

Władysław Noskowski *

STRZELECKI
Radio feature by Wł. Ad. Noskowski

NARRATOR: The famous Polish explorer Count Paul de Strzelecki arrived in Sydney on April 25, 1839, and a few days later called on the Governor, Sir George Gipps, with a letter of introduction from the British Resident in New Zealand.

MUSIC

SIR GEORGE : And tell me, Count, is it long since you left England?

STRZELECKI : Nearly six years, Your Excellency.

SIR GEORGE : Is that so? And where have you been all these years?

STRZELECKI : First of all I travelled on the continent, - France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, - then I went to the United States, visiting Boston, New York, Washington and Niagara Falls, then I retraced my steps to the shores of Lake Ontario and down St. Lawrence River to Montreal and Quebec. .

SIR GEORGE : Exploring all the time?

STRZELECKI : Yes, Your Excellency. And it was very interesting. Returning to New York I went to Havana, Vera Cruz, Mexico, New Orleans and up the Mississippi and the Ohio rivers to Cincinnati.

SIR GEORGE : So you have seen quite a lot of the United States.

STRZELECKI : Yes, I really have, and eventually I went by ship to Brazil, exploring the provinces of San Paulo and Villa Rica. Then after visiting Montevideo and Buenos Ayres, I crossed the Argentina Republic, where I examined various minerals, and I ascended the Cordilleras and walked to Valparaiso. From there by ship I explored the Pacific coast, Lima, Panama and Californian peninsula.

SIR GEORGE : That sounds most fascinating to me, and such interesting territory, too. You must have done quite a lot of mountaineering, Count, haven't you?

STRZELECKI : Yes, quite a lot.

SIR GEORGE : And tell me, how did you manage to explore the Pacific coast so extensively?

STRZELECKI : I was fortunate in being invited by Captain George Grey of the H.M.S. "Cleopatra" on which I spent 10 months. Shortly after returning to Valparaiso, Captain Grey introduced me to Captain Russell Elliot, commander of the H.M.S. "Fly", who asked me to travel with him, and we sailed for the Sandwich Islands, where I ascended and measured the huge Kilauea volcano. After visiting various islands of the Pacific, I arrived early this year in New Zealand, and at last here I am.

SIR GEORGE : You have certainly had a most varied experience, visiting so many interesting places. And tell me, count, what are your impressions of Sydney?

STRZELECKI : We'll, Your Excellency, since I arrived in Sydney I am continually asking myself if I am really in what has been represented as most demoralised colony in the history of nations. All I have read has been completely misleading. The evening I arrived, I left my watch and purse behind and I armed myself with a stick, being resolved to encounter inevitable danger with the least possible risk! However, that night in the streets of Sydney I found decency and a quiet, which I have never witnessed in any other port of the United Kingdom. No drunkenness, -no sailors' quarrels.

SIR GEORGE : I am delighted to hear that, especially coming from such distinguished traveller as you.

STRZELECKI : I am not exaggerating, Your Excellency, - I was most favourably impressed.

SIR GEORGE : And what do you think of the town itself?

STRZELECKI : I was frankly amazed. Your George Street, the Regent Street of Sydney, seems to display houses and shops modelled after London. But nowhere did its lamps and also the numerous lamps in the shop windows betray any signs of a corrupt state of society, common to the streets of other capitals. Since then I witnessed many nights like the first in which the silence, the feeling of perfect security and the delicious freshness of the air mingled with nothing that could break the charm of a solitary walk...

SIR GEORGE : Your comments are most flattering, Count, and I am sure the Colonial Office would be very interested to hear your opinions. I must tell my officers, who, no doubt, will also greatly appreciate your favourable comments, for we are all trying to do our best for the welfare of this colony. And now, please tell me Count, what do you intend doing here? And in what way can I assist you?

STRZELECKI : My main object is to examine the mineralogy and possibly the geology of this continent. Of course, it is such a huge continent that it would take a life-time to explore it all. I think therefore, that I shall confine myself to a belt about 150 miles from the coast and right down into Van Diemen's Land. I very greatly appreciate Your Excellency's kind offer to help me

SIR GEORGE : You may rest assured, Count, that it will be my pleasure to help you in your work in New South Wells, which I shall follow with great interest, and I shall give you letters of introduction to various prominent settlers, as well as our own officials, to assist you and to extend their hospitality to you. And please do not hesitate to call on me whenever you desire.

MUSIC

NARRATOR During the next few months Strzelecki explored the country around Sydney and in September he walked up the valley of Grose, ascending Mount King George, Mount Hay and Mount Tomah. The weather was very bad and he was delighted to unexpectedly find a lone farmer, who received him very hospitably.

MUSIC

STRZELECKI : (heavy rain is heard) How wonderful! A dwelling at last ... And there must be someone in, for I see smoke coming out of the chimney (knock at the door).

A VOICE : Who is there?

STRZELECKI : Only a traveller seeking shelter from the rain.

FARMER : (opens the door) Be welcome who ever you are. Come in!

STRZELECKI : Thanks. Oh, how wonderful to see a fire. I was nearly frozen...

Shall I presently show you a letter from the Governor. You will see you have nothing to fear.

