

EYES TO THE FUTURE

Sketches of Australia and her Neighbours in the 1870s



JENNIFER M.T. CARTER

Some content in this online publication may be in copyright. You may only use in copyright material for permitted uses, please see <http://www.nla.gov.au/copiesdirect/help/copyright.html> for further information. If in doubt about whether your use is permitted, seek permission from the copyright holder. In addition, please follow the links or otherwise contact the relevant institutional owners of images to seek permission if you wish to use their material.

Cover:

Charles Blanchard
Bourke Street, Melbourne, 1881
oil on canvas; 46.6 x 91.8 cm
From the Rex Nan Kivell Collection,
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (T379)

Published by the National Library of Australia
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

© Jennifer M.T. Carter and the National Library of Australia

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry

Carter, Jennifer M.T., 1943– .
Eyes to the future: sketches of Australia and her neighbours in the 1870s.

Bibliography.
Includes index.
ISBN 0 642 10723 8.

1. Australia—Social conditions—1788–1900. 2. Australia—History—1788–1900.
I. National Library of Australia. II. Title.

994.03

Editor: Julie Stokes
Designer: Jodie Ward
Picture research: Seuth Sirimanotham
Printed by Scott Printers Pty Ltd, Perth

CONTENTS

| | | |
|------------------------------|--|-----|
| Acknowledgements | vii | |
| Author's Note | ix | |
| Time Line of Relevant Events | x | |
| Introduction | xvi | |
| Chapter 1 | A Better Promise of the Future | 1 |
| Chapter 2 | Loyalty, Royalty and a Dash of Dissent | 8 |
| Chapter 3 | Officers, Gentlemen and Conduct Unbecoming | 17 |
| Chapter 4 | Hearts and Flowers | 26 |
| Chapter 5 | Scales of Justice | 40 |
| Chapter 6 | True Believers | 51 |
| Chapter 7 | Lines of Communication | 65 |
| Chapter 8 | Bones of Contention | 77 |
| Chapter 9 | Through a Glass Darkly | 86 |
| Chapter 10 | Doses of Healthy Scepticism | 100 |
| Chapter 11 | Odorous Comparisons | 109 |
| Chapter 12 | In Quest of Coolies | 120 |
| Chapter 13 | Shot and Tortoiseshell: Britannia Waives the Rules | 131 |
| Chapter 14 | Lords of the Land | 145 |
| Chapter 15 | Tickling with a Hoe | 153 |
| Chapter 16 | Cold Comfort | 163 |
| Chapter 17 | Our Lunatic Asylums | 172 |
| Chapter 18 | Shades of Opinion | 183 |
| Chapter 19 | Gentlemen and Players | 191 |
| Chapter 20 | Pictures and Performances | 201 |
| Chapter 21 | Hunters and Gatherers | 211 |
| Chapter 22 | An Imperative Instinct for Possession | 227 |
| Bibliography | 242 | |
| Index | 247 | |

FOR JOHN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Working in the National Library of Australia—for the National Library—has been a great pleasure. Many members of staff have helped me, whether in the Main Reading Room, the Petherick Reading Room, or in the Pictorial Section, and I should like to thank them for their courteous assistance. Librarians in the Newspaper/Microcopy Reading Room came to my rescue on numerous occasions and I thank them for their patience. The Manuscript Room has been a delight to work in; I should like in particular to thank Mr Graeme Powell, Manuscript Librarian, for generously making manuscripts and photocopies available, and Mr Greg Wilson for his advice, help and sense of humour. Ms Kaye McIntyre kindly took time to guide me through the music scores of the 1860s and 1870s, while Ms Sylvia Carr of the Pictorial Section gave welcome advice as to the choice of pictures. Ms Julie Stokes provided most helpful guidelines throughout, and her editorial skills have enhanced the original manuscript. Above all, I should like to say how indebted I am to Dr Paul Hetherington whose enthusiasm for my original idea, and continuing interest since, have brought this venture to fruition.

I should like to thank Mr Ken Erlenbusch of the Defence Regional Library, Melbourne, for information concerning Arthur Clarke's Brighton Volunteers, also Ms Sonia Dean, Acting Head of Curatorial Services, National Gallery of Victoria, for providing details and reproductions of two of the three pictures that so fascinated William Sandover (the third, alas, is no longer with us). Tracing descendants of young William and the other 'voices' was not nearly as straightforward—while research into our own family history has become a national pastime, it is infinitely more challenging to delve into that of total strangers! In the case of *Eyes to the Future* this was rarely possible, since manuscripts find their way into the National Library's collection not only by donation but through the sale room. Who owned the wonderful library referred to in Chapter 22, for example? We shall probably never know.

Chance brought me a little nearer to the prickly William Bethell, with the discovery of his relationship to the New Zealand poet Ursula Bethell. Mrs Diana Bethell, of Pahau Pastures, South Island, kindly responded to my request for help, while Lady Jane Bethell of Long Riston, Yorkshire, graciously supplied the photograph of William in his later years. Ms Robyn Gosper of the Hawkesbury City Council Library provided me with photocopies of Thomas Champion's family portraits, and Ms Romana Heiler, descendant of the photographer, generously allowed the originals to be copied. I thank her most sincerely, also Mr Ian Hotchkiss, another family member, who shared information about the Champion family, and their life in Somerset and London. The greatest stroke of luck came in

tracing the descendants of William Sandover. Mr D.L.J. Bettis of The Minorities, London, is undoubtedly a detective *manqué*—thanks to his endeavours, I not only received fascinating details about William's family from his great-grandson Mr William Geoffrey Sandover, but have been able to include a portrait of the young South Australian in this book. To them both I extend my deep appreciation.

To my husband, Dr Roger Cross (no mean 'ferret' himself), must go the credit for spotting the Walpole letters which featured in my original proposal, since when he has been a constant inspiration. His unfailing help in discussing ideas, particularly the significant advances in science of the time, and his positive criticisms of each chapter have proved invaluable. My brother, Dr John Carter, provided me with a happy home base while I worked in Canberra and, like my husband, he lent his photographic skills to the endeavour. I thank him for his loving support and encouragement throughout, and to him I dedicate this book.

Melbourne, September 2000

AUTHOR'S NOTE

When transcribing extracts from manuscripts, I have at times added punctuation. I have kept this to a minimum and I have not corrected spelling. Words in square brackets [thus] have been added; words in parentheses (thus) are as the writer intended. [—] indicates that I have been defeated by the handwriting. Words emphasised by underlining in the original handwritten documents are shown in italics.

The 'time line' is intended to clarify the topics discussed in Chapters 1–22 and is by no means all-inclusive. It is for general interest only.

Reference numbers for manuscript, microfilm and pictorial items are specific to the collection of the National Library of Australia.

TIME LINE OF RELEVANT EVENTS

1851

Port Phillip District is constituted the colony of Victoria, and the northern boundaries are settled.

Gold is discovered in payable amounts in New South Wales by Edward Hargraves and by various individuals in Victoria.

First representative legislatures meet in Tasmania, Victoria and South Australia.

1852

Peninsular and Oriental Navigation Company (P & O) and the Royal Mail Steam Navigation Company begin carriage of mail every alternate month.

Transportation to Tasmania is abolished.

1853

P & O is contracted for a mail service every alternate month from Singapore to Sydney via King George's Sound, Adelaide and Melbourne.

Transportation to Norfolk Island is abolished.

1854

First electric telegraph line in Australia: between Melbourne and Williamstown, Victoria.

First private railway in Australia is opened, between Flinders Street, Melbourne, and Port Melbourne.

1855

Responsible government is proclaimed in Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales.

Victoria: restriction on Chinese immigrants.

1856

South Australia: proclamation of responsible government.

Chinese begin entering the colony of Victoria via Port Robe, on Guichen Bay, SA; anti-Chinese riots at the Buckland River diggings near Mount Buffalo.

A monthly mail service begins between Southampton and Sydney.

1858

First telegraph line in New South Wales: Sydney to South Head; extended to Albury, linking Sydney to Melbourne.

Melbourne and Adelaide are linked by telegraph.

Thomas Champion 'trains' as a photographer.

Australia: population reaches 1 million.

1859

Tasmania: first submarine cable is laid between Tasmania and Cape Otway on the mainland (lasted only a few weeks).

Queensland becomes a separate colony and is granted responsible government.

1859–62

John McDouall Stuart opens up Central Australia; dispels the illusion of an impassable desert or an inland sea.

1860–61

The fated Burke and Wills expedition crosses the continent to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

1861

Sydney is linked by telegraph to Brisbane.

Anti-Chinese riots at Lambing Flat and Burrangong diggings in New South Wales, followed by regulation of Chinese immigration.

Death of Burke and Wills at Cooper's Creek.

1861–62

John MacDouall Stuart's third expedition crosses the continent and returns: a route for the overland telegraph line has been found.

John McKinlay also crosses the continent east of Stuart's route in search of Burke and Wills.

1862

First visit by an English cricket team.

Site of Somerset at the tip of Cape York is selected.

1863

John Tebbutt builds his first observatory at the Peninsula, Windsor. Northern Territory is annexed by South Australia.

Queensland: Kanakas are introduced as labour on the sugar plantations; Somerset is established as a pearling centre.

- 1864
First commercial sugar is milled from Queensland cane.
- 1865
William Macleay, squatter and politician, inherits his uncle's and cousin's natural history collections.
- 1867
Victoria imposes protective tariff on imports.
Direct telegraph line between Sydney and Adelaide.
Gold is discovered at Gympie, Queensland.
- 1868
HMS *Blanche*, a sail and steam corvette, is commissioned to work on the Australia Station. C.J. Norcock sails with her to Australia and records her progress in his log.
Arthur Clarke emigrates to Australia per the *Conflict*.
Clontarf, New South Wales: attempted assassination of HRH Duke of Edinburgh followed by an outburst of patriotic shock—all princely acts of commission and omission are instantly erased.
Queensland: the *Polynesian Labourers Act* is passed by the Queensland Government with Colonial Office approval; deals with the labour market in Queensland only.
Pearl-fishing starts in the Torres Strait, off the Warrior Reefs.
The last convict ship, the *Hougoumont*, reaches Fremantle, Western Australia, with 279 prisoners.
- 1869
Monthly mail service between Sydney and San Francisco via Auckland.
Settlement of Port Darwin.
Tasmania: a second—successful—telegraph cable links Tasmania with the other colonies, via Low Head and Cape Schank.
The Flying Squadron of six ships reaches Melbourne, the first Australian port of call.
Fiji: Captain George Palmer of HMS *Rosario* seizes the *Daphne* for blackbirding and escorts it to Sydney, where the owners get off scot-free.
Missionary agitation for the abolition of blackbirding.

1870

Imperial troops are withdrawn.

The amalgamation of post and telegraph offices is almost complete. Travelling post offices are established.

South Australia gets the contract to build the Overland Telegraph line. Charles Todd, Postmaster-General, is put in charge.

Western Australia: government decides to resume exploration, to find a route for a telegraph line to South Australia. Leadership is given to John Forrest.

HMS *Blanche* runs aground in the Torres Strait.

Europe: France declares war on Prussia (July). Emperor Napoleon III abdicates after battle of Sedan (September).

The Republic fights on.

1871

A permanent military force is raised in New South Wales.

Robin Walpole is shipwrecked on St Paul's Island, en route for the Australia Station.

Anthony Trollope makes the first of two visits to Australia.

South Australia: work begins on the Overland Telegraph.

New Guinea: the Russian scientist, traveller and explorer Nicolaus de Miklouho-Maclay arrives at Astrolabe Bay.

Solomon Islands: the brig *Carl* kidnaps 85 natives in Buka passage; 60–70 natives, dead or wounded, are slung overboard following an uprising.

Bishop Patteson is murdered in reprisal for this and other outrages.

Europe: Paris capitulates after a siege of four months.

The Franco–Prussian War is over, and Germany becomes the major continental power in Europe.

1872

William Bethell reaches Melbourne (29 January).

Arrest of the captain and crew of the brig *Carl* on blackbirding charges.

The Pacific Islanders Protection Bill is introduced into the House of Commons (February).

Arthur Clarke resumes his shipboard diary; the Theatre Royal, Melbourne, is destroyed by fire; Robert Walpole joins HMS *Blanche* as a midshipman (March).

John Morison begins a diary of his 15-month trip (April).
Passage of the 'Kidnapping Act'; provides for punishment of British subjects who enlist or decoy natives against their will (June).
Queensland: Charters Towers goldfield is declared.
First overland telegraphic message from Port Darwin to Adelaide.
First telegraphic message to Adelaide from London, via Java–Port Darwin link.
Ernest Giles sets off from Chambers Pillar (Idracowra) on the first of four expeditions; names Lake Amadeus and Mount Olga (sighted from a distance).
William Bethell leaves for the Canterbury Plains, New Zealand.
New Guinea: HMS *Blanche* explores Blanche Bay and anchors in Rabaul Harbour.
HMS *Beagle* and *Sandfly*, the first of five fast RN schooners to patrol the islands, are commissioned for anti-blackbirding duty.

1873

Publication of Anthony Trollope's *Australia and New Zealand*.
William Macleay offers to bequeath his museum to the University of Sydney, plus £6000 to pay the salary of a curator.
Peter Egerton Warburton, a retired Indian Army officer of 60, crosses from Alice Springs to Perth—not without difficulty—the first European to reach the Indian Ocean from the Overland Telegraph Line. En route he antagonises the Aborigines, desecrates sacred sites, and on arrival is acclaimed a hero.
W.C. Gosse likewise sets out from Alice Springs, in the employ of the South Australian Government; reaches the Townsend Range 100 miles within the Western Australian border, and is forced to turn back.
Ernest Giles' second expedition, again sponsored by Dr Ferdinand von Mueller, reaches Mount Olga and discovers Gosse has got there first. Goes no further west than 1250 east. His companion, Gibson, perishes in the desert now bearing his name.
Payable gold is discovered at Palmer River, Queensland.
The north-east coast of New Guinea is explored by Captain John Moresby who annexes the islands to the east and discovers Port Moresby and Hall Sound.

1874

The Transit of Venus (9 December).
Formation of the Linnean Society of New South Wales, with William John Macleay as President (October).

William Macleay retires from political life.

John Forrest makes crossing from the west to the Overland Telegraph Line via the Gibson Desert.

New Guinea: first London Missionary Society mission is founded at Port Moresby.

1875

William Macleay's New Guinea expedition (May–September).

Ernest Giles crosses from Beltana to Perth, and back to the Peake Downs telegraph station. End of period of major explorations.

Fiji becomes a Crown Colony.

The *Pacific Islanders Protection Act 1875* comes into force; extends powers to control activities of British subjects in islands not possessed by Britain or under the jurisdiction of any other civilised power.

1876

Sydney–Wellington telegraph cable connects Australia and New Zealand.

Tasmania: death of Truganini, last of the Tasmanian Aborigines.

Luigi d'Albertis explores the Fly River, New Guinea.

1877

Victoria: first Test match is played.

Telegraph is set up between Adelaide and Perth.

Chinese outnumber whites 12:1 on the Palmer goldfield, Queensland.

109 pearling vessels operate out of Somerset; settlement is moved to Thursday Island.

Population of Australia reaches 2 million.

1878

Queensland: restrictions on Chinese immigration.

Seamen strike against coloured labour.

1879

First steam tramway opens in Sydney.

First artesian bore is sunk at Kallara Station, near Bourke, NSW.

First successful shipment of frozen meat is sent to England.

INTRODUCTION

By the 1860s and 1870s, the pioneers' efforts were bearing fruit. The colonies in Australia and New Zealand were maturing and (whether they liked it or not) the mother country—for not particularly maternal reasons—was about to encourage her progeny to stand on their own two feet. The whole decade of the 1870s was one of advance and retreat. Responsible government had been in place for some 15 years, and the power base was shifting. Building, manufacture and infrastructure were all-important, and pastoralists were no longer the power in the land that once they had been. Horizons were becoming ever wider as a vast continent was crossed and re-crossed, if never quite conquered. The white population reached 2 million, the Aboriginal population continued to decline.

In cities, the public building programs reflected a confidence in the country's future. The railways opened up the bush; the farmers cleared it. Capitalism was on the rise, but so were the forces of labour. It was a man's world, in whatever direction one looked. Brothels were well frequented, domestic service and clothes-making the respectable alternatives for single women of the lower classes. In the Brave New World of down-under, servants were as good as their masters ('The standard of Education is much higher with the lower orders than in England,' observed Lieutenant Hugh Massy, RN. 'They seldom drop their *hs* and as seldom address their Master or Mistress, as "Sir" or "Mam"¹'), and were always in demand. Conditions for men, women and child factory-workers, on the other hand, were an abomination. For middle-class women opportunities for economic independence were rare: few looked beyond marriage as a goal and, for those who did, teaching or governessing were the only respectable occupations. As for the unemployed, the human debris, the seemingly feckless of society—the idlers, the vagrants and the drunks—it was a cold, self-congratulatory charity that swept them off the streets and into the various benevolent asylums of the towns and capital cities.

For the sober citizen with a penny or two in his pocket, there was play as well as work (and church on Sunday). Variety companies and travelling circuses toured the country towns, and in the cities the theatres were booming. The plays were 'foreign', the players Australian, the audiences rowdy; the bars a trysting place for sexual congress. Opera brought a sense of refinement, as did concerts in palatial town halls: a setting fit for worthy burghers, fine oratorio and soaring aspirations.

Relaxation could also mean sport as participants or spectators. The rise of the natural sciences provided stimulation for both sexes in the form of geology field trips, perhaps, or botanising. A sense of pride in and curiosity about Australia's unique flora and fauna led to a series of learned papers and books, produced in this country for and by Australians.

An increasing number of learned societies counted erudite men (but not women) among their members. At a more popular level, features such as 'A Voice from the Country' by 'L.A.' (later 'L.C.')

 found a following among the readership of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Sydney Mail*.

THE 1870S SAW A RISE in social tensions, with the labour force already questioning the terms of its employment. Victoria's protective tariffs created friction with its neighbours, while in the country districts land reform at last was under way and creating tensions of its own. It was boom time for post-and-rail as pastoralists fended off the advance of free selection, or moved on to the Riverina and northwards into Queensland. The farmers followed, for the land on the Darling Downs was not only rich but cheap. Wheat farming would be problematical for years—good harvests subsidised the bad—and mixed farming brought mixed blessings. These were bad times that put pressure on farmer and pastoralist alike: the need for finance to buy the land and stay there; the accompanying spectres of bankruptcy and eviction.

The Wimmera in Victoria's north-west was settled. South Australia's Lutherans arrived by the wagon-load, leaving a sadly depleted land behind them. (Danish settlers would lead the thrust into the timeless forests of Gippsland.) In South Australia, more land was marketed by government to halt the growing drift. Farmers and would-be farmers moved north to the heartbreak of the Willochra Plain, beyond Goyder's line of acceptable rainfall—following the plough rather than the dictates of common sense.

Gold brought its own particular form of idiocy. From the declining gold towns of Victoria and New South Wales, the diggers moved up to the mining camps of Queensland. Indentured Chinese on subsistence wages made the mines of the Northern Territory pay—then refused to leave them. Governments followed Victoria's lead of 20 years before and legislated against the 'yellow horde'. Gold, that great equaliser of the past and springboard for the future, now triggered a racist policy that would endure for generations. (The 'tin lands' discovered at Vegetable Creek in 1871, which stretched from New England and across the Queensland border, would only exacerbate the problem.)

THE STEAM AGE MADE COMMUNICATION regular and predictable: links with the folks back home, always treasured, were now assured. The continent—crossed and re-crossed from south to north in 1861–1862—was crossed again in 1872 by the land line of the Overland Telegraph. More features of the map of Australia were written in (named after the distant, dead or disappeared) as the line became the starting point for the last westerly expeditions of any note. The Forrest brothers heading east from Perth in 1870 made the final transcontinental link. The telegraphic network was completed: Tasmania to the mainland; Port Darwin to Adelaide, Perth and Sydney; Darwin to Java by submarine cable; Australia to the world.

Increased awareness did not come alone. While Britain thought to distance herself from her antipodean colonies, other nations were closing in. Russia, Japan, the United States of America—all had Pacific coastlines and at one time or another were the subject of a minor frisson or a major scare. With a Dutch, French and German presence already established in the Western Pacific, Australian adventurers and entrepreneurial spirits were not the only ones casting an eager eye towards the South Sea Islands.

Ironically, it was the islands, and men looking for a new frontier, that brought the ships of the Imperial Navy back to Australian waters in significant numbers. The men who sailed them were welcomed with open arms—for their own sakes, and for love of the Queen who sent them. That affection was transferred to Her Majesty's sailor son, Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, on his Australian visit of 1867. Any hostility was reserved for the British Government, and the Colonial Governors, its servants—but never to the Queen, whose birthday was celebrated each year with patriotic fervour.

When the last convict transport to Western Australia arrived in 1867, transportation was finally at an end. (Alone of all the colonies, South Australia, a colony founded on religious and political freedoms in 1836, had never known the stigma.) Visitors now travelled out from Britain to eye with curiosity the white native-born Australian as well as the native black. The colonists were put under the microscope, as it were, every bit as much as beetles and butterflies; they and their habits were studied as avidly as the platypus and kangaroos sent back to Britain's scientific institutions. They did not fare particularly well under such an examination; they were felt to be different, and it was true.

Gold had made Australia a melting pot of nations. The young migrants of the 1850s had married; their children had grown up, taller and stronger than those 'at home', and owing their allegiance to Australia rather than to a country talked about, but never seen. They read the same books as their counterparts in Britain, they sang the same songs—yet they were beginning to march to a different tune. Grandiose new buildings might be copies of the old, yet a separate Australian culture was in the making. By the end of the 1870s the colonists had embraced their environment and a sense of nationhood was slowly emerging.²

THE PICTURE OF THE 1870S painted in these pages is incomplete. The author's interests and the material in the National Library's Manuscript Collection have dictated the direction taken, and for the most part the book illuminates the eastern states of Australia. An unfinished portrait, then, or one employing the *chiaroscuro* technique: one side of the subject in light, the other in shade—or, quite simply, a series of sketches, with each chapter inviting readers to take the topic further, should they wish.

Having made my selection of manuscripts relating to the 1870s, I used a variety of other resources in the National Library of Australia to build up

a picture of the decade: contemporary books and newspapers; pamphlets and obscure self-funded publications—in the original, or on microfiche and film—and the songs and music of the day. Gradually the preoccupations and aspirations of those distant Australians emerged, to be revealed as not so very different from our own. Visitors, meanwhile, brought their preconceptions with them (and often returned home with prejudice intact). Letters, journals, songs, books ... the printed word, the elegant hand, the almost illegible scrawl—all served to bring atmosphere to what is arguably a forgotten decade of Australia's European history.

The 'ancestral voices' I have used, unlike those of Coleridge in his poem 'Kubla Khan, A Vision in a Dream', do not prophesy war; nor do the women wail for demon lovers (although, to be sure, the naval officers who took advantage of them behaved rather like young devils). Some of the writers were to achieve fame or notoriety, others hoped for many things only to be disappointed. Yet others simply got on with the business of life and living. These men and women, as we shall see, viewed the world of the late 1860s and 1870s from a number of perspectives. A variety of writings and writers, then, provide the strands which make this book a tapestry as well as a series of sketches. Here we shall see experiences—like the wools and silks of an intricate hanging—sometimes interwoven or touching briefly, or simply shimmering in the twilight, side by side.

- 1 Hugh Massy, RN, 'Four Years on the Australian Station', 1877 (MS 8520): manuscript account of the years 1873–1877 set out in chapters, p. 93.
- 2 For the basis of this introduction, I am indebted to G.L. Buxton, '1870–1890', in Frank Crowley (ed.), *A New History of Australia*. Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1974.



CHAPTER 1

A BETTER PROMISE OF THE FUTURE

I am at the commencement of the introduction of 'responsible Government' a term by the way which is hideously misapplied.¹

TO SIR WILLIAM DENISON, Her Majesty's Representative in New South Wales, fell the task of introducing responsible government to the colony, which term, as he wrote to his kinsman John Manners Sutton, later Viscount Canterbury, he deemed a hideous misnomer. Lord Carnarvon's own letter to the Governor of Victoria in November 1871 was far more optimistic:

*Government House and Farm Cove
from the Botanic Gardens (detail), 1888
From 'Sydney in the Centennial Year',
Sydney Mail, 21 January 1888, p. 1
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia*

I watch the progress of your administration with great interest for in spite of many difficulties drawbacks and discouragements it sometimes seems to us in the old world that independently of the charms of climate, which are fortunately beyond the reach of politics, you have in your hemisphere a better promise of the future than we can anticipate. I often wish much that I could find the opportunity of a six months journey in Australian latitudes.²

Such a visit might have brought home to the former Colonial Secretary the difficulties under which vice-regal officials struggled in the outposts of Empire. Sir William Denison and earlier governors may have felt they were dealing with fractious children or, at best, petulant adolescents unready to direct their own affairs, but by the 1870s the colonists of Australia had come of age and were full of political guile.

No wonder a succession of colonial governors were worn out and dead by their sixties: Denison dying at 66, Lord Canterbury succumbing at the age of 63. Sir Charles Darling, his predecessor—forced to resign by a series of entanglements not entirely of his making—passed on at the even earlier age of 61. To the casual onlooker, however, the tolls exacted by vice-regal office were not immediately apparent.

As well as Lord Canterbury's correspondence, the National Library of Australia holds letters written by Robert 'Robin' Horace Walpole, his young relation by marriage and the future (and last) Earl of Orford in the English county of Suffolk. Robin's letters have more than a little charm and unconscious humour, the first written when he was an 18-year-old midshipman on HMS *Blanche* in 1872, the last in 1874. He can have had little idea of the part played in Australia's future by the notables whose names trip off his pen with delightful insouciance and careless ease—as befitted one with his numerous aristocratic connections.

He did not meet 'the Canterbury people', as he called them, whose son his sister Amye had recently married, and throughout his tour of duty it was the governors' ladies rather than the governors who took him under their wing. Lady Robinson, he looked upon as his 'colonial mother':

Lady Robinson at Sydney has been so kind to me she asked the Commodore to give me six months leave to come and stay with her. [He refused.] *Lady Canterbury* wrote to her and mentioned my name also to the *Commodore* it was very kind of her—*Mrs Du Cane* at Hobart Town was also very kind. I think she knows Aunt Dorothy and Pollington, at least I saw their photographs in her book ... I have not seen the *Canterburys* yet. I am afraid I shall not see them as they go home in March and we have not heard anything of the *Blanche* going to Melbourne. They will lose terribly by getting *Sir George Bowen* there as he is an awful screw though *Lady Bowen* is very nice indeed. She is a Greek woman and very pretty though she is rather old.³

Lieutenant Hugh Massy, RN, who spent four years in the 1870s on HMS *Barracouta*, a wooden paddle sloop built in 1851, had a similar experience of gubernatorial kindness, although, being older, he was more perceptive:

The Governor at the time of my visit [in 1875] was William Wellington Cairns Esq. His Excellency is not married and I have heard many unkind things said of him—for instance that he is a 'Woman Hater', but judging by the polished politeness with which he received and entertained the Members of the Fair Sex, at his afternoon parties, I should say that the charge is a heartless libel. Whatever may be his peculiarities he is certainly not a 'naval Officer hater', for nothing could exceed the courtesy and kindness he showed us during our short stay, receiving us personally at all hours, and sending us off fresh Flowers etc. from his own garden, and the latest English Papers, he had for us to read during our dreary Northern cruise.'

Linked as he was to London, for most people a governor's popularity depended more on the measure of interference he exerted:

The Governor has the prerogative of not allowing a law to pass till he has forwarded it to the Home Authorities for their decision. All Bills have nominally to pass through the British Houses of



Charles Bayliss (1850–1897)
Government House, Sydney, 1879
From *Album of Photographs of the Sydney Exhibition Building
and Other Sydney Buildings* (Album 129, p. 34)
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (P2117/34)

Parliament before they become law in the colonies, but it is very seldom a Bill is thrown out after it has passed in the Colonies unless the Governor exercises his prerogative in some matter he thinks will not be for the good of his Colony.⁵

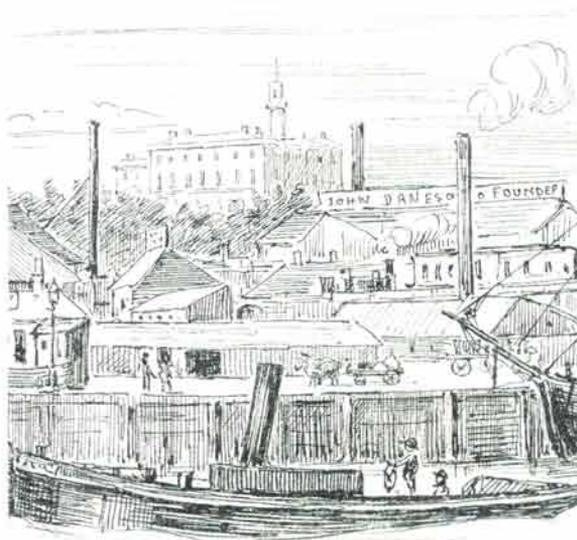
JOHN MORISON, A CLERK from London, travelled widely in the eastern colonies in 1872–1873. It was the fulfilment of a boyhood wish, and his resulting journal may be read in its entirety at the National Library. Here are some of his prefatory remarks introducing a period of his life that brought him ‘a considerable amount of health, strength, and information’:

When at school I always had a love of reading of foreign adventures, which very naturally instilled into my mind a desire to visit some of those places ... After being for twelve months in a mercantile office in the City of London, my wish was gratified, and having obtained a fifteen months’ holiday I sailed at once for Australia ... From my own experience I believe that nothing does one more good than travelling in early life, for it is then that the memory is the sharpest and the observation most keen.⁶

A ‘loyal subject’ of Queen Victoria, who nonetheless ‘would not worship her in the way that ... many did’, he indeed brought a keen eye to his travels and detected a mood akin to his own among the colonists, who—while not as yet openly questioning the function of the Governor, let alone that of the monarch—were already showing a preference for someone better placed to meet their needs:

By the bye I did just happen once, when in Sydney to catch a glimpse of the rejected head of that colony—rejected because he drove about in an antiquated carriage, drawn by four decrepid-looking animals, and driven by a coachman whose hat was covered in cobwebs.

Some colonists would reject the best Governor that England could send to them, because they say:— ‘We have to pay his salary (a stiff one too), so let us choose him from among ourselves, and not have a man from the Old Country who is perfectly unacquainted with our ideas, requirements, and Government.’⁷



Government House Melbourne from the Yarra

Harold John Graham (1878–1929)
Government House, Melbourne, from the Yarra, c. 1882
pen and ink drawing, 7.2 x 7.5 cm
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (R0860/38)

Thanks to the goldfields of Victoria and New South Wales, and recent discoveries in Queensland, the public buildings in colonial capital cities were beginning to take on what some might consider a disproportionate splendour. True, there was a lack of modesty about them (as there was in the forthright behaviour of the women), but did not that come from a sense of permanency and achievement against the odds?

Native-born William Sandover from Adelaide, who was the son of an emigrant from Cornwood in Devon, brought a critical eye to bear on Victoria's Parliament House in Melbourne. His father was a member of the South Australian Assembly, credentials enough to get his son admitted to the unfinished parliamentary buildings. Twenty-year-old William, brought up in a good thrifty dissenting tradition, was always meticulous in his observations, but in what follows can be sensed a sniff of disapproval (there were only 78 Members of Parliament, after all, to enjoy the opulence)—and just a touch of envy:

At present unfinished they look on the exterior rough & ugly, but when completed they will form one of the finest block of buildings in or about Melbourne. The Interior seems laid out regardless of expense. Handsome Assembly & handsome Council Chambers, Ministerial & Opposition Chambers, Libraries, Reading, Smoking, Billiard, Refreshment & Committee Rooms are included within the walls. In one part is a large banqueting Hall, used on State occasions, capable of seating 200 persons.⁸

Sydney was less grand, perhaps, but bad enough:

They even study the convenience of [their] members so much, that besides the smoking, refreshment, & dining rooms & the numerous other extravagances, stables are provided for the horses of members, with two grooms to look after them ([isn't] this going rather too far).⁹

The Sydney Town Hall was (on the outside) 'the handsomest building' he had seen in the colonies, while that in Melbourne—where Sandover was shown around by the Town Clerk—was surely going too far:

It all seems laid out on a princely scale; ease, comfort & luxury being more considered than cost. There are State Bedrooms, Drawing Rooms, Offices &c (all for the use of the Mayor, who could if he wished live on the premises); Councillors Smoking & Sitting Rooms, Rooms for the wives of the Councillors, Baths & the usual number of Business offices. It seemed to me, when looking over the Building, that when the place was built, so many apartments were there, that a difficulty was experienced in naming

them, & hence the number of rooms in reality not required. The Hall itself has sitting room for 3000.¹⁰

If Melbourne was overdoing things—and there was nothing new about that—then what about Tasmania? Miserable William Bethell from Yorkshire, overweight from shipboard inactivity and plagued with chronic toothache from day one, was—naturally—fed up. Nothing much about the colonies appealed to William, the son of a future High Sheriff of Yorkshire, and Tasmanian pretensions simply proved too much:

The ballroom [of Government House] is 100 x 30 ft leading to a conservatory 32 x 16 ft. It is a perfect farce so small a colony having a governor—houses of parliament & the same state officers etc. as in England—the island ought to be attached to Victoria—perhaps the inhabitants would kick ... The Island in its present state will soon go to blazes—annexation to Victoria would be the finest thing.¹¹



Three generations of the Bethell family: William Bethell, of Rise Park, at the wheel of his automobile, with his son Adrian, daughter Phyllis and granddaughter Diana, c.1920. Courtesy of Lady Jane Bethell, Long Riston, Hull, UK.

Of course, that did not happen. Tasmania, along with Victoria and Queensland, had escaped from the aegis of New South Wales back in 1855 and all of them valued their separate identities—identities that would be reinforced by Intercolonial Conferences occurring frequently throughout the 1870s, and beyond. Improvements in travel and communications would boost their confidence further, as would trade and a growing sense of self-importance. When some began to question the role of a mother country half a world away, *Touchstone* felt moved to reproach them on her behalf:

My children, planted beside every sea,
If the parental yoke is wearisome—be free:
I gave you life, a literature, and laws,
And stood contracted to defend your cause:
A flag in glory's pathway oft unfurled—
A right to bear my name—the foremost in the world.

I fought for liberty, and right, and truth
In days long gone; ere you began your youth

I won with tears of blood in many a fray
The happiness which you enjoy to day:
And shall I in return for all you hold
Now meet with hearts estranged, and love grown cold?

Go, if you will—and if you will, remain;
I seek no other object but your gain.
Stay, if content to act as children ought:
Go, if your love is only to be bought.
Go if you value not your British name,
Or estimate in paltry pence your heritage of fame.¹²

IT WOULD BE NO EASY CHOICE—choices regarding a country's future very rarely are. The laws were in place, the voices of Australian literature were already speaking out; the Australian way of life was already distinctive. British troops had been withdrawn, and the Imperial Navy's priorities were clear: defence—like charity—began at home and Australia must take measures for her own protection. Why not, then, take responsibility for one's economic survival as well? By the beginning of the next decade, politicians would be preparing for nationhood, with the Commonwealth already in the making. And yet, while their eyes were fixed on the future, the hearts and minds of the people remained nostalgic for the past—an ambivalence represented by the symbols on our present national flag.

- 1 Viscount Canterbury (1814–1877), Letters, 1856–1874 (MS 8378): William Denison to John Manners Sutton (later Viscount Canterbury), 1 October 1856.
- 2 Ibid.: Lord Carnarvon, former Colonial Secretary, to Lord Canterbury, 6 November 1871.
- 3 Robert 'Robin' Horace Walpole, RN (1854–1931), Letters, 1870–1874 (MS 9110/1 & 2): Robert Walpole to his father, the Honourable Frederick Walpole, MP, HMS *Blanche*, Wellington, 26 January [1873].
- 4 Hugh Massy, RN, 'Four Years on the Australian Station', 1877 (MS 8520): manuscript account of the years 1873–1877 set out in chapters, pp. 104–105.
- 5 Ibid., p. 32.
- 6 John Morison, journal entitled 'Fifteen Months Abroad: containing an account of a voyage from London to Sydney, also a tour through the Australian colonies, Tasmania, and New Zealand, with notes on the return journey to London, calling at the Cape of Good Hope and Lisbon', April 1872 – January 1873 (MS 8167), p. 1.
- 7 Ibid., p. 114.
- 8 William Sandover (1856–1921), Letters, 1876 (MS 1720): William Sandover to his father, the Honourable William Sandover, MLA, Melbourne, 18 October 1876.
- 9 Ibid., William Sandover to his father, Sydney, 28 November 1876.
- 10 Ibid., William Sandover to his father, Melbourne, 23 October 1876.
- 11 William Bethell (1847–1926), Journal, 7 November 1871 – 18 May 1872 (MS 2465): entry for 15 February 1872.
- 12 *Touchstone*, 13 November 1869, p. 39.



CHAPTER 2

LOYALTY, ROYALTY AND A DASH OF DISSENT

Sing Jubilate, Greet him with song,
And welcome right hearty, ye good festive throng,
The son of our Queen, who now visits your coast,
A son of old England, each true Briton's boast.

Loudly sound your trumpets, Doubly beat your drums,
Cannons roar your thunder, The royal sailor comes.

See our princely sailor comes.¹

(above) HMS *Galatea*, HMS *Challenger* and HMS *Charybdis*
at anchor in Farm Cove, Sydney, 1868
watercolour; 30.2 x 42.5 cm
From the Rex Nan Kivell Collection.
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (T2458)

IN OCTOBER 1867 His Royal Highness Prince Alfred Ernest Albert, Duke of Edinburgh, the second son of Queen Victoria, arrived in Australian waters in command of HMS *Galatea*. He met with a rapturous reception: it was after all the first visit by royalty to the Antipodean colonies, and all loyal subjects determined to make it a visit to remember. In the event, it was the action of a disloyal—and inept—Irishman which ensured that the tour will probably never be quite forgotten. In the course of his six months' visit, the Prince visited all colonies except Western Australia and everywhere he was received with great enthusiasm, with one notable exception. On 12 March 1868 Henry James O'Farrell shot him in the back at a picnic—at Clontarf, a Sydney harbour suburb—in support of the Sailors' Home.

A certain ambivalence surrounded Prince Alfred's visit to the Australian colonies. As a representative of his mother, the Queen, the Prince was another symbol of those familial ties to Great Britain; but popular enthusiasm for his visit tended to wane as royal bad manners became more frequent. (As a result, another visit in 1870 was treated with irreverential humour—'Addresses must be sent by post,' wrote *Touchstone's* 'Alfred' to his Melbourne friend, 'Dear Toodles', 'I don't want to be "interviewed" and followed about, and sung to by charity children'²—while the Prince's title and name were conferred upon at least two 'staunch' draught stallions, due, perhaps, to HRH's perceived success with the 'fillies'.³)

Before he arrived, there had been murmurings of dissatisfaction. By the time he left, to republicans like Archibald Michie, lawyer, journalist and parliamentarian, the visit of Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, had proved a godsend—giving them the chance to look a princely gift-horse in the mouth and find it wanting.

The would-be assassin, O'Farrell, was defended in court by Butler Cole Aspinall who, as a junior counsel, had defended the black American John Joseph at the trials following the Eureka uprising of 1854. This time he failed to see his client acquitted—the anti-Irish feeling was running far too high for that. O'Farrell may or may not have been a Fenian, a member of the Irish republican group which at the time was causing a fair deal of trouble on the British mainland, but the suspicion of involvement was enough. He was found to be mentally unbalanced and hanged—presumably *pour encourager les autres* ('to encourage the others'), to use Voltaire's phrase on an earlier occasion.⁴



Francis Charles Needham, Viscount Newry (1842–1915)
O'Farrell [i.e. O'Farrell] in Darlinghurst, 1868?
 pencil drawing, 30 x 28 cm
 Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (R6193)

A month before his Royal Highness arrived down-under, a police van was attacked in broad daylight in the northern city of Manchester, and the walls of Clerkenwell Prison, London, were subjected to a serious bomb attack a few weeks later. That Royalty, on its first visit to Australia, should have come so close to death at the hands of an Irish dissenter sent the colonies reeling; but once the Prince was sufficiently recovered, he faced a serious risk of relapse as he laid first one, then another, and finally an avalanche of foundation stones to buildings that still carry his name.

Some 18 months after the bungled assassination attempt, someone had the bright idea of repeating the picnic—minus Prince Alfred, who was now sailing in the waters off New Zealand—and on Wednesday, 22 December 1869, Lieutenant James Bruce, RN, visited

a place now of world-wide reputation as being the chosen ground of the would-be assassin in his dastardly attempt on the life of the Duke of Edinburgh, where only a small tree now marks the place of the most cowardly tragedy since Wilkes Booth electrified the world in the Washington Theatre; but the past was put on one side for the time, as in the early part of the day the steamers arrived at the spot of revelry, in continuous succession, heavily freighted with gay muslins, pretty bonnets, and bright faces.⁵



Samuel Calvert (1828–1913)
Attempted Assassination of HRH (the Duke of Edinburgh at Clontarf, NSW, 1868)
wood engraving; 18.3 x 21.8 cm
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (S4491)

Unfortunately, as Bruce recorded in his book *The Flying Squadron*, the Governor's wife did not make such a good recovery as the Prince; in missing the occasion she avoided a display of Sydney weather at its most excessive:

We have to regret the absence of Lady Belmore, who entertained such a horror of her last Clontarf picnic, as to be afraid to take part in another; so at half-past two, about 300 sat down to lunch in a large tent, which, in a few minutes, would have been equally serviceable without a top as with, a tremendous thunderstorm breaking vertically over Clontarf, and the rain pouring down like a sheet of water, came right through the roof of the tent, underneath which mackintoshes and umbrellas were in great requisition.⁶

About this time, the 1868 picnic made its way into verse: the scene is 'nature's carpet' beneath 'the vaulted sky of lovely blue', and what the following lines may lack in talent, they make up for in patriotic verve:

What means this wild commotion? Viands choice
Are left untouch'd while, madly, with one voice
The cry, 'the Prince is shot!'—and rush apace
To where the victim, prostrate on his face,
Bleeding and helpless lies; while close behind
The traitor stands, whom now they quickly bind.
His royal victim, borne with care away,
'Tween ranks of awe-struck mourners, late so gay,
Awhile, 'twixt life and death, uncertain lies,
And bravely bears the pain and sad surprise.
How full of wonder is the life of man!
His hopes how vain, though wisely he may plan;
Today, all joy; to-morrow, full of woe;
Nothing is sure, but death, to high or low.
The joyful news, though late, is heard at last;
The frightful wound is heal'd, the danger past.
Clontarf! thy name shall live in history;
Though why 'twas done is still a mystery ...⁷

Discomfort apart, by taking a pot shot at the princeling Henry James O'Farrell did the royal sprig a power of good, for in the outpourings of shock and relief all acts of commission and omission were collectively erased. The 'son of old England' of J. Schott's loyal *Alfred March* might well become a 'stout and burly sailor' entrusted by his mother, the Queen, with serious nautical matters (and so enamoured of the water that he nicknamed his daughter 'Ducky'), but in 1867 he was a callow youth of 23 whose behaviour left much to be desired. Individuals proved less forgiving than the admiring mob, however, and some of them opened their hearts and minds to the beginnings of dissent.

To John F. Blanche, poet of Tullamarine outside Melbourne, whose verses are quoted above, and Archibald Michie, jurist and politician (and another who had stood by the men of Eureka), must go the honours of being among the first to speak out. Blanche's slim volume of verse entitled *The Prince's Visit and Other Poems*, published in 1869, was written 'as a competing essay for the Vice-Chancellor's prize at the Melbourne University'. His own illness intervening, Blanche instead published the work at the insistence of friends. It has an interesting preface:

I am aware that the subject is now, to a certain extent, an unpopular one; many people being now of the opinion that we were too exuberant in our demonstrations of loyalty:—that Juliet (to borrow a simile from Mr. Michie's celebrated lecture on the subject) was too confiding and generous towards the illustrious Romeo, who came so far to see her. But, if Romeo was not exactly what she took him for, Juliet (or, to speak plainly, the colony of Victoria) need not blush on that account; and should Romeo, even yet, convince her of his worth, she would be ready to receive him again as 'her own true love.' Still, it cannot be denied that the news of the British Parliament being requested to vote the sum of £3,500, as compensation for presents[§] made by H.R.H. during his visit to these colonies, has much incensed our community. It must be admitted that H.R.H. was not so precise in his private conduct, or so thoughtfully generous towards our most deserving public charities, as for the sake of example, we could wish him to have been; but due allowance must be made for his youth and inexperience. It is much to be regretted that H.R.H. was not accompanied, on such an important voyage, by some experienced statesman.

The note Blanche added at this point hardly helped soften the criticism of the colony's royal guest:

[§] As we learn at the last mail, it has been explained in the English House of Commons that the sum referred to was to reimburse H.R.H. for the additional outlay in his present voyage, as well as the

preceding one. This puts the matter in a different light. Neither must we conclude, because our own arrangements were conducted on so liberal a scale, that H.R.H. had no occasion to open his purse wherever he went.

So what was the extent of the princely faux pas? Blanche, with his helpful footnotes, went some little way in reminding his readers, while Michie addressed the whole idea of loyalty with a great deal of wit and perception. Extracts from the talk he delivered to the Melbourne Early Closing Association in July 1869 reveal the existing preoccupation with the role of the monarchy, and show too that nothing much changes with the passing of time:

How comes it [he asked] that a simple, gentlemanly, unaffected young man, possessing the one mysterious advantage of Royal birth, should drive a reflecting, sober people frantic with the desire to gaze on him? (Laughter.) What did we gaze at, and why did we gaze? (Renewed laughter.)

Is it ... intelligible that we should throng and crowd together, and almost choke each other with dust (laughter), and raise triumphal arches, and make gold trowels, and pawn our pianos, and go into general convulsions (prolonged laughter and cheers), on account of one whose pre-eminence consists of the accident of rank alone?

How many people under this roof are seriously thinking about this business, or speculating as to what it may indicate or portend? Now that the Australias are assuming almost the proportions of independent states, a Royal personage condescends to come, or is judiciously shipped, to look at us. We are regarded at home as a somewhat democratic community; is Royalty commissioned to fascinate us by its superior morals and manners? Now that the supply of princes in Europe is so rapidly exceeding the demand—(great laughter)—may it not be that home Governments are on the look-out for 'pleasant fields and pastures new' for Royal supernumeraries? (Renewed laughter.)*

That said, Michie—who was 'between posts' in government himself, and had obviously enjoyed the chance to take centre stage once more—likewise recounted the various slights inflicted on loyal Victorians by the royal supernumerary uppermost in everyone's thoughts that night. Melbourne, with 'its now historical flotilla of steamers' waiting at Queenscliff to escort the *Galatea* to her berth, was mentioned first:

The hour had come, and the man; and as within a few minutes to one o'clock the noble frigate rolled and plunged through the rip, reverently and loyally mustered our flotilla to take the Royal visitor

into affectionate custody. Salutes blazed away from the Queenscliff battery, from the *Victoria*, and the *Pharos*; and the *Galatea* herself thundered a salute as her Majesty's representative approached her tall side. But here, unfortunately for Captain Norman's beautifully arranged programme, the *Galatea* seemed to become altogether unconscious of our existence. Instead of waiting to be escorted—according to our pre-arranged plans—the frigate took to her royal heels, and went straight ahead for Melbourne, leaving us all in the lurch ...

Commodore Norman having previously unfolded to us on paper his impressive plans for the port and starboard lines of vessels, the time had now arrived to see how it all looked on blue water, and now the blue water knew it not. Each and every steamer seemed to come driving on, smoking away on her own particular and private account—the little *Pharos* nearly last, and apparently in the highest state of asthma, but struggling along with a 'never say die' look about her intermittent paroxysms of smoke which was absolutely touching ...

Nobody said much, so I suppose everybody thought the more. One dejected and almost spirit-crushed commissioner did, with suppressed emotion, say to me that 'Such behaviour was not nice in the Prince at all.' (Laughter.)⁹



Henry Samuel Sadd
(c.1811–1893)
*Portrait of HRH
Prince Alfred, KG,
Duke of Edinburgh, 1868*
engraving, 20.5 x 15.8 cm
Pictorial Collection,
National Library of
Australia (57747)

No one was laughing in the Western District when the Prince dashed through without stopping a few days after the incident described above. Shops were shut, schoolchildren lined the streets, girls were dressed in blue and white to honour 'HRH'. Arches were up and the flags were out: it was meant to be a day to remember. And so it proved to be:

To save himself four or five minutes of a hot and dusty interview in Colac, the Prince had alienated a large number of persons. He is told that a few minutes' stay would have furnished an opportunity of cementing more closely this colony to the mother country. But he would not stay, and therefore, although the Colac cement may be undiminished in quantity ... some of the adhesive quality of the article is gone. (Laughter.)¹⁰

But, Archibald Michie reminded his audience, 'Is there any more incongruity in Colac than in Melbourne, or in Melbourne than in London, fearing for the integrity of the British Empire by reason of a Prince's impatience in one place or another?' Probably not. In a small part of that Empire, however, over the border in South Australia, the memory of the Prince's visit would wax green forever and, three years afterwards, John Morison recorded its enduring effect:

My next visit in Gawler was at the house of a wealthy miller (Mr. D...) who occupied the finest mansion I ever resided in. Although having risen, as it were, from the ranks, he was a genuine, unassuming gentleman; but his daughters, on the other hand, took upon themselves lofty demeanours, which caused the other folk of the town to remain isolated from them. The residence of this pretending family was situated on the banks of the river Para Para, after which it was named, and was surrounded by a large extent of gardens, orchards, orange-groves, & meadows.

Keeping as they did an open house, they were never without visitors, whom to entertain in grand style was their sole occupation. As a sample of the absurd manners of these young ladies I will just mention an incident that occurred during the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh to their estate, and struck me as ludicrous. It appears that on that occasion they sent their aged maternal [grandmother] to some distant retreat for a spell, for fear she commit herself in His Royal Highness's presence, whereas, to my mind, she was the most lady-like of them all.

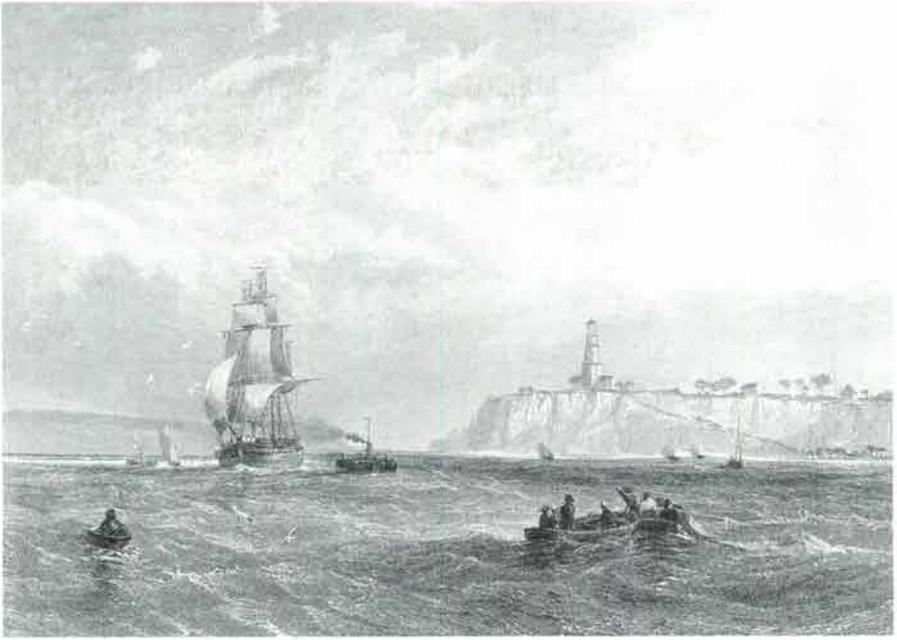
They were all evidently very much enamoured of the Duke, on whose departure they parted his soiled towel among them (I forget if they cast lots for it) and bottled the water in which he had washed his hands.¹¹

While many were glad to have washed their hands of the Prince, Australia's loyalty to Queen Victoria did not falter and, in a phenomenon not unknown to us today, while the royal brood often failed to live up to their queenly parent's high standards of conduct, the sins of the children were never visited on the mother. Her birthday was unfailingly celebrated with a patriotic fervour, matched—if not surpassed—by a delight in a general holiday, as reported by the *Sydney Mail* in 1872:

Never was a general holiday favoured with more auspicious weather. A crisp frosty night had previously presaged a fine day, and certainly the fifty-third anniversary of Queen Victoria's natal day was heralded in, and accompanied throughout (until night at least) by what is known as 'regular Queen's weather'—good fortune in that respect which usually attends those public ceremonials in which her Majesty takes part, having become proverbial.¹²

Steamer trips, the Volunteer Review, sports at the Albert Ground and at the Exhibition: everyone had their favourite mode of enjoyment. There were even excursions out to the picnic ground at harbourside Clontarf ...

1. From *The Alfred March* by J. Schott, RAM, 119 Collins Street, Melbourne; first performed at the Prince Alfred Reception Concert given by the Melbourne Philharmonic Society on Boxing Night 1867, and concluded with many 'Huzzas'.
2. *Touchstone*, 28 May 1870, p. 207.
3. *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express*, 8 August 1875.
4. In March 1757 Admiral Byng was shot at Portsmouth for neglect of duty at the French blockade of Minorca. Facing unbeatable odds, he had sailed for Gibraltar and left the island to its fate. He was court-martialled, and though leniency was recommended, the King refused a pardon.
5. James A.T. Bruce, RN, *The Cruise round the World of the Flying Squadron 1869–1870 under the Command of Rear-Admiral G.T. Phipps Hornby*. London: J.D. Potter, 1871, p. 121.
6. *Ibid.*
7. John F. Blanche, *The Prince's Visit and Other Poems*. Melbourne: R. Bell, 1869, p. 32.
8. Sir Archibald Michie, *Loyalty, Royalty and the Prince's Visit: A Lecture Delivered at the Princess Theatre Melbourne, on July 12, 1869*. Melbourne: Early Closing Association, 1869, pp. 4–6.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
11. John Morison, journal entitled 'Fifteen Months Abroad: containing an account of a voyage from London to Sydney, also a tour through the Australian colonies, Tasmania, and New Zealand, with notes on the return journey to London, calling at the Cape of Good Hope and Lisbon', April 1872 – January 1873 (MS 8167), p. 100.
12. 'Para Para', in Gawler West, was built by pastoralist and miller Walter Duffield, MP (1816–1882), and completed in 1862. The two-storey, 22-roomed mansion, still in use today, is built in the Georgian style, embellished with Corinthian pillars and surrounded by colonial verandahs.



CHAPTER 3

OFFICERS, GENTLEMEN AND CONDUCT UNBECOMING

We'll dance and sing till the morning,
And thus pass merrily the time,
While the clock strikes, strikes one, two, three,
Ha! ha! ha! ha! We'll go home, we'll go home,
Ha! ha! ha! ha! We'll go home merrily.¹

Edward Paxman Brandard (1819–1898)
Port Phillip Heads, 1874
engraving, 19.5 x 26.5 cm
From the Rex Nan Kivell Collection,
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (U287)

THE NATIVE-BORN WHITE AUSTRALIANS were called 'cornstalks'. Long, lean and tough, once they had appeared a different breed to the average European. Decades after the birth of that first generation of children to free settlers or convict stock their descendants were still a subject of curiosity to foreign tourists: somehow, they were *different*. Was it their clothing—certainly fashion was seasons out of date by the time it reached the colonial cities—or was it something more profound? In his book on Australia and New Zealand, which was to become the handbook of intending visitors to the Antipodes, Anthony Trollope pointed out what others had already detected: an ease of manner and self-expression; and that, in the land of opportunity which was Australia in the 1870s, men and women were freer in their social intercourse and met on more or less equal terms. Newly arrived from England where a woman—especially one in domestic service—knew her place, Trollope warned his fellow countrymen what to expect from the local housemaid:

[She] is not degraded in her own estimation by her own employment, and has no idea of being humble because she brings you hot water. And when we consider that this young woman serves you for her own purposes, and not for ours, we cannot rationally condemn her. The spirit which has made this bearing so common in the United States—where indeed it is hardly so universal now as it used to be—has grown in Victoria and has permeated all classes. One has to look very closely before one can track it out and trace it to be the same in the elegantly equipped daughter of the millionaire who leads the fashion on Melbourne and the little housemaid; but it is the same. The self-dependence, the early intelligence, the absence of reverence, the contempt for all weakness—even feminine weakness—the indifference to the claims of age, the bold self-assertion, have sprung both in the one class and in the other from the rapidity with which success in life has been gained ... The young housemaid does not shake in her shoes because you have £10,000 a year.²

The same lack of deference, he warned, would be found among young women of considerable social standing:

Her father and her father's friends have had their time. It is her time now. It is for her to stand in the middle and for them to range themselves on one side. She will do her duty by her father and her mother—but she does it as a superior person attending on those who are inferior. To her grandfather and her grandmother she alludes as poor things of the past, to whom much tenderness is due. But the attention is paid after a fashion which seems to imply that old folk, in the arrangements of life, should not interfere with their betters who are young. Luckily for fathers and grandfathers in

Victoria the power of the purse remains with them, otherwise they would I fear be ciphers in the houses that were once their own. The Australian girls and young married women are not cruel, false, or avaricious, and I will not call them Gonerils and Regans; but I have seen old men who have put me in mind of Lear.³

There was a 'manifest difference' between women out from England and those who were 'colonial-born':

If we are to take personal appearance as the good thing most in request by the female sex, I think that the girls born in the colony have the pre-eminence. As a rule they are very pretty, having delicate sweet complexions and fine forms. They grow quickly, and are women two years earlier in life than are our girls—and consequently are old women some five years sooner. They are bright and quick, hardly as yet thoroughly educated, as the means of thorough education for women do not grow up in a new country very readily; but they have all achieved a certain amount of information which they have at their fingers' ends. They never appear to be stupid or ignorant—because they are never bashful or diffident.⁴

This lack of maidenly modesty could lead to serious misunderstandings. 'The girls out here are not so particular as they are at home,' wrote Midshipman Robin Walpole, RN. 'I find I have had a dozen dances with the same girl several times—I believe that is not allowed in England.'⁵ Robin, of course, was a naval officer and his father in line for an earldom—it made for an irresistible combination. The young midshipman, who had entrée to all the best homes in the Australian colonies, was not slow in taking advantage (and the girls in losing their hearts).

THE ROYAL NAVY WAS ALWAYS WELCOME in colonial society where picnics, music-making and dancing seemed designed to promote intimacy in congenial surroundings. There were conventions to be observed, and norms of behaviour, and while such rules were usually not transgressed, when the navy sailed (or steamed) into port, propriety more often than not was forgotten. So it was in the case of the Flying Squadron, which arrived in Melbourne in November 1869, courtesy of Hugh Childers, former migrant to Australia and now First Lord of the Admiralty. Driven by a sense of economy that would be well received today, Childers favoured the notion that squadrons of large ships in perpetual motion on the high seas, flying the Union flag and letting fly with shot and shell as occasion demanded, would better keep the peace than numerous smaller vessels committed to particular 'stations' (the Australia Squadron, for example). It would also be considerably cheaper ...

Thus, when the frigates *Liverpool*, *Liffey*, *Endymion* and *Bristol* passed the Heads and entered Port Phillip Bay, along with the corvettes *Scylla* and *Barrosa* (the latter replacing the *Cadmus*, which had gone aground before even leaving British waters), the citizens of Melbourne were delirious in their welcome. It was a sign that the Mother Country had not forgotten them; that if the Imperial Forces were to be withdrawn, they could at least still rely on the 'boys in blue' of the Royal Navy. The latter was to prove a serious misconception.

No shipmate who read Lieutenant James Bruce's record of the Flying Squadron's mission was likely to forget his experiences down-under, and no colonial family who had shared them was likely to forgive. To forgive the writer, that is, for the book showed colonial womanhood to be immodest, flirtatious and indefatigable in its pursuit of a well-connected husband. Admiral Phipps Hornby's officers duly obliged by being equally flirtatious—if adept at escaping the toils of matrimony. The mischievous book from the pen of a future admiral (who really should have known better) became not only the talk of that 'most jolly place', Melbourne, some time after the Flying Squadron had flown, but an embarrassment to its successors, as one of them confided to his journal:

we rapidly became more at home with our friends and increased our friendship, more and more did we enjoy ourselves, through their wonderful hospitality; which I must add is still the more to be wondered at after the publication of that scandalous work *The Cruise of the Flying Squadron*, by J.B. whose execrable bad taste, style of writing and ignorance of the English Grammar, which combined the scandalous work, have called forth, amongst the people of the Colonies, considerable indignation and condemnation; and furthermore considerably shaken their former good faith and estimation of Naval Officers to whom, everyone knows, they could not have been kinder and shown greater



Charles
Blanchard
Liverpool Street,
Hobart Town,
1870
oil on canvas;
53.4 x 95.3 cm
Pictorial
Collection,
National
Library
of Australia
(T380)

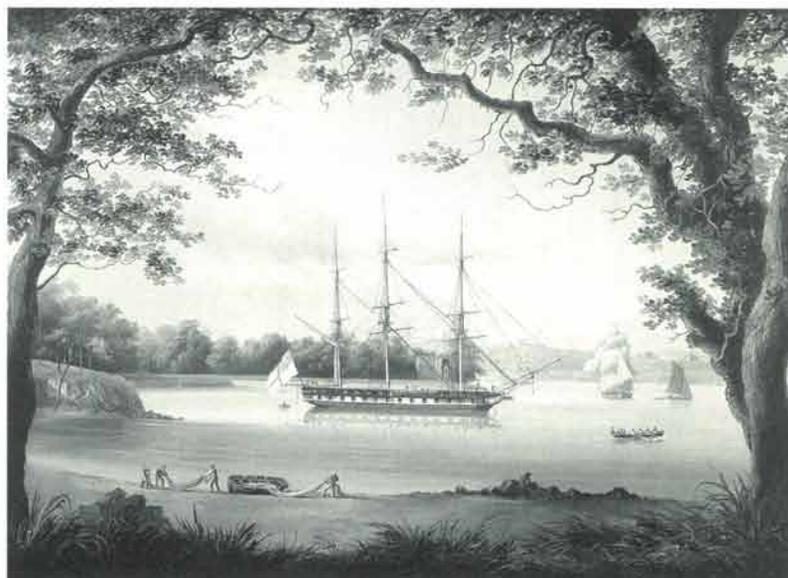
appreciation. In Melbourne especially, people have felt the injustice, the scandalous nature and annoyance of the book: so that it was particularly disagreeable for us to constantly hear the subject in discussion; although all *our* friends were none the less glad to see, and anxious to display their hospitality towards us.⁶

If Melburnians were incensed, what about the good folk of Hobart Town, who had gone out of their way to show a welcome every bit as hearty? And what of the young lady, who had been emboldened to show her affection and thus force an offer of marriage from the young gentleman concerned; who now would spare her blushes? It had all started so well, too, on that public holiday of Friday, 7 January 1870, on board the flagship *Liverpool*:

Then happened a small incident during the afternoon's entertainment, which detracts very visibly from the general notion of the gallantry of the British naval officer. A young, gushing, and slightly eccentric fair one, having for a partner a young, but not very gushing lieutenant, suggested, as they paused exhausted, during an interval in the mazy dance, in a mild and gentle voice, that they really got on so nicely together, that she thought they might try another dance, and he most ungallantly, not reciprocating the tender passion, treacherously placed the confiding one's name down for the last dance, and as soon as society permitted, hurried away to his cabin and made rapid preparations for the shore.⁷

The seafaring cad had, however, reckoned without the tenacity of this particular 'fair one':

in the mean time, unfortunately for him, his late partner, having subdued a more tractable companion, and compelled him to show her the lower regions of the ship, where she spied her partner for the last dance; actually, much pain as it gives us to say it, in a state of drawers, and boldly advanced into the hitherto-believed sanctum, the fearless and undaunted maiden, with imperial air, instantly ordered the uniform coverings to be replaced over the afore-mentioned articles, and remaining gloating over her now crushed victim until the last twist of the necktie, when she returned triumphant to the scenes of previous bliss with her false one, and we heard forgave him, before the sun set on her wrath, shortly after which time the company returned to the shore, leaving a large proportion of the squadron inquiring eagerly as regards the price of land in Tasmania, and other minor matters connected with a lasting residence in the garden of the South.⁸



*Ship of War in Cove
in Port Jackson, c.1860*
oil on canvas;
45.4 x 61.2 cm
From the Rex
Nan Kivell Collection,
Pictorial Collection,
National Library
of Australia (1278)

THE FLYING SQUADRON SOON WAS GONE, if not forgotten, and the early 1870s saw the consolidation of the Australia Squadron, not its disappearance. The steam corvette *Blanche* was commissioned for service in Australian waters and around the Pacific Islands, although life for some time was one long round of pleasure, as Midshipman Robin Walpole wrote in one of his many letters home:

The station is the most delightful there possibly could be and I would not leave it for anything. We left Sydney three months ago and went to Hobart Town where they gave us about four dances a night on an average—Then to Auckland again which is our favorite place. We stayed there two months and are now back at Sydney. The two months at Auckland were about the happiest I ever spent in my life. We knew every body there as we stayed there two months last year. We are going to stay here three months now and as it is *the season* there will be lots of fun.⁹

Fun, of course, might lead to something more serious. Robin's parents had cause to be alarmed, although, as their son reminded them, the Royal Navy was in the Antipodes on business:

I am afraid we are off again to the islands. I like them very well but it is not all dancing and flirting as you seem to think. We have had some fighting, and a wound from a spear is deadly as they are poisoned.¹⁰

Yet the effects of Cupid's darts were more greatly to be feared: Walpole junior would one day be an Earl and a 'cornstalk' daughter-in-law was the last thing the Honourable Frederick wanted. He need not have worried:

nebulous coronets were all very well, but colonial parents were concerned for their daughters' reputations:

You can imagine how old I look when *a stern father asked me my intentions* because I had just spoke to his rather pretty daughter and danced several times running with her. I told him strictly honorable but not immediate. Luckily we sailed the next day.¹¹

Regardless of such dangers, Tasmania was always a general favourite:

The kindness & welcome we received was so great that we were really often at a loss to know to whom we should go; but certain other attractions besides kindness etc. cropped up and set aside all doubts, and I ask, is it to be wondered at such a place as Hobart Town? The beauty of Tasmanian ladies is often talked of and I don't think exaggerated. I was not in the least disappointed, in fact in one or two cases agreeably surprised, as for dancing! I should say (if I were asked my opinion) that their dancing, generally speaking, is faultless.¹²

To a succession of young naval lieutenants (and their superiors) the young ladies of Hobart were nothing if not charming. Knowing that escape was always near at hand, the officers permitted themselves a few liberties in return. Parties at the Honourable Henry Moore's 'Barnclouth', one of Sydney's finest private houses, or others in Melbourne ... The piously indignant Lieutenant Norcock may well have raged against that book, for instance, but if the emphasis (underlined in the original) in his journal is anything to go by, he was no better than his predecessors:

The nicest party we had given us was at 'Moorefield' the house of Mr. David Moore ... I had the *pleasure* of being present, and certainly never before saw such a collection of pretty faces, good figures, and handsome dresses: it was a most enjoyable evening!¹³

There are exceptions to every rule, of course: a few nautical gentlemen were seriously smitten, and took home more than pleasing memories:

Lord Donoughmore was staying here the other day and he married a Tasmanian girl with no money but very pretty ... One of the *Dido's* officers was married the other day and has taken his wife home; she was not pretty and had no money. Captain Stirling [our] old commodore was married here about a month [ago] to a Miss Nellie Deas Thompson and is going home soon. She is rather pretty and sings very nicely.¹⁴

'I do not think that there would be much chance of my ever being married in Australia,' Robin Walpole assured his father, drawing on his own experience and that of his immediate shipmates:

I find that being engaged counts for nothing as it only lasts as long as you are in that port, or at least until you get engaged at the next. The shore people must hate naval officers as a rule and will not go to the balls: they say they never by any chance get any dances with the nice partners. I think that is the reason so few of the nice girls out here marry. They hang on in hopes of a naval officer but the naval officer once home soon forgets the colonies, I think.¹⁵

JOHN MORISON, THE CLERK FROM LONDON, who had already recorded some female silliness over HRH Prince Alfred, made his way to Tasmania 'on a hot sultry afternoon in the month of November' 1871. His observations on the mainland had led him to certain other conclusions, which he may have shared with Anthony Trollope with whom he spent some of his leisure moments while on the island:

It is a notable fact that colonial maidens are said to 'come out' at the age of thirteen or fourteen, being about four years ahead of their sex in England as regards maturity, and it then becomes, without a doubt, a case of 'follow me, boys, I'm open to offers'.¹⁶

He was fortunate enough to be in town in the absence of *Blanche* and *Clio*, and was literally overwhelmed by what he found:

The most striking feature throughout the colony is its great lack of young men.

Pretty, robust, rosy faced girls there are in abundance, indeed the female population is more than double the male ... At the first evening party I went to there were dozens of young ladies, but I, alas, *the only male* (rather bewildering at first, but I finally settled down to my fate).¹⁷

Fate, alas, decreed that he should lose his heart to another, first seen in church, and worshipped from afar: 'But of all the striking features which were presented to me,' he confided to his journal, 'none won my admiration so much as those of a robust and handsome female (L.../B...) scarce seventeen summers—the youngest daughter of a rich old doctor':

Her graceful manner was the admiration of all, and a long, profuse chestnut mane (follow me, boy) carelessly flung over her shoulders added still more to the beauty of the scene.

Many a day after this did I (accidentally of course) pass her in the street; but neither my friend and constant companion who had initiated me 'into all this for the first time' or myself could find anyone who could give us an introduction.¹⁸

It was ever thus. Bitter disappointment was also in store for another young tourist, William Bethell. The son of William Froggatt Bethell, of Rise in

the county of Yorkshire, had aristocratic connections of his own but was not one of nature's gentlemen. The journey he began in November 1871 started badly: 'Dentists are certainly horrid humbugs,' he wrote on the second day out from London. 'Mummery has given me a rare toothache.' Two days later his face was 'as big as a turnip'. His record of the journey thereafter is a repository of cutting sarcasm and spite, in which the colonial ladies—whose beauty was acclaimed by other writers—fared no better than the rest. 'We had always heard the colonial girls were very fast,' he wrote upon his arrival:

All I have seen are beastly ugly—excessively dull—nothing whatever in their hair. Nothing to say for themselves—horrid manners & cannot hold a candle to a second rate English girl— whoever she may be. All the girls are so ugly & the men so plain that marriage must be at a very low ebb.¹⁹

But then, none of them appear to have liked him, either, and that—if not a mouldering molar—was possibly the reason for his spleen.

