

CLASSICS TO GO
KANGAROO



D. H. LAWRENCE

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CHAP: I.

TORESTIN

A BUNCH of workmen were lying on the grass of the park beside Macquarie Street, in the dinner hour. It was winter, the end of May, but the sun was warm, and they lay there in shirt-sleeves, talking. Some were eating food from paper packages. They were a mixed lot—taxi-drivers, a group of builders who were putting a new inside into one of the big houses opposite, and then two men in blue overalls, some sort of mechanics. Squatting and lying on the grassy bank beside the broad tarred road where taxis and hansom cabs passed continually, they had that air of owning the city which belongs to a good Australian.

Sometimes, from the distance behind them, came the faintest squeal of singing from out of the “fortified” Conservatorium of Music. Perhaps it was one of these faintly wafted squeals that made a blue-overalled fellow look round, lifting his thick eyebrows vacantly. His eyes immediately rested on two figures approaching from the direction of the conservatorium, across the grass-lawn. One was a mature, handsome, fresh-faced woman, who might have been Russian. Her companion was a smallish man, pale-faced, with a dark beard. Both were well-dressed, and quiet, with that quiet self-possession which is almost unnatural nowadays. They looked different from other people.

A smile flitted over the face of the man in the overalls—or rather a grin. Seeing the strange, foreign-looking little man with the beard and the absent air of self-possession walking unheeding over the grass, the workman instinctively grinned. A comical-looking bloke! Perhaps a Bolshy.

The foreign-looking little stranger turned his eyes and caught the workman grinning. Half-sheepishly, the mechanic had eased round to nudge his mate to look also at the comical-looking bloke. And the bloke caught them both. They wiped the grin off their faces. Because the little bloke looked at them quite straight, so observant, and so indifferent. He saw that the mechanic had a fine face, and pleasant eyes, and that the grin was hardly more than a city habit. The man in the blue overalls looked into the distance, recovering his dignity after the encounter.

So the pair of strangers passed on, across the wide asphalt road to one of the tall houses opposite. The workman looked at the house into which they had entered.

“What d’you make of them, Dug?” asked the one in the overalls.

“Dunno! Fritzie, most likely.”

“They were talking English.”

“Would be, naturally—what yer expect?”

“I don’t think they were German.”

“Don’t yer, Jack? Mebbe they weren’t then.”

Dug was absolutely unconcerned. But Jack was piqued by the funny little bloke.

Unconsciously he watched the house across the road. It was a more-or-less expensive boarding-house. There appeared the foreign little bloke dumping down a gladstone bag at the top of the steps that led from the porch to the street, and the woman, the wife apparently, was coming out and dumping down a black hat-box. Then the man made another excursion into the house, and came out with another bag, which he likewise dumped down at the top of the steps. Then he had a few words with the wife, and scanned the street.

“Wants a taxi,” said Jack to himself.

There were two taxis standing by the kerb near the open grassy slope of the park, opposite the tall brown houses. The foreign-looking bloke came down the steps and across the wide asphalt road to them. He looked into one, and then into the other. Both were empty. The drivers were lying on the grass smoking an after-luncheon cigar.

"Bloke wants a taxi," said Jack.

"Could ha' told *you* that," said the nearest driver. But nobody moved.

The stranger stood on the pavement beside the big, cream-coloured taxi, and looked across at the group of men on the grass. He did not want to address them.

"Want a taxi?" called Jack.

"Yes. Where are the drivers?" replied the stranger, in unmistakable English: English of the old country.

"Where d'you want to go?" called the driver of the cream-coloured taxi, without rising from the grass.

"Murdoch Street."

"Murdoch Street? What number?"

"Fifty-one."

"Neighbour of yours, Jack," said Dug, turning to his mate.

"Taking it furnished, four guineas a week," said Jack in a tone of information.

"All right," said the driver of the cream-coloured taxi, rising at last from the grass. "I'll take you."

"Go across to 120 first," said the little bloke, pointing to the house. "There's my wife and the bags. But look!" he added quickly. "You're not going to charge me a shilling each for the bags."

"What bags? Where are they?"

"There at the top of the steps."

"All right, I'll pull across and look at 'em."

The bloke walked across, and the taxi at length curved round after him. The stranger had carried his bags to the foot of the steps: two ordinary-sized gladstones, and one smallish square hat-box. There they stood against the wall. The taxi-driver poked out his head to look at them. He surveyed them steadily. The stranger stood at bay.

“Shilling *apiece*, them bags,” said the driver laconically.

“Oh no. The tariff is three-pence,” cried the stranger.

“Shilling *apiece*, them bags,” repeated the driver. He was one of the proletariat that has learnt the uselessness of argument.

“That’s not just, the tariff is three-pence.”

“All right, if you don’t want to pay the fare, don’t engage the car, that’s all. Them bags is a shilling *apiece*.”

“Very well, I don’t want to pay so much.”

“Oh, all right. If you don’t, you won’t. But they’ll cost you a shilling *apiece* on a taxi, an’ there you are.”

“Then I don’t want a taxi.”

“Then why don’t you say so. There’s no harm done. I don’t want to charge you for pulling across here to look at the bags. If you don’t want a taxi, you don’t. I suppose you know your own mind.”

Thus saying he pushed off the brakes and the taxi slowly curved round on the road to resume its previous stand.

