The results of the Literary Competition organised by the VUW Literary Society are as follows:

POETRY

(Joint Judges: Drs. R. T. Savage and D. F. McKenzie)
1st Prize: Miss K. Northcote-Bade for Gardens of the Ford and Thinking About Hedgehogs.
2nd Prize: Mr. M. van Dijk for November '43 and Sublunary Lovers.
3rd Prize: Mr. A. Wendt for These Sea-Chained Islands.

PROSE

(Sole Judge: Renato Amato)
1st Prize: Mr. A. Wendt for The Bayonet.
2nd Prize: Mr. M. Rowlands for But the sailor, etc.
3rd Prize: Mr. N. Bilbrough for The Dog.

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EDITOR'S NOTE—

Another year; another EXPERIMENT.

I am convinced that, just now, University is no more, perhaps, than a trade school one attends in the quest of a trade certificate.

Of the thousands of students on the rolls, only a handful had any ‘literary’ contributions to submit; a few dozen more attempted the short-cut to self-expression which is so often mis-named ‘Poetry’.

Albert Wendt, the first prize winner, is developing, I think, into an accomplished writer and I am glad to see that he is acquiring a definite capacity to shape and control his material, a capacity which, I am afraid, is still lacking in Mr. Rowlands. More than Mr. Rowlands’ technique, it was his subject matter, the ‘thing’ he was writing about and his way of looking at it, that earned him my perhaps questionable decision to award him second prize. From almost every angle, in fact, John Parkyn’s The Last Lecture is a far better work. . . . I mean, better written. But, then, I found it slow, tedious, unconvincing and an odd mixture of righteous, flabby moral indignation and shallow characterisation. It is possible that there is a deep vision of life behind it, but my experience must have been too limited: I am unable to let it stimulate me.

If Mr. Bilbrough’s submission had been more than the isolated brilliant flash it is, I would have thought of another placing for his Dog. The acknowledgement went to the violence of his style and the powerful quality of his description.

As somebody has said recently, “The quality of a magazine does not often depend on the qualities of the editor, but on those of its contributors”.

RENATO AMATO.
Kirsty Northcote-Bade

GARDENS AT THE FORD

At once I remembered when we were small,
Every day at the ford after school
By the tarred logs of the bridge
We made patterned gardens on the bank.
For an afternoon our microscopic land
Was a whole inviolable world; rich

Islands for each, like flowered maps.
Mine was a scramble of winding tracks
Encroaching on yours with armies of plantain,
Periwinkle, lupin, and small bleached roses
Found among blackberries on the dry slopes.
Yours was square, ordered terrain,

Mapped by a lone explorer; large
Paddocks of watercress, blue clay paths.
The gardens were for ever, flowers altered,
The patterns remained. “We can’t choose,”
Said the mothers. “We know whose is whose.”
You said, “You mustn’t come over my wall.”

I forgot the gardens until suddenly,
Through the glass window, you smiled at me.

THINKING ABOUT HEDGEHOGS

I’m thinking that hedgehogs become gods.
But they’re awkward things to contemplate;
People more frequently revere pig-dogs,
Opossums, hoarse roosters or elusive owls.
Yet hedgehogs are much friendlier than fowls.

Remember in the past the small soft-prickled
Horace and Harriet, two most charming snuffers
Who ran from the hedge, asthmatic, to be tickled;
And Oswald, found in Mrs. Biss’s bed?
Now all that generation must be dead.
I searched for another Horace, to regain
The thrill of hunting along tangled ditches,
Of wandering by a tantalising drain,
Listening for the quite distinctive rustle
That Horace's family make, as they bustle.

But I was searching an unfamiliar land;
The time and season were right, but hedgehogs gone.
Not one on the overgrown hill-track as I planned
Came to my sight; and a mocking whistle
From insects in the grass follows me still.

Maarten van Dijk

SUBLUNARY LOVERS

When the moon is horizon heavy,
chaste with borrowed light,
and pock-marked, pustular,
with an eternity of perceived
diseases,
Bill embraces Helen on the hill,
and wonders why her mouth displeases.

NOVEMBER '43

Father's knee was bony;
he held me, told how his footsteps
followed him and fell as if another
walked behind him
to my mother's bed and mine,
in the curfewed city
clenched in war's fist of silence.

Snow fell.
There must have been snow, or much rain.
If it falls there are dull dampeners
on the day and night;
these were owed to the dawn I was born.
What reality of destruction,
stripped thorn ribs bleeding,
of men and bombed houses,
penetrated my foetal glimmer,
warm crepuscular sleep,
as everywhere innocency
stiffened in death?
And what laws governed my conception
when death much outweighed the bearing?

My father had a chimera companion
over the cobblestones.
Neither altogether guilt,
nor fear, nor the ghosts
of a million dead swelling
unploughed fields of Europe,
but these compounded into
a thudding echo empty
as boots marching into
a present without reason,
a future without possibility;
and a birth giving no compensation
for life, hope, love lost.

Albert Wendt

THESE SEA-CHAINED ISLANDS—
(For my brothers: Ationo, Iosefa, Anisi, Fili, and Loi)

(i)
These sea-chained islands, country of my birth, stretch
From the lava fields of Salafai, bleak and hostile
Like the surface of the bloated moon,
To the fortresses of Apolima and Manono
And the dazzling peaks and plains of Upolu.
The mountains, brute and broken, anchor the land.
On the reef, sharp and shark’s teeth, a canoe sustains
Fishermen diving for the elusive coral fish and eel,
While the wind chants a lament to ended journeys
And the octopus sun clinging to fale, palm, and river.
The town, groping cathedral metal round the harbour,
spews
Human excrement of weekly sins into the sulking waves,
While the high clock tower erect, winks and spirals
To the endless tune of the receding tide.

Once there was a time I belonged here:
To the ebony people strutting to Market, Church, and
Death;
To the eternal cycle of children thrusting paths to Man-
hood;
To the forever blood of soil and country.
But now, as I watch the pebbles in the out-going tide,
These things, once rock-pool of my life, reject
Me to barren shores of winter rain and wind, stripped
Of name: the blessed heritage from the warrior past.
Yet I will always remember those years of childhood
When I roamed these islands with my five-men tribe,
plucking
Birds from the fossil trees with shanghai stones.
Once I shattered the flight of a maiden pigeon, locked
It in my artless hands, and encouraged it to die
The sacrificial death of the seditious heart;
Then I gathered the tribe, tore the pigeon
Over a religious fire, and ate it under a ripening sky.
This was the ritual of those primeval years
That vanished like the birds we killed and ate.

Now the tribe is no more; we have escaped the pool of
Narcissus
To the desert of metal cactus and sand: the domain of
Sisyphus.
But I will always remember my brothers and the love
forged
In those primitive years of cannibal laughter.
When we grew in tongue and mastered the Word, Ationo
Was expelled from school; he printed ‘f—’ in the holy
book.
Ationo who stole the fire of the sleeping goddess;
Discovered, they tried to drain the fire from his veins.
Today, he still invades those amazon fields, creating
Children out of the cold ashes of his conquests; dying
The frantic, suicidal death of the fearless Dionysiros.

When the world had spun twelve times round the sun,
Iosefa, Apollo of the tribe, wanted to ride in a fiery car;
Iosefa who claimed that cars had souls, and dismembering
Father’s cadillac, he wept and cried his epitaph:
“S—, they got no souls at all! No souls at all!”
Today, with the sun just a scientific glow in the sky,
Iosefa no longer searches for souls in the bowels of iron
beasts.
Apollo, builder of civilisations, is now a mechanic,
harnessed
To the ordered excrement of Henry Ford, Krupps, and
General Motors.

Anisi, medicine man of the tribe, has joined the Yankee
Army.
Concocting magical spells for the god of war, they will kill
Him in Cuba or Tibet or Timbuctoo; torture and rack
Him in Algeria or Korea or China; lynch and unsex
Him in Birmingham or Little Rock; stake and burn
Him in the Vatican or the Kremlin. Yet when they wrench
The magic from his heart, he will remember our tribal
plans
To tear God, King, and Country out of the guts of the
tribe.

Fili, heir to Josephi’s coat of envious colours, has sold
His heritage for pieces of silver in the temple stockmarket;
He will soon be a millionaire bidding for the moon.
Dressed in Rockefeller grey, they will hang
Him from the tree of dollar green; and he will donate
His wealth to Progress, Art, and Charity.
Loi, the musician of the tribe, is Orpheus in bloom,
And some day he will meet his fair Eurydice.
But it would be a worthy and honest death.

(iii)

My beloved brothers, now that we have grown into men
Snared in the webs of our own past actions,
We have become both the spider and the fly.
The ritual of our lives will soon be over,
But it is enough that love exists between us:
Love forged in those years of tribal laughter.

(iv)

These sea-chained islands, country of my birth, stretch
From the past, time passing, toward a future sun:
From Dionysius and Apollo to Rockefeller and calico dress;
From medicine man and tufuga to naked Cathedral and
'Sin'.
My tribe wandered that twilight path; now we have found
The desert, the well choked with dollar dust.
On the malae, where we once stood and bellowed
The first ape call to the skies, metal monsters thunder
Like gigantic vultures in search of prey and the human
heart.
My tribe, like the blinding moa, lives only in the museum
Of my primitive, dying heart.

The land of falcon ice and steel, destiny of all tribes, awaits
Me, the reluctant exile, victim of one fitful turn of the
world.
Albert Wendt

"THE BAYONET"—

He drifted from shadow to shadow, his bare feet scraping silently over the brittle sand. The breeze brushed his face; he smiled and kicked an empty beer can over the road. Palm trees stood on the edge of the beach like gigantic umbrellas; the sound of the waves grew louder; and the moon hovered over the horizon, grinning like an idiot. He shivered as he stopped and gazed at the lead-like sea; his nose quivered and he sucked in the woman-smell of rotting seaweed. He jumped on the beach, and laughing loudly, he ran up and down chasing the waves, and flying his sleeping sheet behind him.

After a while he stopped and stared toward the west, at the lights of the town. In the harbour floated the massive forms of three American warships, and he suddenly remembered that a war was raging somewhere over the horizon. He felt a retraction in his bowels; he turned, scurried under the shade of a sprawling talie, wrapped the sheet round his shoulders, and emptied his bowels onto the sand.

