THE YOUNG MARVEL

BY UNCLE JASPER

ADVENTURES IN

MARVELLOUS MELBOURNE

IN THE 1870S

In the late 19th century an English journalist George Sala came to Melbourne to send back home stories about the fastest growing city in the world. He was so impressed he invented the phrase 'Marvellous Melbourne'. This story is about the people who made Melbourne Marvellous. It still is.

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By

Uncle JASPER

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Front cover view of Collins St.

{ 1 }

The New Chum.

Gabriel Fox was in a rattling, speeding train, when he had a vision from his recent past. Once again he was in a queue walking up the third class gangway to board a ship at London Dock. He glanced across at the first class passengers who were walking up to a different entrance. Opposite him at that moment was the most beautiful girl in the world. He stared at her and she must have sensed his presence because she looked across and smiled. He waved to her and she waved back, still smiling.

A woman with the girl, probably her mother, took her arm and urged her on. She looked at Gabriel and seemed not to like what she saw, and then he was pushed in the back by someone's portmanteau to remind him he was holding up the queue.

His vision ended in steam and smoke and the rattle of a train entering a station. It stopped and someone was shouting 'Flinders Street, all change.' Porters walked up and down the platform slamming shut swinging doors left open by departing passengers.He got his luggage down from the overhead rack and joined the exodus.

He was surprised when he came out into Flinders Street and saw the road traffic passing by. Rumbling, clashing four wheel lorries and drays, all with steel-rimmed wooden wheels, all drawn by big patient horses with jingling harness and rolling along in two unending streams, travelling east and west.

He had thought that Melbourne would be a quiet colonial town with tree lined streets. Planters, perhaps. with wide brimmed hats, wives presiding over At Home' gatherings of other genteel, tea drinking ladies from neighbouring plantations.

It was not like that all. Melbourne, was a busy, commercial city, scarcely more than twice his age, and growing fast. A few loungers and drunks sunned themselves on benches or sat with their feet in the gutter and leaned against the wooden posts that supported the veranda over the station entrance, but everyone else in the crowds hurrying past walked with purpose, intent on business.

He looked out on all this activity and, with the passion of youth, thought again of the girl. She was in this town somewhere and he would find her if it took the rest of his life.

It was November 1879 and he was twenty two years old.

Passengers from the train were now intent on crossing the road and the way was cleared for them by policemen who who brought the traffic to a halt .

From the other side of the road he looked and saw a road bridge over a river and beyond it a tall three masted ship being towed away by a tug belching black smoke. It was a swinging basin where ships could be turned around and berthed. There were wharves and warehouses on both sides of the river.

He looked away. First he had to find accommodation.

He stopped to look at one single storey hotel that might have cheap lodgings, and was greeted by the stares of some loungers who were either leaning against the veranda posts or sitting on a bench looking out over the river. One of those holding up the veranda , after some thought, spat neatly on to the ground alongside him. "Just in mate?" he said

"What?" said Fox, not sure of the customs of the country, and thinking this might be some sort of greeting.

"Just orf the boat, arnt cha," retorted the lounger. "Gotcher nice little bloody bags, and yer nice bloody suit yer got from some lah di dah shop in London. I s'pose the tailor's still sending bills ter yer old dad's castle; fat chance 'e's got of gettin' the money now. "

Fox was confused and fascinated at this speech. He understood most of what was said to him but the strange accent and the copious use of swear words was beyond his experience. If he had been in England he would have edged past the man and ignored him. Here he hesitated because the man might be friendly after all, and this greeting one of the local customs. "If it wasn't for you bloody lot comin' over all the time we'd have a decent country here. Yer sent me old man out as a convict and now we're makin' somethin' of the place you collar and tie lot come out to show us how it's done. Give us a deener!"

The last sentence was incomprehensible to the young Englishman, he had been asked for something, but what?

"Gor blimey," said the lounger, disgustedly. "They come over and reckon they're going to own the bloody place in six months and they can't even speak the language. Yer just in from the Old Dart arnt cha? Well give us a deener, a bob--Gaw blimey, a shillin'. You know that much English, don't you?"

Under the glare of the Australian, and his friends who were taking an interest in the conversation, Gabriel Fox groped hesitantly in his waist-coat pocket with thumb and finger and produced a florin. "I haven't got a shilling," he said; uncertain whether to hand over the money or call for the police.

"That'll do," said the stranger ungraciously, "hand it over, and be bloody quick about it." He seized the two shilling piece and put it in his own pocket. "Come on you blokes," he said to his companions, grinning broadly, "line up, the drinks are on the new chum this time." They all promptly vacated their veranda posts and marched through the bar doors leaving Fox outside, angrily listening to them in the bar, laughing.

For a moment he thought of going in and punching his tormentor on the nose, but all his instincts were against getting mixed up in a public brawl, which he would probably lose anyway. He glanced down at his clothes, they were clean; even if he did win the fight and taught the upstart colonial a lesson they could become dirty and

torn. They were one of his few assets and must be kept in good condition. Better to regard the two shillings as well spent on a lesson showing the temperament and feelings of some of his new countrymen.

He was about to turn away from the scene of his humiliation and look for somewhere else to stay when he had another thought. He hesitated, then picked up his bags and followed the men into the bar.

They were lined up ready to be served. As soon as he stood with them and put his foot on the brass rail the chatter and noise died away and they waited to see what would happen.

"Where's mine?" he enquired mildly; "you didn't forget to order for me, did you?"

"You looking for trouble," enquired the man who had the two shillings. He was some years older than Fox, approaching thirty. The sleeves of his shirt had been cut off at the shoulders showing his arms which were exceptionally well muscled and covered in tattoos that displayed patriotic and filial sentiments. "If you want to kick up a fuss, mate" he continued menacingly, "you've come to the right bloody place to do it.

"I'm paying for the drinks," said Fox, aggrieved. "That is my two shillings you have in your pocket, you weren't going to leave me out were you?"

The Australian continued to glare at him and then relaxed. He grinned and nodded. "O'Hanlon," he roared at the barman, with a voice that made the bottles on the shelf clink together; "Make it five. I thought at first," he said turning back, "you'd come in to make a stoush of it. Just as well you didn't. I would've wiped the floor with yer, and then the johns would've been onter me, and I probably would have had to do a couple of moons hard out at the stockade. I gotta be careful not to do me block nowadays because the last time I was up the beak said he'd do me brown next time."

Fox could only nod agreement at this speech and drink the beer which was presently handed to him, because he understood scarcely a word.

They introduced themselves. The man, whose name was Benno, grew confidential. "Knew yer straight away," he said. "I dunno how it is but I can pick the new chums every time never been known to fail."

"The immigrants?"

"Yair, the English. Did you come across in the Imperia? We knew she was comin' up the bay but we work the river. A different lot of blokes work on Sandridge Pier, they live down that way."

"Well I did come out in the Imperia. Six weeks from London, that's not a bad run. It's good to know the old country's only six weeks away." He considered the last remark of his new acquaintance. "What do you mean, ‘you work the river? What do you do?”

"Ah, that's our line, we're wharfies, mate, wharf labourers. Things are fairly busy

right now and we'll be startin' our shift soon. We work the Yarra."

"Are you out of work often?"

"Nah, she's not too bad. If the Sydney boat's on time we'll be workin' it tonight. Trouble with this game, yer never sure of the hours. It doesn't matter if you have to start at midnight; if the job's there yer gotta do it, otherwise they give it to some-one else, and then yer gotta keep going until it's finished."

When they discovered that Fox was seeking accommodation for himself while looking for employment Benno and his gang of wharfies became very active and loudly summoned the licensee to come forth and look after their new-found friend.

The man's name was O'Hanlon, he did not want to offend the wharf labourers, who were good customers when they had the time and money to spare and he listened attentively while Benno explained with a good deal of colour what sort of room and board would be required for such a fine, generous young man just arrived from the old country.

With the wharf labourers acting as a self appointed inspection committee they went down a long passage that ran the length of the hotel and looked into a cheerless little bedroom large enough to contain a bed, a wardrobe and little else.

"Well, that's the broom cupboard," said Benno disparagingly, "now show us the bedroom."

"What are yez talking about?" said O'Hanlon, "There's nothing wrong with that bedroom, you won't find many like it in Melbourne."

"The common opinion was that it was just as well. If all the bedrooms in Melbourne were like that they would pack up and leave." The committee then inspected the bed springs and peered into the wardrobe. This did not take long and they expressed much the same opinion with varying degrees of profanity. Bennno looked closely at the dark green painted walls which was the same colour throughout the building. "I suppose in a high wind all the white ants have to hold hands to stop the joint from falling apart."

"If the young man doesn't like it he can easily go elsewhere; but I'm tellin' yez there's not many rooms to be had in Melbourne right now, and prices everywhere but in my pub are sky high."

"Get yer harp, O'Hanlon, and sing us another one."

"No, b'Jasus, two bob a day ; you can't expect me to say fairer than that. If anyone in Melbourne is offering better for less today you go to them, an' good luck I say."

"Gaw strike me dead, O'Hanlon, you should be with Ned Kelly's gang. If you was in charge they wouldn't be fighting the traps, they'd be down in Melbourne in the pub business."

Fox did not have an opportunity to open his mouth while all this chaffering was going on, he could only listen while Benno and his friends gradually wore the publican down until they compromised on one shilling and sixpence. They were satisfied with this and contracted with O'Hanlon for him to stay there a week and were witnesses to the payment of the first two days in advance. Gabriel locked his bags in the room and they all adjourned to the bar once more for a final congratulatory drink before parting.

Fox did not usually frequent bars; but it was clear he was not going to get his florin back so the next best was to help drink it.

When the money was gone and the wharf labourers had made several unavailing appeals to the stony hearted O'Hanlon for credit he went off, laden with good advice, to look the city over. He left and his new friends resumed their pastime of holding up the veranda posts while waiting for their shift to start.

{ 2 } The Music Shop

Gabriel set off to explore the town, hoping to see one face out of all the people he passed. He walked at random along the busiest thoroughfares until he came to Bourke Street. Where he was attracted by a shop on the opposite side, not far from the post office. It was a music shop with four show windows set in wooden frames and a double door in the middle. On the window was painted a florid sign extolling the enormous range of musical instruments and sheet music stocked within. Smaller letters boldly stated; 'Geo. Gladman. Prop.'

Fox crossed the road, dodging a van, a bus, and some jingling wagons, all hauled through the heavy, dusty surface of the road by horses and bullocks.

There were small wooden bridges here and there by which one could cross the stone lined gutters, and the young man walked to one of these rather than risk jumping the gutter and perhaps falling in the slime. Having reached the other side he stood with his back to the gutter, almost on the kerb, to study the shop.

Peering in he could see the stock displayed inside. The largest items were pianos, and pedal organs carved and decorated to appeal to the taste of customers. The organs were much in evidence. They were the one extravagance permissible to the bare, wooden and bluestone chapels being erected by devoted congregations.

No matter whether it served Mammon or the muse Gabriel Fox liked the look of the shop. Music he understood, and the getting of money interested him; here was a combination of both. The name of the proprietor, Geo. Gladman, was repeated over the door. He opened it and went in.

Inside, where the noise of the city was excluded, was a smell of fresh polish and a patina of wax that glinted from the smooth, walnut surfaces of the pianos and organs

There were stacks of sheet music set out neatly, a fine selection of hymns both ancient and modern, and plenty of parlour pieces and current songs for those of lighter tastes.

The music stands and stools, the flutes, oboes, violins, trumpets, were all to hand and everything was in readiness for an outpouring of melody. Gabriel looked round, he liked everything he saw.

A man, obviously George. Gladman, appeared from the back of the shop and advanced on the newcomer rubbing his hands and smiling. The man was tall and portly, and of good presence. He had a fine pair of dundreary whiskers that nearly met under his chin and swayed at every movement. It was difficult to take one's eyes off the whiskers in order to look at the man's handsome frock coat, waistcoat, and striped trousers.

G. Gladman approached and bowed his head deferentially showing a bald pate and a tonsure of greying hair. He was impressed by the dark haired young man's appearance.

"Good afternoon, sir." he said; "Fine weather we are having. May I be of assistance.?"

"You are Mr. Gladman, the proprietor?".

The merchant, with another inclination of the head, indicated that he was that man. "Suppliers of musical instruments and all classes of sheet music to people of refined taste, and you would be surprised, sir, to discover how many such there are in this far flung corner of the empire."

He studied the young man again. "May I help you? We have the finest imported stock in Melbourne. If you require a piano for the drawing room, or the latest in pedal organs we can supply on the most reasonable of terms." Another probable aspect of Fox's character now occurred to him. "I have here something of great interest to a young man who intends to embark on a preaching career."

He picked up what appeared to be a polished wooden suitcase; as he did so it opened out, four legs appeared, the lid lifted, and the box had become a portable harmonium. He attached a small foot bellows to a tube and laid it under the instrument. The organ was ready to play.

"This harmonium," he explained, "has the beauty of simplicity. It is easily mastered, can be set up under the most primitive conditions, and has sufficient range to play all the hymns now being produced."

Gabriel was delighted with the demonstration. "May I?" He drew up a chair, pumped away with his foot on the bellows and played a wheezy sounding popular hymn.

"You have the gift of music," said Mr Gladman. If you could preach also there would be no limit to your advancement. I don't mind telling you that the twin evils besetting this colony are drink and irreligion. There are those of us who fight manfully against both but we are few in numbers; why some of our miners and shepherds in the bush

never hear the word of the Lord from one year's end to another."

His visitor, who intended to ask for a job in the shop, hoped Mr Gladman had not smelled the sinful fumes of beer on his breath. "It is not my purpose to become a preacher; except in a lay capacity," he added hurriedly to please Mr Gladman. "I had considered, rather, going in to commerce."

"Very interesting." Mr Gladman went to a pile of sheet music and, after searching for a short while, found a song which he studied through spectacles clipped to his nose. “You read music?" Fox nodded, took the selected piece and glanced at it. ‘Home Sweet Home’.

"One of our most popular, and I must admit that it is mine also," said the proprietor with a proper blend of sentiment and commerciality.

"I could do it better justice," suggested Gabriel if you were to permit me to use one of larger organs, or a piano perhaps."

''Of course,'' said the proprietor. He bustled across and picked up a stool to put in front of the more decorated organ of the two in the shop. ‘I shall be your bellows man.’ He took the handle and started to pump it driving air into the organ.

Fortunately Gabriel had been tutored to play the organ as well as the piano, and at home he had sometimes been pressed into duty, on Sundays at their local church. He skillfully played the old song as requested.

."Yes," said Mr Gladman when the last note faded into silence, "You really have a gift for music; most enjoyable. Now, in what way can I help you?"

"Perhaps we can help each other, Mr Gladman," said Gabriel, seizing the opportunity. "I came here not to buy but to enquire if there was a position available in your store as a sales assistant. I arrived from England this morning and am looking for employment. You have seen that I can play music and demonstrate practically any instrument in the shop.”

Mr Gladman’s manner changed when he heard this. He became became slightly more distant as the young man changed from a potential customer to one seeking employment. He could see that such an assistant, if cheap enough, would be an asset to the business. The young man was well groomed and had a manner and appearance that would appeal to the musical matrons of city.

He now looked at the applicant and pursed his lips. "And what value do you place on your services? Mr er?" he enquired.

"Five pounds a week, and my name is Fox", replied Gabriel boldly.

Mr Gladman was astonished. He knew that the price of labour was ridiculously high but such a figure had not crossed his mind. A skilled tradesman in times of scarcity, or a very valuable foreman, might command such a wage, but not a shop assistant, just

off the boat from England, no matter how promising in appearance and manner. Shop assistants were not in a position to demand such remuneration. They earned a pittance by working long hours and could be dismissed at any time, without recourse, at the whim of the shop owner. A supervisor or head salesman might earn three pounds to three pounds ten after years of service but here was a brazen youth asking for five, and on his very first day in the colony. It is scarcely to be wondered at that Mr Gladman was taken aback at this preposterous demand.

He did not suggest an immediate departure from the shop, he needed an assistant and one with such an appearance and manner, and with an obvious gift for music, would be ideal. First, however, the young man had to be convinced of the economic facts governing the payment of shop assistants. He put his hands together, made a steeple of his fingers and gazed over them judicially.

"No one in your position, Mr Fox, young, inexperienced, ignorant of the complexities of the music business could earn such a princely salary. Possibly, after many years of diligence and success you might aspire to such an amount. But five pounds a week!" he shook his head and smiled knowingly. "Of course I am not an ungenerous man. I am prepared to offer thirty shillings a week to the right person, on liking, naturally. At the expiration of three months, if everything proves satisfactory, we might consider a reasonable advance on this amount."

"Mr Gladman," was the unabashed reply, "I am prepared to start at five pounds and work up. If I had wanted to spend my life in slavery to earn enough to live on I could have stayed in London and saved the fare out to here for a start."

"Well, pertness is not going to assist you to find a position, particularly at such inflated figure," was Mr Gladman's reply to this statement. He said it coolly to indicate that the subject was just about exhausted, as far as he was concerned.

"I'm not asking for anything out of the way because I would be worth far more to you than five pounds, or even ten pounds a week," Fox persisted. "I'm a salesman, Mr Gladman. I'll guarantee to sell anything. If you pay shop assistants wages that is what you will get - shop assistants, but if you want a salesman who will earn you good money, that is what you must do, pay him enough money to make the selling worth while. Do you know that given the opportunity I can sell anything in this shop?"

Mr Gladman's hand moved towards his whiskers. The concept of salesmanship was new to him. A shopkeeper kept a supply of goods at a reasonable price and waited for a customer to walk into the shop and buy. Advertising in the daily papers was permissible, though when aiming at a certain class of clientele, as one did in the music business, it was better to let no touch of vulgarity creep into the advertisements. Vulgarity was rife in many classes of advertisement, particularly those puffing patent medicines, dentistry and the like. But the music business, almost a sister of the arts, was genteel.

"You can sell the organs?'

"No doubt about it. If I get the right opportunity they won't see the week out."

On this understanding any further exploration of the city was postponed to stay in the music shop and try to carry out his promise. It was urgent that he get a well paid position. He intended to save money in order to go in to some business venture of his own. If he took work at a pound or thirty shillings a week he might never break free. He had not travelled ten thousand miles and ventured all to take some menial job in Australia.

'Well,'' said Mr Gladman at last, ''You may stay here today and study the nature of the business, but I could not permit you to handle any large sales. Later in the week we can discuss wages.''

On that first day he astounded and delighted Mr Gladman by selling one of the organs. A committee of austere men, a minister and two of his elders, from a small suburban chapel, came in to inspect organs, not to buy. They wanted something unadorned, simple, and solid, like their creed, something about which they could report back to the other elders of the congregation. There the various types of organs would be judged, compared and a considered decision made, in which all would have a part.

When they left they had signed an order and left a deposit for the most ornate organ in the shop, and the most expensive.

Mr Gladman certainly would not have entrusted such an important sale to his brash, new assistant but he was engaged with another customer when these gentlemen walked into his premises.

Fox, a first class salesman, as he had claimed, not only sold them the instrument but convinced them that this organ was what they had wanted all the time, that it was the only organ in Melbourne completely suited to their chapel.

He had considered selling them a harp instead. There were plenty of biblical texts to counter any objections they might make to the ungodliness of such an instrument. The bible contained many references to harps, particularly those passages relating to David playing before Saul. A shrewd look at the men made him decide against any such move. Their congregation might not rebel at the sight of an organ more suited to a high Anglican or Papist church than their simple chapel, but a sinfully decorated harp, French at that, would be more than they could stomach. The Elders would have a rebellion, and he a returned harp to deal with.

Furthermore, not a thousand texts demonstrating that harps were mentioned in the bible and pedal-organs unknown, could hide the fact that there was a widespread shortage of harpists in Melbourne, while the chapel already had an organist ready for action.

The tears almost stood in Mr Gladman's eyes when the committee left, doubtfully reassuring one another that they had gained a wonderful bargain in snapping up the organ before any other congregation could get it.

"I do admire you business men!" the minister was saying as they left the shop. "Instant decision! You came, you saw, you conquered - truly Napoleonic."

When they had gone Mr Gladman cheerfully examined the deposit cheque that was handed to him. It was drawn on the Australian and European Bank of Melbourne for ten pounds. He hummed one of the tunes that had been played for the committee.

"A splendid beginning Mr Fox, splendid. I was a wee bit anxious when they first came in, but you handled them beautifully. I doubt if I could have done better myself."

His assistant was sure he could not but chose not to say so. "You played well", continued Mr Gladman, "and I thought the piece from Bach was an excellent selection; but don't you think it injudicious to play those other music hall tunes on the organ, a sacred instrument, one could well say; especially to a group of church men. I almost intervened; I could see they were somewhat shocked at your levity."

"They loved it! They will never admit it but that was what sold them the organ. Of course I was careful to finish up with some hymn tunes just to put them back in the right mood again for serious business. If it had been a priest I would have played him Irish Jigs, but for that lot music hall tunes were just about right."

Mr Gladman clipped his pince-nez glasses on his nose once more and carefully scrutinised his new employee. He could not make up his mind about this young man. Signs of light-minded behaviour were not to be encouraged in the music business. At any other time he would have rebuked such a cynical remark, but the feel of the cheque in his hand, and the respectable signatures on it, made him pause. He resolved to suspend judgement for a while.

Fox was too busy to think about his proprietor's doubts. His next customer, a maiden lady of thirty or thereabouts, was rather fluttered by the nearness of the dark handsome young assistant as they leafed through the sheet music together. He helped her to pick out some piano pieces, including *Home Sweet Home* Imagine her feelings when he opened out one of the duet sheets over which she was a little hesitant, set it up on a piano and invited her to play the piece with him.

She might have refused and left the shop in confusion but for Mr Gladman, who seemed sufficient chaperone to guard against any appearance of impropriety. After some coaxing she did sit down, and they played not one but several pieces together. She found this most pleasant, marred perhaps by several wrong notes on her part. This was due to nothing more than extreme nervousness, but the young man did not mind at all; he insisted courteously that any wrong notes were his fault entirely. He played one or two minor ones himself but she suspected that this was a ruse to put her at her ease.

She departed with a bundle of music about twice as large as she originally intended to buy and was already embroidering the encounter in her mind. Rehearsing what she would say to her friends of it. About how she had actually sat down and played the piano with Mr Gladman's young, new assistant. Her friends would lift their hands and

shake their heads in envious despair over Angela's latest indiscretion. During the next few days the music shop could expect a sudden rise in the number of lady customers who would come, ostensibly to buy, but really to see the new assistant. the little story of Angela's encounter, suitably enlarged and dramatised, would go the rounds among Angela's hundred or so intimate friends until something else came up to distract their attention.

Mr Gladman, not a bad judge of character, could read all this in the spinster lady's face as she hurried out. He knew how valuable was word of mouth recommendation to any business, particularly his, which relied on a circle of patronage. There was plenty of money in the colony and numerous women from well to do families who had no other occupation but to gossip, criticise the servants, or go shopping. The morality of the time prevented genteel women from taking up any more meaningful occupation than these.

Mr Gladman could not see any fault in this system, but he was well placed to exploit it. The women of the wealthier classes, even though they were to an extent the captives of their menfolk and society, still controlled large amounts of money, and his shop, and others like it, were geared to attract them. A good looking young assistant such as Mr Fox would be a definite asset.

During their quiet periods, when there were no customers in the shop Mr Gladman would talk and enlighten his assistant on these matters. Not intentionally, because he could not have stated the question as such. His way was to hold forth on the things that interested him and the three main topics were; the state of gentility in the colony, which was allied closely to the proper sort of religion; the growth or decline of trade, depending how business was at the time; and the Irish question.

He interrogated Fox closely as to the number of Irish passengers that had travelled third class on the passage from England.

There had been Irish people among the passengers. Of this he was sure because of what he had observed during the confinement of the ship; but no one had made anything of it. He quickly decided for Mr Gladman's sake that there were hundreds of them crammed into every available berth.

"I don't mind telling you," said Mr Gladman, when he had absorbed this information with gloomy relish," that the government of this colony is making a rod for all our backs when it opens the flood gates of immigration to these children of the scarlet women. I mentioned to you before that the twin evils that will bring this infant land to ruin are irreligion, in which I include popery and all its works, and strong drink."

Gabriel could recognise here the style of lay preaching that must have enlivened many a meeting of the Faithful Brethren, a sect to which his employer belonged. Mr Gladman and his fellows had a great fund of indignant oratory that could be evoked at any time by the mere mention of the Church of Rome, and they were ever on the alert to save people, fom the machinations of the priesthood.

Mr Gladman was quite sure that only close attention to the more blood-thirsty texts of the bible, and by standing shoulder to shoulder with the other God fearing and sturdy protestants of the colony --He was even prepared to co-operate with the Anglicans, providing they were not High Church, of course, to ensure the flood-gates would be kept closed and disaster averted.

Only by regular attendance each Sabbath at the chapel, of the Brethren, where, if earthly defences failed, repeated and sustained prayers could at last bring down blood, and fire, and brimstone from heaven to destroy the Vatican ten times over and sweep the unsullied shore of Australia free forever from the Catholic Irish plague.

Gabriel emerged from this harangue somewhat shaken and dubious. Never before had he thought much about national perils, or inferior races, and his religion was elastic. He was prepared to take up any religion, or none, if it would advance his interests, but found it difficult to swallow the great gobs of religion and prejudice that Mr Gladman was trying to force on him.

However, they had other things to think about as the long day wore on. Rain set in during the afternoon and Bourke Street was no longer dusty and uncomfortable, now it became muddy and even more unpleasant. Long streams of horses, carts and wagons churned the surface of the street into a nasty mixture of horse dung, urine and sticky mud.

Mr Gladman stood looking out through the shop window, his hands clasped behind under the tails of his coat. He became gloomier still.

"Very changeable weather in this city. If the rain keeps up it will bring traffic to a halt. There's no bottom to some of the pot-holes out there and when the heavy wagons get stuck it's the Devil's own job to get them out. I've seen them hitch up a dozen and more horses without effect. It's very bad for business too, the mud is so thick that ladies particularly can't cross at the intersections. Really," he said, "I don't know why we pay our rates. The incompetence of the City Council is a public disgrace. Surely we pay enough to expect the civilised amenities of paved roads, though we're lucky we're not round in Elizabeth Street the shopkeepers there dread the wet weather; they've had the Yarra burst its banks several times and flood into their shops but then it doesn't take much rain at all to cause trouble in Elizabeth Street."

The contemplation of other people's problems satisfied him for a while until the next customer arrived, walking clods of mud into the shop.

He was a short, stocky man of uncertain age who had trodden a, diagonal, wavery course through the traffic and across the mud of Bourke Street. It was the custom in wet weather, after crossing the road, to scrape the mud off one's boots as well as possible on scrapers that were set on the pavement outside most shops.

He had either not scraped his boots enough, or not at all. Now he stood and swayed in the doorway, beaming at them from a very red face, unaware of the mud he was tracking into Mr Gladman's shop. The Bull and Mouth Hotel on the other side of

Bourke Street had entertained him for a while and now it was Mr Gladman's turn.

Mr Gladman recognised his type and racial origin instantly, he had, as Mr Gladman would have put it, the map of Ireland on his face, and was obviously a drunken navvy of some kind, dressed in his Sunday best.

Mr Gladman went rigid with rage. "Get him out of the shop!" he hissed, "we don't want his type in here -- I won't have it! Just tell him to go."

Fox approached the man politely "Good afternoon Sir," he said. "Can I help you?"

Mr Gladman was still in the same position, apparently looking out of the front window, but he was tense with suppressed reproach and dislike.

"I've come down for the cup." said the man mysteriously. He was groping with his free fingers in the pockets of a new floral waistcoat. All his clothes were new from a broad brimmed hat to his boots which were still shiny, where not daubed with mud.

"The cup!" repeated Gabriel, "We haven't any cups here, I'm sorry, at least I don't think so. As far as I know we have only musical instruments - perhaps you're thinking of some other shop?"

The other waved a parcel of books at him that he had held under his arm. "No, no me boy, you got the bull by the tail, I'm down for the Melbourne Cup, tomorrer. I've brought the Missus and the kids down from the bush, and we're all going out to Flemington with a spanking outfit to have a picnic, and we're going to put a few bob on the gee gees."

"It's a horse race", exclaimed Gabriel.

The stranger in a sudden rage threw his hat on the floor, wildly disarranging his white hair. "Of course it's a horse race, " he shouted. "What else would it be on Australia's national day I'm a man that stood shoulder to shoulder with his mates at the Eureka Stockade. Who are you to try and stop me getting a bit of rational enjoyment with a friendly pot or two at the pub, and an afternoon at the races."

The subjects of horse racing, gambling and drinking always roused floods of indignant oratory among the Faithful Brethren and Mr Gladman was more than ever incensed. He twitched to indicate that the intruder should be put out from the shop at once.

Fox picked the hat up from the floor and returned it. At this the little man's rage passed as suddenly as it had arrived and he was genial once more. Fumbling in his waistcoat pocket he dislodged a fat gold pocket watch with a face cover; it swung from his waistcoat button by an equally massive chain which appeared to be also of gold. He seemed not to notice but suddenly found what he had been searching for. After a couple of tries he put the article into the other's hand -- it was a large gold nugget.

"There's more where that come from," he said. If they tell you the alluvial's all gone,

refer 'em to me. There's more gold in Victoria than's ever been taken out," he stated, tapping Fox on the waistcoat to emphasise this statement.

"There's still a place for the prospector in this state. Don't you believe the big boys with their capital, and their machinery, and their deep leads have got it all their own way. If a man's got the brains and the experience he can still find gold, and this is nuthin'," he said, figuratively waving away the nugget. "I'm almost on to the mother lode. And when I find that I'll be the richest man in the colony. Me and the missus and the kids, we'll all go to Ireland for a holiday."

"And that's not all. Don't you think that's all there is to it." He wagged his finger gravely at the young man, as though to forestall an argument. "I was one of the first blokes into Walhalla. Got a few nice little claims pegged out; and who do you think the big companies had to come to when they wanted to drill their deep leads and follow the seams through? Who do you think, eh?" he paused. "Of course it was me, and they had to cut me in as a big shareholder. Don't you go round saying that Timothy Flanagan gave anything away to the big boys, because he didn't. Me and the family we're fixed up for life and I can go off prospecting whenever I like and someday I'm going to find a field that'll make Bendigo and Ballarat look as though they're picking up pennies."

He suddenly remembered the purpose of his visit and clung to Fox's coat. "I come to buy a pianner for the missus. Which is the biggest and best bloody pianner in the place? Come on mate; no muckin' around. I want a walnut pianner with carving on it, and bloody big brass candlesticks, it's to go to Walhalla, and I want it up there in the house ready to play by the time we get back from Melbourne."

"Yes, we can arrange all that, Sir," Fox had no idea what Walhalla might be, or where it was; but it was obviously a mining settlement, and probably remote. "There is no difficulty. You must understand that specially arranged transport such as this is quite expensive and the instrument will have to be tuned after it is installed in your house. Is there a piano tuner at Walhalla?"

The customer found the idea of Walhalla being able to support a piano tuner quite amusing. Most of the inhabitants wouldn't know a piano if it fell on them. But things would change when his new piano arrived; as soon as his missus and the girls learned to knock out a few tunes their house would be the social centre of the town.

Fox refrained from asking if Walhalla had such a thing as a teacher of piano, and what musical talent lurked in the customer’s family. Personally he would not have cared for the task of rounding up a bunch of bush children and teaching them music; but that was someone else's problem, his was to sell the instrument.

Mr Gladman's manners altered when he heard the customer's intention of buying a piano; he had ignored, but not forgotten the mud on the floor and lifted the lid of a highly polished German, iron frame piano, with brass candle sconces, as requested, and had dusted a stool ready for the customer to play.

Fox gestured towards the stool but the man backed off. He had, it appeared, arrived in Australia aged fifteen and had knocked about the bush ever since. He didn't know nothin' about nothin' except working his arse off, and it was only over the last few years he had been able to scrape few bob together so that now his missus could take it easy and acquire a few of the social graces, even if he didn't know how to, and didn't intend to learn. "You play, mate, show me how it's done."

Fox was pleased to oblige. He rattled off a succession of tunes that delighted the little man. He thumped him on the back, "Done, I'll take it," and turned on Mr Gladman, who stepped back delicately to escape the fumes of his breath. "You got a good lad here, boss. You look after 'im and he'll make a fortune for you. If he was playin' in one of them flash bars he'd clean up on tips alone -- be a rich man in a couple'a years. Righto boss, now how much is this very fine pianner?"

"Sixty five pounds," said Mr Gladman.

The customer staggered back, but Gabriel caught him before he fell over the stool. "Oh, Gawd!" he exclaimed, "I thought a pianner would be about twenty quid!"

Mr Gladman's manner was rapidly cooling again. He shook his head. "Oh, no, no, no, Mr Fox can certainly show you a piano in the vicinity of that amount; but this instrument at £65 is the best in the shop and, I might add, is priced most reasonably. As for transport, now that the rail connection has been completed to Gippsland we can have it sent, properly crated of course, to Moe, and then it would have to be taken by wagon, as you know, the rest of the way to Walhalla. Of course we can ascertain the cost of freight and packing at least as far as Moe. No doubt you would prefer to make your own arrangements between there and Walhalla. But if you wish for a cheaper piano than the one we have shown you Mr Fox would be happy to demonstrate."

"No," said the customer. "I come in here and said I wanted the best, and the best I will have. The missus and me, we been battlers all our lives, and if any woman alive deserves the best she does -- and that's what she's going to have. I'll give yer the sixty five quid, and be pleased to do it. Another thing, you find out how much it costs to send it to Moe and I'll come back and pay that too but there's one thing I want to say." He made several attempts to lay a finger on the side of his nose before succeeding. "I've taken a fancy to this young bloke; he's a smart lad boss, as I told you before -- look after 'im." He kept slapping the top of the piano to emphasise his points, and holding it from time to time to keep his balance. "I told yer, I'm going to the Cup tomorrer and I want someone to go with me, that's apart from the missus and kids, of course. If you give him the day off to go to the Cup I'll buy the pianner. In fact I'll put the cash down now. What d'yer say?"

Mr Gladman was scandalised, Fox delighted. "What! You would take this young man to a horse race? If you are not aware of the evils of horse racing I certainly am. There are special and most dangerous pitfalls for a young man at the race track. This is his very first day in the colony and I would not dream of casting him into temptation. Buy

the piano by all means my dear sir, but don't attempt to lead this young man astray." Fox, who was anxious to be led astray, was quite dejected.

The customer produced a fat wallet and counted out £65 in notes and sovereigns on to the dark polished wood of the piano. They made an impressive little pile, and Mr Gladman's fingers twitched.

"There it is," said his tempter. "I can go somewhere else and get a pianner; the shops are still open and there's plenty want to sell if you don't."

"It would broaden my experience, Sir," suggested Fox. "My mother was always careful to warn me against the dangers of gambling and attending functions of this nature. Perhaps it is my duty to go and experience this. Perhaps if I am called on to preach the word of God at a later time I will have seen sin at first hand so that I am better able to caution others. If you wish I can come along to the chapel next Sunday and tell the congregation what goes on at the racetrack."

The fortunate prospector was delighted with this little speech. Such a tone and such language were unknown in the circles he frequented. He removed his hat to show respect for the sentiments even though he did not clearly understand them.

Mr Gladman, however, was in a moral dilemma. How to get £65 yet protect the young man from evil company? His hand trembled but closed around the money and he bowed to the customer. "Very well, Mr Fox may accompany you to the races toorrow, without pay of course. And I expect him to include a special plea in his prayers tonight to be shielded from sin on this sinful day and to be protected from any urge to gamble money on the outcome of any races. And of course he will be at work at half past eight on Wednesday morning without thought of further holidays or remissions of any kind."

Mr Gladman may have been influenced by the fact that holiday or not the Melbourne Cup was an institution in the colony. Out of a population of about half a million people at least one third would attend the Cup. He would be unlikely to sell anything in his store on the first Tuesday in November. Fox remembered later even the officers and crew of his ship had been anxious to get to Melbourne in time for the big race.

In the end their customer went off without his nugget and Fox had to run down Bourke Street hatless in order to catch him on the post office steps and return it. He seemed quite surprised, having forgotten that he had handed it over in the first place.

"The name's Tim, me boy," he said shaking Fox's hand with a rough, work-hardened grip, and winking. "Tim Flanagan, but you can call me Tim. I'll be round at your pub at 9 o'clock tomorrer mornin' to pick you up. And don't worry, you'll get to work on Wensdy morning all right, even if the boys have to carry you there from the party."

Elated he went back to the shop to face Mr Gladman who was both elated and despondent. Two excellent sales during the day caused him to take a more optimistic

view of Victoria's economy, the day of ruin had been postponed by the activities of his assistant, but now he feared for the young man's moral safety in this visit to the Melbourne Cup. Furthermore he had heard the address given to Mr Flanagan when he expressed his intention to call for Gabriel in the morning. It was a hotel in Flinders Street a notorious drinking shop and the haunt of working people, wharf labourers, and the like. Mr Gladman could scarcely think of a worse place for a young man of gentle upbringing. There were appalling temptations and possibilities of falling from grace in such a den. He urged him to change his lodgings without delay, that very day. There were numerous respectable boarding houses around Melbourne where such dangers were not ever present. He suggested Mrs Tankard's establishment in Lonsdale Street. It was very well spoken of by the Brethren.

The young man, who considered that moral danger at the pub might be preferable to moral safety with Mr Gladman, pleaded that he had paid in advance, that it would be too late to seek fresh lodgings in a strange city that night, and with his lack of knowledge might proceed to even worse quarters. The next day would be impossible as he was going to the races and he could study the newspapers on Wednesday to see what was available. In the meantime he agreed to be very circumspect. Not to enter the public bar under any pretext. To avoid talking to customers or guests he might find on the premises, and above all to have nothing to do with any young women he should meet between there and the music shop. Mr Gladman strongly advised him to go straight to his room and stay there as the safest refuge for any young man in the wicked city of Melbourne.

However closing time came round at last and he reluctantly had to let Fox go. he had some sharp words to say about the trading hours that had been forced on them by the government.

Nevertheless, to stay open any longer was flouting the law of the colony, so they set off amid the crowds to walk to their destinations.

They parted at Flinders Street, Mr Gladman to go to the railway station while Fox walked to the hotel. His intention was to talk to any girls he might meet, to go into the bar for a drink, and then explore Melbourne, with or without company. But this was too much for him; he had experienced one of the longest and most eventful days of his life. After a drowsy dinner he went straight to his little room and slept deeply all night without any more thought for the strange city of which he knew so little.

{ 3 }

The Road to Flemington

Gabriel Fox did not wake easily the following morning. It was late, after nine o'clock. Timothy Flanagan had roused everyone in the house with his persistent knocking and, at last the landlord had arisen to admit him, and then gone grumbling back to bed.

Gabriel sat on the side of his bed for a while and shook his head to clear it. He could see through the grubby window and cheap curtains into a narrow, private alleyway that led round to the back of the hotel. Crates of empty bottles were stacked among the weeds and the sun cast the shadow of a chimney pot on the stained wall of the building next door. Above the roof-line the sky was deep blue, and promised a beautiful day once away from the monotony of this drab place.

Timothy wore a suit and top hat in grey, an outfit that astonished Gabriel he thought it more suitable for a garden party, or a wedding, than a jaunt to the racecourse. Even in the dim light of the bedroom Timothy's shirt buttons set off by snowy white linen appeared to glitter and flash like drops of water caught in sunlight, as did his tie-pin and cufflinks. 'Could they really be diamonds?' He did not like to ask.

Timothy wore a tailed cutaway coat with two staring black buttons sewn into the waist at the back. His trousers were striped grey and black and his boots glistened except where they were marked by traces of dust and mud, picked up on the walk to the hotel. His outfit was marred only by the startling contrast of his red, seamed working-man's face and fringe of grey beard; also he was smoking shag in a short, foul pipe and puffing out wreaths of smoke.

He noted that Gabriel turned away and coughed. He was not a smoker and the acrid fumes from the pipe were unsettling in the confined room.

''You're not the only one that don't like it,'' Timothy observed cheerfully. ''The missus has been tryin' for years to get me to give it up. I don't smoke when she's around because, like you, she hasn't got the stomach for it. I'll put it out in the passage.'' He returned in a moment having concealed the pipe in an aspidistra which graced the green painted corridor, and stood in a majolica bowl on a pedestal of the same.

''You'd be surprised,'' he confided, ''How many times the missus has tried to lose that pipe on me. She's hid it in dozens, maybe hundreds of different places, but I always find it; somehow I can always track it down.''

Gabriel was not surprised. He approved of Mrs. Flanagan's attempts to lose the nasty thing, but understood how Timothy could always find it. It was the smell.

''You keep on dressin', me boy,'' his friend advised. 'I'll talk, but don't mind me, just keep goin' You got a morning suit like this? You gotta be dressed right for the cup.''

Gabriel had nothing of the kind; but he possessed a carefully packed, good brown suit, single-breasted with six buttons. There should have been a gold or silver watch on a chain to keep in his top pocket, but that had gone to help pay his twenty guinea fare to Australia. Nevertheless, after washing and shaving, he was able to dress smartly with a white shirt, red cravat, and yellow kid gloves. He polished his black boots as well as he could with a rag then, with his round black hat on, he was ready to face the world. The only thing lacking was a walking stick, but Timothy had several at his hotel and would be happy to lend one.

''You have breakfast with us," said Timothy. "We're stayin' at the Menzies; it's not far, just up the hill." He put on his hat, and thus dressed to startle the world they set off together.

The streets were deserted; it seemed more like a Sunday, than a working day. There was very little smoke in the air; the gutters were not running with sullage, and no cabs waited for passengers.

''It's the Cup," explained Timothy. ''Who's goin'ter hang around in the city when everyone else is out at Flemington. You'll soon get into the habit yourself, my boy. Never forget the first Tuesday in November is one of the big days of the year. It's like Grand Final Day. Everything in Melbourne stops for days like this''

Gabriel wondered what the grand final was, but did not ask. He thought he would find out soon enough.

Menzies hotel was a large, handsome building on a corner so it faced two streets and the Flanagans had a suite on the first floor. When the two men arrived at the door they heard an altercation going on in the drawing room, but it stopped abruptly when Mr. Flanagan ushered in his guest. Two young women, expensively dressed, but not yet ready to receive visitors, exclaimed something unladylike and disappeared through a door into the next room, leaving a flustered woman to be introduced to Gabriel.

''Old girl this is Gabriel Fox, as I told you of,'' said Mr. Flanagan. He seemed unaware that his wife had suddenly bridled and pursed her lips on being introduced as 'Old girl', He continued, making matters worse. "What's wrong with the girls this time? You'd think they'd stop and pass the time of day with our guest, instead of clearing off like that."

Mrs. Flanagan controlled herself. "You're their father, Timothy, and it's your job to make sure they don't get out of hand. I'm sure I do my best, but I am only a woman, and it's up to the head of the household to control his family. Anyway, you took them by surprise when you walked in. Myrtle's hair is giving trouble and Lydia can't make up her mind which dress to wear, and there are --- "She paused and glanced at their guest, who was sitting in an armchair. ''If Mr. Fox is a married man I am sure he will understand, there are more things to be done before they are ready to greet visitors.''

Mr. Fox quickly intimated that he was still single, so Mrs. Flanagan, as befitted a mother with two spinster daughters to marry off, became more gracious and friendly than the strict rules of hospitality demanded.

Timothy was irate. ''How the devil!'', he saw his wife stiffen at the coarse language and started again. "How could we take them by surprise? You called them before I left, and they knew I was goin' to get Gabriel and come straight back."

The lady closed her eyes. She said icily, ''I think, Timothy, you are referring to Mr. Fox. Would you please speak of him in the proper manner."

“Yair, that’s right. Mr.Fox was comin’ back with me, and they knew it.

I don’t wish to discuss the matter any further. Pardon me, Mr. Fox; I have to go and speak to the girls.” She went into the next room and the altercation broke out afresh, but rather more subdued this time because the young women were aware of the handsome young stranger the other side of the door.

Whether it was the scolding of their parents or a desire to meet Fox that influenced them the result was that they entered in less than ten minutes, gorgeously dressed. Two girls appeared, Myrtle, and Lydia. Myrtle was nineteen and Lydia, seventeen. Lydia was nervous and gauche, and tended to giggle, but Myrtle had inherited a gorgon like glare from her mother, which she used to freeze her sister into instant silence. Myrtle told her to go and call someone called Henry.

'Pa told us you only arrived in Melbourne yesterday,''said Myrtle who was nineteen and coquettish. ''Did you come straight from London? You must think these dresses of ours are very old-fashioned, but then we have to wait so long here in the colonies for the latest styles.'' She indicated the magnificent dresses she and her sister wore. Though not a connoisseur, Gabriel could recognize lavishness and quality when it was pointed out. ''Mrs. Laws, up in Collins Street made them. Ma told her only the very best would do for her daughters and she’s the best dressmaker in Melbourne; everyone says so; but they must look terrible after seeing the London fashions,''

''Not a bit of it!” said Gabriel, who knew how to play this game. The dressmaker had used yards and yards of colourful material that shimmered under the light of the gasoliers. It was full daylight but the room was illuminated with gas because the blinds were drawn. ''They are beautiful'' said Fox, who was never lost for a compliment. “I did not know until this very minute that the ladies in Melbourne wore the latest fashions. You could go to any garden party in England in those dresses and the only thing people would say would be how beautiful and fashionable they are''.

Everyone went down to breakfast in an excellent humour except for a sulky boy of fifteen, Henry, the youngest of the Flanagan family. He had been forced against his will into a heavy black suit and a shirt with a stiff collar. He said it hurt his neck, but his mother did not relent. He was morose and glared at them with a degree of hatred. Not the promise of a day at the races, and slap-up lunch lightened his mood. He had been brought untamed from Walhalla, and longed to be back roaming its hills or talking about machinery with the men who worked the mines.

The other members of the family were there to savour their visit. The two girls, particularly Myrtle, were delighted to have Fox with them. Unlike their brother they were willing to forget Walhalla and force entry into the social life of Melbourne. Mrs. Flanagan smiled on all of them. such a personable young man as Mr. Fox, and such manners were difficult to find in the colony, and impossible in Walhalla. She began to think she would enjoy her day, marred perhaps only by young Henry’s sulkiness.

They had a hurried breakfast because even then the dining room was emptying fast. Fashionable people had come from all parts of Victoria, and from other colonies as

well, to see the race and take part in the festivities of Cup Week. Gabriel could see that the Flanagans would not be out of place on the race-course. The hotel guests passing through the dining room were dressed in gorgeous clothes. The men were sombre enough but immaculate; their women flaunted all the colours of the rainbow. Snowy white linen and diamonds glittered under the overhead lights. Creamy lace decorated the bosoms or necks of ladies of mature years, and the colours of their dresses were slightly subdued. But on the young women; they burst forth into hues that would rouse a peacock to envy.

It seemed that Melbourne was full of dressmakers, bustle-makers, boot-makers, hair-dressers, jewelers, milliners, hatters, tailors, all labouring away during the year for this one day when their art burst into an efflorescence of light and colour.

The Flanagan women watched the display avidly, scarcely noting what they ate, but Henry did not care; he gloomily munched a large breakfast and seldom looked up from his food.

Timothy soon became convinced that they would be late. There was a great bustle at the door after each time the commissionaire entered to announce that a carriage was waiting at the door to whisk away some fortunate group. First there was a quick search for parasols and handbags, a strict enquiry to make sure father had the tickets.

As each group departed, and the movement and chatter in the dining room lessened, Timothy brought his watch out from his pocket and regarded it anxiously. The feeling growing in him was that they would be late. It was the very best and most expensive watch but he doubted that it was right. He thumped it on the table a few times to – as he put it – shake it up a bit. The hands obstinately refused to budge. The waiter was sent to check the clock in the entrance hall; it agreed with Timothy's watch, even a consultation of the kitchen clock gave the same result.

The whole party became prey to the same uneasiness. The time came, the time went, still the doorman did not step into the room and announce that there was a carriage waiting for the Flanagans. Mrs Flanagan took no chances. She had them organized to the last handkerchief; no reticules or parasols had been left behind. Once in the carriage they would leave immediately, there was to be an absolute embargo on anyone running upstairs for some forgotten item, or keeping them waiting on any pretext whatever.

The carriage was ten minutes late. The whole family was in despair. The driver had forgotten them. He must have been drunk last night, and was probably still asleep. Perhaps he had gone to the wrong hotel, or someone else had bribed him to take a family to Flemington, some other family. Father had forgotten to make the booking. Perhaps the carriage was waiting outside and the doorman had forgotten to tell them.

Timothy stomped outside but was soon back to report that the weather was superb, but there was no sign of the carriage. If he did not come within the next few minutes they would have to go to Spencer Street and catch a train.

This announcement nearly brought on another break-down in family relations. It was only Mr Fox's presence that kept the girls from hysterics. Henry did not care either way, he was already a captive in society and nothing could increase his gloom. Myrtle and Lydia were adamant that they would never, never take their new dresses on a one and sixpenny train ride to Flemington to be crushed, and trampled, and dirtied by common people. They would rather die and give up all thought of going into society, which would please pa very much because everyone knew that all he wanted was to keep his daughters in Walhalla and live and die old maids in that nasty hole. Of course if he wanted them to be common working class he was going the right way about it,

Timothy became incensed at these statements and he nearly brought disaster on them by attempting to rise in his place and announce, heatedly and loudly that he was common, that he was working class, and because these jumped up kids had a lot of money spent putting flash clothes on their backs did not mean they were better than anyone else.

Fortunately his family knew what he was going to say at any stage of a quarrel and they were able to stop him in time from making any such statement in the middle of Menzies' still crowded dining room.

By this time real hysterics were impending and Myrtle was in such a state that Mrs. Flanagan was considering taking her upstairs for the desperate remedy of loosening her stays. This was only slightly less serious than actually cutting the cords because of the time and difficulty in retightening the cords and getting the dress to rights once more.

Suddenly all their difficulties disappeared when a page came in to say that a carriage in the name of Flanagan was waiting outside. Anger cooled, hysterics were forgotten, all hastened out into the street not wishing to keep the driver a minute longer than necessary.

Timothy had hired a handsome open carriage with the driver sitting up front on a wide, deeply buttoned seat. He was dressed in a kind of livery and wore a top hat, though it had a feather stuck in the band so no one could mistake him for a gentleman, and shiny leather top boots to show he was a horseman. All were delighted with this spanking outfit, except for Henry, who was delighted with nothing, and got in under mute protest.

The girls were determined to give the impression that they rode every day in such a vehicle. They quickly assumed an air of hauteur so necessary to young ladies of fashion.

Mrs. Flanagan wanted Fox and Henry to ride on the front seat alongside the coachman. It was a spot appropriate for the younger male members of the party, but Myrtle perversely decided that she would ride up there, and the driver had to take out a box from under his seat so she could mount. Fox sat on the outside to make sure she did not fall off.. The others settled on the two seats which faced each other.

All took a lively interest in their surroundings, except for Henry who gazed gloomily at his boots. A slight pause followed until two waiters trotted out carrying between them a heavy wicker hamper that clinked and gurgled pleasantly as they stowed it on the back of the carriage where the driver secured it with buckled leather straps. Without wasting a second he clambered into his seat and cracked his whip over the backs of the two horses.

Fox hoped their route would pass the music shop so he could see if Mr. Gladman had opened it on this festive day, but it was not to be. They went in the other direction, into unknown territory.

He passed Spencer Street station for the first time. It was as busy as any railway station he had seen, with gaily dressed people queuing to buy tickets and then disappearing into the station

The air was sullied with the steam and smoke of the trains clanging, roaring, and hissing as they carried away eager multitudes of race-goers. Then they were caught up in a throng of vehicles all wending their way in the same direction. Mrs. Flanagan felt some satisfaction when she observed that their outfit was by no means the meanest equipage on the road; but soon noticed that parents of families in the other open carriages were facing forward while she and Timothy.sat with their backs to the horses; it was a small matter, but it would be rectified on the way home.

Because their backs were turned they did not see the impropriety of Fox having his arm around Myrtle's waist. She had asked him to do it because of her fear of being thrown out of her seat by the jolting of the carriage. Young ladies did not usually make such advances at first meeting a young gentleman and Mr. and Mrs. Flanagan did not understand why Lydia giggled so much until she got the stitch and had to desist. She could see what her parents could not. Anyway, the road became smoother, but Myrtle forgot to ask Fox to remove his arm.

By this time the carriage had slowed right down because of the press of traffic. They found themselves in the midst of a huge concourse of vehicles of all kinds, cabs, drays, coaches, growlers, landaus, one, two and four horse vehicles of every sort, all off to the races.

Alongside them for a while was a determined man on one of the tricycles, which were becoming fashionable. He had on a red cycling outfit with a matching pill-box hat, and trousers that came to just below his knees. He sat on the saddle between two large wheels about four feet in diameter, driven by pedals and a chain, with a smaller wheel out the front to steer it.

Lydia was overcome again at the sight of the scarlet clad rider labouring in the midst of his machinery; his face nearly as red as his suit, with legs pumping up and down. His muscular calves were covered with grey worsted socks so no one could say such a sight was improper. The poor man rode alongside them for a time to the helpless delight of Lydia, even Myrtle smiled. At last they pulled ahead, no doubt he was pleased to see them go.

The Flanagans were irritated by their daughter's behaviour, but Henry was outraged. He had a great respect for machinery and rather envied the rider. His ambition was to be an engineer, or a builder on large projects. His first priority on visiting Melbourne was to inspect progress on the Exhibition Building, and envy the men working on it. His sullenness had been brought about by being forced to attend a horse race when Melbourne was full of mechanical wonders that cried out for attention.

Henry's mother had other ideas about his future, she wanted him to go into an office and learn a profession. She had set herself a difficult task and sometimes doubted the outcome. Since his babyhood she had battled against freckles and sandy, spiky hair. These, together with his unruly disposition and numerous escapes from parental control to wander the hills of Walhalla did not give her a reasonable hope of him getting an office job; but she had never lost the dream. In the battle against freckles he had been ordered to wear a hat whenever he was out of doors; though he usually lost it; the freckles flourished.

The man riding the tricycle may have been better off on a penny farthing bike. Some young riders actually passed them, weaving their way through the stalled traffic. These men, perched over the huge front wheels of their bicycles belonged to a club. They wore uniforms of royal blue with coats and caps and knee pants to match, but with socks of a lighter shade. The lead rider was equipped with a bugle which was used freely to announce their passage, and to reply with derisive noise to insults and catcalls from other road users. This sight again revived Henry's interest and he craned out of the carriage until they had gone.

In spite of the dust thrown up by all this traffic and the increasing heat of the day most people retained a holiday feeling and there were very few bad tempered exchanges as the great mass of traffic struggled along the crowded roads. The sunlight was tinged with orange because of the dust, but the people around Fox did not comment so he did not either.

When they arrived at the course their driver, by use of reins and whips, and with the help of some attendants, managed to work them in to a reasonably good position. They left him and the carriage while the party went off intending to make an inspection of the course.

Their driver was a tall, thin man, with a permanently mournful face. As he was letting down the steps he offered his first remark of the day. He leaned across to Timothy and said mysteriously, ''The Wanderin' Jew.'' Timothy, with one foot on the step and the other on the ground stopped and stared.

''What's that yer sayin?''

"The Wanderin'Jew, fifty to one. If I owned this cart and the old prad I'd put both of them on him to win."

''You wouldn't have 'em for long,'' retorted Timothy, who was blocking the others

from getting down. ''I don't care what weight it's carryin', even if it started now it'd still lose. But I'll tell you what I'll do for yer. I was goin' ter give you a quid for yourself. Instead, if you like, I'll put it on this old nag of yours for the best price I can get, but if it loses, which it will, don't look for any more when we get back.'' ''It's goin' ter win,'' said the driver obstinately. ''You put it on fer me boss, and I'll be a happy man – fifty quid richer. I got the tip straight from Paddy Geoghegan, the jockey, and if any man knows he should. You take my tip, boss; if you've got any common put some on for yerself while yer at it.''

''Bein'Irish an'all," said Timothy, "It's not a name I'd choose for any horse of mine. I'll put your quid on right enough, and I put on a few for meself, just as a saver, you know, just in case, after all the Cup's not the race for form horses.''

The Flanagans, who did not know much more about racing than Fox, would have gone too early to the course but were arrested by the sight of hundreds of people round about them sitting up in their carriages eating and drinking. Besides, their driver, satisfied with the idea of having his pound put on The Wandering Jew, went to the back of the carriage and unstrapped the hamper. Thus the family were able to save themselves from any little embarrassment by pretending that they had alighted to stretch their legs after the drive from the city and to get rid of some of the excess dust that had settled in their clothes.

It was not long since breakfast, and a little early for lunch, nevertheless after covertly surveying the scene the females of the party saw what the etiquette of the day demanded and everyone sat in the carriage eating and drinking from the hamper while being waited upon by the driver.

All around them was a condsiderable chatter as people called out to one another greeting their friends, moving from carriage to carriage, eating together, toasting new and old friendships in a wide variety of drinks.

The Flanagans longed to be part of this cheerful social activity, but they were from far out of town, no one knew them and, not a soul came near for a drink or friendly greeting. All they could do was picnic decorously in the carriage and pretend the day was shaping up very nicely indeed.

The only attention they received was from some Gypsy fortune tellers. This was acceptable because they had seen other fashionable people being told their fortunes by members of the same band – and they had seemed to enjoy it very much. Apparently one did not lose social caste by having one's fortune told at the racecourse especially if the whole matter was treated as an entertainment.

The gypsy woman made a great hit by predicting splendid marriages for the girls and even went to the extent of giving an exact description of Myrtle's future husband. In fact she described Fox and this was not missed by Mrs. Flanagan, or her daughters. Lydia was helpless with laughter until a freezing glance from her sister brought her to her senses.. Myrtle herself was overcome with embarrassment and emotion, but not so much that she missed Fox's reaction. He behaved gallantly and hid his sudden

apprehension. He was now in even greater favour than before, with Timothy and Mrs. Flanagan beaming on him benevolently. The whole party was happy except Henry whose fortune was that he would either become premier of the state of Victoria, or be hanged. The gypsy woman said – "perhaps both". Her final prediction, before she went off with a generous fee was that Darriwell would win the big race and that she would be back later to get a little more from their winnings.

Gabriel wondered idly if she predicted a different horse for every carriage. There were hundreds of carriages to about thirty entries in the Cup –it was not bad odds. There could be up to fifty of more people willing to give her money after the race. She had advised them to back it for a win or place so that raised the odds in her favour even higher.

Somehow, by means that were not clear, the Flanagans had been able to obtain passes to the enclosure, and there was one available for Gabriel.

He had the impression that a businessman of some wealth and good connections had invested too heavily in a mine in Walhalla and the mine was not returning sufficient income to support his way of life. One temporary solution was to sell his entrée cards to the lawn at Flemington. Timothy had paid heavily because Melbourne Cup Day was the one day when all the people of that and the neighbouring colonies wanted to see and be seen in the enclosure. Mrs. Flanagan would have authorized him to pay almost any price for the opportunity to mingle with the highest members of society.

So with the great pleasure and keen anticipation the ladies tied their tickets to the handles of their parasols, held up the trains of their dresses to keep them out of the mud and dirt and, arm in arm, Mrs. Flanagan with Timothy, Myrtle with Fox, and Lydia with a sullen Henry, they proceeded to the member's enclosure.

Once on the lawn they walked about and joined in the great pastime of everybody looking at each other; though the Flanagans were not worried about being outshone; their dresses were most expensive and had been made by an exclusive, and admired dressmaker who had been recommended to them from far away Walhalla. Timothy hoped that someone would come along and strike up a conversation, his womenfolk hoped the same thing, but not if it meant talking to anyone low. They knew that people of no social background whatever could come to the course and join in the enjoyment of the day with their betters. They had heard that in England one could judge a person's rank by clothing, accent and education, but in the colonies there were no such safeguards. One must be ever vigilant.

Fox was again impressed by the gorgeousness of the crowd. He read in the paper the following day that there were at least eighty thousand people at the course and this immense mass dressed and on show moved and shimmered like a rainbow. Even though most of the men wore cutaway coats and grey top hats there were plenty of male exhibitionists dressed in gaudy clothes that were meant to complement or outshine the clothes of their female companion. Resplendent on the lawn also were military officers scarlet uniforms with frogged tunics which bore numerous service

ribbons, others were in blue with red piping on their trousers. They talked in groups, together with their women, and seemed to see no one else.

The Flanagans were right about meeting unsuitable people on the course for wandering too near the fence dividing them from the common people. Fox heard himself loudly addressed as “Gabby”, and an urgent wave bought him closer.It was Benno, his wharf laborer acquaintance of the day before, who had obviously been patronising the refreshment tent early and often.

The women were scandalized that one so common should intrude upon their guest. Mrs. Flanagan, Myrtle, and Lydia looked away and Mrs. Flanagan shepherded her daughters a discreet distance away, determined not to be introduced.

Fox had the sudden feeling that the colony consisted of different social groups that did not want to know each other. Mr. Gladman and the Brethren would not want to know the Flanagans, except as possible converts, and the Flanagans certainly did not want to know Benno, he looked and acted – low!

Timothy would have been happy to make his acquaintance and was astonished later to learn of the coincidence of the two meeting by chance on two successive days, and in a vast crowd, but his wife gave him such a look that he had to walk off leaving Fox to disengage himself from this unsuitable companion.

Benno in his turn was astonished to find that Fox had more or less stepped off the boat on to the sacred lawn at Flemington. He was not envious but tried to lure him into the more common world on the other side of the hedge.

Benno expressed by certain grimaces and gesture his opinion of the Flanagans and invited Fox to join him and the boys in the tent for a few, and enjoy himself instead of knocking around with a mob of piss-fartin’, stuck up shielas like that.

Fox thanked him very much for the kind invitation but said he had to go, and perhaps they could have a drink another time.

'' Alright,'' said Benno, '' if that’s the way you feel you can bloody go, and up yer! But I’ll tell yer somethin' --- ''He swayed and clutched the fence. ''Old Benno doesn’t turn against his mates; even if they are jumped up snotty nosed little new chum bastards. I’m going to tell you what’s goin’ to win the Cup. But you gotta keep the old fly trap shut, see. The odds are good right now – thirty three to one but we don’t want any stupid new chums flappin' their mouths, makin’ the books a wake-up to what’s really goin’ on. Mind you I’m not saying you wouldn’t get better odds if you went up there.'' He pointed to the hill.

Gabriel judged that it was a less exclusive area, extremely crowded, and that the social tone would be lower, but it looked as though it might be more fun.

''There’s about a thousand bloody bookies up on the hill,'' said Benno, “and not a license among the lot of them. You’ll probably get better odds but you might have to

run like hell to collect your winnings. Some of 'em can go faster than the horses, when they have to. No Gabby", he said urgently, ''No, don't do anything stupid.''

Fox was wondering why he should attract drunks as he tried good-humouredly to extricate himself from his friend's persistence. ''You lay your brass on them blokes over here; you look how fat gutted they are, they have to pay up when you win, they couldn't run for nuts.''

''What horse have you got?" enquired Fox, who was hoping to get to the point of the conversation. Benno convulsively shushed him to silence and after looking around breathed beer fumes through the fence and muttered --- "Darriwell! She's right,'' he said out of the corner of his mouth, ''She's fixed. There's a bloke called Cracknell up, if he can't boot it home no one can. Billy Dakin's the trainer, need I say more? Thirty three to one and it can't miss. Get yer money on before the bookies wake up ter what's goin'on. Are you gunna come and have a drink first?"

Gabriel was still looking for that face in the crowd' but he knew that its owner would not be frequenting anywhere that Benno wanted to be.

He said, ''No thanks, not just now.''

''Well, piss off then.'' Benno wheeled away to face the refreshment tent and leaning forward, so he was off balance, he ran towards it. Fox saw him fall through the tent opening but some of his mates caught him and dragged him with shouts of triumph towards the bar.

The Flanagan family moved in as soon as Benno disappeared. The women said nothing, it would have been unladylike to comment on such a disreputable companion as that.

They noticed it was quite acceptable to stop and listen to the bookmakers, so they went closer. Darriwell was not the longest priced horse in the cup. The Wandering Jew was still at fifty to one, and some horses had a contemptuous hundred to one on their backs. Darriwell was a respectable thirty three to one. Gabriel nervously fingered the sovereigns in his pocket. If he put on three pounds and the horse came in at that price he would take back to the city almost a hundred pounds, plus his stake; it could be the basis of a fortune.

Timothy was nearby listening thoughtfully to the shouts of the bookmakers. Gabriel turned to him for advice.

''Ah, it's a hard choice, me boy. I don't think you can go past Suwarrow, and him a favourite. I'm not a racing man meself, as you well know, but I was reading in 'The Argus' that it won the Derby, leading all the way. It was carrying eight stone ten, and today it's only got six one on its back. If it doesn't carry off the cup today me name's not Tim Flanagan.'' He started to become enthusiastic. ''Last year Chester won the Derby in exactly the same time, then it went on to win the cup. Don't tell me it can't be done a second time.''

The odds on Timothy's horse had now shortened to three to one. It was not worth it; he could lose his three sovereigns just as easily, but if the horse won he would only make a profit of nine.

The people round them did not share his doubts. There seemed to be hundreds of them crowding round, getting their money on to Suwarrrow before the odds shortened even further.

He had met a man in England who believed all races were rigged and had spent his life, and an inheritance, trying to win against the conspiracy. When last heard of he was bankrupt and living a shabby, needy life, but still listening eagerly to gossip and hot tips to restore his fortunes.

Gabriel wondered if he was right, and whether Benno really was on to a conspiracy to let Darriwell win the big race. He had never bet before and felt no urge to gamble away hard earned savings. But all the same, to land a promising job on his first day in Melbourne, and be taken to the Melbourne Cup on the second; perhaps his luck would hold. The odds on Suwarrow were pitiful. He would put three pounds on Darriwell, hoping that Benno the wharf labourer, and Cracknell the jockey, and Dakin the trainer, between them would be able to put £99 into his pocket.

Sooner than explain himself to his hosts Fox managed to escape Myrtle's attentions for a few minutes by pointing out some especially arresting gowns and slipped away while she stared covertly, disguising admiration with disdain.

She had a very low opinion of a young couple dressed in canary yellow outfits designed to draw attention; they were one of the sights of the day. The lady had on a costume all of yellow silk, with bonnet, gloves, shoes, and parasol to match. Her escort's outfit complemented hers and he had, a collar, tie, and gloves of the same.

After inspecting the pair dressed in yellow she said, ''Poke bonnets are coming back. I've seen quite a few today. They're wearing them with cashmere and pompadour silk. Let's move away from the band," she said, it's too loud here.''

She turned round but her escort had disappeared. The only one who had observed his departure was Henry who followed and to Fox's surprise spoke for the first time.

''Whatter ye gunna do?'' he asked.

''I'm going to put some money on a horse.''

''Put some on for me,'' said Henry, and handed Gabriel a sovereign. Gabriel was astonished.

''What do you know about racing?''

''About as much as you do,'' was the retort. Observing doubts reflected in the other's face he pushed the sovereign into his hand.''Go on, take it. It's mine alright. I saved it by doing work around Walhalla. Put it on for me. I can't give it to a bookmaker. He'd

lose his license if he was caught taking money from a minor, and I don't want ma to catch me. Put it on Darriwell, I heard your boozy mate talking about it; and I reckon it's as good as any other.''

This little interchange, though not sophisticated, was certainly more than he expected. He eyed Henry in some surprise. ''Why that horse? There are others at fifty and a hundred to one.''

''They're hairy goats,'' said Henry. 'Most of 'em'll be back pulling the dunny cart tonight. I don't want me sov thrown away on a goat, but if I can get the chance of a bank of thirty three quid it'll do me. If I had that sort of money I wouldn't have to go back to Walhalla no more. I could stay here in Melbourne and get meself apprenticed as an engineer or something. Go on! Take it! I don't want to be a prospector like the old man, rich one day, and on the bone of me backside the next. You take it and I'll keep nit so the family don't get on to what we're doin'' Gabriel took the coin and walked to the nearest and most raucous of the bookmakers plying their trade near the stand. As soon as there was an opening in the crowd he nervously jostled his way through and took some coins from a pocket and held then under the bookmaker's nose. ''Darriwell''

'To Win?'

''Yes,'' He was confused, never having placed a bet before. Of course he was backing him to win, losing was not much use. The bookmaker counted the coins he had been handed and dropped them jingling into his bag. "Seven quid on Darriwell to win. It's a pleasure to take your money, son. I wish there were more like yer and I'd get rich a lot faster."

His clerk wrote something on a pasteboard ticket and thrust it into Gabriel's hand. Then, ignoring his client, the bookmaker continued roaring out the odds and accepting money from other clamouring punters.

Seven pounds!!' He was appalled at what he had done. A sovereign from Henry and the rest was his own. If the horse failed he would be almost penniless – helpless before any economic blackmail that Mr. Gladman, or any other employer, could levy against him. In his panic he thought of going to the bookmaker and explaining his mistake, ask for part of his stake to be returned.

The man wore his top hat almost down to his ears, and he was bearded almost up to his eyes. Some teeth were missing; not a prepossessing appearance, even though people were crowded around trying to give him money. He did not look the sort who would refund money before the start of a race.

"I lay two to one on him," he bawled in answer to a query.

Gabriel turned away blindly. Henry was tugging at his sleeve. ''Did you get me sov on?'' He nodded.

“Put the ticket in yer weskit pocket,” urged Henry. “Here comes Myrtle.” Gabriel stuffed 'the pasteboard into a vest pocket, determined to keep it as a reminder never to bet ever again.

“You’ve had a bet haven’t you, you naughty man,” said Myrtle, slapping him lightly on the arm and practising her best silvery laugh. “Pa said he was putting something on for me. Now I want your best advice, Mr. Fox, which horse is going to carry Pa’s hard earned money?”

The only horse he could think of in the whole world was Darriwell. He could not bring himself to say the name, so Myrtle had to rattle on without his assistance. “Pa’s so set on Suwarrow you’d think it was the only horse in the race.”

It could have been. Fox was so stunned with his own folly he could not think of the names of the other horses, until Myrtle named them, reading from her race book..

Henry stayed close. There was a bond between them now. His parents knew of the sovereign, and if it was lost he would have to endure enquiries and recriminations from his mother. Myrtle would enjoy that, she was a very good assistant inquisitor. She was distracted again by some passing dresses.

In his own way Henry was experiencing the same sensations as Fox; for both of them there was a fortune riding on Darriwell. Gabriel had a sudden urge to confide in the lad. ''I put £6 of my own money on that horse,'' he said. ''I don’t know what came over me; if it loses I have almost no money left.''

''Yair,” said Henry, astonished. ''You got other money aint you. A swell like you, you must have plenty of money.''

''I wish it was like that''. He realized he was saying more than he should have to the boy, but it all came out anyway. ''You have to put on a front in this world; it’s the only way to get on. If I go round telling people I’m hard up they will look down on me; and I’d expect them to. I can speak well, and talk well; that’s all I have. If I didn’t have those I wouldn’t have a job in a music shop. You watch out for yourself, Henry; everyone is trying to push everyone else down so they can claw their way to the top. If they think you’re down near the bottom of the heap they’ll kick you even harder.''

''Pa wouldn’t kick anyone while he was down.''

''Your mother would, and so would Myrtle.''

Henry considered the matter. He would have defended his father, but had to agree that the summing up of his mother and sister, obvious social climbers, was not that wide of the mark. They had gone to miners’ dances in Walhalla, but his mother did not want miners as sons-in-law so she had bullied Timothy into taking the family to Melbourne. The Melbourne Cup seemed a good point from which to start her rise in society.

Henry had other ambitions. He could not comprehend any wish to become part of the

social scene and none of the desires of the Flanagan women affected him in any way. He shrugged the whole thing off as a puzzle beyond his understanding. He said, ''Look, let's not worry about it; if we lose we lose. The only thing is we don't say nothin' about it; the less we say the better. But if you're as hard up as you say you'd better eat anything you can, while it's there. I'll go and tell Pa we're hungry and get him to treat us at the refreshment tent. You may not get much to eat for the rest of the week unless Myrtle gets Ma to invite you to dinner a few times.''

Myrtle came back. ''Now Henry, you've been boring poor Mr. Fox long enough, it's time you shared him with the rest of the family. There must be something special about you, Mr. Fox, he never talks to anyone at home, except Pa.''

Henry instantly turned to his father who was standing on tip-toe to see a parade of horses and jockeys who were to take part in an early race. ''I'm hungry, Pa,'' he said. ''Let's go and get something to eat.''

''You can't be me boy. Y've not long had a big pile of sandwiches and we gave you a few sips of champagne. Even a python snake waits to digest one meal before it starts on another.''

''He can't be hungry,'' said Myrtle firmly. ''He must have hollow legs. We don't want to eat anything yet, and the next race is going to start in a minute.

Fox did not know what horses started or finished, they meant nothing to him. The only thing to do was to wait as patiently as possible for the running of the big race. Henry stood close by without speaking, but suffering from the same emotions as Fox. The Flanagans had no luck. Timothy had put on a sovereign or two for each of them on different horses, but not one had even gained a place.

''I should give up mining and take on bookmaking,'' Timothy complained. ''It's an easier way to pick up gold than bend your back over a creek for hours and never knowing when the rheumatics were going to strike you down, as well as trying to keep your feet warm after you've been squelching about in freezing mud and water all day.''

Mrs. Flanagan sniffed. She now had serious doubts about his ability to pick horseflesh, and it was something to add to her long list of grievances. She aired them at night, in their bedroom. It was her custom to go into his and the family's shortcomings, and the disappointments of the day, in paralyzing detail. Timothy often managed to doze off while she was still talking of the chances she had had in her youth, and of how her life would have changed if she had known then what she knew now.

As the day wore on Timothy tried several times to sneak off and smoke a quiet pipe, and take a drink, and perhaps meet some suitable low life chance companions. There must be other fathers on the course who were being unwillingly hauled up to a higher social standing than they had ever wanted. There was so much money in the colony that people were aspiring to a higher station in life than their parents had ever dreamed of in the old country. He had no success, every time he thought up some

excuse for wandering away he was brought back with his pipe extinguished. It was very pleasing to have Mr Fox present but the girls needed both parents there to guard against any shadow of impropriety. His duty was not to stray from his family during the long afternoon.

They had varying success with the other races, mostly ill-luck. No one's temper was much improved by the enrichment of the bookmakers as sovereigns, guineas and banknotes were transferred from their pockets and purses into their ever gaping bags, with little return. They were all looking to recoup their losses on the great Melbourne Cup itself.

Gabriel waited with mingled apprehension and despair. He cursed himself for not having had the presence of mind to back Darriwell to a place, at least, he might have saved something from the ruin.

At last there was a movement of the crowd as the horses began to parade for the Melbourne Cup. No one was distracted now. Timothy stopped thinking about his need for a smoke. The Flanagan women stopped thinking about their finery, and their losses on the previous races Gabriel and Henry felt queasy.

''Did you get anything on Suwarrow?'' muttered Timothy. Gabriel shook his head. "You should've. It's the best bet in the race. There's no doubt about that, you've only got to read the form. What have you backed?''

Gabriel swallowed and said, almost inaudibly, ''Darriwell, to win.'' Timothy sucked air through his teeth and shook his head. ''If I wasn't on to Suwarrow I'd wish you luck, me boy. You're certainly going to need it. That nag would have to have a furlong start even to get into the first five. Still, with a big field like this, who knows? There are more races to come; we'll bankrupt the bookies yet.'' He slapped Fox on the back in a kindly manner.

Mrs. Flanagan sniffed; she was not altogether sure that even on a race track such familiarity would be acceptable. However, it was matter that could be discussed with her husband when they were alone together.

Myrtle cried out to them, ''Look, they're lining up for the start.''

{ 4 }

Darriwell

The party found a spot near the fence where everybody was pressed together by a crush of people. The girls were afraid their dresses would be trodden on. Apart from that it was not too bad; at least they could see the jockeys and the heads of the horses, and they were near the winning post, which was directly opposite the grandstand.

Timothy was squashed up against a sociable man. The stranger said, ''Sixteen

hundred and fifty quid stake money, and a gold cup. Makes yer mouth water, don't it.''

Timothy was delighted at being spoken to. He longed for conversation with someone of his own age and temperament and he warmed to the man instantly. ''Yair,'' he said, and indicating the horses and jockeys that were being formed into line, ''This is a sight worth seein' too. What've you got?''

I got a pound on Sweetmeat for a win and a place because I know there's somethin' doin'there; and ten bob on Suwarrow, win and a place, just as a saver."

Timothy was just about to congratulate his new friend for his shrewdness in getting something on Suwarrow when the horses bolted past the stand in a swarm of colour and a roar from the crowd.

Gabriel felt sick. He wanted to force his way out and walk around behind the crowd somewhere until he heard the bad news; but he was unable to take his

Suwarrow was leading! What a fool he was! The wretched horse was only carrying six stone one; anyone but an idiot would have backed it, no matter what the odds. He had known that Darriwell had seven stone on its back. The handicapper must have been mad too. Thirty three to one – trust the bookies -- they knew what they were doing, better than any green chum just off the boat. Two minutes had passed. He could see in the distance the bobbing heads of the horses, now well strung out, their flying manes and tails, and the super-active jockeys. The colourful panorama of horseflesh and gaily attired little men seem to slide around the running rail like clockwork. If only he could have enjoyed it what a grand spectacle it would be to watch. No doubt it was for those who could afford to lose or did not have what amounted to a fortune riding on the result. Suwarrow was still out in front; the other horses he did not know in spite of the race books that Timothy had purchased for the family, and one that he had thrust into his hands, He recognised Darriwell, of course, by Cracknell the jockey's colours, and the number eleven on the horse's saddlecloth. It was lying third, not beaten by any means, and Cracknell did not seem quite as busy as some of the other jockeys.

''That's a real cracking pace," said the stranger, shouting into Timothy's ear. His remarks were almost lost because of the noise of the crowd around them. He had his watch out and glanced at it from time to time. ''If Suwarrow keeps this up we'll have a course record. I've been coming here since 1861. I seen Archer win the first two Cups, and I seen every one since.''

I can tell you the name of every winner He interrupted himself to scram, "Jeez look at 'em go! Come on Sweetmeat, you can do it!!''

The crowd was roaring and no could hear him but Timothy and Gabriel, who were pressed close by the crush. ''Look at the time. It's going to be a record!'' He shook his watch with the cover open under Timothy's nose, and shouted.

''Where's Darriwell, I can't see him?'' Gabriel had lost sight of the horse as the toiling

bunch of animals swept round the corner and into the straight.

''Third! Third!'' shouted the man. ''He's not goin' too bad, he could pip Sweetmeat for second. There he is, look!''

Gabriel picked out Darriwell again as he charged towards the finishing line in company with the others. The whip arm of every jockey was going like clockwork for the final run to the post. Gabriel groaned aloud, though he could have screamed and no one would have heard. Second place was useless, he might as well be last. It had to be first or nothing.

The man was now bellowing into their ears for, like the crowd, he was swept by a frenzy as the race hurled to a climax. They were all shouting, even the Flanagan women were calling on their respective fancies for a supreme effort. ''That bloody Darriwell,'' roared the man,'' He's pulling away, the bastard's pulling away! Look at him go! Will ya. just look at him go''"

Then it was all over. The field swept by them like a cavalry charge, flinging clods of earth to one side or another as they tore in a solid mass towards the post. Darriwell was leading by the shortest of margins, and straining every nerve to stay ahead of Sweetmeat, and the favourite was no more than third.

''Darriwell,.''Said the stranger. ''By God, Darriwell. Thirty three to one and it romps home. Did you say you had something on it, son?'' He did not have to shout his query. The crowd was quiet for the moment, waiting for the stewards to post the results.

''I had six pounds on that horse!'' He was dazed at this change from despair to hope, and a surge of relief swept over him like a wave.

The number of the winning horse went up. ''Number eleven, Darriwell,'' exclaimed Timothy. He would have stamped and swore but for a restraining glance from his wife. He had forgotten their guest's good fortune in his own ill-luck. ''Third! bloody third! It's enough to turn a man off racing for life. I didn't even have the damn thing for a place '' He said no more, his wife's look would have stopped a horse in its tracks.

Swearing in public – in such company, was unforgiveable. His daughters had never heard such language before, even in Walhalla. They looked in all directions rather than at their errant father, but his wife was giving him a look that sufficed for all; he realized with sinking heart that he would atone that night at bedtime for this latest fall from grace.

The stranger did not note any of this; he did not realize that Timothy was under very strict control at that time. "Don't you blame Suwarrow!" he was saying. ''I've never seen him run better, even when he won the Derby; that was in two minutes forty three, and any horse that does the two miles in three thirty one is a good horse in my book; the only thing is Darriwell and Sweetmeat were better on the day.''

''I've won nearly two hundred pounds," said Fox. He had been struggling with the

figures in his mind. Mental arithmetic was not one of his strong points, but six sovereigns multiplied by thirty three just about as close as one could get to two hundred. He would go back to the city with over two hundred golden sovereigns clinking in his pockets. It was a fortune; it was like finding a gold mine. He was wealthy – so easy. He would come to the races every Saturday and collect a golden harvest from the bookmakers.

''Two hundrd sovs, eh!'' said the man respectfully, while Timothy shouted and hammered Gabriel on the back. ''You didn't lay yer bet with any of those bookies up there, did yer, son?'' He indicated the crowd on the hill. ''Ah well, you should be alright, it's not as if the favourite won. Some of them unlicensed bookies can run like hares if things go bad.'' ''Congratulations Gabby,'' said Timothy. ''I can see we'll have to go to you in future to get some tips on the races.''

''Yair,"said the man, ''I've been comin' ter the races since I was a boy without having luck like that. Do you know what you should now, Lad? Go home with your money and never bet on the races again. That was mugs luck if ever I saw it.''

Mrs. Flanagan realized that her husband was talking to a common, working person. She said, I think, Mr. Fox should go now and collect his winnings.'' She led the group away towards the bookmakers.

''Do you have the ticket?'' Myrtle enquired. ''You haven't lost the ticket have you?'' He hadn't! He found it after going anxiously through the pockets of his waistcoat, and they all moved in triumph towards the book-maker he had left dejectedly such a short time before.

The bookmaker looked at the ticket and grinned. ''Good one yer, son! I thought I was going ter keep your money, but you was right and I was wrong.'' He could afford to be jovial, the favourite having been beaten made it a very profitable Cup for him, and his fellows in the ring.