The strange little bloke and his wife stood at the foot of the steps beside the bags, looking angry. And then a hansom-cab came clock-clocking slowly along the road, also going to draw up for the dinner hour at the quiet place opposite. But the driver spied the angry couple.

“Want a cab, sir?”

“Yes, but I don’t think you can get the bags on.”

“How many bags?”

"Three. These three," and he kicked them with his toe, angrily.

The hansom-driver looked down from his Olympus. He was very red-faced, and a little bit humble.

"Them three? Oh yes! Easy! Easy! Get 'em on easy. Get them on easy, no trouble at all." And he clambered down from his perch, and resolved into a little red-faced man, rather beery and hen-pecked looking. He stood gazing at the bags. On one was printed the name: "R. L. Somers."

"*R. L. Somers!* All right, you get in, sir and madam. You get in. Where d'you want to go? Station?"

"No. Fifty-one Murdoch Street."

"All right, all right, I'll take you. Fairish long way, but we'll be there under an hour."

Mr Somers and his wife got into the cab. The cabby left the doors flung wide open, and piled the three bags there like a tower in front of his two fares. The hat-box was on top, almost touching the brown hairs of the horse's tail, and perching gingerly.

"If you'll keep a hand on that, now, to steady it," said the cabby.

"All right," said Somers.

The man climbed to his perch, and the hansom and the extraneous tower began to joggle away into the town. The group of workmen were still lying on the grass. But Somers did not care about them. He was safely jogging with his detested baggage to his destination.

"Aren't they *vile!*" said Harriet, his wife.

"It's God's Own Country, as they always tell you," said Somers. "The hansom-man was quite nice."

"But the taxi-drivers! And the man charged you eight shillings on Saturday for what would be two shillings in London!"

“He rooked me. But there you are, in a free country, it’s the man who makes you pay who is free—free to charge you what he likes, and you’re forced to pay it. That’s what freedom amounts to. They’re free to charge, and you are forced to pay.”

In which state of mind they jogged through the city, catching a glimpse from the top of a hill of the famous harbour spreading out with its many arms and legs. Or at least they saw one bay with warships and steamers lying between the houses and the wooded, bank-like shores, and they saw the centre of the harbour, and the opposite squat cliffs—the whole low wooded table-land reddened with suburbs and interrupted by the pale spaces of the many-lobed harbour. The sky had gone grey, and the low table-land into which the harbour intrudes squatted dark-looking and monotonous and sad, as if lost on the face of the earth: the same Australian atmosphere, even here within the area of huge, restless, modern Sydney, whose million inhabitants seem to slip like fishes from one side of the harbour to another.

Murdoch Street was an old sort of suburb, little squat bungalows with corrugated iron roofs, painted red. Each little bungalow was set in its own hand-breadth of ground, surrounded by a little wooden palisade fence. And there went the long street, like a child’s drawing, the little square bungalows dot-dot-dot, close together and yet apart, like modern democracy, each one fenced round with a square rail fence. The street was wide, and strips of worn grass took the place of kerb-stones. The stretch of macadam in the middle seemed as forsaken as a desert, as the hansom clock-clocked along it.

Fifty-one had its name painted by the door. Somers had been watching these names. He had passed “Elite,” and “Très Bon” and “The Angels Roost” and “The Better ‘Ole.” He rather hoped for one of the Australian names, Wallamby

or Wagga-Wagga. When he had looked at the house and agreed to take it for three months, it had been dusk, and he had not noticed the name. He hoped it would not be U-An-Me, or even Stella Maris.

“Forestin,” he said, reading the flourishing T as an F. “What language do you imagine that is?”

“It’s T, not F,” said Harriet.

“Torestin,” he said, pronouncing it like Russian. “Must be a native word.”

“No,” said Harriet. “It means *To rest in.*” She didn’t even laugh at him. He became painfully silent.

Harriet didn’t mind very much. They had been on the move for four months, and she felt if she could but come to anchor somewhere in a corner of her own, she wouldn’t much care where it was, or whether it was called Torestin or Angels Roost or even Très Bon.

It was, thank heaven, quite a clean little bungalow, with just commonplace furniture, nothing very preposterous. Before Harriet had even taken her hat off she removed four pictures from the wall, and the red plush tablecloth from the table. Somers had disconsolately opened the bags, so she fished out an Indian sarong of purplish shot colour, to try how it would look across the table. But the walls were red, of an awful deep bluey red, that looks so fearful with dark-oak fittings and furniture: or dark-stained jarrah, which amounts to the same thing; and Somers snapped, looking at the purple sarong—a lovely thing in itself:

“Not with red walls.”

“No, I suppose not,” said Harriet, disappointed. “We can easily colour-wash them white—or cream.”

“What, start colour-washing walls?”

“It would only take half a day.”

“That’s what we come to a new land for—to God’s Own Country—to start colour-washing walls in a beastly little

suburban bungalow? That we've hired for three months and mayn't live in three weeks!"

"Why not? You must have walls."

"I suppose you must," he said, going away to inspect the two little bedrooms, and the kitchen, and the outside. There was a scrap of garden at the back, with a path down the middle, and a fine Australian tree at the end, a tree with pale bark and no leaves, but big tufts of red, spikey flowers. He looked at the flowers in wonder. They were apparently some sort of bean flower, in sharp tufts, like great red spikes of stiff wisteria, curving upwards, not dangling. They looked handsome against the blue sky: but again, extraneous. More like scarlet cockatoos perched in the bare tree, than natural growing flowers. Queer burning red, and hard red flowers! They call it coral tree.

