

He lifted his arms above his head and stretched his body taut in enjoyment of so excellent a world, in which a man had only to eat and sleep to renew the strength which he had expended on hunting and on love.

He looked down at the crouching figure at his feet and said with authority: 'Come.' But she did not move, and for the first time he began to realise that this was Barangaroo, the fiery-tempered; Barangaroo, unfavoured by the birth-spirit, a shrewish, violent, troublesome and rebellious woman whom no sensible man would have for his wife. If there was trouble to be made, he felt, without exactly thinking it, he was very capable of making it himself, and something warned him that here was a woman in whom his own choleric and impulsive nature might find its match.

She looked quiet enough now, humble enough, sitting with her hands clasped round her knees and her head bent. And Bennilong, hesitating, scowling, found himself shaken by an ecstasy whose echoes still flickered through his nerves, for she was straight and comely and ardent, her arms warm and welcoming. His brow cleared. His vanity, his love of creating a sensation, was suddenly intrigued by the thought of the stir which this marriage would cause. Indeed, he thought, no man fears to handle a 'possum, but there is courage needed in one who would take a wild cat to his bosom! He remembered how abruptly her kicking and struggling had ceased with his blow, how limply she had fallen where he had flung her on the green bracken, and he puffed his chest out and squared his shoulders, thinking that no woman lived whom he, Bennilong, could not master if he would. Soon she would be meek enough.

So he said again: 'Come!' And added angrily: 'It is time to eat.'

This time she rose and followed him, but she kept her head down so that he should not see her small, victorious smile, and a gleam in her eyes which was anything but meek.

Bennilong's younger sister, Warrewee, was now come to womanhood. Carangarang, long since married, and the mother of two boys and a girl, viewed her with a good deal of disapproval, and so, indeed, did Bennilong, objecting austere to those traits in her which were most conspicuous in his own explosive temperament. There was, perhaps, a touch of

jealousy in Carangarang's disapproval. Ever since that strange moment, years ago, when she had felt wild words of grief and mourning rise like a flood in her, and pour from her lips in a lament for her father such as he himself might have made, she had been nervous and ashamed. Seeking to forget her own lapse into conduct so unseemly, she had become a pattern of docile wifehood, but Warrewee, though well past the age when most women found husbands and produced children, not only remained virgin, but shamelessly and persistently produced songs and tales instead. It was true that her fault was not so glaring as Carangarang's had been, for her songs were not such as a man might make, and her tales were not of battles or feats of strength, or of any matters which were more fittingly immortalised by a man; but there was an element in them, all the same, which some of the more sober-minded women of the tribe deplored. To the men she was like a faintly pricking thorn in the foot which they could not discover. For she was mischievously wary, telling her tales only to groups of enraptured children, singing her songs only to circles of women, whose eyes, bright with a mocking, ageless knowledge, met the suspicious glances of their menfolk and silenced their uneasy protests on their lips. It was more dignified, they decided, to ignore her, to pretend that she was doing no more than most women did—making a lullaby or some such trifle—but in their hearts they could not help knowing that there was more to it than that. Why, they asked each other irritably, should she want to make new songs at all? Were there not already innumerable tales for children, hallowed by centuries of use? Were there not lullabies that had been sung to their grandfathers and their great-grandfathers? What other songs should a woman need? What tales were these that she whispered to the dyins, which made them shake with suppressed laughter and dart sideways glances at the sullen men? What was the magic in her words which sometimes darkened their eyes with a strange ecstasy, so that though their bodies lay acquiescent to the dominance of their husbands, they seemed yet far away, withdrawn behind some barrier against which a man felt his rapacious strength as futile as the lashing of stormy surf upon the cliffs?

No, she was an unsatisfactory creature—wayward—all mockery and sparkle—a creature who stirred a man's blood

So Warweeer remained unpunished. But soon it began to be whispered among the young women that she was not always as merry as she appeared, and that sometimes when she was out in her canoe she neglected her line and let her fire go out, and squatted motionless on her heels, singing to herself a song which was not one of those commonly chanted by the women while fishing. And then it was whispered that her eyes were often upon Arabanoo, and this was indeed food for gossip, for Arabanoo had two wives already, and two sons, and it was considered that he would be the last to approve of Warweeer and her flighty ways. That she should look upon him, of all men! Arabanoo, the calm, the kindly, the quiet-voiced; Arabanoo, who laughed seldom but smiled often. Arabanoo, to whom children came to have their toys mended; Arabanoo, who was so gentle and so patient that he hardly ever beat his wife, and so wise that even the old men were willing to listen when he spoke! No, no, they said, putting their heads together while they shredded bark for their fishing-lines and rolled it against their thighs, or wove their grass-baskets, or chipped their fish-hooks from hard shells and rubbed them patiently to a shining smoothness - no, no, the wilful Warweeer was to be humbled now, for Arabanoo would never look at her.

They were right. Arabanoo did not seem to see her glances; he was soberly busy with his own affairs, his hunting and fishing, his two fine boys, his tribal duties and responsibilities. So Warweeer got married at last - to Weeruwee, who was quite old and needed a wife to care for him now that his two former ones were both dead. Continually he exhorted her to go and seek a baby-spirit, and she obeyed him in this, docilely enough, spending long hours on the great outcrop of rock from which no fewer than three of the women had recently acquired sons; but still no child moved in her body, and Weeruwee grew peevish and beat her when he could catch her, which was not often, for he was lame from an old spear-wound in the leg.

In this land, where time was only the unvarying cycle of nature, the seasons, like the trees and the animals and the men, were born, and waxed to their full strength and faded, and were eternally replaced. They added strength and maturity to Bennilong's tough body, but failed to quell the ebullience of his spirits. Wunbula's skill in hunting was his, and

with a warm glance, and then chilled it with derision; a creature, who, with one sly gesture, one whispered word, could strip his superiority from him and leave him smarting like a sulky child.

The young warriors of the tribe looked at her and swung restlessly between resentment and desire, for she was small and slender and gracefully built, and she had a way of looking up from beneath her hair and smiling which plucked at a man's nerves. Kuurin wanted her, and so did By-gone, Bennilong's inseparable friend and companion, but she only laughed at them, and took refuge behind the fact that two of the elders of the tribe were also arguing which should have her for a second wife. In the end, these two fought for her, and one was so badly wounded that he had no more need of wives, and the old wife of the other, adroitly insulted by Warweeer, caused such a disturbance that he decided that peace was even more desirable than the prize of his victory. And then Warweeer began, quite shamelessly, to make eyes at Ballederry.

Ballederry was one of the handsomest young warriors of the tribe, and everyone thought that now Warweeer would be content, and settle down to respectable wifehood and motherhood. But no, she teased and tormented Ballederry until he grew fierce and short-tempered and took another wife instead; and Warweeer, scolded by the older women, rebuked by the older men, envied by the young wives and adored by the children, only laughed, and made more tales, funnier and wicked than ever.

But though the older women listened, and though they could not help laughing, they would shake their bony fingers at her warningly.

'Wait!' they would say. 'One day Wirrawilberoo the Whirlwind will overtake you and leave a baby-spirit in your body! That is the fate of young girls who will not marry and become good wives, as all women should!'

But still Warweeer only laughed, and though Wirrawilberoo did come one day, and the unmarried girls fled, screaming, for shelter, it was not in Warweeer's body that he placed the baby-spirit, but in that of poor Onah who was fat and placid and good-tempered and very plain, and was unmarried only because, so far, no man had wanted her for wife.

Wunbula's eloquence. And sometimes, still, when he saw the ocean from the cliffs, its blue patched with green and purple and spangled with the silver glitter of the sun, Wunbula's dream was his also, and for a second a white cloud on the horizon would bring his heart into his mouth with a strange emotion which was half longing and half dread.

So that when in the dusk of one cloudy summer day a messenger from the Gweagal arrived in haste, bursting with the importance of his news, Bennilong, joining the excited group which gathered to listen, felt his spirit melt into a strange receptiveness, as though all about him, from the trees, from the earth, from the air, voices were saying: 'It is here.' He knew, before the words came which, confirmed his knowledge, that the magic boat had returned. He listened avidly, his eyes glittering and his muscles taut with excitement.

Indeed it was so. When the sun was a little past its height, the messenger told them, a winged boat such as Wunbula's Corroboree of the Bureewolgal described had entered between Bunnabee and Gwea, the headlands of their bay, and had come to rest there. From it a smaller boat had appeared, bearing strange beings such as those who so long ago had come to the same shore.

