

FORELANDS

Based on private research there is reason to believe that the following events occurred in Australia some time ago.

Allowing the usual precautions of time, place, and name changes, the story, in substance is taken from real life.

Submission by:

Paul Edey  
Paul Davies

Background

"Marvellous Melbourne": the phrase itself is one of those popular terms which, while originally held to be an accurate and enthusiastic description of one of the world's new metropolises, now carries with it, in the light of subsequent history, somewhat cynical overtones.

By the late 1880s when the phrase was first coined by ~~such~~ enraptured tourists Melbourne had grown from a small but energetic gold town a generation before to a sprawling conurbation over half the size of the London of the time which was by then itself the largest city in the world and the capital of an empire.

The British themselves were wary, and perhaps jealous of the land boom that created this antipodean rival. Yet the financial madness of the 1880s and 1890s can only be understood when we realise that it was the children of the gold diggers who launched it. Much of the spirit of speculation, of lust and recklessness, carried from one generation to another, and along with ~~them~~ such things also came,

inevitably, all of the corruption and subsequent collapse. Therefore this ~~city~~ story is not another "Australian Western" in the endless goldrush mould but very ~~xxx~~ much the story of a city and city dwellers, of Victorians in both the cultural and geographic sense.

Modern inflationary trends and lackluster post-war economic thinking robs us of any real appreciation of the kinds of fortunes that could be made in ~~the~~ Melbourne ~~in~~ between 1881 and 1891. In a period when the annual wage of a skilled craftsman was £50 men like Baillieu, Davies, and Pink made millions in the same amount of time. Yet most of this was on paper, and when the crash did come its consequences were as bad, if not worse, than anything felt ~~in~~ in the 1930s: suicide, starvation, prison, a declining population-- all the wages of sin as the churchmen would have it.

This then is the backdrop of our story which begins in the late 1890s. Things are not quite back to normal (as they never were in the 1930s until Germany and Japan solved the problem for us) but ~~in~~ the depression had levelled off, there~~s~~ was still a wealthy class and the trappings, if not ~~in~~ the substance of the former financial hysteria still

served the public.

The Princess Theatre, for example, boasted the world's first sliding roof, on balmy nights the audience could watch a performance under the stars, literally. The Exhibition buildings only awaited the formation of the Commonwealth to cap off its usefulness and size, and in an awesome anticipation of the later size of the MCG crowds Queen Victoria's jubilee could draw 200,000 people into the streets.

The streets themselves were a legacy of colonial ambition, the width and daring of St. Kilda Road, Victoria Parade, Royal Parade and parts of South Melbourne which were designed and laid out directly from a model of Versailles. In the city proper Little Bourke Street boasted a string of famous bordellos and gambling dens where one could also succumb to the temptations of opium.

Kipling, Dickens, Trollop and Gaugain all made pilgrimages and the last was surprised to find such a large city in the southern hemisphere with "trams and promenades and mulit-storied palaces of granite and bluestone."

In such a "marvellous" city then, around 1896 we first meet our characters and our story begins.

#### Foreground

George Morelands, 26, is the principal heir of a family fortune founded in the 1850s by his grandfather (an emancipist) and swollen since then by the goldrushes and the demand for beef. Intelligent and cultured George is a young man of liberal opinion and tory tastes, kind, but with the sort of generosity that his father's wealth has never tested.

People look to George and his close companion Basil Jones ~~xxxxxxx~~ as the moulders of the kind of lifestyle needed for a new century, indeed for a new age. The two young men, old boys of Melbourne Grammar, have also shared their years at Melbourne University: Basil to do Law in his fathers footsteps (a prosperous jewish barrister from Malvern) and George to do medicine.

Just as their inherited wealth has given them a certain physical independence so too their years at college have given them an intellectual

independence. And indeed by 1896 there is a new idealism abroad.

They graduate into a climate of intellectual and scientific adventure which proceeds on several levels. Rapid medical and scientific advances (radium, electricity, internal combustion engines), the new humanism, the formation of democratic and socialist parties, and the move towards the federation of the ~~XXXXXXIX~~ Australian colonies are ~~XXXXXX~~ all products of an urge to wipe the slate clean, to put the evils and ghastly poverty of the industrial revolution behind, to replace monarchical systems with a spirit of brotherhood. Yet within all this, existing as the faint hint of an as yet unapprehended evil is the reminder that it is also the age of ~~xx~~ a denigrated Oscar Wilde, of a pointless and savage war in Africa, and of Jack the Ripper.

