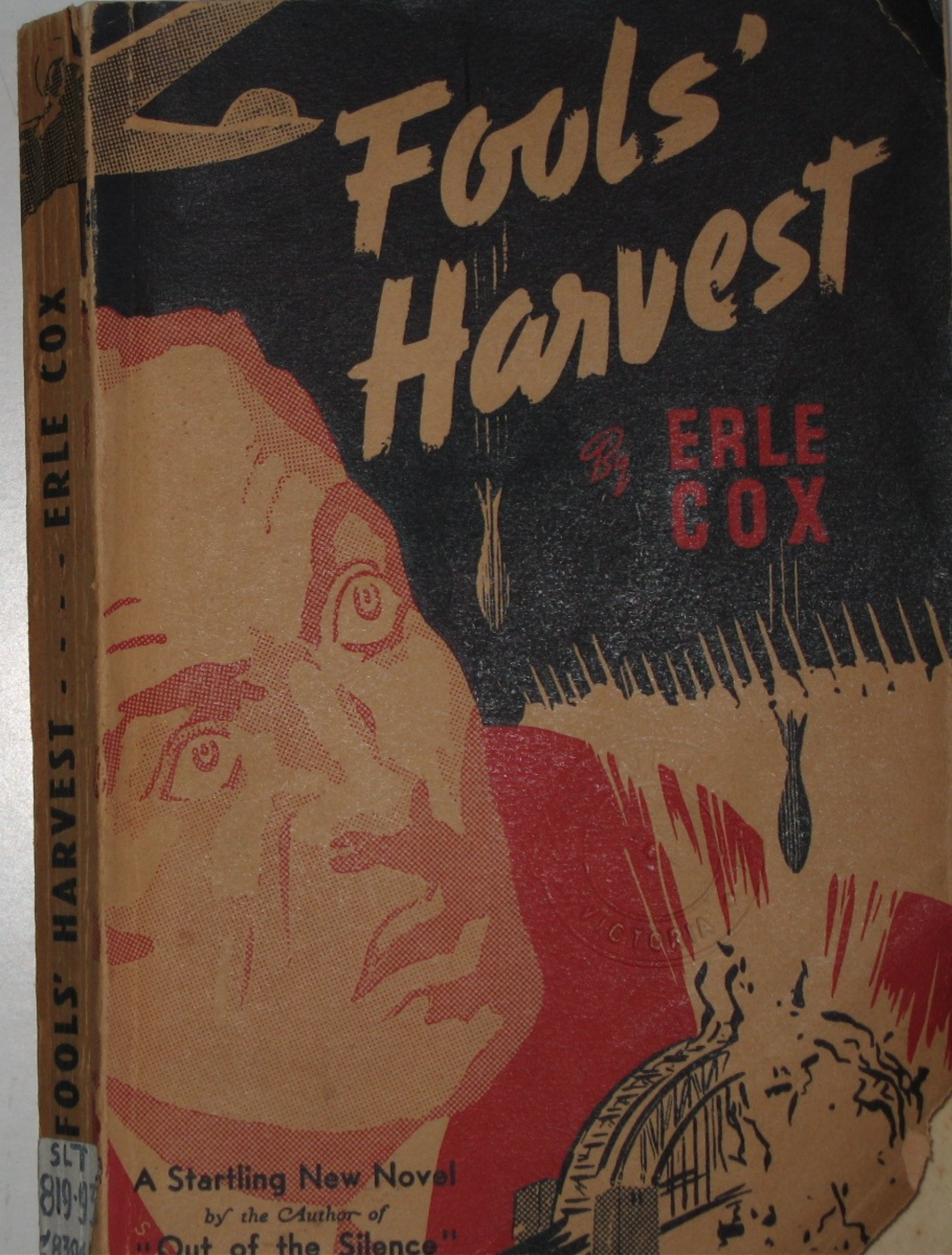

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Fools' Harvest

by

ERLE COX

Author of "Out of the Silence"

ROBERTSON & MULLEN Pty. Ltd.
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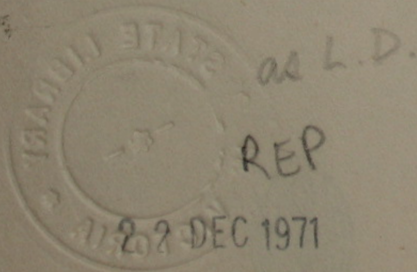

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

This story of to-morrow was originally written as a serial for "The Argus." Its intention was to awaken the people of Australia to the tragic possibilities of apathy towards adequate defence measures. It is now published in book form, with two additional chapters, by permission of The Argus and Australasian Ltd.

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All characters in this book are fictitious

PROLOGUE

In presenting this transcript of the Walter Burton manuscript for publication, the editors desire to remind the reader that its main value lies in its being the longest of the fourteen authentic personal narratives extant descriptive of the Australian debacle of 1939. It should be regarded as supplementary, only, to Major General Marsden's "Australian Tragedy," in which the military story of the invasion is dealt with, and to "The Struggle for the Pacific," by Peel and Everard, who treat the subject from the viewpoint of international historians. It must be remembered that, at the time he wrote, Burton was almost entirely ignorant of the great events that were taking place outside of Australia. His conjectures were governed largely by local conditions, and coloured by an appalling environment. His assumptions were, therefore, at times either partially or totally inaccurate.

Taking into consideration his obvious handicaps, however, it is remarkable how nearly Burton's conjectures do approach the facts. Moreover, in every instance in which it is possible to check his narrative in detail, his statements are fully supported, though in many places his dates are open to correction. This chronological haziness is due, probably, to the difficulty he experienced in writing up his diary regularly. That he succeeded in keeping a continuous record of his experiences at all, in the circumstances, reflects the determination of his character. We have allowed his dates to stand as written, rather than make corrections that may distract the reader's interest from his story. For this reason, too, explanatory comment has been inserted in the text in brackets.

Much difficulty has been experienced in tracing the history of Burton's manuscript. There is no doubt it was begun, if not completed, while he was an inmate of the notorious concentration camp at Carrington, the suburb of Newcastle, in 1948. It came into the possession of Mr. Rex Graham, Burton's nephew, on the death of his father, Fergus Graham, in 1967. Mr. Graham, however, states that he can barely recollect his uncle, Walter Burton, and has no idea of how his father obtained the manuscript. His only memories of Burton are of a big, dark man who used to tell him stories and make him laugh. He was at the time no more than six years of age. Following the policy of the "Paramount Power," he was separated from his parents when he was ten years old. By then, however, his uncle's visits to his parents had ceased for some time. When, after the Pacific War of 1966, he again rejoined his father, his mother had been dead for several years, and Fergus Graham was a broken man. Suffering had made him morose and uncommunicative, and beyond telling him that Walter Burton had been shot, he does not remember him making any other reference to his brother-in-law.

It can only be assumed that, by some underground means, Burton succeeded in having the manuscript passed on to Fergus Graham before his execution, which probably took place in 1952. Such an incriminating document would, no doubt, have been jealously guarded. The habit of secrecy that became second nature with those who lived under the iron rule of the "Paramount Power" may account for Fergus Graham's reticence with his son in connection with the documents. Mr. Rex Graham relates that he was entirely unaware of the value of the bundle of papers until, when examining them, he came across the few disconnected pages of the diary that were written in longhand. The lines he was able to decipher with great difficulty impressed him with their importance, and prompted him to hand the manuscript to the authorities of the University of Canberra.

Why Burton retained these longhand pages must remain an insoluble mystery. They suggest that Fergus Graham could never have examined the papers carefully, or he would certainly have destroyed them. Although economy of space in using shorthand in writing his story may have influenced Burton, there can be no doubt that his primary motive was secrecy. His training as a journalist enabled him to use a script that would be most likely to baffle any agent of the "Paramount Power" into whose hands the story may have fallen. It is evident from the first chapter of the narrative that, in 1948, Burton was engaged in "subversive activities"—that comprehensive offence that filled so many graves. The ruthless methods adopted by the "Paramount Power" in preventing the truth of conditions in Australia reaching the outside world must have made either the writing or the possession of the record a perilous undertaking.

The condition of the manuscript itself bears grim evidence of the days of its origin. There are more than twenty different kinds and sizes of paper, which was probably filched by Burton from any available source. It varies between common wrapping paper and some fifty leaves that were evidently torn from a ledger. With the exception of some half a dozen pages in ink, the entire story is written in pencil. This is so faint in places that chemical means were necessary to restore it for transcription. Burton used, evidently as an extra precaution, three systems of shorthand. This, and the condition of the papers, greatly increased the difficulty of transcription, and we are deeply indebted to Mr. J. H. Stevens, the Government shorthand expert, for the care he has taken in the long and arduous work.

Unfortunately, the inferior quality of some of the paper used by Burton, combined with time and dampness, have damaged a few passages of the script beyond repair. In these instances we have filled in the blanks as carefully as possible by following the reading of the text. After careful consideration, we

have decided to suppress several passages of Burton's narrative. These, however, with one exception, are short, and at most do not exceed two paragraphs in any one abridgment. In taking this step, we are influenced by our opinion that the appalling character of the disclosures may cause great distress to people now living. This opinion applies particularly to the longest omission, some 2,000 words, in which Burton tells of the conditions in the women's concentration camps at Carmel and Mundaring, Western Australia. In so doing we follow the example of Peel and Everard, in "The Struggle for the Pacific," in which they say, in reference to the same subject, that while there are some episodes of the struggle that must never be forgotten, there are others which, for the sake of humanity, must be obliterated from memory.

As in so many other instances, biographical detail regarding Walter Burton, other than that obtainable from his narrative, is almost non-existent. It is a tribute to the thoroughness of the efforts of the "Paramount Power" that, after two decades of occupation of Australia, documentary records are almost as scarce as they are of Rome or Greece after twenty centuries.

As he was married, and had an infant son in 1939, it may be assumed that Burton was then, at least, 25 years of age. His reference to the first Great War, of which he remembers nothing, tends to confirm the belief that he was born about 1914. Of his parentage nothing is known, though there is record of a pastoral family in the Victorian Western District, the head of which was a Walter Burton, that suggests some connection. Even the date of his death is uncertain, but as the events he records do not go beyond 1952, it may be assumed he became a victim of the tragic and ill-advised attempt at rebellion in that year. There can be no doubt that in 1948 he was a member of one of the many underground organisations that were actively plotting against the "Paramount Power." Evidently he was, so far, not

a suspect; otherwise he must then have shared the fate of his friend, Clifford, which is an example of the policy adopted by the authorities that suspicion and guilt were synonymous.

However, it is apparent that Walter Burton became one of the thousands of desperate men who held that death was preferable to life under the "Paramount Power." The loss of his wife and child had converted him into a fierce and relentless enemy of the oppression. His life in the labour camp at Carrington added to his hatred. Apparently, for several years he had disassociated himself from Fergus Graham, and his dearly loved sister, Lynda Graham, so as to save them from any suspicion of being involved in his patriotic and dangerous plots. He must have been lonely as well as desperate. One cannot but feel that, in the end, he must have welcomed death when it came. At that time, Australia had still to undergo another 14 years of humiliation and abasement, before its relief by the Pacific Protocol of 1966, when a bare 2,000,000 of its former population of 7,000,000 white inhabitants survived to face, undaunted, the task of rebuilding the nation.

JAMES LOGAN, Professor of History.
MARTIN T. THOMS, M.A.

University of Canberra,
July 15, 1975.

CHAPTER I.

"And were there really shops full of lollies and toys once upon a time, Uncle Wally?" Rex asked dubiously.

"Plenty of them, towhead," I told him.

He raised his head from my shoulder against which he had been snuggling, and turned for confirmation of the amazing statement to Lynda. As such an idea belonged to the realms of fairy tales in his mind, his appeal to his mother was to unimpeachable authority.

Lynda, looking up from her knitting, nodded her head and added, "And perhaps we shall have them again sometime, darling." Then seeing the few wretched little sweets I had given him, she charged me with spoiling her son—unconscious of the pathos of the indictment.

"What's spoiling?" He was at the age when every new word demanded elucidation.

"Something you, at least, will never suffer from," I told him.

Just then the long-drawn wail of a steam siren came from the mills by the distant wharf. To a thousand men it was a summons to another night of toil. Lynda put aside her knitting and stood up. "Eight o'clock, Rexy boy, bed time!" She held out her hands. With an obedience that was part nature and part training, he slipped off my knees. He bestowed rather a sticky kiss, first on his father and then on me, and turned to his mother. Fergus and I watched them until Lynda closed the door of the next room behind her.

We sat staring at the smouldering heap of smoky

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coal slack on the hearth that scarcely took the chill from the room.

I spoke my thoughts aloud. "Spoiling him! Think of it, man! Half a dozen miserable little sweets one wouldn't have given to a beggar child a few years ago! That's spoiling him! The tragedy of it!"

Fergus stirred uneasily in his creaking home-made chair. "Luxury is relative, although we have only learned it lately," he said. "But don't let it get you down, Wally."

"But it does get me down!" I retorted. "I know you and Lynda have carved out some strange kind of paradise for yourselves in the common hell we live in, but I cannot help wondering what Rex and a few thousand kiddies like him will think when they are old enough to know what we have done to them."

"We?" Fergus sounded argumentative.

"Yes, we! You, I and everyone else who survives. We asked for it, and got it. But it's so infernally unfair to them. Dash it, Fergus! it was their heritage more than ours."

"That conscience of yours must be a nasty companion," Fergus grinned. "Don't let it prod you, old boy. Be reasonable, and recognise that neither you nor I, personally, could have altered things one hair's breadth. Kismet!"

"Kismet be blowed!" I came back. "I doubt if in another twenty years the children who are growing up now will accept that explanation."

"Arguing can't help us, Wally—or them." I knew he was trying to turn me off the subject. It was a settled policy of both my sister and Fergus not to let me dwell on the works of the "Paramount Power."

But I felt I had to talk, if only for once. "Sorry old man!" I replied, "but it was the thought of the boy that set me going. This room, your shack here, epitomizes everything. That waste coal you are graciously permitted to buy; this chair you have made yourself; that table—and we stole the wood it

was built from; that synthetic muck that Lynda is using to knit undies for the boy, while they take all our wool; and you, mind you Fergus, are lucky in this luxury because you had the good fortune to have trained as a metallurgist, and they want your brains."

"It's you who have the right to grouse, Wally. Lyn worries about your camp life."

"Pah! what matter about me," I said. "We men can stand it, though the yoke does gall. I'm on day shift, not as an act of mercy, but because I have a certain value in these as a working animal," and I held out my blackened and calloused hands. "No, it's the Lyndas and the Rexes of our world who do the suffering. I tell you Fergus——"

Lynda's re-entry cut me short. She went to her chair quietly and took up her work. Then before her fingers began to weave she looked from one to the other of us. Then she smiled. "What is it that is so important I may not hear it?"

Fergus turned a sympathetic eye on me. "Sorry Lyn," I said. "We got talking about twenty-eight south and one hundred and twenty-nine east, and all that."

"Wally, why will you talk of it?" she gently, "it only hurts."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, "Don't I know how you two try to help. I do understand, and God knows I am grateful, but my dears, if I don't talk, do you imagine I don't think? That first day is with me in every waking hour."

Fergus looked, and I have no doubt felt, uncomfortable. He hates it to be known that he has been helping anyone. Lyn stretched out her hand, and patted my patched dungaree knee. "Talk of something else, Wally," she pleaded.

"I am sorry Lyn, for letting myself go," I said contritely. "But it was thinking of Rex and you that started me off. I was wondering what he would think later on."

"He'll stick it out, like two other men I know,"

she smiled.

"Well," I announced, "one thing I am determined on is that Rex will know the truth when he gets older. I have made up my mind to write the whole thing just as we saw it. If ever we get out of this mess it may be a lesson to remember."

They looked at one another, and I almost smiled at the concern in their faces. Their comment was characteristic of each. Said Lynda, her voice deep with feeling, "Why crucify yourself again, Wally?"

"A small price to pay if the lesson is learned," I replied.

From the practical angle Fergus put in, "And need I remind you of what the P.P. would do if they got hold of your literary efforts. Three minutes trial, three minutes to the nearest wall, and then—phut! Don't be a mug, Wally."

I laughed. "The case in a nutshell!"

"Besides," he went on, "Suppose you did write it you wouldn't have an earthly hope of doing anything with it."

"It would be worth doing even for the faint chance of getting it through to the next visit of the United States Commission of Inspection," I contended.

"You're right about it being a faint hope," Fergus growled. "Lord! It makes me sick to think how the P.P. hoodwinks those futile Commissions. And then our lords and masters have the nerve to publish their reports to tell us of the 'broad humanity of their administration.' I'd like to have five minutes up a dark lane with the American gent who wrote that phrase."

"Do you think they are really hoodwinked?" I asked Fergus. "They might be playing possum. You know the Yanks are not fools exactly, as a rule."

"If they're not," he retorted sourly, "those reports must be a salve to the national conscience. Anyway, it wouldn't make any difference to us."

Then Lynda returned to the attack. "Listen, Wally, why take the risk now. We have only twelve

years to endure before the evacuation. You could do it then."

"Evacuation!" I snorted. "Lynda, we've got to face the fact sooner or later. There is not going to be any evacuation."

"But the Treaty of Berlin!" she gasped, her glance going from me to Fergus.

He nodded his head. "I'm afraid Wally is right."

"But how could they——" her voice broke.

"Lyn, old girl," I said, "we must recognise now that so far as Australia is concerned, the Treaty of Berlin was a complete washout. At the time the Powers gave the P.P. twenty years' right of occupation during the period of rehabilitation, each of them knew it would be permanent. The clause was a sop to their consciences. Think for a moment! Who is going to enforce the evacuation obligation? Not Berlin or Rome—their people wouldn't allow another war, for one thing. Can Britain, even with the best will in the world? Russia has too much internal trouble to bother about anything else. And, as for the United States, they'll utter pious platitudes, and fall back on the national policy of non-intervention. No! we're finished!"

[Burton did less than justice to the United States. Washington was fully aware of the danger arising from the twenty years' occupation clause. It was with the object of ultimately enforcing it that the Pan-American Confederation was formed, which made the evacuation of Australia the leading plank in its policy of control of the Pacific—a policy that bore fruit in 1966.—Eds.]

"Yes," added Fergus, "and the deuce of it is that the P.P. can use the evidence of the American Commissions of Inspection to prove their justification for sitting tight. They are treating us with kindness and generosity, and we are repaying them with savage hostility, and are totally unfitted to govern ourselves."

"I'm afraid this is a nasty shock for you, Lynda," I said.

She smiled up at us both. "Not so much as you would think. I suppose we all thought it before, and have not put it into words."

That was like my sister. Her pluck was always unconquerable, and I never knew her try to dodge an issue, however disagreeable. I think the hard knocks only welded her closer to Fergus.

"I'm afraid," I said, "I'll have to make a move to the camp. My permit is only till 10.30, and the blighters will cancel it for keeps if I'm late."

"Wait," Lyn said, jumping up. "I have some scones."

"Not on your life," I laughed. "I'm not eating your scones. You two would give your hides to feed me, but you're not going to."

"Oh! Wally!" she was a little hurt at my refusal.

"Don't be sore with me, Lyn," I protested. "I know you want me to have them. If you and Fergus won't have them Rex must. He is more important than I am."

"But I made them for you," she pleaded.

"And I am sure you did. But——" my eyes fell on her knitting, "How many meals did you go without to buy that wretched wool substitute for towhead's undies? Now, the truth!"

Lyn looked guilty. "He must have his clothes."

"Surely!" I answered, "and therefore you and Fergus must develop a streak of lean in your physical bacon, and yet you want me to eat your scones. No, my dear girl! Honesty before social polish is my newest motto."

Fergus grinned at me, understanding. "He's a dour deil, Lyn, and it will take more than you to move him."

"Oh! You men!" She resigned herself to the inevitable. "But Wally, please don't write anything," she asked, returning womanlike to another problem.

"I'll give no promises, dear." I stood up, nerving myself for the real reason of my visit. "Lyn, I've something to say that will hurt a bit."

She stood silent, and waiting.

"I'm afraid I will have to cut out my visits to you—at least for a while."

She put out her hand in appeal.

"You know," I hurried on, "I'm mixed up in things we don't talk about, and the risk of bringing suspicion on you and Fergus is not fair. My coming here is too dangerous for you."

"But you're not suspect?" Her voice caught, and fear came to her eyes.

"Honestly, Lyn, I think not." I reassured her. "You know how careful we are, and the precautions we take. If they suspected me I should have been picked out before now. But the risk is always there. Sooner or later—well, we can't afford to take risks."

"Were you followed?" asked Fergus anxiously.

"Yes," I laughed, "but that is mere routine. Every man who is given leave at night has a trailer. Mine's cooling his heels outside, and, by jove! I'm going back through the swamp, and I'll make them cooler before he has finished with me."

"Well, perhaps," Lynda said wistfully, "you can send us messages through Bob Clifford."

I was afraid of that, but I had to tell them. "You will have to know sooner or later, Lyn. They got Clifford this afternoon."

Fergus rose to his feet with a curse on his lips, and he was a man who seldom used "language." Lyn covered her eyes with her hands. "Has he been——" The word would not come to her lips.

"No," I replied, "but it's almost worse. They have drafted him for the Yampi mines."

"Have you seen anything or is it hearsay?" asked Fergus.

"I saw him in the gang as they were being marched to the transport. We just looked at one another. It was too dangerous to give any sign of recognition. But I feel certain he knew that I understood," I explained.

"Did you hear what happened," asked Lyn. There

were tears in her eyes.

"Just the usual thing. He and about twenty-five others were called out at afternoon muster, and were marched to the transport direct. No trial or explanations. The yard Commandant announced to the muster that they had been drafted for Yampi."

"That cruiser business last week, I suppose," said Fergus, thoughtfully.

"Most likely," I replied. "But of course they never admit anything. Still, when a hole thirty feet long is blown below the waterline of a perfectly new 15,000 ton cruiser while she is lying at her moorings, we mustn't be surprised if some nasty-minded officer of the P.P. tries to connect us with the joyful event. Have you heard anything about it, Fergus?"

He shook his head. "You know I don't hobnob with the P.P., but I have picked up enough of the language to overhear that they are boiling with rage about their beastly ship. I think they must have lost about seventy men as well, from scraps of indignation I hear."

"And we'll pay the price, more or less," I added. "But it's worth it."

Lynda put her hand on my arm. "Wally were you——"

But Fergus cut her short. "No questions Lynda, now or ever. By heaven! Wally I'll help——"

"You'll do nothing of the kind," I interrupted. "Remember the rule, and it is cast iron, we'll have no married men in the game."

"But——" he began.

"No 'buts' old man," I persisted, "It is too unfair to the women to let you in. Remember what they did to Harry Bell's wife to make him speak, and they say that until she lost consciousness, she screamed to him not to tell."

"Ann Bell only did what any of us would do," said Lynda softly.. "Harry did a braver thing by keeping silent." Then she placed her hand through Fergus' arm and looked up at him with a queer little

smile on her lips and went on, "Darling, if you ever bought my life at that price I would spit in your face before I died of shame for my husband." And we both knew she meant it. But that is what the P.P. had made of our men and our women.

"Anyway Lyn, dear," I said, "You must see that I have to keep clear of you both."

She nodded. "I'll have to practise what I preach. Good-bye, dearest, and God guard you." She put her arms about me and kissed me.

Fergus came to the door with me. "About that trailer of yours," he whispered, "You won't——" he paused.

"No," I reassured him. "I had thought of it, but it would be too obvious. Not to-night at any rate. I know who he is, and we can do it some other time. I'll take him a dance in the swamp, and with luck he might get pneumonia. Anyway, we have him on the list of pests, and it's only a question of time before his name is struck off."

He wrung my hand. "Good night and good luck old man. Try to get news of yourself through to us."

"It's a promise," I replied, and walked off slowly towards the camp to give my follower time to sight me. It is a remarkable coincidence that four evenings later he was accidentally run down and killed by a motor lorry on the Maitland Road.

CHAPTER II.

When I made my boast that I would put the story of our tragedy into writing I had no idea that the job would prove so strenuous. Dodging the "blow-flies," as we call the P.P. spies in our camp home at Carrington, with its barbed wire walls and primitive housing, has been the least of my troubles since I began. Although the average camp population is 5,000 men, the authorities did not include a writing room among its amenities. Much less did they consider a supply of writing paper necessary. Letters from without are not regarded with favour by the powers that be. The few that reach us are carefully read and tested with chemicals for unauthorised communications before they are handed over—if ever. Letters outward bound are subject—few as they are, to an even more rigorous scrutiny. Such paper as I have collected so far has been obtained by methods which, in the early part of 1939, I would have regarded as criminal. To-day I look upon its acquisition as a game of chance with the odds against the player.

Now I have sufficient paper with which to begin, and two extremely illicit lead pencils, the problem arises to find a place in which to use them with any approach to comfort. Fortunately, I can trust my shack mates, though my excursion into literature does not add to their comfort—or safety for that matter. Perhaps a description of the camp will better explain the difficulties. Our shacks are laid out in orderly streets on low ground, that is a bog in winter and a dust pile in summer. Each iron shack is 10 ft. by 10 ft. and 8 ft. high. On the walls on either side of the door are fixed three superimposed bunks, 3 ft. wide.

The 4 ft. space between them is bare. Since we own nothing but the clothes we stand in, the absence of wardrobes is no hardship. Although there are six bunks in each shack the registered inhabitants number twelve. They are conducted on the Box and Cox System. The day shift sleeps in them at night and vice versa.

To the north we would have had a fine view of the Hunter were not the wharf that forms the boundary occupied by a barbed wire protected platform decorated with machine guns. They added a wire netting screen after some choice spirits among us knocked out a few of the machine gun guards with stones during the hours of darkness. To the east a similar platform screens the town of Newcastle from view, while the machine guns provide for a cross fire down the streets of the camp should the need arise—as it has on three occasions. The south side is built up with a maze of electrified wire, and on the west are the works once known as the Broken Hill Proprietary Steel Mills. The 200 yard passage between the camp and the mills where we work is also heavily protected on both sides by barbed wire lest we lose our way between the works and our camp.

However, I have found that, by leaving the door of our shack slightly open at night, a ray from the guard light nearest us gives sufficient light by which to write. Beyond inventing new adjectives to qualify the word "fool" my shack mates raise no objection to my writing. Anything done against rules is something of an entertainment to them, and as my activities amount to a capital offence they are prepared to put up with any inconvenience to help me. Indeed, when they learned the subject of my work, most of them became enthusiastic helpers, and I am indebted to them for supplying personal experiences and information I would not have obtained otherwise. There are men in the camp from every part of Australia. From among them I have been able to collect many details beyond the reach of my personal experience.

Should this crazy shorthand of mine ever come to be transcribed, my sympathies go out to him who undertakes the job. Whoever he may be, he can take my word for it that in the writing of it and in the concealment of the manuscript, a dozen men are risking their lives daily, until the time comes when we can find means to pass it on to an American Commission of Inspection, or failing that, convey it to the safekeeping of my brother-in-law, Fergus Graham.

One of the perennial sources of argument in the camp is the origin of our slavery. Strange as it may seem, there is very little bitterness in the disputes, nor is there much personal feeling. We have all gone beyond that stage. Hate and a cold implacable lust for vengeance there are in plenty, but it is all directed against the Paramount Power. Somehow, we all seem to recognise the fact that the blame cannot be laid at the door of any individual or any Government, or public body. As I said to Fergus Graham only a fortnight ago, each one of us must shoulder his share of the obliquy. Its root was in our own smug self-satisfaction. We wanted ease, we wanted a high standard of living, we wanted a white Australia, and we wanted to keep it for people of British birth only. We closed our eyes resolutely to the truth that the ease and the high standard of living had to be sacrificed if we were to hold the more precious portions of our heritage.

With that useless and tragic wisdom that comes after the event we can recognise now the warning after warning that went unheeded. Whoever tried to open our eyes was a warmonger or a scaremonger with an axe to grind. No public man dared raise his voice on the fallacy of high wages, vast expenditure on social welfare, or against our besotted addiction to sport. The Leftists, the "parlor pinks" and all their tribe arranged themselves with every form of pacifism—some sound, some rotten to the core—to oppose all attempts at adequate defence measures. In their minds defence represented militarism and

profiteering armament interests. And we were caught in the storm almost naked. Gad! but they have paid the price of finding out since then.

Even though we had been told early in 1939 what was brewing in the north, I doubt if we would have accepted the story as being within the bounds of possibility. I think we were a people of fundamentally decent instincts then, who would not believe it possible that other peoples would commit acts we would not permit to enter our own minds. Had any one man known the truth, and preached it from end to end of Australia, he would have been branded as a scaremonger. Put into words the great plot would seem too fantastic for credence.

We know now it was true. But then, how was it possible to believe that three Great Powers would conspire to kill and rob one. Was it credible that by carefully thought out plans, the attack, without warning, would be synchronised throughout the whole world. Even allowing this, would anyone dream that the sworn ally of the victim would desert its friend in the day of peril. But above all could anyone conceive the grim humor of one of the three bandit Powers double crossing the other two, and helping itself to the choicest spoils while the other two did the fighting. We in Australia are like the laughing hyena in that we have very little to laugh about. Nevertheless there is something to smile at in reflecting on the feelings of the two when they found that they had been swindled by their accomplice. It will be a lasting regret to me that what the two wolves said to the jackal when they learned the truth will not be known.

[Burton died too soon. All that the two wolves said to the jackal will be found in Peel and Everard's "The Struggle for the Pacific." They never forgave the "Paramount Power" for its treachery, and stood aside when the Pan-American Confederation took punitive action in 1966.—Eds.]

But our ignorance of what was actually coming

cannot be offered as an excuse. I belong to the generation that missed the first Great War that embodied the greatest joke of the ages—"the war to end war." Our parents, in disregarding the warnings, were caught off their guard in 1914, just as we were in 1939. But they had had sufficient sense to have every available man in Australia under some kind of military training. Their organisation was ready. But in 1939, with the whole world still feverishly piling up armaments, we were fiddling about with plants for war material, and entirely neglecting our man power. This in the face of the certainty that the next fight would be in the Pacific, and that Australia would be in the thick of it. I suppose it is natural for my generation to blame those doddering idiots of 1918 with their crazy policy of self determination for small nations. They hadn't the sense to see that in forming thousands of miles of new frontiers in Europe they were creating a new cause for war in every single mile of them. Then there were Germany left without a colony, and the League of Nations—almost as rich a joke as the war to end war. Queer that our civilisation of the 20th century was then as blind as one day old pups.

Looking back to the early months of 1939, our self complacency had something in it that now appears almost grotesque. Our trouble was that, being so far from Europe, we could not recognise that our own interests were as involved in events there as much as if we had been in the midst of them. It was our misfortune that we were the least military conscious people in the world. The first Great War was 20 years behind us. The "Diggers" were all ageing men. We youngsters knew they had been great fighters, but to us the fighting itself was a page of history rather than an actual fact. All their fighting had been done abroad. Such marks as the war had made in broken lives and homes had almost been effaced from memory. The war monuments were to us only stones. Our Australia seemed so

safe, so inviolable. Yet all the time we were hanging like a ripe fruit for any hand to pluck. It reminds me of those lines of Kipling in "The Ballad of the Clampherdown"—

"It was our warship 'Clampherdown'
That carried an armor-belt;
But fifty feet at stern and bow
Lay bare as the paunch of the Purser's sow,
To the hail of the Nordenfeldt."

Australia was like the Clampherdown. Everything outside the range of a few fort guns was "bare as the paunch of the purser's sow" to all comers. The armor-belt was narrow and weak, and our Clampherdown's guns were undermanned. But we appointed a lot of advisory councils.

God! the folly of it!

Spring was coming in with September—and so was the Paramount Power; a bare three weeks away. We were talking about such vital matters as football finals. I have tried often to remember any one thing worth doing in life that I did during September, 1939, before that Saturday morning. But I can remember nothing. I went to talkies I suppose; yarned about the coming yachting season or the surfing; went to the office and did my work. I remember the State Parliament was in recess, so I was having a fairly easy time at the office, because of it. I know Gwen—the first time I have written that name in nine years—was dividing her time between our boy and the garden of our home on Balmoral Heights, overlooking Middle Harbor. As I write a queer incident comes to my mind. I suppose I had jumped from a tram in Spit Road at the Stanton Street intersection a thousand times or more. But it was only on that Saturday that I really saw what a wonderful view through the Heads there was from the Stanton Street corner.

There is good cause why that memory rises clear cut from a host of blurred impressions.

But even before the first of the month every plan

in three nations for what was to follow had been completed to the last detail. They were only waiting for the dawning of Saturday, September 23. Even had we known then of the armada that left a Pacific base in three divisions, between the seventh and the eleventh of the month, it would not have made much difference to the result. The knowledge might have prolonged the agony for a week or two. Only one thing could have altered the course of events. It is one of those futile "ifs" of history. Had the two wolf powers known of the treachery to them contemplated by the jackal, they must have held their hands. They believed in the doctrine of honor among thieves, however, and were badly left. But since they were all bandits together, the wolves should not have been surprised at the bad faith of the jackal. It is possible that the Paramount Power had reason to believe that after pulling the chestnuts out of the fire it would have been left with the husks. In any case it was able to sit in at the Berlin Conference with all the trumps in its pocket so far as Australia was concerned.

[History proves that Burton's suggestion was correct. Despite their indignation towards the Paramount Power, it is abundantly clear that the two European powers fully intended to repudiate their engagements, and to curb the Paramount Power's ambitions in the Pacific.—Eds.]

