

THE SILK MERCHANT'S SON

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*There are few situations more unpleasant than when
two individuals are suddenly and unexpectedly brought
into collision, neither of whom is acquainted with one word
of the language of the other.*

George Fletcher Moore, Advocate-General of Swan River colony
Preface to his Noongar-English dictionary, 1842

The Twenty-Eight Missionaries

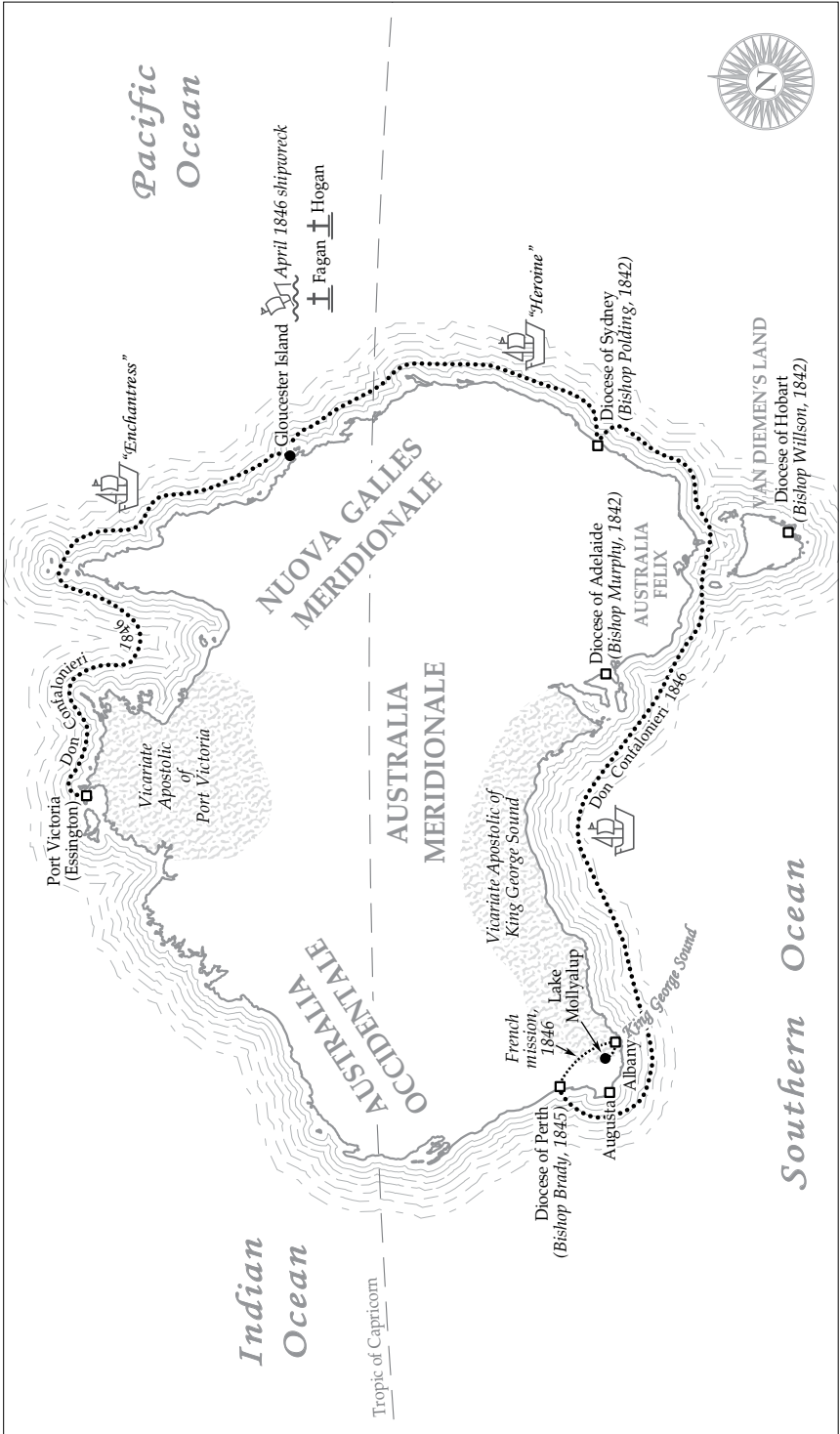
From Dom Rosendo Salvado's *Memorie Storiche dell' Australia*, (1851).

These are the names and nationalities of the missionaries who set out on Elizabeth from England to Western Australia on 17th September 1845, with nationalities and approximate age.

