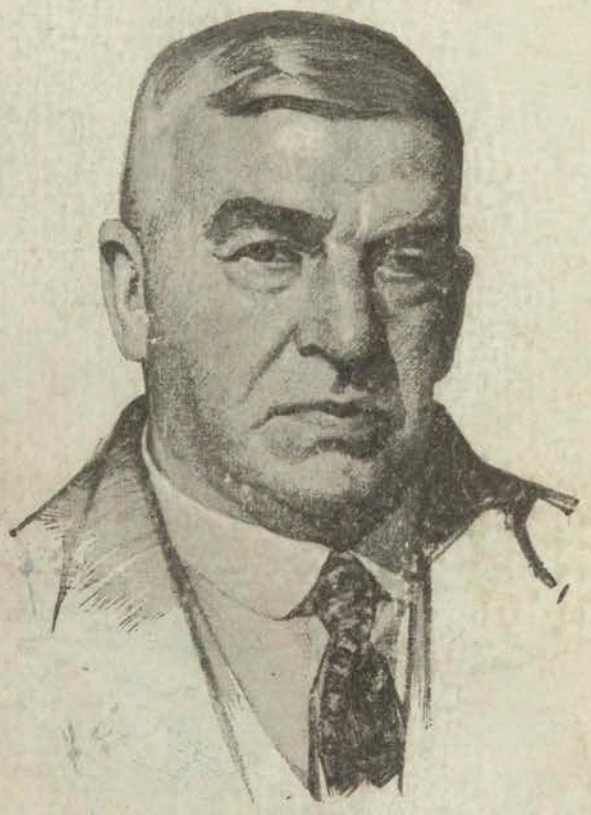
STORM BRADLEY

—AUSTRALIAN



By FRED DAVISON

With the
Authors
Compliments
Ted Larsen
Vancouver

To the Girl in the
Red Dress.

Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying, "When may we sell corn . . . *making the ephah* (a measure of corn) *small, and the shekel great,* that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes." The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, "Surely I will never forget any of their works."—Amos viii., 4, 5, 6, 7.

STORM BRADLEY

—AUSTRALIAN

A STORY OF
YESTERDAY, TODAY AND
TOMORROW

By

FRED DAVISON

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The possible buyer of this book is warned, before purchase, that it is "a story with a purpose." Storm Bradley—First, Second and Third— is a man of the people—always. He, through the changing times, does his full share as a man and a citizen—and, in these loathsome years of unemployment that have descended on Australia, and on the world, he also does his full share towards cleaning up the mess. Yes—it is indeed "a story with a purpose." May its purpose be fulfilled.

STORM BRADLEY—Australian

CHAPTER ONE

YOUNG STORM BRADLEY was the third of his line to bear his name. Both his father and grandfather were Storms. Old Storm, Mr. Bradley and Young Blue was how the neighborhood distinguished them, but in the home Mrs. Bradley and the girls knew them as Grandpa, Dad and Stormie.

Mrs. Bradley—Polly to her husband and to her father-in-law, and Mum to her daughters, Alice and Mary, and to Storm, her youngest—was a dark-haired, pleasant-looking young woman, neither over-stout nor over-thin, but just "right," —well below middle-age; that indefinite period anywhere between thirtyfive and fiftyfive, according to whether one feels "fit" or otherwise.

She was a daughter of John Henry Polglase, one-time Methodist preacher in the Bendigo circuit, who, because of his horny hands, and possibly because also of his rugged outspokenness, was

mostly sent to fill the pine pulpits of the little churches of the "gullies" towards Eaglehawk, while the congregations of the bigger places listened to the "ifs" and the "buts" of the more highly-trained—and the more carefully-spoken.

But John Henry faithfully expounded the truth delivered to him, and cared not at all that his small congregations sang "Beulah Land" reading their hymn books with the aid of half-a-dozen kerosene lamps hanging from the chapel walls. The light that was in him and in his hearers outshone the flickering rays from the polished tin reflectors, and he and they were more than content.

And, next day, he and many of his hearers would be together, a thousand feet "below," puttin' in charge, or eatin' crib while the fumes dispersed, as is the manner of Cornishmen the world over, wherever there are mines and wherever there are miners. Scotsmen are for the engines of the world, Irishmen are for the police force of the world, the English poke themselves in here, there or anywhere, but the John Henry Polglases, of "Cornwall, near England," are never so much at home as a mile below the surface anywhere from Penzance to Timbuctoo.

And wherever they go they carry their religion with them—and best dispense it from little pine pulpits, with the aid of cheap kerosene lamps. Good men and good religion—the latter perhaps all the better because of the kerosene lamps and the little pine pulpits.

When Polly Bradley had been Polly Polglase she followed in the footsteps of John Henry her father, and was a regular attendant at one of the little Methodist churches at which he preached on Sundays. Polglase's beliefs, considerably watered down, and so with something of their "uncomfortableness" removed, remained with his daughter;

but, with the watering down, went a good deal of the "surefootedness" of the oldtime believer. The men and women of the not-so-far gone past believed what they believed, and believed it with all their might. Certain things were Right, and certain other things were Wrong—and that was all there was to it. No halfway house for them. No indeed! The Devil was a most real personage! Dancing! Theatre-going! Riding on trains on Sunday! Or digging in the garden, or chopping firewood, on the first day of the week! Certainly not! Of course, the wife cooking a heavy Sunday dinner, and staying at home from church to do it, was quite another matter. Somehow that didn't count. Just why, it is hard to say—but it didn't.

When one went to Melbourne on a visit, a little easing up was permissible, for was it not understood that city folks were a trifle loose in their way. Just a trifle! There, even ministers travelled in trains from their suburban homes to their Sunday services in the city. So maybe the Lord was not as strict in the big cities as He was upcountry. Maybe!

Possibly religion is a good deal like salt. A sprinkle is beneficial and improves the dish; but neither salt nor religion is meant to be eaten by the spoonful—and a dishful, taken neat, will produce the worst kind of sickness. However, the folks of thirtyfive and forty years ago took their theological salt in liberal helpings—and looked forward to the Land Beyond Jordan as a place where they would get the taste out of their mouths; or, possibly, where they would be given a new palate that would enjoy the saltiness.

Yet, with it all—or possibly because of it all—they served their day and generation faithfully, as we would do well to remember.

Those times, those men, and those manners.

These times, these men and these manners. Then, religion kept very close to the church walls, if not inside the walls; now, religion is spread abroad, and its shadow has become widened past all knowing. Man is becoming his brother's keeper, and the business of all legislatures the world over is acknowledged to be, in the main, the caring for those unable to care for themselves—the placing of the burden on the shoulders of those best able to bear it.

In the years that are gone, to question the right of the employer to do as seemed to him good was Bolshevism—or whatever stood for Bolshevism in those days. Small boys and small girls worked long hours and were paid little or nothing. Old men and old women, past their earning years, lived as best they might—and died years before their time because they had outlived their wage-getting strength. And religion, being confined to the church walls, was powerless.

Now that religion has stepped outside the churches, and has gone into the world and among men, a great change has come. Man is by way of recognising his responsibility to his brother man, and Justice is by way of being done. The old, the sick, and the fatherless no longer are uncared-for, and child labour is a thing of the past among decent peoples.

Yes; and the world is a better world because of these things. There never was a time when the Sermon on the Mount was given such universal application as it is given today. And this in spite of the bloody fact that the world has come through a war the like of which has never been known.

And it may be that the ten thousand John Henry Polglases, preaching from the ten thousand little pine pulpits, by the light of the many thousands of kerosene lamps, had quite a deal to do with the

change. They shovelled out the salt of their teachings, and of their doctrines, and of their dogmas—especially their dogmas—but the winds of free thought took it up and blew it into the widespread seasoning it was intended by God Almighty to be, until it has made the whole dish good. Should it by reason of age lose aught of its saltiness—why, there is an everlasting world supply at the same source from which the John Henry Polglases of the past so vigorously shovelled, and where the John Henry Polglases of the future can just as vigorously dig.

Other influences than the changing thought of the passing years also had had much to do with the breadth of outlook and the kindness of nature of Mrs. Storm Bradley, as compared with the forceful narrowness of John Henry Polglase, local preacher. Her mother, Margaret Polglase, was one of those women who, once in a while, are sent into this world to the exceeding great advantage of the little circle of their home and of their immediate friends. They seldom or never "belong" to uplift societies—but long after they are gone their memory remains, and their children call them blessed. Yes, much of Margaret Polglase was in her daughter, Polly Bradley—with just enough of John Henry to add the fighting touch so desirable, whether in friend or foe.

For Polly Bradley's husband didn't know just at what corner of the day or night he would meet the next connubial "spat"—to which he would contribute his full share. But the sun never went down on her wrath, nor on his. Always, they slept the sleep of the reconciled; for their love, that began when first they looked into each other's eyes at the gate of a little church on a Bendigo hill, had lasted, and would endure to the end—and peradventure beyond. Their differences were

only the wind-blown ripples on the surface of the deep, strong sea of their proved love—and they both knew them for such.

Storm II had become acquainted with Polly while he was on a visit to Bendigo. He had come down from Echuca, on the border of New South Wales, not much more than a boy, at the invitation of a friend of his mother's. They were religious folk and he had gone with them to church one Sunday evening—and so met Polly.

Previous to his Bendigo visit he had had day-dreams of roaming the earth, "For to be'old and for to see, and for to admire this world so wide," but—one look at the girl in the red dress, and all Storm's dreams went into the discard. He'd found something he wanted more than "be'olding, and seeing, and admiring," and what Storm wanted most that he went after—and got.

Most men don't know that what they want "most" they can have—if they really want one thing and one thing only and will go after that one thing with a single mind. Of course, catching two rabbits at one and the same time is a feat incapable of accomplishment. Which is also something most men don't know.

Storm's actions soon advertised his state of mind towards Polly, and the neighbors became well acquainted with the sight of a strange young man about the Polglase home. "I rather took things for granted those days, or seemed to," he would say to Polly. "Anyway, I meant well, and most of my noise was just bluff. Right at the bottom I was a shy youngster."

Storm was no different to most folks. Half a man's brag—more than half—is just an everlasting attempt to hide his own knowledge that he is not anything like what he sets up to be. So he talks out loudly to get by. And very often he

does get by—for people are easily fooled.

Many years afterwards Storm II used to tell his daughters just how he met their mother. "I walked up to the gate of the little church, and the first thing I knew I was going through the ceremony of an introduction—'Mr. Bradley—Miss Polglase.' You girls are not too bad in the matter of looks—but you should have seen your mother when she was your age! And I'm darned if I can see that she's altered much since."

Of course, when Storm looked into the mirror and saw how the slim youth of the church-gate introduction had grown into the stout, middle-aged man, he knew there must be something wrong with his eyesight as to Polly; but, nevertheless, he told his girls the same tale as opportunity offered and with a conviction that grew stronger as the years passed.

Storm II lost no time in his courtship of Polly, and Polly certainly put no obstacles in his way. Not that she was unmaidenly, but just that she knew him for her mate, and didn't pretend otherwise. Then, as always, she acted with inborn honesty and lack of pretence. Her breeding showed in her actions, always. John Henry of the little pine pulpits and Margaret the good mother lived once again in their daughter, so their transparent honesty was hers also.

When Storm and Polly married, they rented a cottage at Redan Hill, not far from Polly's old home, and, about a year afterwards, Storm got his father down from Echuca to live with them. Not that he greatly wanted to have him, nor did Polly, but Storm's mother had died soon before the wedding, and Storm's sisters being married, the old man was lonely.

"Better have him here," said Storm to Polly, in a questioning voice. "He's getting old."

Storm I was a tempestuous old fellow of about seventy. As a young man he had followed the sea—sailing out of the port of Sydney. The Seven Seas knew him and he knew them. He had been a hard man to buck—and was still—so his coming advent into Polly's house was rather dreaded by her, for she had always, during her courtship, looked forward to the time when she and Storm II would be just by themselves.

However, things did not turn out as badly as they might have done—they seldom do—and old Storm and his son's wife got along very well together, though in all things he was the opposite of her father, John Henry Polglase, local preacher; and was an entirely new kind of man to those to whom she was accustomed.

Storm I had small use for little pine pulpits—nor for big mahogany ones either, for the matter of that. From his youth up he had taken all the fun that came his way—paying for it, if payment were demanded of him, as it mostly was without grumbling.

He was a strong old man, with a shock of white hair that in his boyhood had been red, gradually bleaching to ginger as he neared middle life, and then whitening with age. He had as straight a back and as stout a heart as many a man half his years, and didn't know what sickness was.

Not so many years earlier, when Storm II was a boy of ten, the old man used to follow the shearers down from Queensland through to Victoria as cook for the sheds, and so earn a living for himself and his distant family. He married late in life and had had a hard time rearing three children whose grandfather he should have been, not their father.

Neither had Mrs. Storm Bradley I had too easy a life. Her husband's earnings, though fairly good

while the shearing was on, weren't sufficient all the year around, so she added to them by working out as opportunity offered.

Still, with most of the neighbors on the same footing, no one thought they were under any undue hardships, and everybody lived in a fine unconsciousness of their "inferiority," for the spirit of the day, unexpressed but still very potent, was that the opportunities of life were free to all—that life was worth the living, and that the world was a fat oyster for the man or woman who was able to open it.

So-called disadvantages have a habit of proving they are real advantages, and often what appears to be an advantage is only a hindrance. In other words, difficulties stiffen the spine and put sand in the craw, while the absence of the need for effort very often softens the mental and moral muscles. Still, one must not spread any generalisation too widely—or it will split.

Storm II used to tell Polly, speaking of his boyhood, "My mother would talk to us around the tea-table as though we were as good as anyone else—and didn't let us forget that anyone else was as good as us. That's what I call true democracy. And she would tell us, too, that out in the world there was something worth while if we would only take the trouble to go after it.

"And there were no carpets on our floors, nor pictures on our walls, either," he would add; "Only bricks for the one and hessian, covered with cheap wallpaper on the other. But there was a healthy belief in ourselves that made us all unconscious of the brick floors and of the hessian-covered walls."

All his life old Storm had been troubled with "itchy feet." Anywhere he happened to be had always been, to him, a good place to get away

from; and anywhere else had always been a better place to go to. Not the best kind of man for a woman to marry, but for the purpose of extending the boundaries of a nation men of that sort are necessary. They skirmish ahead of the army's main body. Not always do they know where they are going—or why.

The wrecks of men of this type sometimes finish up earning a shilling as best they can; others of the kind make one trip too many out back, and their bones are discovered by some boundary rider long after they have been posted as "missing." With others, the "itch" lessens as time passes, and they settle down and look like other men—outwardly. Inwardly, the difference remains.

But it is from the Great Army of Men with Uneasy Feet comes every once in a while the Leader—who, differing from the rank and file, well knows where he is going, and why. And because of that great difference he plants the flag of civilisation where flag never flew before.

Storm the First was Sydney born. His father had come to Australia with the First Fleet—a sergeant of Marines—and had taken his discharge on the expiry of his period of enlistment. He was one of Parramatta's earliest settlers, and had reared a family of nearly a dozen children, as was the fashion in those days. Storm was one of the youngest. As a boy, salt water attracted him, so the many bays of Sydney harbour knew the redheaded lad well. Rushcutter's, Mosman, Watson's, Manly, were all familiar places to him long before his fourteenth year, and every whaler that tied up at Darling harbour was sure of a visit from him. Then he shipped aboard one of them for a three-year cruise—and thereafter the deep water was his home.

When Hargreaves discovered gold at Bathurst,

Storm Bradley was just back from a voyage to American ports. He was soon on Hargreaves' heels, and, from then on, when he wasn't afloat he was following the gold. Sometimes successfully, sometimes not. These early wanderings had taken him to Bendigo at the time the gold fever was at its height, so when he went to live with his son he was on familiar ground.

"I think I'll have a poke around and look up some of the old spots," said Storm the First the morning after his arrival on Bendigo. "I sunk a few holes on the flats and in the gullies thirty years ago. I'll go and see if they are there yet."

"Do you think you'll know them again, Dad?" asked Polly.

"Maybe—I'll tell you when I get back," answered the old man, as he stepped out of the door on his voyage of re-discovery of his youth. For that was what he was looking for—not for the holes he had sunk in the ground years before in his search for fortune.

Looking up one's youth is a sad business, unless one is a good deal of a philosopher, and unless one's philosophy is of the cheerful kind that readily acknowledges how much worse life might have been—that one has to be thankful for the things one has escaped as a kind of balance for the bruises that the years have dealt out, perhaps rather over-liberally. However, Storm wasn't the sort to lament the might-have-beens, nor to nurse the sore spots where the blows of life had fallen.

"Tomorrow will be another day," he would say, when today had gone against him. "Why, we're lucky to be alive. Look at all the people who are dead—and who have to stay dead."

So the old man spent many an hour picking up his bearings among the abandoned alluvial workings along the Back Creek. Here and there he lo-

cated a hole that had been sunk by men he had known, but not often. Still, it did happen.

"I found Bandy Steve's claim today," he told Polly one evening, sitting at the tea table. "I knew it by the remains of two round holes that a party of Chinese sunk nearby, after Steve struck gold."

"Round holes?" queried Polly.

"Yes," he replied. "Chinks always shaped their shafts round. Everybody else made theirs oblong. Why, I don't know."

"But there weren't many round holes on the field, because there weren't many Chinese. There was a good deal of 'White Australia' about the diggers in the early days. Just as well, perhaps, or we might have more Chinamen here now."

Soon afterwards, Storm II's daughter was born. Polly named her Alice, after her own grandmother, John Henry's mother. Storm had wanted a son —like most men who as boys were the only son of a family otherwise girls. But he learned his mistake later. It was just that, having had no brothers, a boy to him would have been a novelty; whereas he knew, or thought he knew, all about girls.

So he might have done; that is, about all the girls who had been born up to the time his own daughter happened along; but with her advent he soon discovered that all previous knowledge of girls was wrong—that here was an entirely new kind of girl—an entirely better kind.

With which Polly quite agreed.

CHAPTER TWO

STORM BRADLEY the elder had lived a full life and had enjoyed every minute of it. Though possibly not quite so much could be said for his wife.

Not that he was neglectful, for though his monthly cheques earned on the sheep stations were none of the biggest, such as they were he sent them untouched straight back to the family that was beginning to come to him.

"I don't know how father gets his tobacco," Mrs. Bradley often would say to her children. "His cheque comes just as the station manager hands it to him. I wonder what he does for a little money for himself."

Storm the first had paid many visits to London in his seafaring days. That was easy those times, for often the Australian ports would be full of ships waiting to get a new crew, the men having cleared out in a body and gone to the goldfields.

After his third voyage to England and back, Storm I, then almost middle-aged, decided to stay at home. The sea was no place for an old man, and he was beginning to feel his youth slipping from him. Then, he met the girl who later became his wife, and after a while he married.

Before long, there was nothing for it, if he would earn a living, but to go up country and follow the only trade he knew—cooking. Truth to tell, he was no way averse to doing so, for old habits are strong, and stay in one place for long he couldn't. So, leaving his wife and three youngsters behind him, he carried his swag inland, joining the great army of men who went from job to job as work offered. The life was hard and the pay was small.

The railroad joining Bendigo to Melbourne a hundred miles away, had just been built, and Storm Bradley took his family sixty miles further north, to the little Murray river port of Echuca, where the growing wool trade of the Riverina centered.

He got work at the sheep stations on the New South Wales side of the river, as first going only

as far as the Murrumbidgee, but later he wandered clear across New South Wales and on into Queensland. Once a year or so he got back to his home on the Murray banks, but he never stayed there long.

"I'm too old to take a job as cook at one of the hotels here," he told his wife. "I'd break down inside of three months. In the Bush it's easier, and I can always get a helper to do the rough work."

So after perhaps a month at home, he would again shoulder his swag, taking the train maybe as far as Deniliquin, and from that town striking north towards Hay—and beyond.

Bradley was an observing man. "There's too much water running to waste in the Riverina and further north," he would say. "Some day they'll throw dams across the rivers, and then the back country will carry a lot of people. Whether they'll be any happier than we are now, I don't know; but I suppose we'll have to leave that to them. Father's can't keep sons from making fools of themselves."

Storm Bradley the first had a great faith in the future of his country, and of which, as the years went by, he saw so much. "It's a fine land, one of the best," he would say "A bit on the dry side, possibly; but there's plenty of water, if it is properly used. But there's one thing will have to be thought of ahead, and that is the matter of not stocking up with too many people, so that if an extra dry pinch comes along they won't set to fighting each other for the water. If ever there is civil war in Australia it will be over the water rights. The fellows living down river won't stand the chaps upstream cutting it off to develop their own particular district. They'd get their guns out and fight—North against South—and nobody could blame them."

"But there's not much fear of overstocking inland Australia with humans," he would continue. "The thousands of square miles of coast lands will carry the most of the people—the inland will attend to keeping up the quality."

One trip Storm I made—he was away from home nearly two years that time—took him clear through to central Queensland. Telling about it afterwards, he said, "I guess I know more than a little about Australia now. I ought to, for I've seen plenty of it, and not just as a sightseer either. If you want to know a place you've got to earn your living in it, else you are liable to know a lot of things that aren't so."

That trip, Storm I started off with a job cooking for the homestead at a station on the Murray, just below Echuca, on the Victorian side of the river. Somehow, he couldn't hit it with the owner's wife. She was one of the kind that was always interfering. "Less salt in the corned beef—or more currants in the pudding. There was always something wrong that no man could put right," said Storm. So he rolled his swag and left.

Leaving a job in the squatter country of Australia was, those days, an easy business. A man just threw his swag on his back and humped it to the next station, where he was always sure of a bit of meat, some flour and tea and sugar—traveller's rations. Then he would spend the night in the hut, or camp out alongside a creek under a gum-tree.

Bradley turned his back on the Murray rather regretfully. He didn't want to go further north, for that would take him too great a distance from his family. Besides, the Murray river country was a very pleasant place to stay awhile—and still is. Fishing was good, and the billabongs swarmed with wild duck. Rabbits—that were before many

years passed to be so troublesome—were just coming into the district; kangaroos made good hunting, and, altogether, life could be very pleasant, and easy, if one desired an "easy" life.

Still, for Storm I, the "boss's missus" spoilt the job, so, with "Matilda" up, he crossed the river and struck out northwest for the Murrumbidgee country. But let him tell his own tale.

"I got a job at a sheep station on the 'Bidgee. Shearing was just starting and the men's cook had left at a moment's notice, luckily for me, for I hadn't done any work since I crossed the Murray.

"After the station cut out, I worked across the river nearly to the Queensland border which I crossed later. There's a big stretch of country there that will take handling some day. It will be the jumping-off place from which Australians will start when they begin to make real use of the middle of their continent. It's a good place for good men—and no place at all for any other sort.

"It's a matter of rainfall and water saving—and of not trying to use the land for purposes for which God Almighty never intended it to be used. And it's no use expecting any different kind of seasons than those it gets now. The man who goes on it thinking the seasons will get better will meet trouble—they won't.

It will always need to be handled by men who have a healthy respect for its "ruggedness" and its unexpectedness, and who will not be misled by the good years so that they act as if there will never be any more bad ones. There will be—that's certain."

Storm II was about five years old when his father came back from the long trip, and his sisters were two and three years older. They lived a couple of miles outside Echuca, in a three-room slab hut close to the Murray. The river was their

playfellow, and neither the boy nor his sisters could remember the time when they couldn't swim. As they grew older they acquired a boat of sorts, and paddled up and down stream.

As with most Australian rivers, the depth of water varied greatly with the seasons. Sometimes it was a swirling flood, reaching up to the decking of the bridges, forty and fifty feet overhead, and stretching for miles over inundated country—and sometimes it could almost be crossed on foot without wetting the ankles.

Mostly it was just a quiet little river, gum-tree lined and shady, where life was pleasant—so pleasant that the goldfields fossicker had, and still has, his counterpart in the "Waler," who is content to live on the river banks and see life go by him while he takes things easy. He sets his lines for the Murray cod and blackfish, and lives as best he may—for life is not hard in the Australian climate.

There, if a man's wants are small, he need call no other man "Master." An ideal life for the unambitious and the loafer. But, as elsewhere, if a man would earn his own and others' respect, he must be up and doing, and not drowse his opportunities away, even in such a pleasant place as Australia's river country.

It seems as though the nineteenth century was the century when men took less thought of their physical comfort and more thought of their material advance—and particularly that applies to the first threequarters of that hundred years. But the twentieth century has found men softer. They ask for more comfort. Or is it that they take a saner view of life than did their forebears?

Possibly it is that in the earlier times only the privileged few got their snouts into the trough; while, now, all classes have found their way to it.

To change the metaphor—If there ever comes a time, or if that time is already here with us, when too many will have climbed into the waggon, and too few are in the shafts pulling—why, the vehicle will be at a standstill. Then there will have to be a general climbing down, and a general pulling in the shafts—and the nation will move along at a pace good for all.

But climbing down will never be popular. It never has been.

CHAPTER THREE

TIME passed—four years of it—and found Storm I still working at the sheds in the Murray-Murrumbidgee country, keeping as close as possible to his home. Storm II, now a boy of nine, and his two sisters, had depended for their education on what their mother could teach them; but just about this time the colony began to establish free government schools so young Storm and the girls went daily to Echuca, where one had been opened. The walk was a two-mile one, but that was nothing to the bushbred youngsters.

The school was on the outskirts of the town, and the boy was in constant trouble with his sisters because of his habit of walking barefoot along the bush roads, with his boots swinging by their laces around his neck.

"Mother, Stormie won't put his boots on until he gets close to school!" his eldest sister complained. "He just walks along kicking up the dust, then, when he gets near town, he sits down and pulls them on, and we have to wait for him while he laces them up. I wish you'd make him put them on at home."

"I know what's the matter with you," said

Storm. "You think you're a young lady, and you're afraid to show your bare feet."

But it was pleasant walking along the road, soft with inches of dust. School at the other end of the long walk, wasn't as bad as it might have been because of the pleasure of getting there.

Every once in so often there is a teacher who knows how to teach something besides reading, writing and arithmetic, and there was just such a one in charge of that Echuca school. He was what has since become known as a "Good Australian."

Often he would read to the children Australian verses of a kind that was just at that time beginning to appear in the newspapers. The first writings of Australian poets, who, later, were to number among themselves such singers as Kendall, Daley, Lawson, Paterson, and many others. Men who struck the strong Australian note so necessary to the formation of a national spirit:

"The axes ringing on mountain sides,
The woolboats swinging down Darling tides,
The drovers singing where Clancy rides."

Storm's schooldays did not last long, for those were times when the "three r's" were about all that was thought necessary for anyone. So, when he turned eleven, he, without saying anything at home, took the first job that offered—delivering milk around the township's streets.

The milk-delivering job was followed by a couple of years helping a small dairy farmer on the outskirts of Echuca. Storm had to milk the cows and assist with the cultivation. It was hard work and often the boy envied the lads attending school; but by this time the money he earned was necessary at home, so there could be no thought of his leaving work.

By the time he was fourteen he had grown into

a big fellow, strong for his age, and capable of a good day's work, so he left the dairy farmer for bushwork—ringbarking, fencing, burning off scrub and clearing. He joined with a couple of young fellows older than himself and they took contracts from settlers who were coming into the district in considerable numbers. The pay was fair, but not big considering the hours worked, for Storm and his mates put in long days so that their cheques would be sizeable. He liked the work, for he was his own master and the life was a free one.

Storm's mother still lived in the slab hut near the Murray river, and as much as possible he lived there too, but mostly his work took him away—sometimes as far as twenty miles distant.

The girls, Storm's sisters, had both left home and were working as cook and housemaid on a sheep station near the Murrumbidgee. Storm I was cooking for a surveyor's camp about fifty miles down the Murray, and had not been home for over three months, so Mrs. Bradley was having rather a lonely time.

But to her the little place was home, and though Storm II and the girls often urged her to move into Echuca, she always refused. "This place is ours. We don't have to pay rent—besides, I've got accustomed to the loneliness. And, anyway, it's not as bad as it was now the Brown's have built down the road; Mrs. Brown is always there if I should want her." So things remained as they were.

The place was on a little rise about half-a-mile from the river, and had always seemed secure from even the worst flood that might be expected, and had so proved itself. During all the years the Bradleys had lived there the water had never risen to anywhere near the hut—for it was little more—although there had been times when the whole countryside was submerged.

The too-prevalent idea that Australia is always a dry place is wrong. Australia can be, and often is, very wet. One season the rains had fallen all over the country to the north and east of the Murray, and the river ran a banker. Then the local rain came and the water spread over the flats for miles. Mrs. Bradley was alone at the time, but, as she had more than once watched the floods come to within a couple of hundred yards of her door, she was not alarmed.

But this time they keep creeping nearer. The rain continued over all the country drained by the Murray, and there seemed little hope of its abating. Gradually the floods spread until the back road to the town was under water and so her retreat was cut off.

Storm II was away on a clearing contract about twenty miles distant when word came to him that the river was threatening his mother's safety—that the floods had crept right up into Echuca, so he at once set out for home.

Five miles from the usual bed of the stream he met the river itself—and then he had to go warily. The roads were impossible of travel, being in many places washed away and in others a swirling stream, so he struck across country, taking his chances. He rode a good horse—one that could swim well—and several times his life depended on the animal's strength and ability in swift water.

Young Bradley's bushmanship stood by him in his struggle to reach his mother, and more than once his instinctive knowledge of the lay of the land kept him out of places where the water was so deep and dangerous that it would have gone hard with him had he been deceived by appearances. But he knew that danger, and perhaps death, lay hidden in the quiet-appearing spots—that just there was where the treacherous deep

holes were; so he skirted around, sometimes going long distances at a cost of much valuable time.

Once he had to swim a bend of the river itself, running deep and swift. He drove his horse into the stream, much against the beast's will, and then, when some distance across, slipped rearwards from its back, and, catching hold of its tail, went downstream, gradually forcing it across the river until he landed more than a quarter of a mile below the place where he entered the water. Several times he felt the animal graze a snag, but his luck held and he got safely to the other side.

At last he was within sight of his mother's home. The hut stood in the middle of a sea of muddy water and Storm wondered if she had been taken off by a rescue party, or if she was still in the house. Both he and his horse were tired to the limit, but the sight of the place still standing put new strength into him, and he forced the animal once again into the floods.

Halfway through, he gave a loud coo-e-e, and was much relieved to see his mother come to the door and wave her hand to him. The water had risen until it had entered the house and was a foot deep on the floor, but at that the rise had ceased and the danger was over.

Storm took his mother to the town, riding double, but within a few days she was back home, for Australian floods are always soon things of the past.

Storm II was now between seventeen and eighteen years old—a bright-haired, typically scimitar-faced Australian. His youthful activity and strength showed in his breadth without thickness and in his length without lankiness. He was a man in everything except actual years, and could do a day's work with any bushman within twenty miles of Echuca. Because of his reputation for

steadiness and reliability he was in demand among the station owners and also among those settlers who could afford to pay for labour.

Like his father, he would not take up land and go farming. "I don't like the idea of tieing myself down to a piece of the country—I want to travel all over it," he said. "Cockying is no good to me."

Just about this time both Storm's sisters married. The elder went to live in West Australia. Her husband's people were in Perth, and he owned a store at Bunbury. The younger settled down in Queensland, near Toowoomba, her husband taking up land on the Darling Downs.

After the girls left, Storm I was at home a good deal more. He was beginning to feel his years a little; besides, Storm II was earning good money, and grudged his mother nothing she wanted.

"I've got a few pounds in the bank, Mother," he told her. "You've only got to say the word. Don't go without anything you think you'd like."

Storm the elder put in a good deal of time fishing in the river and in the billabongs. Murray cod was plentiful, and there was a good demand for it in the town, so he set himself to supply one of the fish shops regularly. "We don't want to depend on the boy, Mother," he said. "Some day he'll be getting married, and then he'll need that money of his worse than he thinks he does. There's only the two of us, and I'll try and pay the grocery bill with the fish."

During the wild duck season, when the backwaters of the river swarmed with the birds, he shot them. "Bring me all you can get," the fishmonger who bought his cod told him. "Ill be glad to have 'em."

A couple of years passed. Storm II turned twenty—and just about his birthday he visited Bendigo, and met Polly Polglase. When he got

back to Echuca he told his mother about the girl. Not that he said very much, but from the little he did say Mrs. Bradley guessed how things were.

"Is she a nice girl, Storm?" she asked; though she knew the question was an absurd one, for what young fellow in love ever thought his girl was anything but nice.

"You'll like her, Mother" replied Storm.

"I hope so. She must come and pay me a visit soon. Shall I write and ask her?"

So Polly went up to Echuca for a fortnight, and Storm's mother and Storm's girl became fast friends.

Mrs. Bradley was only human, so she didn't run to welcome the marriage of her only son. As an abstract idea it was bearable, but as something in the quite near future it didn't look so good. Yet she liked Polly, and knew in her heart that her son had done well to win her.

"When are you thinking of getting married?" she asked one afternoon, as they sat at the door of the hut watching the river.

Polly didn't answer at first. Then she said, "I don't know. There's a lot to do at home, and Mother isn't strong. We'd better wait awhile."

Mrs. Bradley couldn't help but feel a little pleased at the thought of delay, and even at the cause of it, though she said, "I'm sorry your mother is not too well—but there isn't anything serious the matter with her, is there?"

"No. Just that the work for all of us is getting too much for her. In the letter that came yesterday, though she didn't say anything I could guess that my being here made a difference; so I'd better not stay too long."

Storm and Polly made the most of the visit. They went into the town of evenings, and the girl so far forgot the John Henry Polglase part of her

breeding as to allow Storm to take her to a dance there. He wouldn't be denied "Your dad will never know," he said. "Bendigo is a long way off."

So she went, and had a good time. She couldn't dance—John Henry had seen to that—but Storm was a good fellow with the lads of Echuca, so they saw she wasn't lonely while, at odd times, he danced with the local girls. Which wasn't too often, for he was a "one-girl" man, just as she was a "one-man" girl. But, being masculine, that fact didn't make quite so much difference with him as it should have done. He was a "one-girl man"—with reservations, of course.

Then there were drives out into the country, and a visit was paid to some cousins of the Bradleys living about a dozen miles south of Echuca, where they stayed for the night. Jim Wilson made friends for life of young Storm when he said, next morning, "Stick to that girl, Storm; she's the right sort."

"I will, Jim," answered Storm; "and I want you to remember that I saw her first."

Wilson laughed. "Don't worry, boy; it's easy to see there's no chance for anybody but you."

Leaving the Wilson's early in the morning for Echuca, Storm and Polly made a day of it, driving along the bush roads shaded by gumtrees and bordered by chock and log fences. They made a wide detour to get to a township about ten miles away for midday dinner, and reckoned to leave there in time to be back in Echuca by dusk.

Compared to Storm, Polly was townbred. She had never been on the bush roads before, and enjoyed every minute of the drive.

"How lovely the country is so early," she said. "I can't imagine any place more beautiful than the Bush.

Just then a magpie carolled from the top of a ringbarked dead tree.

"Listen to him," said Storm. "And listen to this too"—and he dredged in his pockets for a scrap of newspaper cutting.

"Here it is. I cut it out of the paper the other day. We'll stop a minute while I read it to you. It's about the chap up there."

The horse not objecting, they pulled up and Storm read the verses to Polly.

"Hark! Do you hear him—hear him sing!
To the still morn now his cadence fling,
From the timbered ridge with a lilt and swing,
And fill the air with his carolling!
O, hear him troll his rollicking lay;
This troubadour, in the morning grey!
To the waking farms he sings away
His golden song of a golden day."

Then he produced a second scrap of paper from his pocket. "Here's another one!" he said.

"I've built my camp on a low hill top,
Where the sandalwood and native hop
And purple lupines grow;
Where brigalows wave aloft their plumes,
Where the air drifts sweet from wild bush blooms,
And the bluebells nod and blow.
Afar I can see the low range lie—
A dark blue smudge on a turquoise sky—
And the green vale down below."

"That's Good Australian stuff written by a Good Australian," he said, as he put the piece of paper back in his pocket.

Storm started the horse up again, but did not

hurry him. "The township won't run away," he said to Polly when she asked him what time they would reach it.

So presently the horse slowed down to a walk —and neither Storm nor Polly seemed to notice it.

It's wise sometimes to stop hurrying to meet life. Let it come along at its own pace—it'll come quickly enough—far too quickly, indeed. But that is a thing youth is prone to forget. Always the day ahead must be caught up with—and today hurried over. Then comes a time when there are so few tomorrows left that one regrets the many todays that have been slurred.

So let's all, like Storm and Polly, forget once in a while to whip the old horse up. Just let him take his own gait—while we enjoy ourselves. Time will pass all too quickly, anyhow.

About midday the township was in sight. One of those typical wide-streeted Australian places, with a row of one-story wooden shops on each side of the main street, and two or three "pubs" occupying the best corners.

The couple drove into the hotel yard and handed their turnout to the groom, who told them that midday dinner was ready.

"There's the boss," he said, nodding towards a stout man standing on the footpath in front of the hotel.

The landlady took Polly upstairs, and Storm waited below until she joined him again. Then they went into the dining room. The long table was filled with diners, mostly men who had come into the township from the farms on business at the stores.

After dinner, they rested awhile, and then, leaving the hotel, drove down the main street and out along the bush road that led to Echuca, reckoning to get there before night time.

It was well past dark when they got home, and Storm's mother was growing anxious. "Why didn't you leave earlier, Storm?" she asked. "I've been expecting you for the last two hours."

"Why, Mother," he said, "We left early enough, but somehow or other we couldn't hurry along. Don't blame Polly—she told me often enough we'd be late."

But, with them both home, Mrs. Bradley forgot her fears and busied herself getting the evening meal over.

CHAPTER FOUR

SOON after the visit to the Wilson's Polly went back to Bendigo. Mrs. Bradley was sorry to lose her, for she liked the girl; but she knew that, with Mrs Polglase unwell, Polly's place was at home. So, with many promises of another visit before long, they parted.

Storm wanted Polly to agree to an early marriage. "Why wait?" he asked. "I've got some money in the bank, and I earn good wages. "Let's get married Christmas"—which was only two months off.

But Polly refused to give him a definite answer. "A little later, maybe, Storm," was the best he could get her to say, and with that he had to be content. Anyway, Bendigo wasn't so far away—and Storm trusted to himself and to luck.

But when the luck came it took a shape he little counted on, and that nearly broke his heart. Soon after Christmas his mother became ill, and before Easter he and his father buried her in the little cemetery along the road to town. Then they went back to the hut, where everything spoke of her and of her love and care for them.

The old man did the best he could, but, accus-

tomed though he was to working about a house, it was a lonely home for them both, and so it wasn't long before the younger Storm, having by inheritance from his father honestly come by uneasy feet, began to wander farther and farther afield, until he was in Queensland's cattle country up north.

Polly, in Bendigo, got letters from him at irregularly regular intervals—and then they ceased to arrive. Worse than that—her own letters to him began to come back unopened, marked "Gone away—address not known." Her mother tried to comfort her. "Don't get so down about it, Polly," she said. Storm's not one of the sort that just forgets. There's some reason why his letters don't come. Maybe he's sick."

But that was cold comfort for the girl. "That's what I'm afraid of, Mother," she said. "If it's just that he has forgotten me—well, I wouldn't be the first girl who has been forgotten, but——Oh Mother, I'm so afraid he is dead! The blacks might have speared him—or some accident with the cattle." Then she began to cry quietly, and her mother put her arms around her and cried a little too.

Shortly afterwards, a young fellow whose people lived near the Polglase's drifted back to Bendigo from Queensland. Hearing about Polly's trouble, he called on her. "Storm Bradley! Yes, I met him a couple of times. Once we were on the same station. The last I heard about him was that he had gone overlanding to Adelaide with a big mob of cattle—about the biggest mob that ever left Queensland for the south. Don't worry about him, Miss Polglase. If he can't take care of himself, then I don't know the man who can."

"But why is it I don't hear from him? Isn't there any way he could send a letter to me?'

"Not on the road his mob is moving—unless they met a 'traveller' he could give a letter to. And that only happens occasionally," answered the young chap. "Don't you worry, though; Storm Bradley will turn up all right." And he took himself off, satisfied he had done his best to quieten the girl's fears.

But the talk with the visitor didn't help Polly overmuch. "Why hadn't Storm written and told her he was going with the mob to Adelaide?" Then she would have not been so alarmed at his continued silence. Maybe he had written—and the letter had gone astray. That was the best she could think, and she took what comfort she could out of it.

The weeks went by, and still no news from Storm. Polly's anxiety began to be mingled with more than a little resentment. It was not right of him! Surely he could, by a little thought, have seen to it that she got word, somehow or other! Other men managed it, so why not he!

Then one day Polly opened the local newspaper and saw something that caused her heart to stand still. News from the Never-Never country that the blacks had attacked the drovers of a travelling mob, and had speared two, both of whom had died. Some details were given, but not many. Quickly she went to the house where the Queenslander was staying and showed him the paper.

"Yes," he said, "That's just whereabouts Storm's mob would be at the time the blacks attacked; but still it mightn't have been his lot." Then he added, "But I'm afraid it looks like it was. His were the only cattle travelling that route just then."

He need not have been so over-frank, and perhaps didn't quite realise Polly's distress of mind at first. Then, in an attempt to say something to

reassure her, he added, "Maybe there'll be more news in tomorrow's paper. Don't let it worry you too much until you know more. Storm Bradley's a hard man to hurt. It's more than likely he's all right."

Polly went back home with a sinking heart. It looked as though Storm's silence was at last accounted for—and accounted for in a terrible way: that he was one of the men who had been killed. Her mother did her best to comfort her, but it was a weak comfort. The man of her love was probably gone from her for ever—so the whole world grew dark. She went to her room and laid down on the bed, and cried until she slept.

Next morning the paper gave further details. Only one man had been killed—not two. The other had been badly wounded and had been taken by the drovers to the nearest cattle station, a hundred miles distant. There he was making a fight for life, with the assistance the station people could give him. Still no names were given, so Polly's anxiety was not lessened.

However, there was now something she could do. She could write to the manager of the station and ask for more particulars. She did so, but she knew that she had a long wait ahead before an answer could come. Mails were infrequent, even in the nearer inland; while in the outback country half a year sometimes elapsed between visits of the mailman. So, for Polly, time indeed dragged.

When Storm II left the Murray river country he had little idea of going far afield, but gradually his instincts got the better of his intentions. He didn't stay long anywhere. North—always north—he headed, until there wasn't much more north to head into, unless he would find himself on Australia's topmost point. But it was an experience—and life is made up of experiences. Some fortunate

folk accumulate quite a string of them. They are the kind who make the most of life. Other people never go in search of adventure—and it never comes in search of them. They know nothing of the hills and the valleys of life—only of the level plains. An easy life, maybe—but not much to look back upon when the sun is westering.

But Polly held the strings of Storm's nature, and soon he began to feel them tightening and drawing him southward. He decided it was time he returned to her, so at the first opportunity he left the job he had. A boss drover had taken a contract to deliver a big mob of bullocks at Adelaide and was looking for good men. Storm offered himself and was engaged. Soon afterwards they began their long journey south. The better part of a couple of thousand miles, much of it through almost unknown country, in some parts of which the blacks were bad and water scarce.

Storm wrote a letter telling Polly he was leaving and not to worry if she did not hear from him for awhile, as they would make a big sweep around, outside occupied country. The letter went astray. Storm gave it to a travelling swagman he met after the mob had left the station, and that was the end of it. Possibly it was the end of the swagman also. Possibly it was that the swagman lost the letter. But the result was the same to Polly.

There were six drovers with the mob, besides a cook and a couple of odd-job men. At first they followed along the customary stock route, until the men and the cattle got settled down to the daily and nightly routine. Then they swung off south-westerly into strange country. The boss drover was a man of wide experience—a bushman of the first class—so there wasn't as much risk in leaving the known country as there would have

been with a man of lesser knowledge. Besides, he knew blacks and their ways, and always got along well with them. He treated them as human beings, with some rights in their own country, and that made all the difference.

The mob made slow progress, but the boss would not have them hurried. "Time doesn't matter so much as getting them to Adelaide with as small a percentage of losses as possible and in good condition," he said. "So just let them take their time, especially for the first week or two."

He used to ride ahead of the cattle and choose the nightly camping grounds, picking up the waterholes. His friendliness with the blacks helped him with the latter, and often the finding of water was all-important.

Before long Storm II got the job of offsider to the boss, and so had a good deal of the responsibility of the management of the mob when the latter was skirmishing ahead of the cattle. Storm stood up to the work, and bit by bit the boss left much of the detail of the undertaking to him. Storm liked it that way. He was one of those who grow fat on responsibility—who like to have some say in the ordering of the daily round. As always with that kind, his responsibilities grew until in the actual management of the herd there was little that did not come under his control.