Two canoes, the tale went on, lay upon the beach where their owners had left them when they returned from fishing earlier in the day, and the strangers had landed so close to them that Wileemaring and others, fearing that they meant to steal them, had sprung to their feet with menacing cries and gestures. Upon this one of the visitors, who seemed to be a person of authority, had held up some strange and very beautiful objects, and handing them to one of his companions had directed that they should be placed upon one of the canoes. The tribe, astonished but reassured by this obviously friendly gesture, had ceased its brandishing of spears and awaited events. By a pantomime which the messenger faithfully imitated, the strangers had then made it known that they required water, and the black men had indicated to them where it might be found. It was impossible to say with certainty, the spellbound audience was informed, whether these beings were men, for their faces were hairless, and their bodies hidden by strange coverings. But when they had landed, that same one who had caused the gift to be placed upon the canoe laid down an object which the tribesmen

took to be a weapon, since all were similarly equipped, and advanced alone towards them, holding out more gifts and making unmistakable signs of goodwill.

Booloomir, one of the elders who remembered the coming of the other winged boat so many years ago, and who had spoken with the people who came on it, had then called for silence, and had expressed his opinion that these were similar beings, and would prove to be as harmless. They would remain a few days, occupying themselves mysteriously, and would then disappear again in their magic boat; for had not this always happened, as was well known from the legends of their forefathers? In the meantime, as they had shown themselves friendly, it would be obviously unbecoming to attack them. Thereupon all laid down their spears and advanced a little, warily, still mindful of the fact that these might after all be spirits with magic at command.

Separated only by a few feet from the one who proffered the gifts, they had halted again. Now the messenger, summing up all his eloquence, chilled the blood of his hearers, for he made it known that these strangers, at close quarters, were repellent and hideous to a quite remarkable degree. Their white, naked faces, their pale eyes, their pinched noses, looked incredibly evil and malign, and they exhaled a peculiar and unpleasant odour, so that the black men, their nostrils twitching, looked at each other uneasily, smelling danger as an animal smells it, mistrusting the unknown.

Again it was Booloomir who took the initiative. He could not bring himself to go nearer, but he greatly desired, as did they all, to handle and examine the glittering ornaments which were being offered to them, so he made signs that they should be laid upon the ground, and when this was done, and the giver had retreated a few steps, he had advanced and picked them up.

Now, indeed, the tongue of Wunbula was needed to describe the beauty of these things. They were smooth and hard as pebbles polished in the creek-bed, and round as the glistening eggs which spiders leave beneath the stones; all the colours of the flowers were in them, and the colour of the sky at noon, and the colour of the sun itself. Nor was this all. Dazzled by the beauty of these things, Booloomir had at last nerved himself to approach near enough to examine the coverings which these people wore, and had himself been adorned with

a long strip of the selfsame substance, which was soft to the touch, and brilliant in colour as the tall flower I-see-you-from-afar . . .

Bennilong turned abruptly and flung away from the group, his face heavy and sullen. It was his boat - his and his father's, Wunbula's. Had they not gone day after day to the cliffs to watch for it, while others laughed at them? And was it just that now it should appear not to him but to others? That it should bring gifts to the Gweagal and none to him, Bennilong, who all the years of his life had (so it seemed to him now) faithfully awaited it? Should the withered neck of an old man like Booloomir flaunt the gorgeous decorations which belonged by right and would lie so magnificently about his own broad shoulders? Like a child he sulked, walking alone through the darkening bush, longing to return with the messenger, as several men of the tribe were doing, to see for himself, but pretending perversely that he did not care, it was nothing to him; others might marvel at this thing, but he, Bennilong, son of Wunbula the great youara-gurrugin, had known all about it for so long that it held no interest for him now. It was very late when he returned to the camp, and Barangaroo scolded because he roused her roughly to make room for him on the 'possum skins; so he gave her a blow or two, and she reviled him, and it ended, as such incidents usually did, in his lying with her under the sketchy shelter of the mia-mia, finding sleep and solace in her arms.

But his pique was not proof against the astonishing news which followed. More winged boats arrived - and more still! In all, the messenger demonstrated, one for each of his ten fingers, and then one more! This was too much for Bennilong's curiosity. He went and looked - from a distance. He watched the coming and going of the small boats as they landed parties and returned to their ships. He particularly admired the gorgeous coverings of the men who most commonly carried the weapons, and the appearance of a red coat was enough to draw his attention from any other sight. He examined the gifts which the white men had bestowed upon the Gweagal, and agreed that, though beautiful, they were useless things, and not suitable possessions for a warrior. But still he could not bring himself to go down to the shore.

He did not think about his mood - merely obeyed it. He was aware, as his father had been aware so long ago, of an invisible thread of destiny which held him to these strangers, drew him towards them; and like all primitive creatures under the threat of coercion, he resisted nervously, wild and mistrustful, jealous of his spiritual liberty. It was as if something warned him not to go forward and meet the hour which would inevitably come upon him. All his life it had been approaching, all his life he had watched for it, and now that it was so close he would not stir a step or lift a finger to hasten a climax which would find him in its appointed time. So when, a few days later, home again with his own people, they saw from the cliffs of Burrawarra three of the small boats making for the entrance of their harbour, he was not surprised.

He saw dark looks on the faces of his countrymen, for there were many who felt that the strangers had already stayed long enough, and this fresh intrusion into their own particular domain was resented. On the opposite headland of Boree warriors of the Cammeraygal appeared, brandishing their spears, and shouting fiercely: 'Whurra! Whurra!' Bennilong's companions took up the cry. He joined in it, but, before his natural excitability drowned other sensations, he was fleetingly conscious of a dreamlike knowledge that all this commotion meant nothing. The time was not yet for the invaders to be gone.

Nevertheless, he rushed down the hillside with the others, shaking his spear aloft, yelling his defiance, keeping the boats well under observation as they rounded the south headland, and made in for a crescent of sandy beach.

While the white men landed they watched from the hillside, their dark bodies camouflaged in the shadow of a rocky outcrop. The strangers, too, they thought, seemed excited. They stood on the beach and pointed this way and that, but always at the harbour. Bennilong and others recognised among them the man who seemed to be their leader; he looked pleased, and spoke rapidly, and they heard him summon one of his companions by calling: 'Hunter!' Once there was a little outburst of laughter, and once one of the men gave vent to his obvious good spirits with a comical gesture and a few dancing steps in the sand, at which the black men smiled in spite of themselves.

Suddenly, looking up the hillside, the leader saw them, and said something which made all the white men turn too, lifting their weapons as if in preparation for attack. About him Bennilong felt the tenseness of his fellows, saw hands close more tightly about the shafts of spears, saw feet shift on the ground, gripping more firmly, heard a mutter of defiance run ominously into silence.

Then the leader of the white men moved. He said over his shoulder something which made his men lower their weapons. He laid his own down upon the sand, and holding his empty hands outstretched before him, began to walk slowly up the beach. Now another murmur arose in the group of blacks, but this time of approval. This white man was no coward. Tirrawuul laid down his spears and stepped forward to meet him. They studied each other curiously.

Tirrawuul saw a smallish man, quite incredibly ugly, with a pale face and a very large nose. He was covered from head to foot, and, though his coverings were not as splendid as those of the men with the weapons, Tirrawuul, himself a leader, could recognise in him a confidence and authority which required no outward trappings.

Phillip saw an elderly savage, quite incredibly ugly, with greying, tangled hair, and alert dark eyes. He was stark naked, and strangely ornamented with raised scars across his body and upper arms. But he stood very erect, and wore his air of leadership with unconscious dignity. For the present, at all events, they assured each other wordlessly, there need be no bloodshed.

Some of the more belligerent young warriors among the blacks were at first disappointed that they were to be cheated of their battle. But it was not in the nature of these sons of the race of Murri to harbour resentment for long. They were quick to observe and to learn, full of curiosity and intelligence, but above all, gay and light-hearted. Their martial ardour could be swiftly roused, and physical courage was a virtue drilled into them from babyhood by precept, example, and bitter tests; but it was more natural to them to be friendly, and they were devoid of malice or suspicion. In these white intruders they saw as yet only dimly and intermittently a menace to their peace. It had been their happy habit for thousands of years to live each day as it came, secure in the knowledge that their land would provide for their to-

morrows; and it was pleasanter to think of the white men, not as foes, but as quaint beings who would provide them with intriguing gifts, and material for endless gossip, conjecture, and mimicry.