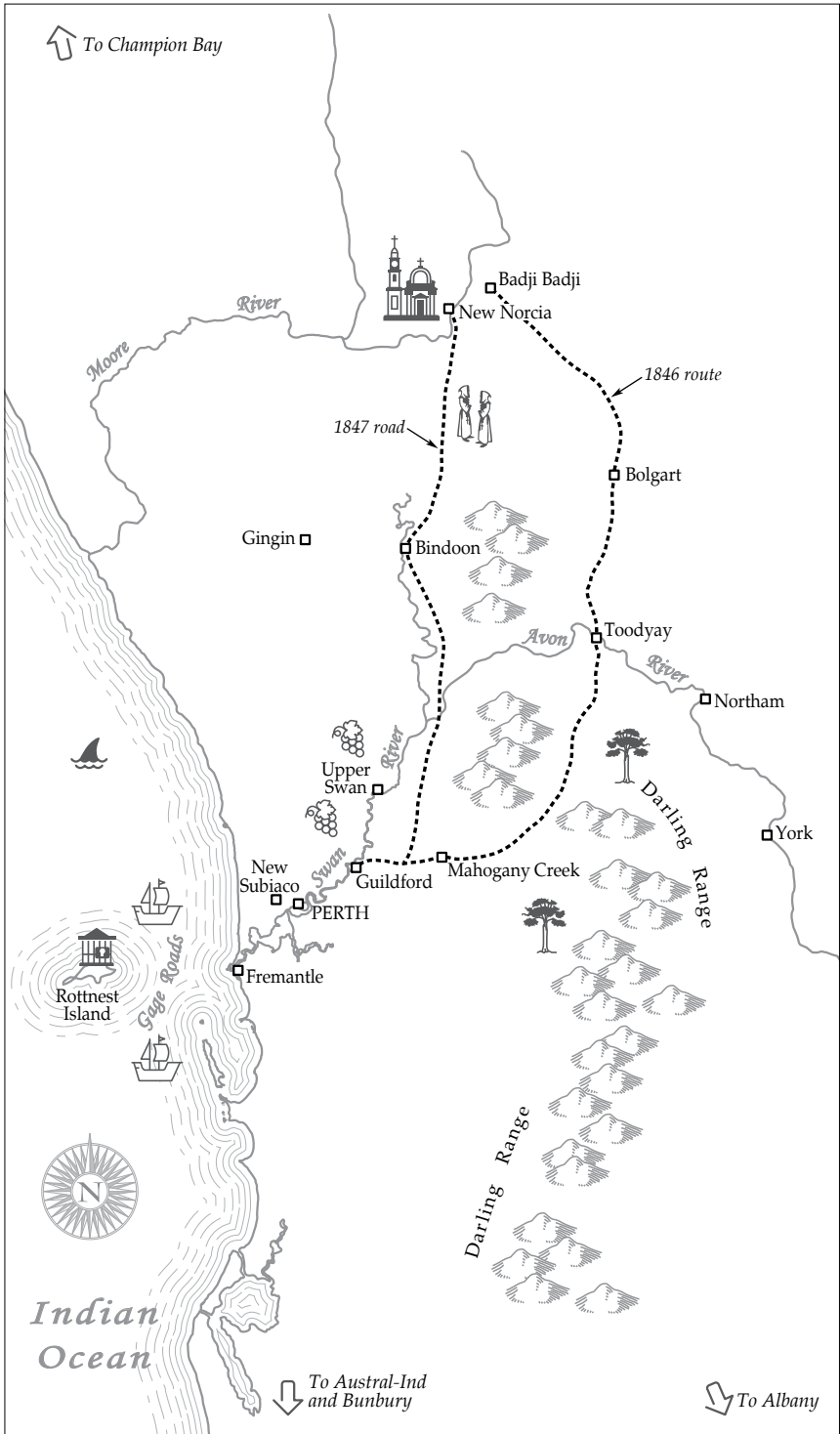
Priests	Bishop John Brady	Irish (45)
	Dom José Serra	Spanish Benedictine (35)
	Dom Rosendo Salvado	Spanish Benedictine (31)
	Don Angelo Confalonieri	Tyrolese Benedictine (32)
	Father Francis Thévaux	French Heart of Mary (25)
	Father Francis Thiersé	French Heart of Mary (28)
	Father Maurice Bouchet	French Heart of Mary (24)
	Father Peter Powell	Irish (30)
Subdeacon	Denis Tootle	English Benedictine (26)
Novice	Léandre Fonteinne	French Benedictine (26)
Catechists	John O'Reilly	Irish (20s)
	Nicholas Hogan	Irish (20s)
	John Gorman	Irish (20s)
	Timothy Donovan	Irish (20s)
	James Fagan	Irish (20s)
	William Fowler	Irish (20s)
	Martin Butler	Irish (20s)
	Terence Farrelly	Irish (23)
Brothers	Théodore Odon	French Heart of Mary (20)
	Vincent Eusbe	French Heart of Mary (21)
Layman	Nicola Caporelli	Count of the Papal States (29)
Nuns	Ursula Frayne	Irish Sisters of Mercy (28)
	Catherine Gogarty	Irish Sisters of Mercy (27)
	Anne Xavier Dillon	Irish Sisters of Mercy (27)
	Ignatia de la Hoyde	Irish Sisters of Mercy (41)
	Aloysius Kelly	Irish Sisters of Mercy (23)
	Baptist O'Donnell	Irish Sisters of Mercy (22)
Postulant	Kate O'Reilly	Irish Sisters of Mercy (21)