However, George and Basil subscribe to the mood of their time, warts and all. Their spirits are choc-a-bloc with boundless good-will as a graduation party spills out of George Moreland's rooms at Melbourne University into the more seedier atmosphere of a high class bordello in Little Bourke Street.

It is at this party that the film commences. In the following we've tried to give a basic account of what happens and have introduced those characters central to the plot. A certain number of peripheral incidents and characters are lacking.

#### The Film

From his position at a card table in the house of ill fame in which we open George Morelands' attention is drawn to a particularly attractive young woman, the companion of another player in the game, Raoul Housemann. Between George and this young woman there is a significant pause-- a quick but deep glance, a flicker of a smile, the eyes meet and then it is gone again. The Italians have a word for it but we won't go into that. Sophie recovers first and George turns back to the game.

Sophie Schneider, if she too hadn't been partly Jewish, could have served as the model for a dozen Victorian heroines. Elegant, not merely beautiful, her features betray only a hint of her inner convulsion.

Her face looks much older than her 25 years, a striking bone structure with prominent cheek bones but also with a hint of weariness under the eyes that counterpoints their ~~intelligent~~ intelligence and acute perception. In a word she is spectacular-- and knows her man.

Housemann is a gambler by profession. If it isn't cards, it's land, or some other shady deal. Originally from Paris he came to the colony for only one reason-- to make money, and is said to be a very dangerous man, but is handsome and dashing ~~with~~ with it.

At first there is little to ~~see~~ separate this night from a dozen other student revels. In the lush, if sombre light of the bordello's reception ~~hall~~ hall the young men squander their parents money at the card tables, drink heavily and freely, some perhaps take laudanum, others lie about chatting to the ladies. It isn't so much a brothel as a kind of risqué club where deals are made, money won and lost, and occasionally where romance begins.

Scattered through the room are other members of Melbourne society. Here, as anywhere else, "Federation" and "The Millennium" dominate polite conversation, the one a popular political ~~aspiration~~ aspiration which the powerful families don't like but can't ignore, the other a speculative merry-go-round onto which is piled all the essential silliness of nineteenth century thinking.

Here Morelands is drawn to the views of his liberal friends, but sees the limitations of their idealism just as he sees he must pay lip service to the establishment if he is to keep the comforts of his class.

In odd pockets of the room one might also find the Chinese "godfathers" of such an establishment, the effective mine hosts of the underground salon, the suppliers of narcotics and reminders, paradoxically, that this is Australia, a strange racial composite, an outpost of Europeanism closer to Asia than to the West.

In the days following his graduation we oversee the setting up of Morelands new practice, the delight of his family in his new profession, the hiring of an assitant nurse, Norah Kelly, and the maturing friendship with Basil. George's father, Sir George, and his mother Cecilia Morelands are almost caricatures of the colonial aristocracy. They have all the paraphernalia of wealth with the habits and mentality of convicts.

They espouse Victorian morality like a dead religion-- something young George readily sees through but can do nothing about. For the elder Morelands their children are investments in the future. Cecilia has more or less herded her son into medicine and elights in his superficial success. They endow him with a surgery and grand house in St. Kilda-- a very exclusive suburb at the time.

And into this surgery, after some months comes Sophie. In the interval, through ~~xxxx~~ some mutual jewish acquaintances she had met Basil slightly and now comes to ask Dr. George Morelands a favour. She wants an abortion, and an operation to make her infertile.

Morelands is inwardly ~~agast~~, but complies nevertheless. Up till now his patients have been wealthy family friends, merchants wives and bored hypocondriacs curious about this son and heir-- and perhaps not without some motive in getting their daughters married off to him. In every way possible Sophie is the complete ~~xxxx~~ antithesis to these people: mysterious and with a hint of scandal, intelligent and well appointed nevertheless, and now this extraordinary ~~xxxxxxxx~~ request.

After the operation it is again some ~~xxx~~ months before they meet although the idea of Sophie preys on Morelands' mind and from time to time spills over into his conversation with Basil who he pumps for information about the girl.

