RECOLLECTIONS OF THOMAS DAVIS
Collected by Steele Rudd

Fifty-three years make a big hole in a man's life-time — 'tis longer than the time allotted many — and as those years were mostly spent on the Darling Downs, Maranoa, Leichhardt and Burnett, and being one of the few links left of the chain connecting those bad old days with the pious present I may, perhaps, be permitted to hope that those of to-day, and possibly the future, may find some interest in perusing these pages of Ups-and-Downs — these leaves that have fallen from the pioneering periods of our country.

In 1849 I joined J.C. Burnett's Survey party, and in December of that year left Sydney for the 'Settlement' (Brisbane) per S.S. Eagle. All went well until we arrived at Moreton Bay, where, for four days we were stuck on the bar. Every moment we expected the Eagle to break up, but at last she crossed, and on the eighth day landed us safely.

Brisbane made no favourable impression on my mind; the north side presented a little life, but South Brisbane and Kangaroo Point were pictures of desolation. And what with the torments of millions of mosquitoes and the oppressive heat, I soon made up my mind to leave. After waiting three or four days for the river boat to arrive from Limestone — which it failed to do — I left on foot, and on the following day reached that place footsore and blistered and well burnt from the heat of the sun — to say nothing of the pains and penalties which flies and other insects inflict upon the unhappy new-chum.

Thanks to the comfortable accommodation provided at the Prince of Wales Hotel I soon recovered from the fatigue of what was only the preliminary to many a long tramp, and hunting up Mr. George Thorn — J.C. Burnett's agent — learnt from him that the drays by which I was to travel were waiting at Three Mile Creek. I joined them, and the party, consisting of eight men, two bullock teams and six horses, made a start. My destination was the Springs, four miles from the Swamp (Toowoomba).

From Limestone to the Downs the journey was uneventful. We had the company of a number of blacks and fourteen drays, etc. belonging to the then famous Boiling Downs, near the Swamp, the property of Capt. Hurst.

We rolled slowly along, and well I remember the hospitable abodes by the way, among them Sally Owen's, Dooyere's 'Horse and Jockey' and Bigge's Camp, now Grandchester. Crossing Liverpool Range we camped at Laidley Creek. Laidley — at present one of the busiest and most prosperous agricultural districts in the colony — could then only boast of a lonely old stock-yard. Nothing else was there to indicate a settlement.

Jimmy May's and Billy Ferris' quaint looking restaurant was all that comprised what to-day is the lively and celebrated town of Gatton. Here the teams were turned out for a few days' spell, and the drunken revels of those drivers and blacks were something ever to remember. Rum was plentiful and cheap — drays were loaded with it, and a hole bored in a cask provided bucketsful of the lively beverage. For diversion, pig-sticking was turned to. Like the rum pigs were plentiful: herds upon herds of them running wild.

I was not sorry when a start was made and we left this terrible den.

Passing Grantham — the 'Com Humpy' — owned by W.B. Pitts, we camped on Turner's Creek, near Helidon Station, the property of William Turner; next day found us at Soldiers' Flat. This spot contributes a sad chapter to the history of Queensland. It was here that a party

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1 Two manuscript notes in different hands are written in the right margin at this point: "John Steele Unit 7/48 Dunmore Tce Auchenflower" and, commenting on "Fifty-three years", "53 & 1849 indicates that this was compiled c.1902 (Thomas died Jan 1904)".
of men escorting a number of drays to the Downs in '46 were attacked by blacks. The whole party, I forget the number, were speared and butchered to a man, the drays plundered and the teams, fearfully maimed, hunted into the bush. In revenge the squatters mustered every available man from stations near and far and following the blacks, made terrible slaughter amongst them. Nevertheless, their hostility did not decrease, and subsequently, for protection of travellers, a numbers of soldiers became permanently quartered at the place. Hence the name Soldiers' Flat.

Crossing the Main Range we reached the Swamp, or Toogoom as the blacks called it, a name derived from the reeds growing in the swamp, on the 8th. January, 1850. We found three white men living there, Joe Dent, Bill Shuttleworth and Billy Gurney. All three were mowing green stuff for Horton of the ‘Bull’s Head’, Drayton: – and now all three are dead!

J.C. Burnett was under instructions from the Surveyor General (Sir Thomas Mitchell) to settle and mark the boundaries of disputed runs on the Darling Downs, notably Eton Vale, Felton, Clifton, Ellangowan, Canning Downs and Maryland; also to lay out the towns of Drayton, Dalby and. Warwick, and their burial grounds. This we did in 1850, but not without many difficulties and hardships. Same year we divided the disputed runs of Cecil Plains, St. Ruth’s, Waranga, Daandine, Greenbank, Jimbour and Warra Warra.

My first piece of colonial experience was met with simply enough. With a theodolite on my shoulder I left camp one morning for Drayton, four miles off, taking a track known now as the Burial-ground Road, intending to commence the survey of the town. On I walked, on and on, until the day was nearly spent, and never came to Drayton – at least not that day. I had strayed from the track and at sunset found myself some seventeen miles out, on the Gowrie side.

Stirring scenes were witnessed at Drayton at this time. A man entered the ‘Bull’s Head’ one day and asked Horton for a drink. “No,” said Horton, “go where you spend your money”. The man went to Meehan of the Downs Inn, but was told there to hump his drum. Stepping into the stable he led out his horse, lifted his swag from the saddle, unrolled it and took out a pair of pistols. Meehan was seated on a stool on the verandah. Without a word the fellow fired one of the pistols at him and shot him in the knee, crippling him for life. Putting the other pistol to his own head he blew his brains out. It transpired at the inquest that the unfortunate wretch in about three weeks spent over £100 in drink.

Towards the end of 1850 we were camped where the present railway station stands along with two other survey parties – Edmund Moriarty’s and R.C. Bagot’s – and Dent and Gurney and Shuttleworth were still there living in a gunya at a spot now marked by Russell Street bridge. These three pioneers, therefore, were the fathers and founders of Toowoomba.

In '51 the ill-fated Fraser family arrived at the Swamp, and a shoemaker whose name I have lost, opened a small shop where the Court House stands. Of course Hurst's Boiling Downs was in full swing at, and prior to, this period, but it was not situated on the Swamp: it stood on the fall of the Range in what is called of late years the Police Paddock.

The shadows of the past grow deeper every day, and events become more spectral in the closing mist while memory plays such fantastic tricks that even the gravest and most reverend colonists remember witnessing scenes that happened before they were born. 'Tis indeed amusing to hear some of these 'blowers' arrogating to themselves the title of founder when in truth they were not on Australian soil when the places they profess to father were first settled on by white people.

Thomas Alford was the first white man to settle on the Springs, called by the blacks Chinkery, followed by Peter Flannagan, a blacksmith, who, with his wife and family overlanded with Hodgson from Port Stephens, and worked on Eton Vale a short time. To these two families is due, without doubt, the honour of founding Drayton. Alford for many years was storekeeping, also kept the local Post Office and was first coach proprietor on the
Downs. He owned the Speck which conveyed mails and passengers bi-weekly between Drayton and Brisbane, fare £2 for the single journey.