CHAPTER III.

One of the strange and incomprehensible features of that first day is, that though I have prayed to forget the events of the afternoon, and cannot, I can remember so little of its earlier hours—those last uncounted hours of happiness for such a host of human beings. There seems to be a chasm of one moment between two eras—one second of time, but worlds apart. To show how little we value the gifts of peace, let me number the little handful of little daily things that I remember of the last six hours—then weigh them against the rest of my story.

Saturday, September 23, 1939, now known as "Bloody Saturday," was one of those perfect spring days that only Sydney can show. It was warm without being hot. There was scarcely a breath of wind and the sky was cloudless. I was down on the duty book to do a meeting in the Domain on Sunday afternoon, so I had my Saturday free. I cannot remember bathing, shaving or breakfast. I must have dawdled a good deal because I know I had to hurry when I left home. I had made an appointment at the office with Max Peters, who was giving me some standard roses, and I was to meet him at 10.30. Gwen was quite excited about them. She was washing the baby as I rushed out of the house pulling on my coat. As I reached the door she called out to me to bring home some talcum powder. It was then just about 10 o'clock, and I had no time to spare. I cannot even remember what frock she was wearing or what we talked about at breakfast, the last time—but one—I saw her.. The 25 minutes run into the city to Wynyard is a com-

plete blank. The day had brought out an unusual crowd even for Saturday morning, and it took me ten minutes to get across to the office in Castlereagh Street.

The usual Saturday quiet of a morning daily enveloped the building. Our floor, the third, was dead. In the subs' room I found Don Ringfield, our deputy chief of staff and our police roundsman, Billings, motionless, and intent on something on Don's table on which I threw my hat. Billings roared at me like the Bull of Bashan for a clumsy so and so nark. It appeared that my condemned hat had cost him sixpence. They were shooting flies with rubber bands at one shilling a pair. Honours were even, and I had ruined Billing's chance for a sitting shot. Come to think of it, their pastime reflected the state of the collective mind of the Commonwealth at the moment.

The next shooting both of them indulged in was not done with rubber bands, nor were flies their target.

I asked if Max had come in. Said Don with a wide derisive grin, "No roses for you this morning my boy. Your little playmate has gone out to the Hawkesbury on a job. Before he went—I rang him up—he explained that you would be expecting him."

"Why the Hawkesbury?" I asked.

"Well," Don drawled, "It appears, from information received, that some warped genius has blown up the railway bridge."

"Cut out the rotting, Don," I felt a little nettled. "What's it all about?"

Don was one of those exasperating men who adopt a pose of never being interested or moved by any event however unusual. He picked up a paper and glanced over it. "According to our correspondent at Brooklyn," he drawled, "at five ten this morning two spans at each end went sky high from their piers. That makes four spans out of seven—I should say the bridge is a washout."

"Rot!" I exclaimed. "Why should anyone want

to blow up the Hawkesbury bridge?"

"That, my young friend, is just what I have sent Max Peters, plus a photographer, to find out. Any objections?" He replaced the telegram on his table.

"It's a preposterous yarn," was my comment.

"Strange to say," replied Don, "I'm inclined to agree with you. So does Max for that matter. The language he used when I sent him out was enough to blow up the Harbour Bridge."

"Don't blame him," I said. "Did you ring The Dinker." The Dinker was our chief, and one who did not suffer fools gladly.

Don regarded me with a pained expression. "Wally, the Dinker is away hacking out divots on the Killara Club greens. Can you imagine what he would say if I called him in to tell him someone had blown up the Hawkesbury railway bridge? Be your age, laddie."

"It would be a bit thick," I laughed. "Anyway the evening rags will get the cream of it if it's true."

"My idea exactly," Don nodded, "so why worry?"

Just then Billings, who had left the room while we were talking, exploded back again. "Look here, Don," he barked. "I wish you would get one of the intellectuals to card the hide off the Water Board. The taps in the lav. are dry."

" 'Orrible disaster!" sneered Don. "You don't wash and you never drink water. Body o' me! What you got to howl about? Go and buy yourself a beer!"

I left them to it. It was, I thought, thank goodness none of my business. It must then have been about 11 o'clock. What I did for the next half hour I cannot remember. I know I bought the talcum powder. The next thing I remember was that I was walking just below Hunter Street in George Street.

Then it happened.

The whole city seemed to tremble from one roar

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of explosion. It was a crash that drowned the roar of traffic for a second. I can still see how the entire pedestrian traffic stopped dead in its tracks. Everyone was staring a question at his neighbour. A young fellow close to me said, "Gosh! That sounds like a powder magazine!"

An older man, wide eyed, retorted, "Magazine be blowed! That was an air bomb, and a dashed big one, too. I heard scores of them in China last year."

Even as he spoke there came two more, almost together. A pause, and then crash! crash! a dozen times in succession followed by a prolonged roar.

Intuition, a pressman's instinct, something clicked in my mind, and connected the Hawkesbury bridge with the riot. There was a taxi passing slowly. I sprang on to the footboard, and shouted at the driver, "Express office! Castlereagh Street! Drive like blazes!"

The whole city seemed rocking as I slipped in beside the driver. He went into Hunter Street on two wheels. The turn into Pitt Street almost dislocated my neck. We were blocked for a minute at the Market Street turn, but I don't think it took much more than three minutes before I was going up the office stairs three steps at a time.

Don Ringfield was alone in the subs' room. For once his pose of indifference had dropped. His face was white, and he was speaking in jerks. As I broke into the room he held up his hand to silence my question.

I heard, "Yes! yes! Are you sure? Five squadrons of seven each! Yes! Both of them?" His eyes registered bewildered consternation. "You saw the marks? Positive it was a red diamond in a black square? Good God, no! They couldn't! Impossible!" There was a pause, and Don broke in again. "But Ted, that's crazy; they must have come from somewhere! Yes! Yes! All right! I'm afraid so! Ring again the moment you see anything!" He slammed down the receiver, and sat staring at me with a dead white face between his hands.

"For the love o' mike, Don, spill it!" I demanded.

"Wally," he said, and his voice was hoarse, "Unless my brother Ted has gone completely bughouse, thirty-five big monoplanes have blown in from nowhere, and blasted the forts at the Heads out of existence."

"How from nowhere? It sounds crazy."

"He says they came straight in from dead east. He saw them come. There is not a ship in sight on the horizon. They were flying low over the water, and only took elevation about a mile out. They seemed to know every gun emplacement, and fairly plastered them with bombs. Then they turned, and went back the way they came. He says there isn't a whole pane of glass left in Manly."

"Did you say a red diamond on a black square?" I said breathlessly.

He nodded.

"And that means——!"

"It does my boy, and it means there's a fleet waiting below the horizon, and we're for it." He sat drumming with his fingers on the edge of the table.

"That accounts for the Hawkesbury bridge," I muttered.

Don stared at me without answering. Then suddenly he jumped to his feet and exclaimed, "Great scot! the water! Do you know anyone in the Water Board Office?"

I grabbed the telephone and dialled as well as my shaking fingers would let me. I almost squealed with impatience at the delay in getting my man. When I heard his voice, I said, "Burton, Express here, Williams, what's the dope about there being no water in the taps?"

"How on earth did you hear about it?" the voice demanded.

"Come clean!" I managed to laugh.

"Well, the 'Herald' has it, too! Every one of the 72 inch mains from Prospect Reservoir was blasted out in three places beyond the Liverpool Road early this morning. There's hell to pay here."

"Nothing to what there's going to be," I said as I hung up.

As I broke the news to Don he looked round the room, and said, "Well Wally, we're having a very nice day for it, whatever it may be. I suppose we carry on nobly—two blinkin' Casabiancas!"

"Rule me out for five minutes and then I'm with you." I picked up the telephone and dialled my home. Gwen herself, eager and anxious, answered. I cut short her excited questions about the explosions. "Listen, Gwen," I said earnestly, "Get the car out. Don't stop to pack, but throw anything you value that is small into the back seat. Take some milk and clothes for Bunty and yourself, and then get away as soon as you can. Go through French's Forest to Hornsby. Don't mind speed limits. Dodge back from Hornsby by the Galston Road to Windsor. Wait there, and I'll try to get to you."

"Wally, why?"

"Afraid the city will be bombarded. Don't go near it for a short cut. Don't go near it on any account. Have you any money?"

"Yes, about seven pounds, but what about you?"

"Don't ask questions. Get to it. I'll join you as soon as I can. Promise, Gwen!"

"All right. But are you sure?"

"Hope I'm wrong. But hurry and don't talk." I cut her off to ensure her obedience.

Said Don as I turned round, "Thank God I'm a bachelor, and all my people are at Yass, except Ted." As he was speaking, the 'phone rang again. He beat me in the grab for it.

I watched the tense expression on his face as he listened after saying, "Yes, Ted." It was his brother again. Presently he snapped, "Can't you make out their number?" "Certain to be!" "Less than half an hour!" "God only knows." "I would if I were you." "Get while the going's good." He hung up and said, "There's a whole mob of ships coming over

the horizon. Can't make out how many. Ted's going to do a bunk. Don't blame him!"

We looked blankly at one another. "Great Scot!" I said. "If they start shooting into the city! It's absolutely packed with people——"

"Yes, and it won't take them much more than half an hour to get in range," Don jerked out. "We might warn them."

"Someone's sure to be doing it!" The evening papers will have out extraordinaries," I said. "Try the wireless stations and the Town Hall."

We each took a telephone, but it was no use. Every number we tried was engaged—Parliament House among them. It was a good sign. Someone must be hard at it. I may say here that although it was barely 12 o'clock, the news was spreading like wild fire. Both the Government and the Town Hall had ordered all broadcasting stations to keep repeating an appeal to empty the city as soon as possible.

My anxiety about Gwen and Bunty increased. I wanted to make sure she had got away. I told Don—and added that if they bombarded the city the odds were against any newspapers coming out. Anyway I would come back and chance it after I had been home.

We made the office the rendezvous, and I left, Don saying he would stick it out, whatever might come.

When I reached the street it looked more like a disturbed ant hill than anything else. There was panic in the air, but the beginning of it only. Though the warnings were being broadcast, they had barely begun to take effect. But when I turned into Martin Place on my way to the Wynyard station, the confusion was apparent. I stopped for nothing, though excited voices were rising round me. I felt if the crowd once began to surge into the streets progress would be impossible. Remember, it was not much more than fifteen minutes since the sound of the first bombing had died down. It was not until I reached George Street, and was within 50 yards of the station that I encountered the first definite warning. A newsboy was running along the

opposite foot path with a news placard: WARNING!—EVACUATE CITY!!—HURRY!!! As his message caught my eye he decided to take his own advice, for he dropped his placard and sprang for a west bound tram.

By good luck, as I dodged through the fast-growing crowd in the underground entrance, I found a Spit tram on the point of starting. It was filled almost to capacity with an excited crowd of passengers, few of whom seemed to know or realise what had happened. As we passed out of the tunnel on to the Harbour Bridge, I turned my eyes down toward the Heads. The Harbour was flooded with sunshine. The whole scene was as quiet and untroubled as always—serene, peaceful and beautiful. Close to Garden Island I saw one of the cruisers, probably the Adelaide, but not the Canberra. Three destroyers were behind the island. A motor pinnace with a foaming wake was making towards the cruiser, and the last thing I noticed was a hoist of signal flags on her mast.

Never did a tram seem to move so slowly as that I had boarded. It stopped at every halt, and it was blocked by an increasing number of motor cars making towards the city. But even so the scene did not seem to warrant the sense of desperate anxiety that came over me. I was mentally calculating the possibilities, and the length of time to spare before the attack could come within range. Not for one minute did I doubt that it was coming. All the way I was turning my eyes back over the city wondering why no planes of ours were on their way. Still I hoped that we had an hour of grace.

When it came the shock was physical. We had just reached Cremorne junction when, from over the Clontarf rise, there came a series of sharp detonations, followed almost instantly by smashing explosions apparently close ahead of us. The tram halted with a jerk. There were not more than a dozen passengers left. A woman began to scream. We jumped off into the street. The explosions continued, and smoke began to

rise over the houses in the distance. As we stood there was a series of terrific bursts among the massed dwellings of Cremorne and Mosman.

Everyone seemed to be yelping at the motor man or the conductor. The street was full of excited people shouting at one another. I pressed to the front of the car and begged the motor man to go on.

He cried out, "What's it all about? What's happening?"

"War!" I shouted back. We could hardly make our voices heard. "It's a Cambasian fleet! They'll be shelling the city soon."

He cried back an utterly unprintable comment on the ancestry of all Cambasians. Then, "I'll take this car to the Spit if you men are game to come. We all began to scramble on board again. The tram started with a jolt, and raced towards Spit Junction.

There was a pause in the infernal racket of explosions. But it broke out again just as we turned into Spit Road, but the tram sped on until, just before we reached Awaba Street it stopped dead. The conductor who had gone forward to the front of the car called out, "No good, gents., the overhead wires have been busted somewhere."

I was down in a second and began running towards Stanton Street. Overhead something screeched and hooted, and I heard another series of crashes towards Cremorne.

Thick clouds of smoke drifting up from Balmoral Heights rowelled me on. Panic stricken women and children were in the street or their gardens. There was a little crowd staring blankly at the remains of a shattered house that had been blown half across the road. I scrambled over broken bricks and splintered fence and ran on. I passed a score of people running towards me, but just as I turned into Stanton Street my arm was caught by a man whose face was half masked with blood.

For the moment I did not recognise him. But when he called my name, I knew it was Bob Hicks, the odd

job man who came to tidy up my garden every Saturday.

"Bob! What's happened? Are you hurt?" I gasped.

"Only a little cut, sir," he replied. "It looks worse than it is."

"My wife, Bob! Did she get away?" I pulled my arm from his grasp and began to run.

He caught it again and held me. "For God's sake, Mr. Burton, don't go to your house. Don't go! You can't do any good," he pleaded earnestly.

"My wife! Tell me!"

He stared at me, and I knew what he was trying to say, "Tell me, man! Tell me!" I shouted at him.

"She was just getting into the car. The third shell fell between your house and Mackenzie's. For God's sake, Mr. Burton, don't go there."

But like a fool, I did not heed him, and, tearing my arm away, ran on.

CHAPTER IV.

In our sorrows and tragedies, we humans are individualists. We can never enter into the feelings of another, neither can another enter ours. Each must sit alone in his own little hell. When I began to write this story I intended to write every truth, however ghastly. I wanted to burn the story into the minds of all who read it; but when it comes to my own tragedy, I have not the courage, even after nine years, to go on. Even as I reached my home three pale and shaking friends tried to stop me. I will only say this about it. What was there could not be covered decently from human sight, and when I saw what was there I became sick. It was only one of the thousands of similar tragedies of that day. Some infinitely worse! But in all the days that have passed since then—more than 3,000 days—those few moments of that day have been with me; their memory is indelible, and that is my curse.

However, I have neither the inclination nor the need to dwell on that one incident—a trifling incident of that day. When the first shock of the blow passed, with its stunned bewilderment, there came on me an urge for action. To stay near the spot was impossible. I put aside the offers of a home from friends, whose manifold anxieties were as heavy on them as my own tragedy. I determined to make back to the office. It was at this time about a quarter to one o'clock. I walked to the Spit Road to try to find means by which to get back to the city. In the mood I was in the thought of danger was not even remotely present. When I reached the intersection of Stanton Street, I paused. The confusion was at its height. There must have been

thirty blazing homes in sight, and the thick black smoke was billowing up all round. Then I looked back. Out through the Heads, and about three miles off shore, steering north over still blue water, was a long line of great, squat, grey ships.

Here I must pause to explain what we only knew later. The first attack had been made by a squadron of ten cruisers, which directed part of their 6 inch gun fire on the thickly housed portions of the North Shore. Here Mosman and Cremorne had suffered more than Balmoral, where not more than 50 shells had fallen. In addition, the whole of Manly isthmus had been devastated. Bad as this was, it was slight compared with the appalling havoc that swept over Woollahra and Paddington on the South side, where the thickly-packed houses were plastered with flying death. There is no doubt that incendiary shells were being used, for scores of fires were blazing over the whole district, and there was no hope of checknig them, for the reservoirs of the high level water system were emptied within an hour.

What I saw passing towards the north was the main battle fleet—moving unhindered from shore or air. Of the ten, six were 45,000 ton monsters—the first proof we had of the truth of the rumors that they were being built in defiance of the Washington Treaty. I stood watching the grim turreted monsters, fascinated. They were stripped bare for battle, and even at the distance I could see their hooded batteries were all swung outward. At the bow of each was a low white line of foam. How long I stared I do not know. Probably it was only a few minutes before suddenly, the whole line was momentarily hidden by a billowing, black, thunder cloud of smoke that burst from each broadside. Then came the deafening detonation of that fleet salvo. There was an appreciable pause before I heard the echoes of the explosion of the shells come in, booming, from the city.

I did not realise it then; but at the moment nearly 100 16-inch shells had swept from the sky and burst

in the heart of the crowded city. The smoke of the salvo had cleared almost immediately, though a dim mist veiled the gray hulls. Then the ships began independent firing by turrets. Why? Later that day I knew. In the midst of the horror that had been the city I came on a blue jacket from the Canberra. He had been on shore leave. Said he, "Believe me, mister, the cows had someone ashore spotting for them. I was down at Fort Macquarie waiting to go off, and, you could see them feeling for the Canberra, till they got her. They couldn't ha' done it any other way. And when they found her they smothered her with heavy stuff. She'd dropped her mooring, and was under way, but they got her all the same. She didn't have a dog's show. Something must ha' got one of the magazines. The explosion sat me back hard on the pavement."

[Burton's blue jacket was right in his guess. Marsden, in his "Australian Tragedy," has it on the authority of the naval officers of the Paramount Power that they had more than 50 fixed and portable wireless stations on shore in communication with their fleet. The portable stations were on covered motor lorries which kept to the high ground overlooking the harbour and city. These spotted for the gunners, and directed the fire. In the chaos that reigned on September 23, there was no risk attaching to these agents. These wireless stations were never really eradicated, though most of them were detected and destroyed eventually. But until the end, the naval arm was kept fully informed of troop movements. These stations account for the frightful accuracy of the fire on "Bloody Saturday," and for the irreparable damage that was done.—Eds.]

As I stood watching, a car pulled up beside me. In it was a man I knew well, Jeff Gage. He sprang out. He was almost incoherent from anxiety. He had been out fishing, and had hurried back at the sound of the first bombing. He had just reached home to learn that his wife and two daughters had gone into the city. I warned him that the chance of getting

through was slight, but that I would gladly go with him. Gage had, apparently, not heard of my loss, but was too preoccupied with his own trouble to notice my silence. It was a nightmare drive. Behind us all the time we heard the crash of the great guns from the sea, which were echoed by the explosion of the shells in the city, from which dense smoke was rising. We went by back streets as the tram line was practically impassable.

Eventually when we reached the Pacific Highway and tried to turn south to the Harbour Bridge, we found the road blocked by a dense volume of outward bound motor traffic, frantic with haste, which would stop for no man. We had to leave the car, and move on foot as best we could. It was a risky walk, because in their panic the cars were taking the footpaths. No man stopped for word with his fellows. Near Mount Street we came on a solitary policeman who was seeing more traffic violations in a minute than he had seen before in his life. But he was sticking to his post. He warned us that we were mad to go on, and that the city was in ruins. So far as he knew the Bridge had not been hit or the road traffic would have stopped. He told us he had tried to get news by telephone, but could tell us of nothing but what had passed before his eyes.

By this time Gage was almost frantic with anxiety. My attempts to try and reassure him that his people might have already got away were useless. Suddenly the motor traffic thinned out. It was only then we noticed what should have attracted our attention before: there were no people on foot coming from the city. We hurried on towards the Bridge. As we approached we could see that it was still intact. The firing had died down. It had taken us nearly an hour to cover the mile from where we left the car to the bridge head. It was absolutely deserted. When, between running and trotting, we were half way across we saw the reason for the desertion. A shell, probably intended for the bridge itself, had completely wrecked

the steel approach between the pylons and the causeway. Beside the wreckage a block of buildings in Lower Fort Street was burning furiously. Behind, vast clouds of smoke were rising above the city, and were blotting out the sun.

When we reached the spot the spectacle was sickening. Among the wreckage, and beyond on the unbroken bridge, were remains of motor cars and humanity that had been caught by the blast of the explosion. We were able, however, to crawl down among the broken decking, and reach the ground near the Mining Museum, where George Street turns under the bridge.

Here we paused to discuss our plans. I had no heart for anything. To me, even the destruction in the city was at the moment a lesser event than my own grief. I was ready to fall in with anything Gage wished, to take my mind off my own troubles. Finally we decided to try to reach the Town Hall, where perhaps there might be some kind of organisation. I looked at my watch, and it was then ten minutes past three, but it seemed three days since I had parted from Don Ringfield.

From where we stood, except for the wreckage behind us there was no sign of the effect of the bombardment, the thick smoke that overhung the city hid everything. Just as we turned to go we were halted by the sound of planes racing towards us. Turning, we saw them in wedge formations of five. There were five of them, flying at not more than 2,000 feet, as though to show their contempt. I don't think Gage knew he was shaking his fist at them and cursing them. From somewhere came a clear bark of a gun, and we saw the burst of a shell among them. That was the first shot of defence that had been fired. There were a dozen or fifteen bursts, very close, but the planes were passing almost overhead before the smoke of the shells drifted away.

We turned and hurried towards the city. We had not gone 200 yards when we heard the crash of explosions behind us. "They're after the Cockatoo dock,"

gasped Gage. But we knew later they had other targets. They were bombing the great fuel tanks belonging to the oil companies on Ballast Point, and Berry's Bay. Again and again came the crash of their devastation that turned the harbour beyond the Bridge into an inferno as thousands of gallons of flaming oil spread from the wrecked tanks over the water, and blotted out land and water alike under rolling masses of black smoke.

The desertion of the street was its strangest feature. Four trams stood in a line, empty, opposite the Mining Museum. It was not until we reached the intersection of Harrington Street that we encountered a human being. Here a well-dressed man stood beside a car in which was a young woman, evidently in a state of collapse. With him were a dozen men, apparently labourers. They were talking in low voices as we joined them. One was saying, "But where are our fighting planes, even if they have knocked out the guns?" They took little or no notice of our arrival.

Gage asked if the way were open towards the Town Hall. One of them said, "You might get as far as Grosvenor Street, boss, but unless you're thinking of suicide you won't go any further."

The car owner put in, "I've tried every way, and they're all blocked."

"Are the ferries running?" I asked.

One of the men spat and laughed shortly. "There's nothing running in Sydney but the people who had the luck to get while the going was good, and I'll bet they're running yet." Then he added, "Wish I'd the luck to be with them."

While we were speaking the planes came overhead again through the smoke. They made towards Double Bay, evidently to avoid the anti-aircraft gun. In a minute or two they were invisible in the smoke towards Bondi.

"What about Macquarie Street?" asked Gage.

The car owner looked over his shoulder at the moaning figure huddled in the back seat. "I tried that," he said in a low voice. "Thousands of people made out of the side streets into the Botanic Gardens and the Domain. Twenty or thirty of the big shells burst over and among them." He passed his hand over his eyes. "It's a shambles. God! It's awful! They are spread out in masses, and the injured are shrieking. The Mitchell Library and Parliament House escaped, but one wing of the hospital is down, and the State Insurance building and the Law Courts are flat. There isn't a building standing on the West side of the street."

Gage turned to me. "I am going to try for the Town Hall by way of Clarence Street; we might get through."

I nodded. It was a matter of indifference to me.

One of the men called out as we turned away, "You're a pair of lunatics. You won't get through."

We hurried along Harrington Street, meeting only a few people who scuttled by and who took no notice of us. As we went the smoke grew denser. As we reached Wynyard Square, and turned up to York Street, we could see it ablaze from end to end. People lying on the pavement by St. Phillips Church cried to us for help, but we pressed on.

Gage's had been a good guess. Clarence Street seemed clear, but it was a mad journey. Between Barrack Street and Market Street, there were burning buildings on both sides, and we were almost suffocated by smoke. Three times we had to scramble over piles of fallen masonry. Again and again we encountered what had been human beings. At King Street there had evidently been a traffic jam, because a tangled mass, the remains of motor cars and trams, was still smouldering, where a shell burst had hurled them into a common chaos. It took us a quarter of an hour to pass over the dreadful heap of debris. And from the sounds we knew many people were still alive and suffering among it.

Gage's instinct served him well, because a little after four o'clock we reached Druitt Street, to find the Town

Hall miraculously untouched. St. Andrew's also seemed to have escaped damage.

After the horrible experience of our journey, the peace of the Town Hall seemed almost too good to be true. In the vestibule there were thirty or forty men in small groups. They were all talking quietly, but with intense earnestness. I left Gage to his own devices for I felt sure I could be of no help. Actually, I heard later that he had recovered his family two days afterward at Katoomba. From what I heard in the following January, I feel he would have been happier if they had been among those lucky ones who were under the ruins of the city.

In the little groups I recognised many a good man. I felt that here would be the beginning of order from the chaos around. Talking to a Supreme Court Judge, who was taking notes, was the chief of police, who was smothered in dust, and had one hand tied up in a handkerchief. There were lawyers, business men, and three doctors of fame. Turning, to my satisfaction my eyes fell on Don Ringfield and the Dinker. They, too, had seen me, and left their group.

Don was about to make some jest, but I think he read my face. He got as far as "Did you——?" and stopped awkwardly. I shook my head.

"I was too late, Don." I was able to keep my voice steady.

They looked at one another. "They're—— " Everything was in the word the Dinker spoke.

"One of the first shells," I replied.

Thank goodness they understood, and did not try to say anything. The hands they gave me were enough.

By a common consent we turned from the subject. "How about the office?" I asked.

The Dinker summoned up a twisted grin. "Our jobs and the office vanished together. Don and I missed vanishing with them by a cat's whisker."

"It must have been hell!" I commented.

"Wally," said Don, "I don't know what you've

seen, but just before the first salvo arrived, the streets were a packed mass of milling, panic-stricken people mixed up with the motor and tram traffic. And then it seemed as though a hundred earthquakes struck in."

"They didn't fall straight," Dinker explained. "They came at an angle, and mostly burst low down throwing the walls out on the struggling mass of human life."

"How on earth did you escape?" I asked.

"That was The Dinker's inspiration," Don answered. "We were dodging walls, and trying to keep our feet, when we came to where the Mayfair Theatre had been. Dink said they didn't hit twice in the same place, and we went and sat on a hill of wreckage till it stopped."

"Did you know Mosman and Darlinghurst and Paddington are blazing?" I asked.

The Dinker nodded. "We just heard, but there is worse than that," he added.

"How worse?" I demanded.

"It's been a hellishly clever job. The Richmond Aerodrome was washed up with time bombs just as the Hawkesbury Bridge was, about 5 o'clock. There is only one plane left fit for service. All the water is cut off from the Prospect Reservoir, and the entire sewerage service is out of commission.

"And one of the first things they did was to scupper the Bunnerong electricity works. Blew it to a scrap heap in ten minutes," added Don.

"Mason, the Chief Secretary, was telling us, too, that at Canberra they're in no end of a stew because since last night they can get no communication of any kind either from West Australia or Darwin."

"Any news from outside?" I asked.

"Nothing, so we hear," Don said. "Great Scot! We seem to be mopped up without a hit back."

We stared at one another helplessly. In reply to my question, The Dinker told me that the Lord Mayor and the Premier were in conference on some plan to organise Red Cross work, and aid for the homeless.

There must be thousands of injured here and in the suburbs untended. Then there would also be the necessity of recovering bodies, and preventing looting. "There is some form of sanitary system to be organised or we'll have the place rotten with disease," he added.

Here Mason passed again, and told Dink that Melbourne was untouched, and that the R.A.F. from Point Cook was on its way here.

"Well," I said, "I came in to offer for any job as long as it's work—sanitary if they like."

"We're with you, Wally; let's hang round till something starts."

Almost at the same moment the building shook to the crash of an explosion, and the shelling recommenced.

CHAPTER V.

For more than half an hour, for the second time that day, destruction and devastation swept across the doomed city. This time only four of the battleships and six cruisers participated, the others had disappeared. The fire was deliberate and purposeful. Comparatively few shells fell in the already ruined area. But the district round the Central Station and Redfern, Petersham and further back, Balmain, were drenched with fire by the heavy guns. To the east the still undamaged areas, both north and south of the harbour, were being pelted by the cruisers. With systematic deviltry, every heavily populated area was picked out in turn. When, by half-past five the firing ceased, practically all the inner residential and industrial districts were a blazing desolation. We heard no other sound of war that day until just about sunset when the rumble of a great explosion far to seaward came to our ears. We did not learn until long afterwards that it was the last salute to a very gallant gentleman who had sold his life at a price the enemy could ill afford to pay—but they paid it.

So far I have told the story as it appeared to me only. The rest we learned piecemeal over several days. It must be remembered that on the afternoon of September 23, for the time being, in the chaos that reigned, Sydney was completely isolated. Every form of communication had been destroyed, and even had it not been, there were few in the city who had thought for anything but their own safety. Refugees in thousands who had escaped along the main highways had spread a story so terrible that at first it was thought to be the outcome of hysterical panic. Wild as it sounded,

however, in the various State capitals, it was far short of the truth.

The Federal Parliament was in recess, and the only member of the Cabinet in residence in Canberra was the Prime Minister. That morning at six o'clock he had been aroused to read two cable messages that had arrived within ten minutes of one another. One, from London, conveyed the startling notice that an unprovoked air and naval attack had been made on Britain, without a formal declaration of war, by three Great Powers. The second was a mutilated wireless message from Singapore; but there was sufficient in it to convey the ominous warning that the British Pacific naval force had suffered a serious reverse from an unheralded attack.

Knowing that several of the Ministers were in Melbourne, the Prime Minister acted promptly. Leaving his secretary to communicate immediately by telephone with the heads of the Defence force, and the members of the Cabinet to meet him in Melbourne, he ordered a plane to be in readiness for him, and by seven o'clock was on the way south. It was not until after he left that the serious news of the destruction of the R.A.F. hangars at Richmond had reached Canberra. By some unaccountable delay the reports of the destruction of the Sydney water supply and the railway bridge at Hawkesbury did not reach Melbourne until nearly midday. These had been forwarded at the moment the State Government had received news that a state of war existed. In Melbourne, the responsible authorities had acted promptly by anticipating the Cabinet's instruction by telegraphing warning of probable mobilisation orders to all military centres. These had been sent out by half past nine. The news had actually been broadcast from some stations in Melbourne by 10.30.

Meanwhile, attempts to get into contact with Singapore by wireless had been only partially successful. It was not until 2 p.m. that the full extent of the naval disaster in the East was known. The tidings drove

home to the Government the fact that Australia must stand alone. Still, in those early hours it had not entered any mind that there would be no period of grace, and that the hour of trial had already struck. Reports from the Postal Department and from wireless stations that all communication from the West had ceased caused surprise and annoyance, but no apprehension. No one dreamed that by daylight that morning Western Australia had ceased to be part of the Commonwealth, and was in the hands of an alien race.

But while in Melbourne the various councils of Defence, Supply, Transport and Communication were working with feverish energy to bring their emergency regulations into effect, they had been overwhelmed by the news from Sydney. We did not recognise at the time, though the military authorities suspected the truth, that the plan of the enemy was one of ruthless terrorism of the eastern States to prevent any possibility of interference with their initial occupation of the West, that they were determined was to be permanent. The wrecking of Sydney was but the first step in this policy of frightfulness, designed to paralyse our organisation, and to obliterate as far as possible our most essential defence industries.

How complete was the knowledge of our weak points, both in defence and industry, was revealed by the cold blooded thoroughness with which the enemy went about their work of devastation. Their aim was to cow Australia by ruthless slaughter and destruction. They relied on the shock of the surprise of the first stunning blow on Sydney to carry it out without serious opposition. That night as far as Ashfield in the West, Willoughly to the North, and Botany to the South, Sydney was in flames, and the glare was visible from Port Kembla, and even further south. The more important key positions had been given especial attention. One cruiser had stood off Long Bay, and systematically pounded the electric power plant at Bunnerong to a scrap heap across the headland. In the second

air attack at three o'clock, the only electric plant left, that at White Bay, was one objective which was fortunately missed by three bombs. It must have been the only failure of the attack, because the three great oil fuel storage plants, the coaling station at Ball's Head, and the wharves at Darling Harbour, with the Pyrmont Bridge, were showered with incendiary bombs. During the second bombardment, the Cockatoo Island yard was struck repeatedly by 16 inch shells, and there can be no doubt but that this fire was directed by an enemy agent ashore; as was that on the Canberra and on the City generally in the earlier attack.

It was from Don Ringfield and others I heard of the scenes in the city during the first attack. It must have been within a few minutes after I left for Balmoral that the stampede from the city began, through the insistent warnings that were broadcast. Shops and offices emptied their staffs and customers into the streets in panic-stricken mobs. All sense and decency was lost in the wild rush for trams, cars and the underground railway. As early as this the police made some attempt to stop all inward traffic. Trams were stormed and men risked death by climbing on the roofs. To every outward tram, people clung like swarms of bees. The weaker were dragged off by the stronger. In less than a quarter of an hour, the whole traffic system was in chaos. Motor owners took all comers who could find room, even on the car bonnets, but the pace was slow because of the milling panic-stricken crowds, each unit of which was striving for his own course, regardless of others.