FARMER : I don't want to see any letters. You are welcome guest and that is all that matters. And before you have a rest let me remove your wet clothes. You are drenched ... Just like that ... Put this over your shoulders and sit in front of the fire. You will soon feel better... I will get some food for you.

STRZELECKI : You have made me wonderfully comfortable. I really do not know what I would have done, had I not found your home. I have spent several days climbing hills and mountains, eventually reaching Mount King George. Mt. Tomah appeared quite close, but immense ravines lay between. I descended and ascended, climbing, sliding and clinging to the wet foliage. On approaching the summit the rain changed to hail. It was so cold that my clothes stiffened and I was forced to look for some cavern to kindle a fire and dry my clothes. And now I have been fortunate enough to find this haven.

FARMER : Where you will be able to rest a few days. To-morrow I shall kill a pig, for you must rest here until the weather clears.

STRZELECKI : But really, this is most kind of you, especially as I am a complete stranger for you.

FARMER : Don't worry. My wife and I will look after you and give you provisions if you intend going further afield,

STRZELECKI : This hospitality is remarkable... Tell me, how long have you lived here?

FARMER : I came to this colony 10 years ago, as a labourer for the old country. I worked hard, saved up some money, got married and settled here. I have two small farms and assigned servants to do the work. I treat them well, I work in the paddocks with them and we eat at the same table. Poor devils! They are not bad, if you treat them well.

STRZELECKI : I couldn't imagine you treating them badly...

FARMER : Why should I? After all, I am grateful for the prosperity I enjoy. So different from the old country! And where are you off to?

STRZELECKI : I am on the way to see Mr. James Walker of Wallerawang, but on the way I am exporting and measuring mountains.

FARMER : I will show you the way to descend into the valley to the west.

MUSIC

STRZELECKI : (dogs barking) Is your master home?

SERVANT : Yes, Mr. Walker is inside. Whom shall I announce?

STRZELECKI : Tell him I arraigned from Sydney town with a letter of introduction. Oh, how nice to be here. This is the first civilised place I have seen for a long time.

WALKER : Welcome, Count!

STRZELECKI : I am very happy to meet you, Mr. Walker, but how did you know who I am?

J. WALKER : (laughs) This not very difficult to guess. I had a letter from the governor's ADC advising me to expect you shortly. In fact I thought you would have been here long ago. Where have you been? Lost?

STRZELECKI : It was very thoughtful of His Excellency to think of me and I was very grateful for the interest he has taken in my humble person. Where have I been? I arrived here from Mt. King George over the wickedest, most crooked and sharp edged range of mountains, with toes peeping out from worn of boots, drenching every day and almost frost bitten on Mt. Tomah (laughs). I am glad I explored these ridges, but nothing in the world would make me do it again, - except for love, perhaps.

J. WALKER : (laughs) You can't tell me anything new about our wild mountains and ravines! For I have just returned from the bush with my domestic retinues after having spent several days tramping up and down gullies and mountains to round up three bushrangers, who were spreading terror and confusion in the neighbourhood.

STRZELECKI : And were you successful in apprehending them?

J. WALKER : Yes, we were, with the help of the soldiers. One of the bushrangers is supposed to be Lambert the Famous, a notorious criminal. Tell me count, do you propose to stay with us for a few day at least?

STRZELECKI : No, unfortunately, Mr. Walker. To-morrow, or they after, I want to push on to Bathurst and to explore the district.

J. WALKER : You are most welcome to stay here as long as you desire. Three years ago I was very happy to extend my hospitality to another distinguish visitor, Mr. Charles Darwin, who stayed with us several days. Anyhow, if you feel you must push on, I shall be very pleased to give you introductions to various station owners in the Bathurst and Wellington districts.

STRZELECKI : This is very kind of you, sir, and I shall be very grateful.

MUSIC

NARRATOR : After exploring the country beyond Bathurst and measuring the altitudes of various mountains, Count Strzelecki discovered gold in the Wellington district. He returned to Sydney several weeks later to report his observations to Sir George Gipps.

MUSIC

STRZELECKI : Look Your Excellency. These are two specimens of gold I found near Wellington. I feel quite certain that a very extensive gold fields exist near Bathurst and if Your Excellency should desire, I shall be pleased to...

SIR GEORGE : (interrupting) I might as we'll be quite candid with you, Count. The discovery of gold is most interesting and, no doubt, it might ultimately be of great importance to the colony, but do you realise what would happen if we allowed this report of your discovery to be made public? The rush for gold would create a most serious problem, for we simply have no sufficient soldiers to control the convicts if they became unmanageable. Nothing fires the imagination of people more than the thought of finding gold... A most serious position would result and for that very reason, I must ask you, Count, to give me your word of a gentleman to keep your discovery secret.

STRZELECKI : Just as Your Excellency desire. As a scientist and explorer I have reported having observed outcrops of coal near Mount York, and also having discovered gold near Wellington. If Your Excellency does not wish the presence of gold being made public, I shall definitely keep the secret.

SIR GEORGE : Thank you, Count. This secret will only be known to you and to me until such time as the gold rush will no longer imperil the safety of this colony...

MUSIC

NARRATOR : Having decided to explore the Great Dividing Range and to proceed onward to Port Philip, Strzelecki left Sydney and spent Christmas at Camden Park with James MacArthur.