Twenty and thirty bullock waggons loaded with wool creeping through the town on the heels of each other was a common sight in Drayton in the fifties. And in wet weather after having perhaps camped a month or more on Parker's Flat (a three months rain was common enough then) three or four teams yoked to one dray often ploughed the main street, bound for the capital.

In '51 the wet season held out so long that provisions became short and the storekeepers (Lord and Handcock) raised the prices, and flour went to £10 per bag. Matters looked blue for the inhabitants until Arthur Hodgson came to the rescue. Happening to have a supply stored at Eton Vale, he not only sold one-and-a-half tons at £2.10s. but delivered it at the peoples' doors.

The Rev. Glennie about this time arrived in Drayton, and under his direction the parsonage and English Church were erected. The same year were built the national school and teacher's residence and the honour of being the first teacher on the Darling Downs fell to Mr. James Rutledge, father of the Hon. Arthur Rutledge, our present Attorney-General. And it was through the representations of James Rutledge to the Government of New South Wales of the suitability of the Swamp as a township, that it was subsequently surveyed into small lots. Originally it was not intended for, or surveyed as, a site for a town, but merely for farm lots suburban to the town of Drayton. Few, however, cared to take up this land at the first sale. Horton, Charles Taylor and Bill Shuttleworth were the chief speculators. Horton took that block where stands the Royal Bank, the Railway Station, Perkins Brewery and Clifford House, a portion of which he turned into a lucerne paddock, Joe Dent and Shuttleworth cultivating for him. Subsequently he sold out to James Taylor.

Shuttleworth and Charles Taylor took up adjoining farms extending to what is now known as the Waterworks. They also sold out later.

In '55 William Horton built the first hotel there – the Royal – and rented it to Mark Macarthy. Then followed the Sovereign (Stephen Mehan's) kept by John Dare, and the Queen's Arms erected by Edward Lord at the corner of Margaret and Ruthven Street, and kept by Fred Samford. This place has since been transformed into the Club Hotel.

Lord and Handcock were first in the field as storekeepers, and as all these people were Drayton residents it is clear that Toowoomba owes its birth to Drayton hands, though to-day it has left the parent place far behind.

Besides Brisbane, Drayton in the fifties had direct mail communication with the following places: Tenterfield via Warwick; Surat via Dalby, Warra and Wambo; Gayndah via Nanango; and Goondiwindi via Leyburn. It was on the last-named route, in years later, that the veteran mailman, Harry Symes, was stuck up and robbed of the mail and horses by Irwin and Allwood. The desperadoes left him upon the road with his hands bound behind his back. Both men, however, were captured and sentenced to hard labour on the public roads.

"Who was the first medical practitioner on the Darling Downs?" is a question one often hears. Dr. Wilkes was. He practised in Drayton in '48, and Dr. Hopkins in '49. It was the latter gentleman who, with Thomas Bracknell Yates in '50 discovered gold in small quantities in pipe-clay at the foot of Gowrie Mountain.

In '52 Dr. Beuchanan and Dr. Gleason came to Drayton; Dr. Armstrong (brother to Dr. William Armstrong) in '54; Dr. Welsh, '56; then followed Dr. William Armstrong.

Drs. Hopkins and Beuchanan conducted a hospital in Drayton at 'Bellair' into which were received patients from many parts of the Downs, and for the interment of those who died there was a burial-ground on the hill. The last bodies laid to rest in this forgotten cemetery numbered fifteen, three of whom were Chinamen; and a comfortable dwelling house now marks the place.
First to practise in Toowoomba was Dr. Sachsie, son-in-law to Dr. Gleason.

Out of the depths of those days beyond recall come memories of Billy Handcock, that grotesque form (a living likeness of whom is an ex-Prime Minister of New South Wales) landlord of the Bull’s Head, first Mayor of Drayton and representative of Darling Downs in the N.S.W. Parliament! Handcock was a great talker and ran the largest business on the Downs at that time. But he passed from affluence to the Insolvency Court, then drifted to Ireland where further failure and misfortune awaited him. Assisted by friends he returned to Queensland, and when last I saw him he was old, hard-up, remorseful and seated under a tree (poor old Billy!) shepherding a few sheep on a selection near Clifton. Later he became an inmate of Dunwich Asylum, and there in lonliness on the shores of Stradbroke ended the life of one of the most remarkable of this colony’s pioneers.

Handcock was first to introduce wheat on the Downs, and Nicholas Scanlan, a Drayton saddler, grew it in ’54 for straw to stuff horse collars with.

At Alfred Lord’s, Stephan’s and Horton’s fruit and vegetables grew in abundance, and the very time that Watts declared on the floor of the Assembly that the Darling Downs wouldn’t grow a cabbage his own garden at Eton Vale was full of them.

Watts arrived on the Downs in the early fifties and went to Felton, then Captain Mallard’s station, as ration carrier. He was a man with a clear head and the Captain recommended him to Arthur Hodgson to take charge of Eton Vale while the latter visited England. So satisfactorily did Watts manage the station that, on his return, Hodgson took him in as a partner. Watts disposed of his interest in Eton Vale to Robert Ramsay and left the colony for the colony’s good – anyway so far as its agricultural future was concerned.

A farm worked by William and Geo. Tubb was in full swing on Dalrymple Creek in 1850, where Allora is standing. When I visited the place that year these brothers had about fifteen acres of corn growing. It stood on a flat on the town side where the bridge is, and the house together with a blacksmith shop was situated where stands Gordon’s Hotel. They found corn raising paid better than the trade and used to cart produce into Drayton and even so far as Ipswich where it brought as much as 15 shillings and £1 per bushel. On the return trip they carried loading for the storekeepers.

So, therefore, the Tubbs were the first farmers on the Darling Downs, and they were the only residents of Allora at that time. Years afterwards I visited the place and found the selection had been abandoned.

Talgai in 1850 was an out-station of Clifton and owned by John and George Gammie. Goomburra in ’44 was disposed of by Ernest Elphinston Dalrymple to the Rosenthal Coy. for £350, and John Deuchar put in charge. The Coy. sold to Patrick Leslie in ’47 for £1,400, and Leslie in turn disposed of it, with 21,000 head of sheep, and a number of cattle, to F. Tooth of Sydney, in ’55 for £39,000.

Glengallan Station in ’49 was the property of Colin Campbell. In the fifties it passed into the hands of Marshall and Deuchar, afterwards Marshal and Slade.

In June 1850, along with Mr. Burnett, I went to Warwick. Warwick then consisted of a public house – the Horse and Jockey, kept by John Collins – two small stores, Burkman’s and Shanklin’s, and a blacksmith’s shop worked by William Craig.