There was a little round summer-house also, with a flat roof and steps going up. Somers mounted, and found that from the lead-covered roof of the little round place he could look down the middle harbour, and even see the low gateway, the low headlands with the lighthouse, opening to the full Pacific. There was the way out to the open Pacific, the white surf breaking. A tramp steamer was just coming in, under her shaft of black smoke.

But near at hand nothing but bungalows—street after street. This was one of the old-fashioned bits of Sydney. A little further off the streets of proper brick houses clustered. But here on this hill the original streets of bungalow places remained almost untouched, still hinting at the temporary shacks run up in the wilderness.

Somers felt a little uneasy because he could look down into the whole range of his neighbours' gardens and back premises. He tried not to look at them. But Harriet had come climbing after him to survey the world, and she began:

“Isn’t it lovely up here! Do you see the harbour?—and the way we came in! Look, look, I remember looking out of the porthole and seeing that lighthouse, just as we came in—and those little brown cliffs. Oh, but it’s a wonderful harbour. What it must have been when it was first discovered. And now all these little dog-kennely houses, and everything. But this next garden is lovely; have you seen the—what are they, the lovely flowers?”

“Dahlias.”

“But did ever you see such dahlias! Are you sure they’re dahlias? They’re like pink chrysanthemums—and like roses—oh, lovely! But all these little dog-kennels—awful pigging suburban place—and sort of lousy. Is this all men can do with a new country? Look at those tin cans!”

“What do you expect them to do. Rome was not built in a day.”

“Oh, but they might make it nice. Look at all the little backs: like chicken houses with chicken-runs. They call this making a new country, do they?”

“Well, how would you start making a new country yourself?” asked Somers, a little impatiently.

“I wouldn’t have towns—and corrugated iron—and millions of little fences—and empty tins.”

“No, you’d have old chateaus and Tudor manors.”

They went down, hearing a banging at the back door, and seeing a tradesman with a basket on his arm. And for the rest of the day they were kept busy going to the door to tell the inexhaustible tradespeople that they were now fixed up with grocer and butcher and baker and all the rest. Night came on, and Somers sat on his tub of a summer-house looking at the lights glittering thick in swarms in the various hollows down to the water, and the lighthouses flashing in the distance, and ship lights on the water, and the dark places thinly sprinkled with lights. It wasn’t like a

town, it was like a whole country with towns and bays and darkneses. And all lying mysteriously within the Australian underdark, that peculiar lost, weary aloofness of Australia. There was the vast town of Sydney. And it didn't seem to be real, it seemed to be sprinkled on the surface of a darkness into which it never penetrated.

Somers sighed and shivered and went down to the house. It was chilly. Why had he come? Why, oh why? What was he looking for? Reflecting for a moment, he imagined he knew what he had come for. But he wished he had not come to Australia, for all that.

He was a man with an income of four hundred a year, and a writer of poems and essays. In Europe, he had made up his mind that everything was done for, played out, finished, and he must go to a new country. The newest country: young Australia! Now he had tried Western Australia, and had looked at Adelaide and Melbourne. And the vast, uninhabited land frightened him. It seemed so hoary and lost, so unapproachable. The sky was pure, crystal pure and blue, of a lovely pale blue colour: the air was wonderful, new and unbreathed: and there were great distances. But the bush, the grey, charred bush. It scared him. As a poet, he felt himself entitled to all kinds of emotions and sensations which an ordinary man would have repudiated. Therefore he let himself feel all sorts of things about the bush. It was so phantom-like, so ghostly, with its tall pale trees and many dead trees, like corpses, partly charred by bush fires: and then the foliage so dark, like grey-green iron. And then it was so deathly still. Even the few birds seemed to be swamped in silence. Waiting, waiting—the bush seemed to be hoarily waiting. And he could not penetrate into its secret. He couldn't get at it. Nobody could get at it. What was it waiting for?

And then one night at the time of the full moon he walked alone into the bush. A huge electric moon, huge,

and the tree-trunks like naked pale aborigines among the dark-soaked foliage, in the moonlight. And not a sign of life—not a vestige.

Yet something. Something big and aware and hidden! He walked on, had walked a mile or so into the bush, and had just come to a clump of tall, nude, dead trees, shining almost phosphorescent with the moon, when the terror of the bush overcame him. He had looked so long at the vivid moon, without thinking. And now, there was something among the trees, and his hair began to stir with terror, on his head. There was a presence. He looked at the weird, white, dead trees, and into the hollow distances of the bush. Nothing! Nothing at all. He turned to go home. And then immediately the hair on his scalp stirred and went icy cold with terror. What of? He knew quite well it was nothing. He knew quite well. But with his spine cold like ice, and the roots of his hair seeming to freeze, he walked on home, walked firmly and without haste. For he told himself he refused to be afraid, though he admitted the icy sensation of terror. But then to experience terror is not the same thing as to admit fear into the conscious soul. Therefore he refused to be afraid.