Hundreds of cars and trams must have got clear before the blow fell. The Parramatta road was one dense stream of cars. But the streets were still crowded by a shouting, struggling throng when the first salvo swooped into the heart of the city, filling the narrow streets with crashing masonry and blasting the lives from thousands. One horror was in the underground stations. At Wynyard, a shell crashed through the vestibule that was packed with humanity.

People crowded in the tunnels stampeded. The lights went out and horror went on in the dark where the fallen were trampled to death. Similar scenes took place at the Town Hall station. Then, to add to the terror, fires broke out in a hundred places. By night, in the space of a mile and a half between Circular Quay and the Central Station, and the half mile between the Domain and Essex Street, more than 60 per cent. of the buildings were destroyed, while all the streets were in flames.

Conditions in the densely populated areas from Bondi into the City, were infinitely worse. In an area of five miles long by two miles deep, the fire of the attackers had been especially concentrated. In this space there are normally more than 350,000 inhabitants. It was not until days after that any conception of the toll of death could be formed. On the North Shore conditions were almost as bad. The inhuman ferocity of the policy of frightfulness was being carried out to the letter.

It will be seen then, that with the whole population of the city either dead, injured or panic stricken; with all forms of transport and communication shattered and with all civil authority either completely disorganised or non-existent, the council at the Town Hall was faced with an appalling task and responsibility. Every man, woman and child who could fly from the stricken area had gone into camp in the national parks and other outlying districts where their food and control presented another pressing problem. At the moment, too, there was not the remotest knowledge of the extent of the catastrophe or its needs. It was not until nine o'clock that night that the Lord Mayor had been able to give the authorities in Melbourne some rough idea of our requirements. There must, then, have been more than 100,000 injured demanding immediate attention, and there were only three doctors available at the moment.

The Dinker, Don, and I found an Italian restaurant still doing business in one of the few unsmashed areas.

I had only then realised my hunger. Antonio demanded 10/- each for 2/- worth of food. We gave him 6/-, and Don gave him his left in the jaw. He probably would have received more in his face and less in his pocket had we thoroughly understood the international situation. When we returned to the Town Hall we found the number of volunteers had grown. More than a dozen more doctors had appeared, and a temporary hospital was formed at St. Andrew's.

I, with others, was drafted to the Domain as a stretcher bearer. God forbid that I should ever see another such night. The nurses in the hospital had stuck to their posts, and had been giving first-aid to the crowd of victims with such medical help as was available, where the dead outnumbered the living by five to one. I do not excuse myself but, until then I had completely forgotten the existence of my sister, Lynda, who was one of the nurses. There was no need for lights, for flames for miles around made the place as bright almost as day. They had formed an emergency hospital in Parliament House, and here a group of doctors, mostly young, were carrying out heroic and desperate work. The Domain had been crowded with hordes of panic-stricken refugees, when a broadside of shells burst over it. The only advantage I gained from this, and the days that followed, was that they hardened my mind and steeled my nerves for things I did later when the chance came. To be merciful we had to be merciless. Only those who showed hopes for recovery were removed from the ground. For the others there was only morphia to quieten their agony. But they were so many and we helpers so few. One had only to experience having to pass by a mother forgetting her own torture, to plead for our help for a broken child, to understand the hate that took root in those hours.

It was somewhere towards morning that, while making one of my endless rounds with an empty stretcher that had become sodden with blood, I heard a woman's voice call my name from the shadow of a tree, and

I found Lynda. She had been working in that hell of pain since one o'clock. With her was a loosely knit angular Scot, with a tow head and a beaky nose. He was acting as her volunteer dresser and orderly, and told me his name was Fergus Graham. They say marriages are made in Heaven. If that be so Heaven takes some queer means to bring them about. Fergus told me later that he was pinned down by a motor car that was on fire, but was otherwise unhurt. Lynda had found him in Macquarie Street, and had levered up the car enough for him to drag himself clear.

My co-bearer, a young divinity student, went mad during the night, and tried to strangle me. I had to quieten him with a slat from a seat that was handy. I didn't blame him for losing his reason. I must have been pretty near to it myself. We were seeing things and doings things that are not meant for men to see or do. I was annoyed though, at the manifestation of his complaint. Thereafter, for the two days following, Fergus was my fellow stretcher bearer. It was during those two days I learned to know him. It was not until the Monday night that we had our first spell. Then nature took charge. We both went to sleep beside the stretcher somewhere near the remains of the Commonwealth Bank. The military took over the ruins next day. But by then there were no more living among them. They had either been removed or not—mostly not.

CHAPTER VI.

It was about time some strong authority had taken over. While many people returned to help, those ghouls that infest every community also put in an appearance, robbing the dead and looting. Some worked in groups, and there were some unclean episodes when they were interfered with. Lives had been lost on both sides. Had I been told on the Friday that on Monday I should kill a man with a brick and feel better for it, I should have regarded the suggestion as more improbable even than libellous. Yet on three occasions on the Monday Fergus and I came on isolated vermin, redhanded. It was dirty work, but we did not hesitate. Fergus proved to be a purposeful man with his hands. Our efforts at summary justice seemed both natural and quite in order. I remember well how pleased we were to guide a young officer in charge of a squad of men to where we knew a gang of the brutes were working. I do not know what his orders were, but when he had rounded them up the proceedings were wholly informal, but entirely satisfactory from our point of view. We found them in the remains of a lane off Pitt Street. There must have been £20,000 of jewellery in their clothes that the sergeant collected before the final ceremony.

The coming of the military power, with martial law to back it, ended that first phase so far as Fergus and I were concerned. It also brought order where chaos had reigned.

During Sunday and Monday rumour of fantastic dimension had been rife. During that time we had not slept, unless we slept on our feet. The only pause in our heartbreaking job was to snatch meals that some

splendid women had prepared for the Red Cross workers. We were too weary and too indifferent to trouble about news. There were no newspapers anyway. It was not until the Tuesday morning that I saw a Melbourne newspaper at the Town Hall, and learned of the catastrophes in the interval.

It appears that after the first bombardment of Sydney, the enemy fleet had divided, leaving a force outside Sydney Harbour sufficient to hold our naval units there. One squadron had gone North with one of two aircraft carriers.

Newcastle had been warned, and Fort Scratchley was on the alert. There was no surprise, therefore, when about five o'clock in the afternoon the roar of approaching bombing planes came in from the east. Then followed the first real fighting. One squadron of Air Force planes from Brisbane took on the overwhelming number of the attacking force, while the second dashed to attack the fleet that lay in waiting some fifteen miles out to sea. This move drew off part of the attack, and the anti-aircraft guns of the Fort got their chance.

It was a hopeless fight against numbers. Between the aircraft and the guns they accounted for eleven enemy planes. But only two units from our two squadrons returned after discharging their bombs and exhausting their machine gun ammunition. The Fort that had got the range of the fleet, began firing, and the fleet responded. But with the air opposition gone, the enemy planes, aided by the fire from the sea, smothered the fort with high explosive shells and gas. In less than twenty minutes from the first shot it was over, and the grim fleet stood in towards the shore. But there was one cruiser missing. That was the only loss admitted by the enemy, though one of the battleships was damaged.

Then as night began to fall there took place a repetition of the disaster at Sydney. The fleet stood off some five miles from Nobby's Head, and began a slow deliberate fire with but one objective—the Broken

Hill Proprietary's great steel works, and those adjoining it. For half an hour 16, 12 and 6 inch shells crashed down on the doomed area. Recognising what was coming the management had withdrawn all men from the mills so that the loss of life was nil. But by dark the plant that had cost £14,000,000 was not worth that many pence.

We in the camp here at Carrington know how effective that bombardment had been. Four years later the Paramount Power put us on to clean up the mess and salvage what was left before they re-erected the mills. The only satisfaction we got out of it was in hearing their engineers curse their Navy for the thoroughness of the job. But at the time it meant that the second largest steel works in the British Empire was in ruins and useless—one of the principal sources of Australia's steel had gone.

While the bombardment was going on, four destroyers separated from the fleet and ran for Port Hunter. They turned into the channel with the familiarity of a man entering his own home. Then—it was an act of patriotic folly—the Newcastle battalion of infantry began to rake the decks of the destroyers with rifle fire and machine-gun fire from behind the King's wharf and the coal shoots on the water front. Swinging their guns inshore the destroyers blazed into the town as they passed further into the basin for room to manouevre. Here, raking the wharf with machine guns and the town with their 18 pounders, they turned and ran the gauntlet again for the open sea. Fifteen minutes later the planes were back again, and, aided by the guns from the cruisers that had stood away to the north, firing over the breakwater, they devastated the town and the water front.

Dusk was falling as the destroyers returned, none saying them nay. They took possession of a loaded oil tanker that had arrived that morning, and was lying close to the Dyke. The tanker was evidently the reason for their incursion. One remained in the fairway, the second appeared to be arranging for the destruction of two colliers, while the remaining pair ranged up beside the tanker. Then retribution overtook them. From somewhere near Adamastown, a battery of field artillery came into action, ranging on the destroyer in the fairway, which was struck by four out of six shells. A second salvo put her out of control, and as she drifted towards the Ferry wharf the second hastened to her aid and drew the entire fire of the hidden battery, the observers for which were giving the range to a yard. Both vessels were replying at random, but the two working on the tanker took no notice. The second destroyer ceased firing and bent all her energies on attempting to take the damaged consort in tow, when with a roar that shook the burning town she blew up.

Even then the two at the tanker did not relinquish their efforts. Their aim was to get it out under its own power, but this was frustrated by the battery turning its guns on the three vessels. A moment later the tanker was ablaze, and, as one of the destroyers shot from behind her, making for the channel, the second could be seen making desperate efforts to release herself from her now terrible charge. Again the battery changed its target for that dashing to make its escape. Luck favoured the fugitive, and in a few minutes it disappeared in the dusk, followed by a savage but ineffective fire. Cascading flames from the tanker enveloped the last of the three doomed invaders. Several men were seen to spring overboard, but the ebbing tide drew them towards the entrance. Ten minutes later she, too, blew up beside the tanker, in tornado of flame that deluged the wharves and harbour for hundreds of yards round. Next morning seventeen survivors from the first destroyer surrendered, and were saved from being lynched by an infuriated people only by rigorous action by the military authorities.

But three destroyers and eleven fighting planes was a small price for the raiders to pay for the irrepar-

able damage they had inflicted on the chief defence industry of the Commonwealth.

I may say here that some of the first scrap steel we used in the new works for the open hearth furnaces some six years later was that taken from the wreck of the first destroyer, which sank near Stockton Ferry.

That night not a light was shown on the Australian coast. All shipping within range that had not been snapped up by the enemy had been warned of the danger. But there was evidence of enemy destroyers close inshore during the darkness, and that the fleet still watched outside. Nevertheless, the two divisions must have changed stations, because by morning it was the main battle fleet that appeared on the horizon off Port Kembla at daylight.

That the attack would be made was recognised by the authorities as inevitable. Without a gun to protect it, Kembla was naked to the open sea. Along its front were placed the vitally important non-ferrous metal works and the plant of the great Australian Steel Works, second only to those of Newcastle. With these out of the picture the Commonwealth's greatest sources of munitions would be cut off. At Illawarra Lake sea planes lay waiting, and at a temporary aerodrome a few miles behind the lake, a score of bombers had taken up a position.

Before dawn a seaplane, reconnoitring, discovered the enemy fleet steaming slowly without lights some twenty miles from the shore, and slightly to the north east of the Port. The first advantage of surprise had been lost to the raiders. For this reason they had stationed their plane carrier some 20 miles to eastward. Knowing their presence had been detected, and that the sole attack could come from the air, the fleet, in line ahead, made full speed to come within range by daylight. The message from the scout sent thirty air-craft, ranging for elevation, from the lake and the aerodrome. Doubtless the fleet had sent similar orders to its air support, and at the same time the aircraft from the battleships and cruisers took wing! In the

growing light the air was throbbing with the drone of propellers.

Then the cruisers, rushing shoreward in broken formation, picked up the headland and opened fire. Almost simultaneously, the battle in the air began. Evidently the ranges were being passed back to the battleships, which, through the hurricane of conflict above and the explosion of bombs around them, turned their great guns shoreward. Over and short at first, the earlier salvoes blasted the town and harbour, but the growing light and shortening range made the target a certain mark for the gunners.

Volcanoes of smoke and flames rose from among the buildings along the water front, and shattered the beautiful machinery of the non-ferrous works on which so much depended. This was the source of all copper and brass work for munitions, and of all our insulated cable and telephone wires essential to field communication. To the right a hurricane of destruction fell upon the steel mills. With their main batteries and their anti-aircraft guns blazing and indifferent to turmoil of wing overhead, the raiding fleet carried out its work of devastation. One cruiser close inshore was sinking by the head, and a second was drifting out of control enveloped in smoke. From the shore a light breeze was carrying the thick black smoke to sea. Plane after plane plunged downward from above, spinning behind it a streak of flame and smoke as it crashed into the sea. A blast of fire sprang from the bows of one of the battleships where a bomb struck her. She turned out of the fight to the east. Immediately afterwards in response to orders, the fleet turned away at full speed for the east, while the destroyers emitted a smoke screen that surrounded them. Before they left the destroyers made desperate efforts to reach the burning cruiser, but finally turned away after picking up the men who, evidently by order, had abandoned her. Five minutes later her decks and guns roared skyward, and when the smoke cleared the hull had disappeared. No doubt the explosion was deliberately

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caused to prevent her from falling into our hands.

It was small satisfaction to Australia that 15 enemy aircraft and two cruisers had been the price of the raid, at a loss of one seaplane and two bombers. The real loss had been in the wrecked and chaotic mass that had been, an hour earlier, among our most valuable essential possessions. Within 24 hours from the outbreak of the raid Sydney had been devastated with appalling slaughter, and our three most important industrial undertakings, on which so many others depended for material, were obliterated. Relying on the surprise of a bolt from the blue, the enemy had succeeded in striking a paralysing blow. From that moment the Commonwealth had become something akin to those garden spiders that are collected by wasps as food for their larvae—with their nerve centres deadened, alive, but incapable of escape.

It was our misfortune that our essential needs of metals and fuel had been concentrated in a comparatively small area of the great continent. Its seaboard was that stretch of 150 miles between Newcastle in the north and Kiama to the south. It was doubly vulnerable to attack because the needs of settlement and the topography of the country caused railways and arterial roads to run parallel with the coast, and because in scores of places inviting beaches and sheltered harbours, difficult to protect, invited the attacker. Such an area demanded the protection of a fleet strong enough to hold the coast from Cape York downward, backed by a land force of comparatively equal strength. That the enemy were thoroughly aware of the strategic importance of the area was demonstrated by the foresight and swiftness that marked that first day's raid. For years, with childish disingeniousness, we had laid our weakness bare to all comers. Guide books, with copious details of roads and communications of every kind were offered as a gift to save a prospective invader the trouble of making his own maps. At the same time, air transport offered agreeable facilities for a more thorough

photographic survey. Our attackers were as fully armed with the necessary topographical information as we ourselves were. With few exceptions the press and Parliament had kept them posted on details of armament.

What had not been publicly disclosed was evidently easy of access, as the first bombing raids on the Sydney forts testified. "They came in," said one survivor, "and picked out the emplacements as though they were at home, and had laid out the batteries themselves."

But while the enemy had been striking to stun the country with shock temporarily, the fourth blow had also been delivered. The news spread that a landing in force had been effected at Port Stephen early on the Monday morning. And that explained in part what had happened to the Hawkesbury Bridge.

CHAPTER VII.

As we absorbed this mass of ill tidings, Fergus rubbed a chin that bore three days' growth of bristles —we were an insanitary pair—and said thoughtfully, "Mon, if that yarn about the landing at Port Stephen is true, we're scuppered."

"Let's hope it is just another lie," I replied. "Think of the other fantastic yarns we've heard during the last two days. It's impossible."

He swept a dirty finger in the direction of the broken and still smoking skyline, and growled, "Look at that, and then say what's impossible. Yesterday and the day before and the day before that were impossible—but they happened."

Here let me say that the hand of the censor had —with good cause—fallen heavily on all published news. While the policy was sound in the public interest it bred an amazing crop of disquieting misinformation.

It was not until the Tuesday morning that I saw the first of the Government proclamations posted. One announced that a State of War existed between Australia and Cambasia. To me and those people of Sydney who had come drifting back from various directions, the announcement seemed somewhat superfluous. Another called on all men between the ages of 18 and 40 years to register themselves at the nearest military centre for training. There were others announcing that the Government had taken over the control and distribution of all food supplies. Also that it was illegal and subject to serious penalties to ask a price for any commodity higher than that ruling on Friday, September 22. I smiled as I thought of the way we had forestalled that regulation on the person

of the restaurant keeper on the Saturday afternoon. Another notice announced that all road transport vehicles and their drivers had been compulsorily swept into military service. Moreover, to conserve fuel, no owner of a motor car could use it except by official license. The cars of the offenders were to be confiscated.

An appeal was also made to men retired from every description of business to return to work to relieve younger men for other service. By another proclamation, the Government took over a large number of business undertakings that would be carried on by their owners for public service.

It was, however, strange that in Sydney, the centre of the catastrophe, less was known of what was happening than in any other place in the Eastern States. Moreover, in the early days we saw fewer men in uniform than anywhere else. The civic problem was terrific. Water and sanitation had vanished over the greater part of the metropolitan area, and all civic activities had been dislocated. Estimates of the killed and wounded on the first day amounted to more than 200,000. Probably another 200,000 had left the city and were scattered in camps in outlying districts, or were overcrowding the outer suburbs, and complicating the situation in a score of ways. In the inner suburbs, however, there were the survivors of those who had been unable to get away, and who were still living in the ruins of their houses—if any. There was practically no form of transport except by water. The ferry service was almost intact, but the problem of fuel was acute. The running time had been cut down to one boat per hour on each route.

On the Sunday and Monday refugees began to trickle back, intent on visiting their homes or endeavouring to learn the fate of missing relatives and friends. It was strange how self-centred people had become, and the situation seemed to bring out the best or the worst in humanity. One of the finest aspects

was the response to the appeal for voluntary workers, and the self-sacrifice entailed was the monopoly of no single stratum of society, regardless of the repellant or harrowing nature of the work.

One of the first tasks, and one that was imperative, was the collection and burial of the dead. Working gangs of 21 members each, were formed, of whom one was chosen as leader. Each gang was allotted a given area. That to which I was drafted worked to the north of Oxford Street, Paddington. So far as was possible, the bearers identified the victims, and gave the names to the leader. It was a grim business, that taxed the fortitude of all concerned in it. Of our gang half were white collar workers—among them a lawyer, a dentist, and two business men, but none shirked where there was every excuse for shirking. There was no possibility of formal burial, and wherever vacant ground of any kind was available, the bodies were laid in trenches and covered in. Clergymen of any denomination, where possible, read the burial service over the trench when it was closed. It was not until long after, when I paid my first and last visit to what had been my home, that I found a grave in what had been its garden. But I never learned to whom my thanks were due.

What occurred was that Sydney, as a capital, ceased to exist. There was neither trade nor commerce to support it; nor were there the means or the men to carry out the work of reconstruction. Events which followed demanded the services of every available man to preserve those intact places which we still held. Moreover, the enemy were determined that it should not be rebuilt as a centre of possible resistance. It became the practice of every warship that passed along the coast to fire a salvo or two among the ruins. To-day, as I write, the fallen masonry still blocks the streets of the city, and blackened and desolate ruins, inhabited by the few who care to take risk, disfigure the once lovely slopes around the Harbour. I believe that, but for the wrecked approach, the great bridge

still stands intact—red with rust where the weather has worn away its paint.

Sydney and its tragedy, terrible as it was, falls into the background. We return once more to Bloody Saturday, when Melbourne had temporarily become the centre of administration. In view of the gravity of the news from London, the Prime Minister's first act had been to call the Federal Parliament into session at Canberra. Nevertheless, the first Cabinet meeting, at which only half a dozen Ministers were present, was held in Melbourne on his arrival.

Before then, however, the news that Britain was at war had spread consternation through the city. All business came to a standstill. The Stock Exchange, to prevent a panic, did not open for business. After a hastily summoned conference between the State Premier and the Associated Banks, all the banks that had opened their doors at ten o'clock, closed them at eleven until the Monday.

It was, perhaps, as well that the public did not know at once the full extent of the catastrophe. They were prepared for it by rumour, and the truth only filtered through gradually. The Cabinet had scarcely assembled when the news was telephoned through from the Premier of New South Wales of the first air raid on the forts. It was not until nearly two o'clock, however, after numerous attempts had been made to communicate with the defence authorities in Sydney, that the story of the bombardment reached the Cabinet officially from the Navy office at the Victoria Barracks, where it had been received from the Adelaide.

At the time, it was impossible for the Cabinet to gauge the extent of the danger that threatened. Absence of communication from Western Australia, at first regarded as a mishap, caused growing anxiety as the day went on. Darwin also was deaf to all wireless and telegraphic messages. But the news from Sydney with which the city was now ringing warranted preparation for the gravest emergencies. The destruction of the Hawkesbury bridge gave ominous warning

that enemy action was projected beyond Sydney, and that Newcastle could be the only objective. Sydney, the natural source of military assistance had been snatched from their grasp. With the Hawkesbury Bridge out of action, the only way of sending assistance was through Orange or Lithgow, via Muswellbrook. Meanwhile, two squadrons of bombers had been sent to reinforce the fort.

But then, as afterwards, the advantage of the initiative was always with the enemy. They held undisputed control of the coast and struck where they pleased. Although it came as a shock, the story of the devastation at Newcastle on the Saturday, and of Port Kembla on the Sunday, was regarded as inevitable by the authorities in view of the suddenness and the utterly unexpected strength of the attack. Only one really bright note was struck on that grim day by the certainty that the enemy had been crippled by the destruction of one of their two aeroplane carriers.

But during that day, and until late on Sunday, the defence authorities could obtain no certain news of the actual strength of the enemy. It was estimated, however, that ten battleships, fifteen cruisers, and more than 30 destroyers were raiding the coast. But far out to sea, waiting the orders to move in, stood a great fleet of merchant transports, which by daybreak on Monday morning appeared off Port Stephens. It was ascertained, also, that apart from the battleship guard to prevent the remaining naval units from leaving Port Jackson, a wide area round the Heads had been mined during the night of the Saturday.

From one of my shack mates, Bob Turnbull, once a shipping agent in Melbourne, but now a feeder of open hearth furnaces at the works, I heard how Melbourne responded to the news. By ten o'clock it was broadcast that Britain, which meant the Empire, was at war. Special editions of the papers were on the streets at the same time. By half past ten, business of any kind, except in the banks, had ceased. Some of the cooler heads, anticipating financial panic, got

in early, and secured enough cash to carry them on. But it was not until nearly eleven, when the city really awoke to the possibilities, that things began to look ugly. Only the prompt action of the Government and the Banks prevented a riot by closing until Monday. There was a lot of noise when the doors closed but the crowd behaved sensibly. Although the streets were thronged, so much so that the wheeled traffic was almost at a standstill, there was very little confusion. There was tense but suppressed excitement. Near the newspaper offices, the streets were impassable through the density of the crowds. But until about half past 12 o'clock, there was no other news posted than the Government's declaration of a State of War.

"I was standing at the intersection of Collins and Elizabeth Street," said Bob, "when I heard a sound that was something between a growl and roar of voices from the crowd in Collins Street. Then it died away into a dead silence. I saw the crowd surging and people come rushing towards Elizabeth Street. A man running by stopped and called out, "A fleet of bombing planes had attacked Sydney. That tore it! By jove! if it had been over Melbourne it could not have caused a greater sensation." During the next 15 minutes something like 300,000 people in the city suddenly awoke to the reality of war. When the first wave of excitement passed Melbourne went cold sober. There was no cheering or shouting in the streets, nor very much in the hotels. People just stood talking in subdued voices in small groups everywhere. The shops closed, and the crowd grew thicker.

"It was towards two o'clock and many of the people were beginning to drift towards the Flinders Street Station. A notice was posted, 'Sydney is being heavily bombarded by a fleet of warships from outside the Heads. Nationality uncertain.' After the first wave of sound you could have heard a pin drop in Collins Street," Bob went on, "then, as by word of command, the crowd began to break up and leave the city."

"The football final was being played on the Mel-

bourne Cricket Ground that afternoon, but the question of which team could claim the title to premiership was never settled. The only people who turned up at the ground were two gatekeepers, and about half a dozen football reporters. No one had thought to call off the match—it called itself off. By three o'clock the city was almost deserted. The twelve picture theatres in the city could not muster an audience of 50 people between them.

"I said that business had been paralysed, but there was one place where there was too much to cope with, and that was at the Victoria Barracks in St. Kilda Road," Bob grinned. "I thought I might as well claim the honour of being one of the first to enlist, so I strolled over Princes Bridge. Something like 60,000 or 70,000 others had got the same idea. The crowd of men had backed up over the road, and had overflowed into the Domain. The barrack yard was as full as a tick, and about 50 permanent men in uniform had been swallowed up among them in trying to get them into order.

When I managed to squeeze my way through, an officer at one of the windows was telling the crowd in parade ground English to go and register themselves at their suburban centres. He also told them where else they could go. There must have been thousands of old Diggers in the crowd. You could pick them out everywhere. It was they who started singing 'Madamoiselle of Armentieres.' That crowd chanted the lay of Madamoiselle for hours. Many of them drifted off to other recruiting stations, but those who hung on kept the barracks staff working all night."

Bob got fed up of waiting about six o'clock, and went to his home in North Brighton. It was only about that time that someone at headquarters awoke to the fact that the broadcasting stations had no censors and were sending out everything that came through—and that was plenty. Refugees from Sydney and pressmen were sending through their accounts of what they had seen. At first, people would not—could not—believe it. But before the censors put on the brake, Melbourne knew that Sydney had been pretty well wiped off the map. But even then they had heard nothing of the second bombardment.

It was later that night that Bob Turnbull, by chance, was one of the few people in the East to receive a whisper of what had happened in Western Australia. After dinner he had gone across to see his partner whose son was a wireless amateur. It was about 10 o'clock, when the son broke in on them wide-eyed, with a story that he had been working on the amateur band and had picked up some station working on a battery-operated plant at a place called Gumaling in Western Australia. He was morsing and the signals were very weak, but he had made out parts of the message and written it down. It ran—"how many not known. To . . . swarms of soldiers in streets by . . . machine gunned the . . . no resistance at all . . . Complete possession of Fremantle and Perth . . . motorists shot . . . cars taken . . . Northam by midday . . . railway captured . . . since then no message . . . cannot see, but think red dia-." It faded out there and the boy tried but could not raise the transmitting station again.

Neither Bob nor his partner was strong in Western Australian geography, but they took an atlas and searched for "Gumaling." The only place they could find approximating the word, was "Goomalling," a junction station on the northern line to Geraldton. They guessed there was something in it, and after a hopeless half hour trying to get headquarters by telephone, they drove to the barracks. Here after an hour's wrangling they finally got hold of an intelligence officer, who read the fragment and hurried them into the presence of a brass hat, by whom they were received with the usual military courtesy. Bob said, on glancing over the paper, his first outburst was to ask what the so and so, such and such they meant by being in possession of an unauthorised wireless set. (The prohibition had not then been announced.) However, after warning them not to repeat the story to anyone,

he so far forgot himself as to thank them, and admitted that message confirmed other information they had.

Actually, it was more than six months before an approximately detailed story of what had happened that day in Western Australia was pieced together. It came through in dribbles from scores of underground sources, for the West was, from then, almost as completely isolated as if it had been on another continent. So far as I remember, the first full story from actual eye witnesses was told by two Roman Catholic priests, Fathers Collins and Fairfax. They reached Port Lincoln in April, 1940, in the last stages of exhaustion. It had taken them four months to cover the journey from Esperance after their escape.

CHAPTER VIII.

This story of the occupation of Western Australia demonstrates fully the diabolic thoroughness of the preliminary staff work that put the State into the enemy's hands almost without a blow being struck. It would be possible only in a country such as ours, that remained persistently blind to the writing on the wall.

During the nights of September 21 and 22 the wireless authorities had had their attention drawn to the transmission of some unknown wireless station either in or close to Perth. The signals were especially strong in the early hours of the morning, but attempts to decipher them were unsuccessful. Early in the evening of the Friday, direction finders were used to locate the station, but the lines of direction crossed at a spot outside Perth on an open road. It was assumed then that a portable set was being used. Although the incident of the mystery station caused a good deal of comment in official quarters, no apprehension was created.

Doubtless this was one of the enemy sets conveying vital information to the expeditionary force at sea. Late that night (Friday) a telegram addressed to the Premier was despatched from Geraldton. It conveyed the information from the owner of a lugger that had been lying inshore about 50 miles north of Geraldton, that he had sighted a large fleet of ships, some of which were undoubtedly cruisers, moving south. Adverse wind had delayed him, and the message was nearly 18 hours late. It never was delivered.

One of the features of the invasion of Western Australia was that it was planned so as to inflict the least possible damage on property. Instead of adopting

the plan used in Sydney, of bombing the forts on Rottnest Island in broad daylight, a surprise attack on the forts at midnight was arranged. Towed in boats by destroyers, a large landing party gained a footing on the island. The flashing light on the high ground must have formed a perfect guide. The landing place was well chosen by someone familiar with the whole island, as the movement was carried out without detection. When the forts were rushed scarcely a shot was fired by the garrison, who, taken completely off their guard, were bayoneted to the last man. In ten minutes after the first alarm the island and its batteries were in enemy hands.

The next phase of the attack took place shortly before dawn, when a series of violent explosions shook the city. Every wireless plant had been put out of action. Half a dozen masked men invaded the telephone exchanges, and put their staffs under arrest. At the same time all the telegraph lines and cables had been cut. It was later discovered, too, that rails had been removed during the night from every railway line at various points outside the city area. The explosions that destroyed the wireless stations had been caused by powerful bombs, which did sufficient damage to put the stations out of action for several hours. No means of outside communication had been overlooked. The uproar caused considerable excitement in the city, but the perpetrators of the sabotage had escaped—their work was done.

Meantime, warned that Rottnest was silenced, the fleet had stood inshore. Convoyed by destroyers, the troopships had closed in to the Cottesloe beach where, under the cover of darkness, disembarkation began. Many people heard the unaccustomed movement off shore, but none was curious enough or unfortunate enough to enquire too closely. Before daylight, two battalions had landed and had assisted in securing inshore a floating wharf that was towed in by short sections. By the time day broke, one battery of

mechanised artillery had been landed on pontoons, as well as two or three swift light tanks.

At the same time motor pinnaces, armed with six pounders, and each towing four boatloads of infantry with a machine gun unit were making for the mouth of the river. By then the daylight was growing, and all pretence of secrecy was put aside. By this time any hope of resistance had passed. While the troops from Cottesloe were moving into Fremantle by road, two troopships steamed towards the wharves guarded by destroyers. The astounded inhabitants of Fremantle found the waterfront occupied by foreign troops who took immediate possession of the railway station. When attempts were made to communicate with Perth it was found that all telephones were "dead." The pier heads were guarded by light tanks to prevent any interference with the berthing of the troop ships.

For a little while the soldiers treated the staring civilian population with contemptuous indifference. But that they were not to be trifled with was dramatically shown when an officer abruptly ordered the owner of a motor car to alight and hand it over. The man protested, and without a word of warning was shot dead at his wheel. At a word from the officer the door was flung open by a soldier and the body was dragged out, and pushed into the gutter.

Before seven o'clock, some five battalions of infantry had been landed. By that time too a strange flotilla was making its way up the Swan River.

It consisted of six motor pinnaces each towing four boats, each of which carried 50 men. By half past seven they had passed Mill Point from Melville Water and were steering for the Barrack Street jetty. These landed at 7.45, and were actually the first troops to reach the city, but only by a few minutes, for two trainloads detrained at Central Station from Fremantle before 8 o'clock.

It was one of the tragedies of the day that because of the early hour, several residents of Fremantle who had dashed to the city by motor cars were unable to

get into touch with anyone in authority. So that though the news of the invasion had reached the city it was known to comparatively few people, most of whom were incredulous. In some respects, however, the misfortune was a blessing in disguise. At the most only one hour would have been available to organise any form of resistance. Bad as the situation was eventually, the slight resistance that might have been organised, must have been useless, and would probably have led to ruthless reprisals or a bombardment of the city.

As it happened, however, the early city workers suddenly found the streets overrun with foreign troops who moved with mechanical and systematic certainty. Father Fairfax stated that at a few minutes before eight o'clock he was walking down Barrack Street towards St. George's Terrace. He had reached the Town Hall, when he was staggered by the spectacle of a body of troops coming towards him at the double, with bayonets fixed. Almost at the same moment there was a burst of machine gun fire at the intersection of St. George's Terrace. One company halted at the Hay Street intersection, close to him, and set up machine guns with which they began to rake the street both east and west. The few who have recorded the events of the morning emphasise the suddenness with which the city was invaded, and callous savagery with which all opposition was crushed by the streets being cleared by machine gun fire in both directions from Barrack Street.

One of the very few men I met who was in Perth on the morning of September 23, was one who owned a service station in the city. If I ever heard his name I do not recollect it now. That was before I was drafted to the Carrington Camp. He had come East as chauffeur to a P.P. officer. He told me that he had gone down to his garage early that morning. The first he knew that anything was wrong was when he heard shooting, and one of his men ran in and told him someone was firing in the street. He tried to ring the

police station. At the time he told me his story he seemed to think there was something funny in trying to call out the police that morning, because they shot every man in uniform on sight.

