

today, and returned strongly. And that sense of shame, which might or might not be the same thing.

I rang my mother, and she said she was sorry I hadn't come down for the funeral. I said I wasn't sorry, that I wouldn't have gone to Melbourne today even if I'd had the money (which I haven't), that I couldn't stand the thought of grieving publicly for a man who died to me years ago, and that I wanted nothing to do with my relatives - especially in that situation.

On Saturday morning the two Melbourne papers carried advertisements notifying the death and funeral of my grandfather. He had died on Thursday afternoon. My mother discovered this when she read the death notices.

The main death notice, which lists more relatives on that side of the family than I knew existed, concludes with the words: 'Peace at last. Jesus never fails.' The writer of the advertisement, in her grief, neglected to mention my grandfather's death to his daughter-in-law.

When one considers that the aunt concerned was granted power of attorney over her father's affairs a few years ago, and has since spent all of his money, including the money he had set aside for his funeral, one wonders to what exactly 'Peace at last' refers.

Pardon me for being somewhat cynical. These things tend to happen when there is a death in the family. I am happy in the confidence (one cannot, by the very circumstances, be sure of such things, ever) that my grandfather never really knew what was going on around him. I think he probably died happy.

My father didn't die happy - but that's another story, a story that I still can't tell after nine years.

I have a sort of hope - not really a serious hope, just a kind of wistful feeling - that both Sigurd and his son Leif are now seated on the right hand of the God they believed in and worshipped in spirit and truth. They deserve it, if anyone ever did.

(But if they are so seated it means I will be sort of left out in the cold, so to speak...)

This is just possibly the worst 'poem' I've ever read:

JOHN BANGSUND
Master Mariner of the 'S, S, Reliance'

Descendent of Vikings this man of the sea
Son of a nation who sail round the world,
When asleep is the sea he laughs in his glee
When troubled and swirled his skill is unfurled.

His lullaby song was a song of the waves,
Dashed into foam on the rocks and the shore
He frolicked on beaches where blue water laves,
Baptized by the sea to be her's evermore.

How placid the grandeur of Norwegian Sound,
With mirror-like water calm and serene,
And pine trees whose plumage and fragrance abound,
The snow-capped mountains add charm to the scene.

Environment surely must play a great part
Forming and moulding the life of a man,
Its noble serenity lives in his heart,
Smallness nor meanness go not with its plan.

So calmly he stands by the wheel of his boat
Guiding it surely through storm and through calm,
Delivering safely his charges afloat
The 'Reliance' and he have conquered alarm.

He is monarch of all who enter his ship
Seamen and passengers out for the day
His standard of ruling is 'good fellowship',
Come with your hamper and be blithe and gay.

Just cast cares aside and be out to enjoy
Sparkle of sunshine that gleams on the waves,
Forget all your worries and things that do cloy
He's at the wheel all anxiety saves.

The wish of your friends who go down to the sea
Is 'success to the S, S, Reliance,
That your form at the helm they always shall see
While you grant all requests with compliance.'

So 'carry on, Skipper', bring joy to the poor
Who cannot afford to drink of champagne
But whose courage to fight and power to endure
All ills of misfortune still they retain.

Sincerely yours, John.

THOMAS N. CUTTLE
'Holmsdale'
Canterbury Rd
Forest Hill (Victoria)

14 August 1938

Pretty rotten - but if Joseph Tishler or William McGonagall had written something about me I guess I would be pretty proud. Carry on, Skipper!