

Obituary

Dr. E. BROOKE NICHOLLS

Leaves of the Tree of Friendship fall one by one, and in the autumn of life we remember the springtime when the lost leaves were young. I saw little of Brooke Nicholls in recent years, but in early manhood we were close friends, and I have pleasant memories of our days together in the bush and the nights given over to talk of men and books and natural history. Of the old bark-hut at Olinda, too, there are recollections. There the three "Woodlanders" planned ventures, and were as foolish, I suppose, in their visions of a "brave new world" as any other young men of a generation ago or to-day. But they *were* observers and added a little to knowledge of the habits of such birds as are found in the Dandenong Ranges. It was Brooke Nicholls' idea, and he was the leader who often encouraged his fellow Woodlanders, the late Claude Kinane and myself, to follow the gleam. It seems so long ago, and now both my old companions of "Walden Hut" days are dead.

Brooke wrote several books after giving up the practice of his profession—dentistry—in which he gained distinction, but perhaps never really liked as much as he did wandering in Australian wilds and travelling in other countries. Ambition for authorship was almost a ruling passion, and soon after I first met him the young dentist confided to me his plans for adventurous travel and the writing of scientific papers and popular books. When nature study was beginning to root in Australian soil, Brooke Nicholls foresaw that it would grow into a great spreading tree.

It is hard to write of him in the formal way, giving dates and titles and all that makes up the conventional appreciation of a distinguished man who has gone. Indeed, I cannot give more than an impression—a memory—of my friend. I remember his generous ways; his enthusiasm; his occasional moods of despondency; the very few sharp differences we had; and Brooke's good companionship, not only at "Walden Hut," but at R.A.O.U. camps-out in Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales. We were "cobbers" always until the inevitable change that marriage brings, and friends till the very last meeting a few months before his death.

Brooke Nicholls was a literary naturalist, with a trained scientific mind. He did original work in dental anatomy; in ornithology he was an observer. His was the chief part in a paper on Cuckoos that we wrote together, and he contributed some excellent general articles to *The Emu*, besides writing many for *The Herald*, Melbourne, and other newspapers and magazines.—C.L.B.