Of having assisted to survey and lay out this town I am proud, for with its public squares and park it is about the healthiest and neatest town in the colony. But how it has suffered from land monopoly! To-day it is simply hemmed in by extensive private holdings. In the future though, one supposes it will all be settled on by the farmer as has been the case with Swan Creek, Killarney and other places.

The Canning Downs estate was taken up in 1840 by those plucky pioneers, the Leslies, changed hands in the fifties for £50,000. It was sold to one Gilbert Davidson, a young fellow who served his colonial experience with Hodgson. Davidson’s manager was Captain Daveny.
Both owner and manager were sportsmen of a rare kind, and the station suited them – only they didn’t suit the station. It got into difficulties and eventually passed to other hands, subsequently falling into the possession of J.D. Macansh from whom it was purchased by a syndicate and cut up into farms.

After surveying the town we started settling disputed runs. This took considerable time and necessitated travelling out as far as Logan on the Jones River where R.C. Bagot and party were already at work.

Our party camped on Cooranga Creek, at its junction with the Condamine River, and waited instructions from the Surveyor General. Cooranga Creek was infested with blacks. We were there five days. On the afternoon of the fifth day we heard distant but frequent gunshots.

“Bang! ... Bang!” and the “boo-oom” came nearer and nearer. We wondered. Mr. Burnett ordered that the horses be got ready and the firearms seen to. This done, we waited for whatever might come along. Suddenly a disordered army of affrighted blackfellows burst through the brushwood into the open where we were camped. Like a lot of hunted emus they made for a big scrub on the edge of which was a large waterhole. In twos and threes they dashed in and disappeared – but not all. Three of four before reaching it fell – dead! While two in the rear, disabled, painfully limped along. These just reached the scrub when hot in pursuit came several white men armed and mounted.

“See any blackbirds run this way?” asked the leader.

“There are some lying beside that waterhole”, replied Mr. Burnett; “but who are you and why are you shooting them like that?”

“Shooting them!” and the fellow scowled. “I’m ---- of ----station; and those ---- wretches have been spearing my cattle”.

While at St. Ruth’s, and on the day our party was to return to the Swamp, I was entrusted with the carrying of some letters to Mr. Bagot. Not an easy undertaking then, as it meant making my way across forty miles of unknown country with only an indifferent marked tree line to guide me over the last eighteen miles. With a small swag on the saddle and with instructions from Mr. Burnett to give the horse his head should I lose my way, I started and reached Warranga at the head of the Moonie River. Warranga then was owned by T. and A. Crowder. Here the marked tree line was supposed to begin. But I found four miles of dense scrub facing to commence with. This I penetrated and came out on a creek. Gave the horse a drink, and dropping the bridle reins on the ground left him standing on the bank while I went to quench my own thirst, never thinking but that he would be there when I came up. To my horror, though, he made off. I tried to catch him, but he was a knowing one. He ran when I ran, and walked when I walked. I could get close to him, but not close enough. I was in a fix.

Determined not to lose sight of him, I followed at his heels, perspiring and tripping over tufts of grass until darkness came on and I could see him no longer. My position was not a pleasant one. I became anxious. Alone in this wild shop without blankets, without matches – without a bit to eat!

For a while my feelings merged on madness, but thought of picking the horse up in the morning consoled me a little. Tired, weary and hungry, I lay at the foot of a great gum-tree for an hour or so. Rising again, I saw just a dim light in the distance. I made for that light instantly; blacks’ camp or whatever it might be, I was determined to reach it. To my delight it turned out to be a shepherd’s hut belonging to Heliford Station, the property of Captain Scott. It was occupied by two shepherds. They welcomed me and gave me a good supper, and we yawned far into the night. In the morning I hit out on foot for the Swamp, sixty miles away, and arrived at the end of the second day.

With a fresh horse and a black boy I returned to the shepherds’ hut and getting on the tracks of the runaway, followed him for several days.
Camping one night on the Condamine, about fifteen miles from St. Ruth's, we met with (to me) a most sensational experience. Having chosen a suitable spot and tethered the horses we made a roaring fire beside a hollow log. The night was cold and pitch dark. Scarcely had we closed our eyes when a sniffling noise attracted us.

“Plenty fella myall dingo!” said the boy, and no sooner had he said this than the horses rushed and one broke loose. Luckily he came over to the other, and we secured the pair within the reflection of the fire. Sleep was out of the question now, for the yells and howls of these dogs was something indescribable. They gave one a cold creepy feeling. It took the two of us all our time keeping the fire going, and pelting the wretches with fire-sticks to keep them off. They collected in scores as the night wore on, and their eyes shone in every quarter through the darkness; their unearthly chorus resounded for miles through the still bush, and anxiously I longed for the approach of dawn. When it came and day broke, to my satisfaction at least, the dingoes disappeared.

On examining a hollow log close beside our fire we discovered five pups not more than a week old. Their existence, of course, accounted for all the trouble. We didn’t interfere with them, but saddled up and away.

Arriving at Greenbank, a few miles from Dalby, we overtook a stockman leading the lost horse; he had picked him up at one of our old camps on the river. To my delight the saddle and swag were still on him.

No doubt many will regard it as strange that I was not molested by blacks during this time. It wasn’t strange at all. The blacks, even this far back, were quiet on the Darling Downs. Hodgson, the Leslies and others by many conflicts had taken the go out of them. To this day the bones of many an aboriginal still lie bleaching on well-known parts of some Downs stations. I can recall two occasions only when a white man was murdered by blacks on the Downs. One happened on Pilton Station when Captain Whitting owned it; the unfortunate victim, a shepherd named Jones, while watching the flock in “Budgee” was treacherously tomahawked.

The blacks took the sheep and drove them over the Range into the scrubs at the Heifer Station. They killed and ate what they could of them, then for pastime, speared and nulla-nulla’d the remainder.

The four posts of Jones’ hut and a dim outline of the old sheepyard are still to be seen, and some fifty yards off at the foot of a treeless, bald, barren mountain, and beneath a box-tree, a flat, timeworn sandstone bearing the rugged inscription, “Jones, 1850”, marks his resting place.

The other occurred at Mount Roscom near Drayton. A stockman employed by Hodgson on Eton Vale was riding through some thick timber there in search of horses when a spear aimed at him by a blackfellow pierced his side. He was a plucky man and galloped all the way to the head station supporting the shaft with his hand. When Hodgson pulled it out the poor fellow instantly succumbed.

Having finished surveying on the Downs, Mr. Burnett proceeded to Cleveland to lay out a township there. I accompanied him as far as Brisbane; but tiring of the life I decided to try my luck in other fields. I left the party and returned to Drayton, December, ’53. In January of the following year I married.

At this time stations were being rapidly formed in the Maranoa district, and Harry Whitty was appointed Commissioner of Crown Lands there. Meeting Whitty one day in Drayton he offered me the position of Postmaster and C.P.S. at Surat which I accepted. His
dray happened to be up for stores at the time, and the following week, accompanied by my young wife, I left Drayton on a perilous journey to the western part of the country.

