westerly

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A QUARTERLY REVIEW

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SEAFORTH MACKENZIE ISSUE

westerly

a quarterly review

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University of Western Australia Press

The present revival of interest in Seaforth Mackenzie—the "critical industry" seems almost to be shifting to him from Patrick White!—has stressed how difficult it is to procure his work at all. Of his four novels, all were out of print until recently, when *The Young Desire It* was reprinted in Sirius Books by Angus & Robertson. *Dead Men Rising*, his third novel, has never been sold in Australia because of fear, apparently, of libel. There is some possibility that his last book, *The Refuge*, may be reprinted here shortly. But at present, only his first novel is generally available. An edition of poems selected by Douglas Stewart and published in 1961 by Angus & Robertson, is now out of print.

Mackenzie's other work—poetry, prose, short stories, radio plays, articles—has been within reach only of those able to visit some of the Public Libraries, particularly the Fisher collection. And accounts of his life have been varied, often deduced from the novels themselves, enlivened by hearsay and gossip, often malicious. *Westerly,* in this issue, offers some of Mackenzie's work previously unpublished, or published in daily and weekly newspapers and magazines and no longer easily available—and a biographical essay.

Mackenzie in his prose work used the name Seaforth Mackenzie; in his poetry Kenneth Mackenzie.

Our thanks are due to Mrs. Kate Mackenzie for providing manuscripts, and to Mrs. Catherine Hills for family material; also to Miss Lukis of the Battye Library.

COVER DESIGN

The cover design is based upon a snapshot of Seaforth Mackenzie and Norman Lindsay (left) walking down Martin Place, Sydney.

We are extremely grateful to the Library Board of Western Australia for permission to make use of the original photograph and to Mr. Frank Fruett for expertly translating this into the form in which it now appears.

T.H.G.

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SEAFORTH MACKENZIE

Diana Davis

AN IMPLACABLE Highland arrogance prompted Hugh Mackenzie to insist that his first child be christened Kenneth Ivo Brownley Langwell Mackenzie so that "he will be known by *all* as *my* son".[1] This aggressive and overbearing habit of mind together with the fact that he "couldn't stand *anything* for any length of time" made Hugh an extremely difficult person to live with.[2] Understandably enough, his wife, Daisy, often found it impossible and after half a dozen years of often tempestuous marital disharmony, she sued her husband for divorce. Once the divorce became final, the instinctive protectiveness of Kenneth's gentle and idolizing mother influenced her to have her son's name officially amended to Kenneth Ivo Mackenzie. Years later she reflected that, since her husband Hugh had been the only son of a family of thirteen to marry, perhaps she had been unwise, possibly precipitate, in taking away his family heritage from the only male Mackenzie heir.[3]

These dual parental forces, however—a harsh overbearing yet nevertheless potentially prideful male figure and a sweet, soft, loving but possibly overprotective maternal influence—were those which shaped the early years of Kenneth Mackenzie (1913-1955), the Australian novelist and poet who died prematurely by drowning at the age of forty-one.

The uneasy suspension of a sensitive and extraordinarily perceptive child between these two polarities, hostilely incompatible, appears (from the hindsight we now have) to have had an irreversible effect on Mackenzie's tolerance of life and of people. A living compound of these two temperamental extremes, he found it particularly difficult to preserve an equipoise between these elements within himself; always he had to cope with periods of intolerable disequilibrium.[4]

At first this simply meant that he was different from the people with whom he lived and with whom he associated. But, in any case, the youthful Mackenzie's interests and preoccupations would have made him appear different in the company of his squatter uncles, sports-worshipping school mates and convergently ambitious contemporaries.[5] According to the Australian norm, Mackenzie's physical appearance was atypical—his skin was pale rather than sun-bronzed, his hair yellow-gold without being sunbleached, and he was strong and muscular despite a total lack of interest in any of the acceptable Australian sports-gods.

At a very early age Mackenzie believed that he had a future as a writer. Extremely intelligent, he firmly refused to expend his energies, intellectual or physical, if he could not perceive the relevance of the task to his personal values and interests.

The combination of such personality traits with this kind of physique was probably not found in a large percentage of the population and would, no doubt, have made Kenneth Mackenzie appear a singular young man under almost any environmental conditions in the Australia of the 1920's. In and around the backwater Perth of this time Mackenzie's inevitable feeling of distinctiveness was exacerbated by the fact that his environment was not so very different from that of many of his contemporaries. Certainly one cannot afford to minimize the effect that his parents' divorce and its repercussions had on the pattern of his life; one-parent-homes, even those most enlightened and sympathetic, inevitably distort at least to some extent the course of a child's development. But the fact remains that Mackenzie's familial background was quite typical.[6] His education was certainly no better, possibly rather worse than that of many of his contemporaries. Although he attended a kindergarten in South Perth for a time and was encouraged to learn by his mother who helped him at home, most of Kenneth Mackenzie's early education was obtained at the small state school near *The Cottage* where they lived with his maternal grandfather in Pinjarra. When at the age of thirteen Kenneth Mackenzie entered Guildford Grammar School as a boarder in St. George's House,[7] his academic record was not considered particularly outstanding. In fact, Mackenzie's cousin who had attended the Pinjarra State School with him until both moved on to Guildford Grammar School, reported that, although Mackenzie quite outstripped him intellectually at Guildford, they had both performed at about the same level in state school.[8]

At Guildford, Mackenzie was something of an enigma to many of his teachers. He was not an ordinary, predictable sort of school boy; he was completely uninterested in sport and worked to the extent of his capacity only when he wanted to achieve a particular goal. His academic record, therefore, was not brilliant; in fact it reflected his pattern of interests rather than his intellectual capabilities. Even in English, where in view of his subsequent preoccupations as a creative writer one might have expected his complete absorption, he appears to have had but spasmodic interest and consequently performed with erratic brilliance. This was apparent even to his contemporaries, many of whom have echoed Gordon Freeth's perception—"In spite of his obvious literary skill it is worth noting that to the best of my recollection he only achieved about fourth or fifth place in the class in English and other languages. In other words he had first rate intelligence but little inclination for routine school work."[9]

Certainly Mackenzie's personality, interests and ambitions were not those of the average boy with his environmental background. He did not attempt to conform to the norms of the school-boy society; the society did not so much actively reject him as enforce a recognition of his lack of concern for its values and attitudes. This implicit recognition of Mackenzie's social status in the school is reflected in this comment by one of his teachers—"I remember that he was not a particularly popular boy, with his fellows or with the staff, and I have the impression that he was not very happy at school. His musical

and dramatic interests were not those of the general run of the boy of that period, and he had rather less than average ability in sport."[10]

In fact Mackenzie made few friends at school. His two cousins were in the same form for a time and they appear to have remained friendly with him from a sense of family solidarity rather than personal choice. Recently one of those cousins explained to the writer that it was not until his second year at the university that he realized that if he disapproved of Mackenzie's actions the fact that they were cousins did not oblige him to condone them—". . . I realized that if he went on like that I didn't have . . . to be with him . . . I could just drop him as I would a non-relative whose behaviour I didn't like."[11]

Of the other boys at Guildford, very few had much interest in or affinity with Mackenzie; friendships at school are typically based upon similarity of interests and it can be seen quite clearly that Mackenzie showed little, if any, enthusiasm for the activities peculiar to the schoolboy.

Hence Mackenzie's preoccupations tended to separate him from the other boys rather than to form the basis of friendships with them. The fact that Mackenzie won the Elocution Prize for his section at Guildford one year is a case in point. Even at the distance of more than thirty years many of Mackenzie's contemporaries at Guildford remember the performance which won this with a distaste for conduct not considered *de rigeur*.[12]

Despite Kenneth Mackenzie's lack of popularity among the students, there was no sense in which he was actively victimized by his school mates. In the Foreword to *The Young Desire It* Catherine Hills writes of her brother's probable reactions upon being thrust into the unaccustomed world of Guildford Grammar School: "I think you could imagine the shock to a child living blissfully in the country that he loved—where every beetle, bird, almost each separate blade of grass he knew and loved—to be suddenly taken away from it all . . . And to be taken away from everything that seemed to be so much a part of him—the life that he knew and loved, was extremely foreign to his nature. To find himself surrounded by his own species, all much his own age, but so terribly noisy and evidently overjoyed to be there. He longed for the solitude of his home, his river and his own bushland companions as well as Mother—who, I imagine was to him the one human being who understood him and didn't make a noise!"[13]

Certainly one can imagine that this experience was a traumatic one; it is possible, even likely, that school as such continued to jar and upset him. The fact that he ran home to Pinjarra at the age of sixteen and refused to return to school makes this fairly clear. At the same time, the evidence of his contemporaries at Guildford shows Mackenzie to have developed extraordinarily ingenious ways of coping with the school environment. It is said[14] that Mackenzie was the only boy of that time at Guildford whose smoking activities were ever completely condoned; the prefects, so the story goes, feared the verbal reprisals which might have resulted had they asserted their authority. In similar vein another Old Guildfordian[15] remembered that he and Mackenzie were appointed to equip and man a stall at a school fete. When one of the other students came along and began to criticize their efforts Mackenzie turned to his friend and said quite audibly "Aren't his eyes close together?" As the lad reddened and walked away Mackenzie said, "People always go away if you're nasty about them." This friend, who at that time was a year younger

than Mackenzie, and rather less sophisticated, remembers absorbing this maxim and storing it away for future reference.

This lad and another,[16] both of whom were at that time sufficiently perceptive and sensitive to be interested, formed the first audience for many of Mackenzie's early experiments in verse. Since Mackenzie's attempts were prolific, neither boy took overmuch notice of the poems that were dashed off with such ease and speed in prep. or in class. Yet both boys reported that, although they did not regard Mackenzie's verbal facility as in any way special, they (probably alone of the boys at Guildford with Mackenzie) instinctively recognized and appreciated something of Mackenzie's power, his sensitivity, certainly his uniqueness in that particular environment.

After Mackenzie ran away from Guildford he did not return to school and hence had very little to do with these boys since their immediate interests and activities diverged so completely at that stage. Mackenzie spent a year at the Muresk Agricultural College[17]—even less congenially than at school. One can scarcely imagine Kenneth Mackenzie—a retiring if often satirical boy—being inspired by such academic studies as Farm Mensuration and English for Agricultural Students, or such practical activities as tending the poultry and cleaning out the pigs-sties.

Determined after this year spent (he felt, wasted) in training for an uncongenial and unsuitable occupation, Mackenzie persuaded his mother that he was not interested in a career on the land with his uncles. The result was that he prepared himself to take his Matriculation exams and subsequently entered the University of Western Australia to study a combined Arts/Law Course. However, this, too, failed to engage his fugitive interest and he abandoned the course without sitting for his first year examinations.[18]

The fact was that Kenneth Mackenzie had very little taste for formal learning—for learning organized along relatively narrow and inflexible lines. He preferred to do as he wished at his pace and time. This unwillingness to be organized by external authorities tended to make Mackenzie virtually unemployable as he grew older.

Initially in Perth, after the failure of the few sporadic attempts to undergo formal training for a career, Mackenzie did itinerant journalistic work for *The West Australian*. It was not long, however, before he realized, with considerable justification, that opportunities for a writer were limited in a town as provincial as Perth undoubtedly was in those days of depression and cultural impoverishment.

Inexplicably, perhaps because of lack of finance, he went first to Melbourne. But Melbourne, like Perth and every other Australian city at that time, was experiencing the bitterness and defeat of the depression. Sadly, for Mackenzie it was a depression more poignantly felt in the vastness of Melbourne than it had been in the kindly, if restrictive, confines of Perth. The incredibly low ebb of Melbourne's economy forced Kenneth Mackenzie to eke out a breadline existence between unemployment and fitful work as a scullery assistant to a cook in a boarding house. The subsistence tenacity required simply to enable him to survive unfortunately left him little time or energy for writing or making contacts, literary or any other kind. In many ways he was unbearably lonely in Melbourne.[19] He had lost contact with many of his friends in Perth, possibly through a lack of propinquity rather than from any deliberate wish

to sever connections. Although Melbourne was full of Mackenzie relations (his father, Hugh's, sisters being particularly kind to their nephew[20]), Melbourne appeared alien to Mackenzie. His relations considered him a pleasant enough young man although they "thought him very quaint—you know, a young man in his early twenties who read poetry and wrote poetry and that sort of thing . . ."[21]

Although his mother and sister had always implicitly worshipped at the shrine of his creative ability, Mackenzie was quite accustomed, though perhaps not reconciled, to the scepticism and uninformed amazement his preoccupations engendered in other people. What was so extremely difficult for him, then, was not so much that he felt unable to establish some basis of contact (rapport) with the people with whom he came into contact as the fact that his literary activities were forcibly curtailed by the need to scrounge enough money on which to exist. Unsympathetic environmental conditions threatened to fulfil his *practical* detractors' worst predictions about the outcome of his creative fortune-seeking.

After some months Mackenzie managed to pawn sufficient of his possessions to enable him to move on to Sydney. Apart from two periods spent in Perth—one in 1948, the other in 1954—and a brief trip to Queensland, he remained in the vicinity of Sydney until his death in 1955. In Sydney, too, things were difficult for him since the depression had not yet abated. The pressure for survival did not lessen; in fact it was intensified, because in 1934 Kate Bartlett (née Loveday) came over from Perth and they were married. Two children were born of the marriage—a girl, Elizabeth, in 1936, and a boy, Hugh, in 1938.

During the years before the war and before conscription was introduced, Mackenzie worked in various journalistic capacities for several Sydney publications. Unfortunately, however, he was no more able to adjust to even the minor restraints of a journalistic position than he had been able to adapt himself to formal courses of study at school and at University.

He began to develop a reputation for unreliability, a reputation which seriously endangered his always doubtful earning potential. He acquired a taste for claret which soon generalized into a need for claret even with his breakfast; attempts to "sweat the booze out of himself" were temporarily successful but "he relapsed again."[22]

With the outbreak of war Mackenzie did not volunteer for service but he became increasingly disturbed by the implications of war and its probable aftermath, especially since the war effectively put a stop to his embryonic plans to further his experience of life in England and in Europe.[23] Eventually the war caught up with him more directly and he was conscripted into the Army; not for active service because he had defective eyesight but to join the rejected soldiery at the Cowra Prisoner-of-War camp in New South Wales. Mackenzie was an orderly room corporal in charge of Italian prisoners-of-war and it was from this vantage point that, in 1944, he witnessed the mass outbreak of Japanese prisoners.

Early in 1945 Mackenzie was sent to the Concord Army Hospital for observation; extensive tests demonstrated "that a duodenal ulcer had been proved, that I would come here for treatment, and would then be discharged from the Army . . ."[24] During this period in hospital, Mackenzie wrote to one

of his friends in Cowra: "Even now when I think of 'The Army' I think of Cowra; the picture of that orderly room and the company lines—indeed, of the whole camp—will stay in my mind till I die. I had various moments of purest happiness there, dotted about on the vast blank futility of it all."[25]

One cannot imagine that these evanescent moments of happiness were in any way frequent enough to compensate for the "vast blank futility of it all." Certainly Mackenzie's discharge from the Army posed many problems for the Army and for Mackenzie himself. Although at Cowra Mackenzie's typing ability had been utilized in an administrative position, and he had had considerable experience in journalism before the war, the inescapable fact remained that he had no specific qualifications and no particular desire to "go and immerse himself in a bloody humdrum job of work."[26] At the same time a regular and reasonably substantial income was necessary to the continued health and well-being of his wife and family.

Mackenzie left the Army hospital in the middle of May and by July was becoming very restive about his continued unemployment—"I'm more and more resentful of Army authority for having got me into the thing in the first place; it's devilish hard to re-place myself without going to the extent of crawling to the many people I know, with the plea, 'What can you do for me?' . . ."[27] A brief period with *The Sydney Morning Herald* was not successful. There seemed to be no pigeon-hole into which he could be confidently placed; a compromise attempt to induct him into the Department of News and Information proved either that the hole was too round or the peg too square.

Although ostensibly his ulcer was to make him an "enforced tee-totaller for evermore", even in hospital Mackenzie had planned to combat the ban on alcohol: "I mean to test out the effects of various beverages methodically before I'm released from this place, so I'll know where I stand."[28] A few cautious onslaughts on liquor while on half-day leave-passes from the hospital emboldened Mackenzie to waive this prescription to an increasing degree once he left Army medical care, forming habits of drinking which were to almost completely ruin his chances of securing regular and even mildly remunerative employment.

Certainly Kenneth Mackenzie and his family needed a steady income but it was equally certain that Mackenzie himself was unable to fulfil the role of breadwinner in any satisfactory way. Writing, which did engage his vagrant interest, was not sufficiently lucrative. What then? In desperation Kate suggested that the whole family move to Kurrajong [29] where she owned 14 acres of land, purchased with her child endowment.* Here the Mackenzies lived for a couple of years, poor but subsisting (albeit somewhat precariously at times). Here they tilled the soil, grew much of their own food and sold surplus produce to neighbours; Kenneth and Kate did itinerant odd jobs round the neighbourhood. Yet still they had insufficient money to buy necessities like tea and flour, and to clothe the children who were by this stage attending local schools, their needs fast increasing with age. Despite periods of sobriety and creativity, Mackenzie could do little to assist; Kate decided that she would have to return to work in Sydney teaching sculpture. This, with the book reviewing and proof-reading Mackenzie was able to do on a casual basis for *The Sydney*

* Letter from Kate Mackenzie, November, 1966.

Morning Herald and *Angus and Robertson* boosted the family exchequer but not the family morale since for much of the time they were forced to live apart.

The craving for alcohol which had disrupted his employment in Sydney now began to further debilitate his capacity for work and for maintaining communication with people. The need for drink which, in the early journalistic days in Sydney and at Cowra, had been more of a social and convivial necessity than anything else, now developed into a compulsive craving for oblivion, for escape from a world of too many demands and too few real and lasting satisfactions. His friends could do little for him.

Mostly writers, poets, artists, journalists themselves, many of these friends could sense the often intolerable pressures which dogged Mackenzie during these years. Many of these people[30] found it difficult to reconcile the vacillations between the "good bloke", fine writer and congenial drinking companion they knew—and the irretrievably alcoholic, pitifully ill figure which with increasing frequency slouched into their lives. Most of these people seem to have been, in fact, little more than acquaintances. Although many people, even people who knew him very little, were extremely kind and good to him, it does appear that very few people knew Mackenzie well enough to offer him much more than material assistance. To men he was certainly a "good bloke", a fine writer and a congenial drinking companion. To women he was often more; most of them found him charming, a "sweetie", essentially kind and lovable. Yet very few, if indeed any, men or women ever got past the externals—the "good bloke", the "sweetie"—to the fundamental personality behind the writer, the poet, behind the pleasant drinking companion, the friend in time of need. Mackenzie's contacts with some people appear to have been pleasantly ephemeral, with others to have progressed to a certain level of companionableness which was maintained over many years; still others would seem to have failed to survive or to achieve a certain stage of intimacy. So that while many people believe that a fine talent was laid waste with Mackenzie's sudden death in 1955, it is probably also true to say that many of his friends were more than a little relieved that Mackenzie's life would no longer continue to plague him.

The unmistakable autobiographical overtones in Mackenzie's writings have led to much speculation, much of it wasteful and meaningless. Literary critics are puzzled. Those who suspect that they may be *in* one of the novels, for example, hunt furiously for the *alter ego* they would be prepared to recognize as themselves; some are furious at what they find; others puzzled, even hurt, that they have not been included. Some women, who suspect that their charms inspired one or two of the love poems, do their best to suppress the fact. It is neither intended to enter any literary critical feuds on this issue nor to satisfy the semi-voyeuristic vanity of those who suspect that the characters are not as fictitious as Mackenzie would have us believe.

That three of the four published novels[31] have at least a recognizable basis in fact, is undeniable. The boys' school in *The Young Desire It* is almost certainly Guildford Grammar School; much of the staple story accurately recreates incidents which occurred during Mackenzie's period at Guildford Grammar.[32] *Chosen People* has its basis in fact[33] and, despite the assertion of many critics to the contrary,[34] is probably more closely aligned to its factual

basis than either *The Young Desire it* or *Dead Men Rising* where the locale is generalized, the incident externally verifiable, and the characters diverse. *Dead Men Rising*,[35] judging from published statements in recent months concerning the Cowra outbreak and the verbal concensus of soldiers who were present at the time of the outbreak, is an extremely faithful account of what actually occurred at Cowra in August, 1944.

Yet all this, however interesting, does not provide any justification for attempts to identify, for example, the character that is Mackenzie in *The Young Desire It*. Certainly much of the sensitivity and sensibility of Charles Fox, the chief character in *The Young Desire It*, is Mackenzie's own; possibly also many of the incidents portrayed in the novel affected him deeply. But an identification of Mackenzie as Charles Fox in *The Young Desire It*, as Richard Mawley in *Chosen People*, as Corporal John Sargent in *Dead Men Rising*, and as Lloyd Fitzherbert—crime reporter—in *The Refuge*, obscures the effect of the novels while at the same time affording no particular insight or illumination concerning Mackenzie's life.

In a recent issue of *Southerly*[36] Donovan Clarke proferred this account of *The Young Desire It*: "Seaforth Mackenzie's first novel, *The Young Desire It* (1937), is the story of two characters, the adolescent Charles Fox and the homosexual Englishman Penworth. The novel is largely autobiographical as Mackenzie hints in his dedicatory note. He has divided his own experience between Richard Mawley, a minor character, and Charles Fox. Penworth is drawn from life."[37] Clarke cites no evidence to support his suppositions. In point of fact, Penworth is not drawn from life.[38] The suggestion that Mackenzie systematically, almost schizophrenically, divided his experience between the two characters, Fox and Mawley, neither has any basis in fact nor any point in illumination. By contrast, Catherine Hills wrote to Douglas Stewart of her brother's life at Guildford Grammar School as "that period of his life he has portrayed in *The Young Desire It*. I could not tell you anything of it except that it undoubtedly developed in him a contempt of the human race in general, and boys in particular."[39] The honesty and straightforwardness of this admission, far nearer the truth than Donovan Clarke's pat account, is admirable.

This kind of approach would seem to be the most meaningful and relevant way to come to grips with the undoubted autobiographical element in Mackenzie's writing; the fact that it exists is only valuable if it is considered in the context of Mackenzie's life and experience as a whole, instead of as an extra, even somewhat dubious, dimension to his writing.

Notes and References

1. Catherine Hills (Mackenzie's sister) in a letter to Douglas Stewart, 1st July, 1962.
2. Cath Bowie (Hugh Mackenzie's niece) in a tape-recorded interview—August, 1966.
3. Catherine Hills in a tape-recorded interview, April 1966.
4. Kate Mackenzie (Mackenzie's wife) in a tape-recorded interview, January, 1966.
5. This was discussed with Peter Paterson (Mackenzie's cousin and one of his contemporaries at Guildford Grammar School) in an interview in October, 1965.
6. Peter Paterson and John Hamilton (Mackenzie's cousins and contemporaries at Guildford Grammar School).

7. D. A. Lawe Davies (Headmaster—Guildford Grammar School) in a letter to the writer in May, 1965.
8. John Hamilton in a tape-recorded interview—April, 1966.
9. Hon. Gordon Freeth M.P., in a letter to the writer—5th July, 1965. The same observation was made by Eric Watkinson and Dr. Douglas Macpherson, both of whom were contemporaries of Mackenzie at Guildford Grammar School.
10. H. E. Gladstones, ("As English was my subject with him, I found him an intelligent pupil with a considerable flair for fluent expression. He was interested in the subject, and so his attitude to the work was good.") in a letter to the writer—13th April, 1965.
11. Peter Paterson in a tape-recorded interview—April, 1966.
12. Dr. Donald Copping and A. B. Walton in a tape-recorded interview, April, 1966.
13. Part of the biographical letter Catherine Hills wrote to Douglas Stewart, 1st July, 1962, is printed as the Foreword to the reprint of *The Young Desire it*, Sirius Books, 1963. (Angus and Robertson).
14. Peter Paterson and others.
15. Eric Watkinson in a tape-recorded interview, May, 1966.
16. Eric Watkinson (in a tape-recorded interview, May, 1966) and Douglas Macpherson. Both tended to see Mackenzie's ability to write poetry as a skill of a particular kind; other boys had other skills. They did not value the one above the other. Nor, on the other hand, did they undervalue it.
17. Letter from the Principal of Muresk Agricultural College—Mr. W. Southern—1965. Mr. Southern has since retired. The present principal is Mr. D. K. Bartels.
18. Registrar, University of Western Australia, April, 1965. There is a story in circulation that Mackenzie submitted a verse satire on the English Department in the University in lieu of an examination paper in English. Since the University has no record of Mackenzie having entered for his examinations this seems unlikely unless, of course, the story refers to some departmental or mid-year examination not sufficiently important for the results to be filed in the annals of the Registrar.
19. Letters to Kate Bartlett (née Loveday) whom he later married. (Mitchell Library, New South Wales).
20. Cath Bowie in conversation, August, 1966. Kate Mackenzie in conversation.
21. Katrine Proud in a tape-recorded interview, August, 1966.
22. Norman Lindsay in a tape-recorded interview, December, 1965.
23. Kate Mackenzie in a tape-recorded interview, December, 1965.
24. Letter from Mackenzie to Tom Lowe (11/3/45) by courtesy of Tom Lowe—November, 1965.
25. Letter from Mackenzie to Tom Lowe (19/3/45) by courtesy of Tom Lowe—November, 1965.
26. Comment made by Tom Lowe in a tape-recorded interview, November, 1965.
27. Letter from Mackenzie to Tom Lowe (27/7/45) by courtesy of Tom Lowe—November, 1965.
28. Letter from Mackenzie to Tom Lowe (27/3/45) by courtesy of Tom Lowe—November, 1965.
29. Kurrajong is forty-five miles from Sydney in the foothills of the Blue Mountains.
30. e.g., Norman Lindsay.
31. The Young Desire It—Cape, 1937; Chosen People—Cape, 1938; Dead Men Rising—Cape, 1951; The Refuge—Cape, 1954. (Four published novels—two fragments of novels, one in the Fisher Library and one in the Mitchell Library).
32. Gordon Freeth, Eric Watkinson, Peter Paterson, Douglas Macpherson etc.
33. Doris Masel, Albert Kornweibel.
34. Reviews, Marjorie Barnard.
35. The Japanese prisoners got no mail because in Japan, they were officially "dead"—hence the title *'Dead Men' Rising*.
36. *Southerly*, June, 1965.
37. Ibid. p.77.
38. Eric Watkinson in a tape-recorded interview, May, 1966.
39. Catherine Hills in a letter to Douglas Stewart—1/7/62.

KENNETH MACKENZIE'S HOSPITAL POEMS

Evan Jones

KENNETH MACKENZIE was hospitalised twice, once in 1945, in an Army hospital, for a stomach ulcer, and some time between October 1952 and March 1963 for a 'broken shoulder' and perhaps some sort of alcoholic 'cure'. These were the occasions of the following two sequences of poems, one a loose group whose character as a sequence is only marked by the naming of the first and last poems, 'Sick Men Waking' and 'Sick Men Sleeping', actually written in hospital; the other more explicitly conceived and written as a sequence some months after Mackenzie was discharged (the initial mss. are dated: the first poem, 'New Arrival', being from July 7, the last, 'The Hospital', ii, from August 21).

These poems are of extraordinary interest: the best of them, poems like 'Sick Men Waking', 'I ought to write to Bill today and tell him', 'O river, river running so sweetly through fields of clover' and 'Sick Men Sleeping' from the earlier group, and 'New Arrival', 'An Old Inmate', 'A Frosty Morning' and 'Night Duty' from the later, are among Mackenzie's best poems—high praise indeed—and although the accompanying poems are at best uneven they provide a fascinating context: for anybody seriously interested in Mackenzie's poetry, as anybody interested in Australian poetry must be, they are indispensable reading.

Publication of these poems also throws a rather sharp light on the inadequacies of Angus and Robertson's *Selected Poems*, the only form in which Mackenzie's work is publicly available. Their editor, Douglas Stewart, knew of only three of the later group of poems, and of these unaccountably omitted 'Night Duty', a poem which he had himself published in *The Bulletin;* and his choice from the earlier group is less than happy. Neither is the editorial handling of the text reassuring. With the earlier poems Stewart worked from copies of the mss. made by the National Library, and made no attempt to compare these with the originals. In 'O river, river . . .' he saw three doubtful readings, two of which were the copyist's conjectures placed in brackets and the third a blank at the beginning of a line. He accepted both conjectures, and filled in the blank to his own taste; he was unaware that there were two

blanks at the *end* of lines. In all, the reader who cares to compare the texts will find that I have made nine corrections of more or less importance to the text that Stewart offers of this single poem.

It was not normal for Stewart to have to work from a copyist's text in this way, but the criticism is worth making because there is evidence that elsewhere the texts have received less than reasonable care. So, Stewart begins a poem with the line 'We went walking, she and I', though the original line is 'We went a-walking, she and I': asked about this, he said that he supposed he had changed the line on his own judgment, though he did not remember doing so and obviously did not regard it as normal procedure. Again, a simple check of first lines reveals that 'The Old Field' in *Selected Poems* prints 'friend' instead of 'field'; this is a proof-reader's error.

I do not wish to criticise Stewart, whose attitude to the poetry has been unfailingly generous, and who has been personally unreservedly helpful. But it is necessary to insist on the inadequacy of the *Selected Poems*, for Angus and Robertson have not only refused permission for publication of a more careful edition elsewhere, but have refused the unpaid and anonymous editorial assistance of the present writer in re-issuing their own text.

Not, indeed, that I can claim to be a textual scholar; in preparing these poems for publication I have simply exercised what care I could to see that the reader has access to the work in the state that Mackenzie left it. The 1963 sequence is in the Fisher Library at the University of Sydney in both manuscript and a typescript incorporating revisions: I give the text of the typescript complete with eccentric punctuation and misspellings except that I have corrected two simple typing errors ('th the' for 'in the' and 'No so' for Not so') from the manuscript; it may be noticed that Mackenzie wisely substituted 'Joe Green' for 'Jack Green' when he published 'An Old Inmate', and also changed the punctuation, but for the sake of consistency I have made no attempt to incorporate these changes.

The earlier poems Mackenzie left only in manuscript. (These too are in the Fisher collection.) Here the text is more problematical, for Mackenzie wrote the poems in a compulsively miniscule hand that crowds four verses to the line of ordinary ruled paper, and although his hand is for the main part remarkably neat and legible the manuscripts do not make easy reading. The anonymous copyist of the National Library, though not free from error (one line is omitted from 'Sick Men Waking', and the copies are lightly sprinkled with lesser errors), made the job a good deal easier, and in the texts presented here there are only three readings with which I remain unsatisfied. 'Easeless' is an unlikely word in line 7 of 'Sick Men Waking'; the last five letters only are legible. The National Library copyist has 'a useless invocation', but the text is clearly '*an* -eless invocation'. Second, 'outward' at the end of line 75 of 'O river, river . . .' is the copyist's conjecture: I cannot offer to improve on it, but take the last two letters to be 'ed'. Finally, 'anxious' in line 10 of 'Grey sky, grey water and a grey ship of war' is my own conjecture for one of the few words that the National Library copyist refused to attempt: but it is not very satisfactory, especially since Mackenzie meticulously dotted his i's and there is no dot above this unhappy squiggle. These then remain as blemishes awaiting someone more skilled than I.