BISHOP BRADY GATHERING THE MISSIONARIES, 1845



AUSTRALIA AS ENVISAGED BY BISHOP BRADY, 1846



SWAN RIVER COLONY, 1846

Before the story starts

For an eternity before Spanish monks appeared on Victoria Plains, the land was home to the Yued Noongar people. So we start by acknowledging the Yued as the traditional custodians of the lands around New Norcia and pay our respects to their elders, past and present.

A word on language. This is a story about mutual miscomprehension. The Catholic missionaries had trouble enough communicating with one other, having seven different native tongues plus Latin, but not one of them spoke the language of the people they had set themselves to convert; not even Bishop Brady despite the Noongar-English dictionary published in Rome in his name. In this story we have a French linguist trying to understand the spoken Noongar word, and mostly failing; hearing, for example, *gouljacque* in place of *kooldjak* for the black swan, or *coumarle* for *koomal*, the possum. When the speaker is foreign, such errors are intentional. When the speaker is Aboriginal, however, a contemporary accepted spelling of the Noongar word is used.

This is a work of historical fiction. Though much of the material contained herein is connected to nineteenth century colonial history of Western Australia, creative licence has been taken here and there with timeframes in the interests of the story.

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I. THE WRONG SCARF

There lived in Lyon an annoying young man by the name of Fabrice Cleriquot. Exactly where he was on this particular evening was a mystery to his father Claude, but he was definitely not at *Lorette* where he should have been. Being an idiot, the boy would be sauntering aimlessly along the *Montée St Barthélemy*, talking to someone or inspecting something that did not require inspection.

Claude Cleriquot did not feel charming this evening, and as a purveyor of fine silk it was his job to be charming. ‘He won’t be long, Pauline, I’m sure,’ he said, trying to inject a little music into his voice. Few in Lyon would have addressed Mademoiselle Jaricot by her first name, for she was a living saint, but these two were old friends. Claude had been given his start in the silk industry by Pauline’s father, who had thought that he was helping his future son-in-law.

They were standing on the porch of Pauline’s pretty mansion, *Lorette*. She had named it after the Italian town of Loreto, where an angel had deposited the childhood home of Jesus. Years before, while on pilgrimage to Loreto, Pauline had almost died of fever but was saved by miraculous intercession for which she still thanked the Virgin Mary each morning, squeezing through a gap in her hornbeam hedge and walking up to the shrine of Our Lady of

Fourvière. This was her favourite place on earth; while standing on a wall built by the Romans, she could thumb her rosary beads, whisper her Creeds, Glory Be's and Ave Marias and, as the sun rose, inspect her own roof for damaged tiles or see what needed doing in her garden.

They had left the three black-cloaked visitors in her salon, each with a cigar and a balloon of cognac. Pauline could still hear them – clerical, male, argumentative. It was nice to escape into the fresh air to think. This new Bishop of Perth was a puzzle. Claude would have a reliable view.

‘Should I trust this one?’ she asked him.

But Claude was gazing into the distance, where he saw nothing. It was a lovely sort of nothing, of course. *Lorette's* famous gardens glowed softly in the yellowing twilight. He saw Pauline's new gardener, another lazy Senegalese, and there were sparrows and a white peacock and so on. But no son. *Lorette at six o'clock, sharp* was the message Claude had sent to Fabrice. Too subtle, perhaps, for an assistant professor of linguistics to comprehend.

‘Claude?’

‘Yes, Pauline,’ he answered dreamily.

‘The bishop?’

‘Oh. He is rather rough, is he not? Peasant stock, I would say.’