''Here you are, me boy. As I always say; you gotta be in it to win it, and you certainly won it. Here yer go! That's two hundred and thirty one quid and your stake. Not a bad little day at the races, eh?'' He counted a mixture of paper money and gold into Fox's trembling hands. ''Now don't forget, anytime you want to have a little flutter like that come and see me, Honest Charlie Chase. My motto is, Honest Charlie Chase always pays ''

Myrtle eyed the money eagerly. ''You're not very good at arithmetic, are you, Mr. Fox! You said, nearly two hundred pounds, and it's a lot more than that.''

He was about to open his mouth and say that part of the proceeds belonged to Henry when he caught that young man's eye. Henry stood back and shook his head violently until his mother noticed and he tried to look casual.

They walked away from the book-maker, a buoyant little group that was suddenly scattered by a second appearance of Benno who lurched up to Fox. How he had

escaped the vigilance of the guards and got into the member's enclosure no one could say but his demeanour and appearance put him in grave danger of being cast out again into the outer world.

Benno gave no consideration to these matters. He had been making good use of his time and was even more drunk than before.

''How did yer go, mate?'' he enquired. ''I put a sov on Darriwell, and now I got thirty four jimmy-o-goblins in me lucy.'' He slapped his trousers a few times to confirm his words. ''I hope you done the right thing.''

To his great delight Fox whacked him on the back and clutching Timothy and Benno by an arm each he dragged them towards the entrance. ''I'll have to take him out again otherwise he will only get into trouble,'' he said over his shoulder to the horrified women. ''Mr. Flanagan can come with me and make sure he gets out safely." He ushered his too willing subjects away to the safety beyond the barriers.

Mrs. Flanagan and Myrtle were aghast; the more so when Henry, ignoring his mother's admonitions and cries, circled round her and darted after the men.

Once safely out of sight and part of the huge crowd beyond the enclosure they followed Benno's well beaten path to the refreshment tent. Henry stayed close and found them squashed as close as possible to the bar while a number of inebriated wharf labourers demanded drinks on their behalf from the harried barmen.

''Beautiful!''said Benno, carelessly blowing the froth off the top of a pot of beer that had been given to him. ''I can remember when they couldn't keep beer cold; them days is gone for ever; thank God.'' He drank. They all drank together. Even Henry was clutching a pot. His mother could not follow him into this male refuge, so he was safe! At least until she smelled his breath.

''To fortune!'' declaimed Fox raising his pot. They drank again.

Timothy had decided not to worry about the consequences of his act. He knew that he was going to pay for the day's sins when his wife got him alone that night, but if the punishment was coming he decided to make the crime appropriate. He drank along with the hardened wharf labourers and all of them.

They all sang and the noise of their voices, untuneful but happy, drifted out of the tent, but not loud enough to be heard by the angry little group of women who waited in the member's enclosure for their escorts to return.

The ladies preserved gentility by pretending not to be waiting and by giving the passing world the impression that they were merely a group of cheerful and charming people who happened to be standing and chatting quite by chance near the entrance.

The man who had fallen into conversation with Timothy and Fox during the running of the Cup wandered in at that time. He too had been looking for congenial company and had been attracted to the tent. He was instantly recognised, seized, and drawn

into the hilarious group where they recalled the glorious moments of the race.

The party did not break up until the next race was imminent and everyone felt the desire to go out and make another assault on the solvency of the book-makers.

Timothy and Henry were a little reluctant to leave the tent and face the wrath of their family and for some other reason Benno also wanted to stay. He drew patterns with a finger in the froth spilled on the table top. The tent was almost empty once more except for this small group. Benno thoughtfully took thirty-three golden sovereigns from his pocket and ranged them in a line along the edge of the table. There was some silver too, but he ignored that.

''That's more money than I've ever seen in me life before. I'd better look at it now cause I won't have it for long. I reckon I'll soon piss that up against a wall, or else I'll give it back to the bookies.'' They all looked at his treasure thoughtfully. ''Why don't you invest it?''asked Henry unexpectedly.

''Yair; I made a dead lucky investment today but they won't all come in at thirty three to one. Any investments I make usually come last. I wish I could hang on to it but I don't know how.''

''Don't ask me," was Timothy's contribution to the discussion. 'All I know is hard bullocking work, or digging out gold, and if there is any harder or chancier work then that I don't want to hear about it. I been lucky over the last few years, but then me wife gets me money and away it goes. I can't advise you, me boy.''

''What you want,'' insisted Henry, ''is to put your money into something that you know is going to go up, and it's somewhere where you can't touch it. Anyone can be rich in Victoria. All they need is a start like you've got, and then invest in the right things.''

The group looked pensively at the thirty three sovereigns. Timothy sat with one elbow on the table. It was resting in a pool of beer he failed to notice, but no doubt his wife would point this out to him afterwards.

''Such as?''

''Land,'' said Henry, ''Houses, city buildings, they're all going to go up, there's no way you're going to stop it. There's all sorts of things besides that you can put your money into. In a place like Melbourne you can't go wrong.''

''Where did you learn all this, young Henry?'' asked Timothy, gazing in astonishment at his surprising son. No one had ever wondered before what Henry was thinking.

Benno had no ideas about what Henry might or might not say, so he studied the idea with the calm fixation of a very drunk man. ''How many city buildings d'yer reckon I can buy for thirty three quid? Don't make me laugh young'un.''

"I won thirty three quid too! I had a sov on Darriwell, just like you did."Timothy sat

with mouth agape listening to this revelation.

''Thirty three quid! And do you know who's going to hold it for me? – Gabby! The three of us'll have between us over three hundred and sixty quid; we can double that in no time.''

''Where did you get a sovereign?" demanded Timothy, "and what's your ma going to say about your gambling like this?''

''I don't know anything about investments,'' protested Gabriel. "I've only been in Victoria one day. What would I know about investing money in the place?''

''Look in the'Argus' or the 'Age! See what's doing there. There are all sorts of things for sale in the papers. Go to a few estate agents and see what's cheap. Go to enough of them and you'll find out what's offering in properties.''

''We'll lose the lot!''

''That's alright Benno. You're going to lose the lot anyway; you said so yourself. This way it's at least better than giving it to the bookies or the pubs. You might end up with a lot of money. Then you can throw it up in the air if you want to.''

"I'm beat," announced Timothy, Fair beat! I don't know where he gets it from. All our family were just bog-trotting Irish. The only idea they ever had in a hundred years was to send me to Australia. Now here's Henry talking about buying city buildings after one lucky win at the race. You take my advice Henry and put your money away. Under the mattress is the only place for gold sovereigns.''

''If I took your advice I would have put the sov on some hairy old goat that hasn't finished yet''

''What's the 'Argus? Is it a newspaper?''

''Yair. I was looking at it at the pub this morning. There's the Age too. They're both full of ads for all sorts of things. But you go for land, Gabriel, or something solid like that.

''He's Mr. Fox to you, and don't you forget it. You show a bit of respect me boy.''

Benno swept the coins off the table into his hand and thrust them at Gabriel. ''Here y'are, thirty three golden boys. I'm gunna keep me stake, but you can hold the rest for me.''

Gabriel felt as though he was being dragged down by the weight of the coins in his pockets. His win and Henry's; and now some-one else was pushing wealth on to him. He wondered if it happened every day in this extraordinary colony. He stepped back and put his hands behind him. ''You people don't know me! You only met me yesterday. How do you know I'm not going to clear off and go to Sydney, or somewhere, with your money? How do you know I'm not a confidence man?''

''I feel lucky,'' replied Benno. ''I trusted the bookies with me sov, didn't I, and they 'came good! Now I'm trustin' you, and if I don't do something with the money quick it'll go for sure, and I still won't be any better off. You'll go witness for me, won't you boss? And young Henry here. You both know I give him the money, and I don't want better witnesses than that. You take it Gabby, and see what you can do for me. You start a business and I'll be the drinking partner.''

Gabriel pulled a face but reluctantly took the money and distributed it around the various pockets of his suit. He thought of pick-pockets who must be on the course watching out for winning punters and enjoined his friends to stay close by him to discourage thieves.

They came out of the tent a little drunk on booze, and luck, and money and made their way over to the fence and hedge that protected the member's enclosure, at about the same spot where Benno had encountered his friend a short while earlier.

Here, by shouting and whistling, they were able to attract the attention not only of Mrs. Flanagan and her daughters but almost all the crowd nearby.

Mrs. Flanagan was almost shaking with rage at this humiliating scene as she gazed at the foolish, grinning men. She was particularly incensed at the sight of Benno, whom she blamed for this social disaster. She could feel people watching to see what would happen next.

Benno was taking his friend's warning seriously and was sticking close enough to have an arm round his neck. He beamed at Mrs. Flanagan and her family, ready to forgive and forget any little misunderstanding that may have marred their previous meeting.

His conciliatory manner was not reflected by the matriarch of the clan. With one comprehensive glance she gathered up her daughters and Henry who tended to stay in the background. ''I think, Mr. Flanagan,'' she said, ït's time we left. We are going to a ball tonight; that is if you are still capable of standing, and I want the girls to rest at the hotel for a while first.''

''Good idea!'' responded the villain Timothy. ''You take 'em home, Ma. You can have the carriage and we'll stay here and give the bookies a bit of hurry up. It'd be a pity to leave now that we're on a winning streak. Gabby's goin' to invest some money for us too. It's like being on the lode, we're goin' to follow it right through.''

Mrs. Flanagan struggled to retain her carefully cultivated accent and manners, as she surveyed the errant men, with a special look of hostility for Benno, who was remaining upright by leaning on Fox and had no intention of taking his arm from around his friend's neck.

''Mr. Fox might like to come with us'', she said. "I think we've been here quite long 'enough. We've won some money and it's time to go home now, before the bookmakers start getting it back again.''

''Not a bad idea that, missus,'' said Benno approvingly. ''I've never walked out on a race meeting in me life before – let alone the Melbourne Cup, but the sooner we get Gabby out of this the better. He's me ticket to fortune and as soon as some of the boys come back from the next race we'll look after him and make sure he gets home safely. No one had better try anything on him while me and me mates are around. Don't you worry about a thing, missus, he'll be alright. We'll see to that.''

Mrs. Flanagan ignored these remarks by the odious Benno. ''Do you wish to ride back in the carriage with us, Mr. Fox?''

Fox would never let himself become completely drunk. He considered Benno, who was breathing beer fumes all over him; and the chance of being dragged off to the refreshment tent once more when Benno's mates rediscovered them. The gold sovereigns were uncomfortable, vulnerable lumps in his pockets. He decided it would be best to leave now. His luck for the day had been strained just about to the limit.

After a struggle he unwound Benno's arm from around his shoulders and neck and dropped him, not roughly, on a nearby bench. Then, with Henry and Timothy in deep disgrace, they departed Flemington Racecourse.

{ 5 }

James Pryor - Salesman

Gabriel was late at work the following morning. The ball had been prolonged and energetic though Timothy had been given little opportunity to indulge in further excesses.

His host had been subdued as the result of a stormy session with his wife behind closed doors. He had almost nothing to offer in the way of jollity, and not being a dancing man, he had sat around, under close observation by his wife and daughters.

Such was the state of colonial society at the time that Benno could have attended the ball too, on the purchase of a ticket. The Flanagans had not yet attained those heights where one was invited to private balls in Cup Week.

Fortunately, nothing unseemly took place on the dance floor, but unfortunately for the Flanagans, by the end of the evening, they had made no new acquaintances both eligible and superior.

Several young men presented themselves to ask to dance with the young ladies but Mrs. Flanagan summed up each of them instantly as factory hands or clerks; none of them better than the young men they could meet any day at Walhalla, and not one in any way equal to the elegance and good address of Mr Fox, who danced several times with her daughters.

They arrived back at Menzies at about one o'clock in the morning, Mrs. Flanagan in a

testy mood and Timothy apprehensive of the ordeal he would have to undergo before being allowed, to sleep.

He was discreetly stopped from going out to the landing to bid Gabriel goodnight, that was a privilege reserved exclusively for Myrtle, who had been instructed not to go beyond the head of the stairs, no matter what Mr Fox might suggest.

Her reputation and hopes would have been quite safe from him because he did not want to give Myrtle any more encouragement and would not have done so but he happened to spot a figure at the foot of the stairs.

Henry's panic stricken face was looking up at him: Myrtle faced the other way and had not, as yet, noticed her brother who had been left at the hotel instead of going to the ball and had been presumed by all to be in bed, fast asleep.

Henry made a silent gesture of appeal and grimaced at Myrtle's back. Gabriel took the hint and clasped Myrtle's hand in his own to gazed deep into her eyes. His other arm he rested on the girl's shoulder and with his fingers beckoned Henry to come up.

There was a rich, red turkey carpet runner on the stairs and Henry sneaked silently upwards, boots in hand, while Gabriel talked to his sister

"I cannot tell you," he said, "How much I have enjoyed the day at the races and the ball tonight. I have been delighted to discover such kindness and friendship at the end of what seemed an endless, weary sea-voyage. You may be sure Miss Flanagan that it will be long before I forget the pleasure of this first day and evening in the colony."

A door quickly opened and shut behind them. Myrtle was startled.' "What was that?"

''I think someone put their boots out to be cleaned. Goodnight Miss Flanagan, and thank you again. I look forward to seeing you and your family very soon."

He departed and Myrtle went in to discuss with her mother this forward but agreeable behaviour on the part of the young man they had met only that day.

Timothy was pleased too; at least the conference between mother and daughter enabled him to get to sleep before his wife appeared in the bedroom.

Mr. Gladman was a little testy and distant when his new employee came late in the shop on Wednesday morning. An assistant was expected to be waiting at the door when the master appeared to let him. His first duty was to dust the stock and set everything to rights. Twenty minutes had passed since opening time and none of this had happened.

Mr. Gladman was assailed with grave doubts about his wisdom in presenting the young man with such a splendid opportunity for employment and advancement in life on his very first day in the colony.

He showed his displeasure by not acknowledging the young man's greeting and

preserving a grave silence when Gabriel picked up a feather duster from the top of an organ and moved round the shop plying it listlessly.

Mr. Gladman was astonished when his brash young assistant, disregarding obvious signs of disfavour, had the impudence to ask for half an hour's leave of absence. He said that he had to go to the bank to open an account.

Mr. Gladman would have rejected the request except that he was astonished by the sight of Mr Fox hauling handfuls of golden sovereigns and notes out of different pockets of his suit and depositing them on the cash desk.

Even though he had been in business since arriving in Victoria twenty years before Mr. Gladman had never seen that much money in a heap; it was a fortune!

Terrible doubts took possession of his mind. "You have been gambling!" he said. "In spite of my warnings you have fallen prey to the urges that ruin so many young men in this wicked city. How can you be protected if you ignore the advice of those older and wiser than yourself?"

"I got some good advice at the course," replied Gabriel now restored to cheerfulness at the sight of the small heap of money. "Darriwell came in at thirty three to one. I had seven sovs riding on his back and some friends gave me their money to hold too."

Mr. Gladman was aghast. "Oh, Mr. Fox, beware! beware! The devil Mammon has you in his grip. This gold you see before you is an illusion; a false lure; a means of dragging you down to Hell. Consider your spiritual well-being and put it away."

"That's what I wanted to talk to you about. I can't carry it around with me. If you can let me off for half an hour when the banks open I can start an account.

Mr. Gladman hesitated. He was torn between the need to show his authority and refuse his assistant even an instant's leave from the shop and the necessity of putting the money away safely.

"Really, you are a most unusual young man. I don't know why I have endured such extraordinary and irregular behaviour since your arrival here on Monday. It is only my desire to preserve your well being that has guided me so far, but I have failed in the matter of the visit to the racecourse. Tell me, have you decided what you propose to do with this tainted money? Stay!" He did not pause for an answer. "It has just come to me! Perhaps there is good to be gained from this experience after all. The Brethren have great need of money for missionary activities. The Elders were discussing it the other day. Why, with this money we could maintain a missionary in India or China. I understand the Catholics and Anglicans are making great inroads in the heathen lands. This will be an opportunity to expose the natives to the true Christian message."

"Yes, an idea such as that is well worth thinking about," responded Gabriel. He wanted to get the money out of the shop and into a bank as soon as possible. He was

prepared to defend it if Mr. Gladman was seized with a religious frenzy and tried to appropriate the lot for the greater glory of the Brethren.

"You shall have from ten to ten thirty precisely, Mr. Fox," said he, taking out his silver watch and unclasping the face cover. "Deposit the money now and you can come with me to the chapel on Sunday to discuss with the Elders how we shall dispose of it for the greater glory of the Lord. We have been guided, Mr. Fox. Guided by a higher power to this very moment, and Sunday will be our day of revelation."

To appear dramatically with the young man and announce that with his assistance and that of the racehorse Darriwell they would now have enough money for missionary enterprises would be a stunning triumph.

No one could accuse him of gambling. He had not done so, and Mr Fox would bear witness that he had been warned against any such activity by his employer. Mr. Gladman looked forward with anticipation and pleasure to the coming Sunday. He never thought that his assistant might have other plans for his money.

Business was good that morning. Several people came in to buy sheet music. A musician paid a deposit on a flute. Pianos were opened and tested as several people showed interest. Gabriel played popular tunes, and everyone was nodding and smiling, people passing by in the street stopped and listened at the open doors.

Mr. Gladman could not but admire the way his assistant dealt with the lady customers, whether old or young, married or single. He had a respectful, attentive, almost bold manner that fluttered yet pleased them at the same time. Mr. Gladman's only reservation was that some of them appeared to be putting off an immediate decision and using this as an excuse to return later in order to see more of the handsome young man.

At ten o'clock precisely he signalled that it was time to visit the bank and Gabriel departed bearing his little load of sovereigns and notes in a linen bag, property of Mr. Gladman.

His employer had recommended The Occidental & Civic Bank as a reputable institution and he soon found it in Collins Street. It was an imposing structure with a tower and dome and lavishly fitted inside with mahogany panelling, a massive polished counter fitted with brass grilles to separate the clients from the tellers, and enough polished, frosted plate glass incised with elaborate patterns to rival any bank in London.

There was no difficulty in depositing his hoard of sovereigns and paper money. He was received by an official of the bank as soon as it was learned that he was a young businessman just arrived from England with money to invest in Victoria.

"Plenty of opportunities here for a young man with capital and spirit," said the official as soon as the money had been counted and a clerk had withdrawn under instructions to prepare the necessary instruments for signature and to obtain

cheques for Mr. Fox's immediate use.

"Yes, Mr. Fox," he said. "You are in the right place at the right time. This colony is about to boom. Don't try and tell me I don't know the signs. We have an assured income from, wool, wheat and gold. We have migrants flooding into the country eager to invest in our industries and bringing all the hard-earned skills we need in this corner of the world. You invest in property, Mr. Fox! Houses, land, shares! Buy wisely, but buy now, prices are going to rise. All the signs are there for a prudent man to see. I only wish I had your youth and capital, I'd be wealthy in no time."

Such was the speed with which the bank had taken his money that he still had ten minutes of his allotted time left as he started to walk back to the music shop.

He allowed himself a moment or two to gaze into the window of a land agency which displayed several posters advertising property auctions.

Anyone interested in property could do no better than take some of these posters, which were available within, study them, and perhaps attend the auction sales in order to gauge the market. If folded small and carried in an inside pocket they would escape Mr. Gladman's closest inspection. It would only remain then to keep his money out of the clutches of the Faithful Brethren and he could study investment at leisure.

Everything in the agency seemed new and freshly varnished as though the builders and shopfitters had just left. Nothing had been spared in the way of panelling and polish, of brass and glass, of framed, coloured brochures of past, triumphant land sales, to make the client aware that this was a place of probity and sound financial dealing. Even the beautifully printed little signs calling for investors to put their money into building societies were a temptation. Rates of interest from six to eight percent were available.

As he entered to make inquiries a round, bustling, sleek young man appeared from behind a partition and placed his two hands flat on the counter.

A glossy, black top hat, obviously his, and a tightly furled umbrella decorated a hat stand in the corner. He was clean shaven and wore a smooth black frock coat and grey trousers, his boots positively glittered when they appeared in view.

The young man in the shop was hardly older than Gabriel "Sir!" he intoned on a note of interrogation.'

"I am interested in studying property investments. I was passing your shop and saw in the window that you had leaflets advertising land auctions. I thought you might be kind enough to let me have some so I can study them and perhaps attend the auctions."

The sleek young man was very self assured but he hesitated slightly before answering. "Those are actually for past sales and were conducted by other agencies. To tell you the truth I don't have any property auctions coming up right now, but a lot

of those blocks are still available. I have authority to sell them and if you wish to inspect and buy I can let you have beautiful blocks of land very cheap and at most reasonable terms. Look at this!" He rapidly flattened out a brochure on the counter and slid it towards Fox. "There you are! There is still land available in Prahran. Whole streets freshly sub-divided and just waiting for you to make a fortune. You can run up dozens of single fronted workmen's cottages, and either sell them through the building societies or rent them out at so much a week. The possibilities here are limitless. Limitless! Brighton! The railway runs to Brighton now, a beautiful seaside area." More coloured paper fluttered on to the counter. "The prices are higher, of course; people are beginning to talk in hundreds of pounds for ordinary size blocks But if the prices are higher so are the profits. People say these prices are too high, you know; but they're not. They say we're in a depression. Perhaps! But what I say is that this is the lull before the storm Every time a new railway goes in we have new opportunities for advancement and profit. Every sub-division, every house that has to be bought and sold represents opportunity for the shrewd investor."

He was reaching for more of the leaflets. "Name an area that you fancy in Melbourne and I can get you cheap property or else put you on the right track. Nothing is any trouble, sir. Name the suburb!"

"All this means nothing to me. I landed at Sandridge yesterday from the Imperia. I took the train from there to Flinders Street and I don't know anything about the city except what I've seen in walking round. I got a job in a music store yesterday and I won't have that if I don't hurry back. I'll take some leaflets with me if you will help fold them, then I can read them and come back and see you later."

The young man lifted the counter flap and came out. He put his hand on Fox's sleeve.

"Just off the boat, eh?"

"Yes;"

"You haven't got that much money have you?"

"No; and I can't afford to make mistakes with what I've got. That's why I have to study things carefully."

The young man looked round the shop and drew closer. He said, "You haven't got much money. I've got even less. Look at this." He indicated the counter, the fittings, and the freshly painted walls. "I have sunk my mother's money into this place. It's her life's savings here and she handed it over without a murmur because she trusts me. I opened for business at nine o'clock this morning and you're the first person to walk through the door. That's alright; it's going to be a success. Mater's not going to suffer through anything I might do. But what I want to ask you is how do you fancy yourself at selling?"

"That depends. If the goods are right and price is right I can sell. I know how to talk to people. I'm a salesman."

"Salesman, that's a good word." He tried it on his tongue. "That's me. I'm a salesman too. Do you know I go out on Saturday afternoons and earn a bit extra by selling blocks on the new subdivisions for other agents. You don't pick up much that way but it keeps me going. There's always room for a new man and if you want to you can come out with me and try your hand. If you want to speculate in property that is the best way to test the market; you will soon know what sells and what doesn't."

Gabriel could not see anything wrong with this logic.

"I know that music store," said the young man. "It's between the Albion Pub and the Post Office. If you like I'll call in later today and give you some more details. Don't worry about having to work on Saturday afternoons. The Early Closing Association makes all the shops close at one o'clock on Saturdays. You know who backs the association don't you?" He nudged Gabriel. "It's the racing and football clubs. The big bookies give them anonymous donations so they can carry on the good work. They want people out at the races not at work. They can't make profits if people don't come."

Conscious that Fox's time had now expired by a good ten minutes they hurriedly folded some brochures which he concealed out of sight in an inside pocket.

Some minutes later, short of breath, he presented himself in Mr. Gladman's disapproving presence. Luckily he was saved from a severe rebuke by the presence of several customers in the shop and he was able to plunge straight into the business of selling a harmonium to a prosperous market-gardener and his wife, who intended to donate it to their church.

Being fresh from the old country the young man was able to play several tunes they had never heard before. He taught the wife to pick out familiar tunes, sacred and profane, on the wheezy instrument and helped her with several pieces that she had not played since she was a girl. They departed, having paid a deposit and purchased a quantity of sheet music.

After a sale of this kind Mr. Gladman found it difficult to deliver an admonition severe enough to properly chasten his assistant for his tardiness in outstaying a clearly defined time limit.

Eventually they agreed that the bank should not have kept him waiting in such a scandalous manner and that he should have explained to them beforehand that he had a large sum of money to invest. In future he was to demand the very best and promptest of service under threat of taking his business elsewhere.

Half an hour was allowed for lunch. Mr. Gladman made it clear that shop assistants in many establishments were not allowed even that generous time. They had to eat in a back room between calls on their services, and many were lucky to eat at all. However, in view of the great sacrifice the young man was to make to the Brethren the following Sunday Mr. Gladman would be generous and allow a full leisurely half hour even though his conduct in the matter of prompt arrival at work was not all that

Mr. Gladman could have desired.

However, in spite of this generosity, the time soon sped away. Fox would have liked to visit the Albion Hotel, a handsome hostelry a few doors further east along Bourke Street. Cobb and Co. still despatched a few coaches from this starting point for long journeys around the state but the coach lines were rapidly being replaced with railways and the services would cease within a year or so.

The remaining coaches left early in the morning and he saw none arrive before he had to hurry back to the shop. It was as well not to have the smell of alcohol on his breath when he presented himself in his place of business.

Mr. Gladman caused him some uneasiness by dwelling on the anticipated pleasure of donating his wealth to the Brethren that very Sabbath, but he held his tongue until the glass doors of the shop crashed open and the plump young man from the estate agency burst in.

He was puffing as though he had run the distance. His top hat was awry, his cheeks glistened with exertion. He ignored the proprietor and his eyes lit up at the sight of Fox.

The young man walked over puffing and rapped his knuckles on the of a piano. "That's opportunity knocking," he said, and did it again.

"Yes, of course. You've come to see about the organ," answered Fox with presence of mind.

Astonishment replaced the genial expression on the young man's face. He looked round and saw Mr. Gladman for the first time. The gentleman bowed and the young man did likewise.

Gabriel took his bewildered caller by the sleeve. "There is a very fine one over here in the corner. It should suit your church excellently." He made a face and pursed his lips at the young man who was about to protest that he had neither the money nor the desire to possess an organ. He led him over to the large pedal organ in the corner which was the one he had sold yesterday and and was now waiting to be delivered..

Fox pulled up the matching stool and pointed. ''Raise that handle up and down like pumping and keep doing it. It works the bellows that drive the organ.'' The young man did as he was told and Gabriel began to play so Mr. Gladman could not overhear their conversation.

"Look as though you are interested in the organ," he advised. "I thought you were coming round later."

"I couldn't wait. It's happened! Just the thing I needed to get the agency under weigh. Have you got twenty jimmy o'goblins? If you have I can turn them into a hundred before the week is out. A hundred quid! You get your money back and fifty besides. Just my luck not to have the ready when a chance like this comes up. A hundred for

twenty, it's unbelievable."

"What's going on? I'm not going into the gambling business, it's too risky."

"This is not gambling. It's as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar. Look! It's a draper's shop in Elizabeth Street, the owner is drinking himself to death and the business is not going to last much longer. He wants to sell because running a shop interferes with his drinking. I know the price because I was working for another agency last week and I've talked to him about it a few times and if I go round and see him he'll sell through my agency. Wait on! I haven't finished. A big draper from Bendigo walked into the shop a few minutes ago and he wants to open up a branch in the city and buy some premises. This shop would suit him down to the ground. I could sell it just like that." He snapped his fingers.

"Well, why don't you? That's what you are there for. Sell it and get the commission."

"I can do better! If we buy a month's option my man will take it like a shot and we can put a hundred quid on the price and share it between ourselves. That's shrewd dealing, and it's better than commission any day!"

"Twenty pounds is a lot of money; I'll have to think it over."

"We don't have any time. I told my man from Bendigo to give me half an hour while I made some inquiries with a colleague who might be able to help him; but if he walks into any other agency that's it. They will never let him go. He just happened to be strolling down Swanston Street and liked the look of my shop. If he cottons on to another agency he might go in there instead and then we're up the spout, my boy. Keep playing! Keep playing! The boss is watching; he's a suspicious old card."

"Well keep working the bellows! What if I put the £20 down and he doesn't buy. If we don't sell the place inside a month do I get the £20 back?"

"No! But if I can't sell it to my man before the day is out I'll walk round the world in a paper suit. Keep playing! Have you got the twenty quid on you?"

"No, but I can write a cheque."

"That'll do. Providing it's a good one; my draper friend will snatch at it, and I know how to write out the option. I've done it before."

"What about the man from Bendigo? He'll go and see someone else while you're doing all this."

"He's sitting in the shop waiting for me. You'll have to go and talk to him. Tell him anything. Say you are my partner and you met me in the street and I told you to go straight back there. Tell him how hard it is to buy shops in Melbourne. Do anything you like only keep him there. I'll take the draper round to the bank and cash the cheque on the spot; but I'll probably have to go with him to the pub first and stand a round or two so it will take a little while but keep your man talking. Take him to the

the Royal Mail pub, if you like, and booze on with him for an hour --- that should give me enough time."

"I can't leave here! I'll lose my job! I started Monday, I had Tuesday off and I've been late twice today."

"What's he going to give you?" the young man asked heatedly. "Two sovs a week? How long will it take you to save fifty at that rate. Go round and talk to my man; do it now before we lose him!"

"What am I going to say to Gladman?"

"Anything you like! Nothing! I don't care!" he said, gesturing to make his point. "Give me a cheque for twenty quid now. Make it out to -- to cash -- that'll do."

Driven by the force of his new friend's urgency Gabriel ceased playing and seizing the pen on the cash desk he dipped it into the ink and rapidly wrote a cheque with trembling hands.

Mr. Gladman watched in astonishment at these actions and saw how the young man snatched the cheque from his assistant and ran to the door. At the door he turned and urgently beckoned to Gabriel, then disappeared.

Mr Gladman realized that there would be no better time to assert his authority. 'Mr Fox" he said, "I shall require a full explanation of this episode. I have grave fears that you may be subject to a gambling mania. If so I must tell you---"

He was interrupted by his assistant taking up his hat and edging towards the door.
"What----? What----? Where are you going? What do you mean by this behaviour?"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Gladman. I must go; I'll explain later."

"Go? Go? What do you mean? go!" Mr. Gladman's face was mottled with rage and he was starting to gobble. "If you put one foot outside that door without permission, young man, you are discharged; make no mistake about it!"

"I'm sorry sir, I have no choice; I have to go."

"But, why?" Rage and curiosity were struggling for possession of Mr. Gladman. "And who was that person you were speaking to?"

Gabriel had the door open now. His actions were nearly as puzzling to him as they were to Mr. Gladman. He had been swept along by the other's urgency. "I don't know who he is. I only met him two hours ago."

"Do you intend to come back?"

"I don't know! Honestly, Mr. Gladman, I just don't know."

"But the Faithful Brethren," wailed Mr. Gladman, "You have to come to the chapel on Sunday to give them the money."

Gabriel's opinion of the Brethren was unheard by the proprietor of the music shop because his impulsive former assistant was already running diagonally across Elizabeth Street.

Having evaded the dangers of being run down by cabs and wagons Gabriel burst breathlessly through the door of the estate agency.

{ 6 }

The Land Agency

He was taken aback to discover that there was not one client waiting but two. The middle aged prosperous looking man sitting in the client's chair and cloth cap in his hands must be the draper from Bendigo. The other was a woman of severe aspect who had laid her umbrella, gloves and reticule on the counter until required. She stared frostily at Gabriel who gaped back at her. They had obviously been discussing the extraordinary nature of a land agent who could leave a shop open and clients unattended in the heart of a busy, commercial city.

"It's about time! This is no way to run a business, young man. I don't mind telling you, just one more minute and I would have walked out of here and taken my business elsewhere." The woman snapped her reticule shut to emphasise the point.

''E's not the one I saw before," said the draper, with a strong north country accent. "T'other was a fat young feller with a shiny black 'at. 'E's a talker, that one. 'e told me to wait, but I can't wait much longer. There's a saying where I come from; 'Time is brass'. I 'aven't got the time nor the brass to be sitting round in Melbourne. I may as well be back in Bendigo looking after me shop."

To give himself a moment Fox lifted the flap and went behind the counter. He hung his brown hat on the hat stand and turned to face the two clients. He looked at them blankly, wondering what to say next.

"Well," said the woman. "Is this all that happens? Are you going to ask me what I want? Or can you recommend a good estate agency where they look after their business and there is someone in attendance when a customer walks in off the street."

Gabriel suddenly jolted into life. "I'm sorry an emergency arose. A client of ours, a Mr. Gladman, wanted to see me urgently. I thought that Mr. ----er! I thought the other gentleman would be here to look after the place. Most unfortunate and I apologise. To make things more awkward our clerk is off sick today."

"A clerk, eh? And what are you, a partner?"

"Well, I -- er --"

"Make up your mind young man. I think this lady's like me. She wants to deal with principals and not underlings. If you're a clerk I'll leave the address of me hotel with you and I'll be on me way. If I'm not suited somewhere else yon fat man can get in touch with me and we might be able to do business yet; but I'll be going home by the afternoon train on Friday -- no later."

"We can discuss the matter," said Fox hurriedly. "I've --- I've just joined the firm, but I have talked over your needs with -- with my partner and he has gone to arrange to -- to show you a shop that will be very suitable for you. In fact I can say that it is one of the best shops that has ever come on to our books."

The draper was eager to hear more but Gabriel was able to put him off.

"My partner is better acquainted with the shop and he has gone to see the proprietor and I have no doubt when he comes back he will take you straight round to view the property but if not, say first thing in the morning."

"I 'ope 'e can show it to me today. I'm a man of decision and I 'av'nt got much time. I'll wait for a while; you attend to the lady first. I'll be considering whether or not I'm wasting me time by sitting here when I could be out and around talking to other agents."

"You're very kind Mr. er------."

"Kimpton, Fred Kimpton's the name lad. Well known in Bendigo I can assure you. If they want quality and service they can come to Kimptons. Better service than I've been getting in Melbourne so far; and that's not saying mooch." He lapsed into a silence that did not encourage further conversation.

Gabriel now had to face the woman who was retying the strings of her bonnet as though about to depart. He hoped she would so that he would not have to reveal to the draper his utter ignorance of anything connected with real-estate or the city of Melbourne.

She finished the bow with a quick jerk and eyed him stonily but obviously was not going to leave.

"Can I help you, Madam?"

"I've seen you before -- It'll come to me presently. In my business you can't afford to forget a face."

Gabriel realized that he knew her too. She had been a first class passenger on the Imperia while he had been trying to keep up appearances with the less fortunate passengers travelling third class. She must remember him after his spectacular arrival in first class during the voyage.

She put aside for a moment the question of identifying the young man. "I have just arrived in Victoria. I could not do anything yesterday because everyone was out of their minds, or away, because of a ridiculous horse race. I have been to five estate agencies this morning, out of which yours gives the worst service. But what I want is a large house suitable as a boarding house. If I can find suitable house in a good location I will open a respectable establishment run on good, sound Christian lines."

"Plenty of people in Bendigo would be glad of another boarding house. You needn't fear missus but you'd be welcome there. It's a growing town; a town with a future. Bendigo's been good to me and I can't speak too highly of it."

"Then why do you want to open a shop in Melbourne?" snapped the woman. "In such a fine, growing town like that, wherever it might be, it seems you would be better opening another shop there where you can look after it properly."

"I didn't coom ten thousand miles from Yorkshire so as to grow small, missus. This is a growing country and I've got a growing family. I've a mind to import good British linen and stooff because there's a market for it here, and Melbourne's the port where it all cooms. Me eldest boy can look after the Bendigo shop and I'll coom 'ere. If we're going to 'ave a Melbourne office it may as well be over a shop where we can sell retail. Some of the younger ones can help me there. That's why I haven't walked out of this agency yet. That fat young body was telling me this shop, he knows about, has a dwelling and extra rooms. It might suit me down to the ground."

The woman turned away and sniffed. She considered herself a cut above the Yorkshireman socially and was not prepared to discuss the state of trade either in Bendigo or Melbourne. She returned to the matter that interested her. "A house, young man. It must be large, clean, and close to the city. I intend to have commercial gentlemen living there and it will need to be handy to warehouses and offices so they can save cab-fares. It's no good showing me a property that's not close to the city. There will have to be churches within reasonable distance because I will have none but Christians in my boarding house, none of your papists or Mahommedans for me. It will particularly need to be close to a Wesleyan chapel. That's my faith and I don't mind who knows it. Some shops close by would be an advantage, but I don't care how far it is from the theatres because they're an abomination. Also find me an area that is free of hotels. Though judging from the number I have seen in walking around this place that may be difficult, but at least I expect you to try."

The Yorkshireman scratched his head on hearing the lady's catalogue of requirements and pulled a face at Gabriel behind her back.

"None of the other agencies had anything that might suit?" he enquired hopefully.

"Perhaps; I have some addresses and I shall take a cab later and go around and view them from the outside. If there are any suitable then we shall see about a proper inspection. I was given an address in a street called Victoria Parade that seemed quite promising; but apparently it is a little far out of town and I understand a brewery has been, or is about to be built nearby, and I certainly don't want any gentleman who

may be boarding in my house to be assailed with the smell of beer in preparation. I have lived near breweries in my time and I know how disgusting they can be!"

"Of course! Brewing is an offensive trade. No lady of your type could possibly take a house anywhere near one of those places. Now, as to finding you a suitable establishment, that is something I must discuss with my partner. He mentioned that he knew of several large houses that are available but he didn't say where."

"You and your partner should talk to one another more often, and you should write things down. It's no good trying to run a business if you don't communicate. Now these houses you mention may be very suitable as boarding-houses but how will I know until I have seen them, and how can I see them if you don't even know where they are - a fine way to run a land agency."

"I'll get a pen and paper and write down your address," said Gabriel, looking round for the necessary materials. There was none to be seen. He opened and shut several drawers, all new and empty except, for wood-shavings left by the joiners. The woman looked at this quest with disapproving eyes.

"You don't even have a pen and ink in the office, do you? There probably aren't any houses for sale either, and you're just wasting my time."

"I assure you---"

"Don't assure me of anything. I don't want your assurances. I want a large house, cheap, with plenty of bedrooms and a good location. If you can't supply that your assurances are not any good to me."

Seeing that Fox was recommencing his hopeless hunt for pen and ink the draper produced a broken piece of tailor's chalk from his waist-coat pocket and handed it to the harried young man.

"Write on the wall with that, lad. Don't ask me why I've got it in my pocket. I must have slipped it in there after I had been marking some cloth. It's better than nowt because, not being a scholar, I use it for me writing, which has to be big otherwise no-one can read it."

Gabriel thanked him and prepared to write the lady's name and address inside one of the drawers. She looked on with disapproval at this unbusinesslike action. "I'm sorry, but we just opened the agency today at nine o'clock and our stationery has not arrived yet. The printers should have delivered it before now: but you know what these tradesmen are like, they never seem to finish their jobs on time."

"Don't be too hard on the lad, missus," interposed the draper, now coming to Gabriel's defence. "If he's just starting off his own business you can't expect him to get everything right on the first day." He winked at Fox and expressed his opinion of the would-be boarding-house keeper by pulling a face but was somewhat disconcerted when she detected him doing so.

She glared. "I hope you're not expressing an opinion of me with those ugly faces. I know how to deal with people like you. Just because I'm ten thousand miles from home and all on my own don't think I'm incapable of protecting myself." Her hand strayed toward the umbrella which was still neatly placed on the counter with her gloves and reticule.

With some presence of mind Fox placed both hands flat on the counter. One of them was resting firmly on the umbrella in case the lady had any ideas of avenging her injured dignity by physical force.

The draper did not apologize. "If I've got an opinion of you missus I can say it in words. I don't have to pull no faces; and my opinion of you is that you're a psalm-singing, bread-scraping, milk-watering, kill-joy female miser, and I can tell you straight that you wouldn't be welcome in Bendigo and I pity any poor commercial gentleman that tries to get a decent meal and bed out of you if he's mad enough to stay in any boarding-house you manage."

The woman abandoned any appearance of striking the draper with her umbrella. Instead she gathered it up, together with her gloves and reticule, and prepared to leave the shop. "This is not the place, nor does it have the type of customers where a lady could do business. I will not trouble either of you gentlemen," and she put extreme stress on the word, 'gentlemen,' ''any further."

She had marched a few paces to the door when she swung round and pointed a finger at Gabriel. "Now I remember! You came out on the same ship as me, the 1mperia. You were in third class, in the cheapest part of the ship. I saw you day after day talking, and laughing, and carrying on with all those bold young women. Servant girls, and slaveys, and daughters of workmen. It was shameless the way they made eyes at you. They thought you were marvellous and they never asked why, if you were so wonderful and rich, why you had to travel on the cheap with common people."

She turned on the draper. "His name is Fox. Fox by name and nature I'd say. I saw what was going on in that ship and if you've got any daughters you had better keep them away from Mr. Fox. He's a man with a reputation that no one could be proud of. And furthermore, during the trip, he managed to worm his way into first class under the pretence of playing their piano. He arrived here on Monday, the same as me.''

''I'll warrant he knows as much about Melbourne as I do, which is next to nothing, and why he's passing himself off now as a partner in a city estate agency I don't know. All I can say to you, Mr. Draper, is to watch him! Just watch!" She turned and marched out of the shop, leaving Gabriel gaping at the door.

What she had said was true. He had flirted in a mild way with some of the girls in third class. He knew them all, of course, but none had been compromised. In the crowded cabins of a third class voyage there were men's and women's quarters and no one could be alone. All the time everyone was under the inescapable observation of other passengers and, like his fellow travellers, he was forced on to the deck, as much as the weather permitted, because of crowding below. But all the time he was

thinking of someone else he had seen only briefly.

The time he broke the rules was because of that girl he had seen on the first class gangway at London when they embarked at the same moment, but were separated by invisible barriers of class and money. She saw him looking at her, and smiled. He waved to her and she waved back. He had never forgotten that look and smile. nor the wave, before they were separated by crowds of passengers pushing up behind them.

Mr. Kimpton broke into his reverie. "There's nothing to be ashamed of in coming out steerage, lad. I did it meself twenty years ago with a wife and small son. It took more than four months by sailing ship and I won't forget that in a hurry. I wasn't ashamed of it then and I'm not ashamed of it now, and neither should you be."

"I'm not. I'm just surprised that she even remembered my name. I didn't think that any of the passengers aft noticed us or what we were doing; let alone that they were asking our names."

"Well you're bit unusual you know. Breaking into first class from third and being allowed to stay, and play the piano, that doesn't happen every day. As well, there's a touch of jealousy there. She could see this 'andsome young man surrounded by girls and all on the top of the world, while she's standing aft with a face like a sour lemon and no one even passing the time o'day for fear they'd have their heads bitten off. Life takes people in funny ways, you know.

As to this other business she mentioned about you not being a real estate agent at all, which, if you arrived in Melbourne on Monday, may not be that far from the truth. Speak up young man, tell the truth now, and shame the devil. Is there a shop for me at the end of all this talk or 'ave I wasted me time in an interesting but idle experience. I can spend another five minutes in hearing your story, but that's about me limit."

"It's all a sort of whirl!" said Gabriel. "Nothing like this has ever happened to me before. That lady is quite right, you know. I arrived here not knowing anything about the place. I met some wharf labourers who booked me into a cheap hotel. I got a kind of job in a music store. Then a customer came in who had an interest in some mines at Walhalla, wherever that may be. He took me to the Melbourne Cup - I came away with nearly three hundred pounds because a gypsy and a wharf labourer told me to back Darriwell, then the wharf labourer and a boy gave me thirty pounds each to hold for them and I put it all in the bank this morning, and then I came in here and asked that young man you met about property investments."

"What's 'is name?"

"I don't know. I forgot to ask. I'll find out a soon as he comes back. I know it all sounds pretty queer but things have just been happening to me since I arrived in Melbourne. I don't know if I'm going to be swept along like this all the time I'm here."

"It's an exciting place. It may be a bit too exciting for an old feller like me. But what happened to you,? Why did you come back to the office?"

Gabriel thought quickly. The draper was shrewd and obviously a good business man. He would not take kindly to a story about an option and a scheme to get an extra hundred pounds out of him on the sale price of a shop.

"I told him I worked in a music store so he came rushing in a little while ago and asked me to get round here straight away and talk to you while he got an authority to sell this property he was telling you about."

"I see. Well, if you started Monday, took Tuesday off and then cleared out today in the middle of trading hours I don't suppose there'll be a job for you when you go back."

Gabriel shrugged. "And what did he want you to do? Keep me talking so I couldn't go to any other agencies?"

Gabriel raised his hands, spread his fingers, and shrugged again. "Something like that. I hope you are not disappointed when he takes you round to see the premises."

"It's almost worth it joost to meet you and yon---whoever he is. I've no doubt you'll continue to fall on your feet. This is not the sort of business I usually deal with but if you can get me a clear title to a property, and it suits me, and it's cheap enoof I don't see why I can't do business with you as well as anyone else. But no hanky panky, mind."

They were both quiet for a while, lost in memories. Gabriel was thinking of how he broke the rules, just to see that girl once more. One morning, a week into the voyage, he shaved and dressed with special care. Then he went up on to the deck and walked past the sign that said No third class passengers allowed beyond this point. There was a locked gate that was supposed to keep people like him in their place. It was no obstacle, being fairly low. He put his hand on top and vaulted over. Then went downstairs, walked along a passage, and came, after a time, to the second class dining room where the second classers were at breakfast.

He pressed on, still unnoticed, and later, he came to another gate and a sign which read No second class passengers allowed beyond this point.

The gate was not a problem and he entered a world of luxury.

The passage was carpeted with thicker and softer floor covering than could be seen elsewhere in the ship. The stateroom doors were of grained timber, numbered, not with painted signs, but adorned with polished brass lettering, and, on each door, was a pasteboard label with the names of the occupants in beautiful copperplate writing.

In this quiet place the ship engines could be heard still throbbing but the sound was muted by such luxurious surroundings. He walked the length of another passage, shorter than others, lit by tightly closed portholes so the sounds of sea and engine could not disturb the precious passengers.

Then there was another dining room, smaller than that in second class, but much superior, and a universe away from the heavy wooden furniture he knew in his part

of the ship.

No one noticed this intrusion, he was well dressed and quiet, and he wandered around looking for one face in the crowded room.

There she was, sitting at a table for four, with three companions He hesitated. Should he go closer? Should he introduce himself and risk being thrown out? He had no plan, but was just led by a desire to see her again.

At that moment she might have again sensed that he was near, for she looked up, saw him, was puzzled for a moment, then the frown lines disappeared, her eyes opened wide, and she smiled.

The memory bubble collapsed as Kimpton spoke again. I hope your partner won't be too much longer.''

Well, whoever he is, told me to take you over to the Royal Mail. I suppose that's a hotel. Do you know where it is?"

The draper shook his head. "No, and I'm not accustoomed to patronizing public houses during working hours. But then I'm a long way from business and I don't care. But you're payin', mind. You're the one that wants to keep me here; not t'other way round."

The Royal Mail was a public house, which was soon found, being on the corner of Swanston and Bourke Streets. Like the others it was two storied with wide verandas sheltering the footpath from sun and rain. Gabriel could have stood in the window and watched Mr. Gladman's music store in Bourke Street, if such an idea had appealed to him. He could also look, from another window, to see if anyone entered the estate agency in Swanston Street, but he did not do that either, even though they had gone away leaving it unlocked.

He and his new friend were standing at the bar, quietly chatting, when the door was flung open and the young man whose acquaintance they had both made for the first time that day came in.

{ 7 } A partnership

He was hot and dusty from the street and had, apparently, not rested a moment since last seen. He came to them blowing out his lips and mopping the perspiration away with a large, white handkerchief. Gabriel put another threepence on the bar and there was a pot of beer waiting for him almost before he came to rest. He nodded and drank, unable, for the moment, to speak.

The draper waited until the beer was almost gone, he said, "Now let's get a few things straight. First, what's your name?"

"Pryor, James Pryor."

"Alright, Jimmy Pryor. Now I want you to meet your partner. What's your name, lad?"

"Gabriel Fox."

"Yes, of course, Fox. That's what that woman said. Well, Mr. Fox it's time you and your partner were formally introduced. You'd better shake hands on it." He gravely introduced them to each other. They shook hands. ''Aving got that settled it's time we started to talk business. In the first place how much extra were you going to try and get out of me with all this jiggery-pokery that's being going on?"

Young Mr. Pryor was aghast that anyone should consider him capable of not behaving according to the highest standards of his calling. Agents were much maligned by the general public. There may have been some, very few, unscrupulous persons in the trade, but on the whole their characters were of great purity.

Mr. Kimpton listened sceptically to these remarks. It seemed that he had had dealings with estate agents on previous occasions, and unfortunately had encountered the unscrupulous few Mr. Pryor had mentioned. Perhaps they were more prevalent in Bendigo than Melbourne.

"I can understand you going off," he said, "to arrange for me to view a property; but why did young Fox 'ere drop everything, and get 'imself the sack from a nice job in a music store, and coom rushing round to yon shop to 'elp you out when 'e doesn't even know your name? It's a funny thing to do and it makes a body wonder what you said to 'im."

"We are men of quick decision, Mr. Kimpton. I made up my mind this morning that he was a born salesman. I went and told him we could split the commission if he'd help me and he decided that there was a better future in land and property than there was working for an old skinflint like Gladman. You're a man of decision too. If you want the shop come and have a look at it now. I have beaten the price down for you but how long it will stay down I can't say. So finish up your beer and we'll take a cab round now if you like." He turned to Gabriel. "What do you want to do? Do you want to come with us, or will you go back to the agency. I'm sorry about your job; things just work out that way now and again."

Gabriel shrugged. "I'll go back to the agency. I don't have anything else to do right now; but I am going to buy a pencil and some paper. I don't want to have to go through all that again."

"Well, I'll say good-bye for the time being young man," were the draper's parting words. "We'll meet again. Whether we do business or not depends on the price your partner is asking for the property. I may get to the bottom of what's going on, I don't know; but I will say it's been interesting."

They parted. Pryor was talking as he hailed a cab and the two men set off to view the

shop in Elizabeth Street while Gabriel went back to the agency.

He was still waiting an hour and a half later, when James Pryor returned. He had bought an 'Age' and an 'Argus' and they were spread out on the counter. He read them, giving particular attention to properties advertised for sale or purchase. He could discern no pattern from the two newspapers except that prices were not particularly high and there was plenty of vacant land available for home builders.

As soon as the other young man came in Gabriel folded the papers, put them to one side and looked at him.

Pryor put his silk hat on the counter and rubbed his hands. "He's on the hook; we just have to play him gently and we'll land a nice, fat hundred pound profit, plus commission!"

"What did he think of the shop?"

"Loved it! You should have seen his nose go up sniff the air when we went into the place. Any draper worth his salt could walk in and make a go of it, and he's no fool. He can see the possibilities. A man like him could turn that shop into a gold mine; though he wouldn't admit anything like that to me. He kept on shaking his head and saying it was far too dear when he knows as well as I do that £2,600 stock, property, and good-will is not buying the business, it's stealing it. Ned Kelly should have such opportunities. He's a wake-up now; he knows that we have a month's option and we're sticking him for a bit extra but he doesn't know how much it is and he daren't wait a month in case someone else snaps it up. The staff wanted to slobber all over his boots, when they found out he was a draper and a possible buyer. They're just hoping that he will take over the place and keep them on; they know that the business can't last more than another three months with old Smith drinking himself to death. He's over the road in the pub all day instead of attending to the shop, and they can't run it for him."

"Well, what's happening now?"

"I left Kimpton back at his hotel a little while ago. Just as I was going he made me a top, final, never to be repeated offer of £2000. I told him my principals couldn't possibly think of such low price but as it had just come on to the books of the agency I would be actively promoting it during the next month or so and if nothing better came along I would certainly pass his offer on for their consideration. He probably goes very well in Bendigo but down here he's out of his place. That's all right, he'll come round. I dare say he'll be sitting on the edge of his bed right now worrying in case another draper comes to us and asks to see a nice shop in the city. It is no good him going to any other agencies because we've got the option, the sole agency. I made this pretty clear to him, in a gentlemanly sort of way, of course."

"That's alright," said Gabriel, "now, what about me?"

Mr. Pryor instantly put on his bargaining face - smooth, inscrutable. He rested one

elbow on the counter. "Don't you fret my boy, you'll get your twenty quid back and fifty besides. Jimmy Pryor doesn't go back on his word. It was your twenty but my brains so, like I said, equal whacks, that's fair enough."

"What if it doesn't come off? What if he finds another shop that he likes better, or he gets one cheaper?"

Pryor waved away the possibility. "You don't know the market. There's nothing cheaper in town at the moment. It's the sort of property that just has to go at that price. You'll get your profit, never fear."

"And what about the commission? I should get half of that too."

He shook his head. "Not a chance. I'm the agent, not you. Half the profit goes to you but all the commission comes to me. Don't get carried away; all this talk about partnership, it's only talk, you know. I did say to pass yourself off as my partner but that was only to keep Kimpton happy while I went off and clinched the deal. If you want to buy a partnership I'm willing to talk but we can't start off by me giving you half a business. That would not be fair to either of us."

"Half of what business? You only opened the doors today. All you have is a rented shop and some shop-fittings that your mother had to pay for. You want to make your first profit by getting money off me. How do I know what the possibilities are because you might have to close up next week if you aren't able to pay the rent, and don't tell me you've taken £100 plus commission because nothing has been signed yet; you could lose him easily."

Pryor considered this statement. "Fair enough. This shop costs £5 a week to rent and I've paid four weeks in advance. If I want to pay another four weeks I'll have to get some money somewhere. But I'll do it. Don't you worry about that because this is a city to have faith in. It's going places, and so am I, and I'll tell you what I'll do. You're a pretty smart sort of cove; you took me up like lightning when I told you to get round here and talk to Kimpton. He said you were as smart as a whip, and I could use a partner like you so you can come in for a hundred quid, plus another four week's rent which you will have to pay; after that it will be paid by the firm. I can't say fairer than that because Pryor and Fox could be the biggest property dealers in Melbourne. All we need is cheek and plenty of luck In a few months you'll laugh at the idea of buying into a gold-mine like this for a measly hundred quid."

"If it is that good why should I have to share? I could go out and rent a shop and start my own business."

"Don't be wet!" retorted Mr. Pryor. "You don't know anything about the business and you don't know the town!" He pointed to the door. "You go out there and try and set up on your own and they'll have your hide nailed to the door before you knew what had happened to you. There are sharks waiting to snap up green chums like you, just off the boat. No, I like the cut of your jib and we can work this town between us."

Gabriel considered the matter. "I dare say it will be better than the music store, and I won't have to put up with old Gladman; though I wish I could have sold more before I left. Tell you what I'll do. Fifty pounds, and that's a lot of money for half of nothing."

"It's fifty quid for half a golden opportunity, and there are a lot of folk who don't even get that chance. But because you were smart enough to drop everything and come round here to look after Fred Kimpton I'll make a final concession -- seventy five and not a penny under."

"Sixty two pounds ten, and that's my final offer."

"Alright sixty two ten and four weeks rent."

''I'll pay the rent when it falls due, not before. We'll know by then whether this going to be a success, If it is then after that four weeks the rent is shared between us.

''Right, my boy, that's it, we're partners, half each in everything.

"All profits from now on are to be shared equally, am I right?"

"Out of profits, yes!"

"I'll write you a cheque," he produced his cheques and they shook hands. Gabriel wrote the cheque and handed it over to his partner. "Now, if we're going to split everything we can start with Kimpton's commission, that is if he buys."

Pryor looked at him in astonishment and burst out laughing. "You got me there,

Gabby." He clapped him on the back. "This is going to be quite a partnership. We might be busier watching one another than watching the clients."

{ 8 }

An Amicable building society.

The new estate agency of Pryor and Fox started well. Mr. Kimpton came round the next morning, soon after opening time, and following some face-saving bargaining and lectures on the virtue of Yorkshire thrift and hard work he capitulated and bought the draper's shop for the full price.

As soon as the deposit cheque was safely buttoned up inside Mr. Pryor's breast pocket and their very first client was gone, with his receipt, he darted off to deposit the cheque in the bank. He had no preferences one way or another, and no bank account, so he too went to the Occidental and Civic Bank as his partner had done and grandly called on the head teller to draw his attention to the new account in the name of Pryor and Fox.

His appearance and manner were so impressive that the head teller, in spite of the youth of this customer, called the manager out of his office to be introduced to their new client.

They were astonished to think that both he and Fox had made substantial deposits on following days. At the same time he opened an account for himself into which he deposited Gabriel's cheque for his half of the partnership.

He received his cheques and a deposit book from the hands of the manager himself. These preliminaries completed, and the firm now well launched, he hurried back to the agency to see what else had happened.

Gabriel was talking to a customer. He had some brochures spread out on the counter for the benefit of this man, a speculative builder who wanted a block of land so that he could erect a house for resale. The man was doing most of the talking so Fox was able to conceal his ignorance of Melbourne and its environs, nevertheless he looked up with relief when his partner bustled into the office.

Pryor rubbed his hands together and moved briskly behind the counter. "One block of land, fifty or a thousand, my dear sir," he said. "If you want land you've certainly come to the right agency. We have selections of prime land here that no other agency in Melbourne could even think of matching. Brighton, Prahran, Windsor, Emerald Hill, Hotham Hill, Williamstown; opportunities everywhere, just waiting for a man of drive and decision to come along and take advantage of them."

"It'll have to be cheap," said the builder. "I don't know why I bother considering the price of land nowadays. There's no money in spec building anymore. Things are crook; there are too many people out of work; they can't pay rent and they can't pay the deposit on a house."

Mr. Pryor gave him a knowing, look. "Ah, that's where you're wrong. There was never a better time or better place to make a fortune, and there'll be nothing better than land and houses. If we can get rid of Berry as Premier and get some business men in charge there'll be no stopping you or me or the colony of Victoria," he said.

"Look at this!" he smoothed an estate plan out on the counter with his hand and pointed to a particular street. "There you are; one whole street. The road is to be made soon. You're lucky you came to us, no other estate agency in Melbourne has got this particular subdivision."

"I've seen it twice already this morning," retorted the man. "The first agency said the road should be done in about five years and the second said, about three, but they didn't think it would be done in much under."

"Ah, yes!" said Mr. Pryor, abruptly shifting his ground, "But can these other agencies offer finance? We can arrange very favourable rates through our connection with the Occidental and Civic Bank. I can take you round this morning if you wish, and arrange a loan on your behalf with the manager. There is no problem. If Mr. Fox and I

recommend you the bank will have no hesitation in advancing all the money you need. Nevertheless, if you prefer to do business with a finance company my partner has access to unlimited capital. You let us take care of the financing and selling. The whole affair can be arranged this week and you can start hiring workmen on Monday.''

''Mr. Fox is a well known financier; put your case to him. We will have to have full details, of course. We know the land, we can view the plans and estimates and we can advise you about the prices of the completed houses. If you're game we can be in and out of this deal inside six months. Don't you worry about unemployment; people are hungry for houses. We'll sell them for £10 deposit and ten shillings a week. There won't be one left unsold inside three months."

Fox and the builder both listened with growing apprehension to this expansive sales talk. The builder was accustomed to building one house at a time and obtaining bank finance to pay for both the land and the building costs. It was a small business that depended on a steady demand for medium priced houses. Pryor's vision of him running up whole rows of workmen's cottages for sale on low deposits was more than he was prepared for.

Gabriel was equally concerned. He did not believe that the manager of the bank would extend credit to the builder on the recommendation of two clients whom he had never met before that day. As for his own money; what he had left was a substantial sum but he could not see how it could purchase thirty or forty blocks of land and then finance the building of houses on them.

His partner continued oblivious, or unheeding, of the consternation he was causing in his listeners. "Finance is the least of our worries," he said. "I don't think we need approach the bank at all. Mr. Fox has come to Victoria to represent a very large building society. I sent a cable to the directors some time ago pointing out the magnificent opportunities there are in Australia, particularly Melbourne. There are over two hundred and eighty thousand people living in this city now, and more coming every week, so they sent Mr. Fox out by steamer to assess the market."

The builder looked dubiously at Gabriel who tried to assume a nonchalant air.

Pryor went on relentlessly, "Ten percent interest is reasonable under the circumstances and we will have credits made available for you to draw on so that you can go straight through without any breaks or difficulties."

"That's more than the Building Societies charge." Said the builder suspiciously, "and you both look too young to me to be in the finance business. Anyway, all I want is to buy a block of land."

Pryor gestured to him to move further along the counter while Gabriel appeared to busy himself with some papers. The young estate agent leaned across and put his hand up to the side of his mouth. "It's alright," he muttered. "Mr. Fox's father is Managing Director and founder of the Melbourne and London Amicable Building

Society, one of the biggest in Britain! Millions in capital. They've got offices all over the place and now they want to start operations in Australia, but naturally they have to be cautious. The old man sent out his favourite son to test the market and what better place to do it than in a busy office like this." He shrugged and spread his hands out in an eloquent gesture. "Getting capital like that into the colony will be one of the biggest things that has ever happened to Victoria; and I might say," he put a finger to his lips to imply confidentiality, "Mr. Fox is most pleased with what he has seen. He has been working on his report to his father for some time. I haven't seen it, naturally, but I have great hopes that it will clinch our position as the premier colony. I can guarantee that any money they care to invest here will be doubled inside five years."

The builder was impressed but not yet willing to be drawn into the web that Pryor was creating around him. "Ten percent is a lot when I can go to the society and pay eight."

"Of course, but can they offer a complete service? They lend you money on a house and if you can't find a buyer and pay back the loan they foreclose and you lose everything."

The builder looked pained. Obviously such a thing had happened to him.

"But with us," said Pryor, "You are offered a complete service. Not only can we give you continuing credit as you need it, but we will also guarantee to sell the houses for you. You leave it to us, we're experienced in this sort of transaction and we can offer a continuous return. The way to fortune, Sir is to use other people's money in your business enterprises."

Eavesdropping from his corner Fox could only agree silently but fervently with this observation from his stimulating but uncomfortable partner.

Eventually the builder, against his better judgment, promised to go out, with a copy of the estate plan in his pocket, and tentatively pick out some suitable streets in order to assess better the propositions that had been put to him. Pryor was to meet him on the land at ten o'clock the following morning to assist with the choice.

As soon as he had gone Fox rounded on his partner and demanded to know what game he thought he was playing. "What's all this rubbish about a building society? What happens when he finds out there isn't any building society and the bank wouldn't lend five shillings on our say so?"

Mr. Pryor was unworried. "Forget the bank, by the time he's ready to start there will be a building society. I think I'll go up and register one this afternoon. That name I dreamed up is a beauty; we'll call it the Melbourne and London Amicable Building society; how does that sound? It's going to be the biggest thing that ever hit Victoria. When I get back from the registrar we'll work up some ads for the paper asking people to subscribe. Ten pounds deposit, then ten bob a week paid into the office, and after twelve months you can borrow enough to build your own house."

"That's £36," said Gabriel after a moment's mental calculation. "We'll end up in jail. We can't go lending people hundreds of pounds on a deposit of thirty six; and what's the idea of telling that cove that I'm going to pay for streets full of houses. All I've got is less than two hundred and fifty pounds," And it'll be even less when you pay my cheque into your account.''

"Don't forget your share of the profit on Kimpton's shop, and you get your twenty sovs back, besides," was Pryor's retort. "It's easy. We're going to make that money work so hard you won't believe it. First we'll buy four blocks of land - that's forty quid. We'll show him the deeds made out in the name of the society and tell him we've got an option on the rest, then we advance some money. It'll be just enough to get him going - besides he'll get ninety days credit from all his suppliers. By the time the bills start to roll in we'll be getting deposits and payments from the buyers, as well as the people who are putting in for their own twelve months loan."

"What if we can't sell the houses? What do we do about money then?"

Pryor slapped him on the back. "They'll sell! Trust me Gabby! We'll sell 'em on deposit and we'll give a good discount for cash, too. In twelve months, two years, people'll be pointing you out in the street when you drive past in your chaise and they'll say, 'there's that wealthy Mr. Fox, he's a director of the Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society, the richest in Australia.' And you will be Gabby, you will be! All you have to do is trust me. In a few years Pryor and Fox are going to be the biggest men in this town. Another thing; if we're going to be the biggest we've got to be the quickest. As soon as this fellow signs up we start selling the houses. If we sell off the plans we can offer them their own choice of paint colours, or something or other; we can talk that over later." "How much money are you putting in?"

"Ah, said the young man, "I put in the brain power. I was going to make a fortune anyway, but this money of yours will speed things up considerably. You'll get in to the way of it, Gabby. Don't leave your money lying around; make it work like billy-oh."

He went off presently to register the name of the proposed Building Society. He was a jaunty figure of confidence wearing a silk hat perched on the back of his ead. He had discarded his overcoat because of the warmth but was impeccably dressed with a handsome black suit and grey waistcoat, a silver watch chain, a diamond tie pin, and a silver banded walking stick which he had inherited from his father, along with the watch and chain.

In spite of his youth no one could doubt the probity and financial acumen of such a man; by appearance he was born to be an estate agent, auctioneer, or stock-broker.

He strode off along Swanston Street raising his hat now and then to matrons or gentlemen whom he might or might not know on the theory that to become a prominent and well known figure around the city was a good way to succeed.

Gabriel was sorry to see him go. It was sometimes embarrassing to be in charge of an estate agency in the middle of a city of which he was almost totally ignorant. Apart

from that the young man's bursting self confidence kept him from worrying about the possible consequences of launching into grandiose building and financial schemes. Even though he was responsible for Gabriel's fears of losing his newly acquired cash, at least he could convey assurance that all would be well.

Half hopeful, half fearful of a client coming into the agency and wanting to buy or sell something Gabriel settled down to read the morning papers and study the classified advertisements.

{ 9 }

A first class experience

He should have read the advertisementswith more attention, but it was difficult because the face of Amy, the first class girl, was more real in his mind than the inky words and numbers he read in the paper. Memories came flooding back and once again he was aboard the ship.

Having got as far as the first class dining room he was not sure what he should do next. The girl had seen him, was astonished first, but then smiled. Her three companions turned to see who had caused these changes, and looked puzzled when they spied Gabriel. He could see, after a moment, they were asking who he was.

If he had been a passenger first class he would have introduced himself by now, but travelling in such a lowly fashion, an interloper, he would be found out and sent back, under guard to where he belonged.

In the saloon, a piano was fastened to the floor so it could not roll about in heavy weather. He thought if he played something she might come and talk to him. On an impulse he pulled up the stool and instantly began a piece he knew well, it was an old English love song that he had rehearsed many times in his mind after seeing her, and his fingers did not betray him. as he played *The Lass of Richmond Hill*. then *Greensleeves.*'

The chatter in the room fell to silence as everyone looked at this strange young man they had not seen before, now playing songs they all knew and loved

He felt the girl had got up and come close to listen, but he could sense the disapproval of her companions, they had come too.

He tried to see her over his shoulder while still playing. ''What's your name?''

A sharp female voice answered. ''Amy, don't tell him your name. He's only a common piano player. He was supposed to have missed the boat, but he must have been hiding for the past week.''

''Hello Amy, My name's Gabriel, but don't be fooled, I'm no angel.''

''You are not to speak to my daughter. Just remember your station in life!''

'' Mama, I think he is a gentleman, he plays so nicely, and such wonderful tunes.''

''Gabriel swivelled round on his stool to face them.'' His memory had not tricked him, she was beautiful, and still smiled. His heart throbbed uncertainly.

''A gentleman does not speak to a young lady without first being introduced. Of course you are no gentleman, being merely a piano player, and would not know the rules.'' The guardian of society who uttered these words was Amy's mother

‘My dear, he has the air of a gentleman. Perhaps he has come down in the world and has to play the piano to earn his bread,'' said a white haired man in a frock coat. He wore the collar of a clergyman.

''I am not going down in the world, sir.'' said Gabriel,'' I am going up, I intend to make my fortune in the colonies.''

''Hmph!'' said mother. ''He's a penniless emigrant. Come away, Amy, you're not to speak to him.''

A tall man in a white, tropical suit that matched the hot weather they were experiencing now joined in. ''Whether or not he is a gentleman I couldn't say, but he's a damn fine piano player.''

A frisson of disquiet ran through the passengers when they heard this terrible word uttered in the presence of ladies.

The man ignored them and continued. ''The management promised us a piano player, and then said you'd missed the boat. Where have you been hiding during the past week?''

Gabriel knew he had to confess. He could not lie about where he came from. He would soon be found out. ''I'm a third class passenger,'' he said. I jumped the gates and came here.''

This time a shock ran through the listeners. If a third class passenger could penetrate into their private world of class and privilege then what could follow. Revolution? Anarchy?''

The man in the white suit didn't care. ''Can you read music?'' A wicker basket without handles was fastened to the top of the piano it was full of sheet music. ''Pass me one of those.''

The clergyman took a bundle of music manuscripts off the top of the pile and handed it over.

''Ah! This is Gilbert and Sullivan, the comic opera HMS Pinafore. I saw it at the Opera Comique when it opened last year. Can you play that?'' He offered the printed sheets

to Gabriel who spread them on the ledge above the keyboard.

''It's arranged for the piano. Yes, I can play it.''

''Well, play away. I'll look over your shoulder and read the words'

The man had a pleasant baritone voice and sang the opening chorus as Gabriel played the accompaniment.

We sail the ocean blue,

And our saucy ship's a beauty

We're sober men and true,

And attentive to our duty.....

At the finish everyone applauded and Gabriel noted that his girl had her arm around the clergyman's waist, obviously her father. They both beamed at him.

A ship's officer appeared. ''Excuse me sir,'' he said, ''But this man is a third class passenger, and I am here to escort him back where belongs. If he attempts to return to first class he will be locked up for the rest of the voyage.''

''No he won't,'' said the man in white. ''You can lock up bad pianists, but not good ones. From now on he will have the run of the ship. Now we've found him we can start a singing club and find out who has a decent voice and who hasn't''

''And who might you be, sir?'' The officer enquired frostily.

''I'm Sir Thomas Black owner of this ship'' said the man in white. ''That's who I am. If you don't believe me ask the captain. He should know. I was a captain meself once and he was me First Mate until he got his own Certificate of Competency. We graduated together from sail to steam.''

''Young man,'' said Amy's father, we can have a Christian service every Sunday from now on if you will consent to play our hymns.''

The voices faded away and died as Gabriel became conscious of a nose pressed against the front window, of the agency. Eyes peering in and a warm breath that made transient patches of mist on the glass. It was Benno, the wharf labourer.

{ 10 }

Mr Gladman meets Benno

Benno's eyes swivelled around the interior of the shop until they encountered those of Gabriel standing behind the counter. He quickly removed his face from the glass and came in.

"I been looking for you, Gabby," he said. "You told me at the Cup you was working for that feller in the music shop. I went round there asking for you and he booted me out.He said you'd cleared off and he thought you'd gone to work for another feller in an land agency. This is the third one I been to. How are yer? Gimme a quid outta me money," He went on. "I need a drink, me tongue's as dry as wombat's arse. I should'nt've give you all that money. I was up all night working on a ship and I got a raging thirst. Better make it a coupl'a quid and then I won't have to come back this arvo." He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and waited expectantly.

"Two pounds," said Fox shocked. "You only gave me thirty three. If I gave you two quid every time you asked for it it would be gone in less than a month."

"It's my money," retorted Benno "If I want to go and have a drink with me own money I don't reckon anyone can stop me."

"Well, you can't! You're investing in houses and land now, because I'm using your money to buy my way in. I've invested it for you, Benno, you told me to. Now you'll have to wait for your investment to come good; just like everyone else."

Benno was astonished. "D'ye mean I'm buyin' houses?" He looked round at the neat, new office with surprise and pleasure. "Well, I never thought I'd end up partner in an agency business. Have you sold anything yet?"

"Only a draper's shop in Elizabeth Street," was the casual answer," and we're talking to a builder about putting up some streets of houses. That's where you come in."

Benno pulled a face and whistled silently. "Gawd, you're a bit of a goer aren't yer? Yer come to Melbourne Mondy, have a win at the Cup on Tuesdy, throw up yer new job Wensdy, and now you're in here and sellin' shops and buildin' houses."

"Melbourne's that kind of place."

Benno shrugged. "It never took me that way, but then I was never a cheeky new-chum bastard straight off the boat." He said this without malice and Fox saw that he was not meant to take offence.

"I reckon that deserves a drink if anything does. If you won't give me two quid, at least give me two bob. It's not good for anyone to be as thirsty as I am."

Gbriel picked a coin out of his waist-coat pocket as he had done on Monday when he first met Benno.

"I'd better look after the business," said Benno. "I'll buy a bottle and come back here and sit behind the screen so I can hear what's going on. I can get on with me drinking and look after the business at the same time. That's alright ," he said hurriedly, "not a word. If anyone comes in I won't say nothin', an' I'll stay behind the screen. All they'll hear is a glug-gluggin' sound as I downs me beer. I won't come out. If anything's goin' to frighten the customers away it'll be the sight of old Benno waitin' to pick up his share of the profits. No one's got to tell me that laborin's my line, not workin' in no

office."

He took the coin and went to the hotel a few doors away. Gabriel was sorry he did not fall into bad company in the hotel for he was soon back with some beer which, after complaints about the office not being equipped with a corkscrew, he was able to open.

After a short time Gabriel was astonished to see that his next caller was Mr. Gladman. The gentleman did not announce his presence by such an uncouth action as pressing his nose against the glass, but he must have been distraught because he had come out without his hat. Gabriel was astonished at this sight, for no man in Mr. Gladman's position would walk around the streets of the city without any headwear at all.

He came into the shop, not in anger as at their meeting, but with a conciliatory air. He would have removed his hat but seemed surprised at not finding it in the usual place.

"I came out quite hurriedly," he said. "The shop is shut and has been so for at least half an hour." He pulled his watch out of a waistcoat pocket and snapped the cover open to see the time. "I must return as soon as possible. In these difficult days one does not leave a business unattended if it can possibly be avoided. How are you Mr. Fox? I trust you are well." He clasped his hands under the tails of his coat, beamed at Fox, and tried unsuccessfully to appear quite at his ease.

Gabriel intimated that he was very well and in fact no great change had taken place in his state since they had parted the day before.

Mr. Gladman was greatly relieved on receipt of this piece of information; or at least so he said. He, like Benno, had apparently tried several estate agents before finding the right one.

Here they were at a loss for Mr. Gladman was reluctant to come to the point of his visit and, unlike his usual grave self-possession, he seemed nervous and unsure.

"If it's my wages you're concerned about," said Fox, "Don't give it another thought." Even while speaking he realized this was probably the least likely reason for Mr. Gladman to search Swanston Street for him. He persisted in this subject because it seemed better to say something rather than they should stand looking at one another. "Don't worry about paying me. I was with you such a short time it hardly seems necessary."

"Of course I shall pay you," replied Mr. Gladman unexpectedly. "The labourer is worthy of his hire. If one works in the vineyard one is entitled to a little share of the fruit." From his pocket came a small leather purse with a snap clasp. This he opened It to produce a guinea which he handed to the astonished young man.

"I have had several people in the shop who inquired for you," he said. "I wish you had been there this morning. Those elders came back; the ones that paid a deposit on the organ; and they changed to a smaller one. I tried my best to persuade them to continue with the original offer but they were adamant. I feel that if you had been

there you would have convinced them of the merits of the larger instrument. The one that they are going to take now is a good £20 less. Really, that was most disappointing -- and after all your excellent work, too."

Gabriel saw what his former employer was driving at. The man went on, "I have given much thought to the matter. Perhaps we were both impetuous yesterday and on reflection I feel that it could well be my civic duty to give employment to newcomers who are trying to make their way in a young colony. If you wish to resume your post in the shop I shall be generous. I am prepared to discuss a reasonable salary and your future prospects. And, if I may be permitted to say of myself I doubt that you would find many employers who would make such an offer after the difficulties we have experienced this week."

Mr. Gladman was disappointed. Gabriel stated that there was no chance of him coming back to work at the music shop. He could see that Mr. Gladman had learned that a competent salesman would make a considerable difference to the business.

Mr. Gladman realized that the young man was permanently lost to music but remained affable in spite of his disappointment. "You will be coming out on Sunday to our service? The Brethren will raise a great hosanna of triumph when they learn the joyful news that you are donating your money to fund our missionary activities."

It was soon clear that this was another disappointment that he would have to live with. There would be no joyful chanting emanating from the Chapel of the Brethren that Sunday, nor any Sunday, not if they were waiting for Gabriel's gift.

On hearing this Mr. Gladman's face became like a thundercloud. "What of the Scarlet Woman?" he declaimed in a loud voice. It was a question that the young man was unable to answer because he could not see it relevance to anything they had been discussing.

It seemed Mr. Gladman did not require an answer, only agreement. It was the opening of one of his sermons and he was now haranguing Fox in an effort to change his mind. "We are all warriors," he trumpeted, "In the battle against the false doctrines of the Scarlet Woman. You, Mr. Fox, have the opportunity to sacrifice your money in the sacred cause of rescuing poor helpless souls from the snares of the papists. Do you know that popish priests go about India like raging lions seeking for souls that they might devour. You think we have a problem here with Irish immigrants coming amongst us to challenge the true faith. Well, we labourers are few but we labour unceasingly and pluck a soul from the burning now and then, but in India or China the work of the Catholics goes on apace and who can say them nay If we do not send out strong and vigilant protestant missionaries to rescue the poor Indians from the clutches of the papists ----"

He would have gone on for some time but for being interrupted by the crash of a falling chair behind the screen and the sudden appearance of Benno in a rage. It had taken Benno a little while to understand what Mr. Gladman was talking about. At first he had listened to the sermon with approval until he realized its nature.

"Yer don't like Micks, eh?" he roared, "Well, me Mum and Dad were Irish and they were sent to this country by the likes of you. I'm a Mick, look at me! and I'm going to stoush you, mate, even if I do six moons at the stockade. it'll be worth it!" He was clutching at the flap of the counter while saying this and Fox was the same time throwing his weight on it to hold it down. They struggled for a moment while Mr. Gladman retreated in disorder to the door.

"Let me at 'im," Benno was saying. "I'll drop the greasy faced old bastard in his tracks. If I don't flatten him I'll never say another Hail Mary in me life."

"I don't think my friend likes you, Mr. Gladman,'' cried Gabriel. 'You'd better leave." He now had Benno by the braces to stop him leaping over the counter.

Mr. Gladman took one last, horrified look which confirmed in his mind the reality of the Irish menace. Later, when his thoughts settled, he would be able to include in his story the tale of how he defied the Fenians to do their worst. In the meantime he accepted Gabriel's advice and fled. It was another triumph for the Catholic missionaries in India, though they never knew anything about it.

"Old bastard!" said Benno, still raging. "If he comes in one morning and finds a brick through the shop window he'll know it's a present from the local Micks. I won't be able to face me mates at St Francis' next Sunday if I don't clock him one where it'll do the most good. How can I go to confession if I have to say I let him get away with all that?"

"Don't be a fool!" Fox was holding Benno firmly where his braces buttoned to the back of his trousers. "You'll go up for twelve months at least if you punch him on the nose. They're not going to put up with a wharf labourer fighting a shop-keeper, and you an Irish Catholic, too. Have some sense, man. Forget it!"

"I won't forget it," retorted Benno, shrugging himself away from his friend's grip. "There are too many people tryin' to keep us Micks down. We're not going to put up with it forever." His rage had passed by this time, but not his anger. "Gimme another two bob. I need some more beer to steady me nerves."

Fox doubted whether Benno should have any more to drink. He might be drunk enough to go round and assault Mr. Gladman in his shop, or throw a brick through his windows, both equally disastrous ways of trying to solve Protestant and Catholic religious differences.

He gave him sixpence. "That's it, not a penny more, no matter how thirsty you get. You drink it in the pub and go home; and if I hear of any trouble round at the music shop you needn't come back here again because I won't help you."

"A zac!" said Benno, with enormous contempt for the lowly coin. "A bloody zac! Is that all I'm gunna get? All you've give me is half a dollar out of me own money. I can't get drunk on that. \Gimme an oxford otherwise I don't get drunk and the money's just wasted. What's the use of being only half pissed? There's no fun in that."

While not prepared to argue with the logic of Benno's view of intoxication Gabriel was certainly not going to give any more than the proffered sixpence and for the sake of the reputation of the estate agency it was urgent to get him off the premises before any clients walked in.

A half drunk, disputatious wharf-labourer who claimed to have a financial interest in the business and was difficult to eject was, perhaps, not the best advertisement for the fledgling firm of Pryor and Fox.

Gabriel thrust the despised sixpence into his hand and was about to bundle him out of the door when he saw someone else coming in.

He made a quick about turn and thrusting Benno before him he pushed him into the screened off section at the back of the shop and left him dishevelled and shaken on the chair with his hat over his eyes.

There were quick, muttered, but savage threats of what would happen if he should reappear or make sound or movement during the next ten minutes. Fox left him to attend to this new client.

{ 11 }

Dr. Smith's Miracle Cure

The newcomer had the appearance of a workman rather than a purchaser of real-estate but Fox had learned after only a short time in the colony that one should not judge by appearances. He approached the man with all the zeal and attention he would have displayed towards the most important looking client.

The man was bald, except above the ears and the back of the neck but his sandy hair appeared to have fallen off and become attached to his chin for he had a full beard and a moustache, both neatly combed. His face, his head, and his clothes appeared to have been out in all weathers for many years, though the clothes were well patched where they showed signs of wear. However, most of this was covered by a long, white linen apron and a white linen square cap such as carriers wore. His status as a delivery man was emphasised by a heavy wicker basket with a handle that he carried on one arm. The basket contained a number of bottles wrapped in blue paper.

He took out one of the bottles and put it on the counter between them. "That'll be one and sixpence, thanks, mate," he said to Gabriel

Gabriel looked at the bottle and at the carrier. "What is it?"

"It's Dr Smith's Miracle Cure, just like you ordered, mate. It cures Bilious Complaints, Diseases of the Stomach and Bowels, Sick Headache, Scurvy, Gravel, Costiveness, Heartburn, Flatulence, Giddiness, Pains in the Head, Lowness of Spirits, Nervous Affections, Spasms, Palpitations, Dyspepsia, Feverishness, Blotches on the Face, Skin

Eruptions and Piles." He had obviously learned this list by heart and fell silent after reciting it, having nothing more to say.

"What, all at once, or does it cure them one at a time?"

