of the coffin when time forgets its paces and the pieces of scaffolding come too slowly out of the dug pit. The Catholic padre was on his knees, his head bent down. Slowly, too slowly, they made a hillock smooth.

Then in groups they turned noiselessly away, going by narrow tracks up the hill, speaking in whispers, still reverent. Challis passed through the frozen forest of white stones, wondering at the story behind the mask of each inscription. This one had fashioned a plan for gathering riches from the toil of other men. That one had known great strength: a brief efflorescence. Here had been beauty, an evanescent colour. There someone had had the local fame of stories in a tap-room. And all those others? Perhaps no one could say of them more than that they had filled a house and emptied out a woman's warmth of blood. Failures all! A buzzing insect was braggart amid their silences.

When they reached the iron gates of the entrance, the mourners spoke in louder tones and resumed their natural manners. Behind them lay a great stillness. The sea's murmur came not to the road. Near the monumental mason's, some children were playing at hop-scotch. The growing dissonance of a tram swinging round the curve drowned their farewells. And so, pursuing their different ways, they went back to the market-place which is the heart of a great City.

Chapter XVII

MUSTERING

Challis closed the door behind his last patient for the evening. He was tired, and feeling, as usual, the discouragement of fatigue. Around him was the disorder of a busy Consulting Room. He felt a little ashamed of it all. The white bucket near the wash-basin had its lid off. An unfolded hand towel hung listlessly from the towel-rail to the left of the basin. There were soap-suds on the small tablet of soap. What a solecism! How violently would that sharp-eyed, athletically built gynaecologist, once his Chief, have reacted before such a spectacle of bad surgical manners! The cutting words of his rapier-like tongue in a ward of the teaching hospital still hurt in spite of the nearly thirty years which had elapsed. "Mr Challis, come back and leave the basin as it was left for you." For a fifth year student so to be lectured in front of his fellow-students and the patients, was the supreme indignity. . . .

The lid of the little electric steriliser was open and there were wet instruments preparing to rust upon its tray: a tongue depresser, a Fergusson's speculum, a probe. . . . There were other utensils all about him. On a kidney tray were soiled swabs and pieces of used strapping. Over on the window-sill were three conical glasses filled with an amber-coloured fluid. One was turbid and showed a heavy deposit. The little spirit lamp had its glass top off. A thermometer lay on the glass shelf above the basin. His binaural stethoscope writhed on the Examination Couch. Before him on the desk was the still unfolded armlet of his blood-pressure instrument. A dozen small history cards were scattered before him. Challis slumped into his swivel chair. Yes! Yes! he would set things in order presently.

He was tired and oppressed with a sense of his own impotence. What was the general practitioner's part? Merely to help an individual to adapt himself to his private infirmity, comforting him the while! Challis was at the hour when every doctor counts his dream and reckons up the loss. One woman had irritated him by her reproaches. Hadn't he done everything possible for her child, just dead of broncho-pneumonia? She had hinted that in future she was going to call in the new young doctor who had recently "squatted" down the road. He was always getting these little rebuffs. He was worried, too, over that woman up at the local hospital on whom he had operated three days ago. She was hiccoughing now. How he hated and feared hiccoughs in a surgical case! He never seemed to have any setbacks, or any cases that "went wrong". Borkum was now patronisingly friendly and talked down to Challis, pontifically, like a leader in the *British Medical Journal*. He was a social lion, and had installed a cocktail bar in his private residence. Women said he was "so up-to-date". The suspicion was lately haunting Challis that he himself was passing out of currency, like old Surridge. These new young practitioners around him were exciting popular admiration by the multiplicity of their laboratory investigations. They sat in their "office" (as they now called a consulting room), and their diagnosis was merely the sum-total of the laboratory findings. Challis still remembered Surridge's outcry against the new instruments of precision. "Blood pressure!" he had fumed. "I can tell all that with my finger-tips." Poor old Surridge! He and Rooney had believed they could diagnose all chest complaints listening with a wooden stethoscope. And, as if in self-defence, Surridge used to shout: "But I *know* them. I brought most of them into the world. I know what their parents were or had." Hadn't he seen the outward signs of disease for fifty years?—the froth of the epileptic, the staring eyes of some goitrous, the dribbling saliva of the old man with a shaking hand whose leg dragged . . .?

