

**THE LIFE OF CHARLES LEDGER  
(1818–1905)**



Fig. 1 Coat of arms of Peru, showing alpaca, cinchona and cornucopia

# **The Life of Charles Ledger (1818–1905)**

*Alpacas and Quinine*

**Gabriele Gramiccia**

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## Preface

At the very end of a long period of work in Australia (1979–81), I came across a fascinating article in the *Illustrated London News* on the extremely adventurous life of Charles Ledger of whom, up to that moment, I had only known that his name had been given to a species of the cinchona tree. In the article I learned of his extraordinary endeavours and adventures, and also that at the end of his long life he had been buried in a pauper's grave at Rookwood Cemetery, near Sydney. Being a malariologist, I was particularly prompted to find his tomb and pay tribute to the memory of this remarkable man.

This was not easy. The Rookwood Methodist Cemetery in Sydney is a huge burial ground. It is subdivided into a number of sections according to the various religions of the world: from Methodists and other protestant denominations and Anglicans, to Catholics, and then Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and probably also agnostics put together into an independent section.

It is in the last that Charles Ledger is buried, as I found after a long perusal of the cemetery registers. The tomb, however, was not a pauper's grave. It was partly overgrown by vegetation, and in a state of partial disrepair. The tomb's serial number could hardly be read, but the grave was large, with an edge of stone all around it, and the tombstone was high and its limestone neatly inscribed in carved letters.

The names carved were those of Emma Garratt, who had died on 28 November 1899, and of Frederick Kingston Olliver, who had died on 31 March 1907, respectively brother and sister of Ledger's second wife.

No mention was made of Charles Ledger, who had died on 19 May 1905 and had been buried there six years after Emma Garratt and two years before Frederick K. Olliver (Fig. 2). Before leaving I collected a few wild flowers and laid them on the grave. From that moment, I started delving into the scattered records of Ledger's life, and the more I found the more I wanted to know about him. I became thoroughly fascinated by what he had done and endured, and I realised what an extraordinary man he had been and how little he got in return for the enormous benefits he gave—or attempted to give—to mankind.

Charles Ledger deserves more—and a tomb that bears his name would seem the very least part of the recognition which is undoubtedly due to him. It is gratifying



Fig. 2 The old tombstone

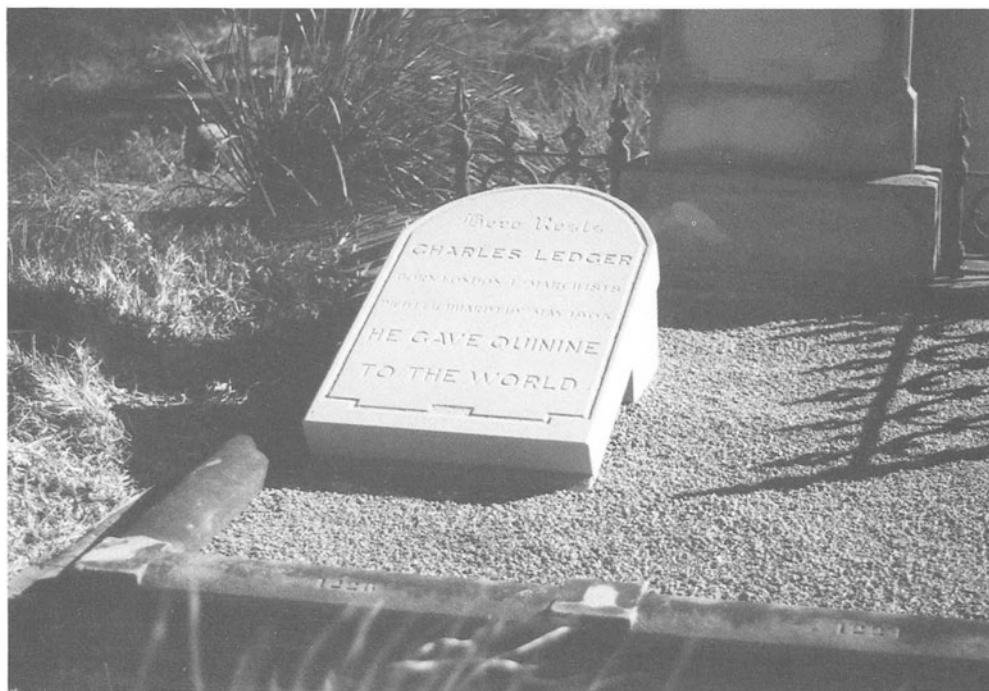


Fig. 3 The new, added tombstone

that a tombstone with Charles Ledger's name has now been added to the tomb, in September 1986, thanks to a donation from the Dutch quinine manufacturer ACF Chemiefarma NV (Fig. 3).

*Cortona, Italy, 1987*

G. Gramiccia

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