Slowly he dragged his feet up the faint path that led to the road. Patches of moonlight lay scattered on the ground like dry breadfruit leaves. A jeep stood on the side of the road. He fell forward and crawled toward it. (The area was a favourite place where the American soldiers brought their girls. He had often gone there with his friends to spy on them.)

He peered inside the jeep, saw a carton of beer, stooped down, pulled out a can, and then searched round for something to open it with. Then he saw it. The bayonet lay like a frozen snake on the front seat. His hand edged towards it, clutched the wooden handle, and drew it towards him.

He shuddered as he caressed the blade, his face flushed. He picked up two cans of beer, and clutching the bayonet, he ran across the road towards his home.

Skirting the main fale, he crept into the small fale where he slept with his mother. Once inside he arched
up and sheathed the bayonet in the thatching; the beer cans he hid in a box under his mother's bed. He paused, sensing something was wrong. His mother's bed was empty. The image of the jeep jarred at his mind; and he remembered where he had seen it before. His body tightened with anger and disgust. He struck at her pillow, beating it till he fell down exhausted. . . . He lay for a long while and cried.

When he heard the purring of the jeep, he sprang up, rushed to the other side of the fale, lay down on his sleeping mat, and drew up the sheet to hide his face.

Footsteps stopped outside the fale. And in the pale moonlight he saw them kissing. He strangled his throat, and suppressed his crying.

"I wanna come in," he heard the American say to his mother.

"No. No, my son asleep. You go now," his mother said to her American. The soldier kissed her. The boy heard the sound of running footsteps, and the jeep driving away. He stuffed the edge of the sheet into his mouth.

His mother crept into the fale, and stooped down over him.

"Are you asleep, Siaki?" she asked. The boy didn't answer; he pressed his knees tight round his hands to stop them from lashing out at her face. She turned and walked to her bed, singing to herself. He heard her fall on to the bed. . . . Soon she was snoring.

The boy's body began to ache. The distorted faces of the other children blocked his vision; he tried not to hear their jeering voices: "Hey, maligi, who's your father? . . . Who's your father?" And he saw himself sneaking away into the bush. Their cries were always the same. And as always, he was unable to answer them, for he did not know who his father was. He only knew, as they knew, that his father was a white man like the American. He ached. He cursed. He cried. Then sleep rescued him. In his sleep, he saw the image of the gleaming bayonet; and a plan began to form. His bitterness focussed on one thing, one instrument of salvation: the bayonet.

Early the next morning he awoke, yawned, wiped the
sleep from his eyes, and glanced at the sun which peered warily over the mountains. He looked at his mother. Her mouth lay open like a wound. He spat into the grass outside. Her black hair spilled softly over the pillow. As he watched her, the sunlight began to soften her face, and he felt his anger ebb away. He glanced at the dome of the fale, and saw the bayonet. He stood up, pulled it out, caressed it, and balanced it on his forefinger. The handle was too light. He would fix that. He turned, opened the box where he kept his clothes, shuffled through it, pulled out a faded lavalava, hitched it round his waist, and strolled towards the kitchen hut.

The neighbours were awakening. Tui, the old man of the family, was bellowing a morning hymn, and soon other voices joined in. The boy glanced up at the breadfruit trees; he noticed that the fruit would soon be ready for picking.

The kitchen hummed with flies as he pulled up his lavalava and urinated into the grass. He picked up a stone and hurled it at a black pig rummaging in a pile of rubbish. He grinned when the pig squealed and scurried away.

He squatted down on the earthen floor of the hut, and balanced the bayonet. His eyes found a piece of copper wire in the ashes. He whooped, picked it up, brushed the ash off it, and began to coil it round the handle of the bayonet. He worked like an expert, his whole attention concentrated on his work.

When he finished, he again balanced the bayonet on his forefinger. The balance was perfect. He rose, unhitched the basket of left-overs from the rafters, picked out a piece of taro and ate it hurriedly, feeling the dry pulpy mass slide uncomfortably down his throat.

Smoke billowed from the nearby fales as he made his way into the bush.

He clambered up the high rock fence behind the village, and jumped into the silent world of green. . . . Dew melted off the trees, and trickled like tears into the ground as he ran through the thick foliage of cacao trees, the thick carpet of leaves crunching under his feet. The coconut trees cheered him on.

He kept a steady gait. The edge of his lavalava soon
got wet, and lapped against his legs. Ahead, the banana plantations sprawled up the hillsides; mist engulfed the top of the mountain range; two flying foxes flapped their way across the sky; and someone was calling pigs to feed. The boy sped on with the bayonet flicking occasionally from his hand to chop off the branches of the trees bordering the path. He unhitched his lavalava, wound it round his neck, and continued in the nude to penetrate deeper and deeper into the womb of green. His eyes were cold, intent; his plan would work.

He stood, poised like a knife thrower he had seen in a film, four paces away from the banana stump. The bayonet he held delicately by the blade with the handle pointing toward the ground. Placing his left foot forward, he arched his back, his right arm swinging back in one effortless motion to spring forward again and propel the bayonet swiftly towards the stump. The bayonet sank its tooth into the stump. The boy smiled. He walked over, retrieved the bayonet, and using his lavalava wiped the blade clean. Then he walked further back, stopped, poised, and threw it again. This time he missed. He got the bayonet, strolled back to his original position, turned quickly and hurled it again at the stump. It flew true.

He practised for a long while, increasing the distance as he gradually mastered the bayonet. He worked in silence, and he didn’t notice the sun climb to noon. When the stump got too soft, he stopped and crumpled to the ground, where he lay and sucked in air in deep gulps. He scraped the sweat off his body with his hands, moved into the shade of low cacao trees festering scarlet fruit that hung down like wrinkled breasts, and fell asleep, oblivious of the mosquitoes which buzzed round him and bit into his flesh.

(II)

He came and sat down to face her from across the fire. The smoke between them made her image shimmer, unreal like a reflection on flowing water. He suddenly wanted to touch her, make sure she was really there. He blinked. Her image still remained hazy. She dipped her hands into a pot, pulled out some taro and placed them
on a plate. She put some grilled fish on it, and handed it to him. He took it without saying anything, and started to eat. After a while he glanced up, and found her staring at him.

"Wish you wouldn't go out all day," she remarked, wiping the sweat off her face with the end of her lavalava. "Fetai and Lima have been complaining about you not being here to do their work." Fetai and Lima were his grandparents.

"There're many others to do their work," he replied.

"But they like you specially," she said. She reached down and turned over a chicken that was roasting on the embers. The boy said nothing. He looked at the malae. The young men were beginning to play cricket.

"Who's the chicken for?" he asked, knowing the answer already.

"For Jack," she replied. Jack was her American. The boy's face remained a blank; he didn't want to show his anger. "He's coming this afternoon to have his meal, then we're going to the pool for a swim," she added. The boy continued to eat; he didn't taste the food. The wickets were up, and five young men stood round them waiting for the others to arrive and start the game.

"Jack is very like your father," she commented absent-mindedly. The boy started; he stopped eating; his head bowed over the plate.

"Who's . . . who's my father?" he asked her, trying to sound casual. She straightened. "Must know," he mumbled. The woman turned over the chicken.

"It's . . . it's," she paused; the chicken smelled good. "It's the white man who lives on the edge of town." The boy's hands clamped round the plate and broke it to pieces. She should not have told him.

"Oh, no," he muttered. His father a drunkard; an old man who lived in a decaying house; the man the children ridiculed every day; no, couldn't be!

"Sorry," his mother said. "Was his housegirl once." She looked at him. "Say something!" she demanded. "What's wrong? Tell me!" The boy sprang up and
towered above her. It was worse than being called a maligi. If they knew, it would be worse; he wouldn’t be able to face them. He started to howl, the vacuum filled with anger and shame.

“But why? Why?” he cried. His mother lowered her head. “I hate you! I hate you... And I hate all white men!” He fell to the ground and cried into his hands. She let him; she knew what was wrong.

“You don’t need to worry,” she told him after a while. “Only your grandparents know who your father is.” She waved a fly from her face. “Now stop howling. Jack’ll be here soon.” The boy ceased crying and stared coldly at her. When she looked at him, he smiled. She recoiled. His smile was cold, terrifying. He would have to change his plan slightly but it would still work. He brushed the dirt from his body, and grinned when he found that he could outstare his mother.

The roar of the jeep interrupted their silent combat. They saw it turn into their home. The woman sprang up and brushed her hair while her son watched children scrambling toward the jeep.

“Aren’t you going to run out to him?” she asked him. He had always done so.

“Why do you like sleeping with white men?” he asked her. It was more of an accusation than a question. She slapped him across the face. He just smiled at her. She wheeled abruptly and ran out to meet her American. The boy squashed a mosquito on the back of his hand, and stared at the blood spot.

“Hi!” The American greeted the boy when he entered the fale, trailed by the boy’s mother. The soldier was a delicate man with a sensitive face and gentle eyes. The boy didn’t reply. “Here,” said the American, tossing him a packet of chewing gum. The boy let it lie where it fell. His mother commanded him with her eyes to pick it up.

“Hey, marine!” the children called from outside the fale. “Gimme chew-gum, marine!” The American guffawed, and scattered packets of chewing gum among the children; the children fought for the gum.
The soldier squatted down on the mat next to the boy’s mother.

“Hmm, looks nice,” he commented, ogling the chicken. The woman giggled, but stopped when she noticed the frown on her son’s face. “When’re we eatin’?”

“Soon,” she replied in English. She turned over the chicken. “Not ready yet.”

“I’m hungry,” sighed the American, rubbing his sagging stomach.

Siaki glanced at the soldier, wishing the American was completely bald and ugly. He picked up a sharp piece of stick and dug it in and out of the earthen floor.

Two women entered the fale and sat down cross-legged beside the boy. The boy edged away. The boy’s mother glanced at the two women, and asked:

“What do you want?”

“Just came to meet your American,” replied Maile, the fat woman with breadfruit-like breasts. She lisped, for she had two of her front teeth missing. Her companion giggled, and glanced shyly at the soldier, who grinned at her.

“What did she say?” the American asked the boy’s mother. “Hope it wasn’t rude.”