But the horrid thing in the bush! He schemed as to what it would be. It must be the spirit of the place. Something fully evoked to-night, perhaps provoked, by that unnatural West-Australian moon. Provoked by the moon, the roused spirit of the bush. He felt it was watching, and waiting. Following with certainty, just behind his back. It might have reached a long black arm and gripped him. But no, it wanted to wait. It was not tired of watching its victim. An alien people—a victim. It was biding its time with a terrible ageless watchfulness, waiting for a far-off end, watching the myriad intruding white men.

This was how Richard Lovat Somers figured it out to himself, when he got back into safety in the scattered

township in the clearing on the hill-crest, and could see far off the fume of Perth and Freemantle on the sea-shore, and the tiny sparkling of a farther-off lighthouse on an island. A marvellous night, raving with moonlight—and somebody burning off the bush in a ring of sultry red fire under the moon in the distance, a slow ring of creeping red fire, like some ring of fireflies, upon the far-off darkness of the land's body, under the white blaze of the moon above.

It is always a question whether there is any sense in taking notice of a poet's fine feelings. The poet himself has misgivings about them. Yet a man ought to feel something, at night under such a moon.

Richard S. had never quite got over that glimpse of terror in the Westralian bush. Pure foolishness, of course, but there's no telling where a foolishness may nip you. And, now that night had settled over Sydney, and the town and harbour were sparkling unevenly below, with reddish-seeming sparkles, whilst overhead the marvellous Southern Milky Way was tilting uncomfortably to the south, instead of crossing the zenith; the vast myriads of swarming stars that cluster all along the milky way, in the Southern sky, and the Milky Way itself leaning heavily to the south, so that you feel all on one side if you look at it; the Southern sky at night, with that swarming Milky Way all bushy with stars, and yet with black gaps, holes in the white star-road, while misty blotches of star-mist float detached, like cloud-vapours, in the side darkness, away from the road; the wonderful Southern night-sky, that makes a man feel so lonely, alien: with Orion standing on his head in the west, and his sword-belt upside down, and his Dog-star prancing in mid-heaven, high above him; and with the Southern Cross insignificantly mixed in with the other stars, democratically inconspicuous; well then, now that night had settled down over Sydney, and all this was happening overhead, for R. L. Somers and a few more people, our poet

once more felt scared and anxious. Things seemed so different. Perhaps everything *was* different from all he had known. Perhaps if St Paul and Hildebrand and Darwin had lived south of the equator, we might have known the world all different, quite different. But it is useless iffing. Sufficient that Somers went indoors into his little bungalow, and found his wife setting the table for supper, with cold meat and salad.

“The only thing that’s really cheap,” said Harriet, “is meat. That huge piece cost two shillings. There’s nothing to do but to become savage and carnivorous—if you can.”

“The kangaroo and the dingo are the largest fauna in Australia,” said Somers. “And the dingo is probably introduced.”

“But it’s very good meat,” said Harriet.

“I know that,” said he.

The hedge between number fifty-one and number fifty was a rather weary hedge with a lot of dead branches in it, on the Somers’ side. Yet it grew thickly, with its dark green, slightly glossy leaves. And it had little pinky-green flowers just coming out: sort of pink pea-flowers. Harriet went nosing round for flowers. Their garden was just trodden grass with the remains of some bushes and a pumpkin vine. So she went picking sprigs from the intervening hedge, trying to smell a bit of scent in them, but failing. At one place the hedge was really thin, and so of course she stood to look through into the next patch.

“Oh, but these dahlias are really marvellous. You *must* come and look,” she sang out to Somers.

“Yes, I know, I’ve seen them,” he replied rather crossly, knowing that the neighbours would hear her. Harriet was so blithely unconscious of people on the other side of hedges. As far as she was concerned, they ought not to be there: even if they were in their own garden.

“You must come and look, though. Lovely! Real plum-colour, and the loveliest velvet. You must come.”

He left off sweeping the little yard, which was the job he had set himself for the moment, and walked across the brown grass to where Harriet stood peeping through the rift in the dead hedge, her head tied in a yellow, red-spotted duster. And of course, as Somers was peeping beside her, the neighbour who belonged to the garden must come backing out of the shed and shoving a motor-cycle down the path, smoking a short little pipe meanwhile. It was the man in blue overalls, the one named Jack. Somers knew him at once, though there were now no blue overalls. And the man was staring hard at the dead place in the hedge, where the faces of Harriet and Richard were seen peeping. Somers then behaved as usual on such occasions, just went stony and stared unseeing in another direction; as if quite unaware that the dahlias had an owner with a motor-cycle: any other owner than God, indeed. Harriet nodded a confused and rather distant “Good morning.” The man just touched his cap, very cursory, and nodded, and said good morning across his pipe, with his teeth clenched, and strode round the house with his machine.

“Why must you go yelling for other people to hear you?” said Somers to Harriet.

“Why shouldn’t they hear me!” retorted Harriet.

The day was Saturday. Early in the afternoon Harriet went to the little front gate because she heard a band: or the rudiments of a band. Nothing would have kept her indoors when she heard a trumpet, not six wild Somerses. It was some very spanking Boy Scouts marching out. There were only six of them, but the road was hardly big enough to hold them. Harriet leaned on the gate in admiration of their dashing broad hats and thick calves. As she stood there she heard a voice:

“Would you care for a few dahlias? I believe you like them.”

