

SEEKING THE GIRL'S GOOD

Introduction: Caroline Chisholm had been running the female emigrants' home in Bent Street, Sydney, for some months, and this incident from Female Immigration possibly occurred in mid 1842. Ever vigilant, Mrs Chisholm looked out for her brood of young female emigrants, especially new arrivals. One of these, an attractive 15 year old, had been intercepted by a predatory male, and Mrs Chisholm went to Sydney Cove after night fall, engaged a rowing boat, and found and rescued the girl, taking a few hours in the process.

When the ship _____ arrived, it was mentioned to me, that there had been a little flirtation on board. The night the girls were sent to me, one was missing, the favourite; she left the ship with the other girls. I was informed that _____, with his boat, had been waiting for an hour off the jetty: I knew where the girl was, but to get her was an undertaking. I was certain he could not pass Lavender's Ferry: to pass under the bows of his own ship would be too glaring.

I went to the jetty; engaged a boat; described the parties I wished to find; promised ten shillings. We went stealthily and steadily along. I soon espied two men in a boat; they had made themselves as comfortable as they could; had selected a snug corner, and were smoking their cigars: these men I wished to avoid, and did so. I now looked out for a place I could land at, and though this was rather *rough* work, I succeeded. I then looked about, but could not see or hear any one.

I was about returning, when I discovered the girl I was seeking: I had never seen her before, but her beauty had been faithfully described to me, and I knew she was *the one*. I told her she had not been missed; that if she was quick, she would not: the girl heard all – but hesitated. _____ laughed at my remonstrance, and said, she did not come to this country to be treated as a child, and he *advised* me quickly to leave them. I saw I had a hardened and unprincipled villain to deal with – reason and persuasion were lost on his callous heart – and, in a taunting tone of irony, he bade me go.

I was determined to make one more effort, and I said, – you know I have no other object than the girl's good; if you give her up to me at once, I give you *my word* I will not mention your name; but if I leave here without her, you must take the consequences. Assuming an attitude of insolence and derision, he said, "Pray madam, what consequences?" "First, when I leave here, I shall report at Capt. Brown's office that a girl, from the ship _____, (who is under age) is here. I shall then call at the "Herald" Office, and the "Gazette" Office, and state all I know. I shall then report the circumstance to Mr. Merewether, the immigration agent, when nothing more will *be necessary for me to do*: what steps he may feel justified in taking, I know not; but I can assure you the Press of Sydney wont spare you." I saw this coward crouch – this villain quail, at the mention of the Press. May the Press of Sydney long maintain its power and *preserve* its influence! Each paper has its own interests; each editor his own opinion; but in the exposure of villany – in any *moral* movement, *they are one*.

I saw this wholesome terror had, to use a Sydney phrase, taken all the "bounce" out of him. I went to the girl; led her past _____; I desired her to get into the boat willingly, that the man should suppose it was entirely her own will. I was hastening to follow her, when _____ said, "I must have one word with you: that poor girl is innocent and good – do you believe it?" "I do." "Then may God bless you!" He assisted me into the boat, and he was soon out of sight. As I passed his waiting boat, I felt a little triumph, in which I fear, pride was mixed with thankfulness – however, these feelings are natural; but they are feelings that require watching and regulating.

I landed at the jetty; I offered the boatman his hire; he refused, in a manner at once respectful and grateful: "You do not know me, ma'am, but I know you; and may my arm wither from the socket, if ever I touch money of yours." "Why, I have never seen you before – who are you?" "Flora's cousin." Alas, poor Flora! many loved you.