“No,” she replied quickly. “Dey cum to meet you.”

“Oh, hi!” the American hailed the two women. The women giggled. “Here,” he added, tossing them a packet of Camels. The fat one snatched at it, and mumbling thanks, she stuffed it into the eager hands of her companion.

“How are you, maligi?” the fat one asked the boy, ruffling his hair. The boy squirmed away. “Who’s your father, maligi?” she joked.

“Don’t say that to my son,” snapped the boy’s mother.

“Aw, sorry,” grinned the fat woman. The boy edged away from the two women, his fists clenched, ready to hit out. The soldier smoked.

“Are’t you going to eat your gum?” the mother said to the boy.

“No,” he snapped. He sprang to his feet and stamped
out of the fale. He heard the two women twittering with laughter as he ran, through the young men playing cricket on the malae, towards the beach.

(III)

Another week came with a sun which withered the grass, and chased the dogs and pigs into the shade. The sea crumpled tiredly on to the beach, unable to reach the rubbish that decayed quickly in the heat; and the children screamed in the village pool, their fathers gone into the town and plantations to work. From the town came the muffled roar of traffic and bulldozers: the Americans were building roads. Life boomed in the town, especially in the brothels. The warships wallowed in the harbour, their guns protruding into the sky like the arms of preachers. Girls got pregnant, and they had to run the gauntlet of ridicule and scorn. Numerous brawls broke out between the natives and the soldiers. Swarms of children trailed the marines, calling: “Hey, Yank, you gimme cigarette? Hey, marine, you gimme bucks?” And they picked up the soldiers’ discarded cigarette butts. The older boys played pimps, accosting soldiers on the streets and asking: “Hey, marine, you wanna push-push? You gimme money, I get you good push-push.” Some of them befriended stray Americans, got them drunk, led them to secluded places, and robbed them of everything. The old people remained sullen, suspicious of the invaders. “Surely they have come to stay. Look what they are doing to the people,” they said to one another. But they were forgotten in the dollar boom. Siaki never went to town. He continued to practise, and his hatred of white men buckled and focussed on one American soldier.

He walked up to the tree, and with the point of the bayonet drew the outline of a man on the trunk. Withdrawing ten paces, he paused, turned, and without effort hurled the bayonet. It quivered in the neck of the outline. He smiled as he strolled to the tree. As he was pulling the bayonet out of the tree trunk, he heard footsteps behind him. He whirled, the bayonet poised for flight.

“How are you, maligi?” grinned a dark muscular girl. She had a bundle of firewood strapped across her back.
“Don’t ever call me that again,” he threatened, advancing towards her with the bayonet flicking in his hand. She stepped back.

“Sorry,” she stammered, dropping the firewood to the ground. Siaki wheeled from her and threw the bayonet. The girl froze as the bayonet whipped through the air and quivered in the centre of the head of the outline.

“You’re good,” she tried to applaud. Siaki didn’t say anything; he ran, pulled out the bayonet, and returned to stand in front of her. She was ugly. He grinned and said:

“Can do better than that. Watch.” He took another five paces, wheeled and in the same motion threw the bayonet to pierce the heart of the outline. The girl clapped. “No man can do that but me,” he remarked. “I’m the only man who can do it.” He had to emphasise his point, for he didn’t quite believe that he was a man. “You don’t believe me?” he asked. The girl giggled, and scratched her small buttocks; there was a haughty look in her eyes as she said:

“I don’t believe you.” She was deliberately edging him on. Siaki took another two paces, crouched as if to duck a blow, and threw. The bayonet thudded into the heart of the outline again. The girl laughed, dismissing him.

Siaki stamped to the tree, pulled out the bayonet, turned and hurled the bayonet at her. She screamed as the bayonet whipped past her head and bit into the trunk of the ifi tree behind her. He laughed when she collapsed to her knees.

“Now have I proved my point?” he chuckled.

“Maligi,” she screamed. “Maligi, you’re not a man. . . . You haven’t got a father! . . . Aikae! Aikae!” She was hysterical. He slapped her. Spinning to the ground, she continued to hurl obscenities at him. Siaki dived on top of her and pinned back her arms.

“So, I’m not a man, eh? I’ll show you!” he hissed, slapping her again. She ceased struggling when he tore off her lavalava. And she whimpered as his face filled
her horizon, as she felt his weight on her. She fell limp. . . . He glanced up. The bayonet gleamed erect in the sunlight. "I'm a man. . . . I'm a man!" he muttered. Then the image of his mother clogged his angry vision: she lay heaving beneath a naked white man. His father. His father. Disgust. He rolled off the girl, and sobbed into the ground.

Blinking out of the darkness, she saw him standing above her. "I'm sorry," he apologised. She rolled on to her side and stared at the ground.

"Did it happen?" she mumbled. He shook his head. Sighing, she crossed her legs. He turned his back to her while she retied her lavalava. . . . They remained silent for a long while. Then she staggered to her feet, and said to him:

"I'd better go now, Siaki." It was the first time she had ever called him by his real name. "Won't tell anyone about what happened." She turned and lifted up the bundle of firewood.

As she walked away, he sheathed the bayonet in his lavalava, and ran after her. He took the load off her back and strapped it on to his own. He glanced at her. She smiled at him. And together they walked toward the village.

(IV)

One night Siaki awoke when his mother and the American entered the fale. They were arguing.

"Are you sure?" he heard the soldier ask his mother.

"Yeah," she replied. He heard her voice break, and she cried.

"Shhh, you'll wake him up," cautioned the American, leading her to the bed.

"What I going to do?" she asked, slumping on to the bed.

"Jus' have to wait and see, that's all," replied the soldier. "Now stop crying." She continued to sob. The American slapped her. Siaki jumped. No one had ever
treated his mother this way. The image of the bayonet tossed and pivoted in his mind.

“You marry me, Jack?” his mother pleaded.

“I can’t,” the American replied. The boy closed his eyes. “I’m already ... already married,” confessed the soldier.

“You lie to me. You lie!” his mother screamed. The American stood up, looked down at her, and walked out of the fale into the night. “You cum back?” she called after him. There was no reply.

The boy lay clutching his hands. The American had betrayed his mother. The outline on the tree trunk came alive and assumed the figure of a white soldier. The boy sprang up, crept over to his mother, and pulled the sheet over her. He turned, stumbled out of the fale, and ran towards the pounding waves.

The next day his mother sat in the fale and gazed at the road. The wrinkles on her face had deepened. Siaki acted as though he hadn’t heard them the night before. At noon she told him she was tired. Siaki brought a mat and laid it under the breadfruit trees. She lay down on it. After watching her for a while, Siaki entered the kitchen, took the bayonet from the thatching, and sharpened it till it was angry sharp.

After sheathing it back in the thatching, he prepared the evening meal.

He nodded at the girl when she entered the kitchen.

“How’s the knife-thrower?” she smiled. She sat down before the open fire. A kerosene tin full of bananas bubbled over the flames. The boy didn’t answer. He stared at his mother. “Is she sick?” the girl asked with concern.

“No, Mala,” he whispered. He looked at her. She was smiling; her hair smelled of coconut oil as it dropped down her back over a clean white shirt and a red lavalava.

“Why don’t you go and play cricket? I’ll cook for you,” she suggested, thrusting more firewood into the fire.

“Never mind. I’ll do it. You’ll get dirty.”

“What’s wrong, Siaki?” she asked.
“Nothing,” he snapped. “I’m sorry,” he apologised. “There’s something I have to do.”

“Want to tell me?” she asked, knowing he wasn’t going to. They remained silent. The fire spluttered tongues of flame. Then she began to sing; her voice caressed him till he felt calm, committed, the load gone.

“A man must be strong,” she sang. “Strong as the palm, just as Solomon, kingly as David. A man, my man, must fight his fate and guide me to my destiny. But he must be supple, supple like the palm, and bend, bend before the storm, or he will break, break and die.” She repeated the verse; then her voice faded to a whisper, and the song was lost in his words as he said:

“Thanks, Mala.” She giggled, and together they laughed, contained wholly in their own world.

As the sun tipped over the heads of the palms, a wind arose to free the land of the heat. Siaki gazed out into the harbour. One of the warships had gone. He smiled.

“What are you smiling at?” she asked him.

“Oh, nothing,” he replied. “Just feel good, that’s all.” She smiled; the flames danced on her face. Siaki wanted to caress it, but the flames separated them. A pig squealed loud and clear from the back of the village. The west was scarlet with the blood of the setting sun.

“Mala, will you fix my mother’s meal?” he asked her suddenly. The girl nodded and asked:

“But where’re you going?”

“Got to go into town and buy some sugar,” he lied. He sprang up, ready to go.

“Will I see you tonight?”

“Don’t think so,” he sighed, avoiding her eyes. He ran from the kitchen. She waved to him.

He returned to the kitchen, wearing a clean lavalava and an orange shirt. “Forgot something,” he mumbled, reaching up and pulling out the bayonet. He wheeled to go.

“But where’re you taking that?” she asked. He paused, finding it hard to lie. She looked steadily at him.

“Going to sell it to one of the fellows in town,” he
said finally. Before she could say anything, he ran out of the kitchen.

From the road, he waved to her. She waved back; then she stared into the flames. A gust of wind invaded the kitchen, churned up the fire, and scattered the ashes and embers round her feet. She didn't believe him. She shook with fear.

(V)

Two days later, as Siaki sat looking at his mother, a jeep swerved off the road and drove towards their fale. His mother jumped up in expectation.

"It's him!" she cried, running out of the fale. Siaki remained where he was and watched the approaching jeep. The jeep carried three men: one Samoan dressed in white shorts and a white shirt, and two American soldiers. The village children swarmed like flies to it only to be driven away by the stick that the Samoan guide wielded. The soldiers laughed. One of them, a tall lanky man, scattered gum among the children. The jeep shrieked to a halt, and the passengers got out. The boy's mother confronted them with disappointment.

Siaki examined the soldiers. Both wore armbands with M.P. printed on them; pistols and batons were strapped to their sides. The children milled round the soldiers while their guide, obviously trying his best to impress everyone, yelled at them and held them off with his stick. A crowd began to gather. "It's the Army Police," Siaki heard someone say. "What are they saying?" Siaki heard an old man ask. "Oh, they're just inquiring about a stolen pig," replied his companion. The crowd laughed.