MUSIC

STRZELECKI : I am greatly enjoying my stay with you, Mr. MacArthur, for I have found in your home all the comforts we love to find in the cities: society, books, fine house, a lovely garden and plenty of fruit.

MACARTHUR: And what did you think of my vineyard?

STRZELECKI : I was frankly surprised to see the six neat little cottages surrounded with gardens, which you had especially built to accommodate the German vine dressers, who emigrated with their families.

MACARTHUR : Yes, they are very comfortable there, and were they not excited when you spoke German to them ...

STRZELECKI : They told me that if they could express their gratitude in English they would tell you how they appreciate your generosity and Mrs MacArthur's kindness.

MACARTHUR : I am very pleased to hear that indeed. And now tell me, count, where do you propose to go from here?

STRZELECKI : Amongst the many places I desire to explore are: the country around the Wollondilly and the Shoalhaven rivers, Lake George, the Yass plains, the course of the Murrumbidgee River and to follow up the Murray Valley into the Snowy Mountains.

MACARTHUR : And then?

STRZELECKI : After ascertaining the altitudes of the highest peaks of the Snowy Mountains, I will proceed across unexplored country to Port Philip.

MUSIC

NARRATOR : According to pre-arranged plans, Strzelecki with his servant met James MacArthur, a cousin of MacArthur of Camden Park, a 19 year-old Englishman James Riley, an aboriginal Charlie Tara and a servant, on February 5, 1840, at Ellerslie Station near Adelong. The party with pack horses, expect Strzelecki, who preferred to walk with his valuable instruments on his back, proceeded along the Murray river for about 50 miles. Leaving the others in a camp, Strzelecki and MacArthur began the arduous ascent of the high range. And you will hear Strzelecki relate what he wrote in his journal.

MUSIC

STRZELECKI : The steepness of the numberless ridges, intersected by gullies and torrents, rendered the ascent a matter of no small difficulty, which was increased by the weight of the instruments, which for safety, I carried on my back. On February 15th about noon I found myself on an elevation of 6510 feet above sea level, seated on perpetual snow, a lucid sky above me and below an uninterrupted view over 7000 square miles. This pinnacle, rocky and naked, predominant over several others, affords a most advantageous position for overlooking the intricacies of the mountains around. This eminence struck me so forcibly by the similarity it bears to a tumulus elevated in Cracow over the tomb of the patriot Kosciuszko, that, although in a foreign country, on foreign ground, but amongst a free people, who appreciate freedom and it's votaries, I could not refrain from giving it the name of Mount Kosciusko. Thus I have reserved and consecrated as a reminder for future generations upon this continent a name dear and hallowed to every Pole, to every human, to every friend of freedom and honour, - Kosciusko.

MUSIC

NARRATOR : Descending the Snowy Mountains the Strzelecki party arrived on March 2nd at McAlister's station on the Tambo river.

MUSIC

MCALISTER: So it is already over three weeks since you discovered Mount (hesitates) Kos-cius-ko. And where do you propose to go now and when?

STRZELECKI : Much as it is delightful to enjoy your hospitality, Mr McAlister we must push on to-morrow. As I wish to continue my exploration of the Dividing Range, my friends and I intend leaving in the morning on our way to Corner Inlet and thence to Western Port and Melbourne.

RILEY: One thing, Mr McAlister, the count never believes I wasting time on resting anywhere for long.

MCALISTER : You are quite right. He seems to be animated by an indomitable spirit urging him to move on and on.

STRZELECKI : (laughs) Well, you can't exactly blame me for that. Being an explorer I might as well be on the move.

MCALISTER : You have a long and dangerous trip before you, gentlemen. You know that MacMillan has explored some of that country, most of which is absolutely unknown, however. To-morrow I shall accompany you just for one day to show you MacMillan's tracks and places where you can ford the rivers. You know that this is the very last station before you reach Western Port. From here onward it is all unknown territory, where only blacks have roamed for countless centuries...

MUSIC

RILEY: What a lovely morning. It seems weeks since we left McAlister's station and we are still tramping on and on.

STRZELECKI : To-day is the 15th April, so that it is nearly six weeks since we left him. I do not know what you think gentlemen, but to me it has been most interesting. This country is one of the richest and most picturesque we have seen so far. We have followed the Tambo river for miles, we explored around Lake King, and do you

realise we crossed and named five rivers? It has been very uneventful so far. We haven't seen any monstrous animals, nor aggressive blacks and it has been only very moderate arduous.

MACARTHUR : Not too bad, but there seems to be dense scrub ahead.

RILEY : Yes, I noticed that too.

STRZELECKI : Oh, that is nothing. It may only be for a few miles and then we will have probably more open country like this.

MUSIC

RILEY : Oh, I feel tired, very tired ...

MACARTHUR : You shouldn't complain. You are the youngest of us all.

TARRA : Massa him be no more tired than other massa... Him be young..

STRZELECKI : Tired, or not, we have to resume our journey. We cannot retrace our steps...

MacARTHUR : Do you think it is wise to continue our journey to Corner Inlet?

RILEY : We have few provisions left.

MacARTHUR : Even the horses are exhausted.

RILEY : I am young and I decidedly do not want to leave my bones in this forsaken country ... I want to see civilisation again.