Besides ourselves, there were of the party four black troopers, a bullock driver, black off-sider and another blackfellow and gin. The bullock-driver was a fiery tempered fellow and in consequence went by the name of Hell-fire George.

All went well until nearing Chinchilla. Here Hell-fire George quarrelled with the off-sider, and from words they came to blows. It was a good fight; but seeing the driver being overpowered by the black I stepped in and separated them. No sooner had I done so than Hell-fire ran to the dray, took out his gun which was loaded with shot, and fired point blank at the black’s head. There wasn’t a move out of him though his face and forehead were one mass of shot wounds. His head was as hard as a maul.

I extracted as much of the shot as I could for him. Next morning his head was a fright—’twas like a large plum pudding boiled hard.

From that out no good was to be got from the off-sider; he turned sulky and his manner from day to day was anything but assuring. When about thirty miles from Surat he slipped away one night—we were in his native part of the country—and only that the four troopers belonged to other parts I feel certain that they would have gone too, and all would have been over with us.

A couple of days later, while we were camped on the river, our off-sider accompanied by half-a-hundred of his tribe, armed to the teeth, returned. Their meaning was plain. Halting when about sixty or seventy yards from us, they held a council of war. I saw my wife safely under the dray which we barricaded as well as we could, then advanced a few paces thinking to conciliate Tommy (the off-sider) over whom, hitherto, I had had some influence. A few spears greeted me and I retired hurriedly. Then the wild yells of them! And a shower of spears and boomerangs rattled round the dray. We were well supplied with firearms and ammunition, and opened fire on them under cover of the dray. Some fell—the rest immediately made off, for which we felt thankful. Still, we followed them, firing off the guns, until they were well away.

Meanwhile a black trooper was sent on ahead to acquaint Whitty of [the] dangerous situation. Next morning a sergeant at the head of eighteen black police met us. He followed the blacks and—shot down the lot of them. Such fearful slaughter was unnecessary and unjustified.

The sergeant returned and went in search of our bullocks. He found them all speared and mutilated beyond recognition. We were therefore unable to move further until a fresh team was sent out.

During this trip my wife displayed remarkable courage. Few would have faced, as she did, a life in an uncivilized part, surrounded by hostile savages, and no other white woman within a hundred miles of her.

Before we got into Surat a murder was committed by blacks a few miles north of us. A tribe surrounded the hut of a station-hand and breaking the door entered and knocked the man on the head. They plundered his rations and left. The troopers followed these also, but failed to overtake them.

Seven white men were stationed at Surat in addition to the black police. I thought it a queer place for one to come to. Although supplied with everything necessary to our comfort, I often wished us back in Drayton. The country around was alive with blacks and one never knew when the place might be surprised. Six months of the year the Commissioner was away in Sydney during which time I was in charge.

We had scarcely been two months on the place when the mailman brought word one day that a man named Burke, overseer at Wondongoon, had been speared by a blackfellow named Wilkie.
Burke, it seems, sent the blackfellow to an out-station with rations and tobacco for a shepherd. Dissatisfied with the quantity of tobacco delivered, the shepherd, when he came in complained. Taking his gun, Burke went off to the blacks' camp, accused Wilkie of having stolen the tobacco, then pointed the gun at him and fired, and missed. Snatching up a spear, the blackfellow drove it through Burke and killed him on the spot.

Wilkie made off and was in hiding for some time, but the troopers got wind of his whereabouts, and running him down put a bullet through him. Burke was the first overseer employed on Jimbour by Bell & Sons. Being a good man among sheep, he became entrusted with the management of Wandongoon, a piece of country the Bells took up in the Maranoa in '49 and stocked with 20,000 sheep.

When news of Burke's death reached Jimbour, young Bell (later Sir Joshua Peter) accompanied by a station hand and a black-boy rode straight to Wandongoon. He found the station in a muddle; most of the sheep boxed; a shepherd the day before absconded; the sheep left closed in the yard and a horse and saddle missing.

Placing the station-hand in charge, Bell, along with the black-boy, followed the absconder. Made Surat that night. The runaway had passed that morning. Although a police sergeant was willing to take up the running, Bell nevertheless, preferred to follow in pursuit himself. In charge of Surat at the time, I supplied him with fresh horses.

Next day he overtook his man making for Burgorah. Securing him, he took him to Yamboocal Station the same day; to Surat the next, and handed him over to the sergeant, charged with horse-stealing, to be taken to Wandaigumbil, thence to Dalby.

Bell remained with us a fortnight looking out for new country; and when his man was brought up for trial he didn't appear against him. The case was dismissed. This was characteristic of Bell. Though he would have ridden as long as horse-flesh held out to bring that servant back, punish him further he couldn't.

A little later an out-station of Mount Abundance belonging to P. McKinrow was attacked, though not without some justification. 'Twas a custom of the whites to keep a few gins on the stations—say, one apiece. The gins' husbands permitted them to stay until they should require them to shift to some other part of the country.

At this out-station there were four gins, who, when their husbands came for them, were persuaded by the whites to remain. The blacks became infuriated which was only natural, and the only thing left them to do was to use force. They watched their opportunity which came one day when the men went out to muster cattle, leaving the hut-keeper—a fellow named "the Boomer"—and the gins in charge. Rolling up, the blackfellows again demanded their gins, and were answered by a shot from the Boomer's carbine, which accounted for the foremost one. Nothing daunted, the others charged the hut and although a second one dropped when the carbine spoke again, they succeeded in setting the place afire. It was in a blaze when, by good fortune, the stockmen returned. A little later and the Boomer and the gins must have been roasted alive. As it was the hut was burnt to the ground.

Subsequently at Bingera Station on the Balonne River, when owned by Fitzgerald, and managed by one B----, there was more trouble. As in the Mount Abundance affair some blackfellows called for their gins and were refused possession. No force was attempted, but the blacks in strong numbers rounded up and drove away every working horse that was on the place and, to an extent, became masters of the situation, the station hands being unable to move out.

Collecting stock returns, I chanced to make Bingera just at this time—fortunately, perhaps, for B---- and his hands. Learning their position, I wheeled round and rode straight into Surat. There I found the Lieutenant in charge of the Force sitting down to a meal, having just returned from the Dawson where, also, the blacks had been giving trouble. Tired as the
troopers and himself must have been, they were, nevertheless, on the road to Bingera within the next hour.

At Waggor they came upon the blacks numbering between two and three hundred, shepherding the Bingera horses. The police fired a few shots in the air to disperse them, but without effect. Finding no injury done them, the blacks became emboldened and advanced at a run to surround the troops. Spears and boomerangs went flying in every direction. A trooper rolled out of his saddle, another’s horse with a spear hanging to it bolted through the trees. The Lieutenant gave the word to fire and a fearful conflict began. The blacks stood their ground and fought bravely – fought until the dead lay thick about them – and only retreated when darkness set in. When morning broke upon the scene they had all disappeared and nothing but the dead remained.