The soldiers followed his mother into the fale. Siaki brought out clean mats for them to sit on; then he sat down and faced them, with his face a blank, without emotion.

The crowd pressed closer to the fale. The soldiers argued between themselves. In Samoan his mother offered them chairs to sit on. The guide got up, and was just about to make himself comfortable on a chair when someone in the crowd called: "Hey, royal friend, you must be
used to chairs!” Laughter erupted from the crowd. The guide cursed to himself, and sat down on the floor.

The boy glanced up when Mala entered the fale and sat down beside him. He began to feel uncomfortable.

“Well,” the guide said to Siaki’s mother, “we’ve come to talk to you about something.”

“What else did you come for?” jeered a member of the crowd, and again the crowd roared with laughter.

“I’m interpreting for these gentlemen,” the guide insisted.

“C’mon, Bill,” the soldier called Hank said to the guide. “We haven’t got all day. Ask her if she knew a soldier named Jack Summers.” Before the guide could interpret, Siaki’s mother said in English:

“I know him.” The guide looked at the floor; it was his job to interpret.

“So you speak English, eh?” commented the other soldier, a chubby fellow with red cheeks covered with sweat.

“No very well,” replied the woman. “I understand good.” The guide was forgotten immediately.

“When was the last time you saw him,” Hank inquired.

“Three day ago,” she replied. “Why you ask?” The crowd was hushed. The soldiers argued softly. Then Hank nodded to his companion, coughed and said:

“He was found dead two days ago.” Siaki saw his mother’s hands cling desperately to the edge of the mat. He felt Mala looking at him. He didn’t care. “He was killed with this,” continued Hank, placing the bayonet before the woman. “It belonged to him.” The crowd gasped in horror.

“It . . . it not his,” Siaki’s mother forced herself to say. Siaki gazed out to sea. He wasn’t afraid; he just didn’t care.

“It’s his all right,” remarked the other soldier. “The boys at camp identified it.” The woman didn’t bother to say anything. She had given herself completely to the
descending inner darkness of pain where no one could reach her.

"Do you know who could have killed him?" asked Hank. Siaki's mother shook her head. "The guy who did it was pretty good with a knife," continued Hank, encouraged by the woman's emotionless response. "Jack was on guard duty. He was inside the wire fence, and no one can creep up to it without being seen. The place is floodlit." He picked up the bayonet and examined it. "The guy must have thrown it from at least ten yards out."

"Hell, he must've been good awright," chorused the other soldier, feeling uncomfortable on the hard floor. "The bayonet killed him instantly. Pierced the heart." Siaki heard Mala gasp. He looked at his mother. Her hands were tearing the edge of the mat to shreds. She wouldn't break in front of the people. He knew that. He braced himself; he would have to look after her when the people left. The crowd murmured, asking one another if they knew anyone that good with a knife. They agreed they didn't.

"I . . . I know no one . . . no one good with knife," Siaki's mother informed the soldiers.

"Okay, then. We're sorry to have bothered you, ma'am," said Hank. "Sorry 'bout Jack. We'll try and find the guy who did it." The Americans stood up, and the guide trailed them out of the fale like a pet dog.

Slowly the crowd dispersed. Mala remained next to Siaki, who wished she would leave; her presence was an accusation, and growing guilt was beginning to disturb his vacant peace.

Siaki rose to his feet and walked over to his mother. She was bent double with pain, rocking back and forth. Siaki knelt down beside her. She began to weep; her wailing mounting to a scream as she leant on to her son's arms. He let her cry on and on until she collapsed to the floor, exhausted. Mala walked over. With Siaki they lifted his mother and carried her to the bed.

"Who could have done it? Who could have?" cried Siaki's mother as she writhed and clutched at her belly. The boy glanced up at Mala. She was crying. He grasped
her hand. He felt strong, relieved, ready to accept. He didn’t care any more if his father was a drunkard. That wasn’t important. Only his mother mattered now. He loved her. That was enough. He broke down and cried.

“I did it, mother;” he uttered, accepting guilt which descended upon him like a curse. “I did it!” His mother’s hand whipped him across the face. Then she collapsed back into the bed, sighed in relief, and was soon sleeping.

Siaki remained with his face in her pillow. He looked up when Mala’s arms encircled him. Mala smiled at him through tears, as though saying: “You are a man now.”

Murray Rowlands

BUT THE SAILOR WILL SEE HER AGAIN NEXT TIME—

“Where the hell d’ya think ya going,” the foreman roared in a voice that could have been the boss’s when they attempted to drift off a few minutes early at lunch time. He stood there in an oilskin and gumboots holding a mop in his hand. He looked like injustice personified. This was the day when he cleaned out the freezers. She felt that by doing this his superior status was in some way tarnished, and so he was forced to seek recourse in the power of his voice to command respect.

The clock showed one minute to twelve; the boss came from the vat room where he was testing the mix; the sun crystallised the drops of water on the stainless steel bench and they all walked back sheepishly to their benches and tables. The foreman looked at the boss and the boss replied with a knowing look promising praise indeed. Hands pretended to work, eyes pretended to look anywhere but at the clock, and ears travelled every step the boss took away from their room. The sun was a piece of light you could hold in your arms as it came through a small side window. She watched the sun and felt as if she were suspended on the very tip of the large hand of the clock, waiting and poised in anticipation.

Then the siren sounded.
The tension vanished in an instant into the movement of legs towards the doorway. The stepping up of traffic on the street which had begun with an old pre-war car, owned by one of the apprentices, coughing rudely into life, was followed by a chorus of motorbikes. This had lulled as these first had been the more venturesome of the factory. Now the street was full of noise and bustle of feet, of engines, but not of voices. The chatter of voices was only becoming apparent as she, as usual, the last left in the wake of the other girls, now several hundred yards ahead of her, walked down the short flight of steps into the street.

She saw the other girls with the divorced woman walk rapidly waving their hands in excited conversation and at once had the desire to dash forward and catch them up. But then she caught every whisper from the many people hurrying past her; every little laugh seemed directed solely at her, at the panic of anticipation that now lived on her face.

"Why did it matter so much?" she asked herself.

"Why did it seem like going back to the house after she was converted when she was fifteen?" She felt as if she was uncovering her very mind to faces that were outside the natural circle that she was used to. The look in their eyes was that of her father when she had tried to convert him to the joy and certainty she knew in her heart. But the weather had turned cold in the afternoon and the derision that he had poured upon her had eaten her like so many indifferent teeth. She dreamt now of a comfortable flat with a large pile of rock 'n' roll records on the gram. for the frequent forgetting of herself in the dance.

All at once she was terrified of being alone with the panic she felt in her body. To be alone at the destruction of any of the dreams she had ever had. The lights then changed and she caught them half-way across the road, by straining forward, the surface of the road seeming like glass.

"Beaut party Saturday, eh," one of the girls was saying. She heard this and knew she was with the group again. The group sat on the bank of the quiet flowing river and
sware at the greedy seagull that stalked for the crusts that they threw him.

The sense of the grey city crowded in upon her when she swung the bag the girls carried all their lunches in, as they walked back toward the factory. Then her free arm, the only thing free in her body, smashed itself into a lamp post. Instinctively she bent to pick up the bag, being hit a moment later by the greyness that was around her.

"I'm sorry," he said. He was in dark blue jeans and a blue sweater, and she knew, for she had found out early on her arrival in the city that this is what a sailor wore. They found themselves a few yards from the kerb and he was laughing into her eyes. He had stooped and picked up her bag just as the noises of the city began around her again.

"Hard head," said the sailor, bending his legs in an awkward manner suggesting he was embarrassed to be standing holding an old felt bag. She ignored him and looked round for the other girls who had left her.

"They left me, eh," She stamped her foot and stared angrily into the boy's eyes.

"Have some lunch with me," said the boy.

"I dunno you," she said. Her head still hurt, but she looked at the boy again and said, "All right . . . where?"

He found a coffee bar after they had walked a hundred yards down the road. Inside, the sun was busy making a mess of it because it belonged more rightfully to the early morning. At the table where they sat he spent minutes hurrying grains of sugar across the surface of the table. He spoke with his voice fixed on the grain of sugar.

"Got in this morning."

"Yeah."

"On the Clouster City . . . she's a bigin."

"How long you been on them ships?"

"'Bout three years."
“Must have been young when you were first on.”
“How do you know . . . how do you know I’m not twenty-three?”
“Course you’re not . . . see?”
“Well . . . how old am I then?”
“Not twenty yet.”
“If I’m not twenty . . . you’re not sixteen.”
“I’m eighteen boy.”
“Gawn . . . I don’t believe it.”
“Don’t care . . . who’re you anyway?”

They stared at the yellow wall. The touch of the boy’s leg against hers was like an electric shock. She saw that it was five to one and leapt convulsively to her feet. He caught her by the door and asked her where she worked. She heard him say that he would meet her after work, to her retreating back.

Time went quickly in the afternoon because she spent her time trying to adjust her body to the movement of a machine and the questions asked by the girls beside her. The sun was an irregular mess on the concrete floor that even a broom could not sweep away. She blew on her hands that were sore from handling the cold ice cream slices and thought of the same sun cutting into her between two clouds and the phlegm from the sea. The clouds went and the storm came, but instead of the sea continually tracing thick, white outlines around the shore, there was just the road, always the road bouncing back the windborne rain.

“Still dreaming of sailor boy,” they said. Somehow she began to link the sailor’s features with the brittle sharp smell of the air after a storm at home.

“You watch sailor boy . . . he kiss and run away,” they were saying. The shapeless feeling had at last meaning and was not just the tangle of driftwood above the high tide mark.

The sun went quickly and the sticky cellophane glued together more and more often, each time it became more of an effort to stop, pause, and claw desperately. But at
last she was outside in the street. She walked with the boy, who had sheened his black hair, not caring where she was going, and adjusting her steps to his long stride.

"We'll go somewhere and talk," he said. They found a green seat, common to all city parks, in a small park separated from the pavement by a flight of concrete steps. They looked, like the seat, towards the dingy brown factories and warehouses.