What impressed him most was that at eight o'clock everything seemed normal, and ten minutes later "the city was fairly crawling with the so and so's." They seemed to come from all directions. The first he saw of them was when looking through the window of his office a sergeant and six men walked in. One of his men went up to the sergeant, and apparently began an argument, when the sergeant pushed his bayonet into the man's chest. It was not 30 seconds between the time they walked through the door till the sergeant was kicking the man's body aside.

Then the sergeant looked round, and saw the owner in his office and walked in. He spoke English, and asked how many cars in good condition were in the place. Told there were twenty-five, he said, "You show me or I stick!" and with the object lesson of the body of his assistant before him, the owner complied. Just then an officer with a squad of men joined the sergeant. They ran the cars out, and the garage owner was forced to fill their petrol tanks. After that they drove the cars away without taking any further notice of him.

He told me also that they seemed to know exactly where to go for everything they wanted. Cars full of men were driven to the outlying suburbs, and all roads leading out of Perth were guarded. Any cars attempting to leave were stopped, and their owners were shot down. All cars entering were commandeered.

So swiftly and methodically was the entire operation carried into effect that, by 9 o'clock the invaders were in complete possession of the city. A population of more than 200,000 was held in submission with practically no effort, or no chance of an effort, at resistance. Acting on pre-arranged plans, and guided no doubt by the agents who had cleared the way for

their coming, bodies of troops took possession of all key positions and services. Rail and tram systems were held up, and the Maylands Air Port was occupied. Every motor car available was commandeered. Those taken in the streets were parked under guard in Stirling Square. Later in the day a systematic requisition was made, and owners were forced to drive their cars to Hyde Park. A squad of enemy engineers took over the electric power station, and all wireless stations. During the day domiciliary visits were made to every owner of an amateur experimental radio set, and all material was either destroyed or confiscated.

Before noon proclamations in English were posted throughout the metropolitan area. These ordered that all firearms should be surrendered by placing them on the footpath in front of the home of the owner. All motor vehicles not already commandeered were to be driven to Hyde Park or Kings Park. All radio appliances for either reception or transmission were to be placed outside homes for destruction. It was also ordered that no citizen was to leave the city. The penalty for any contravention of these orders was—death.

The same thoroughness of system was marked by the manner in which the railways were used to consolidate the hold of the invaders. During the morning, troop trains left for all key junctions. The movements of all incoming trains were provided for. The perfection of the organisation was such that the first knowledge that Kalgoorlie gained of the catastrophe was when, on Sunday morning, a train load of troops took possession of the city. After the initial occupation of the key positions the work of taking full possession of the State was continued with the systematic foresight. So carefully had the work been synchronised, that a cruiser and a troop train arrived at Albany within an hour of one another.

Meanwhile, in Perth, troops continued to pour into the city by rail, road and water. One of the first actions by the battalion that entered the city by the

Barrack Street jetty was to march a company to Government House where His Excellency, who had but five minutes earlier been informed of the invasion, was placed under arrest. The Premier was not in Perth at the time, and was not captured until two days later. But the Mayor was taken from his home to the Town Hall, and ordered to find rations for the incoming troops.

It was learned later that two divisions of troops with tanks and mechanised artillery formed the entire invading force. So sure had the invaders been of success and freedom from interference, that only four first class cruisers convoyed the troopships.

After taking over all public buildings, the troops that remained in the city were quartered on the inhabitants. By night, from King's Park two batteries of artillery held the city at their mercy. Male citizens were requisitioned without discrimination of any kind to carry out the orders of the victors in collecting the firearms throughout the city in motor lorries, and for all laborious work. At Fremantle pressed labour unloaded arms and munitions from the troopships, and transferred them to appointed dumps.

After the firing in the streets on the Saturday morning, by which the city was cowed into submission the people suffered very little violence for the first three weeks, Father Fairfax related. This first morning cost about 800 lives. The invaders showed clearly that they would not brook the slightest question of their orders. Men who in the beginning exhibited the slightest sign of hesitation or truculence in obedience were instantly shot or bayoneted. Otherwise there was at first no great illtreatment of the conquered race.

It was not until the end of October that the people learned the fate in store for them. By then the entire settled portion of Wesern Australia was completely under enemy control. Hope for rescue from outside Australia there was none. Rescue or help by land over the Great Western line was equally impossible as the only line of communication was the railway itself.

Even had troops been available in the east, the lack of transport for men and supplies, including water for an effective force, made such an undertaking impossible. More so, since the enemy had established a strong air base at Kalgoorlie, that would have rendered the use of the line impracticable. The only hope of relief lay by sea from the east, and the sea had passed from Australian control.

The revelation of the invaders' plans for administration was heralded by the arrival of a large body of civilian officials, who acted independently of the military body, but who were directed by the military governor of the State, who had installed himself in Government House. The military police were withdrawn, and were replaced by a civil body, that became eventually the terror of the populace, and whose ruthlessness and arrogance were worse than that of the soldiers.

The first inkling of their fate that came to the broken-hearted people was early in November, when all males over the age of 12 years were ordered to transfer themselves from the north to the south side of the river. Women from the south were to cross the river to the north. The women were to cross the river by the Causeway, and the men by the railway bridge at East Perth. No one was permitted to take any possession but as much clothing as he or she could carry.

It was the invaders' first stroke that showed the manner in which, by the total segregation of the sexes, they had determined to solve the racial problem. The order was forced into effect with relentless thoroughness. No provision was made to house the transferred people, beyond the order that the dwellings should be shared indiscriminately. The appalling act admitted no discrimination. At the same time the policy was made effective in all rural areas.

Then began the drafting of the men into labour camps, and virtual slavery. All work of agriculture, mining, and laborious public services was thrown on

the vanquished people, who were treated more as cattle than human beings. The first doomed thousand were taken by transport to the Yampi iron mines, which became the most dreaded feature of a dread oppression. Here in the terrific heat and under cast iron discipline and relentless toil men died like flies. Food and water were inadequate, and sanitation in the camps was non-existent. There was no attempt at medical assistance, and the men were driven to their tasks till they dropped. Had they been flies they could not have been rated lower than they were as human beings. Eventually the toll of the mines became such a drain on the man power of the West, that when the invader made good his hold on the East the iron mines became the punishment of all who offended the Paramount Power. They were the lowest pit in the hell that was Australia.

[At this juncture some 2,000 words of Burton's narrative relating to the treatment of the women are omitted. Burton gives the source of his information as a metallurgist, and a friend of Fergus Graham, who had been transferred to Newcastle from the West. We have been permitted to compare the text with that of the suppressed passages in Peel and Everard's, "The Struggle for the Pacific," and find the two statements fully corroborative. We have made representations to the Government, suggesting the advisability of the destruction of both documents in order to prevent any possibility of their publication in the future.—Eds.]

CHAPTER IX.

In making this degression on the fate of the lost State, my desire has been to set out fully the situation that the Federal Government was called upon to face during the three first days from September 23 to 25. The few broken wireless messages, such as that brought to them by my friend Turnbull, warned the authorities that a major calamity had overwhelmed Western Australia. Sydney was in ruins, and stories of destruction of Newcastle and Port Kembla added to the ill tidings had thrown the people into a condition bordering on panic. Then over all came the report of the landing force at Port Stephens, the extent of which was at the moment unknown. Silence from Darwin added to the list of misfortune the certainty that it, too, the gateway by air, was in the hands of the enemy.

Messages from Britain warned the Government that the heart of the Empire was threatened, and that for some indefinite time there could be no hope of assistance to regain control of the sea that had been lost in the Naval reverse at Singapore. Our own naval force was bottled up in Sydney Harbour, and, even had it been free, the immense superiority of the enemy made its value negligible.

To face the threat to our freedom as a race, was a militia force spread over the entire Commonwealth at a strength on paper of 35,000 men. From this had to be deducted all available in Western Australia, and probably those in Queensland, also. It was clear that if the enemy made good its footing at Port Stephens, an effective use of help from Queensland units would be greatly restricted, if not entirely prevented. Even though the men were available, difficulties in maintain-

ing contact and an adequate supply of arms were almost insuperable.

Even in the first three days our small but precious air force had suffered irreparable loss. Only one machine survived the sabotage of the Richmond air force. And the loss at Port Kembla and Newcastle had reduced the remainder by 14 effective machines.

The only bright spot in the otherwise unbroken gloom was the knowledge of the enemy's loss of one of its two great plane carriers. This was due to the splendid devotion of Squadron Leader James Garside. In the consternation that reigned when the shattered hangars were examined after the early morning explosion at Richmond, the certainty that the cause was foreign and not of local origin was manifest. Later, while discussions on the situation were in progress by telephone with headquarters, the first air raid on the forts was reported. The necessity for preserving, as far as possible, our fighting planes intact, decided headquarters not to throw the plane away. One machine against such odds could effect no damage, and its loss was certain.

It was at this juncture that Garside submitted a use for the plane, and volunteered to carry it into effect. It was evident from the strength of the air attack that one or more aircraft carriers formed part of the enemy force. These were being kept well out to sea for safety, being among the most vital and vulnerable of the enemy's units. Garside suggested that the heaviest blow that could be struck, and one by which the defence would most greatly benefit, was the destruction of one of these aircraft carriers.

He, however, pointed out that an attempt to bomb the carrier was uncertain of success, and even a direct hit might do no more than cripple it temporarily. He then offered to take the sole remaining machine up with the maximum possible load of high explosives. With this he should fly southwards towards Jervis Bay, and then out to sea at low altitude, only turning north when he was well behind any possible enemy observa-

tion. Then, when finally he was able to sight the fleet, to crash his plane on or against the aircraft carrier.

To gain such a result the certainty of death, he claimed, could not, and must not be considered for a moment. He put forward his offer quietly, and in matter of fact tones, as though it had been a mere question of routine, and retired to await the decision.

Finally, Headquarters accepted the sacrifice, and the man least moved by the decision was Garside himself. In conference with the commandant at the aerodrome, the plan was discussed in detail. It was decided that the plane should leave Richmond, so that its flight southwards, seaward and the turn north should be completed at, as nearly as possible, after sunset. The idea was that the plane, flying in from the east, would itself be in a bad light, while the enemy fleet would stand clear against the light of the setting sun. Garside's own plan was that, on sighting the fleet, he should fly low, barely above the water, in order if possible to strike the hull of the carrier just above the water line, if possible, amidships.

His contention was that the method of attack would be the least likely to be expected, and anticipated by the enemy. The speed of the bomber would reduce the chance of an effective hit to a minimum if they sighted him in time to open fire. In the final analysis the locality and position of the fleet, and especially of the plane carrier, were unpredictable, and he therefore must be free to act for the best results the situation offered when he reached his objective.

That afternoon Garside took off with his load of destruction, going to his death with a smile and a wave of the hand as though starting on a routine peace flight.

I have already told how, about sunset on the Saturday evening, a deep boom of an explosion was heard in Sydney from far out to sea. At the time an anxious group of watchers on North Head saw a momentary blaze of light from below the horizon, that heralded

a sound as though of thunder, that came drifting across the water.

As it reached their ears, the watchers rose to their feet, facing seaward, silent and at the salute. A man had died!

[On the authority of officers of the Paramount Power, Marsden states that Garside's attack was so sudden, and its method was so unexpected, that the enemy had no time to guard against it. When they first heard its approach all eyes were turned upwards, but the bomber roared in on them from the east almost invisible in the evening light, only a few feet above the water. It charged in at a terrific speed, and hit the aircraft carrier just above the waterline almost amidships. The ship blew up and sank instantly, carrying with it 100 planes, and all but three or four of its personnel. They admitted the seriousness of the blow, but expressed warm admiration of the self-sacrifice that effected it.—Eds.]

But the situation that faced the Government demanded something more than individual heroism. By Monday morning there was none in authority who did not recognise the grimness of the task, owing to the extent to which those first blows had crippled our resources, and shaken the morale of the people.

All plans for defence were based on the supposition that the Commonwealth would have had several weeks' warning of any probable outbreak of hostilities. Not even the lesson of the Austrian crisis early in 1938, when a declaration of war was hourly expected, taught the authorities the truth that war could break out over night from a clear sky. The one eventuality for which no provision had been made was on them.

At the very least, six weeks would be necessary to mobilise and prepare troops to take the field even under the most favourable conditions. Now, with one State completely lost and beyond help, and with the enemy in actual occupation of a strategic post on the east coast, the call for action had come.

The call had not come to a country intact and cor-

porate, but to a people shocked by major disasters, with a great centre of population, and one vitally important, in ruins. The destruction of Sydney had meant the disorganisation of plans that depended on that city for men who had been slain, and for essential arms and munitions that had been irreparably lost. The fleet had lost its flagship with all its crew, and the remaining units were as useless for action as if they had never existed.

The only branch of the defence force ready for action, the air arm, though strong in personnel, was even at its best too weak for the terrific task that had been thrust upon it. Plans for bringing the strength of fighting planes up to an adequate number had not been completed. In the first three days almost one quarter of its effective strength had been lost. Despite the destruction of one enemy aircraft carrier, the enemy had sufficient fighting strength on the second to meet the Australian air force on equal terms. But from first Newcastle Waters, and then from Charleville, had come news of large flights of planes bearing the red diamond on a black square. Of these 55 had been sighted moving south-east. It was evident that the enemy was being reinforced from Darwin for the losses it had sustained.

Confronted with this situation the Government had recognised that by no possible means in its power could it replace its lost fighting planes. Its aircraft factories were incomplete, and had they not been, they were short of essential materials.

It was imperative, therefore, that the air force at the disposal of the defence authorities must be rigidly conserved. Nevertheless, it was as imperative that the extent of the enemy's force at Port Stephens should be ascertained without delay.

But, of all the disasters, the news of the enemy's landing at Port Stephens was that which caused the Headquarters Staff the gravest concern—all the more because of the absence of detail. The first report had been received in Melbourne on Monday morning,

September 25. It came from the postmaster at Karuah, at the extreme north-west of the inlet. It announced that six enemy destroyers had entered Port Stephens; the fleet, with a large number of transports, was close outside, and after shelling Nelsons Bay, men from the destroyers were landing. The terror-stricken inhabitants were flying from the district. After that there was silence.

A small squadron of private planes, hastily organised at the Mascot aerodrome, was sent north. These were piloted by officers from the Richmond aerodrome, but not one returned. Later in the day, three airforce scouts departed on a similar mission of reconnaissance. Shortly after they passed the Hawkesbury River, they reported by wireless that they were being attacked by enemy aircraft. That was their last message.

It was not until Tuesday morning about 2 o'clock any more definite news was received. It was telegraphed by a resident of Port Stephens, Martin Hancock, a former Major of the A.I.F. He had succeeded in remaining hidden during the whole of Monday. Knowing the fate of Newcastle, when the lightkeeper at Stephen's Point had given the alarm that the fleet was approaching, settlements round the port had been promptly evacuated. Most of the refugees had made eastward to Morpeth or East and West Maitland, where the news they brought spread panic.

Hancock reported that the troopships entered the Harbour, which had been examined by destroyers and planes. Soldiers had also been disembarked from the warships outside the heads by destroyers. The troopships had anchored in Salamander Bay. In all their movements the enemy seemed to be entirely familiar with the locality. He believed that two brigades with mechanised artillery were disembarked.

Only four troopships had entered the harbour, the rest, of which he counted twenty-two, remained outside with the fleet. During the whole operation at least two squadrons of planes were circling over the port. Towards dusk, leaving one cruiser outside and four

troopships and three destroyers in the harbour, the fleet had turned southward. Hancock, who had left a motor cycle at Salt Ash, succeeded in passing through enemy posts along the Anna Bay Road. He did not reach Salt Ash until midnight, when he made across to the Booral Road through Williamtown, arriving at West Maitland an hour later, and dispatched his report.

It is ironical that a base that had been planned as an Australian naval station, and never used, should have been chosen by the enemy to gain its first foothold in the east.

Hancock's message deepened the anxiety at Headquarters, for the departure of the fleet with the remaining troopships foreshadowed another landing elsewhere.

That the anxiety was warranted was confirmed dramatically on the morning of Wednesday, when two messages reached Melbourne almost simultaneously. The first, from Wallsend, announced that enemy troopships were at the wharves in Port Hunter, and that the ruins of Newcastle were occupied. Troops were already moving along the Maitland Road. The second was wirelessed from H.M.A.S. Adelaide. It was brief, but, brief as it was, it bore tidings of immeasurable disaster. The cruiser was in a hot engagement with enemy aircraft, and was being shelled from outside the harbour. At the same time, landings were being effected at Manly, Coogee, and Bondi beaches.

It is difficult for those who were not present to understand the feelings of General Mackinnon, the Commander-in-Chief, and the General Staff, when confronted with these messages. They and the members of the Council of Defence alone understood their purport. And at the same time they foresaw the inevitable result. The order for general mobilisation had been given on September 23. On this morning of Wednesday, the 27th, the movement was still incomplete. Two days more, at least, would be required to collect the widely-scattered units. And until then it was impossible to offer an effective opposition to the enemy.

On paper, the trained forces of the Commonwealth on a peace footing amounted to 35,000. With Western Australia and Queensland out of the picture, and with the crash of the New South Wales organisation, there were only actually three infantry brigades at the Commander-in-Chief's disposal. At most he could depend upon two artillery brigades. There was one incomplete armoured car regiment, and an inadequate though efficient engineering and army service corps to complete the force at his command. At the most, less than one complete division of 16,000 men.

Already the strategic plan of the enemy was sufficiently developed for the Commander-in-Chief to realise what he had to expect. The first raid on the east coast was intended to prevent any interference with the enemy operations for consolidating their hold on the west. Now, the landings at Port Stephens, Newcastle, and Sydney disclosed the intentions of striking at the heart of Australia—that vital area, between Newcastle and Port Kembla, inland from the 150 miles of coastline. If a circle of 100 miles in diameter is drawn with Helensburgh, just south of Cronulla, as a centre, the arc, running through Newcastle and inland as far as Bathurst, encloses an area, the possession of which means the possession of Australia. It was for this paramount area that the enemy was undoubtedly striking.

It was clear that a third landing was intended at Port Kembla.

Were that effected, the three forces, working in conjunction, must succeed. Within the area lay some of the richest country in minerals and agriculture in the Commonwealth, and every essential line of communication.

The only hope of fending off the inevitable third blow lay in the air force.

It was not until long after that I heard any detail of those momentous conferences in Melbourne that took place on September 27. Despite the Prime Minister's call for the assembly of the Federal Parliament in

Canberra, it was found that the probable attendance could not exceed 30 members. In view of the urgency of the case, the venue of the session was changed to Parliament House, Melbourne. Canberra was too exposed and too far away from Headquarters. The Victorian capital became the seat of Government.

It was at Parliament House, too, that the Defence Council met, and here it was that, on the afternoon of September 27, General Mackinnon stated the naked truth to the Cabinet. The story was told me by a former Minister, just after the news of the decision of the Berlin Congress was made public—late in 1941. He related how a scared House had met, and in half an hour had passed an emergency appropriation of £250,000,000—"might as well have made it £250,000,000,000 for all the good it did us," he added. "Great Scot! What mugs we were."

The Minister for Defence told the House all he knew, and that was precious little. But he assured them that by Christmas time we would have 100,000 men equipped and in the field. Preparations were being made for offsetting the loss of the Broken Hill Proprietary steel works and those at Kembla, by manufacturing in South Australia and Melbourne. He admitted we would be short of steel supplies for the time being. But he assured the members that there were ample supplies of infantry and artillery ammunition.

But it was the gloomiest session he had ever attended. More than a dozen members, including the Leader of the Opposition, had been killed on Bloody Saturday. The Minister confided to the House that the situation must be regarded as grave. But he was firmly of the opinion that the enemy could not reinforce what he called their "filibustering expedition." While the loss of life and the damage done was deplorable, he was sure that within a short time the invaders would be driven into the sea.

When the House adjourned McKinnon was asked to meet the Cabinet to discuss the position. It was then

that, as my informant put it, "we got it right in the neck." He didn't make any bones about it or beat about the bush. He said, "Mr. Prime Minister, I have just issued an order sending the entire air force at our disposal to the South Coast of New South Wales. An attempt at a third landing at Kembla is inevitable. If that landing succeeds I doubt if we can save Australia. As things are there is no other form of opposition I can offer."

They were all pretty worried faces in the room, but as he spoke they grew paler still.

"We must recognise that Western Australia is already lost, but I do not anticipate any attack from that quarter——"

"But why not?——" broke in the Prime Minister.

"Because, sir, it would not be worth their while. They know quite well the hole we are in."

No one spoke.

He went on. "With all the men I can gather from Victoria and New South Wales, with a mixed brigade from South Australia, I cannot muster a full division."

Again he paused.

"None of those troops is hardened or fully trained for service. The possibility of this emergency and the peril from the lack of man power have been placed before successive Governments who have disregarded the military representations."

"We can have 100,000 men trained and equipped by the end of the year," said the Minister for Defence.

"Mr. Prime Minister. I am afraid the enemy will not give us until the end of the year before forcing a decisive engagement."

"You mean——"

"I mean, Sir, that the enemy are already at Maitland and Parramatta. To-morrow they may be in Mudgee. But by that time Lithgow will most certainly have gone, and possibly Moss Vale, if not Goulburn. We must face the facts, Sir. If the air force cannot stave off that landing at Kembla, they will be over the Victorian border in a week."

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It was the Minister for Defence who spoke. "A rather unusual pessimism for a Commander-in-Chief. Perhaps you can give us some grounds for your er—depressing prophecies."

The stocky figure swung round. He was not a man who suffered fools gladly, and he had been working 20 hours a day since the 23rd. The effort with which he bit back the first words that came to his lips was evident, as he glared at the speaker.

"Yes!" he snapped. "You shall have my reasons. But first, let me tell you all, that I, or any other military officer, who gave you an optimistic estimate of our situation should be shot as a traitor.

"I have less than a division of insufficiently trained troops. It will be two days, at least, before I am in a position to move. The manner in which the enemy have moved from the time the first shot was fired indicates that they are thoroughly sure of their ground and their plans. Just as they knew of the gun emplacements on our forts so they know to a man our weakness. Do you imagine for one moment, with the advantage they have gained already, that they will give us an opportunity to enroll and train a thousand men, much less one hundred thousand?"

He stood up and pushed his chair back, and leaned forward with his hands on the edge of the table. "Listen, Gentlemen! From what we can gather, I am convinced they have already landed at least one division at Newcastle and Sydney each. They left Port Stephens with twenty-two troopships, apart from the men they may be carrying on their naval units.

"We do not know, beyond the fact that they have mechanised artillery and tanks, what their strength of mechanised units may be. But——from the perfection of organisation and preparedness they have already exhibited, I am convinced they are much stronger in them than we are."

The group round the table was silent as he walked over to a map on the wall.

"The one great urgent factor is to stop the progress

of the enemy so as to allow him no time to consolidate his positions as he moves towards the Victorian border. When I said he would be across in a week, I was too optimistic. This is Wednesday, and I doubt if we have until Sunday.

"Gentlemen," he said, sweeping his hand to the map. "They have now a practical possession of the New South Wales railway system, and of all the arterial highways and their mobility is assured."

"But surely we can delay them by blowing up the railway bridges and destroying all petrol supplies on the line of march?" came a voice from the table.

Mackinnon returned and took his seat. "As Commander-in-Chief, my answer is, 'yes.' That course would effect some delay. But the answer to the problem is yours—not mine."

"Problem?" queried the Prime Minister.

For answer, the General took a packet of papers from his pocket. "These are telegrams from Singleton, Cessnock, Liverpool, and other places. Everyone of them tells the same story of ruthless slaughter of civilian population in the occupied districts. Every town or settlement they reach is subject to a systematic terrorisation. Age or sex makes no difference. They are sweeping ahead of them a vast, panic-stricken horde of refugees as they move south. These are using every possible form of transport. Some, of course, are moving west out of the line of march. Nevertheless all roads are congested with an uncontrolled traffic.

"You must visualise the situation clearly, Mr. Prime Minister. The evident intention of the enemy is to force you, the Government of this country, to accept their terms at the earliest possible moment. To do this they have adopted a policy of 'frightfulness.' They believe a terror-stricken people will force your hands, or that you will submit in order to stop the slaughter. If we cut the communication and destroy the petrol supplies on the line of advance, we condemn those refugees to death. Or, if not all, the greater number of them.

"Gentlemen, that decision rests with you. Thank God! It is not mine."

"But, surely," the Prime Minister said, "they will not dare to shock the civilised world with such crime. We have been able to establish communication with the Government of the United States. The report of such an infamy must move them to intervention."

"That is a purely political matter," replied Mackinnon. "If I venture any opinion at all it is that, judging from former actions of Washington, any optimism would be misplaced. In any case, intervention would be a matter of weeks; our problem is one of hours. If the enemy have considered such a factor at all, they have offset it in a determination to achieve a fait accompli."

"You can offer no alternative?" came a voice from the table.

"None!" Mackinnon stood up, and looked round the strained faces. "I must advise you from the military situation alone. As regards the petrol problem I think it will solve itself. Investigation we have made in the past proves that the normal road supply would be entirely inadequate to meet an urgent demand for military purposes. The crowds rushing south will have drained every supply station in the line of advance. Possibly the enemy have made provision for their own supplies."

"And the bridges?" The Minister for Defence asked.

"The destruction of the bridges must delay them—but not for long. It is you who must decide whether to cut that line of safety for the refugees. I have already given orders to all local authorities to try to turn the line of flight to the west. And I have dispatched a strong party of engineers by road. They are to reach as closely as possible to advanced parties of the enemy, and to cut the roads and bridges in any useful positions behind the fugitives."

"When must you act?" The Prime Minister's voice was unsteady as he spoke.

"Every hour—every minute counts. Apart from the assumption that the nearest enemy unit is only a little more than 200 miles from Albury—at Lithgow—there is the other factor of an attack and occupation of Kembla and Woollongong. If they strike there—and there is nothing to oppose them—they will move through Moss Vale and Goulburn to the vital road and rail junction at Cootamundra. That will result in cutting off all refugees north of that line. That would be an appalling situation, but not the worst aspect of it."

"Could anything be worse?" said the Prime Minister bitterly.

"Can you not realise what it would mean," Mackinnon pointed to the map. "If they reach Cootamundra they are in possession of the entire vital area of Australia. With that in their hands——"

He turned from the map and regarded them in silence.

"You mean that we're——" The Prime Minister did not put the thought into words.

"Nothing short of a miracle can save us." Mackinnon's voice carried a finality that left no room for argument or dissent.

"Have you formed any plans, General?" It was the Minister for Defence who broke the stunned silence in the room.

"So far as is humanly possible," said Mackinnon grimly. "You must recognise the fact that the military initiative is entirely in the hands of the enemy. We can only try to anticipate his tactics, but we are positively on the defensive. But I must warn you, gentlemen, I should be failing in my duty if I attempted to minimise the critical nature of our position."

"Let us hear the worst, rather than temporise with probabilities. We must know what we have to face." The Prime Minister spoke for the gathering.

"You will need all your courage, gentlemen, but I do not doubt that. I only hope the people will display the same fortitude, for they, too, will be called upon

to face the crisis of Australia's history within a very few days."

He resumed his seat and spoke quietly but decisively.

"In striking with synchronised attacks at both east and west, the enemy, who is fully conversant with our weakness, aimed at dividing our small force. We have already decided that any attempt to aid Western Australia by land is hopeless, and impracticable. I must jealously guard our small force for the desperate needs of the Eastern States.

"Queensland is hopelessly cut off, so we must rule out any hope of help from that quarter. Tasmania is isolated, though I am risking drawing one battalion of trained men as a reinforcement. When I say 'risking,' I mean that I am bringing them across from Burnie to-night to land them, I hope, in Portland to-morrow morning. But the possibility of the enemy sending destroyers to the Bass Straits is so great that I would not have done it had not the demand been so urgent."

"What about Tasmania, General?" someone asked.

"Tasmania's fate will be ours, in any case. They will not bother with the island or with Queensland until they have settled with us. Neither can offer any resistance—and the enemy know it.

"Gentlemen, we can only guess at the strength opposed to us, but I fear it is not less than three divisions: say, 48,000 men. But should it be only two, that is, 36,000 all told; the gravity of our position is not much improved. They are moving down to the Victorian border with all the speed they can muster. They know well that there are no means by which we can oppose them, and they know too that they can hold salient points in occupied territory with very small detachments. That is one of their objects in terrorising the country and cowing the civilians.

"I could move up to meet them over the New South Wales border, but beleve me, gentlemen, it would take 100,000 troops to cope with the possibilities of their advance to Victoria. My base is here, and there are

only too many ways in which they could hold me, while they outflanked me and came in on my rear. And moreover I cannot—dare not—divide my force."

He held up his hand as the Prime Minister moved as though to speak. "Permit me to finish first, Sir. If I should move north, they may, and probably will, land behind me on the Victorian coast-line at Western Port. The longer their line of march from any one of their three landing places in New South Wales, the more their vulnerability increases. They know they must meet me, and they will do it at the first possible moment."

"Their only possible line of advance is at one or more of the rail crossings at Albury, Corowa, Yarrawonga, or Tocumwal, but by any or all of these routes they must converge finally on Seymour by road or rail—and it is at Seymour my force is lying. If I do not go to meet them they are compelled to seek me out."

"Seymour!" exclaimed the Prime Minister.

Mackinnon nodded. "It is the furthest point from their bases I can choose, and the one that will diminish their fighting strength to the greatest extent. Remember we will be fighting on ground we know, and I dare not choose a spot nearer Melbourne."

"It seems a desperate chance, General."

"That is what I want to impress upon you all," Mackinnon said impressively. "It is desperate! but I am convinced that it is our only chance."

"And if we fail——"

"If we fail——" The level gray eyes took in the silent group. "If we fail, then we reap our fools' harvest. I use the expression without any personal implication. The fools are the entire population of this country, who have been warned again and again, and would not heed the warning."

"And if you stop them?"

Mackinnon shrugged his stocky wide shoulders and smiled. "It will give us breathing space—but remember this! It will give them breathing space. Don't

misunderstand the situation. I am convinced that they have heavy reinforcements on the way. There is nothing in the Pacific to interfere with their communications. They can withdraw to the north, and consolidate and come again. The battle, even if we are successful, will weaken us too much to permit us to follow up any advantage."

"You mean to tell us, then, that we must risk everything on one desperate throw, and if we lose it means unconditional surrender?"

"Exactly! All that would be left would be a useless guerilla warfare. It would do nothing more than enrage the enemy and make conditions harsher."

"I may say, gentlemen," he added, "that what I have told you is the considered opinion, not only of myself but of my staff."

Never were there a sicker body of men than the eight Cabinet Ministers who listened to Mackinnon's news. The utterly preposterous event that they and their predecessors had been warned of had actually happened. All the anxious questions they put to him only emphasised the acuteness of the peril.

None knew better than Mackinnon the almost hopeless task with which he was confronted. He had been forced to make a heartbreaking decision. He had to abandon New South Wales, and face a trained and elated army with half-trained and raw men. His only hope lay in that his men, who would be fresh, and fired by a spirit of high courage, would meet an army, tired by long marches, and who would fight on unfamiliar ground. But even so, he knew in his heart, that even if victorious, he must be eventually the victim of overwhelming numbers.

That night the Cabinet learned that the Government of the United States had protested against the slaughter of helpless civilians in Australia, and had received from the enemy's Ambassador an emphatic assurance that the civilian population were being treated with consideration and a spirit of conciliation.

That night the Defence Council learned that the

enemy had effected a landing at Port Kembla and Wollongong. Though two troopships had been sunk, only seven Australian fighting planes were intact.

At the same time came news of the first attempt at resistance on land by a hastily formed body of some fifty civilians, who, recognising the situation, made a desperate attempt to check the advance over the great bastion of the coastal ranges. They knew that the best line the enemy could take to reach the pleateau was through the Macquarie Pass that winds down the precipitous face of the towering rampart of rock.

Arming themselves with shot guns and sporting rifles they piled into cars with all the explosives they could obtain. Half of them were experienced miners. Selecting a spot some third of the distance from the top of the pass they began feverishly to drill holes for their gelignite. An hour later they knew of the approach of a train of motor cars. Some fifteen or twenty went past filled with refugees who cried that the enemy were close behind.

They had left a guard of a dozen men on the bend below that on which they were working. A few minutes later an outburst of fire below warned them of the arrival of the enemy. A tree that had been cut through was hurled across the road by a charge of dynamite. While a dozen workers strove desperately to complete the drill holes that had been begun, the main body, from concealment in the undergrowth opened a steady fire down the pass. But under cover of a raking fire from machine guns the enemy moved up. As the fire of the defenders slackened the chatter of machine guns and the roll of rifle fire increased.

Seeing the attack must succeed, the charges were hastily inserted and exploded in an attempt to effect, at least, some damage. With the roar of the blast some hundreds of tons of rock were flung thundering down the mountain side. There was a momentary silence of firing as the mass of boulders went roaring and crashing among the timber—then it broke out

again as the defenders began their retreat to the cars that they had left higher up.

It was a gallant but ineffectual attempt, for the road was only partially closed. As the first car sped round the next hairpin bend it was sighted by the enemy. It got through, but the next was swept with machine gun bullets and blocked the progress of those behind. The rest made a gallant fight to the end. The face above was too steep to climb. Though the men in the first car tried to cover their escape, the position was hopeless. They fell to the last man. Only one carload of six men lived to carry the news to Moss Vale that the enemy held the head of the pass.