SICK MEN WAKING

Half light, half light . . . the dissolution of dreams
in the huge panes of dawn that soaks up sleep and the sleeper
into a fountain of day
Half light and a crash of running water
signal sleep's over. Turn over, my easy heart,
and listen content to the steps quick with purpose, to the voices
murmuring, an easeless invocation of life
among sick men at sunrise.
All this estate of patterned whiteness and light is mine
to shape for a moment backward into a dream of night
then thrust towards morning:
the steps and the little wheels that run and click
like strips of time laid flat on the shine of the floor
are mine,
clawed under the blanket with me, a rat's nest of fragments,
bits and scraps and chewed corners of thought
woven together by noises—the sigh of grief or pleasure
as men wake; the increasing voices,
always the voices, taking courage from daylight
like children, as wakefulness draws on
self and personality—like a glove—
neat, perhaps worn by the rub of the wheel of years,
or raw and bright and happily insolent with youth.
No rough-and-tumble until on a lingering course
the beloved tea-wagon passes and doles out
hot comfort and a warning of time still passing, time
building a day already out of bricks of minutes
and the thin cement of talk that sets in thought
hardening course by course, a hollowed monument
of waiting and wishing, of day and day
and night infinitely repeated.
Many tomorrows lie in wait like thieves
to rob us of some hours of half living
here in the rooms of day, after the half-light
melts sleep with its cool dispassionate flame
and dreams dissolve in the blue panes of dawn,
the yawning stretch of unattainable heaven,
the stretch and yawn and self-conscious exhalations
of sick men waking.

113 AGH
Mar. 45

Listen, mate, I been in here 8 months,
since last September: once to a con. camp,
but when I come back, I c'lapsed, see. After that
they put me in another ward.
I's there 2 weeks.
Then back in here—a man gets sick of it.
You get so you feel you'll never get out the place.
Yes, its all right: the first 3 months' the worst.
All right when you're a bed patient, they keep you busy
washing y'all the time, and temperature and that,
but once you're up you find it's on the nose.
All I want, I says, is to get out,
back to the Unit with the old mob—
but hell, 8 months . . .
They been up North again since I come in here
and now half them's dead—all the old mates
bar a few, copped it or else got sick like me,
or wounded. I reckon it wouldn't be the same.
I's with one show the whole four years I been in:
first the Desert, then Greece and Crete and Syria
then home. Jees, it was great—then up North.
We were the first up there. We showed the Yanks the way—
f—— the Yanks anyhow.
Thev reckon they're doing a good job, and maybe they are,
but it's not like the old days.
I seen the lot of it. They used us hard
all the time, anywhere there's a job
no one had tried before, like in the jungle
when no one knew a bloody thing about it—
no one but the Japs.
The mob went through it. I musta been the lucky one,
never got even a scratch. You wouldn't read about it.
Then I went down with this 10 months ago.
Wouldn't it uproot you? They flew me back with two others
and the quacks in Brisbane reckoned I hadn't a hope—
they didn't know what it was—don't know now.
Hadn't a chance! F— all they know.
Look, I been here 8 months. I don't feel crook.
Honest, I wouldn't sell my chances mate
for first prize in the Lottery. But jees
all I wanted was get back with my old mob
and Christ knows what's happened to them now.
It's not a bad place, anyhow. They treat you well,
I'll say that. But it's not the same as before
and a bloke feels he's had the lot—I dunno,
perhaps there's something to look forward to.
Mind if I bum a cigarette off you?
I smoke half the night some nights, lying awake
trying to work it out. A bloke gets through some weed.

Thanks, mate . . . When the Canteen chap gets back
I'll give it back to you. I'm set if I got a smoke.
The beer don't worry me anymore. Well—so long.
See you again later. Thanks for the smoke. So long.

113 AGH
Mar. 11-12

I ought to write to Bill today and tell him
he owes me one pound sixteen less twelve bob.
But I just can't . . . not that the news would *kill him.*
He's heard much worse. But I don't need the money
and anyhow, each time I start to write—
even before, each time I start to think—
new daydreams ring the bell and fumble the knob
to be let in, and a world of bees and honey
carried over from yesterday through the night
buzzes awake in answer. Letters and love
are backward things at best, and pause and sink
into a drowsy slumber among the bees
that suck and caress the new dreams coming in
and over all the triumphant voice of a dove
rises and falls neglected. How to take
words out of bubbled air, and let them freeze
into a tangle of ink like skeletons
from which the spirit and the flesh have gone
is my distracted study when I write.
Monday today. I dreamed of you last night
or, to old Bill. *Don't let this trouble you*
knowing it will, a little, a second of shame
making him disinclined, old honest man,
to think of me or to recall my name.
Why should I, so much happier now than he
because I can dream and dream, and days are bright
with bees and bells and honey in my head,
touch him with even a wing tip of concern?
Lying alone in my own territory,
painless upon this high immaculate bed,
I should instead give him the office: *spend it*
drinking my health, because I'm not allowed now
even to think of it . . . Would he, I wonder? Would he
tipping his white head back, nose up, eyes closing,
stop even to remember me and say *Here's luck*?
I rather think not. Men who meet in war
mean little to one another when they part
and this is right. Leave me my bees and bells
to charm the tangle of home, and him his boozing
and we are strangers as we were before,

113 AGH
Mar. 13-14

Belladonna—Beautiful Lady—
how could I drink you three times daily,
green as the light where trees are shady,
bright as the pools where the sea slides palely?

Belladonna—O lovely woman!—
trapped in a crystal shell of glass,
given to many, reserved to no man,
see how I watch you shine and pass—

You who explore with soothing fingers
deeply my inward sack of grief.
soothing the place where pain still lingers—
stealing pain like a kindly thief.

Belladonna—well should I praise you:
cool as a leaf you calm my fever
till with the passing of the days you
cure me—and leave me then for ever.

113 AGH
Mar. 15

Down on the river levels
rooted in reeking mud
like tribes of greenhaired devils
for many an age have stood
the mangroves in their fury
of twisted, tortured wood
symbolic of the glory
of their hatred of god.

Turned on a lathe of passion
by the clawed hands of the sun
to shapes of desolation
when the soft tides are down,
they mock and rage together
silent as if of stone
while seasons, tides and weather
polish their wood like bone.

The stars in shining courses,
the moon secure and far
seem to disdaine the forces
keeping them what they are,
and in unsullied heaven
moored upon banks of air
like gold flowers wind-driven
they light the wry despair

of these inhuman creatures
that blur the river's way
their green contorted features
wrenched by the ceaseless play
of weather, tides and seasons,
their anger shocked in clay
their sap distilled in poisons
and offered to the day.

113 AGH
Mar. 20

O river, river, running so sweetly through fields of clover
among blossoming orchards of orange trees and lime and citron
carry my youth along with yours to the silver pastures
where the flooding estuary runs quietly on to the tide
and ocean accepts and loses your vanished essence.

There in the fish-pale plains of immaculate waters spreading
your currents freed of their banked courses and shawled
silver, lace thin over the shoals and shallows, remember
our sources, yours and mine, in the chalice of distant mountains
where from a monstrous nest of rocks you first came out,
your springs assembled, built and deepened in chains of pools
where strength brews like thunder among the cloudy hills
for the forward onward leap, the first song in the boulders
that shaped your infant purpose, the voice and the babble
of growing water. Lap at the mackerel edge of the bays
and tell me again how, with sun through the green bushes
stippling your glassy torrent, you left the mountains at last
and, after a whole day's hesitation, shy in the foothills
at the confronting spaces of abundant earth,
thrust your vanguard among the scattering trees and took
a hundred acres of virgin plain in a move of your arm,
sucked at its sweetness eternally, and passed onward.
Tell me—I lay my ear to your rapid earlier ripple
where the voice is clear ambition—tell me lest I forget
how with a glance like glass you haled in to you
brooks and freshets, seepage of swamp filtered through sand
springs, pools overflowing in earth soaked with rain
to swell your master current cutting and rubbing its bed
through ten thousand ages deeper and more securely
into the cherishing clay. Tell how you trailed after you
trees from the mountains as though the mountains stretched
arms to withdraw you into their belly anxiously
again, to keep you who had fled, anxiously and in vain:
how the trees cherished you, drew down the winter weather
to fill you fuller with flood, and in summer shade you tenderly
until between green and willowed and ancient banks you came
enlarged and silent towards the straggled village where later
men spanned you with a wooden weir that lifted and loosed you
in silken spilling overflow and an everlasting murmur
of busy triumph, above the highpitched echoing bridge
and the deep pools of your thought, your first conspiracy
beyond. Have I not looked there, seen the boats and the men,
the ropes, the iron claws that tugged from your peaceful depths
a child's heavy body? You were too loving, amorous
of one who came to play, but overstayed, discovered
your virgin secret, and slept, down beyond waking.
Also I have seen you murderous, suffused with flood,
mad with the bigness of winter, tearing your scarlet banks,

the passion of your current terrible to hear—
sulky by day, and loud and tormented at night, roaring
through drowned leaves of trees submerged but still standing
far back from your proper course. At midnight, listening
with ears sharpened by flood, I have discerned also
the fiddling of your stretched and unsatisfied fingers
about my door sill in the dark—about my heart
in speechless premonition of my future end
of which you will be careless, when my own flood
that never knew your long days of peace, subsides
and will not rise again, till my whole course is bare.
The rocks and seams and unplumbed places bared
at last in clean death.

Not so you, sweet river
softened once more at the placid thrilling upsurge of spring
to a bright movement of sunpolished glass gladly reflecting
the washed blue clouds of sentinel trees, the white clouds
of sky absorbed with spring, and the reeds and ferns
and banks of scarlet clay that lean back and cherish
your sudden turns on the folded magic depths at their base.
From the hollows of the hills towards the fields of morning
limitless and everlasting you shape your way, as love
grows in a human heart to shame the flesh it feeds on,
until it makes the estuary of the soul, the ultimate ocean
of immortality. Only love is like you, moving
from its brisk and narrow springs in flesh's mountains
through fields of fruit, and wisdom, widening and deeper
as it goes forward irresistibly and outward
to the simplicity of its estuary and beyond
is taken on an outgoing tide to nothingness
part of the ultimate ocean. Only love and labour
truly pursued have your unfaltering construction
your will, your way, your ever nobler beauty, thoughtless,
incorruptible, secure in the mould of imagination,
the certainty of final dissipation, the joy
of deathless, absolute extinction.

O river, river,
press your lips to the shuddering reeds, drum your banks,
bow the strings of night, brazenly sound the rocks,
pluck music from the sun, and sing me this song.

113 AGH
Mar.

Grey sky, grey water and a grey ship of war
end March in misty silence; and autumn walking
the ways of rain is scarcely here before
it is of winds and winter we are talking.

So long was summer that by now it seems
the mountain voice of soft progressing thunder
is but a sound remembered out of dreams:
it is not strange, but still we wake and wonder

that winter should be here—its lustrous skies
like balm upon the spirit's anxious fever,
the cold and sudden rain that wets our eyes
more sweet than tears of triumphs whatsoever.

April, as lovely as a child's embrace,
draws briefer days about us: summer is over.
We see in winter's pale and peaceful face
the likeness of a dear familiar lover.

113 AGH
Apr.

SICK MEN SLEEPING

Some one calls out, and some one else
answers from seven beds away
as if to say that dream was false
which shook his brain to spill the cry.

The dusky silence lapping sleep
ripples with memory, and rocks
each listener down its swooning slope:
the ropes are snapped, the rings, the racks

are smashed aside, the fire is gone
to ash, the stake is split at last,
but still one hears the banging gun;
one knows his tortured courage best;

one feels the bayonet in his heart;
one treads a trail and cannot rest,
and one whose body was not hurt
knows in his brain the gnawing rust

of death outlived while youth is green—
he speaks for all, but cannot grieve
beyond the speechless sleeping groan
of men alive who feel the grave
press down upon their screaming lips

THE HOSPITAL – RETROSPECTIONS

NEW ARRIVAL

Burgess was drunk when he was admitted
not with alcohol—with pain.
The wailing ambulance that brought him
grumbled and growled away again.

Pain was the brilliant light the smell
of nurse and surgeon the strange faces
swimming in bluish air then gone:
but he had been in stranger places—

but never strangeness and pain together
never the incurious wish to die
that squeezed his mind like the white fingers
probing his pelvis ribs and thigh.

Transported, drunk with so much anguish,
Burgess observed the ceiling part
to show him heaven and hell united
ready to fall upon his heart.

Each of his wounds cried out against it
voiceless and twisted mouths of blood.
Clasped in a cruel consciousness
he closed his lips on the sacred flood

of revelation that welled up in him.
The needle lying within the vein
sobered and then annihilated
Burgess the faces the light the pain.

A NURSE—I

This nurse's averted face for once forgets to seem
weary of being a nurse's face as she withdraws
with casual skill and a firm and secret gentleness
the sutures five days old
from a wound the surgeon made
with godly precision and prescience
where a wound already was.

Usually this nurse with the quiet larrikin voice and eyes
that have certainly looked down her own amorous embraces
and then sought the ceiling as if hoping to find there
a textbook answer to the *why*

that aches in the pulse of ecstasy
and then have closed—usually
she has the air of a bored suspicious girl in a forest where
every trunk is a man's and the foot falls
on traps that may not be sprung.
Usually
she seems afraid of seeming. Usually mostly
her walk is slack her shoulders droop like her eyelids droop
over the full moist wise doubtful eyes
her scornful tongue belies.
Her thick legs and loving arms collect
the ward's regard. For one miraculous moment sometimes
the saddest loneliest pain is forgotten when she walks by
saying as if to herself *Jeez I'm tired.*
I could do a bottle of iced beer right now
and some of the sleep you bastards seem to have a monopoly of.

Outside the sunrise frost is white like her cap
and you know as one by one the stitches are taken away
that such hands such calm eyes and studious even breath
without haste or hesitation make true what is said of her:
"She knows how to handle children and old men."

Only her incalculable self the mortal concealed woman
Might ever defeat this nurse. Her eyes confess it
when no one (she says) is looking.

AN OLD INMATE

Jack Green Jack Green o how are you doing today?
I'm well, he said, and the bones of his head looked noble.
That night they wheeled Jack Green on a whisper away
    but his voice rang on in the ward: I'm a terrible trouble
to all you girls. I make you work for your pay.
    If I 'ad my way I'd see that they paid you double.

Jack Green Jack Green for eightytwo years and more
    you walked the earth of your granddad's farm downriver
where oranges bigger than suns grow back from the shore
    in the dark strange groves. Your love for life was a fever
that polished your eye and glowed in your cheek the more
    the more you aged and pulsed in your voice for ever.

Jack Green looked down on his worked-out hands with scorn
    and tears of age and sickness and pride and wonder
lay on his yellow cheek where the grooves were worn
    shallow and straight: but the scorn of his look was tender
like a lover's who hears reproaches meet to be borne
    and his voice no more then echoed its outdoor thunder:

Gi'me the good old days and the oldtime folk.
    You don't find that sort now you clever young fellers.
Wireless motorbikes all this American talk
    and the pitchers and atom bombs. O' course it follers
soon you'll forget 'ow to read or think or walk—
    and there won't be one o' you sleeps at night on your pillers!

Jack Green Jack Green let us hear what your granddad said
    when you were a lad and the oranges not yet planted
on the deep soil where the dark wild children played
    the land that Governor King himself had granted
fifteen decades ago that the Green men made
    a milesquare Eden where nothing that lived there wanted?

Jack Green lay back and smiled at the western sun:
    "Fear God and the women, boy," was his only lesson,
"and love 'em—but on the 'ole just leave 'em alone
    the women specially." Maybe I didn't listen
all of the time. A man ain't made of stone . . .
    But I done my share of praying and fearing and kissing.

No. I 'ad no dad nor mum of me own—
    not to remember—but still I'd a good upbringing.
The grand'ma raised thirty-two of us all alone
    child and grandchild . . .
                Somewhere a bell goes ringing.
Steps and the shielded lanterns come and are gone.
    The old voice rocks with laughter and tears and singing.
Gi'me the good old days . . .
                Jack Green Jack Green
how are you doing tonight? Is it cold work dying?
Not 'alf so cold as some of the frosts I've seen
    out Sackville way.
                The voice holds fast defying
sleep and silence, the whisper and the trifold screen
    and the futile difficult sounds of his old girl's crying.

A NURSE—II

Tirelessly ceaselessly she talks of herself.
    Everyone listens. None wants to understand
the glassbright waste of words. Everyone knows
    a nurse has no self above her either hand.

Exfoliate mind of a mercilessly cheerful virgin
    flaps like another's washing in the breeze of words
inhabited only by her own voice sounding
    unbodied through the embodied pain of the wards.

Pain must not last: but the voice goes trippingly on.
My boyfriend says . . . Mummy . . . Don—that's my brother . . .
The viewers of the slowmotion picture of their own
unease are nudged by the tones nothing can smother—

the voice as it were in the row behind: the triumphant
patter of one who has seen it all before
chumbling the lollies of fact that moisten utterance:
Dad says he isn't a pig—he's just a bore.

A boar's a pig see? D'you get it?
God.
Strength is needed for the effort truly to believe
she too was is always will be
someone's joy; a cause to delight or grieve

according to her fortune.
Or is she fate?
Does Nemesis chatter so happily on like this
tirelessly ceaselessly repetitive—
the chaste lips capable only of a bloodless kiss,

the cool hands strong but insensitive the eyes
seeing outward only the breezy voice crying
a mockery of pain and death? No—let's be kind:
she is a nurse. What has she to do with dying?

THE HOSPITAL—I

No cries of sorrow escape these unadorned
glowing reflecting walls of brick and glass
nor does bright blood
seep through the holding mortar to be turned
black by the curious moonlight which on the grass
arrests its flood
and rises quickly to the eaves above
steeping the roof in light, plane against plane,
a benison like love
shawled round this house of purity and pain.

This is the hospital. Here the disordered senses
are mended or laid casually to rest
once and for all:
a matriarchate no place for moonlit fancies
or personal passions in the too-human breast
within whose wall
the cold stethoscope discerns only
heart's mortal beat, breath's rushing out and in,

not the long lonely
wish of the blood, memory of what has been,

hope for what may be; memory of bad and good
and hope for better—all this the metal ear
purposely misses
lest in its counting of the march of the blood
and breath's depth suddenly it should hear
cursing, or kisses.
Not for such misty time-marks to be charted
but from the life of which they were some part
they to be parted—
from brain and limbs and viscera and lungs and heart.

This is where women rule, not being more able
or gentler than men but less skilled or inclined
to anxious thought—
for less imagination makes more stable
the body's rig of nerves, the obedient mind
so finely taught
how flesh is lashed to flesh, bone locked with bone,
all sewn with blood that feeds on food and air . . .
No overtone
of spirit-cry confounds this formal care.

This is the house that does not house a soul,
where soul's existence cannot be confessed
until at last
a body lies here, hushed and seeming whole
but without pulse or breath in the rigid breast,
with eyes shut fast
and lips unasking any service again.
Then *Dead* they say
as if this clay, the register of pain,
had with the spirit already gone away.

Yet it was man's compassionate thought for man
which built these walls devised the instruments
bespoke the skill
and dreamed of some unformulable plan
to ease all mind's and body's discontents
and trim the will,
the ineluctable and wayward flamen
about whose tending and dispassionate care
go the veiled women—
the maculate virgins with the vestal air.

Too young they know too much. They hear and see
suffering's grotesque expression and their faces

assume the mask
of matriarchal woman precociously
that hides all instincts, sets before all graces
the woman's task
of binding in the subtle webs of flesh
the spirit however urgent to be gone
out of this mesh
they ply their strength of hand and mind upon.

This is the hospital, the matriarchate
moonlit without and lantern-lit inside
when midnight stands
astride its ridge gigantic and sedate
bending to listen if some voice has cried
Enough! with hands
stretched to welcome in the name of death
a chance escaping soul . . .
The sweat of fever
the agony of breath
the ruined flesh are comforted here for ever.

VISITING HOURS

Into the polished wooden floor the sunlight plunges
like light that sinks through shady water
half a mile from home.
A cracked bell with a schoolroom clamour coarsely infringes
upon the singing nerves; and after
some shocked silence hearing ranges
eager as a dog among the advancing footsteps
half a mile from home.

Half a mile might be a paper wall or a world.
A voice will pierce it a touch will breach it a kiss cross it.

Sharp on the tessellation of the lobby strangers'
multiple feet step. Now or later?
When come the known one's ones
half a long mile half a long month
half a long lingering heartbeat from half a home?

Half a heartbeat is like a hammer raised to heaven
to strike again, stubborn, and a hand can withhold it
a shout stay it a shadow delay it.

Hats and eyes all colours and shapes and ages
surmount the paper bags. Laughter
purposeless as the advancing sunlight hinges

precariously on words waiting to be spoken
to ward off pouncing boredom half a
miserable obliging mile from wait-till-I-get-back
home.

Home can be heaven half a mile hence home can.
Memory mourns it. This same watery sun
slides through the unwashed sashes
and time and tides run backwards just to touch it
to smell the yellow soap and the afternoon ashes.

To smell the sharp oil of innumerable peeled oranges
the spirituous sugar of ivory banana flesh
and listen listen beyond the rustling patter
of modest talking-conscious talking taking
the edge off sound to hear the final footsteps
until too late for hope: when in a flash
half a mile from home becomes an eternity
of stitched-up sour self-pity
half a bloody and unbowed mile from anywhere
but mostly half a mile from home.

Half a mile can be a thousand steps
a tramride (five minutes) or a tragedy of distance
as afternoon wanes quickly and the travelled sunlight
collects and carries up the limewashed wall
the orange peel the gold teeth the jaundice—
all things as yellow and unreal as it.
Half a man is half a mile from home
and no one comes today. Something stretched it
to impossible length. No known ones of one's own
came shyly to listen for the screeching bell
and glance at watches and drop haitches and pick up stitches
and rattle matches and act like bores and bitches
out of season. No one came so let us
thank god for another day near done
(if god will let us) and praise the setting sun
that rolls like a red stone out of the blue dome
half a mile from home.

A FROSTY MORNING

Burgess upon the balcony
    sees east as west and with surprise
watches, through a skeleton tree
    whose bones are soot-black, sunrise.

The sun's red-velvet disc's beyond
    the frosted fields, the purple line

of mountains distant and profound.
    Heatless, it shows but does not shine.

The tree is like the bones of night
    whose flesh the sun has sucked away
to feed the sources of daylight—
    yet still the frost fends off the day,

and Burgess, on the balcony,
    dead from the neck down, cased in stone,
thinks east is west, and laughs to see
    the sun come up where it goes down.

MATRON

Trailing the incense of many thousand Masses
caught in her grey hair which the kerchief hides
the Matron, the unmated mother of the hospital,
of all here, and many more besides,
salutes each bed.
Morning through the open windows watches her
move in the wards, never forgetting a name,
though names mean nothing to her as she passes
serenely on, almost the grand dame,
her almost-holy head
bent gravely in something not quite surprise
to find each bed is still inhabited
by unredeemed expectant flesh that lies
attentive to the recognition bred
by habit in her eyes.

And how are you today? . . . You're looking better.
The faith-inducing words float smoothly free
from her well-disciplined and chiselled lips
but no one would say what her grave eyes see
beneath the brows beneath the brow beneath
the banded veil,
too stiff to rustle, that implacably
turns when she turns to go, and keeps
its virgin counsel
like the command of god upon her breath
asking again *And how are you today?*
And like smooth beads in her rosary of faith,
again *You're looking better . . . That's good. Good . . .*
the mindless words come soft and worn and wise
almost with faint surprise:
but coming from her lips not from her eyes.

For she has seen always
through the pervasive anaesthetic haze
the casting of accounts the even and the odd
additions summed up between man and man
and sometimes man and god.
librae sestertii denarii
play with her dreams a ghastly hide-and-seek:
must into can't goes can—
or please explain it to the secretary,
the man of secrets, at the end of the week
before he meets the board.
So in a rage
of wordless godless desperate jealousy
against the world, the healthy and the sick,
she'll take a broom and sweep a length of passage
with downward lids and menial energy
as though to clear some passage in her mind
towards what she cannot find—
the door marked *End Of Conflict: Ladies' Rest Room.*
No matriarchate had such to take her in
and shut outside her womanly sense of sin
and free her from the soul-devouring womb
ambition's generator, fear's old incubator,
passion's and pain's and penitence's begetter.
Her eyes above her lips above her breast
above sedately folded fingers know all this
but admit nothing, nothing, all is peace,
all is better, better, better and better . . .

She is the Matron. This is her hospital
a projection of herself body and soul
where bodies are made whole
as in the woman bodies are made, whole.

NIGHT DUTY

Old Young who sleeps by day by night
talks madly in his rested brain
where in his bed he sits upright
drugged against movement, against pain;
shouts whispers moans and shouts again.

The nurse holding the lantern low
hears every cry or sigh but his
as she goes lightly to and fro.
His unrelenting memories
are of what was: he knows no is

and she with difficult restraint
goes past and on and bends to hear
some too-familiar poor complaint
from sleepless lips that cannot bear
the tides of darkness, and the fear.

She is the conscience of the place
when lights are out or screened away.
Her shadowy averted face
is like an empty mask of clay
cast in the mould of yesterday

unrecognisable now; her hands
emerged from chaos reassure
the night's distortion; while she stands
momently near, the shapeless hour
takes shape, is momently secure.

Old Young, the nurse, the night, the flame
within the shielded globe of glass
pause like the players in a game
held by some delicate impasse;
and while they pause the seconds mass

to break the half-cast spell, to swirl
the hour apart once more in night.
The nurse becomes a simple girl
who with a desolate air of flight
goes swiftly treading out in light.

SURGERY

The flesh cut free from consciousness can tolerate
the intolerable. What does the smothered brain know
of body's pride laid bare, laid low
under the gloved inquisitive feeling fingers
of god the surgeon masked capped gowned all in white
under the blue and powdery tubes of light?

His eyes show
wider than life following the scalpel's whispered shriek—
the first severance and accurate incision
through which wells briefly the dark blood and the bright
like the same sleeping cry repeated wide awake
through lips of light.
And should those scrutinising eyes shed tears—say of compassion—
to fall now softly down it might be they might
heal the division?

Not so.
There is no mercy here in this most merciful chamber
where the extended supine body on a field of snow
is picked by steel and eagle fingers descending
far from the dark edges of the mind's removed slumber
and the stained glistening ivory bone is shown
briefly like an old god and sealed away (to remember
light) not by tears but by the careful quick mending
of split flesh when tissue and tissue are sewn
together at last by the bright needle and sown
with a seed of futurity in the closed furrow
that the eased body may move and again be limber
for many tomorrows . . .

The mind cut free from flesh can simulate
death and permit this skilled disintegration
in thick thorough sleep while the proud body
lies all subdued and bloody
under the watching eyes and the blue light
incised cleansed healed and wrapped and rapt
in limitless tolerance of the intolerable
suck and stretch and thunder of stormy pain
kept from the timid brain
even when it wakes again.

EDDY

On Eddy, who will not get well
and says he feels as crook as hell,
the hospital has cast a spell.

Neglected by a hurrying nurse
he barely has the strength to curse
and cursing only makes him worse.

Worthless and breathless there he lies
with sucked-in lips and bulging eyes
invoking harsh calamities

on staff and patients and the quack
who in a week has not been back
to hear about his last attack

and give him something for his cough . . .
Eddy who used to be so tough
has had enough, has had enough.

He falls into a savage sleep
with lip outthrust and chin sunk deep
into the strenuous and steep

rise of his chest; and still around
his grizzled head the curses sound
ferocious, meaningless, profound

like angry flies against a screen
mysteriously placed between
reality and might-have-been.

Discarded at an early date
by life, he follows on his fate
which is to curse, complain and wait

for nothing, taking what he can
with naught to lose and naught to gain
and giving naught to any man

until, as at a secret call,
he enters in the hospital
unsure if he has lived at all.

THE HOSPITAL—II

Here in the icy sunlight of an inclement June
stands the monument to man's deathfulness
and destiny to house reason in a mess of tissue—
bone sinew ligament tendon nerves blood
and cuticle: the desperately selfrenewing body
whose fight's lost from the first extra-uterine breath
and lost twice over in its vain suckling at
the dripping breasts whose compassionate poison is
mortality.

Sound the bell and test the blade.
Both so shrilly clamour for
admission to this sacred glade
where upon the shining floor
wheels run whispering: Afraid!

Here it stands the hospital whose hospitality
cannot be exhausted as body's battle can be:
its parts renew themselves apart indifferently
in the name of compassion but without compassion,
sure of their diet, with a soulless static gesture
of eternal benevolence like death's own.
Sunlight and the bitter west winds of June sharply
skid like braked wheels of some incomprehensible

machine off its straight walls and planes of glass
that cage in courage, fear, the anaesthetic snores
and the large whisperings of incipient dementia
along with death's immutable trick-smile and the smile
of health returning—for a little while, remember—
to spoiled and misused flesh and broken skeletons.
Ah what mercy is here, what skill is here displayed
in rehabilitating and saving (for a while only)
the doomed and damned and ironically-named genus
mankind.

Clash! the bedpan cymbals sound
the off-key music of the spheres
to mark a chord and end a round
with urine excrement and tears
piped to oblivion underground.

Here in exchange for suffering pain a man could find
clues to his own soul perhaps if there were only
more silence; but there is no silence no true peace
of ear and eye but always a stirring and a whispering
and the irregular outcry of men and metal almost
as though behind the white screen, the door ajar,
the half-secret sheet a war were always waging
between the animate and the inanimate, the combatants
muffled and uncertain in the airy light; or wary
in the never-perfect dark. Only the young sleep well here,
their battles mostly ahead; no pride withholds them
from shrieking aloud their pain and so voiding it from
nerves still elastic with the warm resilience of growth.
The old lie still and silent, feet repulsing feet
in rigid mutual contempt across the walking aisles,
or with stifled anger and envy and twisted triumph
recite disasters from family histories;
shouting blindly at the ceiling and not listening
even to their own words; until (stunned by the effort
and rattle of empty pretence) they become again
silent, still, denying, sunk in a contemptuous inertia,
sheets drawn up to white-haired ears and wintry eyelids
closed like dead leaves.

To the bell and cymbals move
the nymphs of studied charity
up and down the sacred grove
singing: Fleshly sanity
is all the object of our love.

Burgess in stony plaster from neck to knee, malodorous
somewhat on close inspection; Jack Green defiant; Eddy
pitying Eddy—these will do for three corners
of any given world. In the fourth corner stands
destiny capped, masked, gowned in white, the wide eyes
watching a swinging needle finger a febrile scale

upon a secret gauge outside all common sight.
At his right hand a woman, at his left a maiden—
the inverted trinity looks down upon the supine
sleeping form which, like an open accidentally fallen
amphora, contains still a little sweet oil and wine
of life, and needs but to be sealed up, cleansed
and laid away, to be called whole again
and call the whole a gain
and holy.