Meanwhile his practice ~~gax~~ grows. We catch glimpses of his family, the occasional dinner or excursion, and a not unexpected doctor-nurse flirtation~~xxx~~ developing with ~~KFSAM~~ Norah. Cecilia Morelands gets wind of this and comes down heavily on the subject of a proper marriage, mentions several impeccable choices: landed and stupid, George rejects them out of hand.

The father, an aloof and frail man in his old age talks politics and the price of land and beef. Sir George's house is also grand and emptying rapidly as his children grow up and move out. But around the parental table at these family dinners we find two other daughters, Ruth and May, their men friends, Basil, merchant friends of the father and might overhear from time to time a tussle between the parents as to why George didn't become a lawyer and go into business like his father had hoped, like Basil for instance.

If there seem to be a lot of meals in the story it serves to remind us that this was one of the favourite forms of leisure spending for well to do Victorians and they invariably made a production out of it. And ~~fx~~ so for Morelands life goes on.

The next significant event is an evening at the Princess Theatre. A major English company have brought ~~x~~ their production of Othello to Melbourne after a successful European tour. And here for the ~~third~~<sup>third</sup> time George and Sophie meet, George with Basil and Sophie with Reaul.

She has come to meet friends of hers in the touring company and over the words of Shakespeare's jealous husband George and Sophie play their eye games. In the foyer at interval Basil precipitates a meeting between the four of them. There is some mention that Sophie had once been an actress, and had worked in Europe. George, who had only gone to the theatre out of boredom finds the evening sparking up, each new fact ~~gax~~ gleaned from conversation with her, her cosmopolitaness, her accounts of her mother, and a journalist woman friend of the mothers, a gossip columnist-- all this excites him. The men propose a game of cards and with some members of the cast retire to the establishment in Lt. Bourke for a post- theatre party.

Here the relationship between ~~xxxx~~ George and Sophie deepens as they manage to obtain a few moments alone, and then in a rush of ~~emotion~~ *emotion* that only a late victorian is capable of George declares his passion and, although it isn't at first mutual from her point of view, <sup>she</sup> agrees to meet him again.

And so, while actually not getting to know a great deal about her, and against the advice of Basil the relationship blossoms: in the Botanic gardens, at the theatre, the Windsor Hotel and on the beach at St. Kilda ~~the~~ until, finally, they make love-- desperate, passionate, an almost manic, erotic scene that is rudely interrupted by the arrival of Housemann. There is a fight between the men in which Morelands gets after which <sup>vowing</sup> the worst of it/~~and~~ Housemann, ~~leaves~~ ~~seeking~~ vengeance and murder goes off to plot it all while George and Sophie slip quietly next door to a Chinese temple and are married.

Again part of the mysterious appeal of Sophie are these unlikely contacts she has with all elements of the underworld, ~~the~~ with the sort of people who can organise the ceremony, priest, and temple in which their union is quickly solemnised.

Naturally the parents are outraged. Housemann breaks the news to them and ~~is~~ angrily tells Sir George and Lady Cecilia Morelands that he's still after their son's blood. Sir George assures him it will be ~~therefore~~ a race to see who gets his blood first because they're now after

it too. In time this shock eventually kills the father, but, after the few days in which George and Sophie have gone to the country to eagerly consummate their bond an awesome summons to the parental home ~~xxxxxxxx~~ arrives.

The scene in the family drawing room is nothing short of apocalyptic. Threat follows counter threat, disinheritance, the lot. Lady Morelands is convinced that Mrs. Schneider and that trollop rumour mongering friend of hers are behind it. It's clearly a Zionist plot to undermine the gentile banking structure.

However the young man stands his ground and despite the rush of angry words some of the family are not unimpressed with Sophie's inner strength.

Basil, likewise, if for other reasons is shocked and Norah particularly unhappy. However Morelands pulls her into line, makes mention of their former relationship being warm and friendly and hopes it will continue so. But now, as well as assisting him he insists she also perform the duties of a

personal maid to his new wife. Both Basil and Norah ~~acquiesce~~ acquiesce though the latter hardly hides the fact that ~~she~~ underneath she feels betrayed.