She started and turned. Bold as she was in private, when anybody addressed her in the open, any stranger, she wanted to bolt. But it was the fifty neighbour, the female neighbour, a very good-looking young woman, with loose brown hair and brown eyes and a warm complexion. The brown eyes were now alert with question and with offering, and very ready to be huffy, or even nasty, if the offering were refused. Harriet was too well-bred.

“Oh, thank you very much,” she said, “but isn’t it a pity to cut them.”

“Oh, not at all. My husband will cut you some with pleasure. Jack!—Jack!” she called.

“Hello!” came the masculine voice.

“Will you cut a few dahlias for Mrs—er—I don’t know your name”—she flashed a soft, warm, winning look at Harriet, and Harriet flushed slightly. “For the people next door,” concluded the offerer.

“Somers—S-O-M-E-R-S.” Harriet spelled it out.

“Oh, Somers!” exclaimed the neighbour woman, with a gawky little jerk, like a schoolgirl. “Mr and Mrs Somers,” she reiterated, with a little laugh.

“That’s it,” said Harriet.

“I saw you come yesterday, and I wondered—we hadn’t heard the name of who was coming.” She was still rather gawky and school-girlish in her manner, half shy, half brusque.

“No, I suppose not,” said Harriet, wondering why the girl didn’t tell her own name now.

“That’s your husband who has the motor-bike?” said Harriet.

“Yes, that’s right. That’s him. That’s my husband, Jack, Mr Callcott.”

“Mr Callcott, oh!” said Harriet, as if she were mentally abstracted trying to spell the word.

Somers, in the little passage inside his house, heard all this with inward curses. “That’s done it!” he groaned to himself. He’d got neighbours now.

And sure enough, in a few minutes came Harriet’s gushing cries of joy and admiration: “Oh, how lovely! how marvellous! but can they really be dahlias? I’ve never seen such dahlias! they’re really too beautiful! But you shouldn’t give them me, you shouldn’t.”

“Why not?” cried Mrs Callcott in delight.

“So many. And isn’t it a pity to cut them?” This, rather wistfully, to the masculine silence of Jack.

“Oh no, they want cutting as they come, or the blooms gets smaller,” said Jack, masculine and benevolent.

“And scent!—they have scent!” cried Harriet, sniffing at her velvety bouquet.

“They have a little—not much though. Flowers don’t have much scent in Australia,” deprecated Mrs Callcott.

“Oh, I must show them to my husband,” cried Harriet, half starting from the fence. Then she lifted up her voice:

“Lovat!” she called. “Lovat! You must come. Come here! Come and see! Lovat!”

“What?”

“Come. Come and see.”

This dragged the bear out of his den: Mr Somers, twisting sour smiles of graciousness on his pale, bearded face, crossed the verandah and advanced towards the division fence, on the other side of which stood his Australian neighbour in shirt-sleeves, with a comely young wife very near to him, whilst on this side stood Harriet with a bunch of pink and purple ragged dahlias, and an expression of joyous friendliness, which Somers knew to be false, upon her face.

“Look what Mrs Callcott has given me! Aren’t they exquisite?” cried Harriet, rather exaggerated.

“Awfully nice,” said Somers, bowing slightly to Mrs Callcott, who looked uneasy, and to Mr Callcott—otherwise Jack.

“Got here all right in the hansom, then?” said Jack.

Somers laughed—and he could be charming when he laughed—as he met the other man’s eye.

“My wrist got tired, propping up the luggage all the way,” he replied.

“Ay, there’s not much waste ground in a hansom. You can’t run up a spare bed in the parlour, so to speak. But it saved you five bob.”

“Oh, at least ten, between me and a Sydney taxi driver.”

“Yes, they’ll do you down if they can—that is, if you let ’em. I have a motor-bike, so I can afford to let ’em get the wind up. Don’t depend on ’em, you see. That’s the point.”

“It is, I’m afraid.”

The two men looked at each other curiously. And Mrs Callcott looked at Somers with bright, brown, alert eyes, like a bird that has suddenly caught sight of something. A new sort of bird to her was this little man with a beard. He wasn’t handsome and impressive like his wife. No, he was odd. But then he had a touch of something, the magic of the old world that she had never seen, the old culture, the old glamour. She thought that, because he had a beard and wore a little green house-jacket, he was probably a socialist.

The Somers now had neighbours: somewhat to the chagrin of Richard Lovat. He had come to this new country, the youngest country on the globe, to start a new life and flutter with a new hope. And he started with a rabid desire not to see anything and not to speak one single word to any single body—except Harriet, whom he snapped at hard

enough. To be sure, the mornings sometimes won him over. They were so blue and pure: the blue harbour like a lake among the land, so pale blue and heavenly, with its hidden and half-hidden lobes intruding among the low, dark-brown cliffs, and among the dark-looking tree-covered shores, and up to the bright red suburbs. But the land, the ever-dark bush that was allowed to come to the shores of the harbour! It was strange that, with the finest of new air dimming to a lovely pale blue in the distance, and with the loveliest stretches of pale blue water, the tree-covered land should be so gloomy and lightless. It is the sun-refusing leaves of the gum-trees that are like dark, hardened flakes of rubber.