Wounds with scarlet lips that sing
songs of life the shepherd makes
with his wand about which cling
attributes disguised as snakes
silent wise all-hallowing.

The god descended shows his ancient heritage
of healing skill. Pity ah pity the mended man
who ever again walks proudly saying: I am I,
not knowing how much of himself remains the god's,
how much for all time remains the hospital's
which does not claim, but owns. There is no escape
for those who enter here. What goes forth afterwards
is only a testimony. *Enter and remain*:
that is the law here. Admission is an admission
of ultimate dissolution, and the soul may well
weep softly as it sees become a sudden burden
what it had held formerly to be a grace
and earthly mirror of its own beatitude—
this sickened or broken body, this little toy of death
not yet outgrown, but by a thrust or drop spoiled
more and more, and never again immaculately
admirable.

Heal the lips and seal the task
and shake back into life again,
hide the wound and drop the mask,
count the pulse and wake the brain
but of the future do not ask.

Into the mend join patch graft correction goes
a little of the hospital, enough to assure it
of ownership, enough to walk in the step going
out into absolute day again, and under the tall sky
to sound echoing in the little voice of the healed one
who looks on a world he finds as he thinks changed;
enough to tincture like pain taints sleep his waking mind,
to make gratitude a new perilous and most personal thing
relishing life like some sharp sauce a familiar viand;
enough to make the eyes turn aside again and again
to *when I was in hospital* and the hearing hear
Burgess derisively rattle his knuckles in the dark
upon his stonewalled torso, and sigh, and sigh

Why didn't I do the job properly why in the name of god
didn't I? and recall what someone said: Burgess
tried to finish himself when his wife was burned to death.
She had escaped the immutable lien of the hospital.
Not so he. Not so old Young talking in lucid madness
all night long. Not so the Matron walking from bed to bed
in hazed *Hail Mary* penance for some unremembered sin
against some non-existent tenet forged in her lonely sleep.
Not so the young girls coming and the old girls going and coming
with a clash of pans basins bottles plates thoughts regrets
and backrests clanging and aching backs and leaden feet
lifted from the mocking floor in pretended
habitual lying briskness. *One more hour to go*
and *To think I could love bed so much when I see nothing*
but beds all day and half the night dumbly admitting
the matriarchal claim of the hospital on body and mind.

Call the doctor call the nurse
call the undertaker call
the sexton call upon your purse
to buy a stone to tell it all:
"Now dead. It well could have been worse."

Only the wife of Burgess escaped it by a whisker or a whisper
by burning wholly away as some do becoming the merest sieve
of charred unhampered bone through which the spirit
slipped and was gone.

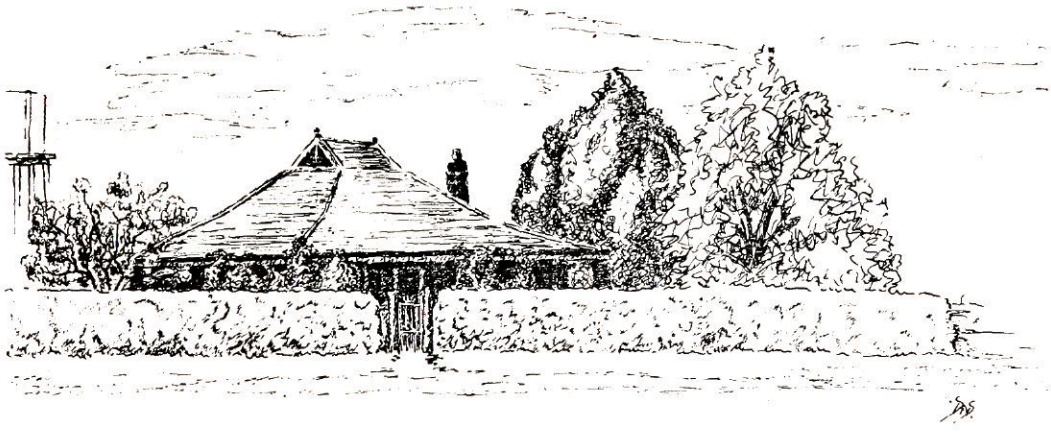
The rest belong. The rest belong.

PROSE AND SHORT STORIES

The prose pieces and short stories are presented not because it is contended they may enhance Mackenzie's reputation, but because to any student of Mackenzie's work they offer much of interest. Mackenzie confessed he found the short story form difficult, and wished, for financial reasons, he could more easily write short stories. The two stories included here—*The Model* and *Maiden's Hill*—show some of Mackenzie's difficulties quite clearly. His love of description of place and personality—description which often took the place of analysis—belongs to the novel, and his inability to mould his material to succinct form, to the significant compression and emphasis of the short story, is revealed plainly.

No attempt has been made to edit or 'improve' the mss. Comparison with the prose of his novels suggests Mackenzie would have revised much of the work. *Maiden's Hill*, in slightly different form, was published in *The Bulletin* in November 1955. *The Model* was written about 1951 from Kurrajong, as apparently was *The Old Adam. I Have Three People* is dated October 1941.

Mackenzie home—Pinjarra—
Desmond Sands.



I HAVE THREE PEOPLE

HERE, IN THE SUNLIGHT of mid-summer, almost in the palm of my hand, I have three people. Two girls and a boy—sisters and brother; that's why they're allowed to bathe naked together. If it had been two boys and a girl it would have been different, but two girls and a boy is all right, however closely they're related.

I have them; looking down on them bathing in the slow deep river I almost believe they were made out of me. Pull an un-practiced, unwanted muscle, still green, from this part of my body, and from here a root-work of veins and arteries like an uprooted weed; and again, from here, and here, slivers and long flakes of thin new-grown fat, and strong bones from where you will. I have far more of all of these than I need; wrap them in skin, nature will get to work, and so—I have three people!

At least three. That illusionary fourth, the diving white reflection, just possibly might be myself; but since there is the feeling that while observing and admiring them I contain them as well, maybe this fourth really is only a take-it-in-turn reflection of myself, which is all they have in common.

They have a flat bank forever green, because of the rich river soil under the trodden grass. Two piles pounded into the mud of the shallower water, long ago, support their crazy swimming platform four feet above what no sane person would call a flood—because it's so lazy in going past—but what is a flood in fact, and has been for a million years or so. Against this eternity of water not obviously flowing, against the comparative endurance of the two driven piles which twenty years of flood and drought haven't changed, set the white bodies of my three people. It makes a fine comparison—the earthly doomed against the immutable persistence of Earth!

Of course, the eldest is a girl, and the youngest is a girl. That's why the boy is allowed to go in with them, all three naked from mid-morning until about noon, when the old plough-share up at the house is belaboured at dinner time. Between the girl of twelve and her of nine is the naked boy. He, no other, is innocent. He alone doesn't know that he uses legs and arms to swim with. Though his sisters, one older and one younger, look at him with sightless eyes and laugh, conscious of their skin-joy in hot sun and tepid water, he seldom looks at them. They merely drink his clear and meaningless smile from the side, supping it unawares from the pointed corners of his mouth.

The older sister—I know this because, as I look at them, I can feel all their troubles and fingernail starts as though they were three mice in this hand—she, alone of the three of them, sometimes takes care against the

sun, sometimes shudders at the slow glass and under-movement of the deep river. The bones I provided for her arched chest have disappeared; the delicate sheets and flakes of tissue I willingly gave have multiplied under the anonymity of skin. On her well-devised thorax the muscles develop, even while I watch: the flat back moves like stirred cream, the arched chest divides smoothly to either side, slightly and unwittingly swollen. You many see this when she dives into the water, straight from crown to heels, as she feels she must. She dives towards a converging reflection of herself, one flashing child face—upwards in the sky of the green water, the other sloping fast out of air.

They don't trouble the heat; it's too intense to be worried by such little fish, just as the ocean is. The younger sister, in particular, whose body is as completely "sexless" as only a girl child's can be, would remind you of a yellowish fish, for her hair is cut short like a boy's and her lips and eyes stick out as she dives, because she is so intent and full of will. Her sister is, of course, beginning to soften. When I got married I softened, myself, for a while; she'll harden up again after a few years, and be as hard as the boy, after this temporary marriage with the unknown.

He hasn't a blemish, that lad! Sitting here, one mile above them, between them and the furious sun but casting no shadow, I can look at my own blemishes, compare them with that boy's perfection and almost forget my own dullness in his brightness. The last things into the hole bored in water are his stiff pink soles with the toes tensely curled in; you might say he was being unborn, each time he dives—in fact, the act has just that concentration of spirit which goes with birth or its reverse. No! I don't mean he dies, I mean he dives.

After him, tensed just the same, eased from the same generous womb, goes the younger girl, immersing nine years of clean and energetic joy again and again. These three bodies, I rejoice to say, do not know or acknowledge one another. I may be wrong in thinking I have all three of them. Perhaps the elder sister has already severed cell from cell, tissue from tissue, thought from thought, memory from memory. How should I know? I should have to be told—no, on second thoughts, I should miss cell, tissue, hour, thought and memory as though I had had a right to them and they had been stolen by a smooth-tongued tramp!

Anyhow, two at least I have. The boy there shows all his bones as he walks and dives and climbs out upon the slippery bank time and again. Not only his yellow-pink feet, but his hands drawn by water, are without blemish as yet. Say what you will, he is the only one not conscious of himself. His body doesn't know it exists; he only imagines himself as bathing in this heat, it's his mind, not himself, which drives and curves up under the filmy surface like that. His fleshless body follows like a shadow follows a real movement. He, I think, could be suddenly encased in amber, and lose nothing. Girls are different.

But it's arguable whether I have him. The water has shrivelled and finally chilled him to the fluid marrow in his clear, small bones; his teeth chatter in a continuous smile and water drips from his childish brows like severe sweat, and he certainly wants comforting. But it's the sun, not I, who does the comforting: the scorching sun on his back, the warm wet grass under

him when he lies down with a certain mawkish grace not far from his elder sister, and, like her, pillows his chest on the long flat grass, and his face on his crossed forearms.

The two of them, lying like that, quite unaware of nakedness or each other, are beyond me. I always want to "impute" some intention or other to the people I see; but those two are beyond imputation, without any intention at all.

Only the little girl sees something to do. She climbs out in a muddy, shallow part, and the thin mud sticks to the infant hair of her forearms and lower legs. With a long bit of dead grass—there's plenty of that beyond the stretch of river silt—she delicately tickles first one backside, then the other, and, though she's only nine, manages not to laugh when a hand swings awkwardly back, and slaps what the hand thinks is an ant or a fly.

That little girl, in the world physically yet physically right out of it, already leads a life of her own. I can see that, after all, dig into them, bend them, graft on to them and beget them though I may, I have not three people.

I have none, because the old plough share's just been beaten with a thin iron bar, and they're up and off like three blind mice. All that remains is the wet grass, the slow river, the force of sunlight—nothing, as far as I'm concerned.

THE OLD ADAM

TELEPHONES REVEAL LITTLE but the feelings of the one speaking. Of age and character they do not, as even a rigid photograph may, tell much. The voice I had heard, asking me abruptly to come the following Monday to begin work with the chipping hoe in a young citrus orchard, might have been that of a man of 45. All I could guess at from it, was shyness; and from shyness, or more likely nervousness, one is allowed to suppose the speaker is of a generation among whom, when they were young, the telephone was a strange piece of mechanism; incomprehensible, like lightning, and charged with the same dangerous force.

I was right in supposing this, which I did before the following Monday morning. Stripped to the waist in the cold mountain sunlight of August, half-blinded with sweat (for the chipping hoe is a heavy tool in sandy clay and shale, on a stiff slope), I stood below a banana-passionfruit hedge to shake hands for the first time with the man whom I knew only as a nervous voice, and who stood a couple of feet above me on the other side. The hand was bandaged, but its grip was immense, though what of the skin showed was a little glassy—as it well might be after 60 years of handling the soils of eastern Australia. Above the bandaged hand the eyes that met mine and looked unhurriedly away were like an adolescent boy's, all innocence in the surrounding network of sun-lines. Thin silver hair, of an impatient domestic cut; bright lined cheeks and sensitive lined lips; a body once tall now slightly round-shouldered after brooding for a lifetime above the delicate mystery of growth out of the earth; a generous air of concentration and wonder. This was my Old Adam.

Our meeting that August morning was the beginning of two years of fairly close association—years of frequent irritations for him, perhaps, but for me years of continual fascination in my role of apprentice gardener. I was country-bred, and could grow kitchen vegetables and the common sorts of seasonal flowers as well as either of my former suburban neighbours; but now I was back (at 35) in the country, and as well as to learn much I had to re-learn much. For this I had two excellent old mentors; my chief, and the English countryman to whom I was truly humble assistant. With few words—for good gardeners are slow and taciturn men as a rule—those two experts taught me a little of the great amount they knew. I also learned more than a little of each of them from observing the fierce old-man passion with which they silently and continually disagreed with each other, each eventually going his own stubborn way in what I think of, in permissible paradox, as a contrapuntal harmony, very good for "our" garden.

My chief was—alas! I must say "was" now—a professional gardener of considerable reputation in Sydney in his day. When I began work under him, he had been retired from the Dept. of Agriculture for some years; he was 74, living with his kindly, brisk-tongued and energetic old wife in their cottage on a mountainside from which, above the four acres of orange-orchard which they worked without help the year round, he could see the sun rise out of the Pacific every morning among clouds which often made him think of a fleet of grey battleships.

His father, he told me later with a sharp glance of his blue youth's-eyes under the sun-shading eyebrows, had been "a Kew Gardens man", who had later been gardener to the Duke of Norfolk; when himself had been born in Ireland. He was only four when he came to Australia, of which his father's brother had written with enthusiasm. That was near three quarters of a century ago, in 1879—a long time, and in those days a long journey on an element alien to one whose heritage and destiny were of the solid earth; so long ago that he always, and justly enough, spoke of himself as an Australian, although I could never think of him as typical of the old men of my own native soil. Perhaps it was his perfect memory for the Latin of the garden, in which I never knew him to hesitate; or it might have been merely his boyish eyes, or the fact that I never heard him speak unkindly of any man.

Gardening, the living soil, was his heritage and destiny. You had only to watch him at work, accurate, dextrous, tender, strong and utterly tireless between dawn and dark, to understand that. In spite of a spare frailness underlined by age, he never to my observation showed himself weary of the hard work that is real gardening. It may have been because he never hurried, in body or mind—often to my own secret and sometimes open impatience. He would not hurry; and when you most watched him for a decision or advice, he was always, always somewhere else, usually a long way off. It inevitably had, as perhaps he intended it should have, on me the effect of making me give up hurrying, too. This was not difficult. Time does not exist in a garden, except as seasons and years. Day and night make no divisions save of vision.

He was indeed the Old Adam, and for the years of my apprenticeship I studied him as a man, and studied under him as a gardener of modest genius. Though you would never have guessed it (from his favourite maddening "between you and I" apology when about to express some uninspired opinion on men and affairs), he had been the friend and confidant of a succession of Governors-General of the Commonwealth. He was no more than decently literate, but his un-Irish modesty was a compelling power, for it was unconscious and sincere. Under his hand and eye for more than 30 years, Admiralty House gardens high above the bright waters of Sydney harbour became the beauty they were and now no longer are.

What he did when he returned to his long-prepared retreat on the mountain slopes showed how the Old Adam does not die in a man. Not content with the labour demanded of him by his own small orchard the year through, he undertook to make a "show" garden round the big new white house built for her country home by a Sydney business-woman whose name is far better known than his will ever be. Miss Teresa Cahill became his neighbour, his

friend, his benefactress in a subtle way of the spirit, and in her turn his—so to speak—horticultural dependant.

Over a period of ten years, aided chiefly by that other expert English-born gardener I mentioned who could seldom agree with him about the touchy details of gardening procedure, he made for the business-ridden *restaurateuse* a place of beauty and infinite repose which, however, she was seldom able to visit for long. He, for his part, seemed almost to live for it; for after 46 years of married contentment, his wife was so much a part of himself that, knowing her always to be there, utterly dependable, himself now her greatest care, he did not find need often to think consciously upon her, but assumed her to be at one with him also in his occupation with the neighbouring green child of his ripest experience.

It was the dearest of all his gardens, because he had made it entirely—he was god to it, there before it was thought of. From his steep orange orchard he could see men clearing away the last of the huge forest trees where it would be; long before other eyes might have seen anything but a sloping chaos of churned earth he had planned and planted its main contours, amassed in his mind a long list of all things that would thrive at that altitude, and begun to love the envisioned creation. He was at once the god and the Old Adam, and he lived to walk every day in that small personal Eden, and labour greatly in it. Under the coaxing and the pressure of his green fingers it thrived so that now the cars on the main highway beyond its upper western boundary slow down or stop as they come abreast, and the drivers of tourist 'buses point it out through amplifiers to their passengers—but not as his.

That wouldn't have troubled him, for his profound interest was quite beyond self-interest. He neither asked nor took credit, since praise is only for a labour ended, and the gardener's labour is of course unending, like the life he nurtures. If he thought of the admiring public at all, he thought of them with vague suspicion: they were pickers of flowers, dangerous, no respecters of verges and borders; and like most people everywhere they talked, they talked . . .

He himself was a silent man. I asked him would he carry a bell, for he frequently startled me very much by suddenly *being* there, as though sprung up from the earth itself. When I had to leave my job there, he was deep in some delicate bit of transplanting during the last minutes of my last day, and neither gave me goodbye nor referred to my going. Quite properly, the comings and goings of humans meant less to him than those of the seasons.

And now, very recently, in the very burgeoning of this good time of spring, he has died; and apart from a frequent awareness of my personal loss I am concerned, afraid, wondering whether such men as Michael Minnett are still being born into the world, or whether, in an age in which there are machines that can do even more than the human hand, eye, brain, and do it faster and more accurately, the Old Adam is indeed senescent, and dying at last.

THE MODEL

None of his few friends and few of his self-elected enemies would have failed to recognise—with compassionate or malicious pleasure according to their sort—the lame, untidy figure of Willand Testament struggling angrily up the hillside road in whipping wind and sun.

His every second step, exaggerated by fury and despair, made him lurch heavily lopsided to the right on the leg that was inches short of normal; and this, with the distracted rage of his face, neatly bearded, thin, bright, and sometimes handsome, gave him the appearance of a malignant devil in search of some yet more evil purpose. In the cold sunlit vigour of the wind, the roadside trees seemed to lean anxiously away from him. The high clouds raced aloof across the sky's thin blue, and only his shadow stayed unalterably with him, lurching along foreshortened, mocking also his helplessness of mind.

The trouble was not the usual morning quarrel with his wife in the dilapidated cottage out of sight below. Its sources lay deeper; the dispute, of a sort to which he was long ago used and secretly indifferent, had merely tapped open sealed springs. He did not even care that he was for the present a social outcast, and an innocent one. He did not care about the poverty caused by a falling-off of the sale of his work. He knew only, with savage grief, that at forty-six he was a mature artist, original, notable, and that he could paint no longer.

By accident, his wife's familiar sharp words had reminded of this which he had spent now some months concealing from himself in the three-walled shed he was using for a studio. Rushing out of the untidy cottage that had become their home and hiding-place since last year's scandal, he began to climb the road below that ran upwards aimed deviously at the mountain ridge, jerking as he walked like a badly-handled puppet.

And in fact it was his grim conviction, in moments of distress, that ever since his father had indulged an angry irony in having him christened Willand he had indeed been badly handled by Fate. His father's anger, that after several daughters his first and only son should be born crippled in the right leg, had passed on to himself, and even the years of artistic and popular triumphs had had somewhere the taste of bitterness and half-defeat.

At heart, however, he was like most creative artists an optimist; and as happens with optimists, too, moods such as that of this spring morning's despair came very easily upon him, so that the boisterous and brilliant day looked sour, unfriendly and dark to his analysing eyes.

"Can't even get a model, she says?" he shouted suddenly into the wind. A car passing him fast uphill sucked away the angry words and returned them

to him as a brief whiff of petrol fumes. He glared after it and stumped on, full of self-pity.

"A pity you can't even get a model, since Cora . . . Oh, I know they'll sit, all right, but the trouble is you can't paint them, Mister Testament. You might as well admit it . . ."

It was crude, cruel bickering of two ordinarily affectionate people now at odds not with each other so much as with angular, distressing circumstances. He went over it all, returning often, in his mind, to his wife's shrewd gibe about the model and his work. It was true, and he was frightened. Cora's death had caused the ruinous scandal of the previous year, and in almost eighteen months it had not faded, thanks to one accursed city newspaper. Even his complete exoneration, in the coroner's court, from all blame, all connection with the little girl's death, had not satisfied that abominable rag, which from time to time recharged and fired its heavy pieces in defence of arists' models—"the poorly-paid victims of debauched and often abnormal paint-puddlers." The memory of such language in print, in a scurrilous, hypocritical sheet that was craven enough to use "blood-poisoning" for "septicaemia", maddened him as though he had just read it. Scoundrelly pismires! Garbage-wrapper copywriters! Scum, scum! Poor Cora, whom he'd never thought about at all except when she was on the model's stand . . .

The steep road turned round a shoulder of the mountain and plunged darkly between the trunks of the big timber. Cleared land, pasture, young pea-crop and orange-grove were behind and below him now, remote in wind and sun from where he stood in sudden stillness and shade, looking back down upon the way he had come. Far away, his cottage crouched in the light among its ragged trees. Through the glassy air of the high altitude, as through a telescope reversed, he perceived the diminished figure of his wife going towards the cottage from his studio shed. Ha! he thought; snooping in the one place she was barred from entirely, the one privacy of his formerly so public life. That must be stopped, at once.

In a characteristic attitude—standing upright on his left foot with the toe of his right boot swinging clear of he road, his hands on his hips, his eyebrows raised as though in surprise—ridiculous yet arresting, he shouted at her, "Woman keep away from there!"

A mile distant, she could not have heard him; but as though she had, and were determined to enrage him still more, she turned and went slowly back, slowly but unhesitatingly. He could see it all. Helpless and far away, he felt so angry that he could only laugh, and then sit down, so queer he felt: as though his wife had been suddenly revealed to him as a stranger.

After all these years—twenty years of rapidly diminishing bliss and slowly increasing dependence . . . He turned away, no longer angry. All she would see in the ramshackle studio would be evidence of his ultimate incompetence. Poor Jeanie, poor old sock. No wonder, he thought, she hated him so often.

The need to sit down was now imperative. He slumped heavily on to a tree stump left by the roadmakers, but there were ants in it. Farther up the road, where in a second turn among the tall timber it said goodbye to the immediate valley, was a seat put there by the shire council for omnibus passengers and weary climbers like himself. He limped on towards it, hearing

in the forest stillness the merry going of the wind in the treetops high above him.

There was a schoolgirl sitting on the far end of the wooden seat. Turning his back, he sat down, unconsciously hiding his crippled leg while he looked with morose, self-pitying eyes at the farewell view of the valley and the plain framed and over-arched by trees. But in a part of his mind not concerned with all the aspects of his present unfortunate life, he was aware of surprise that there were still such things as schools and schoolgirls, when he himself had done with both years ago.

After a few minutes, worried by the silent fellow-human presence, he hitched himself round to have a look. Yes—a schoolgirl, certainly, with one of those ugly leather shoulder-satchels on her back, a shabby uniform of dark blue over a white blouse, and a matching dark-blue hat which she wore with the front of the brim turned back, as though brushed up by a hot, impatient wrist, to show her whole face from brow to neck. She was looking at him as only a schoolgirl can look, with a blank expression pitched between oblivion and scorn, just as if his disturbance of her unthinking self-contemplation had irritated her. Briefly it occurred to him that for almost the same reason his own look might be very like hers, even to the faint hint of insolence. Looking, he smoothed his trim beard slowly, while his professional regard, aroused in spite of his gloomy mood, began to flay back flesh from bone structure, measure proportions, analyse the colours of skin, hair, eyes, lips and the whole facial expression that was at once mystical, bovine and wary . . .

"When you've done staring."

The flat statement, insolent and crude, issued from the imagined canvas on which he was already busy, and surprised him profoundly. Canvasses had often spoken to him in the past, but never rudely—always in words of love, gratitude and faltering admiration. Was he not the great, successful, sought-after Will Testament, darling of the rich to whom he was so charmingly rude in a way that did not ill become the foremost portrait-painter of his day in the whole land? No, he admitted, he was not—not any more; at least, not yet.

"I never," he said, "stare. So shut up. I'm busy."

Later he was surprised, in a different way, to remember that this answering rudeness of address had apparently put the school-girl at ease. Later still he understood why. It was in almost such a tone and just such words she was spoken to at home. It was the very thing, he learned, from which, this late spring morning, she was in flight; and so, naturally, in her unfamiliar state of refugee adolescent girlhood it was perversely reassuring. It was, in fact, the best thing he could have said, because it made her feel "at home" in the midst of running away. He saw her face and body relax, with his artist's eye that missed nothing in a chosen subject. Feeling in a side-pocket, he found his notebook, a pencil and a piece of chocolate.

"Stay like that a minute," he said with authority. "I'll just make a sketch."

Instead of answering in words, she turned her back abruptly. This second rudeness, all in a matter of minutes, surprised him again, and this time made him angrily impatient. He scowled at her shabby back and the concealing hat-brim from beneath which depended a thick dull plait of hair almost as black and coarse as a horse's tail, tied near its end with a worn ribbon. She

was, he thought, not at all like the shy but obliging schoolgirls of his own young days. She was not in the least pretty, and she was ignorant and rude; but he moved so that he could look carefully at her face, and it was a vitally interesting one to him now, for in some subtle way he had not yet determined it was perfectly proportioned.

"Come on, miss," he said sharply. "I won't hurt you. Turn round and let's have a proper look. I'm an artist, and it's my job to draw pretty young ladies. Turn round, there's a good girl. Here—have a piece of chocolate."

He flicked the wrapped chocolate bar along the seat between them to where she could reach it easily; but she did not move to let him see her face again.

"Everyone knows what *you* are," her voice said suddenly to the morning air. "You killed that poor girl. Else why did you come here to hide?"

From that moment the situation between them became fantastic; although, because each in different ways—he by nature, she by virtue of her fifteen ripe years—was completely self-centred, neither of them for one moment realised this. That she should have said what she had said was bizarre enough, there among the quiet trees with the late spring wind whipping their highest branches; but that he, Will Testament, should have argued about it was to any knowing observer grotesque, laughable—and yet characteristic.

"Nonsense," he said coldly. "You don't know anything about it. If you did, you'd know I couldn't possibly have been to blame. When you're a big girl," he said unkindly, "you'll understand how it was the poor girl's own fault. Nothing to do with me—and anyhow," he went on, suddenly angry, "what business is it of yours, may I ask? What do you know about it? A kid of your age."

"I'm a girl, aren't I?" she said, turning with an anger of her own. "And I can read. It was in all the papers, and your picture."

"And do you believe everything you manage to read in the damned gutter-press of this benighted country?" he shouted, quite carried away and forgetting the original purpose of his condescension in talking to her at all. She was staring at him indignantly, with an unexpected, vital alertness; her eyes, he noted mechanically, were of an opaque blue colour, very rare in young girls.

"Everyone knows what artists are," she said more generally but still with that desperately childishly feminine anger. "Out for what they can get. I didn't ought to be sitting here even, let alone talking to you."

"So," he said. "So everyone knows, eh? And how many artists does 'everyone' know in this god-forsaken backwater, for God's sake? Tell me that."

"It was in the papers," she said. "All about you—what you are and what you was had up for." She spoke doggedly, with the indignation dying out of her voice at every word, and a shadow not of the sun seeming to fall across her freckled face below the turned-up hat brim. He made an unintelligible noise of fierce scorn, momentarily unable to speak. Had up, indeed! That in this miserable hole with nothing but fences and trees and mountains, fences and trees wherever you looked, he should have been indentified with his wretched misfortune!

"Now look here," he said when he could speak. "I was not had up. I was called as a witness in a coroner's court. It was found that I was completely innocent of anything connected with my model's death. Nothing else was possible because nothing else would have been the truth. If you happen

to know what the truth is. Most little girls are liars. Now run along to school, and in future don't be cheeky to strangers."

Again he turned his back on her, and fell once more with ease into the mood and posture of gloomy self-pity; determining, for the last time to shave off his neat beard and moustache, have a proper surgical boot made, wear tinted spectacles out-of-doors—and above all to move to another place. The thought of moving on frightened him now, while his creative powers were atrophied, as nothing had ever frightened him before. He knew that if he and Jeanie moved once more, moving in flight, they would never stop, he would never work again. He set his teeth like iron against the feeling of despair that struck at his very bowels. The sound of the girl's voice when she spoke was an incredible intrusion.

"It's you who was cheeky," she said rather hesitantly.

"Was I?" he said. "Then I apologise. And if you don't get off to school you'll be late."

"I'm not going to school," she said.

"Then go home."

"I'm not—oh leave me alone can't you." This time her voice was clearly distressed. He turned, interested: a schoolgirl, on a school-day, not going to school, not going home. Wherever else, for heaven's sake, did a schoolgirl go? Except—ah yes!—to the dentist. In his youth he had often been most grateful for these schoolgirl trips to the dentist; for the hot December afternoons in the long grass by the river . . .

"Perhaps you're going to the dentist," he said, suddenly cheerful. "Perhaps it's that that makes you so bad-tempered this lovely spring morning. Eh?"

Slanting sunlight was shining on her healthy freckled skin, sideways across her eyes. An interesting light; it gave the face planes and depths worth watching, though you could not even for love call it pretty; and he was absorbed again in spite of himself. Was there anywhere another artist who could paint it as he could? With brief, bounding emotion he knew there was not; it was just suited to his own inimitable brush-work.

"I'm—I'm—running away," she said, tears of alarm starting to her eyes as she heard the words aloud for the first time.

"What from?" he asked at once. A mere child still, in spite of her mature and, he now observed, almost opulent form. Perhaps not a child, at that, except in age; and what could this age ever find need to run from? It was, he remembered dimly, the age of absolute courage, most nearly-complete self-sufficiency. Flight was as out-of-character as objective intelligence would have been, when you came to remember; unless, of course, they beat her at home. Any child would run away, he thought, if sufficiently beaten; and he recalled with satisfaction certain nice performances of his own, round the house, through the garden and jeeringly into the street with his sweating, infuriated father, the small-town printer, black-fisted well in the rear.

"Does your dad beat you?" he asked, diverted by the thought. As he himself had never beaten a woman in anger, he could not see that it might be a shocking terrifying thing—even to the one doing the beating. A little heavy treatment was of course good for all females under fifty.

"Nobody beats me," she said hastily.

"Ah," he said. "That's probably the trouble. You feel the need of it, so

you run away to achieve it. Another form of unsatisfied vanity, very natural at any age, particularly yours. How old are you, anyhow?"

"I'd like to see anyone beat me," she said in a stifled voice. "They could just try that's all . . . I suppose that's what you did to that girl—beat her."