Challis's mind was slipping back. He was like a stockman mustering, with the years like sheep, scurrying before, in dust and confusion. He thought of himself as a boy spinning a careless top with a flick of his wrist, or standing on his hands against a wall, or catching greedy sparrows with a four-brick trap by the lure of a little wheat upon a piece of tin balanced precariously with a stick. . . .

Where were his close contemporaries in University days? The Y.M.C.A. student, Scroggy Camplin, who had been sent off the field, allegedly for "using language", was still a medical missionary somewhere in Africa. Perhaps still, too, he was searching for the white-walled city with cooling shade and fresh water tinkling near. Dominick McGlone was reckoned to be a millionaire—high finance had been his pigeon, but even in Pitt Street he hadn't lost his old undergraduate humour. Copeman, too, hadn't changed much. He would still make fun with loud noisy laughter over the abridgement of his leg lost in Gallipoli. Success had not soured one or an ordeal embittered the other. Macleay—how he missed Macleay!—Missed both the teeming flora of that slick vocabulary, the frequent wisecracks, and above all the solid loyalty of his friendship. And now his variegated life was rolled up like an old carpet. . . . Well, his end had been better than Bill Freely's, in a weatherboard public-house, out in the Far West, delirious, during a time of drought. Burney's end perhaps had been best of all—merging into his dream; or young Rooney's on a field in France, where numbered and named upon a Cross he lay amid the stunted forest of Crosses.

And then once again his mind went back to those exciting days when beauty flushed new joys from unsuspected coverts of the senses. He could not think upon those times without being swept by sudden fierce irregular gusts of emotion. That night returned when first she was docile before his wish, and those succeeding nights, too, when she took his limbs prisoner and disarmed his blood. He had come to look upon that consummation as a ceremony solemnly performed, valid with-

out the accident of any priest. Had he not virtuously kept the unspoken promise? But where was she now? And did she, too, have mutinous thoughts and memories half-profane which burst their way past the clausura of a vow? Did she have thoughts at night, smoothing the tangled hair which he had kissed, dishevelled by the first virginal embrace?

And thinking of Maria he could not fail to recall the unpretentious little Church of Sta Maria dei Miracoli, though he had now forgotten the name of the little canal on which it was situated—but it was off the Rio di S. Marino. Was it not like his own life—set among the little houses? He loved that Church the more for its lack of ostentation. It had no pompous air of spiritual superiority over its meaner neighbours. It had no opulent bulk, only the minor conceit of its mural paintings of flowers and leaves, of Cupids and birds, beside a Saint dreaming upon his book.

For long now he had come to think of Maria as a timid gazelle, a timid gazelle that came at first shyly, then half boldly, to quench her thirst at a pool, unseen. She had not hidden the exhilaration of those first draughts, luscious and fresh. She had forgotten for eternal moments the wind's message of an ever-present danger. The trees had been so still and beautiful, the sky unruffled blue, and the little grass was green and tender at the water's edge. She had been lost a while in the placid mirror of her own enchantment.

But suddenly she had lifted her head, paused, for one moment listened, affrighted, and then—and then she was gone. What signal had she caught from the still motionless trees? What phantom seen in the bottom of the pond? Had some shadow fallen athwart? Who will know? Deep in her sensitive heart some alarm had sounded and she had stampeded into the dusk—far from the pool and the little green grass that was tender at the water's edge, into some hidden refuge, safe from alarm, beyond all hot pursuit. Ah! who can find a covert sure from the shy tradition of the flesh?

* * *

The loud insistent jar of the telephone ringing freed Challis from his captive dream. With a start he woke, and automatically lifted the receiver. The local hospital was calling. It was Challis's day for urgent admissions. The house doctor had admitted an "acute abdomen". He thought it was a "volvulus". Challis replied that he would go at once. "Volvulus", he muttered to himself a little savagely. Trust these young men to plump for something rare!

Outside, life was brawling down the main street, for it was Friday night—the night of pay-day. He walked to the hospital, jostling the careless crowd, the cool air fanning his hot cheeks. The weak hour of introspection was over; the saunter of his mind ended. Quickly he had assumed the habit of a man of action roused by the imperious call of an emergency.