He was not happy, there was no pretending he was. He longed for Europe with hungry longing: Florence, with Giotto's pale tower: or the Pincio at Rome: or the woods in Berkshire—heavens, the English spring with primroses under the bare hazel bushes, and thatched cottages among plum blossom. He felt he would have given anything on earth to be in England. It was May—end of May—almost bluebell time, and the green leaves coming out on the hedges. Or the tall corn under the olives in Sicily. Or London Bridge, with all the traffic on the river. Or Bavaria with gentian and yellow globe flowers, and the Alps still icy. Oh God, to be in Europe, lovely, lovely Europe that he had hated so thoroughly and abused so vehemently, saying it was moribund and stale and finished. The fool was himself. He had got out of temper, and so had called Europe moribund: assuming that he himself, of course, was not moribund, but sprightly and chirpy and too vital, as the Americans would say, for Europe. Well, if a man wants to make a fool of himself, it is as well to let him.

Somers wandered disconsolate through the streets of Sydney, forced to admit that there were fine streets, like Birmingham for example; that the parks and the Botanical

Gardens were handsome and well-kept; that the harbour, with all the two-decker brown ferry-boats sliding continuously from the Circular Quay, was an extraordinary place. But oh, what did he care about it all! In Martin Place he longed for Westminster, in Sussex Street he almost wept for Covent Garden and St Martin's Lane, at the Circular Quay he pined for London Bridge. It was all London without being London. Without any of the lovely old glamour that invests London. This London of the Southern hemisphere was all, as it were, made in five minutes, a substitute for the real thing. Just a substitute—as margarine is a substitute for butter. And he went home to the little bungalow bitterer than ever, pining for England.

But if he hated the town so much, why did he stay? Oh, he had a fanciful notion that if he was really to get to know anything at all about a country, he must live for a time in the principal city. So he had condemned himself to three months at least. He told himself to comfort himself that at the end of three months he would take the steamer across the Pacific, homewards, towards Europe. He felt a long navel string fastening him to Europe, and he wanted to go back, to go home. He would stay three months. Three months' penalty for having forsworn Europe. Three months in which to get used to this Land of the Southern Cross. Cross indeed! A new crucifixion. And then away, homewards!

The only time he felt at all happy was when he had reassured himself that by August, by August he would be taking his luggage on to a steamer. That soothed him.

He understood now that the Romans had preferred death to exile. He could sympathise now with Ovid on the Danube, hungering for Rome and blind to the land around him, blind to the savages. So Somers felt blind to Australia, and blind to the uncouth Australians. To him they were barbarians. The most loutish Neapolitan loafer was nearer

to him in pulse than these British Australians with their aggressive familiarity. He surveyed them from an immense distance, with a kind of horror.

Of course he was bound to admit that they ran their city very well, as far as he could see. Everything was very easy, and there was no fuss. Amazing how little fuss and bother there was—on the whole. Nobody seemed to bother, there seemed to be no policemen and no authority, the whole thing went by itself, loose and easy, without any bossing. No real authority—no superior classes—hardly even any boss. And everything rolling along as easily as a full river, to all appearances.

That's where it was. Like a full river of life, made up of drops of water all alike. Europe is really established upon the aristocratic principle. Remove the sense of class distinction, of higher and lower, and you have anarchy in Europe. Only nihilists aim at the removal of all class distinction, in Europe.

But in Australia, it seemed to Somers, the distinction was already gone. There was really no class distinction. There was a difference of money and of "smartness." But nobody felt *better* than anybody else, or higher; only better-off. And there is all the difference in the world between feeling *better* than your fellow man, and merely feeling *better-off*.

Now Somers was English by blood and education, and though he had no antecedents whatsoever, yet he felt himself to be one of the *responsible* members of society, as contrasted with the innumerable *irresponsible* members. In old, cultured, ethical England this distinction is radical between the responsible members of society and the irresponsible. It is even a categorical distinction. It is a caste distinction, a distinction in the very being. It is the distinction between the proletariat and the ruling classes.

But in Australia nobody is supposed to rule, and nobody does rule, so the distinction falls to the ground. The

proletariat appoints men to administer the law, not to rule. These ministers are not really responsible, any more than the housemaid is responsible. The proletariat is all the time responsible, the only source of authority. The will of the people. The ministers are merest instruments.

Somers for the first time felt himself immersed in real democracy—in spite of all disparity in wealth. The instinct of the place was absolutely and flatly democratic, *à terre* democratic. Demos was here his own master, undisputed, and therefore quite calm about it. No need to get the wind up at all over it; it was a granted condition of Australia, that Demos was his own master.

And this was what Richard Lovat Somers could not stand. You may be the most liberal Liberal Englishman, and yet you cannot fail to see the categorical difference between the responsible and the irresponsible classes. You cannot fail to admit the necessity for *rule*. Either you admit yourself an anarchist, or you admit the necessity for *rule*—in England. The working classes in England feel just the same about it as do the upper classes. Any working man who sincerely feels himself a responsible member of society feels it his duty to exercise authority in some way or other. And the irresponsible working man likes to feel there is a strong boss at the head, if only so that he can grumble at him satisfactorily. Europe is established on the instinct of authority: “Thou shalt.” The only alternative is anarchy.

Somers was a true Englishman, with an Englishman’s hatred of anarchy, and an Englishman’s instinct for authority. So he felt himself at a discount in Australia. In Australia authority was a dead letter. There was no giving of orders here; or, if orders were given, they would not be received as such. A man in one position might make a suggestion to a man in another position, and this latter might or might not accept the suggestion, according to his disposition. Australia was not yet in a state of anarchy.