Claude Cleriquot looked just as a wealthy Lyonnais silk merchant should; dapper, silver haired with, of course, an immaculate silk tie and handkerchief. Pauline Jaricot by contrast dressed as she lived, simply and frugally. She wore a loose-fitting gown made of Indian cotton, not bourgeois silk. She wore no powder, no perfume. Having devoted her life to charitable works, Pauline was instinctively opposed to displays of wealth.

Pauline Jaricot had founded the most successful charity of the Catholic Church, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, and had become known, to her chagrin, as ‘The Saintly Virgin of Lyon.’ Nowadays, most of the visitors to *Lorette* were Catholic missionaries seeking her money. Tonight, it was Bishop John Brady’s mission to the natives of Western Australia.

Brady had pressed his case in an annoying manner. The more he spoke, the less inclined was Pauline to help him. He had trained as a priest in France, so he said, but could not tell her precisely where or under whom. His French was execrable. Perhaps they all spoke that way on the island of Bourbon, where he had run a parish for a decade. One source told her that the Pope may have consecrated the wrong priest; it was meant to be a Benedictine called Ullathorne. His Holiness’ eyes were failing and such things could happen in Rome. So Pauline turned her thoughts instead to the poor natives whose souls were in peril. The Society for the Propagation of the Faith had to help them, of course. But once His Irish Lordship was off in distant Western Australia, how might the society monitor its investment?

Claude was still distracted so Pauline took his hand.

‘Please, Claude. Stop worrying about Fabrice. He will arrive in his own time. I have known the boy since he was born and I know he is, you know ...’ She shrugged, unable to find quite the right adjective.

This had the wrong effect on the silk merchant. His aim tonight was to sell Pauline a bespoke product, the services of his only son. True, the boy was not easy to sell: he was of limited utility, demand for him was not great, and now he had failed to arrive on time. But Claude could not allow that the product was damaged.

‘I assure you, he is usually very reliable,’ Claude protested.

Pauline smiled at this lie. Everyone in Lyon had heard Claude Cleriquot complain about his disappointing son. 'He is merely typical of his generation,' he added.

This phrase Pauline had often heard, and always from silver-haired men who had lived through The Revolution, The Reign of Terror, then Napoleon and his endless wars. Adversity had given them character and backbone. Claude himself liked to brag that he had been born just as Marie Antoinette was beheaded, as if her execution had taken place in his very nursery. Their lazy sons, by contrast, had been coddled by their *mamans*, and only knew the peaceful, prosperous times of Louis-Philippe, the 'Citizen King'. They had fought for nothing, so they respected nothing, not the State, not the Church, not even their own fathers. Universities fomented such views. A decent war would correct them.

'Two million natives, he claims,' said Pauline, returning to the matter of the bishop.

'It does seem rather a lot.'

'His French is so poor, I thought perhaps he meant two thousand. I tried to help him, did you hear? *Deux mille*? I suggested. *Non, deux millions*, he grumbles!'

'Do such numbers really matter?'

'Good heavens, Claude!' Pauline was growing exasperated. 'Yes! Numbers matter a great deal to the administrators, whether one is counting souls or *scudos*.'

This rebuke restored Claude's attention. 'Of course. Let us think of it mathematically,' he suggested. 'The colony of Western Australia is about one million square miles, in the English measurement. Might there not be two natives to each?'

'I suppose,' sighed the hostess. Her instinct was always to help the Church establish itself in the New World, since this old one

seemed at times beyond help. But this bishop. ‘Just tell me your view, Claude, please, and smartly. Should I trust Bishop Brady with the society’s money?’

Money! That lovely word fully restored Claude’s attention. This was the moment in any business transaction that he would present the client with his solution to her problem. But tonight, where was the solution? A great opportunity seemed to glow in the cupped hands of the silk merchant, a firefly slowly dying.

Then the garden gate slowly opened and Fabrice Cleriquot appeared. He was not in a hurry. He saw them, began to stroll up the path, but stopped to talk with the Senegalese.

‘Excuse me, Pauline,’ said Claude, feigning as much good humour as he could manage. ‘I will fetch him.’

Claude met his beloved son halfway down the garden path. As viewed from behind, a loving father warmly embraced his somewhat tardy son. Fabrice, however, received a different view of the encounter. His father’s face declared that he would rather have smacked the son’s cheek than hug him. Strong bony thumbs pressed hard into the flesh at the front of his shoulders.

‘Ouch,’ yelped Fabrice Cleriquot.

‘You are late, boy,’ Claude snarled, while gently turning his dear son around to face the hostess and stroking his back with great affection. ‘Kiss her hand. Say nothing stupid. Agree to every proposition. And do not ask questions.’

The expression on Fabrice’s face was, like his father’s, one of perfect calm. He had learned in childhood to rise above provocations.