The net was closing in.

That night, too, orders were issued for the removal of all inhabitants, live stock, and food supplies and fodder from the triangle formed by the railway, with Mangalore at its apex, and with the Murray at between Albury and Tocumwal as its base.

With the orders went another to the Field Company of Engineers to prepare all the bridges across the Murray in that area for demolition.

CHAPTER X.

It was on Tuesday, while Fergus and I were engaged in the appalling work of gathering the remains of the victims of Saturday, that the patients in the hospital were evacuated to emergency hospitals at Parramatta. We had seen Lynda in the evening, and she told us that she was sleeping at the hospital that night, but would be leaving with some special hospital equipment next morning at 10 o'clock.

Between us Fergus and I possessed about 30/-, all but 1/- of which was mine. No one had any money. Most of the banks had ceased to exist. They had a name but no local habitation. Fergus possessed a cheque book, but told me that, though he knew a bank could go broke, he did not realise that one could go as broke as the branch of his Bank that held his account. It's site was occupied by a 40 ft. crater.

Red Cross and other workers were being fed at the Town Hall, and of necessity we were living anywhere we could find shelter, and eating at the public canteen. It was only by good luck, on the Tuesday night, that in George Street I noticed a hole blown in a basement. We explored, and concluded the premises belonged to a furnishing shop for the basement was full of bedding. It was here that we camped for the night. We had agreed to meet our burial gang at Paddington at eight o'clock next morning.

We were both dog weary, and the basement being lightless, we overslept. It was a quarter to eight when I was dragged back to life by Fergus. Conscience-stricken, we hurried to the canteen and drank mugs of coffee and wolfed thick sandwiches as we stood.

Making up Park Street, which was fairly clear of debris, on our way to our work, we had reached the corner of Hyde Park at Elizabeth Street when we halted and stared eastward. From down towards the Heads we heard the distant roar of propellers.

"Those devils are back again," I muttered. "Can you see them?"

A moment later Fergus pointed. "Take a line straight across to Bondi."

There, flying at a great height in the blue, we could make out two formations of dots. "Dod! man," growled Fergus. "Surely there's nothing they've forgotten to smash. What are the brutes after?"

As he spoke they swept downwards, circling round the Harbour like questing birds. Then they roared almost overhead, and a minute later we heard the crash of a gun from the direction of Darling Harbour and a shell burst high in the air among the planes. A moment later the planes began bombing, and we knew it was the remaining cruiser they were after. Above the roar of the bombs we could hear the regular clearer note of the gun. Then we both burst into a yell as one of the planes shattered to fragments in the air. But, almost before the falling pieces had disappeared, there came a concussion that rocked the tottering walls, and a great burst of smoke billowed up behind the skyline.

We were so intent on the fight that we did not notice two companies of infantry had turned out of Park Street towards Oxford Street. It was the military force in charge of the wrecked city. We hurried after them. We found the young officer who had dealt with our bandits in charge of the second company.

From him we heard the startling news that had been signalled from the Heads. The battle fleet was standing in shore guarding a landing from troop ships. The enemy were coming ashore at both Manly and Bondi beaches. As he spoke there was a terrific explosion from the direction of the Heads. He glanced over his shoulder. "There goes the magazine of the North Head fort. They are blowing up the forts to prevent the enemy getting them intact."

"But where are you fellows off to?" I asked.

He wasn't much more than a boy. That lad grinned as he replied. "We're 188 all told, and we're off along to the Old South Road to hold them up."

"But," Fergus exclaimed, "You haven't a dog's show. There'll be thousands of them."

"A brigade probably," he laughed. "But it will be merry hell while it lasts. They'll have the duce of a job rooting us out of the wrecked building up there."

"Dod! man! I'm with you." Fergus' eyes shone.

"Don't be a dashed idiot!" the young fellow snapped back. "There's not a pop-gun in the whole place besides our rifles. You two get back and don't throw away your lives. They'll be wanting men like you later."

"But——" began Fergus.

"But, be hanged," he barked. "Listen! We've had word from Newcastle that they are massacring women and men indiscriminately, and they'll do it here. If you're not mad, you get out, and get quickly. We won't be able to check them for more than an hour or two, and they'll be in the city through the Spit by then as well. If you know any women, get them away. Go! don't be dashed fools."

He shook our hands and hurried after his men.

"That's a man," Fergus commented gravely, as we looked after him.

Then he exclaimed, "Come on! The hospital!" and we went across the park at the double. Before we were half way across we heard the banging of guns in the Harbour. We did not know it then, all of the destroyers had run out and begun shelling the enemy landing at Bondi and Manly. It was a splendid but hopeless gesture, for in a few minutes we heard the roar of heavy guns to seaward. Then came the planes again. Before we reached the hospital we could hear the crash of their bombs as they swooped on the doomed destroyers.

"Queer thing!" Fergus gasped as we ran. "Those brutes have wrecked the whole city. They've murdered thousands and thousands, but no one's seen one of them."

When we reached the empty but still intact wing of the hospital, we found Lynda and about twenty members of the staff who had been warned, and were on the point of leaving. Every effort was being made to hurry the people from the threatened area. Despite the riot of shelling and gunfire that roared over the Harbour, Lynda kept her head, and heard our news without making a fuss.

Her orders had been changed. She was to go to Moss Vale where a train load of injured had been sent. A car was waiting for her at the intersection of City Road and Cleveland Street, which was one of the nearest points from which wheeled traffic could move. That was nearly two miles away, and going over the blocked streets would be heavy. There was no time to lose, and as the men of the hospital staff were anxious to be off they were glad to leave Lynda in our charge.

Fortunately the first part of our flight from the hospital through Hyde Park was over cleared ground. Fergus seized Lynda's small suit case, and we hurried off. Behind us the crash of gun fire died down and broke out again. It was not until we reached Liverpool Street that we began to realise how many people had remained in the ruined area. There were hundreds, mostly men, singly and in groups, all hurrying westward. It was here, too, that in the intervals of bombardment we could hear the faint splutter of rifle fire from the direction of Bondi.

Both Elizabeth and Castlereagh Street were badly blocked, but Pitt Street to the west of Liverpool Street was more open. Even so it took us nearly an hour to reach the wreckage of the Central Railway Station. As we went, Lynda told us that the car that was waiting for her was owned and driven by a volunteer worker named Clifford, of whom she knew nothing. Her orders had been changed before there was any thought of a second attack.

Although hundreds of people were clambering over the debris in Pitt Street, most of the fugitives were making for the Parramatta Road by George Street, so that crowds from both streets, all on foot, converged on George Street West. It was an extraordinary spectacle. We saw very few children. But men and women, whose clothes were all the worse for wear, scrambled and struggled towards open streets and safety. Some were empty handed, but most carried bundles or suit cases containing all their possessions. They were all weary looking, and their faces showed the strain of the terror from which they were flying.

We three talked very little. Fergus stuck to Lynda's case, and I helped her over the tough spots, and they were many.

Then, just as we reached the intersection of the City Road, a fresh torment was added. We heard a high-pitched whine that ended in a screech and the explosion of a shell that burst among the ruins of the Central Station. Those devils were beginning to fire on the flying throng. That fiendish act was one more proof that the fire was being directed by enemy agents.

That first shell was the herald of a storm that made the last few hundred yards of our journey a nerve racking race with death. As we broke into a run devastation swept down from the sky, filling the air with dust and flying fragments of steel and debris. Across the street a dozen shells burst in the University grounds. We could hear the screams of women and the shouting of men.

During those last few yards my mind was occupied with the question of whether a car would be waiting. I could have howled with delight as we found a big double-seater standing at the corner, in Cleveland Street. Beside it stood a tall, somewhat sallow, young man. His dark eyes rather belied the gravity of the long face.

"Clifford?" I cried as we raced up.

"Right! Is this Sister Burton," he flung open the rear door of the car as he spoke. "Pile in! This is no place to talk."

Fergus pushed the suit case in, and Lynda followed it. Then we stood back, hesitating. Clifford ran round and took his place at the wheel. "Hop in, you two," he shouted.

"But!——" I began, somehow it seemed like rushing the boats in a shipwreck.

Lynda bent forward and said to Clifford, "They're my brother and a friend."

Clifford had started his engine and looked round. "It's going to be a tough trip. She may need help. Get in. I can't wait."

I slipped into the front seat, for Fergus had promptly taken his place by Lynda's side. The next instant the car turned south on top gear.

I have seen some fancy car driving, but nothing like that with which Clifford covered those first four miles to Arncliffe. That he never hit anything as he sat staring tightlipped ahead, was at the same time a fact and a miracle. The road was full of mad traffic all heading in the one direction. All semblance of order had vanished, and it was every man for himself.

It was not until we passed Arncliffe that he spoke. "I'll have to try the Prince's Highway, and make through Wollongong, and over the Macquarie Pass. I hear the Hume Highway is almost impassable."

"Lord send the George's River bridge is safe?" Fergus commented.

Clifford's face lit up for a moment. "My sentiments, too. You'll notice I'm not dawdling." He cut in front of a car before us with the needle of his speedometer touching 70.

The air was still echoing to the roar of the bombardment behind us. Then a moment later a shell burst close to the road 100 yards ahead of us. We had still nearly two miles to go to the bridge, but we covered the distance in less than two minutes. But it was a lively two minutes. Inside Botany Bay a

destroyer was nosing on some illegitimate business. Outside a cruiser could be seen wreathing herself in puffs of black smoke.

As we raced on to the approach to the bridge a shell swept through the high girders, miraculously missing them, and sent up a column of water half a mile beyond. We were more than half way across when a terrific burst announced a hit behind us.

Fergus, looking back, called out that only a stretch of the parapet had been blown out, and that the deck was unbroken. Almost immediately—we were not fifty feet from the end, and comparative safety—the bridge and car were deluged by a mass of water thrown up by another shell that struck short by a happy fifty feet.

The next instant we were over, and we felt safe. The cruiser would be too intent on the bridge to bother about the road.

By this time we had raced almost clear of traffic. Clifford relaxed, and slowed down to fifty on the wide smooth road.

I turned round to look at Lynda. "Women are queer," on the authority of Sir Anthony Gloster and Kipling. Though I did not expect hysterics, I did expect her to look scared, or at least anxious. Instead she was looking positively radiant, even to a brother's eyes.

As she returned my smile, Clifford said over his shoulder. "Thank goodness, you're not a squealing woman, Sister Burton; and you had reason to squeal just then."

"We learn to swallow our squeals in a hospital," she laughed, "and to be truthful, I swallowed one long squeal all across the bridge."

Then a thought struck me. "Lyn—have you any money?" I asked. "Fergus and I are almost broke."

"Then we're lucky," she laughed. "On Saturday morning I drew £12 from my savings bank account with intent to commit an extravagance, and did not have time to commit it. It's all here."

Said Clifford, "I can throw in nearly £17, and we may need it badly."

"Why do you say that?" I asked.

He slowed down and turned in his seat. "Have you heard anything of what has happened at Newcastle?"

Remembering what the officer had told us in Hyde Park, I looked at Lynda before I answered.

She read my thought with her usual skill. I never could keep anything from her. "Listen, you men," she said. "Whatever is going on, I'm going to be in it. I'm neither a fool nor a flapper. Things are bad I know, but I want to know everything."

"Sister Burton's right," Clifford said. "I'd best tell you everything. They've been raiding and slaughtering for miles round Newcastle, and as far out as Maitland. I was warned at the Town Hall this morning that the road down from Singleton and Maitland, and through Windsor to the Hume Highway is fairly choked with fugitives making south."

"They told me," he went on, "that conditions on the road are appalling. There is no control of any kind, and the worst element is getting the upper hand. They are stopping cars and forcing the owners out of them, and robbing them besides. Petrol is running short, and they are taking it from people who have it. There have been several murders. I don't know what it will be like down towards Wollongong, but we will have to be prepared."

"There may be difficulty in getting food, too, if that's the case," Fergus put in.

"That's certain!" Clifford answered. "Anyway, when I heard what was going on, I decided that we must take the Prince's Highway. You fellows can't tell how glad I was when you came with Sister Burton, because, unless I'm a raving pessimist, we are in for a rough trip. But I came more or less prepared, even to the extent of doing a spot of looting."

"Everything goes these days," I said. "Ask Fergus where we got the whisky we drank last night."

Clifford bent down, and picked up an attache case from the floor. "Open it," he said, handing it to me. "I raided a shop in Market Street for those."

When I opened the case I found that "those" were a pair of nasty-looking automatic pistols, with 300 rounds of ammunition to match them.

"I did not expect anyone but Sister Burton, or I could have taken another," he explained. "But I've loaded them both. We may not want them, but if we do, we'll want them badly."

"Besides those," he went on, "I have 20 gallons of petrol in the tank and another 16 gallons in the luggage carrier—That gives us a run of about 800 miles."

"Then," said Lynda, "but for the food we have nothing to worry about."

Clifford laughed. "Don't ask me how I got it, but there is enough tinned stuff and biscuits there, too, to see us through."

We did not know Bob then so well as we did later. But this foresight was characteristic. He had a genius for detail that missed nothing. Nor did we know then that Bloody Saturday had cost him his father, his mother, two sisters, and a brother—everyone belonging to him. He had been working for the bar, when the smash came, and had been brought up in a wealthy home.

Behind the mask of his quiet reserve was a cast-iron will and an implacable spirit that stopped at nothing. I suppose, had I been able to pick and choose, I could not have fallen in with two better men than Fergus Graham and Bob Clifford—men of whose existence I had been unaware a few days earlier.

We were not long in learning that anarchy ruled. When we reached National Park we found it swarming with destitute refugees, living under makeshift shelters or in cars useless for want of petrol. They were half starved, and were depending on Sydney for help that was not forthcoming. They swarmed into the road and yelled at us for food, or for a lift to escape.

It was a sickening spectacle. At the back stood women and children, evidently unused to hardship, mutely imploring with their eyes. The crew on the road were men of a different brand. They cursed and threatened as we sped past. Clifford dared not stop. They would have rushed us if he had.

Fergus had taken one pistol and I the other, at Clifford's request. Said he, "It's a case of the survival of the fittest. If it comes to shooting, shoot and don't hesitate."

I never heard of what became of those unfortunates but their fate must have been terrible, and I doubt if any survived. Down nearly the whole of the 20 miles to Bulli Pass we overtook groups plodding along in the hope of reaching help below the Pass.

It was while we were passing Darke's Forest that we received the first hint of what was ahead of us when we began to meet an ever-increasing number of cars racing north, and packed to capacity. Some even had men clinging on their footboards. About a mile from Sublime Point, we found one stopped to change a tyre. Clifford pulled up, and asked the reason for the exodus.

The answer to the question staggered us. The Government had ordered the evacuation of the entire South Coast between Bulli and Nowra, as there was a certainty of an enemy raid and landing at Port Kembla.

We warned them that it was madness to try for safety towards the north, and that they would find Sydney in the hands of the enemy. But they would not listen.

We stopped again at the Lookout. We hoped to add to our food supply, but the little store there had been completely looted. Lynda, who had gone to the platform of the Lookout, called to us, and pointed to the north-east. There, not more than 10 miles away, we saw a great array of ships heading to the south.

The sight spurred us into movement. Already the stream of cars coming up the Pass was almost unbroken. Clifford set off as fast as the descent and the upward traffic permitted. In any other circumstances, I should have called Clifford some unseemly names for the risks he took, but we went down that switchback zigzag at 45 miles an hour from head to foot.

Had the road been clear when we reached the level ground, all would have been well, as it was, the road was a seething bedlam. Down the whole of that long streak of settlement from Bulli to Port Kembla was "tumult and affright." Panic-stricken people in vehicles of every description filled the roads, byeways and highway alike. We crawled along till we reached Bellambi, and tried the lower road, but it took us an hour to cover the two miles to Balgownie before we could reach the highway again. It was then nearly one o'clock, and we found the road clearer, as most of the traffic was making south. By the time we reached Wollongong, Clifford was able to pick his way without trouble.

We were almost clear of the town when excited people, pointing and staring upward, drew our attention to some planes flying seaward at a great height. Then, as Clifford increased our speed, two things happened almost simultaneously. First, we heard the boom of a heavy gun out to sea; then, in Kembla, ahead of us, a shell-burst sent up a pillar of black smoke and debris.

Neither of the four exclamations that greeted it from our car were exactly refined. Lynda's "Damn them!" sounded so heartfelt that we all laughed. That first shell, however, had one good effect, spurring on the thinning traffic. It was time, too, because the first arrival was the forerunner of a series of terrific explosions round the already devastated Port. As we swept through Unaderra, Port Kembla was a raging volcano, but fortunately for us the fire was kept on the sea front. Still, as we fled down the eight miles of road behind Lake Illawarra, we were almost deafened by the smashing concussions of the bombardment. But the peace of the lake and of the beautiful country

side formed a strange contrast to the tumult reigning so near us.

Where the road to Moss Vale across Macquarie Pass branches off Princes Highway at the south end of Illawarra, Clifford stopped the car. He turned round to Lynda. "Here's where you will have to make a decision," he said.

"Why is the decision to be mine?" she asked.

"Well," grinned Bob, "at the Town Hall in Sydney I undertook to deliver a nurse at Moss Vale, and I am ready to carry out my contract."

"Then, why not go ahead?" laughed Lynda.

"Because, if that nurse is wise, I think she'll order me to drive to Melbourne, rather more than 600 miles, at the best speed we can get out of this bus."

Lynda murmured "Umm!" and then, "and what good reason is there that I should desert a hospital full of patients?"

"First," Clifford went on, "the patients may not be there when you reach Moss Vale. Secondly, those shell peddling blighters will probably be there, too, in a couple of days. Thirdly, Moss Vale is in the line of flight from the north, and conditions there are not likely to be fit for human consumption."

We three watched Lynda's face intently as he spoke.

Her level eyes looked straight into Clifford's and she shook her head decisively. "I undertook to go to Moss Vale. Would you turn down a job like that because it was risky?"

"But a man's different——!"

She broke in. "Don't talk nonsense! You know you'd go. Please don't let us waste time."

Bob turned to Fergus and me, hesitating.

Fergus looked at Lynda and shook his head. "I've no doubt but that Clifford's right, but I'll not try to persuade you against your conscience." Then dropping into his own speech, he added: "I'm thinkin' t'wd be a waste o' guid breath."

Knowing Lynda, I laughed. "I'm afraid Graham's right. It would be wasting breath."

"The amendment is carried by a majority of two." Clifford swung the car off the highway, and turned west towards the great wall of the Macquarie Range. Behind us the guns were still pounding.

We spoke very little as the car ran through the lovely open country towards the Pass. Most of the traffic was flying south, but there were some cars on the road ahead. We must have been near the end of the stampede.

As we neared a red roofed farm, tucked into a fold of ground where the road began to rise steeply, a plaintive demand from Fergus for food reminded us that we were hungry. Lynda insisted she must have tea or perish.

It was then that Bob admitted he had tea, but no billy in which to make it or cups from which to drink it. Necessity knows no law, and he turned the car from the road to the house that stood a few hundred yards back.

The house was deserted. We knocked and shouted but received no response. I committed a rather bad job of amateur burglary on the back door. A fire still glowed on the kitchen range, and Lynda took charge of the subsequent proceedings.

While the kettle was boiling Bob and I went to the car for food. At that stage, just four days after Bloody Saturday, our social sense was not quite shattered. No doubt there was food about the house; but though I did not mind burglary, we all hesitated at stealing food—that was to come.

Looking back towards the coast we could see heavy columns of smoke rising from the direction of Port Kembla and Wollongong.

I suppose we were in that house less than half an hour. As we drank our tea from borrowed cups and ate biscuits and cheese, Lynda chaffed Fergus and me on our utterly disreputable appearance. Each of us wore four days' growth on our chins, and were doubt-

less deserving of her description as a pair of Domain deadbeats. Clifford had shaved that morning, and his clothes looked less unkempt. None of us knew where we could get our next shave.

Lynda was tidying up the table when we heard voices outside. Bob and I went to the door. There were five men examining our car with suspicious intent. They were a tough looking gang.

As we slipped out of the doorway one of them looked up and saw us, and drew the attention of the others.

Said Clifford quietly, "What do you fellows want?"

They exchanged glances, and then one stepped forward. "Well! Since you want to know all about it, we want this car," he said truculently.

Clifford glanced at me and whispered, "Have you got that automatic."

I nodded. The weight of it in my pocket gave me a sense of comfort.

"Sorry," said Clifford, "but we need it ourselves. Bunk out of this."

One of them laughed. "Oh!—your bloomin' lordship, you can have ours in exchange. You'll find it half a mile back on the road—without gas."

"I told you to get out of this." Clifford did not raise his voice, but he whispered to me to be ready.

"Well," said the first man, "since there's five of us, the vote's against you blokes. We're taking it. You don't think we're going to wait here to be butchered."

They turned and moved towards the car. As they did, I pulled out the automatic, and called out, "Stop! And stand back!" As I called, I found Fergus was standing beside me.

They all turned, and one shouted, "Rush them!"

What followed was a matter of seconds. The five started forward together. They were not twenty feet from us. As they rushed, Fergus and I fired. One dropped and another stopped; but the other three came on. We fired again and another fell, and the remaining two backed off.

The man we had wounded first, sunk to the ground, and supporting himself on one hand, gasped horrible threats at us. There was a thin stream of blood from his mouth. The other two lay still.

Fergus turned on the two who were still standing. "I'll count three, and if you're in range by then I'll kill you both." He pointed up the hill from the road with the pistol. "One!"

The next instant they were legging it as hard as they could put foot to the ground.

I looked round. Lynda was standing in the doorway behind us. She stared at the fallen men. "Oh! had you to do it?" she almost whispered.

Clifford, who was bending over the wounded man, looked up. "We had no option, Sister. These brutes would have left us here without compunction."

She nodded towards the fallen figure. "Is he——?"

"Just about!" said Bob, standing up. "The bullet went clean through his chest. We'd better get away."

Fergus was replacing the empty cartridges in his magazine, and handed me two. I reloaded, and we hurried to the car. By this time the other two had disappeared. Thirty seconds later we were on our way, leaving the three sprawling bodies where they lay.

As we turned into the road, I looked back. So far as I could see over the quiet open landscape, it was empty, but for a car standing in the middle of the road below us. As Clifford drove on I could not help wondering at the queerness of it all. I had just participated in the killing of three men, but I had not the slightest feeling of remorse or repugnance. All the statute and moral laws seemed to have been abrogated. I had a sense of satisfaction rather than guilt.

"It was Fergus who put it in a nutshell by saying, "It's luck you brought those automatics, Clifford, or we would have been in a nasty fix."

Clifford nodded. "I said it would be the survival of the fittest. I'm afraid that is only the beginning."

The car ran on in second gear, climbing that magnificent winding road up the Pass. Somewhere near the

top we were stopped and questioned by armed men. They were civilians who asked if we had seen signs of the enemy. We told them all we knew, and found they were guards for a party of men who were making an attempt to block the road for wheeled traffic to delay the advance. Higher up, we came on more of them working feverishly.

It was nearly sunset when we reached the head of the Pass, with 15 miles to go to reach Moss Vale. Running through that lovely country with quiet landscapes and shadowed valleys, it seemed incredible that terror brooded over everything. But the village of Robertson, when we reached it, was deserted but for one car that was leaving as we arrived. Its owner asked for news from the coast. He told us he was making south through Kangaroo Valley and Nowra, for Melbourne, and advised us not to go on to Moss Vale as there were rumours that the enemy would make for it. A little later, about half way to our destination, several cars raced by us all packed with men. They shouted as they passed that the enemy had reached the Pass.

At dusk we arrived at Moss Vale. That wide streeted town was in turmoil. Evidently the news that the enemy had reached Macquarie Pass had been magnified to terrifying proportions. It took us an hour to learn that Lynda's train had gone on. To where, our informant had no idea. We sought the station-master, a much harassed man, who was sticking to his job, endeavouring to deal at the same time with a frenzied railway traffic problem and frenzied passengers for whom he had no trains. He told us that a trainload of wounded and injured people had come in from Sydney, but that he had had orders to send it through to Goulburn, and that it had left before midday.

To Lynda, whose calm was a contrast to the surrounding panic, he confided that all possible rolling stock was being rushed south to prevent it falling into the hands of the enemy. But he knew they had got

possession of several passenger trains and locomotives and many goods trucks. He believed they were in Muswellbrook, and were making across to Gulgong. The last message they had from Katoomba was at 2 o'clock, and he feared they must by now be at Lithgow.

We returned to Fergus, who had stayed to guard the car, and discussed the situation. Despite the wild rumours in the streets, we felt that if the enemy had reached the head of Macquarie Pass, it would only be a small detachment to secure the road. It was unlikely that they could reach Moss Vale from Kembla in any numbers before late next day, if then.

"What I can't understand," said Fergus, "is why they are not here already from Parramatta. It's not 70 miles, and if they have got hold of railway rolling stock, you'd think they'd be here to meet their murderous friends from Kembla."

"Elementary, my dear Watson!" Clifford spoke more lightheartedly than he felt. "They want Lithgow first with the munition works, and they want it intact. That crowd that romped into Sydney this morning have wiped out the naval units they had bottled up there, and they can unload their troopships and make the Harbour a naval base. With Lithgow in their hands they can wait for the Newcastle gang to come down to them from Mudgee."

"Don't forget," I said, "they can fly light. The devils don't need to wait for their artillery. They have both rail and road open to them, and I expect they have been able to rake in more motor vehichles than they need for the taking."

"Lord! what a mess," groaned Bob. "It's been a walk-over. Just four days and we're mopped up. Just look how they stand. It's one step for them from Lithgow to Bathurst. The Newcastle lot can join the Sydney force by two lines from Mudgee and Gulgong. Then the gang from Kembla can use Moss Vale as base to work through from here to Goulburn and Cootamundra. That gives them the whole vital area from Newcastle to Kembla, inland."

"And not a whack at them anywhere," Fergus said savagely. "We're running. Everybody's running. Haven't we a military force anywhere? It's like driving sheep."

"But," asked Lynda anxiously, "surely we aren't beaten without a blow, or a fight?"

Bob rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "I suppose they are concentrating our troops somewhere south in Victoria, and may meet them north of the Murray. But——"

"Dash it all!" Fergus said, "The thing's preposterous. There are 7,000,000 people in Australia, and you don't mean to say they're licked by a few shiploads of Cambasians in four days."

"In Russia," Bob answered gravely, "a few hundred thousand organised Communists are holding more than 100,000,000 people in abject slavery. Our organisation was wiped out with Sydney."

"But, Victoria!" Lynda protested. "They could raise 150,000 men there, at least."

"Twice that number would be useless unless trained and armed. They won't give us the time. That's why they're rushing the three landings," Bob replied.

"There's one thing, I know," I said. "We'll have to get out of here, and make for Melbourne."

"That's my idea, too," Clifford agreed. "There's no military organisation here, and if we get to Melbourne they may let us enlist in some kind of force."

Fergus turned to Lynda. "It's useless for you to try to follow your hospital train. I think the others are right."

Lynda submitted without argument, but suggested we should try to get something to eat before we left.

But getting anything to eat in Moss Vale that night was another matter. The mile-long main street was thronged by people whose sole idea was to get out of Moss Vale at the first possible moment. While the others waited in the car I made enquiries for food. There was none to be had. Hundreds of

refugees from the north had left the Hume Highway at Mittagong and had come down to Moss Vale. The stories they spread of the devastation and savagery of the invaders had struck terror.

We had no idea of what truth was in the stories, but they were believed. All the shops had been cleared by the crowds. One place I entered was completely wrecked. The owner told me that when he announced his stock had gone a crowd had refused to believe him and ransacked the place.

I finally returned to the car, empty handed, to find Fergus and Clifford in hot argument with four men who demanded places in it. My appearance complicated the situation. They threatened to wreck the car if we would not take them. No one took the slightest notice of the altercation, violent as it was. One of them lurched forward and struck Fergus in the face. I pulled out my automatic and cracked him on the head with the barrel. The others turned on me, and I warned them I would fire. Clifford opened the door and I slipped in. Two jumped on the running board as we started, but I smashed at their hands with the pistol, and they dropped off cursing with rage.

Clifford started through the crowded street, but driving was no easy matter. Again and again we halted, and at each halt threatening or imploring faces peered in at us. It was half an hour before we got through the fear-maddened crowd. It had been an experience that drove home to us how completely the moral fibre of the people had been sapped. At the railway station a demoralised crowd was clamouring for transportation anywhere. They were swarming over a train of empty goods trucks for which there was no locomotive, fighting for places like wild animals. The milling throng in the streets, who were rushing empty shops and hotels, were not the worst elements of the community. They had been ordinary decent Australian town and country folk.

So far as we could see there was no vestige of

authority or control. They were beyond listening to reason. The one idea was to escape from the threatened town. All ordinary decencies of life had lapsed. The appalling spectacle illustrated the results of the enemy's policy of frightfulness. Mob panic ruled.

It was not until we passed Wingello, 15 miles from Moss Vale, that Bob drew the car to the road side and stopped. For ten miles along the road, fugitives on foot had tried to stop the car. Twice we passed cars that had been stopped, round which fighting groups struggled for their possession. Once I had to fire a shot over the head of a man who stood full in our path in an attempt to hold us up. Poring over a road map by the light of an electric torch we discussed our route. Our experience at Moss Vale decided us not to risk passing through Goulburn. Finally, we chose a route by leaving the main road to cut off through Bengonia to reach Canberra through Tarago.

That night, somewhere south of Bengonia, Bob lost the road. So at 11 o'clock he turned the car into a patch of scrub where it was hidden from the track. Here, with Lynda in possession of the car, we three slept on the ground in turns—one standing sentry.

Next morning at daylight we opened and emptied two tins of tongues, and used the tins for boiling water for tea. It is a plan I do not recommend except in case of emergency. But even cold tongue and biscuits with tea of an original flavour were welcome at the time.

It was while Bob was gathering firewood and Fergus and I were opening the tins that I made a discovery. Lynda approached us from the car. She had made some sort of a toilet, but was not looking her usual spick and span best. With a brotherly lack of tact I greeted her with, "Great scot! Lyn, you do look a deadbeat."

Fergus looked up at the same time, and swung

round on me. There was cold fire in his eyes, and as his hand lifted, no man was ever nearer a sock on the jaw without actually getting it than I was at that moment. I gaped at them in turn. Lynda flushed, and put her hand gently on Fergus' arm. Fergus growled in his throat inarticulately, still glaring. Then enlightment slowly percolated to my understanding.

"You—you two—!" Even my dense mind could not mistake the expression in Lynda's eyes as she looked at that bellicose Scot.

"If you hadn't been utterly blind," Lynda laughed, "you would not need telling."

"And, maybe," Fergus added with a grin, "ye wad no ha' come so near a crackit on the nose. Deadbeat! An' ye say that again ye'll get it."

"I apologise and withdraw unreservedly." Mirth overcame me. "But how was I to know? When did it all happen?"

"Yesterday morning on the Georges River bridge while that dashed cruiser was shelling us." It was Bob's voice close behind us.

Lynda emitted a startled, "Oh!" Her flush deepened as she stared at Bob in embarrassed amazement.

He dropped an armful of wood. "I had to confess. It was the mirror. I happened to glance up as that shell hit the bridge behind us. Forgive!" He held out his hand with a disarming smile.

"You young devil!" said Lynda dispassionately. Then with a little lift of her head as she looked at Fergus. "Anyway, I'm proud of it."

We shook hands all round, and I said to Fergus, "Well, of all the times to select for a proposal, I think yours was a record breaker."

"Well!" he grinned. "I didn't know where the next shell would land and I wanted to let her know."

I turned to Bob. "All I can say is, there must be something in it. If a girl will accept a man looking like Fergus with four days' growth of

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whiskers on him, she's prepared for the worst."

Fergus fingered his stubby chin. "It's verra embarrassin', Wally."

Bob, who was on his knees making a fire, looked up. "Wally," he said, "your sister says she wasn't scared, but I know her heart was in her mouth all the time."

"Fergus!" cried Lynda, her eyes dancing, "Give that young imp what you were going to give Wally."

"We'll do better," Fergus took her hand. "We'll leave them to get the breakfast," and they turned their backs on us and strolled away.

Bob looked at his watch. "It's not seven o'clock yet, we'll give them half an hour." And we did, but they took nearly an hour.

In the circumstances we had a lively meal. As Fergus pointed out, apart from his unusual wooing he had asked Lynda to marry him when his sole possessions were one shilling and the clothes he stood in, and they were, by then, nothing to boast about.

On the road again, Bob soon picked up the right track, and by a little after nine o'clock we were in Queanbeyan, and found the town excited, but otherwise normal. We heard that the enemy were in Lithgow on the previous night, and that Katoomba had been destroyed by fire, deliberately. But all the news was vague and unconfirmed. We waited long enough to have a much-needed shave and clean up, and procure some food. Here, too, Bob was able to refill our petrol tank.

Our decision to avoid Goulburn added more than 100 miles to our route. From Queanbeyan, our road described an exasperating letter N. We went nearly 70 miles south to Cooma. One hundred miles northwest to Tumut, and then 70 south again till we reached the Victorian border at Tintaldra. But one advantage of it was that the roads were almost clear of traffic. We were able to procure all the petrol we required, and by great luck Bob was able to buy three empty

five-gallon drums, which we filled and stored in the luggage carrier as a reserve supply.