- 1 *The Night Bell Galop*, 'Dedicated to the Belles of Australia', arranged by C.J. Vincent, in *The Australian Musical Album for 1863*. Sydney: J.R. Clarke, 1863.
- 2 Anthony Trollope, *New South Wales and Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania* (in two parts). London: Ward Lock, 1873, Part 2, p. 98.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 99.
- 5 Robert 'Robin' Horace Walpole, RN (1854–1931), Letters, 1870–1874 (MS 9110/14): Robert Walpole to his father, the Honourable Frederick Walpole, MP, HMS *Blanche*, 2 July 1873.
- 6 Charles James Norcock, RN (1847–1933), 'Private Journal, 20.7.1870 – 24.4.1874' (MS 5897): entry for September 1871.
- 7 James A.T. Bruce, RN, *The Cruise round the World of the Flying Squadron 1869–1870 under the Command of Rear-Admiral G.T. Phipps Hornby*. London: J.D. Potter, 1871, p. 153.
- 8 *Ibid.*, pp. 153–154.
- 9 Walpole, *op. cit.* (MS 9110/11): Robert Walpole to his father, the Honourable Frederick Walpole, MP, HMS *Blanche*, Sydney, 30 March 1873.
- 10 *Ibid.* (MS 9110/9): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Blanche*, Sydney, 25 November 1872.
- 11 *Ibid.* (MS 9110/1): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Blanche*, Wellington, 26 January [1873].
- 12 Norcock, *op. cit.*: entry for January 1871.
- 13 *Ibid.*: entry for February 1871.
- 14 Walpole, *op. cit.* (MS 9110/20): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Pearl*, Farm Cove, Sydney, 29 August 1874.
- 15 *Ibid.* (MS 9110/14): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Blanche*, 2 July 1873.
- 16 John Morison, journal entitled 'Fifteen Months Abroad: containing an account of a voyage from London to Sydney, also a tour through the Australian colonies, Tasmania, and New Zealand, with notes on the return journey to London, calling at the Cape of Good Hope and Lisbon'. April 1872 – January 1873 (MS 8167), p. 100.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 158.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 174.
- 19 William Bethell (1847–1926), Journal, 7 November 1871 – 18 May 1872 (MS 2465): entry for 6 February 1872.



CHAPTER 4

HEARTS AND FLOWERS

Oh! To be a sportive Fairy,
Dwelling in the scented Rose,
Sailing in the Water lily
Where the sparkling streamlet flows!
Lying rock'd within the Lotus
When the summer moonbeams shine,
Singing softly in the blossoms of the blooming
Eglantine.

Oh! To be a fair Sea-maiden,
Stealing to some gallant's breast,
Winning from some beautiful lady,
Him—the knight she loves the best!
Luring him to tempt the billow—
But my words are wild and vain,

Causing tender hearts to suffer,
We but merit Love's disdain!

Let me, then, be that true Fairy—
Queen of some bright, happy home,
Dwelling 'mid the friends that love me,
Never seeking thence to roam!¹

IN THE 1870S, WOMEN WERE EXPECTED—they were led to expect—to marry, bear children and prove a loyal helpmeet to their husbands. In the middle and upper classes this usually meant taking second place—in a decorative kind of a way—and trying not to be boring, for

the young wife, as usually brought up, is unable to join in many topics of conversation, or to be interested in the numerous subjects which enter into the daily work and duty of her husband. This is an evil. It is not intended to argue that every woman should be bored with all matters which arise in the daily routine of her husband's work, but she should be so educated as that he may feel her to be capable of entering into his plans, and being interested in those matters which occupy the chief part of his time and powers.²

To their betters, marriage for the 'industrial classes' (of England, and presumably elsewhere) seemed a dreary fact of life, and its outcome most probably doomed:

The girl on leaving school at a tender age is either busily engaged at a factory, mill, or some other regular work, or else she helps her mother at home. In the first case she learns nothing of her domestic duties; in the second, though she certainly picks up what she can from the experience of her parent, that parent's previous training renders her but a poor instructor. She usually marries early, and is consequently as ill-fitted for the management of her family as her mother was before her. Her household becomes disorderly, she is not fit to manage the family income to advantage, and to those circumstances not a little may be attributed of the unsatisfactory condition of many homes, and the commencement of discord between husband and wife.³

(opposite) Melbourne fashions, 1881
The Australasian Sketcher, 10 September 1881, p. 292
Newspapers and Microfiche Collection, National Library of Australia

This description does not quite fit the Australia of the 1870s, for, as yet, there were few 'dark satanic mills' to speak of, and when they did emigrate, men of the 'lower orders' were lured by the thought of the land. For pioneer women, transplanted to live in the alien bush, there was no regular income to manage (or mismanage) as they joined their men in grubbing for survival. It was determination, not numeracy, that counted.

For the Bairds who had moved from Burrumbeet to take a small selection in the Victorian Pyrenees, true grit, no matter how gritty, was simply not enough:

On his arrival here [Baird] went to work clearing ground for another selector. The first day he was so engaged a tree fell upon him, breaking his arm and leg. He became an inmate of the hospital, and his wife and family sought relief from the benevolent society. On leaving the hospital, though unable to use his hand with any degree of efficiency, he again began to do a little in the way of clearing ground.⁴

True to the best tradition of country heroines, Mrs George Baird stood by her man—and was almost killed for her trouble:

another tree fell, this time on his wife, who was assisting in the work. Besides sustaining a severe scalp wound, the woman's leg was broken and she became an inmate of the hospital. Anxious about her young family, so soon as she was able to get about tolerably well on crutches, she left the institution. The poor woman had not been long at home, however, when she slipped and fell, breaking her leg again, but not in the same place. She was admitted into the hospital yesterday week, and is, we are informed, progressing favorably. Baird himself is still unable to work for his family, not having recovered the proper use of his broken arm, the muscles having been seriously injured.⁵

Neither women with their shoulders to the plough (like the Germans John Morison would see in the Barossa), nor those engaged in clearing the land (like Mrs Baird) expected widespread recognition of their efforts; the unusual turn of events, rather than her misfortune, made George Baird's wife newsworthy, and then only for a moment. While some women suffered in the service of their families, others nearly killed themselves by slavishly following fashion.

THE BUSINESS OF ANY YOUNG LADY of consequence was to find a husband. The search began in the schoolroom, and could be a lengthy and sometimes contradictory process. A girl should be healthy and fit: the *Sydney Mail* described at length 'Who the Healthy Girls Are' and detailed the benefits of 'Calisthenics for Ladies'; the old days were lamented:

'As the twig is bent, the tree is inclined.' Nature had a good start, and she would not yield to art without a hard struggle. The few robust women to-day are the ones whose young lives were free and careless as the birds, whose clothing never fettered limbs nor pressed lungs, whose impulses and instincts were never checked or killed outright.⁶

Such items appeared alongside accounts of the latest Paris fashions, 'most dangerous ground' if Dr Walter Balls-Headley of Melbourne is to be believed. A noted scourge of quackery (see Chapter 10), he also turned his attention to *haute couture*—in which he found little to commend save 'the effect produced'. The good doctor's remarks as to how it was produced cut across all classes and were the epitome of good sense; whether they were heeded is another matter. Just as colonial houses were adapted to deal with the extremes of summer, so too a woman should take precautions against the heat:

a thin merino vest; then her linen; very loose stays, with very little support in them, and a light coloured thin dress; other underclothing of calico; stockings not too thin, and good sound boots.⁷

If it is true that, as the saying goes, 'Horses sweat, men perspire, ladies glow...', then a working woman was no lady. 'Women, who work with their muscles and get damp from perspiration, should change their inner clothes on reaching home after the day's work,' Balls-Headley advised,⁸ but what working woman had umpteen sets of 'smalls'? When it came to the latest fashions in 'ball costumes', he was probably also ignored. Balls-Headley wrote his paper on *Dress with Reference to Heat* in an era when the taste for bows and flounces, ruches and berthas, could add monstrous bulk to a less than sylph-like figure, and, with his comments on the dangers of corsets and tight lacing, there came a lecture on the female thorax. It is both a little gem in its simplicity and a horrid warning:

You are aware that the chest, enclosed by the ribs, may be roughly described as of the form of a triangle, of which the apex or point is at the top; this cavity is there closed, but open at the bottom; so that, if it be in any way diminished in size or its walls contracted, such moveable organs, as it encloses or shelters, can only be compressed, or forced downwards where the outlet is. Thus the effects of tight lacing are, firstly, to press in and deform the ribs. Secondly, to press on the lungs and contract them, limiting their expansibility; such pressure is apt to induce inflammation thereof, when opportunity from chill occurs; or if there is an hereditary blood taint, consumption is apt to ensue. Thirdly, the heart is forced downward, and palpitation and shortness of blood result.

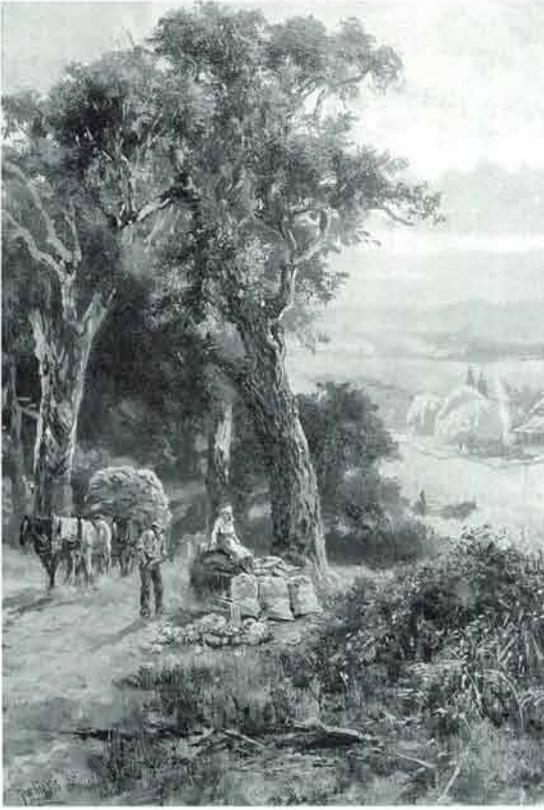
Fourthly, the diaphragm, which is the great muscle across the cavity of the chest, separating the lungs and heart from the liver and intestines, is forced downwards; and consequently the liver, stomach, spleen, and intestines have to find room for themselves lower than their normal situations, to the injury of themselves, and inconvenience of other organs; which thus become jostled. Varicose veins are frequently produced by the interruption to the circulation caused by the pressure of tight stays on the organs of the body.⁹

Did a gentleman want a fashionable wisp of a wife regardless—'it is injurious, and certainly not elegant, to contract the waist beyond the natural'—or a dependable carthorse? As the doctor commented:

What wonder, then, that girls who lace tightly, do not eat much, for they have no room for food; or that they do not digest well what they eat: Doctors know how much they suffer for it; and that man is unwise, who marries a girl who can't eat. Fifthly, if the stays be worn tight, they take from the force and actions of the muscles, being to some extent a substitute; but, whenever a muscle is brought into action less freely or fully than is natural, it wastes and loses power: thus the muscles of the bodies of tightly-laced women are apt to be deficient in power; a matter of serious importance.¹⁰

Everything a girl learnt in childhood was imparted with marriage in mind. In privileged squatting country, young ladies might form some grand dynastic alliance, with troths plighted and acres linked in the grand old feudal manner. In the towns, parties, balls and picnics—even church—had their part to play. A girl might marry a widower, or one of her brother's friends. She settled down and raised a family (or died in the attempt), but how many young brides stopped to wonder where that walk up the aisle was leading? It most certainly went far beyond the altar, with its attendant benignly smiling cleric; socially minded ladies of some gentility might even end up in the bush! Here the writer Louisa Atkinson refers to her own experience:

It not infrequently happens that for health, or economy, or some other good reason, town people forsake their town lives and enter upon a country existence. Here every thing is new—say that economy has been the motive of change, the feeling will be strong to make the most of things. 'How,' says the anxious housewife, or, in the expressive German term, housemother, 'how shall I make my home most comfortable at least expense?' She suspects the existence of crude materials around her, but is at a loss where to seek them, or how to turn them to profit. Removed from the baker, the butcher, the oilman's store—all these callings must be represented by her own ingenuity and skill; nor can the girl, hired



James Waltham Curtis (1839–1901)
Roadside Stall, 1876, 1888
 oil on canvas, 48.3 x 33 cm

Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (R3610)

from the bush farm near, assist her; or the old servant retained from the town household.¹¹

The former Miss Atkinson (Mrs James Calvert since early 1869) continued her articles for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Sydney Mail* with a series entitled 'The New Bush Home'. Her obvious belief that anyone—given ingenuity and determination—could prosper away from the town, was rather misleading, but in one thing she did not err: the chief purpose of any wife (no matter how 'glowing' she might find herself) was to keep the head of the house fed, watered—and thoroughly indulged:

The approach of warm weather revives our housemother's desire to distinguish herself in the matter of cheese. When it is impossible to keep meat fresh, and flies are so numerous, and appetites wane, she begins to muse on the

possibility of giving her good man a glass of home-brewed beer, and a crust of bread and cheese, when he comes in warm and exhausted from the unwonted out-door toil.¹²

Louisa Atkinson's 'Country Bush Mother' may have had a lot to answer for in the wider community: it sounded such fun, this guide to the dairy, the cheese-making, the beehives, the eggs ... Why, she could even make reptiles seem jolly:

It is a good thing not to permit dead timber or stones to lie piled near a hen-house, as snakes are apt to take shelter in such places and do much mischief. During the drought a snake before unknown in the district made its appearance, a pretty creature, but poisonous—a great consumer of chickens, and active by night as well as day. Where these tiger-snakes came from we did not know—the old black and brown snakes so quickly disappeared before them that a neighbour of ours suggested they had changed into tiger-snakes—rather Darwinian, certainly.¹³

A MATE, AS FAR AS MOST YOUNG MEN were concerned, was a person (male) whose company was enjoyed at work and at play: the word conjured up the convivial companionship of the clubs and hotels; the sharing of adversity. When it came to marriage, young men were more ambivalent than women; it was a state to be embraced wholeheartedly and with total commitment—'but not yet, Oh Lord, not yet ...'

Robin Walpole spent his time cajoling girls and avoiding their anxious fathers, although 'it is not all dancing and flirting as you seem to think,' he reminded his own papa.¹⁴ For Walpole and his fellow officers out from England, marriage did not enter the equation, or only very rarely. William Bethell, too, would surely rather have died than wed one of the 'so ugly' colonial girls he encountered on his journeys (or at this stage of his life, perhaps any woman), yet it did not stop him observing the behaviour of others—on the good ship *Agamemnon*, for example:

Nov 22/71. There is a most amusing flirtation going on between Dow & Miss Nilsson, the former about 18 & the latter about 26. I believe in the 'table of affinities etc.' in the prayerbook it is stated a 'Man may not marry his grandmother.' Why on earth a man or woman may not make fools of themselves if they choose I never could or can conceive. There is also a flirtation going on between Mrs Reed & Mr Nilsson—they both seem very desperate—if the former is tired of Mr R why not get a divorce & be spliced to Mr N—I don't know which is the worst bargain of the 2.

Nov 23/71. Flirtation going on splendidly—neck and neck race between Shanks Vialls & Dow, Dow will I think win in a canter unless the young lady (Miss Nilsson) turns restive—a turtle floated past the ship this day.¹⁵



Portrait of HRH Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, and his bride, c. 1874
Courtesy of Ms Romana Heiler

Who, if anyone, gained the prize is not recorded (although Miss Dow sailed back to England in her single state); William's spite was saved for the '2 sets of newly married people' who crossed his path on the voyage to Melbourne from Sydney, and who 'spooned & behaved generally disgracefully, they might do [their] kissing etc in private'.¹⁶

WHEN IT CAME TO AFFAIRS of the heart, no one could have shown more discretion than Catherine 'Katie' Deakin. Catherine was born in Adelaide in 1850, the daughter of an accountant and a farmer's daughter, and grew up in Melbourne at a time when social conventions were at their strongest, even for those of the lower middle class.¹⁷ Young ladies of the time learned to sew and sing and play the piano; if they were lucky, they were taught by competent teachers. But no matter how talented a pupil, success was rated, not by academic excellence or musical *brio*, but by a strip of glinting metal on the maidenly left hand. (And no matter how much she loved a fellow, she must keep silent and wait to be asked to share his life.)

The diary Katie Deakin began in 1872 reveals a young girl of 21 and her daily existence.¹⁸ By the end of the regular entries (in December 1875) she had acquired formal qualifications and was about to embark on a teaching career. But was this what she had always intended?

The three years between 1872 and 1875 were full of social events, with much partying and coming and going. There were many young gentlemen callers, the names appearing most frequently those of 'Mr Strong', 'Mr Pearson' (later the first headmaster at the Presbyterian Ladies College), and one of Alfred Deakin's teachers at Melbourne Grammar School, Mr J.H. Thompson. 'Mr Mickle' and 'Mr Martin' began to call as well.¹⁹ All were friends of Katie's younger brother, Alfred, a precocious youth who in 1872 was studying law and showing an interest in spiritualism. Katie Deakin was a plain girl, whose heavy features lacked her younger brother's good looks, not that that was all-important in the best of circles. Royalty, after all, set an example, with Prince Alfred's betrothed noted as:

amiable and pleasing, with an intelligent and agreeable countenance,
and fine eyes and hair, but not a 'beauty'.²⁰

All of which could have been said of Catherine, but the royal bride—a Grand Duchess and daughter of the Czar—had a pedigree that made her a more attractive proposition. When it came to their own blood-line the Deakins were decidedly plebeian; beauty in their only daughter would have been a distinct advantage. Bookish, serious Katie embarked on deep discussions with her brother's much older friends, and if they sought her out it was surely not for the purposes of flirtation. There is no spark of humour in her early diaries—events are recorded but rarely give an outright hint of her feelings—yet, while it is not always easy to work out the dates of the entries (Miss Deakin did not expect the pages to be trawled by prying eyes), there are enough clues to suggest that from the first half of 1872 the young woman's affections were definitely engaged:

Wednesday Valentine's day. extremely surprised at receiving my first, a pair of white kid gloves—cannot imagine from whom, poetry on address.

Saturday [16 March?] Mr. Strong called [underlined in pencil] busy in even[ing] to concert in Town Hall. Mr. Strong took us. Miss Schiller & Signor Giorza played beautifully ... Saw Mr. Campbell. Mr. S. walked home with us.

Thursday May 2nd. very busy, our little dance. There were Misses Wade, Ashe, Houston, Iffla & Annie Harrow, & Louie & Miss Carpenter. Messrs Webster, A. & D. Pearson. The 3 Kents & Harrie and Jennie (Mr. Strong, Simons & Fred disappointed us—)

Tuesday to town in morning nearly chose dark silk. Mr. Strong here in evening. [The following Tuesday evening he called again.]

[3 June] Tuesday evening Alf called on Mr. Strong.

Thursday. in even Mr. Strong called.

Saturday June 15th. Mr. S. sent us tickets for Opera. *L'Africaine*. Enjoyed it much.

[20 July] Saturday very wet ... in the evening Mr. Strong kindly brought one of the tables painted by his sister to show us. Delighted with it—singing—first time since we were at the Opera.

Thursday 3rd Oct. Ma's face very swoln. In evening Misses Ashe, Iffla & Larrith Messrs Pearson, Strong, the 2 Symons spent evening. Any amount of singing from all except 2 Symons—so strange. Mamma unable to come in the room.²¹

Of all the gentlemen callers, 'Mr S.' was clearly the favoured of her heart, although never identified as the sender of the Valentine's gift. At about this time Katie began learning the culinary arts, a sensible move if expecting to be married. There was, however, to be no proposal of marriage that year from Mr Strong.

The following year saw a flurry of engagements and marriages in the Deakins' little circle, and Catherine, whose health was never considered robust (although she lived to the age of 87), became unwell. After a trip



Catherine Sarah (Katie) Deakin as a young girl
From the Alfred Deakin Papers (MS1540/19/613),
Manuscript Collection, National Library of Australia

to Adelaide in autumn 1873 (possibly in flight from yet another friend's marriage), she was back in town and feeling better:

[17 May] Saturday morn to town. Saw a great many to bow to. Mr. Mickle to chat—in even to Opera *Mose in Egitto*. Enjoyed it much, saw the Kents there & Mr. J. Thompson going home.

[4 June] Wednesday. retrimmed my brown hat.

[9 June] Monday. town had my portrait taken.

Friday June 13th. to Mrs. Wade's party. Enjoyed it very well—all very kind.

Saturday memorable day. had my hair cut ...

Sunday. Mr. Mickle here—wrote to Annie. Spilt the milk all over my dress. Mr. M. here in evening—Monday Alf gone to Stephen's—Mr. Strong came. Dreadful weather all the week.

[28 June] Saturday. busy sewing.

[29 June] Sunday. Papa, Mr. Mickle and I for a walk in morning, round the Gardens. Wrote to Nell then Mr. & Miss Martin came—a splendid evening—

[30 June] Monday. After I came home Ma & I called on Miss Iffla—in evening Mr. Strong came & brought me one lovely camellia—also Messrs Martin & Mickle—whist.²²

Mr Strong, once his floral tribute was safely bestowed, again kept away from Adams Street, South Yarra. Other friends married and Katie began to concentrate more on giving musical tuition. She still enjoyed 'long talks' with her brother's friends—was she, in fact, talking too much and showing too much intelligence for a woman?—and continued to immerse herself in domesticity:

[6 September 1873]. last Friday & Saturday busy making marmalade, used ten dozen Sevilles & 6 doz. lemons & 5½ sweet oranges—making about 80 lbs.²³

She read *Little Women* and *Good Wives* in the place of her favourite George Eliot and Herbert Spenser, and then, on 25 September, 'Mr. Strong came, gave him photo'. (The gentleman reciprocated with a 'promised etching', then made himself absent for several weeks ...) The Deakins now took steps to help their spinster daughter. Refurbishments took place, and in

November Katie recorded 'Our first dance in new room.' The Finks and Joskes attended, as did Mr Mickle, but there is no mention of Mr S. There were other dances, and Catherine continued her mastery of the culinary arts. During 1874 Strong was rarely present, and he was mentioned for the last time on 10 December 1874, a Sunday:

Pa & Ma returned, heard of Mr. Strong's engagement.²⁴

It was a sad end to a mixed year, a year that had seen seances, new faces and a lasting rift with Mr Mickle, as well as the dashing of Katie's dreams; a year in which Catherine Deakin turned 24 and still had no official suitor. She was an excellent musician, with qualifications from the Melbourne School of Music, and had given private lessons since her own schooldays were over. Now she set about acquiring the formal qualifications that would enable her to earn her living. Education was no longer the haphazard affair it had been in the early days of European settlement, and schools and teachers were now regularly subject to inspection. In order to pass matriculation Katie enrolled as a mature student in the newly founded Presbyterian Ladies College—one of the series of denominational schools which would blossom in the coming years—and became one of its first teachers. 'Hurrah!' she wrote in her diary entry for Christmas Day 1875, when she learnt she had passed her examinations, 'such a blessing'.²⁵

Indeed it was. At the age of 25 she was an 'Assistant teacher in general subjects'²⁶ and had turned her back on marriage. From then on, her life would be one of subservience to others. When Alfred reached prominence, first as a spiritualist, then as a politician, sister 'Katie' would be at his side—or behind, standing in his shadow.

LOUISA ATKINSON MARRIED JAMES CALVERT in 1870 when she was 36. Two years later she died—18 days after the birth of a daughter. Among the papers which her biographer, Patricia Clarke, has placed in the National Library for the use of other researchers²⁷ is a copy of the sermon preached by the Reverend William Woolls two years after Louisa's death. From it, the dead woman emerges as an exemplary human being—a botanising lady bountiful, whose sad loss was mourned by all:

Though frail as the tender plant that needs continual watching, her exertions in the path of virtue and science were surprising ... Those who know anything of the rugged mountain or the fearful chasm, may well wonder, how on the elevated ranges, or in the depths of the rocky gullies, she collected specimens of rare and beautiful plants, 'born,' as it were, 'to blush unseen and waste their sweetness in the desert air'.²⁸

She had helped the poor and needy; she had ministered to the sick and dying, including her own mother. To lead a good life and suffer an early death was the lot of all too many young women of the time. To the girls who did not marry but who, by the end of their twenties, found themselves not only maidens but 'old maids', a domestic tragedy such as the Calverts—with oneself in the central role—may have seemed preferable to living alone, or on sufferance with relatives. Strong's last visit to the Deakins in 1874 was later marked as such in Katie's diary (in pencil, like the other underlinings of his name), and her love began, like Louisa's plants, to waste its sweetness 'in the desert air' and her hopes take on their final bitter taste. The suspicion that Mr Strong may have been using her family home to perfect his social graces possibly haunted her long after.

From then on, she recorded engagements and marriages, and became the confidante of others. 'Fink confided in me. Love affair,' she wrote in early 1875, but was more concerned with enrolling at the Presbyterian Ladies College. After 1874, she recorded her birthday, but not her age. There are very few entries in this particular diary after 1875; the last entry was written on 14 September 1877 (although many blank pages remain). At its close, Miss Deakin, aged 27, had a profession and financial independence yet the diary, with its girlish aspirations, remained with her until her death.

In April 1918, Katie Deakin heard that an old friend of her brother's had recently died. The news came in a letter from his son:

You will probably regard this as a strange letter & I am writing it more on a sudden impulse than for any set reason. Though few people might be aware of it the relationship between my father & myself was in many ways a very remarkable one. I do not think that there were many intimate matters connected with his life that he did not speak of at some time or other to me. He often spoke of you & you are probably aware that he had a deep respect & admiration for you. But you probably did not know that as a young man he was passionately fond of you, but regarded you as something altogether too good for him & a long, long way beyond his reach—I hope you will not think me impudent in writing this, but I know that you are not young & I just thought that it might be a little pleasing to you to know that one, who for all his weaknesses was one of the best & wisest (though perhaps not in a worldly way) of men, should have at one time loved you so much. What I have written is of course only known to myself, but I just thought that perhaps you would be pleased to know.

I am

Yours very sincerely

Alan D. Mickle²⁹

Catherine replied courteously and with dignity, yet giving very little away. She had not married; nor was David Mickle likely to have been the man of her choice. But the news must have been gratifying, at the very least, and she may well have paused a moment to consider what might have been. Miss Deakin died in 1937, the brother to whom she had been devoted replaced by a *côterie* of 'cultured men and women who were keenly interested in literature, art, and music'. They met in the family home at South Yarra that was now hers, and where her talents as a 'fine pianist' were once again acknowledged—as they had been by Mickle and those others some 50 years before.³⁰ But did those *soirées* provide the same glow that, long ago, might have been channelled elsewhere and with different outcomes?



I said: I will go into the garden and consider roses;
I will observe the deployment of their petals,
And compare one variety with another.
But I was made to sit and scrape potatoes.

The morning's rosebuds passed by unattended,
While I sat bound to monotonous kitchen industry.
Howbeit the heart of my consort was exhilarated,
And for virtuous renunciation I received praise.

The taste of the potatoes was satisfactory
With a sprig of fresh mint, dairy butter,
and very young green peas.³¹

Ursula Bethell, the eldest child of William's uncle, Richard,³² came to fame as a poet through celebrating the New Zealand landscape around her home, 'Rise Cottage', in the hills near Christchurch. Like Catherine Deakin, she did not marry, yet her life was a happy mixture of social work, philanthropy and loving female companionship. The poem above is hers. It contains humour at the denial of her pleasure: she was single; she was financially independent; she had a choice between roses and potatoes. Married women, on the other hand, had no such option: their role was

well defined. For them, cultivating one's real or spiritual garden must always take second place to the requirements of one's husband—the 'sportive Fairy' transformed into a possibly resentful and certainly earthbound housewife, the orange blossom exchanged for a plate of garden peas.

- 1 From *Oh! To Be a Sportive Fairy*. Words by J.L. Hatton; music by B.S. Montgomery. London: Ashdown & Parry, 1870.
- 2 *Sydney Mail*, 21 October 1871.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Age*, 19 August 1872.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 *Sydney Mail*, 16 March 1872.
- 7 Walter Balls-Headley, *Dress with Reference to Heat*. Melbourne: J. & A. McKinley, 1876, pp. 35–36.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 36–37.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *Sydney Mail*, 21 October 1871.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 *Sydney Mail*, 2 December 1871.
- 14 Robert 'Robin' Horace Walpole, RN (1854–1931), Letters, 1870–1874 (MS 9110/9): Robert Walpole to his father, the Honourable Frederick Walpole, MP, HMS *Blanche*, Sydney, 25 November 1872.
- 15 William Bethell (1847–1926), *Journal*, 7 November 1871 – 18 May 1872 (MS 2465).
- 16 *Ibid.*: entry for 5 March 1872.
- 17 See John Rickard, *A Family Romance* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996) for a picture of the Deakins' home life.
- 18 Catherine Deakin (1850–1937), *Papers* (MS 4913/2/9): *Diary* 1872–1878.
- 19 David Mickle was a university friend of Alfred's, and several years older, as was Arthur Patchett Martin. 'Mr Strong' was very likely Herbert Augustus Strong, who from 1871 was Professor of Classical and Comparative Philology and Logic at the University of Melbourne. He was born in 1841 and married in January 1875.
- 20 *Fiji Gazette*, 5 July 1873.
- 21 Deakin, *op. cit.*
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 For two years Catherine Deakin was a teacher at the Presbyterian Ladies College, Melbourne; then at Corea Ladies College, Brighton (MS 4913/5/22).
- 27 Patricia Clarke, *Papers* (MS 8363).
- 28 *Ibid.*, box 18/7: Rev. William Woolls, *A Sermon, Preached in St. Peter's Church Richmond, on Sunday, April 12th, 1874, on the Occasion of a Tablet Being Placed in that Church, to the Memory of the Late Mrs. Calvert*. Windsor: Benjamin Isaacs, 1874, p. 10.
- 29 *Ibid.*, box 4/21.
- 30 Obituary of Catherine Deakin, *Age*, 4 November 1937.
- 31 Mary Ursula Bethell, 'Discipline', quoted in Charlotte Macdonald, Merimeri Penfold and Bridget Williams (eds), *The Book of New Zealand Women: Ko Kūi Ma Te Kaupapa*. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1991, p. 85.
- 32 See Chapter 14.



CHAPTER 5

SCALES OF JUSTICE

The landlady of the Ship Hotel was a convict, then kept a disreputable house & finally is landlady of the Ship—keeps her husband in fine order—he is fearfully under her thumb ... 2 of the other hotels in Hobart Town are owned by women once convicts—in fact half of the inhabitants are sprung from convicts.¹

A VISITOR'S PERCEPTIONS of the Australian colonies did not change with the ending of transportation. The new arrival viewed his alien surroundings with something akin to suspicion: Australian society might seem a microcosm of

Harold John Graham (1858–1929)
Melbourn Policeman (Summer Uniform), c.1882
watercolour; 9 x 7.5 cm
In *Sketches in Victoria and Tasmania*
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (R9866/59)

England, with its laws and its traditions, yet its very origins were suspect—for all their veneer of civilisation, colonials were still considered as descended from convict stock. William Bethell's trip to Tasmania was dominated by the thought of felons and, not surprisingly, he found traces of them wherever he looked. The voyage back to Melbourne produced further gratifying evidence of wickedness, for among the 'snobs' he found so vulgar and pretentious there was:

a gang of pickpockets and card sharpers—most abominable looking villains, convicts no doubt. Some years ago they looked capable of committing any crime under heaven—two of the young pickpockets were put ashore at Gow Heads. There were six or seven women one of them an excessively pretty girl about 18, evidently just decoyed into the gang for her 2 sisters were at the wharf at Launceston crying at her departure among the blackguards.²

The 'criminal classes' and 'criminal types' such as these were features of late Victorian society. Physical appearance was very important. According to the pseudo-science of phrenology,³ one's cranial 'bumps' determined one's character and disposition. Add to that a lowering physiognomy, receding forehead and brooding brows, and you had a strong indication of bestial tendencies and sub-human behaviour. Put the two together, add a dash of Darwin and a pinch of prejudice, and anything was possible. Mr Gerard, Bethell's fellow-passenger on the good ship *Agamemnon* on the voyage out from England, was known to the young man as the 'Sphinx', or even the 'Gorilla'. He dressed badly, looked like a 'pork butcher' and, although he talked a lot, gave very little away. He was also physically unprepossessing, which laid him open to even more suspicion:

He is tremendously ugly & I think instead of human beings being descended from Apes according to Mr Darwin, apes must have descended from us & that Gerard is the father of the lot.⁴

In the course of his researches into the criminal classes, 'The Vagabond', the *Argus* reporter in Melbourne, was able to go much further:

I find myself face to face with the last minister of Victorian law—Gately—convict and executioner.

A frightful animal—the immense head, powerful protruding jaw, narrow receding forehead, and deficient brain space, seemed fitly joined to tremendous shoulders and long strong arms, like those of a gorilla, which he resembles more than a man. All the evil passions appeared to have their home behind that repelling, revolting countenance.⁵

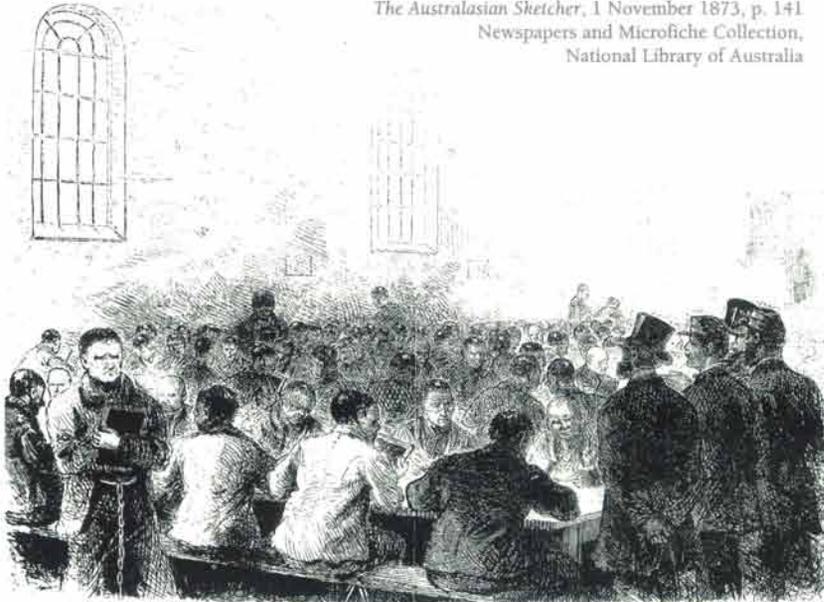
A fitting man, then, to knot the noose and pull the lever, for murder remained a capital offence. Darlinghurst Prison, Sydney, had its own gallows at the ready:

The Gallows & condemned Cells are close together. In the latter is always a Warder separated from the Prisoner by a strong iron grating. A door outside the condemned Cells leads to a Platform with a trap door in it, and to one of the beams above the rope is secured. Beneath the Gallows a place is provided for the Governor & other Officials who from duty are compelled to witness the awful scene. After the Culprit has expired his body is interred in the cemetery and not buried in the precincts of the Gaol as in England.⁶

From dock to death could be a speedy business, especially when the wheels of justice were well oiled and running smoothly:

Adjoining the Gaol is the Supreme Court. Sir James Martin is now Chief Justice of New South Wales, and I was privileged to hear him trying his first case in his new and exalted position. It was a case of Murder, and the council for the defence was most eloquent in his address, but it was of no avail. Sir James in his charge to the Jury carefully laid both sides of the case before them, but after a short deliberation they returned a verdict of Guilty, and the extreme sentence of the Law was passed upon the Prisoner, who shortly after paid the penalty of his crime within the Gaol.⁷

Life in Pentridge, the prisoners' school, 1873
The Australasian Sketcher, 1 November 1873, p. 141
Newspapers and Microfiche Collection,
National Library of Australia



UNIFORMED POLICE PATROLLED the streets of the towns and cities. An urban policeman's lot may or may not have been a happy one, but it offered steady, if not necessarily stimulating, employment. The excitement of the goldrush days was over, although out in the bush and the newer goldfields it was a different matter; in the outback mounted troopers were a necessary part of everyday life. By the time Hugh Massy was concluding his account of 'one of the most interesting and at the same time the most trying Cruise I have ever had', the native police had been disbanded, for the most part. In the Northern Territory, for example, the constabulary were all whites—a 'fine body of men' whose uniform consisted of 'White trowsers, short white Jacket with Silver Buttons and blue facings; cross belt of brown leather, and Cap with white cover and curtain', and who were deemed to do the work 'more humanely'.⁸ This could not have been said of the 'Black troopers under White Officers' in Queensland, whose idea of dispensing justice was their very own:

Strange to say they take the most bloodthirsty delight in slaying their own Countrymen and being wonderful trackers, and few or no questions being asked as to what have become of their Victims, they are most valuable auxiliaries to the Magistrates of the Law. They have instructions to summon the Natives three times to surrender in the name of the Queen before they fire, and I was told a story of a zealous Black Trooper who hailed his Victim in these words 'In de name of de Queen surrender—One, Two, Tree.' Bang, and the poor fellow rolled over dead. No doubt the same thing is frequently done, tho' with even less ceremony. The question arises—'Ought this state of things to be winked at? Is it not a disgrace to our boasted civilization that these brutal murders, under the cloak of justice, should be allowed to continue day after day unchecked?'

No doubt Black Troopers would be of great assistance in detecting crime if they were carefully kept in check; but there is the great difficulty, for their white Officers are perhaps the sons of outlying Settlers who think they have a grievance against the Blacks, and the Magistrate of the District is probably an agrieved Settler himself. And it is almost too much to expect of human nature to think that these men will put themselves out of their way, to see that their Enemies are treated humanely, especially when they can quiet their consciences by saying they did not do it themselves or they did not order it to be or did not see it done, or some equally trivial excuse of a like nature, when this state of things is well known to exist by anyone who has been to the Northern part of the Colony.⁹

No longer were crimes other than murder capital offences, nor was flogging in vogue. Corporal punishment might be used against a juvenile delinquent or a sexual offender, but usually the very idea served as a powerful deterrent:

During one of my visits to Sydney Garotting was in fashion, and Hyde Park was the principal resort of the Ruffians. A line was stretched across one of the bye paths ... and the Scoundrels hid behind one of the Clumps of trees, till a victim tripped over the line when he was rushed upon and robbed. The Government quickly passed a Bill to make it legal to flog Garotters, and put it into immediate force without waiting for it to pass the English House. The consequence was Garotting at once ceased and has not since been heard of.¹⁰

Prison cells were always waiting, those in Pentridge, Melbourne, proving (to the outsider) a sort of penal *pensione* which boasted better facilities than those outside:

Everything seems to be in perfect order, clean & bright to perfection. The prisoners work the whole day & are shut up in their respective cells (measuring abt 6 x 9) at 6 o'clock; the Gas is burning until 8, during which time they may read or write, books & a slate being provided for them. In this respect they seem to be in better circumstances than are many poor but honest families outside. A large Library is in one part of the Building from which the prisoners receive Books. Among a large collection of standard Works, I noticed Forrest, and Warburtons Travels, best Poets & for those who are foreign scholars, French & other continental Books. The men receive a Bath, in a scrupulously clean Bath once a week, & if ordered by the Doctor oftener.¹¹

Hugh Massy found Darlinghurst 'a large substantial, gloomy looking stone structure, surrounded by a high stone wall, having Watch Towers at each angle' where cleanliness, and hard work were expected, and punishment readily on hand:

The Prisoners are all kept employed at some useful trade such as Matmaking, Book Binding & Carpentering—The Women being put to Needle Work and other Female occupations.

The most severe punishment is the Dark Cell—I quite understand the severity of it, for I went inside for a few minutes, and it is indeed a darkness that can be felt.

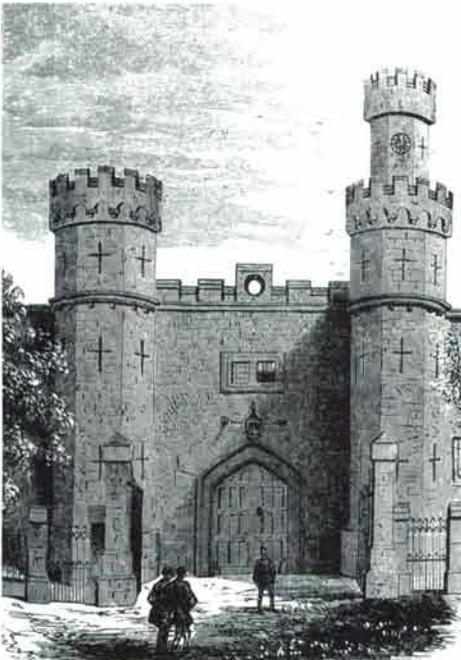
The Cells are single and are kept scrupulously clean, the solitary furniture being a burnished basin a tub for washing, and a Hammock which in the day time hangs against the Wall.¹²

In gaol, as in the various benevolent asylums, a prisoner was expected to earn his keep:

Many different branches of industry are carried on within the walls. We saw some excellent & remarkably cheap baskets made from osiers grown in the prison Grounds. They have too a straw hat & a boot factory, making up all that is required for the other Govt Institutions. Even the leather for these boots is prepared on the premises, a tannery giving employment to a large number of men. In another portion of the Prison are Tweed Works, adjoining this are Tailors Shops, supplying all the Govt Institutions with Clothes. Further on are Carpenters & Blacksmiths Shops. In one of the Yards a number of prisoners were stone cutting & carving for additions that are being made to Pentridge of course by prisoners. Vegetables enough are grown too not only for the prisoners, but also for the Reformatory, Industrial School & other Govt places.¹³

'It is indeed a wonderful place,' concluded William Sandover, if only the inmates had learned their lesson:

A prisoner coming in here without a trade & without an education can have a trade & an Education both given to him & that gratis, so that when he once more emerges into the busy world there is no excuse for him not getting on; but they will come back & the same faces are seen there year after year. The difference in the Prisoners too was marked, some you could see industrious, others trying to execute the smallest possible quantity of work in the longest possible time.¹⁴



Entrance to Pentridge Prison, 1873
The Australasian Sketcher, 4 October 1873, p. 121
Newspapers and Microfilm Collection,
National Library of Australia

AMONG THE MOST COMMON offences featuring women were stealing and drunkenness—for who could keep accurate statistics on infanticide and abortion? The police force kept a hawk-like eye on the property of those who had it, while drunkenness as a social evil exercised the minds of all reformers. That drink could serve as a means of oblivion, a means of forgetting one's wretched circumstances, did not occur to our Victorian forebears, and they would

have been unforgiving if it had, for drunkenness, after all, led to poverty and criminality. The benefits of sobriety and industry, on the other hand, were obvious (as were the evils of non-compliance) and formed the basis of many a lecture at Mechanics' Institutes and Early Closing Associations countrywide.

John Tebbutt junior, the astronomer, was one of the influential men behind the founding of the Windsor School of Arts in 1862, and it served as a platform for his views thereafter. His remarks were not confined to astronomical observations—1875 saw him tackling drunkenness on behalf of the United Religious Mission. The following extract from his pamphlet *The Broad and the Narrow Way* gives an idea of his general thinking:

We come to a point, in the highway of life, where it seems to divide into two roads, the entrance to which are guarded as it were by two gates, the one narrow, the other wide. Over the narrow gate we behold, with our carnal eyes, the finger-board with the inscription, 'To Jesus and eternal salvation' ... On glancing through the narrow gate, we find the way to be very narrow and hedged on each side with thorns and briars. We shrink from the prospect of travelling along such a road and we take a glance through the other, the wide gate, to see if that will prove a more pleasing way for the pilgrimage of life ... Multitudes are passing along it; the tracks along it are very numerous ... I have said that pleasant fields and beautiful flowers invited us on this way, but many of us have already found that those pleasant fields are clothed with poisonous herbage, and that those beautiful flowers are the noxious foxglove and the deadly nightshade of sin ... One of the saddest states of alienation from God is that of the drunkard. Drunkenness is the most fearful and widespread crime that falls under our experience ... The excessive indulgence is intoxicating.¹⁵

Prostitution was another widespread evil, and nothing could be more 'carnal'—to use Tebbutt's word—than intimate knowledge of a woman other than your wife. We can be sure that tarts were off the menu when the righteous met together: sex was taboo, and even the table legs were discreetly covered up. Sex was no topic for the hearth and home (what happened in clubland was another matter)¹⁶ and even newspaper reports showed a certain circumspection:

ELIZABETH STEWART, on the 17th, was, by the Coroner, committed for trial at next Central Criminal Court, the jury having returned against her a verdict of manslaughter in reference to the death of her child. She had kept a house of ill fame in Castlereagh-street, and was an habitual drunkard. On the previous Thursday her infant which was three weeks old, was strong and healthy, next morning it was dead. She had been out drinking with some sailors during the night, and came home intoxicated. The child's death

was caused by suffocation, and it was proved by medical testimony that it had not received sufficient nourishment.¹⁷

Women like Elizabeth Stewart were recognisable and had their recognised haunts: theatre bars, side streets, slums ... Their clients knew where to find them, and so did the moralists. They moved in and took appropriate action. The removal of transgressors away from the public gaze was an obvious, if not necessarily effective, solution: men were men, and women knew it. Ladies of the night (and day) were drawn irresistibly towards the waterfront ('The gangway of the *Thermopylae* gave way and sent 3 women into the sea, they were soon however got out—no doubt all the better for the washing'),¹⁸ thus the Sydney reformers who chose Belueta on Cockatoo Island as a 'reformatory for Fallen Girls and young Women' could hardly have made a more inappropriate choice. Unless, that is, they were meant to stay marooned forever. Hugh Massy again:

It is situated in a bad locality, the pailing of the recreation ground being close to the head of the dock, so that it is almost impossible to prevent conversation going on between the Seamen and Unfortunates. My endeavour throughout these pages is as far as possible to depict people, not when they are on their good behaviour before Visitors, but in their natural everyday life; and I must confess that having been behind the scenes I have not the slightest faith in the utility of this Institution. They go out in the recreation ground without I believe anyone to overlook their behaviour there, and the awful language I have heard and the indelicate gestures I have seen made, are at once so revolting and sickening, that not at the time intending to put my view in writing, I did not go over the Establishment, although I have had many opportunities, as I should not have had the slightest pleasure in such a visit. I do not believe that when there are so many hardened individuals, together, that any permanent good can result, unless they are continually and carefully watched, and those who evince signs of repentance, separated from the more hardened of their sex, who are sure to again destroy the little good feeling that is springing up within them. I believe Mrs. King the worthy Matron does her best to make the Institute a success, but the means at her disposal are very limited, and she is most probably totally unaware of the existence of such facts as I have related, but had she a larger force of Female Warders under her, such would no longer be the case.¹⁹

Moralists would be out in the streets in even greater force in the 1880s; in the 1870s life and public opinion were hard enough on 'fallen women'—Elizabeth Stewart was tried as much for her regrettable lifestyle as for the death of her child. Woman as victim was the norm, and the move to make seduction a crime met with typically Victorian double standards:

Some time ago it was seriously debated at a Social Science Congress whether it would not be possible to check immorality by making seduction a criminal offence; and now not a single case of infanticide crops up in the papers but what some amiable enthusiast is prepared to show that society is responsible for it. If society would only consent to punish the seducer as well as his victim, it is argued, the temptation to do away with the evidence of their common guilt would not be as strong as it is now. The woman's case is a hard one. She is tempted to commit the offence, and then is doomed to undergo alone all the penal consequences of having offended.²⁰

Granted, it was difficult for the female, but how to get around the inequality? Should the law be changed and allow 'every unprincipled woman' to attack the character of her lover? asked the writer (undoubtedly a male). Unthinkable. The same edition of the *Age* took W.G. Grace to task for conduct unbecoming the game of cricket; it knew exactly what constituted gentlemanly behaviour, and how correctly to apportion blame:

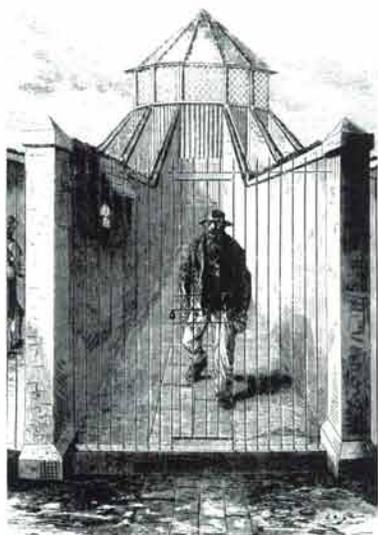
Society, after all, is not called upon to protect a woman's virtue for her. It takes care that she shall be kept fully appraised of the consequences of neglecting it herself, and it concludes that the knowledge of those consequences will be an all-sufficient safeguard for her. If she yields to the arts of the seducer, she yields against the admonitions of her own experience and her own conscience.²¹

Married women, too, could find themselves deserted. Some were learning to fight back and claim their rightful due:

The City Police Court records will show that of late there has been an increase in the number of husbands deserting their wives. On Saturday another case came before the court. A young man named Henry May, a butcher, was charged on warrant with this offence. The parties had only been married about twelve months, and during that time an order had been made by the District Court for the payment of 15 [shillings] per week towards the maintenance of his wife and child. The prosecutrix, who appeared to be very young, stated that she had been compelled to leave her husband on account of his cruel and persistent ill-treatment of her. The accused, on the other hand, stated that his wife was much addicted to drink. The bench remanded the prisoner till Tuesday to afford him an opportunity of paying his arrears of maintenance.²²

NOW AND AGAIN, and often enough to cause concern, justice seemed to have nothing at all to do with notions of fair play. Judge Sir Redmond Barry

was a paradox. He was instrumental in establishing the Public Library and the University of Melbourne, and was President of the Melbourne Club on three occasions. No doubt he would have called himself a gentleman, with all that term implies, yet his contemporaries could find his attitude towards the law perplexing. ‘There must be something about the atmosphere of Sandhurst that is fatal to the judicial serenity and impartiality of the bench,’ reported the *Age* newspaper in July 1873:



Exercise yard, Pentridge Prison. 1873
The Australasian Sketcher,
 4 October 1873, p. 121
 Newspapers and Microfiche Collection,
 National Library of Australia

Some of the sentences pronounced by Judge Barry at the Circuit Court on Thursday have excited almost as much comment in the locality as the famous punishment meted out to the gold robbers of the Great Britain machine by Judge Fellows. Among the prisoners condemned were Rea, the violator of his neighbor's two little girls, and Smart and Phillips, the fraudulent trustees of the orphans whom they robbed first and then turned helpless and destitute into the streets. The latter got three years' imprisonment each, and the former three years and eight months.²³

For Barry, as it turned out, considered crimes against private property of greater importance than those against defenceless individuals, and the rape of a lock more reprehensible than that of an innocent child.

At the same time, a wretched couple who broke into a kitchen and stole a blanket were sentenced—the man to six years' imprisonment, and the woman to two; while a mining manager, who embezzled £4 of his employer's money and then broke into an untenanted counting house to destroy the books which contained proof of his guilt, got eight years. The discrepancies and inequalities in the sentences are obvious at a glance, and it is inconceivable to the ordinary layman how a judge can perpetrate them without giving the alarm to his own sense of justice ... No ordinary moralist, and certainly no skilled jurist will say that the violation and despoliation of children ought to be put in the same category of crime as the theft of a blanket or a few bank notes. But if we are to judge by Sir Redmond Barry's ruling, [the latter] have three times the criminality attached to them.²⁴

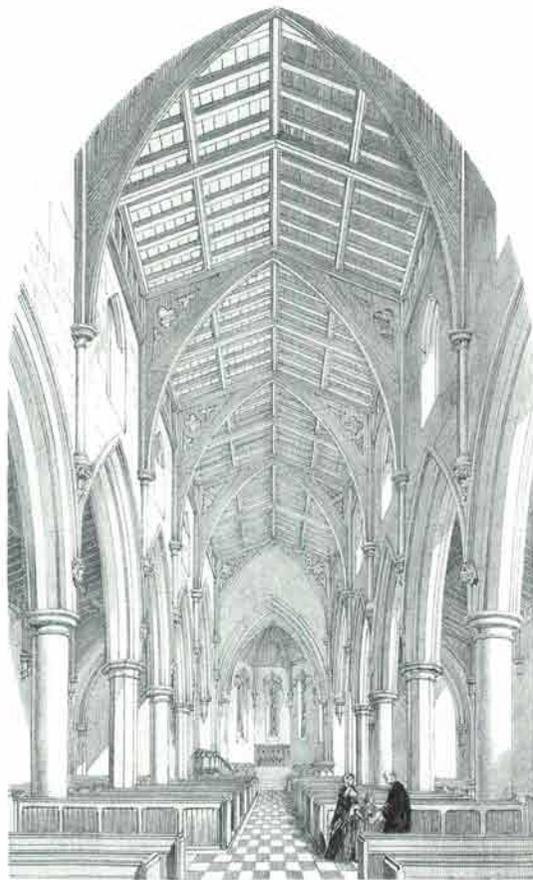
‘At present,’ concluded the ever-vigilant *Age*, ‘we have absolutely no corrective that can be brought to bear upon the judges, save by way of an earnest appeal to their own sense of the most responsible of their functions.’

THE FOLLOWING DECADE would see an explosion of 'boom and bust' activity, and white collar crime involving more than mere 'mining managers'. Vulgar tycoons would take 'marvellous Melbourne' by the throat and shake it free of its social pretensions. Melbourne in the 1880s would see the rise of corporations—and of corporate offences; companies would collapse and secret compositions be made. In the meantime, spiritualism pervaded the most respectable of circles, where a very special (and sinister) white collar trickery had been going on for years.

- 1 William Bethell (1847–1926), *Journal*, 7 November 1871 – 18 May 1872 (MS 2465): entry for 14 February 1872.
- 2 *Ibid.*: entry for 18 February 1872.
- 3 An article in *Touchstone*, 30 October 1869, p. 29, entitled 'Heads of the People', a phrenological study of politician James McCulloch, makes it clear that ability, personal characteristics and even one's future were deemed apparent from the shape of one's head.
- 4 Bethell, *op.cit.*: entry for 28 November 1871.
- 5 Quoted in Michael Cannon (ed.), *The Vagabond Papers*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969, p. 102. Based on The Vagabond's articles in the *Argus*, 24 February – 23 June 1877, and first published in book form by George Robertson of Melbourne in 1877. These volumes are both in the National Library, as are microfilm copies of the newspaper.
- 6 Hugh Massy, RN, 'Four Years on the Australian Station', 1877 (MS 8520): manuscript account of the years 1873–1877 set out in chapters, p. 52.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 53.
- 8 *Ibid.*, pp. 127–128.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 99–101.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- 11 William Sandover (1856–1921), *Letters*, 1876 (MS 1720): William Sandover to his father, the Honourable William Sandover, MLA, Melbourne, 16 October 1876.
- 12 Massy, *op. cit.*, pp. 51–52.
- 13 Sandover, *op. cit.*: William Sandover to his father, Melbourne, 16 October 1876.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 John Tebbutt, *The Broad and the Narrow Way: An Address Delivered before the United Religious Mission Held in the School of Arts, Windsor, during the Week Ending October 2nd, 1875*. Sydney, 1875, pp. 4–5.
- 16 See, for example, Paul de Serville's account of the sexual comforts made available to Prince Alfred's entourage, courtesy of society contacts in Melbourne: *Pounds and Pedigrees*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 63–68.
- 17 *Sydney Mail*, 25 November 1871.
- 18 Bethell, *op. cit.*: entry for 4 February 1872.
- 19 Massy, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–55.
- 20 *Age*, 26 July 1873.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 *Age*, 9 June 1873.
- 23 *Age*, 26 July 1873.
- 24 *Ibid.*



Solitary confinement, Pentridge Prison, 1873
The Australasian Sketcher, 4 October 1873, p. 124
 Newspapers and Microfiche Collection,
 National Library of Australia



Day & Son
(lithographers)
Proposed cathedral
church, Adelaide,
South Australia:
interior view,
looking east, c.1869
hand-coloured
lithograph;
29.2 x 18.4 cm
From the Rex
Nan Kivell Collection,
Pictorial Collection,
National Library
of Australia (U1153)

CHAPTER 6

TRUE BELIEVERS

Lonely musing in the twilight,
When the lengthening shadows fall,
Spirits bright, and holy angel
Come obedient to my call.

Lost and loved ones gone before me—
Phantoms fair from memory won—
Seem to flit before my fancy,
Midway to the setting sun.¹

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, that heretical creation of a dynastically challenged monarch, was itself used to subversion from within, yet nothing can have prepared it for Charles Darwin and *The Origin of Species*. By pushing back the date of the earth's creation by millions of years, and formulating the idea of slow, continuous change, geologists had paved the way for Darwin; what price now God the Creator, and his time frame of six days' labour plus a day of rest—a flurry of activity occurring (according to ecclesiastical experts) in 4004 BC?² In Australia, a decade after *The Origin's* publication, the debate over Darwinian and Creationist theories of evolution was continuing unabated.

The minds of the faithful may have been in turmoil but Charles Perry, Anglican Bishop of Melbourne, knew exactly where he stood and did not fail his congregation:

In my opinion the Bible has nothing to fear from Science. There is no quarrel between them. Some unwise friends of one and the other have tried to set them at variance, but I believe they are, and always have been and will be, inseparable friends. A man is not to be regarded as a disbeliever in the Bible because he is a votary of Science; nor, on the other hand, is one who upholds the authority of the Bible to be supposed to look on Science with suspicion. While I receive with the most perfect confidence all that God has told me through the Bible, I receive with the same confidence whatever he has enabled me to learn from Science. I have no more doubt of the diurnal and annual motions of the leading facts of geology, than I have of the birth, life, and death, the resurrection and ascension, of our Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot for a moment entertain the idea of Science contradicting the Bible.³

A blinkered view? Possibly, yet astronomer John Tebbutt, observing the universe through apertures every bit as narrow, likewise found proof of the divine:

Talk of the mighty achievements of man—of the powerful steamer ploughing its way through the ocean—or of the mighty locomotive dragging its heavy train along material rails at the rate of a mile a minute. Why these contrivances dwindle into utter insignificance when we come to measure their dimensions or their speed by the rule of the Divine Architect. In the planet Neptune we have a locomotive which rolls round the sun on immaterial rails at the rate of $3\frac{1}{3}$ miles per second, not performing one mighty journey round the central luminary till 165 of the years of mortal man have expired ... You will marvel, perhaps, when I tell you that the solar system, grand as it is, is only as a drop in the ocean when we compare it with the real magnitude of the universe of God.⁴

It was grand to be so sure. Meanwhile other, more insidious, forces were at work.

Unlike the Anglicans, Unitarians rejected the dogma of the Trinity. The Church's ideals of simplicity, tolerance and reason appealed to people like the Sandovers, whose origins lay in the dissenting West of England. Whereas the handmaidens of the Anglican Church provided refreshments at tea parties and bun fights, those of the Unitarian Association took centre stage and preached. In 1876 William, junior, attended worship in Melbourne:

On Sunday last went morning & evening to hear Miss Turner, who to my mind is as clear, clever & concise as any Unitarian Minister I have heard.³

Martha Turner visited Victoria in 1870, and stayed to be appointed third regular minister in 1873. The sister of Henry Gyles Turner, historian and Unitarian lay preacher (and occasional contributor to *Touchstone*), whose 'fine house in Albert St. East Melbourne' William was privileged to visit,⁶ was a 'quiet, cultured, English lady' possessing 'a low and gentle voice and quiet manner'.⁷ She proved a universal favourite, according to Sandover, whose congregation 'would not exchange her for any-one', and whose 'discourse' was 'unsurpassed'. In Melbourne, he concluded, there was no one 'clearer, more liberal or more striking'.⁸

Katie Deakin first heard the older woman speak at a time when she was simply 'guesting': 'Pa & I to Unitarian Church. Heard Miss Turner preach—very pleased.'⁹ On another occasion, she preached a 'fine sermon—Jesus Christ'.¹⁰

In Sydney, whatever the case in Melbourne, the popularity of the Unitarian Church was waning:

Dined at Mr. H. Turners ... [who] was formerly a prominent member of the Unitarian Church, now they as well as many Unitarians here are Spiritualists.¹¹

The simple monotheistic doctrine of the Unitarians seems to have little in common with the teeming world of the paranormal, and the progressive ideas of spiritualism may have proved the drawing card in many cases. While the evidence proclaims William Sandover a committed Unitarian, Alf and Katie Deakin were by no means regular attenders. In the matter of religion they appear to have been 'shopping around', searching for a stimulating means of personal expression. This they were to find in spiritualism. The eminently sensible William, for his part, left spirits well alone.

THE VICTORIANS WERE STOICAL about death. They read about it, they wrote about it, and in the parlour of an evening they sang about it. A list of

popular favourites might read as follows: 'My Bud in Heaven'; 'Spirits and Angels'; 'Minnie Bell' ('In the grave, now quietly sleeping'); 'Darling Bessie' ('Now my Spirit Bride'), rounded off, perhaps, by that cheerful ditty 'Dear Mother, I've Come Home to Die'.¹² In the midst of life there most certainly was death: 'It was very sad, the death of Miss Linklater; but scarlet fever is very prevalent here,' William Sandover wrote with resignation.¹³

In Australia, the hot weather brought deaths from fever, while the winter months speeded up the departure of the dying and cut short the lives of the young (if the summer had not done so already). All year round there was the risk of death by misadventure. Life in 1870s Windsor, New South Wales, was as risky a business as anywhere else, and particularly tough for photographer Thomas Champion¹⁴ (although he would have been the first to admit that it had been far worse in the 1860s when all of his work was done *al fresco*). The habit of a daily weather forecast remained with him ever after, and 'No letters',¹⁵ 'No trade',¹⁶ 'blowing a hurricane',¹⁷ 'Self up quite ill head stomach bowels & foot all suffering ... an inquest at Hopkins's upon a woman found dead in South Crk'¹⁸ are all variations on a theme recurring in his diary. There was no looking on the bright side for our man in George Street, Windsor, and inexorably we find ourselves drawn into the monotony of his daily existence: listening, as he must have done, for the doorbell; watching out for the twice-daily mail arrivals by the steamers puffing up the Hawkesbury River; mesmerised by the steady tolling of St Matthew's bells—single, double, triple (depending on the number of deceased). Rejoicing, like him, in the minor triumphs which were painfully slow in coming, and with death a constant source of fascination. Champion's diary, with a sprinkling of neatly sketched coffins, rang a constant toll for the passing of his fellows:

Saturday 17 February 1872. A.A. Nixon brt. up by train from Sydney. Son of N—Tailor, accidentally killed by the upsetting of cart ... age 19 years—a v mournful sight, the brother following Hearse crying all the way.

Saturday 14 September 1872. Dugdale one of the Porters found drowned in H. River. Body lies at Bushells for Inquest.

Saturday 8 November 1872. T. Caddell near Mudgee died of apoplexy.

Friday 15 November 1872. Jessie Upton died in Sydney Infirmary of Lock Jaw.



Self-portrait of Thomas Champion, 1870
Courtesy of Ms Romana Hojler

Monday 18 December 1872. Self up quite ill; head stomach bowels & foot all suffering ... an inquest at Hopkins's upon a woman found dead in South Crk.

Tuesday 4 March 1873. Johnny Benson killed through a fall from his horse.

Wednesday 5 March 1873. ½ [past] 4 large funeral party returning from the late J.B.'s funeral at Richmond.

Tuesday 1 April 1873. Old Field much injured by W.R. Ridge's Bull.

Wednesday 2 April 1873. Poor Field died last night ... 11 o'clock self at J. Harris's on Inquest upon body of the late James Field whose death was caused by the Goring of a 2 yr old Imported Bull. Buried 5 pm at the Cemetary Somers Town.

Monday 7 [April] 1873. Bell tolling 3 times. A young man name Izzard of W. Foran accidentally shot himself.

Tuesday 10 June 1873. 7 am a moist morning much rain in part night—Mate Gardner's wife went into the River near Brewery Sunday between 12 & 1 O'clock nearly exempt of clothing & drowned herself. Cause dissipation & ill usage from her husband—body not found up to last evening.

Wednesday 11 June 1873. 7 am raining steadily. 12 noon no letters. 4 pm Trade nil. Raining fast. Body of Mrs G not yet found.

Monday 28 July 1873. 7 am a fine morning. 12 noon no letters. Fair but windy & cold—a widow ½ sister of Mrs Robinson carpenter's wife leaving 3 children hung herself at breakfast time this morning in closet. 1 pm inquest on said female at Hopkins's Pub. Self on Jury, foreman R. Turner. Verdict temporary insanity.

Tuesday 29 July 1873. Young Ross painter has fallen from balcony. Injured the spinal [column] & shortly after died.¹⁹

Once the funeral was over and the grieving began in earnest, mourners sought comfort from their God. For those who needed more, spiritualism fulfilled a very basic need—a need to communicate in person with their dead—as is illustrated by a letter from Miss Pattie Browne, daughter of H.J. Browne and future wife of Alfred Deakin:

Dear Grandmama

In the last letter I wrote you, you will have seen that we have had a good deal of sickness in our house & you will be sorry to hear that Archie has passed on to the Finer Life on June the 26th. He was getting on nicely from the Typhoid fever, so much so that the Doctor allowed him to go out, when he must have taken something that disagreed with him which caused irritation of the stomach, of which he never recovered. But since his passing away he has returned to Nellie & T, also to the young lady he was so much attached to. He came to her bedside & gave her instructions concerning his funeral. He has been seen & heard by Spiritualists & non-Spiritualists & he said he is very happy indeed, & has met all his old friends & relations. Papa, the nurse, & I were present when his spirit left the body, & I saw my dear Aunt Gracie & my dear little sister Ada bear his spirit away. He has written long communications to Papa & Mama, & wishes them not to grieve for him for he says he has only gone a little before them, where he is waiting to receive their spirits when it is their time to follow him.²⁰

In a ceremony which could not have failed to impress that connoisseur of funerary pomp and circumstance, Thomas Champion, Archie Browne was sent on his way in style:

Archie's funeral was a very large one, it was a Military & Spiritualistic one, he being fond of music & being a corporal of the East Collingwood Band. They gave him all that a Captain in the Army could have had. He had two bands following the hearse & three volleys [were] fired over his grave & twenty guns fired at the Orderly Room where he was much respected and loved. There were over one thousand & fifty present at the grave. Mr. Thomas Walker the Spiritualistic Lecturer at present in Melbourne gave a grand address, the greater portion in poetry, which everyone present were delighted with. Archie's coffin was of white and silver. We had no mourning worn nor any mourning coaches, just the hearse & private carriages. Wreaths & bouquets by the dozens were sent by his schoolmates & intimate friends. Some were pure white, camellias were abundant. When the coffin was lowered in the grave you could not see anything but flowers. The singing by the Spiritualistic choir was beautiful. One of the hymns [was] 'Let the Angel in.'²¹

By this time, they were deeply involved in spiritualism, nor did they wish to escape. For those countless grieving families like the Brownes, desperate to keep in touch with the dark blue yonder, the spiritualist *Harbinger of Light* came up with a starter kit:

HOW TO FORM SPIRIT CIRCLES

An experimental trial at home, among family friends and relatives, often gives the most satisfactory evidence of the reality of Spiritual phenomena. At the same time, as no fully developed medium is present among those who have never obtained manifestations before, the probability is that there will be no results. Nevertheless, it is a very common thing for striking manifestations to be obtained in this way at the first sitting of a family circle; perhaps for every one successful new circle thus started without a medium, there are six or seven failures.²²



Alfred Deakin as a young man
From the Alfred Deakin Papers (MS1540),
Manuscript Collection,
National Library of Australia

Less intimately, and for all her experience, there was little luck for the celebrated Mrs Bamford on her visit to the Reefs Mechanics' Institute, Pleasant Creek. Despite an intervention by 'Sir Isaac Newton', gravity was lacking; the Reading Room's 'atmosphere and the general surroundings of the edifice' proving 'utterly unfavourable towards the production of uninterrupted manifestations'.²³ Several 'circles of *intellect*' were forming in and around Stawell, however, and spiritualism was thriving in the Upper Murray region of Victoria's north-east where, in his study of an evening, the wealthy squatter Sydney Watson, gifted (it seems) with 'animal magnetism,' used the person of his sister-in-law to conjure up the presence of the dead.

A sense of being 'daring' and 'modern' may have led the young Deakins to spiritualists like Evans and Stow, whom they invited into their South Yarra home. Weekly seances using 'planchette writing' began at Adams Street in May 1874 and lasted until the end of August.

Our future Prime Minister by now was playing in the 'big league'—in fact, it was through spiritualism that he was to meet his future wife. Catherine at one time had hopes of exercising her own psychic powers:

Sunday June 11th: to Mrs Broyer's—she told me cheering news, that I have some power by patience & perseverance as medium²⁴

but it was Alfred who was destined to shine.

In the Victorian Association of Progressive Spiritualists he made the acquaintance of a wide variety of people. Some, like the Joskes, he already knew; others he had come across by name or reputation.

The Association and its children's Sunday School, the Lyceum, was founded by W.H. Terry in 1870, and he remained its motive force for many years. Terry, a Unitarian and former draper, was the proprietor and editor of the monthly *Harbinger of Light*, dealt in books, and sold

All kinds of Botanic Medicines, Keith's Organic Preparations, Roots, Barks, Herbs, Tinctures, Fluid Extracts and Saturates, English and American, Imported.²⁵

His premises at 84 Russell Street were also used for his activities as 'medium, trance and magnetic healer, and clairvoyant herbalist'. The *Australian Dictionary of Biography* also notes his apparent sincerity. Sincere or not, his shop was always busy.²⁶

Down the street at number 30 (she earlier lived at number 89), we find Sydney Watson's sister-in-law, Miss Lizzie Armstrong. Likewise diagnosing disease by psychic methods (at 10 shillings a session and regularly advertised in Terry's journal), she was striking out on her own—unconcerned whether she diverted some of her rival's trade in the process. At the same time, she was involved in the 'Aurelia Co-operative Land and Labor Association' (set up in 1873):

Allow me to state that the 'Aurelia Co-operative Association' does not mean 'money-making' alone—but the establishment of a Harmonial home for its members—where free from the 'grinding slavery' of City life—the younger members may be educated in the true principles of Harmony united with Industry ... 'the Aurelia Co-operative Association' is now a registered fact, and our Pioneers have started. Let all true Harmonialists wish them the success their noble efforts deserve.

I remain yours faithfully,
ELIZABETH ARMSTRONG.²⁷

In speaking out, Lizzie was clearly conscious of her status. In 1869 Sydney Watson had arranged for the publication of *Spiritual Communications &c. through the Mediumship of Miss Elizabeth Armstrong*²⁸—an indigestible series of exhortations from defunct divines, leavened with interventions from the squatter's father, small son, and equally-dead first wife. This monograph, together with the letters he wrote on spiritualism to the newspapers (under the pseudonym of 'Schamlynn'), and an equally indigestible two-and-a-half page letter on 'Some of my experiences before I became a believer in Spiritualism' throw a great deal of light on the Watson family's home life over the years and the disturbing events that led to the eldest son's disaffection.²⁹

Sydney Watson's Melbourne base was Yarra Grange, Collingwood, a suburb also home to Pattie Browne and her family. Hugh Junor Browne,

a recent convert to spiritualism, knew of Watson through his letters to the *Collingwood Advertiser*, his attendance at the meetings held at the Masonic Hall, Lonsdale Street, and through their mutual acquaintance, Alfred Deakin. Deakin accompanied Watson—‘very kind & in every way a capital companion’³⁰—to Fiji in 1879, providing legal expertise while the squatter tried to unravel his tangled affairs. A letter from Alfred to Catherine appears to confirm the Watson–Browne connection:

Tell Mr Browne if you see him that his tracts have done good service already & are to do more; they impressed the Captain more than anything else.³¹

Alfred was 23 at the time of writing the above. Three years earlier he was already ‘conductor’, or leader, of the Melbourne Progressive Lyceum and an influential member of a movement which looked ‘to Science and Philosophy as its prophets, to Reason and Intuition as its guides, to right thinking and right acting as its end’.³² Had it stopped there, it would not have differed substantially from the Eclectic Association and men like H.G. Turner. It was the rest of the paraphernalia that orthodox Christians and sceptics found so troubling.