‘Naturally, Father,’ said Fabrice, the perfect reasonableness in his voice calculated to annoy. He was not, after all, the callow youth of

his father's imagination. He was thirty-one years old, and assistant professor of linguistics at L'Université Laïque de Lyon. 'But, Father, you do recall that I have become an Atheist? Why then would you ask me to meet ...'

'No questions!' replied the father, whose attempt to smile for the hostess made him grimace like a ventriloquist's dummy. 'Later. At home.'

At the top of the steps, Fabrice bowed low like a courtier and with theatrical extravagance kissed the slender hand of Pauline Jaricot. She smiled. She had a thin, pale, beautiful, rather sad face; a *saintly* face really, beatifically lit by the flickering porch lamp. Perhaps she blushed.

'I am sorry, Mademoiselle,' said Fabrice, 'but how should I greet a living saint?' He saw his father's jaw muscle tighten in the lamplight, which pleased him.

'Just like that, Fabrice!' said Pauline, laughing. She had not seen him for years, but his childhood naughtiness was still there. Most people watched their manners too well in her presence, which made life very dull. For the first time this evening, the eyes of the hostess sparkled.

'Let's get back inside,' she sighed, 'before these wretched priests finish off my cognac and fall asleep.'

As they entered the house, Claude pulled his son back by his coat collar and whispered in his ear. 'Do not upset the bishop. He is new, and very fragile.' It was only then, in the better light, that Claude realised the catastrophe of Fabrice's scarf. 'What colour is that?' he choked, but it was too late and besides, he knew the answer. It was amaranth, the colour reserved for bishops. Claude, good friend of Rome that he was, owned the only bolt of amaranth

silk in Lyon. Earlier that evening, with some ostentation, he had presented Bishop John Brady of Perth with a new zucchetto and stole in that very colour.

Fabrice entered the warmly lit room to see three priests, all in black, each holding an empty glass. A pair sat together; one short and serious, the other broad shouldered and open faced. The hoods of their cassocks had been thrown back to reveal elaborate tonsury. Benedictine monks, Fabrice surmised. The third was standing with his back turned, seemingly caught in the act of refilling his glass. Atop this one's head was a round silk cap of similar hue to Fabrice's new scarf, and over his shoulders was a matching sash. Fabrice was a little annoyed by this sartorial clash. He had discovered one of his father's secret bolts and had rather hoped his new cravat would be unique.

'Do have another cognac, Your Lordship,' urged Pauline.

'Oh, no, I'd best not,' came the voice from under the pink silk cap. A foreigner, the professor of linguistics could easily tell, but whence, he could not say. His complexion, little red vessels bursting across the cheeks, suggested he had spent too long in the tropics and that he would have enjoyed that second drink even more than the first. 'I wished merely to inspect the bottle,' explained the pink-capped one, putting it back on the table. 'Sadly, we will not be enjoying the likes of this where we are headed.'

Claude made the introductions. The one with the silk cap was John Brady, Bishop of Perth.

'Your Eminence,' said Fabrice, with a low bow. He had learned in childhood the art of dissimulation.

Bishop Brady looked across to the father, back to the son and down to the bottle of spirits. 'Thank you, Monsieur Cleriquot,'

he said, ‘but ‘Your Lordship’ will quite suffice. Had I been made cardinal your father would have brought me a bright red zucchetto, rather than this one of mere ... amaranth.’

At this last word, Fabrice noticed the bishop’s eyes focus on his own neckerchief, then search his face for any clues that the offence had been intentional.

‘I am sure one day you will be made a cardinal,’ said Fabrice, loosening his cravat a little.

‘Some would say I have already exceeded my capacities,’ said Bishop Brady, attempting a smile. He was here to beg for money and this young fool was a distraction from the task.

The bishop was an Irishman, Fabrice decided, based as much on the self-deprecation as the awful accent. His robe looked new. It had sharp creases and all of its buttons. There were thirty-three black buttons on a bishop’s soutane, Fabrice was surprised to recall – one button for each year of Our Lord’s life. He was still rather new to Atheism, and could only hope that such religious knowledge would leave him eventually.

‘Dom José Serra,’ continued Claude Cleriquot, keen to move things away from the clash of silk, ‘and Dom Rosendo Salvado.’

The monks were confirmed to be Spanish Benedictines and the artistic patterns shaven into their short-cropped hair a souvenir of their recent audience with the pope. Salvado seemed the more friendly, springing to his feet and greeting Fabrice in French. His accent suggested to Professor Cleriquot the province of Galicia, probably Santiago de Compostela. The linguist tested this theory by responding in Galician vernacular.