So they moved forward, clustering round Tirrawuul, and the white men near the boats came forward too, and there was a great deal of talk and merriment and mutual misunderstanding. But Bennilong, usually in the forefront of any enterprise, hung back. He stood motionless and almost invisible in the dark shadow of the rock, staring at the white man who, later, he was to call Be-anga, Father, and he felt the thread of his destiny strung so tensely that he was afraid. Here was something which was to draw him into an alien world and hold him there even after death, a lonely, comical, tragic and immortal figure; something which was to bring him knowledge, that heady draught with the after-taste of bitterness; something whose promise and menace he felt already with the perceptiveness of his race, and, with its fatalism, accepted.

Unnoticed, he slipped away. He did not see the strange thing of which his companions told him later—the manner in which the white men had heated water and cooked food in it. Several times during the three days the strangers spent in exploring the harbour in their boats he crept close to their camping-place, listened to their voices, studied their actions. He heard of their visit to the beach of Cannae, beyond Boree, the northern headland, where only a narrow neck of low-lying land divides harbour and sea. Here many of the Cammeraygal had assembled to watch them land, and some had waded out into the water to meet the boats; the white men and the black had mingled freely until suddenly a disturbing thing had happened. The white men's leader, rising, had summoned his people about him, and drawn round them in the sand a vast circle which he had given the blacks to understand they must not cross.

This, plainly, was magic. Subdued, and more than a little suspicious, the Cammeraygal had withdrawn, for it was well known that marks upon the ground were sometimes sinister and dangerous. But no hostile magic had followed. From within the circle the white men had attempted to converse. Already in his tenacious memory Bennilong had stored away new words: 'hat,' 'coat,' 'shoe'—strange-sounding words, he

thought, as sharp as the cracking of a twig. These, he knew, partly from his own aloof observation, and partly from the gossip of his companions, were the names of different parts of their coverings; but there was a substance which they ate which was called 'verygood,' and a kind of a coolamon from which they drank which its owner had referred to as a 'that.'

At Cannae, he learned, not only the white men but the blacks had been teachers. The strangers, pointing to the sky, the water, the sand, and to various parts of their own bodies, had been faithfully instructed, and though their tongues had stumbled clumsily there had been no laughter, for it is not courteous to mock at one who seeks for knowledge.

Bennilong, however, whose ebullient spirits soon overcame his uneasiness when he was out of sight of the invaders, became famous for his mimicry of the white men's speech; capering about with a bit of bark balanced upon his head, and crying: 'Hat! hat!' he reduced his friends and the children of the camp to gales of appreciative laughter. But at night, lying wakeful on his 'possum skins, he saw an aspect of such preposterous speech which was not comical, but, to Wumbula's son, very serious indeed. How could songs be made in such a tongue? It had no resonance, no dignity, no rich roll of syllables. 'Hat, coat, shoe!' With a contemptuous grunt, he rolled over and composed himself for sleep.

When the three boats left the harbour again, and journeyed back down the coast to join the fleet of winged ships, Tirrawuul was relieved. But Bennilong, gloomy and bad-tempered, felt a sense of anti-climax. Was this indeed the end? Was it possible that Wumbula's words were never to be fulfilled -- that he was never to see a winged ship pass from the ocean into their quiet waters between the gateways, Burrawarra and Boree?

It was coming. It had been so long expected, so long watched for, so strongly welded into that part of Bennilong's mind where legends dwelt, and so lately and so bitterly despaired of, that now, watching from the cliffs, kneeling on the same rock where Wumbula had stood so many years ago, he was overcome and silenced by the strangeness of his sensations. The two worlds which indeed never seemed very sharply

separated were now confusingly intermingled, huge with portents, swelling unbearably towards some monstrous climax. The shadow world of dreams and spells and spirits had become real, ratified by a white sail against the blue water; and the real world grew misty, dimmed by a miracle, shaken by magic made visible.

To the others, clustering vociferously about him, it was merely one of the winged ships -- wonderful, exciting, and a little awesome. But upon Bennilong, whose childhood had been haunted by it, whose earliest recollections were of long vigils on these selfsame cliffs, it had a deep and confusing emotional effect. His memories were so vivid and so sharply defined that now, in the dreamlike merging of the spiritual and material worlds, he could see Wumbula, erect and motionless, staring out at the empty horizon; and he could feel as he had felt then, with his alert and receptive child-mind attuned to his father's mood, the longing, at once hopeful and despairing, with which that great youara-gurrugin had watched for one more glimpse of a thing whose beauty had so stirred his heart.

Now it was here. Was not Wumbula here, too? The one did not seem to Bennilong less certain than the other. He was small again, sleepy and cross, and, suddenly, frightened. He did not remember the image of Kuurang which he had made; that, long ago, had faded with other unimportant things from his memory. But now, emotionally transported back to that far-away morning, he found fear there -- a freezing, choking fear of some uncomprehended peril, and his flesh crept and his hands grew damp about his spear, and into the eyes which never moved from the approaching sail there crept a dreadful apprehension.

Steadily it came nearer. Sometimes, dipping in the swell, its wings swung and turned golden in the afternoon sunlight, like the wings of the gulls which swooped about them. Its beauty, Bennilong thought, struggling hazily with his fear, was like the beauty of some of the songs which Wumbula had made, filling one with an exquisite melancholy, and its movement over the water was graceful and serene.

Tirrawuul, frowning beneath his bushy eyebrows, watched it sombrely. Not only in his tribe, but among the Gweagal too, the presence of the white men was beginning to be regarded with a certain resentment. There were too many of

them. One ship, which remained in the same spot—a few men who pattered about harmlessly examining shrubs and shells—there had been nothing in this to excite alarm. But here were eleven ships, and many, many white men. There was an air of purpose about their activities, which was not less disturbing because it was mysterious. Now the earlier visitation was seen in a new light. Wunbula's magic boat had returned to its own far-off home, and the voyagers had told their white brothers of this land, and now here they were. What did they want? Why should they send so many boats—so many men? It was true that they seemed willing enough to be friendly, but was that enough? It was not the kind of friendliness which Tirrawuul understood, and he had felt anger stir in him, watching these men who came as strangers to a land, and yet trod its soil as if it were their own. His perceptiveness was lively, subtle, and aware. There was a note in the white men's voices which he did not like, a look in their eyes which was not less offensive for being puzzling. No man, he thought, had ever before looked upon him, upon his tribe, with patronage and contempt. These were emotions unknown among his people, except as they might be directed at some individual who, by cravenness, by discourtesy, by meanness or disloyalty, had justly earned the scorn of his fellows. Against their enemies in battle they loosed their anger and their hatred; according to them, all the same, the respect of free warriors to others as free and as valiant as themselves. But these men had looked at him—at him, Tirrawuul!—as if . . .

His brows drew sharply together, and he made a convulsive movement of anger, for he had realised that the look these men cast upon him and his tribe was just such a look as he himself might cast upon a group of chattering women—a look not unkindly, but only half-attentive, a look which said plainly: 'These are inferior creatures . . .'

He stood up and turned his back on the ocean and the ship, looking up the long winding reaches of the harbour to where it faded away in the saffron glow of afternoon. He had been, for many years now, the man to whom his tribe turned for counsel. He had earned that place, they thought, mainly by the strength of his arm in his younger days, and by his intrepidity in battle. But he knew himself that he had earned it rather because, when others were full of excitement he was

calm; when others raged and argued he was silent and pondered; and when at last all had exhausted their words, and turned, at a loss, to him, he spoke.

Soon he would have to speak again. In all his long life no such problem had ever confronted him as this which he now saw advancing up the coast with the sun gilding its white sails. The resentment which stirred in him said fiercely: 'Resist, kill, drive out these invaders!' But he had not grown old without learning to mistrust the counsels of anger, and he stood apart from the rest, thinking as he watched, turning over and over in his mind the facts and details which had been gathered concerning the white men and their habits and accoutrements. One account in particular which had come from the Gweagal perturbed him. Many of the white men carried objects which were clearly weapons, for it was their custom to lay them down for a sign of friendliness, as a man might lay down his spears. These weapons were said to make a loud, sharp, and terrifying noise, but the manner in which they were effective was still a mystery. Nevertheless they had another kind of weapon, small, quite short, but obviously fashioned upon the same principle as the larger one, and this certain members of the Gweagal had seen actually in use. It was related that a white man had borrowed a bark shield and set it up against a tree, and then, standing at six spears' lengths, and pointing his weapon at the bark, he had caused it to make its noise, which was not unlike the noise which some stones make when they fly apart in the heat of the fire, but much louder. The tribesmen had been startled by the report, but had advanced as invited to examine the shield. And there was a hole through the middle of it.

