MEMORIAL POEMS OF HEROIC MEN

Although it is true that most of Stewart's poems are his descriptions of Nature, there are some poems which deal with extraordinary men in Australian history. Unlike other countries which had long histories, New Zealand and Australia were new. They had not known revolutions and wars, kingships and aristocracies. Nevertheless there were men who towered above the ordinary by their acts of heroism. Stewart tries to perpetuate their memory in a series of poems.
CHAPTER - IV

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"Professor Piccard" is the story of an exceptional person gifted with the knowledge and spirit of adventure. The truths about the 'Universe' are revealed through his experiments. Ordinary man though he is, he rises by his achievements to great heights and merges with the legendary, historical and mythical figures.

Professor Piccard becomes the Orpheus figure in his attempt to search for the unknown. He rises to the Sun like Icarus, for like a torch he ransacks the cosmos. The comparison with Orpheus and Icarus is appropriate. Orpheus is very passionate and tenacious. To regain his beloved he leaves the earth and goes to Hades and returns with his reward. He wins the prize but loses it tragically.

Or how like some new Orpheus

Wandering through dim Hades

In the same way Professor Piccard dives to the depths of water for fulfilling his passion but in the process he loses his life. In his flight to the sky like Icarus he falls down and meets mortal angel. The poet does not end the
comparisons with mythical and legendary figures. For him Professor Piccard is like a modern saint in his uprightness. He is surrounded by bright wafting angels. He is unaffected by cosmic rays and bullet like meteorite.

The poem "Professor Piccard" has the appearance of 'ballad' and depicts the story of a diver who has great talent and skill in fathoming the sea and scaling the sky. When he is atop the snowy mountains he looks like a shooting star.

Some said it was a shooting star
Some said it was a pheasant

For some he looks like pheasant. Whatever it is he is the object of awe and wonder to the villagers and peasants. He leaps from a mountain and falls into the sea in his bathyscaphe in which he looks like a bubble of air. But for the human he is mistaken for spout, snow or cloud. For some others he is a shining spirit released from heaven or hell. There are others who have mistaken him for a thing from Mars or the man in the moon. Some are able to identify him correctly as Professor Piccard

Some said it was Professor Piccard
Ascending in his balloon

After describing Professor Piccard and his vehicle as a mysterious object the poet now describes the journey of the vehicle. Professor Piccard does not stay in the outer space for a long time. Once he touches pinnacle of stratosphere he changes his direction and falls several hundred fathoms down. The search for another world makes him ignore the dangers involved. And he finds himself not in light but in utter darkness. He is surrounded by shadows of
fish with prominent eyes, the flying phosphorescence and many sea animals which have never seen a man. They all seem to run from the bathyscaphe which the person carries.

_The shadowy fish with bulging eyes_

_The flying phosphorescence_

_The mighty shapes that loom in the shades_

_That never have known man's presence_

It is at the bottom of the sea that Professor Piccard encounters a series of challenges. He has to wrestle for life with an octopus and fight with a giant shark. The poet wonders what will happen to Professor Piccard if he is swallowed up by a whale or if he is surrounded by mermaids of Hades or if he falls like Icarus through space as black as Licorice.

The poet speculates whether Professor Piccard was hatched from a great egg that deeps of water have produced. Whatever it is, Professor Piccard by his daring movements into the sky and into the water, becomes more legendary than any other divine being by his perpendicular motion. Significantly he has come to the accepted as an emblem of hero.

The poem establishes the superiority of Professor Piccard in a series of comparisons. The technique reminds of a method employed by Shelley in "Skylark". The poem is dominated by light imagery suggesting that Professor Piccard lived a glorious life.

References to shooting star, shining spirit, a thing from Mars, a man in the moon and his single minded devotion reveal that he is a figure of fantasy. His
ideal is suggested by expressions like straight, tall, perpendicular and sublimely vertical.