As in many other things time ~~xxx~~ soon performs its great function as the healer of the scars of human folly. The family slowly accept the marriage, indeed invite them for the occasional dinner. The facades still remain ice thin in their reception of her, <sup>while</sup> Sophie maintains a dignified restraint. The subject of children is mentioned from time to time but the couple, diplomatically, bury any reaction to this and skirt round the subject.

Basil ~~of~~ course is still in the picture and develops a relationship of his own, albeit a platonic one with Sophie. Norah still seethes but George keeps her in <sup>her</sup> ~~his~~ place. In fact the only bleak spot in a year of healing ~~xxxxxxxx~~ is a fumbled attempt by Housemann to force a duel and an incident where he arrives at the door one day, takes a shot at Morelands, but only succeeds in wounding ~~xxxx~~ him slightly. No charges are preferred and for a time that's the last they

see of him.

The practice grows-- although personally it becomes more meaningless for ~~George~~ George Morelands. In fact the scandal of their marriage makes the couple quite popular in Melbourne society, and much sought after. And so they begin to hold the kind of parties, orchestrated by mother Schneider and readily discussed at length by her "companion" in the fashionable magazines. (Melbourne had five daily newspapers at the time).

Eventually people begin to jostle each other for an invitation to one of Sophie Morelands evenings, and crowd George's surgery for pretty much the same reason. And here the essential differences between the ~~George~~ couple begin to manifest themselves.

The practice, though lucrative, fails for the first time to support their lifestyle, his reputation for professional brilliance is at ~~growing~~ growing variance with the facts and Sophie's bohemian tendencies, sparked on by her soirees and her mother, move her worldview ever more decisively away from her husband's. And so while time heals

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Another evening at the theatre with Basil and he spies his wife, this time intimate with Housemann, and ~~another~~ another scene ensues.

Intercourse between the couple stops and Morelands, his political prospects ruined by these fresh scandals turns at first to drink and then graduates slowly to the drugs readily available from his cabinet.

Yet the parties, the salon atmosphere, the political debates goes on around him-- Sophie insists that they go on. Accusation follows accusation. She claims Basil has told her of homosexual tendencies in Morelands and suggests their lack of physical contact now confirms it.

This causes an irreconcilable split between the two men and a deepening isolation of Morelands relieved only ~~him~~ by the occasional, if unsatisfying sexual encounter with Norah who still stands by him.

Sir George Morelands dies and for  
 Lady Cecilia  
 a month the slide halts, ~~thereafter~~ still makes  
 half-hearted attempts to intervene but to no  
 avail. To Morelands great chagrin and further  
 financial embarrassment comes the news that  
 the father has left him without a penny.

So while creditors deploy themselves  
 for a killing Morelands, his society patients  
 rapidly disappearing turns his last hopes of some  
 personal redemption to his attendance on ~~poorer~~  
 poorer patients. But to all intents and purposes  
 he is only using himself in the horrors of their  
 sickness, and there is even the suggestion by  
 Mrs. Schneider that ~~he~~ his visits to the houses  
 of the poor are quasi-suicide attempts, attempts  
 to ~~contract~~ contract some fatal disease.  
 One rumour implies that he's already got venereal  
 disease there and that this has turned his mind.

Eventually Sophie makes contact  
 again. She dries him out after one of his  
 particularly heavy nights and suggests a  
 divorce.

Obviously the marriage is at an end and living together is only exacerbating things.

Reluctantly Morelands agrees but suggests they have a break first, that she go back to Europe for a season and perhaps, who knows, it may be ~~the~~ all they need, some breathing space.

The condition is accepted and she leaves. For the next few months, while Sophie is in London a recovery seems to take <sup>place</sup> ~~place~~ in Morelands. Political events are moving to the great climax of Federation and he becomes involved again-- not as ~~myx~~ a potential candidate (scandal still surrounds him) but now as a supporter and campaigner for the reformist-liberal-socialist factions.

Housemann, for less than altruistic reasons is also involved in this as is Basil Jones whose career has soared as much as Morelands has plummeted. Basil by now is a leader of one of the reformist factions and ~~and~~ ~~looks~~ ~~set~~ set for a brilliant political career. Cautiously the two

friends renew their contact.

But of course its not the same.