"Never," He sat up stiffly. "Now don't let's go into that again. Here. Have a bit of chocolate while I do a quick sketch."

Unexpectedly, with tears rolling down her cheeks now, she took the chocolate, unwrapped it and broke off a piece to put between her trembling lips—pleasant, thick lips, he saw, when not set in lines calculated to repulse familiarity; a good colour, and eager for the chocolate in spite of the crying. Ignoring the signs of grief, he began to draw, thinking with satisfaction how seldom chocolate failed when discreetly applied. Each, in the spell of an absorbing occupation, sat silent and almost immobile, face to face, once again oblivious of the other's militant personality; until after a later squinting glance that seemed to see nothing he realised that she was looking not through him as a model should but at him, and about to speak.

"Keep still and shut up," he said softly, for already he was fascinated by the face, the pose, and above all the quality of what he himself was doing.

She moved restlessly. She had finished the chocolate. He willed her to be still; but when she moved again he put down the pencil, profoundly satisfied—though not with the unfinished study—and took out and lighted a cigarette, not looking at her any more. Instead, with bent head and eyes going over and over the square of cartridge-paper and what was on it, he fell into an abstraction of analysis.

"What have you done?" the girl's voice asked. Yes, she had begun to think, of course, and was full of a damnable womanish curiosity, quivering with a wish to flatter her own vanity with his help. Saying nothing, he flipped the notebook along the seat to her.

She took it up with clearly-affected indifference, and he watched her face, forgetting her age, her sex, her origins in a most earnest, unselfconscious hope that she would see what he would have her see. Bending her head, she stared at the study—there again, he thought: that's a pose I could use too.

"Gawd," she said at last. "Is this supposed to be me?"

Quickly, while he was still unsure of having heard, she ripped the sheet from the block and tore it up, looking him full in the face with an unsmiling expression compounded of triumph and fear, like one daring to arrest the process of a magic spell. When she had thrown the pieces aside, they both sat quite still, staring at one another. The wind was going merrily in the tops of the trees high above. A car passed noisily downhill, straining against the pitch of the road; but about the two of them clung utter and impregnable silence through which no sound could break.

At length, after a minute that might have been eternity, he heaved himself up and limped round to her. She watched him approach, her defiant face paling and her mouth opening slowly; but not until he was quite near, standing over her, did her gaze falter. Then, to his horror, she put her hands over her hidden ears protectingly, bent her head and hunched up her shoulders like one about to be struck; but still she made no sound.

He took the sketchbook from her lap and turned and lurched away, thinking, anyhow, there are plenty of other subjects, plenty—now that I know. Now

that I know I can. But the thought was not a full thought, for in fact he was wild with emotion: excitement at the excellence of what he had done (that it was destroyed did not at that moment matter; he had done it!) and horrified disgust and pity, not so much because that child had crouched in such terror away from his aproach as because any sort of society could permit the genesis of such unresisting fear. In all the world, what could have taught her that dreadful pose?

He forgot his own earlier self-pity. The whole incident was over. He wanted to get away now—down to his home of passage where he could think, where he could decide how to find some one he could paint to astonish once again the world which once only, by its capricious rejection of him in his hour of vulnerability, had ever managed to astonish him. He knew, from the way he had used the pencil just now, that his power had come back to him. He limped away.

Running footsteps came after him, before he had reached the bend in the road below.

"Mister," the girl's voice said urgently behind him. "Half a sec, Mister. I'm sorry I done—did that. I'm sorry. It was a lovely photograph. I dunno why I tore it, honestly."

He looked round, still getting along with his up-down lurching gait.

"Go away," he said. "Go to school. Go home. Goodbye."

But an idea was in his mind. His backward glance had convinced him that hers was a fascinating face to paint—and unknown, unknown to anyone in his own world! It would confound them. She was just what he wanted, some one who knew nothing really of him or his work, very little apparently of anything except fear and its armour of defiance. He could show all that. The last half hour had proved, too, that she was just what his hand wanted. He set out to obtain her in his own way.

"You did a terrible thing," he said when she continued to walk along behind him down the hill. "You tore up something that was worth a lot of money. I might have given it to you, even, and you could have sold it—for quids," he added, to improve the odour of the bait. "Now, of course, it's gone. Run along—stop following me."

She snuffled with tears, hastening to keep near him.

"Honest, I didn't mean to, Mister. I know who you are—famous and all that. Couldn't you do it again? If I stayed very still? Please?"

"No," he said, slowing down a bit. "Not now—not today."

"When, then?" She was at once eager and humble.

"Never," he said, smoothing his neat beard between the first and second fingers of his left hand, and pausing to look up towards the overtowering trees where the boisterous wind was letting in the sun. "I'm too busy to waste time on little girls—rotten, malicious, destructive, ungrateful little girls. I'm a very busy man. Besides," he added with an irrelevance he knew would seem to her like perfect logic, "you're running away. You won't be here. Though, unless you have a lot of money, I can't imagine where you're going to run to."

"Mister," she said, "I won't run away. Let me come with you a while. Let me talk to you."

"That," he said, "would be worse than running away. Where do you go to school?"

"Down past your place," she said quickly. "You know where the school is—you know. I walk past your place every day."

"Then run along or you'll be properly late," he said, gentle without meaning to be. But this would not do her. He wondered if his trap had failed after all, and at the thought his eagerness to paint her became livelier than ever.

"I hate school," she said at last, "and I hate it at home. My Dad's always drunk and hitting me round the head, and Mum does too when he belts into her. I get so I can't do the things at school, and the teacher tells Mum and she tells Dad, and it makes him go for me worse than ever."

Shocked, he began to walk on again faster than before down the road that would soon emerge now from the mountain forest upon the open descent to the brilliance of the slopes beyond. When at last he turned to take a quick look at her, she was not there.

Round the bend behind him came a 'bus, growling and grinding in low gear. As it passed, he saw and heard quite a number of children in it, and recognised the school 'bus from the northern part of the district among the mountains. It passed his cottage twice each week-day. Of course the little idiot had not had the courage not to catch it, to run off—scared to miss it, scared to be late for school after all. Just a silly, impudent, cow-faced schoolgirl—not at all an unusual child, with her lies about being beaten by a drunken father.

"Not for me, dammit," he said aloud. "Too risky. I'll go home and paint old Jeanie, anyhow, for the present. In the kitchen. Darning socks. 'Missus Testament caught by our candid canvasser.' Damn, damn!" but as he spoke to himself he heard the footsteps again at his back, running, and the girl again caught him up, breathless, more flushed than before, and looking (he saw at once) quite useless to him in her excited animation.

"The school 'bus," she said, gasping out the words. "I had to hide, or the kids would of told on me."

Looking at her carefully, imagining her in repose, he made up his mind.

"You get on to school as fast as you can," he said. "Now shut up and listen. What's your name?"

"Corrie," she said. "Corrie McIntosh," and now defiance was gone. "Listen Cora—or Corrie," he said, "get off to school. And then—will you do what I'm going to say?"

She nodded, as though she dared not speak.

While his mind worked fast, they entered upon a conspiracy, walking hastily down through the bright wind and the morning until the possibility of being seen together made it imperative that they should separate.

II

In and out and in and out, quick, flashing minutely, Jeanie's needle led the grey wool through the threads already warped across a hole in the toe of a wry brown sock. From time to time she stopped darning to raise her head and direct her dark gaze towards the studio shed fifty yards away on the edge of the old, neglected apple orchard.

She sat in a sheltered corner of the sagging front verandah of the cottage, where the wind could not nag her; and when she looked up her beautiful face, drawn fine and hard now from years of hectic and uncertain life with Testament, was puzzled and worried, as though she feared, yet were defying, some threatened trouble. After only a few moments of steady gazing, she bent her smooth brown head, silvered already along each side back from the temples, and resumed her patient work. The shining needle moved on and back, in and out and in and out with effortless accuracy.

If, in this strange, friendless, uncomfortable life to which she had been brought abruptly in a rage of injured vanity, fear and self-pity—if, here among the glowing foothills and tender distances of a fruitful countryside, there had been one friend of the old, normal, purposeful days to whom she could have talked freely, she would have confessed herself profoundly uneasy at the latest change in Testament. She had written to his agent, Maxwell, who had for years been as generous of friendship as he was of his considerable wealth, to explain how her husband, after months of being irritable, cast down, changed and empty, had in two weeks become his former buoyant self, exactly as he was in the great days of his worldly success; and, towards her, tenderly affectionate and companionable as he had not been since the death of the model Cora.

Now, instead of rejoicing, she was worried, more worried and fearful even than she had been in the worst days after Cora's death, even in the worst black days here in the remote country, when she had watched him regret the foolish impetuosity that had made him give up—and make her give up too—every friend they had ever had, every society, every single simple contact with the old, good, lively city life, where he was a famous man and she his hardly less famous wife.

For, he said it himself, she it was who had made him, she who had, by tirelessly accommodating herself to every mood, idea and fever of work in his earlier years, made possible the sure, rapid development of his genius; she who had posed for him day and night, in every sort of costume or in none, while he fought and conquered student habits and imitation, and in the end became what he was . . .

And now, when she should have rejoiced to find him as he used to be, she was instead alarmed and filled with miserable forebodings; for something very strange was going on in the isolated studio, and with wifely instinct she knew that a woman was concerned. Because this could only be some one from the immediate locality, she had become half-terrified, anticipating not merely another scandal which would drive them away again to yet remoter parts, but possible, even probable, scenes of violence or worse.

For she well knew that the two of them had been indentified as soon as they arrived to live in the tumbledown cottage on the edge of the orchard. She understood, with helpless chagrin, why she was openly looked at with curiosity and a scornful pity by the dull-faced wives she met in the little shop, and by the few tradesmen who came with grudging condescension to her door. She knew the peeping that went on when Testament took his occasional walks abroad, the covert looks and ignorant hatred that followed him on his lurching, defiant way along the road when he went to ask for the mail that neither of them expected. But so far none of this had come frankly

into the open; and life under such conditions was at least, with an effort of mind, bearable.

So long, yes, as the crude antagonism of the district towards her husband was kept secret and chained back, she could support such a life, with all its added material hardship; but let him do one wrong thing involving anyone belonging to the place—were it but to kick at a snapping dog—and trouble would break loose to overwhelm them both again. This she did not think she could bear. If, above all, he were mad enough to do anything involving a woman . . .

Yet, she would have intimated to a friend, there was mixed with her worried forebodings a thread of pleasure. It was pleasure she could not help: a sort of wild, half-incredulous relief to see him as he used to be; to hear him laugh and whistle, as he was doing at this moment over in the distant studio, sometimes even singing a fragment of one of his silly, meaningless songs. She knew what it all meant; she knew, as well as if she had seen, that he was at work on something which was going well.

It was strange, after more than a year, to hear him. Her fine face became bright; but then, at the memory of what she had heard two afternoons ago, it fell into gravity again, the new lines of unhappiness reappeared, and she bit through the thread of grey wool with a sort of desperate anger.

What she had heard was a sound of laughter, a girl's or a woman's laugh, sharp and spontaneous through the wind that plunged between the cottage and the shed. This shed, open fully to the north at that end, stood on steeply sloping ground that ran down to the fence and the road. The open end was about nine feet above the rough track up to it from the road gate, and from this level the cases of fruit, packed in the shed, were lowered on to the trucks in the days when the apple orchard had flourished and prospered.

At the opposite end, southwards, was a line of small window-panes, cob-webbed and dirty and impossible to see through against the strong north light (she had tried); and in the side away from the cottage and towards the orchard a big sliding door had a small pilot-door let into it. The only entry was on this side, for the unwalled loading end of the shed was too high to be looked into from immediately below, and the sloping ground beyond it assured an absolute privacy. The wall facing the house was sealed and blank.

Thus one could enter or leave the shed unseen, by cutting through the overgrown orchard from higher up the mountain highway, to the pilot-door in the far side. Jeanie, who had examined the whole terrain a dozen times without realising she was doing so, wandering about the place when she had no better way of filling out the dull idleness of her days, now understood how convenient this screened approach must be proving.

She was no fool. She knew her husband as only a wife can know the man she has lived with constantly for twenty years, and whom she has tested—and been tested by—to every conceivable extreme. Had anyone suggested that the pleasure of a love-affair were being concealed in the old shed, she would have laughed, for two reasons. One was that Testament all his latter life had denied his studio absolutely to women other than models on duty—denied even herself a nearer approach than the doorway, hurrying over defensively from whatever he was doing, the moment he heard her approaching footsteps.

The second reason, more profound and to her far more dependable, was that during his always-brief periods of probable or real marital infidelity in the past he had changed towards her vividly, becoming considerate to an extreme, almost over-courteous, more than ever talkative, friendly—and quite aloof, as though he had closed between them an uncurtained window. These signs she had learned to recognise with eventual resignation, though never with indifference, consoling herself with the pleasant-painful knowledge that it would not last, he would fling open that window again, and once more she would be his wifely comforter, the only woman with whom he found it impossible to dispense.

For a fortnight now he had been the old Will Testament of their best days together, cheerful, passionate and tender. This could mean only one thing: he was at work at last, and satisfied with what he was doing.

It should have gladdened her wholly; but the fear stayed in her. She felt, though she was little more than forty, that life had been rough and unkind enough to her for a while. She wanted peace for a little longer, and rest to recuperate from last year's evil climax to the years of mounting fame and swelling vanity which Testament had enjoyed. They dared not, she had said, move from this sluggish backwater in the foothills until the day came when he should feel he could return to their own world and the true realities of the life they had made together. Dear heaven, she thought, not further, not deeper into deadly oblivion!

But about that laugh she could do nothing; that was the trouble. As usual, he did not talk of what he was at, nor did she dare risk asking; for she had seen him ruin a work before, merely from irritation at having been plagued with the question: how is it going? In his own good time he would show her. Until he did speak, she could only wait, counting on at least a minimum of discretion in him after the mortification of mind and spirit he had suffered under the Cora scandal; but she was fearful, she was indeed deeply afraid . . .

The community, though spread over a wide territory, was small. Large families of O'Briens, McIntoshes and Greens made up the major part of the population, owning all the land—or having owned it, which seemed worse to later occupants—the milk-run and the baker's trade, the 'bus run into the mountains, and the shop-post office business, every local service and contract, until a stranger's mind became confused and drew back from the complexities of family entanglement; for they had inter-married freely. Any misdeeds within this strong cabala were punished with malicious zest and pleasure by the three clans, but secretly and jealously; misdoing by a newcome stranger, and a city migrant at that, and above all a godless and notorious man like Testament, must have effects which would not bear contemplation.

Jeanie folded the socks she had darned, and looked again at the studio standing stolidly against the wind and sun. By now she knew that whoever was posing for Will came late in the afternoons of Monday and Wednesday and Friday, and did not stay much longer than an hour. He was keeping the shed strongly locked whenever he was out of it, which was seldom: she knew, for once when he was asleep in the cottage she had tried an entry. It was the only attempt she had made since the morning two weeks earlier when, as though to feed her own hungry despair and her pity for him, she had gone during his absence to the forbidden place and looked at the chaos

of discarded, half-finished attempts at imaginative sketches, studies from memory, drawings of the hand, the ear, the eye, desperate and hopeless self-portraits in the big mirror, in pencil, in crayon, even tried in oils. She looked, and went out at once, feeling stifled, and was almost back at the cottage when she felt a compulsion to go again and look more carefully, with less emotion; and this time she had learned that her own deliberately cruel, taunting remarks had been well enough justified. He could paint no longer. The craftsmanship was there, ingrained now, unmistakable to any knowing eye; but that eye would also have perceived that the art was gone from the hand's cunning, and the mind was looking aside from the truth of the subject.

She sat now with her hands on her knee, staring at the shed but seeing inwardly the large old house by the harbour in town, mellow and rich within and without but empty these many months except for the coming and going of a part-time caretaker-gardener; seeing the long slope of garden and lawn to the high studio screened by trees at the low cliff edge, with the boathouse and the swimming enclosure below it . . . a vision of comfort and modest luxury once so real, now remote as a dream. Years of work and saving—difficult, quarrelsome saving in the face of Testament's love of spending all he earned, like a child—years of slow advancement, gradually widening recognition, travel that seemed to her needless and costly, and unceasing encouragement of her wayward husband, all had been spent to obtain that home. Now, it seemed, she had lost it; it lay empty and dead while they skulked in the unknown country, at a time in her life when she was beginning to feel too tired to start again. Now it was up to him: let him put aside his mad vanity, the cowardly egotism which had made him sacrifice her with himself; let him return and be bold in the face of the world's futile criticism of his personal life, for both their sakes.

So moved was she by this sudden yearning to escape from the bright futility of the countryside that with sudden decision she started to her feet, ready to go over to the studio and to make one final passionate attempt to argue him out of his stubborn self-isolation which was tangling them both in a net of despair. But on the edge of the shaky verandah she stopped. Testament himself had come limping round the corner of the shed, whistling cheerily. He waved his hand when he saw her, and shouted, "What about some tea, old dear?" and came on. Her spirits rose at the sound of his voice, at the familiar flash of his teeth in his thin bearded face. Cheerful devil! She turned and went before him into the cottage.

They sat in the warm kitchen away from the wind, and as he sipped his tea he talked, for once, about the city and their friends, ending up with a remark spoken so lightly that for a moment it did not even startle her.

"You know, Jeanie, I've a feeling we shall be going back before very long."

Slowly, to give her mind time, she ran her fingers through her dark hair.

"I thought you said never," she said at last. "Can't you make up your mind?"

She spoke with an undertone of sharpness that had recently become habitual; but the blood sang in her ears a little for joy.

"Oh, that," he said. "I was upset then. I've been thinking it over. They've had their pound of flesh, all those dam' ghouls, and we're not getting anywhere

here. You say yourself it's time I made some money, and I'll never do that here."

"I thought," she said, "you seemed happier here these last couple of weeks. I know quite well you—"

"Happier!" he said quickly. "I've not been even happy for years, Jeanie, and you know it. It wasn't the mud-slingers and the general ignorant condemnation I came here to escape. Not by any means, my girl. It was part of a series of inevitable developments in myself I could foresee. A man can't go on doing the same work in the same way once he's reached a certain stage. I had to have a break, and all the stink over poor Corrie, or Cora, was a good excuse."

He looked out of the window, concealing his face from her. It had been a near thing! Corrie—Cora—the two names were alike, by heaven! What rotten luck. Superstitiously he crossed his fingers under the table and, for good measure, touched the wooden seat he sat on. Corrie! A piece of luck he certainly hadn't foreseen. Beyond the window he looked not at the sunny slopes and hollows restless with wind but at the canvas on the easel, the violent life-sized portrait almost complete, the thick lips, dark strong hair just visible under the hat brim, the skin, the nervous scornful eyes and virginal brow—God! he'd got her there like so much hot flesh; so completely Corrie that sometimes he felt he could turn the canvas over and smack it for the insolent way it looked at him all day every day, and until he slept at night on his stretcher ten feet away from it where it trembled with life under its cover. What most stormed him with secret inward bursts of glee was the humble, sympathetic, bewildered look that lay deepest of all its expressions. Again and again he wondered, more than he had wondered over any previous work of his, how he had done it. He was himself almost humble before his achievement, almost ready to admit that there might actually be some power greater than himself operating through him . . . as though he were a medium.

Proof, nonsense! He, Will Testament, had painted this masterpiece of profound and subtle characterisation. He had never done better. It was the latest step forward in the incomparable Testament tradition—a proof that he was invulnerable, a proof!

He hit the kitchen table a smart blow with his hand, making Jeanie, who had been watching closely his averted face, start and catch her breath. Turning his head, he smiled secretly, then laughed aloud, his eyes devilish sly.

"Sorry," he said. "Your nerves are all to pieces, old girl. I was just thinking how I'll outface those hounds in town when the time comes. How many people do you suppose know where we've been all this time?"

"Hardly anyone," Jeanie said cautiously. At least twenty, she might have told him, to whom she had written, warning them not for any reason to approach him here in any way. "Maxwell, of course—I had to keep in touch with him because of sales. He's written to say there have been enquiries and one or two commissions from what he calls public corpses."

Testament suddenly frowned darkly.

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"What would have been the use? You'd only have got in a rage and done something silly. Maxwell's been too good an agent to lose, Will, and a good friend. Anyhow, you said yourself you weren't going to sell anything."

"I said, I said! It doesn't matter what I said—I didn't want to lose touch with Maxie. I was only waiting for him to make the first move. I consider he behaved abominably over the Cora business."

"If one of you behaved abominably, it was you, Will," she said gently. "He thinks you wanted to get away from everything that might remind you of it all."

He kept on frowning at the window; but suddenly, with the same secret smile as before, got up at last and went lurching hastily out of the kitchen, through the cottage and off the verandah. Once ouside, his steps were silenced by the uncut grass as he headed for the studio; and then she heard a strange voice shouting, and a girl's whimpering scream.

"Look out, mister! Oh—don't, Dad! Don't! Don't!"

It was the voice that had laughed so gaily in the studio, and it was frantic with terror.

III

No one, during her fifteen years of life, had taken much notice of Corrie in any way, other than to check, criticise and curse her for her countless shortcomings. She had never had a new frock stiff from the shop, nor been to a children's party on a Saturday afternoon; she had never over-eaten or over-slept; no one had kissed her since she was a small baby, and her knowledge of the secrets of womanhood had come early, left-handed and meaningless from savagely-prurient fellow-schoolgirls. When Testament met her in the boisterous spring morning trying to run away, what she fled from was not her home-life (she had long since developed safety-mechanisms to deal with that) but the pathetic chaos of not being loved in any way by any one, into which she dimly realised she had now grown. She wanted to do something that would make her recognised; for her individual personality had strongly survived the life of browbeatings and physical chastisement, and was untouched beneath its surface distortions. She longed to love and to be loved, though without understanding this, and in the scandalous figure of the lame artist she instinctively saw a person worthy of her devotion, a fellow-sufferer under the blows of a hard world, and, above all, a man—a passionate, dangerous and mysterious man.

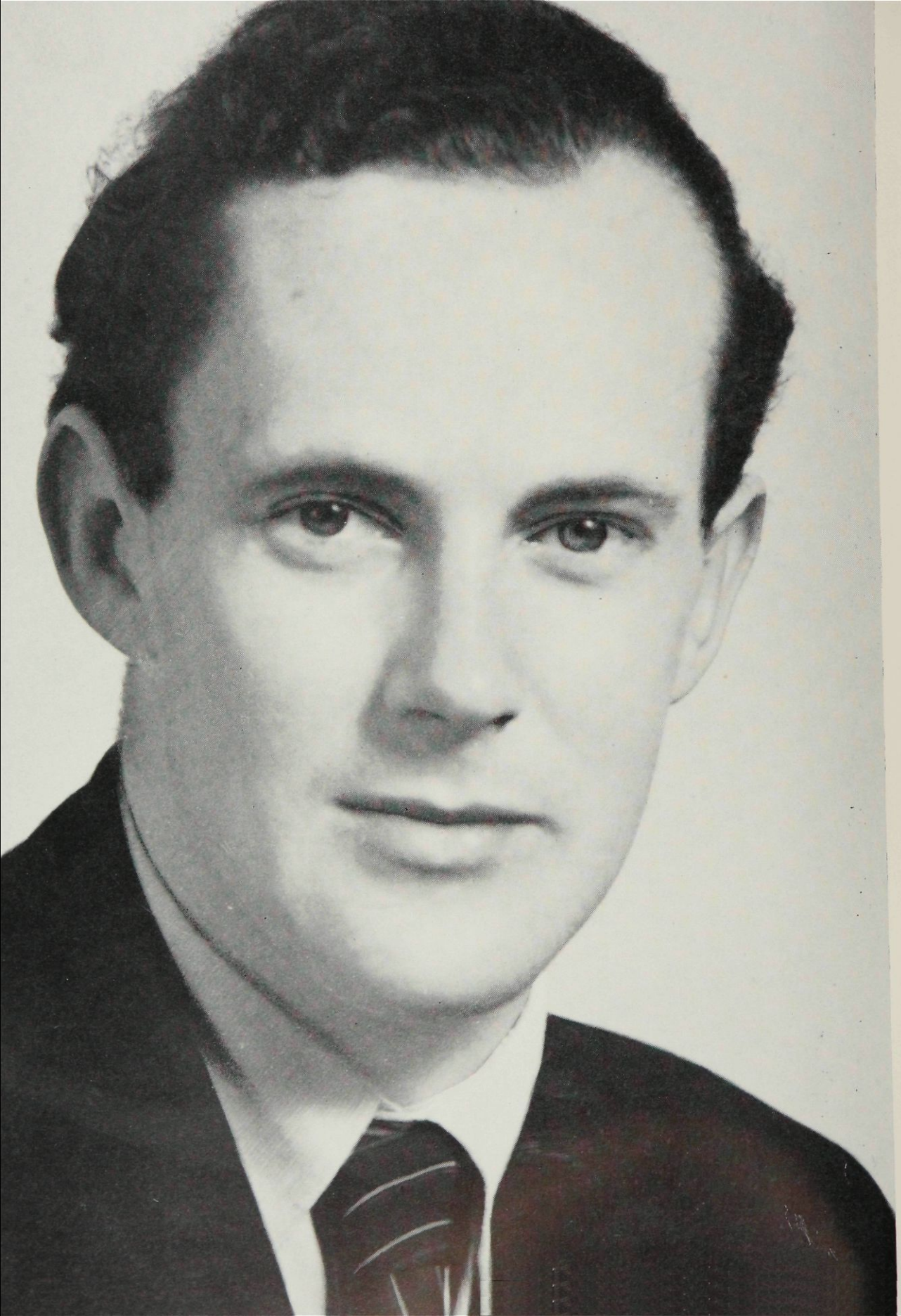
Inherited superstition, the age-old fear of witchcraft, had caused her to tear up the first unlucky pencil sketch that desperate morning. Banished by this act of defiant rejection, the fear was at once replaced by love, by violent and passionate emotions, and it was with a terrible joy that she voluntarily joined in the machinations of the Devil she had just put down—machinations innocent enough and personally purposeful on Testament's part, but for her fraught with exquisite and trembling wickedness. When he coldly told her to come secretly to his studio three afternoons a week, and to lie to her parents about why she was late home, she was shocked and delighted. He himself gave not a thought to possible consequences to her of this instructed duplicity; and had he thought of them he would have laughed and asked "What is it to me?" though at heart he was not unkind. To Corrie, the immeasurable risk she was running (for she thought she knew her father's violence and her mother's cowardice before him) made her concurrence in the conspiracy only a greater proof of her love, and at once more terrifying

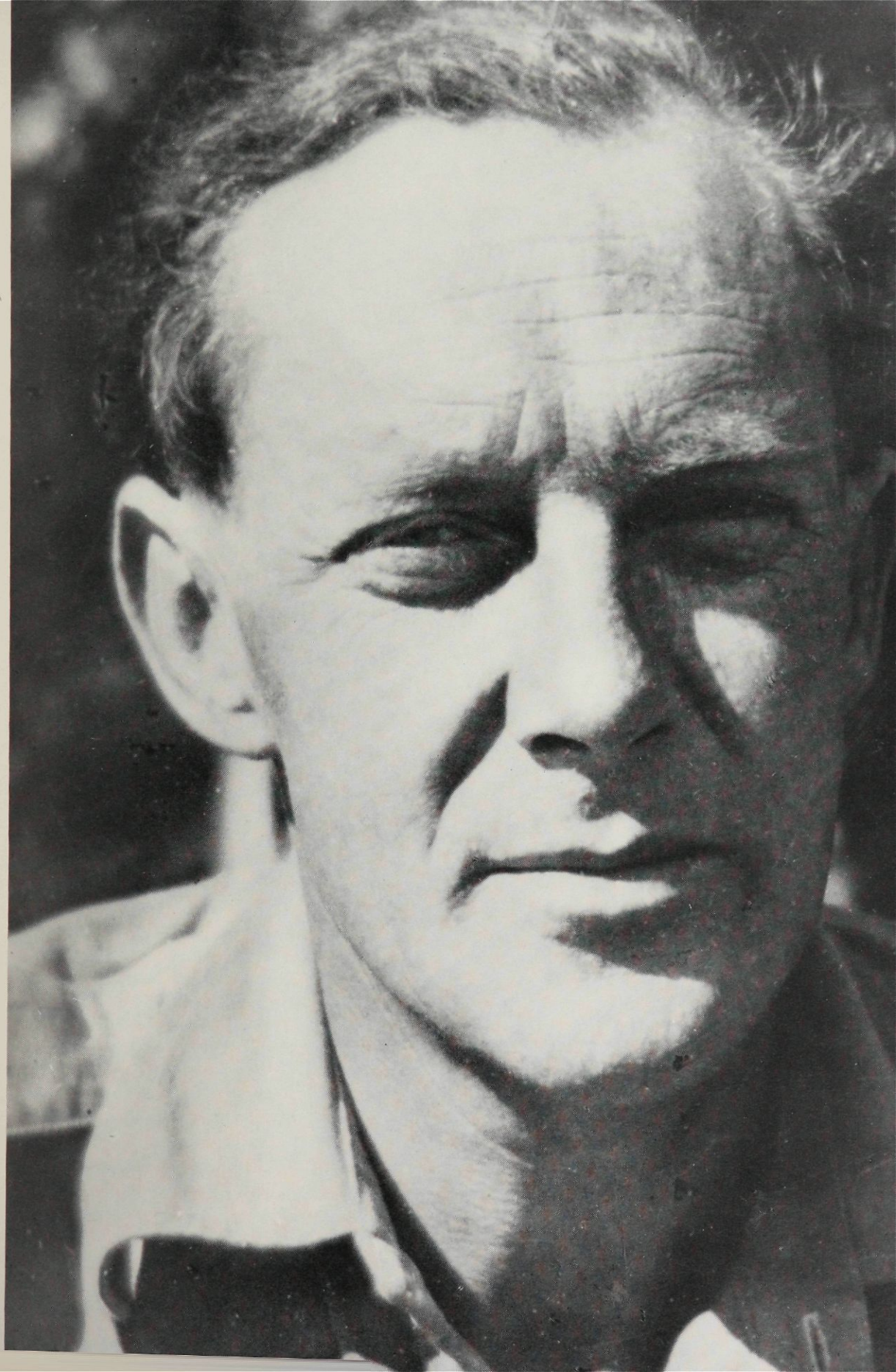
and more passionately exciting, worthy of the self of her adolescent dreams. By the time she was to go for her first sitting in the thrilling loneliness of the studio, she was pitifully in love with her victor.