'Mungo Park' is a dramatic poem which is an imaginary meeting between Mungo Park and Sir. Walter Scott. Sir Walter Scott, by chance, finds Mungo Park tossing wee bits of pebbles in the burn. In astonishment he asks Mungo park why he has been playing with stones and water after the life of adventure and heroism. Mungo park draws his attention towards the bubbles in the water and says that the pebbles that are thrown into the water send up air which takes time to reach the top. He implies by this example of experiment that he bides his time for a greater part of adventure to which the previous experiences of adventure in Africa will be added.

His adventure is strange in Niger river. Although he knows that if is not safe he likes to return to the same river. He narrates how he had swum the river and reached the coast. Sir Walter Scott wonders at his bitter experiences and how Mungo Park had been crushed blow by blow by the people who caught him. He was a prisoner for four months and was kept like a circus beast. Savage methods were used by his captors to make him suffer. He was made fun off by women also. He was subjected to sickness and threat of death. But Mungo Park escaped from captivity miraculously on a certain night. He rode on his horse in ragged clothes and seemed to be an old person having white beard. He appeared to be like a begger and stones were thrown on him by the barbarous people who were more than wild animals. Before he reached to safety he was caught by three tall horse-men who stripped him and put away his horse, money, food and gun. Although his life was spared by them he was left to cruel beasts. He escaped from savage men and animals through sheer courage. Sir Walter
Scott asks Mungo Park whether he gets satisfied with what he had done in his life and whether he knows that the world was ringing with his name. He further asks whether he is not satisfied with the fame that he had achieved. Mungo Park replies that his name must jingle once more whatever replies he had to bear. Sir Walter Scott tells him that one cannot expect repetition of luck. He replies that to live like a lame dog or lead a lazy life sitting by the fire side is very undesirable. He cannot resist the impulse in him that presses to have again adventure.

*Shall I live here a medico in Peebles*

*With petty sickness like a lame dog Whining*

*Or by the burn-side sit and play with pebbles*

He thus becomes a theme for a poem. Sir Walter Scott agrees to write a poem about him. Before he writes a poem, Mungo Park faces the desert’s lions and raging river in his journey through the Jungle. Mungo Park does not feel egoistic of his adventures. He tells Sir Walter Scott that each man has his road laid about his journey and one cannot exchange one’s vocation with other. At best they can wish each other good luck. So, the poem closes with the decision of Mungo Park to go on his adventure and Sir Walter Scott’s returning to his creative work.

*My road lies far; yet it could be, my, friend,*

*In mile and mile we go or book and book*

*We take the same strange journey in the end.*

*What can we do but wish each other luck?*

The poem "Mungo Park" reminds us of Alfred Tennyson’s poem ‘Ulysses’. Both Mungo Park and Ulysses are adventurous persons. Mungo Park is subjected to threat of death while acquiring knowledge. But he is least-bothered
about bitter experiences. Ulysses wants to explore knowledge that lies beyond human thought as he is hated of dull life.

The common features in them are courage, thrust for knowledge and hatred of dull life.

"Rutherford" takes its title from a splendid long poem celebrating Earl Rutherford of Nelson the New Zealander (1871-1937) who first discovered and disclosed the inward nature of the atom and its nucleus. Rutherford is a narrative of exploration and questioning. In this poem the New Zealand scientist Rutherford, the great sea-farer of science, examines man's need to extend his spirit and intellect to the fullest even when the consequences are unforeseen. He is busy in his laboratory by watching the tiny comets darting and winking. His main interest is to explore the innermost secrets of an atom.

He too was making a wheel; but not for the water
Not for the road, or the mill, but such a wheel
He knew would carry man and all his future.

But his father made a wheel out of imagination which could be useful for only external work. It would move only with the help of external force. But the wheel invented by Rutherford, moves itself to go into the depths of Universe.

The poem is a meditative discourse upon the nature of responsibility and power, developed by schematic images around wheel and hand. He asserts that in every heart there is a creative power that can be used for good or evil. Rutherford reflects on his own history and his nature as a man and considers his heritage from his craftsman father. He muses upon his destiny as a scientist.

Where atlast ended perhaps or did not end
The trend of all wheels, the high road of human destiny

The boy makes a small wheel with which he plays only for enjoyment. But the wheel made by Rutherford is for universal need.