SPIRITUALISM FLOURISHED IN AUSTRALIA from the 1860s and the Melbourne movement has been described by Geoffrey Serle as ‘the strongest organized anti-Christian deviation of the time’, denounced by Bishop Perry as a ‘revival of heathen magic and idolatry’³³ (never mind that the Presbyterians perceived Unitarianism as a kind of ‘spiritual dry rot’³⁴). Such rhetoric on the part of the prelate—in contrast to the measured way in which he tackled the challenges of science—indicates where the true danger was deemed to lie. Trouble, when it came, was sensational and emerged from the officials rather than the rank and file. The scandal concerning the dissenting Reverend J. Tyerman drew young Arthur Clarke into the Melbourne audience one Sunday evening in 1872:

I went yesterday morning to hear Mr. Tyerman, the clergyman of the Church of England, who has lately been expelled because of his spiritualistic sayings and doings. He was lecturing in the Turn Verein Hall, Latrobe-street, on ‘Individual freedom essential to Social Progress’.³⁵

Tyerman, rated a ‘fluent speaker’ by young Arthur, used the lecture as ‘principally a tirade against the [Church of England]’. Another speaker then read ‘a sort of lecture’ on ‘the origin of the Bible, denying its Divine origin, and attributing it to communications from the spirit world to Moses, Isaiah etc.’³⁶

The 'magic' referred to by Bishop Perry was often produced by a special effects department, situated in a cupboard, possibly, or by a window, but always in a darkened room. Deftly managed 'apports' ranged from crustaceans to cactus, yet suspicions voiced by unbelievers fell mostly on deaf ears: the general public *wanted* to believe in the automatic writing, the spirit lights, the apparitions ... By 1869, spiritualism counted

some 30 magazines and serials devoted to the dissemination of its theories, and has a literature of its own, numbering several hundreds of bulky volumes, and thousands of pamphlets and tracts.³⁷

As 'spirit circles' multiplied and those pamphlets and tracts increased, a touch of gentle satire seemed in order:

OH! come sweet love, and sit with me
In yonder bow'r, when evening's gloom
A dim light sheds religiously,
And sweetest flow'rs the air perfume;
There, dearest, seated side by side,
With 'planchettes' ready to our hand,
We'll dream away the eventide,
And converse hold with spirit-land ...

Thus, dearest, thus, we'll pass the hour,
And as magnetic currents steal
From heart to heart, with odic power
The 'planchette' to us shall reveal
How, linked on earth by sweetest ties,
Our souls shall mingle happily,
And each the other magnetise,
And each to each a medium be.

And should perchance, to spirit spheres
One of us, first, be called away,
This thought shall dry whole pints of tears
And turn grief's darkest night to day;

That e'en in spirit, faithful still,
Through magnetism we may yet
Communicate, whene'er we will—
Sweet thought—by means of a 'planchette.'³⁸

Henry Gyles Turner, President of the Eclectic Association of Melbourne, used reason to cut the movement down to size:

The meaning which I propose to attach to Spiritualism is the power of living human beings to hold direct communion with, and to receive direct revelation from incorporeal, spiritual or supernatural intelligences.³⁹

Turner referred to 'spirit rappings', then dismissed them:

I will grant that under given conditions, a table will rotate, or even move across a room, will tilt and knock with its legs upon the floor, under the hands of persons who are looking for such movements.⁴⁰

Never mind the phenomenon of levitation as performed by A.D. Home, and the Davenport Brothers with their 'clever jugglery' undertaken in the dark.⁴¹ And as for the volume 'written under spiritual inspiration, by an illiterate youth of two or three and twenty', its 'over 800 large [octavo] pages' were 'full of sound and fury signifying nothing' of which Turner had the following to say:

Astronomy is followed into the minutest details of the manners and customs of the denizens of the other planets, and we learn with becoming reverence the important fact that an innate sense of modesty compels the inhabitants of Jupiter to go on all-fours!

Geology is made interesting by the most fantastical accounts of animal and vegetable life in the pre-historic era.

The development theory is propounded and explained with an elaboration that must make Darwin think very poorly of the result of his forty years labor in that direction; while Huxley may take comfort in learning that we came originally from something more repulsively ugly than the Gorilla!⁴²

It was enough to make bystanders extremely wary, but, nothing daunted, the popularity of spiritualism remained as strong as ever.

Who stood to benefit from such a movement? Disgraced clergymen like the unfortunate Reverend Tyerman, who made a virtue of necessity, and attempted to live off the lecture circuit and pamphlets.⁴³ Nubile young ladies

like Pattie Browne, who were possibly simply bored and tired of waiting for a husband. Single women, past their prime and fast approaching 30; women increasingly referred to as 'spinsters' and 'old maids'.

Katie Deakin trained to become a teacher and gave her love to other people's children. Lizzie Armstrong worked in her married sister's household—indeed, she appears to have had no other choice—until she discovered hitherto unsuspected psychic powers.

Was Elizabeth Armstrong the force behind the bracing pamphlet in which the 'disembodied spirit of Charles Dickens' spoke from the 'Summer-land' to Melburnians in 1873, explaining the 'hundred reasons why every child of earth should enter into investigating Spiritualism'?⁴⁴ To those conversant with the little gem published by 'S.G.W.' in 1869, the title *Spiritual Communications and the Comfort They Bring ... through a Melbourne Medium* certainly has a familiar ring about it—so has the turgid style. Whatever the truth of that, and the accuracy of her Russell Street psychic diagnoses, it was her literally 'hands-on' approach to public credulity that brought Miss Armstrong a steady income and cherished independence.



SOME OF THE MOST RESPECTABLE FIGURES of Melbourne attended the Spiritualist Association's meetings, and youngsters of the Lyceum Sunday School were given a grounding in what constituted a good citizen of the now and the hereafter. Alfred Deakin's version of the 'Beatitudes' goes as follows:

Conductor—Blessed are the faithful;

Children—For they shall dwell in the confidence of men and
of angels.

Conductor—Blessed are the dutiful;

Leaders—For they shall find the peace which cannot be
bought nor sold.

Conductor—Blessed are the punctual;

Children—For they have learned the lesson which stars and
planets teach. They are students of God.

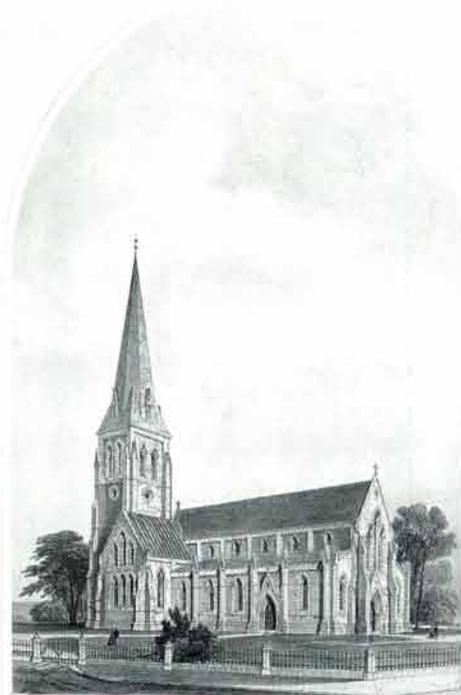
Conductor—Blessed are the orderly;

Leaders—For theirs is the first law of progress.

Conductor—Blessed are the innocent;

Children—For they shall have peace of conscience.
 Conductor—Blessed are the pure in heart;
 Leader—For they shall see God.
 Conductor—Blessed are the faithful, the dutiful, the
 punctual, the orderly, the innocent, the pure in heart;
 All—For theirs is the republic of heaven.⁴⁵

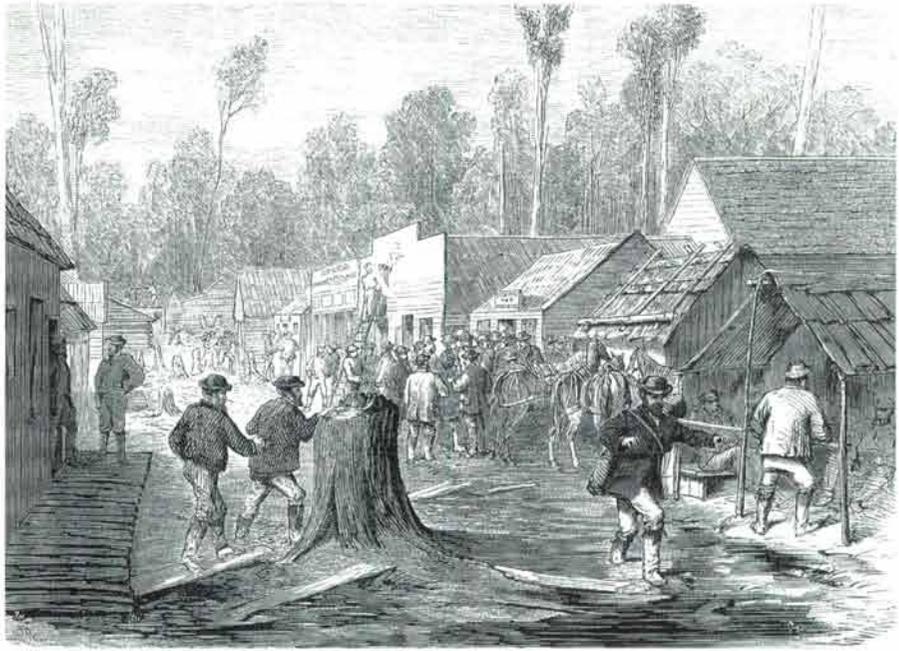
Fidelity, duty, order, purity of heart ... qualities fostered in Sunday School children of any persuasion, and sadly lacking in Archibald Watson, Sydney Watson's runaway eldest son. Those failings were a source of lasting regret to his father, as was the shrinking of his earthly holdings in the islands and elsewhere. His thoughts dwelt increasingly on death and the 'republic of heaven' while Alfred Deakin, his companion on the Fiji venture, entered politics, immersed himself (as it were) in irrigation, and became an advocate of the federation of Australia.



Day & Son (lithographers)
 Proposed cathedral church, Adelaide,
 South Australia; north-west view, c. 1869
 hand-coloured lithograph; 40 x 25.8 cm
 From the Rex Nan Kivell Collection,
 Pictorial Collection,
 National Library of Australia

- 1 From *Spirits and Angels*, a song with words by C. Mackay; music by Mary E Wildash. Melbourne: Allen & Co, c.1875.
- 2 Calculated by Archbishop James Ussher in his *Sacred Chronology* of 1620.
- 3 Charles Perry, *Science and the Bible*. Melbourne: Samuel Mullen, 1869, p. 3.
- 4 John Tebbutt, *The Testimony which Astronomy Furnishes to the Attributes of the Creator*. Sydney, 1878, pp. 9–10.

- 5 William Sandover (1856–1921), Letters, 1876 (MS 1720): William Sandover to his father, the Honourable William Sandover, MLA, Melbourne, 18 October 1876.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 *The Harbinger of Light*, No. 33, 1 September 1876, p. 483.
- 8 Sandover, *op. cit.*: William Sandover to his father, Melbourne, 23 October 1876.
- 9 Catherine Deakin (1850–1937), Papers (MS 4913/2/9): Diary, 1872–1878: entry for Sunday, 1 December 1872.
- 10 *Ibid.*: entry for Sunday, 21 December 1873.
- 11 Sandover, *op. cit.*: William Sandover to his father, Sydney, 21 November 1876.
- 12 All of which may be read (if not sung) in the Petherick Reading Room at the National Library of Australia.
- 13 Sandover, *op. cit.*: William Sandover to his father, Melbourne, 18 October 1876.
- 14 Thomas Champion (1800–1887), born Somerset, England; died Windsor, New South Wales (Michelle Nicholls, *The Hawkesbury Pioneer Register*. 2nd ed. Windsor, NSW: Hawkesbury Family History Group, 1994).
- 15 Thomas Champion (1800–1887), Diaries, 1841–1877 (MS 1093): *passim*.
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 *Ibid.*: entry for 12 December 1871.
- 18 *Ibid.*: entry for 18 December 1872.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 Deakin, *op. cit.* (MS 4913/2/12): Elizabeth Martha Anne 'Pattie' Browne to her grandmother, Park House, Wellington Parade, Melbourne, 8 July 1879.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 *The Harbinger of Light*, No. 3, 1 November 1870, p. 34.
- 23 *The Harbinger of Light*, No. 11, 1 July 1871, p. 131.
- 24 Deakin, *op. cit.* (MS 4913/2/9): entry for Sunday, 11 June 1876.
- 25 *The Harbinger of Light*, No. 63, 1 November 1875, p. 922.
- 26 *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1976, Vol. 6: 1851–1890, p. 259: entry for William Henry Terry (1836–1913).
- 27 *The Harbinger of Light*, No. 42, 1 March 1874, p. 585.
- 28 'S.G.W.', *Spiritual Communications &c. through the Mediumship of Miss Elizabeth Armstrong*. Melbourne: Robert Bell, 1869.
- 29 See Jennifer M.T. Carter, *Painting the Islands Vermilion* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1999) for the disturbing story.
- 30 Deakin, *op. cit.* (MS 4913/2/13): Alfred Deakin to his sister, Catherine, Levuka, 7 November 1879.
- 31 *Ibid.*: Alfred Deakin to Catherine, Levuka, 10 November 1879.
- 32 Alfred Deakin (ed.), *The Lyceum Leader: Composed from the Lyceum Guide for the Melbourne Progressive Lyceum by the Conductor*. Melbourne: E. Purton, 1877, p. 4 (MS 4913/4).
- 33 Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to Be Rich*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1971, p. 128.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 139.
- 35 Arthur Clarke (b.1853), Diary, 29 August 1868 – 6 January 1873 (MS 6792): entry for Monday, 15 April 1872.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 Henry G. Turner, *Spiritualism: A Paper Read before the Eclectic Association of Melbourne on September 2nd, 1869*. Melbourne: George Robertson, 1869, p. 8.
- 38 'A Spiritist Love Song: By a Recent Convert', *Touchstone*, 26 February 1870, p. 132.
- 39 Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 See The Vagabond's article on the Davenport Brothers' later appearance in Melbourne, *Argus*, 8 September 1876; and the Letters to the Editor on the same subject, *Argus*, 9 September 1876.
- 42 Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
- 43 The disgraced clergyman travelled to Sandhurst (where he drew an audience of some 2000), Lockwood, Eaglehawk and Kangaroo Flat in the colony of Victoria, and as far afield as Sydney, and produced a series of pamphlets on God, the Devil, and the paranormal: *The Harbinger of Light*, No. 16, 1 December 1871, p. 197; and see regular advertisements in *The Harbinger of Light*.
- 44 *Spiritual Communications and the Comfort They Bring; by the Disembodied Spirit of Charles Dickens, through a Melbourne Medium*. Melbourne: Charles Troedel, 1873.
- 45 Alfred Deakin, *op. cit.*, p. 5.



CHAPTER 7

LINES OF COMMUNICATION

Good news from home, good news for me,
Has come across the deep blue sea,
From friends that I have left in tears,
From friends that I've not seen for years;
And since we parted long ago,
My life has been a scene of woe,
But now a joyful hour has come,
For I have heard good news from home.¹

Post Office—Arrival of the weekly mail, 1871
Illustrated Australian News, 12 August 1871, p. 157
Newspapers and Microfilm Collection,
National Library of Australia

ONCE THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES realised that Australia had more to offer than a convenient repository for inconvenient felons, free settlers began arriving in significant numbers and communications slowly improved. Steam-packets arrived monthly at Port Phillip from the 1840s on, and in 1852 the Peninsula and Oriental Company and the Royal Mail Steam Navigation Company were contracted to deliver the mail on alternate months to Sydney, via the Cape. The system was not particularly efficient, but it was certainly quicker than sail. Over the years, other monthly mail services to England were added (via Mauritius, then Ceylon), and were followed in 1869 by the Sydney–San Francisco service via Auckland. By 1877 the system ran as follows:

There is fortnightly communication by Mail Steamer between Sydney and England. The Line that runs to San Francisco, and sends its passengers & Mails on from there over the Continent of America, is subsidised by the New South Wales and New Zealand Governments.

And the line that runs to Singapore via Torres Straits is jointly subsidised by the New South Wales and Queensland Governments.

The Peninsula and Oriental Company are subsidised by the Victoria and South Australian Governments, but New South Wales has now discontinued her subsidy to it, but letters are forwarded to Melbourne by the Inter-Colonial Lines ...²

On a personal level, every colonial's heartfelt wish was to maintain contact with friends and family. Letters helped overcome distance and the sense of isolation; they might even contain photographs, those *cartes de visite* so cheap to take and light to send ... No one, for a while, was as interested in news from home as the crew of HMS *Blanche*, three years away from England and with their looked-for replacements long overdue:

the English mail had during our knocking about [by storms, en route for Melbourne from Sydney] arrived with news, and sailed again and had soon reached Sydney (6 days nearly before her contract time). This news we eagerly sought; and as the Custom House Officer came onboard the first, he had the satisfaction of enlightening us thus far—that the *Megara* had been lost on St Pauls [Island]! but all hands were safe!! The news had only arrived by telegram and gave no further particulars—Enough for us at any rate! to know that our chance of being lost in that old tub whilst rounding Cape Horn was at an end! We knew also that we might be delayed some time on the station yet but of course awaited further instructions from the Commodore who was anxiously watching events at Sydney and kept us at Melbourne within telegraph reach until something definite should be made known.³

Going home, for ships of the Royal Navy in 1871, meant a distinct possibility of 'real' action—as opposed to confronting South Sea natives:

The great excitement then prevailing was the somewhat unexpected news of the War between France & Prussia and the startling telegrams relative to the same which were appearing in the papers: the chances of England being involved in it etc. Such a great European War must cause excitement even in the remote Antipodes. Then the arrival of the (newly formed) mails 'via San Francisco' which on Sept. 16th arrived with news (telegraphic) up to Aug. 11th from Europe—the success of the Prussians etc.⁴

Whereas the telegraph titillated, mail steamers provided the satisfaction of a broader knowledge: what affected the security of Europe affected the colonists, after all—if only at a distance. 'One of the chief events of the month in the colonies is the arrival of the English Mail,' wrote William Bethell in 1872, as he set about describing the breathless anticipation of a city starved of the latest news from half a world away:

when it is telegraphed from Adelaide a red flag with 'A' is hoisted on the Post office—'Argus office' 'Chamber of Commerce' etc soon after the 'Argus office' is besieged by people waiting for an extraordinary number of the *Argus* containing news from England. All day boys shout 'Extraordinary number of *Argus*—arrival of English Mail' & of course invent any lie to get a customer, they only charge 6 [pence] for a small sheet about the size of one side of the *Daily Telegraph*—odd to relate these boys never carry any change & make a fortune in no time—when off Cape Otway a blue flag is hoisted with 'CO' the papers make money fast on the arrival of the mail—Sandridge pier is crowded when the Mail enters Hobsons Bay for home & from home indeed when any Ship comes in from or sails to the old country the pier is crowded.⁵

Arthur Clarke and his mother came out to Australia in 1868 to join his father, who had left England five years earlier for the sake of his health. As the 15-year-old put it at the time: 'as he could not come back again and expect to live, we were obliged to take the other alternative, namely to go to him'.⁶ Not the best of reasons for emigration and the ties with home were strong. Sometimes the steamers were early, and brought nothing but disappointment:

The mail arrived on Friday, four days before her time; we did not receive either letter or newspaper.⁷

Sometimes the mail steamers were delayed. Delay was one thing; total loss was another. The perennially optimistic (and usually disappointed) Thomas Champion ran the gamut of emotions in his daily watch for the Windsor postman, old Mr Cambridge. Now and again he was rewarded:

Thursday 29 June 1871. 7 am a very sharp white frost. Trade nil. 12 noon a letter from Ted. 5 pm a letter to Tom. Enclosed a copy of Charley also Ada. A letter to Ted.⁸

Other days were full of anxiety:

Saturday 25 November 1871 ... Anxiety about safety of E. Mail. Has been many wrecks on coast generally.

Wed. 12 May 1875. News that the Sydney mails were saved from wreck of mail steamer.⁹

Such wrecks, for some, were a potential source of profit, as Walpole, RN, reported gleefully to his father:

We towed a large mail steamer [off] the rocks at Fiji valued at £90,000 so we want to get salvage money for her but there is an Admiralty order against asking for it. She was one of the new line of steamers the San Francisco mail steamers of over 2000 tons.¹⁰

He should have known better than to gloat. The wreck of the *Megara* on a rocky Atlantic outcrop, followed by an uncomfortable interlude which lasted some 80 days, left him facing innumerable difficulties. When at last he joined the *Blanche*, loss of clothes, kit and personal belongings proved a personal disaster from which he never fully recovered, and money matters formed the substance of many of his letters home. This correspondence, acquired by the National Library of Australia in 1997, provides a fine contrast to the official records (on microfilm) already in its possession,¹¹ and reveals the difficulties under which the young man was living. The following extracts typify the misunderstandings brought about by distance and delays:

HMS *Blanche*, Sydney, 25 November 1872

My dear Papa

I received your letter on arrival here. I was very greived at having given you any cause to write me such a letter, also one from Messrs Hildrette & Ommanney. I think if you had told me not to draw any more money it would have been enough without threatening to dishonor my bills. I acknowledge that I have been very wrong in drawing money without your leave but you accused me of having

told you I had what was not true, after your first letter telling me I had drawn too much I have paid all money drawn since to my creditors. I am still afraid they are not all satisfied as I have been forced to get clothes. You say that nobody gets three suits at a time but every body does not go for a six months cruize among the South Sea [Islands] with the thermometer at 110 in the shade you wear anything but flannel and clothes are very expensive in Australia ... You said in your letter that you would allow me £50 a year extra besides my pay and service allowance. If I stay in the *Blanche* I am sure it is required as I cannot keep myself clothed on nothing—You afterwards wrote and said you did not understand what I wanted. I am sure if I had the £50 a year extra I could keep myself clothed and be no trouble to you at all. It is only £100 per annum from you which when you come to consider the prices of things in the colonies is very moderate I think. If I have drawn a bill for £10 to pay off all my debts on board and to get a suit of clothes for Melbourne which I am much in need of, I promise that it shall be the last faithfully until you tell me. [If] I had gone in for the law or a soldier I would have cost you three times as much.¹²

HMS *Blanche*, Wellington, 26 January [1873]

My dear Papa

I expected a letter from you last mail but was disappointed. I hope you did not really mean what you said in your last letter because if you did I shall have to leave the service as if you dishonored a bill I should not be able to pay it and I should have to leave the service. I have only drawn £80 in two years which is not very much considering that I have not had any clothes from you and lost so many of mine. You told me that I might have fifty pounds a year extra beginning last July; since May last I have drawn £20, that is in 9 months—Will you tell me if you mean me to have it? I should like to have some allowance and I am sure that I should not exceed it. All I ever write to you about is this awful money. I always used to look forward with so much pleasure to get your letters, now it is more with fear and really I am not at all extravagant. There are very few officers in the ship and any dance or dinner we give comes on all of us rather heavily, besides which we have had to subscribe to putting up two monuments for two of our officers who died a short time ago. I would not have that last bill dishonored for anything. I drew it to pay a mess bill and some clothes I wanted very much. (Things are most aw. dear here.)¹³

HMS *Blanche*, Sydney, 30 March 1873

My dear Papa

I was very much disappointed at not getting a letter from you by the last mail. It is a most stupid way of sending letters through the Melbourne Governors office. It delays them for a long time and

I believe some are lost and in the end it saves sixpence. I suppose I must speak again about these money affairs. You said you would give me an allowance of £50 per year extra I have drawn that up to the end of this month. After that you wrote that you did not understand what I asked and said I must live on my pay and service allowance which is really impossible. Pay and allowance together come to £80 per annum. Mess & wine—servant & washing come to more than that besides which there is band and Newspaper subscriptions also 2 pounds. When we give a dance besides a lot of other things we are forced to subscribe to then there are my clothes which are most awfully expensive out here suits of uniform are £7.10 a piece—I think that if you read this and think over it you will find what I tell you is perfectly true. Everyone gets a regular allowance but me the idea of living on your pay is considered impossible and so it is out here.¹⁴

HMS *Blanche*, Sydney, 4 June 1873

My dear Papa

I have just received your letter dated 3rd of March. I want to Explain that I received a letter from you while we were up amongst the islands saying that I might have an extra £50 a year beginning from July/72—since then I have drawn at Sydney £10, at Hobart Town £10 and at Auckland £20 which is two pounds of last quarters allowance. I have got your letter telling me I might draw the extra £50 I therefore cannot make out why you dishonored my bill. I do not see how I am to pay it without drawing another bill—Till the mail came in this morning I had quite made up my mind to run from the service and try and get work up country on some cattle station. I do not know what I can possibly do if the others are dishonored I cannot make out how money goes I am really not at all extravagant and if I have this £50 a year extra I am certain I can keep within it though clothes are so awfully expensive.¹⁵

HMS *Blanche*, 2 July 1873

My dear Papa

Thank you very much for your nice kind letter the only fault was that it was not long enough—I never said that you were a harsh or illiberal father—any way now I have got an allowance you will see that I can keep within it. Will you tell Messrs Hildreith and Ommanney and I should like a letter of credit for that amount if I might have one.¹⁶

HMS *Pearl*, 8 May 1874

My dear Father

At length we have arrived at Sydney after being eleven months amongst the Fiji Islands. I was changed into the *Pearl* after all against my will rather and I do not like her much although

Commodore Goodenough has been very kind to me ... I shifted from the *Blanche* on the 5th of January. I passed my three yearly examination all right. I think I shall go back again to the *Blanche* when we meet again. I only came to the *Pearl* for this examination and now that it is over I can go back again I suppose. I received the letter of credit for £100.0.0 per annum thank you very much indeed for it is really very kind of you. I can now pay off my small debts and start again all fair. It would be much better though if Hildreith and Ommanney would write to the Union Bank of Sydney and tell them to honor Bills to that amount as there is great difficulty in getting them cashed here. I have not had a letter from Home for so long I suppose all since have gone to the *Blanche*. We found on coming here that our mail had been sent to Brisbane but we have telegraphed for it ... I think some of the letters must have been mislaid through my changing ships.¹⁷

FOR THOSE IN NEED of a speedy answer (if they could afford it, at 10 shillings a word until the 1880s), the electric telegraph was really the only way to go. It took Robin Walpole a good year to put his tangled affairs in order, yet bankers, businessmen and public servants (and commodores on occasion) could from October 1872 make use of a land-based telegraphic network covering thousands of miles which brought them what must have seemed instant answers. Via Adelaide and Port Augusta, the Darwin–Java underwater cable also gave them telegraphic access to London, and foreign news within 24 hours of its occurrence. With this came increased confidence in Australia's place in an ever-shrinking world.

The *Argus*, when discussing the need for a second underwater cable in 1877 to accommodate the needs of such a world, paid tribute to South Australia's achievement in the following terms:



Overland Telegraph party at Roper River, 1872
(left to right) J.A.G. Little, R.C. Paterson, Charles Todd, A.J. Mitchell
photograph by Captain Sweet
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (P1051)

We are glad to see that in framing their proposals the agents-general did not lose sight of the claims which South Australia has upon the other colonies in connexion with all future telegraphic arrangements with the outer world. We trust the enterprise and perseverance of our neighbours will always be borne in mind when the subject is discussed, and not only gratefully acknowledged, but substantially recognised.¹⁸

To be 'substantially recognised' was indeed that colony's due. The prestige that followed the completion of the Overland Telegraph in 1872 was a vindication of South Australians' faith in their own capabilities, as well as a justification for taking on the Northern Territory (somewhat of a 'white elephant' since annexation in 1863). The venture itself will forever be associated with transcontinental exploration and human endeavour, and ushered in the truly modern age.

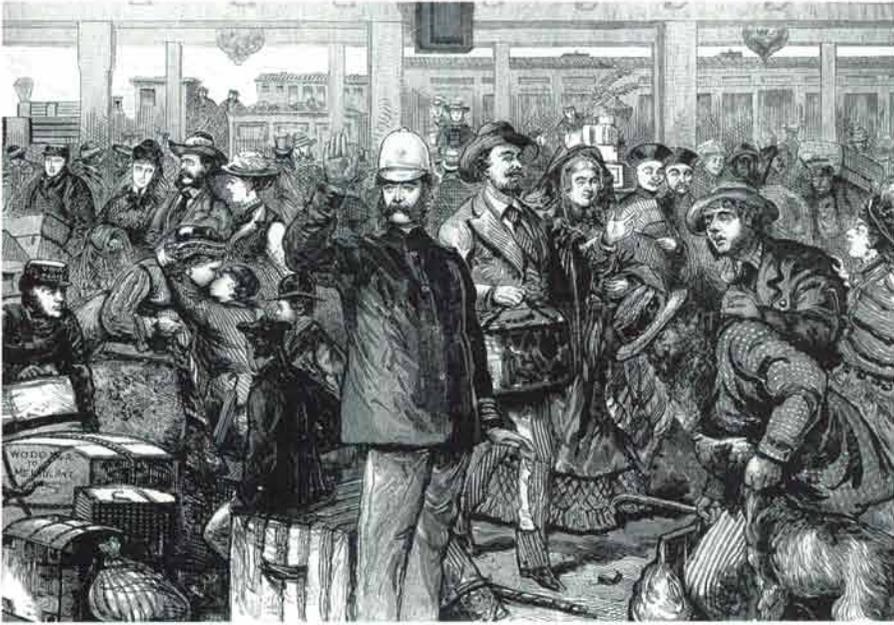
Work began on the Overland Telegraph Line in 1871. The line followed the route taken by the heroic John McDouall Stuart, the first European explorer to make the south–north crossing and return—against the odds—to tell the tale. (It is surely one of history's ironies that those epic non-survivors, Burke and Wills, captured the public imagination in those same years of 1861–1862, and that they, not Stuart, have haunted the popular psyche ever since.)

On completion, the Overland Telegraph served as the starting and finishing line for another rash of explorers when the botanical baron, von Mueller, and the cattle kings, Smith and Elder, sponsored men like Giles, Warburton and Gosse, to set out westwards where the vanished Ludwig Leichhardt once had trod. The brothers Forrest left from Perth to trek in the opposite direction, and back in civilisation, post and telegraph offices mushroomed in expectation of the final conquest (the one in Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, soaring proudly above the infamous open drains). By the end of 1877—the year that Australia's population reached two million—the final wires of transcontinental communication were humming.

WHERE THE TELEGRAPH LED, the railways followed. In Melbourne, the private and public sectors existed side by side:

How different to our stations the Melbourne [ones] are, so busy, almost reminds me of the Victoria Station, London. I noticed though in comparing the Govt & Private Comp Stations, that while the first is an expensively built building with quite an army of porters and officials, the other is a cheap but comfortable building & manned with no more porters and clerks than are absolutely necessary. The private Company pays excellent dividends, too.¹⁹

Out of town, the entrepreneurial spirit so admired by William Sandover was noticeably lacking. In the bush, the railway was by no means as viable, and it was left to the various colonial governments to develop the system beyond the cities and suburbs. An exasperating mixture of wide- and narrow-gauge tracks resulted, one gauge changing to another as a colony's boundaries were reached. But no matter—with so many on the move, and freight and mail being transported as well, the railways not only proved a most exhilarating means of communication, but were realising their full potential.



Country visitors arriving at Melbourne by rail for the Christmas holidays, 1877
The Australasian Sketcher, 22 December 1877, p. 152
 Newspapers and Microfiche Collection, National Library of Australia

The 1879 set of 'Timetables and Fares for the great Southern, Western, Richmond and Northern lines', printed for the Government Railways and, once in the possession of Sir John Robertson, Premier of New South Wales, are most beautifully bound in red leather.²⁰ Handling this item, one thinks, not of the politician, but of the Champion family and other 'ordinary' people who travelled up and down by train from Windsor on the Richmond line. Excursion trains were laid on for holidays and were well patronised by day-trippers from the city—not that this benefited Thomas to any great extent:

Monday 1 January 1872. 6 am a moist morning. 10 o'clock great preparations being made for *Miss Rachel Harris's Wedding*.
 ½ [past] 10 cheap train a [great] many People up.

Friday 26 Anniversary Day January 1872. 11 o'clock a gt many people up by train. 12 am another great lot up—I pm a call by Mr Pidcock. ½ [past] 5 a severe T. storm lasts till 8 o'clock. dreadfully hot. trade nil.²¹

Sometimes, Windsor residents took themselves off to events like the 1872 Exhibition: '7 am a moist morning. A good sprinkle of people going down to Sydney,' the photographer noted, on Tuesday, 30 April. These were short excursions. Sir John Robertson is just as likely to have made the 'Overland Journey to Melbourne' described in his timetable:

The following are the particulars of the Train and Coaching Arrangements:—

Leave Sydney by Mail Train at 7.30 p.m., arrive at North Wagga Wagga at 9.10 a.m., then by Coach to Albury, arriving at mid-night, sleep at Albury; leave Wodonga by the North-Eastern railway at 6.10 a.m., and arrive in Melbourne at 1.58 p.m.

Time occupied in journey, 42 hours and 28 minutes.²²

The regulations and conditions governing travel were as clearly defined as the timetables, and passengers entrusting themselves to the railways—in an era when ‘roads, bridges etc. are frequently being washed away; stoppage of mails and other communications with some parts of the country often occur’²³—accepted that the Commissioner would not ‘guarantee the departure or arrival of the Trains at the times stated, nor be responsible for delay or any consequences arising therefrom’. They also learned to travel light (by the standards of the day):

Passengers by First-class Carriage are allowed 84 lbs. weight of luggage, and Passengers by Second-class Carriage are allowed 56 lbs. weight of luggage, excepting furniture, live stock or such other articles as the Traffic Manager or Station Master may consider objectionable, free of charge, but at owner’s risk.²⁴

Woe betide the traveller failing to produce the ticket demanded by ‘the Guard, or other servant of the Commissioner’, or who smoked ‘in any carriage, except those set apart for the purpose’. And, referring to that anti-social element that existed then, as now:

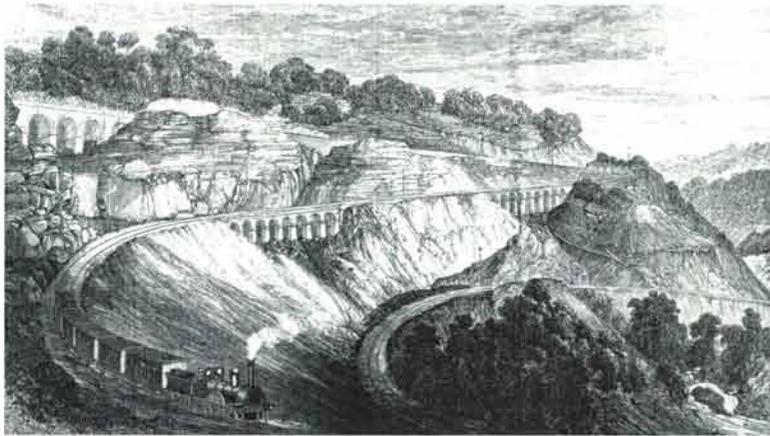
Any person wilfully interfering with the comfort of passengers is liable to a penalty not exceeding five pounds, and to removal from the carriage.²⁵

The Commissioner for Railways, in whose name such fearsome threats were uttered, was a quaintly named ‘Charles A. Goodchap’.

As well as providing regular services and excursion trains, officials were always happy to provide ‘specials’ for visitors of some repute. When it came to those ‘good chaps’ of the Flying Squadron and their jolly outing to Ballarat, however, they had unexpected problems:

The special moved off for Melbourne, with no time to spare on the road, the engine being ably and rapidly driven by the Hon. Walter, time-keeping and stoking also being performed by the squadron, and at one time the combination was undoubtedly successful, as the train was going sixty-two miles an hour, regardless of the boiler, and, with the exception of a short stay at Geelong, where

there was a very pleasant young woman in the refreshment-room, from the county Clare, and where the last of aboriginal monarchs of Victoria presented himself to the Admiral and requested, we think, about sixpence, we again urged on our wild career, and after a short stay at Williamstown Junction, arrived safely at Melbourne, having accomplished the distance of ninety-six miles in two hours ten minutes, exclusive of stoppages.²⁶



The Zig-Zag Great Western Railway from the Lithgow Valley at the foot of the Blue Mountains, NSW, 1871
Illustrated Australian News, 20 May 1871, p. 105
Newspapers and Microfiche Collection, National Library of Australia

Few passengers got to drive the train, of course, but those who took a trip on the 'Zig-zag' railway were sure of a thrilling time, described here by John Morison, our clerk from London:

By far the chief attraction to visitors to New South Wales is what is known as the 'zig-zag'—a wonderful gorge in the heart of the Blue Mountains, about a hundred miles from Sydney, which is ascended by the Railway train in a zig-zag manner, as the ascent is so very steep. You are first drawn say half a mile upwards in one direction and then shunted the same distance in the opposite direction, and so on until the summit is gained, when you descend in like manner on to the plains on the other side of the range.

It is a most wonderful piece of mechanism for when the train is turning sharp round a curve on looking down by the side of the rail you see an immense cavity in the rocks almost immediately below you, and as you fly past the deep abyss and then shunt back up the steep incline, you expect every moment to be hurled down into that yawning precipice.²⁷

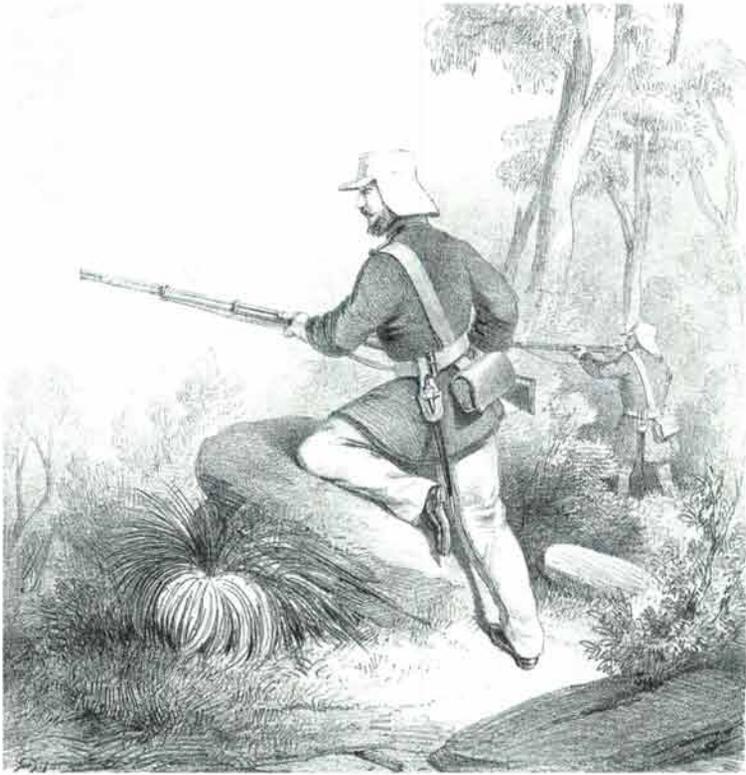
On 2 March 1872 William Bethell also took the 'Zig-zag' out of Sydney. When, much later, he was sent an article on the railway,²⁸ he was still sufficiently impressed to copy much of it into his diary. Unwilling as

always to give the colonials credit—even when it was due—he praised the scenery (God, after all, was an Englishman!), and followed with a typically gloomy prognosis:

The scenery in the mountains is very fine indeed but the railway is a most foolish undertaking by the N. S. Wales government, it will never pay.²⁹

Events were to prove him right.

- 1 From *Good News from Home* (as sung by the Christy Minstrels), by P.S. Gilmore. Sydney: Henry March & Co., 1851–1860.
- 2 Hugh Massy, RN, 'Four Years on the Australian Station', 1877 (MS 8520): manuscript account of the years 1873–1877 set out in chapters, p. 89.
- 3 Charles James Norcock, RN (1847–1933), 'Private Journal, 20.7.1870 – 24.4.1874' (MS 5897): entry for September 1870.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 William Bethell (1847–1926), Journal, 7 November 1871 – 18 May 1872 (MS 2465): entry for 13 March 1872.
- 6 Arthur Clarke (b.1853), Diary, 29 August 1868 – 6 January 1873 (MS 6792) (photocopy—original in private hands): entry for 29 August 1868.
- 7 *Ibid.*: entry for Monday, 1 July 1872.
- 8 Thomas Champion (1800–1887), Diaries, 1841–1877 (MS 1093).
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 Robert 'Robin' Horace Walpole, RN (1854–1931), Letters, 1870–1874 (MS 9110/15): Robert Walpole to his father, the Honourable Frederick Walpole, MP, HMS *Pearl*, 8 May 1874.
- 11 Great Britain Royal Navy, Commander-in-Chief, Australia Station. Records, 1857–1914. Wellington: National Archives, 1962 (RNAS1–54) [microfilm].
- 12 Walpole, *op. cit.* (MS 9110/9): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Blanche*, Sydney, 25 November 1872.
- 13 *Ibid.* (MS 9110/1): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Blanche*, Wellington, 26 January [1873].
- 14 *Ibid.* (MS 9110/11): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Blanche*, Sydney, 30 March 1873.
- 15 *Ibid.* (MS 9110/12): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Blanche*, Sydney, 4 June 1873.
- 16 *Ibid.* (MS 9110/14): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Blanche*, 2 July 1873.
- 17 *Ibid.* (MS 9110/15): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Pearl*, 8 May 1874.
- 18 *Argus*, 21 September 1877.
- 19 William Sandover (1856–1921), Letters, 1876 (MS 1720): William Sandover to his father, the Honourable William Sandover, MLA, Melbourne, 8 October 1876.
- 20 MS 8946.
- 21 Champion, *op. cit.*
- 22 MS 8946, p. 3.
- 23 Norcock, *op. cit.*: entry for July–August 1871.
- 24 MS 8946, p. 43.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 James A.T. Bruce, RN, *The Cruise round the World of the Flying Squadron 1869–1870 under the Command of Rear-Admiral G.T. Phipps Hornby*. London: J.D. Potter, 1871, pp. 96–97. The journey took place on Monday, 6 December 1869.
- 27 John Morison, journal entitled 'Fifteen Months Abroad: containing an account of a voyage from London to Sydney, also a tour through the Australian colonies, Tasmania, and New Zealand, with notes on the return journey to London, calling at the Cape of Good Hope and Lisbon', April 1872 – January 1873 (MS 8167), pp. 59–60.
- 28 From the *Illustrated Australian News*, Saturday, 20 May 1874.
- 29 Bethell, *op. cit.*: entry for 2 March 1872.



CHAPTER 8

BONES OF CONTENTION

Went to Lyttelton in the morning. The Canterbury Volunteers (both artillery & cavalry) make a most unnecessary fuss about the volunteer representatives of the other provinces. Today the Otago Volunteers were played off at [Christchurch] station & also at Lyttelton, prior to their embarking on the *Maori*. They were also cheered, in fact the last fortnight they have done nothing but cheer each other for nothing apparently. The 'Nabob'—Major Wilson—was swaggering in his uniform all day.¹

Volunteer riflemen on the cover of *The NSW Volunteer Rifles Quick March*, composed by William Stailey, 1867
Music Collection, National Library of Australia

ANYONE READING OF THE EARLY CAREER of Hugh Culling Eardley Childers, a founder of the University of Melbourne and one of the men behind the establishment of the Public Library of Victoria, might be forgiven for thinking that he had an enduring stake in the colony. Within a year of arriving in Victoria in October 1851 he held four appointments under the Crown, and soon would be deeply involved in educational affairs. While others were grubbing in the goldfields, Childers was appointed Auditor-General with a salary of £1200. He was only 25. He was also without any experience, and during his time in office staggering sums of money went missing. He was, as one commentator remarks, 'better employed in educational projects'.²

Childers, or perhaps the wife he had newly married before embarking for Australia, still hankered for England. In 1857 he returned to the mother country to take up an appointment as 'Agent for Victoria'—an appointment which, like the missing thousands, failed to materialise when most needed. Childers turned again for Melbourne, this time representing a firm of English bankers, and this time, too, things went badly for him. His departure was final, and he made a career for himself in the British Parliament. In 1864 he was appointed a junior Lord of the Admiralty; four years later he was First Lord, and about to raise a storm of discontent.

THE WORLD NO DOUBT was changing. Britain was being challenged on all fronts, and the Australian colonies were becoming an embarrassment—not that they had ever been seen as absolutely 'proper'. From places where you sent your criminal element, or troublesome younger sons, they had developed into little Englands, still looking homeward for inspiration, guidance—and defence (for responsible government was one thing; to be responsible for one's own defence was quite another). The colonials had always enjoyed playing soldiers, any excuse for uniformed posturing and parading being seized upon with glee, but Australia was a vast sea-girt island, and the thought of a Royal Navy withdrawal was a nightmare.

Fewer ships and free trade in a peaceful world (blessed from 1869 by the Suez Canal) were all very well, but the concept of the Imperial Navy protecting the trade routes while the colonies protected themselves was not a popular one. What was the point of gradually conquering the continent if threats were to come unimpeded from overseas? Foreign expansion in the area meant trouble in the offing.

Everyone in Melbourne remembered those erroneous headlines of 'The Foe—They come! They come!' and the threat represented by the Russians in 1854.³ The trouble these days was: who were 'the foe', and where would they be coming from? Nobody knew, except that when they did come, they would be getting there more quickly. There was the United States across the Pacific; there was—there had always been—France. There was still Russia, with its own Pacific coastline, and now there was Japan.



Faustin (b.1847)
 Right Hon. H.C.E. Childers, 186-7
 coloured lithograph; 19 x 7.4 cm
 Pictorial Collection,
 National Library of Australia (U6154)

But there would no longer be a Royal Navy acting in Australia's defence. Not that the ships of the Australia Station would have been much good in a major conflict—those in the know knew they were superannuated cast-offs—but they and those of the foreign stations were to be reduced in order to defend the British Empire nearer to home. The *Colonial Naval Defence Act of 1865* put the writing clearly on the wall. This Act to make better Provision for the Naval Defence of the Colonies⁴ 'enabled' colonies to raise a volunteer force as part of the Royal Naval Reserve and acquire their own vessels—both at their own expense. By 1869 trend-setting Victoria had done just that. Treasurer Verdon had personally negotiated a gift of £100,000 towards the purchase of a turret 'iron clad', the *Cerberus*. It arrived in 1871 along with the *Nelson* (which had been launched in 1814 and was a gift). Both vessels met with professional approval:

Close to us [off Williamstown] was one of the good old wooden walls of England—H.M. Victorian Ship *Nelson*, one of our line of battleships of 80 guns, which the Victorian Government had purchased from the Imperial one and used her as a training ship for destitute children, and at the same time keeping her in readiness for use if required for the defence of the Colony: a splendid institution and an invaluable one to the Colony. She was in *perfect order*.⁵

The iron turret-ship *Cerberus* was an innovation there. I managed to get an hour, in one of the last forenoons we spent there, to go and see this curiosity of harbor defence and very much gratified I was she is certainly a most formidable vessel and must greatly increase the safety of the place in time of War: she is commanded by an ex Master (or rather a half pay one) in our Service, called Panter, who has been made Captain in the Victorian Navy for bringing her out from England. He is the Senior Naval Officer in their Navy.⁶

Both ships were firing away when Arthur Clarke went down to Sandridge Pier to watch the 'Naval attack on Melbourne' in April 1872:

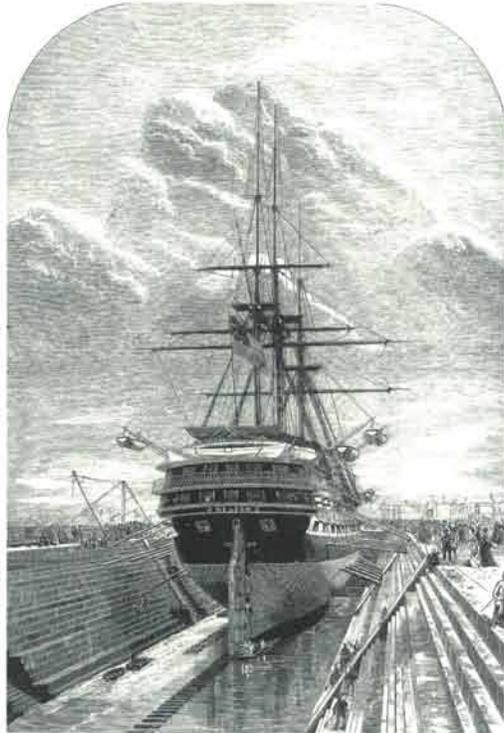
Had a sit down and a look on at the manoeuvres of the *Cerberus*. The guns of the *Cerberus* were something extraordinary to hear when compared with the others mounted in the different batteries and the *Nelson*, they having twice the carrying power of any of the others, and of course making a proportionate noise.⁷

THE DIN WAS AS NOTHING to that raised earlier in 1869 when First Lord of the Admiralty Hugh Culling (and what a fitting name that proved to be) Childers re-entered centre stage to announce that, from now on, colonies must go it alone. He also announced the departure of a flying squadron:

in compliance with a scheme laid before the House of Commons ... having for its contemplated object the display of the British Flag in a detached squadron in the distant parts of the world, in order to facilitate the withdrawal of most of our ships on foreign stations, under the influence of the present rage for economy.⁸

When it reached Australia and New Zealand the squadron was afforded a heartwarming welcome (and not only because many colonial girls wanted the chance to marry an officer based in England so as to better themselves and return 'home'). Here was living proof of the ties binding the colonies with the mother country; proof positive that the mother country cared. The squadron's arrival (according to the *Sydney Morning Herald*) was the 'most glorious sight ever witnessed in Port Jackson',⁹ while the *Empire*, founded in 1850 by Henry Parkes as opposition to the *Herald*, was completely reassured by the squadron's presence:

The arrival of the British squadron, under Rear-Admiral Hornby, is a proof, if any were wanting, that England has a long arm, and is able to protect her colonies if necessary. Probably not half of the twenty or thirty thousand people who saw the fleet coming in yesterday had ever witnessed anything so magnificent as those stately ships coming quietly through the water, with all their deadly armament, as it were, slumbering, but ready to pour out its terrific fire, if need were ... There is no decadence in the British pluck. The same kind of men who fought the most desperate sea fights with other nations at almost any time during the last three centuries, are still, we have no doubt, to be found in Admiral Hornby's fleet.¹⁰



The new Alfred Graving Dock; H.M.C.S. *Nelson* in the dock, 1874
The Australasian Sketcher, 21 March 1874, p. 216
Newspapers and Microfiche Collection,
National Library of Australia

(The social havoc created on-shore by the sea-dogs has already been noted.) The old style of things was passing, however, and First Lord Childers' budgeting provoked a hint of things to come. The newspapers quoted by the author of *The Cruise of the Flying Squadron* show the extent of colonial loyalty and hint at a sense of betrayal.¹¹ The seeds of self-sufficiency and nationhood would take years to come to fruition, but the process described as 'inevitable' was already set in train.

The *Empire*, 14 December 1869:

What we welcome today is but a pigmy representation of the naval power of England. It is sufficient to protect her dependencies from all probable assaults, with the determined resistance of the colonists themselves, and it is well understood that the visit of the squadron is the precursor of other visits of a similar kind. In fact, it is well known that the future policy of the parent country, so far as naval and military defence is concerned, and so long as the present Government remains in office, will be to protect the British Isles, in the first place, and to assist its distant dependencies in the next.

The *Tasmanian Times*, 4 January 1870:

The Navy has always been the more generally popular branch of the military forces of Great Britain ... And certainly we can conceive no likelier and more effectual method of cultivating the sentiment of English nationality in colonial communities than the mission of such a body of English seamen, in such a fleet as now lies at anchor in the Derwent, on a flying visit to the principal ports and capitals of the colonies all round the world ... the moral effect of a visit of a section of the Navy to the colonies is a matter which comes home to us all. Such a visit is admirably calculated to cement, by firm and enduring ties, the alliance between English and colonial populations, of which no Minister who deserves the name of statesman would contemplate the possibility of severance without something like dismay ... The real sense of 'the people', both in the Colonies and in the Mother Country, is for union—close and indissoluble.

The *Tasmanian Times*, 10 January 1870:

It has been well said that in our intercourse with gentlemen of the naval profession who have visited Australian waters we have had some very lofty examples. Indeed, the experience the colonists have had of naval officers has created a general impression of their urbanity and kindness, of their promptitude to succour the distressed, to rescue their countrymen in danger, and to go to their

relief, although at the risk of their own lives. It is not now for the first time that Tasmania learns what they are, or feels that they deserve the hospitality and goodwill of which they have always been the objects. Nor can we forget of how much the flag under which they sail is the emblem and the type. 'The sound and almost universal sentiment (says a Sydney contemporary) of the British colonist is one of respect and affection for that symbol of his country's power.'

The *Auckland Southern Cross*, 28 January 1870:

ARRIVAL OF THE FLYING SQUADRON

Here was a comparatively important section of the British Navy—that Navy which still holds the supremacy of the seas—coming 18,000 miles to visit England's most distant dependency, coming from a land pre-eminent amongst the nations of the world for its maritime enterprise and power to a comparatively insignificant portion of that Great Empire on which the sun never sets, yet it found a people speaking the Anglo-Saxon race [sic], having the same customs, enjoying the same free institutions and privileges, and engaged in laying a maritime greatness which, at no very distant day, may be equal to that of the Mother Country itself.¹²

At Lyttelton (Port Cooper) in New Zealand, Her Majesty's nautical ambassadors were met with uproar. From London had arrived a despatch from the Earl Granville, Secretary of State for the Colonies, which was to precipitate the withdrawal of British troops from Australia and New Zealand.

Immediately after the *Liverpool* anchored, Mr. Rolleston, the Superintendent of Canterbury, went on board to welcome the Admiral, and also to express the great pleasure with which the aristocratic and prosperous province of Canterbury welcomed the squadron from the Mother Country, notwithstanding that at the time New Zealand was writhing under the influence of, perhaps, one of the most injurious despatches that ever left our colonial office ... and as that despatch and the squadron arrived in New Zealand about the same time, we venture to think the feelings of the North and South Island in respect to it were somewhat antagonistic, the South being one of unbelief that it could be possible for the great country, still looked to as being and called Home, of Great Britain, to wish to separate herself from her colonies, especially New Zealand, bone of her bone.¹³

The writer noted 'a general feeling in the Northern Island ... that it must be a matter of a very short time, and the sooner the amputation was over, the sooner the healing process would commence'. That 'dismemberment', he thought, would not be long in coming.

THE COLONIAL VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT went back almost 20 years, to August 1854 when the Crimean War was stimulating defence concerns among the civilian population. Volunteer corps became general: Sydney had its Battalion of Rifle Volunteers, Melbourne its Volunteer Rifle Regiment. Troops of yeomanry, mounted rifles, battalions of infantry—all were at the ready, should the Russians (or anyone else, for that matter) come their way.

To Victoria almost went the glory of first blood. On that famous day, 7 September 1854, explosions were heard, the alarm was raised, and the troops were at the ready—the regular troops, although no doubt the gallant volunteers would have stood shoulder to shoulder to keep the foe at bay. Port Phillip Bay, in fact, where the SS *Great Britain* was celebrating her release from quarantine for smallpox, proved to be the source of the trouble. The celebratory rockets were acknowledged by other ships at anchor (as is the maritime way), and the resulting 'Battle of Melbourne' was talked about for months.

In 1859 rumours of fresh wars in New Zealand and of renewed French aggression stimulated the volunteer movement once more; once the threats were over, it predictably declined. Only when the Franco-Prussian War hit the headlines in 1870 did defence return to the list of priorities:

Since the great European War between Germany & France and the 'Rumours of Wars' at that time about, the authorities of Sydney stirred themselves in their harbor defences which have progressed so favorably now (Aug 1871) that in a few months more Sydney Harbor will be almost impregnable: they have constructed new forts on the most commanding points and according to plans made out by a Committee of professional men of our service, officers of experience and engineers of skill! those forts with the older ones make altogether very formidable defences and such as would, if properly commanded, defy any ships from entering their Harbor. The additional appliances of torpedoes and spars laid across the entrance of 'the Heads' would indeed puzzle our enemy, and ought to be ample to defy such unwelcome visitors. They are also organising a 'regular' Army and have appointed already (Aug 21st) several Officers who were of our Services, retired men who chose to live in the Colony & such men of experience and ability: so that New South Wales is making rapid strides in the 'Defence' way, and certainly proves that they can learn to do without Imperial troops (which have been so recently withdrawn from all these Colonies).¹⁴

Coastal defences to the far north of the continent remained minimal. The headland at Palmerston¹⁵ had 'a Flagstaff and two or three brass Howitzers on it but no houses' and constituted 'the sole defence of the little Settlement',¹⁶ while things were even worse at Somerset at the most northerly point of Queensland, settled in 1863:

It was at the time hoped that it would become a second Singapore in importance, but this hope has not been realised. It was also thought it would be a refuge for the Crews of Vessels unfortunate enough to be wrecked in Torres Straits, but it is found to be too far from the main Channels for that purpose. When it was first settled a detachment of Marines were quartered there but they have long since been withdrawn. The Inhabitants consist of the Resident Magistrate and family and his White Boat's Crew and their families, a Missionary & his Family and some PEARLERS' WIVES and a few Black Troopers, in all about 35.¹⁷

That life without the British Army would be grim proved to be a misconception. On his visit to Christchurch, New Zealand (where he was to stay with his pioneering uncle), William Bethell noted:

[Christchurch] seems a great place for giving banquets—last night there was one to the Cavalry, tonight to the Artillery & the Volunteer band, tomorrow night to the Infantry—Wednesday night a Volunteer Ball & Friday night a banquet to the 'Nabob' Mr. [Cracroft] Wilson.¹⁸

The Brighton Volunteers on manoeuvres at Mordialloc had a capital time, according to Arthur Clarke:

It was a very good sight to see, the opposing forces on different hills, blazing away with both rifles and big guns ... And afterwards the two sides fraternised and camped at a place called Dalgety's paddock.¹⁹

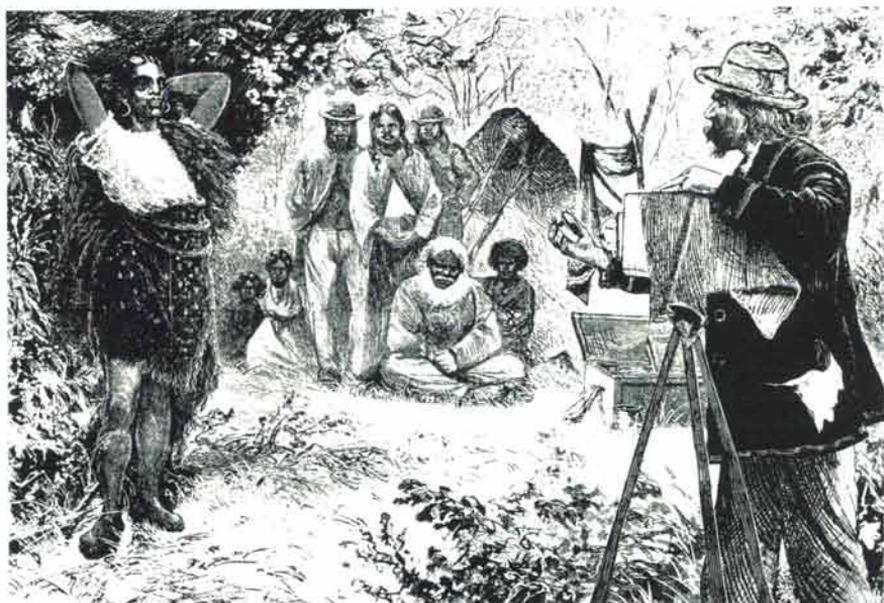
In a later European conflict Arthur's only son would die in action,²⁰ but for the young volunteers of Brighton socialising and camping were to be their lot for a few years yet. Playing at soldiers was often tedious, though it seems to have had its moments:

The [Brighton] Corps was equipped with various guns of doubtful merit until 1871, when four forty pounder, breech loading Armstrongs appeared in the Drill Room grounds, much to the excitement of the populace. Each one weighed over four tons and required thirty men to work it. For practice they fired out into the

bay, although not always as safely as the Brighton Council would have wished. At one shoot in 1874 they badly frightened people 'along the main road', though that was nothing to the hazards of rifle fire at the Elwood Butts where in order to extend the range to a thousand yards, the practice, until 1879, had been to fire from New Street right across Saint Kilda Street to the beach. Complaints of the danger had become frequent although the only known casualty was a cow belonging to a widow called Hastings.²¹

Despite the dangerous enthusiasm of the colonial forces, the Imperial troops withdrawn in 1870 did not return. Contrary to Childers' intentions, however, the Royal Naval presence was eventually increased, not reduced. The Australia Station was indeed cut from five ships to four,²² but soon—with the need to chase blackbirders, police the pearling grounds, deal with the developing crisis in Fiji—the squadron was significantly strengthened. Before long, it was also attempting to keep the ships of other powers firmly in their place.

- 1 William Bethell (1847–1926), Journal, 7 November 1871 – 18 May 1872 (MS 2465): entry for 16 April 1872.
- 2 *The Australian Encyclopaedia*, 1958, Vol. 2, p. 348.
- 3 *Argus*, 20 May 1854.
- 4 Quoted in Bob Nicholls, *The Colonial Volunteers: The Defence Forces of the Australian Colonies, 1836–1901*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988, p. 203.
- 5 Charles James Norcock, RN (1847–1933), 'Private Journal, 20.7.1870 – 24.4.1874' (MS 5897): entry for February 1871.
- 6 *Ibid.*: entry for September 1871.
- 7 Arthur Clarke (b.1853), Diary, 29 August 1868 – 6 January 1873 (MS 6792): entry for Tuesday, 2 April 1872.
- 8 James A.T. Bruce, RN, *The Cruise round the World of the Flying Squadron 1869–1870 under the Command of Rear-Admiral G.T. Phipps Hornby*. London: J.D. Potter, 1871, p. 2.
- 9 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 December 1869.
- 10 *Empire*, 14 December 1869.
- 11 See Bruce, *op. cit.*, pp. 113–114.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 192.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 165.
- 14 Norcock, *op. cit.*: entry for August 1871.
- 15 The former name for Darwin. Palmerston was established in 1869, and took the name given to an earlier settlement at Escape Cliffs, 1864–1867.
- 16 Hugh Massy, RN, 'Four Years on the Australian Station', 1877 (MS 8520): manuscript account of the years 1873–1877 set out in chapters, p. 126.
- 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 110–111.
- 18 Bethell, *op. cit.*: entry for 9 April 1872.
- 19 Clarke, *op. cit.*: entry for Monday, 25 March 1872.
- 20 Thornton Gainsborough Clarke was killed in action at Fleurbaix, France, on 19 July 1916, aged 24. He had married Miss Annie Walker a little over a year before. (Information lodged with the photocopy of Arthur Clarke's diary.)
- 21 G.R. Vazenry, *Military Forces of Victoria 1854–1967*. Melbourne: n.p., 1969, pp. 3–9. (Information supplied by Mr K. Erlenbusch.)
- 22 *Blanche, Basilisk, Clio and Cossack*.



CHAPTER 9

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

In the world I've gained my knowledge, For it have had to pay,
Though I never went to college, Yet I've heard the poets say,
Life is like a mighty river, Rolling on from day to day,
Men are vessels launched upon it, Sometimes wrecked
and cast away,

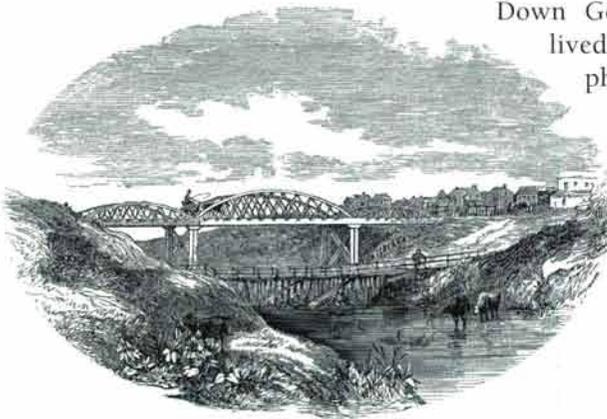
So then, Do your best for one another,
Making like a pleasant dream
help a worn and weary brother,
Pulling hard against the stream.¹

A bush photographer, 1874
The Australasian Sketcher, 18 April 1874, p. 9
Newspapers and Microfiche Collection,
National Library of Australia

THOMAS CHAMPION OF WINDSOR, New South Wales, measured his life, not 'in coffee spoons' like that other non-hero of the everyday, J. Arthur Prufrock, but by the passing of the postman, the vagaries of the weather, and by a normally dismal summary of business. Monday, 14 August 1871, would have been a typical kind of a day:

7 am a fine frosty morning ... No letters—weather fine. No sign of trade—5 pm wind getting up—Trade nil.²

Not that Thomas ever complained—or, at least, not when writing up his diary. As he devoted the weeks and months and years to elusive commerce and the struggle to make ends meet, his approach to life became more stoical: the painful manner of his writing, rather than what he wrote, confides much about the crippling of arthritic fingers. Champion lived in Windsor for over 30 years and was later remembered as a notable 'character' about the town:



Walter G. Mason
View of Bridge at Windsor, New South Wales, 1857
wood engraving; 14.1 x 21.5 cm
In Walter G. Mason, *Australian Picture Pleasure Book*
Sydney: J.R. Clarke, 1857, p. 36
From the Rex Nan Kivell Collection,
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (U806)

Down George-street from the Mill lived old Thomas Champion, photographer, collector, and a host of other things—who always carried with him when he walked abroad a white umbrella of antique design. He had a studio there for years.³

Thomas came late to the photographic arts. He was 41 when he emigrated from London, and no stranger to change: he had already moved from the Somerset village where he was born in 1800 to set himself up in the city.⁴ When he packed his bags again in October 1841 and

took ship for Australia, he had a wife and five young children; behind him he left a host of country relations and an ironmonger's business at 18 Southampton Row, a narrow street between High Holburn and Russell Square. His skills as 'a furnishing ironmonger and bath manufacturer', with the usual range of wares: fenders, fire irons, meat screens, hot closets, kitchen ranges and so forth, were advertised at some expense,⁵ but customers were either slow in coming (or paying), or Thomas's decision to leave was simply a yearning for another change of scene and a new beginning in the great southern land of promise.

Nowhere could have been more in contrast to the maze of London streets than the small town of Windsor on the Hawkesbury River, with the Blue Mountains forming a backdrop. Stinking hot in summer the place may have been, and cold in winter, with flooding a constant threat, yet the Champion family thrived. While Thomas recorded the inevitable deaths of the old inhabitants and the premature gathering to their God of many others less prepared, the nine children he eventually fathered (with the exception of a tiny daughter who had died in London) all passed the age of 60 and most lived far longer. Money was often in short supply and Thomas was still seeking paid employment at the age of 68, but—apart from the affliction of rheumatism, the seeds of which he may have brought with him from the damp and foggy capital of the old country—once the 1870s were upon him, Champion had a fine ‘gallery’ set up in George Street, Windsor, and a more settled period lay ahead. The long-suffering Mrs Champion must have thought it long overdue.

CHANGING DIRECTIONS in your forties is never easy: from being his own master, once he arrived in Sydney and found lodgings for his dependants, Champion was working for strangers and hoping for the best:

Friday 1st April 1842. Commenced duties at Woolley where I look forward to be very comfortable and I am engaged at sorting and marking off £2000 worth of goods. They are badly packed & mostly broken to pieces & damaged by sea water.⁶

The job appears to have lasted quite some time: two more children were born in Sydney, but the ninth and last was born in 1849 in Windsor when Champion was probably already working for R. and E. Tooth & Co., Brewers, a firm that had been in existence from 1835.⁷ As a representative for Kent Brewery Ales and Porter in the Richmond and Windsor district, Thomas became familiar with the 40 or so public houses in existence at the time and, long after he had changed employment yet again, the names of the landlords and their families frequently figure in the pages of his journal.

Weddings afforded him good business, and so too did illnesses and deaths—for what is regrettable for some is usually a source of profit to others:

Sunday 2 February 1873. 9 o'clock called to see little Charlie Harris lying dangerously ill of inflammation on the lungs. His recovery very questionable.

Friday 7 February 1873. 6 am. Bell tolling for little Charlie Harris. A v. foggy morning.⁸

Given the Victorian taste for memorabilia and the macabre, we can imagine Champion standing by, camera at the ready—for who better than an old friend to console you in your hour of need? In the case of the Reverend Peter Turner, late of the South Seas Mission, recent arrival in the kingdom of Heaven, and a mentor more than a mate, that was exactly what he did:

Saturday 1 November 1873. Revd. P. Turner died.

Monday 3 November 1873. ½ [past] 8 saw remains of late Revd. P.T. A placid happy expression.

Tuesday 4 November. [the day of the funeral] Printed & toned 1 doz portraits of Rev T. for sale.⁹

So well did they sell, in fact, that when one of Windsor's most prominent citizens, a mill owner, was taken ill a few months later, Thomas daily marked his progression towards the grave:

Thursday 1 January 1874 ... Mr Hoskisson ill. Dr Selkerk attending him daily.

Tuesday 6 January 1874 ... Mr Hoskisson v. ill with y. jaundice. Taken poorly last Mon fortnight.

Thursday 8 January 1874 ... Mr H a little better.

Monday 12 January 1874 ... Mr Hoskisson not considered better. 12 noon Mr Coley [the lawyer] with him.

Tuesday 13 January 1874 ... Called on Mr H. No better.

Friday 16 January 1874 ... Revd CFG with Mr H.

Monday 19 January 1874 ... Mr H v. low emits blood.

Tuesday 20 January 1874 ... Called at Mr H's. He continues to pass blood. Doesn't see any but friends & own family—He cannot linger much longer. SJ at home. Thomas expected this morning.

Wednesday 21 January 1874 ... The late JH has departed — ¼ [past] 12 no letters. JH is said to be worth ½ a million — 5 pm trade nil. JH died ¼ to 12 last night.

Friday 23 January 1874 ... Busy preparations for the funeral of the late J. Hoskisson ... Followers to meet at dwelling House ½ [past] 11 o'clock. Weather unpropitious. ½ [past] 11 at Mrs H's a great meeting off to church. ¼ [past] 12 after service in Ch a lengthy address or oration by Revd CF Garnsey. 1 pm before funeral was concluded. A heavy fine raining nearly all this time.¹⁰

While the old man was making up his mind to 'depart'—and Thomas Champion was poised like a vulture—other deaths occurred but were accorded only a passing interest. A child drowned the day after the funeral, and by Saturday, 31 January, our Thomas was conducting a brisk trade in cards and portraits of the deceased.

As a business technique it might be said to have lacked finesse, but Thomas had come a long way in his career. In the early 1860s he had been roaming the roads and villages around Windsor, a rank amateur with his 14-year-old son Ted at his side, hiring themselves out at 30 shillings a week: the time it took to take a batch of portraits and develop them to the sitter's satisfaction. The minimum exposure-time for the wet plates then in use was five seconds on a good day, then

The plate had to be sensitized, exposed and developed within a few minutes, otherwise it was spoilt. This made studio work difficult, and any outdoor work a major undertaking, since a portable darkroom—a caravan or a tent—had to be set up alongside the camera.¹¹

It was a tricky business and the logistics involved in transporting the cumbersome camera, as well as the chemicals, other vital gear and barrels of distilled water must have been daunting in the extreme, especially to a man who was nearing 60 at the time.