The man detected sarcasm in this question and answered with all the fervour that Mr. Gladman would have displayed when addressing the Brethren. "I'd be dead now if it wasn't for Doctor Smith and his miracle cure; a corpse mouldering six feet under in an unmarked grave if it wasn't for this here medicinal marvel. I got a fever at Ballarat while I was working a claim and I was a dead goner for sure. No one ever came closer than me to hearing the last trump. I tell you, mate, I was descending into the valley of the shadow of death when another digger brought a bottle of Dr Smith's Miracle Cure to my bedside and forced some of it down my throat. That was it! That was the elixir of life to me. It stopped the fever cold and two days later I was back working me claim as strong as ever."

He contemplated the bottle reverently. "I take a dose night and morning. I have ever since it saved me life. That's a bottle a week at one and sixpence but it's worth every penny because I've never had a day's sickness since I cheated death on the goldfields and you can do the same! You take the bottle, mate, it's the cheapest one and sixpence worth you'll ever buy in your life. Stay healthy, mate, have a table-spoonful night and morning and you'll never look back.

You know why people won't go to hospital?" he went on persuasively, "And why they'd do anything rather than take their young'uns there? It's because they die once they go to hospital. And why do they die? It's because they're not given Dr Smith's Miracle Cure. That would stop diseases spreading between patients; it'd stop it cold. Typhoid's raging in Melbourne right now. If you want to be free of it drink the cure; if not, drink the water."

Gabriel thought that whatever Dr Smith paid his delivery-man was money well invested. The man was sincere in every word he uttered. His experience with the cure, whether real or imagined, had converted him to a true faith in its power.

"One and sixpence for health," said the man, fondling the blue paper wrapped around the bottle.

"It might be everything you say," retorted Gabriel, "But I didn't order it.The man consulted his delivery list. "Name of Pryor?" he asked. "The Doc said you usually come up to the consulting rooms at Bourke Street East, but you couldn't come today and I had to bring it to you at the office."

The carrier was disappointed to learn that Mr. Pryor was not in but was not deterred. He now fixed Gabriel with a glittering eye just as Mr. Gladman might have gazed on a poor, miserable, heathen Hindoo to be snatched from hell by a vigorous sermon.

"You've been lucky!" he said fervently. "Even though Pryor's not here you've got a chance to buy a bottle for yourself. I don't mind if you take this one and I have to

come back with a bottle for the other bloke. I like to see people healthy and this is the way I do it; by telling them about Dr Smith's Miracle Cure and getting them to buy it for themselves.

Are yer teeth allright?" he asked, leaning forward and gazing intently at Gabriel's mouth. "That's all serganio," he said. "Just thought I'd mention it because the Doc's a mail order dentist, too. If yer need new teeth just gum a bit o' putty and send it off to him in the post. He'll fix you up with a beautiful pair of choppers for only fifteen bob. He pulls teeth. It's part of the business. Anything to relieve pain and misery, as he says. Though he does help out young blokes that have been playin' up a bit and've got a touch of the crabs."

He winked, and would have nudged Fox if he could have reached him over the counter. "You know what young blokes are like. You're a man of the world and it's the sort of thing that could happen to the best of us.''

''Dr Smith's Miracle Cure can cure you of the clap in no time but that's not the sort of thing he can put on the label." Here he winked again to indicate to his listeners all the terrible maladies that could be cured by Dr Smith's remedy but could not possibly be mentioned on a label that was likely to fall into the hands of children, or persons of the gentler sex.

At this time Benno made yet another unwelcome appearance. He came out bleary-eyed, shabby, and with a tendency to reel and slur his speech. Gabriel judged that if he had been able to spend the other sixpence that would have been the end of him for the day; eventually he would have staggered out of the pub to go home for a sleep.

"It's alright chum," he was saying to the carrier. "I'll take the bottle. I don't know what's come over me lately but I been feeling a bit crook. Give the man one and a zac, Gabby, and if you've got a spoon in the place I'll have me first dose right now."

The carrier's face lit up with the same joy that would have illuminated Mr. Gladman's face at the sight of a Catholic admitting the errors of his religion in open chapel and asking permission to join the fellowship of the Brethren.

"You'll be alright, mate," he said, leaning across the counter and patting Benno on the shoulder. "You don't even have to tell me what the problem is. If Dr Smith's cure can't set you right nothing else can." He enthusiastically ripped the blue wrapping paper away from a bottle revealing a label with a picture on it of a knight in full armour.

The knight, presumably Dr Smith, was depicted as holding a gleaming sword aloft while a number of monsters labelled, Cancer, Erysipelas, Palsy, Diphtheria Gout -- and so on, were cowering away from him with looks of baffled hatred.

The carrier had seen this work of art many times before and had no time for it now. He had his knife out levering away at the red sealing wax that held the cork in place.

"Wait a minute!" protested Gabriel. "I never told you to open it. I don't want a bottle of

the stuff, and I don't think he does either. You can either leave it, and call for the money, or you can come back when Mr. Pryor is here and deliver it to him yourself."

The delivery-man, exasperated, put his knife down on the counter with a clatter. "I can't take it back now, I've started to cut the sealing wax. Besides, just because you're young and healthy doesn't mean you're going to stay that way. And what about your mate, here!" He indicated Benno who, Gabriel had to admit , did look rather the worse for wear.

"He's got some of the classic symptoms." Apparently the man was a student of the good doctor's manner of addressing his patients, "Blood-shot eyes, poor skin colour, a tendency to stagger a bit." He shook his head while Benno glared at him. "Just one bottle of the Miracle Cure, a measly one and a tanner's worth and he's back on the road to good health. Right," he said, picking up his knife once more. "I'm going to give you a free swig - no charge. Getting one and six a bottle is grand but making sure that patients take their first faltering steps back on the road to good health is even better."

He levered the cork out with his knife and dropped it with the sealing wax on the counter. "Anyone got a spoon? You don't need much, only a table-spoonful night and morning. There's nothing like it, too, if you've got a touch of the jim-brits; it'll fix you up a treat."

Benno produced a cloudy looking beer pot he had abstracted from the hotel. The man made him take it to the tank at the back door and swill it out with rain water to get rid of beer dregs. The precious cure was not to be contaminated with any other liquid.

Having Benno on the premises swigging Dr Smith's Miracle Cure was only marginally preferable to having him drinking beer behind the partition. In neither activity was he any advertisement for the estate agency and Gabriel was debating whether it would not be better to refund the money he had invested and get rid of him. If not he might regard the agency as a sort of bank, to be drawn on every time he was seized with thirst. It appeared that he had a very active thirst and his visits to collect drinking money might soon become too irksome to be tolerated.

The first dose of the miracle cure was greeted with approbation. The taste was said to be strong but not unpleasant, though Benno was not the most reliable guide in these matters. Gabriel had the impression that his friend could have drunk almost anything with little ill-effect.

Benno had detected an improvement already and was prepared to drink the whole contents of bottle in order to feel even better, though the carrier cautioned him against drinking more than a table-spoonful night and morning. Like all great benefits to mankind the miracle cure was not to be abused.

Gabriel was offered a dose too, after Benno had kindly washed out the pot once more. He did not care for the look of it; the colour was that of dark treacle and cautious sniff enabled him to detect a strong odour of alcohol. He suspected opium as well, but

there was no way of checking this suspicion.

He refused to give Benno money for him to invest in the cure. He could get just as drunk on beer, and it was a lot cheaper.

To the great annoyance of Benno and the carrier he positively refused to put down one and sixpence to give Benno possession of the bottle and the rest of its contents. Benno could see his prospects of future health and long life slipping away and the carrier sensed the loss of a convert; they were still engaged in an altercation on the subject when Mr. Pryor bustled back into the office.

He had with him Mrs. Flanagan and her daughters Myrtle and Lydia. He had raised his hat to them in the street. Then, struck by his obvious respectability, Mrs. Flanagan had accosted him to ask if he knew the agency where Mr. Fox now worked.

They were delighted to meet Mr. Pryor and to find Gabriel so quickly, but their pleasure was dampened by the sight of Benno, with a beer glass clutched in his hand, already in possession and leering at them in an amiable mood, ready to forgive and forget past injuries.

"I can see you're engaged in business," said Mrs. Flanagan frostily. "We will come back later, perhaps you will be free by then."

Benno was not the man to harbour a grudge. "That's allright, missus," he said, "Don't mind me. I'm just helpin' Gabby to test out Dr Smith's Miracle Cure. You ought to try it! A spoonful night and morning'll clear you out in no time."

This statement cleared the ladies out of the office straight away. No reference to bodily functions were made, nor even hinted at, in discussions between members of the opposite sexes.

Though unaware of Benno's meaning the Flanagan girls understood instantly, from their mother's expression, that Benno had said something inexpressibly coarse; they followed her out of the office.

Knowing nothing about gentility Benno was puzzled by this reaction to his friendly remarks and it confirmed his opinion about the stuck-up nature of the Flanagan womenfolk. "Don't have nothin' to do with them, Gabby," he said, as he was ushered to the door; flourishing his glass pot for emphasis. "Yer askin' for trouble to have sheilas like that around. If they won't take a bit of friendly advice, or even a bit of chiackin' what's the use of 'em? That's what I want to know. If you want to have anything to do with women get hold of one that likes to have a bit of a joke and a laugh. These ones that have been brought up on bloody tea and constipation they ----" His words were lost as the door closed behind him. He was seen at the window for a few moments making rude gestures to those within; then he disappeared.

James Pryor was not the man to be worried by all this. When the Flanagans withdrew and it was being firmly intimated to Benno that he had better do likewise he was

bargaining with the carrier and beating him down to one shilling for the opened bottle of Miracle Cure.

The man took the money and left grumbling, but not displeased. It seemed he had managed to add another convert to Dr Smith's cure. Benno had promised to buy a bottle as soon as he could raise one and sixpence of his own.

{ 12 }

An Invitation and an advertisment.

"Who are your friends?" asked Pryor when they had got rid of Benno and the delivery man. "It sounds to me as though Mum is down from the bush and she's trying to play ladies."

Mrs. Flanagan would have been mortified to hear this remark. For an acute observer to pick her out straight away as a country person would have been a terrible blow considering the time and money she had spent trying to conceal the fact that she had been born and raised amongst the miners at Ballarat. Her painfully acquired accent and manners had not deceived Pryor.

Gabriel explained they were from a mining village called Walhalla and her husband, Timothy, had large share-holdings in some lucrative mines in the vicinity.

Pryor whistled! "Rich heiresses, eh? This'll do me. I can just see meself with a rich wife. Call 'em in, mate. Let's have a talk with these wealthy little fillies."

Benno had gone, the carrier had gone, and Mrs. Flanagan and Myrtle were delighted to be formally introduced to Mr. James Pryor the rising young business man, impeccably dressed and obviously with pots of money.

"Mr. Flanagan is taking us to the theatre on Saturday night," said Mrs. Flanagan. "We are to have an early dinner at the Cafe de Paris and after that we're going to the Theatre Royal. They tell me it is a lovely place and the plays and shows they put on are very, very tasteful. Really we came along to persuade Mr. Fox to come with us. Pa is looking forward to seeing him again and then afterwards we thought we would call into an oyster bar. There are some quite respectable ones in Swanston Street And what about you Mr. Pryor? Do you have any plans? Can we persuade you to come also? I am sure any friend of Mr. Fox's would be most welcome in our family group."

Little persuasion was required to induce Mr. Pryor to assent to this agreeable scheme; it was clear that the absent Mr. Flanagan was to be their host for the evening, and on these terms the young agent was willing to go to any place of entertainment they cared to name and eat anything that was served up in any restaurant in Melbourne.

It was thrilling for the ladies to learn that he was the Chairman of Directors of the Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society and that Mr. Fox had this day

become a member of the board and that the society had large plans for building low cost workmen's homes partly for profit but more importantly as a public benefaction.

The society was open for those who wished to deposit money against a guarantee of a future cheap house loan, and this stainlessly pure organisation was also willing to accept capital.

It was clear, of course, that investment capital would be accepted only after a close examination of the credentials of those who wished to take advantage of the opportunity.

consortium or monopoly that had amassed money by dubious or dishonest means had no hope of pressing it on to the Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society.

Mr. Pryor somehow gave the impression that the Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society was a concern of great age and respectability, and extremely wealthy. The fact that it had been registered only an hour ago and had a paid up capital of £1 did not come out in the course of conversation.

He made it clear that gold-miners, or those who gained money by hard labour, were more than welcome to invest in the society. The board would look very favourably on any worthy citizen who had money put by and wished to become even more prosperous; it was only natural that such a person should decide to diversify his interests so as to render his future secure and provide a splendid marriage settlement for his daughters or other children.

Mrs. Flanagan was totally captivated by this eligible and elegant young man with his large talk of finance and the golden future of the colony. Never had any woman discovered two such excellent, prospective sons-in-law as she had encountered in three days.

Any mama with daughters of marriageable age would snap them up and she considered how best to secure them against other predatory mothers while her daughters exerted their best guile to clinch a possible union. Perhaps if Papa was to become a large share-holder in the society that would give the family some sort of extra standing in the eyes of the young men.

One thing that had to be done was to woo them away from any desire they might have for the low company of drunken labourers or the like; but this was only a minor matter. It could be arranged after the young men had been manoeuvred into becoming suitors of her two daughters. A whole world of glittering possibilities had suddenly appeared to Mrs. Flanagan.

The young Mr. Pryor could represent an opening into the best of Melbourne society. Such a man must have an entree into all the salons of the city and with this opportunity to widen her social contacts there was no limit to the chances her two daughters could have.

In an instant she visualized the coming-out ball. The glittering assembly rooms, the musicians, her daughters dressed in beautiful white ball-gowns escorted by these wealthy young men in severely formal yet elegant dinner suits.

The girls were being presented to -- could she dare reach so high? -- were being presented to vice-regal personages. In Victoria all things were possible - even that.

"I'm sure Papa would be very interested in talking to you about the society," she said. "I have often told him to find some sure investment that would be profitable yet safe. Girls, how many times have you heard me say to your father that he should find some completely respectable building society and then take the dividends every quarter? So much easier than working with his hands."

Myrtle agreed. She was unable to recall her mother saying anything of the sort, but this was not the time to contradict her. If they had not been constrained by the presence of the young men a spirited argument would have developed, but at present they were working with a common accord.

The conversation turned to Tuesday's outing to the Cup and the good fortune that had attended their visit until they were interrupted by the entry into the shop of the lady who had called only the day before inquiring about obtaining a boarding-house.

She still had on a brown bonnet and severe dress and clutched her reticule and umbrella tightly as though expecting to have them snatched away at any moment.

She watched grimly as Mrs. Flanagan called her daughters and Mr. Pryor held the shop door open and bowed them out. All curtseyed as they went past the two young gentlemen who bowed politely in return.

"Saturday evening at six at Menzies," said Mrs. Flanagan graciously as they withdrew to mutual courtesies, leaving the men to the conduct of their business affairs.

"Madam!" said Mr. Pryor, bowing politely yet again as Fox put out a chair for the client to sit on.

She seemed to mentally check her possessions, which were the furled umbrella and her reticule before she chose to speak.

"My name is Chittering, and this is my second visit here," she said. Mr. Pryor inclined his head politely and waited for her to continue. "There was a man in this shop, a draper,'' she said, who addressed me in terms that no lady could endure and remain a lady."

Mr. Pryor was shocked at this revelation.

"He said things to me that were highly offensive and if I had a husband, and was not a defenceless female, that person would have been horsewhipped the same day: But this young man, Mr Fox, as he is known" did nothing to protect me. He listened instead to a tirade of abuse of which I have not heard the like in - in thirty five years of

life, and I hope that I never have to endure again, and will not endure again. Now, if you are the proprietor I ask what you intend to do about this matter. I ask if you consider this the proper sort of behaviour that should take place in what pretends to be a respectable business?"

Mr. Pryor was aghast to discover such a shameful episode had occurred in his absence. The firm of Pryor and Fox, Victorian representatives of the utterly reputable Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society had never known of such a disgraceful and unforgivable occurrence to take place on its premises before this unfortunate day.

"But you only opened yesterday," the lady reminded him.

Nevertheless, there was a principle at stake. The London directors would be highly disturbed if a report of this nature were to reach them and, no doubt, would institute an inquiry that could lead to the most far-reaching consequences.

However the client concerned had been informed by Mr. Fox that his remarks were of a grossly offensive nature and that his type of business was not welcomed by the partnership, whether as Pryor and Fox, or as representatives of the Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society.

In the meantime, if the lady was still interested in purchasing real estate, the matter would have the close personal attention of Mr. Pryor himself. He was sure that the resources of the agency could produce a property that would be ideal for whatever purpose the lady had in mind and he would take special care in negotiating a low price in order to make up for the embarrassment and mental anguish she had endured.

Their client was soothed by Mr. Pryor's manner and flow of language, and in view of the remarks he made about possible difficulties from the London office and his promise of personal attention to her requirements she decided to give Pryor and Fox a second chance.

Once more she described what she considered to be an ideal boarding house with an even more comprehensive list of matters, situations, and neighbourhoods that would not conform to her vision of a safe and morally acceptable house of lodging for commercial gentlemen.

This caused Mr. Pryor to purse his lips and think deeply in trying to recall any property that would meet such an extensive catalogue of requirements.

He had no doubt that there was a solution to the lady's problem. Mr. Fox's experience in London real-estate offices together with his own intimate knowledge of the property market in Melbourne would ensure the discovery and selection of a large house at a cheap price that would be more than satisfactory.

In the meantime he would make immediate inquiries even though there was nothing

listed on the books at that time that was exactly what the lady wanted. She would, of course, leave her name and address and the instant anything came to light Pryor and Fox would let her know by special messenger.

However, there was always another choice. Had she ever considered investing her money in a safe, respectable, yet highly profitable concern such as the Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society? How much more convenient to pick up a handsome cheque every quarter rather than endure the vexation and worry of conducting a boarding-house for ungrateful and complaining lodgers. Of course Pryor and Fox would find her an eminently suitable building if she was quite determined to go ahead and establish such a respectable but undoubtedly demanding and wearing business. Whatever her choice, their commercial advice and knowledge was always at her command, and though they may advise her one course of action, if she chose to follow another Pryor and Fox would serve her to the utmost of their ability.

Even these remarks did not have the hoped for effect. The lady, like so many others, was fascinated and impressed by Mr. Pryor's eloquence, but she left the office eventually without promising to commit her capital to his expert care.

‘The old Biddy was to much for me.’ He said. – ‘Never mind, let's have a pen and ink and we'll knock out a few advertisements for the newspapers."

He sat down at the table behind the partition and began to pen some remarkable items of puffery designed to get capital flowing from the pockets of the public into the, as yet, empty coffers of the Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society.

"Listen to this," he said, after working for about twenty minutes and discarding several sheets of paper until he had got the words just right.

£5,000,000 OF CAPITAL

A SPLENDID OPPORTUNITY

THE MELBOURNE AND LONDON AMICABLE

BUILDING SOCIETY

LONG ESTABLISHED IN THE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

LONDON

NOW SEEKING TO EXTEND THE BENEFITS OF CHEAP HOUSING

to

OUR INDUSTRIOUS ARTISANS

HAS OPENED A

BRANCH OFFICE IN

MELBOURNE

INVESTORS ARE INVITED TO DEPOSIT MONEY WITH THE SOCIETY

so as to supply

ARCHITECT DESIGNED AND BUILT WORKMAN'S COTTAGES

to

THE LABOURING CLASSES

A SPLENDID RETURN IS GUARANTEED-8% P.A. PAYABLE QUARTERLY

INTEREST MAY ACCRUE AND COMPOUND THE PRINCIPAL

IF SO DESIRED

THIS OPPORTUNITY DEFINITELY WILL NOT LAST

AS LARGE AMOUNTS OF ENGLISH CAPITAL ARE EXPECTED DAILY

TO FULFILL OUR FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

THOSE WHO ACT PROMPTLY CAN EXPECT TO REAP SPLENDID REWARDS TO FOLLOW THEIR SEIZING OF THIS FLEETING OPPORTUNITY.

THOSE WHO DO NOT WILL RUE THE DAY THEY HESITATED.

MONIES MAY BE PAID TO THE OFFICES OF

PRYOR AND FOX

AGENTS

SWANSTON STREET MELBOURNE

During business hours.

Signed

JAMES PRYOR ESQ

MANAGING DIRECTOR - MELBOURNE

£5,000,000 OF CAPITAL

{ 13 } Gabriel objects

Gabriel studied this remarkable advertisement for some time with a feeling of unease as his partner busied himself preparing an even more expansive version. Pryor's silk hat was on the back of his head and he whistled happily as he sat at the table writing, rewriting, and mentally searching for the adjectives that best suited his style of literary composition.

"This five million pounds of capital," said Gabriel after a time. "That's not right, you know, we shouldn't have that in an advertisement."

Pryor considered the matter judicially and found himself in agreement. "Yes, you're quite right, we shouldn't have £5,000,000 there. I'll alter it. We'll make it ten million pounds, or even fifteen. Which do you think would be best?"

Gabriel could see that he was not making any dent in his partner's remarkable optimism. He tried again. "How are we going to pay 8%? What if we have trouble selling the houses?"

Mr. Pryor leapt to his feet, afire with enthusiasm. "We'll sell 'em, don't you worry about that, Gabby. With two characters like us on the job that builder won't be able to put them up fast enough. And don't worry about the 8% either. In our business you have to use other people's money all the time. As long as there's some money in the bank we can keep up the payments and as long as we keep up the payments everyone will go round telling everyone else what a marvellous firm the Melbourne and Amicable is, and as long as they keep saying that there will always be more money flooding in from other investors. Our job is to keep ahead of the game and keep on building and selling until we're the richest men in the colony. stay close, Gabby; stay close! If you stand with me nothing can go wrong."

He looked at his papers. "I've written another advertisement; it's very poetic but, I don't know. I think the first was more dignified."

They studied them both. Fox had to admit that the second advertisement was more flowery than the first. If he had been an investor, with money to spare, he would have been rendered even more wary by this than by the original composition. He could not but feel that Mr. Pryor and Dr Smith had more in common than an interest in Dr Smith's Miracle Cure. Still, the Miracle Cure made money, perhaps the advertisement for funds would do the same. In any event he did not know enough about the population of the colony to say that his partner's daring ideas might not do everything that was claimed for them.

Mr. Pryor made his choice. He clutched the first version of the advertisement in his hand and threw the other in to the bin. He knew his countrymen: they would be repelled by poetry, unless it was in the service of patent medicine, or a wax works. They would be favourably impressed by a reasonably straightforward request for

money. Poetic flourishes or grammatical frills connected with financial matters would be coldly received.

With the draft crumpled in his hand Mr Pryor prepared to depart to the newspaper office in order to have the fame of the mighty Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society trumpeted in the Friday editions of the paper.

"If you have a printer that can work all night," said Fox urgently, "For God's sake get him to start turning out some receipt books. We will need properly printed receipt books if we're going to take people's money off them - and you will have to open a bank account in the name of the society."

"I don't know what I'd do without you, Gabby," said his partner on the way out. "I need a bloke like you to look after all the practical details; I'm alright with the big ideas and the big schemes that are going to rake in the brass, but I need someone like you to make sure I don't run off the rails.''

Receipt books, right! But that doesn't matter. I had my own stationery printed before you came along and I was just waiting for some money to get it off the printer. We can write anything like that on my letterheads until we get proper books printed."

With a cheerful wave he departed leaving Gabriel in sole charge of the office.

There were no more irruptions into his day from predatory mothers and daughters or inebriated wharf labourers and the time passed sedately with the occasional inquiry about land or houses which Fox handled merely by writing down names and addresses and stating that he would have the clerks go through the records of the firm and inform the inquirers immediately if any property was found to be suitable.

Though not satisfactory this was the best he could do considering his double ignorance of Melbourne and of land agency work. Added to this was the fact that any files the agency might possess were in the head of Mr. Pryor who was not in the habit of writing down anything if he could avoid doing so.

Mr. Pryor was late into the office on Friday morning. Of course he had to keep his appointment with the builder to look over the land and discuss where the cottages were to be built.

The builder had been cool and distant when they met that morning. He had talked matters over gravely with his wife the night before to seek her advice, principally because he knew it would coincide with his own feelings. The upshot of their discussion was that he decided to keep the appointment out of courtesy but to be quite plain with Mr. Pryor that he had no intention of becoming mixed up in the project. His desire was to go on as before; in a small way; building a spec. house now and again, and selling it, and accepting the occasional contract. The estate agent's ambitions were too high for him.

Within ten minutes of their meeting he was looking over the land, albeit reluctantly,

and discussing where they would put the first row of cottages. His explanation had not made the slightest impression on Pryor who insisted instead on talking about cottage styles, and patent register grates, and the cost differences between galvanised iron and slate roofs; and above all the necessity of drawing up plans without the slightest delay.

He marched the builder over to a particular spot and indicated with his black, tightly furled umbrella exactly where the first cottage was to be built and why it was important to start from that precise point and no other.

The builder anxiously stroked his chin and listened while all this was going on and waited for a break in the monologue so he could inform Mr. Pryor that he would have to find another builder to carry out this grand design. He intended to mention that fact that his nerves had been troubling him lately and his wife's heart condition was causing them some concern; but there never seemed a suitable pause in Mr. Pryor's talk into which this information could be inserted, and he was not sure that he would have been heard anyway.

Eventually, when Pryor had finished with him, he went off muttering and rehearsing all the excuses and complaints he had been unable to utter to his face while bleakly considering a future of frenzied activity and responsibility. He wondered what his bank manager would think of all this.

Later, when he went home that evening, he quarrelled with his wife and she burst into tears. He shouted at her demanding to know why she did not have faith in the great colonial dream of homes and profits for all, and why shouldn't he build a hundred, two hundred, a thousand cottages if that was his business judgment.

Unaware of any problems he may have caused the builder the young man bustled into town and into the office of C & T Ham, a rival estate agency, where he arranged to split the commission on the sale of five blocks of land he had viewed with the builder that morning. He did not mention that his own building society was going to buy the land but said he had a purchaser at a pound down and a pound a week. Hams may not have cared; the land was not selling, anyway.

He called in at the printer to pay his little bill and pick up his stationery and was in the office of Pryor and Fox just in time to receive £20 from an elderly couple who wished to invest in the society. They received in return a receipt written in copperplate handwriting on one of his new letter-heads.

He took especial care with the receipt because of the historic nature of the moment and the pleasure of seeing his own name printed on business stationery, marred, perhaps, only by having to write the 'and Fox' in addition to his own name. However he did not mind how many times he had to write the sonorous title "The Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society."

"I'll go to the bank this time," said Gabriel, after the two investors had departed. He was becoming tired of being in the office all day dealing with inquiries of which he

knew little and waiting nervously for Benno to reel in from one of the local pubs.

Mr. Pryor agreed reluctantly; one of the advantages of having a partner was the opportunity it gave him to get out and around the town on all sorts of important and stimulating errands. Fox, however, insisted on going to the bank with the first £20 they had received and opening yet another account, this time in the name of the society,.

"Bring back some cheques!" were Mr. Pryor's words as he went out. "I'll go and put a deposit on ten blocks instead of five. Once people see what's happening the rest of the land will start to sell, and we don't want to be caught short."

He had forgotten to order receipt books from the printer.

"I'll do it," said Gabriel. The manager of the bank now made a practice of greeting the partners personally whenever they came into the bank to open a new account, or to register a signature. He was a man of large ambitions himself, somewhat constrained by lack of capital and the cautious financial style that was required of the manager of such a wealthy and respectable bank.

He intended to mention the activities of these new and promising clients in his very next report to the board. In the meantime, he personally saw to the issue of yet more cheques to Mr. Fox. They would have to do until proper cheques could be printed bearing the name of the Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society. He also supervised the clerk when the name of the society was written at the head of a fresh page in the ledger.

"Workmen's cottages, eh?" he said a little dubiously, when Fox told him of the scheme. "No doubt Mr. Pryor has very sound business judgment but I would have thought that the working classes, as a whole, were not in a position to buy houses on a large scale.

After all, business is depressed, at least for the time being, but that will pass. The upward cycle will reassert itself once more and then, I think, there would be a better financial climate for such venture."

He was even more doubtful when he heard that the cottages were to be sold on terms with virtually no deposit. "I would have thought it more advisable to build dwellings for the better-off classes of society in the colony," he said, "after all they are the folk with money."

Gabriel did not feel easier in his mind after hearing these remarks. An important bank manager such as this must know something about the state of business in Victoria. Pondering this advice he returned to the office but his gloomy doubts were once more swept aside.

His partner was in a boisterous mood. Another three callers had between them subscribed more than £75. This was so promising he had already decided to repeat the advertisement on the following Monday.

Fortunately Gabriel knew a little book-keeping and decided it was time they kept proper books of account so, to that end, he had called into Hyman's the stationer at number 71 and purchased a cash book, ledger and a journal for each of the two businesses, and because of his respectable appearance had been able to open a credit account.

It was a satisfactory day. Trusting investors would turn up from time to time in order to hand their savings over to Mr. Pryor's care. He presided graciously over each transaction reassuring the investors of the solidity of the great and famous building society. Gabriel made several visits to the bank to deposit the takings while the respect of the manager for their business acumen rose at each visit.

The dispirited builder came in on one occasion to report progress and be clapped on the back by Mr. Pryor and assured that his fortune would soon be made. He was given a personal guarantee that in only a few years he would be able to take his wife in the utmost luxury to visit her relations in England. The man was still not able to find a suitable point in Mr. Pryor's conversation in which to announce his intention of terminating all connection with the firm. He went away after a while to consider his ulcer and rehearse what he should have said, and wonder what it would be like to really knock off work forever.

Mr. Pryor turned from dealing with the builder to study a contract of sale drawn up for him by a legal man he knew. It was for the sale of the draper's shop in Elizabeth Street and was written in copperplate hand, but the legal jargon in the contract was almost impenetrable.. Mr. Pryor was particularly taken with the impressed seal on the heavy parchment paper and did not care that the document itself was almost impossible to follow without legal training. Sentences, clauses, and parentheses followed and tumbled over each other without punctuation or spacing becoming ever more convoluted until the eye became lost in a wordy thicket of phrases and cunning legal traps. Mr. Pryor did not mind, this was the very first contract of sale he had negotiated as an independent estate agent and he would have been disappointed if such an important instrument had been anything but complicated and obscure.

Of course it had to be submitted to Mr. Kimpton for his signature and he could make even less of it than the estate agent, so it was necessary to find a legal man of his own to make sure the contract was exactly what it purported to be. He promised to come round next day with the signed document - all being well.

In agreeable activities such as these Gabriel passed his first days in the colony until it was time to lock up the business on Saturday at noon and meet the Flanagan family that evening. Mr. Pryor was cheerfully looking forward to persuading Timothy that the only sure means of attaining great wealth and peace of mind in this world was to entrust his savings to the well know probity and keen business sense of the directors of that rising organization The Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society. If his arguments failed at least the evening would not be wasted, they would be dining and attending the theatre at Timothy's expense.

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A meeting in Bourke Street

About half past five Gabriel met Henry in the lobby of Menzies Hotel.

“We're going to a caff for dinner," volunteered Henry, as soon as he caught sight of his friend. "And then we're going to the Theatre Royal. They rebuilt it last year after the big fire, and it should be worth seeing. Pa said he was going to buy three bob seats in the gallery but Ma said he had to get the best in the house or she'd want to know the reason why?

Henry had thrown off much of his gloom. He had managed to escape a few times from parental control and wandered round the city to see the things that interested him. "Pa's thinking of paying the premium to have me apprenticed as an engineer. That means I'd have to stay in Melbourne, but Ma says I'm to go into an office. Anyway, she doesn't want to go back to Walhalla either."

The glass doors on to the street were opened by the doorman, and Mr Pryor came in grandly as though he had swanned through luxury all his life. He was introduced to Henry and, after hearing of Henry's ambitions, promised to get him introductions to the best engineering firms in town.

They went upstairs and were greeted by the Flanagan women who had spent almost the entire day preparing for this moment. Even Timothy had been ordered once again into an expensive tailored suit. He and James Pryor were in evening dress and their toppers glittered in the light of the hotel chandeliers.

Gabriel still had on his brown suit and hat; though this was forgivable. It was well understood that the London tailor had been late in delivering his new clothes. His ship could not have been delayed because a tailor had been derelict in his duty, but the new suits would be following on the very next mail steamer. Meanwhile, though the brown suit detracted slightly from the magnificence of the rest of the party, it was acceptable to Mrs. Flanagan, particularly in view of her hopes for the young men.

Timothy thought it only a short distance to the restaurant in Swanston Street but an ill judged proposal to walk there was instantly rejected by his wife and daughters. They were not going to parade through the streets the way common people did when there were any number of cabs and carriages waiting at the door of the hotel to take them anywhere.

A page was rung for to make the necessary arrangements, and a boy came up and was instructed to summon the very best looking, and cleanest cab in the rank, with the best looking horse. The driver was to bring it to the door at once. He listened with bored inattention to Mrs. Flanagan, said, "Yes Ma'am, right away Ma'am," winked at

Henry when he thought no one was noticing and retired leaving an unfavourable impression of him among the ladies.

Mrs Flanagan had another reason for not wanting to walk along the city streets. She was not sure where Mr Fox had met the detestable Benno, but intended to find out. However, in the meantime, it would be better to lessen the possibility of a chance meeting and the type of coarse companionship that she thought had been left behind forever in Walhalla.

At the restaurant, over the dinner table, the partners were in excellent form and kept the conversation going brilliantly. Gabriel's reports on the high-lights of London society and all the current gossip were eagerly received so that the ladies could have sat for hours and listened.

Mr Pryor was equally entertaining. They learned more about the inner financial workings of the colony that night than they had ever known. Timothy's attention was liable to wander but when this happened the sharp application of his wife's foot under the table brought him back to the matter in hand.

However, it was soon time to leave for the theatre and see what Mr Coppin, the actor manager, had in store to amuse them.

It seemed everyone had come to town. Saturday night was always popular in Melbourne. The Street was so crowded with theatre goers, shoppers, saunterers, and road traffic that it took their cab a while to go even the short distance to the Theatre Royal, about half way between Swanston and Russell Streets. "It's all light, and glitter, and beauty," said Myrtle, with feeling, when they, at last, arrived in front of the theatre which was brilliantly illuminated with flaring gaslights. The old oil lamps which had burned it down last time were long gone to be replaced with the very latest in weather-proof gasoliers. Timothy attended to the payment of the cabman while the others descended to the crowded pavement. They could see into the lobby where lights shed a myriad of colours on to the fashionable throng pressing into the theatre.

This crowd spilled on to the pavement and some were noisily greeting each other, while others eagerly pushed their way inside. Others went in and came out again and the crowd of pedestrians in Bourke Street bustled past in opposite directions.

Others whose business it was to stay there cluttered the path and forced some foot passengers over the wide gutter and on to the road.

A man with a turban, and wearing what was understood to be a Turkish costume, was exhorting the waverers in a powerful voice to hesitate no longer but to step in and buy a ticket immediately before they all sold. His voice was almost, but not quite drowned out by that of an old man who wore a woven cabbage tree hat and ragged evening suit. He seemed not to notice anyone but played an unending, raucous tune on an accordion and howled like a dog. A few people were bemused by this and threw pennies into his instrument case.

There were other buskers competing for attention, and trying to draw people to rival theatres and shows. A few yards further up the hill a uniformed German band played manfully by the light of a naphtha flare.

"I got reserved seats," Timothy shouted into Mr Pryor's ear, after he had settled with the cabman. "Five bob each, and a bob reservation fee; it was daylight robbery but the missus said I must have 'em."

Mrs. Flanagan winced and shook her hand at him, hoping no one saw. How common it was and how like Mr Flanagan to discuss money in front of guests. "I came up this afternoon to the ticket box and bought 'em," continued the wilful Timothy, not noticing his wife's agitation.

"We won't discuss the matter of the tickets here on the footpath, Mr Flanagan," she said, preserving her composure with an effort. "As long as you haven't left them behind; that's the main thing. We had better go inside now or we'll miss the overture."

Her irritation was heightened by the presence of an unknown young person of about twenty who seemed intent on joining their group. She was a good looking, fair haired young woman who was standing gazing at them wildly, particularly at Gabriel. He was talking to Henry and had not yet noticed her staring at him.

"Gabriel!" she said, "Gabriel!" and appeared about to bar their way into the theatre.

''Please!'' said Mrs Flanagan. ''Please stand aside, you are blocking our path.''

The stranger, who was wearing a simple dress and hat that emphasised her pretty features was not to be moved in spite of people jostling past. With her was a young man two or three years older than herself who had been looking up at the coloured lights spelling out the name of the theatre.

"Please, may we get past!" Mrs. Flanagan smiled savagely and tried to usher her girls away so that they would not offended by the indecency of a young women openly parading in Bourke Street.

"It's Gabriel," the young woman said to her companion. "We've found him, Thank God!"

The young man looked sharply at Fox and stepped forward to bar his path into the theatre.

Gabriel saw these two for the first time and smiled. "Amy!" he cried , "Harold! Where did you two spring from?"

"We didn't spring from anywhere," retorted Harold in an unfriendly tone, ''Except. our beds.''Mother and father think we're in bed because we were still tired from the voyage. Amy made me come out to look for you. She said if I didn't come she'd go on her own. I said you were not worth it, but she would come. She's that stubborn!!"

Mrs. Flanagan recovered the power of speech. "Who is this young woman?" she demanded. "There must be some mistake! Send her away.

"It's alright, I know her," mumbled Gabriel. He was grinning and couldn't take his eyes off the girl. "I met her and her family on the ship, coming over. This is Miss Taylor and her brother Harold."

No further introductions were possible. Mrs. Flanagan bridled the instant she realized the young woman was a possible threat to her own plans. She glanced round at her party with a look that would have galvanised a regiment into action.

"Mr Flanagan, take my arm; we are going into the theatre. Mr Pryor and Henry, please escort the girls inside - now! Mr Flanagan will give you a ticket, Mr Fox. When you are ready would you please follow us in. The show is about to start and we cannot possibly stay out here on the street any longer."

Obedient to orders Timothy thumbed a ticket out of his waistcoat pocket and handed it over. Without another word or glance at the two strangers the lady marched the remaining members of the party into the vestibule of the theatre. The last Gabriel saw of them was Myrtle's stricken face as she looked back over her shoulder in astonishment and anger as she was borne away by Mr Pryor's arm, and her mother's determination.

"We have to talk," said Harold. They were standing on the pavement looking at one another as foot passengers pushed their way past, "and we can't do it here. Amy and I didn't sneak out of the hotel just to say hello."

''Amy, I looked for you on the pier, but they let the first classers off the ship , second class next, and we thirders were last.''

''Yes, I know. I tried, to make excuses, just to stay a little longer on the pier, in case we saw you.''

"Well, it's alright now, I won't be separated from you again.'' Amy squeezed his hand.

Gabriel looked round and saw a restaurant over the road. "We can't stay here, let's go and sit down in the quiet and talk things over."

"Yes," said Harold, "there is a lot to talk about. You had better take her other arm. You would'nt want her run over now, not after she found you here."

The restaurant was a place for coffee and tea drinkers. A coloured scroll painted on the window and repeated in the glass over the door stated that the shop was a coffee house and no spirituous liquors of any kind were served.

They walked in and sat at a round marble topped table with a central cast iron leg; the chairs were cast iron too, and not comfortable, though Amy and Gabriel did not notice, they were too busy gazing at each other.

When they had their coffee before them Harold took a small bottle from an inside pocket of his coat and poured some of the contents into his cup. He put the bottle on the table and Gabriel saw, by the label, that it was brandy.

Amy winced at the sight of the bottle, and looked troubled as Harold stirred and drank the mixture.

He then turned on Gabriel. ''This has got to stop. You're filling Amy's head with nonsense. Our father's a vicar, but socially we're far above you, and you're just a pianist.

''Don't talk rubbish,'' said Amy. Father's just an underpaid clergyman. If the Bible Society hadn't been so generous we would have travelled third class too.

Harold ignored her ''You might get a job with a band but you'll have to rely on people putting sixpences and shillings into a plate on top of the piano. My sister can't live like that.''

Gabriel nodded. "You're right about the first part, I am a pianist because my parents made me practise for an hour every day and a tutor came every week. But they died in an outbreak of cholera and I couldn’t I bear to stay any longer so I came out here.’ Amy put her hand over his and squeezed it.

I've only been here only since Monday," he said, "But I have a job as a partner in a land agency. We've sold a draper's shop so far, and now we're borrowing money from the public to build houses."

Amy was delighted at this unexpected news but her brother had reservations.

''Has Amy told you that we are out here because father is to deliver a series of lectures, and we're going home after six months. Our return passage is booked and once we leave you will never see Amy again.''

Gabriel had known all this but hadn't wanted to think about it. Harold's words were like a blow to the heart. He learned about their short stay in Melbourne while they had been together on the ship.

Quite unexpectedly Amy reached out and grasped him by the shoulders and pulled him towards her. She laid her face against his and he could feel the warm, salty tears on her cheek. ''I don't want to go,'' she whispered. I want to stay with you. When it's time to leave I'll hide. They'll have to go without me.

''What, and feel guilty all your life. No! If it comes to that I'll give up a life here and go back to England. I don't want to, but for your sake I'll go.'' He reached up and gripped her shoulder reassuringly.

''You're mad, both of you. You can't stay here, you're not married to him.''

''We're not married yet, but we can soon take care of that.''

Gabriel's eyes flashed wide and he looked from one to the other.

''Well, let me tell you this, Amy. You're not twenty one yet, and you'll have to get father's permission before you marry anyone.''

''We could live together without marriage. That would bring them round, they wouldn't want their daughter lving in sin.''

Gabriel stared at her. This gorgeous young woman had a will of iron. She intended to marry him, and he hadn't even proposed to her. It was a daunting thought.

They were interrupted by a severe looking woman who came to their table. Her hair was drawn smoothly back into a bun coiled tightly at the back of her head. she wore a spotless white blouse, black skirt to her ankles, and button up black boots with pointed toes.

She looked on disapprovingly and informed them that she was the manageress.

"I must ask you to quieten your voices," she said. "And my patrons have been disturbed by the behaviour I have just observed, which cannot be condoned.''

She was further upset by the sight of the brandy bottle. ''You will have to leave. I cannot tolerate liquor of any kind in this establishment. I am sure there are many venues in Bourke Street where you would feel quite at home, but this place of temperance is not one of them. And please put that bottle out of sight

"Well, thank you for your hospitality,'' said Gabriel. We will finish our coffee and go. Please give me the bill.

Harold's drinking worried his family. They had brought him along in the hope he might do better in the new world. It had not worked so far even though his father refused to pay any more drink bills.

"Is your business far from here?" enquired Amy when they were safely off the premises and back into the bustle of Bourke Street.

"Come along and I'll show you," offered Gabriel. I have a key if you want to come in and inpect our records, which wouldn't take long, Amy hung on to his arm as they walked to the premises of Pryor and Fox.

They didn't go in because Gabriel was not sure he knew how to turn on the gas lights. So Amy peered into the dim interior with her face against the glass and hands up to cut the glare of the street lights. ''I must come back and see it in daylight,'' she said.

Harold refused to look. He did not approve of any of this activity and did not believe that Gabriel was good enough for his sister.

''I had better take Amy back to the hotel. Even with me she shouldn't be out on the streets at this hour.''

Gabriel had to agree. He didn't want the evening to end, but Amy's parents did not know she was not safely in bed, it was best to take her home.

Harold did not invite him to come with them, but Amy insisted. If he came he would know where she was staying, and perhaps he would call.

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Fogarty's Pub.

Mr Pryor, as usual, was late arriving at the office. The owner of a hotel had asked him for a valuation of his property with a view to selling it, so Mr Pryor went to see him.

The place was not well managed and the bar trade poor. Only one customer was in the bar when Mr Pryor went in. A bearded old man lurking on his stool, carefully conserving a pot of beer and waiting to give his views on life, horse-racing, football, cricket, marriage, and his experiences on the gold fields, to anyone incautious enough to speak to him.

While waiting for a barman to appear the drinker observed Pryor closely over the top of his pot. "Yer'll have to wait for service," he said, "Mrs. Fogarty ordered the barmaid out, and she left. She's a terrible woman is Mrs. Fogarty. She gets rid of all the barmaids and fights with all the barmen. I've seen dozens come and go while I been drinkin' at this pub. She's always thinkin' Fogarty's gunna get his hand up the barmaid's skirt, or he's done it already. Even my missus was easier to get on with than her."

He drank the last of his beer, tipping the pot well back so the final rivulets of foam ran down his throat. "Can't afford no more," he said, as with a sigh, he put the pot back on the counter. "Things have been pretty tight since I had to knock off work, and I get a terrible thirst on me sometimes, and you wouldn't want to drink the water; Gawd knows what that'd give yer.''

''I know yer thirsty,'' said the old man, but yer'll have to wait. The landlord's missus is always sacking the barmaids 'cos she thinks they're after him, and the men leave 'cos they can't put up with her any longer. They got no staff and Fogarty has to do everything. He looked at Pryor and rattled the base of the pot on the bar. ''Are yer there Fogarty,'' he shouted.

Laborious steps were heard as someone struggled up from the cellar and appeared behind the bar.

It was the landlord, about forty, as near as anyone could guess, and as he came up he ladder from the cellar he gaped like a fish and clutched at the bar.

''Yer've got a customer, Fogarty. He's a man with a thirst like me and can't wait much longer, but he's a toff, and he can pay for a beer. Not like me,'' the ancient added

piteously.

''Them steps'll be the death of me," said the landlord mopping his forehead. "We're a bit short-handed, sir, and I was down in the cellar tapping a few barrels when I heard Cyril knocking on the bar. I'll put an ad in The Age tomorrow and see if we can get some good, reliable staff. We're short of a barman and a yardman, and me health isn't what it should be. I just can't do it all on me own."

Pryor was wondering how the landlord could arouse lust or jealousy in anyone when he saw a face staring at them through a half glass door at the end of the room. It was a sharp featured woman with her nose against the glass and hands up on either side to block out the light. She was watching them intently.

Fogarty saw her too, picked up a cloth and started to wipe the bar. The face disappeared and he dropped the cloth. "Name it, sir, name it," he said between gasps for air. You're Mr Pryor aren't you? You've come to talk to me. Would you like a nice drop of beer to wash the dust from your throat?" He was not going to discuss a possible sale of the hotel in front of his customer, as well he kept glancing warily at the glass door.

James Pryor ordered a drink for himself and a pot for the old customerwho seized his prize and took an eager swig in case there had been some mistake, or a change of mind.

Mr Pryor was about to bring up the subject of inspecting the pub when he noticed the bar door slowly opening. The woman appeared again. She must have gone out the other street door and run along to the bar entrance.

Mrs Fogarty wore thick lensed spectacles that greatly magnified her staring eyes. She stalked in silently, but peered round with great attention at every detail of the bar room including the landlord who shrank before her gaze and gasped even more. She lifted the flap, examined carefully behind the bar, and then flung open the door into the back room as though expecting to surprise someone in hiding. She went up the stairs leading to the second storey, was heard walking back and forth on the front balcony and then round to the side balcony. She must have peered through the windows of every room. She came down again to where there were more rooms to search. She went back behind the bar. They heard her throw back the trapdoor and go down the steps into the cellar. A pause ensued, long enough for a search to take place, then she reappeared and paced in ghostly fashion through the bar room, scarcely taking her eyes off the unfortunate landlord. She shook her head at him in warning and disappeared through the door.

"I'd give her something to go on with if she was my missus," muttered the old man. "Allus hangin' round ter see if he's got any shielas hidden in the place. Why don't yer belt her one?"

They left the talkative old man in the bar. Trade was so poor the landlord was able to leave him with instructions to call if anyone entered. He took Mr Pryor upstairs first

to inspect the 'long room', the pride of the establishment. There he related stories about the wild parties thrown by lucky prospectors thirty and more years ago when gold could still be won by independent men who worked their own claims. The room was shabby enough now and long deserted by partygoers.

"My father built this pub," wheezed Fogarty as he stood at the head of the stairs recovering his breath after they had inspected the bedrooms upstairs and down, and the kitchen, which was cold and deserted.

"That was always his ambition when he came out from the old country; to be a publican in his own place, and a very good establishment it was in those days, too. Course, I don't come up here much now -- crook ticker." He wheezed again and thumped his chest which quivered with fat. He conducted Pryor into the 'long room' just as Mrs. Fogarty flitted out through another door.

"That was the little woman," said the landlord. "She has trouble with her nerves.and she doesn't like me having anything to do with the bar staff; they're common, and the girls aren't to be trusted. She doesn't like the people that drink here and those we have to associate with. She wants to sell everything so we can invest our money and live on the dividends.''

Pryor heard a patter of feet along the passage and was aware of the lady lurking outside where they had just entered. He could catch the flash of a spectacle lens pressed to the door crack.

"Its a great pity," the publican whispered, "but Mrs. Fogarty's not really cut out for the hotel trade. Her nerves are poor, you know. Her family was very high up socially and in wholesale produce and they cast her off when she married into a pub. Her father was an importer in a big way of business; but it's all gone now. Mrs. Fogarty thinks the pub trade is beneath her and she doesn't care for the class of customers we have here. She wants me to sell and invest the money.

She's a wise woman,'' said Mr Pryor, you should listen to her. I strongly recommend that you invest your spare money into the Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society. It's the safest building society in Australia.''

Mr Fogarty frowned as he tried to remember if he had ever heard the name before but turned to the main question. "I can sell the licence, there's no problem there, but all the publicans that have inspected the place wouldn't touch it. They said it was too big and too old."

"Don't you worry about a thing." asserted Mr Pryor. "I can get you a price you wouldn't believe. I have a client waiting for a place like this and she won't want the license; you can do what you like with it. You get someone to clean up everything, get rid of the spider webs and dirt. I'll take care of marketing the building and then we can talk about the best possible investment for the profits. You put yourself in my hands, Mr Fogarty. I'll sell the pub for you at top market price and I would earnestly recommend you to invest the proceeds in the leading building society in Victoria --

The Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society.''

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Amy comes calling

Gabriel did not have to wait long for his next meeting with Amy. She and her family came to his office that morning, about ten o'clock.

Mr Taylor, unlike his wife and son, approved of Gabriel. They had talked often during the voyage and he had grown fond of the young man. There were hymns amongst the sheet music found on the piano and Gabriel played them for the congreation to sing to when the reverend gentleman conducted Sunday services.

Mrs Taylor was not in a good mood when she arrived at the office. She had discovered that her son and daughter had wandered the streets of Melbourne at night when she thought them safe in bed. A further irritation was that they met Gabriel as he was about to enter a theatre. She did not like theatres either, thought they were the abode of the devil.

Gabriel was studying the newspapers when they arrived. He was trying to work out a connection between the classified advertisements and the value of the real estate they offered.

"It was a good idea, but he had the same trouble as before. A certain face would appear and distract him from his studies. But then the owner of the face walked into the office as Harold held the door open for the family to enter. She wore a floral dress with a bustle, carried a parasol, and he had never seen her looking more desirable. The classifed advertisements disappeared from memory as though they had never been.

''My boy,'' said Mr Taylor, after looking about the. office,'This very impressive, and are you really a partner in this establishment.

''So he says,''said Harold. ''Third class on the ship, and three days later he's got an office in the city and a partner.'' Sounds pretty fishy to me.

'Harold, you're horrible,'' cried his sister. ''I'm sure Gabriel would never do anything mean or dishonest

''Well spoken,'' said a voice behind them. ''It was Mr Pryor. He had entered after Harold, and no one noticed. He put his hat and walking stick on the hat stand and turned to face the company. ''Mr Fox, would you do me the honour of introducing me to your friends.''

Gabriel did so and felt a twinge of jealousy when When Amy smiled at Pryor and he held her hand slightly longer than necessary.

When the introductions were completed Mr Pryor addressed the family. "When I came in I heard Mr Harold Taylor doubting Mr Fox's claim to be a partner in this business. I must tell you that what Mr Fox said is perfectly true. Not only is Mr Fox a partner in this thriving business but also a board member of that great institution the Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society.

''As you know he arrived here on Monday, wandered the streets until he saw a music shop, went in, and got an excellent job with good pay. Then. on Wednesday, he paid money into the bank and, while returning to the shop, he called in here to enquire about purchasing land as an asset.

I am a man of quick decision. I saw at once his sterling qualities and invited him to join the business. Since then we have sold a drapers shop in Bourke Street. We are negotiating the sale of a hotel in Hotham, and one of the biggest building firms in this city is contracted to build hundreds, perhaps thousands, of cheap houses for buyers who cannot buy a house under the present conditions.

Mr Pryor was an orator who could impress anyone. Amy and her father were delighted to hear this good report of Gabriel's ability and prospects. Mrs Taylor and Harold were impressed but not quite won over, they lay in wait to see what developed.

''I see by your collar, Mr Taylor, that you are a clergyman,'' said Pryor. ''Are you here to stay, or just passing through?''

''You could say, sir, that we are just passing through. I am a Minister of the Church of England and have been commissioned by our Bible Society to deliver lectures and sermons on the errors committed by Mr Darwin in his book, and his false theory of evolution. The bible itself testifies that God created a man and a woman, and they are the mother and father of all mankind.'

'So I have heard,'said Mr Pryor

Mr Darwin tells us we are descended from apes and time turned these apes to people. He does not tell us where the original parents came from. Every birth requires two parents, male and female. Two beings much alike but with different reproductive organs. appeared at the same time, in the distant past, and mate to set off the process described by Mr Darwin. That would be a miracle. Yet Mr Darwin cannot claim that we are related to other animals including reptiles and beasts so the miracle is repeated thousands perhaps millions of times

''That's most interesting,'' said Mr Pryor. ''I shall certainly come to one of your lectures.''

''Yes, do! We shall be pleased to see you

''What a peach!'' exclaimed Mr Pryor, after the party left. The most beautiful girl, I've seen in a long time, and I'm sure we met somewhere before, and her brother too.''

'' She was the girl who broke up the Flanagans' visit to the theatre, Harold was with her.''

"Ah! Now I remember. That was a shock for Mrs F. I think she wanted you for Lydia.

''Well, she can't have me, and Lydia's quite willing if you want to marry an heiress..

''No thanks, I pass. Not all of Timothy's money would tempt me. You met this gorgeous girl, Amy, on the boat coming over?''

''Yes, I sneaked into first class one day to see her, and they let me stay because I played the piano for them.

''Good for you, Gabby. That's how you get on in life, plenty of cheek and putting yourself forward. Which reminds me, a fellow named Pringle spoke to me yesterday. He wants a clerk's job in the office. I told him to come about eleven o'clock today. You'll have to talk to him. Mrs Chitttering, the boarding house woman, should be here any minute. I'm going to sell her the hotel in Hotham that I was talking about.''

'' What!! Mrs Chittering!!! Henrietta!! You're going to try and sell her a hotel. Better you than me. You should stuff paper in your hat in case she belts you over the head with that umbrella. Kimpton was nearly bashed with it, why not you?''

''No, she'll come round, and after I've sold Mrs Chittering the hotel I'll see about taking that girl away from you.''

''You try that and I'll borrow Mrs Chittering's umbrella. I'll fix you right up. Anyway you wouldn't be interested, she's not a wealthy heiress. If the Reverend hadn't been backed by the Bible Society they would have had to travel third class with me.''

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Mrs Chittering visits Fogarty's Pub

Mrs Chittering arrived as promised. They saw her through one of the front windows as she approached.

'Right on time, Mrs Chittering'' cried Pryor. ''I believe you will be delighted with the property I have to show you, and also I have negotiated an extremely low price.
There are plenty of bedrooms a large kitchen and a room big enough for dining. How it has not been snapped up as a boarding house before this I will never understand. If you are ready we'll take a Cab and go straight there.

Not until the cabby stopped his horse outside the premises did Mrs Chittering realise that Pryor intended to sell her a shabby, run down pub.

''Mr Pryor,'' she said, in a dangerously quiet voice, ''Are you mocking me? You know

my views on alcohol and public houses. They are abominations, snares to catch the working man, to addle his brains, to take his money which should have rightfully gone to his wife and children. Take me back to my lodgings and I will not trouble you any further.''

''No, Mrs Chittering, I am not mocking you but offering you a chance to strike a mighty blow against the breweries and publicans that lead working men to drunkeness. The proprietor of this hotel wishes to retire and has been discussing its future with other publicans. There are plans afoot to refurbish the premises. There is also talk of a 'Ladies' Lounge' where women could go and spend their housekeeping, and neglect their children while drinking beer and spirits.''

Mrs Chittering seemed shaken by the mention of a 'Ladies' Lounge' so Mr Pryor pressed on. 'This is a wonderful opportunity for you, Mrs Chittering. Not only will you buy a asset that can only increase in value, ideal for transformation to a profitable boarding house for single gentlemen who otherwise might be obliged to take rooms in a hotel, and we know what that leads to. Looked at in that light it is almost a public duty to buy the building to rescue your single gentlemen from temptation to sin. And don't forget the young women who might be lured into the Ladies' Lounge, to their ruin.

After hearing all this Mrs Chittering's first reaction of anger and indigation seemed to have passed and she mildly enquired the price

'Six hundred pounds.''

''That's a lot of money for an old and shabby place like this. I'm not wealthy, you know. Judging from the outside it would cost just as much to clean and furnish it, and I haven't got that sort of money.

''No problem, Mrs Chittering, if you are able to put down the purchase price The Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society can lend you enough to refurbish the building to a very high standard. Shall we go in and have a look round.

Mr Pryor had a key to the hotel, which was closed, He had insisted that Mr and Mrs Fogarty should be absent and the hotel closed for business while the inspection took place.

They were not there but had neglected to tell their most faithful customer that no drinks would be served that day.

The old man was waiting indignantly outside the locked front door. ''Where's Fogarty?'' he demanded ''If he's feeling crook his missus orta open the pub for him. I suppose her nerves are playin’ up again.''

''It's alright, Cyril. They'll be back this afternoon. But for now the place is closed''

''If it's closed why are you goin' in? Brought yer girl friend, too, 'ave yer. She looks as if she could knock back a few pots. If she can get a drink why can't I?''

Mr Pryor managed to lock Cyril outside on the footpath while getting Mrs Chittering inside. Her eyes were closed and a scented handkerchief was pressed against her nose. ''The stench of beer in this building is almost overpowering,'' she muttered

''You can have it fumigated, that should do the trick. Then leave all the windows open when the painters and decorators move in.''

''It needs painting everywhere. I have never seen such a neglected building. If the bedrooms you speak of are as bad as what I see before me then the price you mentioned is laughably high.''

''Admittedly it needs work,'' responded Pryor. ''That is why the price is so low. Once painted it would double in value. A tasteful colour scheme and good management would make it a highly profitable business. Come, we'll go and look at the 'Long Room', which would make an ideal dining room, and after that, the kitchen.

Mrs Chittering saw at a glance that he was right. The 'Long room' would make an excellent dining room.

''It's too far from the kitchen,'' she complained. By the time the girls brought the plates upstairs the food would be cold.''

''Not a bit of it, Mrs Chittering. Have a look at this.'' He led her to the wall in which there was a door that looked like a wall cupboard He then drew her attention to a winding handle set in the wall. It was similar to the handle of a mangle or a mincer.

''Watch!'' He pulled the door open and there was nothing inside but darkness And a shaft that led to somewhere below. He started to wind the handle. Moments later a platform the size of the shaft rose into view. It carried six large dinner plates which, by arrangement, had been placed there the night before.

''There you are, Mrs Chittering, that shaft goes directly to the kitchen The kitchen staff down there can load six plates at a time. They ring a bell and seconds later your boarders are getting their nice hot dinners.

Mrs Chittering was impressed but complained about the state of the long neglected kitchen and of the twenty rooms they discovered upstairs and down all available for tenants, including four larger ones suitable for married couples. She was still saying that the price was too high. ''Saving drinkers from themselves or young women from the 'Ladies' Lounge is all very well, But I still have a living to make.'' The price Pryor had quoted her, as well as the unknown cost of repairs and decorating would drive her to bankruptcy.

She was still complaining when Mr Pryor and the cab left her at the door of her lodgings. He went back to the office.

'How's the head?' enquired Gabriel as he came throgh the door.

''Still intact,'' said Pryor. She didn't belt me with umbrella even once. She's back in her

room now, and I guess she's counting up the costs and income involved. My own reckoning is, with good management, the place could turn in a clear profit of betwen ten and thirty pounds a week, and she's the lady that can make it true.

I think she'll come round tomorrow and tell me the place is far too dear. And I'll tell her that the publicans are moving in, ready to make a generous offer. If she can't make up her mind she could well lose the bargain of a lifetime.

''Gabriel chuckled. Well done, James, we'll make a salesman of you yet,''

''You know,'' said Pryor, ''I think it's time we had a little party to mark the beginning of our partnership. We could invite the Taylors to have dinner with us in a nice restaurant somewhere.''

''Sounds a good idea, but there are two things I should mention. One is that the Reverend can't invest in any of your schemes, Pointing out errors in Darwin's Theory of Evolution is not a profitable occupation, so he has no money to spare. Secondly, if this is part of a plot to steal Amy from me I'll get my own back. I'll tell Henrietta that the publicans have no interest in the pub. in fact no one wants it, and she is not to pay a penny more than four hundred pounds.She'll be so grateful she would probably lend me her umbrella, and I could deal out further punishment.''

''These are grave threats,'' said Mr Pryor and I must heed them. I hereby renounce my love for Miss Taylor, one because she is not a rich heiress, and two because she has a clear preference for you. Why she should prefer you to me I cannot explain, but then women are mysterious creatures. However the dinner or lunch is still on and we will confer with the Taylors to see when they are free.''

''Now, to other business. Did that man, Pringle, come to see you about a job as head clerk?''

''Yes, we had an interesting conversation, with references from former employers, and I thought he would suit us very well. Do you want to talk to him?''

''No, I accept your judgment, he can start Monday as head clerk.

''Well, he'll be head clerk in the sense that he is the only one.''

The partners discovered that Mr Taylor's lecture tour was such a success that it was difficult to pin him down to an invitation for lunch.

His belief of a definite date for the creation of the universe was based on the labours of Bishop Ussher, Primate of Ireland in the eighteenth century. The bishop was a formidable scholar and had studied the lives and times of all persons mentioned in the old and new testaments. He compared these with known dates of ancient history and established, beyond doubt, that the world was created on the 23rd of August 4004 BC which, of course, was a Monday.

After Bishop Ussher brought these remarkable facts to light many bibles, during the

ensuing centuries, were published with what printers called a 'gutter' running down the centre of each page. This 'gutter' contained the dates on which various great events took place, including creation. It also carried information and commentary on the text of that page. The Reverend Mr Taylor had such a bible and used it frequently to settle arguments.

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Morning tea

The family had moved from the hotel to a boarding house run by a Mrs Byers. Gabriel was a frequent visitor.

Soon after the family moved in Mrs Byers accosted him on the stairs. She said, ''Mr Fox I believe you to be a respectable young man and would do nothing to harm Miss Taylor. But, to protect her reputation, I must lay down certain rules. While her mother and father are away, due to Mr Taylor's speaking engagements in the country, you are not be in her room with the door closed. You may sit with her in the Common Room or go for walks together. But if you were together in a room with a closed door I should have to report the matter to her parents,''

Gabriel accepted Mrs Byer's ruling without resentment. He knew how rumours would spread if he and Amy were not discreet. But they had other things to think about. They had finally found a time at which the partners could entertain the Taylors.

Morning tea was the best that could arranged because Mr and Mrs Taylor were to take an afternoon train to Ballarat. This would be their third visit, a different church each time.

The place chosen for morning tea was a restaurant run by Mr Hosie in Bourke Street East, not far from the Royal Arcade.

Gabriel and Pryor arrived at ten o'clock and the Taylors were only a little later. As soon as they entered the restaurant Amy ran to Gabriel and kissed him on the cheek.

''Amy!'' Her nother was horrified. Queen Victoria was on the throne and good girls did not do such a thing. The young couple were not affianced. Even if they were engaged it would have been unseemly.

Gabriel suspected that the kiss was to declare to all present that she was determined to have him, and that any family resistance was useless. The mesage was for him too. Amy was a sweet girl but, as he now knew, quite determined when she made up her mind.

Tea and cakes were ordered, nothing further was said about the kiss.

Gabriel asked for coffee. Mr Pryor and Harold would have preferred beer or wine but

the party was not in their honour, and they got coffee instead but Harold had a brandy bottle in his pocket. Half an hour later the morning tea was going well though Mrs Taylor was meditating what she would say to Amy in private. Messrs Taylor and Pryor kept the conversation going by swapping views on the bible and Melbourne real estate values. Harold was on his thirdcup of coffee and poured in brandy when he thought no one was looking.

Amy and Gabriel were sitting in a little world of their own and he did not notice when Mr Pringle, the chief clerk, came into the restaurant.

The man came to Pryor's chair and leaned down to his ear to speak confidentially. ‘Mr Pryor, something very important has come up; could you step outside for a few moments so we can speak in private.’

Gabriel noticed and was about to get to his feet. to learn what had induced the clerk to leave the office, but Pryor gestured to him to stay and look after their guests. He followed Pringle out on to the footpath.

The family pretended not to notice, though all conversation ceased while they watched the two men who were talking in front of the shop window.

"What's gone wrong? Asked Pryor. Why have you come here and left the office unattended?"

He saw, by the expression on his clerk's face, that the errand was indeed serious.

"Some more people came in today with subscriptions to the Society." Pryor nodded, that was allright. "£50.13.6 in total. You said that anything over £50 should go straight to the bank to be paid in.” Pryor nodded:, those were the man's instructions.

"I was just about to leave and some other investors came in; they wanted to subscribe too

"Yes." Pryor waited tensely.

"Then you remember the brochures for workingman's cottage on easy terms?"

Of course he did. Pryor had written them himself and had paid good money to have them distributed through the working class suburbs to supplement advertisements in the Age and Argus. "Two workmen came in as well and they paid £10 each deposit on cottages." The cottages were yet to be built but the brochures emphasised that when finished the price would start to rise dramatically.

"By the time they had gone I had £95 so I thought it best to bank the money, even if it did mean closing the office. That was what you said, Mr Pryor."

"That's alright," said Pryor. "It's not every day Mr. Fox and I have to leave you alone in the office like that; but why come here to tell me? There may be more people knocking on the door right now, wanting to give us their money, and they can't if the

office is closed."

"I still have the money with me!" He produced the cash and a deposit book from the leather bag he carried. "When I got to the bank this morning it was shut and there was a notice on the door saying it would be closed to business until further notice.

James Pryor needed only a moment for this information to sink in.

Everyone looked round when Pryor re-entered, grim faced. He said, ''I am sorry Ladies and gentlemen but our bank has closed its doors to business, Mr Fox and I must go there immediately and find out what has happened. We hope to meet you again when this has been sorted out.''

{ 19 }

Bank robbery.

In Collins Street it was as the partners had feared. A large, bewildered, and angry crowd was blocking the pavement in front of the bank. Many were crying while others hammered on the door and shouted to be let in. It was no use; the imposing, brass studded doors were closed, and the gilt painted lettering on the windows only mocked them. There were signs advertising the strength of the establishment, the depth of its capital, and the ease with which large sums of money could be borrowed, at low rates of interest.

''This will be a lesson to us," said Pryor. ''Next time we don't give money to the bank, we borrow instead. Then it doesn't matter if it goes bust. Look, a notice''"

He shouldered his way through the distraught crowd to read the hand-written placard on the door. 'The bank would be closed until further notice.'

A police constable stood by the door on guard but shook his head at every question. It was clear he knew nothing, any more than his superiors, but had been posted there to keep the peace.

''Where's Pringle?? Now listen, you go back to the office, and stay there until six o'clock at least. It's vital we keep the doors open otherwise the panic will spread to us and we'll be done for.''

''What if anyone wants to deposit money?''

''Take it man, for God's sake; never refuse money. Put it in the drawer and we'll pick it up later. Though I can't imagine anyone will want to part with their cash while all this is going on.''

''But what if they want to take money out?''

''Use your imagination,'' retorted Pryor. ''Make them fill out forms. Tell them the checks have to come from Sydney and theirs'll be in the post on the first of the month. Anything, just give us some breathing time."Say we're not accustomed to being doubted and that our word is our bond and all that sort of thing. Tell them the directors will be along directly to sort things out. Quick as you like.''

''My God!" whispered Fox as the seriousness of the matter struck home. "We're bankrupt; we could go to jail for taking people's money with no security at all." He had to clutch a street lamp to steady himself as he thought of what could happen arrest,a trial ,imprisonment.

''No one's bankrupt until they admit it. Come with me!!'' Pryor seized his partner's arm and drew him round a corner into a lane. He walked along it briskly towing Fox with him.

It was an access lane to the earth closets and other necessary services of the city and it allowed them to get through an unfastened corrugated iron gate to the back door of the bank.

This was locked and Pryor hammered on it repeatedly, refusing to leave in spite of Fox's belief that the whole staff had cleared off while they could.

His persistence was rewarded for after about fifteen minutes of thumping a voice was heard from within telling them to go away. "The bank is closed," said the voice. "I can't help you; I would if I could, but it is impossible."

''Perhaps we can help you.'' Mr. Pryor roared in reply. ''I have been directed to come here by the chairman of the Australian Colonial Bank. We cannot afford to have your bank fail like this it will destroy confidence in the whole system. We think it would be best to give you a loan to tide you over so that the process of closure can take place in an orderly manner without bringing the whole banking system into disrepute''

There was no response from within.

''Open up, man, this is your only chance. I can't shout at you through the door like this. We want to save you if we can.''

There was a delay and the door remained closed as though an irresolute and beaten man was trying to make up his mind what to do. Then they heard bars being removed and the chain dropping and the door partly opened while someone within peered at them.

He caught sight of the partners and tried to shut the door against them. It was too late, James Pryor was half through the opening before anything could be done. He let his partner in and slammed, barred, and bolted the door behind them.

It was the manager who had come to the door. He was much changed from when they had last seen him. The gloss had gone from his black whiskers and his face was pinched and grey. The bearing of a man in charge of a great financial institution had

changed and shrunk, and they detected a slight shuffle in his walk where none had been before. As the two partners forced their way through the back door he knew he had been outwitted- they were no source of help or finance.

''I've told you already, I can't help you,'' he whined, when he realized a trick had been played on him, and no succour was on hand from any other source of credit or money. ''You must leave, he insisted weakly. ''I can't begin to express how sorry I am about your money, but it's gone -- gone. I received a cable from head office in London in our code yesterday. It said the bank had failed and I was to dismiss the staff and send any money on hand immediately to London.

''Have you done all that?'' enquired Pryor.

''I sent messages to the staff not to come today, and I will send off the money either today or tomorrow, after the crowd has dispersed."

''There's some of our money in that. We've paid £600 into this bank since last Monday.''

Fox was about to open his mouth to correct his partner's figures. The amount was considerably less; more like £400, but he thought better of it and said nothing.

''I'm sorry, answered the manager As a depositor you cannot get preferential treatment. When the affairs of the bank are settled you can put in a claim and no doubt you will be paid so much in the pound."

'"Be buggered!" retorted Pryor, "We want our money now. Open the safe. Go on, get your keys and do it.''

The manager glared at them defiantly. I will not!

''Alright, we'll fix you. We'll open the front door instead and let the mob in. Try telling that lot you won't open the safe. They'll string you up from the gasolier." He moved towards the door as though about to carry out his threat.

''There's not a great deal there,'' said the man hurriedly. "I wondered why head office had me send off cash drafts every day: and on Friday one of our directors came in and insisted on clearing out his account for cash. It seemed strange at the time.''

''He knew more than we did. One of his mates in London must have given him the office,'' said Pryor. ''Now get the keys and let's have a look and see how much you've got there.''

''It's not right and it's not legal,'' claimed the manager, as a last, weak defence.

''We don't care about rights or legality. Either you open the safe or we open the front door, Then you can talk to the mob about their rights.''

The manager complained, but the threat of facing a crowd of dissatisfied customers

instead of just two was more than he could stand. He shuffled into his office and they heard him rattling keys out of a drawer.

When he turned his back Pryor gestured to Gabriel to go into the accountant's office and have a look round. The man came out with the keys and Pryor instantly started talking in order to drown out any noise Gabriel might make while turning over papers in the office and teller's cage.

''This is a bad business. What about you? You'll be looking for a job; You had better come round and see us, we'll need a manager, and have you done anything about your own salary? Once you send that money overseas that's it; you'll never see it again. My advice is don't send them anything. They can't sack you, you don't have a job any more.''

''The board has always treated me honourably in the past. My salary was paid on the dot every fortnight. I have asked the local directors to have an emergency meeting this afternoon to discuss the situation; no doubt such matters will be arranged then.''

''Pigs arse! Don't you send any money anywhere until you get your own pay. Collar your own first, then talk to the local directors and let them decide what to do with the rest; but once you send that money off to England forget it. you'll never get a sniff of it again.''

The safe was open by this time. ''There can't be more than £900 on hand right now. I would have had to borrow from other banks this afternoon to continue trading in the morning.

''Well, six hundred of it is ours. Just count it out and we'll be on our way. We've lost a hell of a lot of money in this crash but the six hundred might just let us through until we can get rolling again.''

''I cannot permit a criminal act of this kind. This institution is bankrupt and all assets should be held in common until a rate of so much in the pound is struck and then everyone gets an equal share. In any case I know you have not deposited £600, more like £400.

''Alright. Four hundred quid, if you say so. We'll have it now. And take your pay, too. It may be criminal but what the bank is doing to Victoria is even more criminal. If it makes you feel better I'll write a withdrawal slip for £400, date it yesterday, and we'll both swear, if necessary, that I lodged it before you got the cable from England.''

He found a withdrawal slip and in his usual slashing style scribbled out a withdrawal note for £400, dated it the previous Friday, and forced the manager to hand over that amount.

''Here, have some for yourself. If you don't take it now you'll never see it again. Take my word for it man. I'll bet you've got a wife and family to look after. What are you going to say when you go home and tell her that you had all that money in your hands

but there'll be no housekeeping for her this week or next, or the week after?'' He stuffed some money into the man's top pocket. "That's yours, don't put it back."

''I had an account here too,'' said the manager. "And it's very serious for me now that my position and the money have both gone. But there will be money coming in on loan repayments. At least they haven't got that in London.''

Pryor slapped another withdrawal slip on the desk in front of the man.''Write your own!! Get what you can out now and face 'em down afterwards. Say it was your wife's birthday and you had to get the money out to buy a gift. Let them think what they like, they can never prove that you didn't withdraw the money before the cable arrived; and get some out for your bookkeeper too. If you do that he will back up your story."

''What if the Directors suspect something and lay charges?''

''They'll be busy covering their own behinds. If they accuse you of anything accuse them right back. Don't you be the scapegoat for all this. They will have stuff they want to hide too. What about that director that took all his money out in cash? He knew the bank was going to fail but didn't warn the others. He won't want to hear you defending yourself in case you talk about him. Come on now, man, buck up; stiffen up your backbone a bit."

They left him still undecided and staring miserably at the books but he ran out of his office when he heard the back door being opened, and closed and barred it behind them.

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Mr Pryor to the rescue.

The people in Collins Street were so distraught none had so far thought to try the back entrance and the two men strolled as casually as they could out of the lane and turned away. It was only when they were safely out of sight and walking along the busy street that Pryor turned to his partner.

I got four hundred quid, what did you get?

Fox paused to dive into the bag they had taken from the clerk before sending him back to the office. "There's three hundred here. I'm going to save Benno's money and Henry's even if I don't do anything else. We're going to need the rest to see us through.

Pryor snapped his fingers. ''Sorry, Gabby. I was so busy thinking about our affairs I forgot We both had bank accounts there, too . We can't go back and knock him up a second time. He won't come to the door again. Anyway, we should be able to get through now we've got most of the money back."

At their office a crowd had gathered also. It was a noisy crowd showing signs of panic; the news of the bank failure had soon spread and every finance office in the city had it's own fringe of frightened depositors and investors. James Pryor did not pause at the edge of the crowd.

''Make way please,'' he cried. ''Make way. Let me through. I am James Pryor, Managing Director of the Melbourne and London Amicable. Mr. Fox and I will soon sort this out. Come along Mr. Fox, we must talk to our friends here about this terrible bank crash.''

In no time they were behind the barrier of the counter and facing a crush of people.

But Amy was there! She and Harold had appropriated the office chairs and were sitting watching him. Amy smiled and blew him a kiss. He would have stammered something but Pryor was in command.

He stood on another chair and held up his hands as though he were a bishop about to bless his flock.

''I am sorry we were not here earlier. Mr. Fox and I came as soon as we heard the dreadful news because we thought some of you may have imagined that we too could have been caught in this shocking financial calamity. You need have no fears. The Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society is as solid as a rock. My partner, Mr. Fox, who is a financial and banking expert, took it upon himself as his first duty on arriving from England to examine the financial strengths and credit base of all banks in the colony and I am sorry to say that the Occidental & Civic Bank did not pass the test. Of course, the result of its weakness we have observed today. A great tragedy for thousands of Victorians. What we do intend is to take advantage of Mr. Fox's expert financial knowledge, to start an investment advisory service. It would have been a great boon to Victorian investors if Mr. Fox had been able to make more widely known his findings on that unhappy institution before its collapse.'' He was interrupted by an impatient workman who had forced his way to the counter.

“That's alright abaht 'im, but what abaht ahr money?”

Mr. Pryor's first eloquent sentences had hardly begun to work because there was a pretty general sentiment in the office that the cockney workman had spoken for all of them. A few people called out to back up his inquiry. Mr. Pryor looked at him coldly.

''You have money invested in this office?'' He asked.

''Too right I 'ave! S'mornin' I guv' that man ten quid deposit on an 'ouse. I've changed me mind and I want me money back.''

Mr. Pryor shook his head sadly. ''I thought this might happen. Once a financial institution fails it casts a shadow over all the others no matter how solidly based they may be.Very well, you shall have your money but I must warn you that once the house that you chose has been built its price will increase greatly, probably by fifty percent, and you would be lucky to buy it for that. By then it will be too late you will have to

pay extra or purchase an inferior house on worse terms because you were frightened of a shadow today.''

''I don't want a check! This bloke 'ere said I'd have to wait until I got a check from Sydney. That's no good to me, I want cash in me 'and, now!!!!''

There were cries of support from others present causing Mr. Pryor to look round his audience in great pain.

''This is very sad. Mr. Fox and I thought we may have encountered an attitude of this kind and that is why we have prepared ourselves. You will be paid in cash! Every single person who has doubts about the financial stability of this office will be paid in cash this afternoon. The doors will not close until you have all been satisfied. We have several thousand pounds on hand, which should be enough. If it is not we will send out for more because I have arranged for our financial agents to stand by to supply us with as much cash as is needed.''

''The only condition we make, which is fair enough, is that you must produce an official receipt or document from this office to indicate the extent of your credit.”

It appeared that the workman could have been won over by what he had heard, but he produced a paper from his pocket and laid it on the counter.

“Examine that please Mr. Pringle”, said Pryor grandly. ''Is it a receipt issued by you in the course of business today and is it to the value of £10''

Pringle examined the receipt and admitted that the client was quite right.

“Have your documents ready, please Ladies and Gentlemen, so they can be examined and verified by Mr. Pringle. In the meantime I will ask Mr. Fox to withdraw behind the screen, and he will be our cashier. As a man who has handled millions of pounds in our London office I am sure he is capable of counting out the hundreds of sovereigns we will be dealing with tonight.

''Don't forget, Mr. Pringle, each client must sign a release on the back of each document. If any lady or gentleman is unable to write have them make a cross and we will both witness it.

Mr. Pryor did not examine any of the papers or assist with counting or handing out money: he was there to give the proceedings an air of permanence and respectability.

The cockney workman was paid in sovereigns but did not go away as soon as he had his cash but hung around inside the door.

The next investor was a very young mother carrying a baby swathed in the grey shawl she wore. Her receipt showed an investment of £20 about a week ago. She explained that it was an inheritance; all she had, and she couldn't afford to lose it with the possibility of her husband's job disappearing if the works closed down.

“I hope you don't blame me, she said.

“Not at all, my dear. It's natural that when you hear of tragedies like this you don't want to be part of them. It is a pity the money was not left there longer it would have the first step to owning your own house. However, you do what you think best. But whatever happens take care of it, and the baby, on the way home.”

By this time the mood of the clients had changed. Pryor's apparent honesty and respectability had made a great impression and his willingness to pay everyone out in cash had the intended effect.

"Really and truly now," asked a woman, "is our money safe? Can we trust this office?

Pryor raised his right hand. “Word of honour. This office is as safe as a,'' he paused. ''I was going to say as safe as a bank but when one considers the sad event that took place today the word is not appropriate. Let me say that the London and Melbourne Amicable Building Society is as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar, or as the British Empire itself."

The press of people in the office was now decreasing as some of those near the door, satisfied with what they had seen and heard, began to slip away taking their papers with them. They were replaced with others who had been trying to get in earlier but the tension was considerably less for there had been reassuring murmurs running through the crowd from time to time as information was relayed to those outside. Some were merely onlookers who were curious to see what a collapsing financial institution was like and what the reaction of the disappointed depositors would be.

The cockney workman, rather shamefacedly returned his ten sovereigns to the counter and redeposited them on the house he had chosen. The money was graciously received and he was congratulated by Mr. Pryor on his judgment and his prospects of obtaining an excellent new abode within a few months: provided, of course, he kept up the monthly payments of £1.

It was late afternoon when the office finally emptied. The partners shook the hand of Mr. Pringle, thanked him for his support during the crisis and looked forward to seeing him at the office the following day.

The door was bolted shut and Pryor collapsed into a chair, vacant. at last.

''What a day Thank God no one got hysterical. We could have lost control as easy as anything. If we had of it would have been all up with us.''

''You were superb!'' said Gabriel.

''You both were,'' cried Amy, leaping from her chair. She ran across to hug and kiss. Gabriel yet again.

''I deserve one of those,'' said, Pryor. ''It was me that did all the talking.''

Amy obligingly gave him a hug and kiss on the cheek.''

''So far so good,'' said Pryor, ''But we're still on a knife-edge. One wrong step, one inquiry by the wrong people, and the whole business could come crashing down.”

''What assets do we have? Gabriel took some paper and dipped his pen into the inkwell. Two weeks to go before we have to pay the next rent instalment.

''Put that away,'' said Amy. ''You've done enough for one day. We'll go back to the restaurant and have a meal. You can talk it over there.''

''I just remembered, We ran out without paying.''

"It's alright, father paid, but you can apologise and pay him back next time you meet. He wasn't expecting to pay and doesn't have an awful lot of money, but I'll make sure you do the right thing.''