He, for his part, treated her from the first with the same delicate politeness he always had used towards his models, which made them all too eager to work for him again; and he handled her with the same watchful care a pagan high priest would devote to a sacrificial victim on the day the omens were to be taken. The work he had begun must not for a moment be jeopardised. So that she should not learn to dislike it all, he made her hold the pose only for very short periods at first; and lest she should start thinking too consciously he kept her fed with all the chocolate he could secretly buy. Nothing, however, could withhold from her eyes and mouth the look of love and utter surrender which neither artist nor model knew was there, though it worried Testament after she had gone, even while it delighted him, for its evasiveness and unfamiliarity did not accord with what he remembered of her at the first stormy encounter. At the end of a week's work, after she had unwillingly sneaked away through the overgrown orchard, he stood for a long time glowering at the canvas in the diminishing light of late afternoon, puzzled but in some way very deeply pleased. For all his vanity, he did not for a moment suppose that he had awakened emotions of love in Corrie, and would have been sneeringly angered if he had been told this was so. She was to him just a commonplace country schoolgirl whose colouring and perfect bone-structure happened to appeal to him forcibly but impersonally; she was in fact the chosen victim for a bloodless sacrifice to his genius. In secret, in her absence, he hugged her to him with delight, as a solitary child hugs an inert doll, in imagination making it alive and perfect; but when she was with him, quick now to take the pose, and always in a sort of dazed state for which he thanked the chocolate, she was so remote from all but his sense of seeing that she might have been a doll indeed.

He had no idea of the passions he had inadvertently roused in her from their half-wakefulness. Had he suspected how she thought of him, he would have banished her at once from the closed orbit of his present life, with crossed fingers and horror; for he had suffered, as not even Jeanie knew he had suffered, the torments of living damnation after Cora's death let loose the mongrel world against him. Only a complete indifference to all of her being that was not physical and immediately apparent to his obsessed eye made it possible for him to be so friendly and genial to her, so generous with the expensive chocolate, and so uncaring as to give her impatiently, like bones to a dog, two of the several pencil studies he had made before letting himself begin on the canvas.

She took the sketches without saying anything. It had been vaguely impressed upon her awareness that, for some reason with which she herself had nothing to do, he was a powerful and important man, whose "photographs" (as local dialect styled all pictorial representations) were worth money —even the little ones in pencil that you could rub out if you liked, or alter to suit your own ideas. Folding them up small under Testament's disgusted gaze, and not without some disappointment that the paper was thick and rough instead of being softly glossy, she slid them into her shoulder-satchel and from there transferred them later, flattened out again and now slightly





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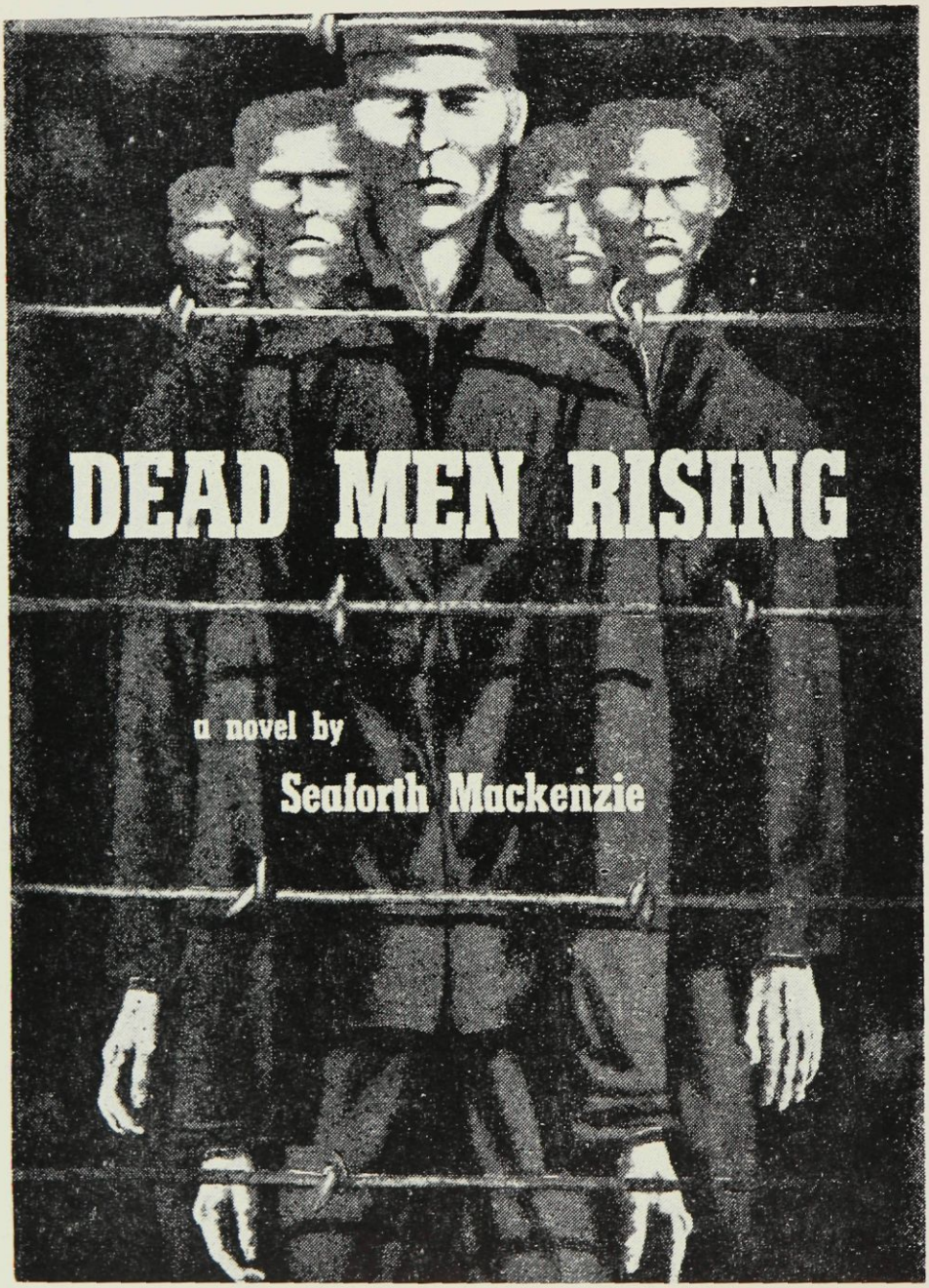

"Dead Men Rising," by Seaforth Mackenzie, is probably the most skilfully written Australian novel. There is hardly a sentence that could be expressed in a more imaginative way. The characterisation is near-perfect, the plot is neat, and the execution has an almost poetic quality.

Of the subject matter, the author has noted: "The story itself is a fictional one based on two facts: on the undeniable fact that garrison men were human, intelligent, and even brave; and on the fact that the greatest prisoner-of-war mass-escape in Christian history did occur in Australia in the first week of August, 1944, almost a year to the day before the final defeat of Japanese arms in the Pacific. I myself saw the things which are described. . . . ."

The book we still cannot buy

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smudged, to a hiding place beneath the yellowed newspaper on the floor of the packing case in which she kept her few clothes and another pair of shoes.

It was unfortunate for Corrie, who was at the time sucking a pencil-end and dreaming beyond the schoolroom hum of voices to the keen joy of the afternoon to come, that her mother should have been moved that morning to think about her daughter consecutively enough to realise of a sudden that the child had lately seemed changed. With surprise that made her put her hands to her head, the spiritless woman sitting by the untidy kitchen table recalled having seen Corrie smiling more than once when there was less than usual to smile at; and it was even a fact, now she thought of it, that she had been brushing her hair at night as well as before going to school in the mornings.

Moved by some obscure emotion cloudily compounded of pity, memories of her own girlhood, and aimless curiosity, she wandered from her blackened kitchen along the open verandah to the farther end which was boarded up to the unceiled roof to serve the girl as a sort of room. It was little more than a box, and already its atmosphere smelled loosely feminine, from the unmade bed and the clothing not often enough washed and seldom washed enough. There was a certain childish disorder, which she began half-heartedly to put straight with unfeeling hands. Starting thus in an idle way, she became caught up in the animal activity of tidying her young, much as a cat who licks her kittens once as it were by chance will fall into a sudden obsession with cleanliness, proceeding more and more passionately until both are dazed with the thoroughness of the job.

After some minutes of moving things about, she went almost hastily to the kitchen, and came back with clean newspapers and a broom. Not for many weeks, not since Joe's last dangerous drunken illness, had she enjoyed the feeling of being employed in a good and profitable purpose; and this feeling so mastered her that when she uncovered the two pencil sketches as she kneeled to put down fresh paper in the upended packing case she did not realise for a moment what she was holding. Then, as recognition and immediate, unreasoned alarm in turn overcame her, she sank back on her heels, breathing hard. The blood seemed to fill her face as she gazed from one creased foolscap sheet to the other, and then to drain from her whole body to her heart, which began to thump in her breast like big guns. At last she struggled to her feet, holding the ominous drawings away from her at arm's length, and with uncertain steps returned to the gloom of the kitchen, where she let herself fall into her usual chair near the black recessed stove now cold and fireless. Breathing fast she reached out to lay the two sheets on the littered kitchen dresser, and then put her hands one over the other on her thin bosom, feeling the perturbed heart beat gradually less hard. When a minute had passed and her breath came easier, she got up and reached high into the sooty blackness of the chimney, bringing down carefully and without hesitation a bottle containing gin, some of which she poured into a cup half-filled with cold sweet tea. This she sipped several times in haste and without any sign of pleasure beyond a final deep sigh that brought to her sick eyes a thin glaze of tears. Then she hid the bottle in the woodbox by the stove.

At last she looked again at the drawings; she held them up after wiping

her eyes, and stared at each in turn, nodding her head in recognition, shaking it in bewilderment. Her brain began to think in its fragmentary way the dazed but driven thoughts of the uneducated and illiterate consciousness. A series of tremendous questions seemed to be put to her which her confusion could not answer. She felt at once elation and fear in very great degree: elation that some one had done these clever photographs of Corrie, the hitherto unloved, irritating daughter whom her father's sullen hatred had made in some way a perpetual cause of trouble; fear, which quickly became a dull terror, of what Joe would do if he knew of them.

Fifteen minutes passed like a remembered nightmare, as she sat there holding the drawings on her knee and sipping at the refilled cup. By the end of it she had passed into and beyond a sort of rigid hysteria, tearless, as it were anaesthetised, to a conviction of ineluctable doom. Nothing worse than this had ever come to terrify her. The name of Testament, that man whom Joe, without knowing him at all, scorned and feared like a lunatic by hearsay, at last came into her mind. Thought failed her at once, completely. She jumped up from her seat with the simple intention of destroying the drawings and all trace of them, as though she had committed a crime that must be hidden immediately. The two upturned faces coasted gaily to the floor, and raising her eyes, as though at a summons, from blindly following their flight she saw her husband standing in the doorway. He was swaying a little on his feet, watching her with his thin neck thrust forward. Meeting his bright, angry gaze, she could not move further, and between them on the unswept boards lay the drawings like a twofold mockery of them both, the father and the mother of the absent child.

IV

For a moment Testament did not recognise either of his visitors. Thought and reason had not overtaken the vivid impression of two fantastic strangers, the immediate feeling that he had stepped out of the warm kitchen and the cottage into the cold windy brightness of a dream. The southwest wind was up again in force; it rushed across the mountain slopes and through the leafless apple orchard, and hammered the southern end of the studio with drunken vicious blows. Against the long blankness of the east wall the two figures stood in a stiff pose of temporarily arrested violence.

Everything of the man looked to be broken, at first sight. The hat forced hard on his head against the wind, the rumpled woollen sweater, the trousers with one leg deformed and sagging to the weight of a bottle whose neck stuck out stiffly like a shiny handle from the pocket; the savage snouts of the earth-coloured boots, and above all this collapsed face, bluish-red and centred round mad eyes and a dot of mouth—all seemed to have been struck down and smashed by some huge inevitable weight from above. Only the wind, you would think, held it all erect by artifice. Between this gust and the next, in the sudden warm pause, it must crumple into a confused heap of clothing, hat, bottle and boots on the hard ground, and awkwardly blow away.

To Testament it was not the wind but the eyes that supported it and gave it grotesque life. The man had the girl's wrist in one grasping hand,

and in the other a shotgun, pointing downwards and with the stock under his armpit.

There was now little visibly to connect Corrie with the girl on the canvas inside the shed against which she leaned. Her mouth was still open to scream her warning; but the ripe lips were bruised and swollen, one eye was blackened, her rough hair seemed to stand out from her head loosely in horror, and there were red marks on her throat.

It had taken Joe McIntosh half the night to make these broad changes in the model whom Testament cherished with a passion that was not love. Other marks stamped on her young body could not be seen by decent eyes, though McIntosh had seen them all, with satisfaction and tumescent, defeated frenzy. Through the long hours he sat sprawled in his wicker basket-chair across the doorway of the verandah room, hardly hearing or hearing only with contempt the moans and sobs and exhausted snores of his wife in their bedroom behind him. Years of ineffectual, drunken, boastful frustration culminated in this night. Now and then he took an exact, neat swig from one of the bottles on the floor at his side which he could reach by letting his hand fall down in a pleasant relaxed way. It needed no effort. Sometimes he talked to himself aloud in a voice of scorn, anger and mounting self-commiseration; and after each of these summaries of the injustice he had suffered from God and man he got up, sighing and swaying, and went into his daughter's room again, either to teach her (as he explained) a lesson she would not forget, or to get the truth out of her somehow. But, unlike him, she said not a word all night.

On a box by his chair lay the vivid studies of her face. He could not see them in the dark, but he remembered every line, done with masterly assurance and intolerable familiarity, and the casual suggestion of bare shoulders hinting at a terrible nakedness. So overpowering was the strength of his frenzy that he could not think with what remained of his brain; the alcohol gave him sleeplessness, insupportable consciousness only of himself as a man betrayed by his own daughter, who lay half-clad and shuddering under the clutched blankets of the bed in the female-smelling darkness.

At dawn, exhausted by the effort of prolonged paternal discipline, stunned with cold and drink, he fell asleep in the chair across the doorway. For a few hours no one moved in that lonely house. The clock on the kitchen dresser had stopped at some hour of night that surely never was, and time itself seemed to have halted there. Dawn came as a vast surprise. Birds sang before sunrise in the forest trees beyond the broken fence and the grass-grown track; with full-daylight the singing and whistling and chirping died away, but later, when the birds had stopped their night's hunger, they began again, and it was the clear calling of a thrush whose claws scrabbled on the iron roof that finally roused McIntosh to confused semi-consciousness. Before thought could intrude on this state of simple, shrinking awareness of being alive, he reached down stiffly for a bottle and emptied the remains of its contents into his mouth in haste. While the feeling of the liquor surged again through his frosty, sickened body he stared at the boards under his feet, and slowly let the rage renew itself in all his flesh. The angle of the sunlight told him it was mid-morning. After draining another bottle, he

shouted suddenly in a hoarse voice at his wife, and hoisted himself to his feet to go once more into Corrie's room.

As she made her way into the kitchen, stale with cold wood-smoke and the smell of uneaten cooking, the woman heard his voice rising and subsiding at the far end of the verandah. He sounded like a man praying aloud.

"Why don't he do her in and get it over?" she said as she let herself down into her chair by the icy stove. Somehow, after the orgiastic climax of the night, something seemed to be missing. She felt no longer any fear of him, only a pity in her flesh for Corrie and a great and weary longing to drink sweet hot tea with gin in it.

"I better do something," she said. "I better get the police or something." But for some minutes she could not even move to make a fire in the dead stove.

V

"Jeanie . . . Jeanie!"

Testament had recognised Corrie in spite of her hurt, bruised face and the unknown look of blind madness in her eyes. In the same moment instinct suggested to him that here was murder. He called out to his wife without realising he had done it, standing still against the buffeting wind, his crippled leg swinging, his eyes watching the eyes of the man.

He had never been ashamed to acknowledge himself a physical coward, though like all cripples he was capable of tremendous bodily courage. Only the mentally inert, the unimaginative, the dullard was made of brave—because ill-informed—flesh, he maintained; and all his life, since the days of childhood chastisements, he had fled from pain as men flee from fire, to turn and face it later; he had averted his eyes from suffering, dreaded illness in himself and scorned it in others, and always taken shelter where he could.

He had no time to call again through the easing wind before the man started towards him, dragging with him the child whose mouth remained open in a noiseless yell of warning. Testament lunged down backwards on his lame leg and began to move in the direction of the studio door on the far side of the shed, not daring for sheer cold fright to look away from the eyes of the other man, who was coming after him making inarticulate noises through the hole of his mouth, slowly because of the girl dragging helpless in his wake. He saw in a brief flash her stiffened legs and outthrust buttocks as she strained against the pull; he saw that the man was quite drunk and beyond reasoning, and as he realised this he realised too that he himself was in mortal danger.

Stepping back with sudden recklessness, he put his lame foot into a hollow of the ground, lost his always precarious balance, and fell, twisting as he went down so that his eyes still looked up at the bright, blind eyes of the man following him. The girl's choking sob of ultimate despair he did not hear, for with a quick animal movement he was up again, and turned, and running as he had run from his father's vengeance round the garden of his boyhood home.

The man too began to run, apparently unaware of the weight of the girl who was now holding his wrist with her free hand and being hauled along on her bare knees with her feet trailing. During all this concentrated activity no one had spoken.

Testament ran, jerking desperately from side to side, towards the pilot-door. Half an hour ago, when he came away, he had for once left it unlocked. His mind acknowledged and thanked the gods for that piece of confident carelessness as he flung himself bodily at the door in one last plunge on his sound leg. McIntosh was almost upon him; he had released his hold on the girl and hers on himself, and with his freed right hand he brought up the shotgun and cocked the hammer. In the abrupt silence, while the wind stood still, the metal sound was neat, blunt and cold. As he lifted the muzzle and slapped the butt into the hollow of his shoulder, he was laughing silently with a shivering excitement which had nothing to do with his hatred and fear of Testament. It was the inward laughter of a hunter over a sure mark, the laughter of a man about to kill.

Several things now seemed to happen in the single moment. As the girl, having regained her feet, jumped with hands outstretched at her father's hunched shoulders, Jeanie came hastily round the corner, Testament slammed the small door hard on the sleek gun-barrel, and McIntosh pulled the trigger, sooner than he had expected to. Of them all, his figure alone remained perfectly still with the gun at his shoulder and his cheek rested lovingly against the stock; until the girl, whose bodily impact had certainly caused the explosion, moaned in a dreadful voice, "Now you killed him!" and slid to her knees, then on to her face and over sideways in a dead faint. Jeanie, running, came to an abrupt stop. In her livid pallor her eyes looked as black as fresh tar. The deafening noise of the shot seemed to go on interminably, even after McIntosh had withdrawn from the now slowly opening doorway the gun's muzzle out of which a white smoke dribbled. With eyes no longer bright he stared at the smoke as it wavered and vanished suddenly on the reawakened wind, and then at the body of the girl on the ground near him, like a man snatched with violent abruptness out of a dream. From staring at the girl he turned to look again at the lowered gun-barrel, and his head began to shake on its thin neck, first in disbelief and then in a sort of quickening palsy, fast and uncontrollably. His hands, too, started their trembling, and from trembling fell to shaking so violently that he could no longer hold the gun, which fell against the door and thudded inwards on to the floor as the door swung fully open under its weight. Through these dull sounds there came the rip and yelp of a car's brakes jammed hard on in the road below the shed; a door slammed with a sharp thump, and hurried footfalls could be heard approaching on the other side of the building as Jeanie stepped forward and McIntosh stood back, shaking all over now, looking dazedly at his daughter and muttering in thick incredulity, "Her. How I got her? It was him . . . him . . ."

Jeanie pushed past him savagely as though he were no more solid than smoke, and stepped over the gun into the studio which no woman but the model on duty was supposed to enter. She had scarcely passed out of sight when McIntosh's wife and O'Brien, the district police constable, came round the end of the shed together, breathless with haste and foreboding. At sight of the child on the ground so white and battered and still, the man leaning his shaking body against the shed wall, and the gun across the doorway, Mrs. McIntosh started to moan softly in her throat and to twist her hands together. Looking at her husband with a look of horror, she went down on her knees

and felt blindly for the girl without averting her head. Daniel O'Brien walked straight to the doorway and picked up the gun, and broke open the breech. Then, not without embarrassment, he turned to his cousin.

"What's going on, Joe?"

McIntosh was beyond speech. He looked at his wife, who now nursed the girl's touselled head on her knees; he opened his small dry lips, to emit only a weak *blah* that became a huge bubble of saliva which burst at once and dribbled over his unshaven chin on to the front of the woollen pullover. Tears ran from under his eyelids down his thin, dark-red face. He looked like a man about to succumb to a stroke. Constable O'Brien moved close to him, cautiously, holding the gun by the barrel in a firm grip. So far no sound had come from the studio since the gunshot split open the silence of desperate activities, but none of those outside realised this; O'Brien and the woman were watching the drunken, shuddering man.

"Bit of trouble with the kid, eh, Joe?" O'Brien said gently. He did not attempt to touch McIntosh, but his left hand slowly reached for the neck of the bottle, slowly and with some difficulty withdrew it, while his eyes, blue and suspicious and frowning, stared hard at the blank eyes of his counsin to foresee any movement he might make.

"Bit of shooting, did I hear, Joe? Accidental." He was no fool; he had dealt with McIntosh and others like him before; more than once he had picked him up and taken him home in the van, more than once he had used force, not unwillingly, in doing his duty without excessive zeal; and he knew well that while McIntosh was frankly dangerous up to a certain degree of drunkenness, beyond it he was a sick man, helpless and a danger only to himself. He judged that the man before him, whom he was as yet holding only with his eyes, had now reached or even passed beyond that deciding point. Mrs. McIntosh, fearing reprisals, had told him as little as possible of the night's doings—enough only to explain her alarm, who was by this time usually alarmed by Joe only in her own imagination. Of the real reason for his behaviour she said nothing at all; it would come out soon enough anyhow, she knew, and she knew too, without caring, that she would eventually be blamed for it herself. No one thought of blaming Joe, mostly because no one thought he was worth blaming or even considering. Even by the loyal cabala he was known to be the disgrace of the community.

"Let's have a look inside," O'Brien said. "You behave yourself, Joe. I don't want to have to put the cuffs on you for an accident." As he spoke he stepped slowly backwards, taking care not to make an abrupt movement, until his heel touched the door-frame. Then, as if it were casually, he turned his head and looked inside.

For a short time he could see little against the strong light from the open north end of the shed between the windowless side walls. Then. as his suspicious eyes became used to this strong contrast of light with darkness, he was aware of Testament's figure slumped into a cane chair halfway down the studio, looking very small and huddled. Jeanie was on her knees beside him. O'Brien, who had said no more than a nodding "day" to either of these two people, and who considered strangers merely as trouble-makers in his district, did not like the probability that the man was badly hurt or even dead in that chair. It was a family affair, this, after all, and it affected

him personally because it could hardly improve his chances of promotion. In the back of his mind he was already considering how much, if not all, of it could be hushed up if no real damage had been done; and at the same time he vaguely saw it as the opportunity he and others had been waiting for to get old Joe out of the way once and for all. In a confusion of mind which he concealed stolidly, he stepped into the doorway, and saw that the man's eyes were open and that he and the woman were staring in a strange, interested way at something on an easel which stood with its back to the door. A glance along the earth floor showed him no signs of blood or injury.

"All right in here?" he said hopefully, putting down the bottle within the doorway but keeping hold of the gun. When he straightened up and looked again, he saw that Testament was laughing and his wife was weeping, though neither made any sound that could be heard above the surge and battering of the wind round the old building. The laughter and the tears almost unnerved him. Briefly he wondered if these two were right in the head, and whether Joe's state was due to a beating-up during which he had fired in self-defence, or even to defend young Corrie. He dared not show these suspicions, however.

After a glance outside at McIntosh, who had gradually sagged down the wall to a hunched sitting position, and at the woman and the girl who was beginning to recover at least her consciousness if not her wits, he walked watchfully down the studio, his boots making little noise on the smooth clay floor, until by turning round he could see the easel as well as the artist and his wife. Testament stopped his silent laughing with a great sigh as though he were profoundly satisfied by what he saw; then, as his gaze took in the policeman near him, he scowled with sudden ferocity. Jeanie sobbed once, aloud, from relief or grief there was no saying. He put his hand on her head, his dark look softening, and said scarcely above a whisper, "Buck up, old girl. It was either her or me, and it had to be her."

"Got her all right, didn't he," O'Brien said cautiously, staring with frankly surprised eyes at the canvas on the easel. A large ragged gap obliterated most of the lower part of what had been a half-length portrait, nearly completed, of Corrie in her school dress. O'Brien saw at once that it was, as such photographs went, a speaking likeness—as far as the neck; for the whole of the left shoulder and breast had been blown away by the spreading pellets, and the other half of what was always the first thing you looked at on Corrie hung forward and sideways, leaving only the head intact. Forgetting his immediate duty, which obviously called for the taking of statements from all who were fit enough to testify, he stepped nearer and to his disgust Corrie's face disappeared in what, when you looked close, was only a mess of paint with scarcely a human colour in the lot. This so offended his policeman's sense of the fitness of all material things for minute inspection that he lost interest at once in the portrait, and turned to the artist, who was evidently quite undamaged by gunfire.

"Missed you by a mile," he said unemotionally. "You was behind the door, I should say, and he let fly through the crack. Missed by a mile. I better get your statement."

Testament suddenly became very animated. He leapt out of the cane

chair, using his wife's shoulder to heave himself up. Not a gentleman, O'Brien observed with convinced distaste.

"He was out for murder," Testament shouted, prancing like a lopsided puppet in front of the easel. "Well, he's done it. He's ruined a masterpiece, a living thing. Bring him in and let him see. Go on Sergeant—bring him in, I tell you, the murdering atavar."

"He's not too good," O'Brien said. "Now you may have to prefer a charge—"

"Charge nothing," Testament said, shaking his first at the ruined canvas and shrugging off his wife's hand from his shoulder. "Let's go, old girl. Bring that lunatic in here. What the devil's the use of preferring a charge now?"

He rushed to the doorway and poked his head out. No one, and himself least of all, would have believed that five minutes earlier he had been firstly paralysed and then galvanised into terrific activity by sheer freeezing fright. Leaning one hand on the door jamb, he swung his lame leg with fury, kicking day in the face, and beckoned and shouted at the collapsed figure slumped at the foot of the wall. O'Brien went past him anxiously, and lifted McIntosh to his feet, already enumerating in his slow mind all the charges this city man was going to be able to bring: enough to keep old Joe inside for a few years, with his record. Shooting with intent was worse than manslaughter and next to murder; wilful damage to property; armed trespass . . . but then, this chap had been in the papers about a coroner's inquiry last year. He might not want any more. What would that leave? Drunk and disorderly, carrying fire-arms while under the influence . . . it might work.

"Come and look what you done, Joe," he said coaxingly. "This is going to be pretty serious for you . . . one thing and another." He urged McIntosh forward and into the shed, where Testament had now hurried to the far end as though about to throw himself through the vast skylike space in fury and despair; and the two of them the constable swaying and stumbling in sympathy with his besotted cousin, together passed the easel and continued on, as though willing but not eager to witness the artist's savage self-destruction. He, however, paused and turned on the very brink of the nine-foot drop, holding on with one hand, twisting up his beard with the other. Jeanie, near the easel, could see his eyes sparkling with temper.

"There now, Joe, look what you done to this gentleman's photograph," O'Brien said as it were placatingly. "You couldn't of wished for a nicer photograph of Corrie," and with a sudden strong twist of both hands he spun the stupefied, shaking figure round by the shoulders. McIntosh, at that distance, found himself looking dead into his daughter's eyes.

The memory of the past night, with all its shadows of immense lusts forever frustrated; immense and ultimate cowardice governing his whole life; the coarse ecstasy of inflicting fleshly pain on the girl who never made one effort to defend herself, scarcely even a sound louder than a gasp, plan though he might to wring from her at least one cry; the false Parnassian vigour of the alcohol flooding his gnawed brain; a humming thrill of deliberate and secret self-degradation; and somewhere, somewhere the obscure conviction that he was in the right as the father, the male, the governor of

all womanly flesh—this monstrous memory, hitherto only fragmentary since his awakening to the pure song and rattle of the thrush on the roof, was consolidated and touched to overwhelming life by the curious expression, pitched between oblivion and scorn, at once shamefully familiar and wholly strange, in the painted eyes under the smooth brow and the hat-brim turned back as though brushed upwards by an impatient wrist . . .

He thought he was screaming, but the sound coming from his funnelled lips was only a high mewing noise simulating a torrent of words that gushed out of his brain like a released flood. Testament said impatiently, "What's this, what's this? What's he say?" and Jeanie moved nearer to look closely at McIntosh.

"It's all right, you know," she said rapidly. "It was very good of you and your wife to let your daughter sit for her picture. I was here all the time to keep her company in case she got bored. Everything was perfectly all right." But she might have saved her defensive lying; for McIntosh, sagging on the constable's supporting hands, heard nothing but his own loud screaming, and saw nothing but Corrie's steady eyes coming closer.

"I think you'd better get him to hospital," Jeanie said in a clear, matter-of-fact voice to O'Brien. "I am a trained nurse. He's dangerously ill, Mr. O'Brien. I've seen delirium tremens before. Get him away in the car. No—wait. I'll take the others inside the house first. And take that—that bottle, you may need it to keep him quiet after all this."

She went hurriedly ahead out of the studio, and the wind whipped her thick skirt hard about her knees as she entered the brilliance of the sunlight. McIntosh spoke at last, in a tiny crying whine as though a cat had spoken with a microscopic voice.

"Hit me Danny like you did before. Put me out cold, Danny, for Chrissake, Dan."

Embarrassed by such a betrayal of private concerns, O'Brien glanced secretly at Testament as he began, with soothing sounds, to hustle the collapsing figure of McIntosh towards the door; but the artist remained leaning in the bright wide opening, his gaze fixed on the shattered canvas, until he felt himself to be alone. Then he limped to the easel and stood before it. Softly, as his eyes moved with seeming aimlessness over the intact upper surfaces, he began to whistle to himself, stopping once to laugh and murmur with relish, *"Hit me Danny like you did before. Put me out cold."*

VI

Maxwell, the agent, got out a glass to look more deeply into the brushwork on the canvas whose lower portion still hung like old rubbish from the stretcher on the easel. The paint was dry. With his fleshy finger-pads, cushions of sensitiveness above nervously-bitten nails, he felt the matt surfaces and at the same time licked his wide red lips without knowing it. Crouched fatly in front of the work, he had rather the appearance of a mighty frog tightly and unostentatiously encased in expensive tweed. Testament called him "the best agent money can't buy". He was very wealthy and a tireless hard worker, of immense knowledge laboriously got together.

"Two hundred," he said without turning from his scrutiny.

"No, no," the artist said rapidly, doing a sort of anguished jig behind the plump, bent back. "You can't have that. It's worthless."

"It's worth it to me," Maxwell said. "I have an idea."

"You could never show it. No proportion left. You couldn't frame it, for a start."

"I have an idea," Maxwell said and straightened up with a slight gasp. "Mount it above a surface of unpolished wood to complete the dimension. Frame the lot in darker wood and lift the tone back into place. It might work." "Good God. Like a cow looking over a rail," Testament said. "No."

"All right, Two-fifty," Maxwell said with no change of expression. "I want it, Will. I'd say it's the best bit of paint of yours I've seen for ten years. What do you say, Jeanie?"