Travelling the roads in the Hawkesbury District was no picnic either, and the following entries from the diary give some idea of the area the Champions covered:

J. Lamrock Korrajong

1861. Sept. Self & Ted at terms 30/- per week.¹²

Mountains Currajong

1861. Nov 18th. 6 am Self & Ted ready to start from Mr J. Lamrocks to Mr J. Sherwoods Douglass's Hill @ 30/- per wk.¹³

Mr J. Sherwood

Woodside Cottage (Korrajong) Douglass's Hill
Self & Ted @ — / week¹⁴

Mount Tomah

1861. Nov 25 Self and Ted by cart to J. Sherwoods.
Board &c. 2/10/- Portraits Etc. 3/-/- Cart 10/-¹⁵

J. Markwell Richmond

Self & Ted at, [December] 1861—at 30/- p week.¹⁶

G. Cobcrofts Wilberforce

1862. Self and Ted commence ...

Tuesday 24 [January] @ 30/- per week 20/- & 10/-¹⁷

That they took advantage of public transport whenever they could goes without saying. But it was not always possible:

1862. February 5th. Wed 6 pm. Coach full. Put luggage in Breeze's wagon. Ran foul of toll gate. Camera broke. Several bottles chemicals destroyed. Arrived in Windsor Thurs 3 pm. Dined with G. Cunningham.¹⁸

Photography
 Develop for Positives *Campania*
 Water 1oz Iron 20 grms Acid 2oz
 1) *Alk. Farnish asphaltum & Turp. 34-*
 1855. Some of *Sp. plates. Camera St. 4/11*
four Lecons @ 10/- *4/11*
6/11/5
apod. d. l. m. in l. d. m. j. m. 30/1
St. Davis
St. 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2
up 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2
St. 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2

This accident was entered in the journal under the heading 'Walked'—which, in the circumstances, seems surprisingly restrained.

Only three years earlier Thomas had qualified as a photographer and he later made the purchases and notes reproduced at left.

He was full of optimism as to the future, but the lessons in no way prepared him for what lay ahead. His earliest adventures came when he accepted a disastrous photographic assignment at St Albans at the start of 1859 and taught him far more than those four lessons back in 1858 at the princely sum of ten shillings a time. What with the roads being poor and public transport virtually non-existent, he and his son were obliged to make their way from Wiseman's Ferry by boat—something still not uncommon over a decade later, as George Davies, editor of Windsor's *The Australian*, pointed out:

Tuesday 7th Dec^r 1872
 I am in a fine mood...
Wednesday 18th Dec^r 1872
 I am in a fine mood...
 I am in a fine mood...
 I am in a fine mood...

Page 196 of Thomas Champion's diary (MS 1093) Manuscript Collection, National Library of Australia



The roads in those portions nearest to the two centres of population [Richmond and Windsor] are good; but the remainder are a disgrace to the nineteenth century, and cannot be travelled unless on foot or by horseback, no conveyance being able to get along them. Luckily the residents have some amount of water carriage, or they would be entirely shut in. This makes our community a sort of amphibious one, they having to take both to the water and the land.²⁰

T.G. Glover
Wiseman's Ferry, Junction of the Hawkesbury and MacDonald Rivers, NSW, 1878
 watercolour, 15.7 x 34.8 cm
 Pictorial Collection,
 National Library of Australia (R4198)

Amphibian or no, when Thomas Champion took to the water to carry out his assignment at St Albans, he was to find himself all at sea:

Wiseman's Ferry

1859. 19 January. Self & Ted arrived at J. Mackenzies per steamer N. Moon. 18 February. Self & Ted left for Mrs Jurds, St Albans per police boat from Dr Cross's 6 pm Thursday. Arrived at St Albans 12 midnight drenched with rain.²¹

Decanted from the police boat in darkness and the dead of night, the Champions made their weary way up from the jetty to the hotel. In 1875 George Davies dealt harshly with the place ('fast going to "kingdom come"'), and continued:

The only healthy thing about the place is the landlady, who weighs about 20 stone, and comes up to the liking of George IV; who always gave his toast 'fair, fat, and forty'.²²

The landlady may or may not have waited up for her temporary employees, but when they did get together over the following days, the outcome was an unmitigated disaster, and Champion found himself paying dearly for the experience before thankfully taking his leave:

St Albans

1859. February 18th. Ted & Self arrived at Mrs Jurds Friday ¼ [past] 12 midnight after six hours exposure to heavy rain in open boat. To 25 [February] trade nil, to March 4 1 or two portraits. Gave Mrs Jurd a railway Blanket, crimson on one side & dark brown on the other as compensation for our accommodation. My Chemicals & other appliances being deranged & own want of experience in the art. My trade here turned out a failure— ~~Gave Mrs Jurd a railway wrapper Crimson on one side & dk brown on the other~~ (Board &c Self & Ted no charge).²³

Poor Thomas must have felt quite deranged himself!

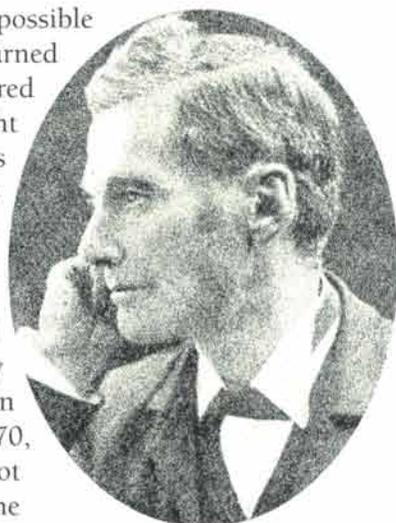


Next a comet went by 'midst fire like hail
To give me a lift I seized hold of his tail,
To where he was going I didn't enquire,
We'd gone past the moon, till we couldn't get higher;
Yes, we'd gone to the furthestmost! I don't think I joke
When somehow I felt a great shock—I awoke!
When instead of balloon, moon and planets, I saw
I'd tumbled from off of my bed to the floor.²⁴

FAME CAME TO JOHN TEBBUTT, FRAS, with the discovery of the Great Comet of 1861; he also produced no fewer than 120 publications for the *Monthly Notices* of the Royal Astronomical Society, London, and remarks on the Transit of Venus of 1874. A fellow townsman of Thomas Champion (who was notable for the large white umbrella he used, come rain or shine, and his obsession with the weather), for Tebbutt meteorology was also a major preoccupation. He was a religious man and took part in the soul-searching of the times; for him, the advances of science served only to bring him nearer to his God (or his God nearer to him, for he had a great sense of his own importance). Unable to ordain the weather, he did the next best thing: he kept meteorological records and published them on a regular basis.²⁵ In so doing, he gained a seeming mastery over the elements which Champion, in his own journal and with his own daily entries, could only imitate and admire. Tebbutt was a trustee of the Windsor School of Arts, which Thomas supported materially with a gift of books as well as by

attending the lectures when he could. It is quite possible that the more Champion the photographer learned about Tebbutt the astronomer, the more he revered him: here, after all, was a successful self-taught amateur scientist who could plot the course of stars and planets and make accurate predictions as to their behaviour.

The Tebbutt family was arguably the nearest that Windsor had yet come to claiming a local aristocracy. John Tebbutt's grandfather emigrated on the *Nile* in 1801 and settled in the Hawkesbury district; his father bought a farm on land known as The Peninsula. John junior inherited it in 1870, although his true area of interest turned out to be not the land but the heavens. Not only did he become celebrated for his astronomical observations, but also as an authority on Windsor and its environs: it was to him that the Reverend J.C. Steele of The Manse, Windsor, applied for assistance in compiling his history of the town. The couple came to an arrangement whereby the astronomer would supply data and photographs for the work (published in 1908 and entitled *Early Days of Windsor*) and would be remunerated upon its completion. The correspondence between them reveals Tebbutt to be a humourless kind of a fellow, aware of his own importance, uncomfortably punctilious over detail—and whose headed paper was complete with a picture of the 1907 observatory in almost baronial style. The effect, unfortunately ruined by a rendering of 'Peninsula' with an 'r', is neatly amended in Tebbutt's black ink and fine pen on each successive page.



Portrait of John Tebbutt
The Lone Hand, 1 December 1909, p. 121
Pictorial Collection,
National Library of Australia

METICULOUSNESS, OF COURSE, is the handmaid of science, and the young Tebbutt was to benefit enormously from his attention to detail. Calculations, measurements—all paid off—and in 1861 he was able to claim the discovery of the year's great comet:

Few comets created greater sensation than the Great Comet of 1861. It was discovered by Mr. J. Tebbutt, an amateur observer in New South Wales, on May 13, prior to its perihelion passage, which took place on June 11.

So wrote R. Chambers in his *Descriptive Astronomy* a few years later. In his memoirs Tebbutt went on to quote further from the work, and (rather more briefly) from that of Professor D.P. Todd:

This remarkable body ... had a tail which appeared to stretch one-third the way round the heavens. The earth and moon passed

through the tail of this body, 30th June, 1861, with no apparent effect save peculiar sky glare. According to Sir John Herschel this comet far exceeded in brilliancy all other comets that he had ever seen, even those of 1811 and 1858.²⁶

Although Tebbutt's reputation was made in Australia—he was offered and refused the post of government astronomer for New South Wales in 1862—he seems to have felt slighted by the international community, blaming his lack of recognition to that now over-worked cliché 'the tyranny of distance':

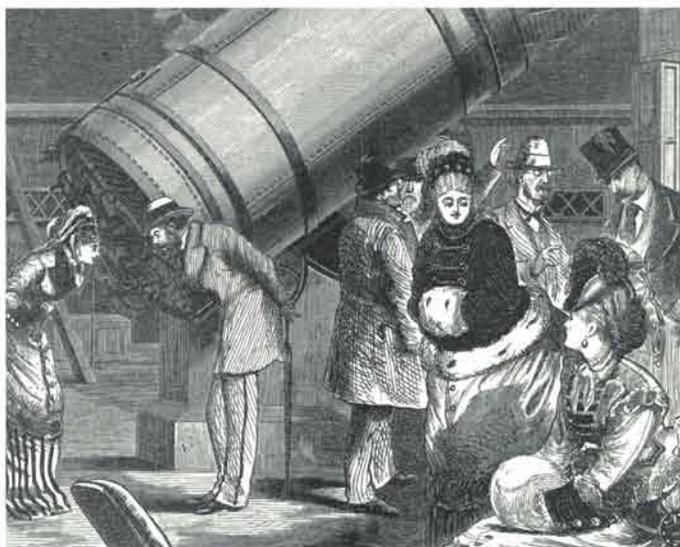
It appears then from what I have ~~gleaned~~ gathered²⁷ from several sources, that my predictions as to the near approach of the comet's tail to the earth were completely verified. In many of the popular works on astronomy, European astronomers are reported to have shown that the earth passed through or very near to the tail of this great comet, but nowhere have I seen it noted that the prediction was made many days in advance in New South Wales. This reticence is, perhaps, due to the circumstance that the results of my calculations were communicated to the colonial newspapers and not to the journals of science.²⁸

Two years after his cometary coup, Tebbutt built an observatory of which he was justifiably proud:

At the close of 1863 I made another step in advance by erecting a small observatory close to my father's residence. This was wholly the work of my own hands, and in accomplishing it I combined in my own person the handicrafts of the carpenter, the bricklayer and the slater ... A small octagonal tower rising from the centre of the observatory and covered by a conical revolving roof accommodated the small telescope. This instrument was mounted by myself according to the Sisson or old English method, and with sufficient accuracy to enable me to identify stars of comparison.²⁹

Tebbutt's success, combined with his obvious affluence, made him an object of envy in the Australian colonies, where government astronomers found life far less easy. Robert Ellery in Victoria was one. The Great Melbourne Telescope—a 48-inch Newtonian reflector, and for years the largest in the world—should have made him first in the field, but from the time it arrived in 1868 it was nothing but trouble:

In particular its liability to oscillate in the lightest wind and the susceptibility of the mirrors to tarnish made it almost unmanageable; even Ellery, with his fine instrumental skill, could not do much with it. What he did achieve, sketches of nebulae



A party of amateur astronomers, 1874
The Australasian Sketcher, 23 June 1874, p. 45
Newspapers and Microfiche Collection,
National Library of Australia.

based on visual observations, was soon made obsolete by the advent of photography for which the telescope could not be used.³⁰

No wonder that he had sharp things to say, firstly, about amateur misconceptions as to the nature of his work:

It is a very popular belief that practical Astronomy consists of star-gazing, looking at the moon, or searching for some unknown stars, planets or comets; and young ladies who come to the Observatory on fine, pleasant nights, to have a keek at the moon, say, 'How delightful! What a beautiful, romantic occupation!' and so it is for an hour or two, if it is not too cold; but long, weary hours of monotonous watching and recording at night, with the long dreary calculations of to-morrow looming ahead, soon strip the delightful romance from the calling of the practical astronomer, and bring it down to the level of other bread and butter getting occupations.³¹

'There is no such thing as *star-gazing*,' he continued somewhat nippily, all observations being 'for a particular purpose, and set out beforehand' by the serious practitioners of the science:

The more popular branches of Astronomy, such as comet and planet seeking, investigations of the moon's surface, delineations of the features of the nearer planets, and such like, are, by general consent, left to amateurs and private individuals, many of whom are in possession of magnificent telescopes, well fitted for the work, and who yearly contribute very largely to our knowledge on these subjects. National institutions, however, have to grind away at the harder stuff ...³²

Comets, he concluded, were nearly always discovered by such amateur observers, not by those 'who have to do the less genial but more utilitarian work'.³³

In 1874, four years after Ellery's address to the Early Closing Association of Victoria, John Tebbutt, amateur astronomer and planet discoverer par excellence, built the second of his series of observatories, 'a circular building of pine, twelve feet in diameter',³⁴ which was to stand a few yards distant from the original. This, too, had a revolving roof and was ready for the 'long expected transit of Venus'³⁵ due on 8–9 December, having last been seen in 1769. Naturally enough, Tebbutt was not the only one anticipating the event, and Lieutenant Hugh Massy of Her Majesty's Ship *Barracouta* was likewise ready and waiting in Sydney:

The Sydney Observatory Signal Station etc. is on Flagstaff Hill. It was one of the principal places from which the transit of Venus over the Sun's disc, which occurred on December 9 1874, was observed.

I saw the same phenomenon from the Ship through darkened glasses, and as it was an event seen once in a lifetime I will describe it.

It was a fine clear day with a breeze from North East. Barometer 29.80 thermometer 86°F and the Sun was so dazzling that I could scarcely bear to look at him through the darkened Field Glasses; and the difficulty was increased by his Altitude being only ... 10 degrees from the vertical. At three minutes before Noon when the Sun bore nearly due North, a small dark spot was observed on his right hand or Eastern edge. This gradually appeared to cut through until the whole was within the Sun's circumference. I then went below to Dinner and at 1.10 returned on deck, by which time the Planet was well within the Sun. The lower part of the sun for perhaps one sixteenth of the whole circumference appeared to be cut off and obscured somewhat similar to an eclipse of the Sun, but with the imperfect means at my disposal I was unable to be more minute in my description. The egress recurred at 2.30 and was similar in appearance to the ingress reversed, being on the Western side and the spot passing away from instead of into the sun's disc. The last transit of Venus previous to the one described occurred in 1769 and was the primary cause of Captain Cook's first Voyage in the *Endeavour*, his place of observation being the island of Tahiti. Strange to say the only scientific observer on this occasion who saw any of the peculiar phenomenon connected with the transit, so minutely described by Cook, was one provided with a very inferior Instrument. Instruments having undergone such great improvements, of late years, it is probable that those used by the great Navigator, [were] of an inferior description to those generally employed at the present day.³⁶

In Windsor Tebbutt engaged the help of a young man from the town. While the astronomer took charge of the 4½-inch equatorial telescope his assistant was to be entrusted with the smaller 3¼-inch instrument. In order to reach the high standards required, they ‘practised daily by means of an artificial transit’ and their efforts did not go unobserved:

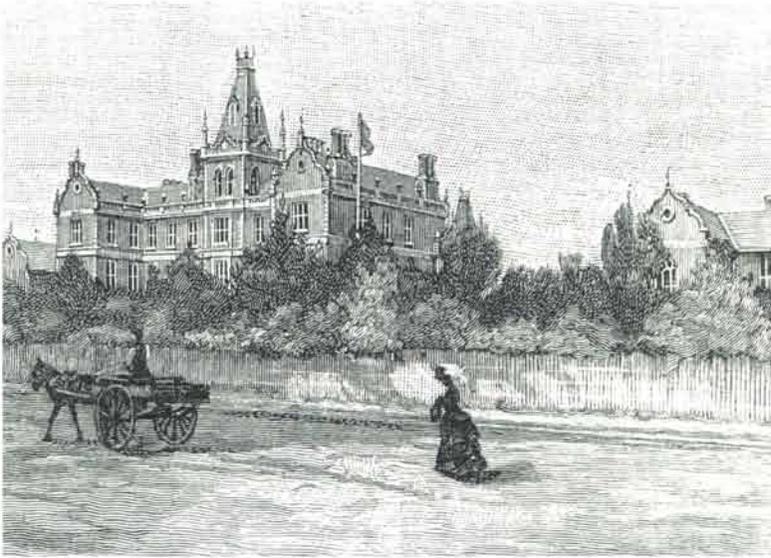
While we were so engaged on the day immediately before the actual transit, and while counting the beats of the chronometer, a visitor from the town entered the open door of the observatory and walked up to the place where I was stationed with my telescope. On completing the counting I looked up and found my visitor to be a resident of Windsor whose attentions were usually devoted to Bacchus rather than to Urania. He accosted me in the following terms:—‘I have come, Mr. Tebbutt, to ask you if I can be of any service to you in your observation of the transit of Venus to-morrow.’ I thanked him for his offer of assistance, and suggested as politely as possible that if his visit were made at the moment of the great event the result would probably be that I should lose the observation for which I had been waiting so many years. While orally thanking him for his proffered assistance I also inwardly felt grateful for his coming as he did, for his visit was the cause of my providing against any contretemps on the morrow. All the gates about the establishment were locked on the following morning, so that perfect tranquillity reigned throughout the period of observation. The day was one of the hottest I had ever experienced, for the maximum temperature in the shade attained to 109.5 degrees, with a hot wind; nevertheless the atmospheric conditions were such as to render my observations of the contacts very exact.³⁷

Thomas Champion, the former brewer’s rep, was, according to his descendents, a staunch teetotaler. He is unlikely, then, in that case to have been the ‘devotee of Bacchus’ so ungraciously repulsed by Tebbutt the day before. Whoever it was might have done a better job than the lad who replaced him:

A few minutes after the planet had entered on the sun’s disc I proceeded to the spot where my assistant had been stationed in order to observe with the smaller telescope. I was, however, completely disappointed to find that he had failed in his work. The fact was that he had been trying to see the sun at the time of first contact, but had forgotten to remove the cap from the instrument.³⁸

‘When he did remove it,’ noted Tebbutt grimly, ‘the contact had already taken place ...’

- 1 From a song 'Pulling Hard against the Stream'; words and music by Harry Clifton. In *The Weston and Hussey Minstrels' Book of Songs*. Melbourne: Clarson, Massine & Co., 1870 (?).
- 2 Thomas Champion (1800–1887), Diaries, 1841–1877 (MS 1093).
- 3 J.C. Fitzpatrick, *When We Were Boys Together*. Windsor, NSW: F. Campbell, 1909, p. 31.
- 4 See Michelle Nicholls, *The Hawkesbury Pioneer Register* (2nd ed. Windsor, NSW: Hawkesbury Family History Group, 1994), for details of the Champion and related families.
- 5 Information supplied by Mr Ian Hotchkiss, a descendant of Thomas Champion.
- 6 Champion, op. cit., p. 48.
- 7 Alfred Smith, *Some Ups and Downs of an Old Richmondite*. Emu Plains, NSW: Nepean Family History Society, c.1991, p. 138.
- 8 Champion, op. cit.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 *The Australian Encyclopaedia*, 1958, Vol. 7, p. 104.
- 12 Champion, op. cit., p. 128.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid., p. 144.
- 15 Ibid., p. 128.
- 16 Ibid., p. 92.
- 17 Ibid., p. 136.
- 18 Ibid., p. 90.
- 19 Ibid., p. 196.
- 20 *Australian* (Windsor), 7 August 1875.
- 21 Champion, op. cit., p. 150.
- 22 *Australian* (Windsor), 7 August 1875.
- 23 Champion, op. cit., p. 338.
- 24 From the song 'Up in a Balloon'; words and music by G.W. Hunt. In *The Weston and Hussey Minstrels' Book of Songs*. Melbourne: Clarson, Massine & Co., 1870 (?).
- 25 John Tebbutt (1834–1916) published a series of volumes of *Meteorological Observations* covering the vagaries of nature for most of his adult years in Windsor.
- 26 John Tebbutt, *Astronomical Memoirs*. Sydney: EW. White, 1908, pp. 22–23.
- 27 Ibid., p. 24. The National Library copy is corrected in what appears to be Tebbutt's own hand.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid., p. 29.
- 30 *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 4, 1851–1890, pp. 135–136: entry for Robert Lewis John Ellery (1827–1908).
- 31 R.L.J. Ellery, *The Progress of Astronomy: A Lecture*. Melbourne: Fergusson and Moore, 1870, pp. 17–18.
- 32 Ibid., p. 18.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Tebbutt, op. cit., p. 38.
- 35 Ibid., p. 39.
- 36 Hugh Massy, RN, 'Four Years on the Australian Station', 1877 (MS 8520): manuscript account of the years 1873–1877 set out in chapters, pp. 55–57.
- 37 Tebbutt, op. cit., pp. 39–40.
- 38 Ibid., p. 40.



CHAPTER 10

DOSES OF HEALTHY SCEPTICISM

NOTICE—J.B. EASTON, DENTIST, having recovered from his late accident, has RESUMED practice. Mr. E. administers the nitrous oxide gas daily. 179, Liverpool-street, facing Hyde Park.¹

WHEN HRH THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH narrowly escaped death at the hands of an aggrieved Irishman, he was naturally more than a little relieved. The man, O'Farrell, was hanged, but in dying he saved a great many lives—or put them in jeopardy—depending on the skills of the doctors in the hospitals erected in the royal name. The loyal citizens of Sydney first conceived the idea of such a hospital in 1868 but the gestation period was long and complicated, with a series of disputes about the site and the governing body delaying matters for years. The Royal Prince Alfred Hospital opened at last in 1882, with accommodation for 146 patients.

The Alfred Hospital
From *Victoria and its Metropolis*, 1888, vol. 1, p. 559
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia

There had been a crying need for a second hospital in Melbourne from the early 1860s, and when the Irish bullet lodged in royal flesh and the sailor prince survived, that city likewise planned a memorial in grateful thanksgiving. The name was shorter than its Sydney counterpart's and so was the time in building; the Duke himself laid the foundation stone in 1869 and the Alfred Hospital opened two years later. The original Melbourne hospital which dated from 1848 was inspected by the conscientious William Sandover—along with nearly every other public building in town—and, generally speaking, and as far as management was concerned, it met with the young man's approval.² He came, he saw, he assessed; and after his visit he ventured to suggest to his father, the South Australian MLA, that something might be learned from the Victorian experience, especially in the matter of funding:



William Sandover with his wife Bertha and son William Jadrals ('Tad')
 Courtesy of Mr William G. Sandover, Richmond UK

That this Hospital has been of great service, can easily be seen by the fact that during the year 1875, 25,129 (indoor & outdoor) were treated. The number of patients at present in the Hospital is about 320. The Institution is supported in the same way as the Benevolent Asylum ... The Board of management is chosen by the members alone, the amount subscribed by each regulating the respective number of votes they may exercise at any

Election. Don't you *think*, this plan of making the general public bear part of the burden, is better than ours, & the Management being chosen by the people alone relieves the Govt of great responsibility & prevents possible patronage? Fostering benevolence on the part of the public, it seems to me, to do away greatly with that feeling, which is only too common among all the colonies of looking to the Government for everything. The Sydney people are seeing the importance of this, although they find it a great trouble to revolutionize existing institutions. I think S.A. might follow. The cost of maintenance for last year was £21,226, the receipts amounting to £20,756 out of which sum the Govt grant was £13,000 (you might compare the Govt grant with the cost to Govt in our colony & the number of patients). The Buildings are large & roomy but the grounds are much too Small.³



William Sandover
as a young man
Courtesy of Mr William
G. Sandover, Richmond UK

There were other points worth noting:

The management are raising funds for the Treatment of Convalescents. They state that patients often arrive at a certain Stage of convalescence and there stop & that in many cases relapses are caused by the inmates 'languishing in the crowded wards of the hospital'. Men & women too who have been under treatment for a broken leg or arm, or for a long & tiresome illness, are dismissed from the Hospital (convalescent but not thoroughly strong) & having no money of their own are obliged to commence work at once & thus weaken & sometimes ruin themselves for their lives. It seems cruel to put such people forth to fight for their subsistence. Against hale & hearty men &

women they must lose. For these cases it is suggested to have rooms at the seaside or in the country, to which they might go for a short time until strength had fully returned. Of course the management of such a scheme as this might be copied in S.A.⁴

'I am only an out-patient at the Melbourne Hospital,' wrote The Vagabond on one of his 'undercover' investigations for the *Argus* newspaper, before giving social smugness another vicious jab:

Inside the walls I believe that everything is lovely, the arrangements perfect, the patients well cared for, the nurses patterns of Florence Nightingale (may her name for ever be honoured in the land), and the doctors, practising together in brotherly unity, totally devoid of professional jealousy, strive with all the learning of science and skill of special training to combat our enemies disease and death. However, I am glad I am only an out-patient.⁵

THE OUTSIDE WORLD could be dangerous as well. George Britton Halford, the eminent first Professor of Anatomy at the University of Melbourne, took up his post in 1862. Like Archibald Watson, his counterpart at Adelaide, his tenure of the chair was a long one; unlike Watson, however, Halford can be said to have truly graced the position. Recognising that snake-bite was a very real scourge of his adopted country (and one he is unlikely to have come across in his former posts in London), Dr Halford began experiments with snake venom while others concentrated on problems like hydatids. In 1869 he was able to publish details of a new (and drastic) treatment calling on a certain sang-froid from all concerned:

Immediately upon being bitten, cut out the part, the first cut to be on the side of the wound nearest the heart, so as to at once stop the poison travelling towards the chest.

Let nothing prevent this proceeding. However valuable any after treatment may be, this must not be neglected. On the same principle in poisoning by the stomach, the first remedy is the emetic.⁶

Once the patient showed 'symptoms of drowsiness or sickness' it was time for more of the same. Another pass of the penknife to reveal a suitable vein, then liquid ammonia was injected (10 drops of the strongest available to 20 drops of water). The next procedure may interest the modern reader more:

If far away from any surgeon, practise in anticipation the operation on a dead dog. A large vein will be found lying beneath the skin of the side of the neck, running from the lower jaw to the top of the chest. After this, try it upon a living one; two friends holding the animal quiet. Exercise a little stern authority over the dog, and he will probably let you inject him without moving. If you succeed, there will be no difficulty in operating upon a fellow creature.

In these trial operations let the syringe be filled with water simply.

I believe it takes a week to learn to use a bicycle. I assure the reader one afternoon will suffice to use the syringe.⁷

But did the treatment work? A Dr Nicholson, practising in the Victorian town of Ballarat in 1875, was certainly willing to give it a go. Little Miss Cleary's parent made no objection, having already completed part one of Dr Halford's treatment:

Her father was with her in the field at the time she was bitten, and saw the snake. He at once excised a portion of the flesh, from which the blood flowed through the fang punctures, and this act prevented Dr. Nicholson from judging of the bite, except by the effects of the poison.⁸

Hedging his bets, Mr Cleary had also tried his own remedy:

The fact of her having been able to drink such a quantity of stimulant—half a pint of brandy—as had been given her by her father, without it producing any signs of intoxication on one of her age—12 years—was sufficient further proof of the poisoning.⁹

The ammonia was injected (it was only the doctor's second use of Halford's remedy), the child duly vomited, and at the time of the newspaper report was well on the way to recovery. Halford was later to

admit that his ideas of treatment were mistaken, so perhaps the 'stimulant' should take the credit.

The public revelled in such cases. Newspaper accounts of accidents and deaths by misadventure—the nastier the better—made thrilling reading. In 1858 Australia's population had reached one million, and by 1870 was heading towards two million. There was an established middle class with real (and fashionable) ailments and medicine was becoming big business. While Melbourne University had been training doctors since 1862, medical schools would only be established in Sydney in 1880 and Adelaide in 1884, but as the science advanced and doctors grew bolder, reporters found that surgical operations could hold all the ingredients of popular melodrama. Suspense, pathos, gruesome details, a hapless and helpless heroine: the case reported by the *Sydney Mail* in 1871 had everything the public craved—even down to the final tug of the heartstrings so beloved of the age:

On the 11th inst. [the story was in the edition of 25 November] Dr. Morson operated on Mrs. Starling, of West Maitland, and cut out of the cavity of the abdomen a very large ovarian tumour, weighing upwards of thirty-two pounds. The patient had suffered greatly from this tumour for ten years, which had destroyed and broken down her health, and rendered her incapable of any exertion whatever. Dr. Morson several times within the last few years tapped the tumour, with only partial relief, as never more than a pint of fluid, of the consistency of jelly, could be obtained, although instruments of the largest calibre were ordered from London specially for this purpose.¹⁰

When even London failed her, the truly heroic patient demanded surgery, 'preferring to run all risks, than to live the living death which her disease had assigned her to'. Her doctor professed to a certain reluctance but, given the opportunity, how could he in fact resist, with medicine eager to push back the frontiers of knowledge? Mrs Starling was admitted to the Maitland Hospital, where:

Under the influence of chloroform an incision of about eighteen inches was made into the tense and distended abdomen, when the enormous mass, 32½ lbs. weight, was lifted out with great difficulty and severed at its root—as extensive adhesions to the internal structures existed, which had to be broken down and carefully dissected before the tumour could be detached, and which greatly complicated the operation.¹¹

Mrs Starling survived for several days—an achievement in itself—but 'the excessive heat of the weather told greatly against her, and inflammatory

symptoms manifested themselves, and we regret to say she died from exhaustion'. (Then, as now, the weather was blamed for almost anything.)

Many people at this time looked to the newspapers for medical advice, if the proliferation of advertisements is an indication. The poor of the cities had no recourse to expensive medical treatment, or fashionable fads, and were lucky to find a bed in hospital when the need arose. Others treated themselves for common ailments: Thomas Champion tended what at first glance was a 'Rheumatic Goat' and favoured the use of 'Blue stone & water for piles',¹² and bush folk had even less of a choice. They, more than anyone, had to rely on self-help and their own initiative in ordinary and less than ordinary situations. Holloway's pills and ointments purportedly worked wonders. If they didn't, then Dr D. Jayne's 'Standard Family Medicines' might do the trick. Dr Jayne's advertisements oozed all the optimism of the successful entrepreneur he claimed to be (he was an American, but surely 'snake-oil'—if not snake-bite—was a thing of the past—or was it?):

DR. JAYNE'S EXPECTORANT is the proper remedy for Consumption, Asthma, Bronchitis, and all Lung and Throat infections; it speedily cures Coughs, Colds and Whooping Coughs, subduing the attendant inflammation and fever, removing difficulty of breathing, producing free and easy expectorations, and by imparting vigor to the respiratory organs assists them in throwing off obstructions.¹³

Having a bit of a problem with the complexion, or perhaps something a little worse? Dr D. Jayne, then, was your man, and his 'Alterative'—which could have been anything from preparations of arsenic to sarsaparilla—the answer to a multitude of ills:

DR. JAYNE'S ALTERATIVE is an effective remedy for Scrofula, Cancer, Goitre, Ulcers, Eruptive Diseases, Dropsy, and Mercurial Affections. Stimulating the absorbents, it acts thoroughly by purifying the blood, thus eradicating the virus or these diseases at their source. For all Skin Diseases it is invaluable, removing both the primary and the immediate cause.¹⁴

Jayne was but one of a whole host of miracle workers offering miracle cures. We have learned to be wary of substances like sulphurous acid gas (which by absorbing oxygen becomes sulphuric acid), for example, yet in the same edition in which Dr Jayne promised relief to just about every part of the human body, the proprietors of 'The Sulphur Chamber' at the Turkish Bath in Bligh Street, Sydney, appear to have recommended total immersion into something rather nasty—albeit with a subtle disclaimer of which our century would surely be proud:

SULPHUROUS ACID GAS has been proved to be destructive of the germs of a great variety of disease, and also of the foul and poisonous products left by disease, and by mineral and other drugs in the fluids and solids of the body. It is directly curative in diseases of the throat, lungs and air passages, and secondarily in derangements of the mucous membranes of the stomach and intestines, and of the liver, kidneys and other glands. It also facilitates the well-known curative action of the Bath in gout and acute and chronic rheumatism. In the Bath, this agent is taken into the blood by the lungs, and passing in a rapid current through the body, penetrating to every part, makes its exit by the pores of the skin, carrying off with it the diseased germs and products with which it has come into contact. Thus administered it is perfectly harmless, and is both soothing and invigorating in its effects.¹⁵

Despite such flamboyant claims, the medical profession preferred to launch an attack on another kind of medicine altogether—homoeopathy. Taking up their pens, a number of Australian medicos tackled this practice of treating a sufferer with substances that (in healthy people) produced similar symptoms,¹⁶ and proceeded to ignore what was good and ridicule what wasn't. Dr James Jamieson of Warrnambool made his own position abundantly clear, at the same time shedding light on the stage reached by regular medicine by the mid-1870s:

Now the tendency of modern pathology is increasingly towards the view that many diseases which have hitherto been ascribed to constitutional or other causes, are really due to the presence of different kinds of fungi. This has been shown with something approaching to demonstration with reference to diphtheria, malignant pustule, hospital gangrene, and perhaps some others; and it is at least probable in many more, and especially in the zymotic diseases, typhus, measles, scarlatina, &c., as well as in dysentery, cholera and others ... Now supposing this to be the case, and evidence in its favour is accumulating daily, it is evident that the limits within which the homoeopathic principle can be held to apply, become very much reduced. If it is demonstrated that any disease is due to the implantation and growth of a parasite, whether animal or vegetable, then to me it seems self-evident that any treatment, which deals mainly or perhaps wholly, with symptoms, and does not directly attack the cause, either in the way of destroying the parasite or at least hastening its removal from the system, must be insufficient and at best palliative—used only because our knowledge and appliances are imperfect, and continued only until some more radical method is brought into operation.¹⁷

Next in the field was that dedicated follower of fashion Dr Walter Balls-Headley of Melbourne. Balls-Headley specialised in obstetrics and tumours and included among his appointments that of honorary physician to the Alfred Hospital and Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society. The doctor was obliged to go into the subject more deeply than he might have intended (the homoeopaths, quite naturally, fought back) and the conclusions he published at his own expense were vicious. First, he gave the results of a private analysis:

Of fourteen Homoeopathic preparations examined, bought from the most prominent Melbourne Homoeopathic chemists, and bearing their names, not one was prepared according to the receipt; some being greatly too strong, others containing almost none, or none of the drug. The conclusions to be derived therefrom, I leave to the public.¹⁸

'In what did Homoeopathy consist?' he asked, before attacking the dose, the drugs, the theory. His answer was predictably damning:

We find that Homoeopathy was commenced in fraud, continued in slander, and sustained by filching, false-witness, and ignorance; and that all of Homoeopathic 'science' that remains, is its bastard representatives clinging to slander, the last rag of the Homoeopathic skirt. Them, lovers of the false and fair, like Circe's swine, I now leave to frolic in their native mire.¹⁹



Opening of the new hospital for sick children, Melbourne—The Lady Bowen Ward
Illustrated Australian News, 1 November 1876, p. 16
Newspapers and Microfiche Collection, National Library of Australia

Or, as the more diplomatic Dr Jamieson preferred to put it:

The increase of our knowledge of the structure and functions of the body, and the causes and results of disease, does not in any way tend to make [Homœopathy's] pretensions appear more reasonable than they were 70 years ago, when physiology and pathology were in their infancy.²⁰

Arguments like this would be bandied about for longer than the 1870s—after all, there was too much at stake for either side to give in easily. Scepticism generally was in a healthy state during the period under examination, and nowhere was it in greater evidence than in the debate about spiritualism, as seen in Chapter 6. So let Professor Archibald Watson's detested step-aunt again offer her truly alternative form of medicine and have the last word about health:

MISS ARMSTRONG
Clairvoyante for Diagnosing Disease
80 RUSSELL STREET, NEXT DETECTIVE OFFICE.²¹

- 1 *Sydney Mail*, 4 November 1871.
- 2 William left home in 1876 on a 'fact-finding' tour, with a particular view to gaining experience in the ironmongery trade. His travels took him to Victoria, then on to Tasmania and New South Wales. He gazes out from his portrait (p. 102), a young man of 20 who is already middle-aged: his letters are full of social preoccupations far beyond his years. If the first William Sandover made his name in hardware, then the second was a worthy successor. He went to Western Australia, started the firm of Sandovers of Perth and Fremantle, and married. With his wife and son (another William), he travelled 'home' in July 1895 and founded William Sandover & Co. of London. Like his father, he had an active interest in politics, being elected Mayor of Richmond Surrey, the home of his second wife. (Information supplied by Mr Geoffrey Sandover, descendant.)
- 3 William Sandover (1856–1921), Letters, 1876 (MS 1720): William Sandover to his father, the Honourable William Sandover, MLA, Launceston, 25 October 1876.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 Michael Cannon (ed.), *The Vagabond Papers*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969, p. 19: 'A Morning at the Hospital'.
- 6 George Britton Halford, *The New Treatment for Snake-bite, with Plain Directions for Injecting*. Melbourne: Stillwell and Knight, 1869, p. 16.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Argus*, 25 December 1875.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 *Sydney Mail*, 25 November 1871.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 Thomas Champion (1800–1887), Diaries, 1841–1877 (MS 1093), p. 58
- 13 *Sydney Mail*, 7 October 1871.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 Homœopathy was first taught by Samuel Hahnemann (1755–1843).
- 17 James J. Jamieson, 'Homœopathy: Its Claims and Fallacies', *Australian Medical Journal*, Vol. 14, April 1874, p. 109.
- 18 Walter Balls-Headley, *Homœopathy Past and Present*. Melbourne: George Robertson, 1878, p. 40.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 Jamieson, *op. cit.*, p. 114.
- 21 *The Harbinger of Light*, No. 69, 1 May 1876, p. 1018. (See also earlier issues.)



CHAPTER 11

ODOROUS COMPARISONS

Much misapprehension prevails in the Old Country in reference to the state of the Australian colonies. It is supposed by many that they live in tents or hovels, are in a semi-barbarous condition, rude in dress and manners, minus all the luxuries and elegancies of life, deprived of the most valuable privileges which are possessed at home, and devoid even of many necessary comforts. Never was a greater mistake made.¹

Sydney with its magnificent bay ought to be the finest city in the Colonies, as it is Melbourne beats it into fits—Nature has done every thing for Sydney Man nothing—Man has done everything for Melbourne Nature nothing.²

Charles Blanchard
Bourke Street, Melbourne, 1881
oil on canvas, 46.6 x 91.8 cm
From the Rex Nau Kivell Collection,
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (E379)

LIEUTENANT CHARLES JAMES NORCOCK, Robin Walpole's predecessor on HMS *Blanche*, who sailed for Australia in 1868, was not the first member of his family to visit Melbourne: his father served on HMS *Rattlesnake* during the survey of Port Phillip (August 1836 – May 1837).³ Thirty years later, master's mate John Henry Norcock was dead and Melbourne had become a pleasant and welcoming city:

The city of Melbourne I think deserves the good name it has (is supposed to have); it is certainly a very fine town and a wonder for its age (half a century covers it) ... Melbourne seems to be the great centre of all the Colonies! A general rendezvous, the Southern Metropolis! Constant communication existing with all parts renders the fact accountable: so with all, we had plenty to do during our stay there and more to see than we could accomplish ... We had a whole month at the most jolly place Melbourne and a most enjoyable one it was! ... We were re-elected [honorary] Members of the Melbourne Club and very civilly informed that our former free railway passes would be held good, and if any new officers had joined, by forwarding their names, passes would be at once made out and given them: other similar compliments and civilities were repeatedly shewn us; we rapidly became more at home with our friends and increased our friendship, more and more did we enjoy ourselves, through their wonderful hospitality.⁴

Sydney, too, treated the visitors well:

The ball was well attended and a success; the people of Sydney seemed jolly but we were total strangers. In a few days we had a heap of calls to return; most of the 'Elite' of the place had called on us, the Capt & each Mess separately, invitations to dinner, croquet parties etc. followed. We were made [honorary] members of every club in the Town; those officers not holding Commissions were excepted from two only.⁵

(The two clubs mentioned were the Australian, 'the resort of elderly gentlemen and the Union generally of the younger', both being 'small but comfortable and well managed'.⁶)

Although they were 'nearly spoiled with kindness and hospitality' in Sydney and proclaimed it the 'best place they ever knew',⁷ naval officers had no preference, generally speaking. Wherever they were at the time was best, with towns like Hobart and Auckland, as well as Melbourne and Sydney, showing their better sides to those desirable gentlemen decked out in blue and gold. Picnics, excursions, balls ... Wherever the squadron dropped anchor, it was time for folly and fun. Only once did Midshipman Robin Walpole, an inveterate party-goer, declare that he had simply had enough (a weakness which proved temporary):

We left Fiji in June and came to Sydney where we stayed a month having great fun dances nearly every night till we got quite sick of it. We then went to Melbourne where the same thing was repeated over again.⁸

WITH TRAVEL BETWEEN THE TWO HEMISPHERES becoming speedier and more comfortable, visitors from Europe increased in number. For most, the Sydney Botanic Gardens proved a major attraction:

I cannot praise [them] too highly, being far superior to anything of the kind I have seen in the other Colonies or elsewhere. The situation chosen is naturally good, being an undulating piece of ground bordering on Farm Cove, and commanding a good view of the harbour beyond, and everything art can do has been done to render it more perfect and beautiful.⁹

Not only were the parterres kept in order:

Anyone is admitted to the Gardens free of charge, provided they conduct themselves properly, do not pluck the flowers, and are not smoking.¹⁰

In the Botanic Gardens of Melbourne it was the Director who was deemed to be at fault:

A BARE GARDEN

FOR some years past, by some singular coincidence, notices of the flower-ishing condition of the Botanic Gardens have invariably appeared on Saturday in the Melbourne newspapers. The *Rumtitumtiflora Pickleiana*, or some other equally unknown flower, has been announced to be in blossom, and some people have rushed frantically to behold the new floral wonder, but have come away without being able to find it. The gardeners being all German, could only be appealed to by a linguist, and therefore inquiry in that quarter has been impossible. This sort of humbug has lasted for a number of years, but at last the public seem to have discovered that the gardens are a sell, and only maintained for the benefit of the great Herr Von Duffer and his countrymen. The question is at last mooted as to what the public get for their money, and what the hero of a hundred orders does for his screw. The occasional issue of a few worthless shrubs to public bodies, a weedy wilderness to walk in, and a glimpse of the snug habitation of the great savant is all that is apparently netted from a great outlay, and in disgust, people frequent the more attractive resort, Fitzroy Gardens, which flourishes without a retinue of Teutons, is little or no expense to the colony, being cared for, *con amore* by a gentleman whose coat is destitute of jewelled stars.¹¹

And so it went on ... As an early instance of the tall poppy syndrome, *Touchstone's* 1869 pruning of the great botanist Ferdinand von Mueller was vicious, overdone ('it is time he made his "bough"', 'packed up his "trunks"') and symptomatic generally of the dislike felt towards Germans in certain quarters. When it came to his own description, novelist Anthony Trollope took a leaf out of *Touchstone's* book:



Troedel & Co
Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, 1879
lithograph; 45 x 34.4 cm
Pictorial Collection,
National Library of Australia (U6825)

Dr. Von Mueller, who is also a baron, a fellow of half the learned societies in Europe, and a Commander of the Order of St. Jago, has made these gardens a perfect paradise of science for those who are given to botany rather than to beauty. I am told that the gardens and the gardener, the botany and the baron, rank very highly indeed in the estimation of those who have devoted themselves to the study of trees, and that Melbourne should consider herself to be rich in having such a man. But the gardens though spacious are not charming, and the lessons which they teach are out of the reach of ninety-nine in every hundred. The baron has sacrificed beauty to science, and the charm of flowers to the production of scarce herbs, till the higher authorities have interfered. When I was at Melbourne there had arisen a question whether there should not be some second and alas! rival head-gardener, so that the people of Melbourne should get some gratification for their money. The quarrel was running high when I was there.¹²

Meanwhile, 'for loveliness, and that beauty that can be appreciated by the ignorant as well as by the learned', Trollope declared the Sydney Gardens to be unrivalled. 'I can only hope that the flowers may carry the day against the shrubs,' he concluded, and those in authority agreed. In 1873 Dr von Mueller was dismissed from the directorship, and to William Guilfoyle went the laurels—and the task of redefining the Melbourne Botanic Gardens on more pleasing and aesthetic lines.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS in both Sydney and Melbourne were a constant source of amazement. Churches, clubs, public buildings as well as gardens saw a constant stream of visitors from the 'old country', who recorded their impressions for the benefit of those back home. Everyone had their own opinion: 'Melbourne is London reproduced; Victoria is another England';¹³ George Street was the 'Wapping of Sydney'.¹⁴ As for Sydney, itself: 'The stranger cannot fail, first of all, to be struck with narrowness of its streets, which, in the finest weather, are far from being clean or attractive'.¹⁵

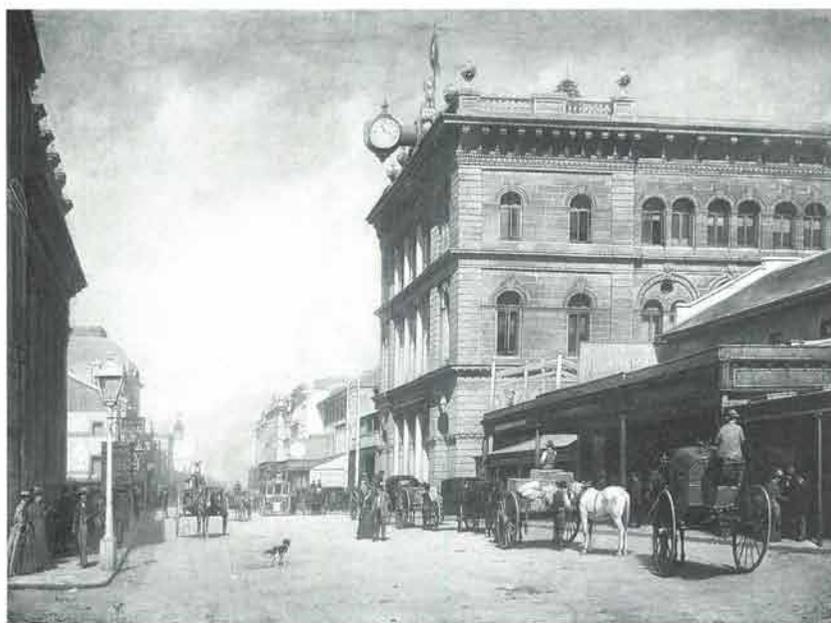
Long before he assumed public office, William Bethell, that future Deputy Lieutenant of England's largest county, already had his eye on public amenities, or—in the case of Australia—their lack:

Sydney is far behind Melbourne tho a much older town—it is like an English country town—streets narrow & irregular—atrociously lighted with gas. Melbourne is badly but Sydney execrably lighted.¹⁶

'Might just as well do without it for the light it gives,' he grumbled. '[T]here is not a decently lighted city in the colonies'.¹⁷

William Sandover, visiting from Adelaide in 1876, would never have agreed:

Sydney seems to me more substantial than Melbourne, the banks, warehouses, shops & stores all show this. Many of its public buildings are far superior ... but yet there is the same drawback; often by their side we find wretched hovels. The Sydney people though seem very slow in some of their ideas, perhaps too proud to copy others.¹⁸



Melbourne, that 'town of wonders', where 'Everybody seems in a hurry—a terrific hurry' had similar shortcomings:

Jacques Carabain (b.1834)
George Street, Sydney, 1889
oil on canvas; 95 x 125.3 cm
Pictorial Collection,
National Library of Australia (R8)

Its grand palace like buildings are wonderful, but when by the side of it one sees miserable little hovels one feels disappointed. Such buildings as I have seen in Collins St, & Elizabeth St &c., we would not tolerate in King [William] St.¹⁹

William Bethell likewise recorded that the streets were 'spoilt by having 2 & 3 big houses & then several little places—Melbourne in 20 years will no doubt be a fair city now only beginning',²⁰ but when he returned from a trip to Tasmania with summer at its height, Bethell's concerns were less to do with aesthetics and more to do with health.



SONG OF THE YAN YEAN WITCHES

SCENE 1ST—*A dark stream. In the middle Pollution floating.
Hot wind.*

1st Witch—Round about the 'Plenty' go—
'In the poisoned entrails throw,'
Cattle festering in the sun
Day by day, and one by one.
Maggots in each carcass teem—
Throw them in the filthy stream!

All—Bubble, bubble, death and trouble,
Stream pollute; and sickness double.

2nd Witch—Cast off skins of wriggling snake,
Ordure, filth, together rake;
Get all to rotten that's akin,
And cast the mingled mixture in.
Putrid scum, and 'slime of frog';
And the drainage of each bog;
'For a charm of powerful trouble'—
Let the 'Plenty' reek and bubble!

...

3rd Witch—Sheep with sick'ning scabby skin—
Lean and dying—tumble in!
Refuse from infected runs,
Which the dingo sniffs and shuns;

Rotten pigs, on offal fed,
Splash them in their watery bed.
Carrion where corruption breeds,
Mix with rank and slimy weeds.
All the drains where filth abides;
And distemper dimly hides;
In the 'Plenty' let them go
Till this filth shall overflow!

...

2nd Witch—If the lot you mingle well,
Then the charm is sure to tell.²¹

William Bethell was right when he commented:

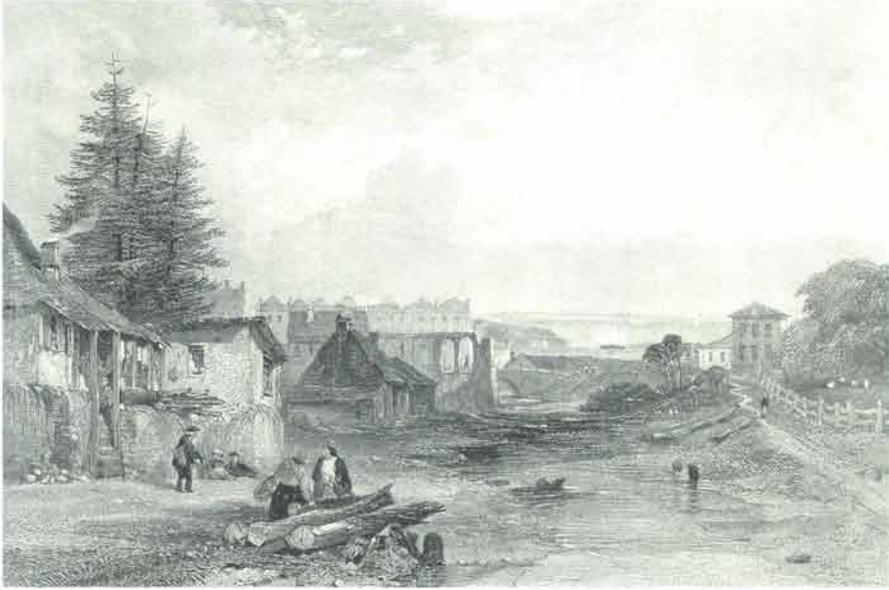
There will be some fine fever in Melbourne someday, the smell in Elizabeth Street after the drains had been flushed by the rains, was abominable—the sanitary arrangements of the city are bad.²²

Melbourne, for all its fine public buildings, opulent private houses, its undoubted splendour, had another—more shocking and dangerous—flaw:

The Yarra was a 'common sewer'—inky black with foul gases emanating from it ... Tobacco was a necessity for those who worked on, or whose business took them to the wharves. Liquid refuse from kitchens, baths and laundries, factories, stables and public urinals drained into open street channels and thence into almost every water course or lagoon in the metropolitan area ... Every night the noisome nightcarts went about their homely tasks; hundreds clunked down St Kilda and Punt Roads making for their disposal points in the sand-belt; municipalities warred with each other in their attempts to delimit trade. The *Bulletin* gleefully began to refer to 'Marvellous Smelbourne'.²³

Water flowed into the Yarra River from various sources; the Plenty, which had its catchment area in the Yan Yean basin, was one. The water was pumped into a tank on the corner of Elizabeth and Flinders streets in Melbourne, then filtered before it went on sale (with the more obvious pollutants abstracted). The smell (and much more besides) remained. In time, gibes from its rival Sydney became common, and the death rate from typhoid five times worse than London's. Charles Norcock, visiting Melbourne from HMS *Blanche*, said nothing about the stink as he walked the city streets—his fears were more to do with drowning:

I must mention their great peculiarity and drawback, they are drained by huge gutters on either side, and are full of these 'young rivers' where the roads or streets cross; they are therefore numerous, and when the rainy weather sets in I believe these gutters are really dangerous—they are bridged over here and there for foot passengers to get from the pavement to the road but that I hear is sometimes impracticable in one of the largest streets (Elizabeth St.) during the heavy rains; men and children have been swept under these little bridges and by jamming there have been drowned!! but such are very extreme and rare cases.²⁴



Melbourne had its infamous open drains but Sydney was not without its problems: the Tank Stream which had supplied the city's needs from the early years no longer ran sweet, and, like the Yarra River, was heavily polluted. It was a fact the Navy had cause to regret:

Thomas Heatwood
The Old Tank Stream, Sydney, 1874?
 engraving, 19.5 x 26.5 cm
 From the Rex Nan Kivell Collection,
 Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (1/216)

Several cases of Typhoid Fever occurred on board the Vessels anchored in Farm Cove, and I have on four or five occasions known Men of War laying there, get up steam and Distil, in preference to drinking the Sydney water.

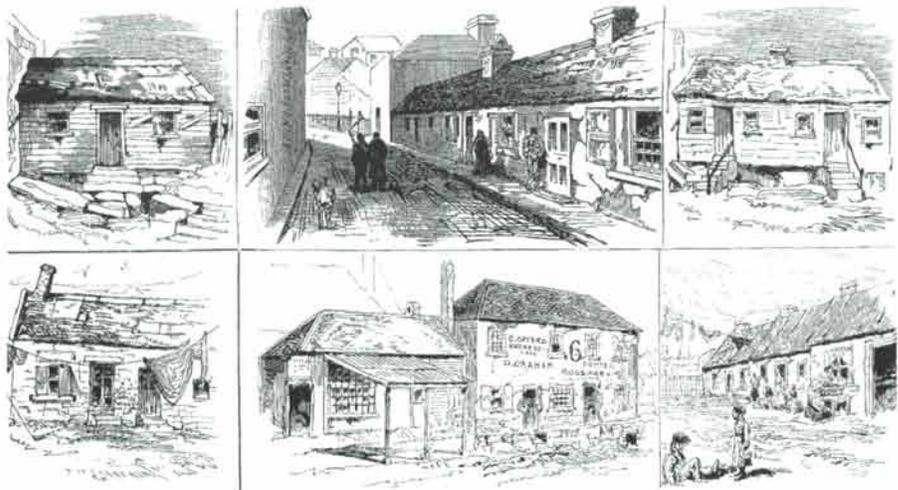
An eminent Engineer lately submitted a scheme to the Government for conducting the water into the City direct from the Nepean River, some thirty miles distant in a Westerly direction whereby an unlimited supply of the pure fluid might be obtained for a comparatively moderate outlay. It is likely before long to receive the Attention it deserves at the hands of the Authorities.²⁵

The casual visitor to the city meantime remained oblivious to such matters:

Standing up there on the heights you have some splendid views. The harbour and its many inlets, forming fantastic shapes as if artificially formed; between the foliage on the banks peep out pretty villas with their gardens to the water's edge—pleasant retreats from the dust or busy hum of Sydney, beyond lies the city with its towers & spires rising above the mass of other buildings, and the forests of masts of shipping, from many and distant parts of the globe, and just below are little steamers, puffing and snorting as they flit about through the vessels, on their way to the opposite shores.²⁶

Sydney may have had a 'better' botanic garden than Melbourne, and in a glorious setting, but neither town was an olfactory delight. Comparisons were as 'odorous' as they were inevitable. William Sandover, from a city where the only acknowledged odour was one of sanctity, did well to keep on the North Shore and upwind of the water. Hugh Massy was less fortunate, and his own version of the harbour's 'delights' was unexpectedly frank:

I will next turn to the Sewers, which are in as bad a condition as the Water Supply. Several of the minor ones empty themselves into Sydney Cove, from Circular Quay, with its crowd of Merchant Ships laying alongside, which cannot fail to have an injurious effect; but I am more immediately concerned with the Main Sewer, having a more intimate acquaintance with it and its working than I have with the others.



City Improvements in Sydney: Old Buildings Ordered for Demolition, 1880
The Australasian Sketcher, 31 July 1880, p. 181
Newspapers and Microfiche Collection, National Library of Australia

It discharges itself into the Harbour at Fort Macquarie 400 yards from the Flagship's Quay in Farm Cove, by a yawning aperture in the sea wall some four foot in diameter. This is only two thirds covered at high tide and at low water it is completely exposed to view. Being out of the influence of the tides which run with considerable strength in the centre of the Stream, a considerable Shoal which is dry at low water, has formed itself at its entrance and is gradually extending further into the harbour. The stench from this accumulation of filth and the aperture it emanates from, is so dreadful other people and myself when passing it in Boats have been obliged to stop our Nostrils and Mouths with our pocket handkerchiefs.²⁷

The build-up of human excrement affected the sheltering men-of-war to a most unpleasant degree:

In the summer Months the nuisance is at its height, and during December and January when anchored in Farm Cove, I have frequently in the early morning when it has been perfectly calm, observed blue vapour rising from the Sewer's Mouth, the stench being distinctly smelt on board the Ship at the same and other times.

In the early part of 1875, several cases of Typhoid Fever which were partially attributed to this source, having broken out in the Squadron at Sydney, the late Commodore Goodenough C.B. C.M.G. issued an order that during the Summer Months, the Men-of-War under his Command, were never to Anchor in Farm Cove, but on the opposite or North Shore side of the Harbour.²⁸

As a result of such concern, the civil authorities were moved, as it were, to action:

the obnoxious outlet was surrounded with Dredges, Lighters and Blocks of Stone, for a considerable time, and they carried it a few feet further into the harbour and closed its mouth with a swinging door, which only opens when the Sewer is flushed. It certainly is a little better than it was before, but the nuisance is abated, but not cured. The only effectual way to put a stop to it would be to lead the Pipe out into the strength of the Current.²⁹

James Goodenough, who succeeded Frederick Stirling as Commodore, was to die from tetanus not typhoid, and from a poisoned arrow not the drains, but the stench in the Harbour as well as other incentives—'He is never on board as he has got his house ashore where his wife lives'³⁰—no doubt augmented his preference for sleeping on shore. Moving the squadron out of Farm Cove was a simple recognition of a universal fact:

that, while an Army might march on its stomach (and a Navy sail), unguarded bowel movements could stop them both dead in their tracks.

- 1 John Morison, journal entitled 'Fifteen Months Abroad: containing an account of a voyage from London to Sydney, also a tour through the Australian colonies, Tasmania, and New Zealand, with notes on the return journey to London, calling at the Cape of Good Hope and Lisbon', April 1872 – January 1873 (MS 8167), p. 67.
- 2 William Bethell (1847–1926), Journal, 7 November 1871 – 18 May 1872 (MS 2465): entry for 4 March 1872.
- 3 John Henry Norcock (1809–1854), Papers (MS 5896).
- 4 Charles James Norcock, RN (1847–1933), 'Private Journal, 20.7.1870 – 24.4.1874' (MS 5897): entry for September 1871.
- 5 Ibid., 'Reminiscences of the *Blanche*, 1854–17.3.1869': entry for 29 June – 17 August 1868.
- 6 Hugh Massy, RN, 'Four Years on the Australian Station', 1877 (MS 8520): manuscript account of the years 1873–1877 set out in chapters, p. 57.
- 7 Norcock, 'Reminiscences of the *Blanche*, 1854–17.3.1869', loc. cit.
- 8 Robert 'Robin' Horace Walpole, RN (1854–1931), Letters, 1870–1874 (MS 9110/20): Robert Walpole to his father, the Honourable Frederick Walpole, MP, HMS *Pearl*, Farm Cove, Sydney, 29 August 1874.
- 9 Massy, op. cit., p. 68.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 *Touchstone*, 2 October 1869, p. 3.
- 12 Anthony Trollope, *New South Wales and Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania*. London: Ward Lock, 1875, Part 2, p. 32.
- 13 Morison, op. cit., p. 67.
- 14 Ibid., p. 32.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Bethell, op. cit.: entry for 25 February 1872.
- 17 Ibid.: entry for 5 April 1872.
- 18 William Sandover (1856–1921), Letters, 1876 (MS 1720): letter to his father, the Honourable William Sandover, MLA, Sydney, 21 November 1876.
- 19 Ibid., Melbourne, 8 October 1876.
- 20 Bethell, op. cit.: entry for 29 January 1872.
- 21 *Touchstone*, 27 November 1869, p. 53.
- 22 Bethell, op. cit.: entry for 21 February 1872.
- 23 Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to Be Rich*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1971, p. 279.
- 24 Norcock, 'Private Journal, 20.7.1870 – 24.4.1874' (MS 5897): entry for February 1871.
- 25 Massy, op. cit., p. 63.
- 26 Sandover, op. cit.: letter to his father, Sydney, 28 November 1876.
- 27 Massy, op. cit., pp. 64–65.
- 28 Ibid., pp. 65–66.
- 29 Ibid., p. 66.
- 30 Walpole, op. cit. (MS 9110/20): letter to his father, HMS *Pearl*, Farm Cove, Sydney, 29 August 1874.



Kanaka labourers on a Queensland pineapple plantation, late 1800s. Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia.

CHAPTER 12

IN QUEST OF COOLIES

The last gleam of daylight is borne on the tide,
Where the tall rushes bend on the river's dark side;
And there, on the bank, by a storm shatter'd tree,
A slave mother rests with her child on her knee.

Above all is hush'd—not a sound to be heard,
But the wail of the wind, or the notes of a bird;
Yet a leaf as it falls, makes her shudder and start
And press with wild frenzy that child to her heart ...

'My child,' she cries madly, 'I fear all is o'er,
That nature exhausted can struggle no more;
From him who has sold thee far far have we fled,
But the slave from pursuit is but safe with the dead ...

Hark! hark! they are near us. Away to the stream.
There's a home in the depths where the stars brightly gleam.
A pray'r then a plunge, the pursuer's beguiled,
And death gives sweet freedom to mother and child.'

HUGH CHILDERS, FIRST LORD of the Admiralty, (as we have seen) had budgetary matters uppermost in his mind: the new technologies were expensive and one had to get the best returns when deploying one's ships. Unfortunately, the two Anglo-Saxon communities most expensive to service were at the 'bottom of the world'—in Australia and Chile—and for years money had been poured into what Frederick Walpole, father of our midshipman, termed the 'ugliest hole on the coast'. The politics of Valparaiso were likewise pretty nasty—although no one would ever admit it, what with British expatriates (not to mention British trade) depending on solidarity with the locals. Even slavery was looked upon benignly. The Honourable Fred, part of a squadron sent to South America and the Pacific in the 1840s, held forth on the subject in print:

The jolly, fat laughing face of the slaves give the lie to our philanthropists' stories; if liberty can better their condition, they will be happy indeed. Not that for one minute any man of sense can advocate Slavery; but it is only time that can reform the abuse; the majority of the present race of slaves are unworthy of freedom: they would hardly go back to their country if the offer were made to them ... Most of the residents here agree in saying that the slaves are generally well-treated; in common sense it must be so.²

Although general abolition came into effect in 1808 and made all slave-trading illegal, British subjects continued to shelter under foreign flags. The Act of 1811 made it punishable by 14 years' transportation. In 1824 it was declared an act of piracy (and a capital crime in areas under Admiralty jurisdiction). In 1837 this was softened somewhat to transportation for life. For a British officer, party to the European maritime conventions that followed in 1841 and committed to the apprehension of all offenders, the following apologia for slavery comes as rather unexpected:

Englishmen, who, of course, are not permitted to own slaves, though to their shame be it said, they often do, hire them of the natives: they are compelled to this, as no free man will perform the dirtier menial offices ... It seems impossible that any decree of State or Senate can make that degraded, sensual, unintellectual thing, a man, in all his might and majesty. No doubt we are all partly guilty of making him the animal he is; but being so, it is too late to alter him. Africa will produce slaves, will war within herself, and traffic in her children.¹

Such reasoning was a useful training in sophistry, dare one say, for someone who later followed an undistinguished career in politics.

WHEN IT CAME TO THE LABOUR TRADE in the Pacific 20 years later, anything smacking of slavery was pounced on by public watchdogs. Politicians—sooner or later—generally followed suit. In America slavery had split a nation and caused a bloody civil war (1861–1865): the North proclaiming the right of a man to freedom, the South a man's right to keep property bound to him by law.

South Sea Islands began to produce the cotton no longer forthcoming from the American southern States. They were not Imperial possessions but, as the planters often came from Britain or Australia, this augmented British trade and proved a definite advantage. On the downside, however, influential liberals and their rumblings of 'slaves' and 'slavery' brought the island trade into general debate. This unfortunately included the colony of Queensland—where it had become common practice to use the islanders (or Kanakas) as labour on sugar cane plantations.

The Act 'to Regulate and Control the Introduction and Treatment of Polynesian Laborers' of 4 March 1868 concerned that very colony. This was all very well but the actual recruiters were not always British subjects, neither did transgressions take place on soil where the Act had force. Had the offenders been the dropouts common in the islands they could have been dealt with quietly—for did they not betray decent standards, and who would make a fuss? As Captain Simpson remarked when the *Blanche* called at Ponape in June 1872:

There are several white men living on the island, who have at different times deserted from whalers, which formerly used to resort in great numbers to this island; some of these men have acquired land in the island, but the majority of them live with the natives, and can barely be distinguished from them by their mode of life.⁴



Naval schooner at anchor in a South Sea island lagoon, c.1880. From Henry Valentine Simpson, *Diaries* (MS. 39588) Manuscript Collection, National Library of Australia

Unfortunately, planters with a veneer of respectability—or indeed, at the very core of island society—colluded in the cynical exploitation of a people never quite able to match the tricks employed against them.

James L.A. Hope's *In Quest of Coolies* (first published in 1870)⁵ gives details of the rules and regulations obtaining in Queensland, which had little or no effect on men whose bases were in the New Hebrides or Fiji. 'Coolie quests' in foreign waters did not exercise official minds unduly: marginal problems, after all, belonged on the margin. Let the Navy police the seas on which Australia's exports made their way to Europe (with sugar and cotton presumably part of the cargo); let the Australia Squadron provide the maternal links so vital to the colonists' sense of well-being. Above all, let it refrain from meddling in external affairs.

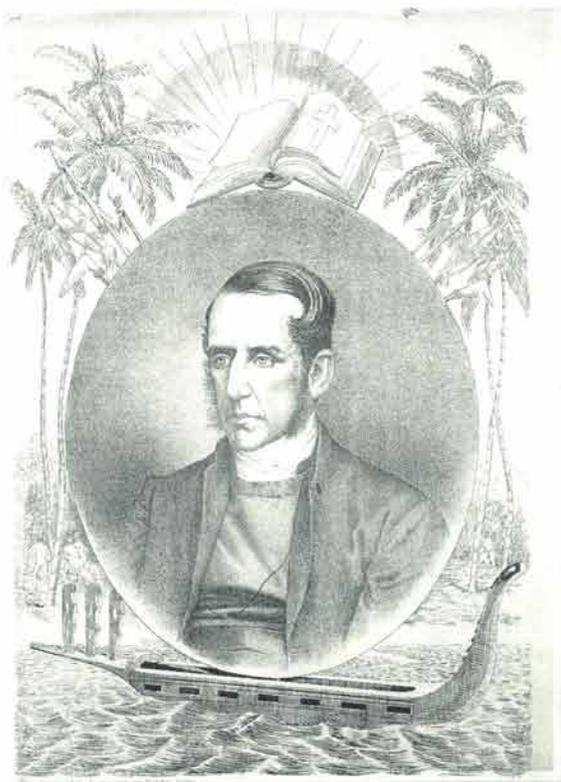
Junior officers tended to have rather more determination. In the matter of the schooner owned by the infamous Ross Lewin, action was immediate—if futile:

It happened, however, that H.M.S. *Rosario* was lying at Levuka and the attention of her captain, George Palmer, was at once directed to the *Daphne* and her cargo. By training and tradition the men of the Royal Navy were deadly enemies of slavers. Captain Palmer saw no reason to draw a distinction between the slavers who carried African negroes to America or Asia and slavers who carried slaves from the New Hebrides or the Banks group to Fiji. So he boarded the *Daphne* and examined her with care.⁶

What Palmer found led to the schooner's arrest, but given the nature of the 1868 Act it proved impossible to bring the owners to justice. All Palmer's indignation earned him was a rap across the knuckles from the Governor of Queensland when the latter expressed displeasure to the Colonial Office over Palmer's correspondence with the Aborigines' Protection Society

in which he certainly insinuates, if he does not positively state, that the Government of Queensland are conniving at violence and treachery practised on the natives. If such is his meaning, and I confess I can attach no other to his letter, I have no hesitation in saying that I believe it to be a most unfounded and unwarranted statement, and one which I feel sure in cooler moments he would be glad to retract.⁷

Things were already turning in Captain Palmer's favour when, in September 1871, the missionary Bishop of Melanesia met his death on a lonely island in the New Hebrides. The visit to Nukapu⁸ was singularly ill-advised, although—in exchanging his mitre for a martyr's crown—



Gibbs, Shullard & Co.
*The late John Coleridge
Patteson, D.D., 1871?*
lithograph: 47 x 33.4 cm
Pictorial Collection,
National Library of
Australia (S10701)

Bishop Patteson passed on a sense of mission hitherto lacking in the British Government. Shortly before, a labour vessel (most probably the *Carl*, the crew of which not only kidnapped but murdered scores of natives in the area) had arrived 'actually painted so as to resemble' Patteson's mission schooner, the *Southern Cross*. When John Coleridge Patteson appeared in his turn, the natives were ready. Rejoicing at his welcome ('the Nukapu natives had never shown themselves so friendly before'), he went ashore—to be slaughtered on the spot. His body was found floating in an abandoned canoe rolled up in native matting, 'still warm', the skull 'dreadfully battered'. 'The features of the deceased Bishop' (and this can have been of little consolation to those who mourned him) 'still retained their accustomed placid smile'.⁹

Dreadful Massacre
MURDER OF BISHOP PATTESON,
THE REV MR. ATKIN AND A CATECHIST.
ANOTHER SACRIFICE TO THE POLYNESIAN SYSTEM.¹⁰

Public outpourings of grief were matched only by the baying for the blood of those responsible. In this, the good burghers of Melbourne were well to the fore:

TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,

The Petition of Your Majesty's faithful subjects,
the citizens of Melbourne, in public meeting assembled,
Humbly showeth:

THAT your petitioners approach Your Majesty
with the assurance of their loyal attachment to Your Majesty's
throne and person.

