IN MEMORIAM MY FATHER
(A. L. Schroders: 19.9.84 – 23.3.74)

I never knew him as a happy man —
more as a plodder whose frustrating life
had kept him from the recognition he
felt he deserved with odd persistence,
a stubborn man who never came within
coo-ee of what he'd seen as destination
when, young and probably idealistic,
he ventured out on life's long voyage,
hampered by us, the family that weighed him down,
cramping his style of fuming indignation
when 'justice' once more was denied to him
and merited promotion passed him by again.
a man who was so easily enraged
by things I, as an adolescent, said to him —
to test his threshold of annoyance —
a man I never did come close enough to
to feel the warmth of humanness within,
and yet, I was his pride and future heir,
the one he taught the simple joy of walking
through fields and forests on the gentle hills
of the good land where he and I were boys
(each in his own eternity, how long ago!)
the one he persuaded with his sketchy stories
of World War I that life is much too precious
to be snuffed out by rampaging destruction
or violence sustained by human vanity and folly
to make of me a life-long pacifist who never
hit out at anyone with fist or stick or gun
as he refused to punish me with hand or rod,
the one also he cried about so bitterly
when I coldheartedly betrayed his trust
and lied about it to his face, the one
he fiercely tried to hold within his province
when I was leaving home to meet my destiny
in my own way, to tend the life I'd found . . .

I wonder: did he ever write a poem
for me to find now he is gone forever,
something to show how much I am his son
in every thought and act and word and wrinkle . . .