Suddenly silent, they had looked at it and at each other, sharply aware that if this small weapon could make a hole through a sheet of bark at such a distance it could also make a hole through a man's body. They had retreated backwards towards their own weapons which they had left lying on the beach, but the white men had made renewed overtures of friendship, and the incident had ended quietly.

But Tirrawuul remembered it. If the small weapon were so deadly might not the larger one be more potent still? Moreover, what kind of a weapon was it which, merely by remaining in its owner's hand, could fling death so far? Was he, Tirrawuul, to engage his tribe in a battle with wielders of

magical power? Was it not the counsel of wisdom to wait, and to watch, and to restrain? For though these people showed no intention of immediate departure, they must, of course, depart some day, and return to their own mysterious land, and there was no sense, therefore, in losing, by means of hostile magic, valuable warriors who were needed for the protection of the tribe.

He looked round at his companions. It would not be difficult, he thought, to guide them in this matter. They were all talking and pointing and exclaiming, and a few were shaking their spears and shouting: 'Whurra! whurra!' as they had shouted on the earlier visit of the strangers, but he read excitement rather than anger in their faces. They had resented the coming of the smaller boats into their harbour a few days ago, but their various friendly encounters with the white men had cooled resentment and whetted curiosity, and now they were already eager for more gifts and more entertainment.

Good. Let the white men come, and, in their own time, depart unharmed. Tirrawuul, with a little sigh, for he was growing old, and sometimes felt a weariness in his legs, laid his spears and his wommerah on the ground and squatted beside them in the shade of a rock. The winged boat was almost beneath them now, riding gracefully into the harbour between Burrawarra and Boree.

Moving to some subtly communicated rhythm, without words exchanged or orders given, the black men began to withdraw. No man hid, but no man was more visible than the flickering shadow of a tree. No man hurried, but within the space of a few minutes the cliffs were deserted, and once away from the vicinity they travelled fast. Bennilong began to relieve the tenseness of his mood by talking loudly and showing off, reminding them of the legend of his father, Wunbula, and that he alone had expected the winged boat to return, he alone of all the tribe had never ceased to prophesy its reappearance. They laughed at him good-naturedly, calling him Kon-kon-talliin, loud-mouth, boaster, but kindly, because for all his boasting he was a warrior and a worthy member of the tribe.

The *Supply* had come to anchor in a little bay some miles from the entrance of the harbour. She lay there now in the

gathering darkness, with her sails furled, and yellow fingers of radiance from her still lights reached out tremblingly across the black water.

The land engulfed her in the majestic silence of its antiquity. Governor Phillip stood on the deck watching the twilight sink into night, and struggled with an illusion. There was no sense of Time here. To-night — was it Now, or a thousand years ago? What was it in the life of a man which gave him that reassuring sense of the passage of Time? On his little journey from the cradle to the grave, how comforting to feel that Time moves forward with him — how chilling, how strange, how awesome, to feel, as one felt here, that Time was static, a vast, eternal, unmoving emptiness through which the tiny pathway of one's life ran from darkness into darkness, and was lost!

It was the silence, he thought, which stretched one's nerves. A man should feel about him the stir of his own restless spirit; he should see the fruits of his energy and his inventiveness, he should hear the sounds of his multifarious activities. If there were but a native village to be seen, it would be something to which one could anchor one's drifting sense of human dignity and pride. It would be Man established and securely rooted, Man dominant, and Nature, however slightly, subdued.

But there was nothing. Nature, undisturbed and unchallenged for countless centuries, had here reached a might, a stature which made Man feel less than pigmy-size. This ship upon which one stood, its achievement, its workmanship, the many ingenious devices by which the ocean had been conquered why did they suddenly seem less than nothing, so that for a nightmarish second one wondered if one had dreamed them — if one had dreamed oneself — if there were, indeed, any such place as England, any such man as Arthur Phillip, any such creed and code as those by which one had lived faithfully for nearly fifty years?

He sighed and shivered slightly, for the evening was cool after the heat of the midsummer day. All about the ship the water lay inky dark, reflecting unfamiliar stars; the shores were nothing but an outline, black shapes of tree-tops silhouetted against an indigo sky. No sound from them. No hostility, from man or beast. Nothing to grapple with. No call to action. Only this darkness which kept the senses painfully

alert, this silence which tautened the nerves, and this devilish illusion of arrested time. 'To-morrow,' he said briskly to himself, but the word was empty. The ageless land had drained it of its meaning and its promise. There was nothing but oneself, a tiny spark of consciousness, alone and aghast in this unconquerable silence.

But the darkness hid its own people, and the silence did not rebuke their voices. The women and the children and the young boys not yet initiated were left alone in the camp, and it was the men alone who assembled at the Bora ground to discuss and decide upon their attitude to the interlopers. Here was an occasion for conclave and the judgment of the elders of the tribe, and to join them came warriors from the Gweagal, the Wanngal, the Wallumedegal, and the Cammeraygal, for the towris of all were affected by this unprecedented invasion. It was Colbee who first voiced the doubt which lay uneasily at the back of every mind.

Who could say, after all, what manner of beings these were, who were so pale and strangely hideous? Was it not true that their forefathers had told tales of such beings, having the semblance of men, was there not this legend, and that legend . . . ? And his hearers nodded, looking at each other uneasily with the memory heavy upon them that many of the legends proclaimed such visitors to be the spirits of long-departed tribesmen seeking their homes again. If this were true, deference must be shown to them.

Suddenly and noisily, there was a dissentient voice - Bennilong's. He had in reality no strong views upon the subject. The day, to him, had been one of intense nervous stress, in which he had undergone a psychological reversion to a childhood dominated by two emotions - his admiration for Colbee, and his desire to see the winged boat. Both had been dimmed by the years which had brought him manhood and some consequence in his tribe, but the one, revived so vividly by the coming of the ship, had awakened the other, and both drove him now, as they had then, to a reckless display of self-assertiveness. He did not know what he thought or what he wanted. He was like a child, rising on a crest of bewilderment and unhappiness to heights of intoxicating naughtiness, and he proclaimed loudly, drunk with excitement, that he did not believe that the newcomers were spirits, but men like themselves, and if they proved hostile they must be

overpowered and their winged boats taken from them, and he, Bennilong, son of Wunbula, who, after all, knew more about it than any of them, would journey with a few chosen comrades across the sea . . .

At this there was a great stir, and Tirrawuul said testily that in the days of his youth it had not been customary for a young man so to thrust himself forward in the conclaves of the tribe, and Bennilong scowled, and Arabanoo, quiet-voiced and calm, intervened. If these were indeed men, he said, would they not observe the normal etiquette of a tribe advancing peacefully into the territory of another tribe? Would they not send an emissary with the customary message-stick, and if they did not do so might it not be interpreted as a sign of hostility?

Many agreed to this, but Colbee reminded them of the gifts which the strangers had bestowed, and suggested that in a tribe so outlandish, and obviously given to peculiar customs, gifts might be supposed to take the place of message-sticks. Soberly at last they all agreed to this, and Tirrawuul, who was still angry with Bennilong, reiterated, looking fixedly at him, that failing evidence of hostility on the part of the new arrivals they were not to be harmed. Bennilong, who did not really want to harm anyone, recovered his good-temper, and shook his spear aloft ferociously, teasing Tirrawuul with such gay audacity that the proceedings broke up in disorder, amidst merriment from the younger men, and outraged head-shaking from the elders.

But at daybreak the whole camp was astir. Bennilong and his friend, By-gone, travelled together. Sheltered by the trees, they crept close to the cove called Warrung where the winged ship had at last come to anchor, and there, presently joined by others, they lay and watched and marvelled, whispering to each other. Bennilong was trembling all over as an animal trembles, not with fear but with excitement and leashed alertness. Now that it was here, larger and more beautiful than he had ever imagined, it seemed to him that he had never really stopped waiting for it - never really doubted that it would come, and he beat softly on the rock with his hand, saying over and over again to himself: 'Wonta-kal bara? Wonta-kal bara?' From what land do they come? And elaborating, without thought, from the inner urgency of his wonder: 'From what land do they come in a boat which

flies like a bird, in a boat lovely and swift as the eagle -- what men are they who fear not Iurong, and who come with Wirri the sun from his sleeping place beneath the sea? And his companions, unstirring, never moving their eyes from the vessel anchored in the cove, muttered softly at intervals: 'Manyero, I know not. Manyero, manyero . . .'

