Verbrugghen had played one of the Scotsman’s violins, and the quality of tone had impressed him so deeply that a meeting was arranged.

Wil Auchterlonie took the measurement’s of the Master’s Stradivarius, a 5000 instrument which was on loan from the Belgian Government. Verbrugghen offered to take the first violin he made after the encounter, but he died on a tour of New Zealand and America, and Wil Auchterlonie daughter still has the instrument.

Her father told her the Master had commented that the fiddles he made would never find recognition in his own or his children’s day but that perhaps in his grand-children’s day they would be sought after.

so it may be Wil Auchterlonie will never know. He died on Monday, at the age of 85, just three months after the death of his wife Elizabeth, and by coincidence on the same day that the world was honouring the anniversary of the birth of a fellow countryman, Robbie Burns.

His funeral is from Parsons’ chapel today at 3.15 p.m. to the Crematorium.

He is survived by four daughters and one son Mrs. A. Denham, Mrs. M. Naughton, Mrs. J. Lane, Mrs. A. Humphries and Mr. W. Auchterlonie.

LANDLOPERS

The Tale of a Drifting Travel, and the Quest of Pardon and Peace, Written by J. Le Gay Brereton.

Although undated this work was probably first published in 1899. According to Brereton, “Much of the story is founded upon the author’s own experiences. Therefore I think well to explain that ‘The Boy’ is not a portrait of any one of my friends, though in depicting him I have found it convenient to borrow a few details (of costume, employment etc) from one who travelled with me a few years ago. But essentially ‘The Boy’ is himself alone.”

I suspect, however, that ‘The Boy’ is probably Brereton’s fellow poet and close friend Dowell O’Reilly.

Sunday 5th April.

We had breakfast fairly early, and a few minutes later were overlooking Kangaroo Valley. The valley was brimming with dense mist, a lake of white vapour, which began, as we watched, to grow tenuous along the wooded shores, and to creep up among the trees. The sun silvered the surface of the cloud, and drew it up into hillocks, as we descended the pass. The zig-zag track is bounded by a semi-tropical jungle of cabbage-palms, musk-trees, myrtles, tamarinds, tree-nettles, wild gooseberries and innumerable plant-forms which I love without labelling. In forks of great trees perched staghorn and bird’s-nest ferns, and the whole mass of vegetation was knitted solidly together with raspberries, lianas and bush-lawyers. Through the deep shadows shot and floated the notes of coach-whip bird and thrush.

Later, we came upon bush of a more familiar appearance, where there were few trees but gums; the ground was shaggy with the palm-like zamia. Lower still were paddocks, imperfectly cleared, with corn and sorghum growing among the stumps. At last we reached the valley and fine pastoral country. The mist had lifted, and the sun was bright between lazy-pacing clouds.
We held a bivouac in the township, smoked, and bought stores. I visited a baker and asked him whether he would break the Sabbath by selling me a loaf. He looked sharply at me, and answered: "No. But I'll give you one."

"All right," I said, and dropped threepence halfpenny back into the 'shammy.'

He gave me a long tinned loaf, and, when I thanked him, said: "Needn't thank me. The baking went wrong. If the loaf was good, you wouldn't get it. I have a whole batch to get rid of some way."

But Bill and I found no fault in the bread.

We turned at the Berry Road, and were soon ascending The Mountain by a zig-zag road somewhat resembling that by which we had made our way into the valley. Among trees of which I took particular notice was one which bore small hairy figs, sweet but otherwise tasteless. Bill suspected that they were poisonous, and would not raise one to his lips until he had seen me eat a dozen. The air was full of rich perfume from the thick brush-wood. The road's ascent is gentle, and by no means unpleasant to the pedestrian, though I am told that people who dwell hereabouts look on it as something to be shuddered at.

On the top of The Mountain we unrolled our swags beside a crystal crayfish-haunted stream, which ran across the road in a shallow channel about ten feet in breadth. After tea, we lit our pipes, and talked in a desultory fashion about the future of the Australian race. We had just agreed that, whatever our faults might be, Australians would never develop into an arrogant nation of truculent hypocrites like the English, when two men drove down to the ford in a trap. Their horse was startled by the glimmer of our watchfire, brokenly reflected in the water, and suddenly shied, refusing to make the passage. A voice, which nobody could mistake for that of an Australian, was heard uttering vain exhortations and words of soothing affection. I proffered advice and assistance, explained the nature of the road, and quieted the frightened horse. Then I led the beast across, wading in cold water, and wondering whether I should get a shilling for the job — or more. The night was dark, and the zig-zag road unfenced; but they were anxious to reach Kangaroo valley, and received my information with the coolness of omniscient ignorance. One of them asked what we were doing.

I said: "Trav'lin'"; and thought I scented coin.

"Oh?" said the questioner, quite at a loss.

His companion came to his rescue. "Oh yes! Yes, of course — selling things. What do you sell?"

"Nothing," I replied.

"Oh nothing!" echoed the strangers in a tone expressive of enlightenment. And away rattled the trap.

"What did they mean by 'selling'?" The Boy asked, as I took off my wet trousers and spread them to the blaze.

"Commercials," I said "They were Britishers." (to be continued)