They went back to Mr Hosie's restaurant. Harold slumped into a chair and dozed off. His sister had taken his bottle of brandy away from him several times while they were in the office, but he always got it from her again. She did not want to be seen in public struggling with him for possession of a bottle of brandy. Now he was snoring with his head thrown back. Amy was terribly embarrassed but the staff politely ignored him.

So did Pryor. “We haven't been pushing the real estate side of the business hard enough,'' He said

There will be an ad in the papers in the morning advertising the houses at Prahran. We will have to be on the ground early and, with luck' we'll be selling like billyoh all day. The footings of the first row have gone in so at least we will have something to show."

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Amy's advice

The Taylor family liked Mrs Byers' boarding house in Lonsdale Street better than the hotel. Hers was a two storey establishment with a balcony supported by fluted cast iron columns. It overlooked the street which bustled all day with vans and drays; traffic serving the large bluestone warehouses and their trade with the port and city.

The veranda was neat, and freshly painted; like the rest of the establishment. Large pots with spreading ferns were put behind each of the posts and carefully watered every day to refresh the eye and help filter out some of the dust from the street. The floor and windowsills of the veranda had to be carefully swept and dusted off by the maids twice a day in windy weather.

The veranda was free to any of the guests that cared to use it and often boarders

lounged up there in clement weather and leaned over the railing to watch the flowing tide of people and commerce passing below.

Mr and Mrs Taylor had a front room which looked out onto the balcony but they had no fear for their privacy because the landlady had installed tasteful, thick lace curtains which also served to keep out heat and dust.

Amy had a ground floor room opening on to a passage wich ran from the front door to the back Her room was spacious and airy with flowered wall paper and sufficient furniture

Harold had been given lodgings near the back of the house, at the far end of the corridor His room was cramped with a bed and a small wardrobe which, even so, were almost too big for the room.

Harold, to everyone's surprise, found a job. He was an assistant in a grocer's shop; it did not pay well and he worked long hours, but the family was proud of him

Gabriel enjoyed his new life also. Sales on the estate had been a success from the start and every penny the partners collected, apart from necessary expenses, was used to bolster the finances of their enterprises. After their experience of the bank failure Mr Pryor had become an enthusiastic debtor. His new philosophy was that if any more banks in Melbourne were to fail he would owe them money rather than the other way round. He had a theory that if he owed the banks money it was their problem, not his.

On that question Amy led Gabriel to the common room where Mrs Byers said they could sit together and talk. There was no one else there so she sat in an armchair and made him pull round another and sit down facing her.

''Now,'' she said, Why were you two so worried when the bank closed its doors, and where did you get the money that you andJames brought to the office in a leather bag?''

''Well, we were worried because we had been banking all the money that came in to the office and when the bank closed we had lost everything and couldn't continued trading or paying our creditors.''

''That's nonsense, you have millions of pounds behind you, that's what it said in the newspaper advertisements.

''I'm sorry, Amy, that's all moonshine. It was an invention of James' busy brain.''

''What! You mean the money in the bank was all you had, and those advertisements in the paper were straight out lies. Why did you let him do it?''

''Well, I was a green chum,just off the boat. I'd never worked in an office before. He knew more than I did and I thought it may have been normal practise to start off a business in that way.''

''But there must be a building society, he keeps talking about it. The Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society, he mentions it once or twice every time we meet.''

''Well, yes there is a society. He registered it last month with a paid up capital of one pound.

Amy shook her head at this folly. ''But where did you get the money you brought to the office the day the bank closed its doors?''

''I'll be frank with you again, Amy. We robbed the bank.''

''You what?''

''We forced our way in through the back door. The manager was there and we threatened to open the front door and let the mob in unless we got our money back. I think our visit woke him up a bit. When we left he was writing withdrawal slips so that he and the bank staff would get their wages.

Amy shook her head again, astonished. ''Frankly dear, holding up a bank doesn't sound like you at all. I think James led you into the bank and it was he that threatened the manager. he's a born bandit. So your whole business is a sham, isn't it?''

''No, not really. It's booming along like the Roman Empire. James has sold a draper's shop and a run down old hotel. We're building and selling houses as fast as we can go.''

''That's good. You've been lucky so far, but keep James in check, and no more lying advertisements. I don't want my husband to go to jail.''

''What? Me or James?''

''Not him, you. I fell in love with a man who was bold enough to break down the social barriers on the ship and come looking for me. Though I must say that when I saw you on the gangway at London you didn't look third class, not to me. I wondered what you were doing there.

''I couldn't forget you after we saw each other,'' said Gabriel, ''And the happiest moment in my life was when Sir Thomas said he was the owner and I could have the run of the ship.'' He paused. ''A moment ago you said 'husband, did you mean it?'

''Of course I did. I don't say that sort of thing lightly, how many more hints do you need?

''But I haven't proposed to you yet.''

''Well, you'd better get on with it, hadn't you.''

As he opened his mouth to speak she reached out and put her fingers over his lips. ''Not now, darling,'' she said, ''Not here. ''Take me out to dinner, to somewhere

nice, and you can propose to me then.''

''But before we talk about marriage,'' she continued, ''We will have to be sure that James is in check and can't get us into trouble.''

He's a great salesman, and very good in an emergency, as he was the other night.

''Yes, but he's impulsive, and you have more influence over him than you realize

Gabriel was puzzled. ''What do you mean? What influence?''

''You're his friend, and he wants you to admire his business judgment.I've noticed it several times, he wants your approval for what he does.''

''I haven't noticed any of this, are you sure?

‘Of course I'm sure. I'm a woman, and women understand these things. You're a thoughtful man and have the better intellect of the two, that's one of the reasons why I love you and want to protect you. From now on you're to take charge in the partnership, especially the money side of it. Those big fat lies in big, fat letters in the newspapers might bring you down yet, I hope not.’

After this interview Gabriel went back to O'Hanlon's hotel in a daze. Amy had refused a farewell kiss in case Mrs Byers entered the room.without warning. She would have barred him instantly from coming back to her house and trying to take advantage of her female boarders,

However they both had declared their love and his next project was to find a place nice enough to satisfy his beloved.

Johann Strauss Junior came to Gabriel's rescue. He was wondering about the next stage of his courtship when he saw a poster announcing that a hall in Collins Street had been rented for the Christmas season. There would be dancing every night to the music of Johann Strauss the younger

Supper vouchers were included in the ticket price. Instructors were also available if any Lady or Gentleman should be unfamiliar with the polka or the waltz, the new dance sensations now sweeping Europe.

It was not the quiet, candlelit supper that Amy had imagined, but that could come a little later, so he asked her.

She had never been to a dance before. Her father was not a dancing man, and her mother preferred the dances of her youth when couples went no further than dancing hand in hand. She strongly objected to the modern style where couples whirled round the room clasped in each other’s arms. She claimed that such dancing led to misbehaviour and even vice.

They argued and, as usual, Amy won. Her trump card was Queen Victoria. It was well

known that the queen had met Herr Strauss, the composer. He had taught her the new dances and she had taken them up with enthusiasm.

If the queen herself danced the waltz and, the polka how could they be said to be sinful. Gabriel would teach her the new steps. She didn't need a chaperone and would be perfectly safe under his protection.

The Taylors had other reasons to worry. They could see their daughter was in love with Gabriel and feared she would refuse, when the time came, to go back with them to England.

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The Colonial Lady's Companion.

Kimpton the draper had paid in full for his Elizabeth Street shop; he waived the usual thirty day period to get possession before the business deteriorated any further, and was already stirring up the establishment as a basis for making himself the biggest draper in Melbourne. He was still not sure just what had occurred leading up to his purchase of the property but knew, whatever it was, he had a bargain that would serve his family business for years.

Mrs Chittering capitulated at last because of news conveyed to her by Mr Pryor that the local publicans were near to making an offer for Fogarty's pub. After a great effort he manged to beat Fogarty's price down to three hundred and seventyfive pounds.

Pryor's services extended to obtaining her a favourable mortgage through the Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society and as she had only lately emigrated to the colony he found a painter and decorator who was a paragon of his trade. He also arranged for the purchase of furniture through his network of friends, each of whom paid a satisfactory commission for a share of the trade.

Christmas was now approaching and the Flanagans had taken a house at Brighton near the sea side with a view to purchase.

To Mr Pryor's regret he was not the agent who negotiated the letting of the house but was pleased to receive an invitation for him and his mother to have Christmas dinner with them and to spend a few days in the house as guests.

Henry was in a state of guerrilla warfare with his female relatives. His mother and sisters were strongly opposed to him seeking an apprenticeship or a job in building or engineering. They contended that one low, working class person in the family was quite enough, thank you, and they did not want any more, no matter how wealthy he might become as the demand for engineers and builders grew with the expanding city.

Henry was considered by prospective employees to be a little old to enter his

indentures as an apprentice, but as his father could pay a premium they were prepared to overlook the problem. Once again he was carried off as a captive to the petticoat brigade. This time to be taken to the wilds of Brighton, much as girls used to be locked up in a nunnery so as to reconsider their notions about a possible foolish or unsuitable liaison.

His duty in exile was to consider the advantages of working in an office rather than the noise and dirt of a foundry or building site. In an office one's hands remained clean, there would be a clear road to the top as manager, or director and his mother and sisters could say to their friends that Henry was showing great promise in the office, rather than having to conceal from them the fact that he was labouring away in some smoky, dirty industry, with blackened face and rough hands.

Taking a house in Brighton in one of the streets between the railway station and the beach was considered a very desirable step up the social ladder. Mrs. Flanagan's first duty on securing the house was to order a set of calling cards from the printer. The names and address on the card were printed in gold copperplate on glossy white pasteboard.

They came neatly boxed and there were cards for everyone. One box contained a family sets of cards. These were in threes, with a hole punched in one corner, and tied together with blue ribbon and a neat bow. The top one read:

TIMOTHY FLANAGAN ESQ

"Alma"

Manor Street

Brighton

The second read:

Mrs. TIMOTHY FLANAGAN

"Alma"

Manor Street

Brighton

The third was:

THE MISSES FLANAGAN

& Mr. HENRY FLANAGAN

"Alma"

Manor Street

Brighton

This accounted for them all and the cards would be used to inform the neighbours that the large and desirable residence "Alma" was now occupied by a genteel family from Melbourne.

A young manservant with spindly legs and an irritating sniff was made to put on white gloves and a white waistcoat to indicate that he was not a gentleman caller but a servant and instructed to visit nearby houses and to leave the cards with the maidservants.

He did it though a natural victim of attack by the local dogs and after a few days of flight and pursuit which brought some criticism from Mrs. Flanagan because of the number of times the housekeeper had to repair his trousers the cards had been left at houses up and down Manor Street and much of New Street and the beachfront and some of the neighbouring streets as well.

Later, after the visiting cards of the neighbours had been presented in their turn there would be 'at home' days during which the neighbours would come to call and take tea.

Mrs. Flanagan knew all this would happen because she had been well advised by a book of etiquette entitled 'The Colonial Ladies' Companion'. The foreword stated that the book was for ladies brought up in the colonies who had not had access in their formative years to the higher classes of society. The author of the guide was an anonymous lady but readers were assured that her family's antecedents were impeccable and in fact connected her with the highest personages in English society. She had put pen to paper out of concern for colonial society which she had closely studied during a sojourn in Australia and the book, as a guide and companion, was intended to lead ladies such as Mrs. Flanagan through the intricacies of establishing a social circle with which no visitor from England could find fault. Mrs. Flanagan studied the book and closely copied the visiting cards from examples found therein. By the time Christmas week arrived the strategies in the book were well in train after the Flanagans had settled into their new home.

In town the partners in the land agency had little time to think of the Flanagans because they were busy securing their own position after the bank crash which had

nearly destroyed both them and their business.

The bank failure had caused great distress to many of its clients who were not as lucky or swift moving as the partners and were facing financial ruin. Little could be done for them no matter how great their distress. Some people who were totally destitute received private charity, but that was all. Some day the receiver in bankruptcy would dispose of any assets owned by the bank in Victoria and the creditors would be paid so much in the pound, from sixpence or a shilling upwards, but the bank depositors would probably receive nothing.

As Christmas approached business at the agency slackened. Clients who had been in the market to purchase cheap housing lost interest, at least for the time being. There was no money to spare for investment in the London and Melbourne Amicable Building Society and the people of Melbourne were totally caught up in the need for entertainments, gifts, decorations, family parties, Christmas puddings and roast dinners. The latter were inappropriate in the hot weather but were prized for their reminders of Christmases past back home in the old country.

It was no use opening the doors of the agency. Christmas Week reminded Fox of his second day in the colony, Cup Day, when everyone lost interest in commerce and thought about a holiday instead. The partners were caught in the prevailing spirit and decided to give up early and close the agency.

In spite of their slack business the streets were crowded with Christmas shoppers and theatre goers. All the play houses were running matinees of their pantomimes and Christmas variety shows. The footpaths in Swanston and Bourke Streets were jammed with pedestrians so that some were forced reluctantly on to the dust and dirt of the roadway itself.

"Don't worry, my boy," Pryor uttered enthusiastically, "this time next year we will all be riding on trams and you will be able to forget the mud and slush, and dust blowing everywhere. You're lucky you came to Melbourne just when it's about to get going again. The nineteenth century is the century of progress and this is the place to be, and we're in the box seat. Just you wait and see the progress of this town over the next ten years; if we're not both of us filthy rich it'll be our own fault."

He rubbed his hands with delight at the prospect of wealth but it was time to go Two more day to go and Christmas would be on them.

{ 23 }

Benno strikes back.

They shook hands and James Pryor went on his way along Swanston Street towards the station raising his hat right and left to respectable looking passers by and nodding jovially from time to time as he caught someone's eye.

Gabriel walked the other way, round into Bourke Street while musing on the events that had transformed his life since arriving in the colony. His thoughts were interrupted by the sounds of fighting and shouting from the other side of the road. It could be heard clearly, even above the other noises of the street.

It seemed the music shop was the centre of a disturbance. He looked across the road and, as he did so, something happened and he saw the extraordinary sight of cracks running as quick as lightning to the corners of one of Mr Gladman's shop windows and then the glass fell out on to the flagstones with a smash that startled the whole street.

A burst of swear words followed in a voice Fox thought he recognised, and a number of invitations for Mr Gladman to come out and fight. Then the same thing happened to another window. There was a smash as before and great shards of glass tumbled out as people dashed back out of the way.

Fox dodged across the road to see if he could help.

He thought he knew the cause of Mr Gladman's present misfortunes. He was right. It was Benno who was very drunk, but not too drunk to throw bricks through the windows of Mr Gladman's establishment.

He had a section of the pavement to himself as he crunched back and forth on the broken glass while vainly inviting Mr Gladman to step outside and go a round or two with the honour of Ireland at stake.

A customer was staring with great round eyes out of the suddenly exposed shop. He still had a flute to his lips as though about to play. A lady at the sheet music section had dropped manuscript paper all over the floor but did not know it while further back Mr Gladman crouched behind the cash desk.

"Why don't you come out and fight, yer greasy faced old mongrel," Benno invited him urgently. Then he kicked away some broken glass still adhering to the frame and peered into the shop.

"Look at 'im," he called out pointing at Mr Gladman while the customers shrank back against the wall so he could have an uninterrupted view. "Doesn't like the Irish and he doesn't like convicts. Well, my mum and dad were Irish and me old man did his time and he was a bloody sight better man than you'll ever be."

He looked round for support but instead the constabulary was closing in. From the corner they had heard the noise and shouting and had run to see what was happening. Benno must have had a supply of ammunition for he quickly demolished two more windows which meant, for the time being, he had run out of targets.

Benno looked at the leading policeman, who grasped him by the arm. "Oh Gawd, not you again McGrath." He screwed up his face in disgust. "This is the second time you've nicked me, why don't you go up to Little Lon. and beat up a few shielas?"

"You've done it now, Benno." said the policeman casting a cool, professional eye over the wreckage. "I reckon we won't be seeing you around for a couple of years after the courts hear about this little lot. Hold him," he said to a second policeman who had just arrived and he took out his notebook.

Benno was looking round at the crowd and unexpectedly caught sight of abriel.

His face lit up and he nudged the policeman. "There's me character witness, there's Gabby. Him and me is business partners and he'll tell you what old nasty face had to say about the Catholics and the Irish."

Gabriel now found himself under the suspicious gaze of the constables and matters were not helped by Mr Gladman appearing from the back of the shop; he was shaking with rage. "He's mad," he exclaimed, "insane! They should give him ten years and a thousand lashes at the very least. What is this city coming to when a reputable shopkeeper is not safe even in his own premises."

He saw Gabriel as Benno's words sank in. "Mr Fox, did you incite this larrikin to commit such an act?" He turned to the policeman. "I have seen that ruffian before. He was in Fox's office and made the most dreadful threats against me. I did not think he would go to these lengths; and I would like to know what part Fox played in all this."

"Gabby's me mate," said Benno "Just out from England and he's a toffee nosed, stuck up little bastard, but he's still me mate, and I'll take on any man here that says a word against him."

"You see, Constable. I engaged Fox as an employee the very day he arrived in Victoria because I considered it my duty to help young immigrants and I had to dismiss him before the week was out because of his absences from work, insubordination and his addiction to gambling. He may not have thrown the stones but I believe he incited that larrikin you have there to this outrage because he holds a grudge against me."

"Just one fair whack at 'im, that's all I ask, one fair whack. I'll stoush the bastard and Gabby'll hold me coat for me, won't you, Gabby?"

It was like a nightmare, to be walking quietly home and suddenly to find oneself in this preposterous and humiliating predicament. To be the centre of a large crowd and under suspicion of inciting a riotous, drunken wharf labourer to break shop windows in the most public place and at the most public time possible.

"Do you know this man?" demanded the constable.

"O'course he knows me," said Benno. "Him and me we're partners in a land agency and a building society. It was me what give 'im 'is start when he was just a green little new-chum, straight off the boat. Pryor and Fox, estate agents to the gentry, that's our firm. You won't find old Benno's name there anywhere, but they weren't too proud to take 'is money to get their start."

"This young man should be saved for his own good," interposed Mr Gladman

spitefully. "He has done nothing but associate with labourers, the lowest class of gold fossickers and common drapers since he arrived in Melbourne. I believe that agency could stand some investigation too. There could be all sorts of shady practices taking place there.

Gabriel realized that Melbourne was a much smaller town than he had thought, and his recent activities had not gone unnoticed by the gossip mongers.

By this time a large box painted glossy black, mounted on four wheels had jingled up to the kerb. It was guided by a police constable sitting on a high bench at front and drawn by two horses. This vehicle was completely enclosed except for a door at the back which had a small barred window. On the side panels the cipher VR , and a representation of the royal crown had been painted in gold and crimson.

"We had better go down to the station and sort this out," said the policeman who had arrested Benno. The constable driving the vehicle got down off his perch and helped the others to hold the struggling, protesting Benno while he was shoved into the vehicle. They ignored his kicking on the inside panel and his shouted abuse directed at Mr Gladman and the arresting officers.

"Now Sir, I think it would be a good idea if you were to come too. This gentleman, the proprietor of the shop, seems to believe you had something to do with smashing his windows. So on the whole you would be well advised to make a statement. Would you like to ride with your friend?"

"I have been greatly injured by this young man," said Mr Gladman, addressing the crowd, and indicating Fox. "But I want all here to witness that I have forgiven him. His redemption will be foremost in my prayers and on Sunday I will ask the Brethren to make a great intercession for him during the service. If it was not for the danger of cutting our knees on the glass I would call on him now to kneel with me and pray to be turned on the right path."

There were some cheers and hallelujahs from the crowd, but they appeared to be ironical in nature. Nevertheless Mr Gladman was encouraged to continue. The flock that normally attended his chapel was sparse and never before had he had an opportunity to address such a large and interested crowd.

"My friends," he intoned, "I expect to suffer a great financial loss from the outrage that has been committed on me today but I would suffer such a loss ten times over if it would turn this young man from the course he is following towards his eternal damnation."

"Oh, shut up! He's right, you are a bloody old hypocrite." Fox had been driven beyond endurance by the false position into which Benno had put him and the proselyting and accusations that were being made by his former employer. "Gawd, why don't you get out a harmonium and have a hymn session on the footpath?"

Mr Gladman raised one hand and put the other over his heart. He looked

sorrowfully upon the attendant throng.

"I am strong," he said, "I expected little else." He shook his head. "One day this young man may come to grace, but not today. Take him, constable. I release him to the law and the law must take its course, though I pray that his heart may be softened in prison and when he eats the bread of punishment he will also drink the water of grace, however," he continued, "I do believe that he should pay for the damage and I will certainly present him with the glazier's bill when it comes to hand."

Gabriel hotly stated that he might as well present his bill to the Brethren for all the chance he had of getting it paid.

"Now, Sir," said the policeman, ignoring Mr Gladman's indignation, "Do you want to ride in with your friend? You will have to go to the station to make a statement."

This suggestion was rejected too. The indignity of getting into a police wagon in the sight of all Melbourne just could not be thought of; someone might recognise him and it could have a serious effect on his business or on Amy. Besides, he did not know if he could trust himself once he was put in with the loathsome Benno.

At last they agreed he should take a cab at his expense and be accompanied by a policemen temporarily excused from duty on the beat.

This was bad enough and the little procession departed for the police station to the cheers of an idle mob. Several larrikins ran alongside the cab for a while calling out cries of encouragement in the mistaken belief that Gabriel was actually the person who had commited the outrage.

They soon fell behind and Gabriel was left to the company of the policeman who seemed to enjoy the change from walking. He lay back in his seat with his heels on the dashboard of the cab. He whistled and tapped the toe of his boots with his truncheon.

"What's going to happen next?" Gabriel enquired anxiously.

"Ah," said the policeman, now rubbing his truncheon on his trousers to give it a better polish, "that depends on the beak, you see; and it depends what your mate has to say when he makes his statement. It seems funny, a cove like you knocking around with Benno, him being well known for the occasional stoush, and he often spends the night with us for being D and D."

Fox looked puzzled so the man amiably explained that a stoush was a fight and D & D was the term for Drunk and Disorderly and that Benno had better watch out for a sympathetic magistrate. He was not unknown to the bench and most magistrates lacked a sense of humour, especially when it came to dealing with a wharf labourer who got drunk and attacked the premises of a reputable shop keeper.

This did not concern Gabriel; at that moment he would not have cared if Benno had been sentenced to be locked up for ten years. He just wanted the man to go away and

not come back.

At the station, the still defiant, Benno was expertly plucked from the wagon by two burly policemen and escorted by them to the counter where the sergeant looked him over.

"What is it this time?" asked the sergeant.

"Drunk and disorderly, smashing a shop window in Bourke Street, threatening the shopkeeper with violence, swearing in a public place, resisting arrest -- "

"It's all lies," said Benno as the sergeant opened a massive, calf bound charge book and dipped his pen in the inkwell.

"You'll be sorry about this Sergeant. You wouldn't want your conscience to tell you you'd sent an innocent man to jail; besides, I got a character witness. You wait until you hear me mate Gabby. He said he'd come down and tell you the truth and he wouldn't want to stay away when old Benno's in trouble because of all the lies they tell about him." He indicated Gabriel who was standing by uncomfortably, waiting to be spoken to.

The sergeant was surprised that such a respectable looking person would care to associate voluntarily with Benno and was about to question him when there was an interruption.

The double, half glass doors leading out to Bourke Street suddenly burst open and a group of constables fell through struggling vigorously with a powerful looking man over six feel tall. The arms of the man were bare to the shoulder and heavily tattooed, as were Benno's. He was bald on top but had a shaggy blonde beard and moustache and long hair hanging down the back. The man was shouting and swearing and held two policemen tightly with his arms round their throats while he lashed out with his boots at the others.

Gabriel was standing well back to escape the fists and feet that were being used so freely when he felt a tug on his sleeve. They had been forgotten while everyone concentrated on the uproar and helping to subdue the battling man.

Benno indicated the door with his thumb and eyebrows to show this was the way of escape.

More policemen had heard the din and were hurrying from upstairs. No one noticed the two as Gabriel was led secretly out of the door and they were in the street in front of the police station before He pulled back from Benno's grip.

"I can't clear off!" he said, "Gladman knows who I am; he'll put me into the peelers, and glad to do it if they go round and said I was on the run."

"He don't know me, and he doesn't know where I live. Tell him if he dobs me in I'll wait until his windows go up and put a brick through them again. Anyway I'm goin' to

piss off. If they want me they'll have to find me."

"You will be in worse trouble than ever if you clear off now, and if you want to tell Gladman anything, tell him yourself."

"That's alright. I've been in worse trouble ever since Father O'Leary kicked me out of communion class, and never invited me back. Look after the business for me Gabby, I'll be back for me dividends later on." With a cautious glance around and a grin over his shoulder he scuttled off towards the river.

There were not many pedestrians around; most Christmas shopping was done further east. At this, the Western end of Bourke Street, there were mainly warehouses and businesses specialising in supplying the needs of country people. They were prosperous but not particularly reliant on passing trade and there were few people walking the pavements.

Benno had moved fast and by the time Fox counted to twenty and faced the unpleasant prospect of re-entering the police station he had disappeared from view.

In the station the big man had just been quelled. He had handcuffs on and what looked like the beginning of a nasty bruise on his bald pate. Two policemen held him up on either side while the sergeant entered the charge and others gathered round to assist the two constables who had been held by the throat.

Gabriel went and sat quietly on a long, wooden bench with no padding on its seat or back and waited for someone to pay attention to him.

In a few minutes they had dealt with the bald-headed man. He was just another incident, a violent incident, in their working lives and he had been dealt with. The men he had been trying to choke had recovered after a fashion and were rubbing their throats and working their necks to relieve them.

The sergeant finished underlining the latest entry when he glanced up quickly. "Where's that larrikin, the wharf labourer?" He looked round the office as though Benno may have been lurking unnoticed in a corner.

"You, Sir, You came in with him, where did he go?" Gabriel shrugged. He said he was leaving, he did not want to be mixed up in any fighting. Perhaps he's waiting in the street."

The sergeant pointed at a man and gestured with his thumb towards the door and the constable went outside. He returned after a minute and shook his head. "He's skipped."

"It's Seamus Benjamin Murphy, the wharfie, who knows him here?" enquired the sergeant, "he's just bolted from the station."

One of the men who had been choked put up his hand, as did another constable.

"He'll make for the wharf," said the sergeant, "or else back to the pubs in town. Dawson, you go along Bourke Street towards the city and Smith you can head along King Street to the river -- and step lively. If you don't find him he can go on the Wanted List for tonight."

he two men clapped on their helmets, which had been picked up from the floor, and departed rapidly.

The sergeant fixed Fox with a stern eye. "I hope you had nothing to do with this escape, Sir. We'll get him, no doubt about that. He's not the sort of man that can stay under cover for too long. Once he gets a thirst on him there's no stopping him, and we know what pubs he goes to."

"Is he a criminal?"

The sergeant shook his head slowly. "No, he's a larrikin. He gets drunk, he doesn't actually start fights but he soon gets mixed up in them. Breaking those windows is the worst he's done so far. But why would a gentleman like you associate with the likes of Benno? I think you had better tell me about it."

His association with Benno fascinated sergeant who made extensive notes but was not able to see where any charges could be laid except against Benno.

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Benno escapes.

The next thing had to do urgently was to go and see the Taylors, well, Amy at least. He didn't want her to hear the story from anyone else.

Gabriel was barely a block away from the police station and heading home towards the boarding house when he sensed that he was being followed.

The afternoon was waning and the street seemed quieter than usual as the constant flow of traffic began to cease. Fewer heavy draught horses than usual were clopping along with jingling harness hauling drays and lorries. The shouts of the carters as they jockeyed for position at the warehouse doors seemed muted; the roars of encouragement as they backed their teams up with cracking whips to the loading entrances of the warehouses were less raucous than usual

Christmas was still three days away but the town seemed eager to begin the celebrations after a hard year.

Many of the carters who had already delivered their loads had not sought other jobs. Their horses were already stabled and they had gone off to celebrate the approach of Christmas, so there were more patrons in the hotels than was usual at that hour.

As he passed the doors and open windows the noise of loud conversation and calling out would rise to a crescendo and die away again from his hearing as he walked on.

Those inside seemed comfortable and though a few people went in none came out. Other, more sober souls, like himself, were going home, but there were no drunk people staggering out of the hotels; it was a too early for drunks to be thrown out because they had spent all their money and closing time would not be for hours yet.

Later when time and money had cut out they would have to waver home to nearby boarding houses or cottages and face their irritated spouses.

Between hotels and warehouses the street was quiet and the footsteps of a few pedestrians echoed clearly against the bluestone and brick walls of the buildings. After working hours it was a quiet, respectable neighbourhood for people who laboured in the offices and factories close by and lived in the cheap boarding houses and residential hotels that were plentiful at the western end of town.

Many had finished early because of the pull of Christmas slowing down trade like a falling tide.

He turned several times to see if there really was someone following behind. When he did so people walking nearby stared back but by no means could he believe that any of them cared about his movements. Perhaps a plain clothes policeman had been ordered to follow him in case he was going to meet Benno. He shrugged that thought off. The sergeant who took down his words knew that he never, ever wanted to meet that man again.

He was soon at Mrs Byer's house and went in, but not before looking up and down the street, still with the uneasy feeling that some unseen person was following.

One or two of Mrs Byer's boarders edged past and went inside as he stood in the door. He nodded, recognising them vaguely, but was sure that none would have any interest in following him anywhere.

He went up to the Taylor's room, but was told by a servant that they were in the common room with a guest.

As he entered Amy rose and flashed at him one of her smiles. His breath was constricted for a moment but he managed to smile back. There was no kiss this time. After a long, heated argument with her mother she had promised not to kiss him again, at least not in public. Queen Victoria was still on the throne and it was improper for unmarried couples to kiss in the presence of others. If they were engaged a kiss on the cheek was permissible, and that was quite enough.

As soon as could take his eyes off Amy he saw the guest they were entertaining, It was an old friend.

''Sir Thomas,'' he cried. This was the man he had last seen wearing an all white suit. The one who owned the ship and saved Gabriel frolm being sent back in disgrace to

third class, where he belonged.

''Hello Gabriel,'' he said. ''I knew if I found the Taylors I'd find you. You wouldn't have let Amy go that easily,

''Actually she found me, In the middle of a crowd in Bourke Street.''

''Well done Amy. He wasn't going to escape just because he was hiding in the middle of a crowd, was he.''

''I think we have discussed the matter quite enough,'' said Mrs Taylor.'Amy was brought up to be a lady. She would never dream of searching for a young man in a crowd of people in a busy street'.

There were several witnesses in the room who knew Amy had done exactly that but said nothing. They didn't want to stir up an argument with Mrs Taylor.

Sir Thomas thought it time to change the subject, ''I was about to tell how I found where you were staying, it was simple. I was walking along Swanston, opposite Saint Paul's Church when I saw a display of bibles in a shop window. It was a religious tract society, and I thought Alfred may have called in on them already, perhaps he had a letter of introduction.''

"Well, I did!'' cried Mr Taylor. Did you meet the Reverend Mr Wade? We're great friends now, he is a true believer in what is revealed in the bible.''

''Yes, he holds you in high estimation, and as well he told me where you were living.

Now Gabriel. I have to congratulate you. Amy has been saying wonderful things about the business you're running now. Tell us about it.''

''Well sir, I'm glad she gave you such a good report, but I got into an awful scrape today.'' He told them of Benno smashing the music shop windows, and how Mr Gladman had accused him of inciting Benno to the attack. He told them of the scene outside Mr Gladman's shop, of the fight in the police station and how Benno had made his escape

''Oh, you poor thing,'' said Amy. ''I wish I'd been there, I would have given them a piece of my mind.''

Sir Thomas seemed amused. ''I wish I'd been there too, I would have enjoyed that, especially the brawl in the police station,I haven't seen a decent brawl in years, not since I was last in Hong Kong.

Mrs Taylor was wondering if they should drop their acquaintance with Sir Thomas Black He would encourage criminal behaviour by regarding it as amusing, and he could well have a bad influence on Mr Fox.

They all stopped talking because of the noise of an argument on the stairs near the

common room. Such things happened from time to time but Mrs Byers was there and they could hear her raised voice remonstrating sternly with some unknown person.

The listeners paid little attention to what was going on. Mrs Byers was equal to any situation involving troublesome lodgers. She put them down promptly but this time the altercation, now in the passage, was not easily resolved. Her pained voice was heard getting louder as she cross examined some unseen person, but the replies were unheard. A very brisk double rap on their door followed. It was opened to reveal Mrs Byers who stood outside with an appearance of suspicion and concern.

"Mr Fox," she said accusingly. "I have just met an individual on my stairs who claims he was looking for you but did not know what room you were in. Perhaps you could reassure me that he is a friend of yours as he claims."

Benno was outside the door with her, his hat pulled well down over his eyes, which were badly bloodshot, and with his coat collar turned up. He appeared to have difficulty in standing upright even though his back was against the wall opposite. It was not surprising Mrs Byers had challenged him on the stairs.

"I'm sorry, Mrs Byers," Gabriel said, and would have ground his teeth with rage if he had been a more demonstrative person.

"That's 'im," said Benno, brightening up at the sight of his friend. "I told you he was me mate, missus, but you wouldn't believe me. 'Ow,s it goin' Gabby?" he enquired cheerfully, "Haven't seen you for a while." He screwed up his face and winked to indicate this was to put Mrs Byers off the scent in case she had heard of the events of the afternoon."

Mrs Byers noticed both the grimace and the wink. She said, in a frosty tone. "You understand, Mr Fox, it is my duty to keep my lodgers from being molested by persons wandering in off the street. My boarding house has always been noted for its quietness and respectability, and I am sure you will agree with my desire not to admit undesirable visitors. Mr and Mrs Taylor came with the highest references and have been model lodgers in the few weeks they have been in my house. It would be a matter of great regret if we had to part company through any complaints from other lodgers."

"He's not a friend of mine, Mrs Byers, and he won't be here long, and he won't be back again. You need not worry, he can come in for a few minutes and then I will see him safely downstairs and out into the street."

Mrs Byers nodded, sniffed, and turned away She was a small woman, but formidable, and walked quickly down the stairs absentmindedly rubbing the stair rail with a polishing rag as she went.

Fox grabbed Benno by the arm and hauled him into the room just as the sound of the dressing gong echoed through the house. "What the hell are you playing at?" He demanded fiercely. "Haven't you done enough for one day what with smashing

Gladman's window and getting me into trouble with the police?"

"Gimme a drink," demanded Benno. "I haven't had a drop all day." He slumped into an armchair and seemed to be about to go to sleep.

He was shaken awake. "You can't sleep here, what do you want?"

Benno leered up at him. "I'm dead sick of being sober; I want a drink. There's Amy, she's a mate of mine; she'll get me a drink."

"You've been drinking all day," said Fox "Look at you!" He indicated Benno's bloodshot eyes, slurred speech and air of collapse as he lay awkwardly in the chair.

"Not a drop," was the indignant response. "All I've had was a bit of medicine to keep me goin'. You don't know how crook I been and I got some of Doctor Smith's Miracle Cure and its fixed me up a treat. I wouldn't have been able to get through the day without it. You'n Amy can have a swig if you like. There's some left in the bottle and it'll make you feel better."

With uncertain fingers he groped in his pocket and at last pulled out a half emptied bottle of the colonial elixir. It was about to smash on the floor when Fox took it away.

"How many did you buy?" asked Fox, sniffing distastefully at the bottle he held in his hand.

"Five," answered Benno after struggling with memory for a minute, "and that's the last one. You'll have to give me money for more. I'm not cured yet."

"Tip this out," ordered Fox, handing the bottle to Mrs Taylor, who looked as though she was being ordered to dispose of a snake.

''I'll do it,'' said Amy, and took the bottle from her mother's cringing hand. I'll take it down to the kitchen and get rid of it.''

If Mrs Byers is not around ask the girls for a cup of coffee. Hot and strong and maybe a bit of sugar.''

''Oh, that's alright, Mrs Byers likes me. She'll give me coffee if I ask for it.''

Gabriel looked down on the afflicted man. "He'll poison himself if he keeps on drinking the stuff. Five bottles at 1/6 that's, seven and sixpence,.half a day's wages thrown away on this dangerous rubbish. It's no wonder you broke Gladman's windows. You were mad drunk; don't you realise it must be stronger than rum?

''I like Melbourne,'' said Sir Thomas cheerfully. ''There's always something happening here. This has made my evening, and it's not over yet. I know exactly what we can do with your friend and at the same time save our friends from having to look for new lodgings.

's good stuff. It's gunna restore me to health; Gabbby, y'say it's gunna kill me. Well, so do the hospitals. They'll kill you off quicker than Doctor Smith's medicine's gunna do."

''Shut your mouth, my man!'' said Sir Thomas. I've been dealing with drunken sailors all me working life.and I'm treating you as just another one only this time it's a bit more complicated. I've never had a tough boarding housekeeper'' standing over me before.''

''We're not going to leave him here,'' said Sir Thomas. ''If Mrs Byers finds that he spent the night in her house she'll ask you to leave tomorrow morning

Benno was sprawled even lower in the arm chair and now lay with his head tilted uncomfortably over the back of the chair and his mouth open. He was starting to snore very loudly when they shook him awake."Come on, you can't sleep here."

"Gotta sleep somewhere. They chucked me stuff out of me room on to the footpath and changed the locks," he mumbled. "They said I haven't been payin' the rent. Now I got nowhere to go. You and Amy'll have to take me in an' I'll get another place in the mornin', if the traps don't catch me first."

Gabriel could imagine that Benno would be thrown out again in the morning if he was found on the premises by Mrs Byers, and they would go with him. The landlady would not have a low, wharf labouring type character like Benno in her house no matter what the circumstances, nor would she listen kindly to any excuses Fox might dream up.

When Amy returned with a cup of coffee the dinner gong had sounded and they could hear doors opening and shutting and footsteps on the stairs as the lodgers went down to the dining room.

Holding the coffee under Benno's nose had no effect. He was now snoring loudly and Gabriel was glad their neighbours had gone to eat else they would have been tapping on the door and complaining of the noise.

They got the coffee into him after a while in spite of his grimaces and complaints.
"You're not staying here; don't think that!'' Said Sir Thomas We're going now to the sixpenny rooms and you can just sleep off your medicine, and don't come back tomorrow. we'll come round and see you. What time do they turn you out in the morning?"

"Ar pas' seven, Gabby, and y' can't do this t'me. I thought you was me mate. Why can't I sleep here? I can doss down on the floor and I won't be a nuisance to anyone. Jus' gimme a go will ya? I don' wanna sleep in the sixpenny place; they turn you out in the morning without no breakfast."

"I'll give you money for breakfast but I won't give you a penny tonight because you'll go straight down to the pubs with it, and you won't get any if you come here for it, not

a penny. I don't want to see you anywhere near here again."

''What's the sixpenny place?'' asked Amy.'' It sounds very cheap, is it nice?'

''No it's not my girl. And you can't come with us three because it's for men only. When your father loses all his money and can't borrow from anyone you and your mother will have to go to the women's sixpenny. I won't be here but I'm sure Gabriel will give you six pence each every night so you don't have to sleep on the streets.''

''You're horrible, I hope your ship sinks and you have to sail home on a raft.''

''Amy, '' cried her mother, ''What a dreadful thing to say, now apologise to Sir Thomas immediately.''

''It''s alright Ivy, Amy and I understand each other.I'll get my own back one of these days.

''What form will your revenge take?''asked.Gabriel.

Sir Thomas said, ''I was thinking of kidnapping the girl, taking her on a ship, and when it sank, and we we were on the raft together I would cut down her rations of food and water until she begged for mercy.

''Well, you'd better not fall asleep. The moment you start snoring I'll roll you off the edge of the raft, and leave you to the sharks.''

''This conversation is most unseemly,'' said Mrs Taylor. We do not want hear about possible criminal acts being discussed so lightly.When the men go, Amy, we, and your father will have a little talk about the duties of a lady in society.''

''Amy pulled a face at Gabriel. She knew very well who would do most of the talking for the next half hour or so.

In spite of Benno's bitter complaints and pleas for mercy on account of it being Christmas they got him out of the chair and with an arm each over their shoulders they proceeded clumsily down the stairs. Their progress was enlivened by Benno's loud conversation and complaints as they attempted to sneak quietly by the dining room door. Benno wanted to go in and have a confrontation with Mrs Byers but they got past safely and no one challenged them.

The sixpenny doss-house was not far from their lodgings. ''We'll make him walk the rest of the way,''said Sir Thomas. 'Exercise is better for him than hanging on to us, besides, he pongs a bit, doesn't he?''

''How did you find this place?'' asked Gabriel.

''Walking, As an officer on a ship I don't get much exercise so when I'm ashore I like to get around and see as much as possible. So far I've seen a kangaroo and a platypus. And I've been to a corroboree. I must tell you that the best way to learn about a city is

to walk the streets and talk to the people. That's how I found the doss house. It's in King Street, between Little Collins and Bourke, I was passing so I stuck my head in the door and had a good look around''

They made Benno walk ahead, not wanting to be seen in the company of a staggering, inebriated wharf labourer who shouted abuse over his shoulder now and again followed by pleas and invitations to come into the next pub and have a drink. They kept a strict distance behind him. Apart from any other consideration th separation might give them time to disappear if Benno was accosted by an alert policeman.

Gabriel knew they had arrived when a shabby man in the remains of a military red coat with the frogs torn or missing asked for a shilling, enough to buy him a bed for the night and breakfast in the morning.

Sir Thomas gave the the man his shilling, and received a smart military salute in return. The man shuffled off at once, not to the lodging house but down the street towards the nearest hotel.

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Benno in the sixpenny dosshouse.

They were outside a large, plain, red brick building of three stories. The entrance was arched and sheltered a short flight of steps which led up to heavy double doors that had been much kicked on the bottom panels where all the paint had flaked away. A sign painted over the arch and repeated on the door A a small spy-hole announced they were at THE NEW MODEL LODGING HOUSE. Another sign attached to the brickwork carried the information that clean beds could be had for sixpence per night and breakfast for another sixpence.

In spite of Benno's pleas to be shouted a parting drink his companions marched him inside to the ticket box where a man behind a glass window was accepting sixpences and shillings from a queue of prospective lodgers.

Signs on the painted brick interior announced that no liquor of any kind could be brought into the dormitories. No women would be admitted. No food could be permitted to be eaten in bed and the outer doors would be locked and all lights extinguished precisely at 10.30pm.

Fox would not trust Benno with a shilling. He stood in the queue and paid the money himself while Benno stood glumly with Sir Thomas.

The man gave him two tickets, one for bed the other for breakfast. The bed ticket was numbered to indicate which bed Benno was to occupy and his name was written in pencil on the back.

Benno looked at his tickets. "312," he whined, "that's the third floor and it's a long way up those steps. I need something to give me the strength to get up there and I haven't had nothin' to eat all day."

Gabriel and Sir Thomas had, by now missed dinner themselves. Mrs Byers would not serve up another just for them. Gabriel hoped Amy had had hers ,but decided that as they were there they might as well see the rest of the sixpenny lodgings.

The place smelled musty and there were taints of other odours in the air, but not much worse than one would smell in most parts of Melbourne at that time. They tramped up to the third floor to find that it was all one large dormitory with dozens of black painted iron beds set out in rows with just enough room to walk up and down between. Wooden lockers were set around the wall and on the payment of fourpence, with the promise of a penny refund on return of the key, it was possible to hire a locker for the night. Any lodger who could not afford the fourpence had to take his clothes and valuables to bed with him at night.

Benno's bed, like the others, was numbered. A board had been mounted over the head of every bed with a number painted on it. This was convenient because some lodgers were sitting up on the beds before turning in and used the board as a back-rest with the pillow as padding. Benno's bed was situated near a half-round window through which a tall man standing on tiptoe could get a glimpse of the roof and chimney pots of the warehouse opposite. There were several windows just the same around the walls but all were firmly shut in spite of the warmth of the night and the pervading smell, to which they soon became accustomed. There were signs painted on the brick walls repeating earlier warnings about smoking, drinking, swearing and so on, and further useful information about service times at local churches.

Even at that hour it was clear some of the inmates had nowhere else to go and were sitting on their beds sunk in apathy. Others were chatting or visiting as they encountered old friends; many were accustomed to spending their nights in the place and were quite at home.

Near Benno’s bed they startled a man smoking a pipe in spite of

prominent notices around the walls to say that smoking was strictly forbidden. He palmed the pipe in his hand in the vain hope that no one would notice.

"It's about time they opened the windows and let some air in here," he said. "There was a man here a second ago, I have no wish to call him a gentleman, who was smoking like a chimney, he just went out as you entered and the smoke hasn't had time to clear. Look at that!" He waved the smoke away vigorously to prove his point.

"You can smoke if you want to retorted Sir Thomas, it's nothing to do with me, but if you were on my ship and smoked that damned thing below decks I'd kick the living.daylights out of yer, and do it twice if it was a wooden ship.''

The man looked at him keenly. "I thought you were the manager. Do you have any

managerial connection with this abode of antipodean luxury?"

Sir Thomas shook his head and the man relaxed. His pipe reappeared and he began puffing contentedly though now keeping a close watch on the head of the stairs lest anyone from the management should appear and catch him defying house regulations.

He glanced up at them again. "Will I have the pleasure of the company of you two gentlemen tonight? If so I advise you to take any valuables you may possess to bed with you and to keep a firm hold on them even when you are asleep. I would not put much faith in the lockers; there are such things as skeleton keys, you know; If you have anything of value keep an eye on it. Some of the persons who frequent this establishment are a little short-sighted and tend to mistake other people's property for their own."

"Anyone who tries to pinch my stuff gets stoushed," announced Benno ,"not that I got anything worth pinching."

"Do I detect a fellow Englishman?" asked the stranger, ignoring Benno and looking at Sir Thomas. "Your voice tells me that you are from one of the southern counties. I'm sorry that you are down on your luck and have to join us in this mean place." He nodded. "You do well to keep up appearances; that's important, and put your trousers and shirt under your mattress. It helps to keep them pressed and as well you can be sure they will still be there in the morning."

Gabriel would have listened but was jolted by a sudden, excited jab in the ribs from Benno's elbow. "F'Gaw's sake look at that."

Gabriel turned to where he was pointing. It was at a young man who had just come up the stairs and was walking slowly between the beds looking at the numbers. In his hand was one of the sixpenny tickets. It was Henry Flanagan.

"Henry! What are you doing here?"

"Henry jumped and was about to flee down the steps when he saw who it was speaking. A sullen look appeared on his face. "I aint goin' home. I don't care what you say, even if it is nearly Christmas; and don't you tell Ma or the girls where I am."

Fox shrugged. "Your mother is not likely to talk to Benno or me so we won't be telling her anything. What about your father? Does he know where you are?"

"Dunno! I asked him for some money this morning and he give it to me. I reckon he had an idea I was going to bolt because I couldn't stand it at home any longer. I thought I'd try and get a job on the Exhibition Buildings. I read in the paper they'll need all the workers they can get if it’s going to be ready next year for the opening."

''Is this another soul in torment?'' enquired Sir Thomas cheerfully. ''Has this young lad, Henry, I believe you said, run away from home at Christmastime.''

He addressed Henry. ''Lad, I judge you to be about fourteen or fifteen, and I was fourteen when I ran away from home, but I was shrewder than you. I didn't run away until after I had my Christmas dinner. What are your plans now?''

''Me mother and sisters want me to go into an office and I can't stand the idea, I want to work in a factory, or build things.''

''You've won me over, Henry. Working in an office would be a living death to a lad like you. Anyone that's ready to give up his Christmas dinner for the sake of a dream has my sympathy.I ran away to sea many years ago, after Christmas of course,and I haven't regretted it, at least not yet''

He turned to Gabriel. ''Would you and the Taylors object to having dinner at my expense somewhere, and we'll invite Henry too.''

''I'm sure they'll be delighted, but if not Amy and I will come, and I think we can count on Henry being there as well.''

''Too right!'' said Henry.

''I believe Young and Jacksons turn on a pretty good spread. I'll make some enquiries.''

''Sounds good,'' said Benno. I'll come too, if you like.

'' No Benno, you're not on my guest list, because you're already on the police guest list. If the police come to my party as well as you they could arrest Gabriel and me and charge us both for habouring a police fugitive.

The stranger who had been caught sm0king, and Benno. defended Henry's right to run away from home and make a living as best he could. The stranger was all for it, and his line was to get as much money as possible out the parents. "Look at me," he stated proudly. "I haven't seen England these 25 years and I get a remittance every month from the family to make sure I stay away. They say if I ever set foot in England again that will be the finish; not another penny from them. Not that I care; I have turned my back on the old Dart forever. However, as you can see, I am a little reduced at the moment; my remittance didn't arrive on time but when it does I will repay all debts, and," he added for emphasis, "with interest, down to the last farthing."

He looked benevolently at Henry. "Of course I've taken a fancy to this young shaver. I liked the cut of his jib as soon as I saw him. You know, young Henry reminds me of what I was like at his age, free-handed, always ready to help a chum down on his luck, and I must admit if a friend was to lend me a pound right now it would come in very handy indeed. Punctually repaid the moment my remittance arrives and, as I said, with interest."

Benno was firm. "Henry don't lend money to no one! and I'll be here to job anyone that tries to get it away from him. Henry's alright; I'll look after him. Don't you worry, Gabby, his own father wouldn't take better care. I'll see 'e takes a little walk before 'e

turns in; just down to the corner and back."

"And I'll come too," said the man. "You never know what could happen to an innocent boy in a city like this unless he has some moral, Christian men with him to keep him out of trouble."

Gabriel's heart sank at the thought of Henry being in the care of these moral, Christian sinners. Still, the boy was not his. If he was driven from home because his mother was trying to force him into a mould that suited her but not him, Fox could not take responsibility, even though he was concerned.

"I caught an early train and came into the city and I've been walking round all day looking at the building jobs. There's a big hotel going up in Collins Street and there's the Exhibition Buildings. I asked if they wanted anyone to start straight away but they said there'd be nothin' doing before Christmas. Y' should see 'em; there's steam cranes and donkey engines 'n mechanical hoists. I'm gunna work with them engines and Ma can do what she likes, she can't stop me. You wouldn't believe what it's like being here after living in Walhalla all your life. If I can't find a job next week I'll ask that Pryor feller to have word on the quiet with Pa, and I reckon he'd have me apprenticed as long as Ma doesn't know anything about it."

There seemed to be a core of commonsense about Henry that would see him safely through the attentions of Benno and the Remittance Man. They might take him for a walk to the corner and then, by chance into the pub but as he was obviously under age no publican, who valued his licence would let him stay in the bar for a minute. His friends would have to take his money and then bring the drink to him outside on the footpath. He did not think Henry would hand money over to either of these chance acquaintances.

As they spoke the dormitory was slowly filling. Men would wander up the stairs clutching numbered tickets and looking round for their beds. Some seemed as though they could barely climb to this floor and had to pause and hang on to the balustrade while recovering their breath; many looked quite ill. Gabriel was glad that he, at least, would not be spending the night there. The lower floors were more popular and a hum of conversation could be heard from below.

Gabriel had his back turned and did not at first see a workman who came up the stairs wearing, in spite of the heat,a long woollen scarf, a grubby pepper and salt cap and a buttoned up coat to match. He was a slight man who closely eyed Fox, perhaps in the belief that that individual was part of the management.

They looked at one another as men do when they see a half familiar face but cannot remember from where or when. The stranger had a drooping, brown, walrus moustache and the tanned face of a man who spent his working life out of doors. Like the other sixpenny lodgers he clutched a bundle of possessions which was never put down except on his own bed, where it was kept in view at all times.

The newcomer wandered up and down the rows looking at his ticket, and the bed

numbers until he found the right one then sat on it and once again looked carefully at Fox. Fox was about to speak when the man suddenly leapt to his feet, his bundle forgotten. His face showed great consternation. "You're the bloke from the building society! What the hell are you doing here in a sixpenny joint? Oh my gawd, the place has gone broke, and you've got my ten quid. I took it out and then put it back again; what an idjit!"

He advanced on Fox. "Gimme me tenner! I want it now!"

Fox recognised him. He was the cockney workman who had arrived at the office after the fall of the Occidental & Civic Bank and had been foremost among those demanding to have his deposit repaid.

The man stuck a dirty hand under Fox's nose. "I'll take it now, in cash. You bastards; you got all that money and you've lost it; but you're not getting mine; if there's not ten quid left I'm gunna take it out on your hide."

The onlookers had been astonished at this interruption but Benno now decided that his reasonableness and tact could be used to good effect. He moved closer. "No one stoushes a mate of mine while I'm around." He stood up with fists at the ready and one foot extended in front of the other; it was the accepted boxing stance of the time.

"E's got me money and now its all gone," whined the man. "If 'e still 'ad it 'e wouldn't be getting a sixpenny bed. That was all the money I 'ad; why do you think I'm 'ere?"

"You can get your money at nine o'clock in the morning, as soon as we open for business."

The man treated this statement with contempt. "Ho yus! and where will you be at nine o'clock in the morning? What happened? Did your fat mate tickle the peter and up traps and leave you without a tosheroon?"

"Just say the word, Gabby, and I'm into 'im. I'll knock 'is bloody head off."

Gabriel was irritated and waved Benno off. "No! Your money's safe, come to the office first thing tomorrow. Bring your receipt I will be there I promise you and we will either return your money or talk to you about your investment. I'm not here for the night; I brought this man here because he was annoying me and I wanted to make sure he got a bed."

"He's got my money, and young Henry's here, he's got cash invested in the firm too. We're shareholders and that's why Gabby's got to look after us."

"There's nothing like investment," said the remittance man "If I'd invested my money when I first came to the colony I would be a rich man now. I was offered shares in the Occidental & Civic Bank when it was first floated, what would you think of that for an investment?"

Those present were not impressed with his example of prudent financial dealings, the

bank named was the one that had closed its doors forever the previous week.

The workman eyed this unlikely group of shareholders. "I don't want to come tomorrer. Just give me the tenner now and we'll call it quits."

"If Gabby says come tomorrer, he means come tomorrer. Now, just clear off and go ter bed. In the mornin' you can toddle down to the office and get yer money all serganio."

"Yeah! You're in it with him aren't yer? You blokes 'ave a whip round now and get me ten quid and if yer don't I'm goin' straight to the traps!"

"The traps!" said Benno, suddenly alarmed. "No you don't! You sit there all quiet or I'll belt yer one."

Gabriel was appalled at the scene. Benno and the investor were shouting and everyone in the dormitory was looking at them in curiosity and astonishment as they stood almost face to face and glared at each other. The noise of the altercation must have drifted downstairs because the drone of conversation from below had quietened. He would have gladly passed round the hat to raise £10 to shut the man up but he knew the company he was keeping and had no more than thirty shillings of his own .He would not ask Sir Thomas for the money and was determined to make the man come to the office.

He was trying as best he could to keep Benno quiet while explaining to the man that his money was safe and he could have it in the morning when Henry whispered to him and pointed.

A policeman was coming up the stairs. No doubt he was making his evening tour of the premises and had been attracted by the noise of the quarrel. Benno instantly threw himself under the nearest bed and scuttled in this way across several rows while keeping out of sight.

He had not been quick enough! The police constable had witnessed this sudden retreat and he came across in time to see Benno's head appearing cautiously over the far side of a bed. Their eyes met and he beckoned with his finger to Benno to come closer.

Benno did not respond except to go further away then, seeing that the policemen had uncovered a line of retreat by moving away from the head of the stairs, he made a sudden dash for freedom and raced down to the lower storey. The officer followed and they could judge from the noise of feet on the uncarpeted steps that he was pursuing Benno down the next flight of stairs as well. Several tenants of the lodging house were able to hook themselves up by the elbows to peer out of the windows and they reported after a few seconds that Benno had bounced down the front steps and was racing away with the law in rather distant pursuit.

''I think it's time we retreated too,'' said Sir Thomas, ''Before the copper comes back to enquire what part we had in all this.''

He gave the remittance man a shilling on the understanding that it would be repaid with interest the next time they met, down to the last farthing.

''I do like a good liar,'' he said, referring to the remittance man as they left. Besides, he said he came from Derbyshire, which I doubt, wrong accent. And you, Gabriel, I must congratulate you on the class of the acquaintances you are gaining here in Melbourne. But I'm glad you were too proud to ask for assistance with the ten pounds the man was demanding.''

Gabriel said to the workman. "Be in the office at 9 o'clock sharp and bring your receipt. If you are not satisfied with your investment or the way we run the society we will all be better off if you put your money elsewhere."

''And you, Henry,'' said Sir Thomas, ''Keep in touch with Mr Fox so he can invite you you to the dinner when we know when and where it's to be.''

Now, shall we go back and entertain the ladies with stories of our adventures here tonight? This going to make Amy very jealous, because she wasn't with us.

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Mr Gladman performs a public service.

The agency opened at nine next morning, but the workman was not outside the shop clutching his papers, nor was he to be seen though Gabriel looked up and down the street.

Office time was regulated by a richly ornamented French chiming, mantel clock that James Pryor had observed one day in a jeweller's window. It was decorated with a bronze representation of cupid aiming his arrow at a shepherd and shepherdess. Cupid must have missed and hit James Pryor instead because he became enamoured of the clock, purchased it on the spot with building society money and now it graced a shelf in a small office that had been partitioned off for his exclusive use. Just as this clock sounded the very last note of nine Mr. Pringle, their chief clerk, appeared through the door. He was 29 years of age, lived with his wife in Richmond, and had been glad to get the job with Pryor and Fox. Times were hard and there was much unemployment, particularly among office workers.

He had been clerk in the office long enough to observe the business practises of the two partners and realized the hollowness of the Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society; but it was not his place to express an opinion on it or on the conduct of the agency. He had become a little more confident about his future over the past few weeks, mainly because the extraordinary optimism of James Pryor buoyed up everyone connected with him.

He was a thin, sandy haired man, prematurely bald, who now took off a swallow-tailed black coat and exchanged it for his office coat. He always brought paper cuffs to

the office to wear on his shirtsleeves after he and his wife had had 'words' about ink-stains on the cuff, which she had not been able to ub out.

The two men greeted one another gravely and Fox stepped out to buy the Age and Argus. Reading the morning papers was one of his duties, particularly the classified advertisements of real estate for sale or purchase. Interesting advertisements would be shown to his partner and they would decide if there was any profit to be gained by Pryor and Fox contacting either buyer or seller to offer their services.

At ten o'clock Fox was still carefully reading the papers and the clerk was writing out some correspondence. The other partner was not there, but no one expected to see him in the office before ten, except when he had an appointment, or called on acquaintances first thing to see if there was any chance of working up new business.

Mr. Gladman was their first caller for the day. He walked in, his head held high. On this occasion he had remembered his hat; he wore a fashionable check suit with a sprigged waistcoat and carried an ebony walking stick with a chased silver handle, his dundreary whiskers had been carefully combed and brushed; it was clear that a matter of importance was in hand.

Fox was not surprised to see Mr. Gladman, he had been expecting the man to call about his smashed windows but did not know whether he was to be prayed over or dunned for the cost of the repairs.

What was astonishing was to see that Mr. Gladman was in the company of the other person whose appearance had been expected earlier, the cockney workman, the depositor.

They entered the office together with Mr. Gladman firmly holding the upper arm of the workman as though he was in some sort of moral custody. A third man followed whom Fox did not notice at the time his attention was so concentrated on the first two.

"Mr. Fox, you have met Brother Thompson, I think," were Gladman's opening remarks. He pushed forward the witness as though he was the first exhibit in a trial. "By the grace of the Lord, after a life of sin and debauchery, he became a member of our little flock and he also toils to earn his bread in an iron yard. He should be there even now as I speak lest his master, a heathen, as are so many of our fellow countrymen should discharge him from his present employment. Yet why is he here? Why is he here in your office --?"

"He wants his money back," interrupted Fox, "Mr. Pringle, look over his receipt, if it is in order write a cheque for the amount."

Mr. Gladman raised his hand. "No, Mr. Fox, a cheque will not do. I know for a fact that your firm was caught in the bank crash and I caution Brother Thompson against accepting anything from you but sterling or a banker's draft on a respectable, solid bank.Brother Thompson caught a train and came to my home last night in great

distress," he continued. "He came because of my position in the city, my knowledge of the world and because of our brotherhood in the church. He told me that he had encountered you in a low lodging house, which I hope he will never have to enter again, and you were in very dubious company. 0ne of your companions offered to do him a severe injury and from his description I identified that person as the ruffian who smashed my windows and later violently escaped from the police.In view of this," he continued, "I have not only brought Brother Thompson here in the hope that I can assist him to recover his money I also first accompanied him to the police station and acquainted them with the facts. Mr. Jones of the Detective Office came with us on this visit and I believe he has some questions to ask you."

At this cue Detective Sergeant Jones, who had stayed in the background to observe and listen stepped forward and laid his notebook on the counter. "You are Mr. Fox, I believe, a principal of this firm, would you oblige me, Sir, with your full name and address?"

Not for the first time Fox mentally cursed the ubiquitous and irresponsible Benno who had got him into this position. "Let's clear something up first," he said. "Mr. Pringle, have you written that cheque yet?"

Pringle's mouth snapped shut. "Nossir." He took the paper presented by Thompson and started to write..

Gladman gazed sternly at Gabriel. "No, Mr. Fox, as I said before your cheque is not acceptable. I am here in the capacity of a loving elder brother to Brother Thompson and I will not permit him to accept from you anything less than cash or a draft from a respectable banking house. When he has recovered the money that he earned by the sweat of his brow then we will discuss my costs and damages. As you may gather from my appearance in this office I have not been able to open my business today. It is a day when I could expect to do good business so being closed represents a grievous loss for me."

He folded his arms and gazed immovably on the assembled company.

Fox did his best to ignore Gladman. "Mr. Pringle, write the cheque. I will sign it. Mr. Pryor should be here at any moment and he will countersign and then you can take Mr. Thompson to the bank so he can get his money and he need not come back. Mr. Thompson you will have your money within half an hour, then you can do what you like with it."

Mr. Gladman smiled in a superior way but said nothing. He did not expect to see James Pryor ever again and was taken aback when that gentleman walked into the office just as the detective was about to restate his question.

Mr. Pryor greeted them, raising his hat to the company before hanging it on its own particular peg. He turned and rubbed his hands, ready to do business.

"Our friend is back," stated Fox, indicating Thompson, "and he wants his money. Sign

that cheque and he can have it."

Mr. Pryor took the cheque that was handed to him by the clerk and signed it without examination or comment. With a feeling of relief Fox sent the clerk and the reluctant depositor off to the bank to collect the money.

Mr. Gladman was a little uneasy at this development. He had built up a great charge of moral indignation as though it was a head of steam, enough to drive an engine. A little of the pressure would be lost if Thompson actually recovered his investment. He waited.

"Now, Sir," said the detective after he had been introduced to James Pryor and had recorded personal details about the partners "Is it a fact that you were seen yesterday evening in the company of one--?" and here he consulted his notebook, "one Seamus Benjamin Murphy who escaped from custody at the Bourke Street police station and is needed to assist our enquires in relation to an incident of property damage that occurred on the same day in Bourke Street at approximately three pm.?"

Fox had to admit that he had been in the company of that desperate character at the time and place stated.

"Your clear duty, Mr. Fox was to inform the police. It is possible that there may be charges laid because of certain allegations that were made against this man Murphy in relation to the incident I mentioned. It could be inferred that you were obstructing the course of justice. Of course if charges had been laid any assistance given to escape the police would be regarded very seriously."

Once again Fox had to explain his connection with the terrible Benno and deny that he incited Benno to smash Mr. Gladman's windows, or knew anything about his intentions. He decided that it might be possible to tell a lie or two and get away with it.

"I couldn't take him to the police station, he wouldn't come; well, he ran away last time, didn't he? I thought it best to get him settled down for the night and then go to the police and tell them he was in such and such a bed in the sixpenny lodgings. You couldn't expect me to wrestle with a violent man like that and drag him along to the police station. Anyway he had been drinking all day; once he was asleep you could have taken him without any trouble at all. It would have worked only he was still awake when the constable saw him and I would not have any idea where he is now."

The detective tapped his teeth with his pencil. He had the air of a man who had listened to all the liars in Victoria at some time during his career in the force.

"It seems an odd connection, you and this wharf labourer, but I have heard some stranger stories in my time that just happened to be true. You say you have no idea where he is now. Will you guarantee to let us know if you do become acquainted with his whereabouts?"

Fox wholeheartedly promised to let the police know anything that might come to light about Benno. He wanted nothing more to do with that erratic individual.

Mr. Gladman could contain himself no longer. "But what of this so called Building Society? How could a penniless migrant straight off the boat become a director of a society that advertises to have £5 million in capital unless it is a house of straw and the £5million exists only in the imagination of the directors? Ask your questions along those lines, Mr. Jones, and I am sure you will get some very interesting answers. How does it exist except on the subscriptions of persons who are foolish enough to be taken in by its advertising?"

Mr. Pryor had known nothing of Fox's adventures of the preceding night and had not been able to join in the discussion but now Mr. Gladman had strayed into the field in which he was most fluent.

"I am glad you asked that question, Mr. Gladman," he stated. "Naturally our books are not open for inspection by the general public but they may be viewed at any time by the properly constituted authorities. Mr. Jones is welcome to the office for that purpose and in fact we would encourage him to obtain an inspection warrant. I mention a warrant so as to protect all parties. Our business methods are open and honest but we cannot permit any person whether police or civil to inspect our books unless we also are protected. Sergeant, please set Mr. Gladman's mind at rest by applying for a warrant. Our ledgers, our journals, our day books, our investment registers, our bank documents will all be open to you."

"You were caught in the bank crash; how could you still be solvent?"

Mr. Pryor looked at him knowingly. "You're a businessman Mr. Gladman, you hear things in the city before they become public and, no doubt, sometimes you act on that private knowledge. We happened to learn in time that the bank was in difficulties and we took the appropriate measures; as you would, as would any prudent businessmen. But have no fears for us, our society is solvent and will be a force for progress in Melbourne for many years to come."

Mr. Gladman was about to pursue the matter further when Pringle, the head clerk, entered the office.

Mr. Gladman looked at him sharply. "Where is Mr. Thompson, what have you done with him?"

"He got his money and left me at the bank. I think he was going back to work but he didn't say anything, he just signed for it and cleared off."

"He left no word for me? No sign of gratitude for having recovered his money?"

"He didn't have to," retorted Gabriel, "he was going to get it anyway. I told him that last night. You could have saved yourself all this trouble and stayed with your business."

"My business," wailed Mr. Gladman, "is ruined. How can I conduct a business from a boarded up shop. Did you know the story was in the papers this morning? The reporters were there less than half an hour after the outrage was committed. There is a report in the Argus and almost half a column in the Age. Just before Christmas, too, really, this could not have happened at a worse time."

James Pryor brightened up immediately when he heard of these newspaper stories and his eyes turned to their own glass windows as though measuring the publicity value of having them smashed too. He decided to give some consideration to Mr. Gladman's problems.

"You are insured?" he asked.

"Yes, but the glass cannot be replaced until the new year. I first met the criminal that broke my windows here, in this office; I do believe it is incumbent on you, Mr. Fox, as his companion to help lift me from this pit of despair into which I have tumbled. My feet are bound round with snares and the devil stands across my path."

"Wait a minute," said the detective, interrupting Mr. Gladman's flow of language. We're a bit busy at the station right now, and I have to hurry back."

"What charges are you laying?" Mr. Gladman enquired eagerly. "Someone in this Godless modern society has to be held responsible for wilful damage to property."

The detective shook his head. "At present there's no provable criminal connection with anyone here. Nothing that would stand up in court. If you come across new information you could let me know but it would have to be a whole lot stronger than what I've heard today. The only advice I've got for anyone here is for Mr. Fox. I would advise you, Mr. Fox, to break any connection with this fellow Murphy. He's a bad lot is our friend Murphy and when we catch him he'll be in trouble. You needn't expect to see him around for a few years."

"But the books, are you or are you not going to inspect the books of this so called building society?"

"Ah well, Mr. Gladman, we're police, not bookkeepers. We act on complaints; yours is the only one we have had so far and the problem seems to have been rectified. Any doubts you have about the Building Society should be referred to the Registrar it is up to him if he wants to investigate the books, If you feel you have some grounds against Mr. Fox for incitement to commit damage against your premises I'm afraid you will have to take civil action. You had better go and see a solicitor."

The detective walked out leaving Mr. Gladman staring folornly at the partners. He too was about to depart when Mr. Pryor called him back.

"Don't go for a minute, Mr. Gladman; I think we should talk some more about this matter. Would you care to step into my office?" There was scarcely room for the three of them in the cubicle that James Pryor graced with the title of office. He had already

made enquiries about moving to larger premises but office space in Melbourne was hard to come by and they were reluctant to move from their shop in the busiest part of Swanston Street.

Mr. Gladman took the client's chair and Fox sat on a corner of the desk.

"This is an unhappy affair, Mr. Gladman, but I think you will have to accept Mr. Fox's assurances that he had nothing to do with smashing your windows. The next question that arises is how can we help you?"

"It's a heavy loss," said Mr. Gladman, shaking his head sadly. "The insurance company will replace my windows but how can I pay rent and expenses if there is to be no income from the business until the new year? Even if I did accept Mr. Fox's story there is no doubt that the miscreant had some sort of connection with this office. I really believe you gentlemen owe me a duty of assistance in these troubles."

"Of course we do," agreed Mr. Pryor genially, rubbing his hands together, "And we are going to turn this affair round into one of the greatest strokes of good fortune you have ever had. What you need, Mr. Gladman, is a pre-Christmas disaster sale. Put up all your prices so that they can be reduced by 25% and we will have some banners made for the front of your building. You are going to have the biggest sale of musical instruments ever seen in Melbourne because Mr. Fox and I will be in charge of publicity. Don't worry about the fee it will be modest and based on results; we're going to astound you with the new sales you will get out of this."

Mr. Gladman was astounded already. The effrontery of talking about extracting a fee for repairing this commercial disaster, and the apparent vulgarity of Mr. Pryor's plans, was just too much.

He rose. "I believe we have no further business to discuss," he said icily, "You will be hearing from my solicitors."

"No, no! Mr. Gladman, never go to the law unless you can be sure of making a profit out of someone." James Pryor gestured the music dealer back to his seat. "You heard the detective; you cannot prove a connection between Mr. Fox and this fellow Murphy any more than you can prove that Mr. Fox incited him to break your windows. Let's be sensible. The chances are you would not win a court case and if so you would have to pay costs. That would be disastrous; there is no way you could make a profit out of a situation like that, whereas, at present, I can see a golden profit just waiting to be picked up."

"After we have sorted all this out I'll talk to you about buying your own premises. This is an important business you are running Mr. Gladman but it is not working to full capacity unless it is also paying off instalments on the shop for you. Renting is no good to a businessman. Buy now and when you retire you can sell the business and rent the property. You buy property here in the city before prices go up, otherwise, in a few years, you will bitterly regret this lost opportunity."

Mr. Gladman was not in the mood to consider buying property. He was thinking about his closed shop. "I have built my business up over many years and my clients would be outraged if I was to engage in a vulgar display such as you suggest. They would go to Allans' or one of the other music stores. You can't build up a high class clientele such as I have and then offend them with vulgarity."

Mr. Pryor fixed him with a glittering eye. "We will hire a German Band to play on the footpath outside the shop -- Christmas Carols will do very nicely. Just for an hour or two each day, and then in the evenings. This whole thing can be carried over into January until you get the windows fixed. You can have a big January sale; it might be best not to reduce the prices until January."

"Another thing. I am sure Mr. Fox would not mind coming back for a few days. There is very little doing in Real Estate right now and Mr. Pringle and I can handle it. Yes, that's it! Mr. Fox can back up your sales and I will deal with the publicity. Perhaps, Mr. Fox, you could go with Mr. Gladman right now and get things under weigh?"

Mr. Gladman and Gabriel looked at one another, lost in astonishment, but James Pryor paid no attention. He was busy calling for the clerk to go round to the signwriter's premises to alert him to the need to prepare for the banners and signs that would be designed presently by Mr. Pryor to help rescue the stricken music shop.

Mr. Gladman attempted to get matters clear in the minds of his auditors. "I haven't authorised this, you know. It is a matter that requires a great deal of thought and what you are asking me is to offend the standards of a lifetime. What if the results are not what you expect and you make matters worse than they are now?"

James Pryor waved these objections away. "Not now, old fellow, time is of the essence. I will have to catch the sign-writer early or the work won't be done today. You and Gabriel go round to the music shop like good chaps and start getting everything ready. I will let you know the instant the sign-writer's are able to come round and put up the banners."

Somehow, soon after this, they were out of the shop and on the footpath, Mr. Gladman was not quite sure how the interview had ended so quickly.

"This young man, your partner, is very overbearing, I had quite a lot to say still and I consider it most presumptuous of him to tell me, a businessman of my experience, how to run my business."

Gabriel was better acquainted with the overpowering personality of his partner than was Mr. Gladman and had not expected anything different. He said, "iI you don't want to follow his suggestions you will have to go back and tell him so; if not we will go to your shop and open up."

Mr. Gladman fidgeted nervously with his walking cane and then decided, like so many others, that it might be easier to let James Pryor have his own way than argue. They walked away together in uneasy silence.

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Mr. Pryor takes charge.

The display window of the music shop had consisted of four large glass panels set in wooden frames. They had been smashed by the infamous Benno and replaced temporarily by rough wooden hoardings nailed to the lintels. Already enterprising bill-stickers had been at work and decorated them with posters for shows and musical performances. They even found one of these people busily over-pasting all of the previously placed advertisements with a series of garish cartoon posters extolling the value of a new brand of soap.

Mr. Gladman came up and waved his stick at the man. "What do you think you're doing?" he demanded.

"I'm doin' me job!" the billposter replied. "Clear off and find somewhere else to put up your bills. I saw this place first. Tell yer what," he said pointing to where the show girls were parading on the other hoarding, painted in salmon pink flesh and wearing costumes that Mr. Gladman hardly cared to look at. "You can have the other half; but you'd better be quick. These windows was only broken yesterday and the other blokes'll be down like flies as soon as they hear about it; and some of them don't care what they do." He ignored Mr. Gladman's complaints after that, hurrying to get the posters firmly stuck to the hoardings. It took some minutes to convince the man that he really was being addressed by the proprietor of the shop. At last he finished the job and went away grumbling, under threat of being handed over to the police.

Luckily the glass in the top half of the doors in the centre of the shop facade had not been broken and two dusty skylights gave some illumination; even with the display windows boarded up the light in the shop was subdued but not gloomy.

Mr. Gladman kept stepping out on to the footpath to survey the facade. "We must get those wretched posters off the front of the shop. They will be most damaging by giving people a wrong impression of my business. Besides they might be seen by members of the Brethren; what will they think if my shop front is carrying advertisements for soap, and musical shows with pictures of semi-clad women." He self consciously turned his face away from this abominable sight."

Fox shook his head. "I wouldn't worry if I were you. If I understand Mr. Pryor correctly you will soon have signs out front that will make you wish you had the ladies back again."

"Now look here," said Mr. Gladman, "I didn't ask for any of this. I suppose I could suspend judgement on your connection with the smashing of my windows but I will not permit these premises to be turned into a centre of public curiosity. I have told

you before, Mr. Fox, decorum and dignity is all in all in the music business. If I do not conduct my business discreetly my clients will patronise other establishments and I am facing enough difficulty as it is without endeavouring to make matters worse."

Fox did not argue but he thought that Mr. Gladman's views on decorum in the music business were about to be tested. His attention was distracted by the arrival of a person who may have been the first client of the day.

He was mistaken. This man, a self important individual of stocky build, was wearing a black felt hat with a flat top and had a full, black beard and shaven upper lip. His suit was the same sombre colour as the hat, relieved only by a white shirt which buttoned up under his chin. He may have worn a tie but if so it was covered by the beard.

"Ah, Brother Gladman!" he cried on sighting that individual. Mr. Gladman was wary at encountering the newcomer and they shook hands solemnly.

"The Devil has been active in Bourke Street, Brother Gladman. I see that he has laid siege to your shop. Not only to smash your windows, which I read about in the papers this morning, but he came back like a thief in the night to put those depraved pictures on the front of your establishment. Pull them off, Brother Gladman, scrape them off. Gaudy representations of shameless, semi-clad women will lure our young people to destruction. Never let it be said that your business fostered Satan's business, for there is enough sin in Bourke Street, the Devil's very stamping ground, without him using a Christian establishment, such as this, to spread his evil."

"They are to come down directly," replied Mr. Gladman showing signs of embarrassment at the preaching of this gentleman and his exhortations to purify, at least, that little part of the city. "I assure you, Elder Muirhead, I have only just arrived myself. I have been busy informing the authorities as to my knowledge of this outrage and, as you know, these things take time."

Elder Muirhead nodded. "We must battle the Evil One where and how we can, but I have been told that the smashing of your windows was the work of a Fenian gang. Is that true?"

"It may be so, but I saw only one man during the attack and he uttered the most horrifying abuse against me and the Protestant faith." Mr. Gladman turned and glanced reproachfully at Gabriel. "I have met him before and faced him down with the true words of the gospel so that he could not stand in open debate before me. But he did breathe out threatenings and slaughter. I know him to be a drunken Catholic, Irish wharf labourer."

Elder Muirhead held up his hand. "Brother Gladman, you are like unto Uriah the Hittite; the Lord hath placed thee in the forefront of the battle against the forces of darkness. You know well that I did not approve of your joining the congregation because of this very business in which you were engaged." He indicated the shop. "Music is carnal in its nature unless it is sung and played in the service of the Lord, but I see that the He moves in mysterious ways His wonders to perform. I have never

set foot in an establishment such as yours before but if I had time I would be pleased to inspect it and hear about your ordeal from your own lips. The whole story will be dealt with fully in the next issue of 'The Rock''.

'' Good Protestants all over Victoria will become aware that the battle is at hand when they must choose sides, for the whirlwind is almost upon them. They will learn that the first blow has been struck here, in Bourke Street, and that you are amongst the foremost of the warriors of the Lord."

Mr. Gladman was clearly at a loss. He nervously clutched the two halves of his whiskers in his fists and stared in astonishment at his fiery companion.

"Perhaps it was just an isolated outrage. I think the fellow was drunk and wanted to vent his spite."

"Nonsense, man! The first shot has been fired to establish the Pope as the ruler of Australia. Pikes and guns, Mr. Gladman. Pikes and guns, that is what we need because it will come to a field, mark my words. It will be your duty to command a company."

"Command a company! You must be mad!

"No, Brother Gladman, sane. Remember, the great Oliver Cromwell himself knew not war until he was in his forties, but he fought gloriously for the true faith. We expect great things of you, Brother Gladman. You shall fight at Armageddon with the same power and strength as Mr. Greatheart of old. We know that you will atone, perhaps with your life, for the sinful nature of your calling."

Mr. Gladman stood with his mouth open, unable to speak

"How many times have I told you from the pulpit that The Scarlet Woman is mustering her legions for the attack and we must prepare to defend our lives and homes. Who would have thought in this far flung corner of the empire that it would fall on us to defend the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the Act of Settlement." He changed suddenly. "Brother Gladman, I cannot spend the time with you that I would wish; it is my duty to call on the other faithful Protestants of this city and tell them that the hour is at hand. I must ring the tocsin, the great warning bell of liberty. I shall see you on Sunday morning at the temple. You are to describe your experiences to the brothers and sisters there assembled and I will follow to lift their hearts and prepare their spirits for the struggles to come. In the meantime, Brother Gladman, call on all true friends you meet to rally at the Chapel of the Brethren on the next day of Sabbath. I too will be out in the highways and the by-ways calling on all honest Christians to gird themselves for battle. By the grace of God I bid you farewell."

He had trumpeted the last part of his speech so loudly and from the middle of the pavement that a number of people walking by turned in astonishment to look. He ignored them, did not see them, and bustled off to spread his tidings of the coming battles.

Gabriel listened to some of his speech but lost interest and had gone back into the shop. He was pleased to encounter an employee of Mr. Gladman whom he had not met before.

This new member of the staff was a woman who had skirted the two men talking on the footpath. She had come in to put on a dust wrap take off her bonnet and cover her hair with a scarf.

Mr. Gladman's last attempt to hire an assistant having ended badly he had compromised for the time being by engaging a lady to come in three times a week to dust and polish and help straighten up the lighter instruments and stock. She could demonstrate some of the musical instruments from stock but without Fox's easy skill and musical talent.

This new employee was a reduced gentlewoman whose late husband had been an innocent and had lost his money in an ill-advised purchase of gold mining shares. He had not understood that the shares were only partly paid and had scraped together the money to pay several calls b0efore the mine was eventually declared worthless and the company bankrupt, leaving him in the same condition.

After this shock his health declined and he died leaving his wife, Mrs.. Goss, without means. She was glad to get work in the music shop. It was a cut above scrubbing floors or working as a maid. While they were there a few people attracted by the appearance of disaster came to the door and peered in, none entered and this gave Mrs. Goss a chance to talk to Fox as she dusted and they moved some of the instruments to show them better.

Mr. Gladman came in greatly troubled. "That was Elder Muirhead," he announced, "he is a man born to lead and to deal with the burning issues of the day, perhaps the colony is too small for his outstanding talents."

Fox had the opinion that Elder Muirhead was a bigger religious crank than Gladman. He had more ability, was more enthusiastic, and so was going to cause more trouble.

"Confidentially, Mr. Fox," said the proprietor, drawing him to the back of the shop, "seeing you know this man that smashed my windows, is he part of a plot to create a Catholic ascendancy in Victoria?"

"Never!" said Fox. "When he is not working he goes to the pub during the week and to St Francis' Church for mass. Certainly you upset him when he heard you talking about Catholics and sometimes he broods about the wrongs of the Irish when the booze is in him, but he would not know anything about plots or conspiracies."

Mr. Gladman confessed, "I must admit that Elder Muirhead's words have shaken me! I have long believed that the Irish were planning to seize government in the colony one day, but not by force. They agitate for the taxpayers to support their schools and no doubt they can outbreed us and put their own men into Parliament. Such a prospect is serious enough but when Elder Muirhead speaks of guns and pikes and a

field of battle I fear he may be going too far. Did you hear him say that I was to lead a company? What would I know about giving orders to fighting men?"

"Well you had better think about it; but if you and the Irish do have a battle I won't be enlisting on either side. You can settle your arguments without me and I will read the papers afterwards to find out who won."

Mr. Gladman did not discern any humour in these remarks. He still walked around with his fists buried in his beard as a sign of agitation. He was distracted and aimless and was no help to the other two as they worked their way through the shop dusting and tidying.