That your petitioners desire to bring under the
notice of Your Majesty the means now adopted by certain of Your
Majesty's subjects to procure from the islands of the Pacific
labourers for the Queensland and Fiji plantations.

That your petitioners believe that these means
are commonly lawless and cruel and productive of much misery to
the islanders; and, moreover, through exciting jealousy and desire
of retaliation in the minds of the natives, they involve in great
danger both missionaries and lawful traders, and, further, that they
reflect disgrace upon the British name.

That in the opinion of your petitioners, while it
belongs to the authorities in Queensland and Fiji to do all in their
power to secure humane and just treatment of the islanders,
Imperial intervention is needed to prevent British subjects from
entrapping or forcibly abducting ignorant and comparatively
defenceless savages for labour in the plantations.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray Your
Majesty to take such steps as to Your Majesty may seem expedient for
putting an end to the evils to which your petitioners have referred.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

For and on behalf of the petitioners.

O. FENNICK, Mayor.

E.G. FITZGIBBON, Town Clerk.¹¹

The *Pacific Islanders Protection Act of 1872* quickly followed. Momentarily
buoyed by higher principles, colonial governors even accepted the one of
'user pays':

IN returning the Despatch from the Right Honourable the Secretary
of State for the Colonies, dated 27th June last, enclosing a copy of
the Act to suppress the crime of kidnapping in the South Seas, Mr.
Francis [the Chief Secretary for Victoria] desires to inform his
Excellency that the Government of this Colony will be prepared,
equally with the other Colonial Governments interested in the
matter, to defray the expense of any prosecutions that may take
place under the said Act, when such prosecutions are undertaken
with its concurrence.¹²

AMONG THE PAPERS of Dr Hedley Ralph Marston in the National Library of Australia can be found various items concerning the island labour-trade: an early paperback of Becke's 1913 story *Bully Hayes, Buccaneer*, articles from *Smith's Weekly* on Dr Murray's *Carl*, the beginnings of Marston's biography of his old friend Professor Archibald Watson, and allied memorabilia. Taken with the log of the *Carl* and photocopies of the published *British Parliamentary Papers* of 1872–74 they provide a fascinating and unusual insight into the labour-trading era.

Contrary to general perceptions of such documents, the Parliamentary Papers make absorbing reading. In June 1873, following the trial of kidnappers in both Sydney and Melbourne and when revelations about villainy on the high seas were a common occurrence, the House of Commons ordered the publication of

COPIES OR EXTRACTS 'of any COMMUNICATIONS of IMPORTANCE respecting OUTRAGES committed upon NATIVES of the SOUTH SEA ISLANDS which may have been received from the Governors of any of the Australasian Colonies, from the Senior Naval Officers Commanding in Australia and China, or from Her Majesty's Consuls in the Pacific, since the last Issue of Papers upon this subject.'¹³

Examination of the same shows how much easier naval action had become. Where before intervention *à la* Palmer was deemed interference, an officer's indignation now had official backing as remote consuls and normally reticent captains united in an impassioned onslaught on the loathsome practice of kidnapping.

The story of one outrage carried out at an unnamed South Sea Island 'by the crew of a vessel bearing the Tahitian flag, but commanded by an Englishman', was—for that very reason—deemed 'likely to prove a much exaggerated one'.¹⁴ (Englishmen, by definition of their 'Englishness', could hardly be involved and, whereas to natives all white men looked the same, for British officialdom it was nationality that counted.) Given the evidence, such touching faith in the English character may not be all that misplaced: Dr Murray, owner of the *Carl*, was an Irishman; Dowden the mate an American. Joseph Byrne, who inspired the Peruvian authorities to prey upon the Polynesians, was another Irishman. Ross Lewin, formerly of the RN and who was killed by the men of Tanna, was (presumably) British, if not (necessarily) English. Ben Pease was American; the infamous Benjamin Boyd a lowland Scot. William 'Bully' Hayes hailed from Cleveland, Ohio, while Watson, Scottish by nature of his antecedents, was the son of a well-to-do, part-Indian Victorian squatter nicknamed 'King of the Upper Murray'.

There appears to be little, if any, evidence of Hayes's involvement in kidnapping (his speciality being the stealing of ships) and he may well have been a victim of the odium affecting anyone remotely connected with

the labour trade. On the other hand, Professor Watson, Hedley Marston's venerable friend, had undeniable links with what is popularly termed 'blackbirding'. There is a multiplicity of books and papers written on the Pacific Island labour trade, yet none, I would venture, reveals the cynicism of the practice to quite the same extent as Archie Watson's log. Watson arrived in Fiji in 1871, aged 21, to oversee his father's land holdings in the islands. A year later he was a fugitive from justice, wanted on charges of kidnapping. Here are edited extracts of the journal he kept on board the *Carl* between January and May 1872; the incidents all occurred in the month of February as the brig sailed through the Kingsmill Islands towards the Carolines:

Saturday 3rd 6 am. Land in sight from Mast head on weather bow. Braced up and stood for it. Anchored about 2½ miles from shore after having sailed round a reef known on the Charts as the 'Nautilus Shoal'. Natives came off. In most beautiful canoes, made of planks sewed together with sinnet [braided cordage]. Traded freely, mats, sinnet, baskets, shells, endage, & for tobacco no other trade of use. They make their own pipes of hardwood, and are stark naked except the women who wear a short grass 'liku'. Boat went ashore and brought off a woman and a man to look after her.

Sunday 4th Got under weigh and stood in 1½ miles closer. Let go in 7 fathoms. A great many canoes came off. Many natives remained aboard during the day trading for tobacco. 1 good mat for a small piece of villanous tobacco ... Bought several copper bolts from natives and had the puggery [scarf] taken off my hat while on my head—8 men 4 women.

Monday 5th Several canoes which had apparently been fishing all night came alongside to sell fish, of which they had a great quantity (flying fish). After buying what they had prevailed on 5 men and a boy to remain aboard ...

Thursday 15th Close to a small island (Mulgrave's). Tremendous tide up. Several most wonderful canoes came off full of men and women ... Some of the men were tatoood all over the body, 10 very fine guys or stays to the mast of each canoe. Very fine coloured mats round the loins of several. The others had immense likus of stained 'vau'. They wear their hair which is straight and fine tied in a knot on top of their head. 6 men 1 boy and 1 woman remained on board by the request of the Dr.

Thursday 29th A Little rain. Hove to off McAskills Island [Pingelap]. Boat went ashore and got some coconuts very cheap for tobacco. One white man was on the island and he said there had been an attack made on some natives by a schooner 2 days before who had either killed or taken one away. *Girls very shy* in consequence.¹⁵

For words like 'request' and 'prevailed upon', one should substitute words like 'false promises', 'enticed aboard', 'seized' and 'fastened': the Reverend Edward Doane, a missionary, had no qualms in doing so in his own version of the same events written from Ponape Island in the Carolines.¹⁶ For 'very shy' he might have used something like 'frightened witless'.

SURPRISINGLY, WATSON'S INCRIMINATING LOG remained safe and secret during the years of exile in Europe (throughout his tenure of the Chair of Anatomy at the University of Adelaide it lay buried in the museum crypt). Others who played a more honourable part in the blackbirding saga tended to go public early: Captain Palmer wrote *Kidnapping in the South Seas* about his trials with the *Daphne* in 1871; Albert Markham, former shipmate of Charles James Norcock on the *Blanche*, published his account of meeting with the *Carl* in 1873.¹⁷ Once the 'Kidnapping Act' was in operation, the Royal Navy steamed into action—fired up with crusading zeal and the force of the written word. Now that the *Carl* was out of action, who better to start with than William 'Bully' Hayes?

'We are off to the islands at last,' Midshipman Walpole wrote in great excitement:

We left yesterday. We are going in search of a notorious kidnapper and pirate named Captain Hayes who has for a long time been the dread of the small trading vessels about the islands.¹⁸

The prospect of prize-money or finding 'a store of plunder' lay before the youngster's eyes as he penned a sketch of the balding one-eared Hayes (no wonder the brigand escaped them):

We have got descriptions of him also [from] a detective who knows him. He is six foot two high and broad in proportion. He is covered with hair has both ears cut off and a great gash across the face so that we shall have no difficulty in identifying him if we catch him.¹⁹

Accounts of the American's misdeeds likewise improved with the telling:

If we catch him he will be hung and a great many of his crew too as they are almost all murderers and people who have run from the law. Captain was a slave captain on the west coast of Africa before he came here but he made it too hot for him there and went to New Zealand where he chartered a ship to carry a cargo. Got a cargo of other people's goods to take to Sydney. Instead of taking them there he went to California and sold the cargo and the ship whose charter he had not paid and bought a small schooner which he used for kidnapping. He lost that and another one. He has now got a brig which he uses for kidnapping. He also boards merchantmen and

plunders them, one of them resisting a little while ago he shot three of her crew.²⁰

For Walpole the thrill of the chase was everything, but senior officers took the matter of retribution more seriously. The dedicated Captain Douglas of HMS *Cossack* would have made an example of Archibald Watson but his target ran away;²¹ when it came to investigating 'kidnapping, and skull-hunting among the South Sea Islands', Captain Simpson of the *Blanche* was equally zealous. Midshipman Robin Walpole did not comment on the labour trade as such, nor did he invoke pictures of pathetic—or, indeed, 'jolly laughing'—slaves but, like Walpole's father, his commanding officer suggested that a properly regulated labour trade might be beneficial (especially for those who would be labouring):

The general result of my observations is, that during this year [1872] there has been no labour trade or kidnapping amongst either the Solomon, Caroline, or Marshall Groups; that during previous years there has been a large and most iniquitous kidnapping trade going on among the Solomon Islands, and to a certain extent among the Caroline Islands, but that few natives have at any time been taken from the Marshall group. I have also great doubts if the natives of any of these islands go willingly, except occasionally as part crew, with a captain they know well. The above, however, does not refer to the Gilbert Group, where there has been, and continues to be an extensive labour and kidnapping trade carried on by Fijian vessels. Large numbers of the natives of these islands evidently go willingly, but many cases of kidnapping are also reported. Could this be suppressed, and the trade properly regulated? I am of opinion that great advantage, both to the natives of these islands and to those to which they emigrate, would be the result, for this group of islands (Gilbert) is at the same time the most barren and unproductive, and the most thickly populated of any in the Pacific. They are a fine healthy race, but infanticide is reported to be common amongst them to check the increase of the population, for which there is no adequate room.²²

Trading vessels, meanwhile, continued to ply their way through the islands, and the islanders continued to take revenge. For those ordered to protect natives at the expense of Europeans it proved a touch confusing: sometimes mixed signals from Whitehall brought singular results—and, sometimes, British justice seemed hardly just at all.

- 1 From 'The Slave Mother: A Descriptive Song'; words by E.L. Blanchard, music by Henry West. Sydney: H. Marsh, 1871?
- 2 Frederick Walpole, RN, *Four Years in the Pacific: in Her Majesty's Ship 'Collingwood' from 1844 to 1848 by Lieut. the Hon. Fred. Walpole*, RN. London: Richard Bentley, 1849, pp. 44–45.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 45–49.
- 4 Dr Hedley Ralph Marston (1900–1965), Papers. *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1873, L: Letters from the Admiralty: Enclosure in Australian letter of 11 December 1872, dated Sydney, 15 November 1872 (MS 1682/68/4196).
- 5 James L.A. Hope, *In Quest of Coolies*. London: Henry S. King, 1870.
- 6 Thomas Dunbabin, *Slavers of the South Seas*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935, p. 194.
- 7 *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1873, L: Queensland: Despatches from the Governor, No. 21 (MS 1682/68/4117).
- 8 One of the Santa Cruz group of islands.
- 9 *Sydney Mail*, 11 November 1871.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1873, L: Victoria: Despatches from the Governor, Enclosure 1 in No. 8, Melbourne, 28 December 1871 (MS 1682/68/4065).
- 12 *Ibid.*: Enclosure in No. 10: Memorandum for His Excellency the Right Honourable Viscount Canterbury, &c. &c.: from J.G. Francis, Chief Secretary, Melbourne, 9 September 1872 (MS 1682/68/4075).
- 13 *Ibid.*: *South Seas Islands*, printed 12 June 1873 by order of the House of Commons. (I have used Marston's collection of the *British Parliamentary Papers* wherever possible, however the collection is incomplete.)
- 14 *Ibid.*, 1873, L: 'Table of Contents: Letters from the Admiralty: No. 32, dated 13 March 1872'.
- 15 Log of the brig *Carl* (MS 1682/68).
- 16 See American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 'Mission to Melanesia, 1852–1909', in Pacific Manuscripts Bureau microfilm 743, Vol. 5, 'Correspondence and reports 1871–80', letters C–W, Rev. Edward T. Doane to Rev. A.G. Clark, DD, Ponape, 21 March 1872, pp. 70–74 (original in Houghton Library, Harvard).
- 17 George Palmer, *Kidnapping in the South Seas: Being a Narrative of a Three Months' Cruise of H.M. Rosario*. Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1871; Albert Hastings Markham, *Cruise of the 'Rosario' amongst the New Hebrides and Santa Cruz Islands, Exposing the Recent Atrocities Connected with the Kidnapping of Natives in the South Seas*. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1873.
- 18 Robert 'Robin' Horace Walpole, RN (1854–1931), Letters, 1870–1874 (MS 9110/4): Robert Walpole to Mrs Laura Walpole, HMS *Blanche*, Sydney, 12 May 1872.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 For a full account of Archibald Watson's connection with the *Carl*, see Jennifer M.T. Carter, *Painting the Islands Vermilion*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1999.
- 22 *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1873, L: Letters from the Admiralty: Enclosure in Australian letter of 11 December 1872, dated Sydney, 15 November 1872 (MS 1682/68/4211).



CHAPTER 13

SHOT AND TORTOISESHELL: BRITANNIA WAIVES THE RULES

Of late years a number of fast, though small, sailing vessels have been fitted out in Sydney and sent to the Fiji Islands, for the purpose of kidnapping the natives and taking them to Queensland to work on the sugar plantations.

The Government appears to have only just become aware of this growing evil, whereas it ought have been put down some years ago.¹

FOLLOWING THE DEATH of the first Bishop of Melanesia everyone knew about blackbirding. In dying, Coleridge Patteson concentrated the minds of his fellow countrymen most marvellously. There were petitions; there were meetings.² The Pacific Islanders Protection Bill was drafted, approved and enacted. And, when made uncomfortably aware of its sins of omission, the Imperial Government commissioned the first of five speedy schooners for the purpose of patrolling the islands on anti-blackbirding duty, the fact did not

Oswald W.B. Brierty (1817–1894)

First Arrival of White Men amongst the Islands of the Louisiade Archipelago, c. 1860
watercolour; 61 x 108.5 cm

Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (R240)

escape Midshipman Walpole, perennially strapped, as he was, for cash. Transfer to one of these schooners (as he explained to his father) would be a helpful step towards solvency:

What I want you to do is to let me have £50 to pay off debts which I promise to do and get some clothes which I want very much indeed and then try by using any interest in your power to get me appointed to one of five man of war schooners being built for the suppression of the slave trade among the islands. I shall then *start fair*, be in the way of no temptation and also I hope be happy.¹

Albert Hastings Markham, the 30-year-old senior lieutenant, had been equally desperate to leave the *Blanche*, and in October 1871 he at last succeeded. When the shipwrecked mariners of the *Megara* arrived to relieve the crew, with Charles Norcock going one way and Markham the other, Norcock made no effort to hide his joy either:

The time in Sydney was not only our last, but was very short; the former great delay caused by the *Megara's* loss made the Commodore anxious to get us away. The 11th was the day named for our turning over to the *Malacca* and delivering the *Blanche* up to her new people: our Captain having decided to go home with us. Commander Challis of *Rosario* was pro tem appointed to the command of the *Blanche* and our 1st Lieut. Markham as Acting Commander to re-commission the *Rosario*; much satisfaction was shown by all concerned in the homeward bound voyage at the latter arrangement which left the 1st Lieut. of *Rosario* (C.F.M. Gordon) to do the duties of Senior lieutenant with both ships' companies.⁴

Had he but known it, a most uncomfortable time was in store for the man described as:

our unpopular Senior Lieut. (A.H. Markham) whose exceedingly disagreeable manner has secured for him anything but the most favorable wishes from those subordinate to him; I should not here mention the fact, were he not well deserving of a lasting bad name, I am sorry I cannot say less for him, a man who has prevented our whole commission from being, what it might have been, a happy one and who has on many occasions made things very miserable.⁵

BEFORE HIS DEATH, Bishop Patteson had written:

I desire to protest by anticipation against any punishment being inflicted upon natives of these islands who may cut off vessels, or

kill boats' crews, until it is clearly shewn that these acts are not done in the way of retribution for outrages first committed by white men.⁶

Unaware that public indignation was at its height, acting Commander Markham set out for the islands with revenge uppermost in his mind, and natives—rather than whites—his chief concern. Markham knew what was expected, since the *Blanche* had meted out punishment in the Solomons some years before and:

Landed 62 men & officers to destroy the village at the head of Rondora bay (the natives of the place having been guilty of murdering the crew of an English schooner the year before) and capturing the vessel. The ship kept up a fire from her starboard side, covering the landing party. At noon they returned leaving the whole place in a blaze and having taken all worth carrying off amongst them, a good seine of native manufacture (cocoa nut), a barrel of white paint (with English label), 2 fowling pieces also English and a few small curiosities. In one of the huts there were 26 human heads arranged overhead as a sort of ornament or trophy of their success and feasts.⁷

Not that it had been plain sailing:

One of our men was unfortunately fatally wounded by a revolver shot from one of our own party who was discharging his weapon whilst coming down to the boats or as another story gives it (I being on board doing duty) a cap had jammed the barrel of one of the revolvers and whilst clearing it the charge exploded and proved so fatal.⁸

Flying the flag was never easy, with the seat of command located in distant Whitehall; before long, Albert Markham of *Rosario* was experiencing a shift in opinion. In the next decade others would continue to punish the natives as if they were recalcitrant schoolboys daring to oppose the authority of the Head Prefect. Like Markham, they would have their own knuckles rapped instead. One moment it would be in order to sling avenging shot and shell with gay abandon; the next, those very natives would be seen as victims worthy of Her Britannic Majesty's protective care. When official opinion turned against him, Markham defended himself with enough vigour to survive.

The following extracts from Admiralty correspondence illustrate the difficulty of working under an authority half a world away.⁹ Acting Commander Markham threw himself into his task with gusto, as he duly reported back to his Commodore in a letter of November 1871. It was

February of the following year, however, before that letter was passed on to London in an official communication. By then a second letter had joined it. When Their Lordships answered in May and failed to give the expected approval, it must have come as a bit of a shock:

Admiralty, 16 May 1872

Sir,

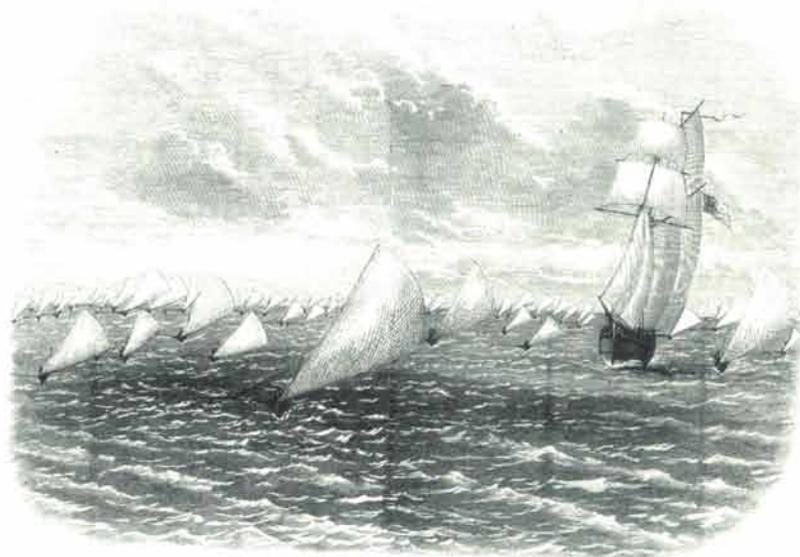
With reference to paragraph 2 of your letter 25 [November] 1871 (forwarded in Commodore Stirling's letter No. 17, 27 [February] 1872) in which you state that, while steaming in H.M.S. *Rosario* along the Island of Nguna or Montagu, you 'threw a few shot and shell' amongst a party of Natives assembled near one of the villages destroyed on the previous day, I am commanded by my Lords &c. to signify their direction to you to report if you are aware whether any casualties occurred amongst the natives on this occasion.

2. My Lords also desire you will report generally whether you can give them any further information as to the loss of life inflicted on the various occasions when force was used against the Islanders more especially during your proceedings at the Island of Nukapu, when as stated in your letter 12 February 1872 you had reason to believe that the loss of life 'must have been severe'.

I am &c.,

[signed] Robert Hall

Immediately Markham called on a chum, Navigating Lieutenant Benjamin Jackson, to help him out (they were both in England on leave):



The War Schooner 'Alcidity' at the King-mill Islands, 1874
From a sketch by Lieutenant M.P. O'Callaghan, RN
The Australasian Sketcher, 18 April 1874, p. 12
Newspapers and Microfiche Collection, National Library of Australia

21 Eccleston Square

15 June 1872

Sir,

I have the honor to request that you will furnish me, to the best of your recollection, with the orders which I gave to the officers of quarters on the 15th of November last, when fire was opened on the island of Nguna, also as to what were the objects named and the manner in which the shot fell, also the distance which the *Rosario* was off the island, and the elevation which was given to the guns, also whether you heard me say, when we steamed round, what my object was in firing at this island.

I would also request you to state your opinion as to whether any loss of life was sustained amongst the natives during the different occasions that force was used against them.

I have &c.,

[signed] A.H. Markham

Lieutenant

Jackson duly obliged, giving a good idea of the Navy's *modus operandi* and falling short on total support:

Elgin Villa, Redhill, Surrey

17 June 1872

Sir,

In reply to your letter of the 15th Inst., I beg to state that when the *Rosario* was steaming round from Havannah harbour to the Island of Nguna in November last year, you told me in course of conversation that you intended firing some shot and shell in different directions about the Island, to let the natives see that a man of war had power to reach them in the bush, with a view of frightening them so as to prevent a recurrence of the murders of white men.

The *Rosario* I should think was from 1000 to 15,000 ... yards off the island while firing, and the officers of the Quarters had orders not to fire without directions from you, they were called up on the bridge, and I think the Captains of the Guns as well, and the objects pointed out to them and the elevations given by you, after consulting with Lieutenant Sanders and myself. The first 2 or 3 projectiles were fired in the direction of some Natives on the beach, and fell well over them, the elevation used being much in excess of that required by the distance; the other projectiles at clumps of trees and mounds of earth, except the last, a shell from the 7 inch gun which was fired with extreme elevation and fell on the other side of the island.

My impression is that no Natives were killed by us when force was used against them, I am hardly qualified to give an opinion with reference to Nukapu Island in the Swallow Group, but I remember asking Dr. Whitney (who I think was in your boat) his idea of the loss sustained by the Natives, and he replied that he did not believe they had lost a man.

All the foregoing is to the best of my recollection as I have no journal or notes to refer to, my things from Sydney not having arrived in England.

I have &c.,

(signed) Benj. S. Jackson

If the correspondence was tedious, Commodore Stirling's enquiries were exhaustive. Their Lordships concluded in their turn that there was 'probably no loss of life' and 'probably the natives of Nukapu did not suffer in the encounter'. Markham was exonerated as having acted 'within the spirit' of his orders following Bishop Patteson's death (yet taken to task for 'the inconsiderate expressions which rendered such enquiry necessary' and rebuked for confusing 'punishment' with 'intimidation'). Then, in a sudden about-face, which illustrates the ambiguity of a naval officer's position in the Western Pacific, came the summing up:

My Lords consider it their duty to make the above observations, but they have now the pleasure of approving generally of your proceedings in a service which their Lordships are well aware was one of more than usual difficulty —

I am &c.,

[signed] Vernon Lushington¹⁰

It was over. A later fall from grace in 1903 (when Markham as second-in-command was involved in sinking the Mediterranean flagship off Tripoli)¹¹ likewise proved only temporary, and the knighthood eventually bestowed upon Admiral Markham must have galled Vice-Admiral Norcock no end. The *Blanche*, the ship they both left in October 1871, continued her work in the Pacific for another four years.

HUGH MASSY, another of the officers whose account of service on the Australia Station is in the manuscripts collection of the National Library of Australia, arrived in 1874. By then victim had turned avenger:

The first thought of every savage is revenge and as they look on all white men whatever their nationality as belonging to the same tribe, they take every opportunity of slaying them in retribution for some wrong done them at a former period.¹²

These remarks concerning Queensland's Aboriginal population applied equally well to the Pacific, although in the case of the islanders it was not lack of food but loss of freedom that caused the trouble. The Aborigines generally exacted a terrible price, although Massy noted an exception:

I know of but one case of their having assisted a Shipwrecked Crew which is cited by Captain John Moresby R.N. in *Adventures and Discoveries in 'New Guinea'*. It was one of the surviving boats crews of the ill fated brig *Maria* which was wrecked on the Great Barrier Reef, and who when they landed on the coast were received with the greatest kindness by the Natives, and supplied with food altho' the natives themselves were almost starving. Captain Moresby went to their rescue in the *Basilisk* and very properly made the poor savages what to them was a handsome present, of Biscuits etc. for their kindness. Another Shipwrecked Boat's Crew of the same vessel who had the misfortune to land a few miles further along the coast were all murdered.¹³

The South Sea islanders were every bit as unforgiving and their memories of past wrongs equally long, yet it very much depended on where one ran aground. If the natives did prove helpful, their actions saw them treated like the owners of some isolated country estate who had gone out of their way to help benighted travellers. Here is Captain Moore of HMS *Barrosa* thanking the Head Chief of the Ailu group, Marshall Islands, on behalf of Victoria Regina:

Sir

I have to thank you in the name of the Queen of Great Britain for the kindness and hospitality with which you and your people treated the five British subjects wrecked on your island in August 1871. I regret that I was unable to thank you personally for these kind services, but when the boat arrived on board night had closed in, and it being unsafe to remain so close to the reefs, I was obliged, although reluctantly, to proceed on my voyage.

I have to request that should any ship again be lost on your islands, you will treat her people with the same kindness and generosity with which you treated these five men, and by doing so you will everafter secure the gratitude and affection of their fellow countrymen.

With this letter will be forwarded to you a present from the shipwrecked men and the people of this ship as a small token of their appreciation of your conduct.¹⁴

In other groups including the Solomons (the scene of Bishop Patteson's demise), the natives killed shipwrecked sailors almost every time. Alexander Ferguson, master of the schooner *Captain Cook*, took a rather novel view in suggesting the Imperial Government should share the blame:

I think that it is highly necessary that one of Her Majesty's ships should be appointed to cruise in these waters. In fact the Imperial Government are pledged to send a ship there, as when Her Majesty's ship *Blanche*, Captain Montgomerie, visited New Georgia to retaliate upon the natives for the massacre of the captain and crew of the schooner *Marian Rennie*, he told the natives that if they would procure two tons of tortoiseshell in one year he would accept that as an indemnity for their misdeeds. This the natives promised to do, and the *Blanche* took her departure. That is now three years ago, yet the natives have never been called upon for their indemnity. This breaking of the faith on the part of the Imperial Government is very bad, as the natives now consider that they may capture ships and massacre their crews as they please, knowing that nothing serious will result from it.¹⁵

As a succession of reports from naval officers and honest traders like Captain Ferguson came flooding in, the emerging pattern could no longer be ignored: any white men unlucky enough to strike the coral reefs around an island lagoon were likely to be hacked to death. In some cases they were eaten. Her Majesty's ships were in no real danger, for reasons that will become obvious:

[Ualan and Ponape] are the two most civilized islands. At the rest of them the natives are very fierce and treacherous. Of course a man of war was safe enough there as the only way the traders can keep them in order is by telling them a big ship will come and kill them all. It is very hard at first to get them to come alongside they are always afraid we are going to kill them. At the Solomon Islands it is different: they are brave people and do not know what a man of war is. I think they have been fired at before though, as directly we fired two blank guns they all lay down flat on the ground till all the noise was over.¹⁶

In August 1872 Captain Simpson of the *Blanche* set off for Rubiana Island under orders to avenge the crew of the *Marian Rennie*:

This harbour [Ferguson] only considered practicable for small schooners, and had himself not ventured inside, but had only anchored in the narrow entrance across which the *Blanche*, when here previously, had moored to trees whilst she fired through the

passage upon the village inside; finding, however, there was no anchorage outside, I steamed through this entrance and found a most excellent harbour inside, in the middle of King Londau's settlements, giving me complete command of all his houses, coconut trees, &c., so that I could destroy the whole without firing a shot, and without the least risk of loss of life.¹⁷

In the watery playing fields of the Pacific the rules of engagement were usually simple: soften up the opposition with a little shot and shell, then invite them to join the team. Captain Simpson was more of a sportsman than Markham of the *Rosario*—first, he ensured that his opponents were conversant with the rules. There was, to begin with, the matter of the fine—which Chief Londau (the murderer of the schooner's crew) refused to pay. Anyway, as the captain reported back, he was reliably informed that:

the men who had signed the treaty with Captain Montgomery were not chiefs at all, but head men who could speak English, that they were totally ignorant of the quantity of tortoiseshell it would take to weigh three tons, but signed anything to get rid of the man-of-war ... that the chief here could not collect such an amount of tortoiseshell in 12 or 14 years ... consequently any one who knows anything of the character and habits of this people, knows it is utterly impossible to enforce the payment of such a fine.¹⁸

What was to be done? Robin Walpole put the arrangement concerning King Londau quite succinctly:

Where we are now we fired some shot and shell at the natives ashore: they have taken two trading ships¹⁹—We have also made a neighbouring island to war with them. They are under pain of death to bring the head of the King of this island to the ship.²⁰

The story, of course, is rather more complicated than that, and the resourceful Simpson proved himself a master of the game. Unwilling to destroy the Navy's moral authority by punishing the undeserving and destroying their villages (as per the Montgomerie agreement), he realised all the same that it was 'absolutely necessary to do something'. Rather like Captain Moore of the *Barrosa*, then, he treated the 'two real chiefs' of Rubiana as men of honour—as indeed they turned out to be—although the methods Simpson himself used were somewhat underhand:

Treaty between Cortland Herbert Simpson, Captain of Her Britannic Majesty's Ship 'Blanche', on the one side, and the Chiefs Isimo and Beateah of Rubiana Island, on the other.

THE tortoiseshell awarded by Captain Montgomerie not being forthcoming, and Londau, the chief who destroyed the schooner *Marian Rennie* and murdered the white crew, having distinctly refused to supply it, the chiefs Isimo and Beateah undertake to execute Londau for these murders in consideration of my desisting from carrying out the treaty entered into by Captain Montgomerie with the nominal chiefs, Tepalla, George, and Heggarty ... And as they state it is impossible to carry out this execution while a man-of-war is present, through Londau having hidden in the bush, they promise to give satisfactory proof to Mr. Alexander Ferguson, master of the schooner *Captain Cook*, that this execution has been carried out within three months from this date. Mr. Ferguson on his part undertakes to forward the information to the Commodore or to the senior naval officer at Sydney.

In witness hereof we have signed our names respectively on board Her Britannic Majesty's Ship *Blanche* at Rendova Harbour, Rubiana Island, Solomon Group, this 15th day of August 1872.

(Signed) C.H. SIMPSON, Captain, H.M.S. *Blanche*

His X mark. ISIMO

His X mark. BEATEAH

Witness to signatures.

WALTER B. BRIDGES, Senior Lieutenant, H.M.S. *Blanche*

ALEX. M. FERGUSON, Master, *Captain Cook*²¹

A further letter from Captain Ferguson confirmed that the terms of the treaty had been fulfilled:

At 4 p.m. of the 8th September four natives came off to my schooner and reported to me that the chiefs Isimo and Beatah had just executed Londo, and that they were awaiting my coming on shore to identify the body. I accordingly pulled ashore in my boat, and found the body of Londo on the beach with two tomahawk wounds in the head; life extinct. To save desecration of the body by the natives, I took possession of it and had it conveyed alongside my vessel, where a bagful of stones was attached to it, and after the boat pulled out to sea it was launched overboard.

I have no hesitation in pronouncing the body delivered to me as that of the real Londo.

I beg humbly to suggest that a man-of-war should again visit this vicinity as early as you may find it convenient to send one; and I think that if the captain of her was made the bearer of some slight present, say a rifle each, for the two chiefs Isimo and Beatah, by way of recognising the service they have rendered to civilisation by ridding this district of a notorious murderer of 22 white men, the crews of the schooners *Pearl* and *Marian Rennie*.²²

It was one thing to employ Australian Aborigines as 'black troopers', quite another to organise islanders as vigilantes, and Commodore Stirling said so:

In this instance I think the making two chiefs promise to execute the other was not judicious, especially after a fine had been imposed, though not collected, and Captain Simpson has been informed accordingly.²³

James Goodenough (who took over from Stirling in 1873) was instructed by the Admiralty:

to give strict instructions to the officers commanding the ships under your orders to be guarded in their dealings with the natives and on no account to enter into illegal treaties of such a nature in future.²⁴

In the case of the *Lavinia*, a bona fide trader in oil and *bêche-de-mer*, whose crew was massacred in May 1872, a similar agreement, described by Midshipman Walpole, seems to have met with no rebuke:

At another island called New Florida we made one nation go to war with another. [They] promise in two months time to get the three chiefs who headed an attack on the British schooner *Lavinia*. If they do not bring them we kill the king and destroy all their villages and crops of yams and tara root.²⁵

OCCASIONALLY, BUT ALL TOO INFREQUENTLY, tales of shipwreck and cannibalism were enlivened by a dash of something just that little bit different. 'Whilst sailing along the northern coast of the Island of New Britain,' wrote Captain Ferguson, 'in the vicinity of the mountain known as "Mother and Daughter"'

I was very much surprised to observe a white child in one of the canoes which came alongside the vessel ... Next morning, at daylight, I stood in with the vessel to within a cable's length of the shore, when I perceived a white woman carrying a bundle of wood upon her head; the child also could plainly be seen about half-a-mile distant with a group of natives.²⁶

It was enough to stir the Royal Navy into chivalrous reaction. After failing to locate the pair, Captain Simpson of *Blanche* learned that 18 months earlier a canoe with two white men and two white women had landed 'on a small island in the channel between the Duke of York and New Britain Islands', where one man was killed and one woman died. The remaining couple was sold to the New Britain natives.

This unusual instance of what we might perhaps term 'whitebirding' caused consternation in official circles. Somewhere down the track the fate of the man was forgotten and the woman became the centre of the affair. It was one thing, after all, for 'one of us' to enjoy the intimate companionship of a dusky maiden; the possibility of a white woman clasped in the arms of a 'nigger' was horrible beyond contemplation—not that it was mentioned as such in either official or unofficial correspondence.²⁷ Robin Walpole told what happened:

In the middle of [Blanche Harbour] there is a large rock shaped like a nine-pin and at the bottom of this rock is an Indian village built partly on piles and partly on the rock a most wonderfully made place. At New Britain the natives are something like the common nigger about the head specially. Their hair is woolly but instead of black most of them have it yellow. The women or at least some of them are very pretty.²⁸

And one of them supposedly was white:

At New Britain we had been told that there was a white woman that the natives kept as a prisoner there we were told to get her if possible—We got the King's brother on board and put him in irons as a hostage and told the King that if he gave the white woman and her child up we would let the native go and give him some beads tobacco [and] knives. We also sent the cutter away but the natives would not let the cutter land so we had to fire on them. Several of the men [were] hit with stones but though there were lots of spears flying about no one was hurt by them. Just as the cutter was hoisted up the prisoner managed to get his feet out of the irons and jumped overboard and swam for a canoe and got in. We lowered the cutter, the 2nd lieutenant and I were in her. We caught up the canoe with the man in her; they all jumped overboard except one and so did the natives in the other canoes and we fired on them. I think we managed to kill a few. I shot the one in the canoe about 12 yards off just as he was taking aim at me with his spear. The man who escaped from the ship was shot too but we never saw the white woman. As we were going out of harbour the next day a native held the white child up and then ran into the bush. We steamed right round the harbour at New Britain which we named Blanche Harbour; it is an enormous harbour quite sheltered ... I think we shall go back again after we have taken in provisions and coals and get the white woman by force if they will not give her up quietly. They say the natives took a schooner here about a year ago and [ate] everybody (16 men and the Capt'n) in her but the white woman and her child (she was the Captain's wife).²⁹

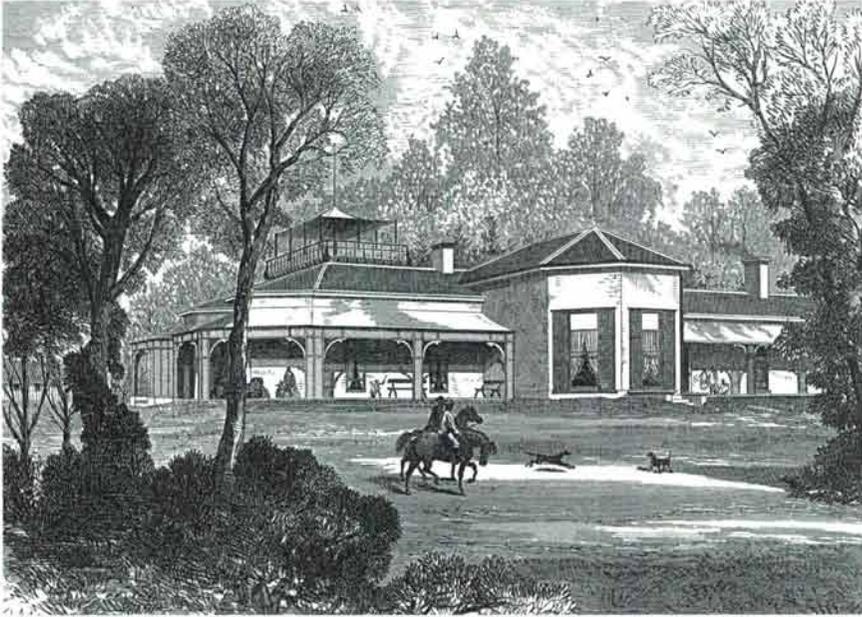
The official report was rather different: a skirmish with the natives, and any shots fired strictly in self-defence. Wisely—from now on it would pay officers to be economical when reporting on such encounters—Captain Simpson played down the idea of substantial bloodshed ('we had to teach them what firearms [were] by killing a dozen or so of them,' said his midshipman, perhaps with youthful exaggeration³⁰), and took the word of his interpreters as an excuse to sail away:

one said the woman and child were not white but yellow, the other said they were white, but they both asserted most positively that they were not Europeans, but that their mother was a black woman, and that they were natives of the village where they had been seen.³¹

'I was anxious to examine a magnificent harbour reported by Navigating Lieutenant Greet,' he continued, and moved on hurriedly to do so. The bay where it all happened, Simpson named 'Albino Bay' in vindication of his decision, the harbour Simpson Harbour. It was an ignominious departure for the *Blanche*, 'a corvette of 1268 tons burthen carrying six rifled guns, two large ones of about 6½ tons weight each, and the other four about 52 cwt.'³² Simpson today is remembered more for the results of his exploration of the waters around New Guinea, as he doubtless would have preferred.

- 1 John Morison, journal entitled 'Fifteen Months Abroad: containing an account of a voyage from London to Sydney, also a tour through the Australian colonies, Tasmania, and New Zealand, with notes on the return journey to London, calling at the Cape of Good Hope and Lisbon', April 1872 – January 1873 (MS 8167), p. 44.
- 2 See, for example, Edward March, *The Polynesian Labour Traffic, and the Murder of Bishop Patteson: The Proceedings of a Public Meeting Held in London, on the 13th December 1871: with the Private Diary of Mr. Consul March of Fiji, and an Introduction*. London: William Tweedie, 1872.
- 3 Robert 'Robin' Horace Walpole, RN (1854–1931), Letters, 1870–1874 (MS 9110/9): Robert Walpole to the Hon. Frederick Walpole, MP, HMS *Blanche*, Sydney, 25 November 1872.
- 4 Lieutenant Charles James Norcock, RN (1847–1933), 'Private Journal, 20.7.1870 – 24.4.1874' (MS 5897): entry for October 1871.
- 5 *Ibid.*: entry for July 1871.
- 6 Quoted by the Rev. Dr Steel, *Sydney Mail*, 11 November 1871.
- 7 Charles James Norcock, RN (1847–1933), 'Semi Official Journal on *Blanche*, 1.2.1868 – 30.3.1870' (MS 5897): entry for 11 September 1868, Bangetta Island, Solomons.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 See 'Australia Station Royal Navy' RNAS 13: 'Pacific Islands 1857–76', Vol. 1 (mfm G1810, reel 12).
- 10 *Ibid.*, Admiralty, 20 November 1872.
- 11 The Admiral of the Mediterranean Fleet, Rear-Admiral George Tryon, CB, lost his life in the incident and of the 642 on board HMS *Victoria* 358 were drowned: W.P. Gosset, *The Lost Ships of the Royal Navy, 1793–1900*. London: Mansell Publishing, 1986, p. 124.
- 12 Hugh Massy, RN, 'Four Years on the Australian Station', 1877 (MS 8520): manuscript account of the years 1873–1877 set out in chapters, p. 98.

- 13 Ibid., pp. 98–99.
- 14 *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1873, L: Letters from the Admiralty, No. 37, sub-enclosure 2: Captain Lewis J. Moore to Commodore Stirling, HMS *Barrosa*, Ebon Island, 10 May 1872 (MS 1682/68/4146).
- 15 Ibid., No. 31, sub-enclosure 2: Mr Ferguson to the Colonial Treasurer, Brisbane, 27 November 1871 (MS 1682/68/4138).
- 16 Walpole, op. cit. (MS 9110/6): Robert Walpole to Mrs Laura Walpole, 24 July 1872, San Christoval Island, Solomon Group.
- 17 *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1873, L: Letters from the Admiralty, No. 43, enclosure in Australian letter of 11 December 1872: Captain Simpson's report of proceedings of the *Blanche*, Sydney, 15 November 1872 (MS 1682/68/4202).
- 18 Ibid., Captain Simpson, HMS *Blanche*, Rendova Harbour, Rubiana Island, 16 August 1872 (MS 1682/68/4210).
- 19 *The Pearl and the Marion Rennie*. Ibid., Letters from the Admiralty, No. 44, sub-enclosure: Captain Ferguson to Commodore Stirling, Rubiana, Solomon Group, 2 November 1872 (MS 1682/68/4214).
- 20 See Walpole, op. cit. (MS 9110/6): Robert Walpole to Mrs Laura Walpole, 24 July 1872, San Christoval Island, Solomon Group.
- 21 *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1873, L: Letters from the Admiralty, No. 43, sub-enclosure in Australian letter of 11 December 1872 (MS 1682/68/4210–4211).
- 22 Ibid., No. 44, sub-enclosure: Captain Ferguson to Commodore Stirling, Rubiana, Solomon Group, 2 November 1872, and forwarded as Enclosure No. 9 of Commodore Stirling's letter of 11 December 1872 (MS 1682/68/4214).
- 23 Ibid., No. 43, enclosure: Commodore Stirling to the Secretary of the Admiralty, HMS *Clio* at Sydney, 11 December 1872 (MS 1682/68/4193).
- 24 'Australia Station Royal Navy' RNAS 13: 'Pacific Islands 1857–76', Vol. 1, Admiralty, 19 August 1873 (mfm G1810, reel 12).
- 25 Walpole, op. cit. (MS 9110/6): Robert Walpole to Mrs Laura Walpole, 24 July 1872, San Christoval Island, Solomon Group.
- 26 *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1873, L: Letters from the Admiralty, No. 31, sub-enclosure 2: Mr Ferguson to the Colonial Treasurer, Brisbane, 27 November 1871 (MS 1682/68/4137).
- 27 The incident recalls that of the famous 'White Woman of Gippsland': see Don Watson, *Calcedonia Australis*. Milsons Point, NSW: Vintage, 1997, pp. 213–214, 228–236.
- 28 Walpole, op. cit. (MS 9110/6): Robert Walpole to Mrs Laura Walpole, 24 July 1872, San Christoval Island, Solomon Group.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid. (MS 9110/9): Robert Walpole to the Hon. Frederick Walpole, MP, HMS *Blanche*, Sydney, 25 November 1872.
- 31 *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1873, L: Letters from the Admiralty, No. 43, enclosure: Captain Simpson to Commodore Stirling, HMS *Blanche*, at sea, 19 July 1872 (MS 1682/68/4208).
- 32 *Taranaki News* (New Zealand), 24 September 1870 (newspaper cutting in Norcock, op. cit.).



CHAPTER 14

LORDS OF THE LAND

The Squatters are the Aristocracy of the Colonies and many of them are immensely rich.

They lease enormous tracts of land from the Government at a merely nominal rental. A Block of Country consists of 16 000 Acres, and a well to do Squatter would lease three or four blocks for five years which is the maximum time, and he would pay between £40 and £100 per Annum for it according to the value of the land, which is decided by an Appraiser appointed by the Government and another appointed by the Squatter. At the expiration of five years the land is revalued and should the Squatter desire to do so he can renew the lease—Should he not wish to do so, another person takes it who pays him so much for improvements such as Fences, Artificial Water

A Riverina Squatting Homestead, 1874
The Australasian Sketcher, 31 October 1874, p. 116
Newspapers and Microfiche Collection, National Library of Australia

Holes, etc. A wealthy Squatter would be the possessor of some 20 000 Sheep and a proportionate quantity of cattle and Horses. A Paddock is a Block or more of Country fenced in and frequently consists of 20 or more square miles.¹

WHEN LIEUTENANT HUGH MASSY wrote his account of the 'Aristocracy of the Colonies' the word 'squatter' may have struck him as strange. Squatting, after all, is the position preferred to sitting by many oriental races, and the term an odd one when applied to Australia's white elite.

It is the other meaning of the word, of course, which is still widely current in this country: the act of occupying land as a tenant of the Crown. In New Zealand, too, squatters in the nineteenth century took up great tracts of land under similar leasehold agreements.

New Zealand, colonised later, was subject to rather more careful regulation than Australia, where vast acreages were often achieved by chance—or cheek. Sydney Grandison Watson arrived in Hobart Town in 1833. He was 16 years old and on his way to New South Wales. He worked on outstations for some time, then settled on the upper reaches of the River Murray. Part of the memorabilia passed to Hedley Marston by Watson's eldest son is the typescript copy of a letter written by Sydney in 1848, from which we learn something of his situation:

I presume you are quite ignorant of my having a wife and three daughters, all of which I have accumulated since November 8th, 1844, which is far from bad work seeing that my youngest is this day 4 months 8 days old. Before marriage I confess I had certain misgivings on the venture—but none since—and I can sincerely say—what few, very few, can—that the 'wife is dearer than the Bride.' This speaks volumes therefore I need not be describing her to you ... As for myself my health is good, but my face has acquired many a wrinkle and my body if possible thinner than ever.²

Watson had his health, and he had a family; during the next 20 years that family grew and his life became more comfortable. The case of Richard Bethell, uncle to the disagreeable William, was rather different. A bachelor, Richard had been living the lonely life of a sheep farmer on the Canterbury Plains of New Zealand's South Island since 1860. On his arrival in New Zealand in late March 1872, William was appalled:

Went by train at 11.40 to Burnham & walked from there to Uncle Dick's house 3 miles—a small house 20 miles from Christchurch or Canterbury plains and found him ill in bed, & the sooner he gets out of the country the better for himself—he has never taken the slightest care of himself—consequently has rheumatism very badly.³

The following day William recorded his impressions of his uncle's home:

I would not have lived the time he has in such a lonely spot for anything—the house has 4 small bedrooms & sitting room & the kitchen, used as a dining room—there are sheep yards & some bad stables—a cart shed—small house with two rooms for a shepherd & a harness room. Uncle D built this himself & called the place Burnham, after Burnham in Surrey where he was born—he also had a good deal to do with building the church & parsonage. The Church is a small one of course.⁴

Soon the acerbic William was revealing an unexpectedly soft side to his nature—and some very real concerns:

Uncle D has about done himself up by the way he has lived. He has worked very hard indeed & lived as hard—when 1st he came out he used to think nothing of walking to Christchurch & back 40 miles, got up regularly at day break, drink some rum & eat dry bread—be out working till dark—then eat some wretched piece of bread & drink some more rum & go to bed, if he was wet through he never used to change, but lie down wet through, sometimes he used to have nothing to eat in the house, & for the first four years or so lived quite by himself, & had not even a housekeeper—hated & still hates the colonists, never went out anywhere—his hard work & hard living is beginning to tell on him, now he is not fit for much & the sooner he goes home the better, or else he will die out here—for the last 3 months since he has let his place he had hardly ever been out, will not eat anything & drinks a great deal of gin—all about here say that had he not had an extraordinary strong constitution (and for the last 7 years an exceedingly attentive housekeeper to look after him) he would have died long ago, for the last 4 years (since a certain young lady Miss Lilley went home) he has got worse. At night he calls for her, & if not that fancies he is out foxhunting.⁵

Why Richard came out to New Zealand in the first place, and stayed—given the dislikes and disappointments that had driven him to drink—is a matter of some conjecture. We know he was the youngest child of the 13 fathered by Reverend George R. Bethell, and that his father's brother was the Bishop of Gloucester, Exeter and Bangor (though presumably not all at once). Given this Anglican background, was he perhaps an embarrassingly 'black' sheep, sent out to seek redemption among the flocks of the Canterbury Plains?

SYDNEY WATSON, for his part, may well have been 'black' in another sense of the word: his father, a general officer in the East India Company's

service, is suspected of an enduring liaison with a local lady. Sending his eldest son to Australia may also have been the answer to an embarrassing problem, India—for all its vastness—being, for the British, socially little more than a village. In the solitude of the Upper Murray, where Watson acquired the Walwa run in 1844 and a great deal of the river frontage thereafter, mysterious hints as to his origins could fade away and ‘facts’ could take their place. Years later Sydney was an established member of the Melbourne Club, General Watson had been transformed into ‘Governor of the Punjab’, and his son—a midshipman at most, if at all—had been promoted to the rank of commander in the Royal Navy.

In 1848 Sydney Watson had plenty to grumble about, and he did:

I am a squatter and J.P.—both at present unprofitable conditions. The former is so on account of the want of labour—or of human beings called immigrants—and the latter you know as much about as I do—dispensing justice for nothing—to-day on the bench, to-morrow hard at work ‘Cincinnatus-like’—at bodily labour. I have 1,200 head of cattle and 4,000 sheep, but I make not a penny from them—such is the high price of the labour necessary to manage them ... I like the life, however, if I had more time to myself.⁶

By the time of the various Land Acts of the 1860s thousands of Watson livestock ranged over nearly 60 000 acres. He had a growing family, no cash flow problems, and an assured source of labour in the shape of brothers-in-law and sons. Attitudes, however, like his circumstances were changing, and trouble was on its way. Sheep and cattle were all very well, but the profit from fleeces, beef and mutton went into the pockets of the few. The growing numbers of colonists needed to be fed and farmers needed land ...

Twenty miles of river frontage to the Murray, with abundance of good agricultural land at the back, are tabooed to the free selector. They might be covered with golden corn-fields, and fruitful vineyards, with orchards and homesteads; and present a scene of plenty and prosperity; but who stops the way? At whose imperious fiat is the industrious settler commanded to stand back, and retire to a more ‘removed ground’?⁷

No, this has nothing to do with Sydney Grandison Watson. The ‘King of the Upper Murray’ would eventually lose most of his holdings as the free selectors arrived, but this particular case of obstruction (in 1869) was not his doing. ‘Two years ago,’ wrote the *Pastoral Times*, as quoted by *Touchstone*, a short-lived Melbourne journal:

The Victorian Government caused twenty miles of the river frontage to be measured into agricultural lots, and a township, on the opposite side of the river to ours, but it has not been offered to the public, nor have any plans been issued; although they have been repeatedly applied for, the answer has invariably been that they would be issued in a few days. Had it been otherwise, the land would have been taken up, a township formed, and a population settled, which would have materially assisted this place. What can have caused the delay? The soil is suitable and not heavily timbered, and a market for produce near, at Wangaratta, and for Melbourne, the river and railway offer speedy carriage. Everything is in its favour, both situation and soil, and yet it is not taken up.⁸

It would be reassuring to believe that the journal's proprietor, James Smith, was wholeheartedly on the side of free selectors, and perhaps he was. That he was against the business partnership of the recently deposed 'twice and future' Premier of Victoria, James McCulloch, is apparent:

Most of the land is required by Messrs. McCulloch and Sellar for a sheep walk, and they will not suffer the coarse and vulgar free selector to come between the wind and their nobility. They would gladly pay two shillings per acre per annum for the use of the land, while Messrs. McCulloch and Sellar pay something less [than] twopence. But then, they are the friends of the people—in the same way that wolves are the natural protectors of a sheepfold.⁹



Stanley Leighton (1837–1901)
Pewsey Vale (Mr Joseph Gilbert's), near Lyndoch, SA, 1868
watercolour, 7.8 x 23 cm
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (R4127)

What incensed this 'Saturday Journal of Criticism, Commentary and Satire' was James McCulloch's curious attitude towards land reform: here he was hanging on to his river frontage on the one hand, while promoting land reform on the other. In New South Wales, the Land Act introduced by five-times Premier and pastoralist Sir John Robertson—another unlikely believer in the claims of agriculture—had been in place since

1861, and when Victoria followed suit in 1869,¹⁰ the wrath of men like Sydney Watson must have immeasurable.

Visitors to the colonies found themselves drawn into the argument and taking sides in the struggle that would go on bitterly for years:

The Squatter's great Enemy is the Free selector, who is generally a small Capitalist. He buys land from the Government at the rate of five shillings per Acre. In New South Wales he must not buy less than 40 Acres or more than 320 Acres, as the Government very wisely wish to people the land as quickly as possible, but he is further allowed in addition to lease three times as much as he purchases. All this land he may select from any part of the run of any Squatter he chooses. The Squatters therefore naturally I think look on the Free selectors as a species of authorised Robber who locates himself there for the purpose of damaging his Sheep runs. I believe it is not uncommon if a Squatter's Stockman or anyone in his employ, has a row with his Master, and is in possession of a little ready money, for him by way of spite to Free select on the Squatter's property, and perhaps choose the best Water Hole, where his cattle and Sheep are accustomed to go, and if he catches any of them there, he either Shoots or Pounds them.¹¹

Some squatters bowed to the inevitable, while others found alternative solutions. In New South Wales heading west was somewhat of a tradition and dated back to the days when virgin territory was easy to despoil:

The Ancient Borough of Paramatta as it is proudly called by the Inhabitants ... for many years was the Residence of the Governor, and the Farms and Cattle Stations of the young Colony were in its vicinity, but when the Blue Mountains were at last crossed and sheep runs and Cattle Stations vastly superior were discovered, it ceased to make progress and is now of very little importance, except to young married couples for whom it is a favourite resort during the honeymoon.¹²

Elsewhere, pastoralists discovered that even the poorest of land was suitable for sheep:

A large tract of sandy country called the Myhall and Salt Bush Country, which until lately was thought to be of no value is now found to be the best for Sheep Runs, as they thrive amazingly well on the Salt Bush; the great difficulty is to supply them with water as rain seldom falls, and when it does it is soon absorbed in the sandy soil. The usual method is to make large Artificial tanks in which to store the water.¹³

Men who could, pushed north into Queensland, where Watson's twins, Harry Frederick and Philip Sydney, founded Gregory Downs Station, south of Burketown on the Gulf of Carpentaria. It flourished for over 50 years, while Hugh Massy noted that others nearer to Brisbane were doing equally well:

Further inland are beautifully laid out Meadows with Herds of Cattle grazing and here and there gentlemen's country residences with tastefully arranged grounds. They are mostly built of one [storey] with large verandahs and are well adapted to the semi tropical climate.¹⁴

Not content with his Queensland venture, Sydney Grandison Watson also expanded into Fiji—in what appears to have been a dodgy deal with one of the local chiefs. In hindsight, bowing to the inevitable would have been an easier option, but no doubt it seemed a good idea at the time.

THOSE IN THE KNOW could have warned those who cared to listen that the land was a vicious master: old families failed and newcomers did not necessarily meet with success. On his way home to England, William Bethell met men for whom the promise of wealth had proved nothing but illusion:

There is in the Steerage a fellow called Crampton—a son of the Crampton who was in the same firm as Martin Peto & Betts (Martin Peto, Betts & Crampton) & which firm failed some 4 or 5 years ago for about 6 million I believe—this said fellow was educated at Harrow & was well up in the School—since he left he has been in New Zealand & has seen a good many 'ups & downs' in life. At 1st he was a cadet learning farming—then a shepherd, then a post & rail splitter—& after that chartered a small steamer, & he finally lost the little money he had in Flax—he is a decent fellow, there are lots of educated men working in the colonies as shepherds etc. who have been to the Public schools & universities.¹⁵

Blue-blooded Robin Walpole also came across names and faces from the past: 'One of Lord Hereford's brothers came out here the other day, having spent his fortune in London. He landed here with 5 pounds.'¹⁶ For others, the auguries were even poorer:

I met one of Lord Clifford's sons named Hewitt here. He does not seem to be overburdened with money, at least very few of [them] do but they will halve their last penny with you. I think they are awful drunkards as a rule.¹⁷

Chivvied no doubt by his family, Richard Bethell of Burnham, New Zealand, a man who was 'very much respected out here, has done a great deal of good & will be much missed', grew tired of drowning his sorrows in drink. He leased out his land, packed up, and returned to England.¹⁸ Sydney Watson, by now an accepted gentleman and owner of a mansion on the Yarra River, whose own subsequent travels would be limited to Fiji, intended to stay for the duration and fight for what was his.

- 1 Hugh Massy, RN, 'Four Years on the Australian Station', 1877 (MS 8520): manuscript account of the years 1873–1877 set out in chapters, pp. 89–90.
- 2 S.G. Watson to J.R. Phillips, Walwa, 10 February 1848 (MS 1682/33/2204–2205).
- 3 William Bethell (1847–1926), *Journal*, 7 November 1871 – 18 May 1872 (MS 2465): entry for 25 March 1872.
- 4 *Ibid.*: entry for 26 March 1872. All Saints Church was in use by 1864, and was a simple wooden building with 'an open, high-pitched shingled roof'; 100 people attended the consecration at Easter that year: Ian McBride, *The Paparua County: A Concise History*, Christchurch: The Canterbury Library, 1990, p. 87.
- 5 Bethell, *op. cit.*: entry for 27 March 1872.
- 6 S.G. Watson to J.R. Phillips, Walwa, 10 February 1848 (MS 1682/33/2204–2205).
- 7 *Touchstone*, 30 October 1869, p. 29.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 During the McPherson Ministry which followed McCulloch's second term as Premier of Victoria.
- 11 Massy, *op. cit.*, pp. 91–92.
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 88–89.
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 90–91.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 102.
- 15 Bethell, *op. cit.*: entry for 4 May 1872.
- 16 Robert 'Robin' Horace Walpole, RN (1854–1931), *Letters, 1870–1874* (MS 9110/12): Robert Walpole to the Honourable Frederick Walpole, MP, HMS *Blanche*, Sydney, 4 June 1873.
- 17 *Ibid.* (MS 9110/15): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Blanche*, Levuka, Fiji Islands, no date, received 3 December 1873.
- 18 While in England, Richard won the hand of his lady, and returned with her to another New Zealand property outside Christchurch.



CHAPTER 15

TICKLING WITH A HOE

The folds shall be thick with sheep: the valleys also shall stand so thick with corn that they shall laugh and sing.¹

AGRICULTURE IN NEW SOUTH WALES got off to a poor start: only one man out of the 1030 people who landed with the First Fleet was a farmer. Not that the British Government had farming particularly in mind when it sent them out: the penal settlement of New Holland was intended to—and did—empty the rotting prison hulks in the River Thames, clear out the gaols, and deal generally with a problem of overcrowding. Little did it matter that the settlement in its turn became overburdened, that the perceived scum of the mother country was poured into a land that could not feed them.

Richard Daintree (1832–1878)
Settlers outside a Hut in the Bush, 1864–1870
photograph overpainted in oil, 38.8 x 60.5 cm
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (E3214)

In her novel of those early years *The Timeless Land*, Eleanor Dark brings the early days vividly to life; we see the colonists venture inland from their harbour-hugging beginnings, cautiously, hungrily, towards the tantalising Blue Mountains. They were starving. In 1789 Governor Phillip placed James Ruse, a time-expired Cornishman with a little knowledge of farming, in charge of the government's 'experiment farm'. He was promised a grant of 30 acres if he proved he could subsist. In 1792 Ruse earned his land at Rose Hill (Parramatta), moving later (in 1801) to the fertile Hawkesbury River district where the Tebbutt family also established itself. The Tebbutts grew wealthy on their farm, although, unlike his forbears, John preferred raking the heavens with a telescope to turning the soil with a hoe. Here is his description of the family farm and the Windsor district:

The Peninsula Estate [is] at the eastern extremity of the municipal town of Windsor. The country for a short distance around is cleared, and has for the past century been devoted to agriculture. The scenery is beautiful. The Peninsula is so called because it is nearly surrounded by the courses of the river Hawkesbury and its tributary the South Creek at their confluence. The soil along their streams is, in consequence of successive deposits from floods, of a very rich character. Windsor lies between the sea coast on the east and the Blue Mountains on the west.²

The Blue Mountains were crossed in 1813 and the Bathurst Plains discovered the same year. Gradually more of New South Wales was explored and opened up. With a ready supply of labour, land was cleared and pastoralists prospered. Surveyor Mitchell's 1836 expedition into what he termed 'Australia Felix' meant that the 'limits of settlement' were pushed south beyond the River Murray. Meanwhile, back in England, plans were being drawn up for another colony, this one free of convict stigma.

EDWARD GIBBON WAKEFIELD, theorist and coloniser, did not (as was generally supposed) write his *Letters from Sydney* from Australia—he wrote them in Newgate Gaol. His crime was more real, perhaps, than many that sent his fellow countrymen and women overseas to the former New Holland, but Wakefield served out his three years' sentence for abduction of a (second) under-age heiress in a comfort that gave him time to dream.

The motives of the 'National Colonization Society', founded in 1830 on Wakefield's release from gaol, might be seen as less than honourable; its methods—as in the founder's approach to marriage—left much to be desired. From the beginning, nonetheless, it met with tolerable success and the years 1832–1850 witnessed a great influx of free settlers into New South Wales and the Port Phillip district.

Over the Tasman in 1839 the New Zealand Company—another Wakefield enterprise—set about the colonisation of the South Island. The latest of several such schemes, it coincided with a growing French interest in the area. Once this was known, British indifference naturally turned to enthusiasm, and with enthusiasm came official backing. The success of the venture, nonetheless, owes much to the Wakefield brothers—William Wakefield led the first settlers ashore at Queen Charlotte Sound, Arthur established the settlement of Nelson, and Edward himself migrated to Canterbury in 1853. It is for the earlier foundation of South Australia, however, that Edward Gibbon Wakefield is certainly best remembered.

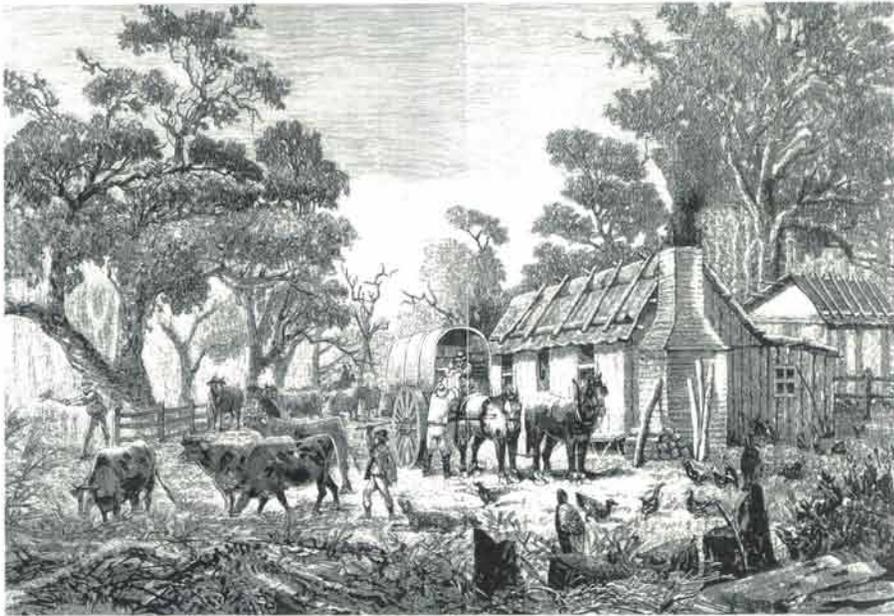
Visionary or conman? More than 150 years after the proclamation of South Australia, Wakefield could be judged as one or the other—or both. His aim of revitalising the colonisation process was admirable—like transportation, it would not only reduce the English over-population crisis, but open up new markets to English goods produced by English factories. Land was to be reasonably priced to enable the disadvantaged a new beginning; reasonably enough priced, that is, to attract an ordinary class of fellow, but not so reasonably priced as to give him ideas above his station. Free passage would be provided for labourers and their families, the cost being covered by previous sale of land to their betters. Once the labourer had proved himself worthy of his hire, the aspirations that had kept him going might at last be indulged. Or not. Meantime, those capitalists who could afford it were able to buy considerable tracts of land and provide their lesser brethren with meaningful employment.

South Australia—the flagship of Wakefield's ideals—was manned by a motley crew, but was proudly convict-free: Wesleyan dissenters from England's west; Lutherans from Prussia; Pacifists; Presbyterians from Scotland; and Roman Catholic Irish ... The flagship itself proved a leaky old tub. Those who were well versed in stoicism and silent endurance turned to the Lord for consolation, others turned to drink or wallowed in nostalgia:

The new land was hard to love, although many praised its evergreen trees and sunshine in an effort to persuade themselves that they really liked the place. Some, intrigued by the curious, sent back parrots, butterflies, wild flowers and rocks. Others carefully tended roses, musk, violets and foxgloves in little gardens to remind them of home. But mockery, natural science and nostalgia did not help settlers to master their environment.³

'The ablest tutors,' continues Douglas Pike in his *Paradise of Dissent*, were the 'experienced bushmen from the despised convict colonies' under whose guidance colonists learned to manage on minimal resources. Forty years on, with at least one generation born and raised there, South Australians would still be trying to master their harsh, sunbaked environment.

THE 1850S WERE TO PROVIDE a respite from hoeing, hacking and fighting with the land. Farmers joined miners in the eastward rush for gold, and, paradoxically, it was the goldrush years and a host of hungry diggers that turned agriculture into a serious business. Suddenly the impetus was there for opening up more land to agriculture, for overcoming labour problems (now that transportation to the mainland had ceased), and—in the case of New South Wales—to do something about the prohibitive cost of cartage from the rich lands beyond the Blue Mountains.



A Victorian Selector's Homestead, 1880
The Australasian Sketcher, 25 September 1880, p. 193
 Newspapers and Microfiche Collection, National Library of Australia

To follow the advance of the railways across the land is to follow the progress of the farmer. The Hunter and Hawkesbury lines were opened in 1864, and by 1870 the iron road extended south over the range to Goulburn. In South Australia John Morison attended a sale of 'some very fine land containing a crop of wheat [which] was sold at £4 per acre—not more than five miles distance from the railway'.⁴ As agriculture, thus encouraged, moved away from the centres of population, the profiteers moved in:

LAND FOR SALE, ENVIRONS OF SYDNEY
 To the Poor Man
 To Invalids, &c., &c.

Within two miles of the wharf at Longueville, Lane Cove River, 1 acre of Land can be purchased for twenty pounds; or, by expending ten pounds in permanent improvements, and paying 8 per cent. per annum interest on the purchase money, purchasers can have credit for three years.

Advantages:—The finest air and most healthy locality in the world, which statistics prove; magnificent views of our splendid harbour and surrounding the country; abundance of firewood and streams of water. An acre of land is sufficient to support a family, bread and meat excepted, which are delivered at threepence halfpenny per lb. for meat, and twopence per 1 lb. for bread of finest quality; milking cows can find abundance of food in adjoining runs. Fowls, also, are kept free of charge; and eggs, carefully packed, will fetch two shillings per dozen during the winter months. Bees increase, and yield most astonishing returns; ten hives would yield from ten pounds sterling upwards per annum, and provide for themselves; honey realises from sixpence per lb. upwards. One acre of land, if cultivated, will yield in strawberries, grapes, vegetables, apricots, peaches, pears, apples, nectarines, plums, oranges, lemons, citrons, comquats, &c., &c., a very handsome return for the poor man's labour. Whilst his vegetables and fruit are growing, the poor man can have almost constant employment at 5s per diem; and the invalid can gain health and happiness in looking after trees, plants, &c., &c.

B. HARNETT,
324, George-street, Sydney,
New South Wales⁵

The appeal to the romantic ideal of self-sufficiency is evident and for 'Harnett' perhaps we should read 'hornet', since surely there was a nasty hidden sting! Not that Harnett was alone in misrepresenting the facts. Louisa Atkinson's articles for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Sydney Mail*, under the heading *A VOICE FROM THE COUNTRY* were no doubt responsible for promoting an entirely false picture of life in the bush, as for example in 'The Fitzroy Waterfall', which she visited from Moss Vale. After the first few miles the terrain soon worsened, becoming

forest land, so high, so thick, it looks a fearful task to undertake to convert such a country into corn-fields and orchards; yet many free selectors are here; we pass their primitive dwellings every now and then. Within one, in the very depth of the wood, some person was playing a flutina when we passed, not unskillfully, and the unexpected melody formed a pleasing incident in the ride. A simple musical instrument, and a plot of flowers—neither costly—how great a pleasure and charm they throw over the rudest dwelling, and how many an heartache may be thus dispelled and interest awakened. It is a pity such tastes are not cultivated.⁶

Indeed, but music was not the first priority out in the bush at the time, neither was a flower garden, although evidently a bonus when present:

I have seen a rough slab hut rendered quite an object of beauty, by having the common scarlet geranium trained against its walls; while a few saplings made into a rustic porch above an entrance, and clustered over with roses, turns a hovel into 'quite a nice little place,' in the eyes of passers by, and to the residents strengthens home love, cheers and animates dull hours, and often keeps the husband and father away from the public house; a better and happier man, as he cultivates a few flowers and vegetables.⁷

BETWEEN 1875 AND 1879 the railway reached Bathurst and beyond, and while that line was advancing, the agricultural possibilities of the Oberon district, some 30 miles south-east of Bathurst, were being debated in a most lively fashion. There was nothing idyllic about the former Bullock Flat (who renamed it 'Oberon' has been forgotten) nor was there much agricultural magic—at least not according to 'Chilblain' of Burragorang in his answer to the Oberon 'Free Selector' who had been 'fishing' for others to join him. The correspondence in the pages of the *Town and Country Journal* under the heading TICKLED WITH A HOE, IT SMILES WITH A HARVEST provoked another writer (calling himself 'Justice for All') to speak out in his turn:

Sir ...