STRZELECKI : Well, gentlemen, if you think so, I am ready to abandon our plan to proceed to Corner Inlet and we shall proceed direct to Western Port.

RILEY : Hurrah! Hurrah!

STRZELECKI : Although I do not think we are far from Western Port ... Perhaps only a few days ... Still we must be prepared for eventualities and, therefore, it is imperative to be most economical regarding our food. I propose to have only half rations from now on, that is 2 lbs of bread daily between us and two thin slices of bacon, are you agreeable?

MacARTHUR : Quite.

RILEY : And so am I.

STRZELECKI : Besides we can always shoot these tree monkeys and eat them.

RILEY : You mean the little animals some people call native bears?

STRZELECKI : Yes. We had one yesterday. It wasn't bad ...

MUSIC

MacARTHUR : It is already a week since we changed our course and still this confounded dense growth and scrub and there seems to be no end to it ...

RILEY : Do you realise how little we have progressed in the last few days?

STRZELECKI : We have approximately averaged two to three miles a day, for we had to cut our way through so much undergrowth.

RILEY : I tell you, what I find particularly trying: the crossing of these accursed creeks. Do you realised how many times in the last few days we had to unload the horses, carry everything on our backs and than we had to get the bogged horses out ...

STRZELECKI : If you like to know I have been seriously thinking of abandoning our horses,

RILEY : (horrified) What?

MacARTHUR : And what? Walk like you have been doing?

STRZELECKI : (laughs) I don't think you have done very much horse riding lately. Yes, may be a few hundred yards ... And then more scrub ... and so on ... But what else can we do? The horses are completely exhausted, worn out and weary.

RILEY : Surely we will not abandon them here?

STRZELECKI : (firmly) Not here, but we must. My plan is as follow: let us descend into the plain below and leave the horses where there is grass. We will hide our saddles, instruments and belongings in the trees and only take what is absolutely indispensable. Worn out as we are at the end of each day, at least we shall not have to clear a space for horses every night.

RILEY : I feel so sorry to have to leave our horses behind us ...

STRZELECKI : There is no alternative. As soon as we arrive at Western Port, we will send a party to bring back the horses and belongings.

MacARTHUR : Very well then.

STRZELECKI : We will only take with us a clean shirt, our guns, ammunition and blankets.

RILEY : To-day is the 27th April. Two months exactly since we left McAlister. And the last 12 days have been nightmare ... Moreover the scrub seems to be getting thicker and thicker, and more difficult.

STRZELECKI : According to major Mitchell's maps we must be about 25 miles north east of Western Port, but owing to the cloudy weather I have only twice been able to take latitude observation. At three miles a day we should reach Western Port in 8 days.

MacARTHUR : And we only have enough food for eight days ...

STRZELECKI : (laughs) Well, to be truthful, we only have enough bacon for three days ... And I suggest making three dampers with the remainder of flour ... And with the help of three monkeys we shall survive ...

MacARTHUR : (gloomily) That sound very grim to me.

TARA : Me nebber leave you massa ...

MacARTHUR : I know Tara ... But I am beginning to wonder if we will ever get there, for if we run out of food ...

STRZELECKI : (firmly) Mr. MacArthur, don't give way to despair. We are still strong and well. A few days might see the end of our struggles.

RILEY : I hope so ... This thick undergrowth is terrible ...

MUSIC

RILEY : This is the tenth day since we left our poor horses and we have walked and walked through this endless undergrowth and still no relief ... I beginning to lose hope we will ever see a human being again ...

MacARTHUR : And I also ... I feel completely worn out ...

STRZELECKI : (brightly) Courage! Courage! Gentlemen, trust in Providence. We shall not parish. Western Port cannot be very far now...

RILEY : You said that a week ago ... And now I don't care how far we are, if we have no more food. We finished our bacon ... The damper is mouldy...

STRZELECKI : (laughs) What about our favourite delicacy, the tree monkey ... Charlie caught Two yesterday and now he is up a tree, looking for one ...

RILEY : (irritably) I can hardly bear to think of them ... hungry as I am ... To think we had to eat them raw, after Charlie had skinned them ...

STRZELECKI : (laughing) That is not because you are developing into a cannibal, but simply because we had been unable to make a fire owing to such excessive dampness.

MacARTHUR : No wonder you have tramped all over South America with your inexhaustible energy and spirit. Did you ever eat anything there, I wonder?

STRZELECKI : (jokingly) Sometimes ... But what is the use of getting despondent?

MacARTHUR : Count, I marvel at your spirit ... You never seem to be depressed but always bright, and cheerful.

STRZELECKI : (brightly) I am tired, but why should I feel despondent? The going is rough admittedly, but when I feel somewhat depressed I look round and get my inspiration by looking at the trees around us. What glorious blue gum and other trees ... How valuable they will prove to this colony ... And how privileged we are to see them!

MUSIC

RILEY : (very depressed) Another day and yet another day ... And still this confounded scrub ... It is even impossible to describe the roughness of the ground ... We seem to be completely lost ...

MacARTHUR : Possible ... But for him we would already have been lost ... He alone never loses heart ... He is always cheerful and tells us stories ... I don't know How he does it ...