It was not long before he stood calm and gowned within the operating theatre. There, all was quiet, ordered discipline. The circle of light from a shadowless lamp overhead was being focussed upon a square of the abdominal skin, marked off with immaculate white towels. The breathing of the elderly patient which at first had been jerky was gradually becoming more regular. With head and face swathed, and with his gloved hands clasped in front of him, Challis stood waiting. After interminable seconds the pasty-faced anaesthetist, looking up, said, "He's ready." Taking a scalpel Challis made a firm incision, according to the art, not tailing it off. The silence in the sanctuary of a cult was profound. It was broken only by the sound of an artery forceps being clipped home, or the whispered instruction of the Sister. Challis felt supremely happy. All his anxiety was gone. The recent tiredness had fallen away. His heart was beating steadily and with joyous rhythm under the white surplice. The love of his art was spilling over. His powers he knew were modest, his abilities not rated high. But in this love he yielded to no other: It was for the Art that healed and relieved. Had he not journeyed far following its star?—from love of his

Art to the love of those afflicted and so onward to the Source of all Love.

Two days later the ill-sheathed knife of European War fell with a clatter to the ground. Startled, the people in Australia turned, then looked away.

Chapter XIX

TOWARDS RESTITUTION

For many Australians the first reaction was one of languid resentment. They did not wish to believe that twice in their own time such folly would repeat itself. The young and adventurous light-heartedly stormed the recruiting offices. The old "sweats", of mien more serious, their "grousing" stilled by the event, put back their ages and with varying success sought to enlist. But the old noisy jingoism of the previous war was absent. Many of the citizens wanted a settlement, a compromise, even at the last moment. They, like many Englishmen, had been using threatening language behind the apparently secure barricades of peace. They, too, had embraced a doctrine of comfort as the final aim—birth under an anaesthetic, life with the anodyne of social guarantees, death eased by a drug! The pioneering spirit of the British race seemed dead, the adventurous character of the Australian diluted by his sense of security. In idlenesses of the spirit muscles had grown flabby and cartilages deteriorated. They had been living through the wizened season of a Faith. Yet in their Avenues of Remembrance the unregarded trees were still young.

Challis, on learning the news, unlike the majority of his fellows, felt a sudden strange exhilaration. He had absorbed so much from Macleay's opinions that he, too, had come to believe in the spiritual necessity of a great conflict. Men had been living too long in complacency, living symbiotically with the evil of self-indulgence. Only the pain of ordeal could rescue them from their lethargy. Out of the new horrors and the new ugliness he was convinced a truer beauty would emerge, an élite arise. History was but repeating itself. He was

thinking of those men half brutalised within the quadrant of a convict settlement who burst into the virgin scrub to drink from little startled streams. He never doubted that his countrymen would survive it all. They would drag from half-forgotten cellars the old dust-covered arms of a chivalry which for a score of years they had been taught to ridicule. And the sun would strike again its shafts of glory from their iron hats, for all the nets that time had spread.

He himself was over fifty. There could be no chance of his being accepted for duty overseas. Nevertheless he was intent on going. Rightly he foresaw that all the available medical help in Europe and in England would sooner or later be found insufficient. Even an elderly doctor without high qualifications would somewhere find a niche in the national service. It excited him to think that out of that low life of mere suburban usefulness he might graduate towards Restitution. Towards Restitution! After more than a century and a half to restore and to repair, to give back, to forgive and be, in turn, forgiven.

The collapse of France shattered the still lingering complacence of Australians, although the racecourses continued to be crowded, and the football matches went on. With a heavy heart the older people thought of our race scattering once more its rich fragments on the still unsated fields of France. Challis had cause for an added grief—thinking of Maria, submerged, now, under that bitter wave. He had owed her so much more than the acknowledged morsel of her flesh. Was it not in those hours of fierce incandescence that he had caught the distant vision of his way?

So, once again it came about, within so short a space of years, that troops went moving down towards a wharf, moving along a Macquarie Street narrowed by cheering crowds. Those who marched had the same hard flint-shaped faces, the same cocksure air, the same turned-up felt hat with its emblem of the Rising Sun. A flower on their rifles, a song on their thin

sardonic lips, and in their hearts a soldier's dream of fame! The years between had not withered all. These men had the same spirit, the same jaunty carriage, and they were going again along the same hard road. "Christ," muttered a bitter voice in the crowd, "went only *once* that way to Calvary."