Blow up the world with this? You could pay dearly
For probing too deeply into that dark resistance
So let his atoms be used to do man good
And nothing but good - pierce to the cancer cell.

Rutherford is somewhat diffident of victory because the men in the world may utilize his invention of atoms to do evil. He wishes the human beings to be the masters of the air, the earth and the ocean. But he expresses his dislike to harm human kind. He wants the outcome of atomic power to be utilized properly and not to let a savage enjoy himself alone in this world with his power.

Rutherford is a man who could never go back and share the old simplicities with his father. He ponders over human history from the time of the first wheel going down to the water. Wheel, his own father made - water-wheel imagery, unifies the whole poem.

Rutherford speculates upon the outcome of his new knowledge of the atom. He knows that man's only hope of salvation is to change and to supplant human barbariity by the rule of the strong and the just.

According to Nancy Keesing, Rutherford more than any other work of Stewart's defies dissection. "Abstracted from the whole, its separate themes and ideas are often obvious and some of its argument sounds incomplete because Rutherford died in 1937 and the poem cannot in its compass refer to atomic
development since his time. It is a truly unified work, and within boundaries sums up and draws together every major theme that Stewart has explored in his writing. Man's good and evil are in it—his endurance through every age, his future necessity, his depravity and his capacity for grandeur.

In language and technique the poem is full of variety. The splendid and the colloquial march together. In deed, there is in places a certain deliberate ugliness which most effectively directs the reader's attention back to the dark seriousness of atomic implications. This is clear in the section where Rutherford speculates upon his own genius acknowledging what he owes to history and to 'hands that had died' as well as to 'hands not human at all', beyond his seeking—hands not his own, like a mist came creeping through, his own at their work and made what he was making.

"He was so clumsy and blind, beyond all patience
But out of the dark, from nowhere, flashed the conception
Like force in the atom and filled with its radiance,
And steadily, patiently, always in the right direction
Despite his stumblings it moved in him in silence
Until at last what it wanted to do was done
All things it seemed, moved through time to perfection
Through earth and wood and flesh through the mind of man

Two voices speak in the poem—Stewart's and Rutherford's but they are seldom clearly defined, except that the scientist's imagery and thought sometimes find blunter language. As throughout the whirling atom is likened to the water-wheel which Rutherford's father made, so wheels within wheels within wheels spin through lines.
The poem "Rutherford" is relevant to all our times. The poem, while paying tribute to the human spirit which is after truth, lays stress on a creative use of science. Several philosophers in this century have exhorted the scientists and politicians through making use of science in a beneficial way and appealed to mankind not to use it for destructive purposes.

In a poem titled "James Honeyman" Auden describes the story of a scientist. His discoveries bring destruction not only to the world but also to himself. The fact that Stewart has written a long poem on Rutherford, suggests the importance of an atom to the mankind.

According to R.D. Fitz Gerald the poem has three parallel themes - all on the same motif of inevitable progress." The first theme traces the personal musings of Rutherford, who considering his work and achievements finds that he cannot retreat but must continue resisting not progress and bring on destruction. Together with this theme a second of craftsman and craftsmanship - is interwoven. The third theme is the ambition of the human species advancing through history into future history and perhaps from world to world in obedience to some creative force" (Australian writers and their work Nancy keesing.)

James McAuley says " Rutherford is a meditation in the form of personality-revealing monologue. The balance between interest in the person of the great New Zealand physicist and concern with the problems faced by the world in consequence of his atomic research is well kept".

In the poem "Kenneth Slessor" the poet describes the reliable, amicable and polite nature of his friend Kenneth Slessor who has sailed so untimely on the water to lose his life. The bad qualities like jealousy, enmity and
hatred are never to be found in him, Pound narrates the story of Kenneth Slessor to Browning.

Hang it all Slessor as Pound once said to Browning Slessor is a man of enthusiasm, submission and confidence. The poet pays close attention to his amicable nature. He is always polite in inviting his friends to dinner. The important thing in him is that he is a bibliophile who arranged the books from floor to ceiling in every rack in his dining room.