For the first fortnight, while they were in more or less familiar country, except for the tendency of the beasts to stray back to where they had been reared, the work was not heavy; and even for some time afterwards, the mob having got accustomed to the routine, everything went along easily. But gradually as the country became more "hostile"—yes, that is the right word for quite a good deal of Australia's far inland—the hard work began. The stretches between water became long-

er—and not always was there water where it should have been. Sometimes a forced march had to be made, when the cattle went waterless for a couple of days—and more.

Then they got into the parts where the blacks were inclined to give trouble. The boss took Storm along with him and went out to one of the camps to see the old men. He gave them tobacco, and a bullock so they might have a feast. They seemed friendly—at least they took the tobacco and the bullock—and he and Storm left their camp satisfied there was nothing to fear from them. Besides, the drovers mustered nine men, all told, and blacks seldom attack a party of that strength.

On the third day after the visit to the blacks' camp, Storm while travelling the cattle along a gully, saw traces of the natives, and later caught a glimpse of two or three myalls in the distance. He told the boss. "We'll keep a good lookout tonight", the latter said. "I don't think they mean any harm, but it's better to be sure than sorry."

So, when the cattle were bedded down, the men who were to take the first watch were warned to keep their eyes open. They did—and saw nothing; though with Australian blacks as the attackers that would be quite possible and yet the country might be full of them.

The second watch passed uneventfully too, but the third, which was taken by Storm and a drover who answered to the nick-name of Twister, had hardly begun before a spear whistled through the air not a foot from Storm's head. Then another, more skilfully aimed, got Twister clean through the body. He fell from his horse in agony, and managed to crawl behind a big tree that gave him some protection—not much.

Storm,—who was a couple of hundred yards

from Twister, saw him fall, and heard him groan as he fell—drove his spurs into his horse and galloped to his assistance, firing his revolver as he did so. It was almost dawn, and the drovers' camp was beginning to stir when the attack was made, so it didn't take many seconds for the cattlemen to come to Storm's help. The blacks made off, but one of a parting volley of spears hit Storm, passing into and nearly through his leg.

That finished Storm Bradley's cattle droving days. The men buried Twister and took Storm to the nearest station, after they pulled the spear out, and left him to the kindly care of the manager and the man. The wound was a long time healing, and it was months before he could ride a horse and so make his way southward. Neither did the mailman call for many week afterwards, which explains why Polly had no word from him. The news she had seen in the Bendigo paper was months old before she saw it, and by that time Storm was well on the way to recovery, and was itching to be away. Not being accustomed to telegrams, he didn't think of that way of saving a few days time when at last he got in touch with civilization, and so the matter appeared in the press before the letter Storm had written to Polly reached her—Storm himself following close on the heels of his letter.

One afternoon, Polly had been down town shopping for her mother, and, when she got home, just as she opened the front gate, she saw Storm sitting on the verandah. He looked up—and the next moment she was in his arms.

"Oh, Storm!" she said, "The neighbors are looking."

"Let them look!" he replied.

And so say we all!

By the end of the year Storm had persuaded

Polly to marry him without further waiting. "I'd sooner stay in Bendigo and go below in the mines, Polly," he said. "If I keep working in the bush, maybe I'll get unsettled, without Mother at the old place, and keep wandering, like hundreds of other men. A man must have a home, you know."

Storm knew the way to Polly's heart, and, man-like, he took advantage of his knowledge. She hated to think of him working out in the bush, doing his own cooking and living a rough life. It was different when his mother was alive, and he could go home at week ends, and so be started off by her with some provision for the coming week's comfort.

So Polly agreed. "Alright, Storm; I'm willing," she said. She was—more willing than she would admit, even to herself.

So early in December they were married in one of the little churches, in front of one of the little pine pulpits that Polly knew so well, and, after a week spent at Melbourne, they returned to Bendigo to make their home there. Before long, Storm I came down from Echuca to live with them, and the bush hut on the banks of the Murray slipped into "The things that have been."

Very soon after the wedding, Storm found there was a catch in the saying "Two can live as cheaply as one," and that, if an end was not to come very soon to his money, he would have to get regular employment. Polly did not want him to go "below." She hated to think of him underground, running the risks that a miner faced daily; for she in her childhood had more than once lived through the anxious time all miners' families know when the word suddenly comes, "Something's gone wrong at the mine!"

"Anything but that, Storm," she said.

"But what else am I to do?" Storm asked. "The only thing I know is bushwork—and you wouldn't like me to leave you and go up country."

"No, we didn't get married to have you do that," she agreed. "Can't you get a job at one of the shops in the town—driving a cart, or behind the counter?"

Storm couldn't see himself doing either, but he didn't say so to Polly. Instead, he hedged. "It's not so easy," he said. "The bosses all want men with experience, and you can't blame them. I wish I'd learned a trade when I was a boy." Then added, with sincerity, "but it's too late now."

Storm was wrong. All that stood in his way in altering his life was the usual state of mind of the man in a rut—that the walls of the rut are terribly high and difficult to climb. Of course they are not. It is just that they seem to be. One good leap—a toehold in their sides—a strong grasp on the top edges—another leap with all the strength that is in a man—and he is out of the rut for life.

That all takes effort, and effort is distasteful to most—but it is the price one has to pay for advancement—or even for continued existence. Not self-preservation, but effort, is the first law of life. In proof of which—look abroad in Nature.

So Storm did not call at the town shops. In addition to the fact that he didn't care for work along those lines, he really thought it was "too late"—so for him it was. For every man, things are as he believes them to be—very largely. Instead, he looked for a "surface" job at the mines, and eventually landed one; thereby taking his first step "below," though he didn't think it at the time.

The immediate cause of Storm's going below was John Henry's health. "Your father's getting

an old man—too old for mining," he said to Polly. "It's time he came up on top."

Storm II was pleased that things were developing so that Polglase could give up his job below, for there was more in his mind than a wish to help the old man. He wanted a chance at the gold, and going in with a party on tribute would give him just that. Most of our actions are governed by a mixture of motives—like the Cornishman's trousers, "a patch upon patch, and a patch over all."

So John Henry took Storm's job on the brace, and Storm and his two mates began work on the "block." No wages—just their half of all the gold won.

Storm II was one of those who dislike having everything made too sure. "Regular wages are too darned 'regular'," he said. "I never was fond of knowing just how much was coming to me on payday."

Tributing appeals to miners who like their freedom—more freedom than a wages man has—and who are willing to try their luck. It is a gamble somewhat on the lines of "double or quits." The miner may have his labour for his pains—or he may get quite a decent return. If the reef develops well—then the tributers will take out good money; If it doesn't—well, they don't.

Polly knew Storm would never be content until he had tried his luck, so she made the best of it.

She was the right kind of wife for Storm II. "I like a man to have pluck," she said; "just as long as he knows when to stop being plucky."

But that's a thing some men never learn. And others never have any nerve at all—they want everything made safe. The former are the world's madmen—and heroes. The latter—well, let's call

then the world's "conservatives," They have their uses, too.

Alice, the baby, was an additional reason why Storm II should be reaching out; and soon there would be another one.

Storm I, old man though he was, pulled his weight in the home. The hut on the Murray brought in a few shillings rent; not much. But enough to keep him in tobacco and a little over for an occasional present to Polly.

He used to laugh about it. "Never let anyone know just how much or how little you've got in your pocket," he would say. "It it's only sixpence, it's enough, just so folks don't know it's only sixpence."

And very much of the world runs largely on just such bluff.

CHAPTER FIVE

"WELL, Polly, we'll know all about it tomorrow," said Storm II one evening, about a month after he had gone in with the tributing party. "The stone went to the battery today, and they're going to put it through at once. It looked pretty nice—quite a little gold showing in it. Give me a kiss for luck!"

The crushing turned out better even than the tributers expected. The month's work gave them nearly three months' wages each.

Storm and his party took a couple of dozen crushings from their block before it was worked out. Some of them hardly aid for the explosives, but the others more than made up for the poor ones. Altogether there was quite a bit over wages in it for the men, and they were more than willing to take another block, but it looked as if they would be unable to get one.

"The directors seem to think we did too well," said Storm to Polly. "At any rate, they're slow at deciding whether they'll give us another tribute. I don't want to go back to wages, but I might have to."

"Say, Polly!" he said one morning, while he was wiping his hands with the kitchen towel. "I've been thinking of getting a few acres of government land out on the Back creek for an orchard."

"But look how you'd have to work," said Polly, though she already was beginning to approve of the notion.

Storm was never one to think things over too long. He either did things—or he didn't. He was not the kind who need to hang up on the walls of their minds the "Do It Now" motto. The man who Does It Now because someone else told him he should is mostly the sort who stops halfway in his doing.

So he applied for the land—and then the waiting began. "It's that blessed mining board, I suppose," said Polly. "Ted Hunt said it always objects to anything the land board wants done—especially if it's letting a bit of land go."

But Storm, remembering some of the experiences of the Echuca selectors, cheered her up. "Don't worry," he said. The government chaps would die if they were to hurry. You start the machinery moving—then you've got to wait. That's all. There are lots of motions to go through before I begin to fence that block. But we'll get it some day."

So Storm went mining again—and Polly watched day by day for the postman's knock to announce the letter that said their application had been successful.

It was tedious job, that waiting, but even a reel of red tape comes to an end some time, so

one day Storm was met at the door by Polly with a smile on her face and a letter in her hand. "I just had to open it," she explained. "I couldn't wait for you to come home when I saw it was about the land."

The letter was a notification that the application had been successful, and that the land would be gazetted to Bradley on payment of the usual fees.

Within a fortnight Storm Bradley got possession and started fencing and clearing. He put in about three hours each day, either before or after his work at the mine, and made quick progress. By planting season he had more than one half of the land ready and got the trees in in good time. "They'll be growing while I'm getting the rest of the land cleared," he said. "It'll be good to watch 'em coming on while I'm working.'

Alluvial goldfields country is the natural home of orchards and vineyards, and some day the worked-out mining country will come into its own again. In that day more wealth will be got from the top three feet than was ever dug from the alluvial or the reefs. And that is no random guess. Though may the time never come, in Australia, when swarming millions will bend tired backs tilling the last inch of a field so that it will produce him a "living;" for then indeed, would Australia no longer be "Australia Felix."

Our wide spaces are our glory. Freedom is ever a child of the open. The land where Nature says to the cultivator of the soil, "Thus far and no farther!" will always breed men and women who will not bend the knee or bow the neck.

Australia's interior being what it is is a guarantee that Australian liberties will remain what they are, so let us thank God for our deserts, and for our "hostile" spaces, for our Never-Never and for the lands beyond. Life is more than the prolific

spawning of toiling multitudes. It is, or should be, the contentment that comes of rewarded effort, together with reasonable hope for the future—for each and for all.

Storm Bradley built a small cottage on his land, and sunrise usually found him hard at it—or, if the mine shift did not permit, then sunset saw him still working. "Long hours may be all wrong—but what is a man to do to get on?" he would say. "I've got to work now so that I can go easier later. It'll average out a fair thing by the time I'm through."

Freehold title and working for one's self keep the ache out of one's back and put strength into one's arm—and intelligence into the head, also. The bundle is not so heavy nor the day so long when the worker is his own master—and the reward of his toil is his own, and not another's.

Old Storm used to work on the block quite a bit when he was at home, but every once in so often his feet became "uneasy" again, and he went up country for a spell, taking a job at his old trade of cooking on one of the sheep stations just north of the Murray.

"What do you want to go away for, Dad?" Polly asked, the last time he told her he was going away for awhile.

"I like to keep my hand in," he replied. "Besides, it stops me from growing old. Anyway, I don't work at the shearing sheds any more—they're too hard on a man. I cook for the homestead—just the boss and his family."

"Well, do as you like, Dad," Polly told him; "But remember you don't have to go away—and don't stay away too long."

The old man's trips seldom lasted more than four or five months, and then he would come

home again, and do a day's work all day and every day on the block.

"Dad's a wonder, Polly," said Storm, as one day he stood watching him through the cottage window. "You'd never think he was his age to see him work. He must be all of seventy-five."

Polly crossed to the window, and saw the old man heaving at a big stump he had just dragged from the ground. "You shouldn't let him do it," she said. "Some day he'll hurt himself and then you'll be sorry."

Storm the younger knew she was right, but what was he to do? "You don't know Dad," he said, as he turned away; "It's not a matter of 'letting' him do anything. That's easy. It's 'stopping' him that would take some doing."

One afternoon Storm did not get back from mine at his usual time. "Whatever's keeping your father?" Polly remarked anxiously to her little girls. "He's never as late as this."

"Dad," said Polly to old Storm, "I wish you'd have your tea quickly and go and see if anything is wrong at the mine."

Always "the mine." Polly could not get the old fear of danger out of her mind, and often she wished that the young fruit trees did not take quite so long to come into bearing, so that Storm could the sooner give up mining and its dangers.

So Storm I hurried over his tea and took the shortest road to the mine, three miles away. When he got there he found that indeed there was something wrong. A couple of hundred men and women were gathered around the shaft's mouth anxiously waiting news from below.

"What's happened?" Storm I asked a big miner who, from the dirt spattered over him, looked as though he had just come off shift.

"Fall of stone," answered the man.

Old Storm was not the kind to get flurried and make a fuss. He had seen too much of life to be afraid of death, so although he knew his son was one of those who were working in the part of the mine affected by the accident, yet he gave no indication of it. "Are all the men up?" he asked.

"Some of them are—most of them. The last load is coming up now."

Just then the signal sounded on the brace telling the engine-driver to haul away, and the wire rope began to move upwards. The shaft was down over two thousand feet and the accident had happened in the drive near the shaft's bottom—the one Storm II was working in.

Fathom by fathom the rope went over the wheel at the poppet head, and all eyes watched the shaft's mouth for the cage. It seemed as though it would never appear. It was the last load, and several of the watching women knew that if her man's head did not show as the cage came to the surface, then he was among those who might never see the light of day again.

At last it came to the top—and Storm was not in it. The low cries of joy from those whose men were in the cage were mingled with the moans of the women who had good cause to fear the worst, for now they knew that the fallen stone had trapped and perhaps killed their husbands and sons, and that there was nothing they could do but wait in agony of mind until the rescue parties had done their brave work.

It was no time for wailing and for standing by in uselessness. Men were needed—and, as always, men were forthcoming. Their mates below had to be brought up—dead or alive. Quickly a party stepped into the cage, and speedily it dropped out of sight, hurrying down with its gallant freight

that two thousand feet. If one had told the rescuers how fine their conduct was they would have laughed derisively. But heroes they were, and of the world's best at that.

Their women watched them go with hearts that beat with a mingling of pride and fear. Once, one of them placed her hand on her husband's arm as he prepared to step into the waiting cage. "Oh, Jack——." But she quickly withdrew her restraining touch as their eyes met. Then they kissed—perhaps for the last time. Not for anything would she have the father of her children and the lover of her girlhood a shirker. The miners' womenfolk are like that—and thank God they are.

Storm I had now a heavy task ahead of him. He must go back and tell Polly and the little girls—and at once. If he waited until some news came to the surface from the rescue party, he might wait a long while, and Polly would be at home with her fears growing from hour to hour. There was only one path for him, and that path lay back to his son's wife and children. The old man had never been one to dodge trouble. Always he had faced the unpleasant—and without delay. So now he turned homewards, for Polly must be told—and he had to tell her.

For an hour after her father-in-law left the house for the mine Polly Bradley grew more and more anxious. Every few minutes she went to the door and looked up the road leading towards the town, but there was no sign of her husband.

The road ran straight for more than half-a-mile, so, except for one or two places where it dipped low out of sight for a short distance, had Storm been on it she could have seen him. Had there been bends in the road, the suspense would not have been so great, for then at any moment he

might suddenly come into sight; but the hopelessness of the road's visibility only added to her mounting anxiety.

At last she could stand it no longer. Her fear that Storm had met with an accident at the mine now became a certainty, so she called the two little girls, who not appreciating at all the trouble that threatened them were playing about the back door. "We'll go for a walk along the road and maybe we'll meet Daddy."

So she and the children set out to see if the other end of the long road beyond the bend held any better news for them than did the view from the cottage door.

"Oh, Mummy, there he is!" said Alice, as a soft felt hat appeared, its wearer gradually coming more and more into view as he walked up the rising ground of one of the low spots in the road.

Polly's heart leapt for a moment. The slowly-rising hat was similar to Storm's—but the next few seconds showed the wearer to be an older man than her husband, and so her momentary joy was extinguished.

They reached the bend of the road, where it made almost a right angle. For the last hundred yards and more the little party had quickened their pace almost to a run, hoping that the stretch of road around the corner would show them that which they so much desired to see—"Daddy" making his way homewards. But there was no one in sight.

Polly at first thought of turning back home. She stopped for a moment, considering what to do. she faced again towards the town. "Come along, children; we'll go a bit farther. We may meet Daddy after all."

At the next bend of the road they saw old Storm coming towards them, and Polly knew by his

manner that there was something seriously wrong.

"There's Grandpa!" shouted the little girls, and they started to run towards him. But Polly could not run. She knew the old man was the bearer of bad news,, and, so far from running to meet him, her natural instincts caused her almost to stop still. Hurrying to meet the bearer of ill tidings was not in accordance with her unspoken, and possibly unthought, philosophy.

"What is it, Dad?" she asked, as Storm I came near. "Is it very bad?"

"There's been a fall of stone—and Storm's down below," the old man answered. "Nobody knows yet who's hurt."

Polly was not one of those who get relief by calling on the Almighty for help. When trouble came to her she gathered together her mental and spiritual powers and met it—to conquer if possible; if not, then to bear it as best she might. And so it was now. "I'll go to the mine," she told her father-in-law. "I'd like to be there when—when they bring him up. The girls can go back with you to the house."

But Storm would have none of it. "You'll not go on without me," he said. "The shaft's mouth is no place for a woman just now—though God knows there are plenty of them there. I'll turn back and go with you, anyway."

"But what about the girls?" asked Polly. "They can't come with us, and they're too little to go back home alone."

"They'll be all right," said the old man. "Let them come, and you can leave them at one of your old neighbours."

In about half-an-hour they arrived at the mine. The crowd had grown larger, but no news had come from below, except that the drive was completely blocked by the fallen stone. Whether the

missing men were in comparative safety at the end of the drive, there was no knowledge.

"It looks bad," said a miner to Storm I. "If they're alive and uninjured on the other side of the fall they would tap on the rock and the party below would hear them. It looks bad," he repeated, emphatically.

Polly heart sank to its deepest depths when she heard the miner speaking. She knew the truth of what he said. If the missing men were alive and unhurt, or only slightly injured, they could let the rescuing party know by knocking on the wall of the drive. But there was only silence.

The mine manager, who was below with the rescuers, sent up word that it would be some time before any news could be expected. The fallen stone had to be cleared away, and that would be slow work. Apparently there were many tons of it—possibly hundreds of tons.

"Don't wait here, Polly," Storm I advised. "One of the miners' wives will take you and the children in for the night, and I'll stay here. As soon as there's any news I'll let you know."

After a good deal of persuasion, Polly went, with the two little girls, to the home of a woman just across the road from the mine, who had heard Storm I talking to Polly, and had at once said, "Why, certainly, come and stay at my place. I'll make the fire up for you in the front room and you can try and sleep in the big chair—for I know you'll not go to bed."

The children slept on the sofa, well covered up, and Polly passed the night as best she could. Sleep was out of the question, and more than once she went over to the mine's mouth. But still there was no news from below. No news that mattered.

Down the mine the party of rescuers were hard at work. The underground boss, Jim Penhallurick

was in charge. The mine manager, knowing that Jim's knowledge of the workings made him better qualified for the job than did his own, left the ordering of the work of the party entirely to him, but he stayed with the men mostly, coming up to the surface only to report progress.

"Be careful," said Penhallurick to the men. "We don't want things any worse than they are—and that roof is very shaky. We'll have to bring down more of the stone before we begin clearing it away."

So he and another experienced man carefully tapped the roof of the drive, and wherever they found the stone loose they set men to work getting it down so that when the party began the main business of clearing the drive there would be no further accidents.

Doing this was a job of hours—not minutes, but Penhallurick was a man who knew his business and cared for his men. If there was a risk to be taken he would as far as possible take it himself; and, also, he knew that the surest way to get the entombed men out was to hasten slowly.

At last the overhead stone was down—that is, all of it that appeared unsafe—and the men began to shift the fallen stuff. How much would have to be handled they didn't know, but hour after hour they worked, until all the first party were worn out with fatigue. Then they gave place to a fresh lot of volunteers.

When the call was made for the second party Storm I stepped out. "I'll make one," he said. "My boy's down there."

"Leave it to a younger man," advised Penhallurick. "It's hard work. At the rate they're going a couple of hours is all a young fellow can stand. Sorry, but you're too old."

So Storm stepped back, disappointed—and unbelieving. Too old! Not he!

Two hours later—at the third call for volunteers—he stepped forward again, but with the same result. Younger men, and plenty of them were offering, so the boss would not let him into the cage.

Soon after the third party went below they came on the first of the missing men—there were three unaccounted for. Evidently he had been working right under the centre of the fall, for he had been crushed to an instantaneous and bloody death, and was almost unrecognisable.

"It's Scotty," said one of the party. "He's badly broken, but there's no doubt who it is."

They lifted the dead man and carried him to the mouth of the drive. "Leave him here," said Penhallurick. "I'll go up myself and tell his wife. Then he stepped into the cage and gave the signal to hoist away. Reaching the top, he asked the braceman if Mrs. MacNeil was waiting in the crowd that through the night had remained at the mine.

"There she is," the man replied, "sitting on the piece of timber near the blacksmith's shop. She's been there since the first news of the accident—and she's got her children with her."

The braceman knew, without Penhallurick saying a word, that Scotty MacNeil had been found—dead.

Penhallurick walked over to Mrs. MacNeil. She rose to meet him—and again there was no need for words. "I'm sorry, Mrs. MacNeil—" He got no further. "He's killed!" she moaned, and stretched out her arms to her children. The little ones began to cry, and caught her skirts.

A neighbour who had been with her all night

took her by the arm. "I'll go home with her, Mr. Penhallurick," she said.

"No! No! I can't leave my husband down there alone. Won't you bring him up to me? I don't want to go home without him!" Then she burst into tears.

"Best take her home," said Penhallurick. "We can't bring him up for some time yet."

So the stricken family walked into the darkness, to await their dead in the little home that had known their joy—and was now to know their deep sorrow.

While the underground boss was on top the rescue party had uncovered the second of the missing men—also dead. Storm Bradley was now the only one not accounted for. With two out of the three dead, the chances of finding him alive were small, and the waiters at the mouth of the shaft almost gave up hope for him.

Polly and Storm I were silent in their agony of fear. The old man had gone to her in the cottage when the first body was found, and she had returned with him to the mine's mouth. She had felt that it would not be long before she knew the worst—or the best.

"I'd better go over," she had said. "Waiting here is terrible." So when for the second time bad news was sent to the top she was there to hear it.

Shortly afterwards, word went around the group at the surface for a fourth party of volunteers. Storm I walked at once to the waiting cage and stepped into it.

"No! No!" objected Penhallurick. "You couldn't stand up to the work. Let a younger man go down!"

"My son's down there—possibly dead. I'm going down. If you want me out of the cage you must

throw me out." And the old man's face told the underground boss that it would have to come to that unless he himself gave way.

"Let him go," said one of the volunteers. "We know just how he feels about it."

Penhallurick said no more, but stepped into the cage and gave the signal to lower.

Old Storm had his way, and as the cage rushed down the shaft his years fell from him; for years are a matter of the body only—the spirit of a man is changeless and deathless. At times the body may hamper it, but when the call comes the eternal youth of the spirit makes itself manifest, and the years that the locust has eaten are restored; the spirit enters into the fourth dimension, and the hands of the clock swing backward. Storm Bradley I, going to his son's rescue, was once more the man of his own youth—strong, capable, and fearless.

Below, it was now only a business of removing the fallen stone, carefully and fearfully, not knowing what minute would reveal the crushed form of the man they sought.

Storm I worked side by side with the strongest of them for over an hour, taking his full share of work and seeming not to tire at all. Then, suddenly, the pile of stone lessened in height and they could see beyond it into the darkness of the end of the drive, and so knew their work was almost over.

Penhallurick thrust a light as far as he could reach over the heap of fallen stone, but its feeble rays showed him nothing. "Keep at it," he said. "Get some more of the stone from the top of the heap and I'll crawl over and make a search for Bradley."

Within five minutes the space below the roof of the drive was big enough to admit a man's body.

Penhallurick handed his light to Storm I. "Hold this while I get through, then give it to me," he said.

Just then the stone on which Penhallurick was standing gave way and he slipped a little. Storm I had been waiting his chance. He was determined that nobody but himself would step into the deadly danger that awaited in the blackness on the other side of the fallen rock, with the shaken roof of that part of the drive threatening to give way any moment and bury the brave soul, who, greatly daring, was the first to pass through the gap.

Before Penhallurick could recover himself, the old man climbed to the top of the stone and forced himself into and through the opening. Almost at once he called out, "I've got him!"

Storm II was lying, partly covered with stone, near the outer edge of the heap. The old man lifted the rock from his son. "He's alive!" he shouted.

Just then a few small pieces of stone fell from the roof of the drive, and one of them struck him. Looking up, he saw his danger—and the danger of his son. Another fall was threatening, and at any moment both of them might be buried beneath a hundred tons of Death.

For himself, he had no fear—it was the thought of his son that gave him strength—and again his youth returned to him. Seizing his boy by the shoulders he dragged him to the opening, handling the heavy, unconscious body as though it was some trifle.

Penhallurick, unafraid of the threatening danger, was in the act of crawling through the opening when he saw in the dim light the old man dragging his son towards him. Stretching out his arms he seized the injured man and soon had him into safety. Old Storm followed at once—and the next moment a loud crash told that they had been

just in time, for the spot where Storm II had lain was covered deep with the rock from the roof of the drive.

The party carried Storm II nearer to the shaft, out of harm's way. "He doesn't look badly hurt," said Penhallurick. "Send up word we've got him, and that he's alive."

"I'll go," said Storm the elder. "I want to be there when his wife is told. I want to tell her myself. Women are odd. You never can tell what they'll do. The kind—like Polly—who stand up well in trouble might give way when the news is good." So he stepped into the cage and was quickly drawn upwards.

The crowd above, hearing the signal to hoist, knew that news was coming—good or bad—and made way for Polly so that she might be the first to catch sight of the occupant of the cage. No need, they knew, to wait for words; the messenger's face would tell the story.

It seemed endless, that quick slipping upwards of the rope, but at last the top of the cage appeared—and the next second Polly knew her husband was alive. The cage came to rest, and in a moment Polly and Storm's father were in each other's arms. "It's all right, my girl, he's not badly hurt," said the old man.

And then she fainted.

Storm II was speedily brought up and taken to the hospital. He was suffering from a slight concussion and his left arm was fractured; but within a few days he was home once more and on the road to complete recovery.

While in the hospital he had been told about his father's plucky act, and immediately he got home he went in search of the old man. He found him out in the orchard putting in a row of appletrees.

"The doctor told me about you going through the

hole into the drive after me, Dad," he said. "Thanks!"

"What else could I do?" answered Storm I, without looking up, as he straightened a young tree.

And that was all.

CHAPTER SIX

STORM'S accident at the mine ended his work underground. He knew it would not be fair to his wife for him to go below again, for, naturally, the fears she had always known now became intensified a hundred times. "I couldn't stand it, Storm," she said one day, when he had casually mentioned going back to his old job. "I'd believe I'd go crazy. You'd never be out of my mind all the time you were at work."

So Storm began to cast his mind about for something else to do, and it wasn't long before opportunities began to show themselves.

When a man opens his mind to the facts of life around him it is as though a camera's shutter was released—the impression is at once made. Similarly, just as long as the mind is stubbornly closed, just so long does the sensitive plate remain a blank. So it is, also, with the perhaps minor matter of getting out of the rut of one's usual occupation. A fixed idea that any change is impossible makes that impossibility an impossibility indeed; but a refusal to acknowledge any such position, and, more, a distinct setting of the mind to an attitude of expectation and enquiry, and immediately the opportunities of life begin to present themselves, and the sensitive plate begins to record their existence. The question then remains. "Will the man have the courage to choose? If he has not—then the plate will soon cease recording.

Polly was, at this time, looking forward to the birth of another child. A boy, they again both hoped.

Two months later the boy was born. Storm II went to the bedside. "Good girl," he said. "So you kept your word—and Algy is here."

"No! It's little Storm who has come to stay with us," and she turned back the bedclothes to show her husband his son. "He's not your colour," she said. "He's got black hair, and yours is almost red."

"That's all right," said Storm as he gave his son a welcome; He'll come red before long. The Bradley men always do."

Then he went outside to thank God in a man's imperfect and forgetful way for his wife's return from the Valley of the Shadow, bearing their son in her arms.

Old Storm was up country when Storm III was born. When he got the news he told the boss he was leaving at the end of the month. "I've got a new grandson down at Bendigo—the first one—and I'll have to go and take a look at him."

"What's your hurry?" asked the boss. "There's been lots of boys born before."

"Yes, but not this one," Storm I replied, "so just as soon as you can get another cook I'll be going."

In about a month he was back in Bendigo, Polly met him at the door. "Glad to see you, Dad," she said. "Come and have a look at your living image."

Storm I followed her into the bedroom. The baby was asleep. The old man glanced at him and then at Polly. "Do I look like that?" he asked, jokingly.

"No, you don't," she said, "and you couldn't if you tried ever so hard. He's like you—but you're

not a bit like him." And Polly pretended to be offended.

"You're right, Polly, my girl," the old man answered, after a long look at the boy. "I don't look like him—I only wish I did. None of us old 'uns look like babies look. The world wears our innocence away, and the best we can hope for is that we are not so ugly as we appear. Maybe under our skin the good God can still see a trace of what we were when we were children. Let us hope so, at any rate."

Polly looked up into the old man's face. "You're all right, Dad," she said.

One morning the postman delivered Storm a letter from his sister in West Australia that dropped a big stone into the quiet pond of his and Polly's lives. Her husband had come back to Bunbury from Coolgardie and had brought with him a couple of hundred ounces of gold! The golden days of early Bendigo and Ballarat had come to earth again and men were rushing to the western fields from all Australia, and from beyond the seas.

That evening, after tea, Storm looked up from the book he was pretending to read. There was no need for him to introduce the subject with preparatory remarks, so he just said, "We're both young yet, Polly, and a year over there might make our fortunes. Suppose I give it a try?"

Polly considered awhile. "Let's wait and see how things turn out," she said, at last. "Maybe the gold won't last. If it does——"

Storm's wife knew the best way to keep a husband was to let him run on a long chain. A man must be a man, even though he is married.

The West Australian goldfields continued to show their permanency, and the streams of men

from the eastern states grew bigger. Storm II became more and more uneasy. "It's the early men who do the best on the fields," he said to Polly.

"Wait till Dad's here," Polly answered. "That won't be long—less than a month."

So it was settled that as soon as Storm I should get back home, Storm II was to go west in search of fortune, and that he was to be back in six months, unless he saw it was best he should stay a little longer.

Storm I arrived on time, and after Storm II had made arrangements for the pruning and ploughing he left for the west. Polly and the children went to the railway station to see him off. "Take

Storm knew he was not doing the right thing. He looked at his little family—and knew in his heart that Polly was the one who was taking the chances—not himself. The goldfields always took their toll of men—fever, dysentery and sudden deaths by accident, for alluvial can be as treacherous as deep sinking.

Polly guessed something of what was in his mind. "Now, don't you worry about us, my dear," she said. "We'll be all right. But you must remember we're all depending on you to come home safe."

Just then the guard blew his whistle, and Storm kissed the children and Polly and boarded the train. Leaning out of the window as the train pulled out, watching the little group waving him goodbye, he knew his place was with them—and not hunting fortune on far goldfields. When the curve of the rails had taken them from his view he sat down. "If it was to do over again," he thought. "I wouldn't go." He only thought so, of course.

In a few hours he was in Melbourne, and the next day was steaming through the Heads bound

for Perth. His fellow-passengers were mostly eastern men off to the fields for the first time; though there were a few who were going back to Coolgardie—miners who had been early on the field and had struck gold there, and were now returning after a visit east. These latter were mostly travelling saloon, but the steerage was packed with "first timers;" men who had to make every pound count—every shilling, sometimes—but were none the less happy for that. Hope called and Youth and Courage answered. A new empire was in the making. Romance walked hand in hand with High Endeavour—and both Romance and High Endeavour are more often passengers in the steerage than they are to be found travelling saloon.

Storm II arrived at Perth and took the train for the railhead at Southern Cross. From there he travelled by coach to Coolgardie. Along the road they passed many men—some already returning to the seaport, and others walking to the fields. Those returning advised the newcomers not to go any farther. "The field's no good—only for a few lucky ones. Nothing but hard work. No water, except distilled, and hundreds down sick."

On arriving at Coolgardie Storm and a couple of men whose acquaintance he had made on board ship pegged out a claim and began work on it.

"What do you think you're doing there?" asked an old-timer—of at least two months standing. "Growing cabbages?"

"Think we're off the line here? said Storm.

"I know you are—way off."

"Where it is—there it is," said Storm, "We'll take a chance where we are."

"Fools for luck!" said the old-timer, a few days afterwards, when he heard the Bradley party were getting good gold.

Those days, scarcity of water was the big trouble on the western goldfields. The gold was there, but it took getting. Storm had to resort to "dry blowing," for it was impossible to get water for pan and cradle, so the wind had to be pressed into service. The washdirt was dropped from a height while there was a wind blowing to separate the lighter dust from the heavier gold particles. Very crude, but more or less effective. There was, then, no water to spare for gold-getting; and, except for what rain water was caught in tanks, the only water even for drinking purposes was distilled from the highly mineralised fluid raised from underground by pumping. Rough living—but the gold made up for it all.

Storm's claim soon petered out—just when the neighbouring field of Kalgoorlie was discovered. The Bradley party left at once for the new rush and pegged out a likely-looking area. For about six months the returns paid well, each man getting about a thousand pounds for his half year's work; but after that the results were not so satisfactory.

"It won't last much longer," said Storm. "Kalgoorlie is like Coolgardie—a deep sinking proposition, or nothing. We'll have to go down for the reef if we're to make any real money."

The surrounding parties were similarly situated—and the reef had yet to be found. So, in order that a company could be floated with enough capital to prospect for the reef—and, when it was found, to properly work it—they all decided to pool their claims and to put the combined property on the market. Possibly a syndicate would buy it.

Just while they were talking over ways and means a group of parties nearby struck the reef—and it was a golden one. At once the Bradley and surrounding claims became the object of intense

interest among mining speculators, and their owners did not now need to look for buyers. It was the other way about—Should they hold on and try and develop the mine themselves; or should they sell at once and at a fair price to a syndicate that stood ready to buy?

Most of the owners thought with Storm. They were just working miners and knew that deep sinking and the machinery necessary for the development of a mine cost money. It might take them years to accomplish very much on their own—if they ever did. And there was such a thing as overstaying the market.

"It's this way," said one of them. "We don't know whether we've got anything or not. The surface gold is nearly finished and we've yet to prove whether the reef is there—and, if it is, whether it carries gold or whether it doesn't. I'm for selling."

And so it was decided. They sold to the syndicate for a price that gave each man about a thousand pounds. The new owners floated the mine into a company that put in machinery, and later developed it into one of the best-paying properties on the field.

Storm's party held together and tried their luck again, but the "surface" days were passing—or past—and none of their new ventures turned out worth while.

For Storm, it was either go home to Polly and the children, or take work at the mines. With his Bendigo experience he would have no difficulty in getting a job as underground boss; but always he remembered his promise. It was over a year since he left Bendigo. Either he must go back to his family or he must bring them over to him. The latter he knew would be distasteful to Polly. She

would come, if he said so, but not willingly. No! He would go back—and at once.

So he telegraphed to Polly that he was on the way home—was leaving Kalgoorlie at once for Perth, and would take the first boat to Melbourne.

The evening of the day Storm sent the telegram he didn't feel at all well, and that night he slept badly—so badly he stayed in bed until well into the next afternoon. The following night was a repetition of the previous one. When morning came he was so weak that getting up was out of the question. The landlord of the hotel where he was staying sent for a doctor, without telling Storm.

"He's in for a dose of typhoid," the doctor said, after a visit to Storm's room. "It looks to me like a pretty bad case. We'd better get him into a private house, where he can be properly looked after, and have a competent nurse."

The landlord agreed. He didn't want typhoid cases in his hotel; but, being a decent fellow, he promised to look after the sick man until arrangements could be made for his removal.

"I know a woman who will take him in, and who is quite a good nurse," said the doctor. 'I'll see her at once and we'll get him shifted tomorrow."

As he was turning to go, he said, "Has he any relatives that you know of?"

Not in the West," answered the landlord. "He comes from Victoria—from Bendigo, I think."

The doctor shook his head. "That's bad," he said. "I think it would be as well if you got him to give you their address. Just in case things go wrong."

The landlord went up to Storm's room. He was lying on the bed flushed with the fever. "Say, old man," said the landlord, "It's just as well to face

things. The doctor reckons you are in for a spell of typhoid. How about telegraphing your folks?"

Storm Bradley pulled himself together. "Wait another day," he asked. "Sometimes the doctors are wrong, and I don't want to give my wife a scare if it can be helped. I'll get you to wire tomorrow if I'm no better by then."

So it was left at that. But the next day saw him worse still, and the landlord sent a message that told Polly her husband was down with typhoid—among strangers. Kindly strangers—but strangers nevertheless.

To Polly, it was bad news clear out of the blue sky. Storm had been doing so well. Everything had turned out just as they had hoped it would. His letters had arrived weekly, and each one was full of good news. Besides, just two days earlier, she had received his telegram saying that he was leaving for home. And now this! Typhoid! That scourge of all mining camps in their early days, before science and sanitation made things safe.

For Storm's wife the sky turned black, and a terrible fear entered her mind. Her husband would surely die—and with him would die all her heart and all her hope.

Next day another telegram arrived. It read, "Sorry Mr. Bradley is worse Doctor says bad case."

The second telegram made Polly's mind up for her. She decided to leave for the West at once. Storm I could look after the children.

"I must go, Dad," she said to Storm I. "I can't stay here while Storm is lying ill so far away." She didn't like to say, "dying so far away," but that was what was in her mind.

The old man agreed it was the best—the only —thing to do. "The children will be all right," he said. "There're plenty of neighbours to help me

with them—and I won't need so much help, either. You get away at once, and you'll be with him in ten days or so."

Polly Bradley lost no time. That evening she caught the train to Melbourne, and next day was on board a steamer bound for Perth. Storm would not die if she could save him.

The week between Melbourne and Perth was a long one for her. No news—and no hope of news. She made friends with one or two women passengers, and they were just as sympathetic as women can be. But one's hopes and one's fears are always opposed—and when it is the deadly fear of the death of a loved one, then hope seems to be a very weak thing.

Arriving at Perth, Polly telegraphed the landlord who had befriended Storm, saying she would at once take rail and coach for Kalgoorlie. When he got her message, he shook his head. "I'm afraid she'll be too late," he thought. "Bradley is very low."

The doctor had told him that in all probability Storm would not last the night out. The fever was at its height, and when it left him, as it was due to do at any time, it would leave him so weak he might just snuff out like a candle. "I've never seen so virulent a case," the doctor said.

Polly Bradley left the train at Southern Cross and went aboard the coach for Kalgoorlie with a heavy heart. There had been no message of hope waiting for her when the steamer got into port. Not that she could reasonably expect one—but reason plays a small part in such matters. And at Southern Cross—still no message!

It was a wearisome journey for an anxious woman—three small children, far away in Bendigo, and a husband, possibly sick unto death, needing her as he ever needed her before. She grudged

each minute of the necessary stops on the road during those long hundreds of miles between Southern Cross and Storm's bedside, and she was a very tired woman when the coach pulled up at the hotel kept by Storm's landlord friend.

"How is he?" she asked, as he helped her down from the coach. Jim Blake shook his head. "None too good, I'm afraid—but he's still alive, and that is something. I mustn't deceive you, Mrs. Bradley. Your husband is a very sick man."

Almost under compulsion by Blake Polly drank a cup of tea before going with him to where Storm was being nursed. He had a horse and buggy ready harnessed in the hotel yard, and not many minutes after she left the coach he was driving her quickly to Storm's bedside.

Mrs. Marcussen, her husband's nurse, met her at the door. "He's still alive," she said in answer to Polly's unspoken question. "The fever is gone, but he's very weak. So weak that—She said no more, but her eyes filled with tears. Then she added. "Go right into him—he's in there," and she indicated by a slight nod a nearby door.

Polly brushed past her and turned the door handle. For a second she hesitated—afraid. Then she opened the door. On the bed lay Storm—his stupor of weakness so great that at first she was sure he had gone from her for ever. Then he slowly turned his face towards the light of the doorway. She swiftly crossed the few feet intervening, and fell on her knees at the bedside. "Storm! Oh, my dear!" she said softly.

The sick man faintly struggled with the clouds of approaching death. He opened his eyes and looked at her without comprehension. "It's Polly," she said. "Don't you know me?"

But her only answer was a slight movement of his head and a slow closing of his eyes. Storm

Bradley was indeed well inside the Border-line.

Then Polly gathered herself together to fight Death for her husband. With a mighty effort she put all her fears behind her, for well she knew how they would paralyse her in the work that lay ahead. Low as she knew Storm to be, she called hope to her aid, and the battle for life—Storm's life—began.

For her to win, Storm must be roused so that he would know she was with him. If she could get him that far, his love for her would give him strength to fight. He would will to live! But could she rouse him? Had he slipped so far within the Shadows that he could not return?

Polly had not waited at the hotel to take off her travelling coat, but had gone straight to Storm just as she was; neither had she removed her hat when Mrs. Marcussen met her at the door. Suddenly it occurred to her that perhaps Storm would recognise her if he saw her just as he was accustomed to seeing her at home—in Bendigo. In an everyday dress and without her hat.

She went to the door and called Mrs. Marcussen. "Can you lend me a house dress?" she asked. "My husband may rouse a little if I can get him to recognise me. He doesn't know me in these clothes."

Mrs. Marcussen at once saw what Polly meant. "Certainly," she replied, and in a couple of minutes Polly had put on one of her dresses, and had taken off her own hat. Then she went again to Storm's bedside, after pulling up the window blind to let the light shine on her face.

She bent over the bed. "Storm!" she said, softly. "Storm!"

He turned his head—oh, so weakly—and opened his eyes. Gradually the vacant look gave place to

a dawn of recognition. "Polly!" he whispered. Just a whisper—but it was enough. She leant over and kissed him, and he faintly kissed her back. His hand was lying outside the bedclothes. Polly clasped it in her own, and the answering pressure told her that her husband knew she was with him —and that he took comfort from the knowledge. Then he closed his eyes again—but his clasp kept something of its feeble strength.

Polly, with her free hand, drew a chair to the bedside and sat down. For a few minutes she remained motionless, and of a truth it seemed as though some of her strength entered into Storm's weakness. Softly she called Mrs. Marcussen. "Try if he will take a tiny drop of brandy and milk," she said. Mrs. Marcussen soon brought the drink, and Polly managed to rouse Storm sufficiently to enable her to pour a few drops between his lips—never letting go his hand.

Another few minutes, and again a few more drops of the brandy and milk—and so on until evening came. Each half-hour found Storm gradually coming back from behind the Veil, until a quiet sleep came to him—and Polly gently withdrew her hand from his clasp. She had saved him. His soul had responded to her call, but it had been a near thing.

Next morning the doctor told her it was now only a matter of time; that with careful nursing he would certainly recover.

A couple of weeks after her husband was definitely out of bed, she had a talk with the doctor. "No, Mrs. Bradley," he said, "I don't think Mr. Bradley is well enough to travel—particularly to make the sea voyage back to Victoria. Typhoid leaves them rather like tissue paper inside, and if he was seasick I wouldn't like to say what would happen. Don't take any chances."

But Polly Bradley had been a long time parted from her children, and their little wants tugged at her heart. They needed her more than Storm did now. He was convalescing rapidly; in fact, one hardly knew him for a sick man except that he tired quickly. So she made up her mind.

"Storm," she said. "Would you mind if I went home, and you followed later?" Then she told him what the doctor had said about typhoid and sea-sickness. "The children will be wanting me," she added.

"Of course you must go!" he said. "The poor little kids—and poor old Dad, too. I'll bet he has his troubles with them."

So a week later Polly left the goldfields for Bendigo, and about ten days found her once more with her little ones—all safe.

"Why the hurry back?" asked Storm I. "We all got along fine. Hardly missed you."

"The house looks like it," answered Polly. "And the children's clothes——!"

"Why, what's the matter with them?"

"Nothing at all—except that I'm going to throw them away; they're past all hope."

Then she thought her father-in-law seemed hurt. "Dad," she said, "I want to thank you for the good care you took of the children. They're all fine—and that is all that matters. Soap and water will soon put everything else right."

And it did.

