

Extract from THE IMMIGRANTS: FABULA MIRABILIS, OR A WONDERFUL STORY

by Moreno Giovannoni

THE FIRST GROTESQUE

No relatives living.

Friends informed.

Luigi Battistig, a Triestino, a native of Trieste who has emigrated to Australia for a better life, on 17 February 1954 at 6.35 a.m., at the age of twenty-eight years, has his

head blown to pieces, and blown off

at Bafaloriva in north-east Victoria, as the report to the coroner states, by an exploding 44-gallon petrol drum used for boiling water to make steam to humidify the cured tobacco in a kiln. After curing by hot air circulating in flues, the tobacco in the kiln, leaves draped and tied in bunches with twine over sticks, is golden and powerfully aromatic, but dry and brittle and disintegrates when handled, so water is heated in a drum outside the kiln and the resulting steam distributed through a pipe into the kiln to make the tobacco moist and manageable.

Luigi's body

was found mutilated.

There are

No relatives living. Friends informed. Nothing found in possession but suitcase of private papers taken from hut and hut locked.

The hut is the usual two-room hut that seasonal workers live in. A classic colonial miner's cottage.

Deceased has sufficient estate to defray cost of burial.

Luigi comes to Bafaloriva from a city that was once the heart of the Austro-Hungarian empire, which built fleets of naval vessels in its great dockyard. When Luigi the *triestino* is dismembered in the bush, the great Trieste dockyards are still building Italian ships for the Lloyd Triestino line to carry Italians to the English colony, including the Galileo Galilei and the Guglielmo Marconi, sister ships,

passenger liners that take the Giovannoni family to Italy and back in 1969 and 1970. Luigi emigrates for a better life and dies, leaving:

1. a suitcase containing papers
2. a locked hut, and
3. enough money to pay for his burial.

No relatives living. Friends informed.

The police report to the coroner also states that Luigi was with three other men, a Veneto called Renato Zanni, a Pugliese called Emo Bello and Tiberio Emiliani from Turin.

The drum was set up outside the wall of the kiln with water in it. A wood fire was then lit under the drum. At about 6.30 a.m. Luigi placed more wood under the drum. Emiliani left and walked to his house about sixty or seventy yards away to get some tobacco to roll into a cigarette. He heard a loud explosion and on rushing out he found Zanni and Bello badly burned and scalded, groping their way towards his house.

Emiliani tends to these two and does not see the deceased. William Golagros, the owner of the farm, a settler from Scotland, who lives about three hundred yards away, hears the explosion and rushes to the kiln and finds the mutilated corpse about thirty-seven paces away. Constables McGregor and Gawain arrive soon after and find the bottom of the drum, which has blown off, about thirty yards from the kiln. The rest of the drum is intact but buckled and is about fifty-four yards in the opposite direction.

There are no suspicious circumstances surrounding the death of the deceased.

Zanni and Bello were both removed to the hospital in Mitrefò in a critical condition and Zanni was later removed to the Base Hospital in Wangaratta.

Luigi is one of Golagros's sharefarmers. Golagros has known him for the past six months. Upon discovery of the body, Golagros covers it with bags and rings for the police. After Constable McGregor arrives with Gawain, McGregor calls his son to drive the two injured men to the hospital. Golagros then shows the policemen Luigi's badly mutilated body lying against a netting fence behind the kiln. The body is beyond recognition, but from the clothing, the build and the general appearance,

Golagros is satisfied it is the body of Luigi Battistig, commonly known as Louie, and tells the policemen.

Similar drums are used by other Italian tobacco growers in the process of curing the tobacco. In one bung of the drum there is a short piece of three-quarter-inch pipe with a hose leading from it. Two days later Golagros finds the elbow pipe between his house and the road, one hundred and fifty yards from the kiln.

Golagros says the drum is not his equipment but the sharefarmer's. Sharefarmers have been using similar drums for heating water and making steam for twenty years. He has never heard of any such drum giving any trouble.

Luigi is decapitated and a portion of the head is some three feet away. The right arm is missing and is found about ten feet away. The left leg is found about thirty feet from the body. When the whole of the body is located, it is taken to the police station in Mitrefò.

When the boiler inspector visits the site of the explosion, he sees that a 44-gallon drum similar to the one that caused the explosion is in position on another kiln. He says that the drums are not built to carry pressure and are highly dangerous when used as pressure vessels.

Luigi Battistig. No relatives living. Friends informed.