Challis followed soon after, not without difficulty getting permission to go to England as a civilian. He was quite confident of finding useful employment there. His old reluctance to visit London had vanished. He was no longer dominated by that phantasy of a hungry young man, a sudden theft, pursuit, capture. He would make good the wrong. The old penal laws weighed no more upon him. He had forgiven them. Where once he had cried in exasperation: "Will the dark stains never fade? Have not the years pled for them?", he now muttered to himself: "They are my people, blood of my blood. Cousins out of a wayward past. With them I shall struggle for what we are and hold, and for our way of life however imperfect." He had not been moved by the smart slogans of the newspapers or caught up in the quarrel over men's ideologies. He felt the exaltation of one who forgives even as he performs the penance given. He was convinced that he would find the old arrogant and pompous spirit of England dissipated. He thought of her, dishevelled and in disarray, stripped of her tinsel finery, grey in defiance, gallant in distress, renewed in spirit, humble.

The ship on which he travelled seemed to have the disturbing sense of private guilt. It suffered, too, under the compulsion of doubts and suspicions. Distant trivial happenings on seemingly deserted sea startled it to sudden nervous changes of its course. A sober gravity invaded passengers and crew alike. No organised gaieties flogged the dull lethargy of a tourist's day. A quoit thrown would have bogged on the slow pitch of an unwashed deck. The happiest climax came after dinner in the smoking-room. There, behind darkened portholes, stories evoked the reprisal of stories. Some men shuffled cards; a few drank to excess. One night a sailor, unable to

bear the gloom of the altered conditions of living, jumped overboard. The ship turned, made the hasty gesture of a search, then rushed off to resume its course.

Among his fellow passengers Challis found an old English doctor on his first world tour whom the outbreak of war had caught in Australia. Doctor Halstead was one of the old school, from Cambridge and St Bartholomew's. He was dignified and urbane. "I have," he said disarmingly, "the one residual function of the old: reminiscence." He could never long forget that Abernethy and Paget were of his line, and he was always recalling the panorama of his student days when Samuel Gee crossed the old quadrangle and dominated all his contemporaries. The young ship's surgeon, Morris Sterman, held all that was old or past in ridicule. Only the new Medicine he revered and his spiritual home was Russia. At the University College he had been taught that always the final test was in experiment. He listened a little superciliously, and with open irreverence to Halstead's reminiscences. They seemed to disagree on everything: their antlers were always locked.

"Doctor Halstead," Sterman would say disrespectfully, "you're a reactionary, a vestigial remnant from an evil past. We young men are going to extirpate you and your like if they haven't already shrivelled away by the time this war is over. . . . You still believe in the honourable inequality of men. . . . You also believe in figures like Morgagni, or Laënnec or Lister—even in Samuel Gee who once wrote a book of 270 aphorisms, all of which the people of my time have proved wrong—excepting, of course, his helpful advice for you exploiters, 'Make haste to profit by your new cures while they still perform miracles for you'."

Halstead, a little ruffled by the unusual lack of respect in a young doctor, but ever courteous, would counter gently: "My dear Sterman, the trouble with your generation is that they don't know the story of their own profession. They want to place us on the same level as dentists and pharmacists—excellent folk, no doubt. You are all for pulling down. What

are you putting back—yes, what are you putting back? England at this moment is shedding its traditions in too violent a moulting. You young men are always crying out, 'Oh! we've made great strides since then. . . .' But, have you, in the things that matter?"

"I'm a realist," interposed Sterman. "Realist! Realist!"

Halstead kept repeating testily: "A realist is ever dupe of the ephemeral . . ."

When Sterman, smoking his fortieth cigarette, would move off—winking to Challis—to make a Bridge four, Halstead, more serene, would resume his recollections of Samuel Gee. "You know he wasn't a prepossessing man physically, he was short and had no eloquence. He had even a slight impediment in his speech, but he had *personality*—that's what they are lacking to-day at all the Medical Schools in London, *personality*. And Gee was *educated*—which the young graduates of to-day are not. They're all a bit like Stedman—he's a very intelligent, quick-minded young fellow, I'm sure he took prizes during his Course—they're all well instructed technically, but they're not educated. And they have no pride in their traditions! They want to be technicians on the same level as the dentists and the pharmacists. *Ours* was once a higher calling. You know, Gee used to object to the word 'appendicitis' and he'd nearly have a fit if any nurse pronounced the word '*enema*'. He was a doctor who considered himself to be custodian of much more than the clinical notes of a case. Realist—This young man calls himself a realist. Isn't it true that the realist is always dupe to the ephemeral?" he repeated half to himself.

Then he would turn to the subject of Australia, which he said he liked very much, but whose problems disturbed him. "Why are all you Australians hostile to the man who gets on? I saw so often that philosophy in action: 'Bring the leader back to the mob.' As soon as one of your people gets up in the world all his former friends want to pull him down "

Challis denied this, explaining that Australians were sometimes over-critical. Often their leaders, having got "up" in the world, changed their political faiths. . . .