The word beat beneath Bennilong's exaltation of excitement, an ominous undertone, an obeisance to the only thing a man might fear, the unknown. His chant faltered on his lips, and By-gone, still muttering 'Manyero,' stretched his hand out instinctively and closed it over his spear.

Presently, to stand beside Tirrawuul, came Colbee, and other members of the Cadigal. It was evident, they agreed, that these people had several leaders, for there were those who gave orders, and those who obeyed, but it was clear that the supreme ruler was the same man of slight stature whom they had encountered before; already, among themselves, he bore his title: 'Be-anga,' the name which they gave not only to their real fathers, but to such members of their tribes as showed unmistakable powers of leadership. To him even the other leaders deferred, but was not this also a very strange thing, for there were many who were of far greater size and strength, and of far more commanding presence? There were those, for instance, who wore the gorgeous blood-red coverings, marked across the breast with white bands such as they themselves sometimes painted with clay upon their own dark skins, and who carried the long weapons. But the Be-anga bore neither these, nor shield, nor spear, nor anything else with which he might force obedience upon his followers. It was Colbee, serious and observant, who presently offered a solution to this puzzle. Did not the other leaders, upon approaching this man, make a ritual sign with their hands to their foreheads, and was it not likely, therefore, that he was no ordinary man, but a sorcerer, who, having magic at his command, had no need of weapons?

There were divided opinions upon this point, but another problem soon distracted them from it. There were among these people some of a kind which had not, until now, been visible. They were so obviously inferior to the rest, so herded and driven, so harshly ordered from place to place, so drably covered in comparison with the others, that it could

only be concluded that they were members of a different tribe altogether.

And if so, why had they not all been slain honourably in the great battle which must have taken place before men would so surrender their manhood? They looked again at Colbee, but he could only shake his head.

It appeared that the main preoccupation of this astonishing people, upon making camp, was not to build mia-mias or to cook food, but to fell trees. For this purpose they used implements which were, obviously, hatchets, but which gleamed in the sun, and bit deeply into the wood at each stroke so that the splinters flew and the trees crashed with incredible rapidity.

All the morning their strange activities continued. What was their purpose? While the sun climbed up the sky they toiled, and the black men could see no result emerging from their labours. There began to be a few pointed comments and some derisive laughter for the inefficiency of a tribe which took so long to establish its camp; but when a row of shelters sprang into being which were not made of bark or boughs, but of some whitish substance which the strangers unloaded from their boats, a silence of astonishment fell.

Bennilong was particularly interested in the doings of a small group of men who were carrying a tall, slender sapling down to the eastern shore of the cove. Here they set it upright in the ground, embedding it firmly in a deep hole in the ground, which had been made ready to receive it, packing stones and earth about it so that it stood at last as if rooted. Could there, By-gone demanded, be wisdom in the minds of people who felled a tree for the express purpose of setting it up in a different place? But suddenly there fluttered out from its top an object so bright and beautiful that Bennilong, who dearly loved splendour and gay colours, felt his heart lift and turn in an anguish of admiration and covetousness. A rapt silence fell upon the watchers. They had never seen anything half so beautiful as this thing which was red as blood, and white as a cloud, and blue as the sky above it; they could not tear their eyes away from its brilliance, the lovely way shadows ran and coiled along it as it flapped in the afternoon sunlight, the gaiety and cheerfulness of its fluttering corners.

They were not at all surprised when they saw that it was to be worshipped. All the people assembled beneath it -- those

who were armed and brightly clad upon one side, and upon the other the enslaved tribe. They all looked up at it, and it seemed to fill them, as well it might, with excitement and enthusiasm. Drinking vessels were brought; the Be-anga cried out loudly a few words which were repeated by the others; they all drank, lifting their hands as if in salutation — and then suddenly a noise shattered the silence.

Bennilong and his friends never knew how it happened, but they, who a moment ago had been lying or sitting on the ground, were now on their feet, strung to a desperate tension, quivering with shock and horror. By-gone muttered with a dry throat: 'Morungle . . . !' but no one took any notice of him, for the sun was shining brightly and there was not a cloud in the sky. But still, far down the harbour, curling round the distant headlands and away into the hills, curling echo of that appalling sound, and above the strange weapons of the invaders a little smoke hung, and then vanished.

Colbee saw it. He said slowly: 'It is the weapon of the white man. It roars like thunder and flashes like lightning, and it can make a hole through a shield at fifty paces . . .'

From the group of white men there came three loud cries. From the winged ship there floated across the water like an echo three more, and then there was silence. Their nerves still taut, their breath still quickened, the black men watched again.

Captain-Lieutenant Watkin Tench of the Marines sat in his cabin on the transport *Charlotte*, scribbling in his journal. It was not, on this momentous and very perfect day, exactly what he wanted to do, for the cabin was hot, and he himself, as he admitted with some amusement, not a little excited; but he was a young man who regarded it as a duty to preserve at all times an unruffled air, and he liked to see himself seated here at his table searching fastidiously for *le mot juste* while everyone else was on deck, scanning the coastline.

But there was more to it than that. He was not only capable of creating a conception of himself and standing back to admire it. His Celtic ancestry enabled him also to perform the feat of retreating another step still, and grinning at his own admiration. Nor had he any intention of missing the fun altogether for the sake of observing himself in a favourable light, and his pen flew over the paper a little faster than

usual, and he promised himself as he wrote that when he had finished this one paragraph he would go on deck and see what there was to be seen, for the afternoon was fading, and by now, surely, they must be nearly abreast of this fabulous Port Jackson, to which the Commodore had summoned them.

He was writing at this moment of their brief (but still too long) sojourn in that God-forsaken Botany Bay to which Phillip had returned to lift their steadily declining spirits with news of removal, and he paused, wrinkling his brows for the hundredth time with wonder that Cook should have spoken so highly of the place — a dreary waste of swamp and sandhills, a barren and inhospitable shoreline! It had been odd and amusing, certainly, to meet and talk with the Indians, and it was of one such meeting that he was writing now, when he had gone ashore with a little seven-year-old boy, the son of one of the marines, and had met a party of savages, led by a hideous old man, who had all been greatly amazed at the child's clothes, and his white skin.

'I bade my little charge not to be afraid,' he scribbled, 'and introduced him to the acquaintance of this uncouth personage. The Indian, with great gentleness, laid his hand on the child's hat and afterwards felt his clothes, muttering to himself all the while.'

That would do. Captain Tench yawned, stretched, and threw down his pen. He would bring his notes up to date, revise and polish them, at some more convenient time. But he had learned during the interminable voyage how one day faded into another just like it, how idleness and apathy grew upon one, how easy it was to allow the finished day to slide away, unrecorded, into the past. As he gathered his papers together and stood up, his eye caught a paragraph which he had penned not so very many days ago, and he re-read it, smiling rather wryly to himself.

'Joy sparkled on every countenance, and congratulations poured from every mouth. Ithaca itself was scarcely more beloved for by Ulysses than Botany Bay by the adventurers who had traversed so many thousand miles to take possession of it . . . ? Alas for their high hopes! He would not soon forget, he thought, even without his journal to remind him, the deepening depression, the sense of anti-climax which had grown upon them during their brief stay in that desolate spot. Indeed, if it had not been for the arrival of the French

ships which, towards the end, had created an agreeable diversion, God alone knew what quarrels and unpleasantness might not have resulted from their frayed nerves and their bitter disappointment. He was enjoying, as he went up on deck, the remembered flavour of that affair. There had been a touch of comedy in it - such comedy as he approved, suave, polished, the hint delicately conveyed and as delicately accepted. The Governor had already left for Port Jackson in the *Supply*, but Hunter had proved very equal to the occasion. He had been, from the first, when he had dispatched a boat with Ball in command to meet and escort the French ships into the Bay, the perfect host. There must be no misunderstanding upon that point, and Hunter had made the position beautifully clear. M. le Comte de la Perouse was indeed welcome to this land upon which they themselves had first set eyes exactly six days earlier. M. le Comte was invited to help himself to wood and water, Captain Clonard was received with ceremony on board the *Sirius*, and presto! - the Frenchmen were the honoured guests of His British Majesty's Government (not yet established) in New Holland.