Despite his resolve Morelands is still addicted to opium, and inevitably enough finds his only sexual outlet with Norah. She, meanwhile, looks forward to the divorce and an eventual union with Morelands on any terms-- simply to nurse him if need be-- as long as its permanent.

This interlude of peace is very much the calm before the storm however. When ~~Sarah~~ Sophie returns refreshed, prepared to go on with it Morelands hopes rise.

Nevertheless within a week she is again accusing him of infidelity-- this time with a factory girl in Collingwood (Housemann has followed him on his rounds and feeds the information on). Morelands protests his innocence (real) but it's no use. The thing collapses again.

A day later, after a hunting incident with Basil Sophie shoots a favourite horse of George's claiming it had been bitten by a snake.

The actual cause was an argument with Basil in which he had defended George over the Gollingwood incident. In a fit of temper that only Sophie is capable of she'd taken a shot at Basil but killed the horse instead.

For legal reasons, if not consciousness of his own vulnerable ~~political~~ political situation Basil had gone along with the story. Morelands can find no evidence of the snakebite but he too acquiesces in the story and that night seeks solace with Norah. Morelands drunk, and having satisfied his lusts with her is in no position to talk divorce with Norah. Norah insists however on her position being given some recognition. George and his nurse have never really fought before so the unusualness of this particular squabble infuriates him.

Now, all along Norah has obviously been a wife-surrogate-mother to George, but she's also been a friend-- the last straw at least at which Morelands has been able to clutch. Thus the collapse of this last slight stabilising influence is too ~~much~~ much. In a fit of mounting fury, even as Norah protests her quite reasonable demands Morelands

finally cracks and strangles her.

Sophie hears the noise of their struggle, comes to the door but finds it locked. She yells through the door that for her this is the final humiliation. She's leaving in the morning. When he feels that his wife has gone back to bed Morelands carries the maid ~~downstairs~~ downstairs, dissects her in his surgery, and after dissolving some of the body in acid buries the remains, somewhat amateurishly in their spacious garden. Sophie, in the stillness of the night thinks she hears noises in the ~~surgery~~ surgery but eventually finds sleep, however fitfull.

Morelands covers all traces of the deed, and in the morning over a desultory cup of coffee husband and wife confront each ~~in~~ other. There's silence for a long time. Eventually Sophie demands to know where the girl ~~is~~ Morelands maintains an almost surreal calm, admits to the affair, is surprised Sophie didn't really pick it earlier when she picked some of the others, and pours out excuses.

Sophie is uninterested in these and demands to know again where Norah is. Eventually, hesitantly, Morelands says she was unable to face Sophie's anger and that ~~xxxx~~ thoroughly ashamed by the whole thing has fled to Queensland where she has some relatives.

Morelands begs Sophie to stay, to make one last effort of forgiveness, now that Norah's finally gone he feels some new hope for them, he'll even try cutting down the drugs.

Sophie is anything but convinced of this, she's getting out. A terrible, murderous rage is again about to unleash itself in Morelands but he conquers it and mentions the ~~xxxx~~ luncheon party they had agreed to have for Basil-- to ~~sin~~ celebrate his election to the new Commonwealth parliament. At least stay till then? Till next week, for Basil's sake, for the party, for his career, at least that, the invitations are already out.

Again, reluctantly, Sophie ~~ix~~ agrees although later she meets Housemann and tells him of these new developments and of her fears that Morelands has eventually cracked. Housemann, always on the look-out for revenge sends the police around. They make their apologies to Morelands, and after some routine questioning of the couple are satisfied that the maid had run away. Sophie says nothing of the mysterious noises from the surgery and merely awaits this last function to effect her own escape.

Housemann, however, continues his own investigations and late one ~~night~~ night finds evidence of Norah's grave. In typical, impetuous fashion he charges into the house with his evidence; ~~and~~ not fearing any physical struggle with Morelands.

~~Now~~ Sophie has retired and Morelands meets him alone. Housemann gloats, Morelands admits the deed and capitulates, unleashing a tale of much woe, and suggests that before they present themselves to the police and before ~~ix~~ they break the news to Sophie they share a drink, Morelands last sad

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toast to a miserable life, once so full of promise.  
 Confident of his final triumph Housemann agrees.