I am perfectly acquainted with Burragorang⁸ for the past twenty-five years, and in justice to both places must give Oberon the palm for raising of stock or growing anything suitable to the climate. In fact everything I have seen grown here has thrived except maize and big pumpkins. 'Chilblain' also states that the Oberon district in wet seasons is nothing but a quaking bog. This is purely a mistake. We Oberonites require wet seasons as well as other districts, but we can do without them better than any part of the Australias ... True, we are subject to frosts late in the season, but they are of such a mild character they rarely affect the crops and the grasses never suffer from them. As for agriculture not making any headway in the district, that is purely without foundation.

Agriculture is not largely gone into, but everyone that has tried it has been rewarded for their labour. I have seen seventy-six bushels of oats gathered off one acre of land; and this speaks well for the richness of the soil. Fifteen to twenty tons of potatoes to the acre is quite common, and vegetables of all kinds grow well.⁹

Try as they might, increase as they did in number, the farmers of Oberon and New South Wales could not provide all the colony's needs. It was no good looking to Queensland either, which at the time was mainly pastoral, so an unwilling dependence on Victorian imports developed.

'THERE WAS SOMETHING VERY ODD to me in the appearance of many minor townships through which we passed,' observed John Morison on his tour of South Australia's mid-north:

They usually consisted of a blacksmith's shop, a chapel, and a general store, surrounded by one or two miserable shanties. Yet I believe that the occupants of them live very happily and contentedly with no harsh master to oppress them—free from the worry and turmoil of the busy world outside.¹⁰

He was wrong, and guilty of the same unwitting romanticism evident in Miss Atkinson's writing: their religion and simple faith might sustain them, but in South Australia's country towns hardship was perennial, if not always extreme or universal. Wheat farmers prospered, despite the land's unpromising appearance, and exports of grain and flour were steady. Wheat-growing was particularly strong, Morison found, in the area 60 kilometres or so to the north of Adelaide:

We then pushed on [from Angaston], among the hills, towards Kapunda, from the summit of which, it was a glorious sight to see the young wheat springing up all round and notice how beautifully nature's verdant mantle encircles this fertile land during the months of spring.¹¹

South Australians were proud of their colony's capacity. William Sandover, the son of an Adelaide MP with a strong interest in trade, noted with evident satisfaction that Victoria—for once—was lagging behind her western neighbour:

Ballarat is in hopes of benefiting from the wheat trade, but I do not think this can be to any great extent.¹²

Wednesday Oct 18th—Tired with Ballarat, I started by 6.30 A.M. train for Melbourne. The country on the line of route is not of the best description, scrubby, uncultivated and in parts barren. I do not believe we saw more than 10 or 15 acres of wheat throughout the whole journey¹³

Not that all South Australian acres were in the best of shape themselves, and even John Morison—a mercantile clerk, not a farmer—could see signs of the trouble that lay ahead. Firstly, the rabbits were in plague proportions:

Here rabbits were to be counted by the thousand, and so prone were they to skeddaddle that I verily would believe we could have killed more of them, and obtained better sport by laying aside our guns and using sticks instead.¹⁴

The methods applied in raising a crop were also alarming, and utterly devoid of 'best practice':

It seems a great pity that the farmers should drain all the virtue out their land by raising grain in it every year, instead of allowing it to lie fallow occasionally, and the consequence is that some land which formerly yielded 12 bushels to the acre, now only yields 5.¹⁵



The surveyors continued to be hard pressed to keep ahead of the demands. A million acres were marked off in 1876, and it was planned to increase the rate by half again as much in the following year. Twelve parties worked along the northern margins. Over 25,000 acres were selected almost as soon as the lands were opened in the Willochra Plains and the hill country north of *Pekina* ... Even a poor crop could not stem the tide. The harvest of 1876–77 was little more than half that of the previous year, less than six million bushels, yet it caused hardly a murmur of caution from the country spokesmen. Indeed, anyone who talked of crop failures was viewed with suspicion.¹⁶

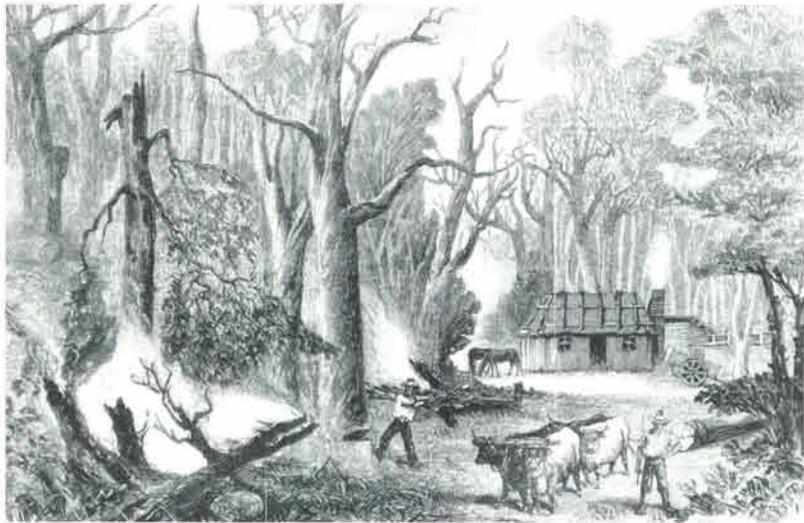
SINCE THE END OF THE 1860s the South Australian economy had been looking up. Miners returned from Bendigo and Ballarat, from Creswick's Creek and Clunes. They bought land in the central north around the copper town of Burra and turned their thoughts to golden ears of wheat. There was money from customs duties and the sale of Crown lands; optimism was high:

South Australia in the mid-seventies was suddenly revitalised. It pulled itself out of the doldrums and quickened in a dozen directions. Bumper wheat crops in 1872 and 1873 led to a rush northwards for farming land. New towns—Georgetown, Laura, Jamestown, Wirrabarra, Appila and others beyond—were laid out grandly with a largesse that suggested imminent cities rather than small country townships. Prices soared and speculation ran rife.¹⁷

At the land sale he attended, John Morison noticed 'old German farmers' whose wives 'squatted in the background, enjoying a quiet pipe'. To them,

and their 'plodding industry and frugality', the colony owed much of their success. It was a common thing, he added, 'to see women behind the plough in German localities'.¹⁸ Working together, praying together, fearing God—it was the German way. They had called their villages 'Praise Valley', 'Hope Valley', 'Hill of Grace', in token of their faith. By 1871 the South Australian population of 185 000 had spread well beyond the Adelaide Hills and the Barossa Valley, where such Lutheran communities flourished, and represented a healthy European mix. The bush was opening up as well:

We drove about ten miles further inland [from Kapunda], through similar country as on the day previous, excepting that the land seemed to be recently tilled, as though the primeval bush had not long since been uprooted, and the 'post and rail' fences appeared somewhat new.¹⁹



Selectors Clearing
the Forest, 1880
The Australasian
Sketcher,
31 January
1880, p. 193
Newspapers
and Microfiche
Collection,
National Library
of Australia

The agricultural expansion was well and truly under way. By 1876 the population had risen to 213 000, and to 280 000 in 1881:

It began slowly in 1869, gathered pace during 1873 and then proceeded at a gallop for the next five years ... About 600,000 acres were sold each year from 1875 to 1878.²⁰

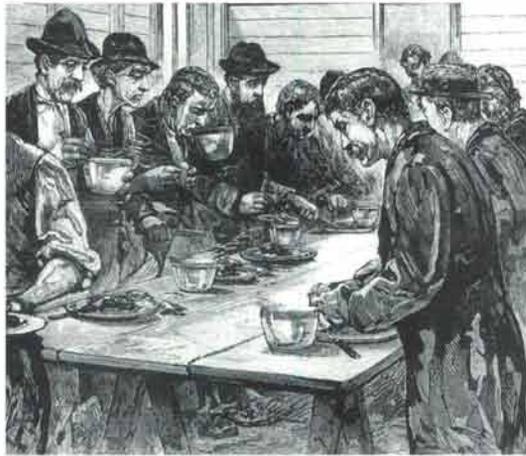
Port Pirie on the Yorke Peninsula became the railway terminus for the lines servicing the rich wheat-producing lands to its north and east, but no railways preceded the farmers as they moved past 'Goyder's line'. Nor should government have sold the land for their occupation. The late 1870s proved Surveyor Goyder right: a certain average minimum rainfall was required for the successful cultivation of wheat (14 inches, according to Goyder, but reduced to 10 inches in more modern times). At first,

farmers were lucky enough to get sufficient rain, but the fact that rain did *not* follow the plough (as the old adage had it) was the heartbreaking discovery of the next decade. Out on the vast Willochra Plain the saltbush was cleared; drought followed drought; the topsoil blew away. In the end a self-sustaining environment was turned into a veritable desert, and townships withered away—like the optimism of the folk who had trusted that strangely fickle land:

At one season these wide plains may be rich, with waving wheat crops, at another they are vast sheets of moving water, and yet again, and more often, bare brown dust and mirage.²¹

Starting in 1880, 11 million acres of the Victorian Mallee were painstakingly turned into farms: the dense scrub was crushed and burnt, the land tamed by the stump-jump plough. The ‘granary of Australia’, they would call it in the coming years, as the land began to smile with harvest after harvest. Laughter and smiles were rare in South Australia’s north in the 1880s, and the stones struck by the desperate ploughs rang out in mockery of a tarnished promise.

- 1 Bible, Psalm lxx.
- 2 John Tebbutt, Papers (MS 8887): *Results of Meteorological Observations Made at the Private Observatory of John Tebbutt, 1891–1897*. Sydney: the author, 1898, preface. The National Library of Australia also holds Tebbutt’s published records for the years 1863–1866, and 1871–1876, where the preface is similar.
- 3 Douglas Pike, *Paradise of Dissent*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1957, p. 498.
- 4 John Morison, journal entitled ‘Fifteen Months Abroad: containing an account of a voyage from London to Sydney, also a tour through the Australian colonies, Tasmania, and New Zealand, with notes on the return journey to London, calling at the Cape of Good Hope and Lisbon’, April 1872 – January 1873 (MS 8167), p. 104.
- 5 *Sydney Mail*, 4 November 1871.
- 6 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 January 1872.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 Burraborang, whence ‘Chilblain’ wrote his frosty comments, is on the southern edge of the Blue Mountains where the Wollondilly River winds its way as part of the Hawkesbury river system down towards the Cox River. It is a rugged hilly area where sheep and cattle thrive.
- 9 Charlotte Waring (1796–1867), Diary (MS 8997): cutting from *Town and Country Journal*, 30 November 1878, p. 1025. Charlotte was the mother of Louisa Atkinson.
- 10 Morison, *op. cit.*, pp. 103–106.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 William Sandover (1856–1921), Letters, 1876 (MS 1720): William Sandover to his father, the Honourable William Sandover, MLA, Melbourne, 18 October 1876.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 Morison, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 106.
- 16 D.W. Meinig, *Beyond the Margins of the Good Earth*. Netley, SA: South Australian Government, 1966, pp. 68–69.
- 17 Colin Thiele, *Grains of Mustard Seed*. Netley, SA: Government of South Australia, 1975, p. 19.
- 18 Morison, *op. cit.*, pp. 102–103.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 109.
- 20 Thiele, *loc. cit.*, quoting K.R. Bowles.
- 21 Charles Fenner, *South Australia: A Geographical Study*. Melbourne: Whitcombe and Combs, 1931, p. 78.



CHAPTER 16

COLD COMFORT

Please give me a penny, Sir,
You won't say 'no' to me,
Because I'm poor and ragged, Sir,
And oh! so cold you see.
We were not always begging,
We once were rich like you—
But Father died a drunkard,
And Mother she died too—oh!

Please give me a penny, Sir,
Is heard on every side,
Lisp'd by little trembling lips,
Sighing on life's tide—
Oh! Listen to their pleading,
And pity these the poor
Then blessings brought from heaven,
Will shine on thee the more—oh!¹

Sydney Soup Kitchen, 1883
The Australasian Sketcher,
4 June 1883, p. 96
Newspapers and
Microfiche Collection:
National Library of Australia

UNDER THE PROVISIONS of the several Relief Acts dating from as early as 1601, the poor of England and Wales were deemed the responsibility of the state. The intent of such laws was to do away with vagrancy and beggars, and compelled those who could, to work in order to sustain what was at best a miserable existence. Those who could not were maintained at parochial expense, with the children apprenticed out as soon as they were of an age to enter employment. From the early eighteenth century, workhouses provided work for the able-bodied destitute, and permanent shelter for the aged and infirm. The nineteenth century saw the introduction of central control, but the stigma of being forced to go 'on the parish' remained, and was carried over from the old world to the new. In Scotland things were different: up to 1845 no poor-rate was levied, and paupers were supported by voluntary collections made weekly in the local parish kirk. This notion of cold charity and dutiful benevolence travelled south as well: there were no poor-laws in the Australian colonies, neither were there poor-rates.

By the 1860s and 1870s a new colonial elite based on wealth and property had long been in the making, and a man could visibly prosper by his own determined efforts. Of course, there were exceptions, as Anthony Trollope noted after his trip in 1872:

In his personal condition the working man does not stand always near to the edge of the precipice of destitution, as he too frequently does in Europe. But there are poor—both men and women—and for them shelter and food are found, and very many of the comforts of life ... No one is ever turned out; nor does there seem to be any great difficulty in getting in if the applicant is really destitute ... In 1870 there were 11,739 persons in the Victorian Benevolent Asylums, of which but little more than a tenth were born in the colony.²

In a society where moral rectitude was prized and self-improvement looked for, the growing sub-class of poor and destitute human beings was a tangible affront; so too were the criminal and insane. The three categories of offender—perceived as threats to material and moral progress—were accordingly bundled out of sight.

As long as a well-managed institution ran smoothly, with the inmates clean, neatly in their place and busily engaged in 'working for the dole', the world at large—and earnest young William Sandover, in particular—considered its duty done:

Monday afternoon Oct 23rd went over the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum. This institution is supported by private subscriptions, supplemented by the Government. They give £2 for every £1 raised privately to the extent of £3,750 (so that the Govt portion never

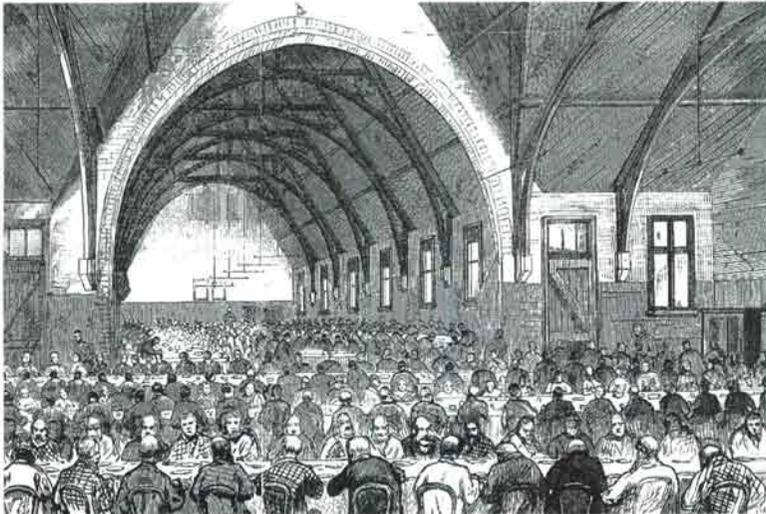
exceeds £7500). Each Subscriber has by a vote, a voice in the Management. I consider this plan superior in some points to ours. It relieves to a great extent the Crown of a costly & vexatious burden, & discourages that spirit too rampant in most communities which aims to throw everything on the Govt.³

As far as possible, such versions of the English workhouse aimed at being self-supporting:

The number of inmates at present is 632. Although in some respects the rooms are not so well ventilated & large as the rooms at Kew, yet on the whole the Asylum appears to be well managed. The old men who can work are principally employed picking oakum, the women at needlework. A great quantity of the clothes required are made on the premises.⁴

Never mind that occupations like picking oakum were mind-numbingly boring, and that yards and yards of tired old rope would be unpicked before equally tired old men were allowed to rest in peace. And who was to say they weren't a lot of intemperate malingerers, anyway:

There is a likelihood of shifting the Benevolent Asylum to a place about 22 miles from Melbourne on a line of railway, where instead of the small grounds they have at present, about 360 acres would be available. This too would keep the paupers from the Evils attendant on large towns (drinking &c), & it is considered that by this change, many undeserving patients who now stay there because it is in Melbourne & near their haunts, would leave thus relieving the charitable public of patients who might & ought to support themselves.⁵



Melbourne Benevolent Asylum, Dining Hall, 1881
The Australasian Sketcher, 31 December 1881, p. 428
Newspapers and Microfiche Collection, National Library of Australia

Sandover may or may not have had a social conscience: that his sympathies lay with the institutions rather than the institutionalised is fairly apparent. That unusual reporter John Stanley James (*The Vagabond*)—for a short time, anyway—caused the reading public to sit up and think. Compare his description of the inmates of the Benevolent Asylum with William's:

Amongst those who now help to fill the Benevolent Asylum there are some who were known years ago by their friends as men of repute, shining prominently in the social circle. Clothed in broadcloth and fine linen, they were the respected heads of families. It is not fair to expatiate on the manner of their decline—in some cases it was their own fault, in others they were victims. Now their friends have forgotten them, hope is dead, energy and effort long since paralysed, body and mind alike blighted, they are helpless and worthless in the struggle for existence, and are only fit to drag on their few remaining years in this asylum.⁶

Such was *The Vagabond's* interest that he took the trouble to research the backgrounds of some of the inmates:

There is one clergyman of the Church of England (an Oxford man), two surgeons, a lawyer or two, merchants, officers of the Royal Navy (in the female ward there is the widow of an R.N. captain), another Oxford man belonging to Christchurch, a Hungarian who



Charles Nettleton (1826–1902)
Melbourne Benevolent Asylum, c. 1878
albumen silver photograph: 37.2 x 52.5 cm
From *Album of Melbourne Views*, c. 1878 (album 217, no. 7)
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia

held at one time high legal office in his own country, a Swede an ex-army officer, a London trades-man from Oxford-street, a War Office clerk, a sailor who fought with Nelson at Trafalgar, and many of the class of *employés*. A short while back there was the son of an Indian general in the asylum but he has left.⁷

There but for the grace of God ... In the interests of balance, however, James did add a coda:

These are mixed up with a number of old Tasmanians, some of whom have been great ruffians, and can spin yarns to which the graphic horrors of His Natural Life appear milk-and-water stories.⁸

THAT FORMER CONVICTS should be among the inmates of such places was only to be expected. When William Sandover moved on to Tasmania, one of the totally and unashamedly charitable institutions he visited was an orphanage at New Town attached to the Asylum for Indigent Women (the equivalent of a female workhouse) where the women consisted mostly of 'the old Convict class' and proved a 'very disagreeable burden'. At the orphanage, schooling for the 150 youngsters was compulsory, but only in exchange for a great deal of hard outdoor work aimed at making the establishment self-sufficient:

The Queens Orphan Asylum is under somewhat the same system of management as at present is in vogue in Holland. Adjoining to the building is a farm at which the children a portion of the day work. Their own vegetables, dairy produce, fruit &c are supplied by this farm. A school superintended by Mr. Hammett is attached to the Institution which the orphans are required to attend a certain proportion of their time. The boys & girls seem well—very well—attended to, the comforts even being extended to '1 [pint] milk each for dinner' instead of water. Wouldn't some boys & girls like this in their own homes?⁹

Many of the children were boarded out with private families in an aim to reduce overcrowding. It gave New Town's inhabitants a chance to supplement their income and may possibly have led to domestic employment for girls who had outgrown dependence on the public purse:

The number of the children in the Asylum a few years back was about 500, but the system of boarding-out, which has lately been adopted has reduced it to its present number. The sum of 4/- per week has been allowed with each boarded-out child, but is found to be not sufficient.¹⁰

All in all, young Mr Sandover once again declared himself impressed with the running of the social machine:

The following remarks which I wrote in the visitors book are my opinions on the institute: 'Have visited the Queens Orphan Asylum & am much pleased with the cleanliness & order exhibited, showing great tact & management on the part of the Superintendent. Have seen similar institutions in the neighbouring colonies & consider this bears most favorable comparison with them'. Signed W. Sandover, Jrn. (Adelaide).¹¹

'The excellent management of Mr. Scott,' he told his family, 'is shown by the fact that (having only held the position 3½ yrs) there has not been a single attempt at escape the last 3 yrs; before then it was a very common occurrence.'¹² Escape would have been even less likely for the inmates of the Deaf Dumb and Blind Asylum of Sydney:

This is confined entirely to children, who seem as happy as children possessing all their faculties outside. The theory of making D & D children understand a person speaking by the motion of his lips, is incorrect, so the Superintendent informed me. A class for making the Dumb speak as we do, was formed, but the Superintendent says that at least with the English language & its difficult sounds, it is impossible to make this a success. The children at the school seemed as full of play & up to as many tricks as those in outside school.¹³

One of them, at least, had all the makings of a survivor:

I was afterwards shown over the building upstairs & downstairs by a blind boy, who scorned any help, but moved about as well & as quickly as I could. He said 'You will notice what fine rooms we have here, & how comfortable they look, come to this window, & just notice what a pretty scene. Botany Bay & the water works to our right, to our left Redfern, the Exhibition Building & Sydney. And across here you will see the University, the Colleges & the fine grounds.' And so the blind boy went on pointing all these out perfectly, as well as a guide with his organs of vision complete could have done. I said 'I thought you were blind.' 'Yes I am but I hear the masters talking about the places & I remember.' I thought this was as wonderful as interesting. The children answered most questions put to them, & a trait I particularly admired, they seemed to adore the Superintendent. This speaks well for the management.¹⁴

No clue is offered here as to what happened once the children reached maturity; perhaps it was a question no outsider cared to ask. Maybe they relied on a little private enterprise, like the blind men he had recently encountered:

I was particularly amused by the system of blind begging in vogue in Melbourne. At every principal street corner, against the shops stood 2 or 3 or sometimes 4 or 5 blind men, one hand extended piteously (for money) the head downcast & a poverty stricken look on the face, & on each man's coat is a tin label attached describing who & what he is, sometimes painted in a most pretentious manner such as the following:

The First Blind Man in Melbourne Pity the Blind & so on.

But the following is a gem. I stood opposite the man with my book copying, he apparently imagining I was busy writing a cheque for him: 'Poor Blind Wanderer on the Earth
Years in darkness I have lived
You have got your blessed sight
To me assistance give.'¹⁵

But with blindness could one ever be sure? Were these men committing an offence by pretending to be sightless, or was the actual disability the crime, brought on somehow by their own actions (drunkenness and syphilis being the favourite culprits in the public's mind)? William was all for official action being taken:

These men often earn 15/- per day it is said. Such a system as this would not be allowed in our town, but perhaps the police have enough to do to check the greater crimes (which are only too rampant in Melbourne. I noticed the 'larrikin' element seemed very strong.)¹⁶

If the blind at large were suspected of being dishonest, then those within the walls of the unpretentious bluestone building on Commercial Road, Prahran, were hardly faring better. It may come as a surprise to the modern reader that the *Argus* should subscribe to the general prejudice against the unfortunates of society, yet give so many column inches to the compassionate views of *The Vagabond*. Until, that is, we remember that *The Vagabond* was the talented exception; the writer of the following report was more representative of public opinion generally. Here, he reviews the case of one Mary Ann Grace, once blind and now dead, who was the unwitting cause of complaints against the Blind Asylum's Superintendent Lovell:

The accusation was, that he imprisoned the girl in a room in the tower because she could not scrub through her impaired health, and that the fasting, the confinement, and the cold, hastened her decease, if it did not cause it. It is not necessary to refer to MR LOVELL'S defence.¹⁷

Sometime before this, the institution had 'lapsed into anarchy' with more than one individual refusing to do the work prescribed, including 'the girl Grace', who was described as 'plump, well-nourished and healthy'. Perhaps she was, but the reporter had more important issues to bring to the public's notice:

The superintendent is expected to see that the work of the institution is done by the inmates whenever possible, in order that the resources may be economised, and that the public charity may be used to alleviate the lot of as many sufferers as possible. This is his first duty. To employ unnecessary paid labour in the asylum is to rob the helpless blind outside its walls.¹⁸

That aside, the most important issue was to instil appropriate discipline to ensure the smooth running of the institutional wheels; the albeit mild rebuke offered to Mr Lovell—'a man not to be trifled with' whose treatment embodied not 'sentimental weakness but the real kindness of a strict rule'—was a matter of some surprise:

The order was a proper one, but there was open revolt against it. It is difficult to suggest what milder punishment than 'towering' could be inflicted upon the ringleaders, and the dictum of the committee, who, after first exonerating Mr. LOVELL from all serious imputation, proceed to state that it was an error of judgement to confine MARY ANN GRACE until she yielded, is somewhat surprising. The girl did not suffer from the confinement, and the institution would have suffered materially if she had been released before, for rebellion would have been successful.¹⁹

So was Mr Lovell the only victim? The girl was dead, for all her appearances of health, and the blind had their reputations well and truly blackened:

The women cavil and scheme; the men break open the windows at night; they come home drunk; they are seen with improper characters. Nor is insubordination the only problem to be overcome. 'The blind,' says one of the nurses, 'are suspicious. If you do them a kindness they fancy you have an axe to grind'; and the truth of this homely saying is apparent through the evidence which has been put before the public. Readers must be surprised at the

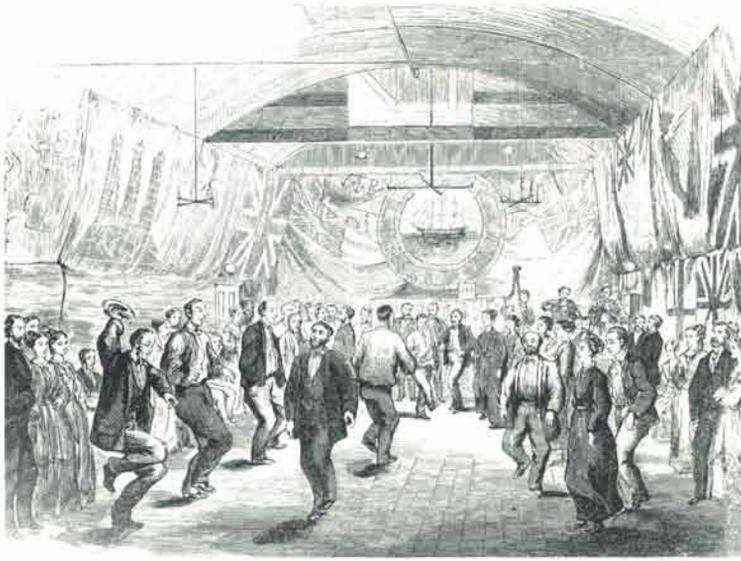
distrust which the inmates exhibit and their ingenuity in putting the worst construction upon innocent acts. Certain windows have been constructed so as only to open a few inches, and a door has been put up at the entrance to the dormitories, and these things are charged against the superintendent as offences, because the inmates do not understand.²⁰

In case the readers themselves failed to understand, the situation was made abundantly clear:

The public may have regarded the Blind Asylum as an abode of peace; may have supposed that its inhabitants are men and women who are submitting themselves with resignation to their infliction, and are endeavouring by amity and forbearance to testify their gratitude to society for taking pity on their helplessness, and supplying them with a home and with daily bread. All such ideas have to be set aside.²¹

'If their infirmity embitters them and renders them suspicious,' concluded the man from the *Argus*, 'so much the stronger is the reason for pity and forbearance.' What he could not forgive was that, this time (as with Sandover's beggars), the ingrates of the Melbourne Blind Asylum had taken the notion of 'self-help' not only literally, but much too far.

- 1 W. Seibert, *Please Give Me a Penny*. Sydney: J.R. Clarke, 187?. To be sung 'Not too fast, with feeling'.
- 2 Anthony Trollope, *New South Wales and Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania*. London: Ward Lock, 1873, Part 2, p. 37.
- 3 William Sandover (1856–1921), Letters, 1876 (MS 1720); William Sandover to his father, the Honourable William Sandover, MLA, Melbourne, 23 October 1876.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 Michael Cannon (ed.), *The Vagabond Papers*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969, p. 158. (See *Argus*, 3 June and 10 June 1876, for the original two articles.)
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 Sandover, op. cit.: William Sandover to his father, Hobart Town, 3 November 1876.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 *Ibid.*: William Sandover to his father, Sydney, 28 November 1876.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 *Ibid.*: William Sandover to his father, Hobart Town, 29 October 1876.
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 *Argus*, 21 September 1877.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 *Ibid.*



CHAPTER 17

OUR LUNATIC ASYLUMS

JAMES, JOHN STANLEY (1843–1896), Author, best known as ‘The Vagabond’ ... The role of ‘Vagabond’, mysterious, cosmopolitan, sophisticated observer of the antipodes, satisfied his sense of self-importance and his desire to hide ... Outwardly egotistical and reckless, he had a generous and sympathetic nature. Probably his early life had helped to develop in him a keen feeling for those in need, a feeling expressed in his best work and commemorated after his death in a memorial erected by public subscription.¹

J.S. JAMES, ‘THE VAGABOND’, arrived in Australia in 1875. He was 33 and had already pursued the occupations of articled clerk (to his father, an attorney), railway clerk and station-master (in Wales), and journalist (in London). He had also—or so he told

Collingwood Lunatic Asylum Ball, 1868
Illustrated Melbourne Post, 8 October 1868, p. 136
Newspapers and Microfilm Collection,
National Library of Australia

the world—managed a stint as a spy in Paris during the Franco–Prussian War of 1870–1871. In America, where his adventurous spirit next took him, he again failed to settle down.

In Melbourne his luck took a turn for the better: Hugh George, general manager of the *Argus*, recognised his qualities and took him under his wing in 1876. The Vagabond's eye-witness accounts proved a sensation, and the first series of *The Vagabond Papers: Sketches of Melbourne Life, in Light and Shade* was followed by another four, spanning the years 1876–1877. They were to prove the highlight of his career.

His straightforward style of writing (imbued with a sense of irony which the modern reader will easily detect) met with immediate success. James, a natural investigative journalist, threw himself enthusiastically into each undercover persona; his eye-witness accounts of the unfortunates of Melbourne and Sydney and the uncomfortable details they contained were very often written over a considerable period: he spent three weeks, for example, in the Alfred Hospital, and four working as an attendant at Kew and Yarra Bend.² His identity remained a mystery, with 'Vagabond sightings' occurring all over Melbourne; these, no doubt, added to his popular appeal.

'WE OUGHT TO HAVE SEEN Yarra Bend while we were in the colony,' wrote a rather grumpy William Bethell in February 1872, 'it is most likely the same as all other lunatic asylums, tho more prettily situated.' Not only did The Vagabond see it, he worked there, and to him we must be grateful for a comprehensive insight into the lives of those human beings of the Victorian age who were not only 'out of sight' but 'out of mind'.

Mental illness was the disability no one cared to acknowledge, but Bethell was not correct in averring that all mental hospitals were pretty much the same. While the problems they dealt with might not vary, the places themselves could be very different:

Monday Oct 16 [wrote the indefatigable William Sandover]. In the afternoon (having asked Mr Horsfall to accompany me) went to the Lunatic asylums at Kew & Yarra Bend situated on one of those numerous but picturesque turns of the Yarra about 6 miles by road from the City. These two Asylums are conducted on different principles; Yarra Bend which has 750 inmates is on the Continental or Farm System. The Grounds which are large, are prettily laid out, & studded with buildings, crops are grown by the patients, and a road running through the park, allows strangers to pass uninterrupted during the day.³

'It certainly, to me, appears preferable to the handsome though prison-like structure of Kew,' he remarked after his visit to the latter asylum which was run more on the lines of a penal institution:

There in large well aired, cleanly buildings, with small courtyards, bounded by unclimbable walls, the patients are confined—imprisoned. The contrast between the institutions is more perceptible in the faces of the insane. At Yarra Bend, cheerful, healthy; many apparently (by their looks) sane; at Kew, vacant, dull, sickly. These are the two pictures.⁴

Unless you had the means to find your way into a private establishment, hospitals for the insane in Sandover's day were subject to severe overcrowding. In a country where terms like 'goldmania' and 'coppermania' were blithely bandied about, there was a long tradition of institutions treating other forms of madness. Sydney's Tarban Creek had been in existence since 1838, with another at Parramatta built for convicts in 1840; Yarra Bend dated from 1848; a permanent asylum opened in Adelaide near the Botanic Gardens in 1852, and Parkside Asylum (later Glenside) came into use in 1870. All were full. Yarra Bend, with its 1043 inmates, was one of the largest asylums in the world, and building started at Kew in the 1860s to ease the situation. Queensland's Woogaroo Lunatic Asylum opened in 1865—but only because the gaol had become too crowded to cope.

IN EARLIER CENTURIES, and often for sinister reasons, most retarded children had died in infancy.⁵ By the early 1800s, however, there were many more survivors. Thrown on public charity, these were placed in institutions shared by the physically ill. In the first half of the nineteenth century, treatment in Australia followed that in England, with emphasis placed on cooperation and patient involvement. In short, like children, the retarded and those termed 'lunatic' were considered capable of self-improvement, and, like the poor, that improvement should be the result of their own efforts.⁶ By the 1860s treatment seems to have been surprisingly modern,⁷ yet a decade later all that was dispensed with and attitudes had changed. Insanity was believed to be a disease of the brain rather than the result of a 'moral' weakness, and in the 1870s notions of self-help and self-improvement (with the underlying optimism that still dominated the management of other benevolent asylums) were deemed out of place when dealing with the insane and the retarded.

By the 1870s, too, thanks to Darwin's theories of biological determinism, both lunatic and retarded were seen as examples of nature's unfit, living proof that civilisation impeded the natural process of elimination.⁸ In civilisation's interests, reproduction was to be denied them.⁹ Now too, with eugenics in the ascendancy, any private individual with a fleeting acquaintance with Darwin's writings was free to expiate on personal social theory, no matter how suddenly conceived:

Looking at some of the boys at Kew, I insensibly became a convert to Darwin. Noticing their vacant, almost inhuman faces, I thought

there is not such a long step between the large ape of the woods & a boy without an intellect; the tail is only necessary & the analogy would be complete.¹⁰

A deep pessimism was driving the medical profession at this point: if the insane were biologically inferior stock, damned by their heredity, then treatment was unlikely to succeed. And if it did, was it in the interests of the race?¹¹ The lunatic and retarded now shared the same hopeless existence, well away from society's other patients in great impersonal places like the asylums built in Victoria at Beechworth, Kew and Ararat. Doctors, not laymen, were in charge, but when an institution numbered in excess of 1000 patients it became a question of control, rather than rehabilitation. There were strict systems of regulation, although these placed less reliance on the horrific physical restraints employed in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century bedlams. By 1876, indeed, according to *The Vagabond*, 'all the English asylums' claimed to be operating the 'non-restraint system' (although the same could not be said for other countries, and the descriptions he gives of physical restraints at Kew are chilling).¹²

If patients were unlikely to prosper under personalised treatment, then what the new treatment should be remained a matter of debate. 'To cure the insane,' wrote William Sandover—that naive and instant expert—'let them see as little as possible of the outside sane public, let them consider their asylum, not as a prison enclosed by high walls, but as a hospital in which they are to stay, probably only for a short time.' This seems to have been the case at Yarra Bend:

The Lunatics (except the very violent) are allowed to wander on any part of the Estate, & I was informed by Dr. Smith (the Doctor in charge of Yarra Bend, to whom I had an introduction from Miss Turner) that the patients so like the place, that there are rarely if ever attempts at escape.¹³

The care of the insane should be of the best, continued William, somewhat hopefully:

Let their attendants be, not men & women picked out at random from the outer world, who look upon these poor unfortunates, merely as animals, but men & women who shall pity & love these maniacs, shall consider their duty—their mission, to make their lives as happy—as bright as possible. These are some of my opinions (crude no doubt), after having (accompanied by male & female warders) seen the Asylums of Kew & Yarra Bend.¹⁴

The reality, of course, was rather different: attendants were unskilled and untrained; they were unsympathetic and often brutal; they were too few

in number. All these factors made them warders rather than nurses, as William was quick to perceive:

The warders, industrious they may be, but they (most of them at least) lack that kind, that cheerful face, that attendants to the insane should possess.¹³



It was not long before the young man was giving his views on Tasmania's New Norfolk Hospital as well. On the island (where convicts were still considered the root of all evil, and the cause of their own problems through their drinking), it was commonly held that, since the government had imported insanity via transportation, it was the government's duty to deal with it. The government did so: the hospital at New Norfolk, which dated from 1829, was run on penal lines and, to begin with, general patients (unless they had the means to go elsewhere) were obliged to mix with convicts. By the late 1840s New Norfolk was devoted entirely to the care of the insane, with only convicts remaining. Unusually, sightseers were banned—in a place where cold showers and shock treatment had been but two methods of subduing the patients. In 1876 the penal aspect of the place was still evident:

Late-Victorian addition to the New Norfolk Asylum, Tasmania, which is still in use.
Photograph by Dr Roger Cross.

There is though almost too much even here of the prison appearance. Great obstacles are placed against the outside public visiting, the grounds enclosed are much too small for the exercise of the patients (it is true there is a farm outside, but this is small & but few of the inmates are there), and the food for the unpaying class is handed to each of them in little round tin pans, (something like a washing-up pan only smaller) instead of in earthenware, or even tin plates. You can imagine this does not look very comfortable, it has too much of the animal feeding appearance & I regret to say is the practice in many not only Tasmanian, but Victorian institutions. In the Newtown Queens Orphan Asylum, the Superintendent who feels very strong against the system, has superseded it by porcelain plates giving a much more cheerful & pleasing appearance to the dinner meal. The Lunatics should be treated as much as possible like the sane public outside.¹⁶

William Sandover, with his by-now wide experience of public institutions, was the first to admit that a casual visitor could know nothing of what



Willow Court, Tasmania, former military barracks converted for use as the first New Norfolk Asylum
Photographs by Dr Roger Cross

goes on behind the scenes, nor did he seek enlightenment; he simply noted his impressions, and later sent them home:

There were on this day 266 patients, 133 men & 133 women. It is separated of course into the male & female side, but these are subdivided into the paying & non-paying division. The former are well furnished & most comfortable, even pianos being provided. The Doctor complains that the building is not large enough, some of the patients having to sleep in the corridors, but this seems a common complaint in Tasmanian institutions, the Government being so low in funds. I do not consider a casual visitor, coming as I did to an institution such as this, is in a position properly to judge of its management. Of

course everything is made to look its best, when the visitor is shown round, the attendants are kind & most attentive to the inmates—so it was with this Asylum. But to examine correctly into the management & treatment of the Insane, one must do so as a reporter of the *Melbourne Argus* did, unknown get engaged as a warder & see & take notes for himself.¹⁷

ON 15 JUNE 1876 J.S. James, alias The Vagabond—one of those very attendants whose random selection Sandover had earlier deplored—made his way up from Yarra Bend to Kew Asylum along the ‘wooded banks and winding river’. Like William, he was impressed by the buildings and their 640-acre setting (transformed today into the expensive Willsmere residential estate overlooking Melbourne’s Eastern Freeway):

The reserve at Kew, I understand, was originally intended as the site of the new Government-house. Certainly, our Viceroy would have been in a safer position there in the event of that Russian gun-boat bombarding Melbourne. However, from a distance, Kew Asylum might be taken for a palace.¹⁸

Once inside, Mr Trumble, the head-attendant, took him off to B Ward to be 'broken in' (and where a total lack of privacy would make writing his 'vagabond notes' extremely difficult). Whether The Vagabond possessed all the saintly qualities advocated by young Sandover is difficult to say; what he did take with him to Kew was a keen eye, a certain detachment, and the sure knowledge that his livelihood did not depend upon his staying. Other attendants could not afford to be so sanguine: on a salary of £1 per week they were underpaid and overworked, but at least it was employment. The men were rough in dealing with their charges but James saw only one 'real wanton case of cruelty'. As for the female attendants, a recent inquiry had shown 'that tenderness is not the rule'; as James put it: 'who so cruel to a woman as one of her own sex?'

Soon The Vagabond was being initiated into the 'little tricks of trade' that made life easier for the staff of B Ward (the hospital ward), which contained its 60 or so hospital and paralysis cases (mixed in with epileptics), all of whom shared one large dormitory or slept in the isolation of one of the nine individual cells. The first thing he learnt was to let the patients do as much as possible for themselves, or for each other, in situations where even the pretence of dignity was lacking—when dressing, for example:

The clothes are not allowed to be taken into the dormitories, but are left round about in the corridor. Many of the patients know where they have left their clothes, but there is a general feeling of community of apparel amongst them, and I noticed one man who hardly wore the same clothes two consecutive days.¹⁹

As at the Blind Asylum, great store was set by scrubbing floors; the other major task in the hospital ward was moving the patients around, so many of them being incapable on their own of such a fundamental part of human existence. The process was a difficult one:

It can be simplified, however, by passing ones arm round a patient's throat *à la garotte*, and by lifting him by the chin, dragging or pushing him before you. I never tried this, but saw it done by others with great success. Certainly, when you fling the man down on his seat, it seems to have taken all remaining sense out of him for a time; but that is of little consequence. If a man who is able to get about does not make haste in dressing himself, or is troublesome whilst washing, or in any other way, it is easy to yell at him as a brutal carter does at a horse, and encourage by a 'clout' on the side of the ear—that is, a blow given with full force with the flat of the hand. It will not mark, but will certainly pain.²⁰

It was a routine kind of existence, the boredom only occasionally broken by blind men tripping over epileptics in the throes of a fit, or such like, or

the daily visit by the medical officer; or the twice-daily appearance of the superintendent (who had 'a disagreeable practice of dropping in upon us at any time'). The Vagabond's spell in B Ward was followed by duty in what was termed the 'side-yard', when the fresh air and exercise came as a welcome change. The views out to Heidelberg and the Dandenong Ranges beyond were perfectly splendid—and those capable of admiring them had ample opportunity:

Except those on the sick list and very infirm patients, are all sent out of the wards, or none. And so in rough weather, the order issued by the head attendant is 'all to be sent in'; whereas, in fact, many would be healthier if allowed to stay outside under shelter. Sometimes they are sent into the wards when a slight shower of rain falls; at others, they are all kept out on a bitter cold day. The senior attendant in each ward is supposed to attend to this, and can send out and keep in whoever he chooses, subject, of course, to the inspection of the head attendant and superintendent. But the attendants like to get the patients out of the wards, as it leaves them less to do.²¹

B1 Ward was a great improvement on B Ward, since the patients did not require constant attention, and 'the attendants could amuse themselves more'. There were, however, some 90 patients 'crowding each other out of breathing space', so no wonder they were sent outside as often as possible.

D Ward was a central clearing house, where cases were admitted, studied (while 'dosed with purgatives and sedatives'), classified and sent to an appropriate ward according to their degree of insanity. Here, there were 30 patients only, and plenty of day room. D1, F and F1 were ordinary wards, with patients of mixed grades. G and G1 were known as the 'refractory' wards, holding what the popular imagination perceived as typical lunatics: patients in restraints, or in the padded room by day, and most of them in single cells at night. American physicians recommended what James even then termed 'chemical restraints', but these were not in evidence—to him, at least—although opiates, bromides, digitalis, as well as chloral hydrate, were in use as sedatives in Australia at the time.

The C wards were for convalescents, and to the outsider full of preconceptions the most difficult to comprehend:

Gathered round the fire, reading or smoking, were a number of patients, to all outwards appearance, as sane as I was. An attendant, I soon found, had not much to do in these convalescent wards; and I could hardly hope, that if not useful, I was ornamental. There was a fair supply of books and illustrated papers, with draught boards and cards for the amusement of the patients. On the rough walls a print or two was hung, and there was a general attempt to make the place look comfortable. Everyone there was quiet and orderly, and the conversation was perfectly coherent. The books supplied

were good novels and magazines. George Eliot, Dickens, Thackeray, and Trollope were the favourites ... C ward underneath the other, has the same class of patients, and from the appearance of both, a stranger, although the dreary wards and dormitories would suggest the hospital, certainly would not think he was in a lunatic asylum ... and there—as everywhere in the asylum where the patients were not troublesome—the treatment was kind. In fact, in these wards it would not do to ill-treat any patient, as they are all sane enough to lay their case before the superintendent.²²

Here William Sandover's problem with the blind beggars on Melbourne's streets reappears: how blind were they, and how mad were the mad? How many of the inmates should in fact be there? The South Australian Royal Commission on lunatic asylums of 1864 echoed public concerns over wrongful detention of the sane, and no doubt this did occur. A language problem might cause the wrongful detention of foreigners, for example, and at Yarra Bend where The Vagabond also found employment, there were a number of Chinese:

all comparing, as regards personal cleanliness, most favourably with the European patients. One of them was the best-looking Mongolian I have seen in Victoria, his features showing that he was of a decidedly superior caste to the majority of his countrymen here. His bright eyes twinkled with intelligence and animation, and it was hard to believe he was insane ... Another Chinaman was pointed out to me as a very dangerous man. He was blind, evidently from an explosion, as his face was blue with grains of gunpowder, where it was not scorched. This man was very quarrelsome, and kept up a continual grumbling to himself; but, poor fellow, I saw nothing in him to make me think he was mad. His sight gone, confined, he must have thought, in a prison, it was enough to make any man violent.²³

Such a man must have come to the notice of the police, and, as James pointed out to his readers, the choice then fell between the madhouse or the gaol.

An asylum was a more suitable place for treatment than a lock-up, and to vagrants, the feeble-minded, the habitually drunk (with a fit of *delirium tremens* thrown in for good measure to undermine their case) and the many 'who imagine and loudly proclaim they are Jesus', the same thing was likely to happen, with permanent results. An asylum is, by definition, a place of shelter, somewhere that offers refuge and safety. There were benevolent asylums for the destitute and for immigrants; asylums for the deaf and dumb and blind. There was also the lunatic asylum, where consignment for a pauper, at least, proved a one-way ticket to oblivion. Should your relatives refuse to care for you, or neglect you, then you were

admitted by law (for your own protection) on the ruling of a magistrate with the backing of two doctors; and there would be no escape, either. Or Section XI of the *Lunacy Act of 1867* might bring about your downfall:

'This section of the [Lunacy Act] offers strong inducement to some persons to get rid of their insane relations by forwarding them to asylums, and as the *facilities for getting into an asylum are greater than those for getting out*, such cases are liable to become a permanent charge upon the State.'²⁴

It was a handy, and possibly sinister, way of getting rid of a relation deemed surplus to family requirements:

Here is poor old Peter — —, an honest old Irishman, reputed to have a homestead at Geelong. I have seen a great deal of Peter, and have asked many of the other attendants who know him, and they all say he should be let out. His relatives, however, sent him here; and doubtless he is a little weak-minded, but his present state is sane enough, and his only desire is to be let out and go to Geelong. All day long Peter asks the attendants when he will be allowed to go out ... I thoroughly believe that it is the sanest men who think most of escaping.²⁵

William Sandover observed that:

My companion (Mr. Horsfall) informed me that he knew some of these boys & men; when they were put in, at that time only slightly gone, but now as mad as could be; he ascribes a great deal of this change to the prison treatment they have.²⁶

Sadly, it may not always have been the treatment, but the knowledge of being unjustly confined that caused their decline.

KEW WAS A SURREAL PLACE at the best of times; certainly, the fortnightly balls open to the public had more than a hint of a *danse macabre*:

The jigs which were played at Kew were void of all harmony, and the jumps and shuffles of the lunatics were most painful to witness. They seemed excited with the exertion, which seemed to have the same effect on them as the war-dance has on a savage. Many of them seemed, to my eye, every moment growing madder, and their grotesque antics increased as the night wore on. To the spectators it was a fine show; they laughed and applauded ... At half-past ten o'clock the patients were all marched back to their wards, sent to bed, and locked in. This being done, the attendants returned to the ball-room, and high jinks took place until midnight.²⁷

Incapable of earning their living, the prisoners had paid their dues. 'The Angel of Death hovers continually over Kew,' wrote J.S. James, 'but he brings no terror with him. Death is a relief to many of these poor lunatics: it must bring heaven, for their present existence is a hell.'²⁸

- 1 *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 4, 1851–1890, p. 469; entry for John Stanley James (1843–1896) by John Barnes.
- 2 These were published as the chapter entitled 'Our Lunatic Asylums' in the First Series of *The Vagabond Papers* (Melbourne: George Robertson, 1877).
- 3 William Sandover (1856–1921), Letters, 1876 (MS 1720): William Sandover to his father, the Honourable William Sandover, MLA, Melbourne, 18 October 1876.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 C. Judge, *Civilization and Mental Retardation: A History of the Care and Treatment of Mentally Retarded People*. Mulgrave, Vic.: the author, 1987, p. 3.
- 6 M. Lewis, *Managing Madness: Psychiatry and Society in Australia 1788–1980*. Canberra: AGPS Press, 1988, p. 8.
- 7 Structured learning situations featuring repetition and reward; speech training methods of the kind in use today.
- 8 Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. London: John Murray, 1859; *The Descent of Man, and Selection in relation to Sex*. London: Murray, 1871, 2 vols.
- 9 Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
- 10 Sandover, *op. cit.*: William Sandover to his father, Melbourne, 18 October 1876.
- 11 Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
- 12 For example: 'the gloves ... are chiefly for refractory patients, or such as are in the habit of tearing their clothes. They are formed of two stiff flat pieces of leather, cut in the shape of a paddle, and sewn together. The hand being placed in this, it is secured by a locked strap at the wrist. Of course, this prevents a man using his hands to any great damage to himself and others, but I think they might be improved upon. The edges of the gloves are very sharp, and a strong man could give a nasty blow with them' (*The Vagabond*, *op. cit.*, pp. 89–90); 'The quarrelsome, refractory and destructive patients are known by being confined in "camisoles," canvas smocks, hats, boots, and gloves, all locked on them. The camisole is a modification of the old strait waistcoat: it is a loose canvas bag, with arms which are sewn into pockets at the side and fastened at the back. The patient is enabled to move his elbows about, and although a mode of restraint, it is not painful' (*ibid.*, p. 94); 'I was present in one of the female exercising yards when Dr. Robertson asked a good and intelligent-looking young girl, who was confined in a camisole: "What are you doing with that on this afternoon? I ordered it to be taken off you this morning" ... "Yes, doctor ... I asked them to put it on me again. You see, I keep quiet, and I've got some peace now. When I've got it off, that cat Mrs.— never lets me alone, says I do wrong, and won't keep her hands off me"' (*ibid.* p. 125).
- 13 Sandover, *op. cit.*: William Sandover to his father, Melbourne, 18 October 1876.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*: William Sandover to his father, Hobart Town, 12 November 1876.
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 J.S. James, *The Vagabond Papers: Sketches of Melbourne Life, in Light and Shade*. Melbourne: George Robertson, 1877, First Series, p. 79.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 85.
- 21 *Ibid.*, pp. 92–93.
- 22 *Ibid.*, pp. 120–121.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 172.
- 24 James quoting from the acting inspector's 1873 report: *ibid.*, pp. 96–97.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- 26 Sandover, *op. cit.*: William Sandover to his father, Melbourne, 18 October 1876.
- 27 James, *op. cit.*, pp. 129–130.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 148.



CHAPTER 18

SHADES OF OPINION

The important thing about the Australian aborigines was not that they were so very different to those first white men who came among them, but that they were so very similar.¹

CHARLES DARWIN'S INFLUENCE on the nineteenth century was already profound by the time *The Descent of Man* appeared in 1871. Following *On the Origin of Species* of 1859, this second challenge to conventional thinking made his name a household word—if it was not one already. Yet this time the critics' reception proved almost muted, while among the reading classes it was, as Darwin's latest biographers put it, received as if it were 'a doting uncle' who 'did not tax one's tolerance so much as entertain':

A romantic pedigree suited them, and epic genealogy. Disregarding the apes, as many did, they found the *Descent* a tremendous family saga.²

Carnival at Beechworth; Procession of Chinese (detail), 1874
The Australasian Sketcher, 26 December 1874, p. 153.
Newspapers and Microfilm Collection, National Library of Australia

And so on one level, it was. On another, more sinister level, Darwin's ideas on heredity and the survival of the fittest were to affect studies and treatment of the insane and the mentally retarded, and provide ammunition for the eugenics movement, with its planned program of selective breeding to improve the quality of the human race. *The Descent of Man* also set in motion what was to become known as the 'White Australia' policy (designed for a nation where the women prided themselves on the freshest of pink complexions, and the men's were quite often a weather-beaten brown).

It was a bad day for the so-called coloured races when Darwin hit upon his scale of human development; and a worse one for the original Australians, who landed up on the bottom rung of a Euro-centric ladder denoting intelligence and worth. For European settlers and visitors to the island continent, the book reinforced their notions of racial superiority and proved a vindication: 'The Aborigines or Native Australians,' observed the well-read Lieutenant Massy, bringing a keen eye to bear on the Aborigines of the North, 'are almost the lowest type of the human race anywhere.'⁵ Even their physique seemed to reinforce the idea:

They are small in stature, skin nearly black, legs much too small for the size of the body which is heavy and clumsily made, and their heads are all out of proportion, and covered with long coarse wiry hair.⁴

As if that weren't enough, the scourge of drink had hit them, making them hopelessly unreceptive to the benefits of civilisation:

They seem to be devoid of all intelligence and not capable of learning anything except to smoke and drink gin.⁵

Yet Massy saw something else: their 'bitter animosity towards the white settlers, who have I fear in many cases treated them in a remorseless manner'.⁶ It was true, and even William Bethell gave the Aborigines a sympathetic, if passing, mention:

The Natives in Australia are treated disgracefully but will never be exterminated as there is so much land in the country useless to the whites.⁷



Robert Darling (1827–1886)
*Study of a Tasmanian Aboriginal Man
in Skin Cloak* c.1860
oil on cardboard, 36 x 38.3 cm
Pictorial Collection,
National Library of Australia (R4880)

The Aborigines of Queensland (an area now suddenly of use) were undergoing the grim process of dispossession; of being driven from the

land they had enjoyed for centuries by men like Sydney Watson, whose land on the Upper Murray was likewise fast disappearing—in his case democratically, under the process of free selection. Fiji may have been a disaster, from every point of view; Queensland was another matter, and when Watson sent his sons north to extend his empire, he wasn't alone and, like others, this time he prospered. Massy may not have witnessed the effects on the Aborigines first-hand, but they were common knowledge, as were the results:

They are rapidly dying out and have gradually been driven back to the unsettled districts of Queensland, Northern or Western Australia, and woe betide the shipwrecked Mariner or traveller who falls into their clutches.⁸

The Aborigines of Tasmania were already gone. By the time Hugh Massy was copying out his journal in 1877 for the edification of family and friends, the woman believed to be the colony's last full-blooded Aborigine, 'Lalla Rookh'—or 'Truganini', as she is best remembered—had been dead for a year. When John Morison visited the island at the beginning of 1873 she was still being pointed out as a tourist attraction:

There was one point I remember, in particular, on which stood a small hut, inhabited by a black woman ('Lalla Rookh')—the last of the Tasmanian natives.⁹

Northern Aborigines might still resist the implacable march of time and progress, but those on the southern mainland had long since stopped fighting back. Contact with European settlers and their habits had resulted in the by-now inevitable decline, and while Australian anthropologists and would-be anthropologists obligingly sent back details of the continent's natives to their counterparts 'at home', those other hunter-gatherers, the Aborigines themselves, were seen as nothing short of an undisciplined and often drunken irritation to the majority of colonising whites.

Long in detail and short on compassion, an article in the Melbourne *Argus* in 1876 gives a fascinating insight into the civilised values of the time. For the inmates of Coranderrk Mission near Healesville in Victoria, self-help, the work ethic, even inter-marriage (although surely with the lower orders only)—were all seen as a way of bringing these unfortunates to social redemption. And with a bit of luck—runs the sub-text—in a generation or so, these idlers, at present living on public charity, would have disappeared as a separate race forever:

That such men should be made pensioners of is absurd. They are as fit to earn their own living as the average white man, and they

would probably be happier and more contented fighting their own way in the world than they are now. For the married women in the community no change for the better is possible unless their husbands determine to go away and work for their living, and take their families with them. The case of the single girl is different. These should certainly be drafted out as soon as they are fit for work, and placed as servants in families where they would be well looked after and taught domestic arts. Many of them are fair enough and comely enough to marry advantageously in course of time, and if they were married to white men, what little black blood they have in their veins would be bred out in a generation or two. But under existing arrangements the black is perpetuated as a pauper class, instead of being merged or absorbed in the general community, as he might be. There is one couple in Coranderrk with children of all ages between five and 25, and with both sons and daughters who are married and rapidly surrounding themselves with children. There is no reason whatever why this numerous family of three generations should be so injuriously treated as to be maintained at the public cost. The members of it are as handsome and as intelligent as the generality of people, and quite as well entitled to the privilege of working to earn their living.¹⁰

The men shiftless, the women immoral and trailing a clutch of half-caste children behind them, there is no attempt here to analyse the cause of such decline. For the more enlightened, the fact that Australia's native population was set at the bottom of the evolutionary scale by no less a personage than Charles Darwin, put them high on the agenda for research. D.J. Mulvaney relates the flurry of activity in the 1870s and beyond to collect all data possible before this 'dying' race should at last be defunct. Questionnaires flew like confetti; the telegraph and railway systems were pressed into service; printing presses ran hot. Information on the Aborigines grew into a mountain of monumental proportions and by the time a Chair of Anatomy was founded at Sydney University in 1926, 'Australia had proved an evolutionary quarry for well over half a century'. It was to be a lot longer before Aboriginal culture received the recognition it deserved:

Only in recent years have anthropologists and prehistorians recognized it for what it is—one of the most precious and individual cultures, significant not only to science but to humanity.¹¹

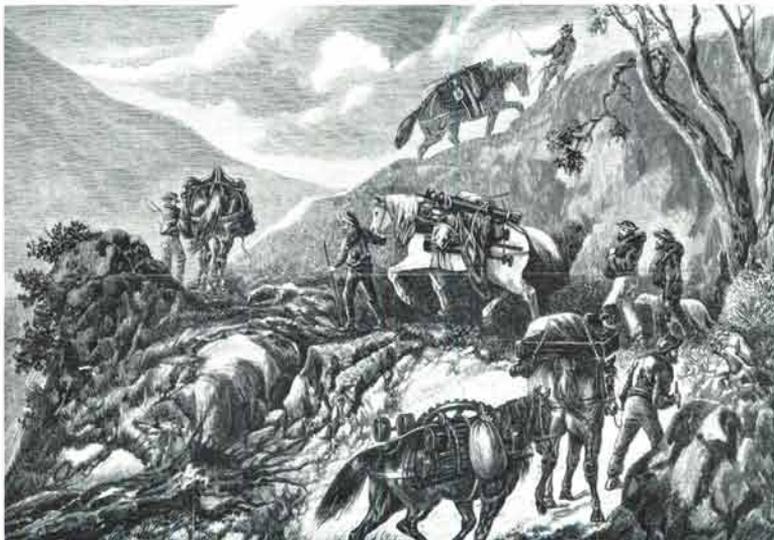
But that lay a long way in the future. The average reader of the *Argus* could fold his paper and apply himself to his breakfast with the satisfaction that things were under control—that the blacks were under control, and on their way out by all accounts. Not so the Chinese, and their civilisation which went back some thousands of years.



From Ballarat to the Palmer was halfway to the Equator, and a Chinese dragon stalked the European diggers all that way and nearly swallowed them in the steaming valleys of the Palmer ... All along the Victorian coast they locked the cage after the dragon escaped. When Queensland became the gold frontier the Chinese arrived on crowded ships from Australia and the Orient. Along the Palmer River in 1875 there may have been nearly 20,000 Chinese fighting flies and mosquitoes, murderous blacks and hostile Europeans ... In numbers but not in wealth the Chinese were masters of the goldfields of tropical Australia.¹²

ARRIVING FIRST AS COOLIES in 1848, then as shepherds until gold fever struck them along with the rest, Chinese numbers were increasing with disturbing rapidity. While miners had long resented their presence on the diggings—anti-Chinese riots in 1861 at Lambing Flat, New South Wales, followed a free-for-all between Chinese and European diggers at the Jim Crow diggings in Victoria in 1857—the general populace could no longer ignore them. While for some the mass presence in the Little Bourke Street area of Melbourne was to be deplored, for other Melburnians like Arthur Clarke the Chinese were a subject of curiosity, nothing more:

I went over to Williamstown today and saw Sam Robinson; he is going away tomorrow. Took my black trousers back to Dean's to be finished ... The roads are in a dreadful state, there having been more rain this year than has been known since they first began to measure it. The ship has just arrived from Hong Kong, and as we

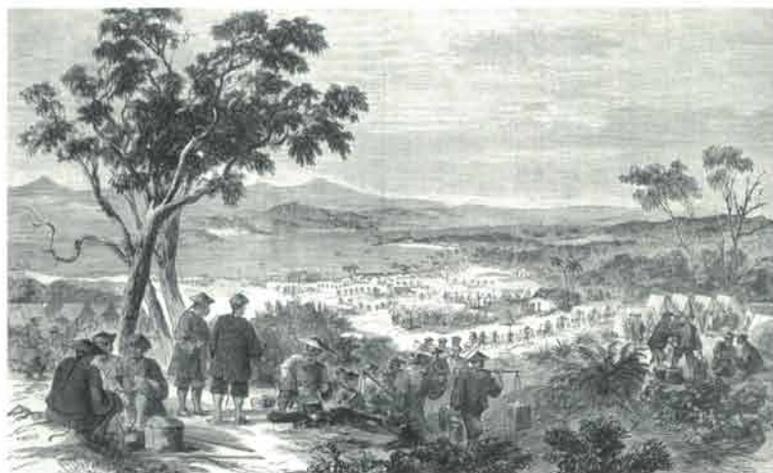


Packhorses on the Road to Mountain Diggings, 1874
The Australasian Sketcher,
24 January 1874,
p. 188
Newspapers and Microfilm Collection,
National Library of Australia

were moving through Sandridge her living cargo of Chinamen were just landing, and a most curious collection they were, the majority without any head covering, and those that had had them tied on with their tails, which made them look 'very peculiar'.¹³

Arthur's continuing fascination took him to the local joss-house:

It was the first time I had been there and it is really a very curious place. There is some very clever carving all about, ornamental with bits of colored cloth at various places. It is really a very curious place to visit, the various things in it being placed about in such a confused way. Being prompted to do so by Miss Reid, I committed the sacrilege of stealing some Joss stick or matches, worth about the eighth of a farthing and had the pleasure when we got outside of striking them.¹⁴



The Chinese Invasion, Northey, Queensland, 1877
Illustrated Australian News,
2 July 1877
wood engraving,
21.7 x 35.2 cm
From the Rex Nan Kivell Collection,
Pictorial Collection,
National Library
of Australia
(175302)

William Bethell, forever jaundiced in the matter of his fellow human beings, preferred to keep his distance, although his Anglo-Saxon prejudices were well to the fore in a trip to Ballarat:

The Chinese men & European women marry amongst each other a good deal—the half castes are ugly & the Chinese uglier, all the half castes [seem] to take after their fathers (Chinese) & not after their mothers—Ballarat is fast going down the hill other places having taken its place. Still it's a fine town for the time it has been going (of course not nearly so fine as Melbourne).¹⁵

William Sandover's 1876 view of the Chinese was a touch more positive:

I see by this morning's papers in the Telegrams that 650 Chinese have started for Port Darwin (about the best thing I imagine that ever happened for our White Elephant).¹⁶



Chinese gold miners, c.1870
From Fr. Christian, *Australia*, Leipzig, 1870, p. 319
National Library of Australia

Any other writer might have been suspected of irony: did Port Darwin and the Chinese perhaps deserve each other? But no one could accuse young William of possessing an overbearing sense of humour, and governments were taking the Chinese question very seriously indeed. Official action against Chinese immigration started early, with a poll tax imposed in 1857 on all entrants to Victoria via the Victorian ports. The Chinese simply landed at Robe Town, Guichen Bay, South Australia, and marched on the diggings in their thousands,

making it impossible for the most earnest of inspectors to take the tax or stem the tide. New South Wales addressed the question in its turn when the tide reached the colony in 1861, then gold discoveries at Gympie (1867) and Charters Towers (1872) took the problem further north. By 1877 Chinese diggers outnumbered white 12:1 on the Palmer goldfield in Queensland causing restrictions on Chinese immigration the following year and a seaman's strike against coloured labour which spread countrywide and across the Tasman to New Zealand.

Anthony Trollope, the much feted novelist and tourist *par excellence*, depicted a typical goldfield town in decline, and in so doing revealed a little of what lay behind the anti-Chinese feeling:

At different points around the centre, which have once been supposed auriferous, there are the skeleton remains of wooden habitations, with here and there the tawdry sign-boards of deserted shops from which high profits were expected. In some few of these skeleton habitations there are still inhabitants—men and women who having a house have been unwilling to leave it, even when the dreadful fact that gold is not to be found in paying quantities has been acknowledged. In the centre is still the town, though day by day its right to the name is passing from it. There are still the publicans, and still the churches—though the services become rare and still more rare—and there is the bank holding its position as long as an ounce of gold is to be extracted from the unwilling soil ...

Here congregate the Chinese in gangs, who are content to rewash the ground which has already been perhaps washed twice by European or Australian Christians, and who, with the patient industry which is peculiar to them, will earn perhaps each 1s. 6d. a day by the process. I will name no such town, because by doing

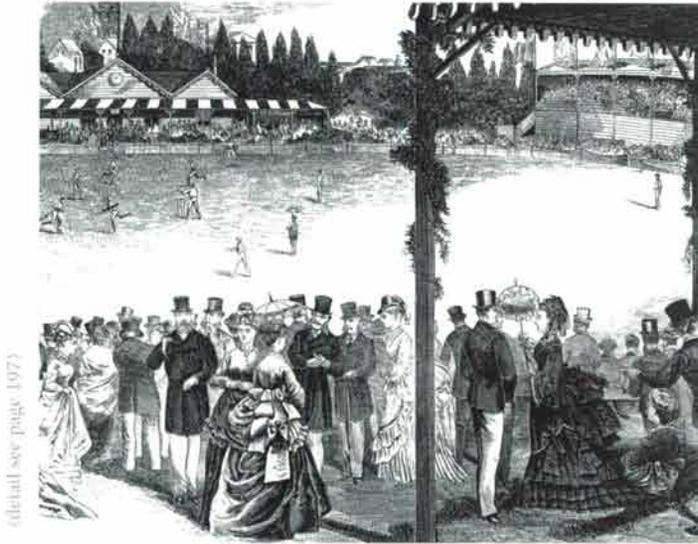
so I might offend the susceptibilities of some still-hopeful denizens of the place specified, but they are easy to find by those who travel in New South Wales.¹⁷

Paradoxically, throughout the 1870s Western Australia—feeling the loss of its convicts, no doubt—was to introduce coolies from China at public expense, while use of Kanakas in the Queensland canefields became more and more common. Both groups were perceived as less of a threat, however, since, as indentured labourers, their numbers could always be closely controlled and (in theory, at least) they would eventually return whence they came.

The Opossum Hill Rush, near Berlin, Vic.: Sketches on the Road (detail), 1876
The Australasian Sketcher,
 10 June 1876, p. 36
 Newspapers and
 Microfiche Collection,
 National Library of Australia



- 1 Alan Moorehead, *The Fatal Impact*. London: Penguin, 1966, p. 153.
- 2 A. Desmond and J. Moore, *Darwin*. London: Penguin, 1991, p. 580.
- 3 Hugh Massy, RN, 'Four Years on the Australian Station', 1877 (MS 8520): manuscript account of the years 1873–1877 set out in chapters, p. 28.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 William Bethell (1847–1926), *Journal*, 7 November 1871 – 18 May 1872 (MS 2465): entry for 30 April 1872.
- 8 Massy, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
- 9 John Morison, journal entitled 'Fifteen Months Abroad: containing an account of a voyage from London to Sydney, also a tour through the Australian colonies, Tasmania, and New Zealand, with notes on the return journey to London, calling at the Cape of Good Hope and Lisbon', April 1872 – January 1873 (MS 8167), p. 183.
- 10 *Argus*, 9 September 1876.
- 11 D.J. Mulvaney, 'Patron and Client: The Web of Intellectual Kinship in Australian Anthropology' in N. Rheingold and M. Rothenberg (eds), *Scientific Colonialism: A Cross-cultural Comparison*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987, p. 75.
- 12 Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1961, pp. 87–88.
- 13 Arthur Clarke (b.1853), *Diary*, 29 August 1868 – 6 January 1873 (MS 6792) (photocopy—original in private hands): entry for Monday, 22 July 1872.
- 14 *Ibid.*: entry for Monday, 30 September 1872.
- 15 Bethell, *op. cit.*: entry for 4 February 1872.
- 16 William Sandover (1856–1921), *Letters*, 1876 (MS 1720): William Sandover to his father, the Honourable William Sandover, MLA, Sydney, 28 November 1876.
- 17 Anthony Trollope, *New South Wales and Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania*. London: Ward Lock, 1873, Part I, p. 38.



CHAPTER 19

GENTLEMEN AND PLAYERS

We were challenged by The Dingoes—they're the pride of
Squatter's Gap—
To a friendly game of football on the flat by Devil's Trap.
And we went along on horses, sworn to triumph in the game,
For the honour of Gyp's Diggings, and the glory of the same.

And we took the challenge with us. It was beautiful to see,
With its lovely curly letters, and its pretty filagree.
It was very gently worded, and it made us all feel good,
For it breathed the sweetest sentiments of peace and
brotherhood.

We had Chang, and Trucker Hogan, and the man who licked
the Plug,
Also Heggarty, and Hoolahan, and Peter Scott, the pug;
And we wore our knuckle dusters, and we took a keg on tap
To our friendly game of football with the Dingoes at The Gap ...!

UNLIKE FOOTBALL, hunting and shooting were non-contact sports for the aristocratic and well-off—sports in which naval men like Robin Walpole could wage war against Mother Nature, wreak havoc without fear of criticism, and indulge a liking for a series of loud bangs. The ‘kangaroo wallaby and wild duck shooting’ recorded by the future Earl of Orford² do not feature in Arthur Clarke’s diary, and that should not surprise us.

There was nothing aristocratic about Arthur, a humble reader’s assistant on the Melbourne *Evening Herald*, and then the *Age*. He was 18 when he resumed the shipboard diary he had begun in 1868—just an ordinary lad with the makings of a decent, ordinary sort of a bloke. Arthur’s accounts of accidents and everyday events mark him out as a natural observer—a spectator, rather than a ‘doer’.