Four or five of the Lieutenant’s men were badly wounded, and riding over the scene of battle I counted thirty-seven dead bodies, including that of the trooper. Yet I am confident that more of the poor wretches fell that day, and, lying here and there in the grass as they had dropped, were left to the birds and the wild dogs of the bush to feast upon!

Next came the murder of Kettle and old Mick Burns and wife in ’54 – shepherds in the employ of Forrest of Wallen Station. And again the same old story!

Kettle had a gin ‘loaned’ him on condition that her husband might take her away on a certain moon. But when the ‘lease’ expired Kettle refused to give the gin up.

The blacks showed no immediate hostility but withdrew quietly. The gin left Kettle’s hut and went to the Burns a mile or so away.

As usual the sheep left both yards one morning with men and dogs behind them, but at night neither they nor the shepherds came home. Kettle and Burns were never seen alive again. But when the ration carrier came along and called at Burns’ hut he found it wrecked and upon the floor the dead bodies of Mrs. Burns and the gin. The police were informed, and after searching for days found the sheep, many of them bitten and torn by native dogs.

In different parts of the bush the bodies of the men were discovered, both stripped naked and speared through and through. The blacks did not in this case as was their usual custom, take away the sheep. But to evade punishment they separated, and in small parties made for different stations. Some went to Wambo, others to Binbinjan and Tiryboo. But the police were hard riders. They rode straight to the last named station and coming upon a large number of blacks there, comprised chiefly of old men, women and children, and without taking the least case to discover if these were the guilty people, poured lead into them indiscriminately.

Afterwards it was proved beyond doubt that two men only out of this mob so unmercifully butchered had had a hand in the murders.

This abominable piece of work was reported to the Government by Whitty and an enquiry was held. I regret to say it ended in smoke.

These are mere instances of the crime committed in the Maranoa during our residence there; and knowing the conditions surrounding the aborigines in those days I was never surprised at them. The majority of murders were caused by the treatment the blacks received at the hands of those placed in charge of stations in the early days. The black police and their officers were quite as inhuman, if not more so. These guardians of the law seemed to have full license to kidnap and ravish the women of the first tribe they came across after a depredation had taken place.

Frequently I have seen them tie young gins – yelling and struggling – to the backs of their horses and carry them off after a dispersal, after the bullets had thinned and weakened the ranks of their protectors.

Wandaigumbil Police Barracks early in the fifties was a perfect harem – young and old gins ranging from twelve to fifty years, could be seen there at any time. The cause of the crimes originated with the whites. The white man was to blame. Was not the aboriginal
robbed of his country? and of his home? Was his hunting grounds – places held sacred by him – not taken and turned into cattle camps by the white man? Those happy homes where once could be heard his corrobree and song he dare not now put foot in. Was not this alone enough to drive him to desperate extremes?

It is sorrowful even to contemplate the wrongs perpetrated on these unfortunate people. The carbine of early days, the rum, European and Mongolian vices and diseases did fatal work amongst them, rapidly diminished their numbers, and soon they will all have disappeared from us forever. It is a humiliating fact that Great Britain, the most civilised and evangelical nation in the world, whose proud boast is that the sun never sets on her dominions, should, with all her pre-eminence, establish her colonies in the destruction of the native inhabitants whom she sweeps before her in the march of civilization; and while her sons go forth to multiply, replenish and subdue, the original owners of the land disappear like snow before the sun.

The arrival of the whites sealed the blackfellows’ fate, and now no power on earth can arrest his destruction.

The blacks were a happy and contented people – independent, respectful, with noble traits in their character, yielding submission to none and with dignity proclaiming – not in words but by gesture – their hereditary rights and independence. And when at times viewing hundreds of men of this stamp, I could no other than wish, and anxiously wish, that some effort be made to save at least a remnant of this interesting race from total annihilation. It is lamentable to think that this should almost invariably be the doom of all savages similarly circumstanced.

It is gratifying, though, to find the Government of the day in its sympathy taking steps to ameliorate the condition of the black race by placing the last of the tribes in comfort on Fraser’s Island.

Associated with the name of Matthew Goggs is a memorable conflict which took place on Donga Creek between the blacks and our party from Surat, or Yalcal, as it was then called. Goggs was on the look-out for new country, and while staying a few days with us at Surat one of his stockmen came in on foot – his horse had knocked up a few miles out – with word of the blacks gathering on Donga Creek with the object of attacking Wirabone Station. They had already slaughtered a number of Goggs’s cattle.

With little delay a well-equipped party, consisting of Sergeant Graham and black police, Dick Walker – once an officer in the English army – James Norman, Matthew Goggs, Harry Whitty and myself, was soon riding hard through sand and mulga toward the east.

On the evening of the second day we came to the banks of Donga Creek. There, camped on both sides of the stream, was a mob of fully four-hundred blacks.

It was apparent some move was afoot. Commotion stirred the camp. Shouting picaninnies scampered here and there, gins in groups clamoured and gesticulated, and most significant of all, the men were armed and ready to march.

With our firearms resting on our thighs we rode up. As we turned a corner in the broken scrub they saw us. For a moment they stared, surprised. “A shot or two in the air”, said Whitty. “Bang! Bang!” in half a dozen places. A chorus of savage yells and a host of flying spears replied. We paused. The yells increased; the spears mingled with boomerangs fell thicker. Whitty change his mind.

“Nothing for it – must go at them”, he said, and Graham led the way. We rode through them pell-mell, and returning went through them again and again – with little good effect. Though confused, they stubbornly held their ground. Into the thick of them we emptied our pieces. Their tactics became warlike. In a short time we were almost surrounded. Compelled to fall back we separated and from behind trees cut gaps in their numbers with our rifles. Still their determination never lessened. Some of our party were wounded – myself among
the number. A spear pierced my thigh and pinned me to the saddle, but fortunately passed through no blood veins.

Fair in the face of powder and ball rushed two or three daring fellows making for Dick Walker. Only one reached him— a tall, muscular man. With a shout of triumph he seized the bridle-reins. Walker jumped out of the saddle, and dropping his rifle, closed with the naked man. A desperate struggle! Walker made several efforts to use his revolver, but the black struck it with his tomahawk and rendered it useless. They fell, rolled, struggled in the grass, came to their feet again. Now the, tomahawk uplifted— now the revolver butt. We could do nothing but check the advance of others. A moment more and one or the other must go under. Walker dropped his revolver. His hand went quickly to his side, and the next instant the naked man was ripped from the lower part of his abdomen to his brisket.

The shades of night came down and we rode back some miles and camped. Rest or sleep we could not, but there in solitude under a starry dome and away from the light of our own fire, we kept silent watch.

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Upon endless plains and in scrubs of the great bush where many a white man has died of starvation and thirst, thousands and thousands of black men, women and children for generations and generations have lived on full and plenty.

About the hour of sunset one could see the lagoons of the Maranoa fringed with boisterous darkies diving for roots of a water lily, known by its large yellow flower, which in size and shape resembled a potato.