About two months later, Storm II was as well as ever, and after a visit to the doctor he took his passage homewards. The first evening after he got back to Bendigo, as they sat around the teatable, Storm said, looking out of the door at the orchard, "I'm glad to be home, Polly—and I hope you're as glad to have me. We're to the good over the Coolgardie trip—but it's home for me after this."

Old Storm was listening, sitting just outside the door. "Quite right," he called out. "It's my turn now. I'm off to the bush next week—tired of watching trees grow. I'm going to where they cut 'em down."

So up country he went. After he had been away about six months several weeks passed and no word came from him.

"I don't like it," said Storm. "It's time and more than time we heard from Dad. He's too old to be knocking about in the bush. He should stay here."

"Well, you know how it is with him," assented Polly. "He hates to think he's under any obligation to anybody. I believe it's that makes him leave us."

"No, Polly," there's something more than that, I think," Storm said slowly. "It's that Dad's trying to turn the hands of the clock back. While he's away he feels more like a young man. He doesn't have to admit to himself that he's old. It's natural."

"At any rate, he knows he's welcome here," said Polly. "I wish he'd stay at home. He must be well over seventy-six."

"Quite a bit over it," agreed Storm. "Three years at least. It's a good old age—and when he comes back we must see he doesn't go away again."

Another week passed, and still no news of the old man. Storm II became yet more anxious and decided to have a talk with the local police sergeant. He blamed himself for letting his father go away this last time. He had noticed he was ageing very quickly, but he disliked interfering, knowing how much it would be resented. So he had done nothing. Now, it appeared likely he would regret his inaction.

"Dad's last letter was dated from Hay," he said

to Polly next morning, as he was getting ready to go to town to see the police sergeant. "He said he was thinking of going farther north—that he had heard of a job at Ivanhoe. A cook was wanted at a sheep station there—for the homestead."

When Storm II returned home he was more worried than ever. "The police could tell me nothing," he said. Hay is in New South Wales, and of course the Bendigo police deal only with Victoria—their own State. They've promised to write to Sydney and ask that inquiries be made around Ivanhoe. I suppose that is all they can do."

"It can't be helped; we'll just have to wait," said Polly. "It'll take time to get news of him in that roundabout way."

"Yes," agreed Storm. "We'll be lucky if we hear anything for two or three weeks. And maybe much more than that."

When Storm I left Bendigo he went by rail to Echuca, and then crossed the Murray into New South Wales, staying for a few days at Moama. Not hearing of any work, he went by train to Deniliquin, fifty miles northerly. A fortnight there and he took the coach to Hay. The latter place was his old stamping ground, where he was well known, and, in spite of his age, valued at the stations as a worker.

For about three months he cooked on a sheep station a few miles out of the township, but soon his feet began to feel their old uneasiness. He must be on his way again! Where? To any place from where he was—like all his tribe. So he shouldered his swag and went north in the direction of the Lachlan river, and so on to Ivanhoe.

Often, he had measured his nearly eighty-year-old strength against the three-score-years-and ten warning—and won; but this time he was to lose, for he staggered up to the men's hut at

Ivanhoe a very sick old man. It had rained a couple of days earlier and he had lain all night in wet clothes. Now, pneumonia had him in its grip—and would not let go.

The men took him in and put him to bed. The boss came down with the station medicine chest and did his best to ease his sufferings, but it was no good. The old man had run his race, and the end had come.

Storm's wanderings had at last come to an end, and he lay waiting for the great Rest that was surely coming to him. The pain had ceased and he knew those around him once more.

Outside the magpies warbled and the cockatoos screeched. The dawn had come, and the Bush began to live. Yet the Reaper was there and would very shortly thrust in his scythe and harvest the ripe corn, to await the threshing.

The old man rambled in his thoughts. Now, he was tramping in search of a job; or cutting up a freshly slaughtered bullock and calling to the dogs who were gathered around the carcass. Again, he was serving out a ration of tea, flour and sugar to a "sun-downer," telling him to be careful of the fire he lit. So the day passed.

The curlews were weirdly calling when the lamp of Storm's life flickered up bravely for a moment, before expiring, and the Chinese went once more to the medicine chest.

"No! No!" whispered Storm. "I'm past that."

The cook grunted and put the bottle back.

And so he drew nearer and nearer to the Border-line across which all must one day step. Sooner or later—what does it matter? The relentless panorama of Time moves on—one end issuing out of the Unknown, and the other end entering into the equally Unknown.

Storm Bradley's theology was rather blurred

and hazy. He had always let others argue over creeds and forms, trying to do his duty as he saw it, and with a strong belief in God's goodness towards the creatures he had made. And now that the Great Change was at hand, why should he fear? All men must return to the Shadows from whence they came—and the Power that had bade them live does all things well. If there is life on the other side of the Veil—that is well. If there be only the Forgetfulness that is called Death—then that is also well. Surely the Author of all Things and Events is All-wise!

They buried Storm I at the foot of a big tree in a corner of the cultivation paddock. Over his head the kookaburra laughs and parrots scream, and none the less merrily because his bones lie crumbling below. And he sleeps as soundly in that unknown grave in the heart of the Australian Bush as any whose virtues are recorded on marble tablets for the edification of the curious.

When word came to Storm II that his father was dead, and that he had been buried on the station, he at first thought of having his father's body brought to Bendigo. "I don't like the idea of leaving him there," he said to Polly. Later, he saw more clearly. "No," he said. "I don't think Dad would wish to be disturbed. It is better as it is. He's buried where he always liked to be—and where he spent so many years—in the Bush. We'll let him stay there."

CHAPTER SEVEN

A DOZEN years passed quietly—as sometimes a dozen years will. At times in the world's life a single year holds more of action than does a score at other times. And so it is with individuals. And so it was with Storm and Polly. Seasons of blos-

som and seasons of fruit came and went—uneventfully. The three little children grew to be three big children—and that seemed to be all the change there was.

For some time Storm III had been slowing down at school, and not all the urgings of his mother and father could spur him along.

"Mother," he said, one afternoon after school, "there's a boy wanted at the newspaper office to learn printing. How about asking Father to let me take the job."

But Mrs. Bradley wouldn't hear of it.

Ten days later Storm II got a note from the headmaster asking the reason of his son's absence from school.

About dusk young Storm arrived. His father was waiting at the gate.

"What have you been doing with yourself?" he asked.

"Working at the "News" office. I told you they wanted a boy." Then he added, "Say, Dad, don't make me go back to school. I don't want to. I'm learning the printing, and I'm to get five shillings a week."

Later that evening Storm and Polly sat together and had it out. Storm was for letting the boy keep his job. Polly wanted him back at school.

If the boy would only say he would go back to school, I'd let him leave," he said. "That'd show he was willing to obey me."

Next morning, what was to be expected happened. Storm III went to his father. "Dad," he said, "I'll go back to school if you want me to."

And Storm II thought he had won a victory.

Two or three years afterwards, Polly let the cat out of the bag. She knew it was quite safe for her to do so, for the boy was doing well in the "News" office, and had been transferred to the

literary side of the paper, giving up type and machinery for the pencil and notebook of the reporter.

"Storm," she said, "You weren't as clever as you thought. That morning Stormie agreed to go back to school—well, I'd had a talk with him, and I told him you'd let him leave school if he would agree to go back, So there you are!"

Storm III was now turned seventeen, and was beginning to show his years by a trifle more attention to his clothes and to the matter of having regular haircuts. The red hair of his early boyhood had toned down to the Bradley "ginger," and he was developing his father's length and breadth, with the same "scimitar" face that is becoming the typical face of Australia.

"Keep this up much longer, Storm, and the "Age" or "Argus" will be sending for you," said Turner to him one day, when a particularly good human interest story written by him had appeared in the "News."

Storm, naturally, was pleased at the word of praise, and particularly with the form it took, for a job on one of the Melbourne daily papers was the Mecca towards which all Bendigo cub reporters kept their faces turned.

Storm III was now being given assignments to report public meetings of consequence. He was a fast shorthand writer and could follow a swift speaker with ease—and could turn his notes into good readable stuff that didn't need too much editing. Also he took a keen interest in the doings of the day, though he did not let his own opinions interfere with his writing. Not more than was natural—of course.

Like most young men, he inclined towards socialism. That was only as it should be. In youth the

heart govern's one's ideas more than does the head. One "feels" more than one "thinks." Later in life, when the "facts of life" begin to get their inevitable work in, and one is driven to the conclusion that the head and not the heart must be the controlling factor, and must always be given the power of veto over one's feelings"—then the socialism of youth is little by little discarded, often much against one's wish; and still more often with the greatest regret that the inherent weakness of human nature make such discarding compulsory.

In youth, the heart, seeing the misery of so many, and also seeing that there is plenty and to spare for all, says, "Why should any be in need when there is so much? Let a Law be made putting this great Wrong right!" And so a Law is made—nay, many Laws are made, all with the best of intentions. But as the years pass, bringing experience with them, gradually the Head takes charge of one's actions—and the Young Man Socialist becomes the Old Man Conservative.

"Say, Bradley," the editor said one night, after the paper had gone to press, "I notice you are giving the socialists quite a number of paragraphs these days. What's the matter? Gone over to their side?"

"Not exactly," said Storm III. "But I've been reading up a bit from their point of view—Karl Marx, and all that—and it does seem as if there's something in it."

"Sure there's something in it! There's national paralysis in it," snapped Turner.

"Do you mean government ownership?" Storm asked.

"Yes—that included," Turner replied. "This country is too full of it. 'What's the government going to do?' 'What's the government going to

do?' Always 'the government.' Soon all there'll be left for the individual to handle will be running corner groceries and selling suburban allotments."

"I thought all Australians believed in the government owning the railroads," said Storm.

"Well, this Australian doesn't," replied Turner, "and as I've always got a minute free in which to save a soul, sit down and I'll tell you why."

"Storm III sat down and was all attention. He knew the editor of his paper to be a man with a worldwide experience, and so was worth listening to.

"It's this way," said Turner, "and after I've told you, for heaven's sake don't speak to me about it again. Just do your own observing and thinking—and see which end of the horn you come out of. Railroads are freight carriers. That's their primary function. Their business is to carry the stuff raised by the man on the land to the markets or to the seaboard, and to bring back to the inlander the goods he needs. It wouldn't matter a great deal if the fellow raising the freight never travelled on the railroad. It's the freight that counts. Get that, Storm?"

"I understand," said Storm.

"Well, it's more than most Australians do," said Turner. "They seem to think that the whole business of a railroad is to carry passengers backwards and forwards on holidays.

"Getting back to freight. There are two sides to that as to most things. There's freight carrying—and there's freight making. And freight making comes first and so is more important than freight carrying. It must be made before it can be carried. That's obvious.

"But government-owned lines are only freight carriers, whereas privately owned railroads are

freight makers as well. And just there is where the big difference comes in."

"But why isn't a government owned railroad a freight maker," asked Storm.

"Why?—because it doesn't have to be," said Turner. Did you ever know any government department that did anything it didn't have to do—it always has to be kicked along. If there's little or no freight to carry, and therefore the line does not pay, there's always the pockets of the taxpayer to fall back on to make good the loss.

"But with a private company it's quite a different matter. If the freight isn't there it must be developed, or the company will soon be in the hands of the receiver. So the directors get to work to influence capital into their district to develop it. If it is sheep country, they see it is cut up for farming. If there's any mineral country in it, they see the ore is got out so they can earn dividends carrying it. If it carries timber they get the sawmills in. All with the same idea—to make freight so they can make money.

"And remember this," Turner emphasised, "making freight gives the employment that makes a nation. A nation is something of the nature of a 'bye-product,' if you get what I mean."

"I never looked at it that way before," said Storm—already learning the first lesson in what was to carry him far from his incipient communism.

"No, I don't suppose you did—but suppose you make a start now," said Turner. "And remember this—as I said, nations are only bye-products of industry. Patriotism isn't sufficient to develop this Australia of ours. Work and wages—good wages—are the prime necessities for that. Work to turn our 'potentialities' into 'actualities,' and wages

well and truly earned and paid, sufficient to maintain a selfrespecting people."

"I've hear quite a bit about our 'potentialities'" said Storm, with something of a grin.

"So've I. Many times. Too many times," replied Turner. "Not but what they're there. They are—but if we don't do something adequate about them reasonably soon—well, someone else will."

Storm III for days afterwards turned over in his mind his editor's side of the railroad question. He hesitated to throw his own ideas overboard—but bit by bit they went into the deep sea of things discarded. The last to go was his fear that if private capital was allowed to go into the Australian railroad business, the railroad users would be bled white in the matter of freight and fare charges.

It was an Australian who rid him of that fear. One evening he was reporting a political meeting, and while he was waiting for the speakers to begin, he got into talk with another reporter, an Australian who had just returned from a long visit to America. "Say," the latter said; "You should see the American railroads. They certainly are up to date. Give a service we only dream about."

"And I suppose the companies that own them charge in a way we only dream about, too. A bad dream at that!" said Storm.

"Not they! They're well and truly controlled in that matter by the bunch Teddy Roosevelt got going on the job—the Federal Railroad Commission, that fixes the freights and fares for every ton of goods and every passenger mile in the United States. And more than that—there are forty-eight states in the Union, and every state has its own railroad commission to see those rates are charged, and no more."

"I see," said Storm. "Private ownership—with government rate control, so the railroad user isn't bled. Sounds like a good halfway house between government ownership as we know it and handing the country over blind to private railroading companies."

"Yes, agreed the other reporter. "Americans paid through the nose to the companies at first—but that's all over now. It'd be a good thing for us if we handled our railroads along the new American lines.

Storm III was interested—but just then the chairman of the meeting announced the first speaker. "Here endeth the first chapter, Bradley," said his friend. "Let's get busy with our business—which is making this chap talk sense—and talk it in the King's English."

CHAPTER EIGHT

JUST about this time, Turner, the editor of the "News," went to Sydney to fill the editorial chair of one of that city's daily papers. It wasn't long before he found a job for Storm III. When Storm got the letter telling him to pack up and come away, he was delighted. Provincial journalism was one thing—but metropolitan newspaper work was something a step higher.

"Run your eye over that, Mother," he said, when he got home that evening, handing her Turner's letter. "How'd you like to have a son on one of Sydney's big dailies?" And he stuck his thumbs in his waistcoat, as one who had the world by the tail on a downhill drag.

Mrs. Bradley read the letter. "Dad will be pleased," she said. "But Sydney's a long way off, Stormie, and we won't see much of you once you leave home."

"That's all right, Mother," he assured her. "If I can't get away once in a while to come over and have a look at you—why, I'll chuck the job. Be sides, you and Dad can always take a trip over there. It'd be something new for you. You haven't seen Sydney yet."

Just then Storm II came in and was told the news. "Good boy!" he said. "And when do you go?"

"As soon as the "News" can get someone to fill my place. In a couple of weeks, I suppose."

Within a month Storm III was in Sydney, settled down in his new job on Turner's paper. At first, his letters back home were jokingly cynical, telling how he found Sydney quite half as full of merit as Sydney folks had always claimed; that the harbour was still there—and was always full of water, even during a dry spell; that the beaches were mostly sand and water—and pretty girls—and girls not so pretty—but not too many of the latter.

But gradually Sydney "got" him, as it gets everybody. Writing to his mother he said, "Some people call Sydney the 'London of the South.' It isn't. It's just Sydney—the one and only. It isn't New London or New Anything. It's good old Sydney."

About a year after Storm III went over to Sydney," his father and Polly paid him a visit.

They got there in time to help celebrate their son's twenty-first birthday. He gave a party, to which he invited many of the friends he had made during the time he had been in Sydney—young men and young women—and Storm and Polly took good care that as far as they were concerned the gathering would be a sucess—at least Polly did.

"You've never had an evening suit—but you're going to get one now," she said to her husband.

"And I'm sure you'll look well in it, too."

Storm II put up a fainthearted resistance, but he had to capitulate. Truth to tell, that is just what he wanted to do. He'd got an idea he would look as well as the rest in a dinner rig-out, and he wanted to prove it. Like many men who did not "dress," he had always had a sneaking desire for an evening suit, but could never muster courage to get one—and to wear it after he got it. Not in Bendigo, at any rate, where the whole town would know—and where his mates might laugh.

"Do you think it's necessary?" he asked. "Just for one night."

"And that night your son's twenty-first birthday party! Don't let me hear another word! Go at once and get measured, and be sure and tell the tailor to hurry up and get it finished! Tell him why, too!" Polly emphasised her commands, by quickly leaving the room and shutting the door behind her.

The night of the party, Storm III was proud of his mother—and told her so. As to his father—when he saw him in his dinner suit, he pretended not to notice anything out of the usual. "Here's where you sit, Dad," was all he said, as he showed him his seat.

Storm II didn't half like it. "I've gone to a lot of trouble to do him well," he grumbled under his breath to Polly. "I might just as well have saved my money." Then he gave a look at himself in a nearby mirror that contradicted all he had said.

"Why, Dad," Polly said. "Your son has paid you a very great compliment. He just let you know by saying nothing that he took it for granted you knew the right thing to do."

"Perhaps that's it," he replied. "But I think it more likely the young rascal is saying nothing on

purpose. Wants me to ask him how I look. Well, he'll wait a long while."

"I don't think you've much to grumble about—why, you haven't told me yet how I look," challenged Polly.

"Oh, you always look alright," said Storm II. "You always do; haven't changed a bit since—"

Just then Storm the younger came up behind them and caught the end of what his father was saying. "Still paying Mother compliments, Dad," he said. "Mother deserves them, too." Then he added, "Thanks for the trouble you've been to, Dad. I know you hate being bothered with tailors."

The mother in Mrs. Bradley kept watching for "the" girl who she felt sure—and feared—was present. One by one, she scrutinised the maidens as they came up to her. "Not this one," she thought. "Perhaps this one?" "Oh, I hope not this one!" And so on for the first half dozen.

Then Storm II went over to a corner of the room and spoke for a moment with a short, smiling-faced, grey-eyed lass, with hair that almost matched his own, except that it was several shades darker, and most plentifully piled on her head in becoming fashion. She nodded, and walked across the room with him.

Mrs. Bradley's heart gave a little movement. This was "She"—without a doubt! There was that in her son's face, and in the girl's, that told her the secrets of both their hearts.

"Mother, this is Miss Norris—Elsie," he said. Storm's mother put out her hand to greet the girl; then, impulsively—a rare thing with her—she took a step forward and kissed her a welcome. And in such manner Elsie Norris became one of the Bradley family.

Storm II looked at his son—and then from Storm to the girl—then back to Storm. The under-

standing that is in men told him all he wanted to know, without words. "You're a good judge, my boy," he said. "Pretty near as good as your father."

"Do you think your father and mother like me?" Elsie asked Storm III, when he was leaving her home that night. "I hope they do."

Storm laughed. "Why, Dad's fallen in love with you—and you know it," he said. "And Mother is quite satisfied with the results of the "once over,"

Elsie was the only daughter of Tom Norris, a retired lawyer, who having made enough money to keep him, and a trifle over, was turning his attention to politics, and so was looking round for a seat in parliament.

"It's not so easy, Bradley," he said to Storm III, shortly after Elsie had introduced him to her family. "The sure seats are marked out for the party favourites—and that applies to all the political parties—and a man like myself can have what is left over. And the left-overs don't look too good."

"Well, and isn't that human nature, Mr. Norris?" asked Storm, "and isn't politics about the most human nature business there is? The Ins and the Outs; the Haves and the Have Nots. That's all there is to it, as far as I ever could see."

"But show 'em you can fight, Mr. Norris," he continued, "and they'll soon find a seat for you. That's the game to play—only you must play it 'regular,' or you have no hope."

"I'll play it 'regular,' alright," said Norris. "I am too old a bird to try it any other way. No forlorn hopes for me."

Elsie's two brothers, Will and Ed were both at this time in West Australia. They wrote home very irregularly, but, as their sister defendingly said, "They were like all other young men—forgetful."

But all was not plain sailing for Storm and his girl. Her mother was against Storm, and hoped the affair would come to nothing. There was another young fellow in the field, and one whose financial position was much better than Storm's.

Jack Wells, the favored of Mrs. Norris, was the son of an old friend of hers. He was a decent sort and had inherited about twenty thousand pounds, mostly in real estate, from his father. He did nothing—and didn't see why he should. "Why should I take another fellow's job away from him when I don't need the money," he would ask, if anyone questioned the right of a rich idler to eat. And no one seemed to be able to give him the answer. Not one that looked good to him, at least.

Wells was very fond of Elsie! Not as Storm was fond of her—for that weak word is most inadequate to describe the love that young Bradley had for the girl. For him, she was the only girl in the world—and, gradually, the power of his love was compelling, and calling forth, an equal love from Elsie.

But, as was natural in a young girl, she liked a good time—and Storm's work tied him at night, just when good times were most to be had. Then, of course, was Jack Wells' chance, and he made the most of it.

Yes—as far as opportunities were concerned, Wells had the inside running. But—the girl's heart—that was another matter.

Still, Storm didn't know—and couldn't know—the true state of affairs. All he did know was that another man saw far too much of his girl.

"Wells is a good deal of a bounder," he growled, one evening, when Elsie showed him the birthday present Jack had given her the evening before. It was a gold bracelet, and must have cost more

than a trifle. "A gentleman doesn't give jewellery to a girl!"

Storm was "in for it," and the tempest broke at once. "Mr. Wells is anything but a bounder—and he's my friend, Mr. Bradley," she said, with ominous quietness. Then she added, "And to say such a thing behind his back—well, is that what a gentleman would do?"

Just then her mother came into the room. The young couple showed to her experienced eye all the signs of having been through—nay, of being in—a quarrel, and she was not slow to take advantage of it. "Oh, Elsie," she said, "I want you in the kitchen for a minute. Do you mind?" Then to Storm, "You were just leaving, anyway, weren't you Mr. Bradley?"

"Mr. Bradley" was, and admitted it. So "Mr. Bradley" left.

Elsie knew just what was at the bottom of her mother's little trick, namely, her disapproval of Storm Bradley as a son-in-law. But she was a girl with a mind of her own, and knew that in the end Mrs. Norris' objections would be overcome, or ignored—or as near ignored as it is possible for a dutiful daughter of these modern times to ignore a mother's wishes on such a matter of importance to the daughter as her own marriage undoubtedly is.

She considered her mother for a moment with a half-smile. "Now Mother dear," she said, with that little touch of something in her voice that wise parents keep their ears lifting for from otherwise dutiful daughters, "Don't you worry yourself about my friends. I can keep them in their places quite well—especially Mr. Bradley."

Next morning, as Elsie woke, a thought darted into her mind. "I'll throw the bracelet into the harbour as I go to Sydney."

About noon Elsie caught the ferry at Parsley Bay, to do some shopping in town. Storm Bradley was on it also, but she didn't know that. He was sitting on the top deck forward, while Elsie had taken a seat on the bottom deck.

Later, when the ferry was pulling out of Garden Island, she went to the upper deck, and seated herself near one of the open windows.

She moved her hand to the window. "Yes, the bottom of the harbour was the best place for it!"

Just then she chanced to glance over to the other side of the boat—and there sat Storm—intently watching her. Their eyes met, and he, wise young man that he was, at once left his seat and crossed to her.

"Elsie!" said he, tentatively.

"Storm!" said she, acceptingly.

And so it was all over. Love never requires explanations—only when Love is in angry mood. Which, thank heaven, occurs often enough to make being in love the most delightful happening in all the world.

However, the bracelet couldn't be left possibly to cause further trouble—for, if lovers' quarrels don't go very deep, neither do lovers' settlements of those quarrels. Every once in so often the Imp of Mischief whose sole occupation it is to see that young couples a-courting shall not die of the monotony of it takes it on himself to drag to the light of day some little happening they thought was buried past all resurrection.

Then, all over again, the Play is acted. First, the Prologue; innocent enough at the beginning, but gradually beginning to bristle with possibilities of trouble. Then, Scene I; Scene II; and so on up to the last Scene; and then the Curtain drops, with the lovers again in each others' arms. And the Imp, with his thumb to his nose and his fin-

gers outspread, all the time peeping around the corner from one of the "properties" at the lovers, the sole actors in the performance.

So Storm, next evening, told Elsie of a way of settling the bracelet trouble—a way she entirely approved.

"You'd better see Dad first," she said. "He might be able to persuade Mother to agree."

"Do you agree—that's all that matters?" asked Storm.

"Yes, Storm, I agree," she replied. "No matter what Mother says—I agree."

Storm gathered the girl up in his arms—and then for quite a long time the world, for them, simply did not exist.

CHAPTER NINE

NEXT day Storm called on Mr. Norris. "Well, young fellow, what can I do for you?" asked the elder man. "Even unto the half of my kingdom —speak and it is yours!" Norris was in an expansive mood and was letting himself go. It made a good opening for Storm.

"It's more than half your kingdom I want, Mr. Norris," he said, jumping right into the business that brought him there, and thanking his lucky stars that the way had been made easy for him. "It's Elsie. We want you to allow us to announce our engagement."

"Look, Storm," said Norris. "I'm not going to make any pretence about it. I like you, and I hope you're lucky enough to get Elsie—and let me tell you you'll be a fortunate man if you become Elsie Norris' husband; but Elsie's mother thinks another way, and I'm not going to fight your battles for you. The most I can promise is that I'll be a 'benevolent neutral.' How's that?"

"It'll do me, Mr. Norris—and many thanks," said Storm, getting up from his seat and shaking hands with his prospective father-in-law. "And I'm sure Elsie will be delighted."

"Get Elsie's mother delighted—that's your next job," advised Norris. I'll look on—'benevolently,' as I said. But, remember, no public engagement until Mrs. Norris is willing."

When Storm told Elsie of just how the interview with her father had resulted, she laughed. "Dad is a dear," she said. "I know what his 'benevolent neutrality' will amount to. It will be all benevolence and no neutrality. I think I'll wait a few days before I tell Mother, so that Dad will have a chance to get in some of his fine work. You don't know Dad, Storm; he couldn't be neutral on anything, if he tried ever so hard."

That evening Mr. Norris told his wife of Storm's visit to him and of its result—of the 'neutrality,' but not of the 'benevolence.'

"Why, Tom, I think he's a very nice young fellow!" she protested. Whyever would you think I'd be against Elsie marrying him? He's sure to get along well. It was only this afternoon at the reception to the delegates from the women's club that Mrs. Malcolm—whose husband owns the paper Mr. Bradley is on—told me how much Mr. Malcolm thinks of him. Storm was reporting the meeting and came up and spoke to me, and I introduced him to her. She told me, as a secret, that he is soon to be assistant-editor."

Tom Norris saw the light—and said nothing. To his wife, a son-in-law rapidly climbing the ladder of his profession was quite another thing to one who had just a toehold on the bottom rung of the ladder. Quite another thing! "And naturally so!" he thought. "And rightly so!" he admitted.

His wife was a mother first—and a mother-in-law afterwards.

"It's all right, Elsie," Norris told his daughter next morning. Tell that young man of yours the coast is clear."

"Oh, Dad, I'm so glad—and thanks!" she answered; her face showing her happiness. "But I

Tom Norris didn't tell Elsie what it was that had caused her mother to change her attitude towards Storm. He thought he might just as well get any credit that was coming.

Elsie had a good session that morning with her mother, and everything was settled. The engagement was to be announced at once, and before midday the two of them had arranged all the details of the announcement party—invitations, decorations, dresses, and all.

Then she dragged the skeleton straight out of its cupboard. "Oh, Mother," she said, "Storm is so vexed with Jack for giving me that bracelet on my birthday. He was going to insist on me returning it. Do you think Jack would mind if I were to tell my girl friends that it was a present to me on my engagement. Then it would look as if Storm knew all about it."

A week later, after the party invitations were out, Wells called at the Norris' home. Elsie was out. Directly Mrs. Norris saw him she knew something was amiss, and after a good deal of conversational backing and filling it all came out.

"I got your invitation," he said, and—and—of course, I'll be very glad to come. But—but—. To tell the truth, Mrs. Norris, I wonder if you would give me a card for a young lady—a friend of mine?"

"Of course I would, Jack!" said Mrs. Norris. "Who is she? Do I know her?"

"Not very well—that is, not lately," he answer-

ed. "But Elsie and she used to go to school together. Her name is Doris—Doris Brown."

Then she approached the subject of the bracelet—very carefully, and in such a manner that Wells always afterwards thought the proposal to change the occasion of the gift came from him.

It's not hard to do things like that when one of the parties to the business is a mother and the other is a young man who finds himself in the position Jack Wells was in—between two stools—that is, between two girls—one going and another coming. He was more than a bit relieved, for it prevented awkward questions from Doris. What more natural than a bracelet for an engagement present? Why—nothing!

When Mrs. Norris told Elsie all about Wells' ready acceptance of the idea, neither of them knew whether to be glad or sorry. Elsie didn't like to think her hold on him had been so weak. He might have waited three months, she thought, before telling the world of his perfidy—for his attentions towards herself had been well known. And Mrs. Norris, in a subconscious manner, wished it had been possible to have kept the bird in the hand—and also at the same time to capture the bird in the bush.

The party at which Elsie and Storm's engagement was announced was a great success.

Tom and Mrs. Norris mixed around with their guests. The usual speeches were made, and Storm took care, when his turn came, to say he hoped the old saying held true, "As the mother is so the daughter will be." He meant it. Being a winner he could afford to. Being Mrs. Norris' prospective son-in-law, he couldn't afford not to.

Mrs. Norris had so much forgotten any small hostility that she may or may not have felt towards Storm as to tell him his tie was slipping.

"Go into Father's dressing room and fix it," she said. If that isn't taking a young man into the bosom of the family, then nothing is.

Tom Norris gave proof of his 'benevolent neutrality' towards Storm and Jack by inviting them together into his room to have a drink. The young men drank his whisky in complete friendliness—each satisfied he had the other where he wanted him; and each equally satisfied he himself had the advantage—and the game.

And they both were right. Life has many prizes—one for everybody. But sometimes the prizes seem to get mixed. When that happens the best thing to do is to take another dip in the lucky bag—and not to lose heart even if the second try is no better than the first.

Remember Bruce and the spider—particularly the spider, for Bruce seems to have done nothing on that occasion but lie down and take things easy. It was the spider who did all the work.

No! On second thoughts, perhaps, for the same reason, it is best to forget the spider—and concentrate on Bruce!

Storm III wrote to his parents telling them of his and Elsie's engagement. Mrs. Bradley at once sent an invitation to the girl to visit them at Bendigo. "Storm's sisters want to make your acquaintance, she said. Mary is to be married soon—and then Father and I will be alone. You must try and come over before Mary leaves me, so that you two can get to know one another."

When Storm was told by Elsie of his mother's wish that she should pay her a visit, he was pleased. "I believe I can get away from the office for a couple of weeks," he said. "We could go over together. That would be fine."

And so it was arranged. Storm and Elsie travelled down to Melbourne and were met by their

friends. Storm conspired with Fred Stevens to have Elsie kept at least a couple of days so they could see the city and its sights.

"Sure!" said Stevens. "It's just what I'd do myself. Trust me—and the wife—and you and Elsie won't get away to Bendigo for a week."

He was as good as his word, and by the time Storm and Polly boarded the train for Bendigo they had had the time of their lives. They had visited Ferntree Gully and the mountain country along the narrow-gauge line up north. They had gone down the Bay to Sorrento, and along the Back Beach. They had spent a couple of days exploring the beaches from St. Kilda through Elwood and Sandringham, and from Half-moon Bay right along to Mordialloc—twenty miles of beaches and there are another twenty after that twenty they didn't have time to see—and another hundred after that last twenty. Beaches—and still more beaches.

Elsie was surprised. She was a Sydney girl, and so thought Sydney was the owner of all the beaches there were. "Why," she said, "I didn't know Melbourne had so many beaches. I thought Sydney——."

"Yes," chaffed Storm, "Some day you Sydney people will wake up to the fact that most of Australia is outside Sydney."

It was a full week after their arrival in Melbourne before Storm and Elsie took the train for Bendigo, and soon it was speeding across the Keilor plains and then up the rising country towards Mount Macedon. It was a delightful journey. The Bush was waking from the night's rest, and whether to the eye, to the ear, or to the sense of smell, there is nothing more pleasing than the Australian Bush before the sun mounts to the zenith—unless it is the same Bush when the King

of Day has descended from his throne and the dews of evening are beginning to fall.

"Pretty good?" said Storm to Elsie, as the train slid around the base of Mount Macedon, and all the glory of the golden wattle showed itself in immense blazes of yellow among the gumtrees.

"It's lovely," she replied. "Just too lovely for anything. Look at the tops of those gumtrees, with all their beautiful tints."

The train was beginning to climb the grade that took them over the timber, and, spread out beneath them, were miles of gumtrees, each tree crowned with a blush of coloring of every shade from gray-pink to orange-violet—and beyond.

"Oh, Storm! Did you ever see anything like it! exclaimed Elsie. Now I know why Dorothea Mackellar calls Australia 'My opal-hearted country.' That's just what it is. The young gumtips have all the tints of opal—and more."

Soon the train began to stop at the little towns strung along the railroad, one by one, until Castlemaine was reached—theForest Creek of the olden, golden days, when many tens of thousands of the world's adventurers turned its surface upside down in their search for fortune.

'Only twentyfive miles more, and we'll be in Bendigo," said Storm.

Then they began to run through the Harcourt orchards. The countryside was a mass of bloom. "You're in the land of fruit, now, Elsie," said Storm.

"I think you mean the land of flowers," Elsie answered, the wide stretches of blossom passing before her.

About an hour later, the train pulled into the Bendigo platform. Storm's mother and father were waiting for them.

When they got outside the station, Storm the

elder walked over to a light single-seater car standing by the kerb and began stowing the luggage away.

Storm II already saw himself driving the car, with Elsie sitting alongside him, through the Bendigo country—Cherry Tree, Marong, Eaglehawk, White Hills, Emu Creek, Goornong—perhaps as far as Elmore; with maybe a good day's run to Echuca and back.

Soon the party were travelling along the tree-shaded Bendigo streets, and out over the Back creek to the orchard. Mary was at the gate to greet them. The two girls kissed first, as is the way of womankind—and entered judgment afterwards.

That afternoon, Storm and Elsie went out, "to look over the orchard," they said. The trees were in bloom and everything was at its best. "They've put on their finery to welcome you," said Storm to Elsie. "Dad's a great orchardist,' he added. "He can persuade fruit on to trees when everybody else has none."

"You must be ever so proud of your father and mother," Elsie said, with emphasis, "for them to have made all this out of nothing." Long ago he had told her how Storm II and Polly had pulled themselves up by their bootstraps, before he was born.

Then, having manoeuvred Elsie behind a particularly widespread tree, whose branches were thickly covered with bloom, Storm and his girl—.

But there are times and places and happenings that are better imagined than described. At any rate, when within two hours they were back at the cottage, Storm was strangely ignorant of much of the orchard. He said he and Elsie "hadn't gone all over it."

They hadn't!

"Didn't you notice the young appletrees I've put in at the back of the new five acres?" asked Storm II

"We didn't get that far, Dad," his son answered. "Nor the peaches just coming into bloom along the side fence."

"No, Dad."

"Then what on earth have you seen? Where did you go?"

Young Storm looked at Elsie—and Elsie looked at young Storm. "We didn't get past the big plum, near the shed." said she.

Then Storm the elder remembered there was a comfortable seat under the plum tree—and didn't press his inquiries further.

"I understand! I understand!" he said, with a laugh.

He did—and so do we.

Next day, Storm's elder sister, Alice, came in from Marong with her husband, Jack Abercrombie, and their two small children, to stay overnight. Alf Hunt, the young fellow who was soon to marry Mary, also put in an appearance and the family gathering was complete.

Mrs. Bradley and Mary sat the party down to the Australian dinner usual on such occasions, and the opening sentence of nearly every subject of talk was, "Do you remember?" School days, and the times when sixpence was untold wealth to the Bradley children—and to the Abercrombies and the Hunts—were joked about, to everyone's delight.

Strange how the knocks and bruises of our earlier times always provide the laughter for the latter days. The good times are forgotten. It is the trials and the tribulations—or what at the time seemed to be trials and tribulations—that are so well remembered and proudly related; possibly, as showing the stuff we are made of!

Then the talk took more intimate lines. Alice told them how she remembered, as a little girl, the accident at the mine that had so nearly taken their father from them—and Storm the elder paid a son's tribute to his father's courage in rescuing him just in the nick of time. He also gave them some memories of his sisters.

Then he grew "Polly-personal," and reminisced about the "girl in the red dress" he had met at the church on the hill—the church with the little pine pulpit. "You girls are not so bad," he said. "But you're not a patch for looks on what your mother was at your age—in fact, I can't see that she's any diff—."

"That'll do, Dad!" said Polly, with a smile that showed how she loved his loyalty. "If it's true, as you are always saying, that I've not altered since I was twenty—well, it doesn't say much for what I was like when I was a girl. You forget that!"

Then Elsie told them about her own family. About her father, who hoped to get into parliament; her mother, and the bracelet episode. "You would have been foolish to throw it into the harbour," said Mary. Then about her brothers, Will and Ed, in West Australia.

"They're somewhere in the West now, but we don't hear from them very often. Sometimes Mother frets, but I tell her they're no different to most other young men about writing home."

And so the evening was spent—to be remembered long years afterwards as the last time all the family were gathered together in one place.

For the next ten days Storm III rediscovered Bendigo in the single seater, with Elsie at his side.

Just as they were beginning to make arrangements for their return journey to Sydney, Storm

the younger got a telegram from his editor telling him to get back to his job without delay.

"I'm afraid I must leave by the next train," he told Elsie and his mother. "The office wants me —there are happenings in the air, and something may 'break' at any time. Something so big the paper will need us all."

Storm's mother packed his bag, and Storm II drove him to the station. "Goodbye, Dad," he said as they shook hands just before he stepped on to the train.

"Goodbye, lad!" said the elder man.

And "Goodbye" it was for both, for a long and eventful time. A time packed by Fate to the brim for the whole world.

Elsie stayed with Storm's people for another week, when she too went back to Sydney. Writing to Storm III from Bendigo, a couple of days after he left, she said. "You don't know how glad I am that I accepted your mother's invitation to visit her. I hope she likes me as much as I like her. And Alice and Mary—and your father. They're all just splendid."

CHAPTER TEN

IT WAS early August, 1914—and it was War! The matter that had recalled Storm III to Sydney had 'broken'—and had indeed broken 'big.' Germany had invaded Belgium, and so had died the first man of millions of men fated to die, who up to that moment had been living and loving, the thought of a bloody death the last thing in their minds.

War is not all evil. Much of the holiness of the sacrifice a nation makes when its men go out to battle—and to death—is called into being by the war that demands that the sacrifice be made. Life

—just as life—is not necessarily a beautiful and a valuable possession. Selfish life is far otherwise. So when men offer their lives in their country's defence—their lives for its life—then is born in each of them the spirit which, at one and the same time, is the product of war, however terrible and horrible war is, and their priceless gift to their country.

War calls into being the fine spirit of a nation's fighting sons and sacrificing daughters—and so that nation is just that much the richer. With war, the men and women of a country rise above themselves to heights that do much to counterbalance the awful price paid—even in a successful war, if there be any such thing.

In war, it is as though, in the nation's book-keeping, there appears on the credit side of the country's ledger items that otherwise would have been non-existent to the eye. Spiritual items, written in invisible ink that only the heat of war could disclose: Honour, Sacrifice and Courage. All the qualities that prove a people to be truly great —and all qualities that war makes visible—and, very often, that war actually creates.

War is not the worst happening that can afflict a people. The existence of a cowardly spirit that accepts an invasion of the rights of one's own nation by another nation—that prefers dishonour to wounds and death—that is a far worse evil than the bloodiest war that ever was fought. Far worse!

Better for a people to live in poverty, sword in hand, defending its rights and liberties against aggression, than to go clothed and fatly-fed obeying the will of others.

"Blessed are the meek!" No! A thousand times No! All history proves the unwisdom of such a weakening philosophy. But reversed, so that it reads, "Cursed are the bullies!" it is a world truth.

But, above all and beyond all—Liberty! Liberty for all and justice to all. Avoiding war, if it can be avoided with honour. Accepting war when honour demands; always with the prayer on one's lips and in one's hearts, "God defend the Right!" Even though the answer should mean the defeat of one's own cause.

Storm II ran true to his breeding. Immediately the cables told of Britain's entry into the quarrel, he saw his editor. "I'm getting into khaki as soon as possible, Mr. Turner," he said, "When will it suit you to let me go?"

Turner stretched out his hand. "Shake hands, Storm!" he said. "You can go right now—and good luck go with you!"

It was a morning early in August, and Storm was among those who besieged the Victoria barracks, eager to enlist for the struggle that was ahead. He had seen Elsie the evening before and had told her his intentions. "You understand—don't you?" he asked. "We Australians can do no less. It's our fight as well as England's."

"Yes, I understand," she replied. "But, oh Storm, it's terrible. Do you think it will last long?"

"No, it can't, Elsie—it can't!" he answered. "They're at each other's throats already in Belgium, and in a few days, when the truth comes out about the slaughter that must be going on there, surely they'll find some means of stopping it all. But, still, we must be getting ready, for one never knows what will happen."

In those days all the world thought the same as Storm—except the few who mattered. Thought that when the armed masses of Germany and France and Britain clashed, the terrible death roll would force a halt to be called. That whoever is meant when the impersonal "They" is used would step in and cry "Enough!"

But it was not to be. As, day after day, accounts of battles came, with the accompanying slaughter roll, that bloody roll began to cease to appal—the nerves of the world became stunned. "They" did nothing—and men in their hundreds of thousands continued to die. They might have done worse—easily worse! They might have continued to live—and then Freedom would have died!

But the men and women of 1914-1918 paid the price of their quality—and the world is moving forward because of their sacrifice. And the end of the forward movement is not yet visible—or even yet understandable. The future alone will reveal just what the war taught mankind.

Storm Bradley was sent to camp for training, and was with his battalion when it sailed for Egypt. Elsie arranged to go to the Woolloomooloo wharf to see him off. Not if she could have would she have held him back. She knew that the time had come when a man must do a man's work—and she also knew that their women could best help by not hindering.

The battalion detrained at the railway station, and formed up to march through the city to Woolloomooloo and the waiting transports. "Permit no mixing of the crowd with the troops!" was the order passed along to the sergeants. As well have tried to stop Niagara tumbling over the lip of the falls.

Company after company stepped off—immediately to be swallowed by the waiting crowd; and soon the wide street was just a packed mass of men, and women—and children—and soldiers. Fathers and younger brothers, wives and mothers, sisters and sweethearts, carrying rifles and equipment, and walking arm in arm with their particular soldier.

"Permit no mixing with the troops!" For the

distance from the station to the wharf no order was ever so wholeheartedly and so literally disobeyed! Yet, when the all-too-short march was over, and the gates at Woolloomooloo reached, each and every woman of that crowd delivered up her man to his duty—and too often to his death.

And at all ports of Australia—at Hobart and at Melbourne, at Brisbane and at Adelaide and at Perth, similar crowds gathered on similar business. And so Australia did its duty—neither more nor less. Men marching away—and women sending them—that the free institutions of their country might endure. That the star-sprinkled Australia flag might continue to float over a free people.

Elsie saw Storm as he stepped from the train at the railway station. She had been waiting a long while, for the hour at which his battalion was to arrive was uncertain—but that was a small matter at such a time. Then she lost sight of him, but luckily his company fell in close to where she was standing, and she saw him again just as the troops got the order to march—"and not to mix with the crowd!"

Two seconds—and she was alongside him. One second more, and they were arm in arm—orders forgotten, and the only thing remembered was that they were sweethearts—and that separation was very near.

The soldier next to Storm was an older man—from far up country—consequently, in all that crowd there was no one to march alongside him. "Give me your kitbag," he said to Storm. "I'll carry it—and then you'll have more room for your girl."

"Thanks!" said Storm, as he handed him the cumbering bag. "Thanks!" looked Elsie, not daring to say it.

And so they went together, down the road so

many Australians afterwards marched—and it may be that in the following years, when gallant company after gallant company of the A.I.F. set out along that same road from the railway to the ship's side, that the men of the earlier days, who had since given their lives at Gallipoli, and in Palestine and in France, and on the other scattered fields where Australians served, marched side by side with them—unseen but not unfelt.

Through such places as the gates of the 'Loo the Australian people marched into nationhood. Yes—for Australia the war was worth while, hard saying though that is, to those whose dearest ones did not return.

The transports and their convoys reached Alexandria, and in the shadow of the Pyramids the A.I.F. trained for work that was before it. The Sphinx looked down on men sweating across the desert, digging trenches, and practising the art of war in mimicry, until their bodies and minds were tuned to the highest pitch. Surely, if ever troops took their work seriously, it was the Australians of those early days of preparation.

Then came Gallipoli! Storm had been transferred to the Third Brigade, composed of men from all Australia. With the Tasmanian companies who formed part of it, were Victorians who had before the war crossed over to Tasmania's west coast; and with the South Australians were New South Welshmen from Broken Hill; while in the Queensland companies were North coast men from New South Wales. West Australians in plenty were there, also.