Now, as he stepped out into the afternoon sunlight and the strong, fresh breeze, Captain Tench found himself hoping fervently that this new site which the Commodore had chosen would come up to the glowing expectations which his description had aroused in them. For himself, he believed that it would, not only because he was, by nature, light-hearted and optimistic, but because his respect for Phillip's judgment was profound. The journey up the coast had taken only a few hours, and now, shading his eyes against the declining sun, he could see the vessels ahead of them making in for the entrance which Phillip had described, a wide entrance between sheer cliffs which, shadowed now, and assailed by the white, high-tossing surf, formed a forbidding gateway to the tranquil haven they were seeking.

Tench was suddenly filled with a furious impatience. He was sick to death of this wallowing *Charlotte* which had been his home for eight months; it was just his luck, he thought, that he should have had to travel on the most decrepit of all these decrepit vessels, on the one which was, even in this grotesque fleet of antiquated tubs, the slowest and most antiquated of all. He was sick of the food, the everlasting salt beef, sick of the cramped quarters, sick of the uncertainty,

longing for dry land and some alleviation of their present discomforts.

Lieutenant Creswell was on deck, too, and Tench, feeling his ebullient spirits bubbling towards that point where they must find outlet in speech, went and stood beside him, whistling *Mabrouck* softly to himself, and trying to decide whether a movement, a flicker, which he had caught silhouetted on the skyline, was natives, or merely shrubs tossing in the breeze.

'Well,' said Lieutenant Creswell, holding his hat to shield his eyes from the sun, 'we have arrived. Let us hope we're not to be disappointed again.'

Tench shook his head. They were between the headlands now; the low, thickly wooded hills ahead sloped down to meet still, blue water which was opening out to right and left of them, and he answered confidently:

'The Commodore spoke well of it; he is not a man to exaggerate.'

Creswell shrugged.

'We need more than calm water. Heaven only knows what blunders and privations you may yet have to record in that everlasting journal of yours.'

Tench turned away abruptly. He did not, in his present mood, like the bitter tone, and he did not like the word 'blunders.' The voyage had been hard; they had all suffered. Eight months and the whole width of the world separated them from their homes, and their first glimpse of the new land had been anything but encouraging. And Creswell, like many of the others, had had much to endure from a stomach which resented the monotonous and not too wholesome diet of the long voyage; allowances must be made for a man with indigestion. It was natural, perhaps, that there should be occasional murmurs, discontent, criticism...

All the same, Tench reflected, there were many things which were natural, and, at the same time, damned bad form. One should live and die with an air. To hold firmly to the small graces of behaviour was a duty doubly imperative when few other graces remained. And if there had been blunders they had been made before the Fleet had sailed, not since, and not by the Commodore.

For the first time, now that their permanent destination was so close, and the hour for adjustment and construction so

nearly upon them, he thought of the future with a trace of anxiety clearly defined by their unfortunate experience at Botany Bay. On the high seas it had been impossible to shepherd one's thoughts of this fabulous, almost mythical country into any clear pattern either of hope or of despondency. It was too vague, too utterly unknown. One's mind still held images of the other landfalls of the voyage; the rocky, mist-bound slopes of Teneriffe and the cheerful white town of Santa Cruz had seemed, if unfamiliar, still in their own world, but once across the Equator life had become a little unreal, and the extravagant, theatrical beauty of Rio had remained in the memory, not to be dislodged, as a kind of embodiment of all that was bizarre, fertile, languorous, opulent. One remembered the little boats of the fruit sellers swarming round the vessels, one remembered the fruit itself, the colour of the piled oranges against the blue water, legendary tales of gold and diamonds, the still air imprisoned by the mountains. And one remembered Table Bay, and a certain savagery in its landscape, which, he thought, had accorded well with the harsh manners of its Dutch inhabitants; a windy, dusty, thirsty place, oppressed and dominated by its mountain.

But this . . .

This was quite different again. One had been prepared, of course, he acknowledged, faintly troubled, for that. But the recorded descriptions of Cook and others had had singularly little life. He himself, Tench thought with a parenthetical flash of his normal buoyancy, could render a far more spirited account, and would do so in good time. But there had been no visual precedent in one's mind to establish an image of this kind of difference. . . .

And instantly his quick brain, leaping between a word and its association, found a description of the difference by adding a syllable to it. Its difference was indifference. This place did not welcome you, like Rio; it did not look particularly fertile, and it was certainly not languorous. Nor did it repel you, like Table Bay; it offered no enmity, no resistance. It simply waited.

And he found himself thinking of the meagre rations which they carried, and of their numbers, a mere fifteen hundred, of whom half were felons, desperate characters not to be relied upon; and he wondered about the Indians, and how numerous

they were, and whether they could be actually as peaceable as they had appeared at Botany Bay, and what lay between this day and the end of their strange adventure.

The end? He reminded himself sharply that for some of them there would be no end. He, when his term had expired, would return to England, the richer by a tale which would open lovely eyes, and cause soft 'Oh's!' of astonishment, and, if he could trust his wit (and he thought he could), silvery bursts of merriment. But many of the wretches below would never see their birthplace again - would never leave this remote and enigmatic land. It was to be their home, the home of their children and their grandchildren . . .

Captain Tench was a young man who lived vigorously and with enjoyment in the present. Excursions into the past bored, and excursions into the future disturbed him, but in the moment that it took him to shake himself free of his involuntary lapse into imagination, he found himself staring round at the harbour with a kind of astonishment, conceiving it as a scene not merely visited, but inhabited by white men.

Safe again in the comfortable span of his own lifetime, he wrinkled his nose with a very proper disgust. His morality was the morality of his times, his sense of justice, if not his natural humanity, dominated by its conventions. He was an officer and a gentleman, and it was not his business to concern himself with the making of the administration of the law. It merely occurred to him, therefore, to be devoutly thankful that he himself would be returning to a more congenial world, and to reflect with distaste upon the kind of community which one might expect to evolve from this unsavoury beginning.

Now they were rounding a low and densely wooded point, and ahead of them the water stretched away westward as far as the eye could follow it. Everywhere the vegetation seemed the same - a dullish, neutral tint, incredibly monotonous. Little crescent-shaped beaches alternated with rocky headlands; and on these parties of Indians appeared from time to time, waving their spears and talking excitedly. Now and then, with a rainbow flash among the trees, birds which Tench took to be a species of paroquet darted from shadow into sunlight and were gone again. They had passed two small islands and were now coming abreast of a larger one, and ahead was yet a fourth, the last rays of the dying sun gilding

its rocky pinnacle.

Lieutenant Creswell, behind him, said:
'Listen!'

For a moment Tench heard nothing but the beat of a gull's wings as it swooped past. Then, coming apparently from round the next point, he heard the unmistakable sound of axe-blows, and knew that they had arrived.

The sun was almost gone before the last of the winged ships came to anchor in the cove; by that time most of the black men had gone off to hunt their supper, for their bellies must be filled, white men or no white men. Just before dusk fell Barangaroo arrived. She had had a successful day's fishing, and her basket was full of fish and grubs and oysters, so Bennilong, grunting approval, settled himself to watch a little longer. He noticed that the lovely object which had fluttered from the sapling was now being taken down, and he found this wise and understandable, for so rare and precious a thing obviously should not be left to the mischievous whims of the spirits who come with darkness.

One fire blazed on the shore near the row of shelters, but most of the white people were returning to their ships. The little cove looked strange, with a strangeness which chilled Barangaroo's heart. She did not like the fallen trees, the scattered belongings of the white men, the row of strange dwellings they had erected. From their boats, now lying with furling wings upon the darkening water of the cove, there came the still glimmer of mysterious lights which were not fires. She shut her eyes and opened them again rapidly, half believing that they would see the blackly shining water stretching unbroken from shore to shore as it had always been; but there they still were, the strange boats, so many of them, so large, so hedged about with mystery!

She peered at Bennilong. There was an intentness in his watching which frightened her. Life, quite suddenly, was bereft of its simplicity; there was danger here. She felt it, smelt it, heard it in the alien tones of voices which carried with eerie distinctness across the water, saw it in the devastation down there by the shore, knew in a flash that already it had laid its finger upon Bennilong . . .