However, it was not until dusk that we arrived at Tintaldra on the Wednesday night. It was here for the first time since the previous Saturday we came on evidence of constituted authority. The crossing of the bridge, as were all other bridges along the border, was under strict official control. We were not prepared, however, for the congested traffic that filled the road from Albury. We found later that the stampede down the main highways had been so great that Albury, and, to some extent, the Hume Weir crossing, had been reserved for Government and military traffic. Refugee traffic had been diverted west to Corowa and Yarrawonga, and east as far as Tintaldra.

A small but efficient organisation took the names of car owners, number of passengers, and point of starting and destination of refugees. They were given a route to which they had to adhere. A warning was issued that no petrol could be purchased on the Victorian side, and that cars must be surrendered to the Government at their destination. Our orders were to go by Tallangatta, Myrtleford, and Whitfield to Mansfield, where we would be redirected.

By the time we had completed formalities, the bridge was closed for the night and would not be reopened until 6.30 next morning.

It was an uneasy night. There were more than 500 cars waiting to cross. The news that petrol could not be procured in Victoria spread dismay and flagrant dishonesty. Again and again uproar broke out through attempts at theft on petrol tanks. It was after a scratch meal of boiled eggs that Bob ran against the controller of the crossing and found in him an old friend. They paced up and down in earnest talk for half an hour.

Bob came back to the car, looking glum. Lynda demanded to be told the worst.

Seated on the running board to keep an eye on

our petrol tank he repeated his tidings. His informant was an old friend of his family. "You might as well hear it now," he said, "I'm afraid we're scuppered. My friend, who is handling the road traffic between here and Corowa, tells me we have hardly a hope. They expect the enemy will be over the border by Sunday or Monday. They will probably wait until their artillery catches up with them. He hears we are not going to try to stop them until they are well into Victoria. They only allow Government traffic on the Hume Highway, and the cross roads are congested with stock they are driving off the enemy's probable route. He says Albury is one seething lunatic asylum. The railway on both sides is choked with trains. They're trying to get the refugees away. They're coming in at the rate of 1,000 an hour. They're sending the motor traffic along to Corowa, Yarrawonga and Tocumwal. Nothing but refugees and military supplies are allowed on the rails. There are thousands on foot crowding in by the roads—all destitute."

"Sounds like a chapter from the Book of Job," I remarked.

"That's not all." Bob went on, "The enemy are devastating and butchering in every town they enter. They are in Moss Vale now, coming down from Parramatta and some from Kembla."

We had little rest that night. One of us was always on guard on the petrol tank. As I tried to settle down after my spell of watching, Fergus got into a heated argument with a prowler. An exchange of opprobrious remarks led to a scrimmage that drew not only me and Bob, but surrounding campers to the scene. We separated the combatants, and I recognised in the intruder a well-known Sydney stockbroker. When the confusion died down it was found that the tanks of two nearby cars had been emptied during their owners' absence. Both owners went looking for my stockbroking acquaintance. After that brawls were unattended except by the principals.

It was just after 7 o'clock on Thursday morning that our car turned across the bridge behind another, loaded like a camel with the worldly goods of its owner. Before we left, a well-known Sydney stockbroker with a badly damaged face, was offering £5 a gallon for 20 gallons of petrol, and there were no takers.

Fortunately the weather held. Had we not known that that red war was behind us, and most likely in front, too, the run down to Mansfield would have made a delightful trip. Possibly Lynda and Fergus were the only two people on the road utterly contented with the present and oblivious of the future.

At Mansfield, which we reached by 1 o'clock, we found the residents polite but not cordial. They already had had some experience of refugees that did not make them popular as a class. Near the Kennedy memorial we found an official who gave us one hour to rest, and added directions that our route lay via Alexandra, Healesville, Coldstream and Ringwood. He warned us that any deviation would mean trouble. We were also told we were to drive direct to Albert Park on arrival, and surrender our car.

We accepted no more than 10 minutes of our hour of grace. Our own experience of refugees made us tolerant of Mansfield's opinion of them. Thereafter, at each town beyond Alexandra, our passes were checked, and we were waved on our journey. As we followed the road among the hills we gradually came to the conclusion that Melbourne had "gone bush." Everywhere a tent could be pitched or a camp made were families, who, having heard of what had happened to Sydney, had left Melbourne, encouraged by the authorities. On the road we passed scores of transport lorries that had been organised to bring supplies to the campers.

It was nearly 5 o'clock when we passed through Kew, and into the city by Bridge Road. To us, who had gone through those five days from Bloody Saturday, its peace and lack of apparent excitement seemed

unreal. Shops were open. People seemed to be going about their business unconcerned. The trams ran as usual, and the evening crowds were converging on the Flinders Street Station. Here and there among the crowd we saw men in uniform. It was only in the freedom of the streets from traffic we saw the shadow from the north. Between Kew and the City we did not see half a dozen motor cars. As we turned from Flinders Street into St. Kilda Road people stared at our car and its New South Wales number. Twice we had been halted and our passes were examined.

Albert Park at last! South of the lake near the Middle Park Station, hundreds of cars were parked, and ours was directed to take its place among them. Here we alighted, stiff and tired. We were four fugitives. Except for Lynda, we had no clothes but those in which we stood. Our joint finances totalled £24. The authorities allowed us to take our food, but the little petrol left was commandeered.

CHAPTER XI.

There was a refugee bureau at the South Melbourne cricket ground where information could be obtained. Here our story that we had come from Sydney by the South Coast attracted immediate attention. Telephones rang and five minutes later we were in a car and driving to the Barracks. How anxious the authorities were for information was manifest by the immediate interview we had with an Intelligence officer.

To the best of our ability we told of conditions at Sydney, and of the roads down, and of what we had seen of the enemy raids. For an hour we answered questions. Then our luck held. Lynda had demanded from Fergus the right to volunteer for Army nursing, to which he had readily agreed as the best and safest place for her if there were safety anywhere. So that at the close of our interview when we, in our turn, offered ourselves for service of any kind, Lynda had no difficulty in gaining her wish. Even the problem of her shelter for the night was solved by the Army Medical authorities. With us, however, the situation was not so easy. Then chance helped us.

As we were leaving the Barracks, Fergus almost fell on the neck of an officer wearing red tabs, who was coming up the steps. "Ginger!" he exclaimed. The other stood off and looked at him, and a second later the two were wringing one another's hands. Bob and I were introduced, and the Red Tab heard our tale.

"All we want," I urged, "is a job in which we

can be useful." He took us back into the building with him.

He suggested our enlisting and going out to Broadmeadows, but Fergus would have none of that.

"Now listen to me, Ginger!" he said with belligerent emphasis. "If we go to Broadmeadows it will be months before we get into uniform, even. We three have been shelled by those blighters." He gave a rapid sketch of our experiences of the week, and went on. "What we want is action, my boy——"

"But," began "Ginger" (I do not recollect his real name).

Fergus cut him short, "I said listen to me! We're three good men, and we want jobs. Do you get that? We want them now. If those red patches you're sporting mean anything, you're the man to get them for us. Uniforms! any kind! now!"

"You infernal, pertinacious Scot!" Ginger growled. "Do you think there are no dashed regulations?"

"Just because I know there are too dashed many of 'em is why I'm laying down the law to you," Fergus retorted.

"I tell you!" Ginger began to protest.

"Holy wars!" cut in Fergus. "Must I say it all over again? Can't you understand English? Don't you see, for one thing, so soon as we get into those uniforms you'll be able to shut me up and do all the talking?"

"Hump! That's a genuine incitement to break the whole of the Army regulations at once." Ginger turned from Fergus to us.

"I think," I advised, "that you would be saving a lot of trouble for yourself if you humor him."

Ginger tugged at the lobe of his ear thoughtfully. "You say you'll take on anything?" he asked presently.

"I've been telling you that till I'm hoarse," Fergus growled.

"You're an infernal pest, Graham," the other

grinned, "but wait here and I'll see what I can do." He departed.

For half an hour we waited, dodging the traffic in the corridors. Then we were rounded up by an orderly, who shepherded us into a presence who was in earnest conversation with Ginger. I hoped, as he looked us over, we appeared more respectable than I felt.

"These are the three," Ginger nodded towards us as we came to a halt. "If that beaky Scot demands to be made a colonel, you'd better give in at once. I can guarantee his nerve." He left the room, throwing a "Good luck" over his shoulder as he strode out of our lives.

The presence looked us over, and made short work of us. "Occupations?" he snapped.

We replied suitably and briefly.

"Could you drive motor waggons?"

We affirmed that we could. Had he said tanks, the answer would have been the same.

Three minutes later we were out of the room, followed by a curtly expressed hope that we would not crash the transport lorries as we crashed the regulations. Fergus's friend, Ginger, must have been a man of ways and means. That evening we reported in uniform to a transport park in the Royal Park. Fergus summed up the situation by saying that if a man could not make use of his friends in an emergency, then what was the good of having friends.

Daylight next morning found us loading flour in two-ton lorries at the Spencer Street yards. There were six of us with a Sergeant in charge, who was not excessively exacting. By seven o'clock we were loaded. We had turned out of the yards into Flinders Street, and were passing the Fish Market when I first noticed the drone of propellers. I felt sore, for I knew in my bones what was coming. It was again Saturday morning, and the memories of the last Saturday were still raw. I stuck out my head and looked back. Bob and Fergus evidently

thought alike, for close behind me they too were craning their necks.

I was waiting, strained, for what was coming. Then somewhere behind towards the west there came the now too familiar crash of the explosion. There were not many people in the streets, but it pulled them all up, standing. A tram approaching me stopped as though it had been shot. As I passed, I cried to the conductor, who was staring ahead, "They're here!" Mixed up with my apprehension was a savage feeling of resentment that, having left them behind at Sydney and Port Kembla, there was something personal in their raiding Melbourne, now.

Then the city quivered to a swift succession of bursts behind us. We reached Elizabeth Street, and turned north while that hellish pounding went on. Inwardly I prayed that we would not be caught in the streets. Some of the scenes in the devastated streets in Sydney were only too fresh in my mind. Evidently the sergeant, who was leading, had similar thoughts, for he was losing no time, and we kept well on his back wheel. I looked westward at each intersection, but could see no sign of the planes, though there were few clouds and the light was clear. Still the riot of sound enveloped everything. I did not know until afterwards that that approaching tram had stopped because the first bomb had wrecked the electric station at Newport, and that others were falling among the oil storage tanks and the Newport railway workshops.

By the time we reached Victoria Street, the bombing had ceased. We hurried on. From the Haymarket I looked back. Beyond the city to the south-west, smoke was rising in solid black columns that ascended for 1000 ft. or more before mushrooming like thunder clouds. All the way to Brunswick the road was thronged by cyclists—men going to their work in the city factories. Most of them had stopped and standing beside their machines, stared at the rising smoke clouds, uncertain whether to go on. When we

reached Brunswick, the narrow bottlenecked street was in a turmoil of terrified people. Electric transport had gone out of commission for the time being.

We found the camp at Broadmeadows as wildly excited as the city, and hungry for news of what had happened. We had not finished discharging our loads when we received orders to race back with all speed through the township of Broadmeadows, and down to Newport to help to transport the wounded. Five minutes later we were on our way.

It was disastrous luck, or calculated deviltry on the part of the enemy that the raid was made at the time. The shops were working night and day turning out munitions with an increased staff. They caught not only the night shift, but many of the dayshift who had already arrived. For this reason the loss of life had been calamitous. As we drove through Footscray the great columns of smoke from the wrecked oil tanks were still spreading their sinister pall that blotted out the sun.

When we reached the devastated yards crowds of people from the surrounding district were risking their lives trying to recover victims from the shattered shops. To Fergus and me, it was a horrible repetition of our work in the Domain on the night of Bloody Saturday. Though a fleet of ambulance waggons was on the scene before us, they could not cope with the loads of suffering lifted from the wreckage. Not five per cent. of the unfortunate workers escaped injury. In exploding, the bombs had hurled, with terrible effect, fragments of shattered machinery and all the loose metal lying about the shops that added terribly to their destructive force.

A number of bombs had fallen among the thickly clustered homes to the north and in the residential area, where a whole block close to the Newport Railway Station was blazing. It needed gritted teeth and steel nerves to help to load our lorries and to drive the mangled and torn bodies to the temporary hospitals. On my first trip with 12 men, six were dead

when I arrived at the destination half a mile away.

As we worked, all the time the conviction was at the back of my mind that those accursed planes would return. I felt sure that Newport would not be their sole objective, and that their tactics of frightfulness were to be repeated in Melbourne. On the only occasion on which I saw Fergus during the morning he re-echoed my anxiety. The morning passed swiftly in our heartbreaking toil. It seemed as though the smoking, twisted ruins had become an inexhaustible source of mangled humanity. I do not know when, but it must have been well after midday, I again heard that sound I had come to hate above all others—the note of propellers flying thousands of feet up.

The day was fine and the white clouds were very high, but looking up we saw the flying specks higher still. They passed directly overhead. Then came the clear cut note of the anti-aircraft guns and puffs of white cloud broke out among the flying fiends. They were over the city—50 of them. Helpless and sick at heart we watched. Then from somewhere behind the spired and towered skyline in the distance came the now too familiar crash, with its sudden mighty black fountain of smoke. Even the searchers among the ruins for the few who still remained alive, halted in their work and stood awe-stricken. Roar after roar, crash after crash, and the black clouds sprang up, thinned and rose again. For fifteen minutes that seemed interminable, the solid earth seemed to quiver under the blows. Then the birds of prey droned overhead seaward again.

I tried to shut out of my mind the thought of what had happened in the city during those minutes. We heard nothing as we went on with our work until only the dead remained. That raid of the morning had been disastrous enough without the second. The railway workshops had been completely wrecked along with the electric power station, and all the oil fuel storage tanks. Almost as deplorable

was the total destruction of the sewerage pumping plant for the entire metropolitan area. All these vital spots seemed as though grouped as an invitation to the attacker. Added to this was the havoc among the surrounding homes. I never heard the total of that death roll, but it must have been ghastly.

There was, however, we learned later, one mitigation of the terrors of the day. The authorities had anticipated the second raid. Orders had been broadcast suspending all business in the city, and all entrances had been closed. The enforced suspension of rail and tram traffic had aided carrying out the orders. During the morning police had patrolled the streets clearing them and residential buildings of people, so that when the second raid came the loss of life was comparatively slight. With incredible folly, though, some residents declined to leave.

By four o'clock our work was finished, and the transport train assembled on the Melbourne road. That drive back showed how the raids had stunned the people in the industrial suburbs through which we passed. The streets were quiet, but all the way through people stood in groups staring at the smoke that drifted high above the city. The almost total absence of traffic gave a weird effect. The rumble of our long train of waggons was all that broke the silence. We passed through Arden and Abbotsford Streets on our way to Royal Park, but could see no actual signs of the damage that had been done.

But we saw only too much of it later. The enemy planes had concentrated on the mile-long target of the heart of the city. It was curious that the west end had almost escaped. Spencer Street was untouched, and so was Flinders Street as far as Swanston Street. From there up to Russell Street, the whole block seemed to have been blown into Flinders Street. The wall above the Princes Bridge railway line had been swept down on to the lines below. There was not a building untouched and flames were raging along the

line of the shattered warehouses and offices of Flinders Lane.

It was not until the corner of Swanston Street was reached that the destruction of St. Paul's Cathedral was visible. A bomb had crashed into the nave, bringing down the Moorhouse Tower and the entire south wall, with the two smaller spires. The chancel was still intact, but unroofed. On the west side of Swanston Street two buildings had been crushed by masses of fallen masonry from the great spire. In Bourke Street and Collins Street the devastation was appalling. Fires were burning unchecked because it was impossible for the brigades to reach them owing to the streets being piled high with debris. The furthest bomb to the east had fallen in Exhibition Street near Little Collins Street. To the west, another had blocked Collins Street below William Street. At the intersection of Collins and Elizabeth Streets, a great crater, 40 ft. in diameter, had been blasted, and was full of water from a broken main.

One strange feature of the spectacle as we saw it first that evening, was the absence of crowds that such a catastrophe should attract. On Princes Bridge there were perhaps 100 silent awe-stricken people, but even in the north, few spectators ventured nearer than Victoria Street.

When night fell orders were given that no lights were to be shown. Even smoking was prohibited in the Park. The whole of the Metropolitan area was blacked out for the night. We three had learned to take our discomforts philosophically, and were thankful for any kind of shelter. I tried to sleep, but the scenes I had witnessed that morning were too new, and despite my weariness, I barely dozed.

Then again, all chance of rest was broken by that loathed drone of propellers.

They came about half-past ten. From the sound and the swiftness of their approach, it was evident that, relying on the protection of the darkness, they were flying low. It was nerve racking to stand in the

dark wondering where the first bombs would drop, and strained feelings found vent in muttered maledictions and grim jests. A dozen searchlights were sweeping the moonless sky for them. As we waited in the Park, they semed to roar above us at an elevation of only a few hundred feet. There was a sigh of relief as the sound diminished. It seemed an interminable time before there came the boom of explosion from the north. Then followed a torture of fiendish ingenuity. Those birds of ill-omen swept on a weaving course from Sandringham to Coburg and from Footscray to Box Hill. They dropped incendiary and high explosive bombs at irregular intervals. Four times they passed directly over Royal Park. Nearer and further we heard the roar of bombs, punctuated by the vicious barking of anti-aircraft guns. The brutes seemed to have carried loads of small but destructive bombs, instead of the terrific weapons they had used to blast the city.

That night raid was pure terrorism. The wide area it covered and the length of time it endured—nearly an hour—was deliberate torture of the whole metropolitan area. We heard later that they had laid their eggs as far apart as Gladstone Street, Sandringham, and the Pentridge stockade. It fulfilled its aim of shattering the nerves of a million people. Actually, it did less material harm than the two daylight raids, but its psychological effects were worse. The worst damage was done at the corner of St. Kilda and Commercial Roads, where the loss of life was pitiful.

The full story of the raid was similar to that of the raids on the Sydney forts on the previous Saturday. There had first been a concentrated attack on the forts at the Heads in the early morning, and later the fleet stood in bombarding the damaged batteries and covering the operations from an aircraft carrier.

Sunday came after that night of terror to reveal that Melbourne, though it had not suffered the Naval

attack of Sydney, was as completely demoralised as Sydney had been. The three raids had broken the nerve of the entire population—the effect on which, no doubt, the enemy was calculating. During the morning we, who were again called upon to assist in gathering the victims, saw the beginning of the exodus on foot to the hills. People who had money were offering fabulous sums for horse-drawn vehicles. The terror of another attack was realised on the afternoon of that Sunday, when that which occurred was the worst of all.

They came over in force about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Disregarding the city, they crossed and recrossed the southern suburbs, especially in the congested areas of Prahran and Windsor, and out as far as Brighton. Every residential suburb suffered. It was in no sense a military operation, but a calculated butchery to smash the morale of the civil population. I think that on this occasion the loss of life must have been equal to that of any of the attacks on Sydney, except that in the city itself on Bloody Saturday. When night fell, the whole of the Chapel Street was in flames from end to end. From a distance the entire area between Toorak Road and Balaclava Road appeared as a sea of fire.

CHAPTER XII.

Looking back on that tragic week from September 23, its every hour brought its own irreparable disaster. In the seven days, Australia had been torn from its apparently unassailable pedestal of prosperity and safety, and flung into an abyss of terror. In those seven days the heritage of freedom vanished. We were stripped of every spiritual and material possession. By October 1, no man in the Commonwealth could call his soul, his life, or his property his own. Their destiny had passed into alien hands. By snatching the West from our grasp, and by three swift blows in the East, all hope of effectual resistance had been crushed. We were as a wrestler on whom an adversary had fixed an unbreakable hold, and who had but to bear down upon our paralysed body till we cried for mercy or broke. The bitterness of it was that our physical strength was intact but we were powerless to use it.

All that terror that had swept over New South Wales was now the lot of Victoria. Scenes such as we had already witnessed in Sydney were now being re-enacted in Melbourne, but under more poignant conditions. The destruction of the oil fuel reserves had made the strictest conservation of what remained imperative. For rich and poor alike, the only means of flight lay with the railways, and, in the rush for safety, panic overcame reason. The Government recognised the advantage of scattering the population of Melbourne as widely as possible. The concentration of food supplies in the city had become a desperate problem, and the destruction of the sewerage system was causing consternation. Every detail of

rail transport that could be used was drawn upon to meet the demands of the clamouring crowds that beseiged the railway stations.

On the Monday, every available man in uniform at the Barracks was called out in an attempt to control the crowds that concentrated at Spencer Street and Flinders Street. Here we saw the scenes of the panic-stricken crowds at Moss Vale magnified a thousand fold. Trains of either passenger carriages or goods trucks were mobbed in the yards regardless of their destination. The only mercy was that no bombing planes appeared. Short of firing into the crowds there was no way of holding them. One battalion was simply lost in such a throng. By midday the scattered units were assembled and rushed to North Melbourne. Here we were given charge of an empty train that was backed into No. 1 platform at Spencer Street, where a crowd of women and children had been assembled. Our orders were to protect the train from the mob, and allow no one to enter it except from the platform.

That train ran through the yards at a speed of about 12 miles an hour. But nothing deterred the wild horde that had swarmed everywhere. During the few minutes of its passage we had to beat off the waves of men that tried to rush it at the risk of their lives. We used the butts of our rifles, without mercy, to knock those off who succeeded in obtaining a hold on the trucks. When the train stopped and the truck doors were opened for the women, the train was rushed from the other side. For a wild ten minutes the troops fought a surging, yelling mob that attempted to storm the train. We drove down with our rifle butts on clutching hands or at times into cursing faces. Then they began to pelt us with ballast metal. Shots began to ring from the trucks, then—no order was given—the men fixed bayonets and used them. By this time the train was packed with its load of screaming hysterical women so that we could scarcely find room to move, and the

train started. Even then the mob of men was still trying to get a foothold.

Well beyond the road bridge over the North Melbourne station, the train pulled up long enough for the troops to climb down. Twice more we carried out the same manoeuvre. But, learning from our experience, we lined the trucks with our bayonets fixed and magazines charged. Still it was a nasty job, as we were pelted through the yards by mobs of men who yelled savage threats and insults at us.

During the next two days thousands of people were transported to country districts and various towns down the western and Gippsland systems, where local authorities organised shelter and food for the refugees who were, in the majority of instances, completely destitute.

Probably the gravest effects of the national crisis were in the loosening of the bonds of authority. In New South Wales civic administration and control ceased to exist. There was a state of anarchy in which the strong, and generally the most unscrupulous, elements came to the surface. It was a condition of national "Sauve qui peut" in which the ordinary decencies of life were lost. There were, however, for the honour of Australia, some splendid exceptions. In both Victoria and New South Wales, the railway men stood to their posts so long as there was a post to stand by. Demonstrations of individual heroism were magnificent. Again and again in New South Wales railway men threw their lives away to delay the march of the enemy. They stuck by their work to help the despatch of refugees, and to attempt to wreck enemy transport, though they knew their lives were forfeited. So long as there was a chance to move a train, or, if necessary, to destroy one, they took it without hesitation.

Everywhere, too, the police carried on in total disregard for their own safety. In Sydney, during the terrible hours of Bloody Saturday, hundreds of them died in their attempts to bring order among the

panic-stricken traffic. When the bombardment was over, they were among the first to give aid to the injured. So it was in Victoria, and especially in Melbourne; the Force was foremost in trying to aid and direct a panic-stricken people.

Again, during the terror of the bombing on the Sunday, there were those among the people of all grades of society, who went to the aid of the injured among the burning buildings. With them were medical men who organised emergency hospitals and worked desperately to alleviate the suffering of the broken people who were gathered by the volunteer helpers.

By Monday, the range of the authority of the Federal Government was confined to Victoria and South Australia. By no means in their power could they offer any aid to Tasmania, and for all practical purposes Queensland was as completely isolated as Western Australia. In the three disastrous days since we had left New South Wales, the invaders had tightened their stranglehold, and had terrorised the entire eastern side of the State into submission. They left a trail of death and desolation wherever they passed. This inexorable cruelty was evidently prompted not only by their policy of relentless intimidation, but also to prevent any possibility of organised hostility in their rear.

Though, by October 3, it was learned in Melbourne that reinforcements had been landed both at Newcastle and Sydney, the invaders in their advance south had a long line of communication to guard. Their ruthlessness was therefore a military necessity to enable them to hold their line with the smallest possible demands on their numerical strength. They were faced, too, with the urgency of forcing a military decision at the earliest possible moment. Rather than allow time for Australia to strengthen her trained army they were determined to force the issue by advancing into Victoria.

One of the bitter incidents of those days was the

reply of the Government of the United States to a second and detailed representation from the Federal Government on the massacres of civilians in the occupied districts. The Cambasian Ambassador at Washington had presented a reply from his Government to the effect that the allegations of the Australian Government were malicious and baseless falsehoods. The Cambasian Government had regretted the necessity for military action, although it did not regard itself as being at war with the Commonwealth. The Cambasian expeditionary force was an unavoidable protest against repeated acts of harsh trade discrimination against Cambasia. Also they had no option but to secure similar rights of migration to those afforded to European countries. Reports from the Commander-in-Chief of the Expeditionary Force asserted that in no instance had civilians been harshly treated, that civilians in the occupied areas had accepted the presence of Cambasians as benevolent. On the other hand, the Cambasians had every right to protest against repeated acts of murder by civilians of Cambasian outposts. In these instances the military authorities had been obliged to make salutary examples.

The Government of the United States had accepted the assurance of the Cambasian Government that any violence offered to inoffensive civilians by their troops would be severely punished.

That there was one grain of truth in that bitter pill made it all the more difficult to swallow. As the wave of refugees spread westward, the stories of savagery they told excited the men of the western towns to fury. In a day or two independent bodies of irregular defenders were organised. They were men from the country towns and the stations outback. Many of them were "Diggers," and all were at home in the saddle. Used to firearms, well mounted, and with a thorough knowledge of the country, these small raiding troops closed on the flanks of the invaders. By the end of the first week down the long line of

advance, they ambushed and sniped day and night. Their strength lay in their mobility. They struck and scattered, and regathered and struck again, giving the invaders no rest and no quarter.

Communications through the west of New South Wales kept the Government fully informed of the enemy's advance south, and when news of the opening of guerilla tactics reached headquarters, trained officers were despatched to provide the irregulars with arms and munitions and to co-ordinate their activities. But while they exacted stern vengeance, and harassed the fringe of the advance, the resistance had come too late to stem the tide. By Monday, the united forces from Sydney and Port Kembla, working down by rail and road, had reached Albury through Gundagai and Wagga. They had collected an enormous train of motor transport, and every road leading towards Albury was infested with their troops. Their progress was marked by the smoke of burning towns and homesteads.

Late on Tuesday afternoon their advance guards entered Corowa. At each place, the bridges over the Murray to Wodonga and Wahgunyah had been destroyed. It was here, too, that they met their first military opposition from the mounted rifle regiments that fiercely contested their efforts at building pontoon bridges. At this juncture the enemy's advance was ahead of their artillery, but their light tanks and armoured cars swept the south bank of the river to cover their engineers. But early on Wednesday morning all resistance to their crossing was crushed when a hail of shrapnell and gas shells swept over the river from the batteries that had been rushed to both towns during the previous night.

At Wahgunyah the mounted riflemen fell back down the Rutherglen Road, harassing the enemy advance from the vineyards that were already showing sufficient green to give them cover. They left the little village burning, but still hung on to the

flanks of the enemy, whose progress they could not halt.

So it was on the Wednesday, October 4, eleven days after the first raid, that, under cover of their artillery, the invaders entered Victoria at two points 30 miles apart. At the same time a force took possession of the causeway of the Hume Dam. Thus they were provided with three lines of advance—or of retreat should the need arise.

From then onward they advanced with methodical steadiness down the line of the Hume Highway. They passed through an empty country from which every human being, and every source of food, had been systematically cleared. As they moved forward, too, their movements were harassed on both flanks by men who had gathered from townships, ranges and plains. Rifles and ammunition had been distributed through scores of centres on both sides of the highway to all who applied.

In every town and settlement eager men rallied to the call; the call to which for years they had closed their ears. They had refused to believe in the possibility of a threat against their country, and the threat had become a desperate fact. Now they were called to answer for their indolence and indifference by an enemy within their gates, already victorious without having fought one battle.

There was no lack of courage among them. Every man was burning to avenge the savagery that had been perpetrated on his people. Now, as they closed down on the line of march, they threw away their lives with reckless bravery. They attacked in groups or singly. They met the disciplined detachments of flank guards with guerilla bushcraft, that took bloody toll. But, as they harried the enemy from the ground so were they harried from the air. All day the enemy planes circled over the advancing army, swooping down at every burst of rifle fire and drenching every attack with machine gun bullets.

But at night, with their complete knowledge of

the country to guide them, the irregulars closed in, rushing outposts or whole battalions indiscriminately, wherever they touched on the highway. Nevertheless their impetuous courage lacked cohesion. They were learning, too late and at terrible cost, that courage was no substitute for discipline in war. The vast, well equipped machine that moved forward with irresistible force, could not be held back by flesh and blood and courage alone.

Each day saw the spear-head of the enemy 20 miles further south-east.

Five days after crossing the Murray they were past Euroa. That was on Monday, October 9.

At Melbourne, the situation of both Government and military authorities alike was tragic. It was symptomatic of the panic that a bewildered people, with the ruin of their country suddenly thrust into their faces, should demand victims. They would not recognise then, as most of them did later, that, to use the words of General Mackinnon, they were reaping a "fools' harvest." They had elected successive Governments, and had themselves tied their hands by insisting on vast expenditure for social services. They had, too, followed the lead of a noisy pacifist minority in objecting to paying the price of an adequate insurance policy in the form of defence measures.

By the end of the first week, Melbourne itself was too panic stricken and too intent on deserting the city to take concerted action. But in the large provincial cities vociferous orators at public meetings were demanding the resignation of the Government. There were as many crazy proposals for the establishment of a Council of Safety as there were crazy orators. All had plans to save a country that they could not recognise was beyond salvation. They largely demanded the immediate creation of armies —probably on the dragons' teeth system.

That old Latin tag about the gods driving mad those whom they wished to destroy seemed created

especially for Australia. I had been through most of the terrors of that first week. I had not seen a single enemy soldier. All the fighting so far had been among our own people. Instead of sinking party doctrines, and offering a united front to the invaders, the entire body politic had been torn by internal conflicts. Even on that Monday morning, with the enemy within striking distance of Seymour, Mackinnon hesitated to move that infantry battalion up to the front for fear of treachery at his back.

Fools' Harvest!

The event proved how sound was his ground for anxiety.

All that week we three remained with our headquarters in Melbourne. A transport park had been established at Royal Park. Twice each day we drove to Seymour and back with loads of munitions and supplies for the troops. Great reserve dumps of supplies had been built up at Tallarook, and other places near the lines. And there were others at Kilmore. At Kilmore, too, a large field hospital had been established. I learned this through Fergus' persistence in wangling loads to Kilmore.

At that time the postal service had broken down completely, and it had taken him three days before he could establish contact with Lynda. He kept Bob Clifford and me in a state of amused amazement at the magnitude of his barefaced mendacity in explaining his delays to irate transport officers. I am afraid we shared some reflected glory by being called upon to support some of his major inaccuracies. We heard the hospital end of the story from an ex-M.O. in a cowshed somewhere near the Eildon Weir about six weeks later. From his account, Lynda's explanations of her absences from duty were, in quality, superior to those of Fergus.

By that time we three had picked up too much information to be under any illusions regarding the outcome of the fight that we knew must take place within the next few days. The men at Seymour

with whom we came into contact were sound to a man, and eager to meet the invaders. One point that puzzled everyone was that Mackinnon's force had not been raided from the air. Neither had Melbourne been visited again since that Sunday afternoon. The immunity of the army was all the more remarkable because, for several days, enemy planes had been reconnoitring as far back as Donnybrook.

[Marsden relates that the enemy were short of bombs because a large supply had been lost on one of the ships sunk by the airforce off Port Kembla on September 27. The large quantities used on Melbourne were not replaced by fresh supplies until October 9.—Eds.]

After reaching Creighton four miles south of Euroa on October 9, the enemy halted to concentrate his forces. Until that day the weather had been uniformly fine and clear. But on the October 10 heavy clouds from the south foreshadowed the coming break. Early on the morning of Wednesday (October 11) the rain began. Twice on the Tuesday Mackinnon threw his precious force of seven bombers on the enemy's concentration. It lost one plane for each raid, but we had the satisfaction of knowing that they inflicted an amount of damage that justified the loss. However, one effect was to incite retaliation. The enemy planes were out in force on the Wednesday morning, and vindictively shed bombs over Mackinnon's position round Seymour. The situation, however, had been ably anticipated. By skilful camouflage, battery and troop positions had been concealed, and the enemy wasted tons of bombs on dummy artillery positions and unoccupied ground. Scarcely any real damage was done.