He is not only a lover of books but also the best cook. Not only the wives but also the bright girls are all eager to know the cookery from him. He is one among those loved by all. His words are different and catchy. His friends go on talking about *Pepys and William Hickey* and Tennyosn verse and drunken pranks of Lamb.

Kenneth Slessor is an efficient navigator like his predecessor Captain Dobbin. But before Nature no body is great as it swallows him. Though he is no more among his friends he is commemorated in the form of verse. The great blue tide and the sea gulls are calm and never reveal the ghastly incident. Though he is far and lost the poet remembers him forever. His lamentation conveys his noble qualities that should be followed by others. Man actually acts continuously in various fields of personal, social and national life. He may be either good or bad at work. The poet gives in this poem a lucid interpretation of the good performance of Slessor's personal social and national life. But fate which took him away, is inescapable. Though Slessor is a man of dedication, fate hasn't spared him.
Like W.H. Auden's "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" in which the noble qualities of the dead poet are remembered. Stewart in his poem "Kenneth Slessor" remembers the great virtues of Slessor's head and heart.

Well round and ripe and rich with years you went
As if you rode that great tide out to sea
And we salute you even as we lament.

*His* loving heart, spaceous hospitality and courtesy make his friends worship him.

This poem is a modern elegy in which the poet and the close friends of dead man, do not lament the death of a person but they praise the noble qualities of him. In the poem the poet suggests that life is short and the great qualities live long.

The poet gives in the poem "Sarchochilus Fiz Garaldi" a remarkable story of Sarchochilus Fitz Gerald whose demise made the poet write a unique poem. He narrates the great story of Sarchochilus to Robert D. Fitz Gerald, grandson of Sarchochilus.

Sarchochilus is completely ignored by all except the poet who recognises him as green orchid with protruberant dripping red cliff - face. The lyre bird sings a melodic <s>ous</s>ong which reveals the virtues of Sarchochilus. Though there is no support he stands safely on the brink of bushfire and flood. The poet does not lament his death but remembers him in the form of green orchid.

*Down the abyss where the lyrebird sings in the fern*

*Green as Sarcochilus, orchid of the ravine*
To think of a person in terms of corrugation, after his death, is actually forgetfulness of his goodness and his service to the nation. Sarchochilus, worked as "Deputy surveyor of New South Wales and was venerated by all. But it seems that except the poet all others had forgotten him. After his demise Sarchochilus, is not passive though he is in the form of orchid, surveys on the edge of the wild rock-fall. The place where the sunlight pales, is small but enough for him to be there under his golden roof and to stride the mountains.

*Under his golden roof; small space enough*

*For the tall man striding the mountains*

The lyre bird sings sweet song to wake up faint tongue orchids in their cover of moss and the spring to see Sarchochilus in flower.

*Deep under rock Sarchochilus in flower*

The poet remembers him even twenty years after his death. It is clear that the song of the lyre bird reveals his virtues like perfection and readiness in service to the nation. The poet says that nobility of life of a man lies in work but not in the personality. All have to leave this world in their turn but the fact is that after taking one's birth one has to utilize one's life. It is very natural to human beings to forget the virtues of great men after their departure from this world. The poet is not like other human beings as he remembers Sarchochilus in the form of orchid.

The words green, *eternity, golden roof, radiance forever*, reveal noble qualities of Sarchochilus.

*'Green as Sarchochilus orchid of the ravine'
Life is short as revealed by the words like small, fall and shrink.

This poem is one kind of elegy in the form of praise to the work-minded man.

The poem The Pictures reveals the poet's immense love of art. Naturally an ordinary man looks at art in the picture as art but never excogitates on their immortal grace. The poet gives them immortal life by describing them in beautiful terms. The terms present their ideal life.

*Needing no commendation fearing no fall*

*Quietly living their own lives on the wall*

The pictures on the wall are hung firmly. By looking at them the poet recollects their noble qualities. The pictures are very clean as the light falls on them to reveal their noble life.

There is a picture of Percy Lindsay's Ploughman who was set up high among white glittering clouds and the blue noon embosomed him. He worked hard in field and was content in it. He was enthusiastic in ploughing the field. He painted his own happiness into the sky.