"It would pay for the move," she said with a faint smile. She had made herself free of the studio since the previous week, during the visits of the police constable and a sergeant from the city who had proved to be agreeable with her about hushing up the whole matter as much as possible, partly no doubt because of relationship between the constable and McIntosh.

Testament ignored her. He looked angry.

"Ten years," he said. "Then what lies have you been telling me and everybody else for nine of 'em? You've been saying I might paint differently but never better. Dam' cheek, now I come to think of it."

"I didn't see it happening," Maxwell said almost humbly. "You're a genius, as I think we've agreed for some time. You can't ever tell about genius. I thought you'd gone the limit of originality, but this is something new again. New modifications of brushwork. Don't bother arguing. I don't only see them. I can feel them." He waved his plump right hand. The ring on the little finger left a streak of gold across the light air of the studio.

"I cut out the frills," Testament said, forgetting at once his anger. "You ought to be able to feel that surface. It was done on purpose. Tactile. I won't part with it, Maxie."

"All right," Maxwell said. He turned away from the easel and the artist to the woman standing watchful in the background. "I'll count on you to see I get it in the end, Jeanie," he said softly.

Testament, who had once more been studying the portrait as if oblivious of them both, spun round on one foot like a dancer. His eyes sparkled, his moustache bristled and his beard was arrogant.

"Over my dead body," he said.

"That's what I meant," Maxwell said unemotionally. "I nearly did, anyway, judging by what went on. It's a wonder it hasn't happened before this. But for that kid, you'd be a dead duck."

Testament stopped swinging his lame leg, and sucked in a deep breath. Then he appeared to realise that Maxwell was quietly making game of him, as he always had in the old days—the good old days. He laughed, and raised one hand to smooth his beard; the look in his eyes softened.

"And now it's the father who's the dead duck,' he said happily. "And no tears shed there, I'll warrant. A good riddance. I shall never wear a waterproof coat again without remembering him."

Or the girl too, he thought.

"What exactly happened?" Maxwell said to Jeanie.

"Afterwards, you mean," she said. "They took him to hospital, of course, and two days later he developed pneumonia and died quite suddenly. It often happens with alcoholics in the state he was in. He'd never have been quite sane again, I think, if he ever had been in the first place. As it happens, it was lucky for us, because for a while the police wanted us to prosecute. The man had been a nuisance hereabouts for years."

"Out like a light," Testament said with satisfaction.

"The girl flatly refused to go home," Jeanie said, "so we kept her here in bed for two days, while she and Will fell in love with each other—"

"What utter rot," Testament said loudly. "I wish you'd stop saying that, Jeanie. You'll end by believing it."

"She wasn't paid for this job, I suppose," Maxwell said.

"She was paid in full," Testament said irritably.

"Yes—but I mean in cash. I take it because the whole thing was so secret . . ."

"Will waited on her hand and foot—just like a father," Jeanie said lightly. "And we gave her a couple of pounds, with some difficulty. The mother got back a job she's had at one of the boarding-houses higher up. We got in touch with the convent sisters in the town, and they've taken the girl there. It couldn't have worked out better for the two of them . . . for all of us, I suppose. Except—"

She looked in a curious way at the murdered canvas.

"Well, the house is opened up and waiting for you," Maxwell said. "Let's have some lunch. It's in the car. Then we can go."

Jeanie went out in a hurry all at once. Maxwell looked round the old packing shed that had, after many empty years, served a purpose again. It was bare and high; and in the middle of the hard earth floor the easel held up the tattered canvas to the windless light of noon that flooded it strongly from the open north end. That canvas insisted on the model's presence still. The youthful ignorant scorn in the eyes was very real, seeming to recognise in all men something of the one man, now dead, who had twisted her life out of shape even before it began to grow; the precocious ripe curve of the unsmiling lips revealed the too-early ripeness of all the flesh; and one felt that the years ahead could hold for this simple creature nothing that was not trivial, after all—pathos without tragedy, laughter without joy, desire without the profundities of love and suffering, emotion never lifted into the realm of thought. Even the memory of a high-pitched, unreal happiness here in this makeshift studio, where, for her, self-realisation had been as much an illusion as it was for the artist a reality, would already be fading into larger, overblown shape, cloudier each day, without meaning. Only the painted face would exist, obscurely beautiful, as long as the canvas lasted.

"Poor little trollope," Maxwell said to himself. He followed Jeanie out into the bright day.

Testament loosened the thumbscrew in the sliding block that gripped the stretcher to the easel stand. While he prised out the pins that held the canvas to the wooden frame, he whistled softly in his beard, very glad to be going back to real life again.

MAIDEN'S HILL

THE SMALL GREEN and white omnibus, still carrying on its lower paintwork, splashes of mud like old blood, though the weather this morning was fine and hot again, stopped at the level foot of Maiden's Hill where an unmade road rose up to join the new main highway from the right.

The driver sounded the horn briskly, and then slumped back into his bucket-seat as though exhausted by the climbing his vehicle had just done, and by the prospect of steeper climbing immediately to continue. From the steep fall of the side road sounded shouts of enthusiasm and cheery greeting. Through the bright washed air and light of ten o'clock Old Bob was arriving, a little late as usual and—as usual—definitely pleased about it. Every second Friday at this time, he escorted himself up the mountain to the pub for a day's drinking and conversation. He was eighty-something (no one knew exactly) and as spry as a hare.

"That's the boy," he said to the driver as he nipped aboard. "Knew you'd make it son." His splendid beard went on talking silently within itself as he settled comfortably into a front seat, his cunning blue eye sharp on the other's in the mirror above the windscreen. The omnibus moved forward and uphill with a hopeless growl that became a sort of scream of anticipatory anguish at the next gear-change.

Old Bob smelt of rum, tobacco and eighty healthy unwashed years. During the previous afternoon of the fortnightly pension-day he had a little "practice drinking", as he called it, in the town down on the plain where he went to draw the money. Now he was already warmed up to put the "practice" to a test it never failed to pass, for the next eight hours, until he was turned out of the pub with old and new friends at six in the evening, to find his way down the mountain again and so home for another fortnight.

"A nice drop of rain," he said to the mirror. "You said, it boy." The driver continued to gaze in silence at the road which seemed to approach his front wheels vertically from the top of the windscreen, edged by trees that splayed apart to make way as they drew near, giving on either hand a dropping view of steep slopes.

"A nice drop of rain," Bob repeated; and that was as far as he would ever go with the monotonous interminable conversation of the lower mountain folk. His talk had an habitual insincere enthusiasm, with exaggerated inflexions that made him sound cheerfully sarcastic. When he said "A nice drop of rum," his beard at last endorsed the words, and seemed in its own way to savour in agreeable retrospect the breakfast draught. It was a beard locally famous, living in great part a life of its own that had nothing to do with the sprightly

flow of words that came out of it. Often, indeed, it seemed to give its owner the lie direct, at which he would furtively smooth it left and right, as though soothing its roused objections.

Winter and summer, Old Bob had his breakfast dish of rum with tea in it for a footwarmer. Once a Friday traveller meeting his beard up at the pub as he passed through from the west had asked, inspired, "What's this—Rum Jungle?" but the name had not stuck for a moment. The beard, explosive though it could be at times, would not have it. The beard was Old Bob, and Old Bob—with a few unexpected monkey-tricks thrown in—was the beard.

Man and beard, like two separate identities, looked down upon the passing slopes of Maiden's Hill from the side windows of the struggling omnibus. To the right, at the head of the wide wandering valley beset sometimes but never quite diverted by savage spurs of the upper mountain, the earth humped a shoulder that had once been an orchard holding, descending steeply east and north clear under the sky. Where the triangle of this fruitful outcrop sat its base beyond the labouring hill road, the gutted shell of a bungalow—gutted not by fire but by time with the help of pick-thief human hands—sat also, behind and beneath the towering cover of a tree, a proud, erect and dying pine whose life may well have begun to leave it when life finally left the simple house beneath, which was still called Maiden's. On the two slopes beyond, the oranges had long since vanished, sunk beneath the high close tides of mimosas flooding back and upwards to the light: the wattle forest of the foothills whose bark is stripped, year after year, for the tanneries of Sydney.

Upon this grim and desolate scene Old Bob's small bright eyes looked out between beard and brim with a speculative regard. The climbing was slow: there was time enough to see, behind the rain-whitened massive trunk, the two front window-sockets sightless under their brows of rusting, creeper-shaggy iron not worth the taking; to see right through to a small unroofed verandah at the back on the left, and on the right the skeleton fabric of an old sort of kitchen and living-room in one. The windows gaped up a little at the road from below it, but in the holes and openings beyond them parts of the long valley were framed and sections of the lowest northern sky, so steep was the slope on which it had been built. It seemed to face not the road and traffic of the road but the high cut wall beyond; for in spite of old Maiden's ferocious, helpless protests the part of the highway now called Maiden's Hill had been cut as though with saw and chisel clean through the humped southern end of his block of land, and the bank opposite his house had been his.

It was all the rumpus and to-do over this brutal feat of road-making, piled upon his advancing years made heavy by the death of his humble wife and the slow failure of his orange groves, that was supposed by doctor and layman alike to have spoiled his wits completely in the end. Senile perhaps, rather than insane, he died of a stroke of irony that was too much for a worn-out simple mind like his; for he died worth more money than he had ever in his life had at the one time—and with no least idea of how to spend it. Old Bob got the lot. Old Bob was never without a useful idea, something far-sighted or simply inspired, but always with money in it somewhere. That was why, now, he lived free and handsome with his age pension for drinking money and other treats.

"The Old Uncle," Bob said cheerily with a sort of salute at Maiden's as the

omnibus clambered past it higher into the mountain. The gesture did not peter out limply in a hand dropped to the knee. It seemed to gain strength from its own movement, and became a thumbed fist that dug the driver like a wooden peg in the ribs under his raised elbow as he clung to the steering wheel. The 'bus felt it, too, and staggered. Old Bob, no chicken, was as tough as tree-roots.

"Cut it out, Bob," the driver said.

"A grand old feller, the Old Uncle," Bob said with warmth and tenderness, disowning the thumb.

"Be before my time."

"You said it, boy. Yes, you said it—a grand old feller. And," Bob said, his voice becoming hushed and unctuous beneath its natural resonance, "a gentleman. A gentleman of the old school, boy. You said it."

He spoke as if he stood by an open grave. The vibrating voice took on a preaching cadence. It boomed softly in the church of his rib case. His little, knowing blue eyes were wet as he turned to give the beard a last glimpse of Maiden's, now receding downhill behind them in the sun.

Old Bob was not the only one thereabouts who remembered old Mick Maiden sitting under that splendid pine tree during his last year or so of life, but he was the only one who remembered him with compassion and without mirth. He was the only one who had been allowed within civil speaking-distance of the man seated erect and mindless on the metal bound tool box containing what he thought was his treasure.

The occasional foot-passengers, mostly men from the district working for anyone during the off-seasons on their own small holdings; sometimes city visitors in bright clothes with their city-conditioned voices defying the mountain silence; always school-children, twice a day except in the holidays—all these appeared to ignore old Maiden under his tree, either because they were strangers or—an even stronger reason—because they were not.

He did not discourage approach: he forbade it, and ignored it until anyone unaware of the ban (like the parish priest on one occasion; and luckily he was a nimble man himself) came within exact reach of the long-handled horse-whip that rested sometimes on the lean and rigid knees, sometimes more innocently still on the packed, brown, smooth pine needles underfoot. Even then he never spoke. The thongs of the whip had tongue enough for two.

Old Bob he knew and always acknowledged with a grave bend of his long-haired head and the remark, addressed to the raw red cliff-bank—his bank—across the road: "Ah—The sister's boy. Young rip." And Old Bob, at that time past sixty and still a bit of a devil in the district in spring and summer nights, acknowledged this courtesy by putting a knowing finger to his ageless hat-brim and replying, "Ah there, Uncle," with a dry affection in which his small bright eyes and his handsome beard acquiesced spontaneously.

There was, in fact, a tight relationship between the two, tighter than that of a mere angular line of common blood. As a boy, Bob had been raised by his young uncle and aunt in their more prosperous days. His mother, older than her brother, had left her child of ruin on his hands when she set out on her wanderings in search of Bob's father—wanderings which being uncharted, came to no known end. Mr. and Mrs. Maiden raised the child to a young

and limber lad to help them in the orchard. What he cost in food and clothing he earned by hard work, like most of the boys of those parts.

Unlike most of them, however, he did not stay, half-educated, conservative, without a thought or an opinion or even an experience unique and his own, to take over the old place, rejuvenate it here and there, marry, beget, and sink with his inheritance back into an indifferent old age in his turn. He left Maiden's when it was flourishing, glowing on its slopes with the joined energy of his uncle and himself, and disappeared from the district for forty years. When he returned, much was changed.

Mick Maiden lived alone at the old place now. His humble, obedient wife died, childless but widely mourned, in the worst year of the great depression, two years before Bob came back. Mick did not know what to make of this situation, though he might have foreseen it: no children, his wife dead, replanting put off again and again in the good years until it was now too late, such fruit as there was, not even worth the picking, not worth looking at, unwanted anywhere in the world; and, worst of all, himself unwanted and his father's house empty and decaying at his back as he sat under the pine tree he had planted as a young man, and stared at the raw red cliff of clay across the road —his bank, that the council's roads board had not quite taken from him. It must therefore have been with obscure emotion that he recognised at first glance his returned nephew looking in at him from the new road beyond the old rabbit-wire fence that had once enclosed his wife's front garden. If so, he did not show it.

"Ah—the sister's boy. Young limb. Come back, would you?"

"Ah, Uncle. Got a new road through."

The sister's boy wore a beard that was greyer and mightier than the Old Uncle's, a very surge of beard to the lower eyelids of the small slanting eyes that still had the sharp, cold innocence of a kitten's. It might have been only yesterday that he had walked away through the small gate in the fence he now approached to open. As his hand came to rest on the top bar, Mick Maiden raised the horse-whip. For a moment, beard challenged beard while Bob tried to rearrange his thoughts, whatever they had been; but the older darker beard, having not a thought behind it, won the brief encounter. Bob leaned his arm on the gate.

"What's in the old tool-box?"

Mick Maiden laid the whip gently across his knees. He stared past Old Bob at the bank of clay far behind him.

"What's in the old tool-box, Uncle? Made a fortune?"

The uncle put his hand down to the padlock that showed between his knees, and then quickly thrust the other hand inside his ancient coat. The whip rolled to the floor of pine needles, where he let it lie. His blank face became troubled with an unwonted concern.

He had not surprised himself by recognising at once the vanished nephew who had written in the past forty years, perhaps a dozen letters, each from a different part of the continent. It had happened as naturally as key fits lock, without thought and without comparison. It could only be the sister's boy, who was bound to come back some day; it could only be young Bobbie who would walk up to the gate like that and make to open it.

And—as thought stirred in his brain—he perhaps saw that it could only be

young Bobbie, the only one of the family left alive, who would know at once the secret of the tool-box. The young rip. Trust him.

A storm of bewilderment, grief long ignored, disappointment at having his secret known (and so lessened in its comforting power) and simple animal pleasure in the nearness of his own blood so troubled the old man as he looked past the sister's boy leaning familiarly on the sagging gate that tears, like the last drops of life's juice squeezed out, filled his blank eyes and crept down his whiskers, two or three on each side of his clamped and hidden mouth.

He was but twenty years older than his nephew, though in spite of his darker colour he looked twice that. A life without any excitements much greater than the occasional wonder what it was all about, the occasional sorry grudge against whatever Fate had ordered his lack of children, had nevertheless left deep and hollow marks upon him—in particular the dreadful sign of half-conscious futility, the burdened look of the unwanted man. The apparent loss of his wits, which made his neighbours and former acquaintances scattered round the district laugh, was a last attempt to save the dignity of having been born a man, and defeated its own unconscious purpose. All he could do now was to sit and look, sitting erect and looking at nothing; draw his age pension every second week down in the town, buy his barest necessities for the fortnight, and return in speechless haste to lug out of some hiding place his old locked box and sit on it until night or early cold or the flurried mountain rain drove him back within his draughty walls and leaking roof.

Bob's return, known already to all but him, changed nothing in his habits. What it did for him, once he had got over his first suspicious impulse to whip him, was to give him someone to listen to, someone to answer now and then; someone, as the weeks went by, to whom he felt inclined to show his secret treasure.

The two bearded figures squatted over the chunky stones spread carefully on a piece of flour bag on the scented pine needles.

"Just keep your hands off, boy—that's all I ask," the Old Uncle said sternly. He moved his own knotty paws, rinded and shining in patches with age, above the stones like a magician making a mystery.

"Diamonds," he said with soft modesty. "One or two show gold, but mostly they're diamond ore." He chuckled without looking up. "The buggers don't know what they did for me when they cut through that bank out there."

Old Bob glanced through the broken fence wire at the red clay bank opposite. He had done a lot of mining in the past forty years. The clay shaded down to packed and sloping strata of grey shale. A hundred miles underground there might have been diamonds. A hundred miles in almost any direction there might have been gold; but not here. What lay so heavily ranged on the rectangle of white sacking were mostly lumps of shale, and a few pieces of what looked like ironstone.

"All I had to do," the other said, wheezing slightly in his crouched position under the splendour and airy weight of the great pine tree, "was to nip across and pick 'em up. They took some finding, but once I got the idea, you see, it was child's play."

Child's play. Bob took a handful of beard to stop it revealing his laughter

of pity and disgust mixed impartially. The poor old man, he thought, shocked and compassionate.

"A grand old feller," he said up at the pub that afternoon to his growing audience; for he had not yet had enough to drive them from him with his garrulous, watchful chatter and his wicked thumb in the chest and ribs.

"No matter what they tell you—the old uncle. You said it, boy. All alone. Game to the last. I wouldn't put it past him"—he gave his beard a short drink to create slight suspense—"I wouldn't put it past him to live another twenty year. I would not. A grand old feller."

Already the district had taken him back, with amused admiration, curiosity, a certain concealed pride; and he knew it. The men he drank with were sons of the boys and girls he had lived among as a lad, with here and there one of his own generation, shy, taciturn in his presence, envious of the much-travelled wanderer returned. He was friendly towards everyone, showing no superiority, at home in the district as though he had never left it.

Above all, he kept quiet about his own affairs, and was vastly industrious for thirteen days in each fortnight, Sundays included. For hours he could talk without revealing anything, for he was skilled in generalisations, abstract commonplaces, the reassuring patter of homely clichés of speech.

A mile down the side road his homeward trail turned sharply into the fruitful depths of the long valley, where he had a "bit of a place" of his own. No one had seen him arrive, or known that for close on forty years that bit of a place, sweetly set athwart a stream of scanty but permanent water, had been his, obtained heaven knew how soon after he left Maiden's, and paid for no doubt with earnings in remoter parts of the continent.

At all events, he had homed to it, and not to his uncle's, like a dog; to the time-weathered hut of two-inch turpentine slabs with its low stone fireplace and earth floor that would outlast its owner and even the memory of him, short of some dire destruction; to the mimosa-infested rich half-dozen acres around it, which he had cleaned up again within a year; to something—in unexpressed local imagination—more than solitude: almost a mysterious non-existence.

Alternate Fridays excepted, he came into view now and then riding a small, sturdy horse whose admirable condition gave no hint that it sometimes drew the light plough of the master it carried so jauntily, the jaunty bearded rider whose dog at the nag's feet was more aloof and proprietary than any dog in all those parts. To anyone more discerning than the local people, that dog would have revealed in its manner the true nature of Old Bob; aloof, possessive, full of secret plans in seed or shooting . . .

These two animals were often to be seen in attitudes of timeless patience outside of Maiden's gate, while the two old men sat under the spread of the pine tree when the weather was fine: the one smoking watchfully at a cherry-wood-pipe which he might gaily wave at a recognised passer-by; the other, erect on his tool-box, gazing with mindless and severe eyes at the clay-cutting opposite, the source of his secret treasure that was, it seemed, his hold on life.

Had any man been permitted to sit there with them he must have been excused for suspecting dark mysteries of communication between those two old men; for now and then Old Bob would take the pipe-stem from out his

beard to remark with conclusive emphasis, "You said it, Uncle," at which the other would gravely nod his covered head at the far bank, saying not a word.

It seemed that some wordless communion went on in their heads, the one so shrewd, the other so mindless. If bad weather ruled the high slopes and the wind blew south or west, they sat before the stove in the dilapidated kitchen where Bob had sat so often in the early evenings of boyhood; and here, perhaps prompted by memory as much as by a mug of hot rum-and-water, his tongue was loosened now and then and he talked of his droving years, his prospecting years, his years in the north, the west, the far south, all the years he had been away getting and spending money, while the old uncle had become rooted and as it were rotted into the earth of Maiden's Hill until not even in imagination could he have left it.

His immobile gaze remained on the golden light in the open firebox; he seemed not to hear the resonant talk of his old nephew; but at every mention —and they were many and inevitable—of money, of gold taken out of the earth, out of streams, from quite shallow holes in the naked ground, he nodded gravely his erect and ancient head and supped at his pannikin of grog with a sort of affirmative and relishing eloquence.

Bob had soon made himself welcome to the older man. He patched some of his clothes and sometimes swept and cleaned the kitchen-room for their greater ease in winter days. With the deft economy of a true bushman he cooked a meal now and then, or left on the back of the stove an easy and succulent stew for the coming night, when he himself would be gone, the old man alone.

Old Maiden, seated immovably on his box, let him do these things, if he noticed him at all except as a voice talking of gold. Once or twice, in the beginning, movements not his own had snatched his gaze from the contemplation of a dream, and his fingers tightened round the whip-stock as with a sudden, narrow intelligence he eyed Bob and formed in his badger-coloured beard the words "The sister's boy—young limb. Come back, eh?"

It was some time before anything of moment happened at these foregatherings of theirs. Old Bob had sufficiently consumed his restless lust for change to be able to settle down, it seemed, to the steady job of making his bit of a place return him what he had paid for it so long ago. His visits to Maiden's were irregular; he neither came nor left empty-handed, in the beginning, until he had borrowed everything he fancied from the tool-shed and the harness-room which adjoined each other under the kitchen floor.

Old Maiden gave no sign of having noticed what "the boy" took, once he understood that Bobbie wanted some of the things he had used as a lad to use again in his wiser years. He seemed, however, to have lost all memory of the past, and certainly had no plans for any future. Since he would obviously go on getting older, he could be more sure each fortnight of his right to the age-pension which for a score of years he had drawn, on which for nearly a decade he had depended.

His nephew's brisk activities about catch-crops, small stock-deals, tan-bark stripping (on a springy home-made ladder Bob was as nimble as a kitten) and occasional faintly-mysterious jobs for one neighbour or another, would not have interested him even had he known of them; and he did not.

But in Old Bob himself he seemed to have developed or revived an interest

of an impersonal, proprietary sort such as men of property have for their heirs-at-law. This interest took no account whatever of the passing of time. It was made evident, albeit rarely, in sudden remarks volunteered after their long silences.

"About time you thought of gettin' married."

Old Bob's beard bristled in all directions before its owner could quell it sufficiently to answer aloud.

"Married? Huh. Marriage is only for the women."

Once the old man mentioned having made a will; once only.

"Everything goes to you, boy, now your auntie's gone."

"No need to talk about that yet, Uncle. You got another twenty-year to go yet. Time enough."

For some reason this species of flattery roused old Maiden to a painful anger.

"Twenty years! What do I want with another twenty years? I got all I want—here." He hit the box he was sitting on with one blue-and silver fist. "You young fellers—always talkin' as if like they say time's money. You got it wrong way round. Money's time, boy, and don't you forget it."

"You said it, Uncle."

In due course the old man seemed to become conscious of the tremendous fact that Old Bob was not curious about nor even interested in the guarded treasure. His visits were even more irregular, often lasting little longer than it took to pass the time of year with his uncle.

This new, incomprehensible thing about the sister's boy began to seem mighty strange during his days of long solitude. He watched Bob more and more, the red clay-bank over the way less and less. Never so much as a glance at the box. Took it for granted! He was confused, like a child with a plaything which, once so novel to all, at last is seen to interest him alone, becoming the more cherished the more it is disregarded of the world.

His small wooing stratagems had no effect on brisk and busy Bob. He tried walking away from the box while the other was near it; once he went right out of the kitchen, hastening through wind and rain down the back steps and round the old house to burst in on the scene he had left by the inner door.

The scene had not changed. Bob sat smoking at the fluttering fire in the stove, each far-apart puff of smoke coming sharp from his beard like an ejaculation of formal surprise. He did not even look round.

"Been taking a constitootional, Uncle? That's the boy."

It was deeply disturbing to the old man, as the weeks went on. The gold was there; there was the sister's boy—the young limb—not interested; not interested even when, as an extreme provocation, he left the key in the lock and the lock open and stayed outside for almost five minutes.

He began to lose his rigid placidity. His mind was working, in its fashion, rustily, crazily, a little passionately. He became nervous, forgot his horse-whip, and played often with his beard, impatient of the other's absences, unhappy with his vast and busy contentment. He did not know it, but he was afraid of something. Insofar as his mind could grasp such an improbability, he felt almost as though he were becoming involved in some black and cunning plot—he and his treasure; and this troubled profoundly his former sense of his own security in a world that had no more use for him.

At last he could suffer it no longer. With calm desperation, like that of a

woman who suddenly believes she is loved no more, he offered his choicest possession, all he had left that had value to himself because it was prized by others.

Old Bob came whisking in one afternoon to find the hoard of stones laid out on its sacking all over the long kitchen-table. Perhaps in order not to seem too easy in his giving, old Mick had in the end placed the long-handled whip across the lot, diagonally. He leaned on the end of the table, one blue-silver hand grasping each corner, and his eyes, no longer remote, dared Old Bob, with a sort of anguish and rage, not to look at it.

"Got a bit of rabbit-stew here," Bob said, going straight to the stove and putting at the side of it a black billy, its lid jammed down tight with brown-paper. "Caught her last night, cooked her this mornin', fresh as the dew."

The whip hissed softly in the air as he turned, and its lash wrapped without hurting round his throat, beard and all. At the same time the old uncle leaned back on the handle like an angler making a strike. Bob came to the table at a little run, grasping the belly of the whip instinctively in front of his tethered chin.

Maiden kept it taut for a moment, then shook it slack and free.

"The old uncle," Bob said reproachfully, with care. "What's the trouble, Uncle?"

"No trouble, boy . . . Look what's on the table."

His quiet voice was strong with a moment's rage whose cause he had not had time to understand. The two bearded faces, so alike, so different, gazed at each other's eyes above the table's length and the lumps and fragments of earth-smeared rock. Then Bob looked down, softly consoling his insulted beard with one sinewy hand.

"It's all yours, boy."

"Ah, now, Uncle!"

"I said it's all yours."

Bob had never in his life found himself in the position of being bought. Always it was he who had done the buying and fixed the price. Now, as he heard the whip slither off the far end of the table like a recoiling snake when his uncle drew back the handle purposefully, he understood he was for sale, that very instant, unless he acted quickly.

Stretching out one steady hand, while the fingers of the other locked themselves in his beard as though to keep his body's balance, he touched one piece of stone. It was among the largest, and did not belong to that part of the country at all, as far as he knew, nor to the other sorts on the table.

He had seen it in a flash when the treasure was first displayed for affection's sake under the opulent manifold arms of the great pine tree. Under its coating of dust it had a smoothed look, as though for some æons it had been handled by water in a shallow bed.

"That one! There's maybe gold in that. But th' others—see the diamonds, deep inside 'em?"

Old Bob could not lift his caressing hand. He crooked the thumb, and with its iron-hard nail scraped a surface of the thing where the old uncle could not see what he was doing. It was like scratching the rind of an old cheese. He looked up and held old Maiden's eye with his sharp blue stare, wiping his fingers, but not the thumb, on the sacking.

"You said it, Uncle. Diamonds. A nice little fortune for your old age."

"I said it's yours, boy. So take it. Go on—take it all."

"Not in one go. Too heavy. Safer here, too. No one to look after it at my place."

"I don't want it here, I say. I want you to have it. Someone'll only come bustin' in one of these nights and lift the lot. With a gun, even."

Old Bob had recovered. He lifted his hand to scratch his head, then turned it palm-up, and looked. In the thumbnail, facing out, his little shrewd eyes could just see a low shine, yellow. Suddenly with both hands he lifted the cat-shaped piece of stone, the muscles of his forearms standing up with the effort.

"She's heavy."

"Certainly," old Maiden said with great dignity. "Gold is like that. Diamonds is better."

"Tell you what, though," Bob said. "We better shift it piece at a time. I'd want a dray for the whole lot, unless I loaded it bit by bit in the trap out in front. Where they could see it."

"Don't take no risks, boy," the old man said. "I just want you to have it all with you. I ever want it back, I'll ask you, you'll bring it."

Bob's voice took on its deepest emotional sonority.

"I'll look after it, Uncle. Safe as houses. All yours still. A bit at a time."

"Not mine—yours, boy."

The two old beards conspired with mutual suspicion in the fading afternoon light, one at either end of the rock-strewn table.

For three days, missed specifically only by his aloof and proprietorial dog and his all-purposes cob, Old Bob was out of the district.

Looking somehow mischievously refreshed, he returned as he had gone, carrying a sugarbag over one shoulder or the other or travelling with it between his feet, which were wearing their best boots; and while his eyes noted the legs, hips and busts of the occasional young woman who shared stretches of his travels (with a secret look of "I could make you jump, my dear"), or winked innocently at any man whose glance they met, his beard preserved an air of immense discretion, barely moving when he spoke, and saying not a word of its own, as though by such cautionary silence it would also preserve its owner's deepest secret—if necessary, in spite even of himself.

He went direct to his bit of a place on his return, with the sugar-bag dragging down first one shoulder, then the other, as he changed unconsciously for ease. His blue dog, as if understanding the unusual sounds coming from within the slab-walled hut, lay alertly across the doorway, looking out. No amount of scraping, thuds and stampings made him turn his cold eyes from the one approach.

Though it was late in the day, Old Bob, his inside exertions completed briskly, came out and saddled his horse, and with a word to the dog rode off. Reluctantly the dog watched him go. Then he returned to the doorway.

In his own fashion Old Bob was wiser than most men of his age and upbringing. He knew men, too, and could deal calmly with all he had ever met, in peace or otherwise. He was only an instinctive "psychologist", however, and his wisdom in human relationships had its limits. Long before he had made one great mistake, when at sight of the treasure for the first time

he immediately fell in with the common opinion that the old uncle was out of his wits. All the stones but one, as far as he knew, were worthless. Nothing in his life's experience could have warned him that Old Maiden might know it too.

With a busy air of one bringing momentous tidings, he swung off his little horse at the sagging gate, hung the rein and went quickly inside out of the chill of early evening.

Mick Maiden was seated on a kitchen-stool, poking at the unwilling fire in the stove with the butt-end of the whip-handle. The tool-box, unlocked, lurked under the table. He did not look round at Bob's entry, but the words "The boy . . ." formed as it were in the air before him and floated up the chimney with the smoke oozing from the cracked and unfitting plates. Bob clapped him gently on the shoulder.

"You're a rich man."