RILEY : I am no longer interested in him, anybody, or anything ... This is utterly hopeless ... Nine weeks since we left McAlister and since I slept in a bad, or sat at a table, ... Or had decent food ... We are lost ... lost ... ugh, those raw native bears...

MacARTHUR : Is it as long as that? Let me see ... To-day must be about the 12th of May and we have walked, half starved for 20 days

since we abandoned our horses ... I wonder if they are still alive ... I wonder will we be still alive in a week's time?

RILEY: Oh, Mr. MacARTHUR, things are not quite as desperate yet ... I still have faith in the count...

McARTHUR : But you must realise that we have no more provisions ... and what will happen if in another day, or two, we won't be able to even find a native bear? Will we feed on leaves, or tree bark? ...

STRZELECKI : (brightly) I am just back with good news. I have shot some birth that looks like a big crow.

RILEY : I wonder what will it taste like raw?

STRZELECKI : My dear James, the main thing is that we have a little food. The taste is of secondary importance.

RILEY : Oh, what would I give for a real roast dinner with vegetables! And a knife ... and a fork ... and a chair ... I doubt at times if we will ever see a human dwelling again and people, who look like human beings, and not like gaunt bearded scarecrows...

MacARTHUR : (very gloomily) 44 days since we saw McAlister ... 44 days of privations ... Three weeks' tramp through this vile, tough country this tangled undergrowth ... cutting our way through it ... Wouldn't it make anyone disheartened? We thought we were only 25 miles from Western Port a week ago and how many have we done since?

STRZELECKI : (cheerfully) I think we must have travelled about 70 miles through this scrub ... Just look at my boots ... My toes are right out (laughs) yet what can I do? The shops are a bit too far away!

MUSIC

RILEY : To-day is the 12th of May. Although I am the youngest of the party I almost feel I can walk no further ... Not another day ... I feel completely worn out, and exhausted ... And the monotony of this vile scrub ... these rough hills ... It's terrible ... terrible...

STRZELECKI : (warmly) Cheer up, James ... It has been very trying, I know, but we must not lose heart ... Victory might be within our groups and then we will tell everyone .. What is this? ... Why is Charlie running towards us so excitedly? What is wrong, Charlie?

TARA : (out of breath) Massa, massa, me been hear dogs bark ...

RILEY : What?

MacARTHUR : (excitedly) Really?

STRZELECKI : (calmly) Tell us about it, Charlie.

TARA : Come, come that way ... Me hear dogs and smell smoke ...
(dogs barking)

MacARTHUR : We are saved!

RILEY : Thank goodness!

STRZELECKI : A man is coming through the scrub towards us ...
And look to the left ... water ... It must be Western Port at last!

BERRY: Welcome to you all. Who are you?

MacARTHUR : We are a party of explorers from Sydney town ...

BERRY : Goodness gracious me! And you got through this unknown
land? That is wonderful!

MacARTHUR : Yes, we got through, but only owing to him. This is
count Strzelecki the famous explorer. We owe our lives to him ... To
his indomitable spirit and courage. We would have given up long ago,
but for his inspired leadership.

STRZELECKI : (brightly) Don't praise me too much. We all owe our
lives to each other ... It was splendid teamwork ... And what is your
name, sir?

BERRY : My name is Berry. I settled here at Western Port a few
years ago with other settlers. But come with me ... you must be half
starved ... and look worn out...

MUSIC : xxxx xxxx xxxx

NARRATOR : After a rest of several days at Western Port, Strzelecki
and his party were rowed across the bay and they continued their
journey through Dandenong to Melbourne, where they were lionised,
for their hardship caused a sensation. One evening in Melbourne
Strzelecki writes a despatch to Sir George Gipps.

MUSIC : xxxx xxxx xxxx

STRZELECKI : (writing) I take the liberty of naming the country,
which has been my lot to discover, - Gippsland in honour of Your
Excellency. I scarcely know of any spot in New South Wales that can
boast more advantages than Gippsland. It has 250 miles of coast, two
already known harbours, Corner Inlet and Western Port, eight rivers, a
navigable lake, lagoons, 3600 square miles of forest plains and
valleys, which in richness of soil and pasturage cannot be surpassed.

It has wonderful timber, blue gum and black but without parallel in this colony...

MUSIC

NARRATOR : Having completely recuperating in Melbourne, we find Strzelecki in August 1940 at Government House, Hobart, talking to Sir John, the governor of Van Diemen's Land. It was the beginning of a long and deep friendship between the two eminent men.

SIR JOHN : It is a wonder you escaped with your life after all these weeks of privations in Gippsland. I hope you will not encounter such difficulties in Van Diemen's Land. I can assure you, that I shall do everything in my power to assist you in your scientific exploration and research. It is seldom that we have the benefit of such a distinguished explorer in our midst.

STRZELECKI : You are the last person to say that, Sir John, for you are yourself a most distinguished scientist and explorer and I shall consider it an honour to have your most sympathetic assistance.

SIR JOHN : My dear count, Lady Franklin and I are most deeply interested in your work and I can assure you, that you are a most welcome guest at Government House.

STRZELECKI : I am very grateful to you and to Lady Franklin for your kindness and hospitality.