‘É un pracer.’

Rosendo Salvado smiled broadly at these unexpectedly familiar

words. Yes, he was a *galego*, he confessed, from the town of Tuy. He shook Fabrice's hand, embraced him like a brother, then held him by the shoulders at arm's length to inspect his new friend more closely.

The Galician had thick, muttoney workman's hands; a labourer posing as a monk. He looked the sort who would survive not only in the religious world, but the real. A pleasant and expressive face, topped by bushy eyebrows which had somehow escaped the razor and seemed to act independently of their owner. They had jumped with amusement at first sight of the pink cravat.

The smaller monk, Serra, remained seated. He seemed intelligent and self-contained, and spoke like a Catalanian. His dark eyes seemed to be asking what evangelistic purpose this young silken fop could possibly serve, and Fabrice was not in the least offended by this posture, since he was asking the same question. Did his father refer to him as the missionaries' 'travelling companion'? What idea must the old fool have in his head this time?

Fabrice had known something like this was coming. Two weeks earlier, he had been summoned to his father's office to discuss 'a matter of grave importance to the family'. Fabrice was made to sit under a brass plaque which read *Cleriquot et Fils, Fournisseurs de Soie depuis 1826*, while pairs of rich women came and went. The enforced long wait was one of his father's favourite ways of asserting his authority.

The 'grave matter' turned out to be a triviality, a measure of his father's backwardness. It concerned a student from the university called Raphael whom Fabrice tutored in English and whose companionship he occasionally enjoyed outside the classroom. The boy's father was threatening all sorts of 'difficulties' with the Faculty.

Such things went on all the time in universities, explained Fabrice. Friendships between a student and his teacher had been known since the time of Socrates. The only problem was the boy's father.

'Silence, boy,' Claude had said, 'you will not make light of this.'

The Cleriquot name had *prestige*. One could bank on it, literally. Any damage to the name could destroy the family's silk business. Rome could never buy silk vestments from a family tainted in such a way. There was a need for decisive action, and so on. 'You will leave Lyon until this matter is forgotten,' his father had concluded.

So tonight's gathering of priests with their unfashionable *coiffure* and ill-chosen *chapellerie* must be his father's solution to an imaginary problem. Fabrice would play along for now; one could not altogether ignore one's need for money. Linguistics was alas not a very profitable pursuit, and Fabrice did enjoy a lifestyle rather in excess of his earnings. So he smiled at the priests, nodded, listened, and tried his best to avoid becoming part of their plans.

It seemed they intended to sail to some part of Australia called Perth, or perhaps Swan River. Endless dull details were being discussed. Nothing seemed to explain their need for a professor of linguistics, so finally Fabrice thought it sensible to enquire directly of the bishop.

'What is your mission to be, exactly?'

'To convert the natives, of course,' said Brady, brusquely.

'Why would you want to do that?' Fabrice pressed, deaf to his father's meaningful expectorations.

'Why would we not?' protested the bishop, his nose reddening further. 'We are missionaries!'

'Might the natives not be possessed of some special nobility, to be learned *from*, rather than converted by force or coercion?'

suggested Fabrice. To invoke Rousseau was usually a winning strategy in Faculty debates, but he was testing new waters here by invoking him before a prince of the church.

‘The naïve sentiments of a theorist,’ scoffed Brady. ‘I presume you have never travelled, young man, and never met a dark man.’

These truths smarted. ‘Well, your views sound like those of a colonist,’ countered Fabrice.

‘Colonist?’ thundered Bishop John Brady of Perth. ‘Are you mad? The Catholic Church is on the side of the poor native, protecting him *from* the English colonists.’ He looked around the room for support, filled as it was with French and Spanish.

‘But the church always sides with the rich,’ suggested Fabrice, to silence, except for his father’s angry sniffing. The Spaniards lowered their heads. They had heard this same argument from the so-called liberals just as they were thrown out of their monasteries.

‘That may be so, in Europe,’ conceded the Irish bishop, surprising Fabrice with his candour. ‘Rome has done little for the poor in Ireland except build them huge cathedrals which they must pay for themselves. But in the new world, in Western Australia, I can tell you that the Church will be a friend of the poor, and especially of the poor natives.’

‘Once there, I predict you will befriend the rich.’

‘There are no rich there to befriend.’

Fabrice was flustered. An uneducated bishop had somehow outflanked him.

It took a Benedictine to ease tensions. ‘Of Australia and its native population,’ said Salvado diplomatically, ‘we are all quite ignorant.’