Other times they gallivanted the plains, like school children, gathering tah, the root of a small plant topped with a blue flower, which, like the lily, they usually roasted. But the food most common to the blacks of those parts was yaaman, a bread made from cooloo grass seed.

It was the gins’ work to collect this seed, and in the evening they would sally forth, dilly-bags in hand, and return with loads of it which they would grind into flour between two flat stones. It tasted like potato and went well in soup.

It was not the custom (as is often stated) for these blacks to eat meat raw. Invariably they cooked it well and their mode of cooking was unique. For instance a possum was thrown holus-bolus on the fire and slowly roasted until it cooked solid. Then it was taken, opened, and the entrails, all but the liver, removed. It was placed on the fire again and left till perfectly cooked.

To cook a large kangaroo or emu, a hole eighteen inches deep and two feet long and broad was dug in the ground, and the bottom paved with small, flat stones. In it a roaring fire was kindled and when well burned down the flesh, cut into pieces, was laid on the bottom where it “cissed” most invitingly.

Any choice, dainty morsel was never partaken of by the young blacks. They were taught to believe such things injurious. The dainties were not to be thrown away!!

Surroundings considered, their habits were clean. They bathed regularly: when the camp became at all dirty, a fresh one was sought. A gin seized with the pangs of childbirth was taken by two of her sex to a scrub and nursed until she had recovered. But not until she had smeared herself from top to toe with ‘pitti’ or ashes and taken a plunge in the river or water-hole could she return to the tribe, for until these things were done, she was considered unclean.

A strange scene to witness was that which attended the death of the ‘handoo’ (child). A frame was made on four fork-sticks driven in the ground on which they placed the corpse. A slow fire was kindled beneath and when every particle of fat was melted from the body (which the mourners caught in their hands and greased their bodies with) it was lifted off and
placed between two sheets of bark its own length and bound firmly with vine or stringy bark. The bundle was then given to the ‘yunga’ (mother) who hawked it round on her back to every watering-place and hunting ground and wheresoever the tribe travelled for months and months so that, as they believed, it would know where to find these things when it jumped up again.

For interring the remains of adults there were burial-grounds situated on sand ridges, and to prevent evil-spirits frequenting them two stout sticks, painted with pipe-clay, were erected at the foot of each.

Many queer old characters were among the blacks of Surat. One old fellow known as ‘Ploughman’ in a scrimmage with some station hands, received a shot wound in the thigh and became a helpless cripple. Though paralysed, he was never forsaken by his tribe. They fed him, fondled him and carried him wherever they roamed, and often derived much amusement from the old fellow by taking him up and heaving him headlong into deep water, for Ploughman, singularly enough, could swim like a fish.

Another old memory is Black Mary, an old gin whose end though tragic enough supplies a humourous instance of the intense supersticious nature of the race.

This old gin sickened a long time in camp, and one day, thinking her dead, the tribe prepared her body for burial. Several of us whites went to witness the service. A hole about two feet deep was scratched in the sand. Wrapped in a possum rug, Black Mary was carried to the grave by four men. They rested her on the brink and took breath. Then – but as she was being lowered she opened her eyes and stared at the undertakers. They dropped her instantly, and three of them, along with others standing around, flew down the hill, at a racing pace shouting “Debil-Debil!!” The heroic one who remained at the gin’s side promptly acted on an inspiration. He snatched up a tomahawk and knocked her on the head!

At one time we had a blackfellow skull decorating the verandah, and not until it was removed would a black approach the place.

Deaths among them from natural causes they always attributed to something in the form of witchery – an act of revenge visited upon them by some hostile tribe through a medium called a ‘mudlah’.

The Maranoa in the fifties was known as the Never Never, and its blacks were then a noble race; also brave and free and happy. See them roaming those plains – naked, massive men and women, carrying their camp-gear, their hunting and war weapons, their handoo and – their hoary and helpless old fathers and mothers, teaching a lesson in gratitude and affection to much of our alleged civilisation!

See them, again in hundreds, hunting the ‘grienion’ (kangaroo) the leaders leaving the main body and stealing on hands and toes through grass and timber to locate the ‘roos. Then the mob, gins, girls, ‘howlah’ (boys) and men dividing into two sections, one moving adroitly to the right, the other to the left, and dropping out every hundred yards or so forming a huge circle round the ‘roos then closing in at a run, the bewildered marsupials bounding first one way then another, some falling at the point of the spear, others breaking through the circle of yelling, joyous hunters!

Of aboriginals of Australia there are several varieties, differing much in language, customs and general appearance. Their language sounds guttural to Europeans until they become accustomed to it. Many of the names, however, especially the names of places, are not only harmonious, but decidedly expressive, always denoting some peculiarity or characteristic pertaining to the locality; and it is, therefore, to be regretted that white people,
influenced chiefly by vanity, should so frequently dispense with these names and give to their places and holdings cognomens belonging to other lands.

The aboriginals have no writings, no hieroglyphics, no signs to record past events, and no monuments of any description. A work of art they certainly have in the ingenious boomerang.

Amongst most tribes exists a definite organisation clearly understood by themselves, yet so difficult to be grasped by the white man that one must necessarily throw aside all ideas of organisation and relationship as existing in civilisation to fathom it.

Tribes are divided into groups, and among those of the Maranoa and Balonne (before they were degraded and confused by the whites) a unique form of society prevailed — a set of class distinctions regulated and kept pure by strict observance of peculiar marriage laws. This social ladder consisted of eight classes, or four sets, called — Males: 'combo', 'hippie', 'murray' and 'cubbie'. Females: 'martha', 'cobbatha', 'bootha', and 'hippitha'. A 'combo' could only marry a 'martha', 'hippie' a 'cobbatha', 'murray' a 'bootha' and 'cubbie' a 'hippitha'. When a man lost his wife, another of his own rank was supplied him; or, if he achieved an act of bravery, he would be rewarded with one, perhaps two, but the class-breed was stringently observed. The issue was classed thus:

A son of hippitha and cubbie became a combo; a daughter, a bootha.

In consequence, in build and stature they had few rivals — mobs of clean, healthy, muscular men, with hardly a diminutive one among them — never a piebald and never an emaciated mongrel. And not until the 'sixties — not until the white man, in all his vice and civilised savagery appeared — did these class distinctions become corrupt and rapidly begin to disappear, and those manly, simple, free and independent people that roamed those torrid, silent plains of the Maranoa become degraded and disunited.

A strange tradition existed with the Maranoa blacks who belonged to what they called 'Tooloom', some natural object that gave its name to a group of individuals between whom, and this natural object, there was supposed to have been some special relationship. There are few objects, animate or inanimate, by which the natives are surrounded which do not give their names to some Toolomic group. A group of individuals, for example, belong to the Emu Tooloom; another to the Kangaroo Tooloom, to the Dingo and so on. They believe their ancestors were transformations of animals and plants and, of course, when transformed to human beings took the name of the animal or plant from which he or she sprung. The ancestors were supposed to have travelled over the country in this way:— A group of Kangaroo people travelled by a certain route; a group of Emu people by another, and the Dingo people by a third. And travelling, each group camped at certain spots where, in the natural order of things, some dropped out and went into the ground taking with them a stone associated with the spirit, until the country travelled over became dotted with spots inhabited by the spirits of the respective ancestors.