The wistfulness of spirit caught in flesh is seen in the picture of Lance Solomon. The poet finds his life immortal and brimming with vitality. Norman's and Lindsay's pictures reveal their earthly stillness. The poet feels as though he were talking and walking with the people in the pictures. He minglest with them as though he were one of their kindred. The thick rays that fall on the pictures tell the real stories of these people.
In the poem "Mending the Bridge" the men with fierce tenacity mend the bridge stubbornly. To them time is precious for the river is not calm. They are massive as rock in the lantern's stormy light as the surroundings are not submissive and deteriorated. Yet with perseverance and courage they start mending the bridge in copper light.

Their labour is against devastating darkness. The task is difficult to be completed as the atmosphere is unfavourable. In baleful light they are passionate to cut the rigid quarry. It is sludgy air that makes them passive in work though they are enthusiastic. But they are contemptuous against the uncongenial conditions. They detest the worst conditions created by Nature. The labour in light is like orange blood. Their determination is so strong as to finish the task allotted to them though bad weather tries to despoil their strength. They are brisk in completion of the task of mending the bridge. A dextrous effort is needed as the condition of the bridge is worse. The night also has not co-operated with their task. The clamour of copper wakes up the leaves and makes them hard and cool.

The night that never sleeps; quickens The soil,

The stones and the grass are alive. The thrush awakes.

Huddles and finds the leaves gone hard and cool.

The cow the bull and the dogs found the night different.

It is a venturesome attempt. But men who labour in the city also with naked forearms singed the copper light to fight with the stone. The men who mend the bridge are stronger than any other man in the city and burnish with sweat and the lanterns now they tower are monstrous against the marshes of the
night. In this poem the men are heroic because they fight with unfavourable atmosphere to mend the bridge.

In the poem "Fence", The poet gives an adequate description of the life of the hogans behind the fence. Fence is quint-essential not only to the Hogans but also to those who live unfortified. Their life is free but principled. Though fence is an old fashined screen it is greatly useful to those who frame families. It is not merely white ants' and weather's ravage. Fence is the screen which display the affairs of hogans at the broken paling that becomes an eating substance to terrier of hogans. The presentation of the life of Hogans is clear and to be followed by others. The poet says that the tribes who live out side are careless, when compared to the principled life of Hogans. The poet is of opinion on that defence is necessary in the form of fence. It is no simple screen where Hogan prunes his roses decently hidden by paling. Mrs. Hogan is also happy behind the screen of protectin. The women in other countries have restricted life, but Hogan's wife represents the life of happiness and freedom.

Sporting together some sunny afternoon

Be noticed with Mrs. Hogan at nymphs and satyrs

Fence is earthwork connected with fossa or a moat and it is protective screen from enemies who are not bold enough to enter fence as Hogans appear like lions. To enemies and even to sabre-toothed tigers the fence disobeys. Though postman is regular visitor to the place where Hogans live, to him the terrier in terrible and Argus-eyed. The life of Hogans behind the fence is peaceable and unproblematic as terrier forbids strangers. They look at their owners as queens and kings.

They are peaceable people behind their barriers
The whole world needs such Hogans to contribute their rich singularity and uniqueness. But it is true that the world does not pay them tribute. They are far and away and the best race in the world. Another unique quality that we find in them is charity. Their children are also like elders and brisk in studies. Fence is like a mirror which reflects the real nature of them. They do not flex to create problems among them and give no chance to others to break in their ideals with bullets and bombs as they are stark. They do not care even though the world is against to them. They have different customs and cultures which nobody breaks with the powerful weapons.

No one break in with bullets and bombs and slogans

Deep out of time is fence and deep is man

The life of the Hogans represents the worlds of peace and charity. The life of others who live outside of the fence represents the world of conflicts, political agitations, public disturbances, deception, hypocrisy and violence.

Douglas Stewart's heroic men represent the world of adventures. They are successful in achieving anything though the dangers are involved in it. Some of them represent the world of happiness and peace. They are completely against to deception and violence.