Yes, all Australia landed on Gallipoli, when to the Third Brigade fell the honour of being first ashore on Anzac.

Storm III had been told off to an oar. "The pinnaces will take their string of boats to close in,

and then you men will do the rest with the oars", said the officer in charge of Storm's company.

At 2 a.m., each man as he passed down the ship's side was given a bundle of sandbags and either a pick or a shovel. "Dig in and hold on!" was the order.

The "Prince of Wales," the "Queen," and the "London,"—men-of-war all—by whom the troops had been convoyed from Lemmos, led, and for nearly two hours they moved slowly over the sea, waiting for the dawn to land and attack.

Storm noticed the dark line gradually becoming more distinct. "There's the land!" he said to the soldier next him in the boat. And gradually it grew still more distinct.

The pinnaces rushed forward, drawing their boats. Soon the order, "Cast off!" was given. The lines to the pinnaces dropped and the whaleboats with their brave burden were left to make the landing as best they might.

Storm grasped his oar—and bent to the job of beaching his boat. Soon a rifle spoke from the land, followed by a long burst of flame right along the heights above the beach. Bullets began to take their toll of the men in the boats, and the rowers instinctively bent down behind the thwarts and the boats lost way.

Storm crouched with the rest, at first. Then a bullet came through the side of the boat, followed by a couple more. Storm and his mates straightened themselves up and began to row their hardest again. "The boat's sides are only wood," he thought. "We're just as well off rowing—and we'll get out of this the quicker.."

Then came the order, "All ashore!" The men emptied themselves into the water—up to their necks, many of them. The soldier next to Storm lost his rifle in the tumble. He grabbed for Storm's

pick. "Give it to me! he yelled—and so at least one Australian began his fight with the Turks armed with a pick.

Still the rifles on the heights spoke—and still good Australians died. Then they got to the beach —the beach of Ari Burnu, later to be known as Hell's Pit because of that early morning's work. Then they charged the heights—and won to the top. But at what a price! And so steep were those cliffs that rifles were carred slung at the shoulder, while hands and feet were used for climbing.

And so that first Anzac Day began—and in like manner all that first Anzac Day was spent. And when the brave news became known at home Australia knew her trust in her sons was justified, for they had proved themselves worthy to stand side by side with the world's best.

And, on that historic peninsular, at other points, France and British troops made attack as gallant, for men are brave everywhere, and in all nations. If we Australians seem to boast our own A.I.F. too highly, it is only that we are a young people, and so the effervescence of youth has not yet died down in us. Later in the war, Storm was lying in a hospital cot; next him was a wounded Jock—a Seaforth Highlander. Said Storm, "You fellows are good fighters." "Aye," answered the Jock, slowly. Then he added, "But we don't say it oorsels."

That was the spirit of a people which had proved itself all down the centuries. It was no longer surprised at its own valour. It would have been surprised if it were otherwise.

The soldier next Storm Bradley during the rush up the heights at Anzac was a youngster known to the platoon as "The Stowaway"—cut down to Stowy. He had earned his nickname by his method of joining up. Turned down by the doctors as palpably too young, he "borrowed" a

uniform and stowed himself away on a troopship, and was not discovered until Alexandria was almost reached. Of course he was at once brought before a petty court-martial.

"Do you know you could be shot?" asked the presiding officer.

"Well, a man's going to be shot sometime," the boy replied.

The officer had never considered the war from that stark point of view. "I hope it's not as bad as that," he said.

The boy looked straight at him, "I thought this was a war!" he queried.

"So it is—but there'll be a few of us left when it's over—I hope," returned the officer. Then he thought for a few seconds and consulted the court. Turning to the stowaway, he said. "I think we'll postpone the shooting for awhile—meantime we'll make a dinkum soldier of you."

"Too right!" agreed the lad. "That's what I came on board for."

"Sergeant," said the officer. "Get an enlistment form and a bible. This court knows a good man when it sees one."

And the Stowaway was sworn in—pronto! Or "toot sweet," as was the word later.

Storm's only thought when he jumped out of the whaleboat into the water was to keep his rifle dry, so he held it high over his head. The Stowaway, being a short youngster, was submerged nearly to his mouth, but he grabbed the back of Storm's equipment and in a few seconds was ashore.

The men threw themselves on the sandy beach, and awaited orders. Soon they came. "Fix bayonets! Charge!" And up the heights they went—to the entrenched Turks waiting at the top, and pouring a plunging fire as the Australians climbed.

When Storm and his cobbers reached the ridge, and were on the point of coming to grips with the enemy, a Turkish machine gun posted on their right flank enfiladed them, and many men were killed. Then came burst after burst from overhead.

Storm looked up from the foot of the rock behind which he was taking a temporary breathing spell. "What's that?" he asked of everybody in general and of nobody in particular.

"That's your introduction to shrapnel, lad," said an older soldier, wearing the South African ribbon. "You'll get to know it better later."

"Seems to me that anywhere is as good as anywhere else, if shrapnel can get you from the rear," said Storm. "So what about getting forward."

Storm's platoon gradually crept over the ridge towards the Turk—for fighting is by no means just a loud hooray and a successful—or otherwise—rush. Not if men are to live to reach the enemy. Before long they reached Shrapnel gully. Storm and the Stowaway crouched behind a bush and began to open a tin of bully beef—for a good soldier eats and sleeps whenever he gets the chance. But breakfast was not for them. "Get forward!" was the order passed along the line—and the bully beef went back to the haversack.

"All the breakfast we're going to get is a pull on the belt!" said the Stowaway, as he and Storm dodged from rock to rock.

They reached the top of the hill and advanced a little. "Dig in!" came the order. And they dug! Not with the picks and shovels that had been served out to them when they left the ship—those implements had been droppd in the whaleboats, for five feet deep of water was difficult enough of negotiation for men carrying full equipment without the extra handicap of pick and shovel. No!

Each man scooped up a little pile of earth and rocks as best he could, and lay down flat—hugging the ground.

"Don't look up, Bradley—there's nothing to see!" an officer warned, noticing that Storm lifted his shoulders and took an occasional glance around. Then an enemy machine gun opened on their left, sweeping slowly up and down the line of crouching men.

Storm heard the bullets striking the ground—and gradually coming closer to him. Men were making short exclamations and some were groaning as, one here and one there, the bullets struck home.

He waited his turn—his luck would be either out or in. It was "in!" and the deadly rain passed by him and along the line—striking and missing—striking and missing. Then it reached the end of the line—and turned back! Again Storm heard it approach! Again the short cries of the men as they were struck! Nearer and nearer it came. Tiger Kelly, lying next him, got it—but Storm Bradley it missed again!

The two platoons on Storm's left got the order to advance. Without hesitation they rose and went forward—but the Turk behind the deadly machine gun turned his deathspray on them, and few survived.

Then he began again on the crouching line. Storm heard the approach of the death messengers, and nerved himself for their passing—or striking. The man next him but one was hit—fatally. Storm heard him groan—and then his own arm suddenly felt as though it was torn off at the shoulder!

He threw himself around. His sergeant saw he was hit and crawled up to him. "Just a flesh wound," he said. "And not bad at that! Get back

to the beach, if you can, before you bleed too much."

Storm inched himself backwards—and then along once more came that spitting rain of bullets! He crouched low to the ground—almost into the ground. Was this to be his finish? He had dragged himself less than his body's length from where he was when he was hit. Another five yards and he would be in comparative safety!—only comparative! Nearer and nearer came Death—summoning this man—and passing that man.

Then Storm was almost blinded by a cloud of dust sent up by a richochetting bullet that whirled over his head. It had struck the ground right where his body had lain when he was hit! His wound had saved him!

Storm waited no longer. Up he got and ran, as fast as his waning strength would permit, over the ledge and down into the gully. Suddenly his foot caught a low-trailing shrub, and he tripped forward and fell full length. Just as he hit the ground—"You—ou—ou—ou!" sang a stream of bullets over him. An Australian machine gun, from behind a nearby bush, had got into action to silence the Turkish demon. But it was very nearly Storm's finish. The shrub had thrown him down just in time, for the gunners hadn't noticed his sudden coming over the lip of the ridge, and had trained their weapon right on the spot where he had suddenly appeared.

Storm crawled and walked the half-mile or more that lay between him and the beach. When he reached it he was all in. "Put this man on board ship at once," said the doctor. So, on the evening of the same day that he landed on it, Storm Bradley left the Peninsular.

A month at Malta and he was fit again for service. Two weeks more found him back on Galli-

poli, with his old platoon. The Stowaway was still with it, and Tiger Kelly was fighting again, but many of his friends had gone West. Snowy Gibson and Dark Watson, the dag of the company, had ventured out together to gather in a Turk for examination purposes—and had not returned. But the vacant places had been filled by others—others who held on just as gamely as did the men who landed on the "twenty-fifth"—the day when Australia fought a "soldiers' battle"—each man and each litle group of men establishing what was to pass into a tradition—"That a Digger never let another Digger down." And that goes for individuals, for sections, for platoons, for companies, battalions, brigades and divisions. Upon it is based whatever success the A.I.F. achieved—and to it every man contributed his share.

Storm Bradley was a good soldier—not a hero, winning medals, but just a man who took his part in whatever was going—good or bad, fun or fighting—and who never let another man do his share of anything dirty or dangerous. So, soon, he got a "stripe."

"We're going to make you a lance-jack, Bradley," said the sergeant-major. 'How about it?"

"Is it because nobody else wants it that you're giving the job to me, Sergeant-major?" asked Storm.

"It's either that or sanitary man—you can take your pick," laughed the sergeant-major.

"Well," said Storm, "If you put it that way, I'll choose the stripe. But will the men have to salute me?"

"They will if you can make 'em—not unless. And that depends whether you can fight 'em," the sergeant-major added.

"Better take the stripe," he continued, seriously. "This war's young yet."

"Right-o!" said Storm. "And—thanks."

Storm Bradley was given charge of a party of stretcher bearers, and so was kept more than busy. The Turk snipers saw to that. And it wasn't always Aussies that the bearers took down to the beach on their stretchers. As likely as not it was a wounded enemy.

One evening word came that a Turk was lying out in the open, badly hit. "What about bringing him in?" said Storm to Keechy Smith.

"Right!" agreed Keechy. "But pass the word along the trench that we're going out, or our own chaps might pot us by mistake."

Picking up the stretcher, they crawled over the top and wriggled their way to where the Turk was lying. He opened his eyes—and saw Keechy pulling out his big clasp knife, with the intention of cutting off a strip of bandage. The worst kind of fear shot into his eyes. He tried to struggle to his feet, but was too far gone. He stared from the open knife to Keechy—and then to Storm, feebly protesting against the fate he thought was in store for him.

"The poor devil thinks you're going to cut his throat," said Storm. "Shove the knife into your pocket and ease his mind."

Keechy looked at the Turk, and then dropped the knife out of sight. "They're told the Aussies are man-eaters—or something like it," he said. "No wonder he thought his time had come."

Then they lifted him on to the stretcher, and worked their way back to the trench, and down to the beach.

An enemy on his legs and fighting was one thing to the men of all the armies—but an enemy wounded and on his back was quite another. War is not all bloody murder; neither does it turn de-

cent men into cruel savages. Not men with decent instincts.

Then came Lone Pine! Storm's battalion was not in that, but he lay and watched the men of the First brigade make the charge—and wondered at their bravery. Lone Pine may not have accomplished much in the way of winning enemy territory, but it drove home to the Turk the manner of fighters the Australian was, and gave emphasis to the lesson of the Landing.

Keechy, one of Storm's bearers, was a souvenir hunter, and never missed a chance. Once he heard there was something to be picked up he would get it, or know the reason why. The risk in the getting didn't count.

In a charge by the enemy on the Australian trenches a Turk officer was shot dead a few yards from Keechy's trench. He was wearing a wrist watch and carrying an automatic. Keechy could see both, and his acquisitive spirit was fired. But so could Squirt Wilson, the next man to Keechy in the trench—and his acquisitive spirit was also fired. Still, there was deadly danger in the acquiring, for the Turkish trenches were only a few yards away, and their dead comrade was in full view from them.

"That's a bosker automatic," said Squirt to Keechy. "I'm going to make a try for it."

"It is," said Keechy. "But those birds in the trench over there will settle you quick if you go after it."

"I think I can get it without climbing out," replied Squirt. "He's only about twelve feet away. A long pole would reach him. Stick a hook on it and drag him in—that's the idea." Then Squirt went along the trenches looking for a pole—and a hook.

Keechy's souveniring soul rose in protest. Why

wait for Squirt to come back with his pole? The watch and the automatic would then be Squirt's —and Keechy wanted them both badly, and for himself.

It was just beginning to get dusk—not dark. What about it? Keechy could wait no longer— Squirt might return at any moment..

Slowly and carefully he flattened himself out on to the top of the parapet, and, inch by inch, keeping the dead man between himself and the Turk trenches, he dragged himself to the body— and got both watch and automatic. Then he crawled just as carefully back to his trench and dropped to safety.

Just as he was picking himself up, Squirt appeared. "Hey, Keechy! this'll do the trick," he said, presenting to his view a long pole armoured with a rough hook made of wire.

"I've got 'em already," grinned Keechy, showing the articles for which he had put his life in most deadly peril. "I crawled over and got 'em."

"You went out there?" asked Squirt. "Then you've damn well earned all you got."

Souveniring was a not too creditable occupation, but often it taught men a contempt of danger that came in useful in sterner moments, and so served a desirable end. It had need to, being contemptible in itself.

It was on Gallipoli that the A.I.F. learned the business of war. Later, in France, almost everything was placed ready made to the hand of the troops, but for the months after the Landing that the Allies held to the attack on the Turk, almost everything had to be improvised. Jam tin bombs and such like instruments of offence—methods of attack—methods of defence—care of the wounded —keeping the men in the trenches supplied with water and food—the whole art of this new war-

fare—all had to be learned; and learned by the only possible method—that of "trial and error." It was a time of almost unorganised warfare compared with the years that followed.

Necessarily, men died as the price of the lessons, but the A.I.F. that evacuated the Peninsular some nine months after the Landing was an army of proven veterans. Sure of themselves and sure of each other. And it was on Gallipoli that the soul of the A.I.F. was born—and it was there that Australia learned to think continentally.

The months dragged on, with little gained to compensate for the men that the attempt to win Gallipoli kept from perhaps more useful use elsewhere; so the evacuation was decided on.

Storm's unit marched out to the beach, and to the waiting boats. "Strewth!" said Keechy as they were passing a little forest of "crosses," "I don't half like leaving so many cobbers up on the hillside."

"It does seem like going back on them," agreed Storm. "But if they know anything, they know we're wanted elsewhere—somewhere where we can do better work. And if they don't know anything—well, we know why we're leaving the Peninsular to Johnny Turk. And that is all that matters."

"Let's give them a salute," suggested Squirt. And the three men faced about towards the little cemetery.

"Attention!" called Storm—and never men stood stiffer and more erect.

"Up!" Three good right hands swept swiftly to three foreheads.

"Down!" Three good right hands cut away as one.

"About turn!" Three soldiers turned about towards the beach.

"Carry on!" said Storm. And the little ceremony was over.

Maybe their dead comrades woke—and saw—and then smiled and turned to sleep once more.

Beachy Bill gave Storm's company a final burst of shrapnel just to let them know he was still going strong, but it was a shot aimed at random, and had no effect.

"He's a ———. Has knocked many a good man," said Squirt—using a word that at one time men fought each other almost to the death about, but which by soldier usage became a term of endearment "You old———!" How often it was said, accompanied by a friendly grin that showed the —almost—love underneath! Had the war lasted much longer it would have become something in the nature of a decoration—taking precedence over the D.S.O. "O.B."—It looks rather well, no matter how it sounds.

Storm's brigade landed in France and went straight to the line. His battalion relieved the "Bantams," a British unit composed of men under or about five feet tall. But they could fight! Height or weight has nothing to do with courage —and courage—"guts," to put it soldierly—is the prime requisite in fighting. Square jaws, straight backs, puffed out chests, large muscles—yes, they are all right; but a man can have all these and fail miserably when the shells begin to burst around, and the machine guns start to spray death.

There's something inside a man that no tape measure can make manifest—and that something is the quality that determines his value as a fighter. Guts! is its common and very appropriate name. The Bantams had guts!

Storm, now a full corporal, had charge of his small party when they went forward to "close supports." The Bantams were in trench dug-outs,

and Storm took his men to the part they were occupying. Looking into one of the dug-outs, all he could see was some men half hidden in the darkness. "How many of you in there?" he asked.

"Seven," answered the Bantam corporal.

"Well, hop it, and make room for better men," joked Storm.

One by one they came out of the dug-out—glad to go, as was only right and natural. "You doan't have to sa-a-y that twice," said one of the Bantams. "We're proper fed up—but where's these better men. I can't see any hereabout. Did you lose them on the wa-a-y oop?"

"Seven men in here!" said Storm to his party. Four tucked themselves in the dug-out.

"Hurry up! Three more!" said Storm.

"Have a heart, Corp!" called one of the men from the inside of the dug-out. "We're full already."

Storm bent down and looked in. "But seven men came out of here," he said. "So what's the matter with putting seven in?"

"Nothing—except there's no room," answered Squirt. "Those Bantam blokes were only half a man each."

By some brainy work Storm managed to squeeze another man in—making four. "Fighting with little men has its points when it comes to billeting them," he thought.

Then turning to the "surplus" men, he said, "You chaps will have to do the best you can. How about digging another dug-out?"

"Say, Corp," said Keechy. "Why did you let those blokes get away? If we had 'em here now we could have made 'em get to work and do some digging."

"Just as well they're gone," answered Storm. "If you tried that game you might have a fight on

your hands instead—small as they are."

There was nothing else left for it—so the Aussies dug. Else they would have had to sleep on the bottom of the muddy trench.

Needs must—when there's a war on!

Though "Digger" was the name the Australian soldier gave himself, he never dug if he could avoid it. Many a time he preferred to take all the risks of shellfire rather than toil at the end of a pick or shovel burying himself below ground; and when, later in the war, they drove Fritz from his positions they marvelled at the depth and the shellproof qualities of his burrowings. So deep had he gone—through solid rock often—that it could not but have had a bad effect on the morale of the men who occupied his "deep sinkings."

The Australians of all ranks knew right well that a very short residence in dug-outs such as the Germans made would spoil men for living in the open. It would break their nerve. So they kept a good deal above ground—and moved about, often rather too freely for their own good.

It wasn't because the Australians were soft-fingered, and unused to toil, that digging was unpopular. If the roll of the A.I.F. was to be opened for the ascertaining in what proportion the different occupations had contributed to enlistment it would be found that the horny-handed had sent their full quota—and more. And very many more!

Storm Bradley's company did its turn in the line, and marched out back to close supports without casualties. As Squirt Watson said, "It's not what happens to a man in the line that counts. It's what might happen. It's not 'Where did that one go?' but 'Where will the next one land?' "

And one of Storm's Diggers, a new enlistment, who was doing his first time in the line, said most truly, "Cripes! I thought war was fighting! It

isn't. It's more like being a target for all kinds of heavy ironmongery."

He wasn't far wrong.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SHORTLY afterwards, Storm's brigade took part in the attack at Pozieres. Though many men were killed it was "successful." Next day, however, Fritz had full revenge by shelling heavily the positions from which he had been driven.

In the attack, Storm's company was held up by an enemy machine gun that was taking heavy toll of the men. 'I'd like to have a try at that chap!" said Storm to his lieutenant.

"Go to it!" replied the officer. "How many men do you want?"

"Three will be enough. More would only be in each other's way."

Storm passed he word that he was going to have a try at silencing the gun, and wanted a couple of men to help.

"You're a damn fool, Corp!" said Squirt. "But I suppose I'll have to be another, and go with you."

Two more men also said they'd go—after cursing Storm liberally for offering to do something he didn't have to do.

"Cut it out!" said Storm. "Let's make a start."

They worked out to the flank of the company, and, taking advantage of some broken ground, got to a spot where the gun could be seen. "You two chaps stay there, and Squirt and I will get farther forward—to that shellhole over there," and he pointed to what looked like a mound of earth that might have a shellhole at its rear.

"Watch that place, and as soon as you see the top of my rifle barrel peep over the mound shoot

like hell in the direction of the gun. Then, when they are busy with you, Squirt and I will rush them."

And so it all happened. The rifle barrel duly appeared over the mound. The two Diggers gave the gun crew a mad minute. Storm and Squirt ran forward, silently at first, then firing from the hip —and in a few seconds they were on the gun. The hail of bullets had accounted for three of its crew. The others surrendered.

Storm and his three Diggers got back to their platoon—all standing. "Good work!" said the platoon commander. "Another stripe for this, Bradley, if I can wangle it. And possibly something else later."

When next the company orders were posted, they read "Corporal Storm Bradley to be Sergeant." Both he and Squirt were recommended for the military medal, which, later, was pinned on their tunics by Monash himself.

The battalion moved back to a little village and billeted there. Storm's platoon had bad luck. The men were given quarters little better than pig pens to sleep in.

"Hey, Sergeant!" called Keechy, from the door of one of the filthy hovels. "Come and have a look! What does the billeting officer think we are? Swine?"

Storm Bradley looked—as asked. "It is pretty rotten," he said. "I'll see if I can do any better for you."

Just across the road was a little cottage with the door padlocked and guarded by a stout iron bar. He walked over and looked in at the window. It was empty—no furniture; but it was dry.

"Come on, boys!" he called. "I'll soon get you in here." Then he picked up a stout length of iron

and inserted one end in the hasp. One heave—and the padlock, bar and hasp came away.

"Walk in and make yourselves at home!" he said.

They walked in.

But it was not all to be as easy as that. Within five minutes the French dame who owned the cottage was storming at the intruders. Just what it was she was saying they didn't know and didn't care—but she said plenty of it. In a shrill voice and with uplifted hands she denounced them roundly. "Officer!" Officer!" was all they could make out of her French protestations.

Then she disappeared—to take her troubles to quarters where she hoped they would be listened to.

"M'sieur," her husband, leaned on the door sill the while she abused and stormed, smoking silently. He looked at "Madame" pityingly—and at the soldiers comprehendingly. "C'est la guerre! C'est la guerre!" he soliquised, half to himself. Which, being interpreted, is "It is War! It is War!"

No doubt he had in his day occupied billets—and had always chosen the best. So he knew. "C'est la guerre"—indeed.

Soon the old Franch dame came back, accompanied by Storm's officer. "What's the matter, Sergeant?" he asked.

Storm showed him the old billets, and explained that he had let the men into the cottage to keep them dry.

The officer looked around the room. "Nothing you can damage, anyhow," he said. Then, turning to go, he added the phrase that covered everything, "Carry on! Sergeant!"

The party carried on.

After about two weeks in the village the brigade moved up to near the line, and went into

close supports previous to taking its turn in the front trenches. At this stage of the war "volunteering" for hazardous work had ceased, almost. When men were wanted for any duty they were "detailed" for it. All the armies were beginning to know what "war-weariness" meant, and its effect on all ranks. The first fine burst of spirit was over. The question now was, "Who could endure to the end?" Upon the answer depended ultimate victory.

One morning Storm Bradley's platoon paraded as usual—that is, the men fell in just behind the support trench they were occupying. Nothing regimental or spectacular—just three dozen dirty Australians, all wishing the war was over—but knowing full well there was a deal of work yet to come.

"I want a man to volunteer for telephonist," the lieutenant said, pronouncing the word as it should be pronounced, with the accent on the second syllable.

Not a man moved. "What was this new job?" "Did it mean membership in any kind of suicide club?" "A bloke had to know, you know, before he took it on."

Again the officer spoke, a little impatiently, "I want a man for te-leph'-onist."

The Diggers looked at each other—but nobody was taking any chances.

Then the officer "tumbled." "Don't you know how to pronounce the word. "I want a tele-phone-ist," and he accented the third syllable.

Now the Diggers understood. "My oath! One of those good jobs that seldom came in the way of a fighting platoon! Where a bloke was twenty feet deep in a fine dug-out, as often as not!" And nearly the whole platoon stepped forward—the

rear rank tumbling over the front rank in their eagerness.

"Why didn't I learn how that blame word is pronounced!" thought Keechy. "That's what comes of putting all my time into two-up. I've missed a nice safe job!"

Keechy was wrong. The man at the telephone was far from always in safety—or even in comparative safety. Often, he was "forward," housed in a frail French farmhouse, shell-ridden, and a sure target for further shelling. And often he would be out in the open "running the line" to locate and mend a break, and so restore communication with the guns at the rear. It was just that to the men in the platoon his job looked good. Comparatively speaking it was.

Then followed over a year of hard and bloody fighting. Bullicourt, Passchendale, Villers Bret, Hamel, Mont St. Quentin, and many other battles became names at the mention of which Australians stand a-tiptoe—until at last the enemy was on the run. The war was drawing to its close.

One afternoon the platoon commander came to Storm Bradley. "Sergeant," he said, "We've got to lay the tapes tonight for the hop-over at daybreak. Pick three of your men and be ready to move forward at 2 a.m."

Storm warned three of the most reliable of the platoon that they were wanted for the job, and then made the necessary preparations.

"Laying the tapes for the hop-over" was a work of some danger, at times. It entailed crawling forward into No Man's Land at or about midnight and pegging a long line of tape—thus giving the "direction" in which the troops were to go forward when they left the trenches in the dawn.

There was nothing easier than for an attacking

force to lose its "direction," with the result that one company would get in front of another company—or one battalion get in front of another battalion—and a general mixup ensue. So the advancing men judged from the stretched tapes the general direction of the attack.

A little deserted village lay between where Storm's company was dug-in and the front line, and all the afternoon the enemy shelled it heavily. Night came—and the moon was at its full, in a cloudless sky. So bright it was that "orders" could be read without striking a light.

"Our luck's out this time!" said Storm to the three men, as they moved off, about midnight. "The night's too bright. Jerry will see all we're doing in front of the line. We'll catch it—and when the men go over they'll get hell."

"It could be worse, Sarge," said Snifter Jackson. "Don't you notice the shelling in the village has stopped? We'll get up to the line all standing, anyhow."

It was so. Not a shell had fallen for ten minutes.

Still, the bright moonlight mattered more than the shelling—for the work on hand and for the hop-over.

Storm looked up at the unfriendly moon. Was that a tiny cloud right under it—or was it just his fancy! The only cloud in all that sky! He took a second look a moment later. Yes—it was a cloud! A tiny one—no bigger than a man's fist!

Storm Bradley was not of those who thought the Almighty was British—or even that he favoured the British. He knew that all the sons of men are sons of the one Father. But he did believe that Right was with the Allies, else he would not have enlisted. Also, he believed that the All-Father had not deserted the world He had made, but

that everything was working out His Will—including the war.

So the thought flashed across his mind, "I wonder will this night give some sign—for or against us. Will that little cloud spread—or will it fade away? I wonder!"

The party took the road through the village. Not a shell fell while they were within its limits! Then they reached the front line, and waited at the rear for an hour or so. Storm kept watching the moon—and the cloud. Gradually that cloud spread—and spread and spread—until it covered the entire sky; thickening so that it completely obliterated the moon that fought for the enemy, and that increased so greatly the hazard the men in the trenches were to run at dawn.

"How about it now! Sarge!" said Snifter. "This is a whole lot better, isn't it?"

"It is," agreed Storm; But in his heart he was indeed thoughtful. Was the spreading of the cloud anything more than Blind Chance? Was it?

In comparative safety Storm and his party laid the tapes. At dawn the hop-over took place. The battalion went fast and far, and its casualties were only a fraction of what they would have been but for the tiny cloud—that spread!

Next morning Storm Bradley got back to the support trenches minus his tin hat. During the tape-laying he must have taken it off, and put it as a marker somewhere; though leaving the steel protection for one's head lying about in No Man's Land was not a very understandable thing in a soldier. Still, he did it, and consequently was without its very necessary shelter against a possible flying shell-fragment.

"Have you chaps seen a tin hat lying around?" he asked a couple of the men of his platoon?

But neither of them had. Rifles, web equipment,

old bayonets, haversacks—everything but tin hats were to be picked up in plenty.

Then Snifter bethought himself. "Say, Sarge," he said, "There's a bloke buried just behind us a bit, and his tin hat is lying on his grave. What about it?"

"Thanks!" said Storm. "I'll hop out and get it soon."

In about half-an-hour he went in the direction Snifter had indicated, and about a quarter of a mile away he found the grave. He stood at its foot. Just a mound of earth, maybe two weeks old, with a narrow piece of board upright at its head, and on the board, in ink, "Unknown. A.I.F."

The dead man's tin hat was balanced on the top of the board. When in life, the soldier had painted on one side of the hat his colour patch—white over red .The colour patch that meant so much to every soldier! His own battalion—the best of them all!

Storm Bradley needed a tin hat. The dead soldier did not need anything any more in this world. Storm needed it badly! He was due to move up to the line that night—and tin hats were a comfort there—more a comfort than a protection, perhaps.

"Well mate," he said, taking the hat from the board, "I know you'd be the first to say, 'Take it!' if you could speak."

Then he looked at the narrow upright board, with its inscription. With the hat on, it had something of an appearance; with the hat off—well, it looked like what it was! And the lettering would wash off so quickly without the protection of the hat! Then there would be nothing to show that the soldier lying there was an Australian far from home! No tin hat with its red-and-white patch to let passers-by know that here lay an Aussie of the "old battalion."

And soon the narrow board would disappear—and the mound would flatten—and then nobody would know anything. Except God!

Storm put the hat back. "No, cobber!" he said; "I'll do without it. It's yours—not mine."

Then he touched his bare forehead by way of salute. "So long!" he said—and went back to his platoon.

"Couldn't you find the hat, Sarge?" asked Snifter.

"I'm no grave robber, Snifter," Storm replied. "I daresay I'll pick one up later."

"Not mine, I hope! Sarge," said Snifter.

"I hope not," agreed Storm. "The platoon needs you a lot worse than I need your lid. So keep ducking and you'll wear it yourself for a long time yet."

That night they moved up to the front line and took over a sector where things had been quiet for a while—so by the law of averages was now due for a lively time. There were many rumours of a general movement all along the line—which might or might not eventuate.

Next morning an Australian wearing the shoulder patches of a West Australian battalion came along the trenches asking for "Sergeant Storm Bradley." Storm was asleep in a dugout, but was aroused by one of the men of his platoon—one of those unfortunates who couldn't sleep by day, and consequently went through torments each night trying to keep awake on duty. "Hey, Sarge!" he said. "Here's a bloke wants to see you."

Storm put his head outside the dug-out. The Digger was a stranger to him. "What's the trouble?" he asked.

"Storm Bradley?" questioned the soldier, extending his hand. "I'm Will Norris—Elsie's brother."

Storm bundled out of his shelter and shook hands. Then the two had a long talk—about the folks at home and about each other. "And how about Elsie's other brother—Ed?" asked Storm. "He's with the Victorians—so Elsie told me long ago."

"He was!" replied Will. "But he went West in the attack at Pozieres."

"I'm sorry!" said Storm. "Elsie and the old people will take it hard. How did it happen?"

"Killed in the move forward by a shell," said Will Norris. "At least, that is what is thought. Ed was number three on a Lewis gun—and after the attack there was no trace of the gun nor of its crew. The platoon sergeant reported them all as missing, and said that at a time when the shelling was very severe on the flank on which the gun was posted, one or two big fellows burst there—and that after that the Lewis gun was silent."

"The usual thing, I suppose," said Storm. "The gun and its crew blown out together—without trace!"

"Yes, that's what happened," agreed Norris. "Poor Ed!" he added. "But he was a good soldier. I saw some of his cobbers afterwards, and they told me he was to have been recommended for a decoration for bravery for attending the wounded under fire. That would be Ed all over, though."

"Well, I'm sorry—but's that the way war is," said Storm. "I wish I had met him—and you can't tell how glad I am you hunted me up yourself. It's an odd place for us to make each other's acquaintance in; but it will be something to remember."

"And tell me about yourself?" continued Storm. "Where's your battalion?"

"Out on your flank," said Norris. "That's how I got the chance to look you up. I don't think we'll be there long," he added. "I hear there's to be

an attack tomorrow night. Our lot is to be the first over."

Then they talked for an hour or more, and parted—for ever. When Will Norris' company hopped over next night, his brother's fate was his. Like Ed Norris, he was one of a Lewis gun crew—and a five-point-nine shell wiped the lot out, with hardly a shred left to tell the tale.

Norris was one of those who saw service because they were determined to do so. Turned down by doctor after doctor, he persisted until he was accepted—and so gave his life because of his quality. As many others did, in like manner!

A few days after the attack—in which Storm Bradley's battalion also took part—Storm got a few hours' leave to visit the West Australian battalion to which Norris had belonged, and so learned the manner of his death.

"Will Norris!" replied the Digger Storm was questioning as to Elsie's brother's whereabouts. "Killed last week—and a good scout he was, too; one of the best. As game as they come!"

Storm went back to his battalion feeling depressed. He had taken a great liking to Will—and now Will was dead. Ed, also, whom he had never seen. That afternoon he wrote to Elsie, telling her about his meeting with Will—and about Will's talk with Ed's comrades. "You and your father and mother must not grieve too deeply," he said. "They were good soldiers and died good soldiers' deaths. And their mates knew them for the men they were."

Shortly after Mont St. Quentin, Storm Bradley was attached to brigade headquarters "for a rest." "You've been with the battalion a long while, Sergeant," the company captain had said. "It's about time you had a turn at something easier." Storm was more than willing. Brigade sounded good to

him after his long stretch with the platoon.

"Going to leave us, Sarge?" questioned Snifter Jackson. "Going to the Old Men's Home—to Divvy headquarters?"

"For awhile, Snifter; for awhile," Storm replied. I may be back before long, though. And I'm not going to Divvy—only to Brigade."

"That's not so bad," said Snifter. "I thought you were going to cut out the war—and go to Divvy. Brigade's more like it. But the platoon's the only place for a man—the only place!"

"It is," Storm agreed. Then he turned to go. But a thought seemed to strike him. "Say, Snifter," he said: "Will you come to Brigade with me?"

"Too right I will!" exclaimed Snifter, his face lighting up.

"No—perhaps you'd better not," said Storm. "The platoon's the only place for a man—as you said yourself." And Storm gave Snifter a friendly grin.

"Sarge," said Snifter, with emphasis, "You're a ———!" And once more the word forbidden to be printed was used—and understood.

At Brigade headquarters, Storm was attached to the intelligence section and given charge of a number of "details," whose duties were varied. Among them was a Queensland bushman well over fifty—whose work was lowly but whose spirit was high. He wore a decoration—military medal—and carried out the filthy duties of sanitary man.

"Who's the old chap with the M.M.?" Storm asked one of the signallers. "He seems all crippled, too."

"Tom Burrows! Yes, he's pretty well broken up —has sciatica bad."

"How'd he come by the decoration?" Storm asked. "Was it one sent up with the rations?"

"It was not!" said the signaller, emphatically.

"He got it for holding up a Hun attack on his company. There weren't many Huns left two minutes after old Tom had turned his Lewis gun on them. No indeed!"

"He got a bullet—several of them—in his leg at the time, and after a spell in hospital he insisted on being sent back to his company. But he couldn't stick it—his leg wouldn't let him—so he took the dirty job of brigade sanitary man."

"Say, Sarge," asked Tum Burrows next morning to Storm,"Can you get me a fistful of Epsom salts tablets from the Quack?"

"Why, what's the trouble?" asked Storm.

"Sciatica," said Burrows. "Epsom salts, and plenty of it, is the only thing that does me any good."

"Why don't you get sent back?" Storm asked. "You've done your bit—and besides, your age would let you out."

"No fear—I'm not done yet, Sarge," said Burrows. "This job of mine is pretty putrid, but somebody's got to do it—so why not me? The sciatica's bad at times—but I can manage along."

Storm Bradley promised to get the salts for him, and watched him as he hobbled away. "There goes the spirit of the A.I.F." he thought. "By all the rules of the game he's entitled to an honourable discharge—yet he carries on. And carries on at the rottenest job the army has to give—sanitary man."

There were Dinkums other than the kind typified by Burrows. For instance—those Australians, who —living abroad when war began—offered themselves for service at the nearest point of enlistment, and poorly paid and poorly fed, served with men almost alien to themselves in thought and habit. Australia did not acknowledge them as it should have done. When the rulers of Australia thought of them—if they thought of them at all—

it was with the idea that it was "all the same"—They were with one of the British regiments—so forget them! And they were forgotten. But Dinkums of the dinkums they were, nevertheless.

Storm Bradley, as one of the sergeants at brigade headquarters had a good deal less to occupy his time than when he was with the platoon, and, naturally, he was attracted by the French ma-amselles that were to be seen around the estamimets. Mostly nothing serious—nothing that Elsie would have taken real objection to had she known; but which knowledge Storm withheld from her—also naturally.

It is only human for a good-looking girl, on the spot and available, to exercise a stronger influence than a perhaps equally good-looking girl ten thousand miles away—and not available. So Mademoiselle Marie, the daughter of the old Frenchman who kept the estaminet at the crossroads, saw much of Storm Bradley. Sometimes he would feel rather guilty, especially when he was going through the contents of the pocket of his tunic, and so would get a glance of Elsie's photograph. But he never felt guilty enough to keep him away from the estaminet.

Some men—most men—are built in, as it were, many watertight compartments. They can closely shut the door of one section of their lives—temporarily, that is—and carry on as if that compartment didn't exist. At least, they appear to do so. Maybe it is all pretence.

So Storm III, just as often as he could make it, was to be found keeping Marie company of evenings at the estaminet..

He had plenty of competition. The Australians had been a long time from home, and so the swish of a petticoat and the sight of a neat foot or ankle

had its natural affect—to the increasing profit of Marie's old father. One in particular of the other sergeants, Jock Murray, made the pace a bit hot for Storm.

Jock was a goodlooking fellow, and, moreover, he wasn't handicapped with the dragging thought that he had a girl back home, and so was playing a rather lowdown game in courting another. Because of this lack of conscience-disability, he put his heart into the job of making love to Marie; while Storm, being a decent sort of chap, and having after all a real love for Elsie—temporarily over-grown by the weeds of absence, perhaps—could make only a half-hearted effort in the same direction.

Little by little, however, he got deeper into the mire of lovemaking—if lovemaking under wartime disabilities and in a foreign country can be said to have anything of mire about it. Storm couldn't see his rival making all the pace; and, besides, the girl was really attractive and nice. The kind who, if she gets to work in earnest, can be dangerous to the peace of mind of any natural-minded youngster.

Maybe if Jock Murray hadn't kept the pace up, Storm wouldn't have gone as far as he did; besides, the other men at Brigade began to take interest in the affair, and, as that was so, there could be no pulling out on his part. Also, he didn't want to pull-out. That was the worst—or the best—of it. Neither did Jock Murray.

Once, when the mail arrived from Australia—Elsie's letter among the others—the sergeant who was distributing them didn't forget to give Storm a rub. "Hey, Bradley! Here's a couple for you—in a girl's handwriting—and you so thick with Marie!"

"Well, what about it?" Storm replied, in none

too pleasant a tone—resenting the interference in his doings."

"Oh, nothing! Nothing at all!" replied the other man. "Have half-a-dozen girls, if you feel that way—and can get 'em."

Storm Bradley put the letters in his pocket, not too pleased with himself—and went to see Marie the same evening.

Little by little he slipped—Mariewards. Elsie became a good deal of a memory. There was something about Marie that wiped other girls off the slate of a man's mind. Storm's love-making increased in intensity until it became either the real thing or something very like it. Sergeant Jock Murray was by way of being crowded out. The brigade staff knew that much, and Storm was kept up to the mark by them more than he was aware. Not that he needed any keeping up, though.

Courting under wartime conditions didn't partake of many of the elements of peace lovemaking. Just a visit to the estaminet as often as maybe, and a rather too public conversation there. Neither was the courting very lengthy—three weeks—a fortnight—one week—and the troops would be on the march elsewhere. So Storm's attentions to Marie were, from first to last, not extended over a very long period. But they sufficed to make him a young man very much in earnest. War did that in such matters.

Marie responded satisfactorily. That is, she blew hot and blew cold in turns. She would sit beside him while he drank his wine and would talk with him—she in broken English and he in equally broken French—and both of them in a pretty good imitation of the language of love, hardly broken at all.

"We'll be moving out of here soon, Marie," Storm told the girl one evening. "I can't lose sight

of you altogether. What will we do about it?"

But Marie of the estaminet had seen too many soldiers come and go to greatly trouble. She liked Storm, but she was too wise to lose her head over a fly-by-night Australian. She had heard too much about them and their lovemaking-in-a-hurry!

"You go soon?" she said, with a regretful look. "Where?"

Storm was too good a soldier to tell her where the troops were bound—even if he knew. He was greatly taken with the girl, but giving information of movements to anyone, especially to the inhabitants of territory that had been under German occupation for two or three years, as had the place the Australians were then holding, was a military crime of which Sergeant Storm Bradley was not capable. So he said no more.

Mademoiselle Marie sighed. "Then eet ees good-bye?" she said. "You go—nevair to reeturn."

They were standing in the shadow of an angle in the wall of the estaminet. Storm caught her up in his arms. "No! No! Marie," he said. "I'll come back to you! The war won't last long now. When it is finished you will still be here, and so I'll know where to find you. Then you'll marry me and we'll go back to Australia together."

"To Australia." she said. "Non! Non! That ees so far away I nevair could leave France—and—and—." Then she hesitated. "Eet is so 'ard to tell you," she said.

"What is, Marie?" asked Storm. "What is so hard to tell me?"

But Marie either couldn't or wouldn't tell him any more of what was "so 'ard." She just let him kiss her—giving him one or two tiny kisses by way of encouragement. Then she said, "The customairs—they need me. I must go!" and she broke away from him, to smile on the just and on the

unjust—as long as their supplies of francs lasted.

Next evening Storm again visited the estaminet. Before he left his billets he took Elsie's picture from his tunic pocket. He didn't have the heart to tear it up—as he had intended to do. He looked at it awhile—and felt himself to be a good deal of a rascal.

But three years and more had gone—and three years is a long time, especially when all those three years have been full of the danger and the excitement and the happenings of war. Storm was not so greatly to blame. "She's a mighty nice girl," he said to himself. Then he thought of Marie waiting for him at the estaminet down the road—and that settled it.

Some wise man once said something about "propinquity." That was what was the matter with Storm. "Propinquity!" And "propinquity" won! It often does!

Storm did not tear up Elsie's picture. Instead, he slipped it into his kit bag. "It'd be more decent of me to send it back to her—with a letter," he thought. It would—without a doubt. Then he set out for the estaminet—and for Marie.

She was sitting down at one of the tables, away in the corner. Storm saw her as soon as he entered the room, for love's eyes are sharp—not blind, as someone once said. Opposite her a French soldier was sitting. Storm did not at first notice him as apart from the other customers—love's eyes are often not sharp enough to notice details. Marie smiled as he approached her. She said something in French to the soldier, who at once rose from his seat. Then to Storm, "Thees ees my fiance. He ees 'ere on the leave."

It was just that, and nothing else, that had been "so 'ard" to tell Storm the evening before.

When Storm Bradley got back to his billets he

took Elsie's picture from his kit bag, kissed it lightly and put it back in his tunic pocket. "That's that!" he said, with a satisfied smile. And it was just That!

And, wise man that he was, he never told Elsie about Marie of the Estaminet—neither then nor at any other time!

CHAPTER TWELVE

LET US go back a little, both as to time and pace. We are in Australia and the year is 1916—towards its end. For more than two years the Australian people had given of their best. A quarter of a million men had gone abroad to fight—every man a volunteer. Conscription had been rejected at the polls, and a further attempt in the same direction in 1917 was also to be defeated. The A.I.F. was to come home as it went away—an army of free men. Before the close of the war the number of Australians who served abroad was to rise to well over three hundred thousand. No niggard contribution to the allied forces.

"Australia First" had taken on an additional meaning. From now on it was also to mean—"First in acknowledging its duties and obligations to the sister British nations, linked together in a uniting that knows and needs no legislative head.

But the need for men grew greater. The battalions were far from up to their full strength. Enlistment was slackening. With the sailing from Australian shores of that quarter of a million went much of the fighting spirit of the Australian people. Now, it was very largely the older men and the boys who were offering. That was to be expected.

Storm II began to show signs of uneasiness. "Hunt enlisted today," he said to Polly, one even-

ing. "He's going into camp at Broadmeadows next Monday."

Mrs. Bradley's heart stood still a moment. Hunt was as old as her husband, and not so physically capable. His son, who had married her daughter Mary, had been with the Light Horse in Palestine, but had been invalided back to Australia shot through with malaria.

"I wonder what Mrs. Hunt thinks about his going," she said. "They're not too well off, and Mary's husband can't help them much."

Storm II sat awhile in silence. Polly watched him anxiously, for she dreaded what he might say next. Then he spoke. "Polly, my girl, I'm going! The war is taking the wrong turn for us. It's up to every man now, no matter his age."