But the wine, all the wine in Morelands cabinet  
 is drugged and it is only his superiour physical  
 immunity to all sorts of ingested chemicals that  
 allows the doctor to remain conscious while ~~ki~~  
 Housemann collapses to the floor.

Again Sophie is awake in her bedroom,  
 and this time the noises in the surgery draw  
 her downstairs but she proceeds not further than  
 the translucent glass door of the operating room  
 and returns upstairs, ~~guzzixix~~ puzzled by the  
 two glasses left in Morelands' library and  
 the wine spilt on the floor. Tomorrow is the  
 day of Basil's luncheon, Melbourne is to celebrate  
 Federation, and after that she is free.

The events at the Morelands house  
 pass unnoticed in May 1901. Melbourne is chaotic  
 with preparations for the official opening of  
 parliament by H.R.H. the Duke of Cornwall and  
 York, accompanied by his Duchess the beloved princess  
 May.

Sophie, nonplussed turns back to the business of organising things and packing her clothes. As the hour arrives guests are ushered into the drawing room. The first function for some time at the formerly hectic Morelands ~~house~~ house has caused not some little interest in society: and for the first time in many months ~~laughter~~ laughter rings off the walls of the Morelands dining room as the scarlet of uniforms brightens the ~~black~~ black of ladies gowns-- an oddly sombre note of court mourning for the dead Queen.

Eventually the party is seated, government officials, officers, new members of parliament, wives, society matrons.

Gossip about the Royal Visitors and some argument between left and right about the ~~distressingly~~ ~~distressing~~ "democratic" nature of some of the official functions, quips about Morelands curry and his joining a "Cooks Trades Union", punctuate an odd culinary compliment of two that leads to a query about the meet.

Is it pork or wild boar? A colonel present declares it's ~~more~~ uncommonly like a Bombay curry he once had the pleasure of enjoying on a tour of India. Someone else declares it's more like long pork in the Melanesian tradition, Basil is asked for his opinion and eventually ~~More~~ Morelands himself. The doctor is deadpan: "It's leg of Roul Housemann" There's laughter all round at this quaint reference to the old ~~rivalry~~ rivalry between the two men and that rumour once had it that Housemann took a shot at Morelands.

For a few moments there is more eating when Sophie begins to show signs of some strain. One or two guests turn to her. There is silence. The continued scraping of cutlery. More eating. Silence. Horror

The hysterical outburst that follows is unearthly lead by an ~~unearthly~~ scream. The table erupts. ~~More~~

Several men attempt to beat Morelands senseless. He offers no resistance but others drag them off. Basil Jones stands motionless in the midst of the commotion staring at ~~back~~ Sophie who equally motionless has subsided back into her chair and is staring at Morelands.

The women are ushered from the room, some sedated, and a meeting of all those remaining arranged in the library. When some semblance of order has been organised the ~~men~~ men urgently debate a course of action.

The country is on the verge of vast change. A sensation of the order before them would, well colour things in an unfortunate light. There's no big issue to be made out of it, the man would obviously be judged unfit to plead anyway. It's so unnecessary to expose all this in court. People's faith in the good order of things must be shielded from shocks of this kind.

Morelands sits silent and alone, his  
 eyes vacant, oblivious to the furious ~~xxxxx~~ wrangle going on around him. Sophie goes to him, a pointless gesture

which she realises on collapsing before him,  
unleashing a flood of quiet ~~xxxx~~ tears.

Eventually a ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ consensus is  
reached. A barrister can supervise a closed and  
formal ~~xxxxxxxx~~ enquiry. Other ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~  
appropriate medical and judicial <sup>authorities</sup> ~~xxxxxxxx~~ will  
be informed that Dr. Morelands, after a horrible  
accident, has suffered a complete mental collapse.

Leaving Morelands in the protection  
of two officers most of the party move off to the  
State Reception at Flemington as fireworks,  
a parade, and indeed an actual historical riot  
caused by the lack of facilities, a huge ~~xxxx~~  
uninvited crowd of commoners, and rain celebrate  
the birth of a nation.

Epilogue

Dr. Morelands was never brought to trial.

He lived out his days under medical supervision  
in his own house.

His property is now occupied by a public  
institution in a large Australian city.