SIR JOHN : Moreover, I am happy to tell you that I have procured a mountain barometer, which will be at your service. It is not a new one, but I hope it will prove useful to you.

STRZELECKI : I am quite certain it will be most useful and many tanks, Sir John.

MUSIC

NARRATOR : In the next 12 months Strzelecki had explored practically all of Tasmania with the exception of the West Coast. He travelled with two servants and three pack horses. As was his custom, he walked everywhere himself. He had dispensed with a tent in N.S.W. But found a tent indispensable in Van Diemen's Land. Once again he is at Government House, Hobart,

MUSIC

STRZELECKI : The lakes are beautiful, especially Lake Marion. I am sure Lady Franklin would love to see it.

SIR JOHN : I am sure she would.

LADY FRANKLIN: Of course, I would. I have listened fascinated to your vivid description. What a pity there is no road to the Lakes. I would far sooner travel to see the beauties of this island, than stay at Government House. Oh, how I envied you when you accompanied my husband to Port Arthur.

STRZELECKI : I wish you could have accompanied us, Lady Franklin, but I can assure you that it was strenuous, as when I spent a whole week on top of windy Ben Lomond to complete observations.

SIR JOHN : I greatly doubt whether Lady Franklin would have enjoyed this experience!

STRZELECKI : Lady Franklin, -when climbing and descending mountains I often tried to visualise Van Diemen's Land in a hundred years' time. What a wonderful island it will be! But, Sir John, irrigation is necessary to develop the country. Take for instance Lake Arthur 2600 feet above the sea level. What wealth that would mean to settlers, who realise the necessity of calling to aid that powerful agent of agriculture, - irrigation.

SIR JOHN : You are certainly a dreamer and a visionary, count! What a fascinating picture of the future you have woven!

LADY FRANKLIN : You have, but there is one drawback: not one of us will be here to see it ... But, by the way, count, to-morrow night there is a dance here and I expect to see you, instead of staying in your room, checking the altitudes of Van Diemen's Land.

STRZELECKI : I shall only be too happy to accept your gracious command. (laughs) Surely you don't think I have become such an outcast and recluse in my tramps from coast to coast, that I am no longer fit for civilised company!

LADY FRANKLIN : I am delightful to hear it, count, for I was beginning to have doubts myself ...

DANCE MUSIC : (voices and laughter heard)

LADY GUEST : What a lovely evening!

ANOTHER : It is most enjoyable.

LADY : Lady Franklin, no doubt, is a wonderful hostess and always so kind and considerate to all. Here she comes with count Strzelecki

...

LADY FRANKLIN : I enjoyed the waltz very much ...

STRZELECKI : No, Lady Franklin, the pleasure was mine, for you dance remarkably well. It reminds me of long , long ago, when I was very young in Poland.

LADY FRANKLIN : Tell me something about your youth. The ladies of Hobart have a very high opinion of you, count, but often wonder if you shun the fair sex? Tell me, are you so intensely wrapped up in your scientific work, that a beautiful face means nothing to you?

STRZELECKI : (with forced laugh) No, not at all ... I am not as bad as that, I assure you ... Yes, I was deeply in love once ... In fact I still am ...

LADY FRANKLIN : That sounds very romantic to me. Are you disposed to tell me something about it?

STRZELECKI : Yes, I will ... (very earnestly) Lady Franklin, you and your husband have been wonderful friends to me ... and I feel I can fully confide in you ... How often under the starry sky in NSW and in Van Diemen's Land, laying on a blanket, I thought of her ...

LADY FRANKLIN : (very warmly) My instinct tells me that you will feel ever so so much better when you confide in me ... and you know me well enough to trust me implicitly ...

STRZELECKI : (sadly) I know, Lady Franklin, I know ... My story is very simple ... I was a young man living with my parents in Poland. We had a small estate ... Life was easy and comfortable ... A wealthy and influential family Turno lived near us ... They had a daughter Adyna ... She was beautiful and sweet ... I was romantically disposed ... Is it a wonder that we fell in love? ...

LADY FRANKLIN : (very kindly) I suppose you proposed to her?

STRZELECKI : (**MUSIC** heard from ball room) Yes, but only secretly... You see, they were very wealthy. I was a young man without an independent fortune and without prospects ... The parents were looking for a wealthy husband for Adyna ...

LADY FRANKLIN : (with sympathy) And I suppose she married someone else?

STRZELECKI : No, not at all ... Realising that we could not obtain her parents' consent, we decided to elope ...

LADY FRANKLIN : (aghast) Surely you did not ...

STRZELECKI : (sadly) No, it did not succeed ... We made arrangement and I met Adyna in a carriage not far from her residence, but her father had discovered her disappearance and set off in pursuit. The servants told him they had seen her leaving in a carriage with a few belongings. The father galloped after us in a terrible rage and overtook us ... After a dreadful scene he took her home. Shortly after that I left home, and went abroad.

LADY FRANKLIN : (with great sympathy) And have you seen her since?

STRZELECKI : No, I left Poland for good ... But we correspond. I cannot write direct to her, because her parents are very bitter ... But we write to a mutual friend who forwards the letters.

LADY FRANKLIN : You made me feel quite sad ... But what would her parents say now, when you have become such a famous explorer?