A keep-fit enthusiast of only limited success (‘Have just been trying to repair one of my dumb-bells which I let fall on the bluestone and broke one end off of. I have raised a blister on my finger but I think I have succeeded in making it secure³’), Arthur Clarke was an adherent of the Carlton Football Club and as such preferred his football from a distance. Who could blame him? Certainly not *Touchstone*. In an article entitled ‘Cutting and Wounding’, the views of that most judgemental of journals were there for all to read:

JOIN a foot-ball club? No, Sir! I have a dislike to contusions and abrasions, and ecchymoses, and fractures and ruptures, and tumefactions, and shocks to the nervous-system, and concussions of the brain, and lacerations of the integument. I desire to preserve my limbs whole. I object to solutions of continuity. I would rather not be all aches and pains for a week after each match. A healthy and invigorating game? Where is the health if you are confined to bed for a month in consequence of some athletic savage tripping you up, and breaking five of your ribs? Besides, what about



Football in the Colonies (also entitled Football at Yarra Park), 1874. *Illustrated Sydney News*, 23 July 1874, p. 17. Newspapers and Microfiche Collection, National Library of Australia.

clothes? Do you think tailoring costs nothing? Is it not true that you who are now advising me to join the club, invariably come home on Saturday night, after these healthy and invigorating matches, with your outward coverings in ribbons? Did you ever look at yourself in a glass after a foot-ball encounter on a sloppy day? What a pretty sight you are, as nearly like an aboriginal as mud can make you. Besides I am not a pugilist, and from what I have observed I have come to the conclusion that the successful foot-baller must be a skilled bruiser if he would avoid being himself a foot-ball. No, sir! cricket is bad enough, but as to foot-ball, it is the perfect realization of brutal and reckless muscularity ... These are my sentiments. SHINS.⁴

During the 1872 season young Clarke recorded the matches he watched:

Have been this afternoon to see a football match between the two best clubs in the colony—Melbourne and Carlton. Carlton had the best of the game as far as keeping the ball near their antagonists' goal went, but luck favoured Melbourne, and they managed to kick one goal to their opponents' nil.⁵

Revenge was exacted on 3 August, with Carlton winning by the only goal, and the game ending 'in something like a fight between a Melbourne and a Carlton man'.⁶ On Saturday, 24 August, Clarke witnessed Carlton beat South Melbourne 4–1, while the following week saw a less than satisfactory encounter:

the [Collingwood] team only turned up to the tune of something like half-a-dozen, so they got up a scratch team which was rather amusing.⁷

Amusement was rare after that (Carlton lost 1–0 to Melbourne in the Victorian championship final that year)⁸ and sport, anyway, was beginning to be taken seriously. 'I have a suspicion that the tendency of the age here, as in England,' wrote *The Vagabond* in 1876, 'is to the excessive cultivation of the bodily powers to the neglect of the mental':

Mens sana in corpore sano I believe to be generally true, but the principle may be carried to excess, and a healthy mind certainly does not exist where cruel and brutal sports are indulged in. Football, as now carried on here, is not only often rough and brutal between the combatants, but seems to me to have a decided moral lowering and brutalizing effect upon the spectators.⁹

He was part of a crowd of 'six or seven thousand' who turned out to see Carlton play at home, and a wide spectrum of society it was:

Ex-Cabinet Ministers, and their families, members of Parliament, professional and tradesmen, free selectors and squatters, clerks, shopmen, bagmen, mechanics, larrikins, betting men, publicans, barmaids (very strongly represented), working-girls, and the half world, all were there.¹⁰

Yes, the game was a great leveller (in every sense of the word), and with support overwhelmingly in the home team's favour, comments were expressed 'rather offensively towards the Melbourne Club, which is considered, I believe, to be a little more high-toned'.¹¹ Shortly after a disputed goal, and an ominous 'squaring of shoulders', the umpire not only took umbrage but 'took up his stick, and walked off the ground' in what was an unusual exercise of his powers. A friend of *The Vagabond* suggested something better:

'The umpire always has a hard time of it,' said he; 'the only thing he can do is to wear several brass rings, if he hasn't got gold ones, and let the first man who disputes his decision have it straight.' This idea was received with great favour by the crowd, and is an instance of the good feeling engendered by this 'manly sport'.¹²

Football has never been for the craven, yet in those days both players and supporters required an endurance beyond the twentieth-century call of duty:

Towards the end of the game one man fainted; several must be lame for weeks, and every man must be bleeding or scarred ... The victory of the Melbourne Club proved unpopular with the Larrikins, who commenced stoning the players outside the gates. One offender, however, received a good thrashing for his pains.¹³

'I consider,' sniffed *The Vagabond*, 'that football as played at this match, is a disgrace to our civilization'.¹⁴



If you come to England, and your bowlers are as good as they are here, you will make a name for yourselves.¹⁵

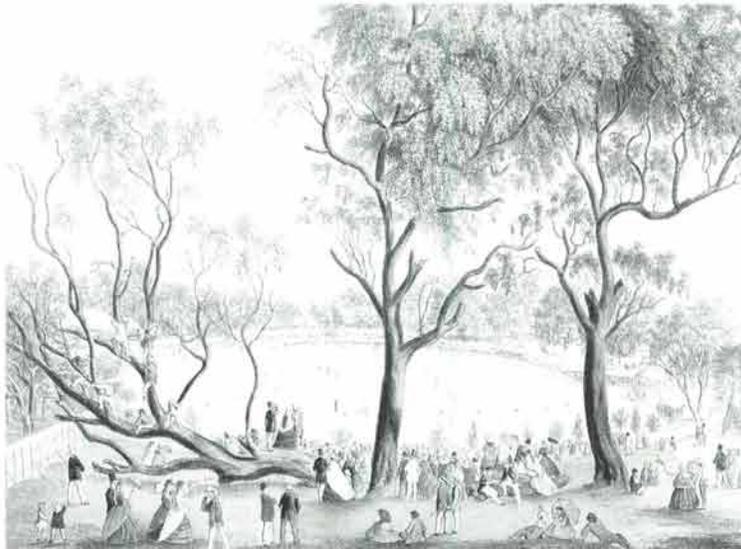
CRICKET, ACCORDING TO *TOUCHSTONE*, was hardly better, but there the satirist was wrong. If you were a member of the Melbourne Cricket Club, founded in 1838 and enshrined at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, then you could consider yourself a most superior person. True, cricket in the

Antipodes was not shrouded in medieval myth as was the game in England, yet the Flying Squadron felt privileged to try its luck on the sacred turf under quite exceptional conditions:

The M.C.C. Captain (Mr. Handfield) waived the right to play professionals—an act of grace on their part, but certainly not more than the strongest club in the Southern Hemisphere ought to have done to a team of sailors, who could not, under the circumstances, be otherwise than out of practice.¹⁶

Two professionals who did not take part in that 1869 encounter were 'Johnny Mullagh' and 'Johnny Cuzens', members of the Aboriginal team which had gone to England the year before. In the course of this money-making venture—intended at lining pockets other than their own—one of the players died, two went home early and the English climate proved the ultimate winner. Mullagh ('a genuine all-rounder—a batsman with a graceful style that many white players envied, a successful medium-pace bowler, and a capable wicket-keeper'¹⁷) and Cuzens (who like Mullagh had achieved the double of 1000 runs and 100 wickets) were taken on by the Melbourne Cricket Club. They bowled in a pre-match warm-up (which the Squadron was lucky to survive) and retired before 'the real fight' began, to the relief of the visiting team:

more especially as, after a very limited number of balls from those gentlemen, we were quite satisfied as to their power in that line, and rather pleased to retire with a somewhat broken finger and rather dislocated shin-bone, which we had to patch up before the evening, in order to appear fit at the ball given that night by the Private Assembly Committee, at their rooms at Prahran.¹⁸



*Melbourne
Cricket Ground,
1st January 1869,
c.1869
hand-coloured
lithograph,
31.6 x 38.0 cm
From the Rev
Sam Kivell
Collection,
Pictorial
Collection,
National Library
of Australia
(A:2884)*

The match was won, predictably enough, by Melbourne, 'with 110 runs to spare', and throughout was conducted in a most gentlemanly fashion.

THE WAR OF WORDS attendant upon W.G. Grace's arrival in late 1873 was nothing short of vicious, although it began mildly enough at the beginning of July:

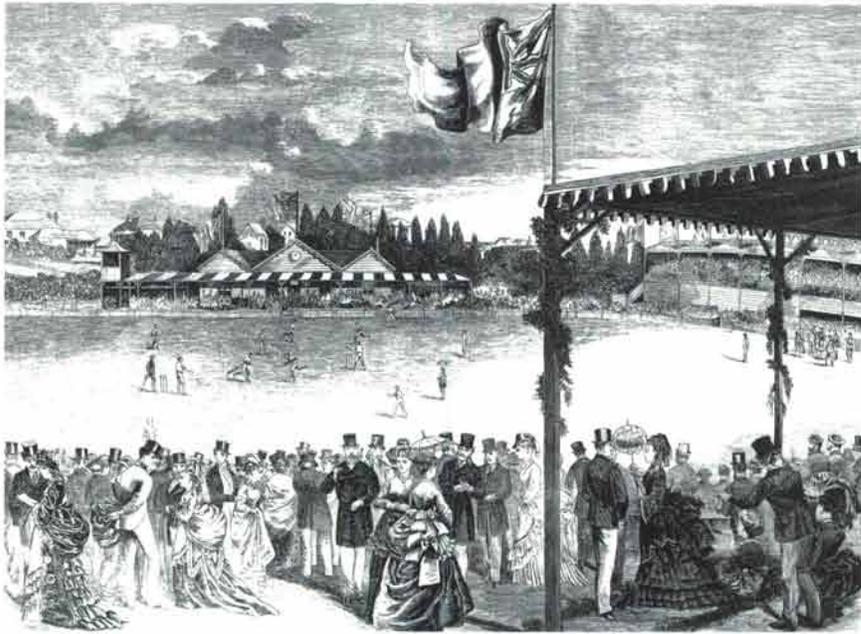
After being kept very quiet for some time, it has leaked out that negotiations have been entered into with Mr. W.D. Grace [sic], the well-known cricket amateur, asking him upon what terms 'he might bring with him an English eleven, composed of gentlemen and professionals, to play ten matches in Australia.' In his reply to the proposal, Mr. Grace mentioned that the present year would be the last in which he would be able to leave England on such a trip, as it was his intention to settle down, and practice his profession at the end of the year. Mr. Grace's terms have been submitted to an influential body of supporters of the game in Melbourne, and they have made a counter offer. If these terms are accepted, Mr. Grace and his team will leave Southampton in October next, and will arrive in the middle of December, so that the first match can be played on Boxing-day.¹⁹

A few weeks later the *Age* poured scorn on Grace's demands:

That all the world's a stage we know from Shakespearian teaching; but that the little world of cricket should become a 'show business' altogether, this generation, mercenary though it be, is scarcely prepared to believe. Has it come to this that the men—the gentlemen of England—are merely players: that they are to barter themselves, and be farmed like any common chattel ...? It would seem so; for have not negotiations been pending for months between a semi-amateur association in Melbourne and a *soi-disant* amateur in Gloucestershire, yclept GRACE?²⁰

The Victorian terms were excessively fair—'First-class passengers per mail, to wit out and home, and half the net proceeds'—but there were other quibbles:

But how about the wine bill on board steamer? Is that the crux, and if so, why? 'The gentlemen of England, who live at home at ease,' are not supposed to liquefy to a greater extent than is good for them; and should they go down to the sea and make their business on the great waters, are not expected to exceed the bounds of moderation. How then the fuss about the grog score?²¹



The Intercolonial Cricket Match, New South Wales v Victoria, 1873.
Illustrated Sydney News, 10 February 1875, pp. 12–13
Newspapers and Microfiche Collection, National Library of Australia

Things had changed since negotiations started:

Last season Mr. W.G. GRACE was to have come out at the invitation of the Victorian cricket clubs; the idea being that the English gentlemen should be franked to and fro, and any surplus that might accrue from the matches was to go towards improving the grounds of the various clubs interested in the arrangement. This was an equitable and an honorable offer.²²

Now, however, 'he who should be the most gracious turns out to be the most ravenous':

Is it certain that New South Wales has not bid higher for this graceless GRACE than the Victorian speculators, and that the 'sucking sawbones' is not paltering between the two offers?²³

The lament about the 'noblest and most spirit-inspiring game ever engaged in by human beings' finding itself debased, and the 'fun and glory of the thing' being forgotten, has a familiar ring, and money-hungry opportunists were given the blame:

Is it the game of cricket that they are desirous to foster—the benefit of the different ground and clubs, and the honor of the thing altogether? Or is it not that they mean to make money out of the

concern for themselves, to exalt one special club to the debasement of others, make serfs for the time being of the cricketing cracks from the suburbs and the country, and pocket all the kudos and all the pelf? We should much wish it were otherwise.²⁴

The agreement Grace drew up with his cricketers is present in facsimile form in the National Library's manuscript collection; from it, we can see that the terms as finally agreed upon were substantially different from those blasted in the *Age*. Responsibility for the tour's operation and the remuneration of his players lay solely in the hands of 'W.G'; the cricketers would receive £150 for a total of 14 matches, plus an allowance of £20 towards wine, spirits and liquor. Second-class passage to Australia would be in a 'Peninsula and Oriental Steam Company's steamer' (with their honeymooning captain, one imagines, travelling first-class with his bride). Hotel and travelling expenses were likewise covered.²⁵

Each player was contracted to obey his dictates: no extra matches could be played by any individual without Grace's consent in writing until the scheduled matches were over and done with.

Like their neighbours in Victoria, the New South Wales cricket clubs duly benefited from the great man's presence. Lieutenant Massy of HMS *Barracouta* wrote of the Albert Ground in Sydney where:

I witnessed the Match played between the 11 of All England and 18 of New South Wales, on January 24th 1874. The English team was composed partly of Gentlemen Players, partly of Professionals, W.G. Grace, Esq. being Captain. Their Play was splendid, but the Colonial team played well and their numerical superiority was so great that after a hard fought Game, they gained the day.²⁶

Three years later, and following the defeat of England's best, the tone was markedly less patronising. The handicap had been reduced and the visitors—all professionals—failed absolutely to live up to expectations.

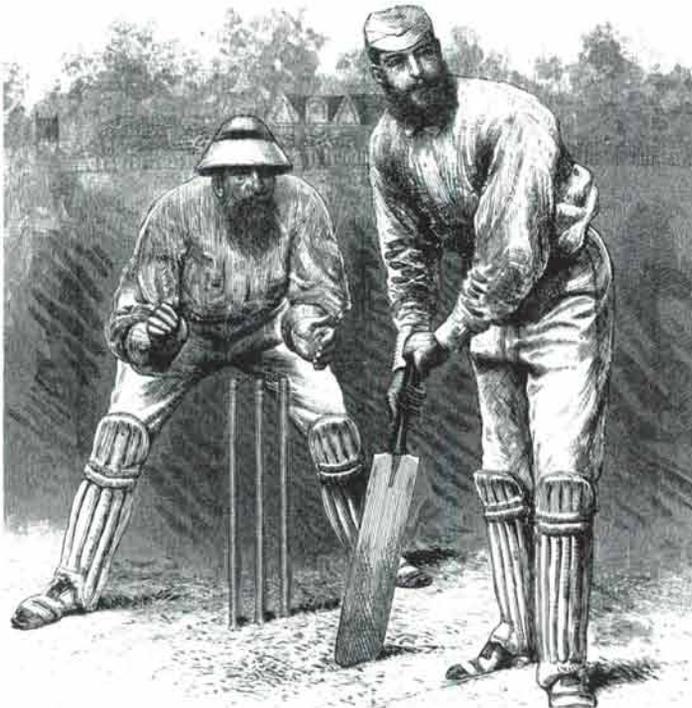
I witnessed another Match between the 11 of All England and 15 of New South Wales played on January 13th 1877. On this occasion all the Englishmen were professionals and Lilywhite was their Captain. I am sorry to say that for a team coming out to uphold the honor of England in the Cricket Field their play was disgraceful. The first innings they all got out for 35 runs, and it ended by their getting a sound thrashing. The Colonials beating them in one Innings and having four runs to spare.²⁷

It was a prelude to what has come to be regarded as the first Test, played against a combined Australian eleven at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in the following March. The combined eleven won.

When it came to losing, Lieutenant Bruce was a far better sport than Lieutenant Massy (the Squadron got very little cricketing practice on the high seas and was used to being bested). Besides, the Squadron—generally speaking—preferred another kind of game:

After a parting glass to the next meeting, the early outward-bounders wended their weary way towards the pier, with only half a leg to stand on a-piece, owing to forty-eight hours' unceasing use of those limbs for purposes of dancing by night, boating, cricket, picnics, etc., by day; in fact, the captain of the Flying Eleven, weary with his great cricketing exertions during the day, and heartsore with his exertions during the night, was discovered, at 4.15 a.m. precisely, in the centre of Wellington Road, seated disconsolately on his cricket bag, expressing, we regret to say it, a fixed determination of desertion ... but we rejoice to say that, after considerable argument, [he] was induced to return to the path of duty.²⁶

The times they were a-changing in the world of sport as well. Australian Rules football, always idiosyncratic in the eyes of outsiders, was becoming ever tougher, while 'kangaroo cricketers' were improving by leaps and bounds (so to speak). No longer was it enough to play for simple enjoyment: decisions were disputed off the field and on, and the 1878–1879 England tour was marred by a riot in Sydney. Umpires have always been fallible, and spectators always a volatile crew, but Grace's 1873 agreement hints at what was expected of the players:



Mr W.G. Grace at the Wicket, 1874
The Australasian Sketcher,
24 January 1874,
p. 177
Newspapers
and Microfilm
Collection,
National Library
of Australia

The said cricketer shall to the best of his ability play perform and carry out all the matches arrangements and engagements to which the said William Gilbert Grace shall make for him and will use his best endeavours to promote the honor and glory of English cricket.²⁹

In the 'good old days', surely, such sentiments would never have needed to be couched in writing—even in the 'lovely curly letters' and 'pretty filagree' of Edward Dyson's 'Friendly Game of Football'.

- 1 From 'A Friendly Game of Football' by Edward Dyson, in Leonie Kramer (ed.), *My Country: Australian Poetry and Short Stories: Two Hundred Years*. Willoughby, NSW: Ure Smith Press, 1991, Vol. 1, 'Beginnings – 1930s', p. 357.
- 2 Robert 'Robin' Horace Walpole, RN (1854–1931), Letters, 1870–1874 (MS 9110/20): Robert Walpole to his father, the Honourable Frederick Walpole, MP, HMS *Pearl*, Farm Cove, Sydney, 29 August 1874.
- 3 Arthur Clarke (b.1853), Diary, 29 August 1868 – 6 January 1873 (MS 6792) (photocopy—original in private hands): entry for Monday, 9 September 1872.
- 4 *Touchstone*, 1 October 1870, p. 4.
- 5 Clarke, op. cit.: entry for Saturday, 1 June 1872.
- 6 *Ibid.*: entry for Monday, 5 August 1872.
- 7 *Ibid.*: entry for Tuesday, 3 September 1872.
- 8 *Ibid.*: entry for Monday, 9 September 1872.
- 9 Michael Cannon (ed.), *The Vagabond Papers*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969, p. 207. (The original article entitled 'Manly Sports' appeared in the *Angus*, 30 September 1876.)
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 208.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 209.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 W.G. Grace, Australia, 1874, quoted in C.F. McCleary, 'The Kangaroo Takes to Cricket' (typewritten attachment with MS 214: William Gilbert Grace (1848–1915), Document (facsimile), 1873).
- 16 James A.T. Bruce, RN, *The Cruise round the World of the Flying Squadron 1869–1870 under the Command of Rear-Admiral G.T. Phipps Hornby*. London: J.D. Potter, 1871, p. 76.
- 17 *The Australian Encyclopaedia*, 1958, Vol. 6, p. 194: entry for Johnny Mullagh (1841–1891).
- 18 Bruce, op. cit., pp. 79–80.
- 19 *Fiji Gazette*, 5 July 1873.
- 20 *Age*, 26 July 1873.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 William Gilbert Grace (1848–1915), Document (facsimile), 1873 (MS 214).
- 26 Hugh Massy, RN, 'Four Years on the Australian Station', 1877 (MS 8520): manuscript account of the years 1873–1877 set out in chapters, p. 71.
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 Bruce, op. cit., p. 188.
- 29 Grace, loc. cit.



CHAPTER 20

PICTURES AND PERFORMANCES

We cannot measure, because we rarely pause to estimate, how much we owe to those who utter their higher thoughts and express the inspiration of their happiest moments, in music. The delight they communicate, whether in the exercise of their creative or their executive power, as it is of the purest, so it is of the deepest character.¹

WHEN CONSIDERING MUSIC in the 1870s, we would do well to put ourselves in the place of the artist and listener. A live performance then had an immediacy and a freshness for the audience which we would be hard put to comprehend fully today. It was considered to be the bestowal of a unique gift. The delight communicated could indeed be ‘of the deepest character’, and familiarity—if familiarity existed—came not from television, radio or recordings, but from playing a piece of music; from performing in a concert; from studying a score. Extracts from two diaries reveal to what extent music was an integral part of life. Firstly, Catherine Deakin:

Melbourne's New Princess Theatre, c.1878
From *Album of Melbourne Views*, c.1878 (album 217)
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia

Friday [23 February] Miss Alexander came to invite me to the Liedertafel—

Monday [25 February] do not think I ever enjoyed a concert more. Miss Schiller playing. Perfection.

Saturday [16 March] Mr. Strong called. busy in even to concert in Town Hall. Mr. Strong took us. Miss Schiller & Signor Giorza played beautifully.

Saturday [10 August]. in evening to Lyster Concert.² dreadful crush. Saw Mr. Strong in distance, S. Turner and Miss Iffla—first time of hearing the new organ. liked J. Edwards piece the best.

Wednesday September 11th. took my first singing lesson—Like Miss Muller so much.

Friday [13 September]. Miss Ashe called & Alf she & I went to hear Mozart's Twelfth Mass & enjoyed it much. Herr Gerlach played.

Sunday Oct 6th Pa & I to St. Francis' heard [Haydn's] Fourth Mass.

Monday. in even Alf & I to hear 'Giorza's' Mass & Concert. Rosina Carandini, Mrs. Cutter, Mrs Smythe & Miss Bassett—Cecchi & Susini—enjoyed it all exceedingly, especially Giorza's playing.³

And Arthur Clarke:

It was raining, not in drops, but in bucketsful today. Have been to the Town Hall to Miss Madeleine Schiller's concert this evening with Miss J. Muir. The concert was principally instrumental music, very good, especially the pianoforte playing of Miss Schiller. The first time I had seen the 'New Organ' and it is an extra large one. Stayed eating oysters at Mrs. Campbell's and was late home.⁴

Went to the Early Closing Concert at the Town Hall.⁵

Arthur's tastes were fairly catholic, and took in the ridiculous as well as the sublime:



Portrait of Madame Carandini, published on her death in 1894 *Australasian*, 12 May 1894, p. 827 Newspapers and Microfilm Collection, National Library of Australia

To the theatre to see 'Harry Rickards's company' in the Town Hall. The hall was quite full in all parts but the majority of the songs sung were very inane.⁶

'My cabbage and my turnip tops' and 'I can do a double-shuffle with the thimble and the pea' were not to everyone's liking;⁷ when it came to songs of refinement, Madame Carandini and her touring company appear to have cornered the market.⁸

Concerts like those attended by the Deakins in 1872 and 1873⁹ enabled Carandini's aristocratic husband to abandon his antipodean career as dancing master while the company toured the colonies, India, Britain, the United States—and the Palmer goldfields. Carandini was no Lola Montez, although, like the pseudo-Spaniard, she (and more particularly Fanny, her daughter) enjoyed a certain royal patronage. John Morison visited Adelaide, a city 'extremely gay with Balls and Entertainments, although it generally bears the name of being remarkably quiet', and was regaled with gossip:

Madame Carandini and her accomplished daughters were giving their delightful 'Ballad' Concerts every evening. Her second eldest daughter Fanny was the popular favourite, on account of her beauty and noble figure. Report asserts that the Duke of Edinburgh was greatly attracted by her singing, and, on his departure home, gave her a very valuable diamond ring which was pointed out to me on her finger, times without number, by jealous young ladies.¹⁰

In Hobart Town, the Carandinis' home town, it seemed to William Bethell as if the group had freshly come from supper:

In the evening we went to a concert at the Town Hall—by the Carandinis they all sang as if they had swallowed a basin of pea soup. Madame Carandini could not sing in the least—Miss Rosina, Fanny & Lizzie sang moderately well—the men could not sing—there was a great want of programmes. I suppose 'printing ink' in Tasmania is scarce.¹¹

Peevish young Yorkshiremen apart, the songsters were generally highly regarded, and Marie Carandini's handsome face adorned many an item of sheet music advertising her songs.



THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF PICTURES in Melbourne was a main attraction. Catherine Deakin wrote in 1873, 'Tuesday [1 July] Separation Day holiday Ma & I to see new picture *Brigands*'. No television here to accustom the eye to a constant parade of images, or coffee-table books of printed reproductions. On the way to the Gallery there would be no hoardings with posters of high colour, advertising products calculated to overwhelm a work of art. Once inside, subject matter based on momentous events in history or legend was in evidence, while classical themes *à la* Alma-Tadema¹²—likewise agreeing nicely with the stuff of Empire—brought a touch of implicit pornography and an attendant thrill. William Sandover's letters reveal the kind of paintings attractive at the time. Later he would be moved by the tangled greenery of Tasmania to fulsome detail; now he stood long and silent before 'the many gems' before describing three in detail for his parents. *The Departure of the Pilgrim Fathers* was calculated to appeal to a couple who had left their West of England home for a dissenter's paradise:

The lifelike faces of the departing exiles & their staunch Puritan friends gathered by the sea-shore, wishing them a long—perhaps an ever—'good bye' are striking. See the old father & the aged Lady, his wife kneeling on the sands, the well worn bible near them, praying for their sons, their daughters who are leaving—are driven from their homes; see the pilgrims standing in the little boat of the *Mayflower*, their faces overcast at leaving their dear ones, but through their tears may be perceived, hopes for a better, a freer country where they may at last worship their God, in what way they list, where the darling wish expressed on that flag above them we ought no doubt by loving hands shall be accomplished 'Freedom of Worship'; —see too the Boy & Girl, unconscious of the purpose of what is taking place round them, the one admiring the fine gun in the boat, the other playing 'peep bo' with some companion on the beach. In that tiny skiff are New England's Pilgrim Fathers, the founders of a nation, which now stands, mighty as the mother stock.¹³

The exoticism of a second picture was possibly more appealing. Here is the young man's description of *A Question of Propriety* by Edward Long:

Before you (so natural that you almost consider it a mirror, reflecting some life-scene mysteriously taking place in some other part of the room) on a handsome Mosaic pavement, beneath the roof, apparently of some fine old Moorish hall, rich in its antique design & noble colors; stands—a dancing girl. Not a dancing girl of the 19th century, but a specimen of modest Spanish beauty, descendant perhaps of some ancient & noble stock, a Spanish

dancing girl—a Spanish gipsy. Here before those ‘*holy*’ fathers sitting in their chairs of state, she has been summoned to answer for the crime—most heinous crime of *dancing*. And they most holy, most righteous men, have determined to see the act (to experience the pleasure) before they judge. Throwing back her raven tresses, discovering to the audience a face of exquisite beauty, she steps out to the centre of the room & to the tune of the harp, played by her trusty black attendant, she commences. Is it much wonder that those Reverend Men relax their stern features, that a soft wonderment & yet of pleasure steals over their pious faces, is it much wonder that yonder retainers, forgetting in whose presence they stand, clap their hands, with a thrilling joy; as the dancing girl, the setting sun shining through the old chancel on her dark gipsy features, & her handsome (but not too showy) dress, dances, gracefully handsomely yet modestly. No, at least they stern, & unbending as they are will have to make an exception in favor of the Spanish gipsy girl.¹⁴

Any new acquisition was an *event* to be savoured slowly. Catherine Deakin came to view *The Brigands* in 1873, as did Sandover three years later. The picture represented:

a Brigands Camp among the fastnesses of the Italian mountains. Surrounded by the lawless band stand two captured travellers, a gentleman & lady, his tall handsome but muscular & dauntless form contrasts with the slight & frightened figure of his companion, as she clings to him, never perhaps having seen danger before. You can imagine the leader of the band (one perchance who had seen better days, who had lived with his friends in some quiet valley, a peaceful life), you can imagine him with the desperate look on his face, saying as he holds to his captive in one hand a pen & the other a pistol ‘Sign this paper for your ransom & leave the lady with us as hostage till you return with the money.’ With a scornful look at the extended weapon, proudly & defiant you can almost see him answering ‘No, do your worst, I will not leave her alone.’ Behold the others around, threatening intimidating but all to no purpose. The picture is truly a fine study, & its size is quite sufficient alone to attract attention.¹⁵

To the width of canvas and the weight of paint, add a touch of nobility—both figurative and literal—and the picture was sure of an instant success:

The Male Traveller is said to be an exact likeness of the Marquis of Lorne, & the story repeated, how true I am unable to say, that the Princess Louise shortly after being married, was jealously ‘Struck’ with the likeness & asked her Marquised husband ‘Who the Lady was’.¹⁶

OPERA, THAT MIX of the ridiculous and the sublime, was not to everybody's taste. In April 1872 young Arthur Clarke acquired an opera glass for £1, and made use of it at the opera *Barbe-bleu*. 'I did not care for it at all, and I do not think I shall go again in a hurry,' he confided to his diary.¹⁷ For a young lady of some artistic pretensions, on the other hand, opera proved the very thing. 'Enjoyed it much,' Katie Deakin wrote of the opera *L'Africaine*, and went to several more:

Saturday morn to town. saw a great many to bow to. Mr. Mickle to chat—in even to Opera *Mose in Egitto*. Enjoyed it much saw the Kents there & Mr. J. Thompson going home.¹⁸

Saturday to *Norma* delighted with it.¹⁹

Saturday. *Princess of Trebizonde*—laughable—crowded house—enjoyed going together [with Alf, and her friend Florrie].²⁰

Saturday. To Opera with Alf dress circle—Dr. Motherwell; *Sicilian Vespers*.²¹

THE APPEAL OF THE THEATRE was wider. It was in its heyday and had moved on from being 'little more than a branch of the liquor industry'²² where no decent woman could afford to be seen because of the local trollops, and had assumed an air of respectability (provided one chose one's seating with care). Australian theatres, however, were still generally condemned by anyone used to something less boisterous. 'Low music halls abound and are patronized by the rabble, chiefly,'²³ remarked John Morison. And William Bethell considered that Sydney's Victoria Theatre would be 'a disgrace to an English country town'.²⁴ But then, Bethell didn't think much of Melbourne, either:

In the evening I went to see *The Streets of New York*, a sensational piece produced at the Princess's Theatre London, under the Title of the *Streets of London* by Mr Dion Boucicault. It is at best I think a dull piece—it was acted at the Theatre Royal Bourke Street. Really the colonists ought to be ashamed of their theatres—the pit & stalls to say the least are disgraceful, there is no sort of order kept. Men spit & chew tobacco, whistle, in fact do anything they like—half of them tipsy—abominable boys shouting all thro the theatre 'Apples, Pears, Grapes & Lemonade' more like a bear garden than anything—really in a town like Melbourne these things should be remedied.²⁵

'In evening to Theatre, Benefit of Adams,' wrote William Sandover in 1876:

School for Scandal by all the leading stars in Melbourne. Theatre crowded, women tumbling down, screaming & being run over & trampled. No room pit, stalls, dress Circle or Upper Circle, so had to do Gallery 1/- & had abt back seat.²⁶

Fire was a constant hazard. The stage was bordered by open gas jets, and if the pit and stalls were crammed with the disorderly 'lower orders', then backstage and in the narrow corridors a similar chaotic situation reigned before, during and after a performance. Props and other inflammable clutter were simply waiting for the flames. Shortly after Bethell's visit, the Theatre Royal, 'the scene of the greatest theatrical triumphs known in these southern climes', was overtaken by disaster. Here is a newspaper clipping from his diary:

The area of the Theatre Royal stage was enormous, and it was crowded with light wooden work in the shape of the frames of scenery, dressing-rooms, properties, and such like. These were soon enveloped in roaring rose-colored flames ... The iron roof lasted after this but a second or so, and then there rose to the sky such a vast volume of bright light as made the few thousand persons in the street (for at no time were the spectators particularly numerous) yell in their mad excitement.²⁷



John William Lindt (1845-1926)
Melbourne's Exhibition Building, 1880s
photograph; 38 x 24 cm

From *Album of Photographs of Melbourne, Victoria, Sydney, Brisbane* ... (album 40, no. 30)
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia

What followed was surreal:

Unconsumed pantomime masks leered hideously on the scene, and in one portion of the dress-circle the crimson damask fittings seemed to offer a convenient seat for a demon fresh from the last act in *Don Giovanni* to gaze luxuriously upon a congenial scene.²⁸

There was more of the pantomime to follow as Melburnians rallied around the stricken players in a now time-honoured way:

I walked over to the Melbourne Cricket Ground and had an outside ticket to see the cricket match between the members of the Theatre Royal in costume. It was very curious to see men dressed as policemen, Scotchmen, clown pantaloons, harlequin and a lot of ancient characters playing cricket. There was an excellent attendance and I expect they would realise a good round sum for themselves by it.²⁹

THE VICTORIAN AGE did not go in for scenes of frenzy when entertainers came to town. Mass displays of adulation were reserved for ill-fated heroes at their funerals, and for the Royal Family in general—although, to be sure, it took a near-death experience to restore Prince Alfred to public favour. Unlike the Duke of Edinburgh, Signor Cesare Cutolo, a public performer of considerable panache, made headlines even when dead, and (thanks to Catherine Deakin's papers) we know that his memory was valued by many. Endowed with 'a courageous spirit, and a sustaining hope', this Neapolitan mainstay of a widowed mother made his way to Australia via Egypt (like Rickards of the turnip tops and cabbage) and established himself as a musician and a man of worth:

his style was distinguished by its brilliancy, impetuosity, and *élan*. *Le style, c'est l'homme*, as Buffon says; and this was especially true of Cesare Cutolo's. It had his vivacity, his sparkle and his *verve*. But in the estimation of all who really knew him, the man dwarfed the musician; and this is his highest praise.³⁰

His tragic death was the stuff of which operas (or farces) are born:

An accident, which has deprived the musical world in these colonies of one of its ablest members, took place on board the steamer *Alexandra* ... during the voyage of that vessel from Sydney to this port. Signor Cutolo and his wife were reclining on one of the skylights on the quarter-deck, about half-past six o'clock in the evening, when the order was given by the officer in charge of the watch to stow the sails on the after-part of the vessel. In lowering

the mainsail the 'peak' became entangled, and the hooks of the throat slipping, the gaff fell on the head of Signor Cutolo, causing a large scalp wound, so severe that the poor sufferer at once exclaimed that he was dying.³¹

Or, as the Captain's log-book (produced in evidence at the inquest) put it more bluntly:

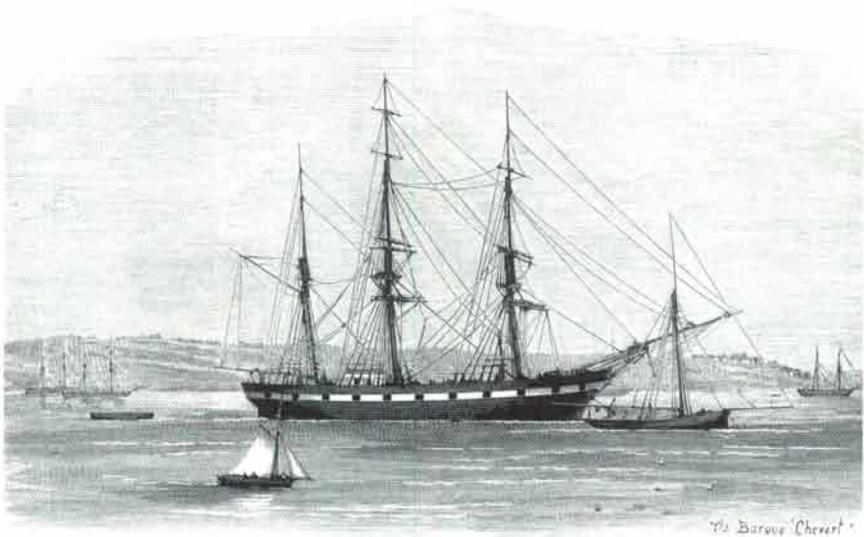
6.30 p.m.—While the second officer was in charge of the deck, the peak of the gaff fouled and came down by the run, striking on the head Signor Cutolo, who was lying on the skylight.³²

By this time, Cesare was lying on a slab, and 'full musical accompaniments' awaited his final curtain call at St Peter's, Eastern Hill.

The Melbourne School of Music held its first public concert in December 1879. The Governor, Sir George Ferguson Bowen, was present when Catherine Deakin, in her thirtieth year, performed two solos: Item 9, the 'Hungarian Dances: Nos. 6, 7, 8, Book II (original ed.) by Brahms', and Item 11 [finale], 'Piano: Capriccio by Mendelsöhn accompanied by Mr. Montagu (2nd violin) Violin: Mons. Caron Violoncello: Mr. Hart'.³³ She was billed as an 'artist student'. Whether she re-read her newspaper cuttings lamenting the Neapolitan maestro is a matter of conjecture; the concert program certainly remained one of her most cherished possessions. Here, after all, was proof positive that a young woman, destined to grow old on the fringe of other people's glory, had sparkled—all too briefly—as a star.

- 1 From 'The Late Signor Cutolo', unidentified newspaper cutting, n.d. (in MS 4913/5/22).
- 2 W. Saurin Lyster was an American impresario who arrived in Australia in 1870.
- 3 Catherine Deakin (1850–1937), Papers (MS 4913/2/9): Diary 1872–1878: entry for 2 December 1872.
- 4 Arthur Clarke (b.1853), Diary, 29 August 1868 – 6 January 1873 (MS 6792) (photocopy—original in private hands): entry for Saturday, 16 March 1872.
- 5 Ibid.: entry for Monday, 8 April 1872.
- 6 Ibid.: entry for Monday, 27 May 1872. Henry Benjamin Leete (1845–1911) was the son of the chief engineer for Egyptian railways, and a civil engineer himself. He early preferred the ambience of the music hall to the more serious side of life, and made a name for himself as 'Harry Rickards'.
- 7 See Eric Irvine, *Dictionary of the Australian Theatre*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1985, p. 244.
- 8 Marie Carandini was in her late forties. In 1843, soon after her family's arrival in Hobart Town, she married the 10th Marchese di Carandini, an Italian political exile living in Tasmania. In 1855 she was singing in a company sponsored by George Coppin, performing in such operas as *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *La Sonnambula*. Carandini later had a triumph in *Il Trovatore*. She produced five daughters, and formed her own touring concert company in the 1860s.
- 9 Deakin, op. cit.: 'Wednesday. in even to Exhibition Ma, Alf and I. Carandini family' (entry for 11 December 1872); 'Friday. Nora, Alf and I to the Exhibition. heard the Carandinis for the last time' (entry for 16 January 1873).

- 10 John Morison, journal entitled 'Fifteen Months Abroad: containing an account of a voyage from London to Sydney, also a tour through the Australian colonies, Tasmania, and New Zealand, with notes on the return journey to London, calling at the Cape of Good Hope and Lisbon', April 1872 – January 1873 (MS 8167), pp. 112–113.
- 11 William Bethell (1847–1926), Journal, 7 November 1871 – 18 May 1872 (MS 2465): entry for 13 February 1872.
- 12 Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, RA (1836–1912), specialised in subjects noted for their careful composition, accurate design and classical subjects such as *A Roman Emperor* (1871), *The Mummy* (1872) and *The Seasons* (1877).
- 13 William Sandover (1856–1921), Letters, 1876 (MS 1720): William Sandover to his father, the Honourable William Sandover, MLA, Melbourne, 18 October 1876. The painting was by Charles West Cope, Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy (1867–1874), who specialised in historical, domestic and sacred subjects. This painting of 1856 (called at first *Embarkation of a Puritan Family for New England*) was originally intended for the Houses of Parliament, Westminster. (A fresco copy was used instead.) It was purchased on behalf of the Trustees of the Melbourne Public Library in 1864 for £400. Dimensions: 221.5 x 286.7 cm. (Information about this and the two paintings that follow was supplied by Ms Sonia Dean, Acting Head of Curatorial Services, National Gallery of Victoria.)
- 14 *Ibid.* Long, who specialised in paintings of biblical or historical subjects, made several visits to Spain from 1857 to study Velasquez and other Spanish masters. The painting was believed by Sandover to be based on Longfellow's dramatic poem *The Spanish Student*, published in 1843 (the American poet had visited Spain in 1826, and possibly 1834). Long, according to other information, found his subject in *Arte de la pintura* by Francisco Pacheco (1638), and perhaps Longfellow did too! Victoria's painting is a replica of that exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1871, and was commissioned in 1870. It is dated 1870 and measures 175.2 x 275 cm (being the largest version made).
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.* The painting by Joseph F Layraud (dated 1870) later became known as *The Italian Brigands*. It was acquired from the Salon by the Trustees of the Melbourne Public Library in 1873 for the sum of £400. Measuring 21 ft by 12 ft when loaned out in 1911, it is alas no longer in existence.
- 17 Clarke, *op. cit.*: entry for Saturday, 20 April 1872.
- 18 Deakin, *op. cit.*: entry for Saturday, 17 May 1873.
- 19 *Ibid.*: entry for 5 April 1874.
- 20 *Ibid.*: entry for 27 June 1874. Two-act comic opera, lyrics by C. Nutter and E. Tréfeu, music by Offenbach; at the Prince of Wales, Melbourne, from 22 June 1874 (for 29 performances).
- 21 *Ibid.*: entry for Saturday, 29 August 1874.
- 22 Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851–1861*. Rev. ed. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977, p. 362.
- 23 Morison, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
- 24 Bethell, *op. cit.*: entry for 28 February 1872.
- 25 *Ibid.*: entry for 13 March 1872.
- 26 Sandover, *op. cit.*: William Sandover to his father, Melbourne, 16 October 1876. The stars were 'Mrs. Scott-Siddons, splendid actress (you should see her when in Adelaide) & granddaughter of celebrated Siddons, as Lady Teazle, Coppin grand as Sir Peter, Greville as Sir Benj Backbite. Adams only passable as Chas Surface' (*ibid.*).
- 27 Bethell, *op. cit.*, unidentified newspaper quoting the Melbourne *Argus*, 20 March 1872.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 Clarke, *op. cit.*: entry for Saturday, 23 March 1872.
- 30 Unidentified newspaper clipping in Deakin papers (MS 4913/5/22).
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 Deakin, *op. cit.*: concert program for Monday, 22 December 1879.



CHAPTER 21

HUNTERS AND GATHERERS

I am convinced that we cannot do better in the present state of natural history in Australia than confine our attention to observing, cataloguing and describing. The synthetical work may well, I think, be left for the present to the legion of writers who aspire to what is foolishly called 'high science'.¹

'NO DOUBT EVERYBODY IS DESIROUS of finding new or curious objects, but the consequence is that the more common specimens are exceedingly rare in collections, and cannot be referred to when required.' So wrote Gerard Krefft in 1871, appealing for contributions to the Australian Museum, Sydney, of which he was then Curator. The occasion was the publication of *The Mammals of Australia*, and natural science, that pursuit of the leisured classes, was about to be thrown open to all and sundry:

The New Guinea Expedition, 1875
(detail) the barque Chevert
The Australasian Sketcher, 12 June 1875, p. 44
Newspapers and Microfilm Collection,
National Library of Australia

The Council of Education will perhaps allow me this opportunity to appeal to residents in the Country Districts for contributions to our national collection. The Echidna and the Ornithorhynchus, shot during August, September and October, but especially their young, being the most desirable donations. Other specimens, such as Fossil Remains of all kinds, sun or smoke-dried Skeletons, Skins of Mammals, Birds, Reptiles, Fishes and Small Animals in brine, Insects and Shells in spirits—will be thankfully received and acknowledged by the Trustees. A most valuable gift, the Young of an Echidna or Spiny Ant-eater (not larger than a French bean), was lately presented by Mr. Sydney Hill, being the second specimen of so small a size ever obtained, and yet the Echidna was discovered nearly a century ago, and described as far back as 1792. It is strange, but true, that not a single very young Ornithorhynchus, or Duck-mole, is in one of the Museums in Australia; the specimens which Dr. Bennett captured in 1834 were unfortunately lost, and I am not aware that others have been secured since. These facts show sufficiently that the study of Natural History, in which many people feel interested, is still much neglected.²

Australian Fossil Remains

PLATE 13



Helena Fimde,
illustrator and
lithographer
Thylacoo—Skull
and Jaw.
Plate 13 from
Gerald Kjeff,
*Australian Fossil
Remains* (Sydney
Government
Printer, 1870)

Two years later the popularisation of the natural sciences was a matter of wider debate. Why, asked the *Melbourne Age*, were the classes set up by the Melbourne Athenæum—a version of the Mechanics' Institute—so lacking in scientific content?

One of the many branches of natural science which can be most readily and least expensively followed is that of geology. No one need go beyond his own native town to learn a great deal about it. In addition to this the practical study of it is the most healthful and interesting recreation that a person can enjoy. We doubt if there was ever a zealous field geologist who did not find his health

strengthened by the open air exercise consequent upon his researches. There is no large amount of previous scientific knowledge required, and it is doubtful whether geology does not owe more to the researches of men of small scientific attainments than the greatest *savants* of the day ... Now that the Saturday afternoon holiday is such an established fact, there can be no better employment for many young men than to work together in the open air, bringing sermons out of the stones, and showing what can be done in helping in the search after truth by means of a Field Geological Club.³

Times had certainly changed. In the 1840s and 1850s, science had been the province of Australia's cultured few. Members of the various learned societies would vie for recognition of discoveries—a frequent event in a country so blessed with 'firsts'—and men like Dr George Bennett and the Reverend W.B. Clarke would dominate the Australian scientific community for decades. Bennett's two-volume *Wanderings in New South Wales ... being the Journal of a Naturalist ...* (published in 1834) and *Gatherings of a Naturalist in Australasia* (1860) became required reading for any self-respecting traveller, and while Clarke's geological forays into the wilderness can have left little time for the writing of sermons or the saving of souls, they brought him a tremendous following among the amateur collectors of rocks and fossils in New South Wales.

Collecting was an essential part of a life in science. Homeward-looking men like Bennett and Clarke sent back skins and bones and rocks to old friends and mentors, and Messrs Owen, Sedgwick and Murchison of Britain's hallowed halls of learning⁴ had them stuffed, classified, displayed and (where appropriate) mounted on pins like so many medieval angels. Whether specimens were kept for private gratification or public debate, books or papers followed, and—occasionally—the illustrations were supplied by women. *The Mammals of Australia* was a case in point:

Mr. A.W. Scott, M.A., was entrusted with their execution, and his talented daughters, Miss Scott and Mrs. Helena Forde, lithographed them. Most of the drawings were taken from life-photographs, and the rest from the best mounted specimens that could be procured.⁵

In Australia, as elsewhere, botany and geology, popular interests involving both sexes in invigorating rambles, enabled females to desert their drawing boards and easels in pursuit of natural history, knowledge—and fun. Gentlewomen botanised on behalf of plant-collecting gentlemen—who mostly took the credit—although Louisa Atkinson, one of the few nineteenth-century women to make a name for themselves in science, was an exception:

Though reared under great disadvantages, mentally and physically considered, Mrs. J.S. Calvert, better known as 'the amiable and accomplished Miss Atkinson,' rose to eminence by the mere force of genius, and by her valuable collections from the animal and vegetable kingdoms.⁶

While the writer in the *Town and Country Journal* may not have known Louisa Atkinson personally, the Reverend William Woolls counted himself both a friend and an admirer:

She brought to light some of the hidden beauties of nature. She gave a 'local habitation and a name' to species previously little known, and the Flora Australiensis will testify to posterity the extent of her collections. Being dead, then, she yet speaks in her works, in her collections, in her delineations, and though no tablet had ever been erected to her memory, the flowers which have been named in honour of her services will ever diffuse the sweet odour of her reputation, and perpetuate the memory of her mountain rambles.⁷

Louisa was fortunate in her friendship with the Reverend Woolls, another of the hunting and gathering brigade. He fostered her undoubted talents and, more importantly, introduced her to the men he dubbed 'the far-famed geologist' (the Reverend William Branwhite Clarke) and 'the distinguished botanist of Victoria' (Baron Dr Ferdinand von Mueller).

At first she was only one of a bevy of ladies who foraged on von Mueller's behalf and counted it an honour. The baron, for his part, was always grateful: some would have a species, or indeed a genus, named in recognition of their efforts. Louisa Atkinson had several. *Xanthia atkinsonia* and *Epacris calvertiana* are but two examples of her discoveries, while signed copies of von Mueller's books pay a more personal tribute.

There was more, however, to Miss Atkinson than a pair of sharp eyes and the artistic talent for which she is also remembered. Articles such as 'Among the Murrumbidgee Limestones', 'After Shells in the Limestone', 'Climatic Influences on the Habits of Birds' and 'The Fitzroy Iron Mines'⁸ helped to popularise the natural sciences in the same way that the self-taught geologist Hugh Miller had earlier done in Scotland,⁹ and to reveal to the Australian public the true value of their surroundings.

Those not predisposed to ramble came to science in other ways. The 'great divisions of nature' were all subjects of books and learned papers.¹⁰ A selection of items from the National Library's 'Catalogue of a Private



Epacris calvertiana, named by Ferdinand von Mueller for Louisa Calvert (nee Atkinson). Photograph by Dr John Carter of a specimen growing in the bush (Mittagong area, NSW)

Library c.1870' gives an idea of the kind of scientific books an individual might cherish:

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>Balfour's Botany</i> | <i>Physical Geography</i> |
| <i>Gatherings of a Naturalist in Australasia</i> | <i>Travels in Norway & Lapland</i> |
| <i>Discoveries New Guinea</i> | <i>Maurey's Phys. Geog. of the Sea</i> |
| <i>Taylor on Poisons</i> | <i>Lyell's Geology</i> |
| <i>Thompson's Chemistry</i> | <i>Food and its Adulterations</i> |
| <i>Cyclopedia Physical Science</i> | <i>Agricultural Chemistry</i> |
| <i>Herschel's Astronomy</i> | <i>Geological Manual</i> |
| <i>Inorganic Chemistry</i> | <i>Voyages to Polar Regions</i> |
| <i>Coal & Coal Mines</i> | <i>Jamieson's Mineralogy</i> |
| <i>Mineral Kingdom</i> | <i>Naturalist Pocket Book</i> |
| <i>Animal Physiology</i> | <i>Chemistry of Wine</i> |
| <i>South Gold Fields, Clarke</i> | <i>Quarterly Journal of Science</i> ¹¹ |

Books were not the only key to scientific knowledge. Until it was destroyed by fire, there was the misleadingly named 'Royal Australian Collection' run by the entrepreneurial Mr Pain in Bourke Street, Melbourne, in a former bowling alley close to the Theatre Royal (where the conflagration mentioned in the previous chapter began). William Bethell kept a clipping of the disaster in his journal:

Perhaps the worst case of all was Pain's Museum, which contained a vast collection of Australian and Polynesian curiosities, some of them unique and never to be replaced. Among them was a 'petrified man', being the dried remains of an Australian native which had been found hanging on the fork of a tree. Besides there were many costly works of art, and above all, by far the largest Australian entomological collection known. These were each hustled into the street, and there left piled up, and almost unprotected against the numerous would-be pilferers. Mr. Pain's loss cannot yet be estimated. His collection was the work of two lifetimes—that of himself and his wife, and a large portion has either been seriously injured or altogether destroyed.¹²

William Bethell was not the sort of fellow to settle for simple curiosities. Seeking serious reading matter and solid food for thought, he took himself off to the Public Library:

It is a very fine building. Went with the purpose of trying to find out the names of some of the sea birds seen during the passage, but gave it up as hopeless as there [were] too many volumes of Travels to look thro—there did not seem to be a collection of Natural History books in the library—everything else was well represented.¹³

(Perhaps he should have gone to Melbourne University where, according to William Sandover, the Museum of Natural History was said to be 'the best arranged collection out of London'.¹⁴) Shortly after his arrival in Melbourne in January 1872, and an encounter with colonial customs officials (whom he found an all too familiar breed), Bethell—that keen observer of things natural and unnatural—set forth to examine the alien world of *Terra Australis*:

Got our luggage after a good deal of trouble from the Customs who seem as big fools as they are in England and perhaps bigger. Went to see the University Museum, very creditable to the colony—a good collection of Victorian fauna also of Tropical South America—a very good geological collection.¹⁵

In Sydney, the Australian Museum flourished under the trusteeship of the Bennetts and Clarkes of the natural history scene, and was the high point of any tourist's visit. Bethell was suitably impressed—especially by the numbers:

The skeleton of the Southern Sperm Whale (*Cotodon australia*) 35 ft long is ingeniously suspended in the centre hall—there are skeletons of 2 smaller whales—*Euphsetio Greigii*—*Euphsetii Macleayi*. The osteological collection is very fine. The series of 100 skulls of various races & the three fine skeletons of Australians & Sth Sea Islanders are particularly interesting—The ground floor contains a large mineralogical & entomological collection—insects principally Australian—the gallery is filled with Birds reptiles & fishes—the collection of snakes, lizards & frogs is very large, it contains 300 genera—500 species & 2000 specimens.¹⁶

Hugh Massy too enjoyed his visit:

The collection is a good one. The most interesting part, perhaps, being the Minerals and the gold-bearing Strata of the Colony. The Entomological collection is also good. There are many good stuffed specimens of kangaroos of all kinds and sizes and a single but very good restored specimen of the Moa, the gigantic extinct wingless Bird of New Zealand. It stands about 15 feet in height. Everything in the Museum is nicely arranged and legibly labelled in English, as well as having the scientific names attached, and the whole of the arrangements reflect the greatest credit on the curator.¹⁷



Louisa Atkinson (1834–1872)
Spotted Pardalote, Scarlet Honeyeater, Superb Blue Wren and Striated Pardalote, 180–ink drawing and watercolour, 15.7 x 11 cm
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (R11095)

The Vagabond totally disagreed:

I do not think very much of the 'Australian' Museum, as it is ambitiously termed. It is very much like that at the University in Melbourne, with the exception that there seems to be too much of everything, and the specimens are not so well mounted. There are skeletons of whales and casts of pre-Adamite monsters. There are cases of stuffed animals and birds, and quite a plethora of minerals and shells. There are thousands of other birds, which, cured and ticketed, i.e. on their backs under the glass, looking remarkably like the pictures of the dead cockrobin in the story-books.¹⁸

'There appear,' he concluded, 'to be bones of every living thing—including three entire skeletons of the human form divine.'



A BONE OF 'EVERY LIVING THING' was exactly what the dedicated collector was after, and the private museum—that feature of many an eighteenth-century town or country house—was a tradition carried over from the old world to the new. Among the most interesting of antipodean collectors were arguably the Macleays, and of the four—Alexander; his sons, William Sharp and George; and his nephew, William John—the nephew was the only one whose hobby became an obsession.

To his orphaned nephew, freshly arrived from the grimly grey city of Edinburgh in 1839, Alexander Macleay represented all that his own life was lacking: the former Colonial Secretary of New South Wales was a man of influence and style; his mansion at Elizabeth Bay was surrounded by equally splendid gardens. (Bones the newcomer already knew, for he had been pursuing medical studies until the death of his widowed mother.) Uncle Alex and cousin George were squatters on the Murrumbidgee River, and William John Macleay joined them. Eventually he made a success of his own station, turned to politics and, like other members of his family, began to indulge a taste for entomology.

In 1865, his cousin W.S. Macleay died and left him two natural history collections (his father's and his own). Under the terms of the will, Macleay was in turn obliged to bequeath them either to the University of Cambridge or to the University of Sydney—a case of looking backwards or ahead. As a politician, Macleay was a man of principle, one totally committed to the country of his adoption; what better way to show it than to enrich its future generations? In December 1873 he not only bequeathed his personal collections to the University of Sydney, but made financial provision for a curator.

If December 1873 was a defining moment in the life of the future Sir William, one that saw him make a considerable investment in the future of this country, the whole decade of the 1870s was a defining one for science. While young men and women enjoyed outdoor pursuits such as rambling and cycling, and taking in the delights of nature to a greater or lesser degree, professionals were taking their place beside the gentlemen hobbyists—collecting, describing and publishing in the way von Mueller had been doing for years!¹⁹ Meanwhile, life in Elizabeth Bay House continued more obsessively than ever.²⁰

A collection in those days could be as simple or as complicated as one wished to make it. A collection of butterflies, describing colours and sizes of wings; a collection of birds' eggs or one of shells, arranged by colour and size. The next step for any truly serious collector was to observe the objects of her—but usually his—affection in their original surroundings. This is precisely what happened to William John Macleay once he conceived the outrageous notion of a complete collection of specimens of all the world's creatures.

At least, to anyone else it would have been outrageous—Macleay simply went ahead. He had the means and, with posterity in mind, he had the impetus to create what would become the most stunning collection in Australia, in either private or public hands. Soon he 'was importing cases of birds by the gross from South America'²¹ and immersing himself in his dream:

All over the world scientists were discovering, classifying, advancing knowledge. In the whole of Australia, with no provision made by governments for collecting, research or education in Natural History, what was achieved must depend on people like himself, on amateurs and enthusiasts. Not only was Elizabeth Bay House Australia's Natural History centre, with Macleay as its unpaid director, but it was a communications centre as well. A library of scientific works, available to Australian collectors and scientists, was being built up at Macleay's expense and, in addition to publications, a stream of letters from leading authorities on Natural History in Europe and America was flooding in.²²

On Sunday evenings his friends gathered round him to discuss developments in the world of science,²³ like minds with whom he discussed the formation of the Linnean Society of New South Wales (he had already disbanded 'his' Entomological Society as being too narrow). The new society came into being in October 1874, yet even that was not enough. Organising his collections was one thing; it was gratifying, too, that people sent their donations to him, and not to eminent scientists back in Britain. Dredging Sydney Harbour might yield exciting new marine creatures, but gradually the need grew within him to *go to sea* himself. He had the money, all that was lacking was a destination—but that did not escape him for long.

John Brazier, a devotee of those Sunday evening 'whisky parties', had sailed as a boy with his whaling father, who collected shells as a hobby and passed on that love to his son. Pacific waters found themselves back in official favour in the 1860s after years of relative neglect, and in 1865 Brazier cruised with HMS *Curacoa* to the New Hebrides, Solomons, Fijis and New Caledonia. In 1871 he was with the *Eclipse* expedition to the Claremont Islands on the Great Barrier Reef. In 1872 and 1873 Her Britannic Majesty's vessels *Blanche* and *Basilisk* were sent on scientific and hydrographic surveys during which Rabaul Harbour was surveyed and Port Moresby discovered (with *Challenger* following in 1875), and when Robin Walpole wrote:

We have on board besides the detective a naturalist a botanist and a geologist to examine into the products flowers &c of New Guinea²⁴

that naturalist was John Brazier. While Brazier reported back to his friend Macleay in Sydney, Midshipman Walpole's letters home give his usual breathless version of the state of work and play:

We left Sydney on the [11th] of May and have been these weeks at sea. Now we are off an Island called Pleasant Island [Nauru] where we were going to but as the *Barrosa* has just come from it I do not suppose we shall go in. I suppose we shall go to New Guinea. That is the place where the birds of paradise come from, also the birds nests the Chinese make soup from.²⁵

There are birds of paradise, emus, also ourang-outangs and other large animals crocodiles [swarm] on the Solomon Islands. There are hardly any animals except pigs on any of the Carolines as they are coral Islands most of them at least. But they all swarm with birds—You can get such lovely parrots and cockatoos at the Solomon Is to be got for a small piece of tobacco but the first lieutenant gave orders that none were to be brought on board and as I had to give all my spears and clubs away having no place to stow them I have only got some ornaments and small things left.²⁶

We are going up to the Islands in about a fortnight I will get you some [ap-] and things I have got some clubs and bows and arrows which I mean to bring home.²⁷

The whole of Sydney was at fever pitch as first one ship and then another returned from the islands. We can imagine the delight with which Macleay greeted his friend Brazier, the conchologist, and how members of the various learned societies descended on the ships in search of spoils:

The *Basilisk* has just come back from New Guinea where she has been making the most wonderful discoveries. The ship is filled with birds of Paradise and cassowarys and the most wonderful native ornaments—It is most awfully hard to keep any curiosities here people are so mad about getting them and you can't refuse I have managed to keep a few clubs and bows and arrows for the Lower Hall at Rainthorpe. But I am afraid all the rest and the shells will be given away here.²⁸

Captain Moresby, in his book on the proceedings of HMS *Basilisk*, described his reception at Farm Cove:

The ship of course was thronged by people coming to hear something about New Guinea, and to see the curiosities we had brought thence, and many of the seamen drove lucrative bargains with the Sydney people. One, in particular, received five pounds, as I was afterwards informed, for a New Guinea pig, which was immediately shaved by its purchaser, painted in stripes of different colours, and otherwise decorated. A small tent was then set up in one of the principal thoroughfares, and the proprietor informed the public that a wonderful striped New Guinea pig, brought by H.M. ship *Basilisk* was on view, and charged sixpence a-head for entrance, with a result that was said to have answered his most sanguine expectations.²⁹

As for the anthropologists, there was nothing like a first-hand impression, but so often they had to settle for second best and second hand. No one had closer contact with the native peoples than Archibald Watson, for example:

Ran into the harbour, being piloted by one of the white men who had been over 20 years on the island, anchored, and were soon surrounded by canoes full of girls of all ages from 10 to 20 gaudily dressed and splendidly tattooed all over their legs from their ancles upwards to where? also their arms & hands as far up as the elbow, skins rubbed with turmeric, a great deal of which is used on the Island, both in cooking and for dyeing their cloth, everything smells of it. I went up a river in a small canoe with one native who took me to his house, and shewed me several beauties of the district who resided in his house and the adjoining ones, and in consideration of a large knife as a bonus to him in the first place I was rewarded with the use of his youngest daughter while the vessel remained at the Island.³⁰

For reasons which must be obvious, Watson kept his experiences to himself, while Walpole doubtless regaled his Sydney friends as well as his family:

After writing the last one we went to some more islands where hardly any ships have ever yet called. They will give you anything they have got (and that is not much) for an old bottle or a small piece of tobacco. We lived very well there on chickens and all sorts of fruit. All the islands are overgrown with coconuts Breadfruit and Bananas—I had some very good pidgeon shooting at some of them. I also shot some chickens, they are quite wild, the natives trap them and bring them off to the ship—At one of the Islands, McAskill Island [Pingelap], we got eight large turtles for one lb [pound] of tobacco at 8d per lb. After leaving the Carolines we came down here to the Solomon Islands. They are enormous islands some of them as big as England they are crowded with natives. The first one we went to was New Hanover there was no anchorage so we lay off and traded with the natives. They are awful thieves they had crooked sticks they pushed into the ports and hooked out what they could overboard with it and swam away. We then went to St Matthews [in Bismarck Archipelago] the natives would not come near us for two days then we went ashore and found the whole place deserted all the houses empty they had all gone off to another island when we came. We got them to come back by giving them presents and promising not to touch them.³¹

Hugh Massy presented his own recollections, bound and in book form, to pass around his immediate circle of friends. Those of Captain Moresby, of the surveying *Basilisk*, found their way into print, as was the habit of the time. Travellers' tales were all very well, but not enough for William Macleay: he needed to go, see, sense and savour for himself, and what better destination than New Guinea?³²

FEW PEOPLE HAD MACLEAY'S ADVANTAGES, or a sailor's opportunities to view the untoward, and perhaps it was just as well. Massy and Walpole were working seamen, and saw what they did in the way of their normal duties, and to them nature was a source of interest, of wonder even, provided one kept one's distance. Sea snakes, for example, were of a 'monstrous length', noted Massy, usually 'from six to eight feet, but I have seen them twelve feet, and in one instance sixteen feet long'. An admirer of 'Charles Darwin Esq.' and his 'various and excellent writings', he consulted the Fijian Consul, another respected man of science, as to the danger of such creatures:

It is considered doubtful whether their bite is very venomous ... their bite is painful but not dangerous. Edgar Leopold Layard Esq. an eminent Naturalist, however, informs me that no reliance should be placed on statements of this kind ... the bite of one may not be venomous and of another [of similar appearance] in a different latitude is instantly fatal.³³

As a tedious voyage to Australia approached its welcome end, the thought of similar creatures, possibly 'laying full length on the surface of the water, belly up, which appears to be their attitude of repose',³⁴ brought out an unexpectedly playful streak in William Bethell:

I hear people still believe in the 'sea serpent'. I thought this idea had long since been exploded however Miss Strong today asked Capt. Marsden whether we should see the serpent—Might we not manufacture one for her benefit?³⁵

Travellers might play their little jokes, or come home with tales of wonders seen and heard in foreign climes. Others brought native curios and shrunken heads to gather dust in some dingy parlour or cold ancestral hall. Islands, in particular New Guinea, the nearest, were systematically and callously plundered in the name of science:

I have a living 'eectus', which I consider a new species. To-day I am going to kill it, to ascertain the sex, though I have no doubt it is a female; but it is very different from the one I gave to you. It has been bought from the natives of Kirapuno, about 100 miles east from Port Moresby. I will give you a full description, to be sent to Mr. Sclater for publication in the Proceedings of the Society.³⁶

Nearer still, the Great Barrier Reef faced unwelcome attention from matelots indulging in a little well-earned 'rest and recreation':

Nearing Cape York, the Great Barrier Reef approaches to within five miles of the Australian coast, and the narrow navigable channel between the reefs becomes more tortuous, for islets and sandbanks thicken.

We often looked for turtle on these banks and islets, but mostly in vain ... Our shooting parties on the islands were more fortunate, and succeeded in making good bags of pigeons and doves; our men amusing themselves the while on the coral reefs like children; splashing knee-deep in water after the fishes that darted about in all directions, breaking off the coral that branched from below in every variety of shape and colour, picking up the beautiful courie, cream-coloured with black spots, and other shells, from the tiniest to the huge clam with a hinge like a jail door.³⁷

With town and city life becoming busier, noisier (and smellier), the peace and seclusion of the bush became increasingly welcome; townfolk advanced to embrace the bush, only to find the bush retreating. One of Tasmania's greatest glories was already under threat:

Of these (Fern-tree Valleys) the name was, and even still is, legion, although the increase of the town, and the yearly extending cultivation of the environs, have obliterated many and many an exquisite fern of loveliness; and for bowers, deep in verdure, tangled round with briar, shrub and climber, and over-arched by sun-excluding canopies of giant fern-trees, have only left a dry waste of dust and ashes round the charred stumps of the poor departed ferns. Another cause of infinite mischief and destruction to these beautiful spots, is the exceeding senseless and tasteless custom of cutting down the long fronds, or even whole tree ferns, to be conveyed into town, and set up, or nailed up in sad, stiff, faded wretchedness, with the notion that such Goth-like barbarity achieves what is called the 'decoration' of churches, ball-rooms, flower-shows, butchers' shops, and others.³⁸

At 6 a.m. on Sunday morning, 5 November 1876, William Sandover 'set off alone for the Bower':

After about 2 hours walk along a dusty and hilly road, rested for breakfast at the Fern Tree Inn, a favorite and quiet staying place for visitors to Tasmania who prefer rural to town life. From there about ten minutes ramble brought me to the Bower, a spot which evidently has been able to show great beauty, but now, thanks to those visitors whose ideal of a days enjoyment is to leave their names deeply imprinted in the trunks of trees, causing in most cases lasting injury to them, or to carry away the fronds so grand in their native valleys for the decoration (?) of their homes, it is bereft of much of its old wild beauty.³⁹

Elsewhere, things were so idyllic that young Sandover waxed positively lyrical over the Tasmanian forests around Mount Wellington:

Here, except in occasional spots, where it has been invaded by the ruthless axe of the settler, is virgin Nature, & man clever though he may be can never construct such scenes. The narrow road winds along through the dense growth, so that one cannot see many yards before him; while the trees towering up 200, 250 & a few 270 ft high, with no branches except in the last 40 ft or 50 ft impress the traveller with awe and admiration at their immensity. And coming round a sharp turn a waterfall bursts upon our view, rushing & whirling down from the giddy heights above to the yet giddier depths below. And there by the side of our own forest track, contrasting with the giant trees; which seem to keep at a distance as if the scene were too hallowed even for them; are quiet but grand nooks—the luxuriant ferns, the clematis & thousand different

climbers, the wild flowering shrubs, the varied but close growth, all uniting to form a picture—a perfect picture, which when once seen can never fade. And the mind wanders back to our young and babyish days long ago, and we would fain imagine that in the midst of yon bushes, fairy forms are flitting about. It *cannot* be a scene of this world of hurry and struggle and care.⁴⁰

Reverend William Woolls, author of *Lectures on the Vegetable Kingdom*, and ‘Patron of the Cumberland Mutual Improvement Society’, found things getting worse, not better, in his county:

In the early days of the colony, when grants of land were bestowed on settlers, and gangs of men were assigned out by the Government, the first thing which they did was to clear away right and left, as cumberers of the ground, all the unfortunate gum trees. Even women and children, the settlers’ wives and families, rejoiced in the operation of what was then called ‘burning off,’ and night after night gigantic fires were kindled for the purpose of destruction. And what has resulted from this prodigal waste of resources? Why, some farms (I allude especially to those in the County of Cumberland) have been so completely denuded that the owners are now compelled, for the most part, to buy timber for fencing, building purposes, nay, even for firewood itself; whilst, in many instances, the destruction of trees so valuable as white ironbark (*E. sideroploia*), black butt (*E. pilularis*), white mahogany (*E. aemenoides*), and box (*E. hemiphloia*), has been a most serious loss to the colony. Some people, however, will never learn experience. They are too wise to profit from the errors of the past; and, therefore, if you look over the old files of the *Sydney Mail* and *Town and Country Journal*, you will find elaborate papers, and even learned controversies, on the best methods of ring-barking or destroying gum trees.⁴¹

‘You may depend on it,’ he continued, ‘that nature requires a certain equilibrium.’

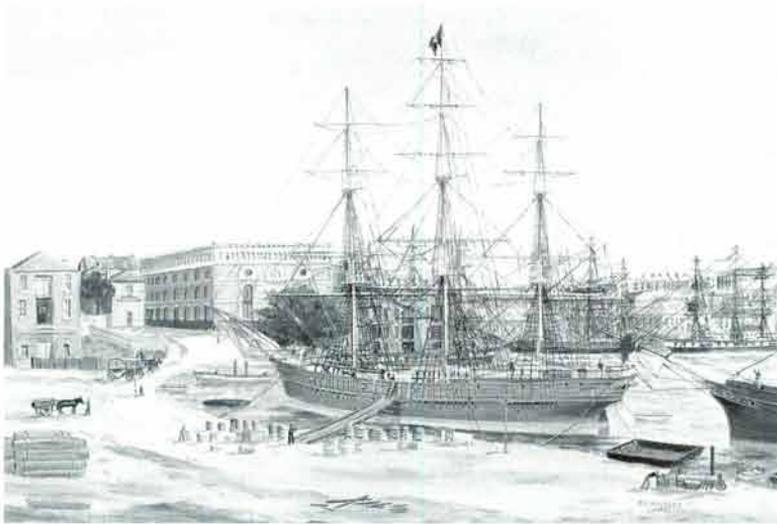
Trees are still falling victim to the modern version of the settler’s axe and balance is still sadly lacking. Progress is retrograde, said the French philosopher Rousseau, and those backward footsteps he so deplored still leave their crushing trail of devastation. The footsteps, soft as they were, could already be detected in the 1870s; here is John Morison, amateur naturalist and occasional shooter, on a visit to the Angaston area of South Australia’s Barossa Valley:

Flocks of beautifully-plumaged parrots were constantly hovering overhead, and the much prized ‘shell-parrots’ were as numerous as sparrows are in England.