Polly Bradley felt no grievance against her husband for not pretending to ask her permission. She knew those were no times for men to hide behind women's petticoats. As a man saw his duty so he must do it. Besides, her breeding was such that she would have despised her man if he had offered her need of him as excuse for his own faintheartedness. The men of her blood couldn't and didn't breed women who failed when the acid test came —as it came to her then.

So when Storm II crossed the kitchen floor and put his arms around her, she, being just a woman, cried for awhile. Then she looked up at him. "I've been fearing you would go this long time," she said. "But I've been hoping it would not be necessary. Do you really think it is?"

"Yes, Polly—there's no help for it. We older men owe it to the younger men who have died to see that they haven't died in vain. You don't know how I hate going—but, as things are now, I'd hate staying home more."

Then far into the night they talked. Talked of

Storm, away in France—of Alice and of Mary. But most they talked of the days when they were young—when life lay before them and love had first come to them. "Polly," said Storm, "If I don't come back again the years we have had together will have made life well worth while—for me. I've been a lucky man to have had you all these years."

"And I, too, my dear," said Polly. "I've always known it—and now I know it more than ever."

Then she added, almost hopefully, "Perhaps they won't take you?"

"They'll take me alright," replied Storm. "I'm not going to try to enlist here in Bendigo. I'm too well known to the doctor. He might turn me down as over age—and, Polly," he added, earnestly, "I'm not offering in the hope I'll be rejected. I'm going through with it, believe me!"

"I never thought anything else. I know you too well," said Polly, none too cheerfully.

Next week Storm took the train to Melbourne. Alf Hunt was to attend to the orchard—but Polly would not hear of him and Mary coming to live with her—for the present at any rate. "Wait until you are really gone, Storm," she said. "Don't let us be in too much of a hurry."

To tell the truth, she was afraid to do anything that might seem like filling Storm's place in the home. Not that she was superstitious—but just that she didn't want to."

"I'd rather be by myself," she told Storm. "It will seem more natural—just as though you might be coming in at any moment." Then she leaned her head on her arms and cried.

Storm understood—and, patting her head softly, he left the room.

When he arrived in Melbourne he proceeded to peel off a few of his years. Though he was well over military age, except his fast-greying hair he

didn't show it overmuch. His first visit was to a barber. "Shave me to the blood," he said as he seated himself in the chair "Give me the closest haircut you know how, and get rid of those little grey tufts in front of my ears. I don't like 'em."

"Got a date?" queried the barber, as he started work on Storm.

"Yes," said Storm; "And I'm about ten years late in keeping it."

"I shouldn't think the lady will still be waiting," said the barber, with a grin.

"Oh, she'll be there all right!" replied Storm II. "She has plenty of time on her hands—and doesn't let any man dodge her."

The barber saw his customer was talking in riddles, so he didn't answer, but kept right on working, and soon had Storm trimmed up to a neat forty-odd.

"That'll do fine!" said Storm, as he viewed himself in the mirror. "It's the most effective haircut and shave I've had for many a day. And now for the lady!" Then he left the shop.

Storm went straight from the barber's to the recruiting depot. "No need to wait a few hours for the grey whiskers to begin to sprout again," he thought. The sergeant glanced at him—and saw through the barbering "This is getting to be a grandfather's war," he thought. "It's mostly old men and boys now."

'I want to enlist," said Storm.

"Right!" said the sergeant, as he produced a form. "I saw that was your business. Name, please?"

"Storm Bradley."

"Say," said the sergeant; "That's not a new one to me." Then he thought a moment. "I knew a Storm Bradley on the Peninsular. Any relation?"

"My boy, I suppose," answered Storm II. "He was one of the early ones."

"And a good soldier, too," said the sergeant. "How's he now? Still above ground, I hope?"

"Somewhere in France," replied Storm. "He's had a long spell of it—and, so far, when last we heard is still with the battalion."

"Just where he would be—a man like Storm. I was his cobber. Has he ever mentioned a fellow called the Stowaway in his letters?" the sergeant asked.

Storm II thought awhile. "The name seems familiar," he said. "Why, of course, I remember now—something about the Stowaway getting a Turk sniper who was potting at Storm—my boy."

"That's right—except you've got it upside down. It was Storm who got the sniper that was potting at me—for I'm the Stowaway, no less!

"I was lying out in front, wounded. The Turk had my range, and any minute would have seen my finish. Storm climbed out on the parapet, where he could get a sight of the sniper—and where the sniper could get a sight of him, of course. One shot each was all they exchanged, but Storm's got home first.

"Then he brought me in. But it was like him to tell you the story casually, so that you got it the wrong way round."

"So you're going to have a cut at the Big Game yourself?" the sergeant continued. "Good luck to you! My wound finished me. I tried to stick it after I was knocked. I was always pretty good with the pencil so I got an easy job with 'Intelligence'—map-drawing—but I was too crook to hold it—so now I'm here pushing other chaps over."

Then he got to the line on the enlistment form that might be a stumbling block to Storm II. "Age?" he queried.

"Forty-f-three," said Storm.

"A damn good age, too," said the sergeant. "Young enough to move forward quickly—and too old to make a hurry-up run to the rear."

"What's a year or two here or there?" said Storm. "As far as I remember I was forty-two last birthday."

"You said forty-three just now; in fact, you nearly said forty-four," chaffed the sergeant. "I'd better put down forty-two right away, or in a minute or two you'll be only forty-one."

"Shouldn't wonder," agreed Storm II.

Then came the doctor. "Strip!" he said. Storm stripped. "Heaven help the Hun who runs up against you," commented the doctor, looking at Storm's physique. "Forty-two!"—and he glanced up from his writing. "You don't look a day over it. Good luck to you!"

Storm II went at once into camp—at Broadmeadows. "How do you get promotion in this place?" he asked a sergeant he met as he passed through the entrance gate. "Hop out for fatigues, first chance," was the reply.

It was midday, and dinner was almost ready. A sergeant came to the door of the hut in which Storm had sat down. "Men wanted for cookhouse!" he called.

Storm got up at once. "Righto, Sergeant," he said, and went forward.

"Nobody else in the hut stirred. "Come on you men, all of you!" shouted the sergeant.

That fetched them, and they fell in at the side of the hut in two ranks.

"Wait awhile," said the sergeant to Storm II, as the latter went forward to fall in with the rest.

Then, the men being ready, he turned to Storm. "Take the party to the cookhouse," he said; "Get

the dixies with the stew and bring them to the mess hut."

Storm II thought quickly. "Maybe this is my chance for a stripe!"

"Right, Sergeant," he answered—though he didn't know where the cookhouse was—and would not know a 'dixie' if he saw it. But what he didn't know he would soon find out.

Storm stepped to the front of the hut and looked down the line. About a hundred yards away he saw smoke and steam rising. "That ought to be the cookhouse," he thought. "I'll take a chance!"

He went back to the men. "Let's get away, boys" he said—not knowing the technique of giving orders as practiced in a military camp. But it sufficed. The men had been to the cookhouse before, so they turned in the correct direction and marched off.

Of course they saw his want of military knowledge. "Poor old bloke!" said one of the party—an eighteen year old youngster who was turning soldier at the earliest moment. "Poor old bloke—he ought to be home in bed."

Sure enough, the place where the steam was rising was the cookhouse. "Here's your dixies!" said the cook, motioning to a row of iron pots full of stew.

Storm's troubles were over. The men stepped forward, two by two, took hold of the dixie handles, and carried them to the mess hut; Storm II trailing after them.

The business of ladling out the stew was one that Storm could do as well as any, and soon every man had his plate full. The sergeant—as sergeants do, the world over—looked on. He approved—which is not so much a habit of sergeants as is the looking on. "See the dixies go back to the cookhouse," he told Storm, as he walked away.

That afternoon, the same sergeant told Storm to take a party of recruits, still in civilian clothes to the camp store, and to have them outfitted. "See you have a job made of it," he said. "I don't want any trouble afterwards because the uniforms don't fit, or because something is missing."

Storm II, being only three or four hours in camp, had as yet no fear of corporals, or of sergeants, or of anyone else—so when the "old soldiers" behind the store counters gave him illfitting tunics, or boots that were too big, back over the counter they promptly went. "No good to me!" Storm would say. "Keep your oversize stuff for oversize men. I want these lads to look smart."

So, in time and after much argument, he got what he wanted—and brought the party back to the sergeant to all outward appearances soldiers.

"The old bloke knows too much for the chaps in the store!" said the youngster who had previously thought of Storm as a "Poor old bloke." My tunic fits fine—and he made 'em give me the 'strides' I wanted—the ones with the leather on 'em—riding pants. He'll do me!"

Sergeant Miller looked the party over. "That'll do," he said.

Next morning Storm was given two stripes. He was a corporal. Hopping out for fatigues had done the trick.

Storm II did not have to go through the grind of training in Australia. Two days after he joined up orders came for all the men in camp to board the transports, and to sail at once for France.

"Can I get two days leave to go to Bendigo? My family live there?" Storm asked his sergeant.

"I think we can wangle it," said Miller. "I'll put it up to the captain. He did so, and that evening Storm caught the train up country. Polly was

expecting him, so when late at night he arrived she was not surprised.

"It's all right, my dear," he said. "We're sailing the day after tomorrow, so I got a short leave to see you before we go."

Polly was taken aback. "So soon!" she exclaimed. I thought it would be months before you were sent away!"

She had been counting on quite a long time elapsing before Storm would go overseas—and was also counting that every month so gained would be a month nearer the end of the war, and so a month nearer safety for him.

"No, we're to go at once," said Storm. "There's a big fleet of transports on the way from Sydney, and we're to sail and join them in the Bight—or perhaps at Albany, where we will be picked up by our convoy—Japanese men-of-war, I believe."

Polly Bradley couldn't help feeling upset. Her son was in France—and now her husband was to be taken from her—and so suddenly! "Oh, Storm," she said; "couldn't you ask them to leave you behind until the next ships sail? It's only a few days since you enlisted."

"I'm afraid not, Polly," he answered. "And I don't believe you really want me to ask, either. Men are wanted badly in France—not in camp in Australia."

Then Storm took a couple of stripes from the pocket of his tunic. "Promoted already, Polly!" he said. "What about you sewing them on my sleeve? I could have got the camp tailor to do it, but I thought you'd like to."

"Of course!—and I'm glad you left it for me to do," she said. "Give me your tunic now—I won't wait until morning."

Storm took it off and handed it to her. Soon the job was done—and he put it on again: Corporal

Storm Bradley, as all the world could see!

Next morning their two daughters came and stayed all day, and in the evening Storm caught the train back to camp. The girls kissed him goodbye at home, but Polly accompanied him to the station.

Standing in the shadow of the railway porch, she put her arms around his neck. "Storm," she said, "I was never prouder of you in all my life!"

"Good girl!" he replied; and then their lips met, perhaps for the last time—how could they tell!

Storm II got back to camp late in the evening and at midnight went on board the transport. The road to the wharf was crowded with men and women seeing their sons and brothers off. But Storm walked alone. As soon as he got on board ship he gathered together a few men and started them to work cleaning up the litter on the troop deck. The upper deck was full of soldiers, all intent on seeing the last of the shores of Port Phillip, but Storm wasn't curious along that line, and so went below to get things straightened out.

Presently the captain of his company came down to see how things were, and noticed, approvingly, the clean up that was being made. "I haven't seen you before, Corporal," he said. "What's your name?"

"Bradley, sir." said Storm.

"Well, carry on!" said the officer, going up the gangway and leaving the party to finish its job.

Next morning Storm was reading the orders posted on the orderly room board, and came to a line that concerned himself: "Corporal Storm Bradley to be Sergeant."

And sergeant it was!

When Polly and the girls heard of his promotion they were delighted. "Dad will be a colonel before

he gets to England, if he keeps on going at this rate," said Alice. But he wasn't.

Plymouth Hoe was reached safely, after three months of dodging back and forth to avoid submarine mischance. Storm's reinforcement went straight to Salisbury plains and their training began. Soon the first draft of men from it was ready for France, and was sent away. And soon—all too soon—the news of casualties among them came back to the training camps.

They were all 1917 soldiers—and as such were late comers—some because of their youth; others because of their age. But they showed themselves to be stout followers in the steps of the men of Gallipoli, of Palestine, of Bullecourt, of Pozieres, and of the many hard fought fields where Australians had proved their quality.

"Too late for fame; full early for mischance," has most truthfully been written of the soldiers of 1917-1918, and many of them lie on foreign fields —"Dead on the field of honour." True, the cream of Australia s manhood answered the call when first the bugles blew—but the late comers were good soldiers, too.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

STORM'S stripes fell away from him when he joined his battalion. "Back to the ranks," was the order for all non-commissioned officers who had not won their promotion with the battalion. A good and wise order, one that made for confidence among the men. It did not have such universal application for lieutenants—though, generally speaking, paricularly for the last two years of the war, all the junior combatant officers of the

A.I.F. had won their promotion by service on the field. Which explains quite a share of A.I.F. efficiency.

Moreover, differing from the men of some armies, Australian private soldiers readily gave prompt and loyal obedience to officers promoted from the ranks, and with whom they had but a short time before served side by side. Thereby proving their own worth—and intelligence. "This 'bird' knows his job—he learned it from the inside out—the only way!" they would say. And they would be right. There was "distinction," but not "class distinction," between Australian officers and men—not as officers and men.

Private Storm Bradley was allocated to his company and was made one of the dry nurses of a Lewis gun. Strange how his age fell away at the front. Strange how the front altered most things. The "man" came out there—the essential thing. All non-essentials disappeared. Storm II became "one of the platoon"—doing all the odd jobs of soldiering with men of half his years, and doing them just as efficiently.

But it took him all his time to remain "stuck" to the platoon. He knew too much.

"You're wanted at company headquarters, Bradley," his sergeant would say. Storm would report there at once.

"You know topography—mapmaking?" the officer would question.

"Yes sir."

"Well, make a map of the trench we captured last night."

"Very good, sir." And Storm would put in a couple of hours making a none-too-artistic, but accurate, map of the trench and its relative position.

Then the order would come: "Private Storm

Bradley to be attached to Intelligence."

Storm would kick—and kick successfully—and would be returned to the fighting platoon. But not for long. Another week—and another order. To be executed again—and again successfully protested.

It had been so in the training camp. Once the colonel had sent for him—and colonels are not to be lightly crossed. 'I want you to take Walters' job in the orderly room," he said. "Walters is a young man and can be doing better work in France."

"I'd rather not, sir," replied Storm. "I'm down for the next draft for France."

"It's an order." snapped the colonel. "You older men are not as strong as you think you are. Take the job—and forget France!"

The time had come! Storm Bradley raised his right hand. "Do you see that wrist, sir?" he asked.

"Yes," said the officer.

"Well, it will become paralysed a week after I sit down at Walters' desk."

The colonel looked Storm straight in the eyes for a second or two. "Is it as bad as that?" he asked, in an appreciative tone.

"It is, sir," was the reply.

"All right, then," said the colonel. "Go to France—and when you crack up, come back here for an easier job."

"Thank you sir," said Storm, as he saluted and left the room.

And that was the last time Storm had to fight his age in the training camp.

Months passed. Storm's battalion was just behind the line at Meteren, in northern France. The enemy was massing for an attack and so the shelling was heavy. It was the last stage but one of the war—

and Germany was to lose; as she had been losing ever since her retreat to the Marne in 1914.

That Germans are not of the stuff of which world conquerors are made was shown by their failure to drive through to Paris, and to the channel ports, in 1914. Prepared even to the last gaiter button, if the grey Hun hordes could not destroy France in 1914, how could they hope to achieve victory in 1918! Partial successes they had won, but each of those successes left them with less hope of ultimate victory.

The gallant French had made good their declaration, "They shall not pass!" The British bulldog had his grip. What hope, then, for an army who, when the game should have been theirs by reason of their millions of bayonets and their preparedness, instead of courageously putting their fate to the touch in one mighty attack at the battle of the Marne, instead prepared the minds of their fighting men for defeat by digging trenches far in their own rear, to which they could retreat in the event of defeat. And, having made that fatal mistake, they were defeated—of course!

So, because they could not win in 1914, they were now on the edge of their great defeat in 1918.

The Australians had, a few weeks previously, been withdrawn from the same position they now occupied and sent down to the Somme to await an enemy attack there in force. The British troops that had then replaced them were hastily-gathered labour battalions—old men and lads under fighting age. The inevitable happened. Fritz opened an attack in strength against them and gained some territory. There was nothing for it but to stiffen the retreating line with fighting veterans—and to the First Division of the A.I.F. fell the honor of being sent back from the Somme to hold the enemy in the north.

So back from the Somme Storm's Division hurried. The head of the marching column had arrived at a point about four miles from where the enemy had temporarily entrenched himself, preparatory to making another drive, and the partial demoralisation of the allied front was only too apparent. Down the road, from the enemy direction, a battery of field guns came at a gallop—the safety of the guns is gone if the infantry in the front give way.

Seeing a considerable force of men advancing, the officer in charge galloped ahead to meet them. Pulling up his horse he shouted, "Who are you?"

"Australians!" shouted the men.

"How many of you?" called back the officer.

"All of us," came the reply. In their fighting pride the men of the Division forgot the Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Divisions down on the Somme.

"Thank God!" said the officer. Then he turned his horse to meet his battery. "Halt!" he shouted —then he swung the guns off the road into a nearby field—and soon had them ready to again bark defiance at the enemy.

And so the German advance on the Channel ports was held up—for right there their advance stayed and their defeat began. The Australians nibbled and nibbled and nibbled at Fritz until they broke his heart—and the ports were safe.

One morning Storm II was peacefully engaged winning the war playing cards when a Digger called to him: "Hey, Bradley! There's a bloke looking for you at company headquarters. Says you're his old man."

Storm dropped his cards at once. "Sorry!" he said to the other players, and made over to a battered farmhouse where headquarters was installed. Halfway there he met his son.

"Well, Dad!"

"Well, Storm!"

Then they shook hands. That was all.

Then followed a long talk—about all at home and about themselves.

"You're looking fine, Dad," said Storm the younger. "It doesn't seem to be taking it out of you. I must let Mother know when I write just how well you are."

"I'll be glad if you will, Storm," replied his father. "And don't be afraid of painting it up a little. It might save her from worrying more than can't be helped."

Storm II brought his son to the barn where his platoon was billeted. "My son, lads," he said. "One of the originals."

"Good-day, Sarge," the men responded. "Sit on that pile of hay and have some scran. You're just in time for grub."

"Think I didn't know that?" laughed Storm III. "I've been soldiering too long not to know how to time my visits."

After dinner, Storm III left. "Goodbye, Dad," he said. "Take care of yourself."

"Goodbye, Storm, my boy," his father responded.

And so they parted for ever—humanly speaking.

Storm II went back to the barn. "The sergeant has the 'A's' on his shoulders—was at the Landing—an Anzac" said one of the men. Got the M.M. too."

"Yes," said Storm II. "Won it capturing a German machine gun."

"Good man!" the first speaker continued. "I'm no medal winner myself, but I'm not jealous of those who win 'em and wear 'em."

Soldiers on active service are just citizens with packs on their backs and rifles in their hands. Men

don't drop their common humanity when they put on a uniform. And so each man in a platoon looks around, unconsciously perhaps, for someone to whom to tell his inner desires—some of them. Storm Bradley II, being an older man, was often turned to in such manner."

"My two little daughters, Brad.," said one such, showing him a photograph, one afternoon, as they were sitting in the trench after a few hours sleep. "All I want is to get back to them." Then he said slowly, "Their mother is dead, you know." Next day, he, too, went West—killed by a shell-fragment.

On another occasion, Storm II, stepping around an angle in the trench, saw a soldier sitting on a stone, oblivious to the world, looking at something held closely in the palms of his cupped hands.

The soldier looked up when he heard Storm, and, opening his hands, disclosed a tiny picture of four little lads—almost babies—and their mother. He handed it to Storm. "I shouldn't have enlisted," he said; "But my district wasn't making too good a showing, so what could I do? The wife was willing—being a good Australian—and here I am. But I should be back in Australia with them."

Maybe he was right—but had he and thousands like him done otherwise than they did, then the war would have had a very different ending for all the world.

Next evening, as the sun was setting, the sergeant of Storm's platoon stepped outside the barn. "Fall in for fatigue!" he called.

The battalion was out of the line, resting for a few days. Not resting very much, you understand. Every second night or so a little excursion up to near the front trenches was planned. Some job needed doing—or was invented if it was thought Jerry might attack, and so a few more men should

be brought a little closer up—on the better be sure than sorry principle.

The job for this night was the digging of a support trench and the erection of a hundred yards of wire entanglements; so some of the men were served out shovels and others were given wooden stakes. And some reels of barbed wire, of course! Mean stuff, that barbed wire, to handle!

At least, that was what the party was supposed to have served out to it. The barbed wire was there, all right—and exactly four shovels. But that was all. Four shovels between twenty men didn't go very far—and no stakes at all. But that was the way with the A.I.F. It may have been worse with the other armies—Who knows!

"Keep your eyes open, boys," said the sergeant. "We'll find plenty of stakes as we go up, and maybe some more shovels. We've a mile to go, so we'll have plenty of everything by the time we get to where we're going."

They did. The sergeant and his party knew that the troops who for three years had fought over the ground they were on had lived—and died—by the sound military maxim: "Carry nothing out of the line—throw it away!" So they counted on finding all they needed—and more than they could carry.

War's operations are mostly carried on contrary to the drill book rules—or any other rules printed in any other book. Which is as it should be—else soldiering would soon become insupportable. Throwing things away for the next lot to pick up and use is a help to tired men—and the finders have just that much less distance to carry the articles thrown away than if they were served out to them in billets. A good reason for a good practice. Maybe!

Of course, someone should have been courtmar-

tialled for wilful misuse of the King's property—but if that had been done we might have lost the war. War is won by the breaking of rules, not by the keeping of them. Every soldier knows that.

The men fell in and the lance-jacks gave the shovels out, taking care not to give them to their particular cobbers, for shovelling is hard work. Then they handed the reels of barbed wire to their particular enemies. This, also, is a useful practice—useful for the lance-jack's friends. Always keep in with the lance-jacks, and so miss the dirty jobs.

F'm-f'rs-ri'-q'-m'ch—all in a slovenly manner that would have sent a parade ground sergeant stark mad. This also is good army practice—when fighting.

The fatigue party knew what the sergeant meant by his marching order—and did it pretty much as he said it. Parade ground motions were kept by the A.I.F. for the parade ground. Shell-fire plays hob with pretty movements—and the rattle of the machine gun ends them entirely. So all ranks got careless—of some things—near the line.

For a mile or more the party marched, gathering shovels and stakes as they went—until all the men were loaded equally with the lance-jacks' enemies.

"Halt!"

The party got to work quickly. Soldiers don't "soldier" out in the open under shell fire—not when the order is "Dig in!"

"Be careful, we're under enemy observation here!" said the lieutenant. "No cigarettes!"

The trench was down about two feet, when one of the men, hungry for a smoke, crouched in a corner and struck a match, hiding the light as best he could—which wasn't very well. Many men have exchanged their lives for a few puffs at a

cigarette—their cobbers' lives as well. This man was one of that kind.

Storm II was digging next to him. "What the hell are you doing!" Storm said—not as a question though. And he grabbed for the light.

"Got the wind up?' 'sneered the smoker.

Yes, Storm had the wind up. Sometimes that is a virtue.

But Jerry had seen the light—and began making his arrangements accordingly. Those arrangements would take a few minutes to complete, so the party dug on, unmolested.

Presently, when Jerry had completed the "arrangements"—Whiz—z! Whiz—z! Whiz—z!" That is not the right sound, but the alphabet hasn't any letters to represent shells rushing through the air. Then "Bang! Bang! Bang!" Neither is that the right combination of letters to give the idea of shrapnel bursts. But it will do—it'll have to do.

The shrapnel continued to come over—and nearer and nearer came the bursts. Jerry was "ranging". "We're getting hell because you couldn't do without a smoke," Storm said to the cigarette smoker.

"Well, a man must have a draw," was the answer.

Just then a shell burst right overhead, and the iron bullets rained into the trench—luckily into the end that was almost unoccupied. Two men were hit—not badly. Storm went to their assistance—and found the cigarette smoker there ahead of him, giving first aid with his own bandages. That was only as might be expected between men.

Next night Storm's battalion moved up and took over a sector of the line. Storm's platoon was on the right flank, in a fifty-yard-long scrape in the earth that did duty as a trench. That is—what was

left of the platoon was there—sixteen men all told.

Australian liberties were defended by a thin line those days. If Australia had only known how thin, maybe some people would not have slept so soundly at home—or talked so much.

The platoon deepened the "scrape." The Tommies who had last lived temporarily in it had evidently not been big men—neither lengthways nor "through," hence the "scrape."

Storm Bradley dug to the level of the other fellows' depth—and then went six inches deeper on his own account. He was three inches taller than the other men. That was three inches more to show over the top of the trench as a target—and he went the six inches deeper because he knew a live Digger was worth any number of dead ones.

"Got the wind up?" asked the cigarette smoker. Not nastily, but just getting a bit of his own back.

"I'm so windy I've got to tie my tin hat on, else it'll blow off," replied Storm.

Storm's platoon held their trench for a few days, and was then relieved by another lot. Nobody had won any medals—nobody had wanted to. They just stayed where they had been told to stay—and marched out when they were told to march,—glad to get away—to go back when ordered. Not before! But they had "stayed put" when "put." There's great merit in that. It won the war!

Then the Big Danger shifted itself to down south. So south to Amiens, to join the other Australian divisions, who had been writing history at Villers Bretonneux, went the Division to which Storm II's battalion belonged. He and a few others had been sent to Corbie a few days ahead of the battalion.

The Eighth of August—Germany's Black Day—was two days ahead when Storm got to Corbie, so

he was in time for Bloody Bill's Great Disappointment. No! That's not quite right. The Great Disappointment began when the Australians saved Amiens at Villers Bretonneux, stopping the German rush in April. What Storm II got south in time for was the clinching of the nail that Disappointment had driven into Bloody Bill's soul.

The Day came! War days mostly begin the night before, and so the Eighth of August, 1918, began at 2 a.m. or thereabouts. Monash had everything in order. Everything! Not a thing was missing! Not a thing went wrong!

Some day Australians will recognise to the full what manner of man and soldier Monash was. Not that they think little of him now. Far from it. Australia produced an army for service in the Great War. She also produced leaders: Monash, Chauvel, White, Rosenthal and many others. From now on Australia will never need to look overseas for men to command her sons in battle. Our "colony" days are long over— and the Great War killed whatever was left of the inferiority complex from which all young nations suffer.

Daylight saw the Australians "going over." The barrage had lifted. The guns had given Fritz a terrible gruelling, and his nerve was breaking—also his line. "This will make great reading in the papers back in Australia," thought Storm.

Day followed day, and the A.I.F. line pushed forward. On their left the Tommies kept hammering at Jerry, and on their right the Canadians could be seen—always well forward. The German was for getting his back to the wall—and the wall was the Hindenbury Line, many miles away.

August passed, and some of September. Fritz had got to the Wall. Storm's battalion had leapfrogged through another battalion to have a further go at him. Storm with it—of course.

Storm II was out on his platoon's left—he and two other Diggers. They were crouched in a deep shellhole waiting the right moment to hop over. All moments are not the right moment to do some particular thing—least of all to advance on an enemy machine gun position. Wars are also won by waiting—quite often!

Jerry's shell-fire was frequent and accurate that day. He knew the range of everything—trenches, sunken roads, dug-outs; for he had just been driven out of them himself. Still, the Australians hadn't lost many men, and for a very good reason —they hadn't many to lose. The platoons were woefully scant—sixteen men on an average. Battalions, companies, platoons—all fought those days at one-fourth of their original strength. So there was a lot of ground for the enemy shells to burst harmlessly on.

But it was all terribly hard on the men. There's confidence in numbers. Sometimes safety, too. Still, the men didn't seem to notice the slimness of the hold they had on the ground they drove Fritz from. What they lacked in numbers they made up in———. No! Not in bravery; that isn't the word. There isn't any word for the spirit that holds men to their job when by all the rules of the game they should get off the field.

Storm II lay close and waited. Did he duck when a shell burst a hundred yards away He did —and so did everybody else. The time to duck is before the damage is done. Afterwards is too late. And it is a wise man who knows when to duck.

The cigarette fiend was one of the two men who were with Storm in the trench. Now, he smoked all the time—and he smoked unchecked.

"This stunt will about finish our turn in the line," said Storm. "The A.I.F. is due for a long

rest. Almost a year under shell fire without a spell. It's too long."

The Australians had done their share to get Jerry backed right up and into the Hindenburg Line—and they didn't care who drove him out of it on to the other side. By all the accepted ideas of such things they should have been eager to attack again and yet again—and to have been ready to fight any troops sent to relieve them. But that is not real war! Not real soldiers in real war!

The cigarette fiend and the other man in the shell hole agreed with Storm. The whole A.I.F. agreed with him. They'd all be glad to get out of it just as soon as the "higher-ups" would let them go. Anybody could win the war who wanted to—except Jerry, of course.

Storm Bradley hugged the side of his shell hole a little closer. "It'd be stiff luck to get knocked right at the end," he thought.

The shell fire increased in intensity—and in accuracy.

Intensity doesn't matter if the ironmongery is all going over the next hill; but when it is lobbing right around—why, that is another thing.

With great suddenness something happened in Storm's shellhole. It left him with one leg nearly blown off and two badly-hurt cobbers lying on top of him. Jerry had the correct range that time.

The three men were fifty yards from the rest of the platoon, and the ragged shallow trench that ran between gave no protection. So for minutes that seemed like hours they lay bleeding—to death.

Then Storm's corporal decided to take a look at his three men in the shellhole. "That last one seemed to burst mighty close to them," he thought.

"Poor devils!" he said, when he saw what the shell had done. Then he got quickly back to the platoon and sent for the stretcher bearers. The

men were too badly hurt for field dressing such as he could give them to be of any use.

Soon the bearers were on the spot. Let not anyone think that a stretcher bearer is not a dinkum bloke. A soldier will always take off his hat to the bearers.

"Take the others first," whispered Storm. "They're worse hit than I am."

So the bearers took Storm's cobbers away—to life; while Storm remained behind—with Death.

Back came the bearers, just as quickly as they could make it, for they knew that Storm was slowly bleeding to death. They carried him to the dugout and the doctors did their best to save him. "Too late," said one of them. "He's lost too much blood. If we'd got him ten minutes earlier we might have pulled him through."

Storm Bradley heard him, and strengthened his soul for the Great Adventure. And when, an hour later, he went West, he went as a man should go —without fear, yet in all humbleness.

The men of his platoon attended to his burying. They sent word to his son that he was dead and that they were making arrangements to have him laid to rest in the little French cemetery at Hargicourt.

Storm III got a day's leave and was with them at the graveside. "I don't know how to thank you chaps for this," he said. "My mother will be brokenhearted; but when she knows Dad is laid here in this beautiful little place, where maybe some day she can visit him, it will help her more than you know."

"That's all right, Sergeant," said one of the men. "Your father was a good soldier, and we could do no less. Then he added, "He was a good man, too. Sometimes he would chip us younger fellows a little if we had gone a bit over the odds at the

estaminets—and then we'd take a pull at ourselves."

"The platoon will miss him," he continued, "But we'll be glad to remember he is here safe. It's tough to have a cobber just 'missing'—maybe buried by a shell, never to be found, as so many were."

Then the men left Storm III to himself—and to his dead.

For the A.I.F. the war was almost over. It was now late September 1918, and by October all the Australian Divisions were out of the line resting—to be brought up again early in November. By then the enemy had asked for an Armistice, and was considering its terms—Unconditional Surrender.

The signing of the Armistice on the eleventh day of November was accepted by the Australian battalions, at least, with an outward quietude that told nothing of the gladness that prevailed inwardly.

Storm Bradley III was once more with his platoon when the news that the war was over came. He was in an old shed playing cards with a couple of his mates, when a runner from company headquarters went by the door. Putting his head inside he called out, "Stop shooting, lads! It's all over." Not that any shooting was going on just there. It was the runner's "unofficial" way of telling the good news.

The card players heard him; the dealer was shuffling the cards. Looking up at Storm he said, "The ——— armistice!"—and went on with his deal—and the game.

It was not that every man there—and every man in all the armies—did not welcome the end of the war. They did! They knew it meant "Home" for

them. Back to Australia! It was just that the Australian does not wear his heart on his sleeve.

Later, when Storm was telling another Australian of the quiet manner in which the news of the armistice was received at the front, his listener said, "It was the same with my battalion. It is the Australian way. They don't overshout themselves. Sometimes it leads to them being misunderstood.

Then, after a pause, he continued, "When I enlisted I was almost a stranger to my own country —Australia. I'd been living for years in the United States, and had got out of touch with my own people. The American is a different sort. He doesn't hide his light under any bushel. He'll tell you all he's going to do before he sets out to do it—and he mostly keeps his word, make no mistake about that! But he likes to do a bit of press-agenting first. That's just his way.

"A week after getting back to Australia I was on a transport with a reinforcement so I didn't have sufficient time to 'get acquainted' with Australians once more. Believe me, it took me quite a long while to get a line on the men on that ship. There didn't seem to be a soldier on it—not the beginning of one. By their talk, not a man intended to go over to France unless he was taken by the seat of his trousers and pitched over the channel. In the sergeants' mess things were no better. I used to wonder why they had enlisted—they were all volunteers, but, just why they had volunteered I could never make out—not from their talk.

"And it was the same at the training camp on Salisbury plains. Once, a visitor there asked me what I thought of the reinforcement. 'They're all dodgers,' I said. 'I don't believe there's a piece of a soldier among the lot.'

"A few at a time, as each man was sufficiently trained that reinforcement was sent over to France —and then I got my lesson. I learned that one can never judge the manner of man an Australian is by listening to his talk. He's like the chap in the bible who said to his dad, when the old man wanted him to go to some place or other, 'I go not'—but he went!"

With the signing of the armistice, Sergeant Storm Bradley's service was ended. As one of the Anzacs, he was overdue for leave back to Australia, so within less than a week he was in England waiting a ship homeward bound, and sailed from Weymouth the following week. Early in 1919 he walked down the gangway of the transport at Port Melbourne waving to his mother and sisters waiting below.

Elsie Norris remained in Sydney. In a letter he got at Adelaide she said, "I owe it to your mother that she should have you to herself for a few days. Your return is sure to awaken in her fresh sorrow for your father's death, and you will be able to comfort her a little. So it is best I stay here. But, my dear, you don't know how much it hurts me not to go to meet you."

It was just as Elsie had said. Polly Bradley almost forgot to rejoice over her son's return in her mourning for her husband, and the journey to Bendigo was a sad one. Little by little, however, the clouds passed away, and in about a week Storm told his mother he would soon be going to Sydney. "I don't know that I'll stay in Sydney," he said. "Maybe I'll come back here to settle down. I'll talk it over with Elsie."

Elsie met him at the Sydney railway station—and the long years since they had parted became as less than nothing. No! That is wrong! They became—and remained—a memory of a duty well

done—by both. And by all Australia as well. Kipling's ringing call:

"For all we have and are,
For all our children's fate,
Stand up and meet the war!
The Hun is at the gate!"

had not fallen on deaf ears in Australia. And it is well that it did not. For in 1914 the greatest crisis in all our short history was upon us. So great a calamity could so easily have befallen us, seeing that by so small a margin did we win to safety. But the margin suffices.

The heroic days of 1914-1918 proved Australia to be no fair-weather partner in the British Commonwealth of Nations, but one willing and able to face the foulest weather that stormy winds could bring. And to ride successfully through it, too.

The Great War found Australians a People—but it left them a Nation. It could so easily have been otherwise. It could have found them a People—and have left them just a Memory—conquered—and so fated gradually to be made alien in tongue and sentiment by their conquerors.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

TURNER, told Storm his old job was waiting for him—or, rather, that he had a new one ready. He needed help in the editing. The pay was decent and the work promised to be to his liking so Storm took it.

Elsie Norris needed no persuasion to agree to an early wedding. The war had eaten into their years more than enough, so about a month after Storm's return they were married, and after a short visit to the mountains they made their home

in a harbour front cottage within a short tram ride of the city.

Storm in his new job had quite a little to do with the working out of the "Times'" policy, so it was not long before his hand could be seen in its pages. Turner agreed with much of his work but slowed him up on certain lines.

"The owners don't like the prominence the trades unions are getting in our columns," he said, one evening after an interview with the proprietors. "Of course, I know it's not the political side of union activities you're giving space to—just the economics of the movement; but all the same I've been given a hint."

Storm wasn't surprised; he'd been expecting something of the sort. "I'm sorry," he said, "But I think it's a mistake not to try to hold unionism to its legitimate work—to guide it out of the political sea. That's all I've been trying to do. Wages, hours and conditions of labour—and the improvement of all three—that's the true business of unionism."

"Yes," agreed Turner, "In some of its aspects unionism is the greatest movement that has come to earth since Christianity." Then he thought a moment and added, "But the way the unions are run they have so mixed their economics with politics that we of the other side dare not do anything to strengthen them, even for their legitimate work. So you can't blame our owners."

"Very well, I'll not offend again. But it's no good, Mr. Turner. Most things need facing. Running away from them is worse than useless. The organisation of working men by working men for their own betterment is absolutely necessary if they are not eventually to live as a Chinese coolie lives—on a handful of rice and with not much more than a single shirt for clothing. However,

I've done my best. If sane unionism is not to be supported by the press, then a little later we will be swamped by the insane variety."

"Just a moment, Mr. Turner," said Storm, as his chief turned to go. "There's that article of mine on immigration that you turned down. Owners again, I suppose?"

Turner nodded. Storm had written an article on immigration and had linked it up with the desirability of enlisting the energy and the interests of the individual with the big things of Australia.

"They must be blind!" Storm snapped. "Men will go wherever there is work and wages. It was the spending of thousands of millions of dollars by private railroad companies that made America the nation it is. The United States government has never needed to part with a dollar to attract immigrants. Instead, it has spent many dollars keeping them out.

"If our Australian nation-building by The Government Job is so good an idea, how comes it we are continually sending commissions of enquiry to private-enterprise countries to find out why they get things done better than we. One would think, if our method was the best, they would be sending here to learn how to get in on a good thing. But they don't—and for the best of reasons.

"No! No!" said Storm, in answer to a question by Turner. "By 'Government Job' I don't mean the government billet of a public servant. It's just an all-inclusive term for our all-pervasive government ownership of everything in sight—and out of sight.""

Turner listened attentively—and with agreement, for he knew that in the main Storm was right. "Keep at it, Storm," he encouraged. "Some day you'll make a spoon or spoil a horn." Then he remembered he was the editor of the "Times," so

he added, "But of course you can't do the 'keeping at it' in this paper. It'll have to be a private matter with you, you understand."

Storm understood—but he couldn't keep what he believed to himself, so soon Turner was again having a word with him.

"You've been running away with yourself again, Bradley," he said. "Your comment on what you call 'artificial immigration' rubbed one of our owners up the wrong way. You ought to have known better seeing that he is president of the Big Brother movement."

"Well, why doesn't he get down to essentials?" said Storm; "Not confine himself to fiddling away at tuppeny-ha'penny things. The peopling of this country up to the point of taking care of its defence is as necessary as was winning the war. We won't be forever left in peaceful possession of a continent. Australia is a good land—and other nations know it. The opportunities of life here are —or should be—as great as elsewhere—that is, natural opportunities. Then how comes it people need to be cajoled into coming here—need to be 'assisted' to get here—and need to be given 'after care' when they do get here?"

"After care!" laughed Turner. "Isn't that something for women and babies?"

"Not this kind of 'after care.' The 'after care' I'm talking about is for grown-up babies—grown-up immigrant babies."

Then Storm added. "We need immigrants—no country more so. Then why in heaven's name don't we let private capital come in and work for us—and for itself. Under reasonable control, of course, for capital, or any other form of power, can be as cruel as hell. All the immigrants we need would soon be hammering at our doors—and the immigrant who hammers to be let in is the only kind

who will stay with us—the only kind who will do us any real good."

Storm Bradley got home that night much troubled. "They're clipping my pen again," he said to Else. "I won't stand it much longer. "I don't want to run the paper—but neither are the owners going to run me."

Storm Bradley felt he was finished with his job. When he took it he thought it offered him an opportunity to speak plainly to his fellow-Australians. He wanted to tell them they were wrong in their political economics; that the slow development of the continent was not due to lack of possibilities therein, but to Australians having adopted a wrong attitude towards certain fundamentalities that work just as inexorably as do nature's laws.

He knew the present-day Australian was cheating himself of the big things that enter into the lives of men in other lands. That, as an individual, he could not undertake railroading, electric lighting and power services, irrigation development, telephone construction or any other of the worthwhile life businesses for full-size men. He could handle only the minor matters—such things as real estate development or the making, buying and selling of the necessaries of life. But nation-building as men of other countries know it? No! That must be left to The Government Job.

Australian development has been slow because we have made The Government Job our god. A tin deity he has proved himself to be. Some day he will meet the fate of all False Pretences, and may that day be soon. By our multiplication of acts of parliament discouraging individual initiative we are slamming the doors of opportunity in our own faces. The wealth of a new continent is ours for the winning—but it will be won only by

the individual, never by "the government." And the individual, in winning its wealth for himself wins it for the nation.

Australians of this generation do not seem to realise how greatly fortune has favoured them, in that they have been born into a country that is largely raw and unmade. Opportunities for worthwhile and well-rewarded endeavour are scattered from the Leeuwin to Cape York. Opportunities for all—not for the capitalist only, but for every man and woman according to their capacity.

The big thing in all progress, and so the biggest thing in the sum of a nation's growth, is the human element—the desire to accumulate—to better one's condition—to have more of the good things of life. This it is that makes men live laborious days—makes them plan and work again. Not only men who control big capital, but right down through the smaller man to the smallest man. This it is that builds a nation. And this it is that we Australians, in our unwisdom, have held to be an undesirable factor in our national arithmetic.

The altruism that expresses itself as the average socialism is a shoddy thing, composed mainly of a desire to avoid hard thinking and hard tasks—and to get in an easy way the biggest possible share of the good things going. That, combined with a fierce jealousy of anyone else's prosperity is at the bottom of the teachings of those who proclaim the all-desirability of The Government Job.

Somebody once said, "If government ownership makes men, then I'm for government ownership." Quite right! But does it? Does any form of communism, however watered down, make men? The Incas of Peru gave themselves body and soul to "the government." Not any activity of their lives

but was government-regulated—even to their mating, for, once a year their young men and young women were yarded up and compulsory paired off in marriage by "the government." And what sort of men did life under those conditions produce? Just the sort one might expect.

When the Spaniard came the government-bred and government-regulated weaklings were swept off the map by a tiny army of "individualists."

A country does not have to go the lengths the Incas went to do itself considerable mischief. Much less will greatly handicap its progress. We Australians should remember that!

Two things and two only can be depended on to get the best out of a man. One is the "bunch of carrots," the other is the spur of necessity—the "kick from behind." Neither of these obtain in The Government Job. With what result we Australians are only too well aware. Private enterprise breeds organisers of the first degree of ability. The Government Job, whether in high places or in low, produces little else but a slowing down so complete that development comes almost to a halt; but in the production of capable men or completed jobs—completed, that is, so that they are financially profitable—it fails dismally.

We are at last beginning to discover that it is not government borrowing that matters so much as government spending. Of every pound the government borrows at least seven shillings is wasted. Possibly much more than seven shillings. But the full pound has to be paid back some day—which means a thirteen shilling asset as against a pound liability. Continue that system and bankruptcy must come—or else repudiation.

Private enterprise administers its own credit—and so gets twenty shillings worth of results for each pound spent. If it doesn't—then it has to take

its loss and write down its capital, and the community is none the worse off.

With government spending of government-borrowed credit, there can never be any writing down. The debt stands. The interest charge must be met. The consequences of the foolishness must go on for ever—until the crash!

Knowing all these things, Storm Bradley made up his mind to refuse to be muzzled. His owners would not permit him to express himself in the "Times," so he resolved to look elsewhere for an opportunity so to do.

"It's far from too late for Australians to change their ways," he said to Turner when he told him he was leaving—and also told him why. "And it may be that we will, in the end, make some profit out of our experiences in foolishness, in that we will know better than ever to return to our mire-wallowing."

Turner shook hands with Storm. "I'm sorry you're going, he said. I wish you luck. You've got the right idea—but go carefully else you'll find the John the Baptist stuff pretty costly. Bucking the accepted order of things is an unprofitable business."

For full two months Storm tried to find a position in line with his desires, but without result. He had to be honest with the editors he saw as to why he had left his old paper. Mostly, they told him bluntly that he was a fool. "You're only a cog in the wheel. What do you think you are? The whole works?" was about the way they summed the situation up to him.