One or two customers came in at last, not put off by the sight of the heavy wooden hoardings on the shop front, and Fox sold them tin whistles or other trumpery instruments as Christmas gifts for children. He could play them all and after a demonstration his customers were pleased to buy. Some sheet music went off too. Mr. Gladman told him the prices of these items when asked but otherwise barely noticed, he was still deep in thought.

Mr. Gladman's thoughts were interrupted by a thumping noise from outside. Ladders were being leant against the facade of his building. James Pryor and the sign-writers had arrived at the same time, and the men were busy measuring the area to be covered with announcements.

"I got them," announced Pryor stepping through the door. "They didn't want to stir out of their workshop, it was too close to Christmas and they had a lot of other work on, but I talked them round. It will be just a rough job, George, but then the timber should come down early in the new year when the glazier gets round to mending the window. We'll get them to pull those posters off and they can do a sign saying 'Billposters Prosecuted'."

Mr. Gladman coolly ignored the remarks addressed to him. He was in some doubt whether he was more offended at being addressed familiarly in this way by a man so much younger than himself, or worried at what was going to happen to his shop.

"There's not a German Band in sight up and down Bourke Street or Swanston Street." James Pryor continued, "You would think they'd be around when they were wanted. If you see one George can give the leader five shillings and tell them to play Christmas Carols outside the door this afternoon and they're to crowd the footpath so people have to walk on the road or go into the music shop. I met a friend of mine on the way round here, he's a theatrical agent, and he knows the town pretty well. I told him to get hold of half a dozen unemployed larrikins; we'll use them tomorrow to carry sandwich boards and signs. The painter said they should be ready by then."

"Larrikins?" trumpeted Mr. Gladman, who had become more and more agitated as Mr. Pryor's plans unfolded. "Am I to understand that you are going to hire unemployed larrikins to parade up and down the city advertising my shop? Now, look here, I have had a lot to endure since yesterday but I will not cheapen my good name and the good

name of my business with such a disgraceful course of conduct, and as for having a German Band hired to force customers into my shop it is just too much; I forbid it!"

James Pryor was not the sort to give up a project easily. He put his hand under Mr. Gladman's elbow and guided him to a further corner of the shop where he was able to address him without interruption. The rise and fall of his oratory interrupted by the proprietor's complaints could be heard as Fox went to attend the few customers who had braved the painter's ladders and planks to come into the shop.

"Isn't it exciting," whispered Mrs. Goss when they had gone carrying their purchases. "I'm not sorry old Big Tummy Gladman had his windows smashed. This place needed brightening up and I think you two can do it: and the way he goes on about the Chinese and the Irish; really, it's not the sort of thing I've been used to; Mr. Goss was a very gentlemanly man and I never heard him say a word against anyone."

She was interrupted for Mr. Pryor suddenly dashed outside to the footpath; he almost ran, which was unusual for him. Once there he tipped his hat on to the back of his head and stood studying the shop front while deep in thought. He came back in again, his face alight with inspiration. "I just had a boomer of an idea," he said to the puzzled Mr. Gladman. "We will have a space cleared behind the left hand window so we can use it as a sort of stage to show off the instruments. The hoarding can come down during the day and there will be entertainment going all the time. The German Band, yes, we will have them in during the day for about half an hour a time. When they're not here, Gabby, you can play some of the instruments out of stock; an organ, a piano, a tin whistle." He caught sight of the harp. "Can anyone work that thing?"

"I can," announced Mrs. Goss. "My father gave me the very best of education. I went to a finishing school in the south of England and I learned music theory and harp. They were my best subjects."

"That's marvellous," cried Mr. Pryor. "You wouldn't mind wearing a long white robe and a pair of wings while you were playing, would you.?"

Mr. Gladman interrupted; he had been outraged at all he had heard but this last suggestion was too much, "Blasphemy!" he cried. "Have you no shame?"

James Pryor shrugged, "forget the wings." He took the unhappy Mr. Gladman once more by the arm. "Now, George, you've got work to do. I want you to run over to the employment agency and ask if they can spare a couple of strong blokes to shift the stock and to lift down the hoarding. You will need rope, too. Well, isn't it obvious? The hoarding will have to go somewhere. It will either have to be taken away during the day or stood upright and tied to a veranda post. Don't argue, man, there's work to be done."

Mr. Gladman had been tugging so much at his beard because of his agitation that it was quite disarrayed, and ,on receiving these new instructions, he was in a state of mind that caused him to cross the road without his hat. He was opposed to all of Mr. Pryor's suggestion but such was the force of that young man's personality that he did

not know how to resist.

On the front of his shop big, flaming red letters were being formed which read:

DISASTER SALE - ALL STOCK MUST GO.

On the other side, on the hoarding which was to be taken down to expose the interior of the shop, the painters were about to set out the words:

ATTACKS AND THREATS WILL NOT CLOSE US.

lAlready inquisitive people were gathering on the footpath to read the signs and to see what would be written in smaller letters underneath.

"Allright," said Mr. Pryor, having delegated all tasks, "I'm off. Make sure they clear a big enough space for you to work in and keep an eye on Gladman. Right now he's liable to do anything. You will only be here about three days because after Christmas we will need you at the office. Next year we're going to sell more land, houses and buildings than ever before. I've been thinking about that, we should get a team of bright young blokes to sell for us and you can be in charge. I'll come round after lunch," he said, "and see how you're getting on. Tell them to tie the hoarding to the veranda post It won't block the footpath and if the police want it shifted I'll have a chat with the Sergeant. Don't admit to anything, just leave it to me to do the talking."

Mr. Gladman never forgot that day or the Christmas Eve that followed. He was not sure if the embarrassment he felt at the gaudiness and vulgarity of Mr. Pryor's campaign was compensated for by the money it brought in.

The sales campaign was the most popular event in Melbourne that Christmas. Several times the police had to move the crowd that gathered outside the music shop while a performance of sorts went on inside.

The Sergeant came in twice to warn them not to obstruct the pavement. The second time he did so Mr. Pryor happened to be there to point out that neither Mr. Gladman nor his assistants were breaking any city ordinances. They were not playing instruments on the footpath and shopkeepers had an ancient right, mentioned in Magna Carta, to attract passers-by to look in at their windows by any means which did not offend public morals or lead to a breach of the peace. The fact that Mr. Gladman's windows no longer existed was not his fault, but the principle was the same. He was more successful than most in inducing people to stop and look at his display and listen to his music but this should not be held against him or his establishment.

The Sergeant went away after this to ask his superiors what, if any, action they wanted him to take about this activity in Bourke Street. He did not come back so they continued to play to the crowd.

The excitement grew yet again when Mr. Pryor's theatrical agent started sending down artists who could perform within the confines of the shop. The agent was

getting his start in business by organising concerts and plays and was glad of this opportunity to employ some artistes for a short time. He hoped someday to emulate Mr. Coppin by establishing a circuit of theatres and country halls for his productions. He was enthusiastic when told about the impromptu concert and engaged the first performers he could locate; they were Irish musicians who had been in his office seeking work at the very moment he learned from Mr. Pryor of this new business opportunity.

The Irish artists had presented themselves in the full rig of plaids and kilts while Mr. Pryor was present. He and the agent led them to the skirl of the pipes and the beat of the drum the length of Bourke Street.

Everyone heard the music as they approached, led by Mr. Pryor and Mr. Edmunds. The two men marched together to the music and raised their shiny hats to right and left as the crowds parted before them and the police stopped all traffic at intersections to let them through.

No one watching as they passed could be ignorant of their destination. Some unemployed men had been rounded up and fitted with hurriedly prepared sandwich boards which proclaimed the wonderful bargains and service available at Gladman's music shop. They shambled along at the rear of the little procession.

Mr. Gladman, pale-faced, huddled in the back of his shop as the musicians stood in a small circle on the pavement and played what the agent announced to the applauding crowd was a lament for the wickedness of those who would invade and destroy the sanctity of private property.

They were ordered off the footpath by an indignant policeman, but that was alright; they merely filed inside and continued their recital in the shop while people crowded round the opening left by the smashed windows.

This display was considered scandalous and talked about for days because one artiste was a lady piper, something never before seen in Melbourne. She was also a dancer, and when she put down her pipes the sight of her socks flashing in Mr. Gladman's shop as she danced reels and jigs was a sensation; people jostled and struggled to see this spectacle. The exhibition would almost have justified police intervention except that they were unable to observe the display over the heads of the crowd no matter how much they craned or stood on tiptoe.

Mr. Gladman ordered these strangers out of the shop but he was scarcely heard over the noise made by pipe and drum and the clapping of the crowd as the dancer, who was leaping higher and higher, came to the climax of her performance.

His orders were in vain for when the girl stood panting and bowing and the musicians were bowing with her the cheering audience seemed to think that Mr. Gladman was part of the act. They gave him a special round of applause when he tried to address them to disclaim all responsibility for the spectacle and explain about the moral dangers into which dancing could lead unsuspecting persons.

Mr. Pryor waved him away and invited those present on the footpath to step inside and view the valuable and extensive stock of musical instruments saved from destruction during the recent outrageous attack. He hinted that if they wished to preserve civilisation from its enemies and arrest the onward march of anarchism and disorder they would do well to support Mr. Gladman, their great champion.

His eloquence was much admired by Mr. Edmunds, who was the ambitious theatrical agent. He saw that some of the more respectable members of the crowd stayed behind to look around the shop and they even made purchases in spite of Mr. Gladman's fears.

"You should be in Parliament," said Edmunds encouragingly. "We need men like you at the top if this colony is going to boom, as it should. You could stand in the conservative interest. God knows, we've got enough miners, shopkeepers, publicans, remittance men, and stump orators to serve every parliament in Australia. What we need are men of principle, business men who know what's good for Victoria and are prepared to stand up for our rights."

"Fox overheard this conversation while he was showing a customer some sheet music. James Pryor smiled and with a light remark turned the conversation away on to another topic but Fox could see the suggestion would not be forgotten or ignored.

Mr. Gladman wandered round distractedly. He could not concentrate on selling anything and could not decide whether his outrage at the liberties they were taking with his business compensated for the sight of so many customers on the premises.

One lady asked for a demonstration of the harp and Mrs. Goss obliged. She and Fox found some suitable music and he sat down at the piano to accompany her playing. Everyone in the store and people walking past stopped to listen for the two of them played together very sweetly.

At this time Amy and the captain arrived to view the damage but came in when they saw the crowds around the music shop. Amy walked up to Gabriel and kissed him firmly on the cheek, a demonstration, Gabriel thought, to show other ladies in the shop that he was her property.

''Sir Thomas shrugged, he said to Gabriel. ''I believe you two will be dancing tonight to the music of Strauss. I enjoy dancing and asked if I could come too, but your young lady told me very firmly that I would not be welcome. The night is to be for you two alone. You know, if I wasn't old enough to be her father, and a married man, I'd be trying to take her away from you and I'd be escorting her to the dance myself.''

''Dream on,'' retorted Amy. ''I'd have to be desparate to go to a dance with you.''

''Well, are you desparate enough to sing duets with me?''

''Yes, I'm that desparate,''

They riffled through the sheet music on display and brought a sample over to spread

on the piano. ''We found some duets for you,'' said Sir Thomas. I'm dedicating the first song to you and Amy.''

Gabriel looked at the sheet. It was a song he knew well, and so did the singers. They had sung it often on the ship to his piano. He played a few bars of music to quieten the audience and then Sir Thomas sang in a voice pitched to the very edge of the crowd, and beyond to the street.

On yonder hill there stands a maiden,

Who she is I do not know.

I'll go and court for her beauty,

She must answer yes, or no.

To which Amy responded

Oh no Tom, no Tom no Tom No.

This went on for several verses with the young man pressing his suit but always getting the same answer until the last verse when he tried a different tack and sang --

Oh hark, I hear the church bells ringing

Will you come and be my wife,

Or, dear madam, have you settled

To live single all your life?

To which Amy replied,archly, and in the sweetest tones -

Oh no Tom, no Tom no Tom No

They were applauded loudly after this and there were cries of 'More!! More. Bravo!!

Sir Thomas leaned down and spoke quietly into Gabriel's ear. ''That was like you and Amy. He kept on chasing the girl until she caught him.''

''I heard that,'' said Amy. ''You'll apologise right now.''

''I won't apologise, because it's true. All I can say in my defence is that I wish I had half his luck

''Hmph,'' said Amy, but they could see she was not displeased.

After that they sang about a missing Highland Laddy, and the singers wanted him to come home. He did not appear but they sang other songs to great applause.

Another person who was enjoying the day was Mrs Edna Goss, Mr Gladman's assistant. She was delighted to have Amy with her and was amused by the verbal exchanges between Amy and Sir Thomas. She liked Gabriel because of his friendliness and admired his skill with the piano, and she loved the songs.

The day was transformed for Mr. Gladman when a client, who was the wife of a rich squatter from the Western District, announced that the harp was charming and would do very well for her daughters. She agreed readily with Fox that the price of £45, was reasonable, seeing it was an imported French harp but she hesitated to pay a deposit of £5 without talking to her husband. She hurried away to see him and explain that their daughters would never shine in society unless they could play the harp. She would be back next day with the deposit, she said, and it could be sent C.O.D., freight to pay by railway.

To his delight Mr. Gladman found Fox playing the most expensive piano in the shop at the request of yet another customer. It was as good a quality piano as the one sold to Timothy Leigh. That instrument had been diverted from its former destination of Walhalla and was now sitting ignored and silent in the drawing room of the house at Brighton.

The customer to whom he demonstrated the piano made up her mind on the spot handed over a £10 note and dictated a first class address in Toorak. Mr. Gladman respectfully attended to these details while Gabriel turned to yet another client.

Mr. Gladman had a lucky escape during the afternoon. Elder Muirhead came back to inspect the premises. He must have heard some rumour of the activities at the music shop and was prepared to denounce Mr. Gladman as one guilty of inviting the devil to be a partner in his business but was astonished, when walking in sternly to do his duty, to discover that a minister and some of his elders were present. They were inspecting the very organ that had been rejected by Gabriel's earliest customers, and Mr Gladman was working the bellows so it could be played.

As members of a less severe sect they had no difficulty in accepting the decorations on the instrument. Indeed, one elder suggested they should, perhaps, look round for something a little more ornate.

Elder Muirhead knew these men favourably. The clergyman for his spirited and eloquent denunciations of the papacy which, he managed to work into every sermon, no matter what the text. His elders and the congregation in general were known for the unyielding stength of their creed. This and their belief in the value of hard work, particularly by their employees, had enabled them to gather great wealth.

Their presence appeared to give legitimacy of a kind to recent occurrences at the

shop. Elder Muirhead resolved not to denounce Mr. Gladman on the spot but to offer a mild rebuke in church on Sunday. As the man's business was going so well perhaps an extra tithe would suffice to balance the heavenly account. All money would be welcome for the war chest to finance the coming campaigns.

These gentlemen greeted Elder Muirhead as a warrior with them in a common cause and Elder Muirhead, who had come to denounce, remained to listen to Fox talking about the organ and playing on it.

The recital was a great success. The organist played pieces from Bach and Handel, two hymns, some modern tunes, and ended with a powerful rendition of God Save the Queen, during which all stood strictly to attention.

Again Mr. Gladman was fortunate, though he listened uneasily for the sound of approaching pipers or a marching band while Fox was explaining the beauties of the organ. None of these sinners turned up while the Minister and his board, and Elder Muirhead were at the shop. Nor did the German Band put in an appearance. Earlier they had been observed at a distance giving a streetside concert near the Eastern Market but no one had told them of a professional engagement at Mr. Gladman's shop.

It was just as well. The organ had made such a favourable impression that the customers were on the point of buying it if only Gabriel was available on Sundays as organist.

He had to decline. It was scarcely possible to have any other form of employment on the Sabbath and to sell real estate would be unthinkable. Nevertheless he expected to be busy on the other six days and would need the rest day to be with Amy and her family.

To Mr. Gladman's chagrin the churchmen withdrew without making a final decision on the organ but promised to return. Before going they enquired about delivery. It seemed they had half made up their minds to treat the church to a Christmas Gift, a new organ. Mr. Gladman promised to call straight away on the carriers to see if the job could be done on the understanding that the clients would be back the next day. As soon as they left he hurried off to the carrier's office.

When he had gone Sir Thomas pulled out his watch, looked at the time. He said, ''Come on you two, it's lunchtime. We'll go to that restaurant you were telling me about, the one where you heard the news about the bank closure.''

''If we go off now we'll leave Mrs Goss on her own.''

'' Alright, we'll wait until Gladman gets back, then we're off.

Business slackened off for a while. There was no one playing a tune or dancing in the shop and the crowds hurrying past stopped only momentarily to gawk at hoardings or look in through the empty window frame.

A man wearing a black beard and a soft, broad-brimmed hat pulled low over his eyes

came in hesitantly and started to look about at the stock.

Gabriel approached the man. "Get out!" he muttered, first glancing at the others and keeping his voice low. "Clear off before you cause any more trouble. If Gladman comes back while you're here he'll call the police and you'll go to jail for sure."

It was Benno, much subdued, and his voice was tremulous. "That's no way to talk to a man on the run, I feel crook and I'm a bit shaky on me pins and I've been waiting outside for the boss to go away so I could come and have a word with you. I'm not feelin' too clever right now and I haven't had me medicine."

"Just as well. You keep drinking rubbish like that and you will end up with alcoholic poisoning. If you hadn't been drunk on Dr Smith's Cure you wouldn't have smashed the windows and the police wouldn't be looking for you."

Benno sniffed. "How d' ya know it was me when I walked inter the shop? The boys fixed me up a treat with the beard and the hat and they even got new duds for me. I thought it'd be alright to walk round in disguise, but you gotta help me. They can get me on to a coastal steamer that's calling into a few places on the way up to Sydney, I'm going to be a deckhand until I jump ship in Sydney, but I'll need money."

''Well, if it isn't my old friend Benno,'' said Sir Thomas, approaching and looking closely at the fugitive.. ''You've come back to bring more excitement and joy into our lives, have you?'

''I need money,'' said Benno,''A man on the run always needs money.''

''Well, you're not getting any off me. I've been dealing with drunks from the time I stepped aboard me first ship. I know that if anyone gives you money you'll go straight to that quack doctor of yours and buy some more of his slow acting poison.

"You're a white man Gabby. You won't let me down,'' said Benno, trying to ignore Sir Thomas, which was difficult to do.

Gabriel was impatient with this conversation. He wanted Benno out of the shop as soon as possible and he and Sir Thomas ushered him to the door just as Mr. Gladman arrived back from his visit to the carrier's office.

"Alright," said Gabriel, "We don't have any of the sheet music in stock that you want; perhaps if you were to go to Allan's round in Collins Street, they may be able to help you."

"Surely," said Mr. Gladman, ''You are not going to send this gentleman away without trying to find some other music that may be suitable for his needs. Which are you interested in, Sir? Sacred? profane? We have a large stock of sheet music as you may have observed and we can always order for individual requirements with a minimum of delay."

Benno gaped at him and then remembered to keep his head down so that his face was

covered by the brim of his hat.

Mr. Gladman stared and frowned; "Surely I've met this gentleman before."

"I don't think so. If you can't get what you want at Allan's by all means come back and see us." Benno fled.

Mr. Gladman entered the shop lost in thought. "Such an odd figure, so heavily bearded; I could have sworn I have seen him somewhere before-"

Fox longed for a customer to walk in to break the proprietor's train of thought. Mr. Gladman had grudgingly come to the opinion that Gabriel may not have incited Benno to break his windows but all his suspicions would flare up again if he realized that the enemy had penetrated into his very shop.

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Mr Gladman buys a shop

Gabriel was about to say something, anything, to distract Mr. Gladman when James Pryor walked in. "Now George," he said "I told you I'd make your fortune for you and this is the day. Get your hat my boy, we have work to do."

Mr. Gladman eyed him. His suspicions were aroused by being. once again, addressed by his Christian name. "What mummery do you intend to inflict on me and my business this time?" He enquired, perhaps ungratefully considering the amount of business he had written that day. "More unseemly shows and songs to bring me and my shop into disrepute?"

"No, no, you're safe for the time being. The Indiarubber Lady who does some fire-eating on the side isn't available today," he said, winking at the listeners, "But the man that stands on his head and plays the violin with his toes is ready any time. Just say the word and I'll send for him. Anyway, don't worry about it George, there are other things to consider. Would you believe," he said, gently catching Mr. Gladman by a button on his sprigged waistcoat and shaking him so the masonic emblem on his watch and chain swung back and forth, "would you believe I have just lamped a nice commercial property in the best retail position in Melbourne. I couldn't believe it. At the price they're asking it won't last a week."

"Is it a shop?"

"Yes, it's a lovely two storey shop in Collins Street East between Swanston and Elizabeth and some madman wants to sell it. You come round and have a look and you'll buy! It's like buying money. This is your retirement fund, George. This is your chance to set yourself up for life. You buy this property and your descendants will bless you down to the last generation."

"I have a shop," retorted Mr. Gladman, "And, "And I have no need for another which, in any case, I could not afford."

"Now, George. I'm not going to put up with this nonsense about you not being able to afford the place. It's a question of bending down in the street and picking up golden guineas that someone has been fool enough to throw away .Get your hat. All I want from you is a deposit and your signature. Ten years from now you might still have a mortgage on the property but it wouldn't matter because you could live on the rent or else sell it and double your money. Now! Tomorrow's no good; an investor may have snapped it up by that time. We'll take a cab and go straight there before someone else finds out there's a pot of gold in Collins street just waiting to be picked up,"

Mr. Gladman resisted and argued with the agent. He said he would view the property on the next day, or straight after Christmas, but at the moment he could not afford to leave the shop. He said his wife was highly nervous and could not stand shocks and upsets of any kind. The work of the Faithful Brethren would suffer, how could he make his usual contributions if the money was to be squandered on real estate?

"Oh, Bugger the Brethren," said Mr. Pryor and had difficulty stemming the indignation expressed by Mr. Gladman at this heresy.

The reluctant purchaser pleaded shortness of cash, but was assured that The Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society would be happy to advance the bulk of the purchase price on the most favourable terms his only outlay would be a minimum deposit, however the larger the deposit the shorter would be the period of repayment.

He was still complaining and protesting when Mr. Pryor made him put on his hat and escorted him outside into the street to hail a hansom cab. They rattled off into the distance and round the corner into Swanston Street.

"Goodness me," said an astonished Mrs. Goss, "who'd have thought it. Is your partner always as persuasive as that?"

"Pretty well," answered Amy, with some pride. 'Mr Fox chose him as his partner, and he made a very good choice.''

''Yes,'' said Sir Thomas. ''If you ever want to sell snowballs to the Eskimos get Jimmy Prior, he's your man.

"I would not have missed today for a hundred pounds," said Mrs Goss.

About an hour later Mr Gladman returned white faced and staring. He looked at the people in the shop and didn't see them. It was difficult for him to speak. He swallowed several times but finally was able to say. "I bought the shop. I've put down a deposit and signed the preliminary papers. How will I explain this to Mrs. Gladman? You have no idea of the delicate state of her health. What will I say to the Faithful Brethren when I tell them I cannot make my usual weekly donation to the cause?" He mopped

his forehead with a large silk handkerchief. "I have been weak; I could not resist the blandishments of that young man." He sat down in a chair usually reserved for customers.

Gabriel tried to reassure him that all would be well, that there was no possibility of a real estate transaction in Melbourne going wrong and that one day he would be glad that he owned property in the centre of the city.

The man looked round wildly. "I will have to give notice to my landlord. In five weeks the new shop will be vacant and I will have to move all my stock round to Collins Street."

He thought again. "Is 10% an excessive rate of interest? To me it seems very high but somehow I could not convey that concept to your friend; he considered 10% most modest."

"He would," thought Fox; 10% on a loan did seem rather high but Fox assured him that he should look on the weekly payments as rent. If he was paying more at least he would acquire a valuable property.

"I never intended to buy," said Mr. Gladman pitifully. "Everything was done in such a rush. We had a quick look at the place upstairs and downstairs, - it is quite airy and spacious, you know, and an excellent location. Then we seemed to whirl off to the bank and draw some money, and then I was signing papers. At no time did I say I wanted to purchase, but somehow I could not make my objections known. Is it too late to withdraw?"

Fox thought it was, and anyway Mr. Gladman would be helpless before James Pryor's eloquence. He was sure the man had a bargain and when he discovered he actually could keep up the payments he would feel differently about the deal. Besides, if the Brethren were to go short of money, that would be as good a reason as any for making Mr. Gladman buy the shop.

"This has been a dreadful few days," said Mr. Gladman. "First my windows were smashed, then Elder Muirhead decided he wanted me to command a company of men in a battle with the Catholics. I have this odious promotion of my business that is bringing it and me into disrepute and now, somehow, I have bought a property I did not intend to buy and possibly can't afford."

He remained slumped heavily in his chair. His hat was still on his head, he had forgotten to take it off and it had fallen forward over his forehead.

This was a delicate moment and Fox did not want to increase the man's agitation but the problem of Benno and his affairs, had to be discussed with his partner.

"You must excuse me for a short while; I have to go to the bank."

Mr. Gladman roused himself. "You have not been gambling again, I trust. I recollect warning you very strongly against the evils of gambling."

Gabriel reassured him. He did not mention that he was going to his own office, Mr. Gladman, in his present state, might come to believe that he and James Pryor were working together against him.

''It sounds to me,'' said Sir Thomas, ''As though you got a bargain. Come on Ame we'll go look at the place and report back.''

''My name is Amy and I am not going anywhere with you if you are going to shorten it. You're a vulgar old sailor, who may not know any better. But until you get my name right you can go on your own.''

''If we were at sea I would have you clapped in irons for insolence to the master of the ship, and as a warning to other passengers, particularly young women. But seeing we're on land I'm at a disadvantage. I'll have to try flattery instead. So dear Miss Amy, lovely Miss Taylor, would you please come with your humble servant to view Mr Gladman's latest purchase?

''Gladly,'' she said, ''But watch your language.''

She kissed Gabriel again as they left the shop.

''You don't ever kiss me like that.''

''You don't deserve a kiss. But one day, if you ever improve,I may let you kiss my hand.''''

Gabriel left the office and went a different way. He could have gone for the rest of the day, probably unnoticed by the the proprietor, so he left Mrs. Goss in charge. She was still smiling at the way Amy had dealt with Sir Thomas.

James Pryor was sitting in his little office, going through the day's mail. He too wore his hat indoors but it was set at a jaunty angle to mark his pleasure with the world.

"Sit down," he said. "Well, I fixed old Gladman up with a nice property. When we get a bit more money behind us we'll start buying up places like that: you can't go wrong. How did he look when he got back to the shop?"

"Terrible! He's useless to us now and I don't think he will get any sleep tonight, neither will Mrs. Gladman; they'll be able to lie there and worry together."

"Ah, he'll be alright. This is the best thing that ever happened to him. Once he starts paying off the property and finds he can manage it without going bankrupt he'll stop worrying. In six months he'll be strutting round giving the Brethren good advice about buying real estate in the city.

Look at this," he said, holding them up, "two more cheques in the mail. That advertisement is still working. I'll put it in The Age again after Christmas."

'Alright, but no lies this time. Don't mention those non-existent cash reserves.

Anyway .I might not be round in the future to give you good advice, I've been thinking, I might go back to the Old Dart and start again there. Then you'll be able to advertise what you like.''

''What do you mean? What are you talking about?'' Pryor was shocked and upset. ''You can't go back to England. Why would you want to go there? You've got everything in front of you here. This country is going places. England's going nowhere. Forget it, I won't let you go!''

''Well, I don't want to go, but we're dealing here with a force stronger than either of us, it's Amy

''Amy! What's Amy got to do with it?''

''I hope to marry her, and her parents are returning home soon. If she decides to go with them I go too. If she decides to stay I'll stay.''

''Well, that's easy fixed we'll give the Reverend a job here in the office. The way we're going we'll soon need someone else besides Pringle. Gabby, you can't leave, you're my anchor. Without you I might do something stupid.''

''No James, Alfred would'n't take a job here. He sees himself as an apostle, or a missionary bringing the truth of the bible to foreign shores. He wouldn't want an office job, he wants to convert the heathens.''

''Well he can have a go at me, if he likes. I'm a heathen. I thinkDarwin was right when he said we're descended from monkeys. Look around, there are monkey types everywhere.''

'Well, that's not a great deal of help. Amy's very strong willed, as you may have noticed. If she tells the family she's not going, that's it, she won't go. But how would she feel after they've gone. She's broken up the family. Her parents have lost their daughter, perhaps their son, if Harold decides to stay.She will feel awfully guilty after doing that.''

'They can come out and visit.''

''The Taylors haven't got the time or money to be sailing around the world, Sir Thomas tells me that the average travel time between here and London is. thirtyeight days to get out here, thirtyeight days to get back, and they'd be travelling third class all the way. So we're looking at all the expense of getting here and home again with no money coming in. And there's the problem of finding cheap accommodation when they get here. Besides Alfred would probably lose his job as a vicar. They'd be marooned on this side of the world without the money to go home.''

''I'll think of something'' said Pryor. ''But you're not going back to England, forget it.''

Fox changed the subject. "Now, about Benno," He said, "he wants his money back so he can go to Sydney."

“When you see him tell him he can't have his money," James Pryor announced decisively. "You can't give him thirty quid, or whatever it is; he'll just piss it up against the wall, then he'll be too drunk to catch his boat. You mark my words it will all go in about a week and then he'll turn up at the office crying drunk and broke and ask you to bail him out. He's not the sort that should have money because if he gets it too easy he'll be in the pub all day or taking medicine. If he gets drunk he'll want to fight someone then he'll be picked up by the police, they'll recognise him and he'll go down for two years, or whatever it is, for smashing those windows. Another thing, when you see him tell him he doesn't own any part of the business. All you did was invest his money at interest and it's worth three quid a year and if he goes to Sydney we'll send him fifteen bob a quarter. If he doesn't like the idea he can go to the police and make a complaint."

Gabriel had to admit that this was a sensible view of Benno's weaknesses. "How will I break the news to him?"

James Pryor put finger and thumb into a waistcoat pocket and withdrew a gold coin. "Here's half a sov, you put in a dollar and that will make it up to fifteen bob. Tell him that's his first quarter's payment and he's not getting another penny until the next three months is up and if he annoys us he's not getting anything."

Back at the shop a few customers had come in. There had been no more performances and Mrs. Goss had not sold much.

Mr. Gladman had disappeared. After Gabriel left he mooned about the shop for a while with his mind elsewhere. He told Mrs. Goss that he was looking for his hat until she discovered it for him on his head; after mumbling something he went out, no doubt to have another look at the new acquisition. He returned later in the same state but Fox had at last learned how to break into his apathy. He showed him the day's splendid takings and reminded him that the banks would close very soon.

Mr. Gladman, with some lightening of his gloom, sat down at his desk, entered the deposit slips and departed in haste before the bank shut its doors.

Gabriel left for the day as soon as the man returned. He was to dine with the Taylors at the boarding house and then escort Amy to the dance.

After he left two workmen, clearly resentful at having to turn out at that time of night, had come and noisily nailed the panels back into place.

When it was done one of them came to the door of the shop. "That'll be ten bob," he said.

Mr. Gladman roused himself fiercely at this demand. "I will pay you nothing," he stated. ''I did not authorise you to come here and you are grossly overcharging. You go to the person who employed you and collect your wages from him."

"Name of Pryor," enquired the workman. ''Yup, he said to collect off you."

"Then he was mistaken! Mr. Pryor is far too prone to take liberties with my name and credit; I am sick and tired of his high handed methods. One way and another I can see he is going to do very well out of this affair. Just for a change let him pay out of his profits."

The first man was joined by his mate who absent-mindedly rubbed the bridge of his nose with a folding wooden rule.

"Yair! Well, we don't know about that. We done the job like we was asked and we don't mind who pays as long as someone comes good with the ten bob; but we want it tonight. The Royal Mail closes at ten and there's not much drinking time left. All things being equal we can't afford to hang around and we only come tonight because this Pryor feller talked us into it and and it should be worth ten bob. If it's not there's no problem. We can soon pull your screens down again." He turned to his mate who was clicking his tongue and making noises in the background to indicate his disgust at this setback. "Come on, Sam, get the jimmy outta the toolkit, we got work to do."

"You can't," cried Mr. Gladman "The thing is in place now and you can't touch it. If you do I will step straight out into Bourke Street and call a constable."

"You'll have to be bloody quick," said the man. "Come on Sam, straight down with it." They marched outside to carry out the threat.

"Wait, wait! You can have your ten shillings!" Mr. Gladman pursued the two men out on to the footpath.

"You mean fifteen bob, don't you," said the man relentlessly. They had dropped a bag of tools on the footpath before doing the job and now he drew out a small crowbar, with a clatter, from the other tools.

"This is monstrous!" cried Mr. Gladman, "It's extortion."

"Stand back," ordered the man, forcing the toe of the crowbar under the edge of the hoarding, while Sam stood by ready to use the claw of his hammer for the same purpose. "If we take it down and have to put it back up again it's going to cost a quid. Ready, Sam --?"

"Stop, stop!" ordered the agitated shopkeeper and held out a gold coin. "Here you are, here's half a sovereign. Just leave everything as it is."

The two men eyed him and his coin contemptuously. "Half a sov's not fifteen bob. You keep this up and you won't get out of it under a quid. Now, come on Dad, what's it going to be? Fifteen bob? A quid? Or nothing?"

In a rage Mr. Gladman fished another five shillings from his pocket and grudgingly handed it over. He was thanked ironically and the man flipped the half sovereign into the air. "Want to make it double or quits?"

Mr. Gladman bitterly ignored this offer and stamped into his shop as Mrs Goss was

preparing to depart.

"When I see Pryor I shall demand that he pay me the fifteen shillings. He had no right to make any contracts on my behalf. I have had just about as much as I am willing to put up with from that young man; and I tell you now that tomorrow there will be no more vulgar and distasteful shows. I have built my business through the years with a strict regard for decorum and proper business practises. This is the way both my customers and I prefer to deal with each other."

Mrs Goss did not want to argue with Mr. Gladman but thought that the man had forgotten or not heard that the first event in the morning, Christmas Eve, was to be a visit by a group of carol singers, and this would be the most tasteful item of the whole day. She did not mention the proposed programme as she did not like to upset Mr. Gladman any further and was glad that it was James Pryor and not her that would be presenting the bill for all this activity."

She threw dustcovers over the larger instruments while Mr. Gladman counted up the takings that had come into the shop after his last visit to the bank. He put it all with the change into a canvas bag to take home. Mrs Goss hoped that he would not forget the bag in his present distracted state and leave it on the train.

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An engagement.

Next morning Gabriel came to the shop in a dazed state. The ball had been everything a young couple could hope for. Because her father was a clergyman and her mother disapproved of modern dancing Amy had never been to a dance before.

''She was delighted to discover that Gabriel was an expert dancer and easy to follow. He led her through the waltz and the polka, covering her missteps until she had learned it all and they moved in perfect unison.

Late in the evening they won a prize and a round of applause. It was for the best couple in the room. Nothing much, just a small metal cup inscribed on one side with the date and place, the other side with the name Johann Strauss Junior. Amy said she would never part with it.

However the crowning moment of the evening came later, after supper was served and eaten they went out,to the balcony overlooking the street. The next dance would be to the strains of The Blue Danube, a melody that was Johann Strauss' greatest hit. It seemed everyone wanted to dance to this tune, or watch the musicians as they played.

Amy was about to follow the crowd into the ballroom when Gabriel caught her hand and stopped her.

''We'll dance here,'' he said. He took her in his arms and they twirled silently round

the tables and chairs, moving to immortal music dedicated to a great river that was certainly not blue. except to lovers. They waltzed to the end of the veranda and back to see through the open door that the other dancers were entranced, serious, clasped gently, gazing into each others eyes.

''Amy darling, will you marry me?''

''Her head was resting against his shoulder and she didn't have to think about the dance steps any more, she was floating in his arms. Her forehead gently bumped his shoulder as she nodded.

''Of course I will. We'll grow old together, but I will always remember the young man on the ship who came looking for me. I'm so glad you found me.''

''I would always look for you no matter how far we were apart, and I'll be with you, no matter whether you go or stay.

Both knew what he meant, but neither wanted to talk about it at that precious moment.

She said, 'I've been kissing you lately even though I promised mother not to. Well, I won't do it any more, it's your turn. You can kiss me instead. Nobody has warned you not to, and I can't stop you, so make it a good one.'

Their lips met and both felt as though they might never breathe again.

They were interrupted after a few seconds by a round of applause.They were so concentrated on each other they had not noticed people who had escaped the heat of the ballroom to sit out in the darkness of the veranda, and listen to the music from the ballroom. These strays had watched the young couple gliding past, lost in their own world

They had seen them dancing, heard the proposal, and enjoyed the kiss. In the darkness they could not see how red was Gabriel's face. Amy's. was not.

The little minx could not help laughing when she realised that they had been found out. She surprised the dancers by giggling helplessly as Gabriel held her up through the ballroom to the door. Some people came off the veranda to give them a parting round of applause.

Amy had recovered pretty well by the time they stumbled downstairs, and were out in the street, walking towards Mrs Byer's establishment.

She relapsed into giggles two or three times on the way home, needing to be held up, and after each fit had passed she demanded more kisses. By this time Gabriel was laughing with her.

Mr and Mrs Taylor were sitting up, waiting for their daughter when she came in hand in hand with Gabriel to tell them her news.

Her father congratulated them both and seemed to mean it but Mrs Taylor burst into tears. ''She's too young,'' she said, when she could speak. ''It seems only yesterday that Papa gave her a little doll as her first toy; she loved that doll. And what will happen to us when our only daughter is on the other side of the world. Perhaps never to see her again. I won't forgive you, Mr Fox, if we have to sail away while she stays here.

''Mother,'' said Amy, ''You are talking to my future husband. Whatever decisions he makes about our lives will be the right ones, and I will support him. Now it's too early to panic and quarrel. There are weeks to go yet before everything is finalised, let's not argue now. She turned to her father. ''Father, will you marry us?''

''Gladly my dear. I will see the Vicar at St Pauls and arrange a date. Now my boy, Amy tells me your parents are no longer living.''

Yes sir, they both died in a cholera outbreak. It was very painful to lose them like that, and I miss them terribly. I have relatives in England, but I just wanted to get away.''

''Would you object to going back to England?''

''I'll go where Amy wants me to go.''

''She's too young,'' said Mrs Taylor forlornly. ''She doesn't know her own mind yet. Don't rush into marriage dear, you may live to regret it.''

''I am going to marry him, and I will never regret it.'' She turned to Gabriel. ''Now you're not part of the family yet, my dear. You will be but I don't want to embarrass you right now, so I'm telling you to go home while we sort this out. I'll see you tomorrow and father can arrange the marriage date. By the way, ask James to be best man, he'll be superb at that.''

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A day of reckoning.

Mr Gladman spent the morning writing on bits of paper trying to work out whether he would be able afford his weekly contribution to the Brethren, as well as paying off the property in Collins Street.

His concerns could be guessed by the occasional groan and the anguished way in which the man clutched his beard. The sums were not working out as he would have hoped.

Gabriel really did not care. He was still stunned by his engagement to Amy and the prospect of a wedding in the near future.

Gladman knew nothing of this and later, after throwing down his pen, he came to

Gabriel, for lack of anyone else to confide in.

He was perspiring and his beard was awry. Gabriel thought he looked terrible, his face was grey, and there were bags under his eyes that had not been there before.

"I knew from the start" he said, "that I was doing the wrong thing putting a deposit on the property but I could not help myself. Never in my life have I met anyone like that partner of yours. If he had a mind to he could persuade a person to fill his pockets with stones and jump off Princes Bridge into the Yarra. All this worry made me pass the worst night of my life. Did I tell you Mrs. Gladman has a nervous condition? She is quite insistent that I cannot continue with the purchase because she is a very strong adherent of the church and makes sure it receives a weekly tithe, which is not consistent with the payment of the loan." He paused and thought while absent-mindedly twining his beard through his fingers.

"Really, Mr Fox," he said, ''I understand from what Mr Pryor let fall that you have had extensive experience in English property sales. In your considered judgment, now, will the property increase in value as Mr Pryor promised? When I tried to explain Mr Pryor's arguments about rising property values Mrs. Gladman became quite hysterical. I had to send for the maid to help loosen her stays."

He bit his lips when he realized the enormity of what he had said and had to pause before continuing. "She was brought up very strictly in the faith of the brethren. Her parents used to take her to chapel three times every Sabbath and three times during the week to choir practice, and evening services.

She takes her religious duties very seriously. She is head of the Ladies' Guild, and they are contributing to the support of a missionary in India. When she learned of what I had done and that I could no longer make my weekly offering to the brethren she had hysterics so that I feared for her life. It was terrible; neither of us got a wink of sleep all night. She insists that I get the deposit back, and I must do it, else I fear for the consequences."

Gabriel thought that anyone who attended the services of the Faithful Brethren six times a week as a child was bound to end up an hysteric, but he chose not to say so. As for Mr Gladman getting his money back, it would be interesting to see who won the tussle, Mrs. Gladman or James Pryor. He did not know Mrs. Gladman but the cheque was safely deposited in the bank and helping temporarily to strengthen their finances. Attempting to get the money back from Pryor would be an interesting exercise. He could not but think that his partner would come out once more on top. He hoped so. Apart from the pleasure of doing the Brethren in the eye the Collins Street property would be a lot better investment.

They were interrupted by a boy of about ten or twelve coming in off the street and calling out his name in a shrill voice. "Mr Fox! A letter for Mr Fox."

"Here, it's for me." said Gabriel, putting out his hand.

The lad looked at him cheekily. "Frippence! Ya gotta give me frippence. The bloke said y'd give me frippence for bringin' the letter."

Fox knew who the letter was from. Who else would send a letter collect from just around the corner for threepence when he could send one by post across the country for a penny. He felt in his waistcoat pocket for a threepenny coin. "You're the crossing boy, aren't you?"

The boy nodded. He had left his broom leaning against the hoarding but he was one of the cheeky children who made a living as best they could collecting tips from passers by in return for sweeping rubbish and horse dung off the road before their footsteps. They made a few shillings now and then by helping timid women across the road, or running messages. Schooling had become compulsory in Victoria over the past few years, but no doubt he had left school the day he turned twelve to escape to the free life of the streets.

The messenger got threepence and left while Fox read the letter. It was brief. James Pryor wanted him to come back to the office for half an hour. He had very pressing business that could not be postponed. He was to come at once.

Mr Gladman was curious about the letter but Fox thought it better not to mention who had sent it. He looked round the shop; it was still dim and quiet for no workmen had come that morning to take down the hoardings.

"I have to leave you for a while," he said, picking up his hat. "You had better send Mrs. Goss to the agency, see if they have anyone to take the screens down. I should be back in three quarters of an hour to an hour." He knew his partner's conception of half an hour was elastic; once he started talking it was difficult for him to come to a final, rounded conclusion.

Mr Gladman sniffed but made no answer. He seemed lost in sombre gloom and slumped at his desk which was covered by scribbled pieces of paper. Gabriel left just as Mrs. Goss arrived and he gave her a quick explanation of Mr Gladman's mood and said he would be back as soon as could be.

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TheArgus raises the alarm.

A number of self-confident men were waiting in the agency when he arrived. It was the largest collection of respectable whiskers and expansive waistcoats that Fox had yet seen in their premises. The crowd that had been there on the day of the bank crash had been larger but without the air of prosperity and respectable solvency these men carried round with them. Such was their presence that, though fewer in number, they filled the place just as effectively as the drab, frightened investors. Pringle, the chief clerk, was figuratively squeezed and flattened against the wall by

this irruption of assertive men who had got into the habit of eating and drinking too much and conversing in loud, confident voices. Gabriel had to push past to get to the counter, but Pryor had stood up well. He seemed quite at home in this company, was unsqueezed, and was talking as loudly and confidently as any of them.

They all knew James Pryor and he knew them. He introduced everyone by name to his partner who shook hands with each one in turn.

They were a mixed group; some looked like successful professional men or fellow agents. Others may have been more at home behind the counter of a shop or giving orders to their employees on the factory floor. The air of solid worth and prosperity they brought into the office reminded Fox of that self made man Mr. Kimpton, the Yorkshire draper. He wondered what business they could have in the agency; perhaps Mr Pryor had got them together to invest in a big property deal.

"Gabby, my boy," said Pryor, clapping him on the shoulder, "I don't like to impose but this is more important than anything you might be doing in Gladman's shop. I want to step out for half an hour or so with these gentlemen. We have important business to discuss and I'd like you to come with us because I could use your common sense." He turned to the clerk. "Keep an eye on the place while we're away. If anything comes up and you want us, we'll be in the private bar at the Royal Mail. We shouldn't be too long, just put off any business, or ask people to call back, unless it is desperately important. If it is, Mr Fox will come and deal with it."

Gabriel did not mind getting away from Gladman for a while; the man was poor company at present, and these strangers gave promise of being much more interesting. The affairs of the office having been formally entrusted to Pringle, the head clerk, James Pryor and his friends filed out of the front door and walked in a consciously important group towards the hotel.

They were a notable sight and the policemen on duty at the corner were so impressed by their collective appearance that they held up the traffic in Swanston Street for them to cross in unhurried dignity.

James Pryor had been in the private bar many times before on business and spoke familiarly with the handsome barmaid, whom he addressed as Rosie. He ordered drinks all round and saw to it that every man had exactly what he ordered. Most preferred beer to the fancy, foreign drinks Rosie had ranged on shelves behind the bar. Their bottles glittered temptingly in the bright light of the gas lamps, doubly reflected by the mirrors around the bar room, but even so they were more for show than serious drinking.

"Now, gentlemen," said James Pryor, after some preliminary chat and every man had a drink in front of him; "You asked to see me, and here I am; what can I do for you?"

An imposing, white haired, merchant, named Briggs, appeared to be spokesman. He had taken off his hat and laid it with his ebony walking cane on the table in front of him. He wore a light cutaway coat and plaid trousers, all of the very best material. He

sported a watch chain on his waistcoat, indeed, they all did, but his seemed to be heavier and of a more costly type. After a preliminary loud clearance of his throat, which fixed even the most wandering attention, he addressed James Pryor.

"Mr. Pryor," he said, "you are well spoken of in Melbourne. The business community of this town has a high regard for men of your calibre and we believe that, in time, under its present management, the Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society, which you, and your partner, so ably represent, will find a place in the colony equal to Colonial Mutual Life, The British and Australian Trust and Loan Company and other financial concerns so prominent and so valuable in our corner of the empire."

He had ordered claret, a common choice of his if one could judge by his red face and wattled cheeks; he paused to take a drink while Mr Pryor bowed to acknowledge the compliments in his speech.

The man continued. "Of course, we are all successful in the various activities to which the Lord has been pleased to call us; we have done very well in the colony and we look to the younger, up and coming men, such as yourself, to carry on the good work. However, all may be undone by the present government and Premier, Berry, who cannot be made to understand the importance of enterprise and the folly of fostering false hopes in the workers for wages and conditions that would be ruinous for industry and destructive of the economy of Victoria."

Amid a respectful silence he withdrew a spectacle case from the top pocket of his coat and snapped it open to withdraw a pair of glittering pince-nez glasses which he clipped to the bridge of his nose for the better examination of a newspaper lying on the table.

"The Argus, one of our newspapers of very sound views in contradistinction to that wretched, radical journal, The Age, has printed a leader which sums up the problems of the colony most succinctly. Let me read it to you, at least in part." He found the required place and read out the following article in a measured voice.

' Last year has gone the way of its predecessors and is now part of history. It was the third, and we have good reason to hope, the last year of the most humiliating and disastrous epoch which the colony has passed through since the date of its foundation. Three years ago that ugliest of political phenomena, Berryism, took its rise and spread like a black and pestilential mist over the whole country, poisoning its moral atmosphere, blotting out its hopeful prospects, blighting its prosperity, and depressing men's minds by its baleful influences. Berry was responsible for perpetrating the evil, the outrageous act of Black Wednesday, and the Chief Secretary of a British Colony proclaimed from the public platform that all the large estate owners in Victoria must be dispossessed of their properties by a 'bloody' civil war, while his colleague the Attorney General, from his place in Parliament warned the Queen's representative it might be necessary to place him on a vessel in the bay and menaced the members of one house with deportation across the Murray. However the power of these political Pistols and Bobadils has begun to wane and it has been declining ever since. Berryism is dying in a

prolonged agony occasioned by its own excesses ---- '

Mr. Briggs paused at this point and gazed at James Pryor over the top of his glasses. "I think I have read enough to indicate the spirit of this very excellent article. I recommend that you finish it at your leisure, but I think it gives point to what I was saying before about the terrible danger to the colony of Victoria unless Berry is stopped in his mad career."

The other men present, who had been listening intently, nodded to confirm the words of the speaker at this point. Some said, "Hear, hear!" and several slapped the top of the bar by way of applause.

"Thank God for the Legislative Council," said the orator. "At least it has stood firm against this levelling, socialistic legislation that the government has tried to bring down. As you know Berry is such an enemy of the Legislative Council, so rabid in his desire to ruin us all with ill conceived legislation that he even went to London to petition the government for a plebiscite to curtail the powers of the council. Of course, they sent him away with a flea in his ear. The imperial government is not going to listen to the populist ravings of an ignorant, colonial politician. He came home empty handed, looking foolish. He is facing an election so this will be the best chance we have had in years to get a good, solid government in power supported by men who understand the nature of the economy and the value of free enterprise."

"Quite right, Mr. Briggs," exclaimed another man, overcome by hearing this recital of political sins. "He promised a paradise for the working man, some paradise when our industry is being driven north to New South Wales. Berry has given the working man such an inflated idea of his worth that he turns up his nose at a reasonable wage, and what's the consequence? Industries close down, unemployment and want. If that's a paradise for the working man I don't want to visit hell."

Mr. Briggs was not accustomed to being interrupted while speaking and glared at this rash individual until he subsided and a perfect silence followed into which Mr. Briggs entered in a stately manner.

"I need hardly tell you," continued Mr. Briggs, "Of the dangers that we face in the colony of Victoria. Berry himself has threatened us with broken heads and houses in flames if we do not yield to the claims of the working class and persuade the Legislative Council to shrink from its duty."

Fox had heard something along the same lines before except that Elder Muirhead and his followers were expecting an Irish Catholic uprising. Perhaps the Irish would not know which revolution to join.

Mr. Briggs was not of the same opinion; he took a far more serious view of the problems confronting the colony. "As responsible citizens, and leaders of the community," continued Mr Briggs, "It is our duty to overthrow the Berry government at this coming election. To this end we require young men of substance, and strength of character; young men who understand and respect the basis of our economy; stout

hearted, with the capacity to stand up for the principles of justice, honour and fair dealing that have made the British Empire respected and feared throughout the entire world. Mr. Pryor, through observation and discussion we have formed a high opinion of your character; we believe that you could make your mark in the political sphere. I now ask, 'are you a man of destiny?' We believe that you are. Will you agree for us to sponsor you as a candidate in the election that can, and must, put an end to the blight of berryism in this state?"

He paused again, this time for the applause that was his due. His friends obliged while he took another drink of claret.

The enthusiastic young man who had interrupted Mr Briggs now re-established himself in the good graces of the assemblage by stepping up to the bar while people were applauding and thumping the tables and ordered drinks all round.

The men were raising their glasses to James Pryor and settling back to hear his answer when a thin, sandy haired person in a pepper and salt suit insisted on being heard. He was wearing calf length brown riding boots; his trousers had been reinforced on the seat and inside the legs with a different coloured material like leather. His necktie was a grey, silk scarf which he had decorated in the middle with a silver stickpin made in the shape of a horses' head surrounded by a horseshoe.

Someone whispered in Fox's ear that this was Jack Chillingford, proprietor of one of the largest livery stables and livestock auctions in Melbourne.

He stood and addressed the group. His movements were so vehement that the pot of beer he was holding spilled over from time to time and the beer slopped unnoticed to the floor.

"I got a hundred and sixty three horses in me stables or out at me paddocks," he declaimed. "Anybody wants a good horse to buy or hire I can fix 'em up, no worries. I sold about a hundred head at the auction last week. All prime stock; I don't let no scrubbers through the door. Anyone can take the word of Jack Chillingford; if I say a horse is good, it's good. If I say it's a broken down chaff burner, don't buy it. The week before I was up at Seymour and sold nearly five hundred head of prime cattle There's no muckin' about; with Jack Chillingford what you see is what you get."

His friends were becoming impatient. They had not left their work in the middle of the day to listen to him talking about his auction activities.

"Put a sock in it, Jack." Someone called out.

He held up his hand. "Prices in my line of business are down," he asserted. "They're the worst I've seen 'em. I been runnin' auctions for ten years, round in Lonsdale Street, since me old man passed on and these are some of the lowest prices I seen. It's no good to me, it's no good to the vendors, and it's no good to Melbourne. I blame that feller, Berry. Since he become Premier the economy's gone down hill. Reminds me of the time I was a young buck and lost the brake comin' down the Punt Road hill. I got

to the bottom in record time but it was hell's delight cutting the horses out of their traces and fishing me gear out of the river. I got a kick in the ribs that slowed me down considerable, I can tell you. And I got another one in the behind when I got home; the old man was quite right I was mad to have gone that way and over the punt. Anyhow, what I want to say is that Berry's lost the brake on the economy and if we don't find it and slap it on pretty, bloody quick we're going to end up in a heap on the bottom of the river."

"Well said, Jack!" This was the general opinion. Chillingford had colourfully expressed what they all felt.

"I might add, Sir," said Mr Briggs, "We are all men of substantial means who have the best interests of the colony at heart. If you accept our offer we are prepared to form a committee to support you and like minded candidates with assistance both financial and moral. We understand that a young man such as yourself, busy establishing and managing these promising concerns of yours, cannot be expected to make the great sacrifices necessary in pursuing a political career merely to serve the public weal unless there are others willing to mark their support and approbation of your actions. We are prepared to play our part, we will find an electorate and finance your campaign; are you prepared to enter on to the larger stage of politics?"

He leaned back in his chair, satisfied with the force of his oration; a friendly hand refilled his glass from a bottle of claret that now stood in front of him. They all waited on the answer to be delivered by James Pryor.

That young man rose to his feet. "Mr Briggs, gentlemen," he declaimed. "I am very much aware of the honour you have done to me today. It is humbling to know that one has gained the confidence of one's fellow townsmen and especially that of citizens of such distinction and excellent judgment as those I see before me."

His audience nodded and glanced at one another meaningfully. So far the speaker had made an excellent impression.

He continued. "You say that Berry is bringing Victoria to ruin; I have to agree. Every day it becomes more difficult to carry out one's legitimate business because of the slowing of trade and commerce. Our aim should be jobs for all, homes for all, the end of ruinous taxation, and the free play of market forces to rebuild the prosperity of our state. I believe that the next election will be the most important ever to take place in the history of Victoria and we must be vigilant and ready. We are in a bad way; the Berry Blight is upon us and unless we do some vigorous weed eradication it will choke the entire colony."

He paused and his delighted audience cheered, clapped and slapped the tables and bar.

When the applause subsided he went on. "The offer you have put before me is most tempting; nothing would give me greater pleasure than to serve my fellow Victorians in the parliament of this colony but, as Mr Briggs has rightly pointed out, I do have

business commitments. Mr Fox and I are directors of the Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society as well as Pryor and Fox, Land Agents. You all know, who better to know, the demands these make upon our time and energy. As Mr Briggs and Mr Chillingford have told us we live in a difficult period of history.The colony is not prospering as it should, due, as we all know, to the mismanagement of the present government. I feel, that under the right circumstances, I could make a contribution to the welfare of the community and I share your sentiments regarding the necessity of building up the economy of Victoria by fair dealing between employer and employed, and by open and fair trade between the colonies. He could not saying anything more pleasing to his audience and they crowded around to pat him on the back and, above all, to buy him a drink.

He halted their congratulations. "Your offer to support me as a candidate representing the solid citizens of Melbourne is most kind, and I am deeply touched, but at this moment I cannot answer you. My partner here, Mr Fox, whom you have all met, must be consulted. If I go off to campaign for parliament you will understand the burden that throws on to Mr Fox. In our office we have committed ourselves to great schemes and great expense. If this is to fail because I have been attending to my parliamentary business instead of Mr Fox's business and mine, not to mention that of the shareholders and depositors, well, then I would deserve a very grave censure, not only from Mr Fox and the others, but also from my supporters. Gentlemen, I cannot answer you now. This is a serious matter that deserves serious consideration. I will give you my answer tomorrow; in the meantime Mr Fox and I must return to the office to catch up on the urgent business we have put aside to be in such agreeable company."

Everyone was greatly disappointed. They had been hoping that he would accept their offer on the spot and some called out for him not to leave. He shook his head smilingly and after they had grasped every hand he and Mr Fox withdrew leaving the others to talk matters over.

"I thought you were going to take them up on the offer," said Gabriel as they were crossing the road. "It was very flattering of them to come to you like that."

"Ah, ha! They will need more than flattery before they get me into the net," remarked Mr Pryor cheerfullly. "We walked out on them at the right time; they can drink and talk it over without us. Before we say anything let's just see what this offer is that they're talking about. It's all very well for them to go on about helping me but they will have to say just how much they're prepared to put on the table before I'll show my hand. Once I'm elected it will be alright. There will be plenty of time for business, but during the campaign it will be different. That's going to take a lot of work. They will have to stump up for an election agent, advertising, and maybe they can pay for a couple of extra staff in the office to help you out while I'm away." He made a little skip as they crossed the bridge over the gutter. "I fancy myself as James Pryor MP. It has a good ring to it."

{ 32 }

The German Band.

He would have continued but just as they were about to turn back to their office they were attracted by the sound of music in Bourke Street.

It was a German band playing vigorously outside Mr Gladman's shop and blocking the footpath. "They should be inside," said James Pryor. "Why would they be out on the footpath like that? We had better go across and see."

The members of the band played without ceasing in spite of the abuse heaped on them by the Christmas crowds being forced off the footpath and into the gutters. Fortunately it had not rained for some days; even so no one would willingly walk in Melbourne's gutters, no matter what the time of year.

The two men pushed their way through the crowd until James Pryor was close enough to tap the band leader on the shoulder. The man played his trumpet one handed and vigorously beat time with the other. He was so intent on the music it was difficult to get his attention. After a few taps on the shoulder he half turned while still blowing and waving and raised one eyebrow.

"Why aren't you inside?" Pryor shouted. "You mustn't play out here the police will move you on; that's no use to us."

The piece they were playing came to an end and the conductor waved to the members of the band who picked up the tripod music stands that were cluttering the footpath and lined up with their backs to the shop facades. They were all dressed in short jacketed red uniforms with black frogs and black stripes along the seams and down the trousers. Their caps bore a fancied resemblance to those worn by German university students.

"Why aren't you playing inside?" Pryor glanced up. "This is no good, the hoarding hasn't been taken down. How can we make sales if the customers can't see into the shop?"

"The gentleman said, into the shop we could not enter!" explained the band leader in a heavy German accent. "He said we could not on the footpath play either. Nowhere near his shop.

I said, we are told to play at the shop and we must do it. Mr Edmunds, the agent, said to play one half hour." He pulled out his watch and looked at it. "There is one and twenty minutes to go; we continue. I think a Strauss waltz would be very nice." He

raised his hand and the band members scrambled back into position. "Meine Herrn," he called out, "Die Blaue Donau."

He looked soulful and raised his hand again ready to beat time while the musicians quickly riffled through their pages of music.

The two men ignored the band and the Christmas throng and went inside to confront Mr Gladman.

He was lurking balefully in the gloom of his shop while Mrs. Goss dusted nearby, hoping not to miss a word of the confrontation. The proprietor rose agitatedly at the sight of James Pryor.

"Mr Pryor," he said, "I must have my deposit cheque returned to me. It is impossible to go on with the purchase of the property, and you must order that band away immediately. I am not responsible for paying them and If they do not leave I will have no option but to call the police.''

James Pryor looked at him and shook his head reproachfully. "George: I thought I'd made it all clear when we talked yesterday. This property is the biggest opportunity you and I have ever had. It's going to double in value within five years and I won't let you throw away a bargain like that. If you let go it will be sold to someone else by the end of the week. What use is that? You lose the bargain of a lifetime and I miss out on my commission." He turned. to Gabriel. ''Gabby, be a good chap and cut across the road to the employment agency. We need a couple of strong workmen with tools to take down the hoardings. Tell them it's urgent. We have lost too much trading time already."

Gabriel was gone only a few minutes; wafted blissfully there and back by the strains of the same waltz music that had. changed his life forever. The proprietor of the employment agency knew of some carpenters who were working a job nearby and had immediately sent a messenger to summon them.

When he returned he found an excited Mrs. Goss dusting as near as possible so she could hear what was going on.'

James Pryor had Mr Gladman by the arm and was walking him up and down the centre aisle, which was kept clear of stock and led to a tiny, glassed office at the rear of the shop.

"Look at it in this light, George," he was saying. "You will have to tell the Brethren that it is an investment for them, just as much as it is for you. Once you get over the payment for the first few quarters and you are starting to reduce the principal on the loan then things will get easier. As the principal reduces so does the interest. In a year or two you will have a property that will be the envy of everyone in the congregation and you will be able to start contributing again. Then, in later years, if you want to sell your asset, you can make a very handsome donation to the Brethren."

Mr Gladman, in spite of his objections, could make no impression on James Pryor, who had no doubt that the debt could be paid off with ease.

To his further chagrin the same two carpenters whom he had met the previous evening presented themselves grinning at the door of the shop. They would have demanded another pound for taking down the hoarding but Mr Pryor refused such an outrageous demand. He made Mr Gladman give them five shillings for the job with a promise of a further five shillings if they returned at the close of business to replace it.

The band was then invited inside; just in time, because the police, after numerous complaints, were about to order its members to cease and desist and to go somewhere else.

"I'm off!" said James Pryor as the band members shuffled into position in the shop and prepared to strike up again. Mr Gladman had retreated to his office leaving Mrs. Goss and Fox to deal with any customers.

"Don't you worry my boy.". "You're nearly finshed here; the real work starts straight after Christmas. If his nibs wants to make any trouble don't put up with it; just send for me and I'll come back and deal with him. Though I may be busy. It's my guess that Briggs and Chillingford will be over from the pub soon to see me, if they're not there already. There is going to be some hard bargaining when we get together."

Mrs. Goss had a childlike delight in the music of the band and applauded every item. Her example led to enthusiastic applause from the people watching through the shop window. She was sorry when the band went away but filled up the time by joining Gabriel in duets or listening entranced as he presented Mr Gladman's sheet music by playing it on the piano.

Gabriel was delighted when Timothy Flanagan walked into the shop. He had come by train from Brighton and was on a mission from Mrs. Flanagan to locate Henry and bring him home. He thought the best place to inquire was at the office and had been directed from there to the music store.

Gabriel had seen Henry only once since his visit to the sixpenny lodgings but he had found a job, and was labouring on the site at the new Exhibition Buildings.

"I don't really want to find him if he's happy," said Timothy. "If Mrs. Flanagan knew where he was and he wouldn't come home she'd send the police round to fetch him. It's bad enough me living in Brighton and being respectable without dragging Henry back too. Still, Mrs. Flanagan always went her own way without asking me, but if she did, I'd tell her to leave the boy alone. He's no more cut out to wear a collar and tie and work in an office than I am."

He waited as Gabriel discussed with a homesick Scot the possibility of importing a set of bagpipes. He promised that a cable would go off to London that very day. He would write it out presently and send Mr Gladman to the post office as soon as possible and get an answer straight after Christmas.

"The fact is," said Timothy Flanagan, as soon as the customer had gone, "I want to see Henry apprenticed to the engineering trade but Mrs. Flanagan'd find out for sure. I haven't had a secret to meself for twenty five years, not since we tied the knot. That woman'd get the truth out of me if I was made of wood and that's one of the reasons why I come to see you; you might be able to help me. I want someone else to sign the apprenticeship papers. I'll put up the money, in cash, so it won't cost anything."

Gabriel had to consider this proposition. He did not think it possible for anyone but a parent or guardian to apprentice a boy to a trade.

"How are Mrs. Flanagan and the girls?" he enquired cautiously. "Are they well?"

"They're well enough," replied Timothy "They're not any happier than when they were living in Walhalla; I know I'm not It took Mrs. Flanagan and Myrtle a while to get over losing you, but if you were to ask me on the quiet I'd say you were bloody lucky to get that nice little girl instead of Myrtle. They're all right now. Myrtle's settin' her cap at Pryor, that partner of yours. He's coming day after tomorrow with his mam to stay with us over Christmas. Ah well, if he's willing to take on Ada as a mother in law I reckon he's game enough for anything. He can't say he wasn't warned; he just has to look at Mrs. Flanagan to see how Myrtle is going to turn out. I had plenty of advice from me father in law before I popped the question, but you know what young bucks are like; I didn't take any notice of friendly warnings. Still, I've never met anyone with the gift of the gab like your mate; if anyone's going to be a match for that pair I reckon he would be."

Well, why don't you get my partner to have a chat with Mrs. Flanagan If he can't talk her round I don't know who could. You won't get a better chance than this, it being Christmas and all, and she wants him for Myrtle so she is not likely to argue if he tells her that Henry ought to be apprenticed to a tradesman, and once the papers have been signed she can't change her mind. While you're at it," he continued. "You could give me five pounds. I think our landlady might have a room down the back of the house for a single lodger, same as the one Harold is in. If I see Henry I'll tell him to call round and see Mrs Byers, and I'll pay the rent. He'd be better off there than in sixpenny lodgings because I don't think you will get him home again unless you catch him and drag him there."

Timothy gave the five sovereigns as requested and acting immediately on his friend's advice walked straight to the land agency to see Mr Pryor while Gabriel remained in the music shop.

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The Hon. Adrian Memsworth.

Both Mr. Gladman and Mrs. . Goss were relieved to have Gabriel in the shop.

The sandwich board men had been rounded up again and fitted out with more signs and even now were parading round the streets with messages urging shoppers to patronise Gladman's music store. As well as being equipped front and back with garishly signwritten boards proclaiming the name and address of the shop. They also bore pictures of different instruments.

The sandwich men wound in an out of the traffic, sometimes separated and hidden by drays, cabs and delivery carts but pressing on doggedly through the principal streets ignoring abuse and the occasional lash across their sandwich boards from irritated carters and cabmen. They were followed too by a group of larrikins who yelled ridicule and now and then threw stones picked up from the road, and sometimes they tried to smear the signs with dirt.

The sandwich men defended themselves as well as they could from these guerilla attacks,and it seemed at times as though a minor civil war was raging in the streets.

Mr. Gladman looked out of the front door when he heard the noise of the passing procession. After one glance he had retreated to the furthest depth of his establishment so as to see no more.

Some pedestrians laughed as they passed the shop, those who had seen the parade, so Gabriel thought this was a good time to play some music with Mrs. Goss.

They had not long been presenting a sentimental Victorian tune, she on the piano, he playing the flute when Mrs. Goss leaned towards him and said quietly, "That man is back again."

Gabriel looked round. He thought it might have been Elder Muirhead entering the shop to denounce them but instead he saw a quiet gentleman in a soft hat and herringbone tweed suit. The stranger smiled, removed his hat and bowed to them.

The piece was soon over and the gentleman was ecstatic at the playing. He clapped loudly causing other people who had been looking through the window opening to join in.

"How charming," he said, "how utterly charming. Whoever smashed the window of the shop I thank him; otherwise I may have walked up and down Bourke Street for years and never known what an oasis of culture was to be found here in this commercial desert. I heard you on the first day you played to the passers by and I have scarcely been able to stay away since." He clasped his hat, stick and gloves to his chest in both hands and beamed on them.

Gabriel thanked him while Mrs. Goss blushed. "You're very kind." He glanced at his watch. "The German band should be back quite soon, perhaps you would care to stay and hear them too."

The man shuddered. "I have done a number of things I have since regretted but I will not add to the number by listening to a German band. If you can tell me when you and

the young lady will next be playing I shall be sure to return." He had manners that had long disappeared in the colony of Victoria, or else he was an off duty floor walker from one of the town's emporiums, because he now bowed again, this time particularly to Mrs. Goss who simpered and dropped a curtsy in return. He had a silver card case in his pocket and produced it as Mr Gladman appeared from his office.

In spite of his gloom Mr Gladman had been watching events in the shop and had noticed that the gentleman had the air and appearance of one who could possibly be a customer and was most probably well to do. He decided to emphasise the fact that the shop and its proprietor were both genteel and the present vulgarity would pass, as soon as the window glass was replaced.

"Good afternoon, Sir," he said, with his best shopkeeper's bow, which was returned. "I am George Gladman, proprietor of this establishment. I am sorry the business is in such disarray; my show windows were smashed by a vicious larrikin while inflamed with drink and nothing has gone right since."

The customer shook his head. ''A godless generation, " Mr. Gladman, he said, sadly. I dread the future, but am comforted by the thought that there is still beauty in the land. What glorious music I have heard in your shop. He clasped his hands together again.

"What treasures you have here, Mr Gladman. How you must cherish their inestimable musical gifts. I have not heard such playing since I was on my last visit to London. One of the great halls of the capital would scarcely do justice to their talents. And the instruments, Mr Gladman, the grand range of instruments you stock, who would have thought that any merchant in Victoria would have the foresight and courage to stock such glorious instruments, of the highest quality. I thought one would have to go to the continent to obtain the like. That harp is in need of a professional tuner as this dear lady no doubt would have noticed, but the instrument itself is beyond reproach and is a thing of beauty, and oh, how one longs for beauty in this wasteland of the arts, so far from the culture of Europe."

"My young friends can easily play some more," said Mr Gladman eagerly. He brought out a light chair that was reserved solely for customers. "Pray be seated."

The gentleman did so but first insisted that each of them should have one of his visiting cards. They were inscribed:

The Hon. Adrian Memsworth

SEA SONG

MORNINGTON

"I live by the bay, as you can see." Said The Honourable Adrian. "Fortunately, not too far from town, and I like to leave my isolation every now and voyage here to investigate what passes for city life in our corner of the globe. It was a great pleasure to walk by yesterday and hear beautiful music emanating from your shop. So much so that I did not

return home but spent the night in the city in order to come back today and hear some more. I have passed the shop several times as this dear lady well knows. My patience has been rewarded and I would be happy to hear you play again."

Mr Gladman dusted the spotless piano once more. He had been quite overcome at the sight of the visiting card. It was not every day that a gentleman, even with the most minor title, entered his shop and addressed him in a pleasant way. What a triumph it would be to go home and tell Mrs. Gladman that an Honourable had been in the shop and had actually made a purchase. With any luck it might happen and they could both stop thinking for a while about the Collins Street property.

Pleased with themselves and the praise they had received the two musicians started on another piece specially chosen by Mr Gladman. It was his favourite; 'Home Sweet Home'. Mr. Memsworth praised them generously.

"I really would like to purchase a selection of your finest," he stated, "but then I play very little, and my housekeeper not at all." He glanced at Mrs. Goss who had looked at him keenly when he mentioned that a housekeeper was part of his establishment.

The Honourable Adrian Memsworth laid his hat, stick and gloves on top of the piano while he walked round the shop and admired the stock.

"Charming," he said, "charming. I have a few items of furniture in my house that friends have been kind enough to praise, but it is only a home for a poor bachelor after all. What I see before me would add finishing touches to the rooms that are so much in need of a gracious feminine hand." Clearly he aimed this compliment at Mrs. Goss who was still sitting ready to play again at request.

"I will start making up my list instantly if only this beautiful lady would come and grace my drawing room with a recital, but to travel to Mornington is such an undertaking that I would not like to impose it on her. She could be my tutor for I play the piano after a fashion but not nearly with the same grace and skill as this gifted young man."

Mrs. Goss was much taken with the thought of travelling by steamer to Mornington and Mr Gladman could not have been more enthusiastic. He urged Mrs. Goss to consider this kind offer and made it clear she would have leave from him to go there and play if it would influence this promising new customer.

"I have fallen in love with that piano," said the Honourable Adrian; "I really must have it. Of course there is already a semi-grand in the drawing room that I have tuned to concert pitch now and again but I believe I have just the spot for the piano in the conservatory, and one of my friends enjoys dropping in to play the flute when we have our musical evenings. It would be pleasant to surprise him with a Christmas gift of a new flute. Yes, I will take both, and we shall have armfuls of sheet music. The lady must make a selection for me, I have implicit faith in her taste, and I have decided to become patron of the Mornington town band. I shall take what brass intruments and drums you have and we can order the rest so you can get them in for me. I shall pay for every member of the

band to come to town to be measured for their uniforms. Put all these beautiful instruments down on a bill for me please, and if we make haste they can be packed up and go on the next ferry.''

''I am excited as a boy to have the piano in my house and when it is installed the dear lady can make an expedition one day early in the new-year to my seaside retreat and we can spend an afternoon making sweet music together.

Mr Gladman instantly took pen and ink and commenced to write an invoice. If the goods were to be delivered that very day the carriers had to be notified otherwise the precious freight would miss the afternoon steamer. No doubt he would charge extra to turn out on Christmas Eve but Mr Memsworth assured them that he well understood the difficulties he was causing. He made it clear there would be a special gratuity for the carrier to compensate for his trouble.

The carrier's depot was in Lonsdale Street and Fox offered to go round and negotiate to see if there was a wagon free to make an immediate start. He came back twenty minutes later with good news. A carter and his mate were willing to do this rush job and they were busy harnessing some horses to a van as he left and would be around in a few minutes. Someone else was getting crates ready in which to pack the instruments, and all being well they would be delivered to the wharf in time to catch the afternoon boat to Mornington.

While waiting for Gabriel to return the Honourable Adrian Memsworth had been chatting lightly with Mr Gladman and Mrs. Goss telling about his life at Mornington since arriving in Australia from England. He explained that he had extensive land holdings on the other side of the bay and out beyond Geelong and some thousands of head of sheep looked after by shepherds and managers. It was a very pleasant life, he said, but lacking in suitable company for a bachelor. Here he looked meaningly at Mrs. Goss who was much fluttered by the hidden meanings in these remarks.

"Now," he said, when he heard the report. "It is time for me to stop gasbagging and pay for these marvellous instruments. I can't tell you how much pleasure they will give to me and my friends in the years ahead. I am sure you will all find time to come out and visit Sea Song. It is only hours away by steamer and twenty minutes by cab from the wharf. Please do promise that you will come out and help a poor bachelor's weekends pass more quickly."

While saying all this he had not been idle. He had produced a cheque from his

pocket book after first inquiring what would be a generous amount to add to cover the cost of packing and carting to the wharf.

"I'm sorry," said Fox, when he saw what the customer was doing. "It is Mr Gladman's policy not to accept cheques in payment of goods unless the customer is known to us or he has very good guarantees regarding payment. Of course we will hold the instruments in store until the cheque is cleared."

"Oh dear," cried Mr Memsworth, his face falling on hearing this statement. "This means I won't get my musical treat until after Christmas. What a shame. I did want to have them in my home during this happy time, and I will let you into a little secret. I was just about to invite Mrs. Goss to catch the morning steamer on Christmas Day and have lunch with me. I was hoping to hear her play in my own drawing room as soon as possible."

Mrs. Goss looked with scorn at Gabriel on hearing this, and Mr Gladman was equally upset. He said sharply, "Now, Mr Fox, I am older than you and pride myself on being a better judge of character. Go ahead Mr Memsworth, write your cheque, Sir, I will be happy to accept it. I have been in business in London and Melbourne for many years and my perception of men and affairs has been refined during that time and I am never wrong. It is a valuable facility, Mr Fox, and you may attain it in time when you have gained some maturity and have dealt with as many people in all walks of life as I have."

The Hon Adrian Memsworth and Mrs. Goss were impressed by this little speech and he put the pen back on the desk in order to clasp Mr Gladman by the hand."

"Nobly put, Mr Gladman," he exclaimed. "My friends shall come here to buy their instruments. I will personally recommend you to them, one and all. He was holding the pen once more and was about to dip the nib into the inkwell when he paused. "It is pleasant to find trust and fair dealing even in this cold, commercial city, and I wonder if I can impose on you just a little more?"

Gabriel shrugged and turned away but Mr Gladman leaned forward attentively.

"It is my fault but I have only one cheque left and the others are home in Mornington. It was foolish of me to forget them because I did want to go to the bank and draw a little Christmas money. I have one or two non musical friends at home for whom I wish to buy gifts but I can't go to the bank now seeing I am giving you my only cheque. Would it be possible to write it for an extra £10 and you can be my banker until the cheque is cleared?"

Mr Gladman was delighted to be of service for such a small request. He went straight to the cash drawer and withdrew £6 from the money that had already been made up to pay into the bank. He came back apologetically. "We had more," he said, "but we have paid into the bank several times today."

He offered the notes and coins. "Would this be enough? I am sorry we cannot make up the £10 and I hope your friends are not too disappointed if you can't buy them the gifts you wanted."

The Honourable Adrian graciously accepted this lesser sum and included it in the total of the cheque. As he explained it was the thought that mattered. His dear friends would be delighted at any small gift he might choose to give. The £6 was ample. He took the notes and gold and put them into his pocket book which was carefully placed in an inner pocket of his coat.

Mrs. Goss was to catch the first boat to Mornington on Boxing Day. This had been decided between them as more convenient than Christmas day and gave her more time to get ready.

The Hon Adrian had an excellent knowledge of the steamer timetables and knew when all the regular and excursion steamers would be leaving with loads of holiday makers. He was to meet her at the wharf and they would go by carriage to his house.

They had just finished making these plans when his face fell and he smote his forehead. "Dear Mrs. Goss," he said contritely. "How could I have overlooked it. I have to go away immediately after Christmas for a week. All my pleasure at meeting you and the excitement of buying these treasures had driven it out of my head. My manager at Geelong wants me to buy another wretched property out on the plains somewhere. I feel I own enough land but he was most insistent and said I must come while the opportunity was there. If I don't he will be most offended and he has been in my employment so long I look on him as a family retainer, and we will make your little journey the first Sunday, a week from Christmas day.

Mrs. Goss was disappointed but had to agree as the carrier's van pulled up at the front door with a rattle and stamping of hoofs. The horses snorted and shook their heads violently as though aggrieved at being dragged out of their comfortable stables and made to work on Christmas Eve. They pulled on their collars and backed so that the van creaked and shook even with the brake hard on. They were not pacified until their nosebags had been returned then they settled down quietly enough waiting while the Hon. Adrian's purchases were loaded into the van.

The Hon. Adrian had decided to go with the carriers to the depot, first to supervise the crating of the instruments then he said he would go with them to the wharf. He was eager that the work should be done as quickly as possible. Haste was necessary to pack the instruments and get them on to the boat as deck cargo and there was no time to spare. He said he would be devastated if they missed the boat because cargo was not carried or loaded on Christmas Day, only people.

He disappeared with the carriers after many farewells and protestations of friendships and offered to come back after his stay at Geelong to arrange for the others to visit his house also.

Besides the men had come and replaced the hoardings so none of the display could be seen from the street expect for persons who came close and looked in through the glass doors.

"Well, that's it," said the proprietor. I thank you both for your help and wish you a happy Christmas day, and we shall meet again on the day after Boxing Day.

He took a card from his waistcoat pocket and glanced at it. ''What a pleasure it was to meet the Honourable Adrian Memsworth. I am sure Mrs. Gladman will be pleased to see his card and hear about my experiences. Perhaps it will make up for my not having seen Mr. Pryor today so I had no opportunity of demanding my deposit back. I shall make a

special point of interviewing him after Christmas and driving my point home. Though I wonder if he is right about increasing property values? If he is correct it is a matter of balancing the present needs of the Brethren against a future profit?" He was still meditating on this point when he turned off the gas and locked the doors for the night.

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A visit to Queen's Wharf

Mrs. Goss was boarding nearby, in William Street, so she and Gabriel walked off together after bidding Mr. Gladman good night and wishing him well for Christmas.

They were walking past the post office when a bearded man with a large paunch and a carrier's white cap and apron came from behind a pillar and down the steps and walked alongside them.

"Clear off!" said Fox . "Go away, or I won't care what happens I'll call the police." He was so angry he would have sworn but for the presence of the startled Mrs. Goss.

"Gawd, you're hard on me," whined Benno, for he was in a new disguise. "Gimme ten bob and I'll hook it. Wocka's missus wouldn't let me in the house so the boys are going to get me on the Sydney boat as a deckhand. I would have been at sea by now only she blew a valve or something so she won't be going until tomorrow or the day after. Fair dinks, Gabby, yer gotta help me. I can't even go back to the sixpenny rope now. The rozzers found me there once so I betcha they'll be back to have another look. O'Hanlon says it's more than his license is worth to have me in his pub, so what's a man to do? You gotta get me into your place and give me a bed. Amy won't mind, she's a mate of mine."

"Oh yes she will, and you're not coming anywhere with me. If you keep hanging round like this I'll call the police."

"Well, gimme a dollar then. I gotta have something. If you give me the five bob I'll keep an eye on that stuff you're sending to Sydney, if you don't it can go to bloody hell."

Fox turned on him. "What do you mean? We're not consigning anything to Sydney."

"Yes you are. I was there at the wharf when it arrived. I know the carriers and I heard them say it was from Gladman's. There was a prissy little bloke came with them and he said the crates were to go on to the Sydney boat. Like I told you; it would have been half way down the bay by now if the engine hadn't clapped out. They had to send to Ballarat for a part; don't ask me what it was I wouldn't know."

"Who was the man with the carriers?" asked Mrs.Goss tensely. "Did he say his name was Memsworth?"

"I didn't talk to him, missus! How the hell should I know what his name was. All I know is that stuff was put on the boat for Sydney. There was a bit of a row when he

found out that the boat wasn't going that night and he wanted to put it on another one but the next steamer doesn't leave until the day after Boxing Day. Anyway, they said they couldn't put any cargo on board until the engine was fixed and they knew when it was sailing. Right now your stuff's in store down at the wharf."

"That's where I'm going," said Fox . "Mrs. Goss, can I take you home because I want to go straight round to the police station. I think there is something seriously wrong here. If Mr Gladman's goods are supposed to go to Mornington but they'e going to Sydney instead, well, it's worth looking into."

"I'm coming with you," stated Mrs. Goss "If that man has cheated us I will report him to the authorities myself. He is a wicked deceiver and should be punished."

Fox was a little surprised at Mrs. Goss's denunciation of the errant Mr Memsworth. A stream of complaints about cruel deceitful men issued from her lips as they hurried away leaving Benno by the steps of the post office. He was not invited to go with them and did not want to come. His opinion was that anyone who entered a police station without being taken there was mad and deserved anything that might happen to them when they got there.