Halstead was worried, too, over the extravagance of even the poorest people. They had a new concept of frugality. "Let the State provide." "What they want in Australia," said Halstead, "is an élite—not a moneyed élite or an élite by birth, but a select body whose right to guide and govern is based on their spiritual integrity and their culture. . . ."

All these conversations disturbed Challis greatly. While he warmly defended his people, none knew better than he their weaknesses. Nevertheless he resented this recent visitor's criticism. It hurt him no less than Sterman's ecstatic denial of the past. In the too-long sessions of meditation between sun and sky there were hours when anguish possessed him and he dreaded the future.

Once he escaped from the forced cheeriness of the smoke-room to stand at the bow peering into the darkness. He imagined himself, for a time, like a seaman of the old sailing ships awaiting the first light to make a land-fall. Somewhere out there in the menacing darkness, he said to himself, there is a coast. He thought he could hear the distant noise of breaking surf. Where was the entrance and the issue? The moments stood by in surly sloth. No beacon winked. Darkness interminable. The ship was rolling timidly upon its length. Time was a rope, idly trailing over the ship's side.

Then at last through broken interstices of the darkness comes the insistent light, throwing its silver spray upon the surf. The course is now clear. The phantoms of an hour past are forgotten. They were but the folly of a tired mind. The ship moves forward surely, the waves servile before its thrust. Refuge from storms: Hail!

Once again his faith grew with the utterance of a prayer, but all his hosannas were hushed in the sound of a screw harvesting distance.

* * *

Autumn and the falling foliage of England! Autumn red-eyed and sobbing amidst its leaves! So, Challis found her, with the swallows massing for flight and the cities full of people fugitive. The ash had already surrendered with indecent haste, and after one gorgeous hour the birch had shed its veil. The poplars were still yellow and on grey walls loitered with an obstinate ardour the virginia creeper. But the rugged oak and rude choleric beech yielded less easily before the caprice of a season. In England, foliage and flesh, trees and shrubs and man's created things, yes, man himself—all, were returning to the earth their revenues of beauty. But always there was something that did not die.

Within the City, life was still heavy with the discord of material cries. Had this England been too long ill: a man with sordes on his lips, plucking at the sheets, babbling of freedoms? Had the drowsy syrup of a dole worked an evil beyond all cure? Had the young become permanently emasculated from taking, too long, their adventures, vicariously, in a cinema? Could they get back the old faith? or had Christ been too long a myth and a political heresy?

Those years of the dead sanctities and that comfortable period which glorified ease were now over. A battle-front was running through the park lands of the rich and the cottage gardens of the poor. Fear was billeted in every home. They told Challis, "You need not now go overseas to see how a dead man lies." A blind fury was dancing through noble thoroughfares and down the little streets. The eyes of men and women were terribly tired after a fever in the night before. They were seeing the earth in convulsions and violent paroxysms of the air. But into sanctuaries long forsaken and under consecrated broken roofs, reverence was coming again. Within the City, obdurate men stood firm amid the broken galleries of stone and upon streets they recognised no more. It is not only the rugged oak and the rude choleric beech which stand unbowed before the wind of a hard season.

Challis shared the darkness anonymously with strangers and was partaker of their faith and fear. He felt afraid and had his moments of exaltation. He knew now that those who answer the challenge never fail. But, in reaction, he had at times his piercing hours of doubts. Once, he woke from fretful sleep, his forehead cold and wet, to hear his own piteous cry, "England, O! England! . . ."

Chapter XX

BEYOND THE HILL LIES CHINA

Figliuol mio
Qui può esser tormento ma non morte.

London lay frozen into a statuesque silence. The siren had screamed its warning above the house-tops. No light of man's shone in the streets—the red and green pencil markings at the crossways were but a distorted darkness. The City lay immobile, its hypertrophied heart beating slow. Cornered and at bay, it was feigning to be not itself.

For several weeks Challis had been in London. He had seen the City, after those guilty nights, haggard and with bloodshot eyes. He was playing his own humble part under the terror, rendering First Aid to the broken and the buried. At times he had had to crawl through tunnels to reach an arm or a leg of someone prisoned and pinioned which, though cold, he had injected with morphia, muttering a benediction with the drug. "Si vivis . . ."