England had as yet at least nominal authority. But let the authority be removed, and then! For it is notorious, when it comes to constitutions, how much there is in a name.

Was all that stood between Australia and anarchy just a name?—the name of England, Britain, Empire, Viceroy, or Governor General, or Governor? The shadow of the old sceptre, the mere sounding of a name? Was it just the hollow word “Authority,” sounding across seven thousand miles of sea, that kept Australia from Anarchy? Australia—Authority—Anarchy: a multiplication of the alpha.

So Richard Lovat cogitated as he roamed about uneasily. Not that he knew all about it. Nobody knows all about it. And those that fancy they know *almost* all about it are usually most wrong. A man must have *some* ideas about the thing he’s up against, otherwise he’s a simple wash-out.

But Richard *was* wrong. Given a good temper and a genuinely tolerant nature—both of which the Australians seem to have in a high degree—you can get on for quite a long time without “rule.” For quite a long time the thing just goes by itself.

Is it merely running down, however, like a machine running on but gradually running down?

Ah, questions!

CHAP: II.

NEIGHBOURS

THE Somers-Callcott acquaintance did not progress very rapidly, after the affair of the dahlias. Mrs Callcott asked Mrs Somers across to look at their cottage, and Mrs Somers went. Then Mrs Somers asked Mrs Callcott back again. But both times Mr Somers managed to be out of the way, and managed to cast an invisible frost over the *rencontre*. He was not going to be dragged in, no, he was not. He very much wanted to borrow a pair of pincers and a chopper for an hour, to pull out a few nails, and to split his little chunks of kindling that the dealer had sent too thick. And the Callcotts were very ready to lend anything, if they were only asked for it. But no, Richard Lovat wasn't going to ask. Neither would he buy a chopper, because the travelling expenses had reduced him to very low water. He preferred to wrestle with the chunks of jarrah every morning.

Mrs Somers and Mrs Callcott continued, however, to have a few friendly words across the fence. Harriet learned that Jack was foreman in a motor-works place, that he had been wounded in the jaw in the war, that the surgeons had not been able to extract the bullet, because there was nothing for it to "back up against"—and so he had carried the chunk of lead in his gizzard for ten months, till suddenly it had rolled into his throat and he had coughed it out. The jeweller had wanted Mrs Callcott to have it mounted in a brooch or a hatpin. It was a round ball of lead, from a shell, as big as a marble, and weighing three or four ounces. Mrs Callcott had recoiled from this suggestion, so an elegant little stand had been made, like a little lamp-post on a polished wood base, and the black

little globe of lead dangled by a fine chain like an arc-lamp from the top of the toy lamp-post. It was now a mantelpiece ornament.

All this Harriet related to the indignant Lovat, though she wisely suppressed the fact that Mrs Callcott had suggested that "perhaps Mr Somers might like to have a look at it."

Lovat was growing more used to Australia—or to the "cottage" in Murdoch Road, and the view of the harbour from the tub-top of his summer-house. You couldn't call that all "Australia"—but then one man can't bite off a continent in a mouthful, and you must start to nibble somewhere. He and Harriet took numerous trips in the ferry steamers to the many nooks and corners of the harbour. One day their ferry steamer bumped into a collier that was heading for the harbour outlet—or rather, their ferry boat headed across the nose of the collier, so the collier bumped into them and had his nose put out of joint. There was a considerable amount of yelling, but the ferry boat slid flatly away towards Manly, and Harriet's excitement subsided.

It was Sunday, and a lovely sunny day of Australian winter. Manly is the bathing suburb of Sydney—one of them. You pass quite close to the wide harbour gate, The Heads, on the ferry steamer. Then you land on the wharf, and walk up the street, like a bit of Margate with sea-side shops and restaurants, till you come out on a promenade at the end, and there is the wide Pacific rolling in on the yellow sand: the wide fierce sea, that makes all the built-over land dwindle into non-existence. At least there was a heavy swell on, so the Pacific belied its name and crushed the earth with its rollers. Perhaps the heavy, earth-despising swell is part of its pacific nature.

Harriet, of course, was enraptured, and declared she could not be happy till she had lived beside the Pacific.

They bought food and ate it by the sea. Then Harriet was chilled, so they went to a restaurant for a cup of soup. When they were again in the street Harriet realised that she hadn't got her yellow scarf: her big, silky yellow scarf that was so warm and lovely. She declared she had left it in the eating-house, and they went back at once for it. The girls in the eating-house—the waitresses—said, in their cheeky Cockney Australian that they “hedn't seen it,” and that the “next people who kyme arfter must 'ev tyken it.”

Anyhow, it was gone—and Harriet furious, feeling as if there had been a thief in the night. In this unhappy state of affairs Somers suggested they should sit on the tram-car and go somewhere. They sat on the tram-car and ran for miles along a coast with ragged bush loused over with thousands of small promiscuous bungalows, built of everything from patchwork of kerosene tin up to fine red brick and stucco, like Margate. Not far off the Pacific boomed. But fifty yards inland started these bits of swamp, and endless promiscuity of “cottages.”