He was shouting out these sentiments and others to express his poor opinion of Gabriel's generosity and lack of mateship as the couple crossed Bourke Street. The noise drew the attention of some police constables who were standing on the other corner. They were bored and were about to investigate his behaviour when he decided it might be more prudent to follow the departing couple.

"Who is he?" asked Mrs. Goss when she heard the patter of his feet running after them and had turned to look, "And could you ask him to moderate his language."

By dockside standards his flow of language was not too bad and he had restrained himself a little in Mrs. Goss's presence but it was still too racy for a lady.

"Keep the noise down," said he said grimly to Benno. "You nearly went to the police station whether you wanted to or not. If you do that sort of thing again you'll go straight to the cells. They know you at the station and you're on the wanted list for breaking Gladman's window. You won't get out of prison for years."

"Is this the man that smashed them?" asked Mrs. Goss. She was delighted to meet the miscreant who had perpetrated the outrage on Mr Gladman's premises. "That's marvellous. I'm glad you did that, it used to be so boring working for that man. Now, between you and Mr Fox and Mr Pryor and the entertainers and everything else it's like a show going on all the time. This makes me feel better when I think of that horrible man Memsworth."

"Have you got a dollar on ya, Missus?" asked Benno as he tried to walk inconspicuously beside them. He looked back from time to time and though the police were standing under the gas light looking in their direction they did not seem interested in following.

"How much is a dollar?" enquired Mrs. Goss. "Is it another word for a pound?"

"He means five shillings and if you give it to him it will be spent on beer or medicine like the other money he was given today."

"Gaw strike me!" cried Benno. "You don't ease up on a man, do yer? I want the five bob for me bed and a breakfast and how can I buy the medicine I need with what's left out of a minjy oxford? I'm sick and you don't care. You got thirty odd quid of mine and I can't get it out of you. If I'd kept that money I would'a been allright by now. It'll be a lesson to me not to trust any bloody new chums in future."

"It's a lot of money," said Mrs. Goss doubtfully. "Should I give it to him? I have to work hard for five shillings."

Fox stopped and faced them. "Don't bother, Mrs. Goss. I'll give him a shilling and that's the stone, motherless end. Not another penny; he can just whistle for it because I won't put up with this sort of thing any longer. I will send him money every quarter; but not here in Melbourne, because it would cause endless trouble. Benno, you write to me from Sydney. As soon as I get a letter I will forward a cheque for your quarterly interest and you can do what you like with it, but don't come back annoying us."

He took a coin from his waistcoat pocket and gave it to Benno. "Alright, that's it. We're going to the police station so you can't follow us there and thank heavens for that."

"I can't read or write," said Benno sullenly. "I told you I started late and the father kicked me out of school after about a month. He said he couldn't put up with me any longer."

"I know how he felt. Well, get someone else to write a note for you. I don't care, as long as you're in Sydney and I'm down here."

"If you was on the bone of yer backside I wouldn't let you down," shouted Benno to their receding figures. He looked cautiously up and down the street lest any policeman should be lurking in a shop doorway. Fox was determined to ignore him and would not look back, though Mrs. Goss kept looking over her shoulder. Benno was an original, she had never met anyone like him before and it took her mind off the possible cheating of the Honourable Adrian.

Benno followed them for a while shouting complaints about his treatment but disappeared when they turned the corner and came in sight of the police station.

Gabriel asked to see a detective and was a little uncomfortable to find Mr Jones still on duty. He wondered if Mrs. Goss would mention the encounter with Benno and decided to do it first.

"The Sydney boat, eh? That's interesting," the man said, making an entry in his notebook. He was engrossed in their story about the Hon. Adrian and seemed to recognise him from the description.

"I think we'll go down to the wharf now," he said. "No problem, we can knock up the nightwatchman. You may be able to identify the merchandise. If you can we will inspect the manifest to see what name he is using and leave instructions that it is not to go aboard any ship. If we lay low until after Christmas we might just catch Billy when he comes to check the freight for Sydney. You can be stiff, you know. If it hadn't been for the ship's engine breaking down he would have been in Sydney before the cheque was returned from the bank. He's probably had a busy day going round to shops like yours and leaving a trail of dud cheques for merchandise. When we investigate we might find there has been a procession of vans to the wharf all day. It wouldn't surprise me if he and his mate in Sydney had an auction arranged on the wharf, It's been done before, but not for a while." He chuckled. "If I'm right about this little caper it's just as well the loot didn't go on the Mornington boat, the weight would have sunk it."

"Billy!" said Mrs. Goss. "Isn't his name Memsworth at all?"

"No, from your description I'd say it was Billy Summers. He and his mate worked a swindle during Cup week, or so I heard, even though there was no official complaint. I reckon he might be lucky if we get him before the bookies do. I'm not surprised he's off to Sydney, probably Melbourne's too hot for him now."

"Then he doesn't have a mansion or friends at Mornington? All that was just part of his lies?"

"I would be surprised if he owns the clothes he was wearing and he probably had the cards printed on tick. No, I don't think you should waste your time going to Mornington to look for his house."

"Flogging's too good for the man!" Mrs. Goss was enraged that her dreams were being torn away by the exposure of this swindler. "I'll go with you to the wharves if it takes all night."

"It's no place for a lady down there, especially in the middle of the night," was detective Jones' doubtful response, but his qualms were swept aside by Mrs. Goss's determination to have the scoundrel brought to justice.

A police wagon was called for and soon they were rattling over the timbers of the wharf to pull up before the large, arched doorway of a bluestone warehouse. Sometimes gangs of men worked all night loading and unloading ships but that night, because of the season, there was no one at work and the heavy wooden doors were barred shut, illuminated by a gas lamp mounted on a bracket over the keystone. Detective Jones thumped on the planks of the door and shouted to be let in.

Only one ship lay at the wharf but more were tied up at other wharves up and down the river. Most appeared deserted, though entry lights were burning dimly on each one. Over the water came the faint sound of a banjo playing a popular tune; It stopped when the detective hammered on the warehouse door.

The ship at the wharf was a two master with a single funnel and two cargo hatches covered and wedged down. They guessed that this was the ship that should have been on its way to Sydney. As in the warehouse there was no sound or movement on board though a security light burned over the gangway.

After waiting a few moments to see if anyone was going to answer the door Fox stood on tip toe and held himself up by the bars to peer through the window of the warehouse. It was quite dark, no light, nothing to indicate that a night-watchman was on duty and locked inside. The noise of the detective banging on the door echoed around the quiet docks.

"There should be somebody about," muttered the detective. "Even on Christmas Eve the company wouldn't leave the place without a night-watchman. If there's no one here I'll have something to say to the manager after Christmas." He banged on the door again and the noise re-echoed from the quiet docks on the other side of the river.

"Who's making all that racket?" Roared a voice from the ship and a yellow square of light appeared as a door was opened at deck level. "You've no call to be making a noise enough to wake the fishes in the water this holy season."

The person on the ship took the lantern down from a bracket and turned up the wick. He stumped loudly over the gangplank and held it up so the light shone on the intruders. "Ye'll explain yourselves," he said. "This is a private wharf and ye've no shadow of a right to come on it in the middle of the night without permission and make a racket that would draw the dead from their graves. If you've come from one of they parties with wine and beer and spirits and think you can roar and carouse on this wharf just as you please well, ye can think again."

The speaker was a man in his forties with a bushy black beard . The beard merged with the hair on his head and upper lip, though it stopped short above his ears. There was no hair at all on his skull. In spite of the warmth of the night he wore a heavy jacket and seaman's trousers. This bulky figure advanced on them holding the lantern high while Mrs. Goss stepped backwards to stand behind Gabriel .

"I am Detective Sergeant Jones of the Victoria Police," said that individual, showing his authority to the bearded man.

He looked at it by gas and lamplight and said gruffly, "So, ye're a detective from the police; it wouldn't matter if ye were the Prince of Wales himself it doesn't give ye the right to come in the middle of the night, on Christmas Eve, of all times, and make a noise like that."

The uniformed policeman who had driven them there got down from his box and came over to see if he was needed. Detective Sergeant Jones waved him away.

The stranger seemed more impressed by the uniform than the written authority but did not abate his aggressive manner. "And who might these be?" He demanded directing the lantern light to Fox and Mrs. Goss.

"Witnesses!" retorted the detective. "They have information that could assist police inquires. Now, I am seeking information about certain articles that may have been loaded on to this ship or could still be in the warehouse. We know they were brought to the wharf this afternoon and consigned to Sydney."

"I know nothing of freight," said the man abruptly. "If ye want to ask about consignments and cargo ye'd best come back when the supercargo reports in, or the wharfinger. My duty is to assist in the care of the ship and to guide her safely, under God's providence, to wherever the owners may direct. When we get our valve repaired we'll be off to Sydney, but that'll no be for a day or two."

"What about the night watchman? Why isn't he here on duty; don't tell me he's cleared off."

The bald man shrugged. "There's nobbut me here. The watch was on the dock earlier but I think he's a man of wrath and has taken himself to the fleshpots of Babylon. No doubt he will answer for his transgressions when Auld Nick calls the sinners of the world to account."

They gathered from this that the errant night watchman must have slipped away to the nearest pub. They were at an impasse unless the detective was to authorise a policeman to stand guard and wait.

"Is there no one else?" enquired Fox .

The man shook his head. "I told you, there is no one here on the wharf and ship but me." He paused. "That is, there are none of the crew on board though we have a saloon passenger who's staying put because he expected to be sailing this day and he's closed up his house in Toorak and sent away all the servants. A man of substance, but good company for a seafaring man such as myself in spite of all."

"What is he like?"

"A godly man who has been to the four corners of the world and seen almost as much of the works of the creator as I have. We've been sitting there swapping our experiences of life. The failure of the bank has gone very hard with him and he will have to start his life over again in Sydney."

"We would like to meet this gentleman," said the detective, "do you mind if we step aboard."

The seaman said nothing but stood aside and let the light from his lantern fall on the gangplank. Mrs. Goss crossed the narrow chasm over the water with gasps and trembling but at last stood on the deck of the steamer, gazed around in astonishment and then had to be assisted over the raised sill in the doorway. She had never been on a ship before.

The first class passenger saloon into which they had entered was panelled with birds-eye maple set off with teak framing and embellished with polished brass fittings and

portholes, and a number of handsome bevelled glass mirrors. Built against the wall were padded benches where the stewards could serve passengers from tables screwed to the floor.

In the middle of the saloon was a much larger dining table it too was firmly fixed to the floor.

There was no one in the saloon though on a corner of a table were two tumblers partly full of spirits to show where the seaman and the passenger had been sitting talking.

By this time they had introduced themselves and discovered that the man they had met was Dawkins, first mate of the ship.

He looked keenly round the saloon. "The passenger must have stepped out for a minute. If you want to seat yourselves I would be pleased to treat the gentlemen to a dram while you're waiting. It will be harder to find the lady something to drink though, with a bit of a search, I might be able to break out a bottle of lemonade."

"I'm on duty," said detective Jones. "I thank you for the offer, but I can't drink. What I would like is to get a sight of this passenger of yours."

First mate Dawkins was looking at him in astonishment when they heard a loud thump from outside.

Jones leapt to his feet. "Quick!" He moved to the door on the opposite side to where they had entered. They all hurried out on to the deck but could see nothing at first because the night was very dark and their eyes were dazzled from the light in the saloon.

After a few moments Mrs. Goss pointed to a row boat that was drifting in the current. The person at the oars was keeping a cautious distance away but was grinning up at them. They had met him earlier in the day as the Honourable Adrian Memsworth.

Ah, Mrs. Goss, Mr Fox and Mr Jones; you are all well I trust." He cried while moving the oars from time to time to stay in the one place. "I'm sorry, but certain pressing engagements draw me away. I can't stay and enjoy your company. Mrs. Goss, I regret I will have to withdraw my invitation for a musical soiree but as soon as I re-open the house at Mornington you will be the first to be invited."

"You horrible man!" shouted Mrs. Goss leaning dangerously over the rail and shaking her fist, something she had never done before.

"You're very cruel my darling," said the trickster, still grinning, "don't be too hard on me, you can have the goods I bought from that pompous old ass, Gladman. They're all yours; just tell him I said you could have them."

"Come back here, Summers," ordered the detective sternly. "If you try to escape you will only make things worse for yourself. Come back and I'll tell the court that you

gave yourself up quietly."

"Thanks for the offer," was the reply, "but I've tried Her Majesty's hospitality at Pentridge and I don't want to sample it again. If you don't mind I'll love and leave you."

"Summers, this is your last warning!" said the detective, "Either come back to the ship or I will spread the word among certain bookie friends of yours that you are still in Melbourne. If they get you before we do you won't be worth finding afterwards."

Memsworth-Summers lay on his oars for a minute. "You wouldn't do that would you, sergeant?"

"Try me. There are certain characters out there have been asking very urgently for you and your mate. They couldn't get at you in a police cell."

"Couldn't they?" he retorted. "I might be alright in Melbourne jail but once I was out at Pentridge there would be no escape. No thanks, I'll take my chances out in the wide world." He started to row to the wharves on the other side of the Yarra."

By this time Dawkins, the first mate, had discovered, in a low voiced conversation with Gabriel , what was going on. He stepped up to the rail. "Come back, you," he roared in a voice that had been heard over many a gale and sliced through the din of fog horns. "You borrowed two quid off me, you bloody liar, bring it back or I'll come over there and pull your guts out, and that boat's company property. I warn you, I'll thump you and the company will lay criminal charges." He said all this interlarded with abuse of the most lurid kind and continued with a stream of profanity of which Mrs. Goss, fortunately, understood very little.

They quietened him after a minute as the row-boat receded towards the further shore. He was abjectly apologetic when he realized all the terrible things he had been saying in the presence of a lady, but detective Jones had little time for talk.

"Get your glass out and keep it on the boat," he said urgently. "I want you to mark exactly where he goes ashore. He might have to climb a fence or go past a night watchman to get off the wharf and then he will have difficulty getting transport on that side of the river, unless he rows upstream past Queensbridge; we might catch him on foot. I'm going off to alert the patrols and the River Police but we'll want to know whether he's upstream or down from here. So someone will be back later on for the information. Come on, you two," he said "I'll take you back to Bourke Street. You won't be needed again tonight."

"Well," said Dawkins, who was surveying the far side of the river through his spy glasses. "I'll bid you goodnight and apologise for my behaviour. I can see you had every right to come on the wharf and make that rumpus and I bitterly regret I forgot myself so far as to blaspheme before a lady and my creator. It was the thought of losing £2 that I could ill afford to a liar and a cheat and how I listened like a gowk to his tales about his mansion at Toorak and his travels that would have made the

Wandering Jew look like a stay at home. It all rose up in me throat when I thought how I'd been cheated and cozened. But enough of me complaining. I'll be here on the boat on Christmas Day; if ye want to visit a plain sea faring man, and a sinner to boot I'll be happy to give you the dram you missed and apologise for my discourtesy."

"I'll come!" Volunteered Mrs. Goss promptly. "No man should have to sit on his own on Christmas day. You can show me over the ship and tell me about the places you have been. That will be better than talking to that dreadful Memsworth man."

"Will you now? I'll be very pleased to see you and we can break out that wee bottle of lemonade I was talking about."

They had to go then, Detective Jones was anxious to start the hunt for the trickster. He let them down from the carriage in Bourke Street, at the police station, to finish their interrupted walk home.

"A very interesting day," said Mrs. Goss complacently. Memsworth had roved but a shadow and a fraud ,but he had been replaced in her esteem by the first mate and now she was looking forward to another kind of Christmas day visit. "I have been so glad to meet you and Mr Pryor. The music business was terribly dull with only old Gladman for company, but with you two around all sorts of exciting things happen. I just hope they catch that horrible man and put him in jail for ten years."

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The Gladmans at home.

The next day, Christmas day, Fox took the trouble to catch a morning train to Prahran to break the news to Mr Gladman. He knew from perusing a postal directory that the man lived a little way off Chapel Street.

The house was a double fronted villa relieved by patterns of coloured brick on the facade and a veranda with a cast iron frieze. The narrow street was lined with similar houses except for some factories or warehouses at the far end.

The area was lively with children playing in the middle of the road, many with new toys, and most of the front doors and windows of the houses were open. Not many women were to be seen. Fox guessed from the smoking chimneys they were inside preparing Christmas dinner. However, some of the fathers and older people sat at ease on their verandas to take the air and watch what was going on in the street. Their tiny gardens and spiked iron fences right on the street line separated them from the road. They surveyed Fox interestedly as he passed.

The Gladman house was the only one in the street with a shut front door and drawn blinds. Fox wondered if they had gone out for the day or were attending chapel at this hour. He had thought of this and had brought a pencil and notepaper. If there was no one home Gladman could get in touch with him or the police later.

He pulled the knob of the doorbell and was rewarded after half a minute by the sound of footsteps in the passage and then someone fumbling with keys and locks. It seemed the door was barred and whoever was inside had to exert great effort to get the bar free. After all this the door was still restrained by a chain. It opened slightly and some unseen person peered out from the dimness of the passage."

A woman's voice asked, "What do you want?"

He raised his hat. "Mrs. Gladman? My name is Fox. I have been helping Mr. Gladman in the shop for the last few days, is he in? I would like to talk to him."

"I have heard him speak of you. He comes home greatly bruised in spirit because you and Pryor, that other man of wrath, wrestle with him to accept the ways of the devil. Poor weakling? How many times have I told him to cast the tormentors out of his shop and reclaim it for the Lord."

Fox felt the conversation was not developing as he might have wished. "I would like to speak to him, if I may. I have some important news that he must know about."

"My husband is repenting his sins and drawing strength from prayer. He must have enough power in him after this pagan festival called Christmas is over to go to Pryor and face him down. To recover the money that rightly belongs in the service of the Lord. He has no time to talk with you of matters that have to do with this passing world and we must go to Chapel soon so that he can confess his weakness and sin in the face of the whole congregation. Elder Muirhead is to lead the prayer that will give him the strength to face the sinner that has taken his money and sunk it into a vanity."

"Well sin is the very thing I want to talk to him about. Someone has committed a sin against him and he should know about it. He has been the victim of a swindle."

The door had been gradually closing but now the woman paused and listened intently.

"Has his foolishness brought him low? He is a worldly man and sometimes his faith wavers, that is when Satan springs on him like a ravening lion. I know that he deals in the vanities of this world and I pray for him constantly. Has the great tempter cast snares around his feet and taken his money by evil means?"

Fox could understand Mr. Gladman a little better now. To be locked up every day, even Christmas day, with this grim fanatic was more than anyone should be asked to bear.

He heard some movement in the passage as though Mr. Gladman had bandoned his prayers long enough to come and listen to the conversation. Mrs. Gladman turned. "George Gladman, the devil pursues you even unto to the door of your abode. He knocketh and ranteth but may not enter. This man with honey dripping from his lips and gall and wormwood in his heart hath chosen the Lord's Day to bring a message of desolation from the City of Destruction."

Fox did not think this a fair assessment of his character but he controlled is irritation for Mr. Gladman shuffled to the door and peered out past his wife's shoulder.

"Mr. Fox! What are you doing here? Has something happened to the shop?"

The man's appearance was terrible. His face was drawn and mottled with grey and red blotches and there were dark marks under his eyes.

Fox looked at him in astonishment but explained the nature of the swindle.

His wife was contemptuous. "You're known to them all now, are you? The agents of the great beast recogniseth a dupe who is easily deceived by lying tongues and they gather round to feed on the substance that he should be laying up for the church. The hand of Satan is here," she continued remorselessly. "He knew that the chapel needs your money, sinful man though you are. It needs the sinews of money to fight the good fight and Satan has struck. First through Pryor by taking from you a so called deposit and now by stealing goods that should have been sold for the glory of the Lord."

"It's not that serious," said Fox, trying to placate here. "We know where the goods have been taken and Mr. Gladman can identify them straight after Christmas. I can't see that there will be any trouble because the warehouse is safely locked."

"You fool, George Gladman," said his wife. "Must I watch and pray ceaselessly. You are to go to Pryor straight after Christmas armed with the authority of the congregation and force him to return the money and you will recover those sinful instruments so they can be converted to good purposes."

Mr. Gladman could endure no more. He pushed past his wife and stood on the veranda. "Pryor said buying that shop is a good investment." "I have thought it over and I believe him. The master has given me a talent and I have invested it for His greater glory. How much better than burying the talent in the earth? Why can the congregation not wait for a while and the money will be returned twice or threefold? Pryor said that property prices in Melbourne are about to increase very greatly."

Mrs. Gladman's glance, when she heard these words of defiance, should have frozen him to silence, but he plunged on, the frustration of years suddenly breaking through. "What about me? That flock of vultures have been taking my money since I married you. You and the rest of them that despise me because I'm in trade and deal in music, but they all want the money I earn to pay for missionaries to go out and make the natives as miserable and frightened as they are. What about me? What about us? I have savings, but not enough for our old age; it has all gone to the chapel and now you want me to confess and ask forgiveness. Forgiveness for what?"

His wife threw up her arms and shrieked, causing great interest among the neighbours who had been listening to the raised voices. They leaned over their fences up and down the street to see what was happening. The children in the road stopped playing and gathered around to listen.

"Oh!" wailed Mrs. Gladman, "that I should hear the words of the beast proceeding from the mouth of my husband. The congregation shall know of this. I shall speak up in open chapel and tell them that the sinner, George Gladman, is more concerned with worldly profit than with the work of the church; that Satan has entered into his head and heart in spite of the tears and prayers of the godly."

At last a great well of emotion burst inside Mr Gladman. He had become more red faced and agitated at every word of denunciation his wife had uttered. He clutched his beard and stamped on the wooden floor of the veranda.

"Damn the congregation!" he shouted violently, "And damn you too!"

There was a ripple of applause from the neighbours and the children, taking their cue from their parents, shrieked with pleasure and cheered.

His wife was astonished at this reversal of years of meek obedence. She staggered back as though hit but quickly recovered. She went inside and slammed the door leaving them standing.

It was only for a minute. They heard her return with Mr Gladman's coat and hat which she handed to him. "I will see you at the chapel," she said with icy control. "There you will apologise to me and the congregation from your bended knees and you will pray to the Lord for mercy in the face of all the sins you have committed and hope that he will find it in his heart to forgive you for what you have said this day."

She stood back inside the doorway and pointed to Fox. "Take care, George Gladman, he is an agent of evil waiting to escort you to where the jaws of hell are quivering to receive sinners. If you do not come to chapel I will know that you have chosen the downward path."

The door slammed. They could hear keys being turned in the locks and the bar jammed into place. Mr Gladman stood still holding his hat and coat and, like Adam cast out of Paradise. He gazed blankly at the closed door.

Fox was awe struck too. His well meaning visit had caused an earthquake in the Gladman household and now he did not know whether to commiserate with the victim or bid him farewell and make a hasty departure.

"Are you alright?" He asked after a while, for the man stood quite still gazing in front of him. "Do you want me to help you on with your coat?"

Mr Gladman made an effort to shake free of his shock. "You must tell me about the devil," he said. "Is he as bad as they make him out to be?"

"Just sit on the step for a minute," said Fox, taking him by the arm. He did so while the children crowded forward for a closer look. One of the neighbours came running up with a glass of beer which he placed in Mr Gladman's hand.

"Well done, George!" he said, patting him on the back. "The mad bitch has had it

coming and we didn't think you were the man to do it. Drink that," he said, indicating the glass of beer. "There's nothing steadies a man like a glass of beer after he's had a blue with his missus. Go on!" He gestured with his hand for Mr. Gladman to empty the glass.

They were interrupted by a sharp tapping on the window behind them. It was Mrs. Gladman, she had been watching from the shelter of the curtains to see what effect her actions had had on her husband. The moment he took the glass in his hand she pulled a drape aside and knocked to attract attention. She shook her finger at him and scowled to indicate that he was not to touch one drop of the dreaded brew.

Some more neighbours had now arrived. They cheered and urged him to drink it down.

The hapless man looked at his wife, at the grinning onlookers who all urged him on, at the children who were jumping up and down and shrieking with excitement and lastly at his wife, who had fixed him with a glare that should have turned him to stone.

Grandly he stood up, raised his glass to his wife in a toast, and held his beard firmly to his chest with his left hand. He drank down the beer in one long gulp and held up the empty glass for her to behold.

The window curtain fell back into place and Mrs. Gladman was seen no more.

Everyone cheered and crowded forward to pat Mr Gladman and wish him a merry Christmas as other drinks appeared. Soon, most of the men had two glasses of beer, one for themselves and one for Fox or Mr Gladman. Even the women had heard something of what had happened and ran outside leaving their dinners untended in the stove. For a short while George Gladman was the hero of his neighbourhood. Neighbours to whom he had not spoken for years walked up and wrung his hand, wished him a Merry Christmas and offered him a drink.

Fox allowed himself one glass and said to Mr Gladman who was standing exhilarated, if confused, in the midst of a small crowd, "Well, I'd better shove off. If I wait around I won't be back at the boarding house in time for Christmas dinner."

The man was in a daze, still scarcely aware of the enormity of what he had done but Fox's words woke him. "I'll come with you." His hat and coat had been hung on a fence spike and these were given to him by willing helpers. In a moment they were walking towards the railway station accompanied by the cheers and congratulations of everyone who could see them off.

Fox was not sure what was to be done with Mr Gladman when they reached the city. He studied him furtively while they walked and saw that the man looked a lot better than when first sighted, his face was no longer blotched and he had a good colour. The excitement and sudden release had improved his appearance for he stood straight, strode out to match Fox's steps and no longer shuffled while walking.

"Are you going to the chapel today?" Fox enquired cautiously.

"Never," was the reply. "You have seen Mrs. Gladman and can understand that I have had a very difficult married life. I believe it is now at an end and so is my association with the chapel. I will find another church with less extreme views and attend that." He was silent for a while as they walked, then said,"You know, Mr Fox, I never thought I would feel the need to thank you, but I do. You and Mr Pryor, even that wretched man that smashed my windows, you have all had a part in making me break loose from a life that was becoming more than I could bear." He thought some more. "Do you know that was the first glass of beer I have drunk for twenty years, it was delicious."

While they were standing on the platform waiting for the train he said, "Now that I am no longer with the chapel I will be able to afford the payments on the new shop," and later, "Mrs. Gladman was not always like that, you know. When we married she was a good woman with strong religious views, but over the past few years she has become obsessed, like some of the others at the chapel. I suppose when people of that type get together they influence one another, and some of their preachers have been quite fanatical. I was always a disappointment to Mrs. Gladman because I was not able to share her more extreme views."

When they arrived at the city Mr Gladman still had not indicated what he intended to do. He looked round at the street, which was almost deserted. "I shall have to find somewhere to live. Do you know, I don't even have the keys to the shop." He patted his pockets, "and only a few shillings to my name, but I will not go back and ask for anything. I would sooner starve in the streets, though the banks won't open until the day after tomorrow." He looked at Fox blankly.

Fox thought of the sixpenny lodging house, but Mr Gladman would be out of place in those surroundings. He suppressed a sigh and said, "Well, come with me. Mrs. Byers may be able to take you in for Christmas dinner and after that we will have to see about a room somewhere."

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Mr Gladman and the devil.

On that Christmas day Gabriel had two single gents more or less under his patronage at the boarding house. Mr. Gladman, and Henry. Henry was there first.

After some real doubts and close questioning by Mrs. Byers, he had been taken in and lodged in the darkest and quietest of her rooms. Henry had slept twice in the sixpenny shelter and did not want to stay there again. He could wash and get a simple breakfast but even so, without his mother to make sure he dressed properly and changed his linen, he was beginning to look seedy.

Mrs. Byers made it clear that if he wished to stay he would patronise her laundress or send his shirts home to be washed and pressed. She kept a boarding house devoted to the reception of respectable people, generally office workers or shop assistants. Henry's stated determination to be a builder or engineer meant that he might come home dirty or dishevelled and this caused her some difficulty, but at last she agreed to him being there for a trial period.

Mrs. Byers took him on Amy's recommendation, though no one else in Melbourne would have persuaded her to do so. She liked Amy and would do nothing that might upset her or her parents. She also said she would come to the church to see her married and that Gabriel was barely good enough for her, though she would have said that of any young man who courted Amy.

Then there was Harold. For the same reason Harold was allowed to stay in her house. Any other boarder who 'drank' would have been out long since but she knew how much Amy loved her brother, and was prepared to tolerate him for her sake, at least for a while.

It was painful for Amy and her parents when Harold lost his employment but he swore he would give up the drink and get another job. He did not argue but was contrite, apologised for his conduct, and sat quietly with them for the rest of the evening.

He even went so far as to volunteer to take a course of Dipsogone which was a popular remedy to cure dipsomania, or persistent drunkeness, though no one had suggested such a thing. Gabriel was uneasy about Harold. He had a limited knowledge of drunks but suspected they were not cured of their addiction by a ten minute lecture from a father or anyone else.

Mr Gladman was another problem. It was not clear to Mrs Byers as to what had happened, and why he had left home on Christmas day, but Gabriel.offered to pay three days board and lodging until Christmas was over and the banks opened so he could make his own arrangements after that.

Amy was a bit miffed with Gabriel for having another adventure without her. She would have been interested to see Mr Gladman ejected from his own home and the impromptu street party afterwards and would have cheered and clapped with the others when the exile toasted his wife with a glass of forbidden beer.

But she quickly forgave him when he pointed out that he had made a friendly visit to the Gladmans with news of the foiled swindle and had not known he would set off a crisis in the household.

Gabriel went with the Taylors to a Church of England service some distance from the boarding house because their own church, St Paul's was being replaced by a cathedral and the foundation stone would be laid early next year. They all went to the service hoping that nothing more would happen to disturb he quiet of the day.

But the peace was broken that afternoon when Mrs. Byers came back from the Christmas service at the the Presbyterian church nearby, which she attended regularly.

Gabriel had told her a little of Mr. Gladman's tumultuous departure from his home and had asked her to send him the bill for his Christmas dinner.

The landlady had taken pity on him because he had eaten nothing , had not responded to the conversation at the table, and had merely looked round vacantly as though seeing nothing.

She took Mr. Gladman to the Presbyterian service because he was a churchgoer and thought the service might cheer him up.

The Taylor family was chatting with Gabriel and Sir Thomas in the common room when they heard steps approaching and a short, decisive tap at the door. Gabriel opened it and there was Mrs. Byers dressed in Sunday black. from her polished, tightly buttoned boots to a raffia hat adorned at the back by a stiffly erect fan of funereally dyed feathers. Clasped in her gloved hands was a bead covered reticule which she took to church every Sunday and which always contained exactly the same amount, one and sixpence. That was a shilling for her to put in the plate and sixpence for Josie, a maid working in her house. It was her custom to give Josie the sixpence during the singing of the offertory hymn and watch closely out of the corner of her eye to make sure it went into the plate.

Josie had been packed off to her room and Fox knew from Mrs. Byer's grim expression that something had gone wrong. She refused to come in but remained erect and fierce at the door.

"Has Mr. Gladman returned yet," she asked. "I would like to have a word with him. No, he is not in his room; I tried there first."

They looked at her dismayed. Their landlady was the one person they did not want to offend and the unfortunate Mr. Gladman had done something to bring her in anger to their door.

"I thought it would be a Christian act," she said, "to take Mr. Gladman to my church. He was troubled in spirit, I could see that and I always considered the best place to find peace for the troubled, and rest for the weary, was in a Christian place of worship. He found neither."

"Won't you come in and tell us about it?" asked Mr Taylor.

She shook her head. "They must be very noisy in the chapel of the Brethren. He sang the hymns so loudly and off key that everyone in church was turning round to see where the noise was coming from, The choir was put out because he quite spoiled the effect of their music."

"Well, we're sorry to hear about that, Mrs. Byers, said Mr Taylor. I am sure I can speak

to Mr Gladman about the matter. I will tell him he must sing more quietly in church."

She held up her hand. "That was not all, Mr. Taylor. Not by any manner of means."

They waited to hear the rest.

"He groaned several times loudly and in the most peculiar manner while the Minister was talking about parish activities and when he was not groaning he kept calling out 'hallelujah'. It may be the custom among the Brethren, but I found it most mortifying. I was never so ashamed in my life; to think that I introduced that man into our church!"

She looked at them all, willing them to be silent. "That was not all! Mr. Gladman quietened down for a while but he started again even louder than before when the Minister delivered his sermon. Our Minister is a very gentlemanly man and he found it difficult to deliver his Christmas message, as we all did, particularly when Mr. Gladman got down on his knees in the aisle and started to weep and pray, as well as everything else."

Gabriel did not say anything in response to these revelations. He was struggling with an unchristian desire to burst out laughing at the scene described by Mrs. Byers, and could hear Sir Thomas making strangling noises, but he didn't dare look at him in case they both exploded into laughter. To laugh at her story would have been the end; Mrs. Byers would have instantly ordered the two of them to leave her house.

"Really," she said, observing them closely. "I have no quarrel with my lodgers here present but you, Mr Fox, seem to attract some very strange persons to my house. There was that dreadful, drunken labouring man who came up the stairs uninvited. There is Master Henry Flanagan who has left the shelter of his parent's roof in very doubtful circumstances, and now Mr. Gladman, who has also left his home for reasons which are not clear to me. These are matters which will have to be explained to my satisfaction if they are to remain in this establishment.

''This story of Mr. Gladman's behaviour will get about, you know. How will I face Mrs. Tankard, who has a neighbouring house, or go back to my church next Sunday with a scandal like that hanging over me?"

"It was just enthusiasm, Mrs. Byers, said the reverend gentleman If we tell him the Presbyterians are different to the Brethren and don't shout or groan during the services I am sure he will understand."

She said coldly, "I doubt that he will be coming back; I have not told you everything that happened."

Fox suppressed his own desire to groan as well as laugh and kept his eyes averted from Sir Thomas,.

"What did he do after that?"

"You may well ask, Mr Taylor.. He grew a little quieter during the sermon and then

broke out again. He stood up in the pew and look round in the wildest manner. Some of the ladies were quite frightened; they are not used to that sort of behaviour, certainly not in a temple of Christian worship. Then he made a terrible noise walking out of the church, right in the middle of the sermon; and he walked like a drunken man and knocked over the table in the entrance with the prayer books on it and Elder Vincent, who was on duty today, had to sit down to recover. He has a strained heart you know, and I really feared for his life. It was the most shocking scene I have ever witnessed in a church. How will I face the Minister or the Elders ever again after introducing that man to the congregation?"

"And you haven't seen Mr. Gladman since?" asked Mr Taylor, shaking his head.

He looked in surprise at a tall, clean shaven stranger, about fifty, with greying hair and a large bald patch who had appeared behind Mrs Byers, while she still stood in the doorway. The man's face was familiar but he could not remember where they had met before.

the newcomer approached self-consciously and Mrs. Byers turned to look, it was puzzling to find this strange man in her house unannounced. Like Mr Taylor she felt as though she should know who he was.

The man paused and grinned uncertainly, waiting for something to be said. They all waited until they realized with a shock that this was George Gladman. Somehow, after the episode in church, he had found the time and opportunity to shave off his whiskers.

"I heard you knocking on my door," he said to Mrs. Byers. "Someone left a razor in the cupboard in my room. I looked at it for a long time and I was thinking dreadful thoughts but then I found myself shaving off my beard instead. I'm sorry, I was busy. I didn't want to come to the door covered in soap and with only half a beard."

Mrs Byers came into the common room, and he followed.

They stared at him in astonishment. The dundreary whiskers that had been so carefully cultivated over many years had gone after a hasty shave. In places a stubble of hair had been left, in others his face had been scraped raw. It was a rough job but an apparent ten years of age had gone with the solemn whiskers. He looked younger and better for the exercise.

"Stay here and we'll talk it over," said Amy. She had been standing behind Gabriel's shoulder while hearing about the troubled church service. "Don't go, Mrs. Byers. I'm sure Mr. Gladman will be able to explain everything."

Mrs. Byers sniffed, but was determined to have an explanation. She waved away Amy's offer to light the fire in their room and boil the kettle for tea. It was far too hot for a fire and she would rather hear from Mr Gladman.

This done Mrs. Byers, though a woman of small stature, folded her arms and towered

over Mr. Gladman who sat meekly in a chair under her gaze. Amy's brother Harold, who had been sitting in the room listening to everything, sank back in his chair hoping not to attract the lady's attention.

"You have had an eventful day, Mr. Gladman," she said. "First you left your wife of many years and came here on the shortest possible notice under the patronage of Mr. Fox; and I must say that if Miss Taylor had not made a plea on your behalf I would have turned you from my door. You then disrupted a Christmas day service at my church and held me up to ridicule before my friends and fellow parishioners. Now I find that you have returned here and shaved off your beard. I might say that whether or not a man wears a beard is a private matter for discussion only between himself and his family, but your wife would know nothing of your extraordinary behaviour, including this last episode, and I demand a satisfactory explanation. If you cannot give a reasonable account of your actions you will have to remove yourself at the earliest opportunity to another boarding house."

Everyone paused and waited for Mr. Gladman to respond to these remarks though at first all he did was gasp and show signs of agitation. He attempted to clutch at his beard in a familiar gesture but it was no longer there and he wrung his hands together instead. "I remember going to church," he answered at last, "and I remember coming back here. What else did I do?"

Mrs. Byers was astonished and frowned. "You must remember," she replied. "Your behaviour was inexcusable. You sang off key in a very loud voice, you groaned and shouted during the service so I didn't know which way to look. I have never been so embarrassed. How can I return there next Sunday?"

"I can't remember any of that," replied Mr. Gladman glumly. "I must have thought the preacher was denouncing Satan, and the Scarlet Woman, and the Pope. I tell you what I do remember," he cried, and got to his feet showing an unexpected change to a mixture of gladness and agitation. For the moment he had forgotten his questionor. He strode up and down the room. "It knocked me all of a heap while the preacher was talking; I said to myself, 'I'll never go to chapel again, not if I live to be a hundred'. It suddenly came to me that I didn't have to stay another minute and listen to him saying that the sinner. George Gladman, was not giving enough to the mission to the Hindoos, and that money kept back from the mission and the chapel was money stolen from The Lord, and the penalty for stealing from The Lord was damnation and eternal hellfire."

"The Minister said no such thing!" cried Mrs. Byers. "Such a gentlemanly man and he was delivering a nice Christmas message. There was not a word about Hindoos or giving money to the church and I'm sure the reverend gentleman has never seen you before, let alone know your name."

"Didn't he say anything about me?" asked Mr. Gladman, pausing in his restless prowling up and down. "Didn't he say that the sinner George Gladman was an abomination in the sight of the Lord for he dealt in the sinful trade of music and did

not give all the fruits of his labours to the chapel?"

"Certainly not!" retorted Mrs. Byers. "If the Minister had anything of that nature to say he would tell you privately, not in open church. All this is nonsense it just wasn't so."

"Then who was it sitting behind me that said, 'don't put up with this sort of rubbish, George, walk out'?"

"Maybe it was the devil," said Harold Taylor, making his first contribution to the discussion. He instantly regretted the interjection for Mrs. Byers turned her fierce glance on him.

"Thank you, Mr Taylor," she said. "We can manage without remarks of that nature. If you can do no better than make blasphemous statements I think we would prefer you not to say anything at all." She continued to glare at him deeply offended at the suggestion that the devil could be a member of the congregation at the Presbyterian Christmas service.

Luckily for Harold there was an interruption. Josie tapped on the door and entered. She was in a state of glee. "You should'a seen old Byer's face in church today. I thought she was gunna have a fit --" She stopped awkwardly.

"That's quite enough from you Josie! You march straight downstairs to the kitchen and see how the kettle's getting on. I put it on the grate as soon as I came in from church and it should have boiled by now. Make tea in the big pot and bring it up on a tray with cups and saucers and sugar and milk."

"There ain’t no milk," retorted Josie sullenly. "It's gone off."

"Yes there is! I told the milkman to call back so we would have enough for tonight; he was to put it straight in the cool room; go and have a look and I will talk to you later about manners and gratitude." She would have said more but Josie abruptly left the room. She did not slam the door behind her but closed it very firmly.

Mrs. Byers shook her head at this departure and then turned her attention to Mr Gladman.

"Very good, what happened then?"

"I came back here," continued Mr Gladman, "and locked myself in the room. Perhaps the devil was at my elbow because I knew the razor was there and I looked at it for a long time thinking all sorts of things. Then I took it in my hand, but the next thing I knew I was soaping my face and shaving off the beard. I didn't know I was going to do that!"

For the first time he looked straight at the landlady. "I'm sorry about the Christmas service, Mrs. Byers, but I'm never going to set foot in a church again. I will apologise to the Minister, I will stand outside the door next Sunday and apologise to the congregation as they go in.

''You'll do no such thing. What you are proposing will only make matters worse. I don't want you anywhere near my church again.''

''That's good because I'll never set foot in a church again during the rest of my life

There were some biscuits on the mantelpiece in a flowered crockery container with a lid. Amy was about to set them out on a plate when she was halted by this remarkable statement. She turned and gazed, astonished at Mr Gladman.

"Not go back to church! cried Mrs Byers Whatever do you mean, not go back to church? You don't have to go to mine, but there are plenty more. I am sure you will find a nice church somewhere that will suit you."

He shook his head. "No, something happened while I was listening to the preacher. He shouldn't have said all those thing about me; it wasn't fair. For twenty years I've put up with being taken by my wife to hear sermons about how anything enjoyable is damnable and for the first time in all those years someone sat in the pew behind me and said, 'walk out George, walk out of the church and don't ever come back'."

Mrs. Byers turned her basilisk gaze on Harold Taylor to see if he had any comment to make on this statement.

The unfortunate Harold sank further back into his chair and gazed straight ahead. He was not about to be drawn into any theological discussions, particularly with the landlady.

There was a short pause but no one came to Mr. Gladman's defence.

"Are you saying to us, Mr Gladman," enquired Mrs. Byers in a controlled voice, "Are you saying to us that you have lost your faith and furthermore that you lost it in a Presbyterian church, my church?"

Mr. Gladman was not to be stopped by danger signals. "Someone whispered to me that if the Brethren are all going to heaven I wouldn't like it and I'd meet better company in the other place."

He abruptly changed the subject. "Do you have any Roman Catholics lodging here."

"Certainly not!" retorted Mrs. Byers bridling at the thought. "I turn them from my door. There is no shortage of accommodation in Melbourne for persons of that persuasion, but not here."

"It's a pity," replied Mr. Gladman, "I've never really sat down and had a talk with a Catholic though the preachers have told us so much about them. They can't be that bad."

"We'll get back to the main point, Mr. Gladman; if you don't mind. I wish to understand clearly whether your behaviour in church today has led you to give up your Christian faith after all these years."

A steel engraved still life picture hung on the wall it was of a number of shot birds draped on a white tablecloth. The composition was completed by a bowl of fruit and a glass of wine. Mr. Gladman appeared to be studying this picture intently though it is probable he never even saw it or could have described it afterwards.

Mrs. Byers waited as judge and jury and the others deferred to her and remained silent while Mr. Gladman studied the picture, then the embossed wallpaper and decorated cornice. "Yes!" he answered at last. "I won't go back and no one can make me."

Mrs. Byers picked up her reticule which she had laid on the mantelpiece for a while and went to the door. She put her hand on the doorknob. "Any person may be an atheist, Mr. Gladman. That is a private choice and we can only pray that they be converted to the true faith along with the hindoos and all the other pagans. However, while such a person is under my roof, I must take an interest in his religious beliefs. For the credit of my house I cannot possibly have an atheist lodging here. I know you are not able to remove yourself today, this being Christmas Day, nor tomorrow perhaps, but I must ask you to make other arrangements as soon as possible."

"I don't want to upset you any further, Mrs. Byers," replied Mr. Gladman, "But I have no luggage, nothing to keep me here. I will go at once. Perhaps you will be kind enough to send the bill for Christmas dinner to my shop."

Everyone wanted to say something but they were interrupted by a noise as though of a kick at the door. Mrs. Byers turned the knob and in marched Josie holding a heavy tray in both hands.

"Where d'ja want it?"

Mrs. Byers nodded towards the sideboard. "Serve them please, Josie, then put the kettle on again. I will take tea in my own room."

Josie nearly dropped the tray when Amy astonished them all by leaping from her chair. "You can't leave now!" She cried to Mr. Gladman. "You haven't any money and everything will be closed. Where will you go?"

"He can go to the sixpenny boarding house," said Harold. "Henry tells me they'll let you in after four o'clock. He says it’s not bad, and you can get breakfast for another sixpence."

Harold had said the wrong thing again and Mrs Byers froze him with a look, "If Mr. Gladman prefers sixpenny lodgings to my establishment he is quite welcome to go," retorted Mrs. Byers, "But I will not order him out on Christmas Day. I am, I hope, a Christian and though others may fall away I will not spurn them on that account. You may stay, Mr. Gladman, until Boxing Day is over, then I will expect you to either return to your proper home or seek another room elsewhere in the city."

"I'll go," replied the man, who was showing every sign of restlessness. He had paced

up and down the living room ever since Mrs. Byers had reminded him of the episode in church and the place seemed too small to contain his energy.

He turned on Gabriel What's the name of that hotel you stayed at during your first week in Melbourne? I'll go there."

"You warned me against it! You said I had to move out as soon as possible because it was a den of iniquity. You will be better off here instead of going to that place, and Benno and his mates drink there, you might meet them."

"That's so, I might," said Mr. Gladman pausing in his nervous movements. It was that drunken labourer that started all this by breaking my windows. I'd like to meet him and say there are no hard feelings. Does the landlord live on the premises?"

"Yes, O'Hanlon, but you can't knock him up on Christmas Day. He may have gone to the beach or down the bay."

"If he's there I will get him out and make him give me a room," retorted Mr Gladman, The law in Victoria says that no publican may refuse to let a room no matter what day of the year it is. Could I borrow a suitcase? An empty one will do. I will have to have something that looks like luggage or he might be able to turn me away."

"Where's he going? What's happening, and what's he done with his beard?" enquired Josie, staring wide eyed at the agitated Mr. Gladman. She too was excited when she heard that he was not staying a single night in the boarding house. "That place you're talking about only seven bob a week bed and breakfast" She said. "If I got a proper job I could earn that much easy, then I could go where I liked without anyone to boss me around. I could go out on Saturdee nights."

"If you think that you've got another think coming," stated Mrs. Byers ''This is a respectable house, and I am your guardian until you turn twenty one.I'll have you brought home by the police if you do anything so foolish as to run away. Imagine a child of your age thinking she can go out into the world on her own, what nonsense! Leave the tray where it is you're coming straight downstairs with me. It's about time we had a good talk."

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O'Hanlon's pub.

"I'll walk round with you," said Gabriel. You shouldn't be alone after all you've gone through

"Tom and I are coming as well' said Amy. ''We're not going to miss out on all this.'''

''Amy!!' cried her mother. Sir Thomas is a knight of the realm. You should speak of him respectfully at all times.''

''Alright mother, I'm sorry, but his high and mighty thingness wants to come too. Every time Gabriel goes anywhere he has adventures. We missed out on meeting the Honourable Adrian Memsworth. And we didn't get down to the docks at midnight looking for stolen goods, or meeting Detective Jones or talking to that perfectly marvellous ship's officer. I suppose Mrs Goss is with him right now. And we missed seeing Mr Gladman's wife throwing him out of his own house, and worst of all we were'nt there' when he drank a glass of beer while his wife was watching,

''You shouldn't be walking the streets on Christmas day, it's not ladylike, and it's dangerous.''

''Mother, I will be perfectly safe. I will be with three men. I am not sure about Mr Gladman but the other two would lay down their lives to protect me.''

''And we will continue to lay them down as long as necessary,'' said Sir Thomas.

''Well, I know about that, but I would feel safer if you had brought your sword and armour and your horse with you from England. There was plenty of room on the boat''

''I'm sorry, but my horse died of old age, the armour wouldn't fit, and I pawned the sword, otherwise, I am at your your service.''

''Well, let's go then.''

The bar door of O'Hanlon's pub was locked but they got in through the entrance at the other door where lodgers could enter and leave without passing through the bar. A small, tinkling hand bell stood on the counter alongside a hotel register with only a few recent entries.

The room keys hung in a row behind the counter on a board screwed to the wall panelling and each hook had a number above it with a corresponding number on a cardboard label fixed to the key. The only decoration, apart from the flowered wallpaper was the engraving of a man's head who looked down on them sternly. The words underneath said - 'Daniel O'Hanlon - Irish Martyr'. This was O'Hanlon's paternal great uncle who had defied British Law in Ireland, with fatal results.

No one came, in spite of prolonged ringing and tapping on the counter. Though the noise had some effect for after a while a hoarse voice in one of the bedrooms was heard to join in roaring for O'Hanlon to answer the door, but without the desired result. The publican did not appear.

They tapped and rang some more. During a pause a faint creaking of bedsprings reached them as though someone was rolling uncertainly out of bed. A pause ensued long enough for a pair of boots to be laced, a door opened and footsteps were heard in the passage.

The transition from reception to passage was marked by a pair of narrow, half glass swinging doors with an incised floral pattern on the glass exactly like the bar doors

which were opposite the reception counter. Anyone approaching could be seen only vaguely by those on the other side.

The two doors were pushed open and Gabriel was astonished to see an unkempt Timothy Flanagan who must have been disturbed from sleep for his hair and beard were awry and in need of combing. The whites of his eyes were veined with red and he blinked as he tried to focus them on the intruders.

They stared at one another. "What are you doing here?"

Timothy disarranged his hair even further by rubbing his scalp with the tips of his fingers and yawned. He said, "Gabby me boy, and friends, there's been the most unholy bust up in the Flanagan household you ever saw. I'm a runaway and for all I know Ada has set the police on me to bring me back."

Sir Thomas leaned down and whispered into Amy's ear. ''In few years this is how Gabriel is going to look when you try to get him out of bed to go to work.''

''You're jealousy is going to get you into trouble,'' she whispered back.''Before you start talking about other people's appearances have a look in the mirror, if you can bear it.''

Gabriel glanced from Gladman to Timothy and wondered what effect Christmas was having on the households of Melbourne; how many more homes were breaking up during the holiday?

Gabriel introduced his companions and asked about O'Hanlon

"O'Hanlon's here but his missus has gone off over Christmas to visit her sister. We had a few little drinks last night while we were talking about the old country, then a few more this morning after he came home from Mass and now he's having a bit of a nap. Guess that's why he didn't hear you."

"You came here straight from home? Does your wife know where you are?"

"Yes and no, me boy. Like a fool I let something slip about having seen Henry since he slung his hook, and she tried to get the story out of me but I wouldn't tell her where he was living. First time in twenty years she hasn't had her own way and she didn't like it so, to avoid any further unpleasantness over Christmas, I upped traps and caught an early train from Brighton. and I came here to O'Hanlon's pub and asked for a bed. I knew a man from the old sod and the darling county would never turn me into the traps."

Gabriel shook his head over this coincidence. "You remember Mr Gladman. He's in the same boat. He left his wife this morning too."

Timothy peered closely at the shopkeeper then grasped him heartily by the hand. "It's the beard!" he exclaimed. "You've lost the wife and your beard at the same time. Damme if I won't do the same." He rubbed his own ragged whiskers. "Ada and the

girls can live in Brighton for all I care. If she wants to marry them off to jumped up clerks they can do it and good luck to them. I only hope they don't trap young Pryor; though he can't say he wasn't warned. I've told him plenty of times on the quiet to have a good look at the mother before he took on the daughter. He can do better for himself than that. Henry and me'll go off on our own because he's worth the lot of them put together; Ada can carry on as much as she likes, she's not going to put my boy into an office job."

He patted Mr Gladman on the back. "You look like a man that wants a room and a drink. We'll go an hammer on O'Hanlon's door and make him give you both, and I might have a little drink meself too, to keep you company."

Mr Gladman flinched at this mention of liquor but remembered his independence. Elder Muirhead might get up in chapel and denounce him, but he would never hear his words. He nodded.

They roused O'Hanlon at last. He was even more dishevelled and puffy eyed than Timothy. Mrs O'Hanlon would have something to say about his appearance and behaviour unless he stopped drinking and tidied himself and their room before she came home.

"You'll have to do the honours, Tim," he muttered thickly after several attempts to get his eyes back into focus. In response Timothy said to the others, "If ye'll wait a minute we'll just fix this up, we had a long discussion last night and it's taken its toll. Sit yerselves in the kitchen and I'll see to him. When we've finished he'll be at his best, he'll come back as bright as the great Daniel O'Hanlon himself.

He led the publican away down the passage and out to the wash house in the back yard where he poured several jugs of cold water over his friend's head.

The great Daniel O'Hanlon must have stumbled a lot and had a thick accent and a headache if the present O'Hanlon was anything like him. After being doused he had dried his head with the towel that hung in the shed. He then sat at the kitchen table with his head in his hands until Timothy went to the bar and got some beer and glasses. Several glasses were required and the man had to concentrate very hard before understanding that Gabriel was asking him to take in Mr Gladman in as a lodger.

He looked suspiciously at the music shop proprietor who had a glass of beer in front of him and was taking sips from time to time in mute but self-conscious defiance of the absent Mrs Gladman.

O'Hanlon had to hold his head again and sit with closed eyes to think of an excuse to reject this new and unwelcome application for board and lodging. Mr Gladman was English, middle class, a businessman, and had brought the police into what O'Hanlon considered a private quarrel with Benno. According to his philosophy the matter should have been settled with cudgels or fists. These considerations made the publican deeply suspicious of the man's intentions in coming to the pub; The enemy

was within the gates and asking for a room.

"All me rooms is taken," he stated sullenly. Timothy would have corrected him but he continued hurriedly, "There's a party of miners sent word they're coming in from the bush tonight and they'll be in town for a couple'a days and that's gunna be all me rooms gone. Sorry, boss, we just couldn't fix you up with a bed nohow."

"Hard luck," Timothy cried. He had no prejudices in the matter and had been looking forward to some refined company over the rest of Christmas. The three of them could have swapped companionable tales about their long years of marriage to dominating women.

Mr Gladman was taken aback too. He had set his mind on O'Hanlon's establishment because it was often mentioned in sermons as a haunt of iniquity and a special place for the Irish troublemakers. Because of his sudden falling away from the faith of the Brethren he wanted to experience the sinful depths of the establishment for himself. It was tiresome and disappointing to think he would have to start again and look for a friendly publican to take him in.

"That's a great shame," said Gabriel. "I think we should call up to the police station and see if Mr Jones can give us any advice about finding accommodation. We will tell him that O'Hanlon's place was full and he couldn't give us a room for love nor money. He might be able to recommend somewhere cheap and clean."

O'Hanlon knew he was beaten. On no account would he wish to have his name mentioned at the police station nor did he want Detective Jones reminded of his existence.

He scratched his head. "Well, who knows; them miners might not turn up after all. It was only a bit of a letter they sent me. They might have got drunk or gone somewhere else altogether."

He took a key from the board. "Would you like to bring your suitcase, Boss, and I'll show you a room as good as you'll find in any of them flash hotels, and maybe better."

The door that O'Hanlon opened was well known to Gabriel. He turned to Amy.''This is the room I used to sleep in after Benno and his mates took me in.''

Amy looked at the room with new interest. ''You poor dear, fancy having to sleep in a room like this.

''Steady on,'' said O'Hanlon,''It's one of me best rooms.

"This'll do," said Timothy, sitting on the bed. "Break out six bottles, O'Hanlon and we'll drink 'confusion to the enemy'."

''Which enemy?

''Oh, any enemy you like, just drink. Come on George, bring in your case and set it

down, this is your new home.''

O'Hanlon looked at his guest. "If the traps catch me serving beer on Christmas Day me licence'll go for sure." He secretly shook his head at Timothy and indicated with a look his distrust of Mr Gladman.

"Ah, he'll be alright," said Timothy "Any man that walks out on his missus and the Brethren on the same day is alright as far as I'm concerned. Just get the bottles, Pat. They're on me and I'll swear as far up as the Privy Council, if you want me to, that it was my booze and I brought it from home with me." He felt in his waist-coat pocket and produced two florins which he laid on a small table by the bed.

''What are you having, Amy?'' Said Sir Thomas

"She's under age," cried O'Hanlon in a panic. If she's caught on the premises drinking beer I'll do six months hard and lose me licence as well."

"Lemonade," said Mr Gladman. "Give her a glass of lemonade, and it's my shout."

This was another declaration of independence. In all his life he never 'shouted' anyone a drink, even a glass of lemonade.

Amy was determined to stay. She had been warned many times by her mother, in the most mysterious terms of the dangers that would beset a girl who set foot in a hotel. What the dangers were had never been made clear but she knew it would be shocking. The desire to to enter O'Hanlon's establishment and see sin close up was very strong.

They sat round the kitchen table and solemnly toasted the day. O'Hanlon listened intently the whole time, nervous in case the heavy footsteps of the law were heard in the lobby. He had an open bottle of lemonade on the table especially for Amy and the bottles of beer stayed in the cupboard until it was time to refill the glasses. He swore them all to secrecy in case their illicit party was interrupted.

Amy stole Sir Thomas' glass of beer, just to see what it tasted like, it wasn't what she wanted so she pulled a face and gave it back

''You know what happens to young women who steal another person's beer don't you?''

''Yes, they get a free drink, but you can keep your old beer, I don't want it.''

O'Hanlon was not the only member of the group abstracted and nervous. After joining in Mr Gladman sank back into silence and they sat around the table, for a while without speaking.

Gabriel thought the man might have been pining already for his wife and asked what was the problem.

"It's this rebellion that Elder Muirhead keeps talking about, I worry about it," he said, and would have clutched at his beard if he had had one. "What would become of us if civil war was to break out in the colony."

"Civil war!" The others sat up to consider this extraordinary statement.

He explained. "Elder Muirhead and the Brethren are convinced that soon there will be a bloody clash between Catholic and Protestant. He has studied the Book of Revelation in the bible carefully for many years and there are prophecies in it about a great battle, Armageddon. Elder Muirhead has read the book many times as well as all the commentaries and is convinced that Armageddon will take place here in Victoria, and after we have won the battle there will be a thousand years of peace. You men are Irish and Catholic, are the Catholics preparing for battle as foretold by Elder Muirhead?"

O'Hanlon and Timothy looked at each other. "No one's mentioned it to me", said O'Hanlon. I'll ask around on Sunday before mass. Someone might know about it."

"The man's mad!" said Timothy. "Even if the Micks and the Proddys wanted to have a fight how the hell would they find the time?"

Everyone was puzzled. "What do you mean?" asked Mr Gladman, staring.

"It stands to reason. In Melbourne they just could'nt spare the time for a battle, let alone a whole war."

Another drink was called for. It seemed the explanation might be interesting.

"Look at it this way," continued Timothy. "We can't have a decent battle on weekdays, everyone's at work. On Sundays they're either in church or resting or down at the beach or having a sleep after Sunday dinner. On Sundays no one would be interested in fighting a battle."

'What about Saturdays?"

"Saturdays! They're worst of all. If you had your battle on a Saturday you'd upset the football or cricket; and in Autumn and Spring you got your race meetings, then there's bike racing, picnics, the beach. I've never read this book of whatever it is you're talking about but if there's anything about a battle in Melbourne it's got it all wrong. Anyone wanting to have a battle on a Saturday they'd they'd be about popular as the rats under the house. We just couldn't fit one in with all the other things that have to be done. Are you sure it didn't say Sydney? They might be able to make the time for it up there. Listen, if you can tell me what Saturday is free during the year, I'll tell you when you can have your battle."

''There's another thing you forgot to mention,'' said Sir Thomas. They all looked at him. ''In this country no one cares about your religion, except a few extremists like the Brethren. You can be any religion you like, Protestant, Catholic, New Calethumpian, just don't force your neighbours to follow your beliefs. And another

thing, don't spend money trying to convert the Hindus. Their religion is older than Christianity. and they like it. I met a missionary in India who'd been there thirty years and hadn't got a single convert.

Mr Gladman thought about this. "Then Elder Muirhead is wrong."

"He's dead wrong," interposed Gabriel hotly. "The man's a dangerous fanatic and shouldn't be allowed to stir up people the way he does. All this stuff about the bible and battles and the Irish menace; you'd have to be weak in the head to believe all that rubbish."

"Thank-you." said Mr Gladman.

Gabriel put his hand on the man's arm. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean it that way.

''But just think,'' said Amy, ''You will never have to listen to him again. He can say what he likes but you don't have to take any notice. From now on you can make some real friends."

"You're right, I will have to make a new life; find somewhere to live, everything will be different." The man tried to twine his hands in his beard, but it was no longer there, his hands fell on the table and he looked ruefully at the others.

"Ah, you'll be right!" cried Timothy. "We can live like kings here in O'Hanlon's pub. No one to tell us when we go out or come in. No one to hide our bottles of drink if they think we've had enough; not that women understand these things the way men do. We need a drop in us now and then otherwise we get miserable and hard to get on with. If women had any sense they'd make sure we had plenty to drink and then they'd be able to jolly us along, no worries."

Mr Gladman brightened a little. "If there's not to be a war at least I won't have to command a company. I hate violence and now I am not sure which side would be in the right perhaps neither."

A thoughtful mood settled on the company for a while after this. O'Hanlon was listening for the heavy tread of the law in the foyer of his hotel, ready to snatch the glasses from the table and still concerned at having an enemy, a member of the ruling class, lodged in his hotel. "All this drink is yours, Tim. You're to say you bought it yesterday," he said, indicating the few glasses and the solitary bottle on the oil-cloth covered table. "And you can all see Miss Taylor has touched nothing but lemonade since she came here. I ask you Mr Gladman have I said a word about beer or offered her anything stronger than lemonade or ginger beer?"

Mr Gladman was not sure what concerned the publican but had to agree. A little beer had spilled on the oil cloth and with his finger he idly spread some foam round the twining pattern of leaves and roses.

"Everything I have ever done has been changed," he muttered. "I wonder if my wife will let me have my clothes, and I will have to think soon about moving to the new

shop, and I will have Sundays free. What am I going to do on Sundays from now on?"

"Well, at least you won't be having a war," replied Timothy, though perhaps we should have a battle to liven the place up a bit. Melbourne's a pretty dull old place on Sundays if you don't go to church, and most of the time it's a damned sight worse if you do. What d'you say to a game of cards or two to pass the time?"

O'Hanlon was bitter at this suggestion. "Are you tryin' to lose me licence for me?" he asked heatedly. "If Jones or one of the other traps was to walk in here and find cards and beer on the table and a minor sitting there too I'd be charged with running a common gaming house. That'd be the end of me; I'd never get another licence in Melbourne. I'd be lucky not to go to jail."

Unnoticed by the others Amy had been listening keenly to noises from the passage. "There's someone out there," she said.

O'Hanlon put the opened bottle of beer on a shelf in the cupboard and shut the door. In almost the same movement he picked up everyone's glass, empty or not to be whisked outside to the scullery. There he tipped out the beer and swilled them with water.

Amy had been right for an insistent tapping was heard on the glass door.

Timothy put his head out and looked up the passage. "There's someone there; I think I know him. I've seen him somewhere before. Hey, O'Hanlon, you'd better go and see who it is.

O'Hanlon came in through the back door, returning from the scullery. He looked up the passage and blanched. "Gawd! I know that hat. It's Jones out there. How did he know I had people with me?"

"There's someone else with him. You'd better go and see what he wants."

O'Hanlon ran into the kitchen to look for more evidence to be hidden or removed. "Jesus, Tim, what am I gunna do?" He turned to Mr Gladman. "You wouldn't dob me in would you, boss? If I lose me licence I'll lose the pub too; that'd be twenty years of me life up the spout; I don't know anything except running a pub."

Mr Gladman was puzzled by the publican's manner but Timothy said, "Don't you worry about a thing, me boy. We'll stand by you thick and thin, all of us, won't we Gabby, and Amy too. She'll tell 'em the plain truth, not a drop of stuff but lemonade. And don't you worry about Gabby's friend -- he's a Briton. Not a word to hurt you will ever pass his lips. Now, you'd better go and see what the man wants."

They sat in the kitchen and listened to O'Hanlon's footsteps receding along the lino floor of the passage. He was heard to open the glass doors and an almost inaudible conversation followed, then footsteps came closer.

O'Hanlon would have kept the detective out but that keen faced individual followed

escorting an oddly dressed figure, holding him by the arm above the elbow like a trophy. Detective Jones's companion still wore a carrier's outfit with a wide brimmed hat and a long beard. It was Benno.

The detective pushed him through the doorway and stood there in case he should try to escape. There was no other doorway, only a barred window over the bench through which one could get a glimpse of the frowsy back yard and the outhouses.

"A cosy party", said Mr Jones looking down on them from the doorway while a dispirited Benno slunk to one side. The detective appeared to take no further notice of his captive. "A nice little Christmas party. Just the sort of thing I might enjoy myself, me being of a convivial turn of mind. I hope you gave your guests plenty to drink, O'Hanlon. It being Christmas and all, a nice drop of cold beer wouldn't go amiss among friends.

And the cards," he said. "Cheerful men like Mr Flanagan, and Mr Fox, they're not averse to a friendly game of cards with you, O'Hanlon; I'll lay a wager, a pound to sixpence, they wouldn't pass up the chance of a pleasant little hand or two, with a few shillings on the table, just to make it interesting."

No one responded to this conversational opening so he continued displaying a sort of official jollity. "And these gentleman?'' He indicated Sir Thomas and Mr Gladman. ''I believe we haven't met. I know the gentlemen here except you two.'' ''My name is Detective Sergeant Jones and I would be obliged if you would tell me yours.''

I am Sir Thomas Black, KCMG, my friend is Mr George Gladman, whom you already know.

Some of the party were taken aback taken aback to find a genuine knight in their midst, with mysterious letters attached to his name.''You never told us that,'' said Amy, who was the least awed of those present. What do those funny letters mean?''

''KCMG? They mean Knight Commander of the Order of Saint Michael and Saint George.''

''Oh la dee dah.'' said Amy. ''Do we throw ourselves flat on the ground before your magnificence, or will kneeling be good enough?''

''Down on one knee will be sufficient for the moment, but anyone who gives cheek to a knight of the realm, with letters after his name, will deserve the severest punishment, and will be taken into custody by detective Jones.''

Jones was not too sure about this claim to be a knight, but at least he looked better than some of the disreputable characters who had presented emselves to him as knights, dames, or even members of the nobility.

Detective Jones inspected Mr Gladman closely. "So it is him! The very man and all his whiskers gone -- well, you've been a bold boy for Christmas haven't you?. "You're wife is going to part what's left of your hair when she sees you. Isn't it a world of change,

eh? Why should a respectable shopkeeker, known for his regular attendance at chapel, choose Christmas Day to shave off his beard? This is another story I would like to sit down and discuss with you one of these days. Until I heard you were here this is the last place I would have expected to find you. Either going to chapel or staying quietly at home seem's more in your line than sitting in the back room of a pub on Christmas Day. You're a puzzle, Mr Gladman, somehow it doesn't seem in character, but apart from that I've nothing to say about a man who's held in such high regard by his neighbours and friends.

He pointed at Amy, ''From her appearance I would say this young lady is less than twentyone years of age. "What's a minor doing on these premises? don't you care about your license, O'Hanlon?''

''Of course he cares about his license.'' said Sir Thomas. ''But in what sense has he broken the law? This is his kitchen, it has nothing to do with his license. Perhaps you could tell us what law prohibits him from entertaining people privately in his own home when the bar is closed. And what about children? Are the children of a licensee not allowed into the hotel where they live?'

''But that young woman is a minor, and no relation to O'Hanlon.'

''You are quite right, both Mr Fox and myself will confirm that she is under the age of twenty one. But all of Mr O'Hanlon's guests here are prepared to affirm in court that she has drunk nothing on these premises but a glass of lemonade.''

Jones knew when there was no point in going on. He said, ''I have more important things to talk about than O'Hanlon's license ''I went to Mrs Byers' boarding house,'' Mr Fox, because I needed a witness and was told you were here with Mr Gladman. Now I have two witnesses! Very good." He rubbed his hands.

''I needed witnesses because I happened to be taking a little stroll down Queen Street a while ago and who should I bump into but an old friend of mine." He looked jovially at the subject of these remarks. "Why, it was that well known man about town, Seamus Benjamin Murphy, better known as Benno.

My friend Benno is in great demand. Everyone at the police station is keen to see him again because he left after his last visit without saying goodbye. You shouldn't have done it, Benno." he remarked while wagging his head at the unfortunate wharf labourer. Your friends were very hurt when you left without even making time to talk to the sergeant."

"I didn't want to cause no trouble,"muttered Benno, "so I thought I'd leave for a while and come back later. I was just on me way up to the station when you nabbed me."

"Of course you were," responded the detective jovially. "I've known Benno for five or six years," he said, addressing the company. "He always means well; it's just that the things he does never come out right. He's a man who was born to trouble, weren't you, Benno?"

"I ain't got no money, and I haven't had anywhere to sleep for the past two nights," mumbled Benno. I dunno why it is but everyone's crook on me." Benno was not a good advertisement for Dr Smith's Colonial Elixir in spite of drinking the stuff. His hands were shaking, he was unshaven and his bloodshot eyes were no ornament to a sallow, skinny face.

"You're in luck," said Jones. "I can't promise any money but you'll have free board and lodging at her Majesty's expense for the next few years. You wait until the court hears what you've been up to lately. The judges don't like people who throw bricks through shop windows -- you'll be sent away for a long holiday in a lightly furnished cell.''

''Now Mr Gladman," said the detective, fixing that gentleman with a keen eye, "you're the key witness in all this. That's why I was glad when they told me you were here. I want you to have a close look at Seamus Benjamin Murphy and tell me if he was the man who threw the bricks through your shop window and uttered threats of violence against the peace of our Sovereign Lady, Queen Victoria?" He took off his hat to emphasise the seriousness of his words.

Mr Gladman opened his mouth several times as though about to speak but shut it again without uttering anything. None of his companions around the table would help. They all looked away.

The detective nodded. "That's right! Think before you testify to anything. The court always has a better opinion of a witness who gives thoughtful replies. Now, is this the man in question?"

Mr Gladman gulped and glanced round at everyone in the kitchen with the same result as before and then had a good look at the hangdog Benno. He shook his head and said timidly, "I don't think that's him."

"What?" Detective Jones' jovial manner suddenly froze. "What do you mean, it's not him? The arresting constables attest that you stated at the time that Murphy was the culprit. He was heard to utter threats against you; do you have the face to tell me he was not responsible for breaking your windows?"

"I've thought about it," was the nervous response, "And I believe I was too hasty in accusing Murphy. It seems to me there was another man who ran away straight after the bricks came through the window. He was much taller, and on reflection I believe he was the one who did the damage."

The detective glared at him. "What is it about this hotel that taints everyone that enters it. You're a church going man, Mr Gladman, a pillar of the community; a man that expects to go to heaven one day if he doesn't tell too many lies. How do you expect to get there if you subvert the Queen's Justice like this? What about the threats he made against you? Are you going to pass those over lightly?"

Mr Gladman had made up his mind. "I remember most of what he said and I don't want to press charges. I will get up in court, if I have to, and say I'm not sure who

threw the bricks and smashed my windows."

The detective clapped his hat on his head and surveyed the people in the kitchen. He put out his hand as though about to take Benno by the arm but dropped it again and shook his head. "If I find Billy Summers will you be able to identify him, or will your memory play up with you again?"

He turned to Benno. "You'll keep, Murphy. There's no way a man like you can stay out of trouble and I'll be watching and waiting. Don't you laugh up your sleeve at me; my turn will come sooner than you think. As for the rest of you," he said looking at them, "playing games with the law is a dangerous thing to do and, somehow, you're all in it together. Just make sure the game doesn't end badly."

They heard his footsteps receding up the passage and the noise of the glass doors opening and closing.

O'Hanlon went outside to make sure the man was gone. He came back and nodded so that everyone burst out laughing except for Mr Gladman who was still agitated after his encounter with the law. Gabriel and Timothy patted him on the back while O'Hanlon ran to the bar to bring back an armful of bottles which he cheerfully set out on the table in full view.

"Thanks Boss," said Benno who had instantly forgotten his recent fright. "I knew you wouldn't drop me into the law; I won't forget that and if anyone tries to break your windows again just give us a whistle; me and the boys'll stoush 'em for you."

Mr Gladman needed a soothing drink. He was trembling from the reaction of all that had happened during the day. Now he was aware of having departed so far from the paths of rectitude he had followed all his adult life, that there could be no turning back. To have defied his wife and deliberately lied to a policeman, all on the one day, was extraordinary; he did not know how he could have brought himself to do such acts but his denial of the truth slipped out when he had the figure of the defeated Benno before him.

Mr Gladman was the hero of the occasion, Benno, Timothy, and O'Hanlon were ready to drink his health and keep on doing it as long as the supply lasted.

Gabriel, Amy, and Sir Thomas were prepared to drink his health once and then leave. Amy insisted on lemonade.

On the way home Amy was ecstatic. ''I knew it''s she said. ''Wait till I tell mother that I was nearly arrested for being a minor on licensed premises.

"You'd better not,'' said Gabriel ''She'll take that story very seriously, and she might ask Mrs Byers to bar Sir Thomas and me from the house because we're leading you into danger.I know she'd be happy to be rid of me.''

''She won't do it for long. If you can't come to visit I'll threaten to move in with you before we're married. That should bring her round.''

''I can see you are going to have a long and happy marriage,'' said Sir Thomas ''Providing Gabriel does what he's told.''

''Exactly!'' Said Amy.

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Prayers for Mr Gladman

Three days later James Pryor wandered into the office and sat down heavily at his desk. He blew between his lips, fanned himself with his top hat and watched Gabriel going through papers which had been left by the clerks to be dealt with after Christmas.

"I've had a rough Christmas," said Mr Pryor. "I didn't mean to come into the office but I had to get away for a while."

Gabriel left the clerks and came into the inner office, shutting the door. "Is it the Flanagans?"

Mr Pryor nodded. "Yes, mother is still there, but she can't wait until Christmas is well over and she can go home again. Did you know Tim and Henry flew the coop? It was bloody annoying to lose Tim like that. I was hoping to spend Christmas talking to him about investments."

"Yes, I know where they are, but don't tell Mrs F.''

James Pryor raised his eyebrows. "I wouldn't tell her if her if her bum was on fire. Well, it's only a day or two more. If mother has to put up with them I suppose I have to too. She doesn't thank me for taking her on the visit, but it has been valuable in its way, even if I couldn't talk business. I won't be back next year, and if I ever see Myrtle and her mother again it will be too soon."

The clerk interrupted by bringing him a letter from the morning mail. Pryor read it. "Ha, ha! The boys have had a whip round over Christmas; they have raised two hundred and fifty quid. Listen to this --." He read from the letter.

'I am pleased to inform you that the gentlemen you met the other day have formed themselves into a committee and authorized me to offer you the support of the said committee if you will consent to stand in the conservative interests for the Victorian Parliament at the forthcoming election. After full consideration of your character and reputation we are of the opinion that you would be an excellent representative of the business community of the City of Melbourne and to that end we are prepared to furnish you with the sum of £250 towards your necessary expenses. Furthermore we undertake to put your name forward in the appropriate quarters for consideration for advancement to high office in the Government to be formed in Victoria after the defeat of the Berry Ministry. We await your favourable reply, Yours etc.' "and it is signed by

Briggs."

"That's not bad; you'll be able to run a decent campaign for parliament."

"They're playing games," retorted Pryor. "I'll send a note back saying I thought they were serious about having me in parliament. They can hand over five hundred quid in banknotes or look for someone else. I'm not going anywhere on the cheap -- they can just forget about it."

He was interrupted by the voice of the chief clerk ordering someone from the premises. His orders to leave were punctuated by the sound of a cheeky individual refusing to go.

It was the sweeping boy from the crossing who ignored Mr Pringle's repeated orders to leave the office at once. He caught sight of Gabriel and James Pryor looking at him through the doorway and addressed Pryor, "gotta message for yer. The cove round the corner told me ter tell yer it was urgent."

"Allright, what's the message?"

"Yer gotta give me frippence first. The cove said y'd give me frippence."

''No he didn't. You're not getting threepence out of me. Here's a brownie, catch!" He flipped a penny to the boy who caught it deftly. "If the message is any good I might give you another; if not you can just clear off."

The urchin shrugged and clutched his penny tightly in the depths of his pocket lest it should be demanded back again. "It's the cove in the music shop, 'e's lorst 'is beard some'ow and now they're all in the music shop a prayin' for 'is, soul and 'e said you're to come at once."

"I wouldn't know what the hell is going on," said Mr Pryor, "but it sounds interesting. Do you think that's worth another penny?" Gabriel nodded and he flicked a second coin to the messenger who caught it one handed and dashed out into Swanston Street after ensuring there were no more coins to be got from the same source.

They took their hats and walked together to the music shop while Gabriel astonished and delighted his friend by recounting Mr Gladman's adventures over the past few days. He was most envious at hearing all this. Gabriel had been living in the midst of drama while he had spent a dull Christmas taking great care not to say one word to Myrtle that could be construed by even the most eager listeners as a portent of matrimonial intentions.

The hoardings had been taken down from the front of the music shop already, a good sign, for Mr Gladman himself must have made arrangements for their removal.

The shop appeared to be full and several people who could not enter were kneeling uncomfortably on the footpath, attentive to what was going on within. Others, apparently just passing by, had stopped in astonishment to watch.

Not deterred by all this Mr Pryor pushed his way into the shop drawing Gabriel after him, while people made way for his progress and rose to their feet from where they had been kneeling. When Gabriel looked round he realized it was an assemblage of the Faithful Brethren who had been summoned to rescue Mr Gladman from folly.

He could find nothing gross about the appearance of these people but they might have been a group assembled by Edmunds, the theatrical agent, if he had been commissioned to collect a cast of supporting actors in a play about misfits of society.

They had all been listening to Elder Muirhead whose subject was Mr Gladman. That gentleman was sitting with his back to the office, arms folded, etermined not to yield to the eloquence of the speaker. Gabriel saw Mrs Gladman, a bony woman with a pinched face. She must have come out in a hurry the bun at the back of her head though fixed with at least two pins was tending to unravel as she became more agitated. Her raffia hat, also pinned on, could have been set at a more becoming angle.

Elder Muirhead paused in his oration when the newcomers came into the shop and eyed them severely. "You are here to further the work of your master, the Devil, no doubt," he stated loudly for the benefit of the listeners. "We were about to pray for our dear Brother Gladman even as you entered because you have turned him out of the paths of righteousness unto the way of destruction."

More people entered. Among them were Amy and Sir Thomas. She waved to Gabriel.

''You see!'' cried the Elder. ''More of the faithful are coming to help our dear brother being brought back to the paths of the godly

"He's on the right path already," retorted Pryor, "I have sold him a first class property that will keep him and his wife in comfort when it's time to retire from business. Any of you ladies and gentlemen want a nice investment property our office is at your service, but don't expect to get a bargain like Mr Gladman's every day. Though I would urge you all to buy real estate before prices go up again; finance is no problem, we can arrange all that through the London and Melbourne Amicable Building Society at a very reasonable rate of interest."

Elder Muirhead drew himself to his full height on hearing this reply and a few groans resounded from the rear of the shop, though not emanating from Mr Gladman. The Elder shook his head as though to express more sorrow than anger. "We cannot permit our erring brother to fall away from the congregation in this manner. He has been most generous in his contributions to our work of battling the Romish influences that threaten the spiritual well-being of this colony. Without him we can maintain one preacher the less and our great dream of sending a missionary to India to convert the heathen Hindoos must come to naught.

"Well, that's something in his favour," retorted Pryor "He's better off here in Melbourne looking after his future than paying for people to annoy the Hindoos."

At these words loud groans broke out from the congregation; it seemed their habit to

express their feelings loudly during a service, and a preacher would be encouraged or otherwise by the noise proceeding from his audience.

Before Elder Muirhead could make his retort Mrs Gladman swayed forward and pointed at Pryor. "Oh! Oh!" she cried. "That the Devil should walk into my husband's shop and say the words of damnation. He has stolen his beard, he has stolen his faith, he has stolen him away from his righteous home. What is to become of me?"

James Pryor turned to Gabriel and raised his eyebrows. Gabriel mouthed silently, "Mrs Gladman," his friend turned back to face her.

Gabriel noted that Mrs Goss was present. She had a duster in her hand but was making no attempt to use it. Instead she gazed with interest and delight at the various actors in the drama as they argued. Gabriel winked at her and she put her hands over her mouth to make sure she did not speak and draw attention to her presence.

"Don't you worry about a thing, Mrs Gladman" said the agent. "This is a nice, profitable business your husband has here, and it will be even better when he moves to Collins Street. It has kept you and the Brethren all these years; they might miss out in the future but I am sure Mr Gladman will be most generous with you. Am I right, Mr Gladman?"

Thus addressed the agitated man rose to his feet clutched at a phantom beard. "I don't want them in the shop," he said. "They must all leave and let me get on with my business. Mrs Gladman may stay, if she wishes, but I will hear no more of this nonsense; she will have to behave herself or go home. I will pay the rent on the house and send her money every week, but if she wants to give any of it to the Brethren that's up to her, they will not get any more from me."

Everyone was aghast at these words except for Mrs Goss and the proprietor's few supporters.

"George Gladman, George Gladman," wailed his wife, "Have you forgotten the hours and years I spent wrestling with the devil in you? How I gradually weaned you from the sins of the flesh?

"Yes," he retorted, cutting her short. "I remember them very well, every miserable year. My new life started when you turned me out of the house; at least I am grateful to you for that, thank you."

She wrung her hands and appealed to the onlookers. "Can I leave this poor, weak man here in the City of Destruction, in the very heart of Vanity Fair. Who will protect him from the snares of the enchanters?" she uttered, looking pointedly at Pryor and Gabriel. "What will befall if I am not here to pray with him and point him in the way he should go."

It occurred to Gabriel that she had had ample time in the past to point him in the right direction, such as it was. If she had not succeeded it was probably too late now.

Elder Muirhead loudly cleared his throat it seemed he was prepared to renew his prayers and exhortations to reach the heart of the obdurate backslider; perhaps he would be one of the preachers short of a job if Mr Gladman fell away from the faith of the Brethren.

"Brothers and Sisters," he cried, "if any of you up to now doubted the power of sin in this wicked world your eyes must surely have been opened by the events of the past few days. We ourselves have seen the agents of the Devil walking abroad in Bourke Street, snatching our dear brother from his loving wife, counselling him to shave off his beard, luring him into a Presbyterian Church, causing him to renounce his faith, and finally, casting him into one of the worst dens of evil known in this wicked city. Can any doubt that I refer to that haunt of Catholics and low class working people, O'Hanlon's hotel."

