



COLD MORNING dew, which had settled in beads on the man's whiskers as he waited on the deserted platform, glistened in the yellow flickering of the guard's hurricane lamp; an Australian rum-bottle (empty) was in his hand, another (still sealed) craned from his hip pocket, but his face was pale and pinched with the cold. Without speaking, without, it seemed, even looking, he slouched awkwardly into the light, startling us with the unexpectedness and the quietness of his arrival and, too, by his dishevelled appearance: his clothes were crumpled and loosely hanging, the leather laces of his boots trailed untied, his sleeve was torn, and into the brim of the hat low over his eyes were jammed—of all things—three two-section trip tram tickets (they were unclipped, and, in the middle of Otago Central, likely to remain so). We were running an hour late: he must have had a long wait on that platform, unlighted, deserted, and forlorn of shelter except for the break to the chill wind made by comfortless cream-cans and heaped sacks of potatoes.

Good-day, he said, although it was half-way through the night, and he said it cheerfully, although he looked any-

thing but that. For three days, the stranger continued (although no explanation was needed: it was obvious enough) he had been on the spree; his shearing finished, he had taken the chance to leave his 1,000-acre sheep-run at the back of Drybread for a trip to Ranfurly. His visit, unfortunately (and this with a grin), had extended from one to two, to three days; now his return was urgent—he had to untie his dogs. Waiting for the usual passenger transport meant more wasted time: would there be any objection to his sitting in a spare corner of the van of this night goods as far as Omakau? There wouldn't, said the guard. Our stranger slumped down, he took a swig; soon he was asleep.

We, too, not wanting to wait for the passenger train (which runs three times a week only), had travelled on the night goods, not realizing before we were aboard that the 155 miles from Dunedin to Cromwell, the terminus, took eleven hours, to which must be added, usually, at least another hour for time lost on the way. We steamed from Dunedin Station at 9 p.m., we chugged into Cromwell at 9.30 the next morning; we had stopped, it seemed, at every tenth fence-post (and