STRZELECKI : I am afraid it would make very little difference to them. They are very obstinate and very bitter. Besides, I am in no position to marry Adyna and to give her all the comforts to which she has been used since childhood.

LADY FRANKLIN : What a great pity! I feel very sorry for you...

STRZELECKI : Thank you, Lady Franklin. I know how genuine you are ... You realise how I feel ... I always think of her ... I named a peak near Mt. York in the Blue Mountains of NSW after her. When I named the highest mountain in Australia after a great Polish patriot, I sent her a wild alpine flower with the words "Here is a flower from Mt. Kosciusko, the highest peak of the continent ... You will be the first Polish woman to have a flower from that mountain. Let it remind you of freedom and love"...

MUSIC

NARRATOR : Strzelecki continued his zig-zag exploration of Tasmania and by the middle of 1841 he had walked over 2000 miles. Sir John Franklin was keenly interested in his work and in his reports on coal.

MUSIC

SIR JOHN : I am always looking forward to your letters and scientific reports, Count, and I am very pleased you have joined our Tasmanian Society, which fosters science.

STRZELECKI : I am very honoured indeed to be a member of the society, Sir John.

SIR JOHN : I would very much like to visit the coal near Jerusalem with you and I also want you to come with me to the coal mine at Recherché Bay. Your commitments will be of great value to me. Here are some specimens of Recherché Bay coal and I will much appreciate if you will analyse it for me.

STRZELECKI : I shall only be too glad to do it for you. And now, Sir John, what about my projected exploration of the Bass Strait islands?

SIR JOHN : I am sorry I had forgotten to mention it to you.

Everything is ready. You will travel on the survey ship "The Beagle" and Captain Stokes will look after you and give you every assistance. But I wish you would return to Hobart for the Regatta, for it is well worth seeing and you will be a very welcome guest.

STRZELECKI : Many thanks, Sir John, but I doubt whether I will be able to come. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to explore the Bass islands and I shall send a report to you on my return and then...

SIR JOHN : (interrupting) Here is my wife. Good morning, my dear.

LADY FRANKLIN : Good morning John, and good morning Count.

STRZELECKI : Good morning Lady Franklin.

LADY FRANKLIN : Are you two gentlemen conferring or confiding?

SIR JOHN : We are merely discussing our friend's proposed visit to the Bass Strait islands.

LADY FRANKLIN : Before you leave, Count, I want to refresh your memory regarding our Franklin Museum in Hobart. You have honoured us by your kind interest and will, I am sure, continue to do so by your patronage and support. It would have given me exceeding great pleasure to have had your signature in the parchment, which is buried in the foundation stone, but there will be still a niche for you in their interior. So please, do not forget...

STRZELECKI : I definitely will not forget, Lady Franklin.

SIR JOHN : That reminds me of something ... Mr. Murchison, the President of the Geological Society has requested my assistance in collecting for him specimens of fossil remains in the colony. Well, you can guess what I am going to say, count. I know of no one who has the power and inclination more effectually to help me than yourself. Will you be so kind to say whether you can?

STRZELECKI : Of course, I can, Sir John. I shall be only too happy to assist you.

MUSIC

NARRATOR : Strzelecki's three years' exploration of Tasmania was coming to the end. He had completed his exploration of the Bass Strait islands, where captain Stokes named in his honour the highest mountain on Flinders Island, - Strzelecki' Peak. For over half a century Strzelecki's keen observations subsequently published in London were considered the standard scientific information on Tasmania. His description of various coal basins were most accurate, and his collection of fossils revealed a remarkable knowledge and forms the basis of Australian palaeontology. Strzelecki's geological observations, clear and concise, are as good to-day, as they were a hundred years ago. As he had decided to sail from Launceston, Sir John Franklin wrote to him a farewell letter on September 29, 1842.

SIR JOHN : (writing) "On reading your letter I felt a renewal of that regret with which I received the first communication of your intention to leave the Island. I cannot let you go without assuring you that in your departure I shall miss the comfort of having a sincere and highly judicious friend, to whom I could impart many of my inward thoughts, and find sympathy and sound advice on subjects of deep interest to me and to the Colony, which is indebted to you for the valuable contributions you have made during the progress of your researches. Lady Franklin desires me to offer you her affectionate regards, - she looks forward as I do and with equal desire towards the renewal of your society on our return. We can then talk over causes and effects as exhibited here, with the unrestrained range, which, except to a few like yourself, prudence would forbid our doing here.

Again let me say everything most kind from Lady F and every member of my family, - Ever yours most sincerely ... John Franklin"

MUSIC

NARRATOR : Back in NSW Strzelecki completed his exploration of the Hunter River valley and in April 1843, a few days before his departure from Australia, he called on his friend Philip King, commissioner of the Australian Agricultural Society, to say goodbye.

KING: All good things come to an end and it seems that we are going to lose you.

STRZELECKI : Yes, Philip, I am leaving, having completed my work here.

KING : And tell me, have you really enjoyed your long stay in the colony?

STRZELECKI : Yes, it has been wonderful and most interesting. People have been most hospitable and helpful to me. I have only one complaint...

KING : (surprised) And that is.

STRZELECKI : The high cost of living. Everything is very expensive here. Homes, living, travel, - even by steamboat, so ridiculously low in the USA and Europe, - is much higher here.