But the A.S.C. was not so lucky. The brutes came buzzing down the highway in the pelting, driving rain with a cold wind that had turned Spring back to Winter. They swept down through the scudding clouds and flying low tormented the transport waggons with machine gun fire. I had taken on a load

of meat, and was the leading waggon of four. When we passed through Kilmore, the rain was coming down in torrents and the hills were wreathed in mist. We were a little beyond where the McIvor road branches, when one of those infernal dragon flies roared down out of nowhere. Ahead through the rain was a stretch of timber-lined road completely arched by the trees. But before we reached the shelter there was a savage stutter of fire, and my cabin roof broke into holes. How the bullets missed me I accepted as a providential mystery. Before the brute could turn and come again I shot into the long green tunnel. Half-way along the shelter the road was blocked by a dozen or fifteen waggons. Their drivers were saying things about aircraft and machine guns that were unfit for print. Looking back I saw that only two of the other waggons had reached the cover. The third had barged off the road and collided with a tree. We found later that the body of the driver had been riddled.

It was then I learned that there were three enemy planes, and they all knew that we were playing possum in the trees. After an interval of about ten minutes during which we could hear them weaving about above us, they came roaring down the outside of the avenue raking it blind from end to end as they swept past. We all crouched behind our waggons, and were showered with leaves and twigs and small branches as the bullets searched the timber. They repeated the performance several times before barging off towards Kilmore, where they apparently saw better game.

But the transport work that day was hectic, and more than 30 waggons were ditched along the road.

That night orders were given to reload at once and to take the road again at one o'clock in the morning so as to get up the road under cover of darkness. So it happened that, on the morning of Thursday, October 12, I was passing under the railway bridge at the Seymour Station just at daybreak. I had

turned into the road to the east side of the station. Then in the distance I heard the sound of artillery fire ahead. Almost at the same moment I saw the flashes of bursting shells half a mile to the west of the town. Those were the first shots in the only battle of a war that was not a war.

It was a foul day following a foul night. The wind from the south blew a gale. All night along the road we had passed through a succession of rain squalls. It was a cutting, dank wind. The low-driving clouds that touched the hill tops hid every glimpse of the sun as the slow gray light came. During the whole of that bitter day and the following night the rain scarcely ceased for half an hour at a time. Underfoot, the ground was sodden, and in level spots the water lay in puddles and sheets.

That long day of red conflict would have been agonising in any circumstances. But every tragic moment of it was made more poignant by the misery of rain and wind.

What happened in detail I do not know. They came down from Mangalore by both the Murchison and Hume Highways, and swarming through the broken timber scattered country between. Their left flank was beyond the Hume Highway, and their right on the Goulburn. Those first guns I heard had opened fire at six o'clock, and for a while there was silence. Then suddenly the whole of the country to the north belched fire, and our batteries, first from the west of the Goulburn, and then to the north of the town, joined in hellish chorus. For more than two hours that pandemonium reigned unbroken before I heard the sharper note of rifle fire.

In those early hours planes dodged in and out of the low-lying cloud roof from the fire of anti-aircraft guns. We knew what was left of our airforce was in the thick of it. Half a dozen times in the growing daylight we saw wrecked machines hurtle down through the mists to earth and destruction. Again and again through blinding squalls we caught

glimpses of pursuer and pursued flash into sight and vanish.

No doubt someone higher up knew what was taking place as the hours went by. But I think that few of the lower ranks knew anything except what was going on within twenty yards of where they stood. My own impression was of shells searching roads with hellish malignity, of carrying on with a dazed incomprehension, and of wondering how anything human, much less myself, remained unscathed. As the day wore on the first tension gave way to a kind of drugged indifference born of biting cold and acute physical misery. I knew that my first knowledge of the enemy's victorious pressure came when I realised that their shells were falling far beyond the town.

That must have been sometime about midday—I had lost all count of time. The town was blazing in a dozen places. Then I remember coming up from a dump beyond the Sunday Creek bridge, and a sergeant with a smoke blackened face and scorched uniform told me the town bridge had been wrecked and directed me up the road towards Northwood. A minute later I crawled out from the wreckage of my waggon, mildly astonished that I was unharmed. Luckily for me the shell that overturned me burst under my back wheels instead of in front.

Here in our camp of slavery, men who were at Seymour that grim October day of 1939, sometimes argue over what Mackinnon should have done or should not have done. Even now they cannot see that it was neither the enemy, the weather, nor any other factor of the day that defeated him. The battle was lost nearly 20 years earlier. It was lost when the country was fooled into the belief that there would be no more wars. It was that imbecility that sent him to face a trained, efficient, and highly equipped army with half-trained men, and without any reserves on which he could draw.

The wonder of it is that those raw ranks held on

as long and as splendidly as they did—some almost mutinous when ordered to fall back—and even then they went back snarling and biting. The story of how the 21st and 32nd battalions held up the enemy, while their guns got through when they were outflanked, would have redeemed a more tragic day. I saw the little handful of 12 men and one corporal, all that remained, and the last of the infantry to cross the Sunday Creek bridge before it was blown up. They marched across in fours with the corporal at their head, regardless of the warning the bridge was going up. Then when they reached the south side, at his order they doubled to the right, and throwing themselves among the scrub on the high bank, blazed into the road and the paddocks over which the enemy were advancing.

We did not know until the following day that Mackinnon and half his staff had been killed late in the afternoon, when headquarters at Tallarook had been bombed from the air. I never saw him, but from what they told of him I think he would have accepted his fate gladly. A Napoleon could not have succeeded where he failed.

The road down from Sunday Creek to Tallarook was almost deserted as the darkness began to fall. The artillery—what was left of it—had gone on ahead and was shelling the enemy advance from further back. Most of the infantry were marching well clear of the road, on which shells were falling as the enemy artillery searched for the retreat. The rain was still falling though the wind had dropped. There was very little order until Tallarook was reached, and some attempt was made to sort out the scattered units.

At that time, Gray, who had succeeded Mackinnon in command, was still holding together what was left, perhaps 4,000 all told. The field kitchens were in being, and most of the men had some kind of hot meal. It must have been about 8 o'clock when the last train, loaded with wounded, left the Tallarook Station. Men came straggling in up till 10 o'clock.

One man I spoke to about that time told me that he did not think the enemy had passed Sunday Creek.

It was sheer luck that threw me in with Clifford and Fergus that night, when I found a damaged waggon about a quarter of a mile down the Pyalong Road—it's hard deck was less sloppy than the soaked ground, and Fergus had taken possession. I had seen neither of them all day, but their luck had been much like my own. Dog weary, despite an occasional shell, we slept until we were ordered out towards daylight.

No one who lived through that next day, as we fell back towards Kilmore, will ever forget it. The roads were blocked wherever possible by blasting trees across them to hamper the enemy's mechanised transport. The retreating force kept off the roads for cover from the aircraft that harried us every step of the way. We three kept together and moved down parallel to an old road that runs to Kilmore about two miles west of the Highway. Fortunately the weather cleared and the sun dried our soaked uniforms. Our artillery must have ceased to exist early that morning because the enemy aircraft gave the guns no rest.

But from every patch of cover for a mile on each side of the road, the retreating infantry sniped as they went back. There was little organisation or order. They knew they were hopelessly beaten, but every man clung to his rifle as his last hope. They knew only too well that it was all over, but still wherever an enemy showed they bit back viciously. But there was no longer any army and hope had gone.

It took us six hours to cover those 16 miles in to Kilmore, on which all roads of retreat converged—and the enemy planes had been before us. The long tree-lined street was in ruins, and among them were the wrecks of transport and ambulance waggons that had been caught in the choked road. Our one thought all the way down had been of Lynda. It was here we saw how complete was the disintegration. The one objective of the men as they came in was

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to break away from the line of the enemy's advance down the highway.

We knew that at the best the enemy would enter the town within an hour or two. Our anxiety was increased by the news that the field hospital and a train load of wounded that was leaving the station had been bombed during the morning. In the general confusion it was some time before we were able to learn that the wounded who survived had been taken to the old police station, one of the few undamaged buildings.

Here, eventually, we found Lynda in warm argument with an irate M.O. Knowing of the imminence of the enemy's arrival, he had evacuated the few wounded left, and had sent all the nurses with them. He had only learned as we came in that Lynda had evaded his order. He was telling her in plain language the fate of women in occupied territory. Fortunately he was more a doctor than a soldier, and accepted without hostility the interference of three very dirty and dishevelled transport drivers. He watched the unceremonious greeting between Fergus and his rebellious subordinate with a surprised smile It was a greeting that made explanation unnecessary.

Said he. "Perhaps, young man, you can make this mutinous young baggage listen to reason."

Fergus grinned, "I've done it before now. What's the trouble, sir?"

"She refuses to leave because there may be more wounded brought in, and we'll have the enemy here in no time."

"Well," protested Lynda, "there may be more."

"Crazy!" snapped the doctor. "Get her out of this!"

"There'll be no more wounded, Lyn," Fergus assured her. "You'll have to go—that is, if there is anything to get away in."

The doctor looked us over. "My car is parked at the back. It will take us all. You boys had better come too."

"If there is no one with a better right?" asked Fergus. "But we'd be glad to go."

"Dash it all!" he said, "It's a case of every man for himself now. Come on!"

He led the way. There was a big double seater in the yard into which we piled with the doctor at the wheel. As he turned into the street I noticed a stack of ammunition boxes, and, asking him to stop, I jumped out and hurriedly placed one of them in the luggage carrier. We had done a bit of firing that morning, but our belts were not empty.

"What's the idea?" demanded the M.O. as I hopped in again beside him.

As we raced down the road I gave him a sketch of our experiences during the previous three weeks, and added. "So you see, it struck me that a case of cartridges might be useful."

That was how Dr. Ben Cornish came into our lives. He was about 50 years of age. He was lean as a ferret, and as keen; and as warm hearted as he was irascible. We and many others lived to bless the day that we met the man who was afterwards worshipped under the name of "Dynamite Ben."

When he heard our story, he turned round to Lynda, and said, "Well, my dear, if I had been given the choice of four people to pick up it would have been you and your three musketeers." Then he turned back to his driving.

We swept down an empty road through Wallan and Beveridge with the needle of the speedometer flickering at 50. Over the open country we saw occasional groups of men plodding westward. As we reached the pine-lined road at Donnybrook overlooking the vast saucer of quiet country between there and Craigieburn, we saw another car making towards us, and losing no time.

Dr. Ben slowed down. "Wonder who this lunatic can be?" he growled. "Must be cracked or he wouldn't be coming this way." He stopped the car as the other came up.

In it was a man, and apparently his wife, with two young girls. They all looked badly scared. From the story they told Dr. Ben, they had some cause for looking scared. They had stuck to their home in Melbourne until that morning. He said the people who remained in the city had gone crazy. The news of the defeat at Seymour had leaked out, and with it had come utter demoralisation. There had been some form of demonstration against the Government, and that a Committee of Public Safety claimed to take over the administration. There was rioting, and no trace of authority. Our informant had owned a filling station, and had retained enough petrol with which to escape. He had run the gauntlet of panic-stricken people who tried to capture his car. Bullet-shattered windows bore witness to the truth of his stories. He had heard that the Provincial cities were also demanding some new form of Government, but that there was no unanimity of ideas. But in Melbourne itself there was anarchy and chaos.

He was making for Yea, where he had friends, through Whittlesea. Then he turned east off the high-road, still losing no time.

Dr. Ben turned round to Lynda. "Well, we're all in this. What will we do? It seems to me that Melbourne is off."

"So far as we're concerned, Major," Lynda informed him, "we're four waifs. We've no home, no friends, or belongings except the clothes we are wearing. We're like the cat that walked by itself; all places are alike to us. What about you?"

"I'm a lone wolf," he laughed, taking up Lynda's excursion into Kipling. "I've neither kith nor kin, and when our Cambasian friends get to Melbourne, if my house is still standing, I won't want to live in it."

"As I see it," Bob said, "the war's over and Australia is down and out. The only thing we can do is to take to the bush, and wait to see what turns up. It may be tough, but it will be tougher if we run into the enemy's hands."

"We leave it to you, Major," Fergus put in, "but I agree with Clifford."

Dr. Ben turned to me. "And you?"

"I'm with the others, now and always. We may have to rough it, but it is the best we can do," I replied.

"It's tragic," Dr. Ben spoke thoughtfully. "But I'm afraid you young people are right. We're all blotted out. Done! Wiped out!" Then, after a moment's pause. "Those vermin behind us will be too busy digging in for a time to pay much attention to the outside country places. And something might turn up to pull us out of the hole."

"Major," I asked, "Do you know any place, small and out of the way, with good bush country near it for refuge, if necessary?"

He thought a moment, then his face lighted up. "By jove! the very place! I'll tell you as we go," and he turned the car east towards Whittlesea.

As we went he told us of a little fishing resort in the mountains about 100 miles away, and 40 beyond Alexandra. "If you young people will make me a member of your gallant company, then I'm with you. And gladly! We've enough petrol to make it."

CHAPTER XIII.

Although we did not know it then, that decision we five made that afternoon on the empty highway at Donnybrook, was typical of the disintegration of a nation. On Thursday, October 13, the social and administrative fabric of Australia was torn to shreds. The Australians were no longer a nation. They were a conquered race, without Government, and without cohesion or a rallying point. Law, order, discipline, and morale had collapsed. There were some 7,000,000 people spread over the country, leaderless and helpless.

In the world without there was no hand raised to help us. We were the spoils of war to an arrogant power. Europe was one vast battleground. Britain our sole hope was barely holding her own against overwhelming odds. India was in flames. In Canada there was a warm appeal for aid for the stricken sister Dominion, but where there were the men and the will, the seas were in the enemy's hands. Then, too, our conquerors had begun to put into effect that policy of preventing news of what was being done here from being spread abroad.

They set in motion that propaganda machine that spread round the world, when it was quiet enough to hear, that vile tradition of the anarchy, cruelty and treachery that we never lived down. They understood thoroughly the psychological value of the saying that a lie will go half way round the world while the truth is pulling on its boots. With devilish ingenuity they filled the American press with sensational stories of Australian cowardice, cruelty and treachery. They told of their necessity to take over its Government for the sake of humanity, because

they found the Commonwealth in a state of utter anarchy. They told how their kindly and considerate rule had been met with barbaric murders and tortures of their people that would shame a savage. They told those stories with a wealth of circumstantial detail, and inventive genius, that was as brilliant as it was foul.

Their half truths were worse than their pure mendacity. They alleged that at the battle of Seymour 100,000 Australians had broken and fled, with scarcely any casualties, before 10,000 Cambasians.

[There is a total absence of official figures regarding the battle of Seymour, on both sides, that is significant. The Paramount Power made a point of destroying all Australian archives of every description. Marsden estimates that Mackinnon could have had very few more than 12,000 men at his disposal on October 12, 1939. It is probable that the Cambasians had at least 20,000 on the field. Mackinnon's field artillery was outranged, and his airforce had been almost used up before the battle. Burton's estimate that only 4,000 men fell back on Tallarook on the night of the battle is probably fair. One sinister aspect of the battle was that no estimates of wounded on either side have been given. Most of the Australians must have been left on the field. Their fate has never been referred to by the Paramount Power.—Eds.]

It must be admitted that, so far as Melbourne was concerned, there was justification for their allegations of the anarchy they found when they entered what they regarded as the official seat of Government. From several people I have heard varying accounts of what occurred when the news of the disaster at Seymour became known. Despite the exodus that had been going on since the bombing on September 30 and the following day, there were probably more than half a million people still left in the Metropolitan area. But these were more demoralised than those who had

left, because of the certainty of occupation by the enemy within a few days.

News of the treatment of civilians in occupied towns in New South Wales had spread. The stories of enemy atrocities could scarcely have been magnified from the truth. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that panic reigned, and that the terrified inhabitants lost their heads, and that there were deplorable excesses committed in consequence. So far as I have been able to learn, there was no really organised insurrection against the Government. What occurred was caused by irresponsible hot-heads with no real following, who made demands as crazy as themselves, but who, unfortunately, were listened to by terrified people who were easily led. There must have been a score of these self-appointed geniuses all claiming to be able to save the country.

The police force was entirely inadequate to keep such crowds as gathered round these orators in control, so that the rioting that ensued was widespread but actually aimless. It was the natural result of the breakdown of the entire social structure that occurred. The demonstrations were bred of fear, and the crowds were beyond reason and unable to think for themselves. Parliament House was one objective of this mob animosity, and the members of the Government were obliged to escape from the blind wrath as best they could. One of the redeeming features of the disaster was the gallant attempts made by Labour Leaders and Trades Hall officials to stem the flood of demoralisation. They recognised the futility of divided counsel at such a crisis and loyally stood by the Ministry. They faced, and tried to reason with infuriated mobs who would listen to anything but reason. Several of them lost their lives in trying to turn the rioters aside from their folly. The fratricidal madness had become completely out of hand.

When the enemy finally took possession of the city on Sunday, October 15, it was in a chaotic

state. They entered from Coburg, Essendon, and Preston, and worked inward methodically. Unfortunately, the conditions they found were some excuse for the drastic measures they took to restore order. The same folly that was at the root of the disorder incited some of the rioters to fire on the advance of the enemy, who responded with merciless reprisals.

Herein lay the bitterest aspect of the tragedy. In the temporary Capital of Australia, the invaders alleged that there was no authority from whom they could accept surrender, or to whom they could dictate terms. The real administration, that had been dispersed, approached the Commander-in-Chief, but he declined to recognise them. In the circumstances the Cambasians took over the Government, and enforced their own laws and regulations, which they made by proclamation.

Meanwhile, as all organised military opposition had been crushed, they proceeded systematically to make good their occupation. In exactly three weeks from striking the first blow they were in practical possession of the whole Commonwealth. They knew they had ample time to complete their plans, and to consolidate their position. Britain was powerless to help, and Europe was too busy to interfere. The United States were fooled by the most foul and unscrupulous propaganda. Every possible outlet of news to the world outside was stopped.

By continuing their policy of frightfulness, they occupied the salient points and the capitals and large provincial cities. These they were enabled to hold with small, but efficient and ruthless forces. Regulations in the cities and larger towns forbade an Australian to walk on the footpaths, to be in the streets after dark, or to engage in any occupation without licence. The slightest infringement of a regulation was punished summarily by death without trial, and on the spot. Men, for not raising their hats to Cambasian officers, were shot dead in the streets. The

whole aim of the policy was to terrorise the people into abject submission.

The Commander-in-Chief of the invading army, now known as the Paramount Power, made no excuse for the barbarity. He claimed that he had 7,000,000 lawless people to deal with, and he was justified in adopting any measures he thought fit to safeguard his country's interests.

After the debacle, the Paramount Power set about dealing especially with Queensland and Tasmania, from which no opposition could be expected. Month after month transport carried thousands of peasants and working people south. They began at the north of Australia, working from Cooktown down the coast. First came a military force to spread terror through the district. Then came the transports, with the Cambasian workers, who took over the plantations and farms. Wherever an Australian could be captured, he was sent to work on the land for the invaders, practically in a state of slavery.

So thoroughly was this methodical invasion carried out that, by the end of 1941, two years later, when the Berlin Congress was held, three plenipotentiaries of the Paramount Power attended as representatives of the Government of Australia. In the two years between, the Commonwealth was systematically gutted of any natural wealth to which the Paramount Power took a fancy. Worse still, the gutting was done by the Australians themselves, who worked the coal mines, the gold fields, the farms and orchards and sheep and cattle stations. Coal, wool, wheat, iron, and other minerals were torn out by their rightful owners working under the supervision of the Paramount Power, and shipped out of the country.

This programme of suppression, however, was not carried out peacefully; until the Congress of Berlin it is safe to say that outside the cities and the large provincial towns the writ of the Paramount Power did not run beyond a rifle shot. It would have taken

an army of 1,000,000 men to enforce their rule absolutely.

Scattered all over Australia were thousands of men who became outlaws, and whose sole aim in life was vengeance. At first there was little cohesion among them. At first barely half of them were armed. Gradually, however, this was altered, and from north to south, Australia was overrun with some of the most desperate and ruthless bands of guerilla fighters whereof the world holds record. Most of them were men bred in the country and bush, who knew their districts as a man knows the palm of his hand. Before long the city folk who had gone bush became equally dangerous to the Paramount Power.

In this guerilla warfare no quarter was given or asked. It developed with the most coldblooded and ruthless killing without mercy. It was this that furnished the Paramount Power with material for its propaganda in the world outside on Australian atrocities. Of it I can say this, that we did fall to the level of trying to emulate the barbarity of the Paramount Power, but we were never able to equal their sheer fiendish ferocity of reprisals.

It will be remembered that when the invaders entered Victoria all the livestock in their line of march was driven east into the ranges as the safest place for them. Thousands of sheep and cattle were allowed to run loose. A similar policy was adopted in the other States when it was known that organised military resistance had collapsed. For this reason the bush and the ranges were full of stock that had, perforce, been abandoned to run wild because they were either ownerless or their owners had no means of using them or profiting from them. It was these that provided the guerilla bands with food and, in the end, clothing.

Doubtless there were thousands of people—especially women and children—among the ranges near Melbourne, and others who had fled from the

large cities, who perished from hunger and exposure. Those, who, forced by privation, surrendered themselves to the Paramount Power, had reason to wish they had not stayed where they were and died. These poor dupes were in many cases lured from safe hiding places by promises of safety and protection that were never honoured in letter or spirit.

Those, however, who took to the bush in the country districts, developed a style of hard living and swift thinking that enabled them to become almost as much a terror to the Paramount Power as the Paramount Power was to them. They became, both men and women, as hard as nails. Their bushcraft developed in a school where an ill-learned lesson or a mistake meant certain death. They established contact with their brethren in bondage in the rural districts. Such a perfect system of secret communication was established that the enemy could make no move that was not immediately known to the guerillas.

Though against this the Paramount Power had the advantage of a highly organised military force, with motor transport, and an omni-present airforce, during those two savage years they made little or no impression on the guerilla warfare. Of course, there were heartbreaking disasters, but for every life they took a relentless toll was exacted. If the history of those two years could be written in full, it would form one of the most exciting records of adventure and bloodshed ever written.

Some of those guerilla troops became legendary for the daring of their deeds. On several occasions I fell in with the famous "Dumbell" Wright, whose headquarters were near Beechworth, and who harried the country from Wangaratta to Albury with tireless audacity. It was he who immortalised himself by hanging the Paramount Power's military Governor of Victoria within sight of Wangaratta. The generally accepted story about "Dumbell" was that he was or had been, a clergyman of some denomination which

objected to shedding blood. But this was not true, for on one occasion Clifford and I were with him in a raid in which he did not exhibit the slightest repugnance to using a bayonet he acquired from a Cambasian soldier.

His name was due to a weapon he invariably carried. It was made of a two-pound dumbell broken across the shank. The broken shank was fitted into a short length of rubber hose pipe and tightly wired. Used with "Dumbell's" strength and dexterity, that waddy became a terrific weapon—all the more effectual because it was silent. Despite his size, he could move with the stealth and silence of a cat. The success of so many of his raids was due to his genius for "seeing that the sentries were asleep," to use his own expression. His technique was to strike with his right hand and catch the body on his left arm as it fell, so as to prevent noise. On the night I was with him I saw him get his man, but without a sound, though I was not more than 10 feet from him.

Many of the raids were organised to obtain arms and ammunition. Although many of the guerillas were unarmed or only partly armed in the beginning, before three months were over there were arms and ammunition to spare. These were supplied, unwillingly, by Cambasians. I think "Dumbell" Wright armed almost the whole of north-eastern Victoria—and a tough crowd they proved.

In each State there were several outstanding figures. There was Monty Black, once an artisan in the Lithgow works, who ran the country between Nowra and the Bulli Pass as far back as Moss Vale. It was he who captured a visiting Cambasian Prince of the Blood, and exchanged him for twenty of his men who had been captured. He promised to send him back safe and unharmed, and did, but with a strange word tattooed on his forehead. Monty's sense of humour lacked refinement. It was Monty, too, who first captured machine guns for his men.

But all along the coast up as far as Cairns the guerillas held sway. Outback, where there was less cover, the technique was different from that of the ranges and the bush, but equally effectual. There was one Queenslander for whom the Paramount Power offered a reward of £100,000, alive or dead, and a free passage out of Australia to any country the traitor liked to name. There were no takers, though probably from 5,000 to 6,000 people could have claimed that reward. This man, of Danish extraction, named Neilsen, achieved his distinction by wrecking five troop trains within the space of three weeks. No doubt the Paramount Power would be pleased to know he is among the men of our camp at the steel works, though he does not use his own name.

But that there were no traitors ever, in those days, despite temptation, was one of the finest aspects of the game—and one of the most appalling. A favourite method of trying to make a man betray his friends was to capture a wife or daughter, and use her as a form of torture, as they did Hill's wife a few months ago, here in Newcastle. Hill did not speak, but he succeded in killing with his bare hands the man who gave the orders, before he, himself, was shot down.

Later, after the Treaty of Berlin had given international recognition to the occupation by the Paramount Power, the situation altered. There came a time when we found there were those among our own people who could bring themselves to betray their friends. No man knows how he will behave until the moment of choice comes to himself, and the agents of the Paramount Power had made a science of creating traitors.

There were some who broke under the strain, for whom we could feel only pity. When their police found they could not obtain information by tormenting a man or woman, they used "indirect interrogation." This euphuism for scientific savagery meant that the victims, men or women, were given the alternative of watching wife, husband or child treated with unspeakable barbarity, or answering questions put to them. Those who would condemn these people for failing, should ask themselves honestly how they would come through such an ordeal. We checkmated them by excluding married men from all subversive societies.

But there were others. In the universal misery and drudgery, there were some who bought comfort or privileges by spying. These were grouped under the unlovely name of "blowflies." Sooner or later they were discovered—and unpleasant things happened to them under the guise of accidents. The P.P. were under no illusions about these accidents. They never admitted their knowledge. But we could always gauge the value to them of a victim of an accident by the extent to which conditions were made uncomfortable in consequence. A really good blowfly's eradication would give us double shifts and reduced rations for a month. We knew they knew and they knew we knew.

But they could not keep faith with their own traitors. We had more than suspicion for the belief that some of the clues that led to the discoveries of spies were deliberately placed in our way. They had either finished with the man or mistrusted him.

But during the guerilla period we could and did trust any one of our own people. We had one great advantage in that, though many of the guerrilla fighters' names were known, they were not known personally, So that we could, and often did, mix with the people in the towns in safety. I have seen Dumbell Wright slouch through the streets of Wangaratta, under the noses of the P.P. police. He would look like a rag bag and suffer a kick with a whine—but he never forgot the face of the kicker.

We never knew the total results of our glorified bushranging. But the loss of men and material to the Paramount Power must have been enormous. In the north-east of Victoria alone, I do not think 5,000 men to be an over estimate for the two years.

[Marsden's estimate, based on P.P. admissions, places the figures at 100,000.—Eds.]

There may be some difference of opinion on the ethical side of this murderous warfare, but it was a question that we left alone. In any case, it was the natural and inevitable outcome of our defeat. Had even military decencies been observed by the Paramount Power, things might have been different. Had they exhibited either elementary justice or made some effort at conciliation, we might have met them half way. But their choice of that policy of "frightfulness" with which they began and continued, bred a loathing and disgust that placed them outside of consideration of humanity.

CHAPTER XIV.

We five little thought when we cut across from Donnybrook to Whittlesea that afternoon of the strange wild life for which we were headed. It was dark when we reached Yea, and strange, after our weeks of strain and uncertainty, to find the town in a reasonably normal state. There was both fear and anxiety, but otherwise the people were untouched by the tragedy. A few men from the broken army had made their way across from Tallarook through Kerrisdale, so that the defeat was known. But they brought the reassuring news that the enemy were not moving in our direction.

So for that last time in our lives, we ate a civilised meal and slept in civilised beds. From enquiries we learned that the shops were still doing business. That next morning, as there was no immediate need for haste, we went shopping. We four still had a little money, but to our delight Dr. Ben came forward as a fairy godfather. At a council he urged we should buy essentials for a rough life. It was he who found the money for tools and thick, hard-wearing clothing and boots with which we crammed the luggage carrier and the car. So that, with our three rifles and ammunition, we were well prepared for emergencies.

Then, just as we were preparing to start, that amazing man went off in a characteristic blaze of wrath at Fergus. "See here! you young ass! Haven't you got a grain of sense? Do you expect me to dry nurse you all your life?"

Fergus gaped, astonished by the apparently unwarranted onslaught.

Then turning on Lynda as though he would bite

her, Dr. Ben snapped. "You're as bad! No sense, either of you! Get yourselves married at once! No other chance but now!"

Fergus rallied his senses, and gulped, "Doc, you're a genius!"

I think that was the only time I ever saw Lynda at a loss in an emergency. She stood voiceless and motionless, with her face burning, and her eyes on Fergus.

Clifford and I made no attempt to hide our mirth, but we recognised that there was sound commonsense behind Dr. Ben's unconventional suggestion. We both rallied to his side.

"Lyn," I said, "do you dare to disobey your superior officer in war time."

"There'll be no orders," Fergus growled, "But, Lyn, I'm pleading!" He held out his hand to her.

Lyn did not speak, but took the hand he held out.

This had happened as we were standing on the footpath beside the car. Ben watched them with a chuckle. "Bless you, my children!"

"Well done, Cupid!" said Clifford grinning at the Doctor.

"You impudent young ruffian!" he snorted. Then he took Lynda's arm. "Lend her to me a moment, Fergus, while I buy the ring," and he led her away.

Fergus looked after them with a dazed expression on his face, and then murmured with deep feeling. "Yon's a great mon—a great mon!"

When the two returned, Lynda was laughing and Ben was looking fierce. The jeweller had assumed that he was the bridegroom. Ben resented the mistake as an affront to Lynda, though a compliment to himself.

We drove to a parsonage to which Ben had been directed, and found the parson in his shirt sleeves, gardening. Ben took full charge of the proceedings, and brushed aside some technical objections raised by the parson regarding the three days' notice. He surrendered, and after filling in the necessary forms,

Ben gave the bride away when the ceremony was gone through.

I do not think more than 25 minutes elapsed between the time when Ben issued his ultimatum and when Lynda walked out of the parsonage as Mrs. Fergus Graham.

As Clifford said, by that time the bride had recovered consciousness. As we returned to the car she stood with her hand in Fergus' arm, and laughed up at us. "Listen, you men! I've known Fergus for three weeks. He proposed to me while we were being shelled, and travelling at 70 miles an hour. Now he has married me, and is taking me on a honeymoon with three other men, to no known destination. We have no home, and we are penniless; but," here she put her hand on Ben's shoulder, and kissed him, "Major, you're a darling."

"She's a shameless hussy, Fergus," laughed Ben. Then, opening the car door, he said to Clifford and me. "You two crowd in the front seat with me, the back is reserved for the bride and bridegroom."

Some 50 miles from Yea, if you know where to look for it, there is a little vllage at the junction of two clear mountain streams. It is built on the only 200 acres of level ground within many miles. Once, 80 years ago, it was a busy mining town. When we saw it late that afternoon, with its little silent street of some 20 or 30 old houses, it looked like an English village that time had forgotten. The hills towered high all round it so that it lay as though at the bottom of a cup. In the tiny gardens were neglected pear and apple trees 50 ft. high. Rose bushes ran wild, and were in their first blossom. Though it was not five o'clock, the sun was behind the towering range that rose from the stream behind the town, and its atmosphere was a mystic misty blue. On that day the peace of Heaven brooded over it, and we felt safe.

Had we scoured the State we could not have found a more perfect place of refuge. The road

that ran through the deep valley gave the only approaches from north and south. Access to it was impossible without our knowledge. After we had explored thoroughly the surrounding country, with one of the 30 or 40 residents as a guide, we knew we were safe from the incursions of an army. The hills to east and west, clothed with virgin forest, offered a thousand hiding places. Along one branch of the stream coming in from the east we could penetrate for miles into the ranges. At an alarm, within five minutes, everyone could be under cover and beyond danger.

Here we settled down, and for nearly two months were lost to the world. Ben took the lead naturally. He gathered the villagers together and told them of the certainty and the danger of enemy activities. He urged them to prepare by building, beforehand, shelters for the times of stress that would surely come. He proved a born organiser and leader. Under his direction and with willing labour, huts were built in the most inaccessible positions, deep in the scrub. He would permit no grouping. Everyone knew where all the huts were, so that each in a measure was dependent on the other. He taught them that they must not use one path too often, to make tracks that might betray the existence of the huts. These were so cleverly built and disguised that they could be passed almost without notice. Within a week he had won the absolute confidence of all.

Beside a deep pool in one stream, shadowed by elms with a span of 50 ft., Fergus and Lynda were given a two-roomed cottage. Fergus made all its crude furniture, and that of their own refuge hut in the ranges. We three left them pretty much to themselves, but after a while they came to life again and became part of the community. During their honeymoon, however, we made two valuable discoveries. One was that stock of every description was roaming at large through the bush. The other was when we were led to an old deserted homestead

in a valley some ten miles away. It was large and surrounded by a small forest of great walnut trees. For two weeks Ben kept the workers busy on it, disguising it so that from the air it must have looked like an outcrop of rock. He foresaw its need. Later it became "Dynamite Ben's" hospital for wounded guerillas.

In those first few weeks we laid the foundation of an organisation that became one of the best known among the ranges. We formed contact with adjacent settlements—though none were near—and organised a perfect code of bush telegraphy. Those quiet, resourceful people in that district accepted Ben's frequent explosions at their real value as a driving force. It was at this time some local genius of the mining profession named him "Dynamite Ben," and the name stuck. Bob, Fergus, and I were his aides. But Lynda became his Chief-of-Staff, second only to him in authority. She was Ben's chief nurse and right hand. Among the women her word was law. What Ben aimed at was creating a communal spirit —which is a very different thing from the Communist spirit.