Old Maiden pushed at the heartening fire with a sort of feebleness of hand and intention.

"The sister's boy," he said with startling, exasperated emphasis. "Young fool . . . I know where you've been."

"More than two-thousand-pound-worth o' gold in that bit of stone."

"Could of told you. Young fool. Saved you the trouble. What business is it of yours?"

Old Bob confirmed his own earlier mistake by beginning now to act what he thought to be the proper part.

"Now for the others, Uncle. One by one. Nothing suspicious."

"Young fool."

"Now, Uncle. What you said. I'll take care of 'em for you out home."

"Young fool."

Something was going wrong. That box was under the table. Bob stooped over the old seated man who still had not looked at him. As he did so the handle of the whip, raised perhaps by accident just then to its proper upright position, caught him smartly on the beard and nose.

He started back, and the old man stood up suddenly and threw the whip towards a dark far corner.

To Old Bob it was a gesture of immense drama, executed with a sort of angry weariness like an action delayed too long; and it came near to frightening him.

"I knew that was the end of him—throwing away that whip of his," he said, many days later at the pub where a vague, spontaneous wake grew up to mark the mortal passing of the owner of Maiden's Hill and an imaginary treasure, who by tenacity and silence had lived to become the district's oldest inhabitant.

Few of the men drinking to his memory had known him better than by sight; none of them had in any way liked him, for in that mountain-foothill country it is as much as anyone's reputation is worth to like a crazy man. Only Old Bob had had an affection for him, and in a nephew—almost a son—that was natural, and Bob's fidelity had been acknowledged, silently, and taken as proper.

It was proper, too, that Old Bob should inherit the old fool's leavings, paltry though they were. No one expected him to do anything about the place

known as Maiden's; the wattle had a hold on it, leaching the goodness of the soil, and the oranges had long since died to the stock from neglect, shooting again here and there from the roots as the original bush-lemon whose sturdy radical system had for so long nourished the alien fruit.

Nothing but tan-bark to take off Maiden's now; and year after year, in the warm weather, the axe of Old Bob might have been heard from time to time in the steep thickets, and the neat low stacks of bark seen in solid congregation under the exhausted but still noble immobility of the giant pine in front of the house, which squatted dismally behind it high above the valley.

The old man never sat there again on his mysterious locked box. After he had flung away his whip, like a man under some obscure compulsion casting away all further ambition, all authority, all human pride and obligation, all claim, even upon life itself, he disappeared, muttering "Young fool" in a parched voice, from the dusky kitchen into the inner darkness of the ancient dwelling where he had been begotten and born; and there, some time later, at an unknown hour of a cold and starry night, while the pine tree held its breath in the still darkness above him, he died.

Old Bob could not get any word out of him again. He had called him a young fool, and that was that. He remained behind the closed door of the bedroom, silent, unseen, even when Bob dug up and brought back the hefty nugget that had come from God knew where—for Bob never knew, and if the old uncle did he refused to say, refused to speak at all.

On the following morning, arriving early and troubled, the sugar-bag again dragging down his shoulder, he was troubled still more to see, when he dismounted with youthful lightness, that the tool-box lay tumbled empty under the pine tree, in that place where for so long it had been as a throne of mysterious and life-giving strength. Not a stone left in it, not a stone to be seen nearer than the half-buried rubble at the foot of the high red clay-bank on the other side of the road up which the trucks of long-distance hauliers were already roaring with loud and furious power, two hours out of Sydney through the dawn.

Bob never saw the treasure again, nor learned what the old man had done with it during the night. He stowed the precious nugget in the rusty oven of the kitchen-stove, and stood the fallen whip upright again in a corner by the hearth, where a spider with absolute prescience, used it to support an extension of her web. For the following few days he called regularly, unwelcomed, noting here and there a sign of the old man's existence, which was continuing from habit and as it were despite him, like that of a wound-up clock in a locked room.

After a peep inside the oven he went away, leaving food on the kitchen-table, where it accumulated and mouldered, although he knew the old uncle was still there within; waiting, he came to realise, for him—the sister's boy—to be gone again as he had gone 40-odd years before. Their relationship was all but ended; Bob, for all his wisdom, could not understand, but his instinct, which could not tell him why, told him it was so.

Then came the day, after a week or so of more and more irregular calls, when he found the old man's will on the kitchen-table and the old man peaceful and dead in his blankets that were as old as himself. His dead beard was

white round his open mouth that seemed to exhale a round "O" of unemotional and never-ending wonder.

With some difficulty Bob closed the flung-up eyelids; his own beard, solitary again now, made inaudible remarks and required pacifying when he had left that room.

After hiding the heavy sugar-bag in a secret place of his childhood he stood for some time under the pine tree, in whose huge cone of branches the morning sun was deeply enmeshed, and fingered the will without opening it. Then he got upon his horse and rode down Maiden's Hill, a jaunty figure bearded proudly to the eyes.

"A grand old feller, just the same,' 'he said aloud, as though at the end of a long thought; and his beard, gay and independent in the sunny breeze of his going, seemed to endorse his owner's sentiment with approval.

THE PATRICIA HACKETT PRIZE

The Patricia Hackett Prize for the best original creative contribution to *Westerly* in 1965 is shared by Colin Campbell for his story, "Lizard Without A Tail" (which appeared in No. 2 of 1965), and Fancy de Grys for her story, "The Night Of The Frogs" (which appeared in No. 1 of 1965).

The Editorial Committee gratefully acknowledges the kindness of Professor G. A. Wilkes of the University of Sydney, who acted as judge.

The prize of 100 guineas (210 dollars) is to be awarded annually. This is the first occasion on which the award has been made.

Appreciations of Miss Patricia Hackett in whose memory the prize was endowed appear in *Westerly* No. 1 of 1965.

BOOK REVIEWS

Tomorrow's Sun—A Smuggled Journal from South Africa, Helen Joseph, (Hutchinson, 302 pp. $5.30).

ONE OF THE striking aspects of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa is the prominent part played in it by women of all races. Nothing makes the Nationalist Government more furious than when White women become actively involved in demanding human rights for their dark-skinned brothers and sisters, and Helen Joseph is a particular thorn in their side and a target for their spate of laws which, according to the International Commission of Jurists, have had the result of defeating the true ends of justice and turned South Africa into a police state.

Helen's background is interesting, for she entered the political arena only in her forties. Born and educated in England, her first job was as a teacher in a high school for girls in the princely State of Hyderabad. Here she made friends among the Moslem ruling class, but, like them, she simply accepted without question that the majority of the people lived in destitution.

"I was impervious to the dramatic contrasts around me, the depths of poverty and the displays of fabulous wealth."

In 1931 she went to South Africa, where she married. It worried her that there was a colour-bar against Indians there. This she defied to some extent in her personal friendships, but she was barely conscious of the much greater discrimination against Africans and Coloureds—like most South African White women, she had not come into contact with any except house servants.

When war broke out she joined the Army as an Information Officer, and the requirements of her lecturing led to studies which opened her eyes concerning inequalities between the races. So after her discharge in 1946 she took a diploma in Social Studies and began to work in Community Centres. Her first post was at a Centre for Whites, mostly poor Afrikaners, but soon she was working for the National War Memorial Health Foundation and had established a Centre in Cape Town for Coloured people—"The tragic stepchildren of white South Africa, people of mixed blood, descendants of Whites, yet rejected by them."

During her two years in Cape Town, she went back temporarily to Johannesburg to put the finishing touches to the new Foundation Centre being organised for Africans in one of the segregated townships.

"At last I had worked with the African people; they were no longer a group of dark-skinned shadows. I had become sharply aware of them as human beings, as close to me as the Coloureds had become. As the result of this chain of experience I came at last to the personal decision that for me political work was the answer. The race laws, the whole system of organising people according to race, had to be changed."

She obtained a job as Secretary of the Transvaal Clothing Industry Medical Aid Society of the Garment Workers' Union, then led by Solly Sachs (who visited Australia in 1964 to raise money for the Defence and Aid Fund). Then she looked for a political home and first joined the Labour Party, but found it to be ineffectual—for one thing, it excluded non-Whites from membership! By that time, the Nationalists had been in power for two years. The new apartheid laws which they introduced led to the Defiance Campaign of 1952. Helen was tremendously impressed by the non-violent and disciplined nature of that protest, in which 8,000 people, including a few Whites, went willingly, singing, to jail. So when, in 1953, she was approached to join the new Congress of Democrats, which was to be a sister Congress to the African and Indian ones, with a White membership specially engaged in

working to change the white racist point of view, she immediately accepted.

It was in that year that I first met Helen and became associated with her not only as a co-worker in the political field, but also as a personal friend. I have always had a tremendous adimration for her complete integrity, her courage, her capacity for hard work and her almost fantastic talent for organisation. It is no wonder that she speedily rose to the leading ranks in the Congress of Democrats, and that she soon became Transvaal and then National Secretary of the multiracial Federation of South African Women, which included not only women from Congresses, but also from the non-White Trades Unions and Churches. Some of the most exciting chapters of the book tell of the struggle against the extension of 'passes' to African women and the mass demonstrations at the Union Buildings in Pretoria. We are also introduced to several of the wonderful African women leaders.

Several chapters of the book are devoted to the Congress of the People, which drew up the Freedom Charter (a sort of South African Declaration of Human Rights), to the fight against Bantu Education and to the Treason Trial, in which Helen was one of the accused. (She has written fully about the trial in her first book *If This Be Treason.*) The accused were out on bail, and Helen managed not only to keep her job by working before and after Court hours and on weekends, but also to continue her political work. So the Government took a further step against her—it banned her from all gatherings except, social, religious or educational for the next five years, and also from leaving Johannesburg, on the grounds that the Minister of Justice was 'satisfied' that she was promoting feelings of hostility between Whites and non-Whites and that he had 'reason to believe' that the achievement of the objects of Communism would be served if she were to attend gatherings. There was no recourse to a Court against the Minister's decision, but it should be noted here that during the Treason Trial the accusation that she was, or had ever been a Communist was not even suggested by the prosecution.

Even before the Trial was over, Helen had become involved in trying to alleviate in some measure the cruel fate of another group of people suffering under the Nationalist revival of an old law which gave them the power to move any African (or group or tribe of Africans) arbitrarily from any part of the country to any other. Between 1948 and 1962, 120 people, including several women and three children, were banished to desolate parts of the country, sometimes thousands of miles from their homes. No reasons were given, but they came mostly from the Native Reserves and their 'crime' seems to have been that they opposed the hated Bantu Authorities Act. It became known that they were existing under shocking conditions and that some of them had died.

The day Helen's ban against leaving Johannesburg expired, she slipped away from the city with two friends—an Indian woman and an African man—and set off on a journey of 8,000 miles to visit as many of the banished people and their desolate families as possible—their whereabouts having been ascertained from relatives and friends. When she returned she embarked on a campaign, writing and speaking wherever she could, to expose what was being done to these helpless people, whom she described as the 'Living Dead'. It is not surprising that in October, 1962, she was the first person who, under the new law generally known as the Sabotage Act, was condemned without charge or trial to five years' house arrest—a new version of a 'living death'.

In her book the author describes fully what it feels like to be under house arrest. But, factually, it meant that she might not leave her home except during the hours she went to work, and that she must report to the police every lunch-time. She might have no visitors whatsoever, and might not communicate in any way with other banned persons—a provision which cut her off completely from the great majority of her personal friends. Furthermore, nothing said or written by her might be quoted or published in South Africa.

Helen fought back in the only way possible—she wrote and smuggled out to England the manuscript of *Tomorrow's Sun.* And she most courageously refused to consider the inevitable repercussions. In the book we do not, of course, learn what these were. But they came even before the book was announced by the publishers. Only five or six friends in South Africa were 'in the know' and it is certain that the information must have been obtained from one of these who had been detained under the new '180-days' law and interrogated by the Security Police for days on end under the most inhuman conditions, till they broke down completely and gave information about others. (That such torture takes place was recently accepted by a judge in a High Court case.)

On the 7th February, 1966, Helen was handed by detectives a new document making extensive additions to her original banning order. Among other things, she was now prohibited from even *preparing* any matter for publication. This, of

course, meant no more books! She was expressly forbidden *to enter any building which housed a Trade Union* office. Hence, she might not enter the building where she had been working for the past 15 years! The Johannesburg *Sunday Times* wrote:

"Colleagues and associates hoped that her employers would be able to provide a small office for her in an adjoining building, but this was not done and her appointment was terminated. Those who have worked with Mrs. Joseph for many years say that her experience and devotion to her work will be a great loss to the organisation, and that it would be almost impossible to replace her. I was told that her work would be divided among several people."

In seeking a new job Helen will be hampered by still further restrictions. She is prohibited from entering any educational institution—obviously it is known that she used to be a teacher! She may not enter a court of law nor any area set apart for non-Whites. Friends say she has no private resources, but she will never give in and leave South Africa, which is what the Government wants her to do. She is determined to stay and keep on fighting somehow, no matter what the odds.

The name of the book is taken from *Trooper Peter Halket,* by Olive Schreiner:

> "Tomorrow's sun shall rise . . . and it shall flood these dark kopjies with light . . . on the spot where we now stand shall be raised a temple. Men shall not gather in it to worship that which divides, but they shall stand in it shoulder to shoulder, white man with black . . ."

In her last chapter, Helen writes:

"Dark and forbidding as the outlook for freedom is now, there is one lesson that the Nationalists have not learnt, and that is that history has shown that tyranny cannot prevail for ever. The writing is on the wall for those who care to read. It is written on the continent of Africa, in the halls of the United Nations, and in the hearts of the non-white people of South Africa, where it is not so easy to see.

"But it is there. Quietly, softly, the people are still singing the freedom songs, and they will go on singing. They sing in the streets and in their homes, and even in the jails. As long as there is song, there is hope . . .

"Deep in my heart,
I do believe,
That we shall overcome one day."

Kay Kruger

An Area of Darkness. An Experience of India, V. S. Naipaul, (London: Andre Deutsch, 1964), 281 pp. Price 25/- Eng.

Confessions of a Native-Alien, Zulfikar Ghose, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965). 159 pp. Price 21/- Eng.

V. S. NAIPAUL was a novelist with five books and a string of awards to his credit when he visited India in 1962-63. He returned to publish a volume entitled *An Area of Darkness* which contained the raw materials of another half-dozen fictional works. Among others there is an exhausting chase through Bombay's bureaucracy for a bottle of Scotch and a bottle of Metaxas—both opened; a long middle section on Kashmir with a marvellously funny "Hotel Liward, Prop. Flush System M. S. Butt" and a strange pilgrimage to the Amarnath Cave enshrining a Shiva *lingam*; the sketch of the Inspector of Forms and Stationery Northern Railway; and a tale of a drunken Sikh who sets out to clear south India of its local inhabitants. All of these are skilfully done. But they do not make up the most important part of the book; for *An Area of Darkness* is, as the subtitle puts it, "an experience of India", and it is this concern that gives the book its impact and for which it must be judged.

The experience of India recorded in the book is of a very particular kind, because Naipaul is a very particular kind of Indian. The grandson of a Brahman who emigrated to Trinidad as an indentured labourer, Naipaul grew up in a community that had re-created "India" but in a setting that made its customs and even its memories less meaningful as time went by:

> "India had in a special way been the background of my childhood. It was the counry from which my grandfather came . . . He abandoned India; [but] he denied Trinidad . . . A few reassuring relationships, a strip of land, and he could satisfyingly re-create an eastern Uttar Pradesh village in central Trinidad as if in the vastness of India. We who came after could not deny Trinidad. The house we lived in was distinctive, but not more distinctive than many. It was easy to accept that we lived on an island where there were all sorts of people and all sorts of houses. Doubtless they too had their own things . . . They were what they were; we were what we were. We were never instructed in this. To our condition as Indians in a multiracial society we gave no thought . . . [But]we were becoming self-conscious, self-assuring; our secret world was shrinking fast . . . [it] began to dis-

solve when I was six or seven; when I was fourteen it had ceased to exist."

As this community became more and more amorphous so the meaning of the "India" to which it had ultimate reference, became more and more indistinct. India to Naipaul was "featureless", "an area of darkness". Partly, as he himself saw, this was because he had "contracted out" of one important side of "Indian" life:

"I came of a family that abounded with pundits. But I had been born an unbeliever. I took no pleasure in religious ceremonies. They were too long and the food was only at the end . . . So it happened that, growing up in an orthodox family, I remained almost totally ignorant of Hinduism . . . and so one whole side of India was closed to me."

India was, therefore, an area of imagination. But, after he had come to London, he read about it, committed its map to memory, became a "nationalist"; but then began to lose interest until there came the desire, in the midst of the anonymity that London seemed to impose on him, to know where he belonged. So he travelled into the "area of darkness". "And for the first time in my life I was one of the crowd".

India was a complete shock to him. It was not the India of Trinidad, that was very clear. Nor was it an India that he could accept personally. And this is, essentially, what the book is about: an explanation, for himself, of what India is so that he can justify, to himself, its rejection. His view ranged widely. He had read and looked and tried to understand; but both the old and the new he found unacceptable. His first problem was the degradation which he found implicit in the old and the customary and manifest in "caste". From this he recoiled, appalled:

"Caste in India was not what it had been to me in Trinidad. In Trinidad . . . the caste we occasionally played at was no more than an acknowledgement of latent qualities; . . . In India it implied a brutal division of labour; and at its centre, as I had never realised, lay the degradation of a latrine cleaner. In India caste was unpleasant; I never wished to know what a man's caste was".

Or again:

"It is enough in India that the sweepers attend. They are not required to *clean*. That is a subsidiary part of their function, which is to *be* sweepers, degraded beings, to go through the motions of degradation."

Appalled by this, the "old", he found it equally impossible to accept the "new India" of the up-and-coming commercial and technocratic élite, the *nouveau riche* of the cities, the new ruling politicians, all of whom seemed to inhabit a strange fantasy world drawn out from the debilitating years of imperial rule by the British. The British, he argues, possessed India so completely but withdrew from it so irrevocably that, in the end, they gave it nothing substantial, nothing creative on which to go forward:

"The British refused to be absorbed into India . . . While dominating India they expressed their contempt for it and projected England . . . [In the end, then] the Indo-British encounter was abortive: . . . the penetration was not complete; the attempt at conversion was abandoned . . . The creative urge failed."

The result was "a nationalism which in the beginning was like a mimicry of the British" and which ended "in the conscious possession of spirituality . . . (and) ancient culture" so that India was left with a double fantasy in which "their new self-awareness makes it impossible for Indians to go back" while "their cherishing of Indianness makes it difficult for them to go ahead".

For his own part Naipaul was clear that he could no more bear with this new India than he could accept the old. His conclusion was to get away, having found through this "experience of India" what his position really was:

"India had not worked its magic on me. It remained the land of my childhood, an area of darkness . . . In a year I had not learned acceptance. I had learned my separateness from India and was content to be a colonial, without a past, without ancestors."

There remained one final act: to visit the village from which his grandfather had come. It was a strange and disturbing pilgrimage for the encounter with his origins focussed all the fears that he had come to recognise and the visit ended with an almost irrational desire to chop savagely at the ties which seemed possibly to still hold him to India:

"Too much had been assumed; I felt overwhelmed; I wished to extricate myself at once . . . I drove off. I did not wave . . . So it ended, in futility and impatience, a gratuitous act of cruelty, self-reproach and flight."

This, though, was the point of the visit—to cut his ties completely so that he knew that he did not have to go back, so that he could be "a colonial". In this way he could return to London, unfettered, unafraid now to be without

other roots. A feeling of guilt remained. Soon after he wrote back to a friend in India: "I forget now what I write. It was violent and incoherent; but, like everything I wrote about India, it exorcised nothing". But even so the experience had been gained and India could be rejected.

Naipaul's is a very personal book. His picture of India has to be taken as a personal one: its purpose is entirely one of determining Naipaul's own attitude towards the country from which, in a way which is meaningless to him, he "comes". It is not surprising, therefore, that *An Area of Darkness* tells us, in the end, more about Naipaul than about India. However the personal dilemma which Naipaul explores is not merely personal. He is examining the situation, as he himself puts it, of the colonial, the transplanted man looking back to his "native land" and to his immediate prospect. This, of course, is not a new situation; but there is a new element in the expression of it. Our previous understanding has come through European eyes; we have not always stopped to remember the movements of other peoples—the Indians one of the most significant among them in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, spreading out to Africa, the Caribbean, South-East Asia, the South Pacific, and to Britain itself—who now form other bands of colonials. Naipaul's is the clearest voice that we have heard so far discussing the relationship which develops for the Indian-colonial between his new and his old land; it will not, I think, be the last.

Witness, in fact, Zulfikar Ghose's *Confessions of a Native-Alien*. This is a much slighter and altogether less skilful book than Naipaul's; but, if anything, the predicament is even more complicated. Ghose is described as a "Pakistani" but as he himself says, he is not at all convinced that such a nationality can mean anything to him. Born in 1935 in the Punjab, of Muslim parents, he was raised in Bombay until 1952 when he was taken to England, because the family felt that they would be disadvantaged as refugees in Pakistan and were second-class citizens in India. (His name implies something of the mixture of this background: half Muslim, half Hindu, the Ghose being a corruption of the Muslim 'Ghaus'.) In London, at Keele University, playing and later writing about cricket, writing poetry and editing a poetry magazine, and trying hard to live up to his nickname, "Zulf the Wolf", he grew away both from India and from Pakistan. He became, in fact, English. His return to his "native countries" (to report the M.C.C. cricket tour) resulted only in a growing aversion, first, to the practical problem of living and writing in either country, secondly, to the problem of being always torn between the two, particularly as, without any concern for Islam, he had no commitment to Pakistan as an idea; and thirdly, and perhaps most important of all, the provinciality of the western culture with which he was confronted:

> "I just go to the pictures, the first one on my way . . . This is supposed to cheer the Catholics of Calcutta. It's called *The Singer Not the Song*, and this is the level of western culture that mangaes to seep through to the east . . . If you look at the countries in terms of these films, in terms of the propagation of vulgarity, in terms of the absolute degeneration of values, then the east is no worse than the west and worst there is nore. And if you do not have the sense of rootedness to one country and have to make a choice—because you need to make a choice, because you're tormented by not belonging—then what is there to choose? . . . I move on to a bookstall, look at the lovely paperbacks come all the way from Harmondsworth, Middlesex, and go over those I haven't read. Gogol, Turgenev. And those I have. Mann, Dostoevsky. I'm about to turn away with the shame of realising that I haven't read all the plays of Shakespeare . . ."

He gets back to London, determined to stay, determined to hang on to the nationality that he prizes, his Englishness. Almost defiantly he ends with the news of his approaching marriage: "We shall live in England". Another colonial "without a past, without ancestors"? That, it seems, may be the price of a resting place in which to send down roots.

P. D. Reeves

Forty Years' Poems, Robert D. Fitzgerald, (Angus & Robertson, 1965, $3.50).

Cockcrow, Rosemary Dobson, (Angus & Robertson, 1965, $1.75).

The Ilex Tree, Les A. Murray and Geoffrey Lehmann, (Jacaranda Press, 1965, $2.10).

A Need of Similar Name, Bruce Dawe, (F. W. Cheshire, 1965, $1.85).

The Feast of Ancestors, J. R. Rowland, (Angus & Robertson, 1965, $1.75).

Young Commonwealth Poets '65, P. L. Brent (ed.), (Heinemann, London, 1965, n.p.).

THE END OF the Second World War spelled the end of an epoch in more ways than one. The age of distinctively "modern" poetry which began with the experiments of Pound and Eliot, although still clinging across the Atlantic, is now apparently over in Australia. All six books under review here display no desire to experiment or be startlingly original in an *avant-garde* sense, and what Denis Donoghue described in the early 1950's as the New Conservatism seems to have pervaded the Australian poetical scene. Perhaps one reason is that the poetry-readers of the 1960's still hold in high esteem the four doyens of Australian poetry—Alec Hope, James McAuley, R. D. Fitzgerald and Judith Wright.

It is perhaps in response to this reverence that R. D. Fitzgerald, called by some the "uncrowned poet laureate of Australia", has at last produced *Forty Years' Poems,* poems selected from his nine volumes written from 1923-1963.

One cannot fail to be reminded of Yeats when reading this volume, not only because of the poet's "unaging intellect" but because, like Yeats, he rejects

> "a threshing of words flailed out so finely
> in pursuit of the unsiftably minute that you
> lose truth under dust of talk",

especially in short poems like "The Toss':

> "Life, toss up your florin;
> 'Heads', I call.
> Regret be far and foreign
> whichever fall.
> Whether for losing or winning
> the stake scarce to be won—
> it's a fine flash of silver, spinning
> in the gay sun."

Although trained as a scientist, and one of Australia's most highly qualified surveyors, he retains his faith in instinct and a deep mistrust of logic. Fitzgerald is remembered by acquaintances for his prodigious laughter, and his poems reflect his boisterous acceptance of life, tinged in the later section of the book by what one critic has called a "knobbly scepticism". His apparent pragmatism and his emphasis on the flux of all things are admirably expressed in what he himself considers to be his chief claim to the laurel wreath, "The Hidden Bole": a complex poem on the death of the ballerina, Anna Pavlova:

> "the immense murmur of night halts at your
> edge of air—
> I praise your triumph for its transience,
> that the notes pass and fair dies into fair."

"Essay on Memory" (awarded the Australian sesquicentenary prize in 1938 and here printed in full) follows as philosophically abstract a line of thought, but as Fitzgerald himself says in the *Australian Poets* series (Angus & Robertson, 1963):

> "Study of these poems will surely show that they neither advance nor argue out any concept shallow or profound, purely as an exercise of the intellect; nor is it ever the function of poetry to do so. Poetry of ideas, poetry of purpose and thought do pursue truth, if not directly as science or with the meticulous detail of philosophy; but it is a different kind of truth, that of innate significance in objects, scenes and relationships considered as unique wholes rather than evidences of general principles; and such significances are realized in the first place through the emotions and developed by the imagination."

One must remember that Fitzgerald is descended from the literary and scholastic le Gay Breretons. It is not surprising then to see seventy-seven pages occupied by an historical epic "Between Two Tides", concerning the adventures of Will Mariner on the Tongan Islands of the nineteenth century. Happenings, names and geography have received scrupulous attention, but the poem itself does not entirely avoid the dangers of continued narrative, namely occasional lapses into prose or sententiousness and lack of lyricism. However, the interwoven themes of free will and primitivism help to sustain interest fairly well. In my opinion, the shorter historical poems on Dampier, Montaigne and Mary Ann Bell, and especially the one concerning his ancestor Dr. Martin Mason, who supervised the floggings of convicts at the 1804 Castle Hill Rebellion, are more successful.

The five years Fitzgerald spent as a surveyor in Fiji undoubtedly had a great influence on his work. "Essay on Memory" was conceived under canvas in unceasing heavy rain in the mountains of Veivatuloa, and rain becomes a recurring symbol of memories:

"beating our lives to patterns imposed past
all defeating by our poor wills."

The life he led alone there leads to a preoccupation with the image of the solitary man in a foreign land—Will Mariner, Dampier, Hastings and Tasman among them. His knowledge of Fijian chants contributes to a skilful use of trochaic rhythm. (For further details of the influence of Fiji on his work, I would refer interested readers to an article by Dr. A. Grove Day in *Meanjin* (1965, no. 3).

* * *

In contrast to the ruggedness of Fitzgerald's volume comes the warm eloquence of the fourth book of another well-established Australian poet, Rosemary Dobson. Her earlier poetry, showing a preoccupation with Mediaeval tapestries, Renaissance paintings, and baroque styles, was criticised for reflecting, not life, but someone else's imitation of life. Although the favourite images of dew, frost and snow still appear, they are thawed somewhat by a warmly human, more direct approach. The first section deals at first hand with a woman's experience of a fever, childbirth, life, with the added dimension of myth—the Annunciation, the Visitation, the raising of Lazarus from the dead. "Cock crow", the title poem, is an excellent example of her skill in setting a poem in and out of time. Rather than risk outrageous understatement by summarising it as the betrayal of the poet who seeks isolation, I quote the last three verses:

"My mother and my daughter slept,
One life behind and one before,
And I that stood between denied
Their needs in shutting-to the door.

And walking up and down the road
Knew myself, separate and alone,
Cut off from human cries, from pain
And love that grows about the bone.

Too brief illusion! Thrice for me
I heard the cock crow on the hill,
And turned the handle of the door
Thinking I knew his meaning well."

Although the book is somewhat arbitrarily divided into two parts, it seems to split more naturally into three—those poems directly concerning the poet and motherhood, a theme carried over from earlier volumes, those more indirectly focussed through secondary figures such as the sailor who seeks anonymity and Captain Svenson on his hospital bed, and those which are modern reworkings of traditional myths.

Those of the first section have an immediate physical appeal, a resonant depth and rich tone of mood that guarantee the book as a whole success. With the wonder and fear involved in childbirth comes the poet's never-ending search for inspiration. For me, "Dry River" tied as it is to images of dried waterbeds is more effective than the rather abstract, Gravesian "The Passionate Poet and his Muse", but both describe the feeling evoked in the final words of "The Spring":

"Like thirsting, shipwrecked sailors who
Cup hands to catch the falling rain
I stretched my hands to catch the words
And caught as many may be kept
In the threads of nothing's net
Or in the eye of violet."

If e. e. cummings' dictum "a poet is one who can feel and express his feelings in words" is true, then one has only to compare this with the pathos of "Jack", that cry to a wooden toy "coffined up in life", "Shut down and crying for release", to appreciate the fine poetic control she has over the cadences of spoken language.

Dobson's modern interpretations of myth are interesting, though they don't maintain the high level of the other poems in the volume. Andromeda appears in a funfair, the monster is the crowd that shuffles around her, and Perseus the circus tumbler who leaps over the stalls to rescue her. "The Gorgon's Feast" deals with their marriage feast, momentarily interrupted by Agenor's armed forces, whom Perseus turns to stone at once, the feast continuing. The fine touch of irony apparent in "Eutychus" is then introduced:

"Feet up at last, exhausted and alone,
Her mother and her father can agree
That everything went well; a daughter lost
To gain a son of radiance and renown,
And their good fortune noised throughout
the town.
Mortals, like gods, can close their seeing
eyes.
In mannered calm amidst catastrophe.
Is not such strict composure praised?
I think another Gorgon head is shown
That turns these human hearts to hearts of
stone."

Not so successful are "The Dolphin" and "The Rape of Europa", where experiments with dactylic metre add to the tone an unnecessary flippancy which is reinforced by the sight of Europa boiling a billy on a spit of white sand; there is, however, a fine note of homesickness in the last lines of the latter poem.

James McAuley notes "something finely and intrinsically aristocratic in the breed of these poems". While I would agree, it seems that their main feature is their immediate communicability and control of colloquial language. I find it the most enjoyable book of this selection.

The literary and academic background apparent in Rosemary Dobson's poems shows through "The Ilex Tree", a first volume by Les A. Murray and Geoffrey Lehmann. The title of the book comes from Virgil's seventh eclogue where two Arcadian singers, Thyrsis with his sheep, Corydon with milk-heavy she-goats, meet under the shade of a whispering ilex-tree to compose their verses. Murray and Lehmann had worked together editing the University magazines, *Arna* and *Hermes*, from which some of the poems come.