In some localities we find a number of Kangaroo spirits; in others the Emu, Dingo, etc. They also believe that in the past, when a child was born its birth was simply the incarnation of one of these spirits, thus:— A child born in a place where, in the mythical past, the Kangaroo people camped (having, of course, left behind Kangaroo spirits) such child would be the reincarnation of a Kangaroo man or woman.

Another tradition is that in the past a party belonging to a certain Tooloom camped, one time or another, at a place where a sacred ceremony was held which ceremony henceforth
became associated with that particular spot, and the one Tooloom (the members of which performed it).

This ceremony is one quite distinct from the ordinary corroboree which may be witnessed and taken part in by all of the tribe, consisting largely of dancing, feasting and courting, and ending often a fight. It is a sacred ceremony and mournful, only the elderly people were permitted to take part in it, – the young always excluded.

A few days before the ceremony would take place forty or fifty members left the camp to prepare themselves – whitened their bodies with pipe-clay, kindled numerous fires and placed white poles in the ground to keep the devil off. The opening item began at dusk when all sat round in silent groups for about half an hour. Then suddenly an old man would jump to his feet and yabber eloquently – ceasing, would listen attentively to some imaginative noise: then he would finish by throwing a boomerang in the direction. This was a sign for all to crouch down and the men to chant a weird dirge lasting an hour or two, when the gins would join in, till gradually the performance turned to a scene of wildest excitement, and with firesticks and tomahawks usually lasted till noon the following day when all would depart from the sacred camp and proceed to the nearest water, wash themselves and return to the general camp. So terrible were the wounds they would inflict upon themselves that for weeks they were unable to move about, and the surrounding hills constantly re-echoed their yells and groans of suffering.

I witnessed one of these ceremonies which was associated with the Kangaroo Tooloom of Talongaroo in the Maranoa. It is handed down that at Talongaroo a party of Kangaroo men killed a kangaroo and dragged the body to the base of a range of hills and there placed it in a cave: a great stone erected itself to mark the spot and into the [place] there entered the Kangaroo spirit.

And here are some names and phrases in the dialect of the blacks of the Balonne, Dawson and Comet rivers:-

Brooken brooken  Thick milk
Boory malcha inah  It’s very hot today
Bribroo  A rosella parrot
Boondoonloo  A quail
Bulleroo  Two
Bullabah  Three
Ballero ballen  Four
Burganoo  A plain turkey
Booyoyne  Lancewood
Burrumburra  The second born
Booreeber  Sick
Bungeryuggera  You climb the tree
Burraga  The mouth
Bullbun  Bloodwood
Beebee  An aunt
Burree  A stone
Bourdbee  Fourth born
Boombooo  Ti-tree
Bullburra  A river
Burry burry  A gully
Boorgan or dingo  A dog
Bungall doon  Of short stature
Boorat    Be quick
Cowai     A black duck
Coondaloo An emu
Cargoyne  Look out
Coonga waggera We will canter
Chermull  A paddymelon
Cooreethulah An eagle hawk
Cargoburrah A laughing jackass
Catter walla A dead fish
Cargoi    Look at that one
Carmo cudja Stinking water
Coothera A sugar bag
Coongo    No
Curry     The sun
Cagga     The moon
Caboolah  Brigalow
Cungarah  Ironbark timber
Cungul    Uncle
Carter    Brother
Coothering Sister
Cundoo    A grown up boy
Coballa in da yaamun burra Did you make that?
Canda     A spear
Coonmerry A shield
Cobble cobble A tame turkey
Cungull    Feathers
Corble cobble Tadpoles
Commil inda gualta Don't you talk
Curyoo    Come along
Deena dabortha Ten
Duldoo     Kangaroo rat
Duthing   Native bear
Dely      Yes
Dunduree  Gum-tree
Dulingun  Third born
Doorer burger A dead tree
Goomah    Brains
Handoo bidgeon A little baby
Howlah    A lad
Iley yameenoo wannelgull We will find some ducks
Iley yane weano We will go fishing
Inda youngal monkey You find the sheep
Inda burranoo You wake up
Inda waggeroo You run quick
Inda carnagoo oogener You swim
Inda dibinbee You are a good walker
Inda cora ooboonboo You go back
Inda nebunga yarra You go through them
Out where the grinning skulls bleach whitely
Under the saltbush sparkling brightly;
Out where the wild dogs chorus nightly –
That's where the dead men lie.

In the fifties and sixties my occupation frequently took me over the Dawson country,
necessitating my travelling via. Hornet Bank Booroonda and Mount Hutton. Often have I
ridden over the very ground where the police came up with the murderers of the Fraser family
and saw the bleaching bones of the dead blacks strewn here and there – a gruesome sight!
full-ribbed bodies, fleshless arms, disjointed leg-bones and ghastly grinning skulls peeping out of the grass. And I have passed the place in the dead of night with yet twenty miles before me, through a wilderness without a soft side — Nature in, what always seemed to me, her worst aspect — but never without a shudder.

Lonesome indeed were those long night rides through solitary, uninhabited bush where brumby mobs and wild dogs held their sway.

One heard the first dingo just after sundown — a long, low, flute-like call out of the distance, answered near at hand, then swelling to a chorus — occasionally a note, best described as a howling bark — the voice of a hybrid. While all other Australian animals are in harmony, all marked by nature as loitering along three thousand years behind the times, the dingo is a discord. All have pricked ears, the same characteristic face-mark and a wild distant look in the eyes, so different to the tame dog, some of which have eyes as beautiful as anything in nature. The black and tan dingo, so common at the present day marks a cross with the sheep-dog. In his way he is the squatters’ worst enemy, for having all the cruel qualities of the pure dingo and greed for killing, he is less distrustful of man and consequently more daring. The pure dingo has a slinking habit and hang-dog expression. And with all the ingenuity brought to bear in the art of killing and trapping him for sport, and or necessity, he is not yet extinct nor is he likely to be for many long years.

A blackfellow is by far the best dingo hunter. He moves as softly through scrub as the wild dog himself, reading something upon the dusty page of every track. Once taught to hold a gun he is a sure shot, neglecting nothing that might turn a chance into a certainty, never firing until sure of killing.

Watch the dingo as he comes with swinging trot along the track. The dejected, half-asleep look and drooping head and tail give him an air of deep reflection. But let the smallest twig be broken by the way and he will see it, and immediately start off as though some enemy had suddenly swooped down upon him.

To the observant bushman the dingo’s tracks often tell their own story. The small footprints in the dust or sand show how he trotted to a certain spot. The last impress, the deepest, discloses that something startled him, and sticking his claws down hard, took a side leap for cover. Knowing this peculiar trait in him the hunter turns it to good account by breaking a twig where he will see it as he probably turns a corner, and planting a trap or two on either side for him to jump into.