Things were beginning to look serious for him. It seemed as though the editors had marked him down as "Dangerous!" and so didn't care to employ him. Then, one morning, a proposal was made to him that seemed to offer what he wanted—

opportunity to write as he wished. Turner had been speaking about him to a friend who had a small interest in the "Weekly,"—a journal that needed fresh blood and fresh ideas—and had mentioned just why Storm had thrown up his job on the "Times."

"Send him to me, Mr. Turner," said Lloyd. "Possibly he's the man I'm looking for. I put a couple of thousand into the "Weekly," and unless the right man takes hold of it now I'm afraid I'll lose my money. I like what you say about his ideas, and maybe he and I will be able to come to an understanding."

Storm called on Mr. Lloyd at his city office. Lloyd was a man with many interests, but the virus of printer's ink had early got into his blood, and keep out of newspaper ventures he couldn't. The "Weekly," a journal with a small but Australia-wide circulation, had needed money to increase its size, and Lloyd, because he thought it a useful influence in Australian life—and also because of the aforesaid virus—had put up two thousand pounds.

But Mr. Lloyd was of opinion that the "Weekly" needed a definite editorial policy much more than it needed money, so when Turner told him about Storm and his ideas he though he could do worse than have a talk with him.

They met, and after an hour's conversation Lloyd told Storm he'd take a day to think things over—to call again next afternoon, when in all probability he'd have some proposal to make. "I think we'll be able to get together," Mr. Lloyd said.

Next day Storm Bradley saw Lloyd again. "Well, Bradley," said Lloyd, "I've been considering what's best for me to do. I like your ideas on public matters, and I think Australia is about ready

for them. Anyway, I'm willing to take a chance as to that. If Australia isn't, then we're both going to lose out.

"I've got two thousand shares in the "Weekly," —pound shares. If you'll buy five hundred of them at that price you can have the job of editor at a fair salary. Not as much as you were getting on the "Times," but enough to live decently on.

"I suppose you can see why I want you to put some money into the paper. It'll tie you to it, and also get out of you the best that is in you."

"In other words, Mr. Lloyd, it will make me take a dose of my own medicine—self help and self-interest."

"Exactly! That's fair, isn't it?"

"Quite fair. But its fairness isn't the reason I'm going to accept your offer. It's that I want to be working on my own paper—and I'll take one-half your holding of shares—not just one-fourth—if you'll make easy terms for the other five hundred."

"Not I, Bradley," laughed Mr. Lloyd. "I think I can see that you're the sort of man who'll make the paper go, so if you want any more shares, go and buy 'em somewhere else. I'm keeping mine."

"I'll own more than five hundred shares in the "Weekly" some day," said Storm. "Either yours or someone else's."

Lloyd considered a moment. "Bradley," he said, "If you find any of the other shareholders want to part with their shares, just let me know. Maybe we can, between us, arrange to take them. I rather think you and I will make a team."

Then he rose and shook hands with Storm. "Glad I've met you, Bradley," he said. Very glad."

"Same here, Mr. Lloyd," returned Storm Bradley.

Twelve months passed. The "Weekly" was mak-

ing good headway, and Storm was happy in his work. To raise the necessary five hundred pounds to buy the shares from Mr. Lloyd he had to mortgage his cottage, but the dividends on the shares, though small, took care of the interest.

Lloyd had been more than as good as his word, and had bought enough shares from other holders to give himself and Storm a controlling interest in the paper.

"You've nothing to thank me for, Bradley," he had said when Storm expressed gratitude for being helped to increase his holding. "The way you are doing your job as editor is making the paper, and it's only right you should get some of the benefit."

And so ten years passed by—more than ten. Australia was prosperous—and the "Weekly" prospered with it, Storm Bradley fitted more and more into the management of his paper. Once in a while he felt dissatisfied with its failure to change in ever so slight a degree the public's attitude towards public matters. Government borrowing and government spending—government control of everything in and out of sight—became more pronounced.

"Well, at any rate," thought Storm, "The hotter the pace the sooner we'll reach the end of the track. So maybe it's all for the best ultimately."

And he was right.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

DURING that ten years everybody seemed to be prospering—in spite of the enormous war debt. Credit was available for all who wanted it, both for nations and for individuals. And all nations and all individuals naturally wanted it, and so took all they could get. That accounted for the "pros-

perity." On top of the war debt there quickly piled another debt just as big—perhaps bigger and just as mischievous. But the borrowing couldn't go on for ever, although the way was made easy—too easy.

Then came the first rumblings of the storm Credit was not so easily obtained. The banks began to be insistent in the matter of "reducing those overdrafts." Terrible fellows, the bankers!

The manager of the bank that handled the account of the "Weekly" wrote Storm a friendly letter—the first of the "series." Asked him to call and see him some day. Storm went. It doesn't do to ignore one's banker's invitation, however vaguely it is worded.

"Your paper is on a good footing, Mr. Bradley," said the banker, "But things generally are not looking too bright. I'd like it if you don't let the overdraft get any higher."

Storm agreed. Naturally! One always agrees with one's bankers.

Then advertisements became more difficult to get. Advertisers were also having interviews with their bankers. Their trade was falling—and so their expenses had to be cut.

Again Storm's banker wrote. This time not so vaguely. The overdraft must be reduced—and at once! Storm began to economise. In other words, he dismissed a couple of men. That didn't help to make business brighter—either for him or for anyone else—particularly not for the two men dismissed; but it balanced the "Weekly's" budget for awhile.

Storm Bradley was to learn, as everyone else was to learn, that balancing budgets by adding to the army of unemployed is a poor way of restoring prosperity.

However, there didn't seem any real reason to trouble unduly. There was still plenty of money

about, if it did seem to be a trifle elusive in the getting and in the keeping. Particularly in the keeping.

Another six months passed. Each month just a little slacker than its predecessor. Fewer advertisements. Lessened circulation. More men dismissed —to react unfavourably on business generally.

Storm Bradley began to worry in earnest. His own financial butter began to disappear from his financial bread. He had placed a rather large mortgage on his home to buy shares and more shares in the "Weekly," and now the mortgagee was pressing for repayment. "The value of the property has dropped a lot," he told Storm Bradley; "So if you cannot repay me the full amount I must ask you to at least reduce the mortgage by several hundred pounds."

Storm raised four hundred pounds by giving a second mortgage on the cottage—paying a high rate of interest, and so further embarrassing himself. "Needs must when the devil drives."

Still the business slump continued—getting worse rapidly. Tens of thousands were unemployed in Australia—and millions were in the same state all over the world.

Again the "Weekly's" banker wrote to Storm —the third or fourth of the series. This time not a trace of vagueness was in the letter. "The overdraft must be paid off by the end of the half-year, failing which——!"

It was the beginning of Storm's real troubles. Tens of thousands of other men's troubles had begun much earlier, but Storm Bradley hadn't noticed that hardly at all. One's troubles are one's own. The other fellow's are his own, too. It is not until quite a number of thousands of people are deep in the same sort of trouble that anything much is done about it.

Storm Bradley's financial worries began to have their reaction in his paper. A newspaper is a very human institution. As the interests of those controlling it are so will its attitude be towards public matters. One cannot expect otherwise—else one would find the radical press advocating reactionary meaures—and the conservative journals supporting communism. There is an orderliness and decency about these things that sometimes one doesn't recognise.

Driven by his own financial position Storm studied finance as he never had studied it before —and from a new angle. When a friend challenged what seemed like his change of front, he laughed. "I'm beginning to believe that a man thinks with his belly, and not with his head," he said. "Anyway a pinch there puts things in a new light."

The result was an article in the 'Weekly,' almost unknowingly given Storm by John Allan, a banker friend of his—who had held high position in the Australian banking world, but who now was retired from active life on a considerable pension. Storm had made his acquaintance at a lunch club he had joined, and learned much from him concerning the verities of finance.

"You outsiders have the wrong idea as to banking," said Allan one day to him as they smoked at the club after lunch. "You think it's something mysterious, and so above the ordinary comprehension. It isn't. It's just like any other business—except that its decisions are more far-reaching. Its business is buying and selling credit for profit, just as a butcher buys and sells chops for profit. But it can also manufacture credit—and no butcher can manufacture chops. Also, it can—and does—kill credit, when killing credit suits its purpose—profit-making.

Another thing you all go astray in is your

conception of "money." Most people seem to think that bank notes and gold and silver are money. They are wrong. Those things are only 'tokens.' Credit is the real money. Bankers have found that out—and when the man in the street also finds it out he'll see to it that he gets a bigger share of the profit attaching to the use of credit than he gets now. Also, he'll see that credit's ebb and flow is not so erratic as it is these days."

Allan thought for a few moments—then he corrected himself. "No. 'Erratic' is the wrong word," he said. "There's nothing erratic about the tides of credit. There are a couple of dozen bright lads somewhere in the 'smoke' who are well and truly in control. I wonder just how long they'll be allowed to keep in hiding—and in mischief."

Storm Bradley's old paper, the "Times", with Turner still editor, brought up all its guns, and all its horse and foot, to defend the control by private banking of the expansion and contraction of credit and its pronouncements were accepted as of authority. But steadily the financial drop continued. The tens of thousands of unemployed became hundreds of thousands of unemployed—with many of them fast becoming unemployable through the inevitable deterioration of their morale and their habits.

The Federal and State governments piled taxation on taxation to meet public commitments, and turned thousands adrift out of public employ to reduce the wages bill. Naturally, the extra taxation cut into the available private capital, and the sacking and cutting salaries of the civil service lessened the spending power of the people. It was the "vicious spiral downwards."

The unemployed had to be fed—if the shop windows were to remain whole—so weekly dole tickets were issued.

"It's all wrong," said Bradley in his paper. "We are ruining our citizenship by pauperising it, and we are bankrupting our capitalists by taxation to commit that ruin."

Turner's paper held to its course of denying that the twentieth century had arrived and also denying that the trade and commerce of that century required different banking and credit methods than did the nineteeth century. The bogey of inflation was trotted out—while the most ruinous deflation the world ever knew was all the time eating into the manhood and the heart of Australia's citizenry.

Storm Bradley's advertising man, Jack Higgs—a cobber of his A.I.F. days, and then known as The Stowaway—was up to his eyes in trouble. Jack had married when the war ended and had put his gratuity and all else he could scrape together into a cottage, making up the remainder of the purchase money by raising a mortgage on the place—two mortgages, to be precise, a first and a second. The latter he had by strict economy at home and in his personal expenses partly paid off. But, like tens of thousands of others, he was "caught," and it looked as though he must lose his home, for, as his salary had had a couple of cuts since the bad times began, he could not pay the instalments as they fell due.

Then another knock met him. "I can't help it Jack" said Storm Bradley, when for the third time he had to tell Higgs that his pay must be less. "Everything is sliding downhill—circulation, advertisements, space rates. It's either cut to the bone or shut up shop. You can stay on if you will handle the advertising on commission. You're salary will have to go."

"We're lucky if it isn't 'Goodbye the happy home,'" Higgs said to his wife when he got home

that evening. "Advertising is dropping to almost nothing—so the commission I earn will be somewhere the same."

In the language of the troops, Jack "Gave it a go," but wasn't able to feed his family and to pay the instalments. "Best thing that could happen to this country would be another war," he said to Storm, when they were talking things over. "There'd be plenty of money let go then."

Higgs had the usual foolish idea that the business of Australia, and of the world, was carried on by Money; that the pound notes that are so magical in their effect when dangled before the eyes of the shopkeeper, and cause in him great activity behind his counter, are the prime cause of all prosperity. He didn't know the first thing about the moving force of the credit inherent in the life and the work of a nation.

As with hundreds of thousands of his fellow-citizens, Jack Higgs' miseries were to open his mind to, and make him teachable about, many things of which in prosperity he was ignorant—and of which, while that prosperity continued, he and they would remain ignorant. As Storm Bradley had found out, man thinks with his stomach, not with his head. Higgs' stomach was yet to assume its true function.

"I was a damned fool to take on this cottage!" Higgs said to his wife, one day, as he held in his hand a letter the postman had just given him reminding him that the mortgage interest was overdue. As if Jack needed "reminding!" Why, he went to bed with the "knowledge"—and met the "knowledge" in his dreams—and got out of bed in the morning still full of the "knowledge." Reminding!

"I put two hundred pounds into it at the start," he continued "and I've paid three hundred more off

it—and how much of it do I own now? Just less than nothing!

"Five hundred 'of the best' that we might have had a good time on all gone to the pack. If it was sold it wouldn't bring as much as I owe on it. So all I've bought with five hundred quid is a debt. There's something wrong somewhere."

Higgs was right. There was something wrong. The man who had spent his money as he got it—had used it to have any kind of a good time with—had at least the recollection of the fun he had had; while all Jack had for his 'thrift' was an unpaid mortgage—and a whole-hearted determination that never again would he be such a fool. For the future he would buy 'good times' with his money—not houses.

"Save up again—to have it taken from me again! Not much!" Jack snorted. "A man can't help being fooled once—but to be fooled the same way twice! I should say not!"

And there are now tens of thousands of Jack Higgs. All with Jack Higgs determination—"Never again!"

Larger and larger grew the army of the unemployed. Deeper and deeper into the mess slid the State and the Commonwealth. More stubbornly than ever Storm's old paper, the "Times," held to its course of denunciation of any inclination shown by the Commonwealth government to handle the trouble at its source and, by banking methods, counteract the deflation that was squeezing the courage out of all the citizens.

Meanwhile the whole people suffered. Old men and women went to their graves years before their time through worry. Boys and girls acquired habits of idleness through inability to find work in those dangerous years of youth when lack of occupation fixes for ever their attitude towards

steady industry. And men and women of all ages lost their self respect—and learned to accept a dole without flinching.

One morning Storm Bradley got a letter from his banker that brought him right up against it. It was the last of the series, and read: "A cheque drawn by you was presented this morning. Unless you can at once make a deposit to meet it I will have to return it. Your account is overdrawn as it is. I am sorry, but I have my instruction from headquarters, and they are definite."

Storm had—or thought he had—still some resources. He did not yet realise that he was squeezed quite dry. So he called on his banker. "I've got a small factory building at Alexandria," he said. "It is mortgaged to only about fifty per cent of its value. If I leave the deeds with you couldn't you let me have a hundred or so? And surely the presses and linotypes of the paper are worth at least a couple of thousand."

The bank manager was a man as well as a banker. He sympathised with Storm—but he had his own job to consider. "I'm afraid I can't do even that," he answered. "All the banks are standing together and if you were to deposit ten thousand pounds worth of the best securities in the country against a five hundred pounds advance, my answer must be No! Those are my definite orders from higher up."

"Meaning that the banks have decided that property of all kinds no longer has any value as a basis for credit," said Storm.

"Meaning just that!" the banker replied.

"Well, if Australians put up with that they will put up with anything," said Storm. "But I don't think they will. Some day—and soon—the banks will find that their present very profitable right to freeze or to liquefy credit at their will will be

taken from them. But 'some day' won't help me now; and it's 'now' that matters."

After a little further talk the banker agreed to let the cheque go through—but it was to be the last until Storm's account was put in credit.

Then Storm Bradley left, in no enviable frame of mind. His credit was stopped; his resources declared valueless, yet money he must have or the "Weekly" would cease publication, and with that cessation would go all his work of the past and all his hopes for the future. He decided to see Lloyd. Maybe he could get help there.

But Lloyd had troubles of his own. "I'd like to help you, Bradley," he said. But I can't. I've over-reached myself and my banker has let me know that I'm at the end as far as he is concerned I offered to deposit with the bank many thousands of shares in a couple of Sydney's trading companies as security for a few hundred pounds—but nothing has any value now, according to the banks. I don't know what it will end in—blue ruin for us all, I suppose."

"Well, Mr. Lloyd," said Storm, "I'm afraid the paper will have to stop, unless we—you and I—can do something. We are the principal shareholders—in fact, not far from the only ones.

"Is it as bad as that?" asked Lloyd.

"It it!" Storm replied with emphasis.

After some further discussion they decided to try and sell some of their shares in the "Weekly" to get ready money to carry on with. Lloyd gave Storm a list of people of his acquaintance to whom shares might be sold, and the latter left on what was to him a most distasteful mission. Parting with any of his shares was almost as bad as closing the paper down. But money must be had for immediate expenses. He could see his way for another fortnight—Lloyd had given him a few

pounds, and he himself had about as much again in the savings bank, put away for eventualities. Well, one of the eventualities had arrived. Very much arrived!

Lloyd's list of prospects proved of no avail. All of them were battling for their financial lives—their banks having suddenly taken away their "lifebelts, too."

"Damn it!" said Storm, as he left the office of the "last hope"—it having proved vain, "I never realised what a hold the banks have on the throat of credit, and how they can choke the life out of everyone and everything by just a little pressure.

Storm was only partly right. He did not realise that what the bankers were doing, was not constricting credit so much as changing its place of investment. They were sending it scurrying for safety to the haven of government securities—hence their demands on their private borrowers.

Storm Bradley had done some hard thinking during his visits to the different men who were on the list given him by Lloyd. All these people were thought to be "substantial"—all had been, a few months earlier. Now, their property—their basis for credit—was "No Good!" The banks said it was "No Good," and they were the final arbiters.

So he decided to have an article written for the "Weekly" that would explain how such things could be. He knew such a man who used to bother him considerably in the days of prosperity offering to write for him, and telling him just what would one day happen.

Storm grinned to himself. "Marvellous how a personal financial pinch makes one think differently," he thought. "Time was, not so long ago, when I hated the sight of him coming in the office. Now I'm looking for him."

The article was written—and printed. The writ-

er went to the root of the matter. What money was. What credit was. The difference between private credit and public credit. Who bears the burden. Who the capitalist is, and particularly who the worker really is—that the employer is a capitalist only to the extent to which he uses his own money; after that he is a worker for the man from whom he borrows. Most business men don't quite grasp that important fact, so they fail to see their community of interest with men who live by wages.

He also suggested possible preventatives for the regularly recurring financial crises that afflict the world, and he particularly dealt with the instincts and forces that compelled the banks to act as they always did during those crises—accentuating the severity of the panics and retarding recovery from them.

There was nothing new in what was in the article. Written during good times it would have attracted no attention whatever—but, "other times, other ideas." the belly of man was getting its work in, and so causing men to think as they never thought before. Lloyd was one of the first to approve it. "Good stuff in that article," he said to Storm.

At lunch next day Storm met his friend John Allan. "So you're getting wise to things," said Allan. "I read your financial article, and the old banker in me scoffed at it—but the longer I'm away from banking the more I'm coming to see the other fellow's point of view. Banks and bankers need watching, just as everybody needs watching. Bobby Burns put it right:

"When self the wavering balance holds,
It's rarely right adjusted."

"But I noticed the article wasn't signed" continued Allan. "Is it a secret?"

"For the present," Storm replied. "You see, I don't know that the name would carry much weight. The writer has been for many years preaching and prophesying on financial matters—so much so that he came to be thought something of a pest. But now the avalanche has overtaken us there are quite a few who are beginning to think Block—let us call him that—is right—and always has been right."

Allan looked his acquiescence. "He's so near right that the small amount he is wrong doesn't matter," he said. He knows how little 'money' counts—and how greatly 'credit' enters into things. And when he's found out that, he's found out nearly all there is to find out. And he's found out, too, the immense difference between 'private credit' and 'public credit'—which has always been a close secret with the bankers."

"Money!" said Allan; "The sooner we coin a word that will better fit the idea behind that word the sooner will the man in the street come out of his dream. Money—notes or metal—is just the 'small change' of the world. Credit is what keeps us all going—credit based on production and the means of production; not credit based on gold. Gold is only an article that up to the present has had the confidence of everybody that it will be accepted in exchange for goods. It is not 'goods.' Now that we have been shown it can be cornered—by the United States and France—maybe that confidence will be shaken more than a trifle."

Allan thought awhile, then he continued; "After all, why should credit be based on gold? Gold has little real value as a servant in supplying the needs of mankind—and its production cannot be kept uniform with the requirements of trade. Its 'cornering' has proved that. Wheat, wool, cotton, iron, copper—all have a most real value. They are

the wealth of the world—yet gold has been constituted their master, and as such has prevented, and is still preventing, them serving mankind. William Jennings Bryan was right when he said, "Mankind is crucified on a cross of gold."

Storm Bradley nodded. "You should know, Allan," he said. "Your banking experience must have taught you many things."

"It did," agreed Allan. "And among those things it taught me was that the banks are not as long-sighted as is generally thought. "For instance, take things as they are now. If the banks had taken more thought for their customers and less thought for 'the government' we would all have been better off. They pulled in their overdrafts to lend the credit to 'the government'—thinking the latter the better security—with the result that they brought their customers' businesses to the point where there's no profit in them with which to pay income tax to 'the government.' So 'the government' finds itself without income sufficient to balance its budget."

"Then there's the matter of 'private credit' and 'public credit,'" said Allan. "It'll be bad for the bankers when the ordinary citizen gets to know just what 'public credit' means—just what 'public credit' is—and just what 'public credit' can do in the way of lifting the debt burden from his back."

After a moment or two, Allan continued: "Private credit is the credit the lenders of credit judge each applicant's possessions to be worth when he wishes to borrow. Public credit is the sum total of all the production and means of production of a nation—everything—factories, farms, houses, sheep, cattle, men, women, the will to work of those men and women, the determination of those men and women to maintain a decent living standard so that there will be an adequate demand for the

goods produced. All these things are factors in the total of 'public credit'—and they amount to a goodly sum; far, far, greater than 'private credit.'

"And when the fool public wakes out of its foolishness and demands that this 'public credit' be used for the general benefit and not for the benefit of the few—why, there'll be something doing," concluded Allan, as, having finished lunch, he reached under his seat for his hat.

"And," added John Allan, as he and Storm stood for a moment at the door of the restaurant, "If you want proof that we live by credit and not by money, just remember that while our 'money'—or notes—total only fifty million that our bank deposits are over five hundred million—and the total wealth of Australia is around five thousand million. The banks keep the control of the No Man's Land between five hundred millions and five thousand millions to themselves. But they'll not always do so. Not when folks learn more about 'high finance.'"

Storm Bradley walked back to his office marvelling at his own and other men's density in not long ago noticing the gap between fifty million notes and five hundred million deposits—and, more particularly the gap between the five hundred millions of deposits and five thousand millions of value.

"Of what did the four hundred and fifty million consist?" he asked himself. "Why Credit, to be sure!" he mentally replied. "And credit whose margins could be moved backwards and forwards into the realm of the five thousand millions —and so cause panic or prosperity at the will of whoever was in control."

"Too dangerous a power to leave with anyone," was Storm Bradley's conclusion, as he sat down to write an article that not only gave the "Weekly"

its fighting policy, but which was destined to set the Australian mind travelling along an entirely new track.

In the article, Storm advocated the simultaneous release of national credit along two lines—one to be used in connection with public employment and one by private enterprise.

"The courage of private employers" Storm wrote "has been so deflated that it is almost hopeless to expect them to take the risks of production much if anything ahead of demand—and demand does not exist as it should because the worker, who is also the consumer, is out of work and so is out of wages—and wages is the buying power. We are in the vicious spiral downwards, but the moment the employer begins to find that the demand for his product is increasing, that moment he will begin to employ more labour to meet the demand. But the demand must begin first. When that happens we will get into a beneficent spiral upwards.

"Therefore—and let us be thankful that we have, as an institution belonging to the nation, the Commonwealth bank in good and efficient working order, and possessing the confidence of everyone. We should at once make available through that bank, out of 'national credit' many millions without interest, as of course it would not be "borrowed" money, but a use of our credit as a people—to at once put public works in hand—anything in the nature of a public utility, such as unifying our railway gauges, building cross country railway lines, developing new ports, and making roads, or for municipal works, water and sewerage development, electric power etc. That would give the initial impulse to employment we so greatly need. But it would be only an 'initial' impulse—private enterprise must carry it along.

"To enable private enterprise so to do, I sug-

gest that our Federal Government return to our internal bond-holders one-tenth of the value of their bonds—through, again, our Commonwealth bank. Just a book entry—nothing more—a book entry in the books of the Commonwealth bank placing to the individual credit of the bond-holders one-tenth of the amount of their bonds. Our internal public debt to those bond-holders is about five hundred and seventy millions. One-tenth of that amount is fifty-seven millions, so the addition to our liquid credit would be fifty-seven millions.

"That would not be inflation. It would be a controlled release of 'frozen credit' back to the lender in exactly the same form in which he lent the nation the accommodation. We would have just that much more liquid credit and just that much less frozen credit. There is no inflation about that."

Then Storm continued: "The immediate result of this change of form of so much of our capital would be, first, to free us of over two millions yearly interest payment—which saving would materially help to balance our governmental budgets. Secondly, it would by its presence in the banks, and so by its availability for investment, lower the interest rates at present paid by borrowers, thus helping lower the costs of production and the cost of living. Thirdly, it would, by this lowering of interest, encourage employers to resume production—and thus lower unemployment. Also, if thought advisable, the whole of this writing down of our public debt could be credited against the public debt on our railways, which would help the states in their budget balancing, and might, I hope, cause some let up in the, perhaps, present possibly necessary legislation directed against motor transport. Also, possibly giving the primary producer some relief in lower freights and fares.

Then Storm concluded, "But in this matter the

Australian people and the Australian governments would need to remember the advice. 'Be Bold!' Half measures will avail them less than nothing. The times call for wisdom and for courage in equal measure."

Almost as an afterthought, Storm added, "I ask my fellow-Australians not to fear a new idea—not to be afraid of original thinking—for it is upon the shoulders of the rebels that the world has always moved forward. From Christ—and with all reverence I use His name—downwards, that is true. But it is also true that from those who would serve mankind by opposing existing evils the world always demands suffering even unto martyrdom. And the Money Power is very cruel when it is fighting for its life."

The times were opportune for the appearance of Storm Bradley's Declaration of the "New Idea" in finance. Men's necessities were pressing them as never before, and so they were willing to explore any path that promised a way out of their trouble.

But nevertheless, there were no immediate results, for new ideas are but slowly gripped by the public.

Storm Bradley was clean discouraged. He could see no light ahead. The next Friday was pay-day for his men, and where the money was coming from he didn't know. His personal debts were greater than he cared to think about—household expenses, mortgage interest and the repayment of some money he had borrowed to help keep the paper afloat—Lloyd having contributed a similar amount.

"We'd better face it now," he said to Lloyd. "Neither cash nor credit is to be had. There's no wages for the men this week, so there's nothing for it but to close down, unless you can help. If

you can you may have my shares in the paper as security."

Lloyd threw up his hands. "It's a crying shame that things should have come to such a pass," he said. "You and I and everybody else know that it need not have happened. Hundreds of thousands out of work and on the edge of starving, existing on the dole, losing their self-respect and becoming desperate. And thousands of men who a short time ago were sound and solid financially, now faced with a ruin from which they will never recover. And the cause of it all is——What?"

Storm, who had been looking out of the window, jerked swiftly around. "What! The 'What' of it is not far to seek!" he snapped. The credit of the country—both public and private—has been frozen. It is not in a condition to function—and our fear of what may happen is preventing us liquefying it so that it may once more oil the wheels of trade."

"Inflation!" grunted Lloyd. "The Germans had enough of that. "Print more paper money until you need a couple of bushels of it to buy a pound of butter! There's no sense to that."

Storm Bradley laughed derisively. "You've been reading the stuff my old paper is printing—and you've been looking at its pictures of German mark notes, printed to fool us," he said. "Thousands have been doing the same as you until they're so scared they're afraid to make any move at all. They just sit down—and wait for the avalanche that will blot them out." Then he left—there was nothing more to say—or do.

Next day Storm got a telephone message from Lloyd. "A friend of mine has guaranteed the "Weekly" bank account up to three hundred," he said. "So carry on awhile longer—but make it go as far as possible for I'm afraid it'll be the last

from him—or from anyone else."

The "friend" was John Allan. From the side lines he was watching Storm, and the fight the latter was making had enlisted his sympathy; but he made it a condition with Lloyd that Storm was not to be told who the guarantor was.

Storm knew that the respite from his troubles was only temporary, but he was thankful for even that and set himself to make the most of it.

At home that evening he had a talk with Elsie on ways and means. "It's a case of throwing the cargo overboard to save the ship," he said. "And the 'ship' is the 'Weekly.' I could let this place for enough to pay the interest on the mortgages—and also to pay the rent of a semi-detached cottage around, say Redfern. If you will agree to that it would help a lot."

Elsie thought of her two children—and mentally saw them playing in one of Redfern's narrow streets. Naturally, she didn't like the idea at all. "Must it come to that, Storm?" she asked, showing her dislike in her voice and in her face.

"It's up to you, Elsie," Storm answered. "If we can cut our house expenses to the bone—and beyond—there is just that much more chance of weathering the storm, and the paper lasting until things take a turn. I've got three hundred pounds between now and the 'finish.' The farther I can make it stretch the greater the chance of pulling through."

It was not the first time that Elsie and Storm had talked matters over, so she had a good idea as to just how things stood. Time and again she had gone without things she would have liked for the children and for herself because Storm assured her that he daren't spend any more on the home than was absolutely necessary. But giving up her home, and with it giving up the surround-

ings that she valued so highly to set her children's minds along the right path, was another matter.

"Couldn't we get a smaller place—no matter how small—somewhere around here?" she asked. "I'd hate, for the children's sake, to go to Redfern.

So it was settled that she was to look for a cheap cottage in a district perhaps not so "industrial" as Redfern, and that the move was to be made as soon as possible. After much searching Elsie was partly successful. She rented a semi-detached cottage in a by-street near Bondi Junction. It was a big step-down from their own place —but necessity is a stern driver, so the move was made.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

TOM NORRIS, Storm's father-in-law, was in no better case than other people. His visions of sitting in parliament had long since vanished—now, to be replaced by sterner ones. His real estate investments had all gone wrong, so his income had almost disappeared—and with his financial independence had gone much of his sureness as to just how much and how often a man should stand by his signed word, or his given promise.

Norris had speculated in real estate—and in real estate margins at that. He had contracted to buy ahead of his ability to pay, as had thousands of others. Like them, he had trusted to a continuance of prosperity to enable him to sell, possibly at a profit, before his own balances had to be settled. Now, he was left with a good deal of partly paid for property on his hands—and with no hope of either completing the purchase or of selling for sufficient even to pay the amounts still owing.

Talking it over with Storm Bradley, he said, "I've always thought of myself as of a man of my

word—now I'm forced to behave like something very different, and I don't like it. But it's either that or Mother and I must go on the old age pension."

Storm didn't know the particulars of Norris' property deals, but he knew that they had been fairly widespread and considerable—enough, if they averaged out anything like Norris had thought they would, to have put him on Easy Street. "Are you down as low as that?" he asked.

"Low!" said Norris, with emphasis; "I'm that low I can't get any lower—both in money and in self respect."

Storm could see that the old man—he was now well over sixty-five—was wanting to tell him his troubles, possibly with the hope that someone else would not look on them in the light that he himself did, "What's wrong, Dad?" he asked, sympathetically.

"Wrong," said Norris. "Everything's wrong—most of all, myself. Time was when I could look any man in the face—now——." And he left the sentence unfinished.

"Tell me all about it, Dad. Maybe it's not so bad as you think."

Tom Norris sat awhile in quiet, twisting a piece of paper with his fingers; then he looked up. "Well, it's this way," he said. "You know this legislation that has been passed enabling a man to get out of his property obligations. Well, I hate it like hell—but what am I to do? I'm half-way through several purchases—and now I cannot get through the other half. The new law says I can hand the property back to the chap I bought it from—and go clear." Then he stopped.

"Of course you lose all you paid on it," Storm reminded him."

"What's that got to do with it?" snapped Nor-

ris. "I'm going back on my word just the same."

"But if you can't pay—well, you can't."

"That's not all of it," replied the older man. "I've got an interest in another property that gives me a couple of hundred a year, and while I have that property I cannot honestly claim inability to pay. What am I to do? I'm past my earning years. If I let that two hundred go in an endeavour to keep to my promise—what will happen to Mother and me? As I say—the old age pension, or the dole."

Then the old man jumped to his feet "No, by God!" he exclaimed. "I'll break every one of the ten commandments before I'll let that happen. I'll take advantage of every law that will help me—let others do the same. Everything is 'slipping'—everybody's standards. And mine has gone with the others."

"I don't blame you, Dad," said Storm. "I know what I would do under your circumstances. I know what everyone else is doing." Then, because he could see Norris was taking the matter very hard; "Don't worry, Dad. Remember, you've got Mother to take care of."

"That's about all I do remember," Norris answered, "for well I know that the tender mercies of the world towards the 'old poor' are damned cruel." Then he left—a worried, broken man—old before his time, and discredited in his own eyes.

And that last is about as bad a fate as can befall a man.

Storm Bradley sat thinking, after Norris had gone. What the old man had said was true—Scars were being made on men's minds that would never disappear. The morals of nations and of individuals were being lowered to an extent almost unbelievable. The written contract was no longer

inviolate. Governments were evading their debts to those who had loaned them credit—were forcibly compounding their interest payments for something less in amount than they had agreed to pay. Individuals were following suit. Was it right that such should be done? Was it wrong? Was the written contract to be held sacred—against the crying of the needy? Or was it just the demand for "The pound of flesh! The pound of flesh!" Was Right on the side of resistance to that demand? On which side stood the Eternal Verities? It is so easy to deceive one's self when one's own interests are at stake. Could a man be so upright that he "leaned over backwards?" Was there such a thing as a "diseased conscience?"

Storm Bradley shook his head. "God help us all." he thought. "I hope I'm not pushed too far myself. We all have a 'breaking point'—and I know I'll reach mine long before Tom Norris did."

Then he settled down to handle Today as best he could—leaving Tomorrow to take care of itself.

Storm set to work to draw up a plan that would make the most of Allan's guarantee. Three hundred pounds! In the running of a weekly paper it wasn't as much as it seemed. He went carefully through the list of employees—striking out all but those absolutely essential. His pen halted above Higgs' name. His old time battalion friendship with Higgs fought for the retention of Jack—but the preservation of the "Weekly" had to come first—so, most unwillingly, he crossed his name out, with a couple of others.

"I'm sorry, old cobber, but you know how things are," he said to Higgs, when he faced the unpleasant task of telling him that he must go. "I'll have to attend to the advertising myself—though just how I'm going to do it I don't know."

Jack had been expecting something of the sort,

so he wasn't surprised. "It's all right, Storm," he said. "I don't blame you. But—can you tell me this: "What did we fight the war for, if we're all to be pushed into the gutter now?"

"Jack, I'm beginning to think that the world fought the war just to be pushed into the gutter it is now finding itself in—so that it can climb out again; but climb out on the other side of the gutter a wiser world than it was before the war, and before the gutter-pushing happened."

"Pushing men into the gutter is a dangerous business, though," grunted Jack. "Something's liable to happen to them while they're down in the gutter—some of the dirt of it will never come off them again."

"That's true, and it's a pity, Jack. But let's be sure that it is the other side we climb out on—and not just back to where we were—for the gutter has to be crossed some day if a decent civilisation is to stay with us."

"Meaning what?"

"Meaning just what you like to make it mean. Personally, I'm beginning to make it mean that a world in the gutter of debt is worse off than a world at war."

"Too right it is, Storm. Then how about an armistice—the kind of armistice that just tells the creditor to go to hell."

"No, I'm not up to that point—not yet. But a man never knows just where he'll be tomorrow. It all depends on the belly."

"It does—and mine's likely to be empty pretty soon," said Higgs. "I'll be waking up some fine morning to find myself a rather dangerous citizen—for I'll not beg—and I'll see my wife doesn't starve. Of that you may be dead sure."

"And I wouldn't blame you," sympathised Storm. "The world owes every honest man a chance to

earn a living. That's the first obligation of society all other obligations are secondary to it. Though if that obligation is met then the meeting of all other obligations would be an easy matter—for a world at work would soon be a world out of debt."

"And I can't see that the world is in debt, either, Jack. To whom is it in debt? To some other world? No! The bright lads of this world seem to have got the dull ones just where they want them—and so the world is in debt to itself. Maybe time will show that the bright lads are not so bright, after all."

"Bright!" said Higgs. "They may be bright—but they're certainly not careful. They'll get theirs some day—right in the neck."

"They're getting some of it already," agreed Storm. "The devil is chasing them around the stump—as he is chasing everybody else. When they 'forgive their debtors' they will find their own debts 'forgiven,' and not until then—as was said a couple of thousand years back."

Higgs left—to look for work; and to look, like tens of thousands of others were looking—in vain. He looked—until the value of his life insurance was eaten up. He looked—until his furniture was sold, bit by bit, to provide food. He looked—until he had to leave his war service home in a suburb and take a Woolloomooloo room. He looked—until, most unwillingly he "went on the dole." He looked—until he grew accustomed to being "on the dole." He looked—until his desire for work died. Then he looked no longer. Another good man—one of the best—beaten to the ground by circumstances over which he had no control, and in the making of which he had no hand.

Storm helped Higgs all he could—which wasn't a great deal. He gave him work each publishing

lay taking the "Weekly" to the newsagents; but that didn't mean much. But it kept him in touch with Storm.

When Higgs went on the dole, he rather shamefacedly told Storm what he had done. "I hate it like hell!" he said.

"Yes—I suppose you do," said Storm. "But there's another way of looking at it. I have come to think of the men on the dole as soldiers of industry who have been put out of action by a new kind of wound—and so are entitled to new kind of pension. Offer any one of them a job—and see how quickly he would drop his 'pension.'

"And many of the women-folk of the dole-takers put up a fight for decent appearances that is epic in its bravery. They show a front to the world of their neighbors that almost justifies the charge, 'They don't need the dole—look how she turns herself out to go down the street!'

"Yes—maybe! But the brave front is carried because the courageous woman holds that the cardinal sin is to "let go!" Decorations have been bestowed for less."

"No, Jack," Storm continued; the shame of the dole is not on the 'honest' takers—it is on the givers—on everybody. Yet, only yesterday I heard a well-fed citizen say, 'These dole takers! Why don't they work? The first time they apply for it they pull their hats well over their eyes—ashamed; then, very soon, up goes the hat—and they want a double issue."

"There're two kinds of fools, I think. The first is the fool who thinks the unemployed can find work by looking for it. The second is the fool who thinks his own job is safe—that he will never be in the line—with his hat down over his eyes—or with it thrown well back. The man I heard condemn the dole takers, indiscriminately, was both

those kinds of fools at the one time."

Higgs took little comfort from what Storm had said. "'Feed them—or fight them,' some fool said once," he said as he turned to go. "It's not necessary to do either. Just get them a job—that's all that's wanted."

"Too true!" though Storm Bradley, when Jack had left. "Too true—but not so easy. Not yet—not until someone—many someones—higher up has learned a lesson. I only hope the lesson won't cost too much."

One evening Jack Higgs got back to the Woolloomooloo room to find it in darkness. His wife had been doing odd jobs scrubbing out a city office, but she was usually home soon after dark. Early in the morning, or immediately after the office closed, was the time of day she worked.

"It's a damned shame," thought Higgs, as he put the kettle on the gas ring. "I didn't ask her to marry me for her to live this kind of life. Thank God there are no kids, anyhow."

Jack waited awhile for his wife to come in, then he sat down to a solitary tea. Ten o'clock, and still she didn't get home. Eleven o'clock—and Higgs began to be disturbed. Several times during the last week or two she had been late in getting home, but usually nine o'clock saw her back from—wherever it was she had been!

For Higgs, for some time had been not so sure concerning his wife. Once or twce he had noticed money in her purse that he had not given her; and two or three bits of women's finery she was wearing he had been afraid to ask about. Also—Madame's—up the street a bit! Jack had once seen his wife talking to Madame! He had said a word or two to her, warning her—but she had laughed—rather loudly. All this now came back to him.

The hands of the clock were nearly at twelve

when the door opened and Jack's wife stumbled in —more than a little drunk—and fell on the bed.

"H'lo, Jack," she said, with a foolish smile.

Higgs pulled himself together. What was this that had happened to him—and to her?

He went over to the bed. "What's all this about?" he asked. "Where've you been?"

The drunken woman opened her eyes. "Goo' ol' Jack," she murmured, and closed her eyes again.

Higgs caught her by the arm and pulled her over on her back. She made an effort to rouse herself, and half sat up. "Sorry, Jack," she slobbered, and then once more lapsed into the stupor and helplessness of drunkenness.

Jack saw it was no use trying to get anything out of her until the effects of the liquor had disappeared, so he threw a blanket over her and left her to herself.

All inclination to sleep had left him, and he sat with his head lowered over his folded arms, leaning on the table top, waiting for his wife to wake out of her drunken sleep—waited until the day began to break. Then he filled the kettle and lit the gas and began to make some meagre preparations for breakfast.

His wife stirred on the bed, then she opened her eyes—but, as they met Jack's, she quickly closed them again.

"Get up, Sarah," said Higgs. "Get up and drink some tea—and let's know what happened to you last night."

Mrs. Higgs did as she was told—her every movement one of shame. She kept her eyes averted as she made a feeble attempt to tidy herself. Then she took the cup of tea that Higgs had poured out for her and drank it.

Jack watched her drink the tea—and took a hold on himself, for he feared what was to come. For

weeks she had been complaining of their miserable position—had been blaming him for it. "Other men seem to be able to earn money—why can't you?" had been her constant grumble.

It was useless for Higgs to tell her, as he had told her, that he was one of thousands of unemployed, who had no particular skill at any business—that his soldiering at an early age was responsible for his position in the unskilled labour market—such market as there was.

"More fool you to go!" she had said.

He had had no answer to that. He was beginning to think she was right.

Of late Higgs' wife had let up a little—seemed to be accepting things as they were. Not a good sign—sometimes a sign of sullen resignation—sometimes a sign of dangerous desperation.

When times had been right with Jack—when he had been making good money on the "Weekly"—he and his wife had hit it together well. She had taken care of him and of their home—had been a good wife. But there was a flaw in the steel of her make-up and when the strain of bad times came it showed itself.

That flaw exists in everybody's "steel"—but with some it takes a much more severe strain to demonstrate it than with others. And luckily most people pass through life, and through life's troubles, without ever reaching their snapping point. But it is there! They should remember that when they incline to pass judgment on their neighbours.

Higgs waited until his wife had drunk the tea. Then he spoke. He was no fool. His own past had not been so lily-white that he didn't know what drunkenness in a woman indicated. Jack feared the worst. Feared that Sarah, fond of good times

and fond of easy surroundings and of nice clothes, had sinned the Sin.

"Well Sarah!" he said. Then a pause. "Is this the beginning—or is it the end. You know what I mean."

Sarah Higgs dropped her head on her arms as she sat at the table and burst into tears. Then she stopped crying, raised her head and looked Jack straight in the face. "And who's to blame for it all?" she demanded. "You! Making me live in a hole like this! Never a bit of pleasure! Not a shilling but it must go to buy food. And then you blame a woman for——"

And again she bowed her head on her arms and sobbed.

"Oh, Jack—and we could have been so happy—we were so happy—until all this misery came on us. Damn everybody and everything!"

"Sarah! I want a straight answer," said Higgs, with a quietness that the woman knew was more dangerous than if he spoke loudly. "Were you at Madame's place last night?"

"Yes!—if you must know, Yes!" shouted his wife, defiantly. "Now, make the most of that, if you want to."

Higgs took the blow man-fashion. Neither abusing the woman nor excusing her. But it was the end—and he knew it. So did she.

She looked up at him. "You'd better clear out," she said. "I'll be alright here. I'll manage—that's not so hard—with Madame's just up the street."

But Jack Higgs wasn't a dog, to leave his woman—the woman who in happier times he had loved, and who had loved him—to leave her on a fast downslide to hell. "I'll not do that," he said. "I'm not saying that things can ever be the same between us again—but I'll not do that."

"Then what will you do?" his wife demanded. "Stay here and preach to me?"

"No—I'll not do that either. I don't know yet what I will do. It'll take some thinking out. But you're not going to stay here!" "Not with Madame's—just up the street," thought Higgs.

Then he left—to get a room as far from "Madame's—just up the street" as he could. "Stay here until I get back," he told the sobbing woman, as he closed the door behind him.

As soon as he was gone, Sarah Higgs got up from the table and, following her woman's instincts, began to tidy herself. But her mind was made up—if only she could act without delay. It was the end—whatever Bill had to say—or whatever he did! Some things can never be undone. Not by God himself! And this was one of those things. She knew Jack—and she knew herself, too. Knew that a quick hell would be less misery for both of them than the slow hell that would last all their lives unless she ended everything now.

"No! she wouldn't go to 'Madame's—just up the street,' as she had first intended. She would make it more final than that."

"And she did!"

Higgs was out all day. First he saw Storm. "We've got to leave the Woolloomooloo room," he said. "Can you lend me a pound to pay the rent on another place?"

Storm could—and did. Though he was very short of pounds—or even of shillings.

Then Jack went room-hunting around the poorer quarters of Balmain, and eventually found what he wanted.

He didn't hurry back to the Woolloomooloo room. God knows he had nothing to hurry back for! So it was after sunset before he opened the door and stepped inside.

