

YOUNG MARVEL

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

The Young Marvel

By

Uncle JASPER

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Front cover view of Collins St.

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The New Chum.

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

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

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

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

He had thought that Melbourne would be a quiet colonial town with tree lined streets. Planters, perhaps. with wide brimmed hats, wives presiding over

'At Home' gatherings of other genteel, tea drinking ladies from neighbouring plantations.

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

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

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

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

From the other side of the road he looked and saw a road bridge over a river and beyond it a tall three masted ship being towed away by a tug

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belching black smoke. It was a swinging basin where ships could be turned around and berthed. There were wharves and warehouses on both sides of the river.

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He looked away. First he had to find accommodation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"The immigrants?"

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

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

"Ah, that's our line, we're wharfies, mate, wharf labourers. Things are fairly busy right now and we'll be startin' our shift soon. We work the

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Yarra."

"Are you out of work often?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fox did not have an opportunity to open his mouth while all this chaffering was going on, he could only listen while Benno and his friends gradually wore the publican down until they compromised on one shilling and sixpence.

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They were satisfied with this and contracted with O'Hanlon for him to stay there a week and were witnesses to the payment of the first two days in advance. Gabriel locked his bags in the room and they all adjourned to the bar once more for a final congratulatory drink before parting.

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

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

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{ ~~Two~~ } The Music Shop

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

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

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

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

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

Inside, where the noise of the city was excluded, was a smell of fresh polish and a patina of wax that glistened from the smooth, walnut surfaces of the pianos and organs. There were stacks of sheet music set out neatly, a fine selection of hymns both ancient and modern, and plenty of parlour pieces and current songs for those of lighter tastes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You have the gift of music," said Mr Gladman. If you could preach also there would be no limit to your advancement. I don't mind telling you that the twin evils besetting this colony are drink and irreligion. There are those of us who fight manfully against both but we are few in numbers; why some of our miners and shepherds in the bush never hear the word of the Lord from one year's end to another."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr Gladman was astonished. He knew that the price of labour was ridiculously high but such a figure had not crossed his mind. A skilled tradesman in times of scarcity, or a very valuable foreman, might command such a wage, but not a shop assistant, just off the boat from England, no matter how promising in appearance and manner. Shop assistants were not in a position to demand such remuneration. They earned a pittance by working long hours and could be dismissed at any time, without recourse, at the whim of the shop owner. A supervisor or head salesman might earn three pounds to three pounds ten after years of service but here was a brazen youth asking for five, and on his very first day in the colony. It is scarcely to be wondered at that Mr Gladman was taken aback at this preposterous demand.

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

"No one in your position, Mr Fox, young, inexperienced, ignorant of the complexities of the music business could earn such a princely salary. Possibly, after many years of diligence and success you might aspire to

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such an amount. But five pounds a week!" he shook his head and smiled knowingly. "Of course I am not an ungenerous man. I am prepared to offer thirty shillings a week to the right person, on liking, naturally. At the expiration of three months, if everything proves satisfactory, we might consider a reasonable advance on this amount."

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

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

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

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

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"You can sell the organs?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr Gladman clipped his pince-nez glasses on his nose once more and

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

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

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

She departed with a bundle of music about twice as large as she originally intended to buy and was already embroidering the encounter in her mind. Rehearsing what she would say to her friends of it. About how she had actually sat down and played the piano with Mr Gladman's young, new assistant. Her friends would lift their hands and shake their heads in envious despair over Angela's latest indiscretion. During the next few days the music shop could expect a sudden rise in the number of lady customers who would come, ostensibly to buy, but really to see the new assistant. the little story of Angela's encounter, suitably enlarged and dramatised, would go the rounds among Angela's hundred or so intimate friends until something else came up to distract their attention.

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

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

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

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how business was at the time; and the Irish question.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Very changeable weather in this city. If the rain keeps up it will bring traffic to a halt. There's no bottom to some of the pot-holes out there and when the heavy wagons get stuck it's the Devil's own job to get them out. I've seen them hitch up a dozen and more horses without effect. It's very bad for business too, the mud is so thick that ladies particularly can't

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cross at the intersections. Really," he said, "I don't know why we pay our rates. The incompetence of the City Council is a public disgrace. Surely we pay enough to expect the civilised amenities of paved roads, though we're lucky we're not round in Elizabeth Street the shopkeepers there dread the wet weather; they've had the Yarra burst its banks several times and flood into their shops but then it doesn't take much rain at all to cause trouble in Elizabeth Street."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The stranger in a sudden rage threw his hat on the floor, wildly disarranging his white hair. "Of course it's a horse race, " he shouted. "What else would it be on Australia's national day I'm a man that stood shoulder to shoulder with his mates at the Eureka Stockade. Who are you to

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try and stop me getting a bit of rational enjoyment with a friendly pot or two at the pub, and an afternoon at the races."

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

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

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"There's more where that come from," he said. If they tell you the alluvial's all gone, refer 'em to me. There's more gold in Victoria than's ever been taken out," he stated, tapping Fox on the waistcoat to emphasise this statement.

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

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

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

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

The customer found the idea of Walhalla being able to support a piano tuner quite amusing. Most of the inhabitants wouldn't know a piano if it fell on them. But things would change when his new piano arrived; as soon as his

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missus and the girls learned to knock out a few tunes their house would be the social centre of the town.

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

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

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

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

"Sixty five pounds," said Mr Gladman.

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

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

"No," said the customer. "I come in here and said I wanted the best, and the best I will have. The missus and me, we been battlers all our lives, and if any woman alive deserves the best she does -- and that's what she's going to have. I'll give yer the sixty five quid, and be pleased to do it. Another thing, you find out how much it costs to send it to Moe and I'll come back and pay that too but there's one thing I want to say." He made several attempts to lay a finger on the side of his nose before succeeding. "I've taken a fancy to this young bloke; he's a smart lad boss, as I told you before -- look after 'im." He kept slapping the top of the piano to

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emphasise his points, and holding it from time to time to keep his balance. "I told yer, I'm going to the Cup tomorrer and I want someone to go with me, that's apart from the missus and kids, of course. If you give him the day off to go to the Cup I'll buy the pianner. In fact I'll put the cash down now. What d'yer say?"

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Mr Gladman was scandalised, Fox delighted. "What! You would take this young man to a horse race? If you are not aware of the evils of horse racing I certainly am. There are special and most dangerous pitfalls for a young man at the race track. This is his very first day in the colony and I would not dream of casting him into temptation. Buy the piano by all means my dear sir, but don't attempt to lead this young man astray." Fox, who was anxious to be led astray, was quite dejected.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"The name's Tim, me boy," he said shaking Fox's hand with a rough, work-hardened grip, and winking. "Tim Flanagan, but you can call me Tim. I'll be

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round at your pub at 9 o'clock tomorrer mornin' to pick you up. And don't worry, you'll get to work on Wensdy morning all right, even if the boys have to carry you there from the party."

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

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

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

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

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

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The Road to Flemington

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

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