‘We are *not* all quite ignorant, Rosendo,’ corrected his bishop. ‘I have been to this colony, you may have forgotten. I have published a dictionary of the language of the natives.’

Salvado lowered his eyes once more. ‘My apologies, Your Lordship. *You* are not ignorant, of course, but the rest of us are. That is why we shall follow your spiritual lead.’ When tempers settled, it was the bishop who was left in his own corner, not the atheist.

The visit dragged on, even after goodbyes were said. Claude ingratiated himself to the new bishop with another amaranth-coloured gift, this time a *biretta* in an ostentatious box. Pauline gave Bishop Brady a handsome silver tabernacle and a pair of candlesticks. Once the priests had finally departed, Claude spent a long time on the porch with Pauline talking about francs while Fabrice sat nearby and smoked.

Pauline would advise the society to provide modest support to Brady, half the amount the bishop had hoped for. She felt guilty for doing so, and expressed an inclination to provide some additional support to the mission from her own purse. Claude whistled at this, but in truth he had expected and indeed hoped for it. In such a case as Bishop Brady, personal philanthropy would be risky, he explained. The solution was to entrust her money not directly to the bishop, but to Claude’s very dependable son. Fabrice would accompany the missionaries to Western Australia and ensure any funds she gave were spent gradually and to good purpose.

‘But I will *not* travel to Australia!’ Fabrice declared as they walked home along the *Montée St Barthélemy*. Although the Cleriquot estate adjoined *Lorette*, so large were the respective grounds that it was a fifteen-minute walk from gate to gate. ‘I cannot! I have students to teach!’

‘No you don’t,’ countered the father, calmly. ‘I have advised the university to reallocate them.’ He handed Fabrice a purse. ‘Feel the

weight of my argument.' It was heavy. 'This is the Mademoiselle's own money. And there is much more to come, but only if you behave yourself.'

'How much?' asked Fabrice, in a tone noticeably more subdued.

'In total, one hundred and ten thousand francs.'

Fabrice fell silent. Great principles, he noted, made no sound as they collapsed.

His father continued. 'That matches the amount that the Bishop of Perth will get from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. A more capable man than Brady may have received two hundred thousand from the society, rendering you unnecessary. But happily, there are many mysteries about this bishop and while mystery has its place in religion, it is not welcome where money is concerned.'

'So, you have been given a task, my boy. You will travel to this Swan Colony or whatever the godforsaken place is called. There you will become the eyes and ears of Mademoiselle Jaricot, and disburse her funds precisely as she says, and when she says.'

'But I do not approve of proselytising natives,' objected Fabrice.

'Your view is inconsequential,' snapped his father. 'Just do as she tells you. Record for her the performance of this bishop and of his missionaries. Write regularly to her. Take perfect care of her purse. Dispense the funds only in accordance with her advice. Do you understand?'

'I understand,' repeated Fabrice, examining his fingernails. He permitted his father a few seconds to enjoy his complete surrender, before adding, 'but I heard her tell you I was to be allowed some discretion.'

'Discretion?' his father thundered. 'How can you exercise something you do not possess?'

The Cleriquots, *père et fils*, walked the rest of the distance in silence, one contemplating the success of the evening, the other the disaster of it. Once home, Fabrice was bemused to find that Maman already knew everything and had even prepared one of her speeches.

‘Our dear boy is starting his life again,’ she announced, ‘but on the right foot this time, we hope.’ She presented him with an unusual tropical hat, dome shaped, made of woven leaf with a brass top. ‘It is called a *salacco*,’ explained Maman. ‘They all wear them in the Far East.’

With a flute of champagne in hand, Claude softened. He had managed to turn adversity to profit this evening, and felt he also should say some kind words. ‘I am quite sure,’ he proclaimed, ‘that despite all the past disappointments, our dear Fabrice will, if not triumph exactly, then succeed. Or if not succeed, then at least, ah ... manage.’

Glasses were clinked, cheeks doubly kissed. Tears came to the eyes of Madame Cleriquot. It had suddenly hit her. Her only son was to travel to far-off Western Australia! And the poor boy was only thirty-one!

‘It might not be so bad,’ said Fabrice, almost resigned to the venture. ‘I can still teach in the winter.’

‘*This* winter?’ said his father, exasperated, ‘Three months will be barely enough time to get there, and only then does your job begin. You must stay until the mission is established. Besides, you must stay away from Lyon until this sordid matter at the university is forgotten.’ Claude glanced at his wife, whom he had not told of any ‘sordid matters,’ remembering as he did so to interrogate her later about her rôle in the scarf debacle. ‘You will be gone for two years, boy, maybe more. Now go back to your apartment, pack your bags, and for your mother’s sake do arrive on time for your farewell dinner tomorrow evening.’