His wife was lying on the bed—Dead! Her head covered with a heavy blanket and the gas ring, turned full on was also under the blanket. A scribbled note, saying "Goodbye, Jack!" was lying on the table.

With Higgs, his wife's death wiped out all her transgressing. He thought only of her as his wife who had been murdered by his poverty—and by Society. Little by little his anger grew until it blotted out all his sky.

Then Jack turned blazing communist—not just the kind of communist who contents himself with uttering foolish words. He was not that sort of man—the best kind never are that sort. They are always men of action. The man he had become hated and despised the man he had been as a soldier and as a citizen—so he hated and despised all he had then stood for, and sought its destruction. Soon the community had reason to regret its treatment of him—and soon he was in conflict with the Law—and just as soon he was feeling the Law's strong arm.

Storm Bradley went to court to plead Jack's case. He told the magistrate the circumstances of Jack's enlistment—how Jack was a good citizen at heart, but driven to desperation by his wife's death and by continued unemployment.

"I'm sorry," was all the magistrate would say. "But I've got to do my duty. Two months hard labour."

And John Higgs—the boy who wouldn't take "No" for an answer, but forced his way into his country's fighting ranks—the man whose claim to decent citizenship should have been undeniable—went down to the cells with hell in his heart,, an enemy for ever of civilisation as he saw it. And who can blame him?

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

STORM Bradley was having trouble piled on trouble. Allan's three hundred was gone. The size of the "Weekly" had been reduced to eight none-too-large pages. Lloyd had pulled out—that is, he had told Storm he could not help any more—that if he chose to carry on by himself he could do so. So Storm, with Lloyd's permission, sold the linotypes and the press and used the money to pay an outside printer to get the paper out. That kept him afloat for awhile.

One edition of the "Weekly" carried on its front page William Jennings Bryan's indictment of "Money," as he found it in his day—an indictment that cost Bryan the Presidency of the United States.

> "The Money Power preys upon the nation in times of peace, and conspires against it in times of adversity.
>
> "It is more despotic than monarchy; more insolent than autocracy; more selfish than bureaucracy.
>
> "It denounces as public enemies all who question its methods or throw light upon its crimes.
>
> "It can only be overthrown by the awakened conscience of the nation."

The day following that on which this appeared, Storm met Allan in the street. Allan was carrying a copy of the "Weekly," and, after greeting Storm he pointed to the Bryan quotation, "Isn't this a bit strong?" he asked.

"Just as strong as the truth is strong," replied Storm. "What is it that is starving the world now if it isn't the money power?'

Allan dissented. "Rubbish! It's overproduction and low prices. Machinery is displacing men."

"You should know better than that, Allan," Storm said. "Machinery is taking the drudgery out of work and is producing plenty for everybody. There's nothing wrong with machinery. It is Finance that is choking civilisation to death. As an old banker you know that."

John Allan at heart was a humane man, but half a century of banking had turned him into something of a machine for the collection of debts. As such, he and his like have their very distinct uses in the world—just so they are not allowed to control the world.

"Well, and how would civilisation get along without finance?" he asked. "Somebody must carry the bundle of interchange of trade."

Storm thought a moment. Then he said: "Mr. Allan, are you satisfied with the pass things have come to? Never mind for the moment whose is the fault. Come now! Your life is well behind you, so it doesn't matter a great deal to you. Are you satisfied?"

Like most men, "Allan appealed to" was another man than "Allan argued with." "No, Bradley"—he replied, "Looking at it that way—most certainly I am not."

"Neither am I," said Storm. "And it is to help make a change that I printed Bryan on the Money Power.

Storm set out to make what might prove the last days of the "Weekly's" life "interesting." Following the lead of the "Times", he closed his columns to correspondents who sent him letters countering his arguments—and, also, following the same lead, he printed anything however extreme that "unorthodox" writers sent along. It was not

"magnficent"—it was not fair—but it was "war."

Except for a short article each issue, he wrote almost nothing himself, giving all his time to the business side of the paper in an endeavour to enlarge its scanty revenues and so put off as long as possible its seemingly inevitable closing down. Block supplied much of the financial criticisms, and odd contributors wrote most of the remainder.

Among the latter was a writer who signed himself "Long Bay"—the nom de plume of Higgs—also his temporary residence. Needless to say the articles bearing that signature were none of the mildest, but Storm printed them because he thought Jack had earned the right to speak his piece. Also because he thought that the system that had turned a good citizen into an unreasoning bolshevist needed criticism from the point of view of the bolshevist.

Storm and Elsie had long since left the Bondi semi-detached cottage. They were now living in a still cheaper place in Paddington—but even that was getting beyond them.

One Saturday evening, as Storm sat at home going over the small books that now sufficed to hold the accounts of the paper, and the adding up of the figures had shown that each week left him further "in the red" than he was the previous week, he closed the book as discouraged as a man could be—and yet hold on.

"I'm a fool to keep going," he said to Elsie. "Bad as things are in the city I think I could earn enough to keep the house if I were to shut the "Weekly" down. Turner would give me a chance to earn a little as 'linesman' on the 'Times,' if I were to ask him."

Elsie didn't reply. She hated to say anything that might hurt Storm, yet she felt that the wat-

ers were closing over their heads—and that the end was near.

Storm thought for a moment or two—then every fibre of his being revolted against the idea of surrender. "No I'm damned if I will!" he ejaculated. "I'll work the "Weekly" as a one-man show before I'll give up—and I'm nearly doing that now."

Elsie thought of many things—of the uncertainty each week as to whether she would have the rent ready for the collector when he called; of her little debts with the tradespeople—growing slowly bigger; of the children's clothes so quickly wearing out; of the suit that Storm needed so badly and couldn't get. But never she thought of her own needs—or, if she did, she quickly put them behind her. Then she looked up and met Storm's eyes. "If there's anything you want me to do—anything I can do—" she said, "just tell me what it is, Storm. You know that—don't you?"

Storm patted her hand. "Too right I know it," he answered. Then he put the books away—and, for the moment, as far as possible, put his troubles away with them. That was the only way in which to get heart to meet the next day and all the days following.

And Storm didn't have longer than the next day to wait for more trouble, for when he got home that night he found Elsie very much worried. Not having seen anything of her parents for more than a month she had gone during the day to visit them.

"Storm," she said, "you must go and talk to Dad. He's in a terrible state of mind. I'm afraid he'll do something desperate."

"As bad as that?—then I'll go and see him as soon as I've had tea," said Storm.

When he got to the rooms over a shop into

which Tom Norris and his wife had moved when their fortunes had fallen, he saw that Elsie had not exaggerated. Norris was sitting in a chair with his head dropped between his shoulders—all the life and the fight gone out of him. Mrs. Norris was trying to get him to drink a cup of coffee, but without success.

Storm walked over to him and put his hand on his shoulder. "Don't take it so hard, Dad," he said. "I'm sorry I've kept away, but I've been up to my eyes in it—and forgot. Maybe I can help you and Mother if we put our heads together."

Tom Norris didn't so much as look up. "What's the good," he replied. "I'm through—down and out! Down and out!" Then he sagged lower than ever, and refused to say anything more.

Mrs. Norris told Storm all about it—that is, as much as she knew. They owned—or thought they owned, for it was mortgaged heavily—a terrace in Paddington. The tenants were mostly out of work and so couldn't pay any rent—just a few shillings now and again. The rates and taxes were unpaid and so was the mortgage interest. Almost every post brought Norris a letter from some one of the public authorities threatening legal proceedings if the arrears were not paid up—and the mortgagee was incessant in his plea for payment of interest—he was now almost as poor as Norris himself. Also they were behind in the rent for the rooms they occupied—for it was either starve or let their own rent go unpaid. As it was, both Norris and his wife were weak from lack of proper food.

"If only Will and Ed were alive! They would have looked after us!" sobbed Mrs. Norris.

Storm thought of the two sons—killed fighting for their country—and then of the old couple

slowly worrying to death. There was something wrong somewhere.

Then he thought of himself! Why had he been so wrapped in his own troubles that he hadn't bothered to keep closer in touch with the old folks? He hadn't seen his father-in-law for two months—hadn't called on him since they had taken the rooms they were now in. The shame was on him for his neglect. His only excuse was his own troubles—and they were many.

"Damn this depression!" he thought—almost audibly. "It's splitting families so they will never look kindly on each other again. Fathers in work get to think their out-of-work son is a loafer; the son in work who is called on to pay all his wages in to keep a home for his out-of-work father's family soon begins to despise the old man; grown sons, tired of hanging around home, go wandering about the country until they discover that they can somehow live without work—and get to at least tolerate the lazy life; adolescent boys and girls are stepped off on the wrong foot in life's race because there are no jobs for them; and old men like Dad are either worried into their graves or else the fag end of their lives loses all the decency that should belong to it."

Then he pulled himself together. "You and Dad must pack up and come and live with us, Mother," he said. "I'm sorry—but I didn't realise how things were with you. And Elsie is just as sorry as I am."

At first Mrs. Norris refused. As for Norris—he seemed to be past all caring what happened.

"Why didn't Dad try and get a war pension?" Storm asked Mrs. Norris. "Two sons killed should entitle him to something."

"He did—but there was something about them not being 'main support'—and then this terrace

that we don't get any rent from—that prevented our getting anything."

"I'll see about having your stuff brought to our place tomorrow," said Storm, as he said goodbye to his mother-in-law. "It's no use you saying you won't come—you're coming! I've left you too long by yourself."

Mrs. Norris was overborne by Storm's insistence. In truth, she was glad to have it so, for life had got her down, and all her pride was gone.

"Very well, Storm," she agreed. "But neither Elsie's father nor I thought it would ever come to that." Then she dropped on a seat and cried—another good woman beaten to her knees. One of thousands—of tens of thousands.

But Tom Norris, though he went to live with Storm, never settled himself down. Always he was disatisfied and uneasy. At his age—sixty-five—he was too young to believe himself old—and too old for possible employers to consider him as young enough to hold a job. Sit in a corner, out of the way, and see his life finish, he would not. Go out and land a job in times of job-scarcity, in competition with younger men, he could not. So his mind ate into itself until his crotchety behaviour began to get on Elsie's nerves.

"Dad is getting impossible," she said to Storm one evening, after a day of putting up with her father's attitude towards her two children. "Of course, they make a noise and disturb him, but in a small house like this, and with us all living together in it, what are they to do? They can't play in the street."

"Poor old chap," said Storm. "Life's been very hard on him lately. Try and not take too much notice of his cranky ways."

But Elsie was getting just a little "cranky" herself. Storm was losing all the old cheerfulness

that used to mean so much to her, and the constant nag of her petty debts to the grocer and others, combined with the absence of hope for brighter days, was having its sure effect. Nothing was right—everything was wrong. Her home, now overfull, held nothing of repose—there was never any recovery to be had by a quiet hour or two to herself during the day.

Instead, a disquieting doubt as to Storm's ability to fend for her and her children would keep rising in her mind. Here and there, a neighbour seemed to be keeping headway in spite of the bad times. How did they do it? Why couldn't her husband do the same? Was it that he was too much of a Don Quixote—tilting at windmills?

She kept putting the thought from her mind—and it just as often kept coming back. Once, she mentioned the apparent prosperity of their neighbours. Storm laughed. "They're all government servants,—that lot," he said. "They're the only people who are sure of anything these days."

But that didn't help Elsie. Again the disloyal idea concerning Storm protruded its ugly head—again to be promptly repressed. It was just that her troubles were getting too much for her—not that she really doubted the worthwhileness of Storm's purpose.

Elsie wasn't alone in her danger of change of attitude towards her husband. Thousands of women were losing their girlhood's belief in the man they had married—and with it something—perhaps much—perhaps all—of their love. For people are just people—and so are human.

The admiration that is given to a man who always "brings home the bacon" is natural—and proper—but homekeeping women do not always recognise the difficulties that arise in the "bacon-getting."

Yes—in thousands of homes the man now had little of his old assurance of headship—and sat down to a table, his family knowing that the food was none of his providing. All of which was not his fault—but was none the less humiliating.

Yet he was always being told in the "Times" to "grit his teeth and see it through." The grit was there—but it was unpleasantly between his teeth as he chewed; and some day, if conditions were not soon altered, that same grit might cause him to get up from his table of crucifixion and attempt to prove his manhood in a way that would be unpleasant for himself and for society.

Then there was Elsie's unfair—but natural—attitude towards her father's financial position. With thousands of other children—and wives—and widows—she was beginning to think of her father as a man who had been foolish. "Why hadn't he known better?" "When he had had money why hadn't he been more careful of how he invested it?"

Yes—it is so easy, after the event, for one to be wise—and to hold others foolish who used their best "beforehand" judgment—and failed. Many men were going to their graves after years of prosperous life followed by a killing and unsuccessful struggle to maintain their families in accustomed comfort—wrongly blamed by those for whom they died prematurely, and inscribed on the minds of those they left behind, though not on their tombstones, was the epitaph. "Foolish Dad."

Pleasant thought to keep an old man company on his sick bed! Judgment by results—not by honest endeavour. Fair enough coming from the world, but not from one's own.

Storm Bradley couldn't help but notice the slight change in Elsie's attitude towards him. Worse, he guessed its cause. It hurt him more than

he thought anything could hurt. It hurt him so much that it began to lessen his love for her—for it touched his vanity; a quality Storm had in common with all men.

Love is very largely felt in common with another or not at all. At least, if a man's love for a woman does not soon call forth a corresponding love from her it dies—novelists to the contrary notwithstanding.

Similarly, proof, or even a suspicion, that one is held lightly in the esteem of another will inevitably and quickly produce a reciprocal sentiment in the mind of the individual so held. So Storm and Elsie were in high danger of soon losing their "oneness"—of becoming "two."

Storm was only human—in fact, he was very human. The feeling swept over him that he was being deserted by the one—the only one—whose loyalty he desired with an overwhelming desire; and for the first time in his life he knew what "loneliness" meant—the kind of loneliness that needs a superman to contend against.

But Storm was no Christ. He was not of those who can enter their Gethsemane—and pray. And then can walk alone to the Cross of their crucifixion! No! He resolved to forget his "mission" and to slip into the ranks of the opportunists—to sell his undoubted talents in whatever market they could most profitably be sold—and so to provide for his family.

Not quickly did he arrive at his decision—and certainly not without some loss for respect for the man he had thought he was—but found he was not! Like all other men, Storm had his breaking point—and he had now arrived at it.

Or thought he had. But, behind his renunciation was—not a selfish desire for the good things of life—nor even a slacking of his willingness to en-

dure further hardship in the pursuit of his ideal—but a recognition of his duty towards his family. "First" things had to come "first." That was all—and that was sufficient. "He that careth not for his own is worse than an infidel—there is scripture for that. Men who would serve their fellows even unto death must remember Kipling's lines:

"Down to Gehenna or up to the Throne,
He travels the fastest who travels alone."

Storm Bradley, in his renunciation was greater than Storm Bradley following his own desires. And Elsie, in her doubts as to him, was in the line of Nature's wise plan—that, with the female, her young ones must come first.

But Storm Bradley, none the less, felt that a cloud had come between himself and Elsie—a cloud not of his making—nor of hers. But his resolve was taken. He would close the "Weekly" down and go after his share of whatever "free-lance" journalism was to be had. That he could get a full-time position on one of the papers he knew was impossible—they were all letting men out, and, worse still, were using as much "free" stuff as they could get to fill their columns.

When he told Elsie of his intentions, she sympathised in her heart with him—but feared to say anything that might weaken him in his resolve. "I'm sorry," was as far as she dared go.

And the cloud between them grew just a little heavier—or so it seemed to Storm.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

A FEW days after Storm Bradley had decided to close down the "Weekly," and before he had taken any definite steps in that direction, he met Lloyd in the street. "I've been hoping to see you,"

said Lloyd. "I'm getting a few people together to have a talk about conditions, and I want you to come along and put your point of view. This depression is getting out of hand. Something must be done or we'll all be swamped beyond recovery."

When, next day, Storm entered Lloyd's office he was surprised to see sitting around the table men whom he had always thought to be men of substantial means. But there they were! "Caught!" —like everyone else. Both Allan and Block were present, sitting near Mr. Lloyd, who lost no time in getting to the business in hand.

"Gentlemen," he said, "You know why we are here—why all of you have come—to try and discover some way out of our present troubles. No need for me to enlarge on them—no need at all. The thing to do is to find a remedy—if there is one. Like most of you, all that I have is 'frozen.' Yesterday I took a bundle of securities to my lawyer and asked him for a few hundreds. 'Mr. Lloyd,' he said, 'If you were to bring St. Mary's cathedral and ask for an advance of fifty pounds on it, I couldn't get it for you.' "

"Now, gentlemen,' Lloyd continued, "that is no position for a country to be in. All business runs on credit—if there is no credit, then business cannot run, and we all starve—employer and employee, alike. You are all hit by present conditions, just as much as the worker is, therefore you are all interested in altering those conditions. So I want to hear what you have to say. But—and this is a big But—please leave party politics out of the discussion or we'll get nowhere.

"Mr. Bradley is known to all of you—and you also know the opinions he has been expressing in the "Weekly"—whether you agree with him or not —so as that will give us something definite to begin on I will ask him to open our talk."

Storm got to his feet. "I will be brief," he said, "and so will cut out all preliminaries. Let me begin by stating the obvious. Lack of production is not what is the matter with the world—nor with Australia. The world was never so full of production as it is at present.

"Neither is it that we have been extravagant—have lived beyond our means—for as we have not consumed all we have produced then we cannot have so lived. We have not consumed enough to keep prices up—hence one of the reasons for our troubles.

"Neither is it that machinery has displaced labour, and so caused unemployment. If that be what is wrong, then all we have to do is to halve the worker's hours and everything would be all right. So far from invention being an enemy of mankind —and of prosperity—I most emphatically say that our hope for the future centres on the engineer and the chemist—Finance, of course, working with and not as at present, against them for the welfare of mankind.

"But"—and here Storm paused—then he continued, impressively, "With production increased and made easy by the chemist and the engineer we must have increased consumption—the standard of living must be raised. The goods produced must be consumed—all of them. Economists agree as to that. What they do not agree on is as to how a sufficient consumption shall be brought about. Some advocate a lowering of prices to induce greater consumption, and to obtain that lowered price they would lower wages—'Cutting costs of production,' they call it.

"Cut costs of production by any means except the cutting of wages", continued Storm, "For if you cut wages then you cut the buying power of the community—and the old evil of under-consum-

ption would be back with us accentuated.

"Gentlemen," said Storm, leaning forward in his earnestness, "Misapplied finance is at the bottom of most of our troubles. That—and the selfishness of our common human nature.

"All men are alike in that they will fight for their property—whether that property be in their possessions or in the amount of payment they receive for their labour. On that determination, strange to say, is built up much of what we value in our civilisation; a civilisation of which we have every right to be proud, capable though it is of improvement—great improvement—if along the line only that every man should be reasonably certain of his continued moderate well-being—that is, every man who gives some adequate service to his fellowman.

"But these days are proving that hope to be a vain one. All reasonable certainty of continued employment is gone; the savings of the individual, be they much or little, are being swept away, and all of us are being reduced to comparative or actual want.

"With what result?" Storm asked. Then he answered his own question. "With this result—that the courage of the manhood and the womanhood of Australia is being deflated beyond the point of safety—almost beyond the point of recovery. And men and women of courage are the only worthwhile product of any country.

"Not while the memory of this depression lasts—not while the present generation remains in active control of business—may we hope for a recovery sufficient to give us the prosperity we easily should attain and hold. There is not a man listening to me who will now—possibly ever again—give his faith and his backing to any business proposal brought under his notice. No! It will be as it

was with Melbourne after the crash of 1893—a new generation of business men will have to grow up and take charge before any worthwhile advance is made.

"And as it will be with the capitalist so it will be with the worker. Imagine any wage earner again struggling to buy a home—if you can imagine it? His small savings have been swept away—his sacrifices of present pleasures for future stability have proved themselves foolish in their uselessness, and he has been reduced to something very like pauperism by causes over which he has no control. The wage earner who did not so sacrifice has at least had some fun for his money. None but a fool will be caught in the same trap twice. And our working man is no fool.

"Now what is the prime cause of all this inhumanity of man to man?" continued Storm. "It is that periodically the supply of credit necessary for the conduct of business is shortened. There is not enough oil to serve the machine.

"Underconsumption, and not overproduction, is what is the matter with us. This underconsumption has caused the drop in prices of world commodities that in turn has caused the constriction of the credit that is based on those prices. Hence the shortage of money—or credit.

"Any action that shortens credit lessens employment, and so reduces purchasing power, which in turn lowers prices, which in turn again shortens credit, which in turn again lessens employment, which in turn again reduces prices—and so on until the end comes—as it is coming now. Therefore—any arbitrary shortening of credit by the credit masters of the world is criminal, and some day will be punishable as such.

"Why not lower interest and wages, and so reduce the cost of production?" asked a stranger.

"Then the lesser amount of credit available might prove sufficient."

Storm quickly gave the answer to that line of thought. "The amount of credit would at once shrink in proportion to the lessened price caused by the lessened wages and interest," he replied. "Besides, no debtor nation, such as Australia is, can afford to do that. If it did it would find its debts increased beyond all bearing—exactly in proportion to the lowered price of its exports. And the individual debtor, while his interest payment might be lessened, would, in effect, find the principal sum of his indebtedness increased in the same ratio that his interest payment was lowered.

"Creditors and creditors alone, whether they were nations or individuals, would be the only ones to benefit by a general price lowering brought about by a cut in wages and interest. The creditor should be the last to benefit—not the first—nay the only one so to do. If the result of the present world discussions as to what is the best way out of our difficulties is only that wages are lowered, then all we will have done will be to have added additional slave chains of debt to those which already bind us —and all mankind.

"No, gentlemen. The ratio between wages and our debts—public and private—must be as it was when those debts were incurred else our workers will gradually be forced into a slavery that will be dangerous to our civilisation.

"Let me be quite clear—by 'worker' I don't mean only the wagetaker—but all who aid production by personal effort. That very much includes many so-called capitalists, who provide the brain motive power that brings into existence and keeps in existence employment for the wage taker.

"To the extent that he is employing other men's capital in the running of his business—be that busi-

ness either a farm, factory, warehouse or shop—the employer is a worker for the provider of his capital —usually a bank, of course. And nearly all employers of labour are users of outside capital—and therefore workers. During our good times they forgot that fact—but now they are wide awake to it. Possibly much good will come of their awakening.

"Possibly as users of capital they will also waken to the fact they are 'employers of capital' as they are 'employers of labour.' That they have to pay a wage to capital just as they have to pay a wage to labour—and that their interests are just as much endangered if there be an undersupply of capital as if there be a undersupply of labour. That is, if the supply of capital drop below a certain point its 'wages' will go higher, just as happens when there is an undersupply of labour. And with this big difference—that the worker who asks unreasonable wages can be sent about his business—or the charge 'passed on'—but capital borrowed is a debt to be repaid in full—and its demands must be complied with, for 'the borrower is servant to the lender.' The lender cannot be sacked, as can be the wagetaker.

"If an employer of labour wishes to keep adequate control of his factory or farm," continued Storm, "he will see to it that his supply of labour is sufficient—whether that labour be man-power or credit-power, and will take all possible steps to counter any move for the shortening of either. And if ever he is justified in taking action to increase the supply of available credit he is justified now. Shortening of credit is killing the purchasing power of his customers, the would be buyers of his product—and so is killing him.

"It rests with such as those present to end the present shortage of liquid credit" said Storm. "Not

easily will this be done, for it will be fought to the death by those who now have the expansion and contraction of credit in their hands. Such handling is mightily profitable to its handlers—though its manipulation is so harmful to all others. So all of you must expect a fight with the gloves off if we decide to begin the battle. Governments come and governments go—but the unseen, but not unfelt, government by Finance lives on uninterruptedly."

At once a prosperous-appearing individual at the foot of the table, who had been paying close attention to Storm, arose. "Mr. Chairman," he said, "Just what does Mr. Bradley mean by 'national credit?' I am acquainted with but one kind of credit—that which I have in a bank in the form of money—and which money I can draw out in bank notes whenever I wish. I certainly would like to know what this other sort of credit is. I did not know it existed—nor am I even now convinced it does exist."

Mr. Bradley," said Lloyd, "You have heard Mr. Graham's question. Will you answer it?"

"Certainly," said Storm, as he rose to his feet. "National Credit is credit based on the whole of the production and means of production of the nation—including the private credit in the banks mentioned by Mr. Graham. In its highest degree it includes the industry and integrity of all our people—their will to work and their determination to maintain a decent standard of living. The total physical wealth of Australia is somewhere about five thousand millions; the total bank deposits are about five hundred millions; the 'national credit' is the four thousand five hundred millions in addition to the five hundred millions of bank deposits. So you will see that National Credit is a very real thing.

"The 'money' of which Mr. Graham speaks—bank notes—amount to only about fifty millions, so I think he will see that even the credit contained in the difference of four hundred and fifty millions over which the banks exercise control and that fifty millions is not 'money' in the sense he understands money. It is 'credit,' the amount of which compared to the five thousand millions of Australian real wealth, should not be left for the banks to adjudge. The expansion and contraction of that four hundred and fifty millions into the realm of the five thousand millions should be in less self-interested hands than theirs. The greater the difference between those two figures the more valuable becomes the four hundred and fifty millions of bankers' credit. So it is only natural that they should fight any proposal to lessen that difference—which the release of National Credit would undoubtedly do."

"I am glad Mr. Graham asked his question, for it goes right to the kernel of the matter that is now engaging the world's attention. The whole fight today is between the holders of the credit that is at this present time given expression to on the books of the banks—the five hundred millions—and the holders of the credit that is denied expression on those books—the four thousand five hundred millions. And naturally the owners of the five hundred millions will do all in their power to prevent the four thousand five hundred millions, or any part of it, being so expressed—and thereby made available for competition with their five hundred millions. And because it is not so expressed, our world is starving amidst plenty."

"So that those of you who feel a degree of natural timidity concerning the exploring and the using of this new field of credit may take heart, let me remind you of the time not so long ago

when the Commonwealth bank on behalf of the people took over the note issue. The conservative press was filled with dire prognostications of what would happen to us when this very profitable right was taken from the banks—none of which prophecies came true. And I doubt if there is anyone in all this broad continent who would now go back to the old state of affairs—except our banks, of course. So it will be with us when we decide to handle our national credit for the good of all our people.

"There's an old and true saying, 'Give any man power—and he will abuse it.' And so it is with Finance. It has abused the power it has taken unto itself until it is dangering the peace of the world. But it cannot continue to do so for ever. Things will come to a climax if some relief is not soon given—and the climax may be of such a nature as to be most distasteful to everyone of us.

"Finance as we know it is damning itself and damning civilisation by its greediness. All most of us ask from it is three meals each day and a bed at night. Possibly a glass of beer and a picture show once in a while. Not too much to ask—is it? If that little is not granted—and granted right soon—then the writing will be on the wall for Finance as we know it. Bare justice is all that is asked—justice, and a recognition by Finance of the great fact that 'For everyone who gets something for nothing, someone is getting nothing for something.' The time is rotten ripe for a truer understanding by Finance of just what is covered by the commandment, 'Thou shalt not steal.'

"But Finance is and will remain incurably stupid and incurably selfish—perhaps stupid because selfish, for selfishness is the quintessence of stupidity. Instead of giving back half of the loaf it is subtracting from industry and so retaining the other

half—possibly properly so—for itself, it will continue to insist on keeping the whole loaf—to its own ultimate hurt, for it will yet find arrayed against it, not only those usually known as 'workers,' but those who up to the present have been its loyal supporters—the leaders of industry. They will wake to the fact that they too are being 'squeezed' by Finance—that in these times of depression they are being dragged in their hundreds down from any foothold of smaller or greater eminence to which they may have climbed and are being thrust down into the struggle for the odd jobs of a bare existence. When they do so wake up—then let Finance beware.

"All that the men and women of Australia ask from Finance is a job of work so they may earn their daily bread. If that job is not 'given' them—then who can say what they will 'take' tomorrow—and in the 'taking' perhaps destroy us all; for the patience of men has its limits—and the workers of Australia have been very patient.

"The workers of the world have right on their side, for the claims of labour are prior to the claims of capital—for labour represents men's lives. As was said long ago, 'It is not right that some men should be born into the world saddled and bridled to be ridden, and others born booted and spurred to ride them.' Yet so it is. And the Riders of Finance are using their spurs most cruelly Those Riders must be dismounted—and it is to assist in their dismounting that we are met today."

Then Allan rose to speak. All present knew of his fifty years' connection with banking, and so expected from him a defence of existing finance. But he surprised them.

"Mr. Chairman," he said, "During my long con-

nection with banking I learned almost nothing about finance—and in that regard I was no different to my fellow-servants of banking. All that I did learn—all that banks practise—is the business of buying credit in the cheapest market and selling it in the dearest—if the security is right. Just as other shopkeepers do with the commodities they handle. And just like those other shopkeepers, they conduct their business for their own profit—not for the public good. In that they are not to blame, no more than is any other shopkeeper.

"Of course, that is not how many people view banks and banking. There is something about a big bank building, both inside and outside, that "puts it over" the beholder. It all looks so substantial and so 'detached' from ordinary selfish business interests that one can hardly blame the public for being deceived. But deceived they are —except those who get into close connection with the manager's room as debtors. Then they begin to understand that it is just a case of borrower and lender. Of course, it cannot be otherwise—but banks and banking assume too much. They assume to be the friends and the advisers of the nation. They assume to sit in the position of a just judge, holding the scales equal. And they presume to advise the nation on matters in which they have private interests that run counter to the interests of the people. And, what is more, they 'get away with it.'

"When I say that the banker knows nothing of finance, I am referring to the ordinary individuals in banking employ. And incidentally, I advise such a person never to study finance. If he does, and if he follows the logical conclusions he must inevitably come to, then banking will soon find it

out—and he will either be sacked or he will be placed in a minor position. Promotion will never come his way. Of that you may be very sure."

"How comes it that you got to the top of the tree then?" asked a friend of Allan's, Tom Graham.

Allan laughed. "A proper question, Mr. Chairman," he replied. "I got to the top because I never studied finance until 'after' my banking life was over. While I was a banker I confined myself to banking—the buying and selling of credit in the markets most profitable to the bank whose servant I was. I was 'true to my salt'—and was given my reward. It is only since I left banking that I have studied finance—that is, finance as it affects the whole people; not finance from the bankers' point of view. Two very different kinds of finance, I assure you.

"Don't misunderstand me, please. I know private banking to be a necessary and legitimate business, but it must be confined to its proper sphere—and that sphere does not include the control of the nation's credit; neither does it include being judges as to the expansion and contraction of the amount of credit that is to be made available for the conduct of business.

"Private banking should be like orcharding in our irrigation settlements. The impounding and the release of the water—which corresponds to 'credit'—is the business, not of the private orchardist, but of a government control. The use of that water, is the business of the fruitgrower, just as the use of credit should be the business of the private banks.

"Instead, the banker by every means in his power seeks—and successfully—to control the whole of the credit of the nation. Just as the orchardist who has sufficient water himself is selfishly interested in preventing water being released to

other growers whose product will compete with his in the market, so the banker is interested in stopping the release of the large reservoir of credit that would water the orchards of his competitors. He calls it inflation—whereas it is just a decent use of the wealth of the people.

"Private banking is in the position of a company that owns a large reservoir of water that is used to supply a settlement of orchardists. Word comes that back in the ranges is a far larger lake that could easily be made available for the orchardists of the country. Is the company that owns the only available water supply to go out of its way to help the development of the new supply? Not on your life! At any rate, not unless it can get control of that supply for its own profit.

"And more particularly not, as it has long known of the existence of that lake—and has established a secret pipe from it to its own reservoir.

"National credit is the lake whose existence is beginning to be spoken of. Private banking is the reservoir.

"Often we see newspaper headlines such as, 'The Banks Come to the Rescue Once More!' Save us from 'rescuing,' for that way slavery lies.

"The government should use our own 'lake' of credit for all its public works construction, and so leave the resources of the private banking 'reservoir' to fructify private enterprise—which badly needs that fructifying. For private banking to continue by its 'rescuing' to further debt-enslave the nation, and by using its tremendous influence prevent the use of our own 'lake,' is a damnable, blind—perhaps not so blind—selfishness that amounts to high treason against the nation—and against all civilisation.

"Private banking must be restricted to its proper sphere of operation—which is acting as custo-

dian for private funds, and lending those funds to private enterprise—never to the government. Then, the best interests of all three parties—banking, private business and the nation—will be served; not the selfish interests of banking alone, as is the case now.

"That banking cares only for the safety of its deposits and for the profits to be made thereon is shown by its attitude towards its overdraft customers at and after the beginning of this present depression. It called up those overdrafts to lend the money to the 'government' though in too many cases that calling up meant driving the unfortunate borrowers into insolvency; and it did so because its money was more secure with the government than it was with private business.

"What was the immediate result? Why, that the man whose overdraft was called up had to lessen his business operations and so dispense with employees, thereby accentuating unemployment. But that was no concern of the banks. They were following their proper occupation of buyers and sellers of credit.

"But they should drop all pretence of being trustworthy as national advisers in times of financial distress. Relieving that distress is not their business. Making profit for their shareholders, and conserving the safety of their depositors' funds is their proper business—and the only one they pay any real attention to.

"In proof of which take the last yearly banking return for the Australian trading banks. The amount of credit advanced by them to private enterprise was less by eighteen millions than it was the previous year—and the amount of credit advanced by them to 'the government' was greater by just the same amount—eighteen millions. Does that tell you nothing? Eighteen millions withdrawn

from employment-giving and employment-profitable private enterprise! Eighteen millions more advanced to 'the government'—much of it for the payment of the dole to the men thrown out of work by the withdrawal of those eighteen millions from private enterprise and eighteen more millions added to our debt and its interest-burden.

"Gentlemen! The political party who advocates further borrowing by any Australian government from the reservoir of private credit is not fit to be entrusted with control of Australia's present and future.

"The present times remind me of a man I once knew who had an iron tank water supply to his house. The tank ran dry, through a hole wearing in its bottom. He did not mend the hole—and then couldn't understand why the tank failed to refill, though it rained ever so hard. The water ran in—but it also ran out! So it will be with us if we permit our governments to keep a-borrowing our banks' funds as they accumulate. Those funds will never reach the level at which their presence will compel the banks to look for investments once more from among business men.

"The twelve million loan that the government proposes to float 'to aid employment' will cause more unemployment than it will cure. It is the hole in the tank's bottom! It will be withdrawn from its present useful use by employers and they will have to send men adrift at present in employment. It will be turned over to the government to employ fewer men—and to get infinitely less of useful results—than if were left where it is.

"The Jews of old were told by Moses "To lend to all nations and to borrow from none." Sound advice—and most applicable to Australia today, particularly the latter half.

"Further, you will have noticed that in the loan

now to be raised by our Federal government—with the gracious consent of 'the banks'—that it is to be secured by Treasury bills—and these bills are not to be sold to private individuals, but to banks and the like. That means only one thing—that the banks are getting an even tighter hold on the control of public finance than they have had heretofore—and goodness knows that was tight enough. They are so fixing things that they can keep to themselves the profitable lending to the government of all the funds they do not choose to lend to private employment.

"Too much of our savings has gone to 'the government.' It is time to stop. More—it is time to consider the return of those savings and that credit. And I know of no better method than that put before this meeting by Mr. Storm Bradley. Release National Credit sufficient to give useful work to our unemployed. Mr. Bradley has explained shortly what National Credit is. To most of you it is a new idea—perhaps an unorthodox one—but never has the world been in the condition it is in now, and new conditions demand new treatment. We must increase our liquid capital until it is sufficiently large to handle our increased production. If we do not, then we will have a continuance of what we have with us now—increasing production with a lessening trade, causing still lower prices, and those lower prices giving a lessened base on which to raise the necessary credit to finance consumption—followed by still worse times than now.

"We must aim at increased consumption. If we do that with success, then production will take care of itself. Increased consumption—by ourselves—by Australians! It is the home market that matters most—not the supplying of food to people of low standards of living, be they white, yel-

low or black. If we aim chiefly at selling to customers abroad whose standard of life is appreciably lower than our own, then as sure as shooting we will drop to their level. Rather than do that I would see our country go back to the dingo and the kangaroo—for if we cannot carry on with reasonable amenities of life for all, then why carry on at all?

"By releasing National Credit we could make our national debt serve us instead of ride us. It is a debt that is covered by the asset of the whole of our public possessions—railways, telegraphs, harbours, schools,—everything. It is not such a debt as is the war debt—blown away in smoke. Therefore let us use the credit side of that debt and return to the bondholder a tenth, say, of the credit he advanced us. The presence of that fifty-seven millions in the treasuries of the banks would compel the issuance of it to private enterprise. The water would be in the tank once more—and we would be the fools of the world if we ever permitted it to leak out again through the gaping hole of 'loans to the government.' Public credit for Public Works' must be our slogan.

"Not the cancellation of credit as we have known it these last years is going to do us any good. Not the cancellation of credit by lowering wages—not the cancellation of credit by lowering property values under moratoria—not the cancellation of credits by forcing down the value of shares in our big industrials—none of these things will help us at all.

"What we need is the release of credit—the release of National Credit by a properly constituted non-political body, as free from influence, banking or political, as we can make it. I know that sounds like counsels of perfection—but has the civilisation of this twentieth century come to such

a pass that we admit our inability to decently manage our affairs. I think not. I hope not. That would be a poor ending to mankind's thousands of years of thought and labour.

"Possibly Mr. Bradley's scheme—or some adaptation of it—may be an acceptable way out of the difficulty such a nation as America will find itself in when—as most certainly must come—the world's war debts, are cancelled. When that time comes, the United States will contain millions of citizens who will be holders of the bonds on which those debts are secured. What will be done about it? To cancel those bonds would be to single the bond holders out as the one class to bear the burden. Manifestly unfair! To return them their credit through some such scheme as that put before us today would spread the burden over every citizen of that country. And it would also retain in America, as working capital, the credit based on those bonds.

"And possibly, also, some adaptation of the idea will some day be adopted by ourselves to free us of our overseas debt, by, as each loan falls due, paying it off with London credits obtained by our exports, and releasing sufficient local national credit to pay the exporter here the money due him —always, of course, keeping strict watch on local price levels.

"That is about all I have to say—except I would remind you of the old and most true banking aphorism, 'The Hand that Writes the Overdraft Rules the World.' Particularly true is it that the Hand that writes the government overdraft rules the government—and the nation. So let us as a people see to it that we get control of that Hand else we will never get out of the mess we are in."

Then John Allan sat down.

At first no inclination was shown by anyone to

continue the discussion; then Graham again rose "Mr. Chairman," he said, "We have heard much that is new to us from both Mr. Bradley and Mr. Allan. Personally I am not yet convinced that they are thinking along sound lines—but I am convinced that the lines along which we have up to the present been moving must have much that is unsound about them, else we would not be in the parlous position that we are in. Every effect must have its cause. In order to give us time to turn over in our minds what we have just heard I think we should adjourn this meeting for a week or so after which we could meet again and be in a better position to decide what steps we shall take. You know the old proverb about fools rushing in. Don't let us be fools. Let us go slowly."

Graham belonged to that numerous class of men who seem to be constitutionally unable to make up their minds. They are like the hungry donkey, whose mind was so well-balanced that he couldn't choose between two bundles of hay offered him, so he starved to death. Or possibly it is that they know only too well which is the right bundle of hay, but it doesn't suit their interests to admit it, so they "postpone decision," hoping to dodge the responsibility—and the personal unpleasantness—of making a decision that would be contrary to their interests and to their ingrained bias. The world is full of such men—and the heights to which they climb on the ladder of life as compared with men of greater intellectual honesty is proof of the worldly wisdom of their cowardly attitude towards the problems of life.

Then an elderly worried-looking man who had been listening intently to both the speakers got up. "Don't let us go too slowly," he said. "The devil of debt is very close up to most of us now. It is too late to start thinking, after he gets us by

the short hair. Mr. Bradley's idea that the employers should look upon borrowed capital as an employee—and so should do nothing that will shorten the supply available to them—such as encouraging the lending of it by the banks to the government, but should, instead favour any movement that would release for their use some of that at present frozen, seems to me well worth looking into.

"Also, his two proposals, each one complementary to the other—the first, that credit shall be released to public bodies to give the necessary start in restoring confidence; the second that one-tenth of the amount of their bonds shall be returned to our internal bond-holders so that there shall be an addition to the capital available for private employment, seem to me so simple as to be unsound. They are almost too good to be true.

"However, 'out of the mouth of babes,' etc—so it may be that this is destined to be the new gospel of finance. Let's look into it. It may be right—it may be wrong—but it's worth considering. And in any case, we're all between the devil and the deep sea. The old saw, 'When in doubt do nothing' never did appeal to me. I've always ordered my life on exactly opposite lines to that.

"Now it seems to me that the best thing we can do is to get behind Mr. Bradley and his paper. Eventually, the world will be saved—or damned—by printer's ink, so we mustn't let the "Weekly" die, as rumour says it may do.

"But running even a small weekly costs money. There are twenty of us here. Ten pounds each will help more than a little—two hundred pounds will pay the printer's bill for awhile longer, with what the paper itself earns. And here's my ten pounds," the speaker concluded, as he passed up to Lloyd a yellowback note and resumed his seat.

After a little further talk, most of those present promised to do as Burton had done—subscribe ten pounds. Then, having persuaded Graham to come in with them, they formed themselves into a committee to take charge of the "Weekly" for awhile and to consult as to further action.

It wasn't that they altogether approved Storm Bradley's scheme. Rather it was that they couldn't see what else to do. The old finance had tripped them up—maybe this new kind would put them on their legs again—as individuals.

As Lloyd put it, "Possibly it is quite true that if we follow the advice of the 'Times'—just grit our teeth and see it through, that prosperity will return—but, and this is what hits me, prosperity will not return to the same individual or set of individuals. All my property will have passed to someone else—and I'll be on the old age pension The Commonwealth, as a Commonwealth, will recover—but the individual as an individual will go under. That is no good to me—or to you."

Lloyd was right. The individual, whether he be the owner of one small cottage, or of fifty pounds in the savings bank, or whether he be the owner of fifty thousand pounds worth of margins in shares or land, is not as much interested in the general prosperity of the people as he is in his individual retention of his possessionss, be they small or great. To stand idly by while they are being nibbled away by the depression is the act of a fool. A wise man would lend his aid to remove the depression and so save his possessions for himself.

Though Storm Bradley knew the assistance to the "Weekly" would save it for a time at least, he did not like the idea of sharing the control of his paper with anyone, but he soon saw the wisdom of acquiescing in the proposal. Week by week the

committee met and took off his shoulders much of the business worry, leaving to him the editorial side of things.

And, as always, for printing ink is marvellously attractive and hypnotic in its affect on those who dabble in its management, two or three of the committee bought some of the unsold shares in the "Weekly." They were a little better fixed financially than were the others, and Storm was much relieved to know that the paper's finances would be the better for their action.

Then things began to develop, as they always do when a dozen or so earnest men get together determined that they shall develop.

Besides, public opinion was changing. Men were readier to listen than ever they had been. All over the world the idea was taking root that civilisation was not "safe"—that a world in debt was a world in danger—that the worker had prior rights over the money-lender—that the financier was killing the golden goose—that "debt" and "slavery" were two words with the one meaning—that High Finance was its own friend and everybody else's enemy—and as such must not be permitted to govern the world—that private banking credit was a super-monopoly, and therefore was super-dangerous—in fact, that it was the only monopoly, all other monopolies being its pups—that the imposition on a people of a standard of living that would result in a deteriorated citizenry was only a prelude to a revolution—indeed, might be worse than a revolution—that a new and wider meaning must be given to the commandment "Thou shalt not steal," though the churches were slow to preach the necessity for the new meaning—that the "equity" of a matter is far greater than its "legality," for equity is based on the everlasting Rights of Man, but legality is for the moment

only, and changes with the changing thought of the times.

Yes—the time was opportune for Storm Bradley and for the "Weekly."

CHAPTER NINETEEN.

AUSTRALIA is nothing if not political. It was its politics that helped the "Weekly." Its slogan, "Cease Borrowing! Use Public Credit for Public Works!" attracted attention. Also its proposal that a percentage of the value of all government bonds held in Australia should be returned to the holders by credits given them in the Commonwealth bank was being seriously inquired into by leading men of all interests—except Finance and Communism. The former because they saw it meant the end of the haven of gilt edge government securities for their money, and the latter because they knew its adoption would break the back of Communism by releasing private capital to give employment—with its accompanying contentment.

Strange how, always, extremes meet.

Storm Bradley met the editor of the labour newspaper one morning. "Why don't you give the new idea a leg up in your columns?" Storm asked. "The 'Times' won't so much as mention it—and for what looks to it as a very good reason; but I should think it is rather in line with your policy."

"Nothing doing, Bradley," was the quick answer. "I'm a communist, first, last and always—and your schemes, by restoring employment, would kill communism. You'll have to get along without me."