Everyone groaned at this point in his discourse but Gabriel could only admire the intelligence gathering network of the Brethren; to have collected this much information in so short a time, it was astonishing.

Mr Pryor was not astonished but was growing impatient. To be cast in the role of the devil when it was Gabriel, not him, who had brought the bad news to the Gladman household, was a little too much, even for his good temper.

Gladman stood up and paced the floor in the little space available; it was there because the Brethren shrank from him as he paced to and fro.

Mr Pryor stepped up on to his chair and held up his hands for silence in a manner Gabriel had seen before. "My friends," he announced, "brethren all, I must inform you that Mr Gladman appointed me and Mr Fox recently as his business agents. As his agent I advise you he cannot conduct his business while a prayer meeting is in progress in his shop; his customers would not understand, nor would they like it. I have his authority to tell you to leave. Everyone must go except, perhaps Mrs Gladman, but that is up to her. I must ask you to leave now in an orderly manner with no further shouting or groaning; if not I will use my delegated authority to call the police and have the shop cleared." He held up his hand again to Elder Muirhead. "No Sir, not another word. You have made your feelings clear to Mr Gladman and no doubt he will consider them in due course."

The Brethren looked to Elder Muirhead for guidance doubtful as to whether they should stay on the premises until Mr Gladman came to his senses or depart and leave the devil in possession. "We have done what we could," cried the Elder. "We have wrestled with temptation and perhaps we have planted a mustard seed of repentance in our dear brother's heart. May it grow into a mighty plant of faith to lead him back to us. Remember my beloved friends when the time comes we shall welcome him with joy and songs of triumph, until then we shall not give way to despair. This has been a set back, not a defeat; we shall walk from the shop with our heads up singing of our triumph." True to his word be burst into a raucous hymn in which everyone joined and they gradually filed after him out of the shop.

They would have gathered on the pavement outside to pray and sing some more but the police, who had been interested spectators, moved them on. As soon as the Brethren left, Mrs Goss, in a state of suppressed excitement, continued dusting, but not too far away. She did not wish to miss one word of the conversation. Mrs Gladman was there too, but standing forlornly and looking at her husband.

"You alright now, George?" enquired Mr Pryor. "Mrs Goss is here and she'll help you look after the place. We have to go, there are things we have to do before the new year, but if you want us just send word round to the office."

"Yes, I need your help now. I was not honest with Mr Jones on Christmas Day. I don't know what came over me, but whatever Murphy's faults may be I didn't want to be responsible for sending him to gaol, especially at Christmas time. He broke my windows, I know that, I saw him do it, but it was the starting point that changed my life. That Memsworth man would have cheated me anyway, but everything else would have been different. I might still have been in thrall to the Brethren. I don't want to go to the police office after lying to Mr Jones like that, I couldn't look him the face and talk about other things. Would you and Mr Fox deal with it for me? Mr Fox can identify the instruments; he was there when they were sold."

Mr Pryor raised his eyebrows. "This may take some time, and we are very busy at the office right now."

"Well, last week you mentioned a fee for your services. I was angry at the time and would have abjured it if I could, but I have thought it over, like so many other things, and if you will do this for me I will ask you to add your costs, in time and so on, to the fee."

Mr Pryor nodded graciously. "Of course, our resources at your disposal at all times. Mr Fox and I will attend to the matter for you; don't give it another thought. We will make sure that all the instruments are returned, all we need is a copy of the invoice so they can be identified with the help of the police."

At the mention of the lost instruments Mrs Gladman reminded them of her presence by falling once more to her knees and groaning. "Better to lose them than your soul, George Gladman," she cried. "Come home! Come home with me and we will wrestle together with the demons from the pit."

"Oh, stand up," retorted her husband irritably, lifting her to her feet. "I won't have you carrying on like this in the shop, it's bad enough in private. Mrs Goss, go out and call a cab. I will send her back home."

Not wishing to be absent for long lest she miss something Mrs Goss hurried outside. She would have run to complete her mission but all her ladylike training in deportment prevented any such action. She hastened out leaving the door swinging behind her.

"Don't be afraid, Miriam," said Mr Gladman encouragingly. "I will send you money

each week to pay the rent and to live on. I would give you more but if I send too much you will give it to the Brethren. I may start a little fund for when you ever really need money."

Mr Pryor nodded approvingly at this. "Quite right, very prudent if I might say so. I can recommend an excellent investment fund returning a good rate of interest."

"But I don't want the money," she cried, "I want to save you."

"I will escort Mrs Gladman out to wait for the cab," said Mr Pryor, grandly offering his arm. "There is no need to discuss financial matters in front of a lady. I can advise you later on of the most prudent means of disposing of surplus cash."

Mrs Gladman shrank back from his proffered arm; no doubt it smelled of brimstone, straight from the pit. "No, I want my poor, misguided husband. Release him; let him come home where he belongs. I can take care of him and nurse his wounded spirit."

"I am not coming home, except to get my clothes," was the reply. "From next month I will be living over the shop in Collins Street and for the time being O'Hanlon's Hotel will be quite good enough for me. I will ask Mr Fox to come too when I pick up my clothes and shaving gear. You must understand, Miriam, when you put me out of the house it was for good and all, even though you may not have meant it that way."

"I was concerned for your soul. Could I see my husband walk into great danger and not call out a warning?"

"Perhaps so, but I will pay the cabman and send you home. You can stay there or go out, whichever you please. But don't bring those people round here again; I won't have it. I will call the police and have the shop cleared."

Mrs Goss returned to announce that a cab was waiting at the gutter.

"Come Miriam," said Mr Gladman more kindly. "I will take you out myself." He led Mrs Gladman, sobbing, out through the front door and handed her up into the cab.

He shook his head as the cab horse clopped away and the vehicle turned the corner. "She was a kindly woman once; I suppose she is still a good woman by her lights."

The others turned to one another. ''That's one little drama we didn't miss,'' said Sir Thomas. ''Well done James. I'll know who to call on when they start praying for me.''

''That's not all I've done,'' said Mr Pryor "Henry's right! You remember Gabby, asking me to talk to his ma. It took a lot of persuading, especially after Tim cleared out because she wasn't going to do him any favours, but she came round after a while. I must say she's still not happy about it but she won't make too much trouble if he's apprenticed to an engineer or a builder. She didn't want to upset me, at least not yet, so you had better tell Tim to get the indentures made out, paid for and signed, while I am still in her good books.

After mother comes home she and Myrtle are going to find it pretty hard to get hold of me. You know, at one time I thought of marrying Myrtle to get a lever on the old man's money, but some sacrifices are just too great. I think I'll wait until someone like Amy comes along."

''I'm here,'' said Amy, ''Together with The Ancient Mariner himself, the one with a mixed bag of letters after his name

''I am trying to teach this young woman good manners and kindness towards aged, and respectable persons, such as myself','' said Sir Thomas. ''But I have had little success so far.

Amy stepped forward and kissed Gabriel.

''There, you see, kissing young men in public when her mother told her not to. She doesn't kiss me.

''I hate silly old men with beards.''

''I don't have a beard.''

''Just as well, if you had a beard I would hate you even more than I do now.

''Sir Thomas gave up and looked at his watch. ''It's lunchtime. Gabriel, and you Pryor, are you free for lunch? You can come and protect me from this young woman. Before we go there is one thing I must say to Gabriel. ''After you marry this young lady you will not win an argument ever again. At least not with her.''

''Quite right,'' said Amy. If he is a good, obedient boy, and follows my advice at all times, he will do very well. Now, lunch.''

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The campaign commences.

The glaziers came out straight after the new year and installed new panes of glass in the display windows to replace those smashed by Benno.

Mr Gladman had learned something from his ordeal for now there were signs on the shop, large ones, announcing a grand sale of musical instruments due to an imminent move to new premises in Collins Street

While the detective was looking for him Benno had gone to his friend Wocka's place by Wocka's invitation. Everyone knew him as Wocka, and were not aware of any other name. Mrs Wocka was outraged at the foolishness of offering Benno sanctuary on any terms, but decided he could stay for a short while, a very short while.

She was wary of having Benno anywhere near her husband; he was easily led astray

and Benno was just the man to do it. After they made a late and noisy return from an unauthorised visit to the pub next evening she assaulted them both with a frying pan, then locked Wocka in and locked Benno out. It was after this incident, when he had nowhere to go, that Benno was arrested by Detective Jones while wandering around the city.

Since his escape from the law Gabriel had heard little of him. Several ships arrived in port and he and his mates worked long hours loading and unloading cargo, with little time for getting into trouble.

Gabriel was now doing all the work of managing the agency while his partner campaigned to win a seat in Parliament.

Running for parliament was arduous work and called for long hours of attendance at various hotels in the city; much backslapping and standing rounds of drinks. Financially this was not a problem.

The committee, after some hesitation and indignation, raised their offer of assistance to £400 and, with a matching show of hesitation and indignation on his part, Mr Pryor at last accepted the money and confided to Gabriel that he would have taken £350. He discovered later, to his regret, that the committee would have gone to £450. Still, £400 was a generous amount with which to fight the campaign. Charles Edmunds, the theatrical agent, was his partner in this batle.

Edmunds was a self proclaimed genius in the design of theatre posters. He asserted frequently that his posters would drag crowds into any theatre, no matter what the quality of the show.

He set to with enthusiasm and soon after bill posters were hard at work everywhere pasting up the results of his genius on every vacant wall and tenement where there was the least bit of space. All over town were to be seen highly coloured portraits of James Pryor and Edmunds with their names in florid lettering underneath and exhortations to vote for them at the forthcoming Victorian elections.

The same or similar messages were carried round the streets by shambling sandwich men. The last attempt to convey a message by these means had been too ambitious, or so everyone agreed, because they had to rely on the sandwich men being able to read and stay in their proper order. They were discharged as a group after the message about Mr Gladman's sale became hopelessly jumbled and now there was only one slogan per man.

Gabriel studied the posters but could find little resemblance to the two person he knew. Anyone unable to read might have the impression that a new faith healer was in town and touting for business.

The portraits had been commissioned by Edmunds from a local commercial artist who specialized in cartoons for soap advertisements and theatrical posters. there was little difference between the two pictures They were both shown, chin up and head

back as though gazing into the distance and looking far into Victoria's future. At least Gabriel presumed this was the intention of the artist. The man specialized in bright colours and these crept into the portrait's complexion seeming to indicate that its subject imbibed as much claret as Mr Briggs. No doubt the intention was to make them look noble and thoughtful, but something had gone amiss with the portraits and the staring eyes, gave them a manic air. Gabriel did not make any adverse comment about the posters because the two principals in the campaign admired them greatly and seemed well satisified with the result.

The government party had sponsored another candidate for the same seat, a radical merchant, Mr Samuel Jobley, who had raised himself by tremendous efforts from ordinary seaman to be an enterprising, wealthy, grocer. The man never omitted to tell his audiences at political rallies that he had sailed to the four corners of the world and seen the wonders thereof, but dived overboard and swam ashore when his ship came to Melbourne and anchored in Hobson's bay.

From there, evading the authorities, he made his way on foot to the goldfields but found little profit digging for gold. After a few months fossicking and working unprofitable claims he drifted back to Melbourne and started amassing his fortune. His story never included the interesting detail that his career was immeasurably advanced by marriage to the daughter, the only child, of a successful grocer, and the even more fortunate, though untimely, death of his father-in-law.

Like many men of his class he worked hard and drove shrewd bargains but his lucky marriage to the grocery business was the real basis of his fortune.

The man always concluded his orations by telling of the bright future awaiting any working man who was prepared to labour hard, refrain from strong drink, and take advantage of the great opportunities offering in this far flung corner of the British Empire.

He was a formidable opponent, a good match for that dynamic and eloquent young business man James Pryor. The first skirmishes in the campaign consisted of their enthusiastic helpers tearing down or overpasting posters put up by the other candidate. After a while this became so wearing that intermediaries met and gained an accommodation whereby, within reason, each side respected the others advertising.

The politics of the two opponents did not differ greatly except in detail, though each predicted the eventual collapse of Victoria's economy if the other's party was returned to the Treasury Benches.

The main difference between the two was their attitude to drink. Though abstemious and careful himself Mr Pryor had no objection to treating his constituents to copious quantities of beer in pursuit of their esteem and votes. Mr Samuel Jobley, on the other hand, was an aggressive teetotaller. After returning from the goldfields he had joined the Independent Church and also a local chapter of the anti-drink society and had renewed a childhood pledge, taken under the influence of the Junior auxiliary of the

local Band of Hope, never to touch beer or strong drink in any form.

Because of Mr Pryor's known habits of frequenting hotels and consorting with drinkers he was running on a strong anti drink platform while managing to convey the belief that Mr Pryor was being supported by the publicans of Melbourne. It was implied that his opponent, if elected, would work for longer hotel trading hours and aim for the eventual triumph of the demon drink. Mr Jobley, in contrast, would labour to curtail opening hours and towards the happy outcome of a total ban on drinking in Victoria.

He had the enthusiastic support of the prohibitionists of which there were many in the colony at that time. The young, unmarried members had their own chapter of the Anti Drink Society and were further pledged to convert other young people to the joys of abstinence and religion. If any unfortunate youth could not be turned by prayer and example from the desire for strong drink they would cast off the offender and have nothing further to do with him or her.

They provided enthusiastic workers for Mr Jobley's campaign and every night there were torchlit temperance processions through the streets with posters of Jobley held aloft as though his very picture would be sufficient to drive the powers of darkness from the City of Melbourne.

The drinkers of Melbourne stood firm for Mr Pryor. The hotels would empty when one of Jobley's processions passed by and the patrons would line the pavement to jeer and cat-call while holding aloft glasses and bottles to drink ironic toasts to the prohibitionist groups. They would be answered by cries of, *'Booze is the downfall of the working man' and, 'give your wages to your wives, not the publicans and 'Oh, that man should put an enemy in his mouth to steal away his brains,'.*

The younger and better looking female temperance workers had their own cry, which was considered most bold. *'Lips that touch shall never touch mine.*''

Edmunds had pressed Pryor and Fox's office in Swanston Street into service in the campaign. The agency had a show window on either side of the front door with a floor area of less than half of Mr Gladman"s shop. Both windows had been completely covered with posters trumpeting Victoria's desperate need to have Messrs Pryor and Edmunds as representatives of its interests in the State Parliament, and hinting at the disasters that would follow if they were not elected.

Until the two sides came to an agreement it had been the first duty of the clerks every morning to peel away unauthorised political posters stuck on overnight. Now they merely had to repair or replace the portraits where they had been decorated by unknown, disrespectful persons with scribbled whiskers, or a pipe or various kinds of hats.

As well as showing the political allegiance of the establishment by these means all the staff, including Gabriel, were issued with blue cockades, Mr Pryor's colours. This was all very well but the window posters blocked out much of the natural light and made

the office quite dim. They had to have the gaslights on all day, else the clerks would have strained their eyes working on the ledgers.

Benno and his mates soon noted the great battle of the posters and one day appeared as a deputation in the office. They declared their total support for Mr Pryor's candidacy and offered to recruit other friends of low persuasion and disrupt Jobley's campaign. They had heard of Mr Jobley's aim of shortening the hours during which hotels could remain open and closing the numerous breweries catering for the thirst of the citizens of Victoria. They had rooted objections to any such course of action and considered Mr Jobley as their natural enemy. The first proposal put forward by Benno and his companions was to rip down every surviving Jobley poster, then put a stop to the processions and finally attend his meetings and make enough noise to drown out any speech he might care to make.

They listened with disbelief and indignation to Gabriel's plea to stay away from both campaigns. It was difficult for them to understand that Mr Pryor's political career would not be advanced by their intervention. They filed out of the office at last angry and frustrated that their proposed and well meaning contribution to the political process had been rejected in this way, but still resolved to take to take a leading part in the campaign.

The possibility of a win by Jobley was considered so alarming the publicans and proprietors of the metropolitan breweries had an informal meeting and levied themselves and absent members £5 each to contribute to Mr Pryor's campaign. They forwarded it with a promise of more if necessary. Mr Pryor returned a gracious note thanking them for the money and suggesting that matters were so desperate another, similar donation would be needed if there was to be any hope of turning the political tide. He was delighted when a second cheque arrived and commented to Gabriel, who noted that a number of substantial citizens were now contributing to the cause, that win or lose they would end up making a large profit on his first attempt to become an MP.

Mr Pryor's talent for publicity and his willingness to express an opinion on any issues of interest to journalists led to lengthy reports in the daily papers, all of which highlighted his political skill and business shrewdness. The stories were widely read and commented on so more and more of the general public heard of Mr Pryor and his burgeoning careers.

Most spoke of him approvingly as a rising young man who had far to go in the business and political life of Victoria.

Their firm was now more under public notice than ever and starting to build up a register of properties for sale as well as establishing a valuable rent roll. Their position as well respected young financiers was enhanced by a constant flow of business connected with the Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society. The political campaign and publicity seemed to provide a great stimulus to business for intending clients would come in and look round for Mr Pryor. It was disappointing

not to meet him on the spot but Gabriel was able to deal with them quite well and no business was lost because of his absence.

Gabriel had engaged other clerks to assist, as well as salesmen who worked mainly outside but the office was now terribly cramped and there was an urgent need for larger premises. If they were to retain the shop in Swanston Street it would at least be necessary to find another shop, or offices to take the overflow of employees. When Gabriel was able to catch Mr Pryor's attention long enough to discuss the matter it was decided suitable offices would have to be found for the Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society in Collins Street, now undoubtedly, the financial centre of the town.

An address in Collins Street was the only possible one for such a vigorous institution of growing importance. The centre for the building operations would be well placed in the same offices if possible, but the estate agency should definitely stay in Swanston Street.

Mr Pryor had to bustle away again. It was a Friday and Edmunds had decided on a torchlight procession for that night to rival those of Mr Jobley. They were to march through the streets preceded by a brass band in smart red uniforms with drums beating, banners flying and promises of drinks for those supporters who cheered the loudest for Mr Pryor and booed the loudest at any reference to Jobley. At the conclusion of the parade the principal figure in all this fuss and show was to deliver an open air address to the citizens of Melbourne. It was to be a grand and eloquent speech which would mark the formal opening of his election campaign.

At this desperate and crucial moment in the history of Victoria, as he described it, the manoeuvering beforehand would be forgotten and the minor skirmishes treated only as preliminaries.

As far as Mr Pryor was concerned what had gone before, his publicly expressed indignation at the duplicity and wickedness of the Berry Government, the tearing down of Jobley's posters, the rumours about his opponent's character and trustworthiness, which had spread like lightning through the electorate, was no more than the ritual trumpet blowing and abuse that Chinese armies of old employed to overawe one another before any battle could formally commence.

The serious work of demolishing the Berry Government and its candidate was to begin that very night. It was imperative that he rehearse his speech in front of a mirror, memorise the most telling points and jokes, and make sure it was written out clearly for the reporters so that every word and every sarcastic reference to his opponent would appear in the papers the following day.

James Pryor went away to prepare himself for the great test while Gabriel supervised the pinning of blue cockades to the hats of the staff. No clerk could possibly come to work unless wearing a hat so when they were let out an hour early that afternoon to attend the meeting and procession, which was to start promptly at seven, the group were clearly seen to be in the conservative camp and supporters of Mr Pryor.

Pringle, the chief clerk, was last to leave. Gabriel had to wait a short time at the door while he reluctantly shut his ledger after making a final entry. He would have spoken but Gabriel seemed in a hurry to close the office, as indeed he was. He had promised to attend the procession and meeting, and wanted to go and see Amy and have something to eat before going out again.

Pringle pursed his lips and turned as they stood for a moment in the recess between the footpath and the front door. Gabriel was about to lock them both out of the office. He said, "Do you want me to start tomorrow drawing cheques for the quarterly interest payments?"

"Are they due?" asked Gabriel, taken by surprise. All the recent events had made him forget their obligations.

"Yes, the payments must be made next week, or the office will be in default. Will I start drawing the cheques up tomorrow, ready for signing?

"Yes, that's allright. When they are ready we will catch Mr Pryor, tie him to the chair if necessary so he will stay in one place long enough to sign them all."

Pringle did not respond to this mild joke but nodded thoughtfully, said goodnight and went away, hardly noticing the people around him. When out of sight of the office, and hidden in the throng hurrying towards the railway station, he unpinned the cockade from his hat and threw it away.

The procession was to assemble in Bourke Street East, not far from the Post Office. It was easily found by following the vigorous strains of music from the band and seeing colourful groups of marchers, many wearing sashes, as they moved into their places. They were to march straight up Bourke Street to the Eastern Market, which was still being built, and there fall out round the corner in Stephen Street to be addressed by Mr Pryor. In former years political meetings were held in the aisles between the market sheds but the builders were in possession now.

Stephen Street was not a reputable street; a haunt of prostitutes and larrikins, and many of the boarding houses had doubtful reputations. However the police would not permit meetings in Bourke Street they disrupted traffic and frightened the horses. Stephen Street was less busy, mainly because respectable folk did not go there much. Gabriel had heard some talk of changing its name to Exhibition Street in order to get rid of old associations and honour the Grand Melbourne Exhibition which would be opened later next year.

He arived in good time, shortly before seven, to find a large crowd near the Post Office and Edmunds haranguing the sandwich board men and pushing them into some sort of order. He made sure each had a blue cockade pinned firmly to his hat so as not to blow away in the night wind or be knocked off by a political opponent if there should be any hostilities. The sandwich board men were assigned the extra duty of carrying flaming torches for illumination and to lend colour to the parade. Mr Edmunds had wanted to let off fire crackers and rockets along the way but the police firmly vetoed

this suggestion, though the Inspector agreed to Roman Candles being displayed as long as the men held them in their hands; they were not to be thrown around.

Gabriel was surprised at first to see such a large number of people getting ready to march, and their enthusiasm, until he realized that a rival parade in support of Jobley was assembling in much the same area to proceed to a similar destination. There was some jeering and chiacking going on between the groups; fairly good humoured, but Gabriel saw, with a start, that Benno and his friends were present. All had been issued with blue cockades and wore them defiantly on their hats and caps. Jobley's supporters were identified with orange and blue sashes draped over the right shoulder, the colours of the Temperance League.

On the whole Jobley's adherents seemed more respectable than Pryor's; most of Pryor's people had been hired by Edmunds, including the brass band, though there were a few genuine supporters present, not counting Benno and his friends, that is.

Gabriel could not help but wish that a large ship had come up the river that night with an urgent cargo in need of immediate unloading. He would have much preferred Benno's absence to his presence.

A large man in what appeared to be full regimentals with a huge bearskin busby on his head was helping Edmunds marshal the parade. He was to march at its head with his baton twirling, escorting Mr Pryor in the place of honour.

Mr Pryor's procession was about to move off when more band music was heard. It became louder, and all eyes turned towards Queen Street from where the sound came. A large four wheeler, big as a bus, was coming as fast as the traffic would allow.

Drawn by four horses over the crossing it pulled up in fine style after passing the rival groups. This vehicle was decorated with banners in support of Jobley and there were people sitting on the roof waving his placards.

The music was coming from a band in the four wheeler, the members of which were wearing orange and blue sashes over their uniforms. Some band members were sitting on cross benches inside and some on top while the band leader stood alongside the driver in such a position that his conducting could be seen by the players from above and below.

Having passed them, the driver stopped the vehicle, and who was to be seen but Mr Jobley standing on the top deck. This platform was usually reached by a set of steps but these, at present, were stowed under the floor.

The wagon was no sooner stationary than that gentleman limped out to be seen and admired by the crowd. Even the most inattentive passerby would be aware that Mr Jobley and his wagon had arrived. The band played a fanfare and the drummers earned their money if men ever did with the energy they expended on the kettle drums, while their efforts were underscored by a steady thumping on the bass drum.

His supporters broke ranks and clustered at the rear of the wagon cheering loudly and clapping while Mr Pryor's adherents, led by Benno and his friends, groaned and booed in a counter demonstration. Mr Jobley, who had a figure made ample from years of good living, smiled and raised his top hat repeatedly to acknowledge the cheers until it was knocked out of his hand by a flying tomato.

At this unexpected attack everyone was silenced and looked round to see who was responsible. Gabriel instantly glanced at Benno but that individual and his friends seemed the very mirrors of innoncence, though Gabriel did not care for their broad grins and triumphant looks.

It was now the turn of the Jobleyites to boo and shake their banners. But Mr Jobley raised his arms, calling for quiet. Someone found his hat and it was returned stained and dented. He shook his head and held it up for all to behold.

"My friends, he boomed, "The state of my hat shows the level to which political contention has sunk in this fair colony of Victoria, a glorious jewel in Britannia's crown. Words should be the true missiles of debate. Facts and eternal truths are the artillery with which we assault the bastions of deceit, ideas are the rifles with which we shoot down error. But who among us would stoop so low as to use fruit, the products of the creator, to score a point instead of employing rational argument?"

This incident had delayed the start of both processions, and traffic in Bourke Street was slowed almost to a crawl. After a while they were at the centre of a great throng of people as passers by were mixed up with the contending parties and a great mass of vehicles, carts, cabs, buses, private carriages, and the like were held up both ways, and in Elizabeth Street as well. Drivers were standing on their boxes to see what was causing the sudden stop and passengers on the tops of buses craned up from their seats.

Mr Jobley had not intended to make a speech at that time; he was merely going to show himself and then ride on the wagon to Stephen Street with the band playing and his followers marching behind. The attack with the tomato made him forget this part of the itinerary and he started to harangue the crowd, something he had promised not to do.

The police had emphasised to all candidates that there would be no stump orations in Bourke Street and they would be allowed to stay on sufferance for only a short while in Stephen Street.

Mr Jobley had forgotten and sawed at the air with his arms while shouting that the person who threw the tomato, no doubt was a miserable victim of drink, and in the merciless grip of the grape. He was urging the poor, lost drunkards present to sign the pledge of abstinence from all malted and spirituous liquor and vote for Jobley when several more tomatoes rapidly followed the first. One hit a bandsman, two others splattered against the side of the wagon, but the fourth hit Jobley on the chest, ruining his expensive, flowered waist coat.

Gabriel had been watching. It was Benno and the others who were the

marksmen. They had smuggled bags of rotten fruit into the crowd and now were cheerfully dipping into them for fresh ammunition.

Gabriel rushed over and caught Benno by the arm just as he was about to launch another missile; Wocka was too quick to be stopped and too accurate to be diverted; he threw an overripe tomato which spattered on Jobley's check trousers.

"What the hell do you think you're playing at?" shouted Gabriel, snatching away one of the bags.

"Fair suck o' the sausage, Gabby," retorted Benno, indignant that his contribution to Australian democracy was being interrupted in this unseemly manner. "Gimme them termaters back. Don't you worry, we'll get your bloke up at the election. The boys are going to stand outside the polling booths and thump anyone that goes in to vote the wrong way. And we're going to run this feller Jobley out'a town while we're on the job. Come on Gabby, hand 'em over. You can have a throw too, yourself, if yer like."

"Just keep out of it!" said the exasperated Gabriel. "Don't you dare have anything to do with this election. Keep away from it and keep your friends away too. If there's a way of losing you'll find it for us. You do it again and I'll report you to the police. Give me that!" He snatched the other bag of fruit away from Wocka who was too much taken aback to resist.

Benno was appalled and looked at him as though seeing Gabriel in a new light. "Bloody New Chums," he said. "Yer can't trust 'em. Gunna turn me inter the rozzers are yer? ''Alright, have it your own way. Knock back our help and see how yer get on. But don't come to me afterwards grizzling about all the pubs being closed down. Gawd!" he said to Wocka, "after all I've done for him, too."

He was interrupted by Wocka nudging and indicating something with his chin. Benno glanced in that direction and they slid off into the crowd leaving Gabriel standing and clutching the two bags of fruit. Everyone was looking at him accusingly; at the wretch who had thrown the tomatoes and disrupted the great Jobley parade.

He felt a hand placed on his shoulder and half turned; It was Jones the detective.

"Hello, Mr Fox," said the detective "Are you helping your mate, Pryor, get into parliament? this is not the way to do it,you know. I thought an Englishman, just out to the colonies would be able to set a better example than this."

"Disgusting!" said a woman wearing the blue and orange sash of the Jobleyites. Others in the crowd looked on and nodded; several were also wearing the badge of temperance. "I saw him do it," said the woman. "Obviously the man's a drunkard. He was laughing and throwing those tomatos along with his friends. I'm going to call a policeman; they should all be locked up, and I'll go to court and say it to the magistrate. Though it's a great shame," She continued, addressing the folk looking on

"Such a well dressed young man, too. How could he have sunk so low as to become intoxicated and assault our dear friend, Mr Jobley, a future Premier of Victoria.

Look round for a policeman," she urged the others. "He and his friends should be taken to the watch house, and locked up." Everyone approved her remarks and were hostile towards Gabriel.

"You're wrong!" said Gabriel angrily. "I didn't throw anything. I was just standing there and someone else threw the tomatos and I took the bags away from them so they wouldn't do it again. I'm sorry it happened, but it wasn't my fault and I didn't do it; how can you say such a thing?"

His words had litte effect because clearly everyone disbelieved him. They looked at the bags of fruit in his arms, shook their heads and murmured to each other while gazing at him.

"I know what I saw!" retorted the woman. "It was the most shameful thing that ever happened in Melbourne. We should get an officer to take him into custody."

Someone bustled away to find a policeman while Jones looked into Gabriel's appalled countenance and shook his head. "You see what comes of associating with bad company. I knew you would get into trouble if you kept on hanging around with Murphy and his mates; but I always say, 'if they won't listen, they won't learn'. You'll have to explain all this to the magistrate."

He nodded at the bags of fruit still being clutched by the speechless and miserable Gabriel. "Hang on to those, they're evidence, we'll need them during the hearing."

The shiny black helmet of a policeman could be seen above the heads of the crowd. It came closer as the constable was led towards the scene of the crime. The woman waved at him as he approached and pointed at Gabriel. "That's him," she cried out, "Take care, he's drunk and dangerous."

Mr Jobley had observed this and came across, using crutches to spare what appeared to be an extremely sore foot. He was vainly using his handkerchief to wipe some of the mess off his waistcoat and trousers.

"Is this the young man?" He showed some surprise to think that a person dressed so conservatively and of good appearance should be responsible for attacking him. He shook his head too. "The habit of drinking alcohol can overcome anyone, high or low; even the most seemingly respectable people fall victim to the demon rum. We hear so many sad stories of blighted lives at our meetings and we try and save poor miserable victims of drink where we can, but often are not successful. The only answer is for me to enter parliament and work to throttle the whole vile trade that battens on the weakness of poor, sinful people."

The woman had been looking keenly at Gabriel and suddenly she clapped her hands together and drew in a breath. "I knew I'd seen him somewhere! He was arrested just

before Christmas for breaking the windows of a shop in Bourke Street. He and a dreadful labouring man were in it together and they were taken off to the police station. What is Melbourne coming to when people like this are allowed to roam the streets?"

The constable looked at Detective Jones who still had his hand in a proprietorial manner on Gabriel's shoulder. "Good day Mr Jones, do you want me to take him in?" The detective raised his other hand. "No, no. Leave it to me. This gentleman and I are well acquainted and I won't need any assistance. You can get back to helping sort out the traffic." The constable raised a finger to the brim of his helmet and turned away.

"If you're a detective why don't you put him in handcuffs?" demanded the woman. "We're lucky he didn't have any bricks to throw; he might have done someone a serious injury."Take this, you can read it in your cell," said Mr Jobley, handing Gabriel a temperance tract. It was headed - 'The Drunkard's Nightmare'. On the front was a picture of a haggard man in the throes of delerium, cowering away from horrid, imaginary monsters which the artist had drawn and coloured in vivid detail.

"Come and see me when you are released," he continued. "You will find me at Jobley & Coy., wholesale warehouse in King Street. Anyone will direct you to it. I will be happy to talk to you and you can attend our meetings to discover the end result of intemperance."

"Thank you Mr Jobley, that's noble of you," said Detective Jones with a grin. He seemed to be enjoying the situation. "He's a hardened young man but I might be able to persuade him to come and see you when he's free again. ''

The woman accusing Gabriel was eager to be a witness and he wrote her name and address in his notebook.

Mr Jobley had decided to continue with his procession dressed as he was and use his clothes as silent witnesses to the horrors of drunken behaviour. The police ordered both processions away and had made the arbitrary decision that Mr Pryor's should go first. When it reached Steven Street his parade was to turn right, while Jobley's was to turn left.

Mr Pryor's parade moved off. Obviously its leader did not know his partner was in the hands of the police under suspicion of behaving riotously in Bourke Street for he moved off in the company of the Sergeant Major, followed by his procession. His bandsmen blew vigorously into their instruments while the drummers tried to outdo their rivals with the volume of noise produced. Mr Pryor waved at the crowd and the Sergeant Major, who was no more than an actor engaged and accoutred by the agent, strutted ahead signalling grandly to the band with his staff.

Mr Jobley let them get a good way ahead, then his band struck up in competition and the two processions proceeded noisily up Bourke Street.

Soon the crowd thinned a little and the throngs hurrying by were no longer

concerned with politics or temperance but only shopping or the theatres. Mr Jones took his hand off Gabriel's shoulder and guided him round the corner into Elizabeth Street by the post office steps where the crowds were less. They faced each other.

"Get rid of the fruit," said Jones, indicating a nearby bin. "You don't want to be carrying that sort of stuff round the city."

"Won't you need it for evidence?"

"No, who would want rotten old fruit brought into the court. We don't need it." He gestured towards the bin and Gabriel gratefully got rid of the tomatos. He hesitated for a moment and was about to drop the the temperance tract in too.

"Keep it for your future brother in law. If the medicine doesn't work Jobley might be able to fix him up."

Gabriel was astonished once again at the knowledge people had of each other. In spite of its growth Melbourne was a small community far away from any other town of the same size. Still, he had other things to think of as he returned the tract to his pocket. "Am I under arrest?"

"No, not if you tell me who threw the tomatoes." He looked at Gabriel's face. "I'm not a fool, Mr Fox. It's not in your nature to do anything as stupid as that. Besides, I saw you in the crowd; you didn't have anything in your hands then but a few seconds later you were talking to Murphy and his mate. I reckon you took the tomatoe away before they could do any more damage. It was them, wasn't it?"

Gabriel looked at him.

"That's alright, if you won't tell me I still have a witness who will get up in court and say you're a drunken sot who should be locked up for attacking her dear Mr Jobley. That's a problem in dealing with eyewitnesses. They're very handy in my line of work, but sometimes they believe they saw things that just didn't happen. Of course that would not be much help to you in court. She was very definite, wasn't she? She has a real mental picture of you throwing the tomatos, and that's what she believes and so will the court. She would be a very effective witness and only you and I would know she was wrong, and they may not question me on that point and if they do I might have trouble with my memory, just like Gladman." He mused for a minute while Gabriel thought over the implications of what he was saying.

"You have your estate agent's licence now, I believe. If you are convicted on this charge you'll lose it for sure, and then, of course, because you are such a bad character, there may be an order to inspect the books of the building society. I wonder where that would lead?" He paused. "Can you remember now who threw the tomatos?"

"Would I go to jail?"

"Don't think so. It was only a first offence and Pryor would give you a rattling good

character reference. Probably you'd get off with a fine and a caution from the beak. It would be a hell of a job trying to get your licence back though, It could take years and you wouldn't be much use in the business without it. Besides, Pryor would lose the election and you would all be unhappy -- except Jobley."

Gabriel knew when he was beaten. He could not possibly take the risks that Jones was outlining; apart from anything else he had to think of Amy, and their marriage. He capitulated. "It was Benno and his mate, Wocka. I saw them throw the tomatoes." Gabriel was only English after all; he did not realize the enormity of of dobbing in a mate to the police.

The detective nodded. "Were any more of Benno's mates there? Ah well, if you say there weren't, I believe you. Murphy and his offsider will do for the time being; I will get the others later, when I'm ready." He winked at Gabriel and was about to turn away when he had a second thought. "You remember that story you told me about winning money at the races. It sounded pretty fishy, but do you know, it was all true. I was talking to a bookie who really wants to meet Billy Summers and I thought I would try your story out on him. You could have knocked me down with a feather when he said he was the bookie and picked you straight away for a mug punter. You were one of the few that put money on Darriwell, and you paid him in gold sovereigns; how's that for a coincidence? Now, if you take my advice you'll never go back to the course again because luck like that doesn't happen to the same person twice. And another thing, keep away from politics; you're not cut out for that sort of caper. Leave it to Pryor; one politician in the firm is enough." He nodded politely to Gabriel and walked away.

Gabriel looked at the retreating detective while he was in sight and then, having been humiliated in public for a second time by the irresponsible Benno, he unpinned the cockade from his hat and dropped it in with the fruit.

e would never, ever attend another political parade, temperance meeting or prayer meeting, particularly if it involved the Faithful Brethren. He would never attempt to alter the beliefs of the Hindoos, and the Irish could pour into the colony in vast numbers as far as he was concerned. All he asked was that they should buy workmen's cottages and not try and stop others of different faiths from coming also. His concern from now on would be to look after his wife to be and his business.

He walked back to Mrs Byer's boarding house. He would tell them everything and Amy would be annoyed at missing some more excitement, and angry that she was not there to argue with the woman eyewitness.

When he arrived at the boarding house was not able to tell his story for a while because the Taylors had interesting news of their own. Mr Taylor had received a letter from the Bishop. It was friendly in tone and said he was well aware of the great work the Reverend gentleman was doing in battling the false doctrine peddled by followers of Charles Darwin. He said the church needed strong and persuasive peakers and he would be pleased to see Mr Taylor next Tuesday at Bishopscourt, at

10am, to discuss this and other matters

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Mr Briggs' fears.

Gabriel was first at the office on Saturday morning. It was his duty to open up. Pringle did not have a key, though he was to be given one quite soon. He was a quiet, steady man, always punctual in discharge of his duties. While walking to the office Gabriel thought he would send the clerk out that very day to have a new key cut for himself. Pringle could open the office without the partners having to be there and Gabriel would be free to go out early selling their rapidly increasing stock of partly built dwellings.

When they arrived at the office door together he noted that Pringle's blue cockade had disappeared from his hat, but said nothing; his own was gone too. They greeted one another gravely. Pringle was in the same thoughtful mood as on Friday and Gabriel was still shaken from his fright of the previous evening.

Pringle carefully hung his second best coat on the hook assigned to him and put on the wrist protectors made by Mrs Pringle. He and the others were allowed to take off their coats while working at the books but had to retain their waist-coats, with the addition of a cardigan during cold weather.

While the other two clerks were settling down to their work he came quietly into the tiny inner office which Gabriel had to use while Pryor was absent, there was scarcely room for him outside. "Mr Fox, do you want us to start making out those cheques today?"

"Of course! I thought we had discussed this last night."

Pringle rubbed his chin while gazing intently at Gabriel. "Have you had time to look at the bank balances lately? I think you should." He turned and went to a large safe recently installed that made the place even more cluttered than before. Gabriel had unlocked it as part of his morning routine so Pringle could distribute the books as required. He bent down and took out a heavy, calf-bound ledger with water marked end leaves. This he brought to Gabriel and put down on the desk. The book was opened at the most recent entries and Pringle pointed out some of the items that troubled him.

"Look at that, and that, and this figure here." He ran his finger along the appropriate lines so Gabriel could understand more clearly. Gabriel frowned; he had some knowledge of book-keeping but was not able to follow Pringle quickly enough

through the maze of copperplate writing. "What are you saying?"

Pringle stopped with his finger on the book and looked up. He spoke softly so the clerks beyond the partition would not hear. "I'm telling you that our cheques are going to be dishonoured; there's not enough money in the bank to cover the quarterly payments."

Gabriel went white; he understood instantly the implications of the statement. Dishonoured cheques would mean a scandal, an enquiry into the society and an examination of its books. It would probably lead to bankruptcy. Most of the money that had come into the office recently was beyond recall, at least for the time being. Mr Pryor had insisted on investing every penny and neither had given much thought to the rapidly approaching time when they would have to find cash for dividends and interest.

"How much are we short?"

"Over £370. It could vary; it depends on what the movement of money is in and out of the office between now and when the cheques are presented for payment."

They stared at one another while Gabriel's thoughts raced to find a way of dealing with the situation; he could think of nothing but possible criminal charges while Pringle worried over the prospect of trying to find another situation with the stigma on him of being chief clerk of a ruined firm. Everyone would know!

It was a relief to hear the front door swing open and Pryor's familiar step and greetings to the staff as he came to the glass cubicle where his desk was. He came in and sat on the edge of the desk. "I missed you last night," he said. Jobley copped some tomatos from the crowd; you should have seen him; what a mess. I hope those mates of yours weren't mixed up in it. But I'm sorry you didn't hear my speech; it was the best I've ever made, and I got in some good ones about Jobley. He'll squirm when he reads what I said about him; it's all in the papers, and I've brought them in to show you. Have a look at this." He was flattening the newspapers out on the desk when he noticed their faces. "What's up? You both look as if you'd lost a guinea and found a zac."

"It's worse. We're in real trouble."

Mr Pryor took off his top hat and hung it on a peg. He was rarely without it and the way he wore his hat generally indicated his mood. In moments of stress he would take it off and smooth his fair hair. "What's the problem?"

Gabriel touched a finger to his lips to remind Pryor to keep his voice down and indicated Pringle who again demonstrated the lines of figures showing serious difficulties for the infant firms they controlled.

James Pryor shook his head while looking at the figures. "I'm not a book-keeper. Just tell me about the bottom line. I suppose there's no chance of a mistake."

"No, Sir, there it is. There are the figures," said Pringle pointing. "We have so much to draw on and so much to pay, and the figures don't match, not unless you can find near enough to £400 somewhere. We would need the extra for wages and so on, until more money started coming into the office."

"We'll be bankrupt, they'll sell everything," said Gabriel, in a near panic. He was wondering how he would tell Amy and then look after them both with no job. All his money had been sunk into the business. The block of land for their house would be taken away from them.

"Don't be wet!" said Mr Pryor scornfully. We're not done for, not by a long chalk. You're only bankrupt when you admit it." He looked at Pringle. "Thanks for telling us, but I wish we had known earlier. Never mind, it's our problem now. You go out and set the men to working on the cheques while Mr Fox and I sort this out between us. Do the others know about this?"

Pringle shook his head. "I do these books myself; the other two haven't any idea that there's a problem."

"Good! Well, don't forget, mum's the word. We have to keep this 'in house'; if any stories about bankruptcies get out we'll have a screaming mob down on us wanting their money back. We'll be done for and so will you; you'll find it hard to get another job. Anyway," he added, "if I'm going to go broke it won't be for a measly four hundred quid. I reckon it would be a blot on the Pryor name if I went through for anything under half a million at the very least."

Pringle went back to his desk while the partners sat in the little office knee to knee and tried to sort out their predicament. "Who's the richest cove in Melbourne?" mused James Pryor, tilting his chair back on its rear legs.

"I don't know. It wouldn't be Briggs, would it? He's the only one I can think of." The front legs of Pryor's chair thumped on the floor. "You're a genius, Gabby. He's the very one; we've got a hold on him, too. Beauty, mate! Tell Pringle to send one of the clerks round to his office with a note from me. I'll say it's urgent and he's to meet us in the saloon bar of the Royal Mail within half an hour."

"Shouldn't we go to his office?"

"No! All we want is four hundred quid, let him come to us. If you're going to get into debt in a constructive way it has to be done properly. In the end we will be doing him a favour by taking his money. If we had more room and some privacy we could tell him to come here but the pub will have to do until we get a decent office."

"What's the hold you have on him?"

"It's fear, me boy. Fear of losing everything and ending up a snivelling old pauper, ruined and spending his nights in the sixpenny boarding house. He is terrified of Berry winning the election and bringing civilization down in ruins; that's what I have

to work on. We'll get the money alright. You watch how I do it and you'll see the master weaving his spell. Four hundred bloody quid! I'm not going under for four hundred quid. Come on, we'll go to the pub and have a few, I'll need to be in good voice for when he comes."

James Pryor was having a confidential chat with the barmaid when Mr Briggs arrived. The man was put out at being summoned suddenly from his office in this peremptory manner and was very short with them. He made it clear that only a matter of the greatest importance would justify such an inconvenient interruption in his busy day.

Pryor had ordered a glass of claret and the barmaid passed it over with her most practised smile as soon as Mr Briggs appeared in the bar. He was slightly calmer with the drink in his hand, but not much. "Now, what's all this about?" he demanded. "I have had to put aside a number of urgent matters to come and talk to you two; what you have to say had better be important."

"It's about the election," said Mr Pryor, shaking his head. "Things aren't looking too bright."

Mr Briggs's mottled face become even redder on hearing this ominous announcement. In his agitation he slopped some claret on the bar. "What do you mean? What are you talking about?"

"It looks as though I might have to withdraw and give Jobley a free run into Parliament. I'm sorry about this, and with the election so close I suppose you won't be able to get another candidate."

"It would be impossible to get another candidate," cried Mr Briggs shrilly. "What are you talking about? We have invested a lot of money in you as a Member of Parliament and now you say it is going to be wasted. Why have you changed your mind?"

"I haven't changed my mind. I believe I would have a valuable role to play as a Member of Parliament but things are just not falling out the right way. It's a pity, and in such a hard fought campaign like this, apart from Jobley getting a free ride, it could affect the whole election so that Berry could get up and win."

"You can't! you can't!" cried Mr Briggs agitatedly. "Society cannot afford to let Berry have another term. We would be totally ruined. Don't you understand the fellow's hatred of the commercial world and of businessmen who are the spring and backbone of our prosperity. If he had another term he could satisfy his spleen against us, and me in particular because he knows I am an enemy of his levelling, socialistic government. He won't be satisfied until we are all brought down to the same level. Why are you saying this? You must not do anything rash until we have discussed the matter with your support group."

"It's not easy to have to tell you," responded Mr Pryor. "I would never forgive myself if I was forced out of the election and Jobley won by default. As you say the colony may never recover from the damage that Berry would inflict if he had a second term,

but if I have no choice -- "

The thought of being at the mercy of his political enemy agitated Mr Briggs so much Gabriel feared he would suffer a heart attack. "Tell me," he said pitifully. "I don't understand. You say you want to be a Member of Parliament yet you are going to withdraw, You, the most prominent of the younger candidates. What can we say to make you change your mind?"

"It's a question of honor. My only honorable course at the moment is to inform you as my principal backer that my circumstances have changed so radically I may have to withdraw from the contest."

"May! What do you mean, may? have you not made up your mind yet? For heavens sake don't make any foolish decisions until I have had a chance to consult my colleagues." He took out a large handkerchief and wiped his brow with a shaking hand. "You don't know how spiteful Berry can be, especially since we influenced the Imperial Government to reject his attempts to destroy the powers of the Legislative Council. If he wins the election he may try again, and who knows what the outcome would be."

Mr Pryor looked at him sorrowfully and shook his head. "You don't know how this tears at me. The last thing I want in the whole world is for Victoria and its community to be at the mercy of such a man as Berry yet my partner, Mr Fox, and I have discussed the matter fully and we have come to the one conclusion. I simply cannot afford to go into the Victorian Parliament. The fact is that if I withdraw from the business to perform my parliamentary duties then our financial future is in doubt."

Mr Briggs frowned. "How can this be? Your firm is soundly based, is it not? Surely there is no danger of bankruptcy?"

"Not at all! Not at all! But we have a large and valuable stock of houses that must be sold within a reasonable time or we shall have temporary cash problems, and then the London office wants us to expand our operations; they are not concerned about the coming elections and have no idea of their importance. They are more concerned with the question of offering shares on the open market and starting a bank; the names suggested so far are 'The Bank of Victoria', and ' The Metropolitan and Rural Bank'. These are only preliminary ideas, but you can appreciate the amount of work and attention to detail that would follow such a decision. I could not possibly campaign for office once I became immersed in such vast enterprises as these."

"This is very strange," said Mr Briggs. "It is a great pity your London office did not notify you of its intentions before nominations closed for the election. If you withdraw now it will be the talk of the city. With no opponent Jobley will be declared the member without the need of a poll and it would provide an enormous boost also to Berry. I have no doubt he would win the election and then proceed to undermine the structure of business and wealth we have erected in Victoria. Can't you reconsider this decision?"

Mr Pryor looked at him pensively and rubbed his chin. He gestured to Briggs to move away from the bar, even though there was no one else present; the barmaid was now helping to serve patrons in the adjoining room. The three of them sat at a small table.

"I can see the glimmer of a solution but hesitated to mention it because it involved the question of money," said Mr Pryor. "I fear I have imposed on you and your committee far too much. You gentlemen have been more than generous in your support for my campaign; but the point that occurs to me is that if Mr Fox was able to direct more staff he would be able to cope with my absences and no damage would be done to our future or our plans for starting a new bank. To do that, of course, will require a further advance of money."

"Money!" said Mr Briggs, "you want more money? We have already given you a very large sum and not enquired as to its expenditure. Why is that not sufficient?"

"Ah," replied Mr Pryor, "we musn't mix up campaign funds with investment capital. We are not asking for a gift but a forward investment in our business ventures. When we float the bank we will be selling shares at a premium but if you care to consider this a forward purchase we will let you have the equivalent amount of shares at par."

Mr Briggs frowned. "I am not sure I want to spend money buying shares in a non-existent bank. How much do you have in mind?"

"Only a modest amount," replied Mr Pryor. "£500 will do nicely. I could ask for more but I am sure with Mr Fox's prudent management we can overcome any minor difficulties."

"Five hundred pounds!" said Mr Briggs, aghast. "Considering what we have given you already, at this rate we will be up to a thousand pounds in no time." In his agitation he almost drained a second glass of claret and Pryor had to call for a refill.

"£500 or £1000, it's a mere bagatelle in the context of what we are talking about. If we win the election it will be worth many thousands to your group. If we lose it will cost you many thousands."

Once again Mr Briggs wiped a film of perspiration from his forehead. "When do you want an answer?"

"No hurry, Monday will do very well, but my principals in London are hard headed businessmen and they intend to get on with this new project. Of course I am very heartened by their confidence in Mr Fox and myself, but we need your temporary assistance. If you can't help I will have to announce on Monday that I am withdrawing from the election. It's a great pity but I am sure that whichever party wins Victoria will have a great and glorious future."

Having uttered these words he and Gabriel bade farewell to the despondent businessman and walked out of the hotel. Once in the street and out of sight of the bar windows Pryor clapped his hands and rubbed them together with satisfaction.

"Five hundred quid ready to drop in our laps." He shook his head as another thought occurred to him. "I'll never learn, I should have asked for seven hundred and fifty, or a thou. Ah, well. It's too late now, maybe next time."

"I'm glad I saw that," said Gabriel, unconsciously echoing Mrs Goss. "You think we will be allright?"

Mr Pryor winked and whistled a jaunty little tune as they crossed the road. "Monday will be mannah day for us; do you think I should stick him for some more?" Gabriel thought it better not. "Ah, well. Five hundred sovs is not a bad day's work; we might get some more out of him later. I hope you studied the value of supply and demand. I am the only one in the world that can take on Jobley at this election because nominations have closed and no one else can have a go; if I pull out he will get a free ride into Parliament."

They crossed the road to their own office. Soon it would be twelve o'clock and the clerks would go home, or to a cricket game somewhere. No such relaxation for Gabriel or Mr Pryor, they would each go out to one of their estates and talk to the home-buyers who would be prowling around and looking at the show houses in response to persistent advertising in the daily papers

James Pryor had been thinking about their recent interview. "What do you reckon would be a good name for a bank? I just plucked those two names out of the air because I didn't think about it much until I started talking to Briggs. We could use a new, lively, go-ahead bank in this town. There's a fortune to be picked up and I rather fancy myself as managing director of a large commercial bank. We could float it on the stock exchange here and in London. that should supply all the capital we need. Anyway, give it some thought over the week-end and if we come up with a good name on Monday I'll register it.

Gabriel was not sure he could stand the excitement of being part proprietor of a bank. They were on the verge of disaster with their present enterprises and only luck and Mr Pryor's superb cheek was keeping them solvent. Perhaps some day they would be rich and secure, but not yet.

He was worried about the next quarter's payments. How could they be sure there would be enough money in another three months?"

Mr Pryor patted him on the shoulder reassuringly. "That's allright, Gabby. Don't give it another thought. Don't forget I havn't spent the election money yet, and I told you we were on a profit. There will be enough money in the account to pay off the next lot and I won't spend it this time."

"You mean you had the cash in hand already? Why did we have to go through all that rigmarole with Briggs when you had the money all the time?

James Pryor winked. "If we were short next quarter I wouldn't be able to blackmail Briggs because the election would have been all over. They could throw me

out of parliament for being bankrupt but I wouldn't want to go to Briggs with a story like that. We can't afford to give anyone a sign of weakness; they'd have us down in no time.

He looked at Gabriel's face. "Don't you worry, Gabby. We'll pull it off -- it's early days yet and there might be a few fortunes to come and go before we're really wealthy. Though I tell you, if I were you I'd put the house and any other assets you can lay your hands on in your wife's name; if things go bad at least they can't touch her property.

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Benno in touble - Again

By the time Mr Pryor's french clock had sounded the last stroke of noon the three clerks had hurriedly put on their coats and were bidding goodbye as they walked out the door. The day was fine and there were hours of daylight to be enjoyed before Sunday when legislation demanded that all sinful activities should cease. On Sundays Melbourne sank back in on itself and the godly held sway in church and chapel; almost everything closed except places of worship. The Public Library would be open and it was possible to walk in the parks, and sometimes hear a band. These pastimes were viewed with suspicion by many influential clerics; the proper place for the people of Melbourne on Sundays was in church and the reading of irreligious books on the Sabbath, or hearing profane music, was denounced from many a pulpit.

However it was still Saturday, and Gabriel and Mr Pryor left the office a few minutes after their employees. Both would have a quick lunch at home before going out to urge the purchase of the desirable, modern homes advertised in the daily papers. Saturday was a day for selling rather than electioneering so Mr Pryor could attend to business with a clear mind.

Mrs Goss came out of the music shop as Gabriel was passing and they walked on together talking amicably until they came to the post office where Gabriel glanced up to make sure they were not accosted by Benno lurking in the colonnade.

He was not there, but they were not easily to escape his influence for one of his mates was on watch and lurched down the steps to walk beside them while keeping a cautious eye on the police directing traffic over the crossing. He said nothing, being a man of little fluency though he had had one previous moment of eloquence when they first met in O'Hanlon's pub and he had denounced Gabriel's views on working class investments. Gabriel was reluctant to say anything. Perhaps the fellow already knew about Benno being shopped to Jones the detective and would make his views known on the subject of people who dobbed in their mates to the police. Mrs Goss kept peeping round Gabriel at this new addition to the gallery of characters she had met since starting work in the music shop. The extensive tattoos on his arms were of particular interest; with shirtsleeves cut off to the shoulder the man was a walking picture gallery.

They were halfway up the hill, nearing Queen Street, when the newcomer spoke for the first time. "Benno's in the shit again," he said hoarsely, but recollected that he was in the company of a lady and looked across at Mrs Goss. "Sorry Missus," he said sheepishly. "I mean, me mate Benno's in a bit of trouble with the law. He's gunna need some help because Jones's after him. Jones reckons Benno's goin' to the stockade for at least twelve moons, once he catches up with him. He says he's got a witness that'll put him straight inside.

"What has he done?" asked Mrs Goss eagerly. Has he broken someone else's windows?"

"Nah! Him and Wocka was nearly lumbered for throwin' tomatoes at Jobley, that bloke that wants to close the pubs. They was going to fix Jobley right up but Jones was on to them before they could really get going; and now he's got this witness he keeps talkin' about.

Mrs Goss was delighted at the thought of being personally acquainted with such a desperate character but Gabriel was alarmed to think he was the mysterious witness, and of the necessity of appearing in court to testify against Benno and Wocka. It was an uncomfortable thought. "Are they under arrest?"

"Nah, Jones hasn't lamped Benno yet and he's not taking Wocka in for a while. When Wocka's missus found out what he'd been doing she told Jones to leave him to her. She was gunna do him over and they reckon by the time she finished he wished he'd gone out to the stockade for a few months. Now she's crook on him even more because she bent the handle of her best frying pan when she donged him with it."

"She must be a big, powerful woman," said Mrs Goss admiringly.

‘Nah. She's only half Wocka's size. If he holds his arm out straight she can walk round underneath it; but thank Gawd she's not mine. She's a firecracker that one; I know I wouldn't like to take her on."

Mrs Goss was astonished to hear this revelation of family life in the Wocka household. "Why does he put up with it? Is he as big as you?"

"Well, yair, he's taller thant me and I reckon he's a bit heavier. But he gave his missus a bit of a backhander when they were first married; he wanted to shut her up for a while. But he didn't do it more than once. She waited until he was asleep and hopped into him with a rolling pin. He never done that again -- he says he can't stay awake all the time."

Gabriel waited impatiently for the man to finish."Well, where's Benno, then?"

The man looked about. "Ah, well," he muttered, in some doubt about how much to tell, he paused. "Well, he's living under someone's house and the people in the house havn't found out yet about him being there. I reckon it's not much of a life for poor old Benno; and he needs money for medicine and food. Anyway the boys reckon they

can get him on to the Sydney boat like we were going to do last time, but he has to get his hands on the dibs. He'll need spare change when he gets to Sydney.

Gabriel sighed. Benno always needed money and when he got it the results were disastrous. The best idea he could think of was to get him out of Melbourne as soon as possible. He was not happy to think he might have to stand up in court and identify Benno and Wocka as the culprits who assaulted Jobley with their tomatoes; he had to live in the town afterwards. Though how could he arrange to have Benno paid a small amount before he got to Sydney? It had to be just enough to buy some food, but not enough to get him into trouble, and if Jones found him first Gabriel would have no choice but to testify in court.

"What ship?" asked Mrs Goss, "do you know what ship they're going to put him on?"

"Uh, I don't know, Missus. I think it might be the Culloden. She'll be the next ship to leave for Sydney, in a couple'a days, Tuesday I think. She had to have a valve fixed over Christmas but she's back on the Sydney run now.

Mrs Goss was triumphant. "That was the boat we were on when we were looking for Memsworth. You remember Mr Dawkins, we met him that night. He's first mate of the Culloden and if you like I can give Mr Dawkins some money for you and he can hand it to this Benno man when they get to Sydney."

She simpered. "He and I have been walking out together since Christmas so we'll meet whenever his ship is in Melbourne. He already has his master's ticket and the owners have promised to make him captain when the other one retires but he wants to get a job as a Port Phillip pilot; either that or captain of an excursion steamer, or master of a tug. He doesn't mind much as long as he can stay here in Melbourne and work on the bay. He is a widower, you know. His wife died some years ago and I think, if he is successful in getting a post in Melbourne, he will declare his intentions."

Gabriel congratulated her on this prospect of matrimony and turned to the man to be rid of him. He handed over five shillings. "I will get some more, but for heaven's sake keep him out of trouble, off the streets, and out of the pubs, otherwise Jones will find him. I think we will do what Mrs Goss suggests and Mr Dawkins can hold the money until they get to Sydney; after that he will be on his own, he can do what he likes, as long as he doesn't try and get back on the boat. I suppose he has enough sense for that; Jones will be waiting for him back here. Mr Dawkins may be kind enough to give him a little cash for us whenever he is in Sydney; or at least until he can get a job."

The man looked at the crown piece doubtfully. An optimist like his friend he had been expecting more, but Gabriel's manner gave no encouragement to pleas for further advances from Benno's credit balance. The £33 seemed as firmly concealed as ever in the recesses of the capitalist system. He took the money, shrugged, and turned away.

"I can get a little more on Monday," Gabriel called to the retreating men, "but don't come near the office. Watch out for me here after work." The man looked back and

nodded, then walked on.

"I will be seeing Mr Dawkins tomorrow," said Mrs Goss. "We're taking the steamer to Queenscliff to have picnic, and I can ask him then when the boat will be sailing."

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Mr Briggs buys bank shares.

A clerk sent by Mr Briggs arrived soon after the start of business on Monday morning. He carried a note which summoned Mr Pryor to an immediate meeting at Mr Briggs's counting house. That gentleman had never yielded to modern usage and always referred to his office as a counting house.

Mr Pryor read the note, which was peremptory in tone, and showed it to Gabriel; then he whistled a little and sat down at his desk to look over the morning papers. He became excited when reading one article and insisted on reading it aloud to the staff. It was a story about the introduction of telephones into Melbourne. This was a recent invention, now all the rage overseas, and some enterprising merchants were having lines installed between warehouse and office for instant communication between the two. There was even talk of exchanges being installed so one subscriber could ring another, even though the other was on a different line. Mr Pryor's imagination immediately took over. None of those present had ever seen a telephone and were not sure how they worked except that confidential conversations could be carried out instantaneously over long distances; perhaps even as far as Sydney or Adelaide. He enlarged on the subject for some time and stated they would have one installed in the office as soon as possible, besides there was the interesting possibility of buying into a telephone company, or dealing in its shares.

Mr Briggs' clerk was sent back with the information that Mr Pryor would be along directly, as soon as he had dealt with some business. That rising young entrepreneur sat and read the papers and chatted some more then, about half an hour or forty minutes later, he sauntered out of the office into busy Swanston Street. Immaculate as usual and the very picture of jaunty self confidence he raised his umbrella, instantly halting a cab which he entered while directing the driver to Mr Briggs' counting house and warehouse, situated in one of the lanes.

While he was away Mr Kimpton, the draper, no longer of Bendigo but now resident over his new shop in Elizabeth Street called. The man spent a few moments looking at the posters stuck to the windows of the office and entered. Gabriel was better pleased to see him than when first they met. He was looking for another shop to set up one of his sons in business and had been in several times enquiring if suitable premises had come on the market. One of the suburbs would be a good location; Chapel Street would do, or Smith Street. These and others were starting to develop as excellent shopping streets and every shop his family controlled would increase their bargaining power with the British exporters of bed linen and napery. He was thinking

of branching out into men's clothing; the sale of shirts and collars, cuff links and studs too, represented the possibility of excellent business.

He still had some doubts about the methods of Pryor and Fox but could not deny that through their office he had obtained a well positioned and eligible shop at a reasonable price. Gabriel had looked in once or twice and Amy had patronised this thriving business to be served by its attentive staff with Mr Kimpton in the background supervising in a firm but benevolent manner. He employed his large family, and some of their cousins, in the Melbourne branch of the business but the sales staff did not resent this. Custom was growing and other shops would open to make fresh opportunities for employment.

Gabriel was now confident in his knowledge of the city and wrote down the addresses of two shops soon to be vacant. They chatted for a while. Mr Kimpton was proud of his business acumen and the prosperity of his shops and they laughed a little over the recollection of their first meeting.

Mrs Chittering, the boarding house keeper, who had purchased the delicensed hotel was doing well, he said, and they had come to a sort of wary neutrality after she had visited his shop to bargain for cheap bed linen.

Her boarding house, rescued from the breweries, had been completely repapered throughout, and a fanatical regime of scrubbing, numerous times, every fixture and every surface had been imposed on her harried maids to rid the place of the least taint of alcohol. The bar and bar room fittings had been removed and, by her particular direction, had been burned rather than sold. The former bar room was unrecognizeable in its present purpose as a dull sitting room for quiet and temperate lodgers. The boarders in this stronghold of rectitude were comfortable enough but complained about the constant smell of phenyle and strong soap; some would have preferred the aroma of beer, but were careful not to say such things where Mrs Chittering could hear them.

Mr Pryor returned after an hour or so. They knew he had been to a hotel because he was in a happy mood and stood with his back to the front door smiling cheerfully at everyone. His step was quite steady and he produced a cheque and laid it on his desk to show Gabriel who had eagerly followed when he came in. It was for £600 and made out to Pryor and Fox. Gabriel sighed, he had not realized how the tension had been building in his mind but that was over for a time. All he had to worry about now was the eventual repayment of the £600.

"It's no problem ," said Mr Pryor airily. "Briggs and the others are the first investors to buy shares in the new bank." He took a piece of paper with some notes on it from his pocket. "We'll have to get another set of books if we're going to start a bank. This is the list of subscribers so far and the amounts they're putting in; I said they would be buying their shares at a discount if they got in early."

Gabriel looked at the scrawled piece of paper. The writing was hard to read but it would be an historic document if a successful bank was to come out of all this.

However, the precariously indebted firm Pryor and Fox seemed an unlikely base from which to launch a bank with, as yet, only £600 of borrowed capital, most of which was to be spent paying off existing debts. He felt apprehensive at the thought of this new venture now being germinated in the fertile mind of his partner. Still, neither he nor anyone else knew how to instil some caution into the mind of this ebullient young man and prevent the creation of a rickety financial structure masquerading under the respectable title of bank; one could only hope for the best.

"We just have to get offices in Collins Street," said Mr Pryor. "I'll scout around a bit and see what's available. What would you say to 'The Mercantile Bank of Melbourne.' How does that sound?"

Gabriel walked out of the office and left him to sort out the names.

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A message from the Lord

Mr Pryor and Mr Taylor were not the only ones to receive a note calling them to a meeting. The crossing boy had come in with such an invitation for Gabriel. He could not, or would not say who had given him the sealed envelope, but Gabriel was summoned to a grocer's shop in William St.

There he was to meet someone who was very anxious to consult him and receive his advice. He decided to go and meet this mysterious person. If Amy had walked into the office at that moment he would have taken her too. It was the sort of mystery she enjoyed,

The grocer's shop he found in William Street was the same number as on the note so he walked in.

It looked like an ordinary grocery. A broad wooden counter, scrubbed every day. Behind the counter were shelves to the ceiling laden with brightly coloured cartons of food. Tinned and bottled jam, marmalade, conserves. Light cartons of breakfast oats and similar food were stacked high up, near the ceiling, and beyond the reach of anyone standing on the floor, or even on a chair.

No problem, they could be brought down by using a pole with a blunt hook on the end so as not to damage the carton. The grocer hooked the top of the carton and it would fall off the shelf and be caught dextrously on the way down.

There were other shelves too stacked with packets of nutritious food. At least the manufacurers or importers claimed they were nutritious, as one could read on the labels

Weighing scales were mounted on the counter. A pleasant aroma permeated the air in the shop from opened wooden cases of tea. Chinese, Indian, and Ceylonese teas were

present and each had a tin scoop lying on top of the merchandise. The crates had separate linen cloth covers to hold in the aroma and keep out dust.

There were two assistants with neck to knee white aprons and a man with a square cut black beard and a white apron from his waist to just above the floor.

The black bearded man was writing with the stub of a pencil in a book he had on the counter. He looked up when Gabriel came in, smiled and put the book to one side.

''Mr Fox,'' he said ''It's good to see you again. The gentleman who asked for a private conference is in the store room. When you have finished we'll have a chat, talk about old times, and I have some very good advice for you. Come with me.''

Gabriel had no idea who this man was, but was ushered through a door at the back of the shop. The man did not come in. Instead he shut the door as he departed leaving Gabriel in the store room.

A window let in enough light to see the clutter of stores that surrounded him. Most surprising of all was to see Mr Samuel Jobley, Mr Pryor's principal opponent at the Victorian Parliamentary Elections.

Mr Jobley was sitting on a small wooden barrel marked 'Pickled Herrings, but someone had been kind enough to supply him with a leather covered cushion.

His right boot was missing. In its place his foot was heavily swathed with bandages.

Neither man was eager to start talking. Gabriel was wondering why he was there, and a pause ensued until Mr Jobleysaid, ''I owe you an apology. I thought you were drunk and had attacked me by throwing tomatoes. I am sorry, it was not so.''

Gabriel nodded to acknowledge the man's apology, but said nothing., surely there was more to their meeting than this.

Mr Jobley bit his lower lip and continued. "There is something I must ask you about the persons who actually threw the tomatoes -- wharf labourers, I understand. Mr Jones, the detective told me that you know them quite well, even though you had nothing to do with their blackguardly actions and tried to prevent it. I must admit that I was astonished that a gentlemanly young man such as you should know these persons but, nevertheless,you can tell me something about them. Were they intoxicated at the time? Had they been in some hotel with their friends and become inflamed with drink before they decided to interrupt my parade?"

Gabriel did not know. It seemed most likely the two men had called in to a few pubs on their way to the market to gather up some rotten tomatoes, and probably afterwards as well. ''Why Mr Jobley was so concerned about this point he could not understand. If they were drunk at the time of the outrage surely this would provide the material for some powerful new speeches; the knowledge seemed unimportant, not enough to call for a secret meeting in the back room of a grocer's shop.

"I don't believe in doctors," said Mr Jobley, apparently speaking at random, "Nor in hospitals. Good food, clean air, and total abstinence from alcohol in any form are the three great pillars on which one can build a long and healthful life. If the body is treated as a temple of good living then one can worship at the shrine therein."

He was about to go on but Gabriel interrupted. "I don't want to be rude, but did you bring me here to discuss the evils of alcohol, or was there something else you wanted to mention?"

Look at my foot,'' said Mr Jobley "I suffer from gout. It seems unkind and unfair that a total abstainer, such as myself, should should be a lifelong martyr to this affliction usually associated with men who drink heavily. My father was a victim of the same malady, yet I learned abstinence from him and my dear mother. I fear this is a family weakness and I am doomed to suffer, but no doubt the Lord has some good reason for visiting this painful affliction on the men of my family. Fortunately I suffer only occasionally and there are long periods when I am free of pain, this is why I thought I would be able to take part in the election campaign. I thought at first the Lord has allowed me a period of grace because of the importance of my work, but then why has he laid another great burden on me?"

Gabriel was always uneasy when encountering those who discussed their reactions to God's will, as though on intimate terms with the almighty.

'As well as this the whole meeting so far, such as it was, seemed pointless. He was sorry to hear that Mr Jobley was a sufferer from gout but did not see why had been brought to Mr Gladman's shop to discuss the man's ailments or his views on the practice of medicine. "In what way can I help you," he asked, making it pretty clear, he thought, the sooner Mr Jobley got to the point of the discussion the better he would be pleased.

"I must know about these wharf labourers," said Mr Jobley, lowering his voice and glancing round. "I am interested to learn if they are on a course of a particular kind of medicine. Do you happen to know, sir, if either of those men buys a certain tonic from a Dr Smith who has an office in Collins Street East? Its trade name is 'Dr Smith's Miracle Cure' and, to identify it further the doctor advertises it as 'The Colonial Elixir'. It is important that I know."

Gabriel looked at him in astonishment and the merchant hurriedly continued. "It was a revelation to me but Mr Jones told me the stuff is strongly alcoholic, highly addictive, and this acquaintance of yours actually gets drunk merely taking it as a medicine. You must tell me, had he been drinking the Miracle Cure when he assaulted me? "

"He could have been," said Gabriel, still mystified as to where all this was leading. "You're right, it wasn't me threw the tomatoes at you, it was these men, and one of them, I know, drinks the medicine every time he can get his hands on a bottle; it would be a lot cheaper to get drunk on beer than that stuff. It was him that broke Mr Gladman's windows and I know he had drunk several bottles of it that day.''

On hearing this information Mr Jobley's expression changed and he began to gasp and clutch at his cravat as though about to have a heart attack. Gabriel put out a hand to support him while he sank back on to the barrel.

"This is dreadful," gasped Mr Jobley, "dreadful! The leaflet that comes with the bottle specifically mentions gout as one of the conditions it cures; and I have been drinking it in all innocence."

"You mean you've been dosing yourself on Dr Smith's Cure? Man, you'll be an addict if you drink that stuff for too long."

Mr Jobley sat in the chair with his head bowed in his hands. Gabriel looked at him for a while. "You are addicted," he said. "You took this stuff because you thought it might help you with your gout and now you can't give it up. Is that right?"

Mr Jobley nodded miserably. "I have tried doctors here and in England, dozens of them. I have drunk the waters at Bath, I sleep every night with my feet higher than my head so the blood will drain from my feet. I have been dosed with this and that, purged, bled, starved -- everything -- all to no avail. Then about a year ago I saw a display of this stuff in a shop window and thought it worth trying. It certainly made me feel better and I have been taking larger doses night and morning, and during the day as well, until I began to crave for it. I thought that strange until Mr Jones told me about this wharf labourer who drinks it constantly and how it was heavily infused with alcohol and he was probably drunk at the time, merely from taking medicine.

The information was like a thunderclap to me and I swore never, ever to touch the evil brew again. I had a bottle in the office and I tipped the contents out but now I am racked with fevers and pains and I have fallen! fallen! Since that dreadful day I have drunk several bottles of the hellish concoction; and you have confirmed what Mr Jones had to say; it does contain alcohol -- what am I to do?"

Gabriel looked down at Dr Smith's unfortunate victim. He did not know what to say but it occurred to him that Mr Jobley would now be able to make some splendid orations on the subject of unfortunate people craving for a drink. He would be speaking from personal experience.

"I will have to give up all pretensions to being a member of parliament," said the unfortunate gentleman. "How can I condemn drunkeness when I too am a victim? I shall write to the returning officer and say that I will not be contesting the election; of course that means Mr Pryor will become the Member for this area. It is unfortunate, but what else can I do?"

At first Gabriel was selfishly pleased at this result of Mr Jobley's misfortune. James Pryor would be able to get back to work if he did not have to campaign for office; he could handle some of the growing volume of business now laid on Gabriel and the clerks. Gabriel contemplated this prospect for a moment then another thought came to mind. If there was to be no further campaigning perhaps the publicans, and Mr Briggs's committee, and the other subscribers would want their money back.

Of course their donations had all been spent; gone to finance the campaign so far, and on other projects connected with the activites of the office. James Pryor always relied on cash income to get through his financial difficulties and he would be found out if pressed for refunds. Whatever happened Mr Jobley must be persuaded not to withdraw from the race. Winning or losing was not important as long as he stayed there.

Gabriel thought for a minute and leaned down to pat him on the shoulder. He wished he was as persuasive as James Pryor but he could not send for that young man to change Mr Jobley's decision and induce him to continue in the election race.

"Things can't be that bad," he said. "You must have converted a lot of drunks in your time. I suppose you told them how to give up drink; now you have to talk to yourself in the same way."

the man shook his head. "Very few -- very few. Most drunkards I encountered were hardened in their sin. They mocked me and my fellow workers when we tried to turn them away from their sad addiction; many said they enjoyed drinking and told us to mind our own business."

"But you have hundreds of followers; I saw them in Bourke Street the other night, think how many of those you have saved from a life of drunkeness; how did you convert all them?"

Mr Jobley shook his head. "I didn't. Most come from homes where drink is unknown. There is no more powerful protector from the workings of booze than a good mother. Out of all my followers only four or five at the most are truly converts. The others fall back into their old ways or mock us when we try to raise them from the depths of sin."

Gabriel could understand that. Probably most of the people Mr Jobley and his followers tried to convert were comfortable in the 'depths of sin', they probably liked it down there and did not want to listen to the preaching of a bunch of fanatics; they would sooner have another drink.

He decided to try again. "But you are not like these, Mr Jobley. You truly want to break yourself of this unfortunate liking for the Miracle Cure, and if you perservere and succeed what a triumph that will be for the cause of temperance. I think you should stay in the election and boldly go out and tell the voters how you were nearly snared yourself by drink in a new and dangerous form. You can warn them about these quack medicines that are laced with alcohol. Why, it is a whole new theme you can explore in your speeches." Gabriel began to see the possibilities in this latest revelation and enlarged on the subject. He could not help but believe that James Pryor would have been proud of him.

"Think," He continued, "Of the new audience you could reach. You could appeal to the thousands of people who must be taking rubbishy medicines and remedies at this very moment; they should be told they may be drinking alcohol without knowing

about it. Victoria needs you in parliament, Mr Jobley, to fight the publicans and brewers and also the manufacturers and vendors of patent medicines."

This was a revelation to Mr Jobley, that out of his tribulation might come fresh opportunities of spreading the message of temperance. He sat up straight on his barrel and barely winced as a lance of pain pierced his foot. He looked at Gabriel. "Perhaps the Lord has done this to me for that very reason; that I should make my own error known to the people and save them from falling into the same pit into which I have tumbled. Sufferers who take medicine are not hardened drinkers like so many I have to deal with. I can speak and warn them against the perilous path in which they are all so unwittingly treading."

"No doubt about it; I think that's what the Lord had in mind. Don't withdraw from the election, Mr Jobley. Go out instead and proclaim Your message; and you can hammer it home in parliament, too."

Mr Jobley, ignoring the pain, shook Gabriel's hand. "How plain it is now," he cried' "You could be a messenger from the Lord making all clear and straightening out the crooked ways before me. Of course! In my vanity I could not see that this tribulation was laid on me for a purpose; whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and now I must go out before all the world to carry the message of temperance to an even wider audience than before. I shall be strong; not another drop of the devil brew shall pass my lips. I shall sally forth and confront Doctor Smith in his very den; plead with him to cease dispensing this vile brew, or at least remove from the recipe all trace of alcohol. Thank you Mr Fox; I thank you with all my heart for your words that have saved me from abandoning the great crusade of temperance. How bitter I would have felt in my heart if I had yielded the ramparts of truth to the enemy just because of a single setback. Now I can defend them with new heart; I can sally forth into the field right up to the ranks of the ungodly themselves."

The man was transformed. Once again he shook Gabriel by the hand and pointed out a pair of crutches which Gabriel handed to him and helped him up. With a shining face he hobbled out of the store room to order someone to go out and get a cab. One of the assistants ran outside while the others stared.

Mr Jobley pointed at Gabriel. ''A messenger of the Lord came to tell me not to take the coward's way and run from the battle. The pain I suffer is for my own good and reminds me of the long and difficult road ahead. First I must go and plead with Dr Smith to be temperate and permit his customers to be temperate also."

A cab had arrived at the door and they all assisted Mr Jobley up the steps and into the vehicle. As he left they could see a crutch being waved out the window.

When he had gone the man with the beard led Gabriel back into the store room. ''Do you mind if I sit on the barrel?'' he said. ''I'm still not used to standing all day. You don't remember me, do you?'' he said, sitting down.

Gabriel shook his head.

''I was your bank manager at the Occidental and Civic.''

Gabriel studied him closely. ''Good Lord, so you are! What are you doing managing a grocery?''

''When you saw me last I was broken, shocked. I didn't know what to do. Your friend, Pryor, shook me awake. I didn't send any more money to London and scooped out enough to pay the staff, at least for another week. I emptied my own personal account, and took the cash None of the board members complained because an examination of the books showed the Australian branch was not at fault.''

''How did you get into the grocery business?''

I couldn't get a job in banking. Everyone knew I was not at fault, but the collapse was so unexpected, so sudden. so spectacular no one wanted to have me on their staff, I was associated with failure. But Sam Jobley threw me a lifeline. He's a great man is Sam, a true friend. He tells me that when his office manager retires next year I can have the job.

''But tell me about yourself, how long have you been a messenger of God?''

''Oh, about five minutes. Sam suddenly promoted me after we finished our discussion.''

''What did you say to him?''

''I really can't tell you. I feel like a priest in the confessional box. Ask him yourself, I'm sure he'll reveal everything.

''Alright, I'm glad you respect him and are ready to keep his secrets. Now I'm going to give you some advice. First, keep your partner in check, I nearly collapsed when I saw the ads in the paper and all that rubbish about millions of pounds in reserve. It's false advertising and if anything goes wrong you'll both be held responsible, because you're partners.”

“I remember he offered me a job in your office, but I didn't want it because I thought your business was too rickety and fly by night. I didn't want to be associated with two financial disasters, one was enough.”

''Now he wants to start a bank.''

''For God's sake stop him! Owning a building society with no capital is bad enough, but to add a bank with no capital is asking for disaster. I know your partner could talk himself out of jail, but he may not be able to get you out too.''

''My guess is that if you can keep Mr Pryor on the straight and narrow for the next ten years, while investing wisely, and within your means, you will have enough backing to start a bank, even then I wouldn't advise it. But hold him in check as long as you can.''

''But I must tell you how pleased I am for the way you brought Sam back to life. He's a good man and I was worried for him, but not any more. And if you can find the time come and see me now and then. I would be grateful, and your partner too.''

''Well,'' said Gabriel “I'm glad to meet you again, and I'll take your advice and tell James to stop dreaming and get on with what he does best, selling things.''

''Good! And as a mark of gratitude Jobley's Provision Stores are giving you a box of groceries, and as you couldn't carry it through the streets we'll pay for a, cab to take you and your box of groceries home and the cabby will carry it inside for you.''

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A message from the Bishop.

he shop staff loaded Gabriel's box of provisions into the cab and Gabriel ordered the man to guide his horse towards Mrs Byer's boarding house.

He didn't live there, but Amy did, and he hoped to see her and ingratiate imself with Mrs Byers at the same time. The lady was quite pleased when she saw what he had brought and he went upstairs while her staff were carrying the contents of the box to the kitchen.

Amy ran, under the disapproving eyes of her mother, to kiss him when he appeared.

Sir Thomas was there also and he and Amy were having an argument.

''Would you believe?'' she said, ''That this nasty old man of the sea won't won't tell me how he came by those letters after his name. He said it's a state secret. All he'll admit is that KCMG stand for Knight Commander in the Order of St Michael and St George, but he won't tell me why or how. A state secret! Have you ever heard such rubbish?''

'Maybe why he was awarded such an honour is a state secret, and if so, he can't tell you.''

''Nonsense! If he were the real Ancient Mariner with a long grey beard and glittering eye, he wouldn't be able to help himself. He'd tell me everything and keep on telling me until I screamed for mercy.''

''Maybe so, but all the Ancient Mariner did was to bring a curse down on himself for shooting an albatross and then forcing wedding guests to listen to his story. No one gets a Knighthood for that sort of activity. You're not under a curse at the moment are you, Sir Thomas?''

'' No, not a curse as such, but I do have your bride to be threatening never to speak to me again if I do not divulge my secrets. I'm rather attracted to that idea. I would welcome some peace and quiet. Anyway, Gabriel, what are you doing here at this hour

shouldn't you be at the office.''

''I should be, but there's a story behind my appearance here. I received a mysterious letter from some mysterious person to go to a mysterious destination because this person needed my advice and help.

''Well, what happened? Who was this mysterious person?''

I met him and we discussed his problem, and he was so grateful for my advice he gave me a large box of groceries.

''He did what?''

''Actually it wasn't him. It was his manager who gave me the box of groceries.''

''You're lying! You and this old, broken down Jack Tar have got together and are trying to drive me mad with curiosity.

Be careful Amy. Don't make acusations until you know the facts. I arrived here in a cab that was paid for and I brought a big box of groceries. If you don't believe me ask Mrs Byers. I gave the box to her and she was very pleased. I will give you one clue as to the identity of my new friend. He suffers from gout.''

''Gout! Never heard of it. You're making all this up aren't you?