She said nothing, squatting motionless on the rock behind him, knowing that the terrors of a woman are to be nursed in

her own heart. For it is the function of man to be fearless, and what man could face a woman's knowledge and remain undaunted? So she kept quite still, her face impassive and her dark eyes melancholy, feeling the life of her race stir within her body, and knowing its movements for the throes not of birth, but of death.

Captain Tench, coming on deck for a breath of air before retiring, glanced up at the starry sky, so much denser, softer, nearer than the night firmament of his homeland, and down at the darkly shining water, and about him at the dark and silent and interminable trees. Far away on a height of the northern shore he saw the glimmer of a fire, and immediately he felt that the darkness was inhabited, the silence pregnant with sound, the weight of some age-old alliance between this land and its people not resisting, but passively obstructing them. He thought, puzzled: 'I have never felt more an intruder in my life!' And then, laughing at himself, shrugged, and went down to bed.

Andrew Prentice was the first on the deck of the *Scarborough* upon that Sunday morning when the landing of the convicts began. He stood against the rail blinking in the strong sunlight, scratching his verminous body mechanically, staring at the shore. He heard the muttered comments of his companions behind him, but he said nothing himself. The dry earth — any earth — was what he wanted, and the country to which they had come was, at this moment, not a prison, but a goal. His first consciousness of it was its sharp impact on his senses; it was a cloudy day with gleams of sunlight now and then, but there was a glare from the water which dazzled his eyes; scents came to him which were alien, unidentifiable; a sound, high, piercing — an ear-splitting sound — shrilled from the unfamiliar green which clothed the sloping shores.

He felt himself balk as if he had breasted some invisible barrier, and since all his life he had met obstacles with fury and a tigerish vindictiveness, hatred of this land sprang to life in him, ready-made. The water, a still, glittering sheet, stretched away into the distance. The trees were tall and their leaves glittered, too, so that they seemed more silver than green, and their trunks were skeleton-white. No ocean was visible. They lay here in this unknown, landlocked harbour, and on the shore there waited some kind of life of which

Prentice could know nothing save that it would be ugly, harsh, and cruel. He did not resent or fear that knowledge. Ugliness and cruelty had been his daily fare all his life and he had toughened morally and spiritually to cope with them, so that now no human misery and no human depravity had power to penetrate the self-protectiveness of his spirit. But for a second something had penetrated it, and he resented that flash of perception in himself all the more fiercely because it was something he could not name or account for, and because it had startled him for a split second and then vanished, leaving him nothing but the flavour of an emotion. He stared at the shore, turning his red head slowly, lowered, looking up beneath his brows. There was nothing forbidding about the landscape; no towering cliffs, no barren sand-dunes, no majestic skyline, and Prentice gave back to its impassivity a sullen and contemptuous glare. Already from a couple of the other transports boatloads of convicts were putting out, and with a sudden stirring of excitement, he wondered how soon it would be before the women were disembarked. He had thought of Ellen during the voyage with hatred, because it was her fault that they were here. Since the child had been ill she had been more and more reckless in her thefts; shrewish, too, dangerous and malevolent when he had grudged her her perilously won spoils which she always wanted to spend on the blasted child, who was sure to die anyhow. But now, at the end of the journey, and at the beginning of a new communal life, he felt his long-starved desire begin to stir and rage. On this transport only male convicts had been carried, herded in semi-darkness, in filth and idleness and the morale-destroying boredom of an eight-months' voyage, and they had endured the natural penalty of that unnatural segregation. Prentice had come through it all right. His nerves were blunted, and he had long forgotten what it was to feel ashamed of anything. In the world which he knew, life was not enriched, but made more base by every fresh experience, and he had learned, as in defence of their sanity such men must learn, to regard morals and ethics as luxuries not available to the poor.

Now, watching the boatloads of stores and convicts going ashore, his thought of Ellen held no kindness - indeed no personal quality at all. She was merely a female body which would be available when they were both landed, and beyond

physical assuagement his mind did not care to seek. He more or less presumed that his son would have died on the voyage, but beyond that gave him no thought. No one, indeed, had thought of *him* when he was four years old, except desultorily, to toss him a scrap of food from time to time, and as often as not to let him steal or forage for himself, and he knew that those days had been his training for life. Sharp wits, alertness, mistrust, an inspired capacity for lying and deceit, a deep-rooted habit of expecting always the worst, the ugliest and the most hopeless - these things were his equipment, and he cherished them, girding himself in them as in an armour, and brandishing a resentful hatred of more fortunate human beings as a well-tryed sword.

Well, the voyage was over. They had arrived. Where? There was none among them who had any clear idea of the geographical position of this New Holland to which they had come. It had been, at home, a fabulous-sounding name, if it had been even that; a place on the other side of the earth, inhabited by black savages. It might be a large island, or it might be a small one. It might be, for all they knew, part of Asia. But at all events it was land. There would be fresh water, there would be animals one could kill for fresh meat, there would be some kinds of fruit growing. And there would be daylight, sun, clean air to breathe.

Yes, already there were these last things. The drab, shuffling group on the deck stood in them, looking at the shore. From there the sharp double crack of axe-blow and echo came to them across the water. Boats from the store-ships were rowing backward and forward; already a patch of ground had been cleared and tents erected - the nucleus of a strange community on the fringe of an ominously quiet, unblanchably waiting continent.

Obedient to a word of command the convicts began to move forward. Accustomed by now to being herded, accustomed to being acquiescent, they walked heavily along the deck, feeling the press of other acquiescent, suffering, unwashed and repellent bodies about them. In the boats they sat silent, a little stupefied by the unaccustomed fresh air and bright light, and by the sense of space about them which gave a phantasmic illusion of freedom.

The Governor was ashore. A slight, straight figure in his blue

coat, he stood in the shade of a tall tree, wiping his hot forehead with a handkerchief and holding his three-cornered hat under his arm while he talked to Zachary Clark, the assistant commissary. Prentice, to whom it was second nature to ferret out and absorb information against a time when it might be useful to him, watched his gestures, thinking sharply behind his expressionless eyes that in the confusion of the next few days it should not be impossible to help oneself to a few extra rations when the stores were partially established.

Already, in his mind, he was turning this confusion to account. He saw that it was not going to be easy for authority to build order from such chaos. Escape, he thought, with dawning excitement, was, surely, not so desperate a gamble here? The woods came down to the shore, they were dense, and what could be easier than to slip away some evening when dusk was falling, and not return? Impossible, here, to set unfailling guard over them; tools must be given to them to build and dig with, a musket could be stolen, somewhere in the woods there must be food, else how did the natives live? And somewhere, if one could keep going long enough, there must be civilisation - a port - ships sailing . . .

A thought of Ellen touched his consciousness and was instantly discarded. A man could travel better alone, or perhaps with another man. And if the child still lived she would not leave it, so let her stay, and rot. His excitement mounted. Here was a situation he could enjoy. Here was authority in difficulties, authority working not with the whole might and power of its established sovereignty behind it, but isolated, in disorder, hampered by lack of all that social machinery by which it oppressed such people as himself. He saw, in the eyes of many of his fellows, a dawning appreciation of this fact. Passing and re-passing each other in the course of the day's work, they grew almost light-hearted with the knowledge that Fate had given them an opportunity at least to hinder and obstruct, if not openly to rebel.

All day the boats went backward and forward between the ships and the shore, unloading men and animals and stores. All day the work went on, but the confusion increased rather than lessened, and the cleared land at the end of the cove soon wore an air of elaborate insanity which Captain Tench, busy as he was, found time to contemplate with a good deal of amusement.

'Business now sat on every brow,' he recorded jauntily that night in his journal, 'and the scene, to an indifferent spectator at leisure to contemplate it, would have been highly picturesque and amusing. In one place a party cutting down the woods; a second setting up a blacksmith's forge; a third dragging along a load of stones or provisions; here an officer pitching his marquee, with a detachment of troops parading on one side of him, and a cook's fire blazing up on the other.'

His eyebrows went up a trifle when he saw the Governor's portable canvas house being erected on the east side of the cove, but he confessed to himself with satisfaction that, if any man lived who could invest so makeshift a dwelling with the dignity proper to the seat of government, that man was Arthur Phillip.