The tram took them five or six miles, to the terminus. This was the end of everywhere, with new “stores”—that is, fly-blown shops with corrugated iron roofs—and with a tram-shelter, and little house-agents' booths plastered with signs—and more “cottages”; that is, bungalows of corrugated iron or brick—and bits of swamp or “lagoon” where the sea had got in and couldn't get out. The happy couple had a drink of sticky ærated waters in one of the “stores,” then walked up a wide sand-road dotted on either side with small bungalows, beyond the backs of which lay a whole aura of rusty tin cans chucked out over the back fence. They came to the ridge of sand, and again the pure, long-rolling Pacific.

“I love the sea,” said Harriet.

“I wish,” said Lovat, “it would send a wave about fifty feet high round the whole coast of Australia.”

“You are so bad-tempered,” said Harriet. “Why don’t you see the lovely things!”

“I do, by contrast.”

So they sat on the sands, and he peeled pears and buried the peel in the yellow sand. It was winter, and the shore was almost deserted. But the sun was warm as an English May.

Harriet felt she absolutely must live by the sea, so they wandered along a wide, rutted space of deep sand, looking at the “cottages” on either side. They had impossible names. But in themselves, many of them were really nice. Yet there they stood like so many forlorn chicken-houses, each on its own oblong patch of land, with a fence between it and its neighbour. There was something indescribably weary and dreary about it. The very ground the houses stood on seemed weary and drabbed, almost asking for rusty tin cans. And so many pleasant little bungalows set there in an improvised road, wide and weary—and then the effort had lapsed. The tin shacks were almost a relief. They did not call for geraniums and lobelias, as did the pretty Hampstead Garden Suburb “cottages.” And these latter might call, but they called in vain. They got bits of old paper and tins.

Yet Harriet absolutely wanted to live by the sea, so they stopped before each bungalow that was to be let furnished. The estate agents went in for abbreviations. On the boards at the corner of the fences it said either “4 Sale” or “2 Let.” Probably there was a colonial intention of jocularly. But it was almost enough for Somers. He would have died rather than have put himself into one of those cottages.

The road ended on the salt pool where the sea had ebbed in. Across was a state reserve—a bit of aboriginal Australia, with gum trees and empty spaces beyond the flat salt waters. Near at hand a man was working away, silently loading a boat with beach-sand, upon the lagoon. To the

right the sea was rolling on the shore, and spurting high on some brown rocks. Two men in bathing suits were running over the spit of sand from the lagoon to the surf, where two women in "waders," those rubber paddling-drawers into which we bundle our children at the seaside, were paddling along the fringe of the foam. A blond young man wearing a jacket over his bathing suit walked by with two girls. He had huge massive legs, astonishing. And near at hand Somers saw another youth lying on the warm sand-hill in the sun. He had rolled in the dry sand while he was wet, so he was hardly distinguishable. But he lay like an animal on his face in the sun, and again Somers wondered at the thick legs. They seemed to run to leg, these people. Three boys, one a lad of fifteen or so, came out of the warm lagoon in their bathing suits to roll in the sand and play. The big lad crawled on all fours and the little one rode on his back, and pitched off into the sand. They were extraordinarily like real young animals, mindless as opossums, lunging about.

This was Sunday afternoon. The sun was warm. The lonely man was just pushing off his boat on the lagoon. It sat deep in the water, half full of sand. Somers and Harriet lay on the sand-bank. Strange it was. And it *had* a sort of fascination. Freedom! That's what they always say. "You feel free in Australia." And so you do. There is a great relief in the atmosphere, a relief from tension, from pressure. An absence of control or will or form. The sky is open above you, and the air is open around you. Not the old closing-in of Europe.

But what then? The *vacancy* of this freedom is almost terrifying. In the openness and the freedom this new chaos, this litter of bungalows and tin cans scattered for miles and miles, this Englishness all crumbled out into formlessness and chaos. Even the heart of Sydney itself—an imitation of London and New York, without any core or pith of meaning.

Business going on full speed: but only because it is the other end of English and American business.

The absence of any inner meaning: and at the same time the great sense of vacant spaces. The sense of irresponsible freedom. The sense of do-as-you-please liberty. And all utterly uninteresting. What is more hopelessly uninteresting than accomplished liberty? Great swarming, teeming Sydney flowing out into these myriads of bungalows, like shallow waters spreading, undyked. And what then? Nothing. No inner life, no high command, no interest in anything, finally.

Somers turned over and shut his eyes. New countries were more problematic than old ones. One loved the sense of release from old pressure and old tight control, from the old world of water-tight compartments. This was Sunday afternoon, but with none of the surfeited dreariness of English Sunday afternoons. It was still a raw loose world. All Sydney would be out by the sea or in the bush, a roving, unbroken world. They all rushed from where they were to somewhere else, on holidays. And to-morrow they'd all be working away, with just as little meaning, working without any meaning, playing without any meaning; and yet quite strenuous at it all. It was just dazing. Even the rush for money had no real pip in it. They really cared very little for the power that money can give. And except for the sense of power, that had no real significance here. When all is said and done, even money is not much good where there is no genuine culture. Money is a means to rising to a higher, subtler, fuller state of consciousness, or nothing. And when you flatly don't want a fuller consciousness, what good is your money to you? Just to chuck about and gamble with. Even money is a European invention—European and American. It has no real magic in Australia.

Poor Richard Lovat wearied himself to death struggling with the problem of himself, and calling it Australia. There