''No I'm not! I can't answer for Sir Tom, but you've heard nothing but the truth since I entered this room''

''How can anyone have gout? There's no such thing.''

‘’Yes there is. It's a very painful sickness that attacks the feet, or joints, mainly of men, no one knows why it comes or how to cure it. It just goes away after a while.

Amy was looking at him suspiciously. ''Well if he has this gout you're talking about why did he call you? You're not a doctor.

''He wanted to talk to me about another matter, that's the secret part.''

Amy screamed. ''I'll kill you two,'' she cried.

She was about to say more but her father entered the room looking pleased with himself.

Before he could open his mouth she said, ''Father, have you ever heard of gout?''

''Yes, of course my dear. It is a very painful condition. In fact Mr Jobley, the candidate for parliament is suffering from it at this very moment. It is so agonizing that he thought of giving up his campaign until he took advice from someone whom he described as a messenger from God. His adviser used such powerful arguments that he has regained his energy and will fight to the end, despite the pains of gout.''

Both Amy and Sir Thomas turned and looked at Gabriel. But the Reverend Mr Taylor was not to be denied. ''You must listen to my wonderful news,'' he said.

''The Bishop and I had a friendly chat in which he told me he had heard excellent reports of my mission to refute the false doctrines of Mr Darwin. He said the Church of England was flourishing in Victoria, but powerful, preachers were needed to carry on and expand its influence. And he capped all that by offering me a Victorian parish with a house suitable for my family. And, best of all. I will get a stipend that will leave us forty pounds a year better off'. The presbytery and church are reasonably close to a railway station, so we can all go and have a look.''

''I would sooner go home,'' said Mrs Taylor. ''I wish Amy and Harold would give up these ideas of living in Australia, and come with us back to England''

''Well, my dear, Amy insists that she will stay here with her husband, while Harold has met a young lady who has converted him enough to make him give up strong drink. He also wants to stay. What if we are blessed with granchildren, yet never meet them, or perhaps only after they had grown up. Face it, Ivy my love, this is the Lord's will. We are here to stay.

Everyone, except Mrs Taylor, was delighted with the news that father had brought home. The next project was to visit the presbytery to make sure it was a nice house suitable for a warrior fighting to preserve the supremacy of the bible and the truth of its historical record as revealed by Bishop Ussher.

Amy apologised to the love of her life for doubting him even for a moment and kissed him enthusiastically until her mother asked her to stop.

The next day, in the office, Gabriel casually asked his partner if he happened to be acquainted with the bishop.

''I am now,'' said Mr Pryor, I made a social call on him the other day, at Bishopscourt and asked him to explain some passages in the scriptures that troubled me.''

''You don't know anything about religion, or the bible.''

''You may be right there, so first I went to the Bible and Tract Society in Swanston Street opposite St Paul's and asked Mr Wade, the old boy in charge what parts of the bible are hardest to understand. He preached a sermon, which was a bit long and boring, and gave me some tracts to help in understanding the bible. I got enough out of it to make me sound like a real seeker after truth.

''While you were with the bishop did you happen to mention my future father in law's name?"

''Yes, it did come up in the conversation. I told the bishop what a great man he is and what an ornament he would be to the church in Victoria. We also got on to the subject of the new cathedral and he told me the foundation stone is to be laid early in the new year. And I said this magnificent building was worthy of an Archbishop and if the

Victorian clergy were allowed to vote on who is to become the incumbent the wisdom of the Reverend Mr Taylor, and his vote, would be invaluable in selecting the right man for for the job.''

''Well, whatever you said, it worked. We're all going by train to inspect the house and the parish to make sure the offer is as good as it sounds.''

''Gabby,I told you I wouldn't let you go back to England. Now Amy doesn't have to feel guilty because they'll be only a train ride away, If they don't like the house let me know and I'll have another chat with the bishop,''

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At home withBenno and Ma Tarvin,

At lunch time Mr Pryor had the whim of changing his usual habits and instead of going out to a counter lunch he had Young &Jackson's send in a sample of their best, together with some bottles. He was a good customer, well known, and the centre of a group of city gents that shared his taste for an enjoyable life. He would often lead them cheerfully into various hostelries, and the hotels vied with each other for his approval.

He and Gabriel ate together in the tiny, walled off cubicle he described as his office. Usually Gabriel had only a sandwich or a roll and a glass of beer, but when they were together Mr Pryor insisted on him having a lavish lunch; he could not bear to be in the company of an abstemious eater.

They were eating and talking but the conversation stopped when Pringle was heard remonstrating with a caller. From his tone they thought it may have been the crossing boy on another errand and as stubborn as ever. Voices could be heard but it was difficult to see through the frosted glass of the door.

A woman with a loud voice and common accent had entered the office and, in spite of Pringle's remonstrances, refused to leave. Mr Pryor reached out and pushed the door open with his foot. It was clear why Pringle did not want the stranger to stay and it was doubtful that she would be welcome in any respectable office. Pringle was particularly taken aback by her hair which had been rinsed at some time with a dye that made it a vivid reddish colour, though now showing lots of brown at the roots; and it was doubtful that she had combed it before venturing into the streets. An unfortunate choice of colour when selecting her dress that morning made it clash abominably with her hair so that her appearance was enough to draw every eye in Swanston Street. She saw the two principals gazing through the open door and, ignoring Pringle, came across though her wide skirts made it impossible to join them in the cubicle.

"Hello, boys," she said, smiling in a professional manner. "Having a little din dins are we?" She stood boldly before the doorway in spite of Pringle's disapproval and the barely hidden delight of his assistants. The tops of her large bosoms were visible under

an indecently low cut bodice edged with lace which, together with the rest of her costume, could have been cleaner. It had been a rash venture for her to come so far into the respectable part of town; she could have been arrested on the spot for loitering; or, at the very least, warned off.

Mr Pryor was not taken aback at this sight. He instantly assumed the jovial manner used when addressing barmaids and women of a certain class. Their visitor could have been in her mid to late twenties, but perhaps was younger. She was in a profession where women aged rapidly. She took note of Gabriel's glance and tried to twist some stray hair back into place and straighten some of the numerous bows adorning her costume. "It's the bloody wind," she said, "It does blow a girl about; I can't keep nothin' straight."

"What can we do for you dear?" enquired Mr Pryor Even a woman of this type might have money to invest.

1"Which one of you fine gentlemen is Mr Gabby?" she enquired and then gazed keenly at Gabriel. There was no doubt about it; he had started visibly when she mentioned the familiar name.

"Glad to meet you, Ducky" she said brightly. There's a friend of yours stayin' at our house; name o' Benno; 'e come to me in the street because he's feelin' crook and 'e needs help. The missus said I'd better see you about it because he kept talking about yer. 'e says he's a partner in the business y'got here." She pulled a face to indicate what faith she put in this claim by her friend.

"What's wrong with him now?" enquired Mr Pryor. "He doesn't own any part of our business, and we're sick and tired of being pestered whenever he wants some drinking money. Why should we help him out just because he's got himself into trouble again?

"Because Mr Gabby's 'is mate," said the young woman spiritedly. "And he's Mr Gabby's mate, and where we come from you don't run out on yer mates just because they're down on their luck.Anyway, the missus says 'e can't stay in our house unless 'e finds some money from somewhere. If 'e can't pay up out 'e goes; sick or well, she says. Gawd, she's a hard woman - an I can't keep him. I got a living to earn, meself."

"Is he very sick?" Gabriel was instantly despondent at the thought of Benno sending another unconventional messenger to put even further strain on their relationship. "What do you want us to do?"

"Yair, he's pretty crook is the old Benno, and what you can do is stop the missus from turning 'im out in the street like a dog. What if 'e dies in the gutter? Benno was always good to me when he had money; not like some of them low-lifers I have to put up with in the house. Can't you give me somethin', just to give the missus, so she won't chuck 'im out tonight. She'll do it, too -- mean old bitch! an' she's dead narked on me for bringin' Benno home when I found 'im. She says he can come any time as a customer, when he's got money; but 'e aint got no money, and I havn't got any either. From what Benno tells me I reckon you owe him somethin'. And it'd be beaut if you could come and see 'im."

The young woman said all this in a genuine and unaffected manner that indicated some of her feelings for her friend

"Well, we'll have to think about it," said Mr Pryor. "Just wait over there a minute, will you, dear." He gestured towards the client's chair and she sat down in spite of Pringle's obvious disapproval. To add to his embarrassment someone had entered quietly to stand just inside the front door and had listened to the conversation unnoticed by either of the partners or the woman.

Mr Pryor pulled the door shut so they were cut off from the others. "What do you think?" he asked. "Do you want to go and see him?"

Gabriel didn't. He thought he had seen quite enough of Benno; sufficient to last him a lifetime.

"I think she comes from a house in one of the lanes off Little Lon.," said Mr Pryor, referring to the eastern end of little Lonsdale Street, a known haunt of prostitutes and criminals. The police tolerated the area; it was regularly patrolled and was handy for them because most of Melbourne's thieves and pimps lived in a small section of the city where they were easy to find when required. "I reckon she's keen on Benno; she's got her eye on him. I suppose anything would be better than working the streets for some old madam; hard as nails. If she could get Benno off the grog and back to work that would be better than what she's got. Why don't we go tonight and look him up?"

"Maybe we could all go," said a well known voice from the background. It was Jones the detective who had gestured Pringle to silence when he had walked in shortly after the girl. Because of the partly opened door they had not observed his entrance, but he had quietly listened to the conversation.

Well, Sal," he said to the young woman. "I saw you walking down Swanston Street and I said to meself - 'where's she going at this time o' day? Bourke Street after dark is more her beat, isn't it?'. But when I saw her go into this haunt of probity I was really interested. It set me to thinking, perhaps I'd misjudged Sal all

these years; maybe she had money to invest and she'd come to these well known financiers so they could look after her fortune; so I thought I'd just have a little bit of a listen; I could always use some financial advice meself.

But what's this I hear? It's Sal that's telling them what to do with their funds -- 'Sink some more money into 'Benno Incorporated', she says. It didn't sound to me like the sort of thing you'd do if you wanted to be rich -- more in the nature of throwing good money after bad, I would have thought."

He shook his head at the young woman. "So you've come across my old pal Benno, have you? and he's crook. Well, we'll soon fix him up with a nice comfortable bed in the infirmary with bars on the window to make sure he doesn't go wandering off again. I know Benno does tend to wander a bit, but we should be able to cure that for the next few months. With luck he might even do a twelve for throwing tomatoes at a

respectable grocer standing for parliament; the beak isn't going to look too kindly at a wharf labourer with his record of brawling and D & D."

"Why can't yer just leave 'im alone," cried Sal. "Poor old Benno. 'e doesn't want much out of life -- just a fair go, that's all. I reckon we could go away together -- maybe to Sydney. 'e was talkin' about goin' to Sydney, and we could make a new start. I'd look after 'im and keep 'im off the grog -- "

"Benno's a villain," retorted the detective . "He should be in the quod for smashing those windows in Bourke Street; but I can get him for assaulting Jobley by throwing missiles -- to wit -- tomatoes. He'll go in for a few months then you and he can go where you like. Sydney'll do me -- that'll be two problems I won't have to worry about any more."

"Steady on!" interposed Mr Pryor. "Are you sure your witnesses are allright? Mr Fox was present at the incident and some of the ladies there were so confused they thought he was the one that threw the tomatoes.

Mr Jones scratched the side of his chin and looked at him. "Mr Fox's not going to get up in court and make a confession, is he?"

"Not at all. But what if Benno has a defence lawyer? He could confuse the issue so much the magistrate wouldn't know what to think. He'd probably let Benno off. You don't want to go into court with unreliable witnesses, it wouldn't look good; don't forget, you told Jobley that Mr Fox was not responsible for throwing the tomatoes and who knows what everyone will be saying once they go under cross examination." He paused. "I think we will take you up on that offer. What say we all go and see Benno tonight; are you game?"

Jones looked at him and considered what was to be done next; Benno was going to escape him yet again. He did not want to get him into court and then have his witnesses forced to contradict themselves by a smart barrister briefed by Pryor; they both knew that an aborted court case would not look well on the record; there could be other ways, and he would be waiting when Benno got into trouble next time.

He decided to give in with an appearance of reasonableness and nodded. "Allright, if you gentlemen really want to make a night visit to Little Lon I'll meet you on the post office corner at half past seven this evening."

"Eh, turn it up," said Sal in a panic. The last thing she wanted was to have Detective Jones nosing around her establishment; the madam would throw her and Benno both out on to the street the moment the detective had gone. Even if she denied everything the madam was not stupid. She would know there must be a connection between Sal's visit to Benno's friends and a return call from the friends accompanied by a detective. The other hangers on at the house would not be happy either, and they could turn nasty.

Detective Jones understood her problem. "You tell Ma Tarvin from me that if she cuts up rough I'll be back, but next time I'll bring the boys in blue to turn her place over, and I'll keep on doing it every night until she learns not to interfere. If I want to come along to

the house and make some enquiries about an old friend of mine that's not as well as he should be then you'd think she'd be glad to see me. Now, you cut along back where you come from. I don't want to see you down in this part of town -- at least not during the day, there are too many respectable women and families around. The night's your time, not now."

Sal could not argue but the thought of the detective dropping a hint to Mrs Tarvin on her behalf was disturbing. Being under semi-official protection by the police could mean suffering from numerous accidents when they were not looking. It was a bleak prospect but she could do nothing about it. She left the office, careful to observe the proprieties while under the cool observation of Detective Jones.

The three men looked at each other. The detective had immense power over the likes of Sal, Benno, and Ma Tarvin but little over the two respectable business men he saw before him. "7.30 tonight," he said, and nodded at them, "Outside the post office. And don't forget your hankies; they'll keep out the worst of the stink and any infections that are going around."

They nodded back, "we'll see you then."

The partners were exactly on time for their appointment at the post office but Detective Jones was not, though the usual collection of drunks and loiterers were sitting on the bases of the columns and the steps watching the life of Melbourne flow by. Two policemen on the beat strolled casually round the corner from Elizabeth Street but bounded up the steps when one of the men who had been sitting on the steps rose to his feet and started to disappear along the colonnade; after a vigorous sprint they caught him in Elizabeth Street. The fugitive was a wiry man with long, unkempt black hair who struggled and swore loudly. They avoided his kicking feet while one constable handcuffed the man and the other reached down and picked up a greasy tall hat that had fallen off and stuck it back on his head.

Detective Jones came up behind the two partners while they were watching this little drama. "That's the last you'll see him on the streets for a while" he said with some satisfaction. "I've been holding a warrant against that chap for two years, but he hasn't been around. I spotted him just before you arrived, and gave the two constables the office; it was very neat work, I thought. Well, that's a good start for the evening; will we go now and call on Ma Tarvin?"

He led them along Elizabeth Street. "You're going to improve your education tonight," he said conversationally; "at least you'll find out some things about Melbourne you didn't know before. Not many of your class of people come this way, except for the wrong reasons, and I wouldn't recommend you go anywhere near the place at night unless you're with an official person such as myself. You'll be alright, they know me and they know that if anyone even speaks out of place to any of us the force would turn the place over every night for months. It'd ruin business in the lane and we'd come across a lot of people that'd rather not be found. No, we'll be allright. Everyone'll be on their best behaviour tonight."

Mr Pryor had lately taken to smoking the very best of cigars; they were fat and imported and each one had a colourful band around the middle. With a flourish he nipped the end off one with a cigar cutter which was carried in his waist-coat pocket. Gabriel did not like the things so he offered another to Jones who took it and sniffed appreciatively. "Not while I'm on duty, thanks," he said, waving away the proffered cigar cutter, "but I'll be glad to remember you later, when I do smoke it." He put it in his top pocket and they paused while Mr Pryor lit his.

They walked along Elizabeth Street. There were not many people walking in either direction but Jones surveyed each passer by covertly, at the same time noting the contents of every shop window. The larger businesses in Bourke Street had been left behind; these were fireworks makers, fruit and bird dealers, tanners and curriers, chemists and drug importers, a tobacconist, a restaurant, a hotel and the like. After a time the detective led them into St Francis' church on the corner of Lonsdale Street and they moved through while Jones closely eyed the worshippers. Very few looked up or glanced at them. Most kept their eyes firmly fixed on the altars or the dim colours of the windows, and their lips moved as they fingered their rosaries. The only sound in the church was made by a man with a harsh, nasal voice. He was dressed in shabby clothes and led a little group who were calling on the mother of God for succour; they were in ecstasy as they kneeled and looked adoringly at the main altar.

Detective Jones nodded at the man as they walked out, but was not noticed. "Tom Scroggins," he said. "Used to be the best dip in the business until he got religion," -- by which they took him to mean pickpocket -- "He was born a Roman and they all come back to church in the end. I've seen it happen dozens of times, especially the ones that are going to swing; it's some comfort for them and I suppose it's better than nothing. Though Tom took it up again earlier than most; the R.C. chaplain got to him while he was doing a stretch and he came out a changed man. From my point of view it was a pity; in the old days I used to get a lot of useful information out of him."

They walked east along Little Lonsdale Street past mean looking shops and cottages. Virtually none of the well fed customers that patronised the retail establishments in Bourke and Collins Street would pass this way and there were even fewer people about than in Elizabeth Street. The shops were shuttered and bolted as were the low houses and everyone was locked in though there may have been some movement in the lanes off Little Lon, but it was too dark to see properly. The fall of their footsteps was the only sound until they came to Swanston Street and heard the crack of whips and the noise of cabs and carts going past.

When they crossed Swanston Street two constables were waiting and saluted Jones who nodded back; after a few words they fell in behind the three men and followed them. "I've ordered an ambulance," said the detective. It should be here in a minute and I'll have Murphy picked up for the infirmary." He looked at their expressions. "Well, you might not like it much, but he'll be a hell of a lot better there than in Ma Tarvin's place. You wait till you see it. -- ah! here it comes." He had heard the approaching noise as the ambulance turned the corner into Little Lonsdale Street. It was a low vehicle on two steel rimmed cart wheels with handles front and back so it could be wheeled by one or

two men. It had a white canvas cover fastened over hoops and, being a police ambulance, it was fitted with straps and buckles to make sure unwilling patients were not able to escape. Jones crooked his finger at the two men wheeling the ambulance and the party proceeded along Little Lonsdale Street with the ambulance rumbling along behind.

Neither Pryor nor Gabriel had ever been in this part of town before and the stench from the full cesspits and the remnants of sullage in the gutters was strong even by the standards of the nineteenth century. They followed the detective's advice and pressed folded handkerchiefs to their noses. "It keeps out the infections," he said. There were a number of squalid, low roofed tenements crowded on either side of the lane and the police lanterns shone impartially on each and down even smaller lanes and alleys on either side. They could hear doors slamming and calling as shadows flitted away from their lights and into noisome openings that led into labyrinths the two businessmen could only guess at.

Detective Jones and the two policemen looked about with a proprietorial air. In the midst of this place they were clothed with authority and this grubby empire was all theirs, to be dealt with as they chose. Once or twice Jones sent policemen to investigate dim alleys while the others waited in the middle of the lane. The second time they returned with a reluctant, dirty man who blinked and turned his face away from the bullseye lanterns while being inspected. "You're alright, Gus," said the detective after a careful look at his face. "We've got nothing on you right now, get a job, keep away from the bookies and you and me'll get on just fine." He waved the man away who, having shaken off the grip of the constables, scuttled into the darkness. "He'll be back in quod soon," said Jones cheerfully. "Most of these characters can't keep out of trouble and when they fall we're waiting for them."

After Gus disappeared he walked a few steps and pointed out a shabby house with a facade of false wooden tiles from which a coat of paint was peeling and cracking; a tiny, overgrown garden space between the street and the verandah was polluted with discarded bottles and rubbish and the remains of some broken furniture. They could see this by the light of a dim oil lamp in a bracket mounted on the edge of the verandah roof. It illuminated the door and showed the street number which was painted on the lantern glass. Jones indicated that one of the constables was to knock on the door, which he did, with his truncheon.

"This is Ma Tarvin's place," said the detective. "There are usually a few people about but I suppose we've spoiled business for the time being."

They were still in the middle of the road and observed some lace curtains in an upstairs window being twitched to one side and a white face was dimly seen looking down. The door opened a moment later and a dirty child with tangled black hair looked out impudently. "Half a dollar each," she said holding out her hand and you can take your pick of any of the girls; I'm in that too."

"Cut that out, you thievin', rotten little mongrel," screamed a voice from along the

passage. "Keep yer dirty mitts off the takings!" The child suddenly noticed the police officers and bolted out of sight. They heard the sound of a smack and a yell followed by a childish burst of profanity as the girl raced off to some unknown hiding place. A much heavier tread was heard coming closer and a fat woman with grey hair and a slovenly dress appeared at the door. She saw detective Jones straight away and her face fell but she quickly recovered and screamed out a greeting.

"Mr Jones!" she cried. "It's beaut to see yer. Yer oughta come more often. Y've brought some friends too, well ain't that nice. Any friends of Mr Jones are friends of ours. Won't the girls be pleased to see yer."

"One wasn't! That child's under age, Ma! You've got some explaining to do and it had better be good -- Why have you got children working in the house? You should know the age of consent by now."

"I do, Mr Jones, I do, none better than me, but just because she lives here doesn't mean she's on the game. That's me own dear sister's girl, the little bitch. But as God's me witness I wouldn't use her in the house and she's been nothin' but a bloody nuisance ever since I took her in after me sister passed on. She'd pinch anything that wasn't nailed down an' I knew what she was up to! She was gunna take yer money and scarper down to Bourke Street and spend it. I'll ave the hide off her back one of these days, you see if I don't." In her earnestness to impress the police officer she had moved close so he had to turn his head and blow through his lips to escape the stench of stale gin.

"We're coming in," said the detective. "I want to have a look round. Are there any absconders here, Ma?"

"May Gawd strike me dead on the spot if I'd let anyone like that in the house," protested the uneasy woman, " though I gotta tell yer there's a sick feller here. He's an old friend of one of the girls, if I can put it that way; and she asked if he could stay a while. Well, you know me," she said with a leer to emphasize the depths of her compassion. "Soft hearted I am; You know how I look after the girls and I just can't turn friends away from me door. So I said 'e could stay for a while, until 'e's better. I 'ope you're not lookin' for 'im, Mr Jones. It's Benno Murphy, I think you know 'im -- and 'e's alright I 'ope; not wanted by the law, or nothin'."

"Yes, I know him, and you won't be in trouble for taking him in." He entered while his companions and one of the constables followed. The second policeman waited outside with the two men who had brought the ambulance. Ma Tarvin led them down a dirty passage where the only light was the police lantern and what leaked from under the tightly closed doors where people sat, frightened and waiting for the unwelcome visitors to leave. "Show us the sick man."

Ma Tarvin pushed open a particular door and startled Sal who had been bending over Benno in his frowsy bed trying to do something to ease his discomfort. "How's the poor feller now, Sal, dear," said Ma Tarvin while Sal stepped back from the bed as though caught in a guilty act. "She's been that good to 'im, you wouldn't believe, and lookin' after him like -- like steam," said the woman, unable to think of a more suitable

expression.

"Goodday Sal. I hope I see you well," said the detective, nodding comfortably at his old acquaintance. Sal did not respond and cast only a quick glance at Gabriel and Mr Pryor. "I think he's a bit better," she said, "but he reckons he needs more medicine before he'll come good."

The detective moved closer and cast a practised eye over the sleeping patient and the bottles by his bed. "Smith's Colonial Elixir, eh? Don't give him any more of that stuff; it's poisoning his liver; he'll die drunk if you keep on pouring it into him. I don't have much time for Murphy but I'll take him off to the infirmary unless you lay off giving him this so called medicine"

"But it is medicine," protested Sal. "I wouldn't give him nothin' that'd hurt him."

A chest of drawers with knobs missing and the top covered with odds and ends, undusted ornaments and bottles, stood against the wall. In spite of his distaste Gabriel moved further into the room and picked up from the chest a bottle of Doctor Smith's Elixir, it was half empty. "The best thing you can do for him is tip this rubbish out and make sure he never touches another drop of it in his life."

"Poor fella," said Ma Tarvin, " 'e's been that sick you wouldn't believe; me 'eart goes out to 'im, and Sal's been such a dear, an angel, I couldn't have looked after ‘im any better meself. She bought two bottles of medicine for 'im out of 'er own money."

"Well, you drink it then," said Gabriel handing her the elixir. "There's a binge in every bottle." Ma Tarvin sniffed the medicine and raised her eyebrows. "That's not bad stuff, love. I could go a few sips of it meself."

Their talking woke up the patient who looked round with bright, feverish eyes. He cheered up at the sight of Gabriel and James Pryor but tended to slide back under the blankets when he noted Detective Jones standing by his bedside with a uniformed policeman in attendance.

"Oh, Gawd, it's not you, Mr Jones, is it? Don't put the arm on me now; I'm crook. Sal, I could do with some more medicine, pour it out, love. 'ow are yer, Gabby, Mr Pryor? I hope yer feelin' better than me right now." He looked at Sal. "Gawd, me throat's that dry! Put some of the medicine in a glass, will yer, and I'll have it now."

"No you're not!" Gabriel stated firmly. "Not another drop while I'm around; you were alright until you started drinking this Colonial Elixir, and now you're addicted to it. There's a police ambulance waiting outside for you. If we say the word you'll be taken straight off to the police infirmary; they have proper medicine there and as soon as you're well enough it's up before the courts for you."

"What's all this about his medicine?" cried Sal, "what's wrong with it? He's been taking it five times a day and it always makes 'im feel better. Gimme that bottle!" She snatched it away from Ma Tarvin who had taken advantage of the attention centred on Benno to

sample Doctor Smith's product for herself. It was very well received and she had drunk almost a third of the remaining contents before Sal took it back. "Don't you do that to me, my gal," said Ma Tarvin angrily, but they were saved from a sharp quarrel by the presence of police officers on the premises.

"What's in it; what's wrong with it?" asked Sal, staring in bewilderment at the bottle in her hand.

"I don't know," said Jones. There's plenty of alcohol in it. I reckon it might catch alight if you put a match to it. "I'd say laudunum, opium --- probably anything the quack's got on hand when he mixing up a new batch. I wouldn't advise anyone to drink it; well, not as a regular thing."

They heard a door open, the noise of running feet in the passage. Jones gestured at the policeman who dashed out of the room. He left the door open and they soon heard the sound of a spirited scuffle going on in the street. The noise from outside stopped to be followed by trampling feet in the passage. The two policemen came inside escorting a tall, bearded figure between them. It was Benno's friend Wocka, another wharf labourer.

"Oh, it's you, O'Reilly," said the detective grinning at him. "Frequenting a house of ill-repute, eh? Your wife's going to be interested when she hears about this."

The wharf labourer almost fell to his knees in his agitation. "Jesus, Mr Jones; you wouldn't tell her would you? If she finds out I'll have to leave the country. She'll kill me! You can't dob me in, I just came here to visit me old mate Benno and I wasn't going to have nothin' to do with the girls."

"That's right," said Benno to corroborate his friend's story. "Old Wocka and me was just having a bit of a talk until you arrived. Don't be too hard on him, Mr Jones, and whatever you do don't tell his missus he was here. I've seen her in action."

"Yair, and she's donged you on the scone a few times when you've got your mate into trouble, hasn't she," said the detective; "Hmm, well, we'll see; it's the sort of story that gets out, isn't it, O'Reilly? You can't expect to visit a place like this and not have someone tell your wife. She found about you throwing tomatoes at Jobley, didn't she? She knows all about that?"

Wocka seemed pained at the mere recollection of of that episode. "Yair, she found out allright. I went through hell afterwards and I still got the bruises. If someone tells her I been here I'm done for! You wouldn't do that to me would you, Mr Jones?"

"I don't know," said Jones, affecting to consider the matter. "The only reason I didn't pull you in over the tomato business was because I knew your wife'd do a better job than the courts. You won't try that on again in a hurry. My advice to you is steer clear of politics altogether."

Wocka shook his head. " Oh Christ no, no more! Once was enough for me."

"Don't be too hard on him, Mr Jones," said Benno from his bed where Sal had found a damp, cool cloth and was wiping his forehead. 'E was talkin' to me until you arrived, and he's been a good friend. What are gunna do with 'im."

Jones shrugged and lifted his finger at the two policeman who immediately let Wocka go. "Maybe I'll tell his wife we flushed him out of Ma Tarvin's place," he said, grinning. "I reckon we'll hear the noise up at the police station when she gets hold of him. If he thinks he had troubles just because he threw a few tomatoes in Bourke Street, wait until she finds out about his little visit tonight." He looked severely at Wocka. "You go straight home and stay there, and keep out of trouble or I'll tumble you right into the shit with your missus. It would be no good telling her you came to visit Murphy, that would only make things worse."

Not being under the law's constraints any more the unhappy Wocka moved unobtrusively towards the door and disappeared after casting a last appealing glance at the detective.

"It'd be interesting to see who else is on the premises," remarked Detective Jones. "But then, I guess you gentlemen did not come here to help raid a brothel." He resumed his survey of the uncomfortable Benno. "What are we going to do with him? I could get him for being on the premises in a house of ill repute."

"Gawd! yer wouldn't do that would yer, Mr Jones?" cried Ma Tarvin. "Have a heart; I got a livin' to earn like everyone else. You just say the word and I'll turf 'im out now; I don't want 'im, it wasn't my idea for 'im to come 'ere." She was horrified at the thought of the publicity and court appearances that would follow such a charge. The police might close the house down and she would have to start again with another black mark against her name.

"You will not!" screeched Sal. " He stays here tonight; we'll find somewhere else in the mornin', and then you can go to hell!" A screaming match between the two women would have followed but the detective quietened them.

"How are you going to look after him?" enquired Mr Pryor. "Do you have any money. Before anyone would take him in they'd want cash on the nail." Sal shrugged. "I dunno, I reckon I'll have to earn some, first thing in the mornin'" She glumly contemplated the uncertain future that was opening for her and Benno.

Mr Pryor put thumb and finger into his waistcoat pocket and produced some silver. He gave five shillings to Ma Tarvin who looked astonished but quickly palmed the coins "That should see him right for a while until Sal can make other arrangements."

"Of course it will!" responded Ma Tarvin cheerfully. "If Mr Jones says it's alright, Benno can stay. For five bob a day 'e can live in the 'ouse as long as 'e likes. Course I can't supply any food at that rate but no one can say Ma Tarvin ever put her friends out in the street; and Liz can work to 'elp support 'im."

"How do you feel about going to Sydney, or Brisbane?" asked Mr Pryor, ignoring Ma

Tarvin's declarations of sincerity. We'll give Benno an advance on his dividends and you can go together; what do you think, Mr Jones?"

"I think he's got a charmed life," replied the detective. "He should have gone down for smashing Gladman's windows, and he should have gone down for throwing those tomatoes at Jobley and he's only gone half way in poisoning himself with that bloody medicine. You should take him to a clinic first so they can get to work with a stomach pump; but it won't be the police clinic, not unless I decide to lay charges. You shouldn't have handed over that dollar; he'd be better out of here and straight into somewhere where they can take care of him properly; maybe the Charity hospital would be best; they don't lose as many patients there as they do at the Melbourne. As for going to Sydney - that sounds allright to me; if he and Sal can leave the state before there's any more trouble I don't care where they go."

"Old Benno, 'e can stay 'ere tonight." Cried Ma Tarvin who was concerned lest the detective should force her to return the five shillings. "Sal and me, we'll look after 'im like we was 'is own sisters; 'e wouldn't get better treatment in no 'ospital.

"Here, you can have this too." said Gabriel, handing her the bottle of miracle cure. "I hope it does you as much good as it did Benno." Not understanding the irony of his remark she slipped the bottle into a fold of her dress.

"Eh! turn it up," protested Benno. "That's my medicine you're giving away. I could do with another dose right now. You hand it back, Ma."

"No!" Gabriel turned fiercely on Sal. "If you really want to look after him, he's never to have another drop of that stuff. Never, as long as he lives; it's poisoning him. He was quite healthy until he started taking it; now look at him.'

"Well, what about Sydney? If you want to take us up on the offer, say so. You'd better; if you stay in Melbourne you're going to get into trouble one way or another."

"Yes I'd like to go to Sydney, Mr Pryor," said Sal. "We could start all over again; he could get a job and I'd look after him. I'm sick of this life." She looked round at the dingy room and the frowsy furniture; it smelled. "I'd like a nice room somewhere that I could keep clean for both of us." She took Benno by the hand and he nodded.

"Can you lend us your men and the ambulance to run him round to this hospital you mentioned? I reckon he'll be better off there than here and they won't have any of Doctor Smith's muck in the medicine cupboard."

" He's a nice feller," said Benno sullenly. "And a benefactor to mankind. I met him up at his rooms and he told me so 'imself.

The two officers in charge of the ambulance came in when ordered carrying a sturdy folding stretcher between them. It was made of canvas with wooden poles; they laid it on the floor and between them they lifted Benno out of bed and on to the stretcher.

The detective was about to order his removal, but instead he turned to the woman.

"Who else have you got here, Ma? anyone I should know about?"

Ma Tarvin's face twisted at these words and she seemed to develop a spasm in her neck to make her head move jerkily. The detective interpreted this as a signal to move closer. She glanced at the others in the room to make sure they were not near enough to overhear and muttered something close to his ear. He assented to whatever proposition she was putting forward and took two shillings out of a purse to drop into her grimy hand which instantly closed on the money.

Her head twitched again, Jones and a policeman followed her out into the hall where Gabriel and Mr Pryor, peering after them, saw them stop before a door. The constable pushed the door open and shone his bullseye lantern into the room. Jones looked in, made an exclamation of satisfaction and ordered whoever was in there to come out.

"Rotten old bugger," muttered Sal, who was kneeling by the stretcher to adjust Benno's blanket. "She's sold someone else out for two lousy bob. That's all she does, just sells people when she can get away with it. She sold me into this business when I was just a kid. I hope Benno and I can get out of all this; we'd be allright if you can send us both to Sydney.

Whoever it was that had been located with Ma Tarvin's guidance came out meekly enough and he was escorted back to Benno's room to be examined by the dim light in that chamber.

It was the Honourable Adrian Memsworth, or Billy Summers as he was known to the police. He was much less dapper than when Gabriel had seen him last and he was no longer the jaunty man about town of great wealth who had cozened Mr Gladman into giving up his money and musical instruments.

He nodded at Gabriel and attempted to resume his old manner. "Hope I see you well, Mr Fox. Be kind enough to give my regards to Mr Gladman and Mrs Goss when you come across them next. I'm sorry I couldn't entertain Mrs Goss at my mansion, but I'm sure she will understand."

"You'll be able to entertain her on visiting days out at Pentridge," retorted the detective, pleased at having one trophy to show for his evening visit to Little Lon. Summers put his hands out in front of him as though accustomed to the ritual and the policeman, equally practised, slipped handcuffs over his wrists.

"Well," said Jones, 'providing Gladman doesn't have any more lapses of memory you should be filed away for a year or two. Though I don't think we'll have any problems, even if Gladman can't I am sure Mrs Goss and Mr Fox will both remember very well what you've been up to."

He gestured to his minions and the ambulance men picked up Benno's stretcher and led the way with the others following behind out of the silent house.

Ma Tarvin had not lingered to say goodbye. No one had seen her since she led the

detective to Summers' room and as she was not to be seen no one could

demand a refund of the seven shillings profit she had made on the evening.

The ambulance men strapped Benno into their vehicle.

"Can we borrow them to deliver Murphy to the hospital?" enquired Mr Pryor.

Detective Jones nodded and the two men started trundling their vehicle away followed by Gabriel, Mr Pryor, and Sal. A policeman grasped Summers by the upper arm and started marching him off in the opposite direction while the detective followed gazing keenly about at the shabby buildings on either side of the street.

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The Charity Hospital

Amy scolded Gabriel when she heard about missing another adventure and his and Mr Pryor's visit into the seamy underside of Melbourne's night life. It had no effect when he explained the impossibility of taking a lady into a shabby, disreputable place of ill repute, particularly this one.

Amy was annoyed but Sir Thomas said he thought Melbourne could have produced better class places than this. He went on to reminisce about such establishments he had encountered in Shanghai and Hong Kong. He would have discussed brothels at length, but remembered in time that he lived in the nineteenth century, that Queen Victoria was on the throne and that such topics were forbidden in polite society

Mrs Taylor debated in her mind whether or not he had said enough to make it necessary to sever all connection with the man, even though he was a knight of the realm.

The problem was Amy.She had decided to visit Benno in hospital and was ordering Gabriel to find out the visiting hours. She had missed too many exciting events already, and wanted to meet the man who had thrown the bricks that smashed Mr Gladman's windows, and if Sal should be there also, that would be a bonus.

Mrs Taylor tried to to point out how improper it would be for a young lady of good upbringing to visit these persons in the charity ward of a hospital, particularly the daughter of a clergyman, think of her father's reputation.

Amy replied that she would be with her fiance, a noted business man and adirector of the Melbourne and London Amicable Building Society, as well as that he was a messenger of God. If anyone doubted his divinity let them ask Mr Jobley What better company could she have to visit a poor, sick patient especially on New Year's Day, the first day of 1880

''We live in modern times,'' she said. ''Women should be able to go anywhere and do

anything, especially without men,

This statement was so ludicrous, so out of touch with the times that no one othered to answer it.

''Barnacle Bill can come too,'' she said, ''As long as he promises to behave himself and reveal some of the murky secrets of his past. His sins cannot be forgiven until he tells us what they are.''

''I have left undone those things which I ought to have done,'' said Sir Thomas, ''And I have done those things which I ought not to have done, and there is no health within me.''

''Exactly,' said Amy, ''Now someone hand me my parasol and we'll go.''

The hospital was nearby and the man at the counter told them that patient, Benjamin Murphy' was in a men's ward on the third floor, he was in bed number twenty.

They toiled up to the third floor and found number twenty already had a visitor. It was Sal. She sat by the side of the bed and held Benno's hand. The girl had dressed more modestly than the day before but was taken aback when Gabriel appeared on the other side of the bed and introduced her to Miss Amy Taylor, and Sir Thomas Black. He apologised for not knowing her surname

Sal did not know what to say. These well dressed polite people were from another world than hers. They could walk in daylight on the streets without being warned off or told to go back where they came from. They spoke differently to her, and some of the words they used were unknown to her. She was lost in embarrassment and smoothed imaginary wrinkles on Benno's sheets rather than look up at their faces.

Amy knew what to do. She had gone often with her father to visit the sick and poor of the parish. She gently put her hand over the girl's hand. ''Your name's Sally, isn't it?''

Sal nodded.

''My name's Amy. Tell us, Sally, do you think he's better than he was

''They've taken away his medicine, and he keeps asking for it.''

''They did that because it's not real medicine at all, if he's kept from drinking the stuff, and eats well, he'll get better and better, and one day you and he'll walk out of this place and you can start a new life together in Sydney.''

''Thank you miss, you're very kind.''

''Amy,'Call me Amy. And he's Gabriel'' she said, pointing. And he has to marry me soon. The other's Tom. Tom has had a terrible past but won't admit to anything. He feels safer that way.

Sal looked doubtfully at her two new male acquaintances, but asked instead about the missing Mr Pryor

.''Is he coming today?'' she asked. ''I liked him, and he didn't put up with any rubbish from that detective fella, and the way he went on downstairs when we got here and the man said they didn't take patients after nine o'clock, even though he was brought there by two coppers.''

''We was asked to bring him back today, but they didn't have a chance of keeping Benno out, not with Mr Pryor there. They had to call down the matron, and the night medical officer, and any porters and nurses that were still on duty. The porters were needed to carry Benno up to the men's ward. And he made sure I could go up too to see that Benno was comfortable. He's a wonderful man, I reckon he could talk the leg off an iron pot.

Gabriel smiled when he heard this assessment of his friend. He looked around. There were forty iron frame beds in this grim room. No need to count, they were all numbered, the head of each was pushed against a wall, so one could wander up and down between the two rows to find the patient one wished to visit..

The room was well lit with skylights, and a window on the end wall which had a good view of the city's smoking chimneys.Directly opposite the double doors through which visitors entered and departed was a large portrait of Queen Victoria. It dominated the room, noticed by everyone that entered.There were no other decorations, unless you included signs about visiting hours, or noise, or unseemly behaviour. One sign indicated that vases were available to anyone who brought flowers. And there were cracked and chipped vases on a table in the corner, and a sink with a single tap.

Most beds were occupied by wan figures. Many had wives and children gathered ound talking to one another in low voices. The face of one patient looked as though it was modelled from wax. He lay back exhausted with closed eyes while his wife sat by the bed waiting dumbly to be overtaken by tragedy Gabriel was thinking of this when he saw Timothy Flanagan walking towards them with Mr and Mrs Gladman. Tim walked up with a smile beaming through his whiskers. Mr Gladman was also smiling, but his wife looked as though she would rather be somewhere else.

She was carrying a paper bag, and after a nod from her husband put it down on a small oak table by Benno's bed.

''Some delicacies for the invalid'' said Mr Gladman. ''We hope you feel better and will soon be up and about again.''

'Sal,'' said Benno, speaking so quietly she had to lean forward to hear him. ''Tell Mr Gladman,-'' She interrupted him. ''My name's Sally. From now on everyone's to call me Sally. I'm never going back on the game, and if you call me by the old name I won't hear you, I won't answer!''

''Well done,'' said Sir Thomas, ''And here's a small gift to mark the day you declared

your independence.'' He took a purse from his pocket, extracted a one pound note, and handed it to the girl, who looked startled at this unexpected generosity.

''Sally, my dear, ''he said, ''This is not so much a gift as an investment. I want you to spend part of the money to buy a big frying pan, and every time you suspect that Benno is drinking Dr Smith's Miracle Cure on the sly, dong him hard on the bonce.''

Sally didn't understand everything he said but grinned at him, because she caught the general drift of his remarks.

''And if he persists in drinking that horrible stuff keep on doing it until he realizes that Dr Smith's medicine, as well as being bad for his health, also causes severe headaches.''

''I'm pleased to hear you say that!'' cried Mr Gladman. ''I'll match that pound with another one. He really meant what he said for he produced a sovereign and pressed it into Sally's hand while curling her fingers over so she held the coin tightly.

Once again Sally could not speak and resumed her occupation of smoothing the bed sheets, unable to look up at them.

'She's very grateful for your kind words and help,'' said Amy, who had Sally by the hand once more. Sally's other hand clutched her money ''She would thank you if she could, but might start crying because it is a long time since anyone gave her anything without demanding something in return.

''Thank you Miss,'' said Sally, ''you and your friends have been ever so kind.

''Amy! My name is Amy. If you're going to call me Miss I'll call you Sal. Now don't forget.'' she said, pointing. ''He's Gabriel, we're to be married because he ran out of excuses. The ones with money are Tom. and Mr and Mrs Gladman. Last but not least is Mr Tim Flanagan. We're all friends of yours, and don't forget us.'

Timothy always had a few gold nuggets in his pocket. He gave her one.

There was half an hour to go and the visitors talked of the events that had brought them together. They learned that Mrs Gladman had left the Brethren and joined a much milder sect that had no foreign missionaries.

The Brethren had not given up hope of her returning to the fold and came occasionally to kneel on the wooden veranda floor to pray to a locked door. The neighbours knew what to do, they called the police and had the Brethren moved on.

Mrs Goss and Second Officer Dawkins of SS Culloden arrived a little later, arm in arm. to see the brick thrower who had smashed her boss's windows

They learned too that Mrs Goss was hopeful still of an offer of marriage from Mr Hamish Dawkins First Mate of the SS Culloden which plied between Melbourne and Sydney. He already had his master's ticket, and was qualified as a pilot on Port Phillip

Bay. But there were no vacancies at present so he had applied to become master of one the ferries criss crossing the bay.

At last a gong sounded as an attendant walked in carrying the instrument. It was laced to a square bamboo frame which he carried in one hand, while using the other hand to strike the gong repeatedly with a padded stick. The visiting hour was over and visitors were filing out through the double doors.

A little relieved to be out of it the group walked away down the stairs and into the reception area.

There Mr and Mrs Gladman bid them goodbye. Mr Gladman shook hands cordially with everyone. Mrs Gladman shook hands with Amy but rewarded the others only with a wintry smile and a nod.

Sally also took Amy's hand and squeezed it, but girl's mind was so filled with gratitude there was no room for words, she smiled silently at them all and went away.

After they left Gabriel turned to Amy. ''Darling, you were wonderful, talking with that poor girl. Benno isn't much of a marriage prospect but she's going to marry him anyway. But you changed her just by making her use your christian name, you couldn't have done it better.''

''Thank you my dear He's like all men, he needs a woman's guidance to bring out the best in him. You too will be much improved after I have had you in hand for a while, If you are not I will bring out the family frying pan and try other methods.''

Sir Thomas opened the cover of his watch. ''We can talk later about his training, it's time we went to the restaurant. Ivy and Alfred should be there by now, as well as Henry, and Harold and his young lady, and, of course, James who has promised to stop campaigning for at least two hours while he has lunch with us. If he loses the election by one vote no doubt he will blame me. But I don't mind. Today I'll be able to keep the promise I made in the sixpenny lodgings and treat you all to a slap up dinner.''

''This evening at dinner would be good time to tell us why you have such a good relationship with the saints Mike and George.

''It all started with Eddy Prince of Wales.''

''Sir Thomas,'' interrupted Mrs Taylor, ''I think you must be in error. No person of breeding would refer to Edward, Prince of Wales as 'Eddy.

I am sorry to disappoint you Mrs Taylor but I fear I am not a person of breeding nor are many of the people he chooses to associate with. He is a man who enjoys the company of ladies, and some of those ladies are not all that they should be.''

''I believe we do not want to hear any further reference to His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales. Perhaps the conversation could be turned to other subjects.''

''Oh mother, don't be so prudish! I'm sure Royal Persons do silly things, just like everyone else. Look at that French Prince who got himself killed by Zulus. You couldn't get anything sillier than that. Go on, Sir Thomas. We will tell you later whether or not we believe you.''

''She's right, you know. History is littered with royal mistakes. Harold at Hastings and Richard III on Bosworth Field both lost their lives because they couldn't wait for their allies to arrive and assist them in their battles''

''That may be so, but it does not excuse us for speaking disrespectfully of Royal Personages.''

''Ivy dear, don't become worked up. Just listen quietly to what Sir Thomas has to say, then we can discuss other subjects.''

''You know my views Alfred, we must be respectful at all times to those whom God has chosen to set above us in society. If we do not we are callenging God's order of the universe, and if we do that what follows but disorder and ruin!!'

''Quite so, my dear, but the sooner Sir Thomas finishes his story the sooner we can turn to other subjects.'

''Yes mother,'' said Amy, Let him speak, we can all denounce and abuse him later.

Sir Thomas sighed and moved on. ''Well, after that vote of confidence I will continue my story. I was out one night with His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, a sort of unofficial bodyguard, he needed one from time to time. He decided he wanted to go into a certain house on a certain London street and I pleaded with him not to.''

''Well, why not?''

''Because it wasn't a good idea..Imagine Ma Tarvin's house on a grander scale, cleaned daily inside and out, interor walls walls decorated with pictures and scenes painted directly on to plaster''

''What sort of pictures?''

''Amy, don't ask. I really think it's time you left the room.''

''Mother, in two weeks from now I will be a married woman. I will know some of the secrets of marriage, and I am not leaving the room. I want to know how Sinbad the Sailor here went into a house like Ma Tarvin's, with the Prince of Wales, and came out a Knight Commander in the Order of St Michael and St George. It sounds pretty fishy to me.''

''Well, listen, if you can stop talking for a while, and you'll know what happened, it's my yarn, not yours.''

''Well, go on! Who's stopping you?''

''You are. Now we had an argument and Eddy -- sorry, the prince won, because he is the prince. It was a gambling house, they had a roulette and all the card games you could want. They didn't mind which you gambled at as long as the house made a profit.

We went in and had barely sat down with our cards and drinks in front of us when the whistles started blowing, and the door crashed open. It was the police they had decided to raid the house that very night.''

''Of course we all bolted for the back door, but the cops were there too and in the confusion Eddy -- sorry, the prince was belted over the head and fell down.''

Mrs Taylor was sitting with her hands covering her face, she was moaning softly.

''Well, I picked him up and someone shot a light into our faces. The sergeant looked at me and said, ''Is that who I think it is?'' He must have been on royal protection duties, or seen him at a parade.

''It is,'' I said, ''And tomorrow I will get up in the police court and say that one of your lads belted the future King of England over the head with a police truncheon, knocking him to the ground? How do you think that will help your chances of promotion?''

''Like hell, you will! Simpson, help this gentleman and his friend. Wills, you go outside, and if there's anyone waiting to see what a police raid looks like, order them away, tell them they'll be arrested for loitering. And get a cab while you're out there.''

''Well, we got away with it. A doctor bandaged the wound, kissed the spot and so on. The papers carried a story that he had tripped while walking down the Strand and injured his head. Not to worry he would soon be better and fit to resume his royal duties.''

''And that's how you got the KCMG?''

''Not quite. There's a little more to the story. Someone went to the queen and told her that her son had been knocked on the head during a brawl in a bawdy house, and furthermore it happened in the company of that well known wastrel and man about town, the notorious Captain Thomas Black.''

''This doesn't sound like a promising way to get a knighthood.''

''No, you're quite right. The queen summoned both of us to the palace and when we got to the audience chamber she screamed at us for twenty minutes. You may know that she blamed Eddy's wild and wasteful ways for bringing on the premature death of her darling husband Albert. Anyway she told him to act like a prince, opening bazaars, dedicating monuments, making speeches when a new sewage works burst into life. All that sort of thing, to assure the taxpayers that they were getting good value from the Royal Family.

As for me, the only way to get redemption after this unsavory episode where I lured the prince into grave danger was to go out to India and get myself killed defending the British Empire. But whatever happened I was never to see Eddy again

''Was it after this dressing down that she sent for her sword so you could kneel down and be knighted?''

''No, that came later. I believe that the prince had a word with Dizzy, who was Prime Minister at the time.

''Pardon me Sir Thomas, I think you are referring to the Honourable Benjamin Disraeli who is our Prime Minister at the present time. If so my wife and I would prefer you to use his proper title.''

''You are quite right Mr Taylor, and I apologise. I must learn to adapt my seafaring ways to polite company.''

''Yes, I believe the prince spoke to Mr Disraeli and explained that I had not wanted him to go into the house and that I had protected him after he was hit on the head. Mr D waited until the queen calmed down and explained the circumstances to her. He knew me quite well, of course. He also put my name down on the recommended list for services to overseas British trade and, after some resistance, the queen eventually tapped me on the shoulder, though I must say she didn't seem very gracious about it. Now, if the saints Mike and George, as Miss Taylor names them, are in need of assistance I'm their man.

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Dr Smith strikes back

During the next weeks of the election campaign Mr Jobley returned to the hustings with fresh vigour. His followers had been concerned at the gout attack that had overtaken him during the previous week. However this problem had been overcome, by a visiting messenger of the Lord, No one knew who the messenger was, or what the message.might have been

But the visit was successful. Mr Jobley returned to attack his old enemy, the liquor trade, with fresh torrents of eloquence. Everyone soon noted a new target for what was almost abuse. He mercilessly attacked the sale of patent medicines with a special emphasis on the wickedness of Doctor Smith and the dangers inherent in his miracle cure, the Colonial Elixir.

His supporters soon learned that the demon drink was attacking society in new guise with the backing of unscrupulous quack healers such as Doctor Smith.

He had called on the doctor in his rooms and pleaded with him to withdraw the elixir from sale or at least modify its ingredients.

Doctor Smith had refused to do anything to damage the sales of what was, by far, his most popular product. His electric belts, guaranteed to restore vigour to even the most feeble, were selling well but it was difficult to advertise them in the papers or elsewhere except in the most guarded terms. Of course the miracle cure could be publicised quite freely in advertisements suitable to be read without a blush by even the most delicate minded person. Some of the social diseases that it cured had to be omitted from advertisements that were meant for general reading, but otherwise there was no difficulty and each publicity campaign was followed by the sale of an increased number of bottles.

The doctor himself believed in the efficacy of his cure and insisted on showing Mr Jobley a whole drawer full of letters from persons who had been cured of various ills, or at least had their symptoms alleviated. He offered to drink the stuff himself to demonstrate how mild and beneficial it was, but Mr Jobley was unconvinced.

That night, at a meeting, Mr Jobley made a terrific onslaught against both Doctor Smith and the miracle cure and the speech was printed in full next day in the papers.

It was soon after that Mr Pryor, his opponent, received a deputation from the local manufacturers of patent medicines led by Doctor Smith. During his remarks to the delegation Mr Pryor mentioned the ancient liberty of Englishmen to drink anything they liked and in any quantity without being harassed or put down and equally the absolute right they possessed to make anything in any quantity that anyone wanted to drink and charge whatever they liked for their product, provided it was not actually poisonous.

These remarks made an excellent impression on the businessmen present. An impression which was confirmed when Mr Pryor hinted that Jobley was in league with the medical profession to put the patent medicine manufacturers out of business so the doctors could have the field to themselves and prescribe their own medicines and that only he, James Pryor, when in parliament would be in a position to crush this iniquitous plot.

He told them their industry was at the crossroads, not to mention that it was fighting for its very existence, and that the torch of freedom was in danger of being extinguished and that their precious liberties hinged on the coming election.

Doctor Smith asked how they could help. Mr Pryor pointed out that the election hung in the balance; no one knew whether reason would win the day or whether tyranny and ignorance would triumph. He said that unfortunately money was a necessary ingredient in any election campaign and he and Mr Fox had given of their all in fighting the anti-business, reactionary policies of Jobley. Money was urgently needed and would be carefully applied to bring about the best possible result at the election.

The manufacturers were deeply impressed and disturbed by what Mr Pryor had to say. They asked him to kindly withdraw from the private bar for a short while so they could discuss their reaction to what he had said. The barmaid was instructed to

supply him with anything her cared to drink and at frequent intervals while he waited in the saloon bar. Before withdrawing he emphasised the value of his time and the fact that every minute spent in the hotel meant a further absence from the great crusade to bring Jobley undone.

He was deep in conversation with some other men in the bar and the barmaid when a man came out to ask if he would be kind enough to step back to meet the delegation once more.

Doctor Smith, who was their spokesman, made some flattering remarks about their new friend and potential representative and announced they had decided they could do no less than donate £100 to his campaign.

Mr Pryor thanked them graciously for this generous promise of support but pointed out that these were such difficult times that even £100 was little enough with which to fight and win the most important election campaign ever known in the colony of Victoria. Of course he was grateful for any donations to the war chest, no matter how small and he would do his best to eke it out with great care and to the best effect so they would not be disappointed with the outcome of the election. However election campaigns were like wars, the side with the greatest resources was generally the winner.

His remarks had such an effect on those present that someone immediately moved an increase to £200 and this was carried with acclamation, the meeting breaking up soon after, but not before Mr Pryor had emphasised the need for the money to be supplied as soon as possible; the following day would not be a minute too early because of the crisis hanging over all of them.

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Wedding Preparations,

The election was to take place on February 29th, a Saturday. Gabriel suggested that the wedding should be postponed to a date in early March because his Best Man was deeply engaged as the favoured candidate of the anti Jobley faction and would not, perhaps, have time to attend the ceremony.

This idea was rejected scornfully. The bride said he would just have to make the time. She said there would be numerous opportunities for him to stand for Parliament but only one chance to preside at his partner's wedding, and that was to go ahead with or without him. If he did not attend on the day Sir Thomas could take over, but Pryor's penalty for non-appearance would be that she would never speak to him again.

In the face of this threat James Pryor agreed to come on the day and perform the duties assigned to him.

Her father could not give the bride away. He would be officiating at the altar and

hearing the wedding vows. He could not ask 'Who giveth this woman to this man?' and then answering himself by saying 'I do.'

The bride insisted that no part of the marriage service was to be omitted and the Ancient Mariner could bring her to church and give her away. It was not too difficult for him to say 'I do,' at the critical moment.

Sir Thomas said that because of his advanced age he would probably forget and she better have a large card handy with the words 'I do' written on it and she could hold it up as a reminder of what he was to say.

The bride said there would be no placards at her wedding and if he forgot the two words assigned to him during the ceremony, a swift kick on the shins would help him remember.

Her next idea was that they should go and inspect the parish that had been promised to her father. It would be nice if he could marry them in his own church, and if there was a restaurant in the town that could provide a wedding breakfast that would make the day perfect.

Next Saturday morning the family would assemble at Spencer Street Station to catch an early train.

There were other matters to be attended to. Amy had heard good reports of Queenscliff. It was a coastal resort at the entrance to Port Phillip Bay, and was visited twice a day during the season by paddlewheel steamers from Melbourne. On their way there and back they called in at Sorrento and sometimes Mornington.

Queenscliff was a growing, thriving town, so that would be their honeymoon destination. She told Gabriel to telegraph the 'Esplanade' a highly recommended guest house and reserve a double room for Mr and Mrs Fox, seven days bed and breakfast. Amongst her other information she learned the best suite available was the Queen Victoria Room so she gave Gabriel strict instructions, he was to secure that room, and no other, without consulting her.

The next Saturday morning the family assembled on Spencer Street Station and Gabriel was sent to buy first class return tickets for all.

Sir Thomas asked if he could come with them. He knew few people in Melbourne and the captain of his ship was busy preparing for departure back to London, besides, he enjoyed the company of Gabriel and the Taylors, especially that of Amy.

Permission was given providing he paid his own fare and didn't make a nuisance of himself.

He went with Gabriel to buy the tickets and insisted on paying for them all, including those for Harold and Betty. Betty Fletcher was to be Amy's

bridesmaid and, apart from that her other occupation in life was keeping Harold off

the booze. She was treating him as a patient recovering after a long illness.

Ivy had other fears. She didn't want to visit the parish. She wanted to go home,to England, with her husband and two children, still unmarried. But all, except for her, were happy to stay in this new land. She had got the idea into her head that the presbytery would be made of bark with a skeleton of roughly cut timber poles, and every time she wanted water she would have to take a bucket outside and dip it into a tank. Despite her fears the train arrived and bore them away.

An hour and a half later, they stepped out on to a country platform and were surprised to find a small group of clergymen and their wives waiting to welcome them.

There was the verger. He was Mr Isaac Jones, with his wife, his job was to keep the church in good order, look after the vicar's vestments and deal with visitors when the vicar was away on parish business.

Three of the gentlemen present wore clerical collars and the verger introduced them. Father Hartigan, represented the Catholics, No wife ofcourse The others were Mr and Mrs Stephen Burbage. Presbyterians, and Mr Nottage who was the Methodist minister of the town. Unfortunately his wife was not there, she was an invalid and bed ridden, but would love to meet Mr and Mrs Taylor.

Ivy volunteered to go at once to visit the lady and sit with her but had to be reminded that they were to catch the four o'clock train to the city

Father Hartigan excused himself from going with them to visit the church and presbytery. He said every member of his flock within a twenty mile radius would know by tomorrow evening that he had been to greet the new Church of England vicar and he didn't want to shock them further by actually entering his church.

It was only few minutes walk away and when they arrived Amy was pleased. The church was a timber building, and small, as was to be expected in a country town, but very satisfactory. She and Gabriel would be married there by her father and everyone present was invited to the wedding

It was the presbytery that surprised the newcomers. It wasn't a hut as Ivy expected, but a brick house with a slate tile roof. Three bedrooms so the family could come and visit.

But that wasn't all The kitchen contained one of the new cast iron stoves where the fire was contained away from the oven. Mr Jones lit the fire and showed Ivy how to pump water from the tank outside into the kettle. It soon boiled then everyone sat round the kitchen table, drank tea, and ate the cakes the ladies had so kindly brought that morning.

It occurred to Ivy as they chatted that with a comfortable home like this in a kindly town, neighbors to cultivate as friends, and the extra income Alfred had mentioned,

life could be quite pleasant.

An added attraction was that her children, and possible grandchildren, if in Melbourne, would be only an hour and a half away. Just to please Alfred and the children she would stop complaining and consent to stay. Perhaps in the future they could save enough for one last visit to England.

The People Speak

There was a gradually mounting sense in the community that the government of the colony was about to change. Melbourne's daily papers agreed in stating that this was the most important poll yet to take place in the colony of Victoria, but disagreed on all other points.

The Age supported Premier Berry and was opposed to the policies of James Service, Leader of the Opposition. All his life Service had advocated free trade principles; which were contrary to the views of David Syme, proprietor of The Age. That gentleman had, for many years, agitated, through the columns of his paper, for import tariffs and strict protection for what he described as the 'fledgling industries of the colony'. Service's free trade policies were an anathema to him and his journal.

The Age's rival, The Argus, was equally sure that the return of Berry would lead to a collapse of public confidence and the flight of capital from the colony to New South Wales -- a calamity not to be contemplated. A new Berry Ministry, emboldened by re-election would not respect the sanctity of private property and, even worse, would attempt to shake off the restraining hand of the upper house, the Legislative Council.

Graham Berry had lost the confidence of the Legislative Assembly now it was up to the Victorian electors to turn out in vast numbers on election day and confirm the verdict of his fellow members of parliament.

The concert chamber of the town hall had been converted for the day into a polling booth, headquarters for the whole of Victoria. From the moment the doors opened it was difficult to get in because the seven candidates were outside on the footpath intent on greeting everyone and they were supported by double that number of political partisans. All were wearing the colours of their favoured candidates and harangued every man who approached to cast his vote.

The candidates, remained outside the town hall during the long hours of polling, ready to shake the hands of and say a few encouraging words to anyone intending to go inside. Occasionally their helpers would steer towards them a man with a query, or a desire to meet a particular candidate. Three workmen arrived about 9.30; they did not seem to need advice from anyone and ignored the blandishments of the anti-drink group. They had come to seek James Pryor and each made a point of taking him by the hand in a sincere though painful grip. By that time he was barely glancing at the faces of most of the voters as they streamed past; they were just a blur; one

grasped a hand, smiled beneficently and murmured thanks for any words of congratulation or good wishes. These men had such strong, toil hardened hands that he had to look at them and gained an impression of having seen them before. One had a drawn face and appeared to have barely recovered from a recent illness. Holding his arm was a woman still young and rather overdressed, even by the standards of the day. The thin man also had a surprisingly strong grip, and held the candidate's hand firmly until Mr Pryor concentrated on him.

"I've come to say thanks and give yer me vote," said the man. "Where's Gabby today? I can't see 'im here." It was Benno, just discharged from hospital who had come out with Sally and his friends to cast a vote. James Pryor was about to deliver one of his set speeches about the wickedness of the Berry Ministry when he realized that the men really did intend to vote for him.

"It's the pubs," explained Wocka, whose eye tended to wander as though with an uneasy feeling that his wife might be in the crowd and concealed because of her short stature; if so she could suddenly appear and order him home. He was safe enough for the time; he had been questioned closely about the proposed visit to the polling booth and it had been authorised; there being no ships to unload that day, on condition that he was home by 12.30, in time for his midday dinner. She had also given him threepence to spend in any way he pleased as long as he drank his pot of beer quickly, came straight home, and had little association with Benno.

She had heard about Sally and had given the proposed union with Benno her grudging approval. As she said she certainly did not 'hold' with the class of women Sally represented but thought that any restraining influence on Benno, particularly when exercised by a woman, was better than none.

After a careful examination of the people passing by Wocka was satisfied that his wife was not within striking distance. He repeated, 'it's the pubs. If that feller Jobley gets inter parliament 'e's gunna close 'em all down, and the breweries too. That's no good to us, I can tell yer! Me and the boys is gunna strike all the names off the paper except yours." His mind reverted to an earlier grievance, "yer should've let us fix 'im up. 'E wouldn't even've got 'ere today if you'd let the boys do the right thing." His companions looked at him doubtfully. Wocka's wife would soon have put a stop to his engagement in political activities of that nature; they remembered her reaction to the episode with Mr Jobley and the tomatoes.

It was clear the men had a shaky knowledge of the ballot, probably never having voted before. Mr Pryor tried to explain that they were voting in a three member constituency and could leave two other names besides his on the paper and their votes would still be valid. He strongly recommended they should leave his name on, and also that of Mr Edmunds. If they wanted to leave a third name on the paper that was up to them. They were a little discontented at this. They had made up their minds to vote for Pryor and no one else and the news they could vote for two others was unsettling.

Mr Jobley had observed the three men talking to James Pryor and as they moved away considering this new development he presented them each with a temperance leaflet especially printed for the occasion. It contained a wholesome message about abjuring all contact with strong drink and also warned against unsupervised use of patent medicines. The tract ended by advising the reader which names to strike off the ballot paper and which to be leave on.

The men did not take this advice well. After one glance the papers were scrunched up and thrown over their shoulders causing Mr Jobley to step back with a look of disdain. He would have said nothing and turned to other, more amenable voters, but Betty, Harold's friend, saw the incident. She was colourfully attired and had been waving her temperance parasol at everyone who went past. Wocka was poked firmly in the waistcoat with that instrument. "Shame!" said Betty, "Shame! If you have no consideration for your own health and the welfare of your loved ones why not think of the future of Victoria? That was Mr Jobley you've insulted, the greatest man in the colony, and it won't be long before he's Premier."

"Turn it up, missus," said Wocka, angrily rubbing his stomach. "That 'urt, don't do it again."

"I'd do it again and more if I could knock some sense into your head," was the defiant retort. "Unless we destroy the evil of drunkenness in this community there is no hope for us. You must take the pledge of abstinence and it's here ready for you to sign." She pointed to a table set up on the pavement in front of the town hall. It had papers on it and was overseen by two women who sat side by side, their backs to the wall.. A cloth sign over their heads and fastened to the wall stated in big letters --

TEMPERANCE = HAPPINESS DRUNKENESS = MISERY

FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR FAMILY FIGHT BOOZE

VOTERS' TEMPERANCE UNION OF VICTORIA

"There it is," said Betty using the offending parasol once again, this time to indicate the table. "It is only a few steps but they could be the most important you have ever taken. It would be like passing a threshold to a new life. You sign the pledge never again to partake of alcohol and I am sure Mr Jobley would be kind enough to countersign it for you."

The men looked at one another. They could not push past Betty for she was standing firmly in their way. Wocka said disgustedly, "Bloody women! I gotta put up with this

sort of thing at home and now they're startin' on me in the street."

Harold Taylor was at Betty's elbow listening to her haranguing the wharf labourers; she put her hand on his shoulder to display him as an exhibit. "Look at Mr Taylor," she cried. "A fortnight ago he was a hopeless drunkard sinking rapidly towards the pit of perdition but he was saved from that horrible fate by Mr Jobley and has signed the same pledge I am asking you to take. Tell them Harold, tell them how you came to face up to the evil that was ruining your life and how much you have changed for the better."

"You be careful, miss," warned Sally. ''You won't get Wocka to give up his drop of booze; but he's sober now and that makes him bad tempered."

Benno shook his head at this folly Betty was proposing. He knew how fearsome Wocka and his other friend Joe Garbutt could be in a brawl and though the men could not hit Betty because of her sex there was no such protection for Harold.

"You should all try the path of temperance," said Harold with an admiring glance at Betty. He seemed intimidated by the size of Wocka and Joe but stepped forward gamely. "The Demon Drink is raging through the colony at this very moment seeking victims to destroy. If you think of yourself as drinking only in the company of friends and safe from the perils of the bottle you are in grave danger of falling victim yourselves. Fight, my friends! Fight with all your might!"

"Yair, I reckon I will," stated Wocka. The code of the time would not let him touch Betty, at least not in public, even after she poked him with the parasol, but his temper was considerably shorter than before. He adopted the stance of a pugilist, one foot forward and his two fists up, one in front of the other. Harold stepped back smartly just as Wocka punched him on the eye. He went down straight away leaving Wocka astonished because in the circles in which he moved an opponent did not keel over after a little knock like that.

"You drunken beast!" screeched Betty, and set about Wocka with the parasol. He flinched away while everyone looked in horror at the recumbent Harold. "Jeez!" said Benno while the blows rained down on his friend. "You're gone now, mate. If your missus finds out about you stackin' on a blue at the polling booth you're done for! You know what she said about getting inter fights." Sally had intervened on behalf of Wocka; she clasped Betty tightly from behind so her arms were pinned down and the parasol could only be waved futilely at Harold's assailant.

Startled candidates and voters appeared in the circle of spectators. "This man's mad with drink and he attacked poor Harold for no reason at all; call the police!" cried Betty to Jobley.She shook free of Sal's grip, dropped the parasol, and fell to her knees beside Harold.

"We'd better piss off while our luck's in," said Joe, speaking for the first time on that memorable occasion. They all glanced round. Wocka, taller than the others, could look over the heads of the surrounding crowd and saw a shiny black helmet. It was not

moving towards them; the fracas had been so sudden the constable was not yet aware of it.

"Yair, come on, let's go!"

"You haven't voted yet," said Mr Pryor, taken aback.

"No, we haven't, sorry about that. Maybe next time." They started to edge their way through the press of bodies, away from the helmet.

What about you two?" Mr Pryor enquired, indicating Benno and Joe."You can go in and vote, the police won't be after you."

Benno shrugged as he sidled away with Sally in tow. "They'll be after witnesses. See yer later." Mr Pryor's pleas were useless. Joe and Benno's abiding principle in life was not be witnesses to anything. They were not particularly dishonest but had a distaste for the legal system which favoured their class enemies.

Harold was helped up and, although wobbly on his legs, was led away by Betty to find a beefsteak for his eye. Some of the local hotels might have been able to supply such a thing but her beliefs and the customs of the time would not permit a woman of her class to enter any of them, and she certainly would not have trusted Harold in one of these establishments on his own, especially as he needed comforting after his clash with Wocka . His conversion to abstinence was very recent and it was not certain that he could resist temptation once inside one of these establishments devoted to vice and liquor.

Gabriel and some of their clerks turned up at the polling booth soon after midday when the office had closed. Harold had returned with the beginnings of a spectacular black eye; and was now playing a martyr in the cause of temperance. Betty and Mr Jobley were proud of his action in haranguing the evil representatives of the publicans, even at the cost of being brutally attacked. Any voter who could be buttonholed was introduced or had him pointed out as a fighter in the forefront of their cause and the black eye was a badge of honour. A chair had been reserved for his use in case of a giddy spell and he sank into it from time to time to show his weakened state.

His presence did not always have the desired effect; some of the more hardened voters laughed and offered to buy him a drink, others said if he planned to close the pubs his assailants should have blacked both eyes.

Gabriel was sorry about his brother-in-law's condition but more concerned about telling Amy and his mother that Harold had been in a fight. He made the man promise faithfully to come to Mrs Byer's house that evening with Betty, to prove to the family he had not suffered fatal or permanent injuries.

Mr Pryor paid little attention but concentrated on the voters. He shook each of his clerks by the hand as they disappeared into the polling booth. They protested that he

could rely on their votes but there was no way of checking these assertions; every vote was secret. Mr Pryor had enrolled them all, including Gabriel, after giving the staff a lecture on the possibility of the office closing for ever if he was not elected to parliament.

He warned them he might move to New South Wales and try his luck up there if the voters of Victoria were unwise enough to reject him at the ballot box.

When Gabriel went in to vote he was given a paper with the names of the seven candidates printed on it in alphabetical order, and the polling clerk scribbled his voter's number on the back. Theoretically the returning officer could later check the choice of every man who voted, but no one had ever heard of such a thing. Besides the officer or his clerks could have faced criminal charges if they had gone around telling how various people had voted.

Gabriel went to a desk and carefully put lines through the names of four candidates. He left the name Pryor.JW. on the paper also that of Edmunds.CGC., and just for luck he gave Jobley.SW. a vote. He did not really care about the hotels or the breweries but thought a strong voice was needed in parliament to criticise the peddlers of patent medicines. Besides, Jobley and Pryor were a matched pair, they would enjoy sparring with each other across the floor of the house.

He could vote only for the Assembly candidates and not the Legislative Council because he did not yet have the property qualifications to have his name entered on the voters' list for that house.

A number of carts and carriages had been hired by the candidates and decked out in their colours to convey voters who otherwise might not have attended. One manufacturer of tooth powder had offered to supply a large two horse van fitted with temporary seating. His gesture was accepted and Edmunds gave the driver a list of names and addresses of voters who had expressed an interest in voting for him and Mr Pryor, but the driver came back later and reported having lured few people aboard. No one was surprised at his lack of success when they saw the van pulled up outside the town hall. The donor had combined business with the election. Painted on both sides of the vehicle was the head of a grinning black urchin with open mouth showing two rows of shiny white teeth. There was also a message which read -- Toothache, neuralgia, etc. cured instantaneously by **Don's Patent Magic NEUROTIC POWDER**. Sold by all chemists. Packets one shilling

No matter how many nostrums people of all classes might buy and consume privately to cure their ailments no respectable persons would be seen riding in a vehicle associated with patent medicine advertisements, or their manufacturers.

There was enough transport for their purposes so the loss of Mr Don's van, which was sent away, did not upset them and a succession of vehicles rolled up all day carrying voters to the booth.

The publicans had promised to deliver a large number of voters and did , nobly. They

kept a close eye on their patrons and questioned every one as to whether or not they had already voted. Those that had not were either sent or brought to exercise their democratic rights.

Unfortunately not every one was acceptable to the returning officer. He stipulated that only those capable of walking inside and holding a pencil could take part in the election. It was no good telling him how an unconscious or extremely drunk person would have voted if he had been awake. A horse trough in Bourke Street became the principal means of restoring drunken voters to a sense of their responsibility to the infant democracy of the colony. Their heads were held under the pump until they could stagger back to the booth or until they were given up as hopeless.

An extremely sober but tight lipped woman in company with her husband arrived in one of Jobley's conveyances. She shuddered at the sight of inebriated voters being led inside and ignored Messrs Pryor and Edmunds though she smiled at Mr Jobley and his supporters as she marched her husband through the doors into the booth. Those standing outside forgot the pair until ten minutes later when raised voices were heard and the lady was escorted outside by the returning officer, a serious looking man with a full beard.

"I am sorry, Madam," he was saying, "you should know the rules by now, I cannot permit a woman to vote in the election."

"I was helping my husband," she said. "He was voting. I was merely showing him who to vote for."

"If I were to press charges you could be in serious trouble. No one is permitted to go to the desk with a voter and tell him how to vote. But you did more than that; you snatched the pen from his hand and started to mark the ballot paper yourself. That is a criminal offence and I could call a constable, but I won't, instead you are not to come back into the booth."

"How will my husband know who to vote for?"

"That is his problem and his privilege. The only advice he will get from us is that he can leave three names or fewer on the ballot paper and we will show him which box to put it in when he has finished voting. Apart from that it is up to him."

"Well, I struck some names off, at least he's not that stupid that he can't work out the rest."

"You're too late. I have already ordered the poll clerk to cancel his ballot paper and give him a new one."

"He won't know how to mark the paper! How can you get sense out of a man. Anyway, it's high time we women were given the vote."

The returning officer shrugged. "That won't happen in your time or mine! Just you wait for your husband out here. If you set foot inside once more I will lay charges." He

lifted his hand as the determined woman seemed about to walk in again, but she subsided, muttering darkly.

"There'll be no stoppin' them one of these fine days," said a voice in Mr Pryor's ear. He had been so distracted by the spectacle of the woman being escorted outside that he had not noticed the arrival of three more voters. Timothy Flanagan shook his head. "It wouldn't surprise me one bit if we live to see women gettin' the vote. Of course they don't have the same reasoned judgment as men but as long as they vote the way their husbands tell 'em I suppose it'll be all right. I can't vote here meself," he said. "I dare say I'll have to go all the way to Brighton to do it; but I brought some mates with me."

He was accompanied by O'Hanlon and Mr Gladman, both dressed very formally with ties and stiff collars as though the poll was a solemn ceremony.

Mr Pryor took them all by the hand and Timothy stayed to chat while the other two stepped into the booth. "We registered George's address as the pub," he said, "so he's in your electorate. Otherwise he would have had to front up at the Prahran Town Hall or somewhere if he wanted to vote. I told him The Brethren and the chapel were supporting Jobley so he couldn't get here quick enough to vote for you, Funny how he and O'Hanlon hit it off together now. At first Pat didn't want him in the pub at any price. Now he was real sorry to see him go back to his missus, but it's all right; George's wearin' the pants in that family now. As soon as the shop closed he came round to the pub to see O'Hanlon and me and we all come up to the booth together leaving Mrs O'Hanlon in charge I might even get back together with me own missus, being in the pub's allright but it's not like home, even without the nagging. Besides they've got hold of a new cook down at Brighton now, and she can knock up some tremendous meals; young Henry's living like a lord she'll make him fat before his time if he doesn't watch out."

After a time his friends reappeared from the booth. "We'll be moving into my new premises on Monday week," said Mr Gladman. "I suppose you had forgotten with everything else you have been doing, but I have hired the carriers. Mrs Goss and I will work right through Sunday to get everything in order. We're having a grand opening sale, you know; that's another idea of yours I'm taking up. You and Mr Fox might like to drop in while it's going on; we'd be pleased to see you. And I have great hopes of everything working out alright; plenty of customers have said they will come to see us when we go to Collins Street."

Mr Pryor slapped him on the back. "Of course you will, George. Once you get settled you'll get hundreds of new customers. In twelve months you'll be looking for somewhere bigger, and good luck to you."

O'Hanlon had been waiting to join in, he said, "When you're the member Mrs O'Hanlon and me'll be glad to shout you a drink. You and Tim, and George, and Mr Edmunds are welcome to come and crack a bottle with us to celebrate yer win; just let me know when it's on and we'll have everything ready."

He stopped and grinned uneasily as Detective Jones walked by and nodded affably

before entering the booth. "Well then, we're off," said O'Hanlon who was not going to wait around until Jones re-emerged. They shook hands once more and walked away.

That night it was dark and most of the men who intended to vote had done so hours ago. Some theatregoers dropped in before starting their night's entertainment but the weary candidates and those of their helpers who had lasted the distance found the time going slower and slower. The hour from seven to eight that evening seemed the longest in the whole calendar. However, even that passed and at 8 pm the returning officer came out and firmly closed and locked the doors of the booth.

"We'll see you all back here about half past nine," said Edmunds turning away with Mr Pryor. "They should start posting up the results by then." The candidates all nodded at one another and went off to their delayed dinners.

As they were walking off two men hurried round the corner. They recognised the candidates. "The Trump up at the United Services Pub said we had to go like the clappers and come down straight away and vote for youse blokes, and there'd be a drink for us when we got back." Mr Pryor shrugged his shoulders. "Don't bother, it's all over. You should have been here before eight o'clock." they walked past leaving the men looking plaintively at the firmly locked doors of the town hall.

At 9.30 Gabriel, Amy and Sir Thomas walked to the booth to read and hear the results for themselves. Polling officers from all over the colony would be telegraphing results to the tally room. After that the figures and a record of seats won and lost would be posted on the the windows of the Argus and Age. .

They looked but no figures were posted up yet. Soon they were joined by a growing crowd of citizens and the first of the nervous candidates who had returned to discover what effect their eloquence had had on the electorate.

Messrs Pryor and Edmunds had dined somewhere in the city and returned in a cheerful mood. Coming round the corner they shouted greetings to Gabriel's party and some of their supporters, an action which drew bleak stares from the temperance group; its members suspected them, quite rightly, of having drunk beer and spirituous liquor with their dinner.

By ten o'clock a large and noisy crowd had gathered in front of the newspaper premises. There was some taunting of Jobley and his supporters and calls for a speech to which demands Pryor and Edmunds jovially added their voices. Mr Jobley refused to oblige because what he privately described as the dregs of the hotel patrons were now present; whether he included his political rivals in this description was not clear. Jeers and catcalls were heard when he refused to speak and various cheerful members of the crowd waved bottles of beer and offered him a drink if that was what he needed to get going. He shook his head sorrowfully, gazing with compassion on these poor victims of the public house trade, an action which caused a burst of laughter lasting five minutes or so.

One drunk man got up on the ladder that would be used when posting up the results,

amid cheers of encouragement and offered to tell the story of his own life as a powerful disincentive to imbibing liquor in any form, but he fell off the ladder and was heard no more.

About a quarter past ten a door opened for a moment and a workman came out bearing a another ladder on his shoulder. He came out to the hearty cheers of the crowd and put his ladder against the notice board. Some of the livelier characters in the crowd tried to wrestle the ladder away and make off with it but were foiled by a patient constable who earned the approbation of the crowd and was offered enough drink, if he had accepted the proffered bottles, to render him incapable of service for the rest of the night.

Five minutes later the the returning officer appeared accompanied by some of his polling clerks and with a sheaf of papers in his hand. One of his staff carried a stool on which the officer was to stand. Everyone ran or walked out from under the verandah and into the street leaving him standing on the stool with his entourage around him.

"His excellency the governor," he declaimed, and his opening words silenced the crowd immediately.

''His excellency the Governor,'' he repeated, “Acting under delegated authority from Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, last month issued writs for a general election in the Colony of Victoria. The election was for the purpose of ascertaining which persons shall represent the various electoral districts and provinces of the said colony. Not all the results of the poll in other districts have yet been telegraphed to me but I am pleased to announce the results in this particular Melbourne electorate. It shall be my duty to inform the governor as follows -- " He paused for effect, then started to read from his papers. The candidate who received the highest number of votes was Jobley, Samuel William, with 2400 votes." He was interrupted by a burst of cheering from that gentleman's supporters who crowded round to take his hand or slap him on the back while other members of the crowd booed or groaned.

When he could be heard again the returning officer continued, "the second highest tally was attained by Pryor, James Willoughby, with 2340 votes." More cheering followed these words and much waving of bottles. "The next in order," said the returning officer, shouting over the noise was Edmunds, Charles Graham Considine, with 2142 votes. I therefore declare these gentlemen duly elected from this electorate to the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Victoria to well and truly serve the people of Victoria until it pleases Her Majesty to call another poll."

The names of the other candidates and the number of votes they received could not be heard over the din that followed these announcements so the returning officer returned to his booth after first handing the papers over to the man with the ladder so he could chalk the numbers on the board. Another man took the second ladder to go and write up the figures outside the Argus office.

James Pryor saw Gabriel in the crowd and broke clear from his supporters to come over with a beaming face. He was so overcome with the joy of the moment that he

actually hugged his friend. He said in his ear, "this is it, mate. tomorrow I'll have a thumping headache, but I'll sleep it off all day and on Monday I'll be back at the office; then we'll make the fur fly. My mob is going to win this election and it'll be the biggest thing that ever happened to Victoria. Nothing can stop Victoria's progress now; its going to go up and up and so will Pryor and Fox. I told you we'd be the wealthiest men in the colony, and I meant it. Just you watch us go!

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