All day the trees crashed, and the clearing crept back from the shore. Phillip the seaman, who liked everything shipshape, who betrayed in his person and his habits an almost pernicious tidiness, moved in the heart of this chaos, and never by a flicker of expression nor a tone of voice betrayed the almost revolted exasperation with which he surveyed it. Seamen, marines, officers, convicts; pigs, sheep, fowls, cattle; bedding, boxes, ropes, tools, bits of furniture, loads of foodstuffs - this, he thought, wore rather the air of an emergency evacuation than of a planned settlement!

He knew, long before the day was out, what faced him. He had not enough tools, and those he had were of inferior quality. Not enough clothing for the convicts, many of whom were already in rags. Not enough artisans - carpenters, stone-masons, blacksmiths. Not enough farmers. Only once during the day he paused to think about it. Then, standing on a little rise to the east of the cove he looked down at his community, and realised that he would have to bully it into surviving. He was nothing if not a realist. He knew that nine-tenths of the convicts would go near to starving rather than work, and because he was essentially fair-minded he was even able to comprehend their twisted logic. 'We are prisoners. Why should we help to build our jail?' Suddenly he looked up: the swarm of humanity and its destructive activity was lost, and he saw only the country and felt a strange stirring of excitement in his heart. There was more than a jail here; he would make it more. He would travel inland, find good

country for pasture and for farming, send for settlers, build up a free community . . .

'For,' he thought, remembering and repeating a phrase he had used even before leaving England, 'I would not wish convicts to lay the foundations of an empire . . .'

It was a thought which had sprung from a deep conviction then. Now, even as he re-formed it, he found that its validity was being assailed. He did not know why it no longer seemed important, and because he could find no reason he reasserted it with a certain obstinacy. One *would* not wish convicts to lay the foundations of an empire. But again he had the uneasy sense of having made a false step—lost his bearings—left himself vulnerable to some force which he named a danger only because it was more powerful than himself, who, by virtue of his commission from the King, should have been omnipotent. It was as if the land, watching indifferently, had said to him: 'What does it matter? The lives of these miserable men will be over in the blink of an eye, and their children will be mine—not yours.'

Phillip half shut his eyes, dazzled by the sun and by something which had been near enough to an hallucination. He had seen a city on these shores. He had seen wharves crowded with shipping. He had seen wide streets and lofty buildings, and the homes of a free and happy people, and he was startled by his own inability to dismiss so fanciful a vision with incredulity or at least with scepticism. Deep within him, hopeful and undismayed, something said stubbornly: 'Why not?'

It was high time, he thought grimly, beginning to walk down the hill again, that he got back to work.

The blacks were moving camp. It had become quite evident from the behaviour of the white men that they had no intention of immediate departure. Though they had not so far shown any sign of hostility, many of the blacks, and especially the older men, were uneasy, and it was upon their insistence that the camp was being deserted, and the tribe moving away from the vicinity of the cove which the invaders had occupied.

Bennilong quite openly resented this move. It was becoming more and more plain to him, and to many of the younger men, that benefits were to be derived from the presence of the white strangers, for there was no end to the beauty and the

efficiency of their possessions, and already they had been generous with gifts.

Leaning on his spear, and watching Barangaroo sulkily as she collected their belongings for the march, he was thinking that it was a sad thing to grow old and lose one's enterprise like Tirrawul and other elders of the tribe; to be unable to see how desirable it was that some young man of courage and address, some young man of imagination and quick wit, some young man, in short, like himself, should go among these people and observe their ways.

He scowled, watching Barangaroo as she loaded herself with their belongings—baskets and water-carriers, a flat, smooth pounding stone, a bundle of kangaroo sinews for sewing, a woven receptacle full of white and red and yellow clay, a precious supply of whale grease wrapped in i-tree bark, a bundle of 'possum skins, and an assortment of Bennilong's spare weapons. Her movements were quick and supple, and highlights slid along her limbs and breasts as she stooped and straightened. She was glad that they were moving camp, and she was not at all impressed by Bennilong's bad temper, though she was careful to move outside the reach of his arm. She feared and mistrusted the strangers, though she hoped that some day she, too, might be given such ornaments as those which Colbee's wife, Daringha, so proudly wore. But there was no sense, she felt, in remaining too near such beings. Her blood chilled a little, and her flesh crept merely to think of them; her womanhood revolted from the sexlessness of their appearance—their bodies hidden away, their faces beardless—and she stole a glance at Bennilong for comfort, and unwarily dropped her package of whale grease on the still hot embers of their fire.

Bennilong's bad temper erupted. He dropped his spear and shield and began to belabour her about the head and shoulders with his wommerah, shouting revilements upon her carelessness which were almost drowned by her shrill cries. It was a domestic wrangle, ending as abruptly as it began. Bennilong, feeling better for his outburst, grunted and picked up his spear and shield again, and Barangaroo, rubbing a lump on the side of her head, and setting to work to gather up her scattered belongings, continued her meditations where they had been interrupted.

Indeed, she reflected, the fate of the women of these

white newcomers must be a sad and dreadful one. Could a woman find joy or pride in lying with such beings? At first (so Daringha had told her sister, Peeka, and Peeka, whispering, had told Barangaroo) it had been suspected that all the strangers were women, but one of their number had furnished most positive proof that they were men. Yet might not some of them be women? Barangaroo snatched up the last of her burdens, driven by an obscure urge to put as much distance as possible between herself and these people as speedily as might be. For a man was a man, strong and bearded and virile, and a woman was a woman, built for service and endurance, and it was an ugly thought, and one which frightened her, that they should be indistinguishable from each other. Troubled, seeing confusedly as one sees in dreams, she had a vision of some age-old stability undermined, some ancestral security disturbed. Not her mind, but her blood denied these pale intruders, not her reason, but her body revolted, as if, already, they had threatened rape. She stole another glance at Bennilong.

He was still standing moodily leaning on his spear and watching the preparations for departure. The mia-mias were all dismantled and the fires out; the children had gathered up their playthings and the dogs were running about excitedly, snapping at each other, eager to be away. The women were nearly ready, loaded with young babies and camp gear, so that the warriors, preceding them, should be unencumbered for battle or for hunting if opportunities presented themselves.

It was, he thought peevishly, a foolish and fruitless thing which they were doing, for even their new camp would be within easy walking distance of the white men's cove, and he, for one, would return often to watch them and their ships and their doings from the shelter of the hillside. Curiosity burned in him consumingly. Acquisitiveness drove him. To know, to have. Here, into their life, had come something new, rich in marvels. He longed to plunge into it and draw that richness out for himself. Already in his mind there was a song stirring about these people, a song of their coming, of their appearance, of their strange activities and their stranger implements. In this alone, it was material for a fine corroboree, but secretly there was more, much more, that would never pass his lips. For almost unconsciously, in the

ecstasy of composition, he had gone beyond the tale of things which had happened, into the realm, to him not very different, of things which might happen; and his song had become a saga of the prowess of Bennilong, son of Wunbula, who was great not only in his own tribe but in the tribe of the white men, sharing their councils, versed in their customs, speaking their tongue, voyaging in their winged ship where no other man of his race had gone . . .

It was foolish, he thought, to withdraw like this. It was true that since the coming of the white men fish had become scarce in the vicinity of their cove—but that, after all, was a small matter. It was all very well for Tirrawul to warn that their friendliness might be assumed. Were there not many great warriors in the tribe to defend it, and would not the Ciweagal and the Wanngal and the Wallumedegal and the Cammeraygal come to their assistance if need arose, and would not the shores be black with them, as bristling with their spears as the back of Piggiehillah with his spikes?

Soon the white men would be gone, and perhaps never again in his own lifetime would a winged ship visit their shores. Never again would this chance come to handle and examine strange things, to fill one's eager eyes with marvels, and one's hungry brain with rich material for thought. One morning he would go down to the cove and it would be deserted. The winged ships would be gone, the rows of white mia-mias would be gone, the lovely thing on the top of the sapling no longer fluttering against the sky. Slowly, while he grew old with waiting, the bush would claim the cove again, the felled trees would rot away, from standing stumps the pink and crimson leaves would shoot, and undergrowth would clothe the trampled ground. Nothing would be left of the white men but his own song of them, his own corroboree, so that his children and his children's children would know, and wait perhaps, as he had waited, for them to come again.

Tramping through the bush with the other warriors he was softly silent, and none spoke to him, not even By-gone, knowing the darkness of his mood. That night he sat for a long time before the embers of his fire, thinking gloomily of the red and black pattern which he had made with such care and pride upon his shield, and how much finer it would look if