'Grass Parrots,' so called from their green plumage, were very numerous, and we could soon have brought down enough with a gun to make a sumptuous pie.⁴²

- 1 William Macleay, presidential address to the Linnean Society, 31 January 1876, in *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales*, Vol. 1, 1877, p. 93.
- 2 Gerard Krefft, *The Mammals of Australia: Illustrated by Harriett Scott and Helena Forde for the Council of Education. With a short account of all the species hitherto described by Gerard Krefft*. Sydney: Government Printer, 1871, preface.
- 3 *Age*, 9 June 1873.
- 4 Sir Richard Owen (1804–1892), zoologist, anatomical and palaeontological researcher, and pre-Darwinian; Adam Sedgwick (1785–1873), Woodward Professor of Geology, University of Cambridge, canon of Norwich Cathedral and an anti-Darwinian; Sir Roderick Impey Murchison (1792–1871), geologist and geographer.
- 5 Krefft, loc. cit.
- 6 Appreciation of the 'The Late Mrs. J.S. Calvert', *Town and Country Journal*, 30 November 1878, p. 1025 (in Diary of Charlotte Waring (MS 8997)).
- 7 Rev. William Woolls, A Sermon, *Preached in St. Peter's Church Richmond, on Sunday, April 12th, 1874, on the Occasion of a Tablet being Placed in That Church, to the Memory of the Late Mrs. Calvert*. Windsor, NSW: Benjamin Isaacs, 1874, p. 10, in Patricia Clarke, Papers (MS 8368/18/7).
- 8 Published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 May 1870, 24 May 1870, 16 June 1870, 9 November 1870 respectively.
- 9 Hugh Miller (1802–1856). His newspaper articles on geology in the *Witness* (Edinburgh) were published in 1841 as *The Old Red Sandstone, or New Walks in an Old Field*.
- 10 They included zoology, botany, mineralogy, meteorology, anthropology, ethnology, geography, geology and palaeontology, among others. See William Macleay's presidential address to the Linnean Society, op. cit., p. 84.
- 11 'Handwritten catalogue of a private library of a resident of Sydney. The library includes titles relating to New South Wales, geology, natural history, directories and journals. Two pages in the back of the notebook list the contents of the house' (MS 8211). The indications are that the owner was a Francophile medical man from Scotland with 'Anglo-Indian' connections.
- 12 *Argus*, 20 March 1872.
- 13 William Bethell (1847–1926), *Journal*, 7 November 1871 – 18 May 1872 (MS 2465): entry for 30 January 1872.
- 14 William Sandover (1856–1921), Letters, 1876 (MS 1720): William Sandover to his father, the Honourable William Sandover, MLA, Melbourne, 8 October 1876.
- 15 Bethell, op. cit.: entry for 29 January 1872.
- 16 *Ibid.*: entry for 28 February 1872.
- 17 Hugh Massy, RN, 'Four Years on the Australian Station', 1877 (MS 8520): manuscript account of the years 1873–1877 set out in chapters, p. 50.
- 18 "'Sabbath-Breaking" in Sydney', in Michael Cannon (ed.), *The Vagabond Papers*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969, pp. 128–129.
- 19 Frederick Waterhouse, Director of the Public Museum of South Australia, published a catalogue of mammals and birds of South Australia and the Northern Territory in 1875. That same year Dr Schomburgk, Director of Public Gardens, Adelaide, published a paper on the flora of South Australia, giving a complete list of all known plants. E.P. Ramsay, Curator of the Australian Museum after Krefft's dismissal, and a member of the Council of the Linnean Society, published a work on raptorial birds. A work on *Orchids of Australia* was produced by Robert Fitzgerald of the New South Wales Lands Department. The establishment of the Department of Mines of New South Wales in 1873 made geology a serious business. In 1875 Queensland was working towards a geological survey; the Mining Department of Victoria published a geological map of the whole of Australia by R.B. Smyth; Charles Wilkinson, New South Wales Government Geologist, published *Mines and Mineral Statistics of New South Wales*, containing 'Remarks on the sedimentary formations of New South Wales'.

- 20 'By April [1874], Macleay was writing to Boucard, a natural history dealer in London, to order 1000 species of foreign birds. Later in the year he put in a second order': Peter Stanbury and Julian Holland, *Mr Macleay's Celebrated Cabinet: The History of the Macleays and their Museum*. Sydney: Macleay Museum, University of Sydney, 1988.
- 21 Peter Stanbury 'Sir William Macleay: Squatter, Member of Parliament and Scientist', in Peter Stanbury (ed.), *100 Years of Australian Scientific Explorations*. Sydney: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1975, Chapter 1.
- 22 David S. Macmillan, *A Squatter Went to Sea*. Sydney: Currawong, 1957, p. 16.
- 23 They included Sir Edward Deas Thomson, Macleay's father-in-law, former Colonial Secretary, and Vice-Chancellor then Chancellor of the University of Sydney; John Smith, Professor of Chemistry at the University of Sydney; John Brazier, conchologist; George Masters, curator of Macleay's museum from February 1874; William Forster, politician and naturalist; Dr James Cox, medical practitioner and conchologist; Captain Arthur Onslow, RN (on survey vessel HMS *Herald* in Western Pacific, 1852–1861); William Bede Dalley, barrister, literary critic and politician.
- 24 Robert 'Robin' Horace Walpole, RN (1854–1931), Letters, 1870–1874 (MS 9110/4): Robert Walpole to Mrs Laura Walpole, HMS *Blanche*, Sydney, 12 May 1872.
- 25 *Ibid.* (MS 9110/5): Robert Walpole to Mrs Laura Walpole, HMS *Blanche*, Lat. — S, Longitude 167E, no date but probably written on or soon after 6 June 1872.
- 26 *Ibid.* (MS 9110/6–8): Robert Walpole to Mrs Laura Walpole, HMS *Blanche*, San Christoval Island, Solomon Group, 24 July 1872.
- 27 *Ibid.* (MS 9110/12): Robert Walpole to his father, the Honourable Frederick Walpole, MP, HMS *Blanche*, Sydney, 4 June 1873.
- 28 *Ibid.* (MS 9110/14): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Blanche*, 2 July 1873. This was indeed the case; in a letter from Fiji, Walpole wrote: 'There are no shells to be got here lots of clubs though. I begin to think that curiosities are great trash, they are very little good and if I take them to Sydney people will get them out of me somehow. I gave away almost all the last lot' (Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Blanche*, Levuka, Fiji Islands, no date, received 3 December 1873 (MS 9110/15)).
- 29 Captain John Moresby, RN, *Discoveries and Surveys in New Guinea and the D'Entrecasteaux Islands: A Cruise in Polynesia and Visits to the Pearl-Shelling Stations in Torres Straits of H.M.S. Basilisk*. London: John Murray, 1876, p. 233.
- 30 Archibald Watson (1849–1940), Log of the brig *Carl*; entry for Saturday, 2 March 1872, in Hedley Ralph Marston (1900–1965), Papers (MS 1682/68).
- 31 Walpole, *op. cit.* (MS 9110/6): Robert Walpole to Mrs Laura Walpole, HMS *Blanche*, San Christoval Island, Solomon Group, 24 July 1872.
- 32 For an account of Macleay's trip to New Guinea on board the *Chevert*, see David S. Macmillan, *A Squatter Went to Sea*. Sydney: Currawong, 1957.
- 33 Massy, *op. cit.*, p. 124.
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 Bethell, *op. cit.*: entry for 18 November 1871.
- 36 *Sydney Mail*, 1 July 1876. P.L. Sclater, MA, PhD, FRS, was Secretary to the Zoological Society of London.
- 37 Moresby, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
- 38 Louisa Anne Meredith, *Our Island Home*. Hobart Town: J. Walch; London: Marcus Ward, 1879, p. 9.
- 39 Sandover, *op. cit.*: William Sandover to his father, Hobart Town, 12 November 1876.
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 William Woolls, *Lectures on the Vegetable Kingdom*. Sydney: C.E. Fuller, 1879, pp. 90–91.
- 42 John Morison, journal entitled 'Fifteen Months Abroad: containing an account of a voyage from London to Sydney, also a tour through the Australian colonies, Tasmania, and New Zealand, with notes on the return journey to London, calling at the Cape of Good Hope and Lisbon', April 1872 – January 1873 (MS 8167), p. 106.



CHAPTER 22

AN IMPERATIVE INSTINCT FOR POSSESSION

Amongst other rumours it was reported that Americans were about to send an expedition from San Francisco to examine the eastern shores of the Island. I deeply felt the importance of forestalling any attempts of alien nations to establish a claim to this great island, knowing that foreign possession might lead to complications, and feeling that the development of the great Australian Empire would be cramped in the future should its progress be arrested in the north.¹

AS TENSIONS BUILT UP in Europe, so British interest in the Pacific declined: the Empire could best be defended from home. The Maori Wars of the 1860s were over and the region was at peace. By 1870 Australia's land defence was deemed a colonial responsibility. The arrival soon after of the iron-clad turret ship *Cerberus* underlined the general proposition: that Royal Navy ships would be reduced to a minimal presence—enough to allay the colonists fears, but no more—and that further expansion was off the Imperial agenda.

John Grant McCredie (1912–1988)

Ship 'Star of Peace' at Circular Quay about 1870, 1965

oil on canvas on cardboard: 40.6 x 30.3

Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (R3923)

Over the decade the colonists looked increasingly to their own salvation. In admirable fashion, the New South Wales Government made a virtue of necessity: rounding up the waifs and strays who made Sydney streets so untidy, they trained them as seamen on a clapped-out East Indiaman (purchased for the purpose) and re-named NSS *Vernon*.² Victoria acquired HMVS *Nelson* for similar purposes in 1868,³ and preparations for self-defence continued.

Other nations, meanwhile, were taking an interest in possible colonisation. The French, of course, had been colonising for years, starting with the Society Islands in 1838:

France has seized the rule, her vessels in warlike array fill the harbour, her drums and martial fifes disturb the sweet songs of the groves, and her flag floats in possession from most matter-of-fact looking bastions. The politics of the place are no business of mine. While there, as in duty bound, I sided with the natives, and, a strict adherer to Nelson's code, hated the French most cordially.⁴

'Poor Taheite! The eagle has his claw on you,'⁵ lamented the Honourable Frederick, the first of the seafaring Walpoles, and years later when Archie Watson reached Papeete he found marked signs of a colonial presence. There were 'nice shady streets' and 'some delightful tropical residences in back' while 'Cream-Coloured Europeans & tawnie beauties' drove about the streets. Nightlife in the early 1870s had a certain *je ne sais quoi* of French sophistication:

When the lamps are light in the evening the boys and girls (plenty of the latter) come out dressed in spotless linen & little white hats stuck on the side of their heads and promenade the narrow streets in twos and threes, making an awful row, laughing and chattering. You would think you are in Pandemonium. Through long and close intercourse with the pale faces of all nations (more especially *Les Français*) they have lost that natural charm which one finds in the incomparable hour of *Ascention*. At day light in the morning you may procure a cup of chocolate or *café noir* to refresh you after your night's exertions.⁶

Colonisation of New Caledonia followed, and Midshipman Walpole informed his father (who had exchanged his berth on HMS *Collingwood* for a backbench in the British House of Commons) that the French—although still not to be trusted—were rather jolly:

There is a French ship in here [Sydney] now. They are very civil to us, always asking us to dine on board. They are great fun. We had a grand dance when we were at New Caledonia. All the Frenchmen seem to go in for married women very strongly.⁷

The Dutch⁸—‘a very superior lot of men’ who ‘all spoke English admirably’—were seen from time to time, as were the Americans (of whom William Bethell could not say the same):

The United States man of war *Narangansett* came in from the Pacific Islands today, she is an ugly looking craft, a bad steamer & not a good sailer, the officers are not at all a nice lot excessively vulgar, lot of Yankees.⁹

Before long, Britain was more involved in the Pacific, entirely against her inclination.

THE GOLD RUSH ERA left Victoria singularly blessed and New South Wales a comparatively poor relation. The best of the land was taken, and young (and not so young) blood looked elsewhere for adventure and profit. In truth, the colonists had been looking outward for years and moving beyond Her Majesty’s jurisdiction. The Fijian Company of Adelaide (1861) and the Polynesian Company of Melbourne (1868) were but two symptoms of this restlessness, and once the potential of the South Seas was noted the trickle of entrepreneurial colonials turned into a veritable torrent. Even naval officers were not immune to the idea of settling on Fiji:

We have all got an idea of starting cotton planting at Fiji as people seem to be making fortunes in a very short time there. I have met several people with plantations there and one of them offered me a billet there which I declined unless I had to leave so I am laying up in case anything happened.¹⁰

Sandalwood, whale oil, *bêche-de-mer*, had brought Europeans to the Pacific, now cotton and sugar cane did the same. Many of the islanders were used to a European presence, although happy partnerships could always turn sour:

The Queen of the Ualan Isd [Kosrae] was a very pretty little woman and her sister was lovely. At Ponape Isd. the women are also very pretty the queen especially so she was a halfcaste—They have got Spanish blood in them I believe the natives of Ponape say that a long time ago a Spanish ship was wrecked there. The Spaniards landed they were all dressed in armour so the natives could not kill them. They lived for a long time at Ponape and married the native women. After they had been there some time they began to oppress the natives so one day the natives rose up and killed the Spaniards by forcing their spears into their eyes the only place not covered by iron.¹¹

The islanders could not free themselves so easily of the blackbirders who carried them off to labour on the plantations. It took the death of a senior missionary on a faraway coral island to make an equally distant government sit up and take notice.

In 1872 HMS *Basilisk* joined *Rosario*, *Blanche* and *Dido* on anti-blackbirding duties and five speedy armed schooners followed.¹² It was a profitable process for some, as young Walpole wistfully reported:

I believe the *Basilisk* has made £12,000 prize money one of her prizes sold with the cargo for £26,000 and there are two more to be sold both with pearl shell in which is worth £160 a ton.¹³

Basilisk, a wood paddle sloop built in 1848, arrested five blackbirding vessels. A similar success in mapping the New Guinea coast would add to Her Majesty's troubles in the Pacific. Meanwhile, there was the embarrassment of Fiji to deal with.

Correspondence in the *Sydney Morning Herald* had recommended annexation way back in the 1850s,¹⁴ and the willingness of Chief Cakobau in itself should have aroused suspicion. Cakobau was proclaimed *Tui Viti*, or King of Fiji, in 1867 and proceeded to sell off his own (and his rivals') land. Most of the resident Europeans rallied around him—they, after all, were buying the land—and brought their own style of civilisation to his capital: 'a terrible place for drinking & almost without intellect of any kind outside of business'.¹⁵

Edward March, British Consul when the labour trade was bringing in high profits and the influence of the law was at its lowest ebb, found that (like a policeman's) a consul's lot was not a happy one. Soon he was at odds with labour recruiters and their clients—many of whom were government ministers—and was stirring up white dissidents to back him.¹⁶ In 1873 HMS *Blanche* (with Walpole aboard) arrived just in time to avert an unpleasant confrontation:

We are now at Levuka the capital of the Fiji Islands. I was quite surprised to find it quite a civilized place there are 300 people at Levuka and about 800 in the group altogether.¹⁷ We have been very gay here had several dances and the people are very hospitable indeed to us—All of a sudden though there is a sort of civil war broken out. The government, it seems, tax the people and give them no advantage for their taxes as the white inhabitants all except the government party of about twenty have taken up arms against the government, Thakombau the King, a disciplined army of about 300 Tongan troops and about a thousand niggers.¹⁸

March was replaced by Lieutenant Nettleton of the *Blanche*, and Walpole, financially embarrassed as usual, missed out on a golden opportunity:

We sent our paymaster ashore as consul here and he being rather a friend of mine was going to apply for me as his secretary till the proper secretary comes (which is a place worth £200 a year) when he had some quarrel with the Captain and therefore thought it no good.¹⁹

The former consul seemed to have put his retirement to good use by spreading malicious (and inaccurate) rumours:

The government here consists of the King (Thakombau) a Fijian native, his premier Mr Woods an ex-second master in the navy turned out for theft he then entered the Victorian navy where he was dismissed for drawing and keeping dead mens pay for himself—Then Mr Thurston the Minister of Finance who had to leave Melbourne being concerned in a diamond swindle. Most of the people here I think have done something that makes it unsafe to go anywhere else but the two biggest scoundrels are at the heart of everything.²⁰

For a time, the chance of action looked very promising:

If there is any fighting we are to land and fight for the white men against the natives. I am told off for the landing party and we are all longing to have to land—I think they are all certain to have a fight ... We are going to have a meeting of all the white inhabitants of Levuka on board this afternoon and I believe that if they get no satisfaction then they will fight. We are going to use 20 lb. rockets against the natives. I have been ashore for the last two nights with an armed boats crew to keep order in the town.²¹

'Captain Simpson would undoubtedly have intervened,' wrote R.A. Derrick, Fiji's official historian, 'had the situation become serious.' As it was, 'there was a great deal of fun on both sides, and the Battle of Bull Run—as the affair was popularly styled—ended with no worse consequences than a few bruised heads.'²² When reports reached London, not a few in government would have echoed Charles Norcock's earlier sentiments in private, if not in public:

I am not now able to enter into the Affairs of the Fiji Islanders, but certainly would be sorry to join them until things assume a *more pleasing* prospect.²³

Pleasing or not, things had gone too far. In November 1873 Commodore Goodenough arrived in Levuka with specific orders to settle the troublesome business of Fiji. 'It seems they are going to annex Fiji after all,' Walpole told his father in May 1874. 'I hope you will oppose it as it is really the worst place on earth I think.'²⁴ Two months later he was writing:

There has been such a lot of talk of annexing this wretched Fiji the Commodore is quite mad about it. The old Consul Mr March calls it a nest of 2000 ruffians and I think that that explains it perfectly. The best thing they could do could be to make a convict settlement of it.²⁵

When it came to the crunch, none of the Australian colonies wanted to govern Fiji (or make a financial contribution, although expansionist interests acknowledged the islands' usefulness to trade). There was, however, the matter of protecting the decent settlers who had put their savings into the various islands, and who could ill afford to leave—even if they agreed with Robin Walpole that it was 'without exception the most fearful place' and the whites 'the greatest scoundrels living in the world, I think: half of them never sober all hoping to cheat the other'.²⁶ There was also the matter of keeping foreign snouts away from a most profitable trough, for the land—if Sydney Watson's holdings were anything to go by—was undeniably rich:

Ba coast block 'Tavua' Viti Levu runs along coast north westerly in a strip about 12 miles long and 6 miles wide—30,000 or 40,000 acres—very open country—undulating—rich soil—could walk ride or drive over it—well watered throughout & bounded by the Tavua River to the east well fitted for the growth of all tropical productions Sugar, Coffee, Spices, Cotton, Same plant, and so open it would form a superb grazing run—

Nuku Leva on North West coast of Vanua Levu—frontage to sea 6 or 7 miles—bounded on the east by river navigable for boats for 7 or 8 miles up and by another river to the west which falls into the sea by a magnificent waterfall—average breadth—8 miles the block's area 35,000 to 40,000 acres—well watered throughout—open undulating country easily cleared for cultivation or well fitted for all tropical productions.

Na Via Via—at Point Kumbelau about 500 acres—situated on a perfectly land lock harbour—the only one on the whole of the southern coast of Vanua—formed by the Island of Nau Lom Lom two entrances—the main one practicable at all tides—deep water—close to shore at all tides a circumstance of very rare occurrence in Fiji—a most perfectly lovely spot in point of scenery—soil no richer in the world—one frontage to the harbour—one to the sea and is moreover the nearest point of Vanua to Levuka the capital.²⁷

THE CESSION OF FIJI to Great Britain took place on 31 September 1874, and hopes initially were high. The scenery was 'lovely beyond description', Alfred Deakin enthused when he accompanied Sydney Watson to Fiji at the squatter's request and expense:

This is certain (you may tell Papa) to be a great country but Sir Arthur thinks £3,000 the smallest capital that can be profitably used. The land question is being rapidly settled & anyone with £5,000, energy, & any knowledge of coffee sugar or cotton planting is sure to do well—the climate is wonderfully healthy & the soil remarkably productive.²⁸

By 1879, when he and Sydney Watson set out from Melbourne, Fiji had been annexed to the British Crown for five years. Like the Australian colonies before, it was fast becoming a worthy outpost of Empire and any of the comforts taken for granted by visitors to Melbourne were also available in Levuka. The Club, where 'everything is very neat clean cosy & sociable & especially select' made them honorary members, although the most select aspect of travelling with Sydney Watson was a meeting with His Excellency, the Governor:

Sir Arthur Gordon is both by appearance & what I can learn of him a man of strong original autocratic character official training & considerable ability—He disregards display altogether receiving us in shirt and trousers with a sash round the waist—the ordinary dress here. He is quick & brusque in manner & according to all accounts an indefatigable business man.²⁹

If Sydney talked business with Sir Arthur, it was hardly surprising; it might have been a different matter when he was closeted with the Colonial Secretary, John Thurston. Deakin found him 'a quiet but able man'³⁰ and Watson may have thanked that ability for extricating his eldest son, the wayward Archibald, from an awkward situation some years before.



THERE WAS NOT MUCH GOING ON in Cardwell, Queensland, in March of 1872. A 'line of tiny wooden houses running parallel to the beach' serviced a meagre population, a couple of hotels did the same for transient miners heading north-west to the steamy Etheridge diggings.³¹ An unlikely place for a harbour, but to the survivors of the *Maria*, New Guinea bound, the shallow anchorage must have seemed like heaven. 'Seventy-five spirited young men,' Captain John Moresby called them. He might just as well have called them 'bloody young fools'.³² Moved to prophecy as well as pity for the gold fever-ridden prospectors from Sydney (the death toll from that 'crazy old brig of 167 tons, as ill-found aloft as she was leaky below' must have been close to 40), his words were slow in reaching fulfilment:

Thus ended this unfortunate attempt to reach New Guinea; an attempt which is but one proof, out of many, that Australian instinct points to the possession of this great island. Many attempts to establish a footing in New Guinea may fail, but the instinct is a true one, founded on natural facts and needs, which time will prove to be imperative.³³

Across the Torres Strait, the great island of New Guinea continued to tantalise and beckon as the surveys begun in the 1760s were resumed by Captain Moresby:

Bougainville, D'Entrecasteaux, D'Urville, and Captain Owen Stanley, had all seen what they took to be the eastern extremity of New Guinea, but did not approach near enough to define the outline of the land seen by them. H.M.S. *Blanche* had the previous year approached the eastern shores of New Guinea from E.N.E., but meeting dangerous shoals, had anchored thirty-four miles from the nearest point of the mainland ... The *Blanche* remained in this position one night, and the following day retraced her way without having made any nearer approach, leaving the configuration of the eastern shores of New Guinea still unknown.³⁴

Moresby's book of his adventures, published in 1876, disclosed a little of the unknown, while the naturalists' accounts and the brightly plumaged loot distributed among the intelligentsia of Sydney added to the island's attraction. New Guinea was perceived as a scientific as well as a literal El Dorado, yet, as so often happens, the missions got there first.

The Reverend Samuel McFarlane of the London Missionary Society was employed to spread the word of God among the heathen.³⁵ At the same time he 'moonlighted' as an explorer:

a small little double screw Steamer has been put at his disposal by the Society, and being a man of great energy and perseverance, he has done no small amount of good in other ways, having explored a large number of the New Guinea Rivers, and a large extent of the Coast of that island in his little Vessel.³⁶

When William Macleay brought the *Chevert* to Somerset, Far North Queensland, in 1874, the missionary was well enough established to view the scientist with suspicion. Russian anthropologist Nicolaus de Miklouho-Maclay and Italian naturalist Luigi d'Albertis were already exploring New Guinea, as well as an aptly named 'birdman':

Whilst here we fell in with a lonely waif of society, named Cockerill, who has betaken himself to live in a tiny vessel of about



William Matthew Hart (1830-1908)
Paradisaea raggiana Schläter
Mitapis Raggis' Bird of Paradise, 1877?
from an original by John Gould
watercolour, 55.6 x 36.2 cm

Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (R3651)

eight tons, and accompanied only by his son and two natives, cruises about these seas as a naturalist, and seems to be happy enough in his own way. His boat seems laden with specimens of beautiful birds; and from the Aru islands, 500 miles west of Somerset, which he had just left, he had brought some boxes full of the Great Bird of Paradise, and the still more exquisite King Bird of Paradise, of which he kindly gave me a specimen.³⁷

A few eccentric savants were all very well, but Macleay's arrival posed a definite threat. In McFarlane's mind it was associated with the clamour for the annexation of eastern New Guinea, seen as the latest area ripe for colonial exploitation. Like all missionaries, he feared the deleterious effect on natives of contact with the whites. Given his own joy in exploration, antagonism was inevitable — an antagonism increased by Macleay's young engineer (a survivor of the *Maria* and still, it appears, wildly talking of gold).

Macleay returned to Sydney in October, his reputation in tatters and his meticulously planned expedition belittled by McFarlane as disorganised and ineffective. The former politician, however, rose above the criticism:

I am satisfied from my own observations and from what I have heard from pearl shellers and others who had visited the country that dread of hostility from the natives need be no bar to the exploration of New Guinea ... the real difficulties proceed from the climate and nature of the country. Low-lying wooded swamps, unhealthy and impenetrable ... the most interesting part of the island can only be reached by finding some river which can be navigated. The Fly, I believe, will be the river.³⁸

Unless—or until—the time came for official expansion, Macleay's view was that private enterprise should be discouraged:

Any attempt of the kind must end in failure, certainly in the ruin and perhaps the deaths of the adventurers, as in a fixed hostility on

the part of the natives ... The idea of a party of Englishmen [i.e. Australians] settling in New Guinea for the purpose of cultivating the land is preposterous. All labour would have to be imported, paid for and protected.³⁹

Amateur explorers continued to ignore his sage advice and succumbed to the lure of the unknown,⁴⁰ and on an official level the idea was given some serious thought. The amiable Dutch had held suzerainty of the western portion of the island since 1814. There was nothing to be feared from them or from the native princelings who were disposed to be friendly:

The Rajah of Salwatti, who is supreme ruler at this extreme of New Guinea, came off to visit us on the following day in a large prahu, rowed by about twenty men, and ornamented with various banners, and an enormous Dutch ensign. A huge gong, slung in the bow, was beaten continually as he approached, seated under a large blue silk umbrella spread in the stern, and we received him in conformity with such pomp. We found him a well-informed gentlemanly man, able to speak a few words of English; in which he told us that we were the first English man-of-war we had seen on this coast, and expressed a hope that many English ships would follow.⁴¹

It was *foreign* men-of-war that worried the colonists: the eastern part of the island was seen as being essential to the security of Australia. Agitation for its annexation, at its height following the cession of Fiji, met with no success: maintaining the Australia Station was already a considerable expense. 'The *Barrosa* has been aground five times in six months and knocked two holes in her bottom,'⁴² Walpole told his mother (his own ship, *Blanche*, had struck a reef in April 1870), and a string of such actions brought the following admonition:



H.M.S. *Blanche*
on a Coral Reef—
Torres Straits,
April 1870.
From a sketch
by George S.H.
Budge, RN
From the
Humphreys
Collection,
Pictorial
Collection,
National Library
of Australia

Sir

I have received and laid before my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty your letter of 11th January last No. 7 reporting that HMS *Conflict* touched the ground on four occasions during her recent cruise at the Solomon Islands, and I am commanded by their Lordships to signify their direction to you to give orders that officers are to be more careful in navigating the narrow channels among the reefs of these islands, so as to avoid injury to HM Ships.⁴³

With colonial governments still unwilling to support words with action, taking on hazardous tropical islands with treacherous hidden reefs was not a subject for discussion.

AS BRITAIN DREW BACK from further colonisation, the advance of other nations did not go unnoticed:

In one of the high class reviews received by this mail—an American journal—this country is described, as a matter of course, as peopled by the children of convicts; and these allusions are galling to individuals, and they do injury to the colonies. One of the plain duties before us is to efface the stigma, and so long as a single convict is sent to New Caledonia, and the bad traditions of the unhappy past are thus maintained, so long Australia is justified in manifesting a repugnance to the extension of the French settlement [to the New Hebrides].⁴⁴

'Great Britain,' it conceded, 'has probably had enough of annexation for the immediate present':

Fiji has not been a pecuniary success, and the Transvaal is a heavy responsibility, but a strong case can be made out why she should interfere so far with the New Hebrides as to veto their annexation by the French. Discovery is held to give a European nation a right to such islands. So, it may surely be urged, does long and patient labour in evangelising and civilising the native population, especially when the original discoverers have long abandoned their claim.⁴⁵

It was obviously unfair that what the Presbyterian Church had sown, the French Government should reap (the harvest, when it came, would be a joint Franco-British undertaking), but it took German intervention to precipitate a crisis.⁴⁶ *Ariadne's* action in annexing New Britain in 1878 was repudiated, but the harm was already done. The sense of betrayal dormant since the withdrawal of Imperial troops in 1870 was rekindled, and Britain's continuing inaction served to fan the flames. With the awful example of France's drubbing by the Prussians still fresh in the minds of

many Australians, the feeling that Britain was disregarding danger to her colonies gathered momentum. Never mind that another such scheme for New Guinea was rejected in 1880—that was small consolation with Prussian might closing in from the north.

SOMERSET, LIKE CARDWELL further south, had little to recommend it:

The Settlement is composed of some dozen and a half weather board Houses, including the old barracks, all falling into a state of decay, partly from atmospheric agency, partly from the ravages of the White Ant.⁴⁷



E.P. Bedwell
Somerset, Cape York, Queensland, 1872
watercolour, 14.1 x 23.7 cm
Pictorial Collection, National Library of Australia (R3929)

The port, in fact, was dying. It was unhealthy, and so was its population. C. d'Oyley Aplin, resident magistrate at the time of Macleay's visit, died of typhoid later in the year. The garrison had gone. Life had always been fairly undemanding: pearl-fishing, carousing, waiting for the mail steamers to call twice-monthly ... and Aplin's successor, not overburdened with his official duties,

at the time of our visit was absent when we arrived, on an exploring expedition up the Fly River, New Guinea, in the Missionary Steamer *Ellen Gowan*; but his amiable wife did the honors during his absence in a most hospitable and kind manner, sending us off the best part of a Bullock for our Xmas dinner, and supplying us with Milk and other luxuries during our stay.⁴⁸

Henry Marjoribanks Chester was of those 'bricks' on which empires are founded, and the cement that holds them together. He was the settlement's last magistrate, and moved with it in 1877 to Thursday Island as magistrate and harbour master—just that little bit nearer to an island crying out for annexation:

By a late Act of government, all islands, lying within sixty miles of the shores of Queensland, had been declared British possessions, and this Act had brought the Australian boundary to within twenty miles of New Guinea.⁴⁹

The Chesters were a splendid couple: he with an Indian Navy background; Egbertha Emily, the daughter of a General in the Bombay Army, and both keeping the standards of the Raj alive in darkest Queensland, before flying the Union flag out in the Torres Strait.

On 18 March 1883 the *Carola*, a German corvette, headed out of Sydney for Port Moresby in an attempt (it was thought) to initiate the long-dreaded colonisation process. She was forestalled: Sir Thomas Mcllwraith, Premier of Queensland, in a masterly stroke involving that modern miracle, the telegraph, had organised a coup.⁵⁰

In 1869 Sir Henry Wrixon addressed an audience as follows:

Generally, men find their nation with history made and fate fixed. In older lands, when they would excite the patriotic feeling of the people, they remind them of their ancestors. But we are the ancestors here. (Cheers.) We are the ancestors of this country, and when I say this, I speak of the whole people of this Australian continent. With us it lies to make or mar the future of Australia. Never was there an opportunity so grand, nor a responsibility so serious ... if we of this generation would only excite some patriotic feeling.⁵¹

A little over a decade later Henry Marjoribanks Chester did exactly that. Acting on instructions, the man who had spent the last six years dealing with a nest of seafaring vipers left his Thursday Island base and proceeded per the steamer *Pearl* to Port Moresby. On 4 April 1883 he took possession almost single-handedly of land between 'the 141st and 155th meridians of east longitude'.⁵² Quixotic, most certainly (the action was officially repudiated soon after), he and Mcllwraith were men tilting at the windmills of Whitehall, but did it matter? The ties of blood might tug for a while yet at our hearts and minds, but the apron strings were severed. Confident in a sense of nationhood, and now of age, Australians were looking to the future. There would be no turning back.

- 1 Captain John Moresby, RN, *Discoveries and Surveys in New Guinea and the D'Entrecasteaux Islands: A Cruise in Polynesia and Visits to the Pearl-Shelling Stations in Torres Straits of H.M.S. Basilisk*. London: John Murray, 1876, p. 168.
- 2 From Robert Towns, plantation owner and entrepreneur. The future NSS *Vernon* had seen duty as a passenger-cargo ship, plying between Britain and the Pacific, and had latterly been a whaler: Lew Lind, *Fair Winds to Australia: 200 Years of Sail on the Australia Station*. Sydney: Reed, 1988, p. 110.
- 3 *Nelson*—unlike her namesake—was doomed always to 'miss the boat'. Laid down in 1809 and launched in 1814, too late to take part in Napoleon's defeat, she was refitted in 1854 and arrived too late in the Crimea. This '1st Rate Ship of the Line' became the pride of the Victorian Navy and—a monstrous white elephant—could be seen in the early 1870s moving ponderously through the waters of Port Phillip Bay: *ibid.*, pp. 103–104.
- 4 Frederick Walpole, RN, *Four Years in the Pacific: In Her Majesty's Ship 'Collingwood' from 1844–1848 by Lieut. the Hon. Fred. Walpole, R.N.* London: Richard Bentley, 1849, pp. 83–84.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 121.
- 6 Hedley Ralph Marston (1900–1965), Papers (MS 1682/68): Archibald Watson (1849–1940), Log of the brig *Carl*, pp. 2–3.
- 7 Robert 'Robin' Horace Walpole, RN (1854–1931), Letters, 1870–1874 (MS 9110/4): Robert Walpole to his father, the Honourable Frederick Walpole, MP, HMS *Pearl*, Farm Cove, 29 August 1874.
- 8 From HNMS *Curaçoa*, a Dutch man-of-war.
- 9 William Bethell (1847–1926), Journal, 7 November 1871 – 18 May 1872 (MS 2465): entry for 13 May 1872.
- 10 Robert 'Robin' Walpole, *op. cit.* (MS 9110/1): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Blanche*, Wellington, 26 January [1873].
- 11 *Ibid.* (MS 9110/6): Robert Walpole to Mrs Laura Walpole, HMS *Blanche*, San Christoval Island, Solomon Group, 24 July 1872.
- 12 *Alacrity, Beagle, Conflict, Sandfly, Renard*. With the exception of *Alacrity*, they were built by Cuthberts of Sydney; all took a complement of 25: Lew Lind, *Fair Winds to Australia: 200 Years of Sail on the Australia Station*. Sydney: Reed, 1988, pp. 112–113.
- 13 Robert 'Robin' Walpole, *op. cit.* (MS 9110/15): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Blanche*, Levuka, Fiji Islands, no date, received 3 December 1873.
- 14 See Roger C. Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific: The Expansionist Era, 1820–1920*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980, Chapter 2.
- 15 Catherine Deakin (1850–1937), Papers (MS 4913/2/13a): Alfred Deakin to Catherine Deakin, Levuka, 7 November 1879.
- 16 See R.A. Derrick, *A History of Fiji* (Suva: Printing and Stationery Department, 1946), pp. 195–241, for the background to this period of Fiji's history. Captains Douglas of *Cossack* and Challis of *Rosario* were two naval officers who also gave him support.
- 17 It is clear, from what follows, that by 'people' Walpole means 'whites'.
- 18 Robert 'Robin' Walpole, *op. cit.* (MS 9110/15): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Blanche*, Levuka, Fiji Islands, no date, received 3 December 1873.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 *Ibid.* Thurston and Woods were by no means as black as they were painted, presumably by the ex-consul. The only man involved in scandal was James Stewart Butters, Speaker of the Fiji House of Commons—he was forced to resign as a Victorian MLA.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 Derrick, *op. cit.*, p. 235.
- 23 Charles James Norcock, RN (1847–1933), 'Private Journal, 20.7.1870 – 24.4.1874' (MS 5897): entry for 7 June 1871, Levuka.
- 24 Robert 'Robin' Walpole, *op. cit.* (MS 9110/16): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Pearl*, 8 May 1874.
- 25 *Ibid.* (MS 9110/19): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Pearl*, Melbourne, 25 July 1874.
- 26 *Ibid.* (MS 9110/20): Robert Walpole to his father, HMS *Pearl*, Farm Cove, 29 August 1874.
- 27 Hedley Ralph Marston (1900–1965), Papers (MS 1682/61/3706).
- 28 Deakin, *op. cit.* (MS 4913/2/13a): Alfred Deakin to Catherine Deakin, Levuka, 1 November 1879.
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 Moresby, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

- 32 They set off for New Guinea, met the north-west monsoon, and were driven onto Bramble Reef, 30 miles east of Cardwell: 21 drowned, 14 (including the captain) were killed by Aborigines. Some died of exposure; others were helped by 'Kindly blacks' (*ibid.*, p. 48).
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 *Ibid.*, pp. 178–179.
- 35 The missionaries of the London Missionary Society arrived on Darnley Island in 1871, and in 1874 the first mainland mission station was set up by the Rev. McFarlane.
- 36 Hugh Massy, RN, 'Four Years on the Australian Station', 1877 (MS 8520): manuscript account of the years 1873–1877 set out in chapters, p. 112. Reverend W.G. Lawes landed in New Guinea in November 1874, and established a mission station at Port Moresby in June 1875.
- 37 Moresby, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
- 38 Quoted in David S. Macmillan, *A Squatter Went to Sea*. Sydney: Currawong, 1957, pp. 143–144.
- 39 Quoted *ibid.*, p. 144.
- 40 In 1876 Miklouho-Maclay returned to what was now called the Maclay coast. In April, Dr James, the physician on Macleay's expedition, was murdered on Yule Island. In July, Lawrence Hargrave, the expedition's engineer, took a trip up the Fly River with the naturalist d'Albertis in a New South Wales government steam launch, the *Neva*.
- 41 Moresby, *op. cit.*, p. 290.
- 42 Robert 'Robin' Walpole, *op. cit.* (MS 9110/5): Robert Walpole to Mrs Laura Walpole, HMS *Blanche*, at sea, no date, probably on or around 6 June 1872.
- 43 Australia Station Royal Navy, RNAS 13: 'Pacific Islands 1857–76', Vol. 1, Robert Hall, Secretary, to Commodore James Goodenough, Admiralty, 16 March 1875 (mfm G1810, reel 12).
- 44 *Argus*, 27 September 1877. The occasion was the departure of the missionary Rev. John Paton from Melbourne for the New Hebrides.
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 See *The Australian Encyclopaedia*, 1958, Vol. 6, pp. 470–471, for German activities in the area.
- 47 Massy, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 111.
- 49 *Ibid.*, pp. 128–129.
- 50 See *The Australian Encyclopaedia*, 1958, Vol. 2, p. 341: entry for Henry Marjoribanks Chester (1832–1914).
- 51 Sir Henry Wrixon, *Condition and Prospects of Australia as Compared with Older Lands: A Lecture*. Melbourne: Early Closing Association, 1869, p. 14.
- 52 *The Australian Encyclopaedia*, 1958, Vol. 2, p. 341.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

REFERENCE

For general reference purposes I found the following books extremely helpful:

Australian Dictionary of Biography

Australian Encyclopaedia, 1958 edition

Chambers's Illustrated Encyclopaedia, 1923 edition

Who Was Who

ITEMS FROM THE MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

Bethell, William (1847–1926), Journal, 7 November 1871 –

18 May 1872 (MS 2465).

Canterbury, Viscount (John Manners Sutton) (1814–1877), Letters, 1856–1874 (MS 8378).

Champion, Thomas (1800–1887), Diaries, 1841–1877 (MS 1093).

Clarke, Arthur (b.1853), Diary, 19 August 1872 – 6 January 1873 (photocopy—original in private hands) (MS 6792).

Clarke, Patricia, Papers (MS 8363/18/7).

Deakin, Catherine (1850–1937), Papers (MS 4913).

Grace, William Gilbert (1848–1915), Document (facsimile), 1873 (MS 214).

'Handwritten catalogue of a private library of a resident of Sydney.

The library includes titles relating to New South Wales, geology, natural history, directories and journals. Two pages in the back of the notebook list the contents of the house' (MS 8211).

Marston, Dr Hedley Ralph (1900–1965), Papers (MS 1682) (includes personal papers of Professor Archibald Watson (1849–1940)).

Massy, Lieutenant Hugh, RN, 'Four Years on the Australian Station', 1877. Manuscript account of the years 1873–1877 set out in chapters (MS 8520).

Morison, John, Journal entitled 'Fifteen Months Abroad: containing account of a voyage from London to Sydney, also a tour through the Australian colonies, Tasmania, and New Zealand, with notes on the return journey to London, calling at Cape of Good Hope and Lisbon', April 1872 – January 1873 (MS 8167).

Norcock, Lieutenant Charles James, RN (1847–1943),

'Reminiscences of the *Blanche*, 1854–17.3.1869'; 'Private Journal, 20.7.1870 – 24.4.1874' (MS 5897)

Railways: 'Timetables and Fares for the great Southern, Western, Richmond and Northern lines' (MS 8946).

Sandover, William (1856–1921), Letters, 1876 (MS 1720).

- Tebbutt, John, Papers (MS 8887).
 Walpole, Robert 'Robin' Horace, RN (1854–1931), Letters, 1870–1874
 (MS 9110).
 Waring, Charlotte (1796–1867), Diary (MS 8997).

MICROFILM OF OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

- Great Britain Royal Navy. Commander-in-Chief, Australian Station.
 Records 1857–1914. Wellington, National Archives, 1962
 (mfm G 1799–1843). (I used mfm G 1810, reel 12: Australia Station
 Royal Navy RNAS 13: 'Pacific Islands 1857–76', Vol. 1.)

CONTEMPORARY PAMPHLETS AND PAPERS

(SOME ON MICROFICHE)

- Balls-Headley, Dr Walter, *Dress with Reference to Heat*. Melbourne:
 J. & A. McKinley, 1876.
 — *Homoeopathy Past and Present*. Melbourne: George Robertson, 1878.
British Parliamentary Papers, 1873: 'South Seas Islands'.
 Ellery, R.L.J., *The Progress of Astronomy: A Lecture*. Melbourne: Fergusson
 and Moore, 1870.
 Halford, Dr G.B., *The New Treatment for Snake-bite, with Plain Directions
 for Injecting*. Melbourne: Stillwell and Knight, 1869.
 Jamieson, Dr J.J., 'Homeopathy: its claims and its fallacies', *Australian
 Medical Journal*, Vol. 14, April 1874.
 Michie, Sir Archibald, *Loyalty, Royalty and the Prince's Visit: A Lecture
 Delivered at the Princess Theatre Melbourne, on July 12, 1869*.
 Melbourne: Early Closing Association, 1869.
 Perry, Bishop Charles, *Science and the Bible*. Melbourne: Samuel Mullen,
 1869.
 Tebbutt, John, *The Broad and the Narrow Way: An Address Delivered
 before the United Religious Mission held in the School of Arts, Windsor,
 during the Week Ending October 2nd, 1875*. Sydney: s.n., 1875.
 — *The Testimony which Astronomy Furnishes to the Attributes
 of the Creator*. Sydney: s.n., 1878.
*Spiritual Communications and the Comfort They Bring; by the
 Disembodied Spirit of Charles Dickens, through a Melbourne Medium*.
 Melbourne: Charles Troedel, 1873.
 Turner, Henry G., *Spiritualism: A Paper Read before the Eclectic
 Association of Melbourne on September 2nd, 1869*. Melbourne: George
 Robertson, 1869.
 Woolls, Rev. William, *Lectures on the Vegetable Kingdom*. Sydney: C.E.
 Fuller, 1879.
 — *A Sermon, Preached in St. Peter's Church Richmond, on Sunday, April
 12th, 1874, on the Occasion of a Tablet being Placed in that Church, to
 the Memory of the Late Mrs. Calvert*. Windsor, NSW: Benjamin Isaacs,
 1874.

Wrixon, Sir Henry, *Condition and Prospects of Australia as Compared with Older Lands: A Lecture*. Melbourne: Early Closing Association, 1869.

CONTEMPORARY NEWSPAPERS AND JOURNALS

Age

Argus

Australian (Windsor)

Fiji Gazette

The Harbinger of Light

Sydney Mail

Touchstone

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

A selection from the National Library's Music Collection was used, mainly as chapter headings, and is not listed here.

BOOKS

A. CONTEMPORARY

Blanche, John E., *The Prince's Visit and Other Poems*. Melbourne: R. Bell, 1869.

Bruce, Lieutenant J.A.T., RN, *The Cruise round the World of the Flying Squadron 1869–1870 under the Command of Rear-Admiral G.T. Phipps Hornby*. London: J.D. Potter, 1871.

James, J.S., 'The Vagabond', *The Vagabond Papers: Sketches of Melbourne Life, in Light and Shade*. Melbourne: George Robertson, 1877, First Series.

Kreffit, Gerard, *The Mammals of Australia: Illustrated by Harriett Scott and Helena Forde for the Council of Education. With a short account of all the species hitherto described by Gerard Krefft*. Sydney: Government Printer, 1871.

Markham, Commander Albert Hastings, RN, *Cruise of the 'Rosario' Amongst the New Hebrides and Santa Cruz Islands, Exposing the Recent Atrocities Connected with the Kidnapping of Natives in the South Seas*. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1873.

Meredith, Louisa Anne, *Our Island Home*. Hobart Town: J. Walch; London: Marcus Ward, 1879.

Moresby, Captain John, RN, *Discoveries and Surveys in New Guinea and the D'Entrecasteaux Islands: A Cruise in Polynesia and Visits to the Pearl-Shelling Stations in Torres Straits of H.M.S. Basilisk*. London: John Murray, 1876.

Palmer, Captain George, RN, *Kidnapping in the South Seas: Being a Narrative of a Three Months' Cruise of H.M. Ship Rosario*. Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1871.

'S.G.W.', *Spiritual Communications &c. through the Mediumship of Miss Elizabeth Armstrong*. Melbourne: Robert Bell, 1869.

- Tebbutt, John, *Astronomical Memoirs*. Sydney: F.W. White, 1908.
- Trollope, Anthony, *New South Wales and Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania* (in 2 parts). London: Ward Lock, 1873.
- Walpole, The Honourable Frederick, MP, *Four Years in the Pacific: in her Majesty's Ship 'Collingwood' from 1844–1848 by Lieut. the Hon. Fred. Walpole, R.N.* London: Richard Bentley, 1849.

B. MODERN

- Bach, John, *The Australia Station: A History of the Royal Navy in the South West Pacific, 1821–1913*. Kensington, NSW: New South Wales University Press, 1986.
- Blainey, Geoffrey, *The Rush that Never Ended*. Rev. ed. Melbourne University Press, 1978.
- Cannon, Michael (ed.), *The Vagabond Papers*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969.
- Carter, Jennifer M.T., *Painting the Islands Vermilion*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1999.
- Clarke, Patricia, *Pioneer Writer: The Life of Louisa Atkinson: Novelist, Journalist, Naturalist*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990.
- Clowes, Sir William Laird, *The Royal Navy: A History from the Earliest Times to the Death of Queen Victoria*. Facsimile ed. New York: AMS Press, 1966, Vol. 7.
- Crowley, Frank (ed.), *A New History of Australia*. Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1974.
- Derrick, R. A., *A History of Fiji*. Suva: Printing and Stationery Department, 1946.
- Dunbabin, Thomas, *Slavers of the South Seas*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935.
- Irvine, Eric, *Dictionary of the Australian Theatre, 1788–1914*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1985.
- Judge, C., *Civilization and Mental Retardation: A History of the Care and Treatment of Mentally Retarded People*. Mulgrave, Vic.: the author, 1987.
- Lewis, M., *Managing Madness: Psychiatry and Society in Australia 1788–1980*. Canberra: AGPS Press, 1988.
- Lind, Lew, *Fair Winds to Australia: 200 Years of Sail on the Australia Station*. Sydney: Reed, 1988.
- Macdonald, Charlotte, Penfold, Merimeri, and Williams, Bridget (eds), *The Book of New Zealand Women: Ko Kui Ma Te Kaupapa*. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1991.
- Macmillan, David S., *A Squatter Went to Sea*. Sydney: Currawong, 1957.
- McKinlay, Brian, *The First Royal Tour 1867–1868*. Adelaide: Rigby, 1970.
- Meinig, D.W., *Beyond the Margins of the Good Earth*. Netley SA: South Australian Government, (1966) 1988.

- Nicholls, Bob, *The Colonial Volunteers: The Defence Forces of the Australian Colonies, 1836–1901*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988.
- Nicholls, Michelle, *The Hawkesbury Pioneer Register*. 2nd. ed. Windsor, NSW: Hawkesbury Family History Group, 1994.
- Pike, Douglas, *Paradise of Dissent*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1957.
- Rickard, John, *A Family Romance*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996.
- Serle, Geoffrey, *The Rush to Be Rich*. Rev. ed. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980.
- Stanbury, Peter (ed.), *100 Years of Australian Scientific Explorations*. Sydney: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1975.
- Thiele, Colin, *Grains of Mustard Seed*. Netley, SA: Government of South Australia, 1975.
- Thompson, Roger C., *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific: The Expansionist Era, 1820–1920*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980.

INDEX

- Aborigines xvi, 75, 136–137, 183, 184–186
 at missions 185–186
 cricketers 195
- Aborigines' Protection Society 123
- accidents 28, 55, 104
- Adelaide 51, 63, 203
- Agamemnon* 32, 41
- agricultural leases 150
- agriculture 153–162
- Alfred Ernest Albert, HRH Prince—
 see Edinburgh, Duke of
- American Civil War 122
- Armstrong, Elizabeth 58, 62, 108
- astronomy 86, 93–98
- asylums—see benevolent asylums; lunatic asylums
- Atkinson, Louisa xvii, 36–37, 157–158, 213–214
 on life in the bush 30–31
- Auckland, New Zealand 22
- Australia
 and coloured races 183–190
 colonising aspirations of 227–241
 development of xvi
 population of xvi
 visitors to xviii, 18, 40, 111
- Australia Squadron 19, 123, 131—see also
 Australia Station; Imperial Navy
- Australia Station 85
- Australian colonies 78
- Australians
 characteristics of 18
 'cornstalks', or colonial-born 18, 19, 22
- Bairds of Burrumbeet, the 28
- Balls-Headley, Dr Walter
 on homoeopathy 107
 on women's fashions 29–30
 on women's health 29–30
- Barossa Valley, South Australia 28, 161, 224–225
- Barry, Sir Redmond 48–49
- beachcombers 122
- begging 168
- benevolent asylums 45, 107, 163–171, 172–182
 —see also lunatic asylums
 Asylum for Indigent Women, Tasmania 167
 Deaf Dumb and Blind Asylum, Sydney 168
 Melbourne Benevolent Asylum 164–167
 Melbourne Blind Asylum 169–171
 Queen's Orphan Asylum, Tasmania 167–168
- benevolent societies 28
- Bennett, Dr George 212, 213
- Bethell, Richard 38, 152
 in New Zealand 146–147
 on Aborigines 184
 on Tasmania 6
- Bethell, Ursula 38
- Bethell, William 6, 24–25, 84, 113, 114, 147,
 173, 188
 on Australian Museum 216
 on Carandini concert 203
 on Chinese 188
 on emigrants 151–152
 on marriage 25
 on Melbourne and Sydney 113
 on public health 115
 on Public Library, Melbourne 215
 on shipboard flirtation 32
 on theatre audiences 206
 on University Museum 216
- Bethell family 6, 147
- 'blackbirding' 85, 120–130, 131–132
- Blanche, John F. 12
- Blue Mountains, New South Wales 75, 150, 154,
 156, 162
- botanic gardens—see under Melbourne; Sydney
- botany 213
- Bowen, Lady 2
- Bowen, Sir George 2, 209
- Brazier, John 219
- Brigands, The* 205, 210n
- Britain 82, 237
 as 'mother country' 6–7, 20, 80
- Browne, Archibald 56
- Browne, Elizabeth 'Pattie' 55, 58
- Browne, Hugh Junor 55, 58–59
- Browne family 56
- Bruce, Lieutenant James, RN 20, 199
- Burnham, New Zealand 146–147, 152n
 bush, life in 28, 30–31, 157–158
- Cairns, William Wellington 3
- Calvert, Mrs James—see Atkinson, Louisa
- Canterbury, Viscount 1, 2
- Canterbury Plains, New Zealand 146
- capital punishment 41, 42
- Captain Cook* (schooner) 138, 140
- Carandini, Madame Marie 202, 203, 209n
- Cardwell, Queensland 233
- Carl* (brig) 124, 126, 128, 130n
 log 127–128
- Cerberus*, HMVS 79, 227
- Champion, Thomas 54–56, 64n, 68, 87–93, 98, 105
- Champion family 88
- charitable institutions xvi, 163–171, 172–182
 —see also benevolent asylums
- Chester, Mrs Egbertha Emily 239
- Chester, Henry Marjoribanks 239
- Chevert* (barque) 211
 New Guinea expedition 234–236
- child abuse 49
- Childers, Hugh Culling Eardley 19, 78, 79, 80,
 81, 121
- Chile 121
- Chinese xvii, 180, 183, 186–190
 anti-Chinese riots 187
- Chinese question, the 189
- Christchurch, New Zealand 38, 84
- churches
 Adelaide, cathedral church 51, 63

- Church of England 52, 53, 59
Unitarian 53, 59
- Clarke, Arthur 59, 67, 192
on Chinese 187–188
on music 202–203
on opera 206
- Clarke, Patricia 36
- Clarke, Thornton Gainsborough 84, 85n
- Clarke, Reverend William Branwhite 213
- Clontarf, New South Wales 9, 10–11
- colonists xviii, 2, 3, 78, 109, 154, 185, 229, 236
- comets 96, 97
Great Comet of 1861 93, 94–95
- communications xvii, 6, 65–76
- convicts 18, 40–41, 66, 153, 167, 174, 176, 237
- Cook, Captain James 97
- coolies—see Chinese
- Coranderk Mission 185–186
- 'cornstalks' 18, 22
- corporal punishment 44
- cotton 122, 123, 232, 233
plantations 229
- Creation theory 52
- cricket 194–200, 208
Aboriginal cricketers 195
first Test match 198
Melbourne Cricket Club 194–196
- crime 41–45, 46, 50
- Crimean War 83
- Cruise of the Flying Squadron, The* 11, 20, 81–83
- Cutolo, Cesare 208–209
- Cuzens, Johnny 195
- Danes xvii
- dancing 19, 21, 22, 23, 181
- Daphne* (schooner) 123, 128
- Darling, Sir Charles 2
- Darling Downs, Queensland xvii
- Darwin, Charles 52, 183, 186, 221
- Darwinism 31, 41, 61, 174–175, 183–184
- Deakin, Alfred 33, 53, 55, 57, 59, 62, 63, 232–236
- Deakin, Catherine 'Katie' 33–36
and religion 53
and spiritualism 57
as old maid 37–38
as professional teacher 36, 39n, 62
domestic education of 35, 36
formal education of 36
health of 34
literary tastes 35
musical talent of 36, 38, 209
on music 202
on opera 206
rift with Mr Mickle 36
social life of 33, 38
- Deas Thompson, Nellie 23
- death 53–56, 88–90, 104
- deaths recorded by Thomas Champion 54–55, 88–90
- defence 7, 77–85, 227–228, 236
- Denison, Sir William 1, 2
- Departure of the Pilgrim Fathers, The* 204, 210n
- Descent of Man, The* 183, 184
- dissent 8–16
- Doane, Reverend Edward 128
- domestic arts 31, 34, 35, 186
- domestic violence 48, 55
- Dress with Reference to Heat* 29–30
- drought 162
- drunkenness 45–46, 165, 169, 176, 180
- Du Cane, Mrs, wife of governor of Tasmania 2
- Dutch xviii, 229
- Early Closing Associations 13, 46, 97
- Early Days of Windsor* 94
- Edinburgh, Prince Alfred, Duke of xviii, 8, 12, 14, 101
arrival in Australia 9
assassination attempt on 9, 11, 100, 208
in South Australia 15, 203
in Victoria 13–15, 50n
public criticism of 9, 12, 13–15
with his bride 32, 33
- Edinburgh, Princess Marie, Duchess of 33
- education 36
of girls 33, 34
- Ellery, Robert 95–97
- Elizabeth Bay House, Sydney 217–218
- emigrants 151–152
- employment xvi, xvii
- entertainment xvi, 201–210
- environmental degradation 222–225
- eugenics 174, 184
- Eureka, trials resulting from 9, 12
- exploration xvii, 72, 234–236, 238
- explorers
Robert O'Hara Burke 72
Forrest brothers xvii, 72
Ernest Giles 72
William Gosse 72
Ludwig Leichhardt 72
John McDouall Stuart 72
Peter Warburton 72
John Wills 72
- farming xvii, 153–162—see also free selectors
- Federation 63
- Fenians 9, 10
- Ferguson, Captain Alexander 138, 140, 141
- Fiji 59, 63, 85, 123, 127, 151, 229, 230–234
- Fijian Company, Adelaide 229
- Flying Squadron 19–20, 74–75, 80–83, 195, 199
- food 31
- football, Australian Rules 192–194, 199
Carlton Football Club 192, 193–194
Melbourne Football Club 193–194
- Forde, Mrs Helena—see Scott, Helena
- fossils 212, 213
- France 78, 228, 237
- Franco-Prussian War 67, 83, 155, 173, 237
- fraud 49, 50
- free selectors 28, 148–150, 153–162, 185
- free settlers 18, 66, 153, 154–155, 224

- 'garrotting' 44
geology 52, 212–213, 225n
George, Hugh 173
Germans 28, 160–161—*see also* Lutherans
Germany xviii, 237–238, 239
Gippsland, Victoria xvii
girls, colonial 26–39
 appearance of 19, 25
 behaviour of 19, 20–25, 29
 health of 28–29, 30
gold xviii, 156, 189
goldfields xvii, 4, 43, 160, 187, 189, 190, 203,
 229, 233
Goodchap, Charles A. 74
Goodenough, Commodore James 71, 118, 141,
 231–232
Gordon, Sir Arthur, governor of Fiji 233
government, colonial 3–4
governors—*see under* individual colonies
Goyder's Line, South Australia xvii, 161
Grace, Mary Ann 169–170
Grace, William Gilbert 48, 196–198, 199–200
Great Barrier Reef 219, 222
Gulf of Carpentaria 151
- Halford, Dr George Britton 102–104
Hargrave, Lawrence 235, 241n
Hawkesbury district, New South Wales 88, 90–92,
 94, 154, 156, 162n
Hayes, William 'Bully' 126, 128–129
health 28
health hazards
 in Melbourne 114–116
 in Sydney 116–119
Hobart Town 20, 22, 23, 40, 203
Hobartians 21
homoeopathy 106–108
Hoskisson, J. 89–90
hospitals 28
 Alfred Hospital, Melbourne 100, 101–102, 173
 Melbourne Hospital 102
 Royal Prince Alfred, Sydney 100
- Imperial Navy xviii, 19, 78–82, 85, 118, 126,
 131–144, 222, 227, 237
Barracouta 3, 97
Barrosa 20, 137, 219, 236
Basilisk 137, 219, 220, 230
Blanche 2, 22, 24, 66, 110, 122, 128, 133, 136,
 138, 140, 143, 219, 230, 236
Challenger 8, 219
Clio 24
Cossack 85n, 129
Dido 230
Galatea 8, 9, 13–14
Megara 66, 68, 132
Pearl 70–71, 140
Rattlesnake 110
Rosario 123, 132, 133, 230
Imperial troops 7, 20, 237
In Quest of Coolies 123
indentured labourers—*see* Chinese; Kanakas
infanticide 45, 48, 174
Intercolonial Conferences 6
Irish 155
- Jackson, Lieutenant Benjamin 124–126
James, John Stanley—*see* *The Vagabond*
Jamieson, Dr James 106, 108
Japan xviii, 78
judiciary 42, 48–49
Jurd, Mrs 92–93
- Kanakas 120, 122, 190
Kent Brewery 88
Kew Lunatic Asylum 173–174, 175, 177–182
 chemical restraints at 179
 physical restraints at 175, 179, 182n
 violence at 178
Kidnapping in the South Seas 128
Krefft, Gerard 211
- 'Lalla Rookh'—*see* Truganini
land reform 148–150
land sales 156–157, 160
Lavinia (trader) 141
law and order 40–50
learned societies xvii, 219
Linnean Society of New South Wales 218, 226n
lower orders—*see* working classes
loyalty 4, 8–16, 78, 81–82
lunacy 172–182, 184
Lunacy Act of 1867 181
lunatic asylums 172–182
 Ararat, Victoria 175
 Beechworth, Victoria 175
 Kew, Victoria 173–174, 175, 177–182
 New Norfolk, Tasmania 176–177
 Parkside (later Glenside), South Australia 174
 Tarban Creek, Sydney 174
 Woogaroo, Queensland 174
 Yarra Bend (Collingwood), Victoria 172,
 173–174
Lutherans xvii, 155
- McCulloch, James 149
McFarlane, Reverend Samuel 234, 235
McIlwraith, Sir Thomas 239
Macleay, Alexander 217
Macleay, George 217
Macleay, Sir William John 217–218, 226n,
 234–236
Macleay, William Sharp 217
Macleay Museum, University of Sydney 217
mail service 65–71
mail steamers 65–71
Mallee, Victoria 162
Mammals of Australia, The 211, 213
Manners Sutton, John—*see* Canterbury, Viscount
Maria (brig) 137, 233–234, 241n
Marian Rennie (schooner) 138, 140
Markham, Captain Albert Hastings, RN 128,
 132–138
marriage 20, 23–24, 26–39, *passim*
Marston, Dr Hedley Ralph 126, 127, 146

- Marston Papers 126, 146
 Martin, Arthur Patchett 33, 39n
 Massy, Lieutenant Hugh, RN 3, 136, 221
 on Aborigines 136–137, 184–185
 on Australian Museum 216
 on squatters 145–146
 on Sydney's sewers 117–118
 mateship 32
 mechanics' institutes 46, 57, 212
 medicine 100–108
 anatomy, human 29–30
 folk remedies 105
 homoeopathy 106–108
 patent medicines 105
 sulphur baths 105–106
 surgery 104–105
 Melbourne
 Botanic Gardens 111
 'boom and bust' in 50
 compared with Sydney 109–119
 Exhibition Building 207
 Government House 4, 5
 Great Telescope 95
 'marvellous Melbourne' 50
 National Gallery 204–205
 Parliament House 5
 Princess Theatre 201
 Progressive Lyceum 59, 62
 Public Library 49, 215
 society 23
 Town Hall 5
 Melbourne Club 49, 110
 Melbourne Cricket Ground 195, 208
 Melbourne University 49, 216
 Melburnians 20–21, 124–125
 meteorology 93, 99n
 Michie, Sir Archibald 9, 12, 13–15
 Mickle, Alan 37
 Mickle, David 33, 35, 36, 37–38, 39n
 mining xvii—*see also* individual minerals
 Mitchell, Thomas Livingston 154
 Moore, Captain Lewis J. 137
 Moresby, Captian John, RN 137, 220, 221, 234
 Morison, John 3, 4, 24, 156, 159–160, 224
 in South Australia 15, 159
 on Adelaide 203
 on Carandini concert 203
 on musical audiences 206
 Mueller, Ferdinand von 72, 111–112, 214
 Mullagh, Johnny 195
 Murray River—*see* Upper Murray Valley
 museums 215–218
 Australian Museum 211, 225n
 Museum of Natural History, University of
 Melbourne 216
 Pain's Museum 215
 private museums 217, 218, 226n
 Public Museum of South Australia 225n
 music xvi, 19, 34, 157, 201–203
 natural history xvi, 155, 211–226, 234–235
 National Colonization Society 154
 nationhood xviii, 7, 81, 239
 naval manoeuvres 79
 naval officers 17–25, 81–82, 110
 Nelson, HMCS 79, 80, 228
 New Guinea 219–220, 222, 230, 233–236, 238,
 239
 New Britain
 annexation of 237
 exploration of 142, 143
 the 'white woman' of 141–143
 New Hebrides 123–124
 New South Wales, governors of
 Sir William Denison 1, 2
 Sir Hercules Robinson 4
 New Zealand 82–83, 146, 155
 governor of, Sir George Bowen 2, 209
 New Zealand Company 155
 Norcock, Lieutenant Charles James, RN 20, 23,
 110, 115, 132, 136
 Norcock, John Henry 110
 Northern Territory xvii, 42, 72
 nostalgia 7, 155, 239
 Nukapu Island, New Hebrides 123–124, 134, 136
 Oberon district, New South Wales 158, 162n
 O'Farrell, Henry James 9, 100
 'old maids' 36, 37, 38, 61–62
On the Origin of Species 52, 183
 opera xvi, 34, 35, 206
 Overland Telegraph xvii, 71, 72
 Pacific Islanders 122–128, 132–133, 137–143
 massacres of whites by 125, 132–133, 138,
 140, 141, 229
Pacific Islanders Protection Act of 1872 125, 131
 Pacific Islands xviii, 22, 122–123, 127–128,
 219–221
 pacifists 155
 Pain, Mr (museum owner, Melbourne) 215
 painting 204–205
 Palmer, Captain George, RN 123, 128
 Palmerston (Darwin) 84
Paradise of Dissent 155
 Parramatta, New South Wales 150, 154
 pastoral leases 145–146, 150
 pastoralists xvi—*see also* squatters
 Patteson, Bishop John Coleridge 123–124, 131,
 132–133, 136
 Pearson, Charles 33, 34
 'Peninsula' Estate, Windsor 94
 Perry, Bishop Charles 52, 59
 Phipps Hornby, Admiral Sir Geoffrey, RN 20
 photography 66, 90–93, 96
 phrenology 41, 50n
 pioneers 28
 police 40, 43
 native 43
 pollution
 in Melbourne 114–116
 in Sydney 116–119
 Polynesian Company, Melbourne 229
Polynesian Laborers Act of 1868 122

- poor laws 164
 population
 of Australia xvi, 72, 104
 of South Australia 161
 Port Darwin 188
 Port Jackson, Sydney 80
 Port Pirie, South Australia 161
 Presbyterian Ladies' College, Melbourne 36, 37
 Presbyterians 155
 prisons 42, 44–45
 Darlinghurst, Sydney 42, 44
 Pentridge, Melbourne 41, 42, 44–45
 prostitution xvi, 46–47

 quackery 28, 105
 Queen Victoria xviii, 16, 125
 Queen's Birthday holiday 16
 Queensland xvii, 122, 123, 125, 151, 158, 184–185, 190
 Queensland, governor of 123
 William Wellington Cairns 3
Question of Propriety, A 204, 210n

 rabbits 159–160
 racism 148, 189
 railways xvi, 72–76, 110, 156, 158
 recreation xvi
 religion 51–64—*see also* churches; spiritualism
 responsible government xvi, 1
 Riverina xvii, 145
 Robertson, Sir John 73, 149
 Robinson, Lady 2
 Robinson, Sir Hercules 4
 Roman Catholics 155
 Rose Hill (Parramatta) 154
 Royal Navy—*see* Imperial Navy
 royalty 8–16, 33
 Ruse, James 154
 Russia xviii, 78
 Russian scare 78, 83

 St Albans, New South Wales 91–93
 salvage 68
 Salwatti, Rajah of 236
 Sandhurst (Bendigo) 49
 Sandover, William, jnr 5, 45, 101, 102, 108n
 family 101
 in Tasmania 167–169, 223–224
 on art 204–205
 on Darwinism 174–175
 on lunacy 175–177
 on Melbourne and Sydney 5–6, 113
 on Melbourne Benevolent Asylum 164–166
 on the Chinese 188
 on theatre audiences 207
 social conscience of 166
 Unitarian beliefs of 53
 Sandover, William, snr 101, 159
Science and the Bible 52
 Scots 155
 Scott, Harriett 213
 Scott, Helena 212, 213
 seduction 47–48
 servants xvi, 18, 31, 186

 settlers—*see* free settlers
 sewers 116–119
 sheep 150
 ships—*see under* Imperial Navy; or individual ship
 names
 shipwrecks 68, 137–138
 Simpson, Captain Cortland Herbert, RN 122,
 129, 138–143, 231
 slavery 121, 122, 123—*see also* Kanakas
 snake-bite 102–104
 snakes 31
 snakes, sea 221, 222
 society, colonial 19, 30, 40–41, 110
 Somerset, Queensland 84, 234–235, 238–239
 South Australia xvii, xviii, 15, 28, 71–72, 155,
 156, 159, 160–162
Southern Cross (schooner) 124
 Spanish 229
 spiritualism 33, 36, 50, 51–64
 sport xvi, 191–200—*see also* cricket; football,
 Australian Rules
 hunting and shooting 192, 221, 222
 weight-lifting 192
 squatters 30, 145–152
 steam age xvii
 Steele, Reverend J.C. 94
 Stewart, Elizabeth 46–47
 Stirling, Commodore Frederick, RN 2, 23,
 66, 133, 136, 141
 Strong, Herbert Augustus 33, 34, 35, 36,
 37, 39n
 Stuart, John McDouall 72
 Suez canal 78
 sugar 123, 232, 233
 plantations 125, 131
 surgery 104–105
 Sydney 156–157—*see also* Port Jackson
 Albert (cricket) Ground 197, 198
 Australian Club 110
 Botanic Gardens 111, 112
 compared with Melbourne 109–119
 Government House 1, 3, 5
 Observatory Signal Centre 97
 Parliament House 5
 society 110
 Town Hall 5
 Union Club 110
 Sydney Exhibition of 1872 73
Sydney Mail
 on marriage 27
 on Queen Victoria's 53rd birthday 16
 on surgery 104
 on the working classes 27
 on women's health 28–29

 tariffs, protective xvii, 160
 Tasmania 6, 23, 167–168, 176–177, 185,
 223–224
 Tebbutt, John 46, 93–95, 97, 98, 154
 and meteorology 93, 99n
 and religion 52, 93
 and the Great Comet of 1861 93, 94–95

We are presented with much that is strange and much that is strangely familiar in *Eyes to the Future* as Jennifer M.T. Carter brings to life the Australian colonies in the 1870s.

Through judicious use of primary research material held in the National Library of Australia's collections, this publication explores social customs, social conditions, encounters with Australia's neighbours, eminent people, strange episodes, the operation of justice, royalty, romance, dissent and much more in this fascinating decade.

The reader is drawn into the everyday lives of the colonists of the 1870s: some achieved fame and notoriety, others watched their hopes and dreams crumble, while many simply got on with the business of living. This portrait of Australia, 100 years after James Cook and his crew first visited in the *Endeavour*, presents a country in the early stages of emerging nationhood.



Jennifer M.T. Carter graduated MA from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland and is now a Fellow of the Faculty of Education at the University of Melbourne. She is the author of *Burra 1845–1851: A Directory of Early Folk* (1996) and *Painting the Islands Vermilion: Archibald Watson and the Brig Carl* (1999). She writes historical novels under the pseudonym Mary Talbot Cross, including *The Foundling: A Tale of the Burra Burra Mine* (1998).