On such pilgrimages he had found comfort thinking upon St Francis wandering through Umbrian woods, seeking simples and a cure for this mortality. When the sight of beauty in ruins distressed him, he would repeat to himself: "This beauty is but a shadow of the greater beauty." And then, as if in justification for all his own sensual enjoyment of the world, he would say: "How else can we see and praise and understand except through the medium of these poor senses?" He could never forget how illumination had first come to him through the clerestory of a passionate moment.

Now, having put on his tin hat, he went forth once again to find his Aid Post. His direction lay at first by shattered

tenements which under the harsh daylight had recently distressed him with their intimate griefs. Night lent them now a spectral awe. Why had this tiny shop escaped the caprice of the blast? And how had that house been spared from the general devastating fire? Quite close, great girders had been twisted like the fibres of some weak reed.

In a moment he was lost. A mass of rubble had forced him to make a detour and soon he had found himself in unfamiliar territory. In this forest of darkness there were no landmarks. He smiled, saying to himself, "I should be looking for notches on a tree." Peering he saw the half of a bedroom above him with a wardrobe balancing itself precariously. The streets were deserted—all the human rodents seemed to have burrowed deep down into the earth. Somewhere below these buildings, he thought, are men and women wearing the mask of a grim fortitude. He thought of his own countrymen, hard-eyed and laconic, in a time of drought, staring up at the ever pitiless sky, *waiting*.

Overhead, the searchlight beams were nervously sweeping the sky. Sometimes they met, like finger-tips in a moment of prayer. Prayer! It had come back to many unfrequented homes. The drone of aeroplanes could now be heard growing louder. Soon came the first distant whines and then earth-quaking explosions. Sudden flares appeared as when the stokers open their furnace doors. A pall of smoke uncoiled itself over the City.

Challis found some fire-fighters coupling their hydrants and manoeuvring their huge curled lengths of hose. Their language was foul, but of a foulness that did not seem offensive, as if they did not know what they were saying. It might have been an invocation to the Mother of God, involuntarily uttered. Only the earth's imprecations were vicious.

Onward he went with the faltering exaltation of one who has faith in an Everlasting Mercy and from whom the burden of old coarseness had fallen away. No more the aboriginal calamity of life oppressed him. No longer was he possessed

by any anguish for the present or by a dread of the poignant moment of victory.

He had come to identify himself with those convicts who, out of the enclosure of their settlement, had pushed forward, their pockets full of grain. Was he not kindred to them in a felony of the senses? The West Road was the symbol of their travail and their release. Did it not carry still the meagre relics of their passing: crumbling stones with an arrow and a number, the dust over all? Yet those convicts had pushed on, exhilarated. They had seen summits and ranges with red dawns spilling over a distant peak. Beyond the Hill and across the Bay they had found a goal. God in His Mercy had given distance to their dream. What did it matter if, on the way, they shed the trivial remnant of their flesh?

Challis thought on the years when he had blindly groped his way, years of precarious foothold, when the mountain peak was veiled in mists, when Faith had slumped through nights, when he had known the shame of self-pity and the yielding to it. He had been giddy on sudden heights and vain on little pinnacles. But now he, too, was pushing forward with those old shadows for company.

In a darkened street he touched the summit of his climbing. He did not hear the premonitory whine: the world was far, too far, away. He had been beyond the sensation of any blast. Upon a London Street, bespattered by a crimson dust he lay, and life hurt him no more. He had made restitution, even to the offering of his unanointed flesh.

A slow drizzle, setting in, fell upon the blackened ruins around. The incense of many burnt offerings was rising from the ground. Through lattices of smoke could be seen the glare of many flames. The Thames itself was burning, that Thames which had known so many changing tides and fortunes, the banner of victorious hosts, the hulks of prisoners debased, glory and tribulation and shame. Along its banks were passing now the flames of war and weeping women.

The noise of aeroplanes had ceased and the searching lights had left the sky. Yet Dawn came slow as though from an Eastern altar the priest refused the benediction to the prostrate earth. Is not the sacrifice enough, O Lord? Upon the roads, as on the channelled stone tables of a rite, the victims' blood was flowing still.

At last, light, a Samaritan passing by, ministered to the broken form amid the wetted dust of a little street. Slowly from the City proper, like rude hosannas, rose the noise of an engine gathering speed, the sounds of hammer on metal, the clang and the clank of a machine, and the shuffle, shuffle, shuffle, of iron-shod feet.

THE END