Fabrice Cleriquot felt his face pale. 'When am I to leave?'

'When the priests leave. Tuesday.'

'In two days?' A cruel fist reached deep inside the chest of Fabrice Cleriquot as if to steal his heart. His very life had been snatched away. His friends at the university, with their intelligent wit. All the amusing parties. His comfortable apartment, gone. And now he remembered ... right now, probably asleep on the red velour sofa, the one who had triggered this difficulty would still be waiting for him.

Fabrice Cleriquot trudged disconsolately from his parents' mansion, the first sad steps on an unwanted journey. He was to sail in the unpleasant company of argumentative black-cloaked foreign priests, not to Tahiti or some such desirable place, but to a remote English-speaking outpost of which no one had ever heard, whose towns were populated, no doubt, by murderers, rapists and convicts, and then to venture beyond even that to live among the wild natives of Western Australia, all for no better purpose than to disturb their eternal peace in the name of a god in which he had no belief.

Alone, in the darkness, on the *Montée St Barthélemy*, Fabrice Cleriquot shed a silent tear for himself.

He returned to his apartment. As expected, upon the red sofa, still sobbing, lay Raphael. By some means the boy too had already learned that his *professeur* was to be exiled, like Napoleon, to some distant island. Instead of being consoled for his misfortune, Fabrice was wildly berated.

'You are utterly selfish and I hate you,' were the boy's last words before he slammed the door. Then from outside, 'I hope the savages get you and kill you and eat you.'

From: Pauline Jaricot, Lyon
To: Fabrice Cleriquot, Lyon

16th June, 1845

Cher Fabrice

I suspect it is against all your natural inclinations to travel to Australia with a group of monks and bishops. I understand. Even I sometimes tire of bishops, always grasping for something. I fear there may come a time on this journey where you are tempted to go your own way. I am writing this to explain why it is so important that you stay and succeed.

You and I are wealthy, educated and occupy an esteemed place in French society. Most of God's people do not have these advantages. Many are hungry, enslaved by their poverty, or dwell in far-off lands quite ignorant of Our Lady's love for them. We have a duty to these masses, we cannot deny it.

My sense of duty came upon me when I was fifteen. Before that, I was not a saint in miniature, I assure you! I was a pretty, rich, indulged girl living 'The Silk Life' as we called it. After dear Maman died, my father denied me nothing. I was quite the terror, really.

But one day I attended a dissertation by Abbé Wurtz. His subject was 'The Vanity of Women'. After that, I was done with girlish silliness forever. I dressed plainly, refused mirrors and went to work at the Hospital for Incurables. I grew up that day and threw off all desire for riches. I hope that you can do so as well.

In France, especially among the rich, the Church has become like a lamp without oil and I fear it will soon go out. Its best hope lies with the poor that suffer among us, and with those in distant lands who as yet know nothing of God's love for them. In such newfound places as Western Australia, the lamp is still full of oil and it is up to us to light it for them. Recently I had a vivid dream in which the New Lamp relit the Old.

The social ills from which France suffers fall mostly upon the working class who are destroyed by work, beaten down by it. But I am an optimist. I see in this downtrodden class the means of our Salvation. Improve their lot, and we all improve. The husband can be given back to the wife, the father to the child, and, through them, God to mankind.

I will share a secret with you Fabrice. I have bought a blast furnace! It will be run as a model of the Christian Spirit, as no capitalist would ever allow. The workers themselves will own the furnace, and run it, and profit from it. There will be a small village, with small neat cottages for the workers, a free school and a chapel. Your father would disapprove of the plan, seeing no possibility of profit. Please do not tell him or he will counsel me against it, and I always give in to your father.

You must ensure that the money I entrust to you is spent for the benefit of the native men, women and children of the colony of Western Australia, so that like my poor workers, they might prosper. They must be taught to read and write and add numbers, but above all, encouraged to grow in the knowledge of the Love of God. What I wish for these children of God, you see, is exactly as I wish for the working poor of Lyon.

Take the enclosed letter to M. Paracel, Manager of the Banque Lyonnais in Paris. He will arrange for you to collect some English currency from a London bank.

I have faith in you that your father may lack. Don't forget, my father was a wealthy silk merchant too. Such men have a certain way of looking at the world. My view is simple. For there to be true

peace on earth it is necessary to correct certain imbalances, and I believe it is the will of God that we do so.

Bon voyage, mon cher Fabrice. Be assured I will pray to Our Lady of Fourvière every morning until your safe return to Lyon.

Pauline