"You're from the country," he said.
"How do you know?"
"You look at things the same way I do . . . sorta different from other people. I noticed the way you looked at that flower bed back there . . . ."
"Are you from the country?"
"My father owns a small farm in East Anglia."
"Is that near the sea?"
"Yes. It's on the East coast of England."
"But do you see the sea?"
"No. We're ten miles inland."
She was disappointed and they lapsed into silence for a few minutes.

"What sort of farmer is your father?" said the boy, conscious that there was a peculiarly high pitched tone in his voice.

"He works at the sawmill, boy. We run a few cows. Sometimes they run us though. One time Sam our bull got mad and run us pretty hard."

"Why did you come to the city?"
"She's crowded our home, boy . . . ten kids and another just come. Nothing to do there so we all come . . . just about all our school are here now."
"Y'likin' it?"

The question annoyed her. You could not tie happiness in a big bow to your physical surroundings. Happiness came out of your body at certain times and was not something floating in the air. Again he asked the same question.

"Why?" she snapped out.

But she warmed again to his simplicity and nodded at him. When he reached across and took her hand
she noticed that the back was covered in freckles. She traced the veins out with her eye and didn’t notice how cold the fingers seemed to be. There was only the noise of thinning traffic when the sun dropped into the yellow hills. When she relaxed her shoulder against the upper part of his arm she noticed how some of her tension slid away. The smoke was no longer visible from the railway shunting yards and the larger shops on the other side of town had begun blinking their neon lights. She looked into his face as he slid his hand along the back of the seat, and then paused before putting it around her shoulder. Now she was conscious of his upper leg and thigh.

It was physical to kiss and to open your mouth and feel the full pulp of the tongue. Almost spontaneously her eyes had been turned towards the boy who had leant forward and kissed her. She felt his long coarse fingers feeling her breasts, tracing and retracing them in a kind of harmony. Her flesh glowed as his hands roamed now free over her body. Then anticipation shaped itself into physical feeling. Her body slipped further down the bench until his body completely covered hers. She heard his voice incanting by her ear. This again made her conscious of her loneliness.

“No, boy,” she said. He was pleading and speaking through his hands as well as his lips. Now she became a place of conflict, one part of her driving her on and the other in deep primitive fear of having another press so deeply into her. She rolled her head to and fro, torn by desire and pleasure engendered by the boy’s caresses. It was as though she was on tip toe and the world had stopped. This was what her anticipation had been building up for, this was its ultimate aim.

“Alright boy . . . you’re persistent.”

He stroked her hair in reply.

It was completely dark when she looked over his shoulder at the thick cluster of stars grasping into the night. His hands were gentle against her neck. Then it was all pain, searing vivid red pain; red as the neons now lighting the far sky. There was no protection in his flesh when she sunk her fingers into his shoulder. She cried
deep inside her, unaware whether she had made any external sound or not.

When he had withdrawn she was so naked and so exposed. The stars were eyes looking down, staring at her suddenly half her size.

"I hurt you much?"

Again he was semi-coherent, but this time it had no effect on her. She skipped down the steps leading to the road, as if through movement trying to forget the pain her body had experienced.

"Would you like something to eat?"

The hand that he took awkwardly was cold. He looked at his watch.

"I must be back at the ship in ten minutes. If I get a bus from here I can just make it."

"Where does the ship go?"

"To Brazil."

"When?"

"Tomorrow."

It surprised her when she thought about it later that they sat for five minutes on a bus seat and said nothing. But what could be said when the bus finally droned towards them. They were really strangers. He squeezed her hand, turned up the collar of his coat, and disappeared up the bus's steps.

She followed the bus, her feet slouching forward. A faint breath of wind disturbed the orange street lights, now in sole charge of the street. She bent and picked a yellow daisy, growing where the concrete had chipped. Its leaves were brown, and when she put it under her nose, it had no smell. She stood looking at it for some minutes, revolving the flower between her hands and moving her body as if to some distant unheard music. Then she ran, forcing every bit of air out of her body. The street said nothing when she leant against a lamp post and cried.
Riley came out of the bush just after midday and saw the house down in the narrow valley before him. A string of smoke stood up from the roof.

When he was a hundred yards from the house, just beyond the outer sheds, a dog started barking. He saw a woman come to the back door, look at him, then go back inside. He knew she would have time to do whatever she wished. He wondered if there was a telephone.

As he passed, the dog leapt at him, straining beyond the reach of its chain. Its tail thrashed the air and its bark was shrill. But he knew it was only a brash, noisy animal. It would grant friendship to all. He thought about the warm, lean neck; how it would feel in his hands. The dog would think he was playing with it.

The woman was waiting as he came up to the back door. She greeted him easily, ignoring the rifle at his thigh.

"I thought it would be you," she said as she backed into the house before him.

His eyes swept the kitchen.

"I'm here by myself," the woman explained. "My man's gone down the valley for the day . . . help a friend pull stumps." She was anxious, her hands like heavy, nervous birds before her. Riley put the rifle down. He would give himself half an hour.

"I was almost expecting you," she continued. He looked at her. She gestured. "The radio's been talking about you all morning . . . You must be hungry . . ."

She was a tall woman cloaked with a heavy spread of flesh. Yet her body did not droop. Her small features were gathered on a small face.

Riley stared at her. Her eyes slid away.

"Yeah," he said. "I'm hungry."

She waved at the food on the sink bench.

"There's more," she said.

Before he ate he pushed the coarse jersey away from his wrists and washed his hands carefully. Then he
attacked the bread and meat beside him. The woman's talk came fast.

"Most of them from down the flat are helping them look for you . . . my man isn't, of course. He was going to have nothing of it. He was a bit for you . . ." She hesitated. "Is it bad in there? Do you get it tough? You know . . .?"

Riley looked at her, his mouth thick with food. Her face was stupid, he thought. He nodded his head at her.

"Well, you're doing alright," she told him. "They were over behind Kimberly late this morning. That's a good six miles away."

"Yeah . . .," he managed.
She brightened. Her eyes found the rifle.
"Where did you get the gun?"
Flecks of food flew from his mouth.
"Friend's."
"Huh. Say . . ." She made a show of remembering. "I suppose you could use some liquor."
She made a move further into the house. He grabbed her arm.
"Wait," he said.
He threw the half-eaten joint of meat at the sink and followed her into the interior of the house. There was a telephone hanging on the wall of the dim passage.

She went into a large bare room and crouched down in front of a cupboard. He stood behind her as she examined the bottles, and he saw the shape of her through the taut material of the frock. She was bulky.

Then as she drew back towards him, bottle in hand, he stooped and threw her on her back like a turtle. The bottle crashed over the floor. She clawed at his face.

She tried to bite him when he was on her, but when he had spent his bigness and was easy beside her, the blood was running out from her mouth over her face. Her eyes were shut.

"I had wanted that," she said.
He laughed. She was stupid alright.
Then suddenly he lifted himself up beside her and
ripped the rest of the material from her body. The flesh moved pale, released. Her eyes remained shut.

Clenching his hands, he bent and kneaded her breasts. His knuckles were sharp and horny, and he watched her fight the pain in her face. His knee came up into her soft, open crutch. She squealed.

Then his hands were into her neck and he was straddling the bucking body as if he was fighting a horse.

He found the bottle still intact against the wall. It was a third full of whisky. He found an old haversack in the kitchen and he stuffed it with the bottle and some food. Then he picked up the rifle and left the house.

The dog sprang at him, its body eager, eyes bright. He cursed, he had forgotten it.

Abruptly he brought the rifle to his shoulder and snapped the catch off. But the animal sprang aside as he fired.

The bullet entered its back and slammed it to the ground. Its eyes flickered, filmed, and it whimpered like a human. Its fur was splashed with blood. Riley's temper broke.

"F . . . you dog!" he screamed. "F . . . you dog!"

And with four more bullets he blasted a hole the size of a fist in the animal's head.

Then he turned and started at a run for the hills.

*John Parkyn*

THE LAST LECTURE—

In the moment of absolute tranquillity which preceded the shaping of his notes into a neat oblong, the grey-haired man, together with the formidable pile of books surrounding him, composed a rather faded still-life. The picture was completed as the lengthening early evening shadows cast by the adjoining buildings encompassed the room and its contents with a grey shroud, veiling those passing few seconds with a unique timelessness. Professor
Wilhelm gave a soundless yawn, stifled the sigh with a gesture, and drew a clay pipe from his pocket. After the third attempt he managed to light the imported tobacco, not because of any lack of dexterity brought about by senility, but because he had still, after forty years’ lecturing at the same university, not rid himself of the unforgivable habit of returning dead matches into the box. But eccentricities were generally permitted the academic mind, he mused, and indeed, in some instances this was all they had to offer. Often they would remain known only to the person himself; but Professor Wilhelm was fully aware that the relationship between the parrot in the cage behind him, his clay pipe, and himself, had long been a topic of student conversation. He turned, then, to observe the bird that had been his study companion for so many years and that he had been so regularly identified with. A white cockatoo, it returned his gaze with fitting solemnity, occasionally twitching its head to nuzzle beneath a wing. (Professor Wilhelm had never bothered to name it, but simply referred to it as “parrot” in lighter moods, or, if there were occasion for annoyance when it manifested its hatred of captivity by pecking the Professor’s fingers unawares, under a collective name of his own invention, “parratus cockatuus”. Sometimes, the Professor queried his motivations, but when he read one morning tea time a newspaper headlining “Bohemian Orgies”, he understood himself perfectly.)

This evening, however, the bird was less amiable than it had been for some weeks. Perhaps it was too draughty on the window ledge, thought the Professor. Or perhaps it, too, in its own way, suffered that end-of-term feeling. The breeze had increased in force, yet the bird was surely accustomed to the elements by now. It seemed to enjoy itself even more when in closer contact with the outdoor world, which was why he always left the window open. Perhaps it even enjoyed music; if it did, there was always the periodic entertainment provided by an assortment of bells which could be heard tolling across the town from various carillons and clock towers throughout the day. There was the possibility of releasing the bird, considered Professor Wilhelm, but then again, freedom was often
only a matter of acclimatisation to varying restrictions of environment.