Geoff Lehmann, like Miss Dobson, sometimes prefers legend and mask to direct lyrical statement, and poems such as "Lines for a Chinese Tear-jar", and "Pope Alexander farewells his daughter" show an elegance and sophistication which is reflected in the economy and smooth polish of Murray's "Property" and "Love After Loneliness".

Both poets might be called Romantics in the sense that they often seem to escape to a dream world of the imagination. Lehmann can see and describe in Daliesque terms lions on the beach at dusk, an image which recurs in fantastic surrealistic profusion with that of the dolphin, in his evocations of the past Governor of Africa, Marcus Furius Camillus.

More particularly and perhaps more self-consciously, Murray explores the world of memory in "Privacy":

"Now I'm a child again in dim July,
In the indifferent, ah, but dancing rain,
The spiced fantastic winter on the roof."

The fantasy world of Marienbad is recalled in "Minuet". His poems on war are sometimes distanced to depict phantom barges, naive trainees or a New England farm in 1914. A more direct approach results in a more vital poem in "Les paras".

An even more immediate world of his own experience is that of the Australian countryside of which he says;

"Dreaming silence
Though I myself run to the cities, I will forever
Be coming back here to walk, knee-deep in ferns
Up and away from this metropolitan century."

It is in these poems of the aboriginal settlement and Mad Jess, of memory and spring hail, of driving through sawmill towns, that his poetry becomes more natural, if a little verbose. The finest poem in the book is the tightly-controlled villanelle, "Agitation".

Lehmann's "Australiana" shows up the comparative looseness of some of Murray's verse. "Christmas Beetle" is an eight-line gem, while the longer "Old Man Possum" is a pathetic narrative of a possum trapped in a tin roof by his natural instinct to climb higher. "Late Autumn" brings a misty Canberra vividly before use as a little girl dances in a shower of golden leaves.

His whimsical humour appears again when we are reintroduced to his grandfather, William Rainer, who in the December 1964 issue of *Poetry Australia* outdrank his friends and spent the night in the snow. Now his proud relatives are brought alive on the evening William Rainer dies of an overdose of morphia. One meets for the first time his father in a series of four short poems which hint at the conflict between fear, estrangement and love in the small boy's feelings for this seventy-year-old man. One also meets in a powerful poem the pigs his father kept in Tuscany:

"Puddles of hatred against man, they wallowed
In greed, despair and viciousness."

A stronger, more confident poet than Murray, Lehmann has appeared in many Australian periodicals and has won the £50 award from the Poetry Society of Australia. It is ironic that at the age of nineteen he should have published in *Southerly* a poem called "A Forgotten Once-Popular Poet Speaks". His future seems assured.

* * *

Geoffrey Lehmann and Bruce Dawe have already clashed poetically. When Dawe published a poem in *The Australian* in April last year against U.S. intervention in Vietnam, Lehmann had a reply printed in the *Bulletin* a few weeks later. At a first glance Lehmann's lyricism and tenderness seem directly opposed by a somewhat misanthropic outlook in Dawe's second book, *A Need Of Similar Name.* Certainly some of Dawe's portraits do not inspire love for the human race. One meets the Eminent Australian, the little Third Division Clerk, and the righteous Australian-Aryan. ("The peppermints he daily chews to cloak his carrion breath / Avail him nothing who persists in breakfasting with death.")

The female is not exempt from his caustic gaze—those elegant shallow ladies whose sigh of admiration over a slim volume is the kiss of death to the author, the American mother with her world of Pepsi-Cola figurines, excellent Spam, chewing gum, hot dogs, and electronic brains, even his mother, who becomes obsessed with the desire to possess "a wholly bought-and-paid-for coffin to call her own".

But one excellent poem "Comedian" reveals the paradoxical nature of this satirical poet:

"They cheer his ludicrous mime, the lunatic mirror
Wherein their extravagant images approximate truth.
All thumbs, he sets their cracked glass trivia ringing
Purer than crystal, disquieting them until
Further antics reassure them and they laugh.

Yet, being like all a calendar of decay, he feels
Even more keenly than most the significance of the wind.
Which strikes through his worn motley, an autumnal pencil
Cancelling each numbered day—small wonder, then,
If the stranger blundering backstage should surprise
An aspen mannikin without cap and bells, tears in his eyes."

His interest is more than broadly social—it is based on a deep concern for the individual; "Process", for example, is a cry of concern at the impersonality of American Defence Department estimates of casualties in a putative nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union. The impersonality of the I.C.I. Building, with its "bland display of rock-bottom confidence", "the waste land of depilatory and / Beauty Mask, O Brave New World . . ." or the plight of the aboriginal stockmen paid lower wages than his white brethren concern him:

"Blessed are they who reluctantly withhold . . .
Thus it is understood
That the station-boss, from fatherly concern
For the aboriginal good,
Knowing their wastefulness, in every State
Pays them (with deep regret) at lower rate."

His laughter can become less mocking, as when he writes an ode to his typewriter or the delightful elegy for the fluffy moth who shared his pillow. A soft tenderness entirely missing from the satiric poems creeps into the lyrics for his wife, Gloria, a tenderness which degenerates into sentimentality in "Presages on a Rainy Day" and "Death of a Nun" (Dawe became a Catholic in 1954, the year in which he began an Arts course at Melbourne University).

His strength lies in his use of irony, the tenderness coming through with much more effect in "And a Good Friday was Had by All"; here the last lines gain power by being said through the centurion who, impersonally obeying orders, nails Christ to the Cross.

For the most part the poems are alive and fresh, especially where irony and satire are employed. The introduction of images for their own sakes disrupts the imaginative unity of such poems as "The Hunter at Sunset". However, this book is both more varied and more mature than Dawe's first volume, and his recent work in periodicals is still more promising.

A "public" poet in another sense, J. R. Rowland displays the sophisticated urbanity necessary for a foreign diplomat. Many of his poems deal with his travels through London, South-East Asia, Cairo, Moscow. The poems, however, like those white collar workers of whom he remarks:

"Learn not to enquire too deep, retreat from passion,

Find they have time only for light fiction."

show only a superficial grasp of subject. Too often one finds a close echo of Eliot, as in the long poem on Laos:

"In Harry's bar the stringed guitar
Competes with sounds from the bazaar
Vol-au-vent and entrecote
Swim with grease and burn the throat . . ."

or in "London in December":

"Day and night they crowd to the echoing town
Where the only vivid things are underground posters
A dream of continual distractions, and are blown
By harsh winds up to where lights appear at mid-day
In orderly constellations
Low in the sky like hell's mouth."

Too often the descriptions of countries are nothing more than a journalistic list of objects; for instance "Fremantle" is thus described:

"Pass the Moderne Gifte Shoppe, Reg. Macpherson
Ern Jones for bicycles, Kinkara Tea,
Avoid the rolling barrel, pause
For the sour smell of beer, distinctive
As the tigerish footballers framed against green tiles.
Here is a newspaper; read in its many pages
About Shark Tragedy, Dave Sands and cricket scores."

Only two poems rise from this prosaic flatness: "Seven Days" is a pithy reversal of the seven days of creation till

"The seventh
Became a thousand aeons without word",

while "Dawn Stepping Down" is a fragile celebration of a cool dawn:

"Till I, holding a feeding baby,
Notice his eyes
Turn to the window, and following
Almost see the unhurried passing angel
Whose cool gauze brushes the crocus
Darts dusted under trees, the fleeting angle
Of a bent wing."

British Commonwealth Poets '65, a result of the Cardiff Commonwealth Arts Festival, was intended as a representative survey of work being done in 1965 throughout the Commonwealth. The poems, as one would expect, are remarkably vital and diverse, although there is a predominance of loose free verse.

Styles vary from Keith Harrison's pithy "Onan's Song" to David N. Cull's typographical flights in the manner of Apollinaire. Jeff Nuttall's "Kwela for a Given Situation" composed of cut-outs from the *London Evening News* and the *Commonwealth Institute Journal* affords a strong contrast to the lyrical "Orange" by the Ghanaian B. A. K. Griffin.

An English reviewer was surprised by what seemed to her an arbitrary selection of contemporary English poets. Many young poets who made their names in England and in British periodicals in the previous few years, however, appear under the countries of their birth: for instance, Peter Porter (Australia), Dom Moraes (India), Zulfikar Ghose (Pakistan), Edward Lucie-Smith (Jamaica) or David Wevill (Canada).

The Australian selection seems reasonable when we remember that it is based on youth rather than accepted quality, but one wonders at the exclusion of Chris Koch, Thomas Shapcott and Randolph Stow.

The book, although attractively presented and exciting as a preview of future doyens, inevitably enough contains several poems immature in approach and style. The short time taken from the inception of the book to its publication—eleven months—is perhaps responsible for its slapdash air and the impression one receives of poems collected for the sake of having a Commonwealth collection merely, and without regard to choosing the best poems available.

Felicity Haynes

Thomas Peel of Swan River, Alexandra Hasluck, (Oxford University Press, 1965, 60/-).

IN THE MINDS of most readers the name Thomas Peel will probably conjure up, at best, a shadowy outline dimly recollected from schoolday history or family anecdote. Peel was, it may be remembered, a cousin of the Tory Prime Minister who founded the police force and repealed the Corn Laws; and he was a 'capitalist' who invested his fortune in the infant Swan River colony and lost it all through mismanagement and misfortune. In her most recent biography, *Thomas Peel of Swan River,* Mrs. Hasluck has set out not only to clothe this wraith-like outline with flesh and blood, but also to reassess Peel's contribution to the foundation of Western Australia. In the first of these aims she has succeeded very well; as to the second there is perhaps more room for dispute.

Thomas Peel was born in 1793, the second son of a wealthy Manchester merchant and manufacturer. After leaving Harrow, Thomas desultorily occupied himself with the usual pursuits of a young man of means and showed no interest in following his father into the family business, his elder brother into the church, or his cousin Robert into politics. In 1828, married and in his mid-thirties, Peel became interested in the possibility of emigration to New South Wales, but before anything came of this plan his attention was diverted to the proposals of Captain John Stirling for a new colony at the Swan River. Whether or not Peel felt, as Mrs. Hasluck repeatedly suggests, a need to prove himself the equal of other members of his family in an entirely new field, it is clear that the idea of founding a new colony took a deep hold on his imagination.

In November 1828 Peel and a group of well-to-do fellow members of the Windham Club suggested to the Colonial Office that they should be granted some 4,000,000 acres at the Swan River in return for conveying 10,000 emigrants there and founding a colony. The Government was encouraged by this proposal to proceed with Stirling's plan for colonising the Swan River, but it insisted that Peel and his friends should be limited to a maximum of 1,000,000 acres and should be part of an official colony rather than establishing a private one. As more and more conditions were added, one after another of Peel's associates withdrew from the scheme, but the Colonial Office agreed to allow Peel himself 250,000 acres on the South bank of the Swan if he transported 400 settlers to the colony by November 1, 1829.

Whether Peel would or could have gone it

alone we do not know, for at this crucial juncture Solomon Levey, an emancipist merchant from Sydney, came forward and offered to go into partnership with him for the purpose of taking up the land at the Swan. Peel accepted Levey's offer and a deed of partnership between the two men was agreed upon, though the Colonial Office was not, at this stage, informed of the arrangement. Under the terms of the agreement Peel was to proceed to Western Australia and manage the lands granted to the partnership, whilst Levey was to contribute to the initial outlay required and to supply Peel with stock and stores as they became necessary. Preparations took longer than expected, but at last on 10 August 1829, Peel sailed from Plymouth with the first of his 400 emigrants, bound for the tiny Swan River colony which Stirling had founded a few months before.

From the first Peel's venture failed to prosper. By arriving six weeks later than had been stipulated he forfeited the special land allocation which had been reserved for him until 1 November, and was forced to choose land elsewhere on the same basis as other settlers. Moreover, the long strip of coastal plain that he chose proved to be unsatisfactory—to this day no one has been able to cultivate much of it at a profit. The supplies which Levey had promised to forward did not materialise, and Peel was unable to provide his migrants with the food, cattle and equipment due to them, nor did he have the cash with which to buy these necessities and pay wages; his notes of hand were not accepted. In order to feed his people, and to satisfy those who had entrusted money to Levey in London in expectation of stores to be delivered on arrival, Peel was forced to borrow heavily from the Government, thus incurring a burden of debt which blighted the rest of his life. Most of the indentured labourers he had brought out left him for better employment, and within two years he was left, a sad and lonely figure, living in primitive though not altogether uncomfortable circumstances, in the midst of his useless acres.

In many respects the chapters in which Mrs. Hasluck deals with the last thirty years of Peel's life are the most interesting, for hitherto little has been commonly known about him after the collapse of his dreams. Of course this phase of his life was an anti-climax, but it was an illuminating anti-climax. Probably few readers will even have realised that Peel lived on in Western Australia until 1865, through not only its first two decades as a gentleman's colony, but most of the convict period as well. Despite his decayed fortunes Peel remained a person of some consequence in the restricted society of the colony; he was for years a magistrate and member of the Legislative Council, and he was on close terms with those of the leading settlers with whom he had not quarrelled too violently. Although unable to retrieve his lost fortune, Peel gradually adapted to the new environment in a fashion similar to that of many other settlers, and Mrs. Hasluck's lively and readable account of this process of adjustment gives many valuable glimpses of the first thirty-five years of Western Australian history.

Peel himself emerges as a strong personality able but erratic and shortsighted, honest, hospitable, and proud, but also tactless and irascible. Though Mrs. Hasluck wishes to suggest otherwise, her own account of the man confirms the impression that the seeds of his failure lay in large measure in his own character. Peel repeatedly antagonised men upon whose goodwill and cooperation he was dependent; he rashly committed himself to a secret partnership which placed him entirely in the hands of a man about whom he knew very little and who was to remain out of reach in far-away London; he allowed his departure for the Swan to be delayed when it was obvious that the time was the essence of his contract with the Colonial Office.

In addition to these factors, both Peel's difficulties and those of the colony as a whole were worsened by the poor quality of the land in the vicinity of Perth. This more than anything else got the colony off to a slow start and earned it a bad reputation which exacerbated the problem by drying up the flow of settlers and new capital. It is thus uneccessary to invoke a villain to explain the failure of Peel and the Swan River in the way which Mrs. Hasluck does. Edward Gibbon Wakefield is the man cast in this role; he was, we are told, "responsible for the near-murder of the colony of the Swan River" (p. 121). It is true that Wakefield did ridicule Peel and Western Australia without any real knowledge of the colony and with the aim of boosting his own scheme for South Australia; it is also true that this bad publicity was harmful to the colony. But in *Thomas Peel of Swan River* the importance of this factor is magnified out of all proportion. Unfortunately, Mrs. Hasluck all too often tries to rehabilitate Peel's reputation by traducing that of those who criticised or opposed him. Not only is Wakefield described as a "pestiferous fanatic", but Archdeacon Wollaston is a 'perky chatterbox', Twiss of the Colonial Office 'suave and malicious' Adam Elmslie 'self-pitying but full of self-esteem, a sick and petty man', Lord Glenelg is an example of 'muddling duplicity', and various others are sneeringly described as this or that 'worthy'.

Such a partisan approach makes for entertaining

reading, but it diminishes the value of the book as history by undermining the confidence of the reader in its judgements. Nevertheless, Mrs. Hasluck has added a great deal to our knowledge of Peel and has shown him to be a much more interesting man than is commonly supposed. There can be no doubt that although his own plans failed hopelessly, the migrants and capital which Peel brought to the Swan were a major contribution to the development of the colony.

B. K. de Garis

Coppin the Great, Alec Bagot, (Melbourne University Press, 1965, $6.50).

Stars of Australian Stage and Screen, Hal Porter, Rigby, 1965, $4.50.

TO WRITE ANY history—of a man, or a movement or a nation—is a perilous task. Not only are facts to be gathered and verified, but when they are all assembled there is the problem of presentation. Ideally, the writer is totally unbiassed, which means, as a rule a dull catalogue of information with the *élan* and charm of a railway time-table. But it is very hard to remain unbiassed, and proportionately, as the author's interest is ensnared, the temptation grows to select, arrange and colour the information. Dickens' *Child's History of England* is a curious piece of work, but it is easier to remember that Henry VIII is "a monstrous blot of blood and grease" than that "the permanence of Henry's work was rooted in the iconoclasm which the sentiment and facile equity of subsequent ages is ready to condemn". And Macauley is a compelling writer, but darkly suspect as an historian.

This brings us to two interesting and contrasting books on the Australian Theatre—*Coppin the Great* by Alec Bagot, and *Stars of Australian Stage and Screen* by Hal Porter.

Mr. Bagot's very long biography has a foreword by Leonard Mann, a host of references and acknowledgements, and an immense family-tree of the Coppin family, with mention going back to 1374. It is based on first-hand material—books, letters, journals—supplied by Miss Lucy Coppin, who was a personal friend of the author; and it not only covers the eighty-seven years of Coppin's life but devotes several chapters to that of his father who was also (rather confusingly for a biographer) named George Selth Coppin. The book is leisurely, gently slanted in favour of its hero, and a mine of information about theatrical life in the 19th century in the English provinces, in California of the gold-rush, but primarily from 1842-95 in Australia.

The pictures, both of the man and his world, emerge slowly in a sort of pointilliste technique. A multitude of small incidents, often presented in actual words of the characters concerned, slowly builds up a whole. The importance of the details varies, but they are all offered with the same air of mild interest so that the reader tends to glide past them without recognizing anything particularly startling. It is only when he stands back and views the whole that the extraordinary, highly coloured picture becomes visible. Thus, hearing of George Coppin's first (*de facto*) marriage at the age of 22, and his second, 13 years later, to a widow with four small children, one notes a brief mention of his third. It is only later that one realizes, with mild surprise, that his third wife was his stepdaughter and 22 years younger than himself. There is no comment at all on this odd union—nor on the fact that it appears to have been blessed with seven children who also had three step-aunt-sisters. Nor is there any untoward emphasis on Coppin's curious habit of making Positively Final Appearances. After arriving in Australia in 1842 he made one in 1843, another in 1846 . . . and so on until his last, at the Princess Theatre, Melbourne, in 1901! One also discovers, with growing interest, that Coppin introduced into Australia such diverse elements as roller-skating, thrushes, glass-blowing, the Dramatic Authors' Society (which controlled all playing rights in Australia), the camels used by the ill-starred Burke and Wills expedition, the English Test Team, and an American entertainer, James Cassius Williamson.

Any one of these facts, exciting in itself, could be elaborated and romantically coloured and woven into the fabric of Australian history like some Dumas extravagance. But this is not the technique of Alec Bagot. He presents his material quietly; every point is authenticated and documented; there is always the understatement. And if he offers a rare comment it is always diffidently . . . After pointing out Coppin's belief that camels could save exporers' lives, he remarks that if the camel tender had not let the animals wander off (and later turn up safely in Adelaide), "the fate of the expedition might have been happier". And at the end of an account of a performance (undated) of *Milky White* at the Melbourne Haymarket we find: "His presentation of the misanthropic Daniel White was flawless. After the curtain,

Coppin recounted at length the many negotiations he had made to recruit talent for the colonies (here follows a list of names long forgotten—dancers, singers, impersonators, skaters and actors); then, as though legitimate entertainment were not enough, Coppin added, 'I left an invitation in England for eleven gentlemen cricketers to pay us a visit and have every reason to believe a team will be made for next season.' " And there is no comment at all; no Ashes, no Hobbes, no Bradman . . .

This consistent understatement is at once enchanting and infuriating. Because the tone of voice hardly varies, one is apt to miss something exciting, and the indolent reader, skipping along, finds George Coppin in and out of bankruptcy, Parliament or matrimony with hardly a chance to draw breath. One has to *work* over this book to get the best from it. Mr. Bagot presents to us, quite deliberately, I imagin, a flamboyantly theatrical figure, a gambler and a visionary, of demoniac energy and wide-ranging interests, a man who wielded immense power, as pleasantly 'human', a good husband and father, a little naive in his emotional life, an M.P. and a businessman of great and solid worth. These two aspects are, of course, not mutually exclusive, but to reconcile the paradox requires an effort in reading. Once the effort is made the picture of a remarkable man comes into view and with him the whole world of entertainment of the 19th century. George Selth Coppin was born to the theatre, was a strolling player at the age of seven, and at sixteen was on his own as a busker, working the roads and inns of Cambridge. For nearly 70 years he knew the theatrical world—song and dance, melodrama and high tragedy, the ditties of Billy Barlow, *The Lady of Lyons* and *Hamlet*; he performed for the goldminers of Ballarat and San Francisco, travelled in hell-ships from Panama, by coach and train through the Australian outback, built theatres, skating-rinks, botanical gardens, hot sea-baths, zoos and hotels, made and lost fortunes.

This is the wildest romance told as the staidest fact. What the reader carries away is measured by the interest and the background knowledge he brings to it.

* * *

Very different is Hal Porter's *Stars of Australian and Screen*. The jacket-blurb states: "Long before Hal Porter became a playwright he was a theatrical fan . . . After that he became a producer and through the years he has done a great deal of research into the history of Australian theatre. Now he brings it all to life." The author's introduction also promises later books dealing with the story of Australian singers, with the ballet and with the "little theatres".

Were it not for these "footnotes", one would be inclined to assess the work as plainly as pot-boiler, something thrown off as a commission, for it is curiously uneven. The early section, the first two chapters, are immediately arresting. An atmosphere is evoked as clearly as the smell of size and old makeup and the fumes of gas chandeliers. In the telling phrase, the evocative image, the world of 19th- century theatre is recreated for us with nostalgic undertones that catch at the imagination: "Old one-page theatre programmes brittle as autumn leaves and nearly as brown; fringed satin programmes headed and footed by *Vivat Regina*; glazed and gilded programmes gaudy as cathedral stained glass and thick as literary periodicals . . ."; "In London, the *bon ton* was dressing and over-scenting its ill-bathed self to tour the sights: the manacled lunatics of Bedlam, the fetid malefactors of Newgate, the stripped drabs being floated at Bridewell . . . It was, however, the less elegant and more barbarous amusements for the English exiles in early N.S.W. They did the rounds of the cat-o'-nine-tails floggings, the stocks, the treadmill, criminal corpses hung upon chains, 7-at-one-blow hangings.". . . ; "Corinthians of the Melbourne Club with their curly-brimmed beavers, brass-buttoned swallowtail and high rolled collars". . .

This is the sort of thing which Alec Bagot does not give us. Here is the creative imagination at work, and Hal Porter takes us by the hand and whisks us through one hundred years and more to the Iron Pot theatre with its "white-painted ceiling sprinkeld with gilt stars", or the Sydney Theatre Royal, "its boxes lined with crimson and lavishly spangled with gilt-headed nails". Porter's magic carpet spun of master words is more comfortable than the foot-slogging of Bagot's journey. But after the initial scene-setting of the Australian stage, the catalogue of its stars becomes a little tedious. The scheme of the book is vaguely chronological in that we begin with the first Australian performance (Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*, June 4, 1789, before Governor Phillip) and proceed through the 1830s, '40s and '50s on to the 1960s. Within this rough framework are potted biographies of celebraties, sometimes with critical comment on their value and influence, sometimes enlivened with anecdote or shrewd appraisal. Of Oscar Asche, for example, he tells the following anecdote; while Asche was resting after the strenuous Act III of *Othello*, the business manager tittupped in chattering about box-office receipts, "Asche sprang to his

feet and thundered, every organ-stop of his voice full out, 'How dare you speak of filthy lucre to Othello! How dare you! Out! Out! before Othello strangles you!' " He then goes on to analyse the Orientalisms of Asche—*Kismet, Chu Chin Chow* and *Cairo*—linking them backwards to his flamboyant *Antony and Cleopatra* and forward to cinema extravaganzas and 'a cheapening public taste', with a side glance at the sociological phenomena of the time—"*The Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyèm bound in flaccid moss-green suède; Amy Woodford Finden's *Indian Love Lyrics;* Edmond Dulac's watercolours inspired by the Persian; Diagilev and Nijinsky's *Scheherazade*; Flecker's *Hassan,* Poiret's dress-designs and, at the end of the scale, Theda Bara and Louise Glaum and the craze for aigrettes, scarab brooches, oscillating ear-rings, chunks of ersatz jade, tasselled pouffes of tangerine satin and harem trousers."

This sort of writing is fun to read, and the criticism is provocative and informed. Of great interest, too, are the comments on the much despised Victorian melodrama and the analysis of Bland Holt's *Riding to Win* at the Melbourne Theatre Royal in 1901 (to be found, rather oddly, in the chapter headed *"The '60s and '70s"*. Mr. Porter makes the point, clearly and validly, that while the literary value of these plays was not high, as pieces of theatre they show superb craftsmanship. In characteristic phrase he says, "Today it is fascinating to find that it is not the one-set play brow-beaten audiences of these times must bear with."

These critical interludes are invariably lively and stimulating, whether one agrees or not with the author, and they are the sort of thing which one misses in the Coppin biography. On the other hand, they are apt to be too persuasive, too often reflecting Porter's private prejudices. They could, like Dickens's "blot of blood and grease", be dangerous because too memorable.

As the work comes closer to the present day, these highly personal judgements become more and more subjective. The second half of the book, while useful as a rather enlarged theatrical *Who's Who* couched in lively phrase—"He (Peter Finch) also engaged in an Uplift-for-the Moron-Masses activity by performing the less intellect teasing portions of Shakespeare and Molière on the spot for factory-workers"—is alternately a dullish catalogue of names and a vehicle for outspoken but flagrantly prejudiced criticism of contemporary theatre in Australia. Mr. Porter does not like contemporary theatre, nor imported Culture with a capital C, nor Americana, nor J. C. Williamson, nor Patrick White, nor the Elizabethan Trust—and he says so very loudly and clearly. However much one may agree with him—and I, for one, am inclined to walk with him quite a distance—one feels the tone is too loaded . . . *"The Ham Funeral,* an attempt at trick-playwriting by Patrick White, an English-cum-Australian novelist adored by cultural cliques" . . . "the unholy and spendthrift alliances of White and Tasker" . . . "A cabal of cultural busybodies to 'raise the standards of production' in a country which has already driven out its most gifted actors and actresses, thus leaving English directors who were not good enough to make the grade in England to act boss cocky to Australian . . ."

Mr. Porter looks back nostalgically to that full-blooded era which Mr. Bagot presents so calmly, and looks forward where Mr. Bagot has, of course, no concern at all, his interest ending with Coppin's death in 1906. Despite a similarity of subject matter, the intentions of the two books are quite different. So are the techniques and personalities of the authors, and one is tempted to speculate on the sort of biography Porter would have made for George Selth Coppin. What a rip-roaring, robust, serio-comic colossus-illusionist he would have been! Of course he might not have been George Coppin at all, but an era would have come to life irradiated by the fitful incandescence of Porter's gaslight chandeliers.

The publication of these two books during 1965 suggests that, despite Porter's assertion that "Australian professional theatre is shoddy and limited", there is interest in its past and therefore hope for its future. Admittedly there is a paradox involved. The public who will, presumably, read these two books, the "social sheep, culture cranks and shifting-vote demi-intellectuals", is not the public that Hal Porter wants, certainly not the public for a living theatre. Subsidy, "the manure for inferior talent", does not seem to be sufficient to keep it vigorous, and he ends with a prayer for someone "fully armed and full of fight, with the intensity, the forthrightness, the unfaltering convictions, the broad view, the skill and hard-headedness" of the earlier Australians. In short he wants—and anyone interested in living theatre raher than artificial culture must agree with him—another George Selth Coppin.

The tradition is there. In different ways these two authors have presented a revelation of the richness, the strength, variety and very real achievements of our early theatre. The interchange of the truly great names between Australia and Europe is surprising and heart-warming—Charles Kean, Gustavus Vaughan Brooke, Ristori, Dion Boucicault, Sara Bernhardt, May

Robson, Oscar Asche, Mrs. Herman Vezin, O. P. Heggie, Charles Matthews, Mrs. Scott Siddons, Clyde Cook, Marie Löher, Janet Achurch . . . and so on down to today—Coral Browne, Peter Finch, Diane Cilento, Zoe Caldwell and Judith Anderson.

And the dramatic fare of the great 19th-century performers was both varied and abundant, ranging from Shakespeare to minstrel shows—and presented, to the surprise of 1960 intelligentsia, on the same bill and by the same people. A great dramatic actress could play Lady Macbeth and sing a sentimental solo "Early Love". George Rignold layered Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth and Falstaff between *East Lynne* and genteel comedies. Theatre was not caviare to the few but a complete menu for all comers.

With this fascinating tradition behind it and a renewal of interest such as is shown in these books, surely something should stir in the world of Australian theatre before long.

Jeana Bradley

BOOKS RECEIVED

Some of these may be reviewed in future issues

The Paper Chase, Hal Porter, (Angus & Robertson, $3.25).

A Century of George Eliot Criticism, Gordon S. Haight (ed.), (Methuen University Paperbacks, 21/- Stg.).

Kenneth Slessor, Clement Semmler, (British Council, Longman, 2/6 Stg.).

Doomsday Morning, Wynwoode Reid, (Rigby, $2.75).

In Charcoal and Conté, Colin Thiele, (Rigby, $2.10).

On Aggression, Konrad Lorenz, trans. Marjorie Latzke, (Methuen, 30/- Stg.).

The Beckoning West, Eleanor Smith, (Angus & Robertson, $3.75).

The Other Half (poems), Judith Wright (Angus & Robertson, $1.95).

Arcady and Other Places (poems), Vincent Buckley, (Melbourne University Press, $2).

The Harvest of Tragedy, T. R. Henn, (University Paperbacks, 15/- Stg.).

The Elizabethan Love Sonnet, J. W. Lever, (University Paperbacks, 16/- Stg).

Milton's Brief Epic, Barbara Lewalski, (Methuen, 63/- Stg.).

Noonday Country Poems 1954-1965, Charles Higham, (Angus & Robertson, $1.85).

XI Hunter Valley Poets + VII, Norman Talbot (ed.), (Maitland Mercury, 40c.).

The Bloomsday Book, Harry Blamires, (University Paperbacks, 18/- Stg.).

Dark Stranger, John Iggulden, (Macdonald, 25/- Stg.).

An Afternoon of Time, D. E. Charlwood, (Angus & Robertson, $2.50).

Once Around the Sun: An Anthology of Poetry by Australian Children, Brian Thompson (ed.), (Oxford University Press, $1.95).

Style Manual, Commonwealth Government Printing Office.

Henry Lawson's Best Stories, Cecil Mann (ed.), (Angus & Robertson, $3.75).

Henry Lawson, Poet and Short Story Writer, Colin Roderick, (Angus & Robertson, $2.50).

Parliament of a Thousand Tribes, Osmar White, (Heinemann, $4.50).

PERIODICALS

Thrust, Spring, 1966.

Meanjin, 3—1966.

Poetry Australia, No. 12, October, 1966.

Abstracts of English Studies, Vol. 9, No. 6, June, 1966.

Sydney Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 1.

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