KING : You are probably right. And what have you done in the last 5 months since your return from Van Diemen's Land?

STRZELECKI : I have been busy as per usual ... I made a geological survey of the Hunter river valleys, Port Stevens, Raymond Terrace, I have investigated the Newcastle coal basin, have found traces of coal at Lake Macquarie, have analysed soil here, there and anywhere...

KING : You certainly haven't wasted your time.

STRZELECKI : No. I have visited the most northerly farms in the colony situated at Stroud and Booral. The soil is well adapted for wheat and barley, as well as fruit. In short a situation most favourable to the application of irrigation, which will render the district one of the richest and most important in the colony, whilst I think Newcastle harbour is excellent.

KING : And when are you leaving us, Paul?

STRZELECKI : The day after to-morrow, on the 22nd April by the barque Anna Robertson of 317 tons.

KING : And any regrets?

STRZELECKI : Very many. To leave so many wonderful friends ... Especially dear Sir John Franklin ... He has been marvellous to me ...

KING : You must feel tired after these strenuous last few years?

STRZELECKI : Tired? No! (laughs) I feel remarkably well, although I have travelled at least 7000 miles on foot during the last four years!

MUSIC

NARRATOR : 18 months later, at the end of 1844, Strzelecki is sitting at his desk in London writing his "Physical Description of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land". His servant comes in bringing a large sealed envelope.

STRZELECKI : What is it, John?

JOHN : Sorry to interrupt you, Sir, but here is a letter, or something ... just received from the post office.

STRZELECKI : Thank you, John. ! what is it? ... From Hobart ... That will be interesting ... I must open it ... (opens and reads) "We the undersigned cannot suffer you to depart without presenting to you assurance of our sincere regret. The benefits which you have conferred upon our Country have added other motives to those of private friendship, which call for a public and united expression of our esteem. We are conscious that much is owing to your scientific knowledge and to your indefatigable exertions; much that will henceforth advance the progress of science and the development of the natural resources of Tasmania. Permit us as your friends, bound to you more especially by the interest, which you have attached to our adopted home to offer our contribution towards the completion of yours labours" ... many signatures ... Sir John Franklin ... £400 ... And what is this inscription ... (reads) "We the undersigned Ladies of Tasmania fully concurring in the sentiments of esteem and regard, expressed by the Gentlemen of the Colony for Count Strzelecki, desire to participate in the honour of contributing towards the testimonial" ... (very moved) Friends ... Wonderful friends ... indeed ... (dreamily) I seem to see it all again ... The Grose Valley ...

Gippsland ... the long walk ... Western Port ... beautiful Hobart ... the Murray River Valley ... and rising above all, Mount Kosciuszko ...

THE END

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- **Władysław (Ladislav) Adam de Noskowski (1892-1969)**, journalist, editor, music critic, teacher, educator. He attended Chrzanowski's private high school in Warsaw, continued his education in Switzerland and later studied at the University of Warsaw and Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques in Paris. He arrived in Sydney on 24 April 1911 and was naturalized on 4 May 1914. The same year he travelled to California where in Hollywood he played in few movies, among them *Macbeth* (1916). In that year Ignacy Paderewski employed him as a secretary to work for the Polish National Committee. Noskowski was also secretary of the newspaper *Free Poland*, sponsored by the Polish National Alliance. In February 1918 he returned to Sydney and married on 4 March Beatrice Barnett (d.1960). Until 1919 he was a translator and interpreter for the Australian Military Forces censor. He taught French, history and geography in various high schools in Sydney (1920-26). From 1919 he had been music critic for the *Sydney Mail* and wrote for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Evening News*, *Art in Australia*, *Home*, *Shakespearean Quarterly* and *Musical Australia*. He also worked as a critic and an editor of *Australasian Phonograph Monthly* (1925-29). During 1927-33 he contributed columns on music to *Sydney Morning Herald*. It was during 1929-31 that he published his own monthly *Australian Phonograph News*. He also contributed to Chicago based *Musical Leader*.
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- **Between 1933 and 1945 he was honorary consul-general of the Republic of Poland in Australia, New Zealand and Western Samoa.** Noskowski co-operated with A. E. Dalwood to establish the Polish-Australian Chamber of Commerce. Together they visited Poland in 1935 and attended Marshall Josef Pilsudski's funeral. During the World War II he organized the Polish Relief Fund, which raised £30,000. He also encouraged the Australian government to grant £10,000 to the Polish Red Cross. In 1942-45 he edited the monthly *Polish and Central European Review*. After the war he initiated musical programmes for the Australian Broadcasting Commission's radio and later became an examiner in French. In 1959 he prepared two

text-books for senior high school French classes. In 1966 he began to write a 'History of opera in Australia' but unfortunately, the nearly completed draft disappeared in unknown circumstances. Noskowski died on 29 July 1969 after being struck by a car. L.K. Paszkowski, *Noskowski, Ladislaw Adam de (1892-1969)*, Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 11, (MUP), 1988; Władysław Noskowski, *Dziennik z pierwszych tygodni w Australii. Rok 1911*, Edited by Bogumiła Żongołłowicz, Polsko-Australijskie Towarzystwo Kulturalne w Australii Zachodniej, Perth 2011.