Professor Wilhelm took another deliberate draw on his pipe. Turning his back on the parrot, he found himself once more in that familiar position of his, both elbows on the desk, head between hands, and essays to either side, neatly piled according to percentage attained. As he remained motionless, he wondered which of his senses he was most conscious of at that time; whether the steady coolness of hands on cheek, the faint aroma from the smouldering pipe, or the barely registering ticking of the ancient clock on the mantelpiece were receiving more attention than, say, the strain of his eyes focussing on the calendar at the end of the room, and that after a wearying academic year, too.

The Professor laughed. If there were any sensation he was most aware of right then, it was the bitter taste in his mouth of the interview he had just completed in the preceding hour. They had been most polite from the time he entered the office carrying the envelope and, of course, exceedingly diplomatic. What had been most surprising regarding the general aura of bonhomie was that those of the interviewers not from the immediate hierarchy of the university but representing Government interests answerable only to the Prime Minister had treated him with far more respect than he had expected. His colleagues, on the other hand, had been a little objectionable, and were it not for the fact that he wished to preserve a certain show of dignity through to the end, he would have most certainly walked out on the whole party. It had been quite unnecessary the way some of the members of other faculties, and even his own, had insinuated unsavoury behaviour on his part. Besides, many of them were considerably younger than he was, and even if they did not agree with his views, they could at least have respected his age and worthiness to hold them. But in all fairness, it had probably been a distinctly uncomfortable event for all of them, one which they had never participated in before, and this strangeness had perhaps induced certain fears which they took out on him in the form of bad manners.
The Vice-chancellor had been the most interesting of all. At the beginning of the interview he had said: “Every man has the right to believe in something, provided he is discreet and discerning.” This somewhat naive remark could have been deliberately conceived as such, thought the Professor, in order to render him at first antagonistic and later, full of admiration for the philosophical statements that ensued as the interview progressed. Though the interview lasted only one hour, for the Professor it seemed more like a week. The questions were answered with patience, but instead of finishing there, they invariably seemed to open further doorways for new questions to be led into the interminable corridors of cross-examination. Professor Wilhelm remembered thinking during the coffee break (the chairman offered him sugar and cream before the other men) that the whole incident was vaguely surrealistic; but reality was quickly restored when a brief reference was made to his parrot, which slightly offended the Professor. “If it could talk, we’d learn the whole story,” had muttered what looked like one of the librarians who was making notes of some kind in shorthand. Professor Wilhelm felt tempted to ask just why he was taking notes and just why he had brought “parratus cockatuus” into the conversation, but it seemed likely that little notice would be taken of him. Besides, a librarian was scarcely expected to know that this particular species of “parratus cockatuus” was incapable of mimicking language.

Before the coffee break finished, a senior lecturer (whom the Professor used to play golf with in undergraduate days) had whispered in his ear: “Don’t worry, old chap, it’s not you on trial, it’s the system.” Professor Wilhelm was about to ask what exactly was meant, and whether perhaps his nervous system was endangered, but before he could, the senior lecturer had bobbed behind a curtain of inscrutability, muttering something about his handicap being reduced to twelve. The gathering’s atmosphere had almost assumed that of a cocktail party when the chairman rapped a paper knife on the table and called the meeting to order. Professor Wilhelm blinked twice and wiped the sweat from his brow with an embroidered linen handkerchief his wife had ironed that morning. It
was hard to believe this was his own country. . . .

. . . “Now where did you say you were born, Professor?”

All in all, it had been quite an extraordinary after-
noon, he reflected. Immediately before the interview, one
of the students he had assisted in the printing of the
pamphlet had stopped him in the corridor. The student
looked hot, flushed and a little excitable, for the first time
without the usual calmness he had shown during the weeks
of preparation of the publication. Whenever the Pro-
fessor had had occasion to clarify then reinforce the more
complex interpretations of their task, and this often met
with conflicting opinions, especially from the more dog-
matic younger people, this student, maturer than the others
and one of his own class, had proved to be an excellent liaison.
Although not commanding the admiration and
respect of the older man, he was better suited to talking
to the other students on their own terms, and was respon-
sible for the snowballing ramifications of the movement
throughout the college. What had begun largely as an
experiment developed, through him, into something that
had the support, directly or indirectly, of most of the
undergraduates. Professor Wilhelm’s lectures increased in
popularity, and it was not an uncommon sight to see
students sitting in the aisles during the last term. But
Professor Wilhelm was perturbed that the student had
stopped him so openly in the corridor to discuss the
pamphlet. Already matters had gone too far in that it
was now an open secret in most circles as to what was
taking place. Apparently, even the impending interview
was known to the students involved, for the student asked
the Professor what he intended doing, and why he was
carrying the envelope. The Professor looked quizzically
at the student, in the same way as he had looked quizzic-
ally at students for forty years, and paused before replying.
He said: “I think I shall just have to talk to them.” The
student had then reacted quite out of keeping with his
character, the Professor recalled. He had hurried off, in
the direction of the cafeteria, without another word. But
it was the last day of the last term for the year and he
had, more than likely, many matters to attend to. . . .
... "We repeat, was the university's printing press used, Professor? And if so, what authority ..."

Professor Wilhelm could not help but suppress a quiet chuckle as the interviewers stopped to compare notes before their next barrage of questions, for he had often discussed with the students just what would take place if their activities were uncovered. In actual fact, they had never really considered the possibility that the group would be revealed, and it was rather coincidental that it had been, considered Professor Wilhelm, due to the immense loyalty all the students involved had shown him from the very beginning. That, perhaps, would be the salient feature worth remembering. It was difficult to realise that the evenings of furtive meetings in private homes and coffee bars had finished, the meetings where idealism had had to come to terms with practicality, the meetings that had climaxed with the publication of the pamphlet and the headlines in the newspapers. ...

... "The names of the students, what were their names, Professor?"

And it was not until those last few minutes of the interview that Professor Wilhelm perceived how detached he had been throughout. He remembered at one stage holding up the proceedings while he searched for the notes to be delivered in his lecture at five o'clock, which would begin shortly after the interview. The chairman told him that at a time like this he should hardly be thinking of lectures, but the Vice-chancellor reminded the chairman there was a syllabus still to be completed, and that fee-payers were entitled to their full course. ...

... "You realise, of course, Professor, that your appointment here could automatically ..."

The final proposition was so curious in its presentation and Professor Wilhelm was caught so completely unawares that he evaded the eyes of his colleagues by refuelling his pipe. This operation took a length of time out of all proportion and he wondered whether perhaps the slight shaking of his hands had anything to do with it. He decided to the contrary, because he had knowledge of this trembling for at least a month, and moreover his doctor
had attributed it to nothing more than overwork for a man of his age. After elaborating on this diagnosis for far longer than a guinea was customarily worth, the doctor had recommended retirement, but Professor Wilhelm was emphatic in refusing to terminate his career before he had achieved a more complete satisfaction. And ironically, this last statement posed him a dilemma, on the surface at least, to threaten this very striving for a deeper fulfilment.

Professor Wilhelm bore this potential jeopardy in mind as he addressed the interviewers for the last time. He explained that he finally realised his true place in relation to the university and that, for the time being, he had very little more to say. He said that everything the inquiry should know about was in the envelope, which he laid on the table in front of the Vice-chancellor, first dusting away some ash which had fallen from his pipe. In the time it took him to position the envelope and return to his seat, the Professor was overcome with an urge to address the meeting once more. He wanted to tell them that they were right, that a man’s vocational status should not have to be endangered due to an extra-curricular activity indulged in probably more for the sake of a cause than anything else; he wanted to tell them this, and to point out that, as with most group actions, causes could be graded into inferior, mediocre and superior, and that the choosing of a cause was always harder to accomplish than any promulgation of the cause. Eventually, the Professor convinced himself that it was necessary to elucidate his actions. He reached for the envelope again and replaced it in his hip pocket; as he had expected, the room became suddenly silent.

“Did you . . . feel you wanted to add something, Professor Wilhelm?” asked the senior lecturer, swallowing the remains of his sentence with a flavouring of nervousness and embarrassment.

Professor Wilhelm paused. He gazed at a lone fly, obviously sent as an observer, circling and droning above the balding head of one of the Government representatives.

“No,” he said, without deliberating. “I’ve changed my mind.” In the long silence that followed, he glanced
at the chairman to see whether this met with his approval, but the chairman was busily engaged in testing the edge of the paper-knife on his forefinger and cleaning beneath his thumbnails.

The meeting then appeared to temporarily relapse into the informality of the coffee break. Professors of other faculties, in accordance with the traditions of any peer group, gathered around and congratulated him on his decision. The Vice-chancellor stated that as it was evident the Professor had not reached his conclusions, on what was basically an idealistic issue, without some supreme soul searching, then he could see no reason for further prolonging the inquiry. He mentioned quite affably that it was not, by any means, for this meeting to order or even recommend a suspension, but rather to aid a fellow colleague in distress. The Professor had devoted his lifetime as a servant of his students, contributing both to the social and intellectual development of a university which he was proud of, and which was proud of him. As the Vice-chancellor finished what had almost become a speech, the senior lecturer (whom the Professor used to play golf with in undergraduate days) invited Professor Wilhelm to a match in the weekend, and to bring his wife also, if he felt so inclined.

The paper-knife’s scraping on the forefinger ceased.

“Well, then . . . it’s only a matter of the envelope?” asked the chairman. A ripple of apologetic laughter floated around the interviewers.

“Yes, it . . . would appear so,” smiled the balding Government representative. The fly circled a fraction closer.

Professor Wilhelm took the envelope from his pocket again and replaced it on the table. The interviewers took their places once more and there was instant silence apart from the heavy breathing of the librarian, who had considerably exerted himself in taking down a full, fair and accurate account of the proceedings. The first person to speak was a professor who had instructed at the same university for almost as long as Professor Wilhelm himself, provided sick leave was not taken into account, as
his health had failed him nearly as often as he had failed students.

"I propose we carry on in committee," he said, urgently and in one breath. "Begin at the beginning." There was a murmur of assent, but the chairman intervened, ruling that a vote was necessary.

"After all, this is a democracy," agreed the Vice-chancellor, adjusting the gold pin on his wool tie.