When the day came, as we knew it must, when our lovely village was but a few smoked walls and heaps of ashes, and when death was our hourly neighbour, the protection of Ben and Lynda became a sort of religion. When Fergus and Bob and I had to leave the valley on our raids we did so with the knowledge that they were guarded as kings were never guarded. Their whereabouts was known to all, but a stranger who strayed within five miles of either of them unchallenged would be lucky if he were not shot on sight.

During that respite Ben organised lines of communication with Mansfield, Alexandra, Woods Point, and hamlets in between, through which we obtained news of what was going on. And all that news, bad at first, became worse as the weeks passed. But when the time came for action our system was so

complete that a man could not have moved a mile in the district without our knowledge and consent.

Then presently strangers worked their way towards our village, for the story became known that somewhere there was a strong man and a leader. Newcomers never knew how closely they were watched and tested. If we did not "like the looks of them," they were turned aside without ceremony or politeness. If in doubt, we brought them to Ben, who had an uncanny insight that was unerring. Occasionally without their knowledge Lynda looked over recruits. There was a Melbourne barrister who never knew that a woman he had never seen passed judgment on him, and had him turned back. But by December we had recruited some fifty sound men.

It was about the second week in December that we heard from Woods Point that four waggon loads of soldiers with machine guns were coming up from Warburton. We told our friends to let them pass. Ten miles from our village they were stopped by a fallen tree in a narrow road. Then, when they bunched, another tree fell behind them. I was the very proud commander of the thirty rifles that formed the reception committee. When that second tree fell they were like rats in a trap. There was not a man in sight in the thick undergrowth, but there was no possible shelter for them. From both sides of the road a point blank fire swept through them. Three minutes after the explosion of the charge that brought down the second tree, it was all over. It was that afternoon, for the first time, that anyone of us saw a soldier of the Paramount Power at close quarters.

From any point of view, that first episode was sheer butchery. They were taken by surprise, and fired wildly into the scrub beside the road. On our side, there were no casualties; on theirs there were no survivors. I do not think there was one among us who felt the slightest compunction for what we had done or for how we had done it. My own feelings were those of elation. When I remembered

the scenes in the Domain in Sydney on Bloody Saturday, and the massacres in Melbourne, the merciless killing seemed not only justifiable but a moral obligation.

Within two hours we had cleared up the road and removed the traces of our raid. We dumped the bodies of two officers and 49 men into an old shaft. Our spoils were two machine guns, fifty rifles, and a quantity of ammunition. Three of the trucks were run into a gully and covered with bushes. The fourth we brought back to the village, where it was concealed in the scrub with the petrol from the other three.

Within an hour the news had been circulated throughout the district. As Ben said that night as we talked it over, "The fat's in the fire now. We'll have them swarming through the country like hornets." And he was right. That was the first conflict in our district, and from then on it was savage war. After our first sight of the enemy we saw far too much of them. They were up next day looking for their lost trucks, and they came in force. They did not find the trucks, but they found trouble in plenty at Woods Point, where they were expected, and were received with military honours.

They burned the town before they left, but they never saw a man. On the night of our raid Ben had sent the Woods Pointers one of our machine guns, and a man who could use it. The Woods Pointers were very grateful. They scuppered four armoured waggons with gelignite. During that night Ben and Lynda treated their first half dozen wounded.

After that they kept trying through Alexandra and Mansfield. They had made what they left of Yea a military depot, and from then on we were kept on the jump. Every now and then they sent over a squadron of planes that would come swooping down our valley machine gunning anything they thought suspicious. It was by a development of their aircraft tactics that they finally reached our village

and destroyed it. This was about the end of January.

We were warned of a raid in force with light tanks, both from Mansfield and Alexandra. But from daylight that morning their planes patrolled the roads through the ranges. They flew singly in a procession about a mile or two apart, so that there was always one in sight to checkmate our attempts to block the road with timber. By this time we had more than one hundred good men at the village, and the Woods Pointers reinforced us gladly. Ben had the bridge at the south end of the village mined. He scattered the rifles in the timber along the road in twos. His orders were that not a shot was to be fired unless there was a man to fire at.

It was eleven o'clock before the first tank rumbled into view, scouting for the armoured cars. A quarter of a mile behind came another, and then the armoured cars—40 of them. They fairly sowed the timber on the hillsides with bullets, while the light tanks pasted them with shells. Our reply was a slow irregular fire, but while they certainly made the most noise, we did the most damage. Our luck was out, for the bridge looked too suspicious, and we failed to get the tank we hoped would try to cross it. It was blown up and they were stopped from going past the village. But we scored when they tried to leave their cars to burn the houses.

They raged round the village for about two hours and left it in ruins, but the cost must have been more than it was worth. That day we, too, suffered the heaviest loss up to date, with 17 men killed and twice as many wounded. Among the wounded was Bob Clifford, with a hole through his shoulder that held him in fuming inaction for three weeks. That was the only time that one of our trio received so much as a scratch.

After that raid Ben blocked the road so effectually with timber, and by blowing up stretches of it, that not even a heavy tank could get through. It crippled

our movements a good deal, but it made us immune from surprise visits, except from the air. Our loss in that big raid in January was heavy, but we had no difficulty in finding recruits. The trouble was the other way. There were more offering than we could handle comfortably, or arm adequately, at the time. Ben found that 150 men were the maximum that could be used with advantage from our headquarters. The surplus were encouraged, and helped to form new independent units.

From then on the struggle never ceased. From Warburton northward, the countryside was in arms. As time went on the bitterness and utter ruthlessness intensified. Learning from experience, we began raiding instead of waiting to be raided. There was always a loose and flexible association between the independent guerilla units, and where possible we helped or reinforced one another's efforts.

Ben's fame as a doctor as well as a leader spread. It was through this that Fergus and I made the acquaintance of "Dumbell" Wright in August, 1940. Ben was seriously hampered through a lack of medical supplies—especially anaesthetics. We knew the P.P. had a military hospital at Wangaratta—they needed it badly, because Dumbell's men alone must have provided sufficient P.P. patients to keep a normal hospital busy. So Fergus and I made a very lively journey north, and found Dumbell in his quarters outside Beechworth. The suggestion of raiding the hospital appealed to his sporting instincts, as much as did the idea of supplying Ben with his medical stores.

Two days later, we three—Dumbell, Fergus and myself—wandered into Wangaratta. It was the first time I had been in one of the big towns that was fairly crawling with P.P. troops and police. Dumbell was accustomed to the game, but Fergus and I found the ordeal rather trying to our nerves. But no one took much notice of three deplorable deadbeats so long as we kept from between the wind and their

nobility. We scavangered for food in a back lane till we were summarily ejected by a P.P. policeman who almost broke my shoulder with a waddy he carried. It was a revolting business, but fruitful, for in one of the dirt bins was Dumbell's post office. For two days we loafed about, an offence to the eye, nose and landscape.

Then Dumbell received news that altered his plan of raiding the hospital to the more congenial method of holding up a train at the station. We heard from friends in Albury that there was a truck of medical stores coming through. On it were a dozen carboys of anaesthetics. The stunt was more burglarious than spectacular—apart from Dumbell's exercise of his own peculiar weapon. We three actually did the job, but Wright had half a dozen of his men at hand to help if necessary, and to get away with the loot.

At that time trains in transit were heavily guarded, but once in the yards in a military town, the vigilance was relaxed. There were a few sentries whose beats we knew. The night was dark and bleak, and we waited until we saw the sentries changed at about 2 o'clock in the morning. Then I saw Dumbell in action. He abolished three men in as many minutes without a sound. We knew exactly where the truck was on the train, and where to look for the carboys. The only noise we made was in opening the truck door. Wright handed out three big jars and remained for some time nosing round in the truck before he came out.

Ten minutes later we passed the three jars over to Wright's men, who were waiting for them with orders for their disposal. Had they been our own property, and legally acquired, there could not have been less fuss over getting them. The really trying part came next day. Wright decided that it would be better to hang round the town, as his and our immediate disappearance would have placed the three deadbeats under suspicion, and made further visits to the town, for Wright, too risky. So we stayed

for another two days, which I admit, I spent with my nerves on edge. The P.P. were boiling with wrath and making things unpleasant, even for them. Wright told us that his identity was known to three-fourths of the Australians in the town, but while the military and police raged they gave no sign.

The night we came away Wright told us to wait for him outside the town, as he had business to attend to before he left. It was nearly two hours before he rejoined us, and we made off at our best pace towards Tarrawingee, though not by the road, to recover our precious ether. After a while he said, "I might as well tell you fellows what I have been doing. I didn't let you know before, because it is entirely my own affair. I went back and climbed the water tower and emptied four four-ounce bottles of hydrocyanic acid into the tank. I have warned all of our people."

Fergus gave a low whistle. "I don't love the P.P., Wright, as you know, but you're giving them a nasty weapon for propaganda."

Wright stopped and turned to us. He spoke in a whisper of concentrated hate, "Believe me, I would not lay poison for a dog, but when I saw my home at Holbrook after those brutes had been there, I swore I would kill and go on killing by any means, however foul, so long as I live."

He was in no mood for argument, so we said no more. Though remembering that first day in Sydney, I understood the urge that prompted him to do what he had done.

[This incident was blazoned all over the United States. The Paramount Power alleged that more than 600 of their people, among whom were several high officials, had been poisoned. It had a disastrous influence on the Australian cause. While they condemn Wright, Peel and Everard remark that the Paramount Power was careful to omit adding that they had forced several hundred Australians to drink the same water—this they undoubtedly did.—Eds.]

One effect of Wright's vengeance was to rouse the P.P. to a fury. The whole of the North-East and the ranges seethed with their raids of reprisals. Fergus and I had a hectic time getting back to the village where we had been given up as lost. It took us three weeks to cover the road back, about 90 miles. Had it not been for the aid we received all along the tracks by which we travelled, I doubt if we would ever have pulled through. But we arrived with our precious burden intact.

Ben was more exercised in his mind as to the results of Wright's methods than in the deed itself. It certainly intensied the brutality with which our war was conducted. It was about this time we all began practising knife throwing until we could pin a playing card at thirty feet. Any ideas of the chivalrous side of warfare vanished. It became a matter of course of get our man in the back. Everything went in those days.

As the months went by all our clothing wore out, and we were reduced to wearing skins of the stock we slaughtered for food. Any luxury, such as soap, we looted from the P.P. There was an unwritten law that we left their women alone, but when our own were reduced to wearing sheep skins, some of the P.P. women who fell into our hands received unceremonious treatment to provide them with something better. Because of this Lynda acquired an extraordinary wardrobe. After a successful raid there was always someone who had acquired some kind of dress material for her. They laid at her feet every fabric between calico and brocaded silk.

The long bitter months of 1940 passed, and it was well into 1941 before we heard rumours of peace in Europe. What had been going on there we heard in scraps but could believe nothing. Then in the middle of October an aeroplane soared down the valley shedding leaflets instead of the usual bullets. These leaflets, printed in English, announced that a world-wide Armistice had been signed, and that a peace

congress was being held in Berlin. They offered a three months' truce from hostilities to be extended if necessary.

Our experience of the Paramount Power made us wary about accepting their news or their assurances. Then they approached us under a white flag. They wanted the leaders to go to Melbourne to negotiate. The reply of the leaders was a unanimous and unflattering refusal to consider their guarantees of safe conduct. After arguing for three weeks we agreed that Wright and Ben would meet their delegates on the road in the open outside Mansfield. Each delegate could bring three men, but all must be unarmed. No armed men were to be within 20 miles of the meeting place.

Bob, Fergus and I went down with Ben. We were a picturesque gang. Lynda had done some amateur tailoring, and had fitted out Ben and Fergus in suits of duck that looked so like pyjamas that the difference did not matter. Bob was wearing a natty sheepskin tunic with the wool inside. My costume was a P.P. uniform overcoat with the badges and buttons removed. Dumbell's gang were in sheepskins, but he, himself, had the nerve to show up in a P.P. officer's uniform with badges and buttons he had cut from jam tins. His impudence so incensed the Brigadier General who met us, that the conference nearly ended before it began.

After four hours of cat and dog discussion, we began to get somewhere. Finally we agreed that hostilities should cease pending the decision of the Berlin Congress, provided they confined their troops to five towns on the Hume Highway. Our men were not to approach within ten miles of these towns. Similar arrangements, with slight variations, were made in other districts. They also agreed—this was on Ben's insistence—that we should be supplied with medical necessities, soap, and some clothing for women and children, and at least 50 tons of flour for each camp.

So it was that by mid-November the raids ceased and we waited. The Paramount Power had agreed to keep us informed on the negotiations in Berlin, but whether they had not the information or they withheld it, what we were told was scanty and non-committal. We had become used to our hard lives. Apart from the risks it had been a demoralising period in some respects. We who had once been decent citizens had become men to whom killing was a matter of course. Human life meant less than nothing. And it was not clean killing, for both sides used the basest treachery and the basest means.

On the other hand, I and the others were never so healthy in our lives. We lived in the open, and developed a hardiness and endurance that we would not have believed possible in other circumstances. Most of our fighting had been done on foot, and some of our forced marches of ten and fifteen miles were done at nearly five miles an hour carrying rifles and full cartridge belts. I have done a good deal better than that for an hour when some of the gentlemen opposite were on my trail—to make the pace for me.

The truce was adhered to on both sides. I think they were as glad as we were of the respite. We certainly had a bad time. It is not boasting, however, to say that the gruelling they got was far worse than they gave. If—that bitter "if"—we had had an army of men such as made up the guerilla forces in the first place, we would have wiped them off the map in a fortnight. And we would have had that army but for the altruists, sentimentalists and other well-meaning but thrice accursed visionaries.

However, we hung round our camps in the hills idling away our time until the middle of December, when the news was sent to us that the Congress had arrived at a decision regarding Australia. It was to be announced at a meeting arranged as before.

It was December 18, when we went down to Mansfield to hear the verdict. We were met by the

Brigadier-General with whom the truce was negotiated. Without any preliminary discussion, he read from a document in his hand. "The Congress decrees that all that part of Australia north of 28 degrees south latitude and west of 128 degrees east longitude shall become the unalienable territory of Cambasia. Further, that for a period of 20 years, Cambasia shall occupy the remainder of the Continent and Tasmania as Paramount Power. This period has been fixed in order to permit the Paramount Power to indemnify itself for the cost of its expeditionary operations in Australia, and to facilitate and assist in the establishment of a responsible government of their territory by the Australian people subsequently. In order that the Paramount Power shall base its administration on a just and benevolent treatment of the Australians during the period of occupation, a neutral delegation of inspection consisting of five members appointed by the President of the United States, shall visit Australia once during the course of each year, and report thereon to the permanent committee of the Congress of Berlin."

Then that arrogant little brute carefully folded and creased that document and handed it to one of his staff, looking us over all the while with a cynical grin on his face. Wright exploded in an oath, and made as if to throw himself on the Brigadier, but in an instant he was covered by three automatics. Ben stood pale as though frozen. Beside me Fergus was rumbling in his throat. I did not look at Bob, but I knew he felt as I felt, murderous.

It was Ben who broke the silence. "Does Great Britain subscribe to that document?" he asked.

"All the Powers at the Berlin Congress, including Britain and the United States." He bowed ironically as he spoke.

Then he turned to one of his staff and held out his hand for some documents, which he took, and then went on speaking.

"You cannot expect, and my Government cannot

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and will not concede, the lenience that we would have extended to you had you accepted your defeat with a spirit of resignation and conciliation. The outrages you have perpetrated against the nationals of the Paramount Power demand full reparation. However, we are disposed to be merciful despite the provocation we have received. You will listen to the terms that my Government imposes."

He unfolded a paper and read: "All Australian nationals now unlawfully under arms against the Cambasian Government and against the terms of the Treaty of Peace of Berlin, will surrender their arms and themselves forthwith to the appointed officials of the Paramount Power. In the event of disobedience to this order it is decreed that for every man killed by an Australian unlawfully under arms, fifteen Australians selected by lot from under the jurisdiction of the Paramount Power will be summarily shot. Moreover, for every national of the Paramount Power unlawfully wounded five hostages similarly chosen, will be shot."

He paused and looked up. "It may interest you gentlemen to know that in selecting the hostages, no discrimination of sex or age will be made. I would like you to be quite clear on that matter."

Then he continued. "In the event of your submission, the Paramount Power graciously agrees to grant an amnesty for your past crimes. You will, however, be required to perform such services for the Paramount Power in return for your pardon as its officers see fit to direct. Two exceptions, however, are made in this district; no mitigation of punishment will be allowed in the cases of the men known as "Dumbell" Wright and Dr. Benjamin Cornish. These two must surrender unconditionally to the officers of the Paramount Power."

From the three of us came a shout of rage, but Ben swung round on us and thundered, "Silence! Stand back!" Such was the power of his hold on us, we fell back without a word.

There was a nasty smile on the Brigadier's face as he said, looking at us, "Your friend is now, as always, a man of remarkable ability and understanding."

Ben turned on the Brigadier, "Assuming we see fit to accept your terms, I presume the safety of our women and children is assured."

"Your women do not interest us——" there was a filthy insult in his tone—"They and their children may remain with your men."

Ben's voice was icy. "Do you require an immediate answer?"

"Oh! not at all!" came the suave, sneering voice. "Let me see! This is the eighteenth. You will be good enough to deliver your answer to an officer I shall appoint to meet you at this spot on midday on the twenty-fifth—an auspicious day among your people, I believe."

Until then my hatred of the men of the Paramount Power had been general, but at that moment it centred in that one figure. He paused a moment, but neither Wright nor Ben accepted the challenge.

Then he went on. "You would perhaps like copies of your orders——" His slight emphasis of the word was an incitement to murder, as he handed Ben and Wright a copy of the paper. "Good afternoon, gentlemen!" He turned stiffly away and entered his car, followed by his staff, without looking round.

We stood silent, watching the car as it disappeared in the dust. Then Ben turned abruptly to Dumbell. "We'll talk this over together, Wright," and they paced off down the road.

For a while we others remained silent, I knew only one of Wright's three lieutenants, Fenner, who had been a counter hand in some shop in Melbourne. It was he who spoke first. "We can't let them give themselves up."

"Seems to me they need not," Clifford suggested. "That cocky little swine only said that they would

not be pardoned. There's nothing to prevent them from sticking to the bush."

"Alone, though," put in one of the others. "It's the finish for us. Wonder if they'll keep their word."

Fergus, who had been glaring at the spot where the car disappeared, turned round. "Better for us perhaps if they didn't. The only reason for their dashed amnesty is that we're more useful to them alive than dead." Then, "Does anyone know where 28 south and 129 east run?"

It was one of Dumbell's men who enlightened us. "They've grabbed a pretty fair piece of country. Twenty-eight south is approximately the line of the Queensland border, the other is the West Australian boundary. They've left us New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania."

"With the whole Commonwealth to play with for the next twenty years," I added.

"By that time the four States they've left us won't be worth having—they'll have stripped them bare." Fergus was a better prophet than he knew.

While we talked Ben and Wright were pacing slowly up and down in earnest debate.

"Those two are just the splendid pair of fools to give themselves up," Fenner said, as we watched them anxiously; "and I'd let myself be shot to ribbons to save Dumbell."

"Who wouldn't?" Clifford spoke for us all.

"But," I said, "actually they can refuse."

"But they won't, and that's the pity of it." Fergus' voice was bitter. "They know the game's up. I doubt if either of them will care to carry on in the bush. Ben won't, anyway."

As he spoke they quickened their pace, and walked toward the horses. "Come on, boys!" Ben cried. We mounted and the two shook hands and parted, we three following Ben.

For ten minutes we rode behind him in silence. Then he motioned us to come up. "Well, boys, it's finished. Wright and I decided we have no option but to accept. We cannot go on in the face of those murderous reprisals."

"But you, Ben!" I put the question that was in all our minds.

"Wright and I have decided on a way out," he said. "You'll know that later." Then his voice changed. "Now this is an order to you all—and I expect it to be obeyed. Not one word to anyone, and especially not to Lynda, about the exclusion of Wright and me from the amnesty." Then, to prevent further talk, he touched up his horse and rode on.

That night we called a general rally of our men, and Ben told the unhappy news. "If we alone were affected, men, I would counsel you to stay here and fight to the last man, as I know you would," he concluded, "But that threat of reprisals is genuine. We cannot go on and condemn hundreds of helpless fellow people to death. I fear we are surrendering to slavery, but that is the price we must pay."

"Will they keep their words about the women and children?" was the only question asked.

Ben gave the only possible reply. "I think, and hope so."

And so it was settled. On Christmas Day, by Ben's orders, I rode down to Mansfield, and met one of their officers, and gave him Ben's reply. Fenner had come in with Wright's. We were given our orders curtly. Wright was to surrender with all his people at Beechworth, and we were to come into Mansfield on the same day—New Year's Day, 1942. All arms were to be brought in.

With all our women and children, it was nearly two days' march from the village. A touch of humour in that via dolorosa seemed impossible, but Lynda provided it. When the women—there were 32 of them—assembled on the morning we started, the men stared at them in incredulous amazement. Normally they were fine average Australian types. What Lynda presented to us was the most fearsome looking collection of hags and slatterns that ever offended the

eye. They were in rags, and unclean rags at that. Their faces, hands and arms were a dirty yellow brown. Their hair was as unkempt as the rest of their get up. The children, some 40 of them of all ages, were equally repulsive looking.

Lynda herself was almost unrecognisable. I was with Fergus when he caught sight of her, and his exclamation of recognition left me speechless with mirth.

"It's a fairy tale," Lynda laughed in answer to his demand for an explanation.

"It's more like a bogie story," he retorted. "Woman, you look like—like—an ash heap."

"Call me a ruse de guerre," she smiled—and we saw her white teeth were stained almost black. "It was Ben's idea," she explained. "He suggested that there was no need for us to look our best. The intentions of those brutes in Mansfield may be honourable, but there's nothing like making sure."

Ben came up at the moment, and looked over the group with approving eyes. "It's a triumph, Lyn! A ghastly triumph!"

"But how on earth did you do it?" I asked. "It's revolting!"

"That's where the fairy story comes in," Lyn replied. "When the princess disguised herself as a kitchen maid, she always stained herself with walnut juice. The colour lasts."

"Well," Ben smiled. "The highest compliment I can pay you is that I'd hate to see you in any kitchen of mine."

I left Fergus trying to thank Ben for the idea.

But it was an unhappy procession that moved off down the valley an hour later. Bob and Fergus and I were in a state of sick anxiety about Ben. We had each tried to discover his intentions, but he had evaded answering. As we made our way through the scrub he seemed the least concerned of any of us, and chatted with the children most of the time.

That night we camped four miles out of the town,

by the roadside in the open. I doubt if many of us slept except for a few occasional minutes. We five had sat round a fire until about 10 o'clock. But there was very little talking. When Ben got up he told me there was no need for an early start, and to let those sleep who could. Then he nodded good night and left us.

I must have dozed off just about dawn, for it was light when Clifford aroused me. There was consternation in his voice. "Wally, quickly! Come to Ben!" I hurried after him. Twenty yards away we found Fergus bending over Ben, who was lying at the foot of a tree. As we came up, Fergus looked up. "He's dead!" he said in an awed voice.

We stooped and raised him. There could be no doubt but that Fergus was right. Beneath him was a leaf from his pocket book. I picked it up. It was addressed to—"My four dear and loyal comrades." Briefly he had written that Wright and he had chosen this way out to rob the Paramount Power of its triumph of punishing them. "I leave you to surrender my body to them as you think fit." Then at the end—"These two years that should have been the most bitter of my life have been made the brightest by the love and friendship of the four dearest people I ever knew. God bless you all, and give you strength to endure.—Ben."

The small bottle we picked up beside him told its own tale.

When, looking down on the figure, that somehow seemed smaller in death, I said, "I am glad!" The others understood what I meant. Then Fergus left us with bowed head to break the news to Lynda.

After we had called the camp together, and Fergus told them what had happened, and why, we made a litter of branches broken from trees, fastened together with fencing wire. That which had been Ben was laid upon it reverently. Our men—they numbered 160—formed fours on the road. We broke them into two sections, between which the

women and children were placed. With eight men shouldering the litter, and Fergus, Clifford and me marching behind it, the procession moved off, the men with their rifles at the slope.

Until then we had not seen a sign of the enemy though we were sure our movements had been under observation during the whole of the previous day. Less than a mile out of the town we were stopped by an officer in a motor car. Beside the road stood an armoured waggon. As we halted, the officer left his car, and approaching us, demanded the surrender of Benjamin Cornish. For answer Fergus ordered the bearers to lay down the litter. Bending down he raised the leafy branches that had been placed over the body.

Then for the first and only time in my experience I saw an officer of the Paramount Power do a decent action. This one stood to attention and saluted as he looked down. Then he stood aside and waved us forward. As the men raised the litter again he gave some order to those in the armoured waggon which afterwards rumbled along behind us. The officer returned to his car and drove off ahead of us.

When we entered the town the main street was lined with troops, from behind whose ranks what remained of the townspeople watched our surrender with silent sympathy. As we entered the street we flung our rifles to the ground and passed on. The silence was such that the only sound was the shuffle of our illshod feet and the clatter of the weapons as they were flung aside. So it was that on New Year's Day, 1942, we entered into bondage.

That night, in our compound where we had been herded without shelter, we buried the body of our beloved Ben.

CHAPTER XV.

Throughout the country that day more than 40,000 men laid down their arms, and our conquest was complete. We entered on the third stage of our humiliation. The first was that three weeks of inglorious warfare with its single decisive battle. The second was the two years of guerilla warfare. And this, the long-drawn agony of hopeless bondage with the knowledge that the Paramount Power will never honour its treaty obligations or relax its hold on the prize it has snatched from a people who could not hold it.

From our first concentration camp at Mansfield where we remained for a fortnight before we were dispersed, we learned what our fate would be. They fed us on boiled wheat and treacle, with the coarsest of meat twice a week. Meanwhile, we were questioned individually and registered. They ascertained our previous occupations, and any of us such as Fergus, who possessed special useful qualifications as a metallurgist, were separated from the rest, who were drafted for hard labour. We found that those who had taken part in the guerilla warfare were marked men from then on.

Our discipline was more severe, our punishments harsher, and our work more laborious than that given to those who had not taken up arms. They made us distinguishable from all the others by shaving our heads. Others could hope for some alleviation of their bondage through relaxed regulations, better food and shorter hours. The only concession we were ever given came at a later date, when, in the camps we were allowed four hours' liberty a week.

After a few escaped to the bush, preferring the risk of starvation to bondage, they ensured our return by instituting a system of hostages. Each man had to nominate two comrades as hostages. If he escaped his hostages were shot after 24 hours.

The men who were married were drafted into separate camps with their families. But their children were taken from them at the age of 10 years, and set to work. Few parents know what became of them, and few ever saw them again unless accident threw them together. We ex-guerillas, however had one compensation. It became an unwritten law among our own people to render us any possible service as a labour of love. They would leave food or some little luxury of clothing where they knew we would find it. They conveyed messages and passed on information to us. Though this was strictly forbidden not all the ceaseless vigilance of the Paramount Power could prevent this intercommunication.

It was the policy of the Paramount Power that all the products of Australia were either diverted to their own use, or exported and sold overseas. Our wool was sent abroad and sold overseas. We were allowed only synthetic fabrics. All coal except that for their own use was exported. Fergus had predicted that they would strip Australia bare, and they did. Vast areas of forest land were stripped of timber and were never replanted. The bread we were given was made from waste wheat, unfit for export, badly milled, and half bran at that. Our vineyards were exploited in the same manner. Our orchards were cultivated, but only those who worked in them ever saw the fruit. Labouring gangs grew vegetables for our masters, but cabbages were the only vegetable allowed to us.

Our Australia must be a truly profitable prize for the Paramount Power. Labour costs nothing, although we are supposed to be paid at the rate of ninepence a day. But as this is always mortgaged for the wretched clothing and boots that are charged

against us, we never see any money. Some in the higher professions, such as Fergus, who has a hut of his own, receive as much as 12/- a week in money —but they are the aristocrats. Whatever this cost of labour may be it is so low as to be scarcely appreciable. The entire revenue for exports of primary and secondary products goes to the Paramount Power. It must be enormous, but they are always able to prove to the American Committees of Inspection that they are running the country at a loss, because of the high cost of administration and the necessity for maintaining an army of occupation. Maybe! It is said the salary of the military Governor-General is £100,000 per annum.

Before long the systematic brutality of our treatment bore fruit in a war of sabotage. We cannot kill, but we can and do destroy. Sabotage is carried out, especially among factory workers, with an impish ingenuity. I think this must be the only serious cost of administration to the Paramount Power. But it goes on despite the severity of penalties. Detection means a blank wall and a firing squad, or a sentence to the Yampi iron mines, from which there is no return—worse perhaps than the firing party. If they cannot catch the individual, which they very seldom do, the gang on a job or in a factory, is put on short rations or longer hours. For nearly the three first years I worked on a timber mill, and I think the average of stoppages for repairs to machinery must have been one week in four.

But among us, and especially among the ex-guerillas, theft is even more prevalent than sabotage. This applies especially to such luxuries as good food. But the general principle is for a man to get away with anything he can lay his hands on, provided it is not too heavy. But weight does not mean immunity. In the timber camp I was one of six men who succeeded in getting away with a lorry-load of stores intended for the managing staff. They recovered nearly half

of it, but our crowd lived well on the balance for a week or two.

I suppose we have become utterly amoral. But the doctrine we subscribe to is that we only take what is actually ours from the real thief. Personally, I have never felt any qualms of conscience, and my capacity for disgust at having to steal food has become atrophied. When I was drafted to Newcastle when the steel works were being rebuilt, the only ray of light in the gloom came with an unexpected reunion with Fergus and Lynda. During the entire interval of three years I had heard nothing from them. A few months later Bob Clifford was drafted in. We found they were selecting for the steel works camp all those ex-guerillas whom they suspected of being active in subversive movements. Here, before they organised the camp, Bob and I systematically raided enemy stores for luxuries, with uniform success, though on one or two occasions we left the scene of operation under fire. I doubt if Lynda's baby would have lived but for the preserved milk that Bob and I procured for her.

But now, as I come to the end of the story, a more sinister and evil spirit has crept into our hatred of the Paramount Power. This is born of the knowledge that has come to us during the past two years that they have no intention of evacuating the four States at the end of the twenty years' term.

Until then we were buoyed up with the thought that our servitude had a limit, but when the hope faded our spirit did not break; it became brutalised. Slowly the exactions and oppressions of the Paramount Power have become more inhuman and pitiless, and our silent underground resistance has become more vindictive. All those tyrannies that were once reserved for the ex-guerillas have been extended to the rest of the people. Hopelessness has bred a recklessness of life that would be unbelievable to people differently circumstanced.

Lately our numbers have been added to by the

transportation of all the Australians in Queensland to the three southern continental States. For the past five years the Paramount Power has been populating Queensland with its own nationals. Our people were made to work for the farmers and orchardists and cane growers until there were sufficient Cambasians to take over the State completely. They have retained only the strongest among the men to do the most laborious work such as clearing new forest ground for cultivation.

Last year it was decreed that no Australian would be permitted to live in Brisbane or in any of the large provincial towns of Queensland. But several thousand men were kept as labourers to carry out the work of a complete rebuilding of Brisbane. Only the finest of the public buildings are being retained. It is evident to us that this policy of the elimination of the Australian by ill-treatment and hardship is being extended to the four southern States. The men who are coming down from Queensland are physical wrecks, worn out with ill-nourishment and overwork.

The consequence has been the development of a silent, passive resistance among us on the surface, beneath which is a seething mass of conspiracy and vindictive retaliation. This year, for the first time since the suppression of the guerilla warfare, killing has recommenced, despite reprisals. It has been carried out secretly for the most part, but occasionally as the result of a sudden outburst of rage by some victim of tyranny or brutality. Again and again, especially detested police officials have disappeared. About six months ago—just after I began writing this story—that Brigadier-General who took the surrender of Ben and Dumbell Wright came to Newcastle as Commandant. I got word of his advent from Fenner, who was working on the new breakwater. His administration proved more iniquitous than that of his predecessor. For two months one single organisation kept him under incessant observation. They cannot keep us all in concentration camps so that

there are plenty outside to carry on the good work. He disappeared from his own house.

There were at least 50 people who knew how he was taken from his house and what became of the body. The P.P. police raged for a month and their vengeance was diabolic, but no one spoke. It is this silent killing that is getting on their nerves—and on ours. The same atmosphere of terror reigns everywhere.

For my own part, hope of release is gone. I have not dared to go near Fergus and Lynda again though I know they are safe so far. There are many among us who feel that the only chance of drawing the attention of the outside world to the terrible condition of our slavery is by a general rebellion. Such a move, however presents vast difficulties through the problem of co-ordination. But still the attempt is being planned. I fear it will take years before the organisation can be sufficiently advanced to take action. I am participating because I have reached the stage when I do not care what happens to me. Since the day I saw Fergus and Lynda last, and saw Bob Clifford in the gang that marched to the Yampi transport, I have lost heart, My only wonder is that I have escaped so far. But sooner or later they will reach out for me, and when that day comes I will have the satisfaction of knowing that whatever they may do to me has been paid for in advance.

It is strange that I can feel neither regret nor self reproach for what I have done during these past nine years. I set out to tell the whole story without hiding a detail. But my courage has not been equal to the task. But no one, I believe, could do so. I have killed bound men without pity or compunction. It has all been part of our harvest. One night in 1941, Clifford and I came on two wounded men after a raid. They begged——

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