Turner, the "Times" editor, was frank. "Sorry, Storm," he said, "but your ideas are too new for my paper. See me again about the middle of the

century and maybe I will be able to give you some space."

But notice was being taken in quarters that counted. The section of the radical party that deprecated the talk about "revolution," and so were deeply in earnest to get the unemployed back at work—knowing that to be the only way to prevent an outbreak that would be difficult to handle—discussed Storm Bradley's proposals and decided that there was something in them—that, at least, they might be the basis of some action that would result in better times. But to give effect to them would not be easy. The press would of course, be in opposition—that was to be expected—and that part of Labour that was revolutionary would follow the lead of their newspaper, as voiced by that paper's editor.

World events were showing the truth of the hundred-year-old observation, "Behold with how little wisdom the entire world is governed." Learned professors of economics were in childbed—and were being delivered of tables of "percentages!" Percentages of imports, percentages of exports, percentages of "real" wages, percentages of "nominal"" wages, percentages that told the hungry exactly the lower—always lower percentage of food their children ate this year as compared to last. Talk—talk—endless talk—in the hope that somehow the Great Showdown—or the Great Blow Up—would be avoided. The Showdown that would order the "passengers" off the Coach—or the Blow Up that would end both Coach and passengers.

The world was being told by those professors—is still being told by them—to consider itself "poor"—that it couldn't "afford" this or that. All of which was foolish talk. The professors counted everything in terms of money—never in terms of man-power. And money was paralysing Man-

Power—which is the one thing we cannot "afford" to let continue. We must learn to think of all production in terms of Man-Power—not in terms of Money. When we do that we will know that the greatest loss a nation can suffer is the continued unemployment of many of its people. And when we "know" that, with an inner knowledge, then the reign of the Anti-Christ of Money will be ended.

The manufacturing nations of the old world with their swollen industrial populations were fighting to retain the unwholesome state of affairs that compelled they should either find markets for their manufactures—or starve. They built tariff walls in self-defence to keep their internal trade to themselves. Then they found that was a game the other fellow could play. So where were their markets? Gone!

The British of the North Seas thought to remain the chief manufacturing centre of the British Commonwealth—so they met the Younger Nations in conclave, thinking those Younger Nations would sell their Birthright for the privilege of feeding the Older Nation. The Birthright of Self-Development—and Self-Control.

And all the time the experience of the ages was vainly endeavouring to make itself heard in the councils of the British nations—that the position most greatly to be desired was each people as far as possible self-supplying, both in the matter of food and of manufactured goods, thereby having a proper balance between its numbers and its capacity for self-support. There is grave risk when a country is so overpopulated that it must either import its food or starve. Sooner or later it will starve.

Issue after issue Storm Bradley explained and argued. He confined his attention almost entirely

to Federal matters. State governments he knew to be almost moribund. Their sovereignty had been taken away from them by the Federal Loan Council—the super non-elected government of all Australia. No State could get forward with any new development work except by permission of that Council—and any State government failing to give its people satisfactory service could always put the blame on the Council—and always did so. So state sovereignty and state responsibility were both gone.

And not state sovereignty and responsibility only—Federal governments, also must go carefully, asking leave of the Loan Council—a thing Australians never intended.

And above the Loan Council stands the Commonwealth Bank—and the Commonwealth banknote. Australia parted with its federal form of government, and became a unification, when the Commonwealth bank took over the note issue. "Finance is government" has been well and truly said. Behind Australian public finance is the note issue. For better or for worse the Australian Banknote is in ultimate control of all Australian governments—Federal and State.

The "management of currency," so favourably viewed now by economists as a partial cure for the world's economic troubles, is only a halfway house to the "management of credit"—not so favourably viewed—as yet. But the one means the other—ultimately.

A little at a time the "Weekly's" advertising increased as the circulation improved because of public approval of the paper's stand, The corner was turned, and once more the balance was on the right side of the ledger—so long as the "overhead" was kept down. Storm Bradley saw to that—except that he put Jack Higgs back on the staff.

"I'll do your paper no good, Storm," Higgs said, when he was told that there was a job on the "Weekly" for him. "I'm not the man I was. "A man can't go down to the Depths, as I did, and not show the marks forever afterwards."

But Storm wouldn't heed him. "There's something coming to you, Jack," he said; "and I'm going to see you get it. We'll chance its effect on the paper. In fact, it may be for the paper's good."

"But a lot of people know I'm a communist," said Higgs. "You'd better think twice, Storm."

"Communism didn't put the world where it is," said Storm. "Neither did it put Australia into the soup. Neither did it have the least little bit to do with it. The advocates of ultra-individualism should not forget that."

"And neither will communism get the world out of its troubles." Storm added, on second thoughts.

"But, communist or not, there's a job waiting for you on the "Weekly," Bill—old cobber. And I wish to God that putting you back on its staff could put you back to where you were two years ago—back with Sarah in your cottage at Coogee."

Just what Higgs was to do on the "Weekly" Storm didn't know—but he was resolved that never again would he lose touch with Jack. If the paper couldn't keep afloat carrying Higgs—then all three—the "Weekly," Jack and himself—would go down together.

But things didn't turn out that way—far otherwise. The "stone" the builders rejected was again to become the chief corner stone. Like many men who set out to "plan" for success, Storm was to achieve it by chance—for Higgs' early talent with the pencil came again to light, almost by accident.

One day, soon after Storm had provided him with a desk and a typewriter, both men were sitt-

ing at it talking. Storm picked up a sheet of paper upon which Jack Higgs had been whiling away an idle hour—drawing. "I didn't know you could do this sort of thing," said Storm. "Not too bad, either! I've seen worse—much worse. Even in the "Bulletin."

That gave Higgs an idea. He would try what he could do in the way of a drawing for the "Weekly." So far it carried nothing but letterpress. Possibly, he could get Storm to use a weekly first-page cartoon—if it was in him to provide it—and the quality was "right."

The issue of the "Weekly" that carried the first full page drawing above the signature of "J'iggs" was the beginning of its real success. Jack had not gone down to The Depths for nothing. His first work showed that. It bore the caption, "Crucifixion—New and Old."

Two Crosses were shown. One—that of the Christ of two thousand years ago—with the Crown of Thorns—but also with a Vision of Angels. And at the foot of the Cross, the Mother of Christ, weeping.

The other Cross had spiked on it a Figure of a Man—Unemployed. His Vision, shadowed near his head, was of his wife and children at a table eating Dole food—and sitting at his feet was a Crow—waiting—one of the World Crows of Debt.

And—the final touch of truth—Higgs' Figure of the Crucified on the Cross of two thousand years ago was the same Figure as that on the cross of Today—scantily clad in the mean garments of the poor.

"I wonder," said Jack to Storm, "if the churches know Whom they are denying as they stand idly by these days. There are not Two Christs—there is only One!"

That drawing established "J'iggs"—and after its

publication the "Weekly" never looked back. Each issue carried some of Jack's work—and always his finger touched the spot. The pen is mightier than the sword—but the pencil is the master of both.

Just at this time a change of government took place. The "old idea" was to be given a further trial. Would it mend its ways? Would it avert the Red Danger as only it could—and in the only way—by taking the burden from the taxpayer's tired shoulders, without further pinching shillings from the workers' pay and taking pennies from the dole and pension payments that took the edge off the hunger pangs of the unemployed?

Would it—could it—get the unemployed back to work and so give a man back his self-respect?

Would it? Could it?

If it "wouldn't"—if it "couldn't"—then the End was within sight. The patience of the masses was wearing thin—its edges were becoming frayed.

And the Age of Miracles was past. Man must save himself. As ever, though, all forward movements must "of" the people, "by" the people and "for" the people. The springs of all movement are ever from below—never from above. Universities and such are the "billabongs"—the backwaters—of the River of Life—not the River itself.

But conservatism did the usual thing—usual for Conservatism. It "half did" its job. It dealt in "half-measures"—a habit of fools and cowards. It "half-kept" and "half-broke" its election promises. It "half-fed" and "half-starved" the citizenry by borrowing sufficient credit from the banks—always the banks must be profitably brought into the picture—profitably for the banks, that is—to give "half-time" to a fraction of the workless—for six

months only! The labouring mountain had brought forth a mouse—and a dead mouse at that.

But, over and above all parliaments sits the secret Parliament of the World's Debt Masters—and not easily nor readily does the Old Order of thought give so much as one inch of room to the New. Nor does it do so, often, except under physical compulsion. The French aristocrats would not believe that underneath them was a stirring volcano. They did not wish so to believe—therefore they did not believe—to their eventful great sorrow.

The czaristic Russia of later days screwed down the safety valve—and declined to "know" that there was a head of steam gathering that would blow them heavens high—or hell low.

So the Debt Masters of the World folded their hands and murmured, "Peace—All is Peace." They misread their times. They increased their Debt-burden by schemes that lowered prices and "costs of production"—a euphemistic phrase for "wages"—one that hides the intention of the phrasemaker, and so permits him to get his mischievous work in—at the cost of both employer and employee.

Each morning the employer unlocked his factory door a more debt-burdened citizen than he was the previous evening, and each morning his employee stood to his bench to work more hours for the Debt Masters and fewer for himself than he did the day before—and all because of the foul advice of those Debt Masters—that mankind accommodate itself to the lowered price level instead of by all and by every means keeping the price level where it was when the Debt was incurred.

Were the Debt Masters wilfully criminal in their advice?

Were the Debt Masters deliberately multiplying

their Debt Burden by advocating the retention of the lowered price-level?

To both question the answer is—"Yes."

The lowering of production costs—which is the lowering of the wages of industry, whether the wages of the employee or the "wages" of the employer—may help one nation to snatch more of the world trade than does a competing nation, but it will also lower the volume of that trade by reducing its own purchasing power, and so lose for itself any temporary advantage it may have gained.

And the Finish may finish both Masters and Slaves.

But Storm Bradley was concerned only—or mostly—with his own country. The world position was one that Australia could neither help nor hinder—so he kept the fight going against any further borrowing, together with a steady advocacy of the use of Australia's own national public credit for all public works—to give the employment that alone could restore business confidence.

But particularly he kept hammering at the necessity for the return to the internal bondholders of a portion of the value of their bonds, so increasing the amount of local capital available for private enterprise and for taxpaying, and at the same time lessening the country's interest-burden.

Slowly but surely these constructive proposals began to gather adherents, and so Storm Bradley began to be more and more in the mind of the public. When that happens to any man in Australia the accompanying thought is, 'Let's elect him to something." And often that means—another good man spoiled.

The inevitable happened.

One morning as Storm Bradley was waiting for the tram at his street corner—he and Elsie had at

the first sign of better times moved from Paddington—the driver of a motor car travelling citywards pulled up and offered him a ride to his office. Storm accepted.

"I read the "Weekly" regularly, Mr. Bradley," said the man at the wheel—and I know you well by sight. I've been thinking for quite a while of having a talk with you."

"Well, now's your chance," said Storm. "I've got to listen—or jump out."

"Slocomb's my name, Mr. Bradley—and I'm a neighbour of yours—and something of an admirer as well," explained John W. Slocomb—meddler in politics. "I'm the president of the local political busybodies—and we've been talking you over as a possible candidate for parliament. At present the electorate is represented by a Labour man—and we want to alter that."

"But the elections are just over," said Storm. "You're looking a long way ahead, aren't you?"

"Not so far as you think, Bradley," Slocomb replied. "It's on the cards that our man will be given a job by the government that will necessitate his resignation—and so we'll have an election jumped on us. In that case we must be ready—so we're starting to look around for a candidate right away. What about yourself?"

Storm Bradley hesitated a moment. He felt tempted to agree, yet at the back of his mind he knew his real work was with the "Weekly"—that there was a danger politics would sidetrack him. Also—he knew himself to be a bad party man, for he could see only too clearly the good and bad points of both sides. In fact, as between the two main parties, he did not know to which of them he was mainly attracted.

"I'd like a day or two to make my mind up," he said at last. "It's good of you to consider me

in the matter—but——." Then he went to the meat of the business—"Say, Slocomb, how do you know I'm on your side in politics—I don't know myself, that I am?"

Slocomb laughed. "And I don't know about myself either," he said. "In any case, this electorate would never return a dyed in the wool conservative. The only chance of winning the seat is with a man of very liberal views. And I know you would fill the bill there, if your opinions as expressed in the "Weekly" mean anything."

"Leave it for a few days—that's the best I can say; but thanks, all the same," said Storm, as the car pulled up opposite his office to let him out.

That evening Storm told Elsie of Slocomb's suggestion—that he should try and enter politics. The tiny cloud that had begun to gather over them had dispersed with the easier times—had dispersed and was forgotten, completely forgotten. For neither Storm nor Elsie were the kind of fools who occupy themselves scratching the sore spots to keep them sore.

Naturally, she was pleased, and said so.

"I'm not so sure," said Storm. "At first I though it might be a good opening—that I could be useful—but politics is just as likely to gag me and to tie my pen as it is to do otherwise. More likely, perhaps. I'm inclined to think I'd better stay where I am—running the "Weekly."

Tom Norris was all for Storm doing as Slocomb suggested. "You won't be asked twice," he warned. "There're plenty others who'll jump at it. It's your chance—perhaps the only one you'll get."

But Storm couldn't see it. "No, Dad, I think I'll have to refuse," he said. "I don't care about being yarded and branded by either party. Of course, yarding and branding has to be done—but it will be an ill day when there are no cleanskins left.

It'll mean that the last mile of open country is fenced in—that freedom to think—and to speak—and to act—is dead. That Barbed Wire is King."

Norris laughed. "I suppose you're right," he said. "But don't worry—there will always be lads with wire-cutters. There always have been. 'Damned bushrangers!' or 'Sons of Freedom'—according to how one's mind ranges."

Just then the bell rang, and when Storm opened the door he was met by Slocomb and half a dozen others.

"We want to have a talk with you, Mr. Bradley, concerning the matter I mentioned this morning," said Slocomb. Then he introduced, one by one, his friends. "This is a deputation—if you will take it as such?"

"Now, Mr. Bradley," said Slocomb, when Storm had them all seated around the table, "this is no time for a man to refuse to give the most useful service that is in him—and we think you are the kind of man who can best serve the country by fighting for a seat—successfully, we hope, in parliament. Your paper shows you to be a man with vision—and at the same time practical. We don't expect you to dot all our 'i's' and cross all our 't's—in fact, we know you are not that sort. You've been through the mill of adversity, and so know just what everybody is up against. Now—what about it? Will you agree?

Storm Bradley got to his feet. His mind was made up. He was going to say "No." But he had to say it tactfully—and to give his reasons.

"You will take it, gentlemen, that I appreciate the compliment you are paying me, and I thank you for it." he said. "Yet—what am I to do? If I do as you wish—then what about the "Weekly?" Divided attention gets one nowhere—and is fatal to a newspaper. If I were to win the seat—then

my first duty would be to the electorate—and these days that would be a full-time job. Gradually my paper would either become a 'tied' party journal—or it would die. There could be no middle course. Do you wish that?"

"Certainly not," said Slocomb.

"Then imagine me, if you can as a member—a party member—of parliament—and my paper following its present independent course," Storm replied. "It's not possible."

"No, gentlemen," Storm said; "the 'Weekly' has set itself to do two things. The first is in its slogan, "Cease Borrowing! Use our Public Credit for Public Works." The second is to reduce our internal debt by returning periodically instalments of the credits loaned us by our internal bondholders. For me to divert from those ends any of my time and such ability as I may have would be, not to serve the country but to betray it. I am well aware you do not mean to tempt me—for temptation it is—but I feel that this moment is a crisis for me—and perhaps, who knows, a crisis of much greater moment than that.

"The work of the 'Weekly' must come first—it must be my only work—and that work has but just begun. The real fight is all ahead. Too well I know that.

"Also, I am a "middle of the road" man by instinct—but so is the traffic cop. And surely he is useful, as I hope I am useful. If we all fell into line—divided into two parties, or schools of government,—then to whom would the appeal be made on polling day. It is because a considerable body of voters switch their support, election by election, that sane progress is made—and not a continuing blind party control. "All of the parties are "extremist'—though none of them think they are—and it is to the 'middle thought' of the unattached

voter that any one of them must turn—and satisfy—if they would sit on the treasury benches. So I am—and must remain—one of those who act as the 'pudding' on the political see-saw. We follow principles—not parties—and because of that we must be content to forgo the plums—or the loaves and fishes—of political office and reward."

"Why not stand as an independent candidate?" Slocomb asked.

Storm Bradley laughed. "You're not in earnest, Mr. Slocomb," he said. "You very well know what happens to any candidate who is his own party—and there's reason for it, too. Imagine a parliament of independents—or one controlled by a group of independents. No—things in parliament are as they are, party-politically—and for good reasons. We of the independent thought must be content to use our weight outside parliament—and ever to remain outside that body.

"And we must remain unorganised, too—and so not 'for sale' in a body. It is a difficult matter to buy sufficient individuals—individual by individual; it is difficult to the point of impossibility. But it is easy to buy them as an organised body. Offer political preferment to the leaders—and the trick is done. We must content to be the brake when the country is going downhill—and the accelerator when the grade is upwards. And it is very much uphill just now.

"So, gentlemen, with many thanks to you for the compliment you have paid me, I must decline—though it is a very great temptation to me—as it would be to any man."

Slocomb and his friends saw that is was useless to try and induce Storm to change his mind, so after a halfhour passed in general talk they left.

"Bradley's got the right of it," said Slocomb, as

they walked up the street. "It's as he says—there's a reason for party discipline within a party—a good one. But these days the country is best served by those who tie themselves to no party, but vote at elections as the times and the emergencies dictate."

"Maybe, Slocomb," said one of the party; "but the fact of the matter is that Bradley is a born newspaperman. The 'Weekly' shows that. So we'll 'let the shoemaker stick to his last'."

"He will, whether we let him or no," laughed Slocomb. "That is, if plain language means anything. All the same, I wish he'd done as we wanted him to do."

"But the ocean is big—and there are other fish in it," Slocomb added, as he turned in at his gate.

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE MONTHS went slowly by—and, though the "Weekly" made useful headway—thanks to "J'iggs," and to the gathering body of independent middle thought—the black clouds of depression and of unemployment showed no signs of dispersing. The interest-bearing public debt increased, naturally, for out-of-work men and their wives and children had to be fed—half-fed, that is—and as taxpaying ability lessened in proportion as business disappeared, the country's scanty revenues had to be reinforced by loans from the banks thereby making matters worse if only because of the increased interest bill.

The financial editors of the dailies wrote optimistically that "the banks were never in a sounder position"—meaning a safer position for the banks. Too true! As the credits that should have carried business and so have given employment were paid in over the bank's counters they

were loaned out to the government, and Commonwealth's Treasury bills taken as security. In days gone by this would not have been. Those credits would have accumulated in the banks until their accumulation would have forced down the interest rate—and then, when they had been loaned to private enterprise their commonsense expenditure along remunerative lines would have been the concern of the banks whose assets they were.

But loaned to the government against short-dated Treasury bills they were turned into something as near "gilt-edged" as any security can be. Also—those Treasury Bills could be cashed into Commonwealth banknotes almost as and when required Yes—the banks were both "sound" and "safe." But civilisation was neither sound nor safe. And man's civilisation, not private banking, is man's first concern.

Was it any wonder that Finance in Australia fought Storm Bradley's idea that Public Credit should be released for public works—to get men working again without further increase in the public debt? No wonder at all. "Near is my shirt —but nearer is my skin" is the motto of everybody —banks included. The safety of their principal when loaned to the government was far to be preferred to taking a chance these risky times by loaning their funds for business development.

Was it any wonder that Finance in Australia fought Storm Bradley's other idea—that a periodical return should be made to Australian internal bondholders of a percentage of the value of their bonds—and so increase the amount of private credit available for private enterprise? No wonder at all. "Four sales at five shillings are better than five sales at four shillings" has always been the belief of a certain type of business man. So four hundred pounds of credit to loan at six per cent

looked better to banking than six hundred pounds worth to loan at four pent cent. So any increase of credit—any liquefying of frozen credit—was "No Good" to the banks, however much it would have done towards restoring sound conditions throughout the country.

And the financial muddle the banks preferred to any movement that would challenge their rights to control the country's financing to their own profit was unbelievable. They preferred that the hundreds of thousands of out-of-works and their families should be fed by the State; that assistance should be given by the State to pay rents; that subsidies should be paid by the State to employers to supplement the wages of factory workers; that country landowners should be assisted in the same manner as were factory owners; that municipalities should be subsidised with unemployment grants. All from the loans advanced by the banks against the security of Treasury bills.

As private businesses, the banks were quite right in their action. Their first thought had to be for the security of their deposits. But—why let them come into the picture as advisers to the government seeing that they were so palpably self-interested. Private banking is a legitimate and most useful business, and the function of acting as intermediary between the wouldbe private lender and the wouldbe private user of credit is safer in the hands of private banks than it is in the hands of a government bank.

But the business of controlling and ordering the financial doings of the nation as a nation—of acting as moneylender to the government—that is another matter. "The borrower is servant to the lender," and it is not fitting that a government should be the servant of its private moneylenders.

That way slavery lies. It is that which has put the world—and Australia—into debt and so into slavery. Finance, which should be the Servant of the world, has become the Master of the world—possibly the Thief of the world.

And, surely, Finance, as the party who profits by the transaction, and who doubly profits by getting and keeping the Nation in its debt, is the last to whom the nation should apply for advice as to the wisdom or otherwise of applying the nation's own crediti to the nation's own use—for Finance is too self-interested to be able to give honest advice on the point. "Where the carcase is, there will the vultures be gathered together."

And that last is true "on both sides of the paper." If democratic institutions as we know them are to continue—if democratic institutions are to be still further democratised—it will only be if, and when, we decide to fittingly punish public men who criminally misuse their positions to put money in their purses. Without doubt, Democracy's professing servants have, time and again, taken the thirty pieces of silver—and so sent their Cause to its crucifixion. And not the servants of Democracy only—for human greed is as widespread as humanity itself—and affects all political parties alike, though possibly in a differing manner.

When both the briber and the bribed are punished for their great Crime by being stripped of all citizen rights—so they can neither vote for nor be elected to any public position, nor can occupy any position in public employ, nor are eligible to receive any public moneys whatever, nor can use the law courts to claim their rights against a citizen—in short, lose all rights whatever—then perhaps an end will come to public corruption—the Great Betrayal of Democracy.

A year passed and taking warning at last from

the desperate happenings of Russia gradually a sanity began to make itself manifest in public discussion overseas—and in Australia. The first cause of the world trouble—war reparations—was quietly dropped into the world's garbage can. Bankers and such were given a less prominent place in the councils of the mighty—their advice was listened to with respect—but not necessarily followed. Economists learned to add to the elements that guided their reasoning the great element of human nature; also they began to discern that a nation's wealth should be expressed in terms of man-power and of productivity—and not in terms of money; that, judged by that standard, all nations were wealthy; that if consumption be made possible then continued production follows as a matter of course—and "prosperity" is only the consumption of production—that and nothing more.

It is too much to say that they admitted that the claims of labour were prior claims to the claims of Finance—that was for them yet to learn.

But the great initial impulse towards the upward movement in prices that gave the world back its purchasing power—and which cut the world's debt in half—was given when the British Commonwealth of Nations began to move in the direction of the demonetisation of gold. Gold was to be deprived of its empire—it was to be relegated to its intrinsic use, whatever that might be. It was to become a commodity—not continue as a King.

Following that "beginning to move"—for the move itself was not necessary—the gold holders rushed with their metal tokens to buy real wealth —wool, wheat, iron, copper, rubber, cotton—any of the commodities that serve the needs of man. At once prices moved upwards—and the world depression began to lift. Gold got a shock from

which it never recovered, for Finance had been taught a lesson. The "clay feet" of its idol had been demonstrated to a visibility—it was so easily capable of being "cornered"—so, little by little, Finance relegated its old god to the lumber attic—and sought other means of controlling things to its own profit.

For the Battle—that one per cent of mankind shall keep the other ninety nine per cent working for them—has been the battle of all the ages, though the fields on which it is fought are many. The Millenium will always be far in the future—never will we catch up to it—nor is it desirable that we should do so. If we did—then the upward march of man would end—and his decadence begin. And without the necessity for an eternal vigilance short and sharp would that decadence be. Man's thousand years of peace will begin when all his capacity for fight has evaporated—and when that happens life will be too insipid to be worth the living.

Mankind dearly loves a fight—and more dearly still it loves a fighter. The fighter even of a losing battle gets his share of the applause, too; but the turner of the other cheek—the fellow who allows himself to be kicked down the street without kicking back—must look for his reward hereafter; he'll get none here below. And—it's doubtful if he will do any better up above, for his non-resistance is mostly a result of his lack of spirit. And surely that is not among the heavenly virtues.

However, let's get back from vain imaginings to more interesting matters.

Simultaneously with the changing thought at the world-embracing conferences, the Australian conservative governments began to show some degree of readiness to study other methods of re-

habilitation than those belonging the previous century. What the "Times" had long taken to be the rheumatism of unwilling old age it now showed a faint inclination to accept as the growing pains of youth.

This new thing—this doctrine that credit—or money—loaned when prices of goods were high should be repaid in terms of those goods; that the loaning of credit should be an investment and not a speculation; that both lender and borrower should share in either a price rise or a price fall; and that Gold should be dethroned. That last was the final ditch of "privilege," but it was ultimately won.

The dethroning of Gold was not "the fight" as far as Australia was concerned. That centred around the passing into law of a Bill to authorise the gradual return of their capital to Australian bondholders. Three things influenced the Australian people in their decision so to do.

The first was the crippling effect of the interest payment on all government and semi-government services—railroads, harbours, schools, water and sewerage services, municipalities and the like.

The second was that it was either take that action or cancel or seriously "cut" all "social services"—old age pensions, widow and child endowments, unemployment relief, soldier pensions. Tc attempt to do that would be to attempt the impossible For good or for ill, the Australian has accepted as his public responsibility the care of the weaker brethren.

The third and by far the most important, was that private enterprise should be enabled—or forced by its capital-accumulation—to take its full share in restoring employment to the worker. So the internal public debt had to be gradually "evaporated." And in its evaporation it would provide

a supply of private credit that would start once more the wheels of trade—and production.

Meaning by "production" such twentieth century necessities as motor vehicles, petrol, newsprint paper, soft wood and timbers and the like; for all of which the market is here, but which continue to come in from overseas because local capital naturally prefers the "safe thing" of lending to the government to taking the business chances of financing industrial companies.

And the logical corollary of that return of credit was of course, the acceptance of Storm Bradley's slogan, "Cease Borrowing! Use Our Public Credit for Our Public Works!" To return the lenders their credit, and at the same time borrow fresh credit from them would be both ridiculous and impossible.

Overseas happenings were running their slow and painful course. Conferences, "conversations," talk of "quotas," talk of "removing tariff barriers," pronouncement by "the mighty," semi-starvation of the weak, demands for the reduction of armaments that if agreed to could only result in less and less employment and in substituting a cheap and horrible chemical warfare for war as we know it, "balancing of national budgets"—that would still further "unbalance" ever private budget in the land. "While the grass was growing the steed was starving." Yes, indeed! Except that there was little sign that the grass was really growing.

Storm Bradley got into the fight with all his strength. Each issue the front page of the "Weekly" was occupied by a "J'iggs" cartoon that kept the paper in the front rank of illustrated journalism, and of black-and-white art. A notable one set forth the old story of the Prisoner of Chillon, for twenty years a prisoner in his cell. Suddenly a

thought struck him—and he opened his cell door and stepped out to freedom.

"J'iggs" showed the man stepping over the threshold of the dark rat-haunted Cell of Debt and Depression into the out-of-doors. Underneath were the words, "As Easy as That!"

Fortunately for "moderate thought," the "lunatic fringe" of the Labour movement at this juncture forced the issue of socialisation of all industry and so caused a split in the party. The "socialisers" and the communists, being one in their objective, combined against the remainder of the party—which remainder, though containing perhaps, the minority of the Labour leaders and sub-leaders yet comprised by far the greater number of labour voters—and, what was more important, held the confidence of hundreds of thousands of electors who while not members of the Labour party yet leaned towards it in their opinions and usually cast their votes for its candidates.

Labour congresses, as also congresses of the conservative parties, in the heat of their word-battles, and in the joy of "passing" impossible and foolish "resolutions," always forget the existence of this very vital element amongst voters, with the result that a "victory" at congress sometimes means a defeat at the polls.

Knowing this, and fearing the growth of the sentiment for socialisation among the ill-paid—and too often non-paid—of the community, the more moderate minded of the conservatives endeavoured to persuade their leaders to meet the times by adopting Storm Bradley's Idea—but without success. Just as the ostensible leaders of the socialisation party take their orders from "below," so do the equally ostensible leaders of the conservative party take their orders from

"above." Finance said "No!"—so "No" it was.

Whether it was that Finance despised the socialisation movement, and so did not fear it; or whether it was that Finance preferred to run the risk of civil violence—without which it knew socialisation would never prevail in Australia—can never be known. Sufficient that Finance said "No!" Naturally, many of the moderate-minded of the conservative party "walked out."

It seems as though "ingrowing toenails" is a complaint not confined to the feet, but that there is such a thing as "ingrowing toenails of the mind," and that too long and too close an association between men of like political thought brings about just the pressure that causes this painful mental complaint, and so prevents a mental "spread" sufficiently broad to sense that the world outside the congress halls and other party meeting places is immensely bigger and more important than the world inside those halls and meeting places. It was the recognition of this fact that gave moderate Labour the victory over the immoderates—and eventually its victory at the polls.

For moderate Labour at last had realised that the outside political world of its well-wishers was wide-awake to the fact that the real "Leader" of any party is its "Objective"—not the individual who for the time being is permitted to be its figurehead, and that the keeping of a somewhat moderate-minded man in that position only accentuates the mischievousness of the "Objective." That being so—never while "the socialisation of all the means of life" remained their objective—and so their real "Leader"—could they hope for the support of moderate men. For "Socialisation" and "Communism," and "Bolshevism" are but three words with the one meaning—and a deadly meaning at that. So the "Socialisation" plank of

the extremist Labour party found no place in the platform of moderate Labour.

This section of Labour, thoroughly purged of the aforesaid 'lunatic fringe,' accepted Storm Bradley's slogan, "Cease Borrowing! Use Our Public Credit for Public Works!" and fought the next Federal elections on it—winning the Lower House but failing to get control of the Senate. Storm was greatly heartened, but he knew that the battle was far from won. The Senate was strongly entrenched, and behind it stood Finance and Privilege as well as a press that wielded great power.

But not all of the newspapers stood so definitely against the Government. Little by little the "Weekly" had come to be something of a newspaper's newspaper, and so was kept on the files of most of the journals in the Commonwealth. Storm Bradley—and Block—and "J'iggs"—preached to an influential congregation each week. Perhaps it was that the doleful times preached for them—that the great Belly of Australia was sending its message out; and, as ever, when that happens changes are due—overdue!

The Senate turned down a Bill empowering the Commonwealth bank to issue national credit for the purpose of absorbing the unemployed on public works—unification of the railway gauges of all the States, sewering country towns, road construction, water conservation and distribution, and the like. The House of Representatives at once joined battle—and the fight for Australia's future was on. Again the Bill was sent up to the Senate—and again it was rejected. Then the Government asked for a double dissolution and a referendum so that the voter could decide the issue.

Storm Bradley and his friends—"J'iggs," Lloyd, Allan and Block—set out to use the "Weekly" to the uttermost in the fight for the new idea. They

printed tens of thousands of extra copies, and a million of the "As Easy As That!" cartoon, backed with printed matter, and gave them an Australia wide free distribution.

Also, knowing the "inflation bogey" would be trotted out, "J'iggs" drew a carroon as a counter-blast, entitled "Deflation!—Take your Choice."

It showed an "orange drink" counter—with the average citizen in the "squeezer" instead of the usual orange—the juice, represented by shadowy delineations of his home, his insurance policy, his small savings bank deposits, his occupation and his self-respect, running rapidly from him into an ever-swelling rubber bag bearing the well-known "three balls" label.

Storm invited—and got—help from journalists all over the Commonwealth, so that the natural suspicion against a New South Wales—and therefore provincial—newspaper would be at least in part counteracted, and he saw that every library and reading room in Australia was supplied with his paper and its cartoons, and that shops, factories and farms all had copies in abundance.

So liberal was the distribution that, not by design of his, but because of the over-supply, not infrequently the "Weekly's" message reached the housewife wrapped around her daily purchases—but it achieved its purpose, and that was all that mattered.

Storm Bradley knew too much to "load" his columns with long articles. Short paragraphs, big type—and bold assertion was his method of attack. And he addressed himself always to "The Voter Who Does His Own Thinking"—the non-party man. "Vote Labour 'This' Time!" headed everything he wrote—with a sub-title, "Keep Both Parties Guessing!"

"J'iggs" provided another cartoon, suggested by

Storm—"The Man Who Counts." It showed a "See-saw," with Labour and Conservatism equally balanced, and the Independent voter standing in the centre of the plank ready to lean towards, and so control, either party.

But the "J'iggs" cartoon that swung the Australian voter definitely and in tens of thousands to the New Idea in Finance, was one entitled "The Massacre of the Innocents." It depicted the Youth of Australia leaving school for the Job of Life. Boys and girls with their young years of play behind them and with their manhood and womanhood yet to come, with hope and ambition in their hearts and with smiles on their faces, poured in thousands out of the school doors—to be met with a cloud of the poison gas of idleness that withered every instinct of self-help and of industry and of manly and womanly pride—and they emerged on the other side of the stinking cloud with the hope and ambition gone from their hearts and with the steel of their young minds eaten through with the rust of an idleness that was none of their seeking and none of their fault.

That compulsory idleness grew with the boys' growth, until, as adolescents, they wandered up and down the countryside, riding from town to town on the railroads as chance offered them free travelling, camping by the rivers and eating the dole food handed them by the police, until all wish for a steady life work was gone. And who could blame them? The conditions were none of their making—their elders were responsible for that. Yes—soul and body, the youth of the land was being crucified—and all because Finance would not be denied its profit—would not agree to the use of the nation's Credit so that work and the wages of work might be made available for all.

Not any proposal for the issuance of work to the unemployed—whether of the world or of Australia—but is accompanied by a proposal for a "loan." The idle millions of Finance must be given opportunity for "investment"—meaning that Finance uses its enormous power of control of all governments to the end that the world must continue to starve in idleness unless it agrees to further load itself with yet another interest-paying obligation to Finance. Always Finance must come into the picture and profitably to itself—but most damnably adding to the debt-burden of the nation.

And yet—What is the driving power of Finance? It is the combined selfishness of those who in greater or in smaller degree, and so in larger or lesser comfort, ride on the Coach of the Nation at the expense of the Pullers in the Shafts. For such the Banks do but speak—they are the Riders made articulate, and, by combination, powerful.

And, human nature being what it is, if the Pullers in the Shafts were tomorrow to become the Riders in the Coach, and the Riders in the Coach were to become the Pullers in the Shafts, then, and at once, the present Flogged would become the Floggers—and with right good will they would Flog too—and the Floggers of today would know just what the Whip tastes like. For which reason lovers of humanity work with their minds set on a time when Flogging by Anybody of Anybody will be brought to its irreducible minumum—for Flogging there always will be. Man's necessities will see to that. Always those necessities have Flogged Man—to his own great good—and always they will continue to do so, other-

wise Man would have remained hidden in the primordial ooze.

Storm knew the uselessness—and the danger—of attempting to form another party, so he sought to rouse the real thought of the land, and to show them where their strength and capacity for service lay—in keeping clear of all parties and in refusing to take Orders.

Also he knew—and he tried to show his readers—the real power that the unaffiliated voter in Australia has; how that to him and to him alone is due very much of the credit for what has been accomplished; that from him and from him alone can much be expected in the future.

The supporters of all of the political parties are too blinded by their zeal for their party's success to give a considered judgment as to any measure under political consideration. The deadly monotony of the parliamentary division lists is proof positive that independence of judgment is the last thing permitted to a party man—labour or conservative.

So, as independence is not possible in parliament—then it must be kept in good working order outside that body to show its strength on polling day. And to be always ready to change sides when reason dictates.

And that independent thought will be best and most truly expressed when the people are permitted to register their desires by referendum—that weapon of Democracy that Labour at one time so earnestly advocated, but which Labour so quickly dropped when Labour changed from a people's party to a party just as desirous of imposing its will on the people as any of the political parties of history, ancient or modern, have been or are.

Sheridan's famous speech on the liberty of the

Press could well be applied to the Referendum:

> "Give me but the liberty of the Press, and I will give to the Minister a venal House of Peers. I will give him a corrupt and servile House of Commons. I will give him the full swing of the patronage of office. I will give him the whole host of Ministerial influence. I will give him all the power that place can confer upon him, to purchase submission and overawe resistance. And yet, armed with the liberty of the Press, I will go forth to meet him undismayed. I will shake down from its height, corruption, and bury it beneath the ruins of the abuses it was meant to shelter."

Substitute for "Press" the word "Referendum" and it is equally true—and party politicians know it, and because of that knowledge decline to allow a fuller use to be made of the Referendum.

CHAPTER TWENTYONE

ELECTION day came and went. The victory rested with the "New Finance" in both Houses and at the referendum. The country began to prepare for the change in financial control, and gradually that change was brought about. And an epoch-making Change it was. One that will in the centuries to come stand out in the plane of history as a far more notable accomplishment for the twentieth century than was the Pyramids of Egypt for an earlier day. But the one was the work of Men—while the other was the work of Kings. And Men have always builded better than Kings.

Also, the adoption of the New Idea in Finance proved to be the beginning of the development of Australia's hinterland, for a start was made in the

locking of the Darling river, whose waters now run uselessly, or almost so, to the sea. Broken Hill became the capital of a new State—and Bourke, as the centre of a populous river district, came into its own place in the sun of prosperity.

And as it was with the western country of New South Wales so it was with the rest of Australia's unused miles. West Australia, Queensland, South Australia, the Northern Territory—all moved forward, aided by the Commonwealth's power over its own finance and banking. And Australians woke to the fact that why they had federated was not, as they thought of old, that they might speak with one voice to the outside world, but that they might, through the concentration of their public finance—their National Credit—develop their continent, and so hold it for the white man. They had builded better than they knew.

And the voice of the "secessionist" was heard no more in the land. The centralisation of public finance brought about a decentralisation of development that satisfied all but the unsatisfiable—and they were in a harmless minority.

With the release of national credit for public works unemployment disappeared, and with it went the Dole and all the financial miseries of all Australia. Not a man need be out of work. Those that were idle fed themselves—or went hungry. They had now their choice—something they did not have before. Liberty to starve, if they wished it that way. Few so wished it. Liberty to feed themselves by doing honest work, if they wished it that way. As all did—they always do.

As the new credit began to flow from the workers' pay envelopes into the shopkeepers' tills and thence into the farms and factories, that elusive thing, Confidence—so vainly sought after for

years—came forth from its hiding place, and the courage of the individual citizen came back and private enterprise took on its full share of the work of the nation and of the employment of its people.

Prosperity returned,—not with the rich richer and the poor poorer—and the "in-betweens" squeezed dry, as the years from 1930 onwards had threatened; and as would most certainly have been the case if the "Times" advice of "Grit your teeth and see it through" had been followed—but with a "Fair Thing for All." And no man can ask more than that.

Also revolutionary communism was dead as Julius Caesar—killed by the third—and most powerful of the Trinity: "Feed him; Fight him; or Give Him a Job."

Yes—Australians were the first people to wake up as a nation to the great Truth—that the standard of living a people can "afford" is entirely relative to its man-power and to its productivity—and need not be relative at all to the bank balances of its private citizens.

The first work to be put in hand was the unification of the railway gauges of all the States. For more than a generation this work had been crying aloud to be done. Many governments had had many reports drawn up by many experts—and all had agreed as to the necessity of the work, and also had agreed as to the great saving that would be made in the handling of the railway traffic of the Commonwealth. Yet always the great cost stood square across the road. Now—with the new method of finance—the surplus labour of the nation that was costing around ten million a year to feed—half-feed—could be put to work reproductively.

Of course, private finance did not get a profit. That was a bad habit well and truly sworn off by the Australian people.

Then there were the thousand and one roads "separating" the man on the land from his nearest township or railway. The average motor car tourist, sticking to the main roads so well kept in order for him by the authorities, knows nothing about the miles of bush tracks, miscalled roads, that have to be painfully negotiated by the man who feeds us all. The conditioning of those roads was crying aloud to be done—had been for years. Well—a start was made at last.

Also a beginning was made on the sewering and water supply of hundreds of country towns. Only a beginning—for that was a work that could never be completed while the nation lives—and grows.

New harbours were planned so that the exports could take the shortest way to the sea-board and so reach the world's markets at the lowest possible cost.

New cross country railroads were put in hand linking up some of the lines that stretch out from the seaports into the back country, widening apart as they go. All time savers and all adding to the value of the country through which they passed, and helping to get from that country its maximum production.

All these things—unification of railway gauges, new harbours, good "farmer" roads—not tourist speedways, though they have their place too—and many others, proved to be the real way to "cut costs of production"—not the wage-lowering as advocated by Finance.

And providing the country towns with the amenities of life—water turned on at a tap; sewering that cuts the doctor's bill by making filth dis-

eases things of the past; electric lighting and power—that make life and work "easy." All these things helped lessen the drift of population city-wards—and "decentralisation" began to be something more than a name.

Yes—those, and there are many of them who had honestly opposed the new theory that no country could "afford" to have its citizens out of work, and so feeding at its expense, began to see that the old method of Finance was a wicked and wasteful one—that a nation's man-power and land-productivity were the measure of its wealth, and that each development put in hand and finished was only a stepping-off place for further work. That there could be no finality to the capacity of a nation to usefully employ all its people, and to do so without piling up a back-breaking burden of interest-bearing debt to hold it in slavery.

And private banking found, to its great—and honest—surprise, that the field for its useful and profitable work was greater than ever; that the greater surety of employment made for the greater surety of its investments; that with the mending of the leak in the bottom of the tank of private capital—the leak of "loans to the government"—the banks' supply of credit available to private business rose once more to the tap level from whence it could flow out as and when required.

But the great lesson that all learned was that a nation's greatest loss—and one that would if not checked eventually lead to national, material and moral and spiritual bankruptcy—was to have its people idle. That at all costs and at all risks its people must be usefully employed.

And, when the word went out to the world that Australians had put their house in order; that there was work and wages for all; a movement of population began to the southern continent that started

an era of growth which made life indeed worth the living, and that ensured for all time the integrity of its coasts against foreign attack—always remembering the sound Dooleyism, "Thir-r-ty million people is enough for anny counthry."

But the great strength of the New Australia—or of any people living clear of the curse of debt—against the success of a foreign attack would lie, not in their millions alone, so much as in their knowledge that their free conditions were worth fighting for—that the old days of economic slavery to Finance were gone—that they would sooner part with life itself than with their New Freedom.

In the great war of 1914-1918 Australians had done their share—but the winning of that war had brought them only debt slavery. So much so that had another war broken on the world their part in it would have been taken most unwillingly—if at all. Possibly—probably—Australia would have taken part in it only after something approaching a civil war within its own boundaries and between its own sons.

And who could have blamed them. If those four years of death, danger and dirt brought them little besides debt and unemployment, then what could they have hoped for in return for further years of fighting?

And not only Australians were, in 1932, thinking along those lines. Americans also were regretting the part they had taken—and any future European wars would have found them cold indeed.

If the Sons of Privilege desire the Sons of Toil shall continue to fight in the battles of the country, then they must see to it that the latter have something worthwhile for which to fight—else The Day may find the Sons of Privilege fight-

ing their battles alone. For the parlous times through which the world is passing in these years of destitution have stripped from many men much of their willingness to endure hardship for Country's sake. It is not yet too late to repair the great wrong that has happened—but it soon may be. The next war may find, if Debt Slavery be not abolished, that the question in Australia will be, not Conscription as compared to free volunteering, but will Australians fight at all. True refusal to fight abroad may lead to a forfeiture of our continent to the enemy—but there is such a thing as a national sullenness that declines to be guided by reason. That sullenness is fast overtaking many in Australia—and else where. And the cause? The denial to the people of their Right to Work—and so to Live. Then why should they fight? Why, indeed!

But of course some "wild men" there were who still went up and down the land wordily arguing that work was an evil—that with the New Order "dolce far niente"—sweet do-nothing—should be the portion of all.

Storm Bradley—the Dreamer Whose Dreams Came True—knew better. "It's like it was when America's Civil War ended," he said. "The negroes thought that Freedom meant freedom from work—that they could sit in the sun all day long and scratch themselves. But they soon found they were wrong. As some folks in Australia will soon find they are wrong. What we have won is the right to our own lives—to starve if we will, or to live decently if we will.

But, as always with each step upwards that Man takes, so it needs a higher type of man to hold that step—and to prepare for the Next.

For there always is a Next.