Professor Wilhelm sensed the unanimity even before the show of hands. He would have liked to have remained while he was still under discussion, but the interviewers evidently no longer required his presence, and were emphasizing this with a stony silence. He thought it best to leave without protest, as they were obviously preoccupied, and in any case, he had that lecture to deliver in five minutes’ time.

Yes, the inquiry had certainly been extremely interesting, thought the Professor, rising from behind his desk and collecting his lecture notes. Perhaps the whole matter would be put down to eccentricity, to join the parrot, the clay pipe and himself. Whatever the outcome, however, he knew that he would be able to rely on the support of the students. There were the few occasions when he had lost his temper and denounced them all in uncontrollable generalities; his wife had usually to bear the brunt of these, countering by deliberately over-boiling his breakfast eggs to channel his anger in another direction. But by the end of the day, and the end of the evening meal, the issues were forgotten, and discarded as easily as the daily newspapers are thrown aside. Oddly, he had found that as the years passed, his tolerance of the younger generations had increased. He vividly recalled his violent reaction in that first year at the university when he arrived at his lecture room to find his delivery gesticulations mimicked by a bearded youth. Actually, the caricature had been quite a clever piece of acting, and later the youth became a successful cabinet minister. My motives could be strictly selfish, wondered Professor Wilhelm. Tolerance by the ageing could conceal a certain patronisation in order to sustain their own youth, even if only in the realm of
new ideas and trends; this contrasted sharply with the other type, prominent in Letters to the Editor, but honest in their jealousy. Professor Wilhelm knew that he was constantly learning from his pupils and, in a sense, they had far more to offer him than he had them.

He was about to leave his room then, when he heard the parrot uttering some barely audible, and, in their own way, quaint noises. What was it the librarian had said? “If it could talk, we’d learn the whole story.” Yet as soon as Professor Wilhelm set his gaze on its beak, he noticed that its efforts were achieving very little, in spite of the concerted strain. And even if it were successful in self-expression, the Professor was doubtful whether it would ever win an appreciative audience, least of all from its own kind. But then, a bird can express itself in two ways, in song or in flight, said Professor Wilhelm, surprised to hear himself voicing his thought aloud. He opened the cage door and placed the bird on the back of his left hand, and with his right, he levered open the study window. Tentatively, he outstretched his arm until it was level with the window sill. Almost immediately, the bird struggled to rise in flight. The Professor had a preconceived notion that it would not succeed, but nevertheless, he had hoped that a better performance would be given. There was an element of futility in the way in which it beat its wings with no effect. Eventually, it was forced by the wind against the pane that protruded at right-angles to the building. Professor Wilhelm was puzzled, unsure whether to be pleased or not. Gently, he placed the parrot back in the cage.

The easterly outside the university was waning while the Professor hurried down the corridor, as fast as his ageing body would allow him. As he did so, he recollected a friend saying to him at the inquiry that he hoped the university would be able to benefit from many further years of his experience. His reply had been: “No, I will be finishing tonight.” This had surprised his colleague, remembered the Professor, but now, as he walked into the lecture hall, with barely the hint of a falter in his stride and as proudly as he had first done so forty years earlier,
he knew that, by then, only a few minutes later, it would be obvious to all of them.

Professor Wilhelm put on his glasses and adjusted the notes on the reading stand. Reaching for the light switch, he laughed wryly to himself. It would have all been far more worthwhile to have seen their faces when they emptied the few grams of bird seed from the envelope, he thought. But still, it was a pity that "parratus cockatuus" had to go hungry tonight. Nevertheless, there were other matters to attend to, and if there were one thing the Professor was emphatic about, it was the methodical planning of his lectures. Fundamentally, he knew they were not creative, being merely contrived orations based on someone else's ideas; yet in a sense, they were true for him. He could not describe that indefinable impulse he felt swelling inside him halfway through a lecture, when he knew that what he was trying to say was winning a response. This end product was a reward in itself, but each section of the process had to be dealt with in turn, and so the Professor decided to repress everything pertaining to the interview from his mind, and to concentrate solely on the delivery of the lecture. His only hope was that the afternoon's incidents would not in any way affect this, for what value the pamphlet if it meant the failure of even one hour of his profession?

In an instant, he sensed that something was wrong. He looked up from his notes and saw, to his surprise, that the lecture hall was empty. He found this rather hard to understand, for only that afternoon, before the interview, he had spoken to the student who was in his own class. He took out his diary and checked to see whether the faculty had closed the day before, but there the entry was pencilled in, and in his own awkward handwriting. He remembered the student had asked him what he was going to do and he had replied: "I shall just have to talk to them." There was the vague possibility that this had been misinterpreted, but it was hardly likely. He had known them all too well for there to be the remotest chance of that happening. Moreover, it was particularly unfair of him to think that, frowned the Professor; none of them was present to defend himself on such a cruel charge.
Either they genuinely believed the term had already con-
cluded or, more probably, he himself had misinformed them
with a slip of the tongue the day before. Still, it was
a pity that none of them, even some of the older students
whom he had come to know as closely as it was academi-
cally possible, was present, for he had planned on making
the last lecture his finest effort.

And he knew it was the last lecture because, straining
his eyes, he could now make out the two men who had
entered quietly, pausing at the back entrance to light
cigarettes. The balding one coughed artificially. It would
be rather naive of me to think they were here for higher
learning, thought the Professor, admitting, however, that
it did first briefly occur to him. They approached nearer,
appearing slightly out of place in the lecture hall. Middle-
aged and pleasant featured, they slowed respectfully,
allowing him time to regather his notes and return the
diary to his pocket.

Professor Wilhelm turned off the light switch above
the reading stand: somewhere, he could hear a bell tolling.

Les Cleveland

A COURSE IN SURVIVAL—

It is 10 o’clock, Armistice Day, 1937. I am outside
the sports locker rooms.

"There will be a one-minute silence. The school will
stand to attention. The band will play ‘God Save the
King’.”

The Headmaster had given this out at morning
assembly with the gravity of a top diplomat telling the
Christmas Islanders about the schedule for the next atomic
explosion. Then he stalked off to the staffroom to go
over the campaign with the rest of the top brass.

This school is a barracks where we rehearse a crude,
quasi-military comic opera round the school band, the
cadet corps, and the doctrine of keenness. At the blast
of a prefect’s whistle, hundreds of louts in short pants and
flannel shirts with the sleeves rolled up to a regulation height of one inch above the elbow, scramble to key positions and fall-in by platoons. To trumpet and drum, and the animal-farm shrieks of a swarm of n.c.o.’s, they march into company echelons and do physical drill, sometimes to music from a wireless amplifier hooked up to the school gramophone. It plays “The Skater’s Waltz”. The n.c.o.’s examine us critically about the head, arms, hands and feet before herding us on to the battalion parade ground.

There, by a swift manipulation of masks, the masters appear in blustering khaki as majors, captains and lieutenants. The battalion sergeant-major is a barrel-bellied Boer War veteran on the permanent army staff who has advanced from the local drill hall on a khaki-painted Boer war bicycle. He calls for markers. We shamble through the obsolete rigmarole of the British Army Manual of Elementary Drill. It is a ritual derived from tactics which no doubt were successful at Waterloo, but which are going to be demonstrated before long to us uneasy cannon fodder as hopelessly inadequate to withstand the Panzer onrushes, the Stuka attacks and the blitzkrieg assaults—onslaughts which, had we but known it, the wily Hun was at that very moment devising for our further education.

But today the school band pumps and dribbles reassuringly through the Invercargill March, the right hand guides spring rapidly to attention with a clockwork click of their shining heels, the battalion falls in, numbers off, forms fours, open-order marches, and struts obediently to the commands of Imperial Authority. The officers take post at their respective company stations, and the Headmaster, a tight, Napoleonic, beribboned figure, complete with spurs and a cavalry sword, confers with his adjutant. Ten o’clock strikes. Sad whistles wail from the boilers of both the school heating system and a nearby brewery. The Head snaps the battalion to attention. The officers salute. The band wheezes into the National Anthem. The Head clanks his sword up into the general salute. All are transfixed in a respectful tableau before that shining symbol of authority and tradition. Only a few cripples propped up on their crutches outside one of the classrooms, and a scat-
tering of strays who had been temporarily left out of battle on account of illness are exempt.

I am one of these. I look at the Head. He is glaring behind his sword. I think of Armistice Day, Anzac Day, League of Nations Day, May Day, Empire Day, Christmas Day and Mothers’ Day. I can see what’s wrong with this parade. It isn’t so much that it’s an attempt to turn Armistice Day, and whatever it might stand for, into a kind of Empire loyalty demonstration—I don’t object to that—it’s simply that the Head isn’t doing it properly.

“The fool,” I think. “He doesn’t know anything about it.”

This is true. The Head got a commission in peacetime and has never seen a shot fired, let alone a cavalry charge. The only people on the staff who perhaps have, are keeping very quiet about it. When they turn up on these parades they always stand morosely in what I am one day to realise are attitudes of doubt and suppressed irritation.

“Anyway,” I tell myself, “I’m not a soldier; why should I have to stand to attention?” So I don’t. I lounge against the locker room door with my hands in my pockets. This is conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline. It is defiance, insurrection—a questioning of the entire Anglo Saxon tradition of obedience to the tribal mores that looms behind the brass band and the military rituals.

The Head sees me out of the corner of his eye. I get a caning.

“You used to be such a keen young fellow,” he says. “But you’ve got very slack lately, very slack. It won’t do.”

He is quite right. During my first year at this school I build up an impressive reputation for my keenness. I fling myself into all the compulsory sports parades. I badger the masters in charge of the junior grades for sports equipment with which to play extra games on unscheduled occasions. I swot up books on rugby and on athletics and I go for training runs with the Third Fifteen. Later on I am to realise this might have been the path to a brilliant future—a good sporting record at school, a steady job with
an oil company or a stock and station agency, a commission when the war breaks out, and a responsible post (preferably somewhere behind the lines), promotion to managerial rank on return to the office, perhaps a few seasons as a rugby selector ("It's a pity about the war, he'd have been an All Black if he could have kept going"), membership of the right clubs, a few lucrative directorships, maybe appointment to this or that advisory board or administrative tribunal. Anything could have been possible. But instead I am corrupted by Science and Technology.