To have wended one’s way through the Dawson scrub leaving the bones of the slaughtered blacks far behind was joy indeed; while the faintest glimmer of a fire ahead, whether of blacks or whites in camp, a gladdening sight. And when one thinks of handfuls of brave hearts forging farther and farther west, the mind is flooded with memories and old scenes live again.

Night in the Maranoa. Not a sound save the tramping of horse hoofis and the cropping of grass around the camp. The noises of middle night just hushed. The owls long ago ceased hooting and on noiseless wing are making their last hunting grounds. Silent and motionless beside the dying fire lie forms of sleeping men. The night goes by. On the still air faintly falls a tone of distant music: first low then rising and falling, gradually becoming more and more distinct till coming nearer and nearer, fills the air around, and passing on recedes, grows fainter and fainter — then is lost. The wild ducks on the wing are ‘wh-ishing’ overhead. From out the creek comes a faroff trumpet note, then another, and another — the mellow call of the wild geese. The world is waking. Day is near. Upon the eastern horizon a streak of gray slowly broadens and twilight peeps through where all before was darkness. Outlines of tree-trunks stand like ghosts reaching out their shadowy arms, feeling their way through the dimness. The chirp and flutter of birds that through the night slept in low bushes fall on the ear. The sleepy forms beside the dead fire stir. They rise and grope about. Light spreads over the heavens. The
eastern sky flushes to deep red and pales again to rich gold. Then on the edge of the hill the sun and --

“Their tents in the evening would whiten
The scrub, and the flash of fires
Leap over the shadows to brighten
The way of ambitions desires;
By the axe-mark we followed their courses,
For scarcely the ashes remain,
And the tracks of the men and the horses
Are hidden by dust-storm and rain”.

 Returning to Drayton in ’56, I saw a little more of J.P. Bell. An election was on. Colin Mackenzie of Warra Warra, Bell’s intimate friend and neighbour, was opposing Clark Irving, the Clarence River squatter, for a seat in the New South Wales Parliament, and Bell was in the thick of the fight.

‘Billy Handcock’ was supporting Irving, sparing neither grog, horseflesh nor money to secure his return. The Downs that extended to and beyond Surat, and to distant polling-places where liquor could not be obtained, pack-horses loaded with the two-gallon keg – one slung each side the saddle – were dispatched. I was offered £20 to go to Surat as Irving’s representative, and upon it becoming known, was waited on by Bell, Edward Lord and Horton who went one higher in Mackenzie’s interests.

Both advances were declined, and – the fight went on just the same.

Bell’s exhaustless energy in this trial of political strength between Clarence River, Richmond and Darling Downs squatters was worthy of better success, and had Mackenzie himself only fought half as hard his return must have been assured. Instead, he lost many votes, his friends among them, through failing to turn up to address his meetings – always pleading indisposition. But how Bell stuck to him! On nomination day Mackenzie, though a finished speaker, broke down and Bell rose and addressed the crowd – the first public speech, I believe, Sir Joshua ever made.

On the morning of polling-day Bell came to my residence, having heard that I was undecided for whom to vote. As a matter of fact I intended to vote for Mackenzie, preferring to accept the ‘devil’ I knew to the one I didn’t know. Of this I tried to convince him; but to make sure he left his horse for me to ride to the polling-place and walked back himself.

It was open voting those days and to the displeasure of many old Drayton hands, I voted against Irving; and – he was returned by a good majority.

’64 was an eventful year in the way of sensations. Two bushmen in the neighbourhood of Leyburn after a spree, ended their earthly trouble. One chose hanging – the other, like numbers before and since wandered into the bush and in the direction of Yandilla was found dear and stripped of his clothes. It was near the same spot that Owens, manager of Yandilla, was shot by one Ritchie. Ritchie, a resident of Leyburn, had contracted to put up a building on Yandilla. When completed it was condemned by the overseer, and as manager, Owens refused to pay for the work. Ritchie sued him and lost the action which maddened him. He left the Court House and procuring a gun and proceeded some distance along the Yandilla road and waited for Owens. Owens came, and beside him in the trap was the Rev. Thackeray. Ritchie demanded his money, Owens refused. Then, to the clergymen’s horror, Ritchie pointed his gun and shot the manager dead!
Ritchie was tried and sentenced to death for the murder and in August '64 was executed at Toowoomba.

How certain scenes in one's past stand out clear and distinct from the mist of by-gone recollections! Stamped, as it were, on one's brain in vivid colours - a never fading landmark outlined against the surrounding gloom - often enough trifling in themselves, and it may be heeded but little at the time; yet there they are! And none stand out more clearly against the dim background of my memory than the excitement attending Separation.

Before convictism was abolished, and especially shortly after that event, dissatisfaction arose between the northern and southern divisions of the large territory then comprising New South Wales. The labour and neglect of northern interests were most important. In regard to labour the squatters complained of not receiving their fair share of what was available in the southern market. This led to many suggestions and abortive attempts to obtain cheap labour, all of which mostly failed. So the discontent continued!

Meanwhile, growing town populations nursed their grievances. Their natural and vested interests were overlooked and, they argued, trade and commerce were going to the dogs.

Both parties though moved by different considerations and apparently pursuing different lines, were tending toward the same goal. And the goal came quickly into sight when, in one of his despatches, Earl Grey furnished the word ‘Separation’! The northern people caught the inspiration and at once raised the standard of Independence and rallied around it. The whole population of Moreton Bay was roused, and all ranks joined in the crusade of Independence.

The demand of the northern people was strongly opposed by the Government of New South Wales and the people of the south. They brought all the influence they could to bear, but opposition only acted as a stimulus to men like Hodgson, Macalister, Wilks, Hobbs and Cribb. In '58 the efforts of these gentlemen were rewarded by the Imperial Government declaring its intention to grant separation. But not until the arrival of Sir George Bowen, per the Cordelia on the 10th. of December, 1859,xx was the birth of Queensland ushered in.

At Drayton the excitement was intense. The ‘Bull’s Head’ and ‘Downs’ Hotel were ‘free’ - the squatters paying for the liquor. Two bullocks were slaughtered and roasted on large fires; and the surrounding hills were ablaze the whole night long.

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1. penalties/penalties
2. many/mant
3. hunted/hunte
4. swamp, swamp
5. Daandine, Daandine
6. out, out,
7. Bank, Bank
8. pre-eminence/preminence
9. civilization/civilation
10. spears/spears things
11. their/our
12. self/myself/-
13. 'cobbatha', 'cobbatha
14. ['", '"

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xx [ ...] Omitted ts, although a blank line has been allowed.
xx into the place there into ty/he there The 'y' is struck over with an 'h' suggesting the word is 'the' but if so a word, speculatively 'place', has been lost between 'the' and 'there'.
xx characteristic/characteric
xxii necessity/ncassity
xxiii farther/father
xxiv their last hunting/their last hunting
xx 1859] 859