In these simple days people still believe in Science. Sometimes they tut-tut about the likelihood of poison gas being used in warfare again, or have occasional qualms about dropping explosives on unarmed civilians; but nobody is obliged to worry about the possibility of blowing up whole cities and laying waste whole continents. People think Science can be coaxed along so that progress and happiness will be almost as automatic as the notion of social security which Michael Joseph Savage, Uncle Scrim and a few other howling revolutionaries are scheming to establish in New Zealand.

I read books on economics, and on scientific method, and I join the Science Club. No more training runs and extended football practices. In between manufacturing home-made explosives and experimenting with an illegal radio transmitter which some of us are constructing in a corner of the school boiler room, we wonder why political science can't be made into a more exact discipline and why everyone is kicking up such a fuss about the depression.

Anyone who is at school during the thirties can't help knowing all about the depression. If your parents don't have some money you probably never get to a secondary school, but if you do, you find yourself trying to matriculate in three years so that you can compete for a job as an office boy, a bank clerk, or if you are extremely talented and lucky, as a cadet in the Civil Service. If you get as far as a university it is axiomatic that you are the New Zealand equivalent of a gentleman. This was soon to be no longer the case, but in the thirties, whatever the physical hardships and moral anxieties, one certainly knows one's
social status. The example of the next door neighbour being charged with theft for stealing firewood from the wharf, the people across the road going bankrupt and having to sell their home, the schoolmate's father who commits suicide when his business fails, and the swaggers who are always turning up at our place looking for feeds, or just being found asleep under the big macrocarpa hedge, enable you to sort your position out very accurately in terms of pounds, shillings, pence, meals and beds.

There are a few sons of the rural aristocracy, as well as some boys from well-to-do industrial, upper-middle-class families at this microcosm, but most of us are from lower, more insecure levels and we know it. We have arguments about Socialism, Fascism and Communism at the Science Club, and we concern ourselves with the possibility that the mild little band of opportunists who constitute the first Labour Government should institute what the newspapers are calling the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat". A club meeting ends in a fight when a faction of farmers' sons rises in revolt during a debate on "Should New Zealand Be Turned into a Collective Farm?"

It is suggested that depressions could be prevented if the Government took over agriculture. The peasantry might resist, but they could be disciplined. That starts the fight.

The Head stops me in the corridor next day and says the club had better limit itself to pure science and keep off politics: parents have been complaining about the damage done to their children by the farmers' party. These farmers' champions are hefty creatures—one of them has the distinction of being the best belcher in the school. He can reverberate his way through a whole stanza of the National Anthem, but in no disrespectful way; he is quite capable of vigorously defending tradition and the status quo when what he feels to be his real interests or his personal dignity are threatened.

The Head gives me another lecture on keenness and says it would be better for me if I concentrated on sport instead of setting myself up as a political agitator. Now in these days, Headmasters are still important people. They
have not been reduced by the growing power of the Education Department to mere administrative dummies, carrying out the instructions of the central bureaucracy in Wellington, being polite to parents, nice to the staff, and appearing as benign, apologetic father figures to the pupils in the institutions. Headmasters still have power. They set themselves up as authorities. They introduce all sorts of crackpot systems into their schools, they thunder out moral instruction and make ex cathedra statements on formal occasions. One tyrant even turns his breakfast table into a forum for philosophical discourse, and when he runs out of his own platitudes he has his children recite passages from Shakespeare, the New Zealand equivalent of Greek. All these old Gradgrinds are guardians of the national well-being, manipulators of its future collective mind. Few actually see themselves as teachers, however, and it is not till years later I am to realise that the only thing you can possibly get from a New Zealand school, apart from a rather patchy formal education, depending on what crank happens to be influencing the syllabus at the time, is a certain amount of training for survival in the adult arena. Not training in theoretical tactics either, but training in ordinary commercial hand-to-hand fighting, using boots, claws, broken bottles, biting, gouging and verbal dexterity as well. No holds barred. The worse the school—that is to say, the more confused, brutal, tyrannical, cynical and materialistic the regime—the more can this be seen by a child of average sensibility to resemble the adult world outside, and in consequence, the more useful preparation it offers for the ordeal that awaits him.

So I ask myself questions. What possible relevance could the myth of team spirit have in a society which can’t find enough useful work for everyone to do, and which tolerates fear and distress in God’s Own Country, to say nothing of racial hatred and political oppression in Europe? It occurs to me that the Head is in the position of a king in a feudal state. But he is a bad king. Instead of warning his subjects about the Black Plague and the difficult things they will have to do to deal with it, he is telling them fairy stories. Anyone can see that the Headmaster’s sword-rattling is no answer to the blitzkrieg methods which
have been used experimentally in the Spanish Civil War, or, for that matter, even the terrific fire power of the infantry in the concluding stages of World War I. It is not even any use as a symbolic evocation of force and intelligence, because it is an evasion of reality. The most that such leadership can do is to send us trampling heroically into another Gallipoli or another Passchaendael. I can see that in this school, as perhaps in the world outside, it is necessary to resist in order to survive. Fortunately there are opportunities for guerrilla fighting.

I am ultimately to find that the impressive thing about New Zealand lies in its ability to produce, at any given moment, an impressive assortment of heretics, cranks and dissenters as well as the usual clamour of uncertainty, selfishness, panic and intrigue from the main body of citizenry. Like the larger world outside, this school has its mystique. On the one hand there are the official, invalid, discredited, inadequate myths: on the other there is the range of uncertain, imaginative, individual possibilities. Like all resourceful institutions this one has its officially sponsored subversives. One of them is an eccentric art master who fights the prevailing materialism by embracing it. In order to arouse glimmerings of interest in the reluctant prisoners before him, he is forced to talk about how Cellini actually made his big bronze castings, how Michaelangelo mixed his paints and how sculptors grappled with their blocks of marble. If we can’t grasp the form of the artifact we can at least investigate the components of it. Another rugged individualist is always scurrying around the Alps on mountaineering expeditions. This makes him fitter than anyone else on the staff and enables him to referee football matches and coach the First Fifteen by vigorously intervening in the scrum himself with a curse and a thump here, and a stimulating cuff there. It also enables him to talk condescendingly about football as if it were, after all, only a game for sudy pops who get puffed after running about for an hour or so, on flat ground too.

And there are dancing classes. You go to these if your parents have the money for the fees. If you are lucky and cunning you dance with the Headmaster's
daughter—a voluptuous redhead of 17, filling in time at home until she goes on a physical education course. She is helping the regular dancing mistress—a more mature and disillusioned specimen from among the staff wives—to introduce us to genteel social behaviour and the delights of the dance. I track the redhead to the local skating rink on afternoons when I should be at compulsory sports. She is very friendly.

Every few weeks you are herded into the school hall and mustered into the Gay Gordons by the scowling staff. Girls are laid on from a nearby private school. All goes well until the secretary of the Science Club flogs a bottle of absolute alcohol from the chemistry laboratory and laces the girls’ fruit drinks with it. There is a row afterwards because some of the girls pass out and are subsequently pronounced to be drunk when the matron at their school holds an inquiry. The Head gives a talk at morning assembly on the dangers of sex and alcohol. He also bans the Science Club.

We hand over the minute book and the funds go out of existence officially, but we continue to meet secretly in the school boiler room. The boiler room is an island of humanism in the ocean of authority. It is the only comfortable place in the school. The cripples who can’t do drill or sports sit on sacks of coal and old packing cases, reading books about sex or smoking illicit cigarettes; deserters and conscientious objectors skulk among the pipes, and the Science Club continues its serious research projects in a corner which once held an electric lighting plant. When the Head liquidates the club he does not destroy its underground roots.

One afternoon we are all down there tinkering with the radio transmitter we have made in order to carry out a special exercise on Sports Day. We propose to install a secret circuit in the school amplifier system so that we can operate it by remote control through our transmitter. This, we hope, will enable us to superimpose embarrassing wisecracks on official announcements, introduce snatches of improbable music and bursts of gibberish when the Head is presenting the prizes and making speeches. We
have just been trying out a Shirley Temple record played backwards at the wrong speed.

"What we want," I say, "is something like that only a bit more crazy, a bit more violent. It wants to sound like somebody in the middle of a real bails up, yelling his head off, saying all sorts of mad things. What we want's a cross between Charlie Chaplin and Bob Semple, something that's completely opposite to the Head's idea of himself. He's a little man, see—and like all little jokers he thinks he's Napoleon. (I have just read a book on psychology and I'm a hot shot at character analysis.)

"And who do you think you are?" sneers one of the cripples who is listening—a pale, bitter casuist with a twisted foot. This is unexpected. I hadn't actually thought of that aspect of psychology.

"Yes, you," said the cripple. "You're busy pulling everyone's tit—what about your own?"

"I haven't got any," I tell him coldly.

"Ha!" sneers the cripple. "That's what you think. And that's what you think because you think you're a great lady killer like Ramon Novarro or Errol Flynn or somebody."

"Shut up, you rotten little twisted up bastard!" I say. "You're jealous because the Head's daughter likes me, that's all. I can't help it if women are fascinated by me. It's just one of those things.

When the laughing stops I realise that the transmitter has been running all the time. Most of this dialogue has been picked up by the old carbon granule microphone we are using, but I don't suppose it matters; we are using a dummy aerial and it won't carry beyond the school buildings.

A few nights later, after I've been to dancing class, I am kissing the Head's daughter in the back seat of his Chev. where he has left it parked in his driveway. With analytic passion my tongue is exploring the inside of her throat while I rummage elbow deep in her clothing. The door is wrenched open and her father shines a torch on us.

"The great lady killer, eh?" he hisses. "Go to my study."
He hustles the girl inside and comes after me. Obviously he's been listening in to all our doings on his own wireless set in the house. He probably just leaves it running all the time and monitors us whenever we come on the air. So that's why he always seems to be one jump ahead of us! We'll have to change our frequency or something.

"This is just one of those things," he says when the caning begins. "Personally I think there's more of the Machiavelli about me than the Napoleon, and this is fortunate for you, otherwise I should most likely expel you."

When I do escape from that school I ask the Head for a reference. He smiles an omnipotent smile and scribbles.

It reads: "He took his part in school activities."