

'Letters from New South Wales, 1826' by Henry Thomas Ebsworth.

[Transcribed by Karen Moller, UON Cultural Collections, October 2017]

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Sydney 1826

My dear William

A residence of some Months in New South Wales has afforded me opportunities of becoming partially acquainted with its leading features, and knowing the interest this Country winter in England, I shall do myself the pleasure in my future correspondence with so esteemed a friend to give you every information respecting the Colony, I may conjecture interesting and amusing.

Fortune has now placed me in a foreign chime; - oceans separate me from relatives and friends; - the companions of my Youth are absent and new acquaintance must be formed; but believe me, though the world itself divides us; though some may claim respect never can he be found to supplementary esteemed ----- in my affection; - sun diminish the firmness of my ancient friendship: the days are passed together in our Youth, free from anxiety and

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every care, can never be obliterated from my memory; - the retrospect excites ideas, melancholy and pleasing; the remembrance of happiness then possessed is productive of the latter feeling, and the knowledge that it is fled for ever, cannot but excite the former, for as Ossian says: "Often does the memory of former times come, like the evening sun upon my soul; - but to our subject

On our voyage hither we visited Rio; from thence I addressed you an Epistle, and as it gave you a description of that Brazilian Town with a detail of circumstances connected with the voyage, I shall not trouble you with a recital of those subsequent to our learning the coast of South America, as they would afford little or no variety; I shall therefore [maft] you on the South Atlantic, glide you through the Southern Ocean, and lead you into Bass's Straits, which divide the Island of Van Diemen's Land from that of New South Wales. - These Straits abound with Isles and

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numerous barren rocks, rendering it a dangerous passage; trespassed them safely with a good breeze and delighted at the idea that our voyage would speedily terminate. -

The Eastern Coast of New South Wales has nothing in its appearance to interest the Stranger; moderately elevated Hills form this boundary; they are thickly wooded, but variety is wanting to render them pleasing to the spectator. On approaching the Heads of Sydney Harbour, the Light-house, erected on an eminence three hundred feet above the sea has an imposing appearance, and imparts the first idea of the Country's being the abode of civilized Man - The Weather was delightful, the sun shone brilliantly, and as we floated on, we were occasionally cheered by parties of Ladies and Gentlemen from the Hills; shortly was the ocean hidden from our view by the lofty rocks forming the heads of Sydney Harbour, when Port Jackson engaged our attention. The beauty of the scene amply repaid

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us for the dull monotony we had experienced along the coast, and the numerous coves of the harbour, varying their size and shape, together with the jutting lands and fertile isles formed a pleasing contrast to the insipid sameness we had left behind us. A gentle breeze wafted our bark lightly through the waves, and we anchored safely in Sydney

Cove after a voyage of one and twenty weeks. I enclose you a sketch of the Harbour from the heads of which to Sydney the distance is about six Miles. –

Unfortunately the worst part of Sydney faces the Harbour, and previously to landing, a person would not be prepossessed in its favour; this portion of the Town rises on an eminence, from where the prospect is delightful, but the builds are small, and tenanted by the poorest of the Inhabitants. In small Forts fortify the Town, but they are more adopted for ornament than use. – Sydney is of considerable extent; more than a Mile in length, and its breadth varies from

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one fourth to one half that distance. – Upon looking around one is surprised upon reflection, that forty years have not yet elapsed, since this spot was nothing but a desert. - The religious edifier are two protestant churches; one of the Scottish church which is nearly completed; two Methodist meetings, and a Roman Catholic Chapel, which has been commenced upon too grand a scale to allow of its being finished, at least for the present. – The Barracks for the Military are extensive buildings. The public hospitals are handsome structures, and the Barracks containing the Men convicts are capacious and command a fine situation. A new Courthouse is in progress, but its construction, (in which no taste is evinced by the architect) gives little satisfaction to the Inhabitants. The Gaol which is situated in the heart of the Town, I consider too confined; a new one has been commenced about a mile from the Metropolis (Sydney) but the outward Mall is alone completed. The small wooden houses, which the first

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settlers erected are giving way to longer edifices of hewn stone, and houses are rising daily upon newly appropriated ground. - Warehouses of considerable magnitude are seen about the Wharf, indicating the prosperity of the Merchants and a rapid increase in population. - The Inns have good accommodations and luxuries are no less scarce in Sydney than in a Country Town in England. –

We are generally destitute of amusements, but during the last Winter, a few concerts have afforded some entertainment; - neither the Instrumental nor vocal performers would be tolerated in England; but where nothing better could be obtained, the whole passed off passablement here, though the number of vacant seats considerably increased towards the conclusion of the season. - The Inhabitants are eager for a Theatre, but they cannot procure sufficient funds to erect one, although a house has actually been commenced for the representation of Dramatic Spectacles.

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Government house and the Domain possess nothing attractive, excepting the Stables, which have much the appearance of a Castle; they were erected during the residence here of Governor _____ Commissioner _____ in his report exclaims against them as a piece of extravagance and folly; - his observations I consider perfectly correct. Government Gardens, to which the Inhabitants have access, are mostly certainly of a visit; most of the European and Tropical Vegetables, fruits and plants are cultivated there. -The Oak, the pride of the English Forest makes a poor figure in the vegetable Kingdom in New South Wales; the soil is not adapted to it, and with much difficulty it is preserved alive.

The Military force at present in Australia consist of from 800 to 1,000 Men; the greater part being stationed here, whilst small parties have been marched more into the Interior of the Country. –

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A vessel of War too is generally upon this station, and although both military and Naval Officers are here, there appears no spirit either amongst them or the Inhabitants. –Of Society, little can be advanced in its favour. –

As in all small Societies, Sydney is divided into parties; this feeling is carried to great extent between individuals who have come free to the colony, and others who were unfortunately sent here. - Men who have been convicts, but who, since their emancipation have acquired considerable Wealth, endeavour to place themselves upon an equal footing with free settlers : the latter oppose their inclinations, and these continued strifes and jealousies, carried on by a paper war, have rendered the Inhabitants a very litigious people much to their detriment, and the benefit of law practitioners. -

Three newspapers are printed here. The Gazette, the Australian and the Monitor; the two former twice,

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and the latter once a week. The Sydney Gazette is an old established paper and supports the Government; The Australian has not been edited beyond three years; it commenced in opposition to the Gazette and in defence of the people's liberties, but it is suspected, that the Editor is now in favor with the Governor. - The Monitor, which came out only a few Weeks since is edited by a second Cobbett, and already has he been threatened with an indictment for a libel upon the Government. -

The heads of many families being involuntary exiles, little can be expected in the moral world; - it is really shocking to see the depravity and vice which exist here; Religion seems known but as a shade, and morality appears nothing but a name amongst the greater part of the Inhabitants.- The lower people drink to an excess, which is the offspring of every other vice and crime, and even in the higher circles, things are tolerated which in England would

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subject the Individuals to reproach and banishment from Society.

Convicts are much better treated now than in former years.-Their hours of labour are the same as free mechanics, and I believe they have sufficient food: some years since these unfortunate Men were treated with the utmost rigour, and frequently half starved, their daily allowance of Rations being insufficient to support nature. - It is a fact that convicts have been known to murder each other merely for the sake of possessing their ration of a few pounds of Flour or Pork. -

Stage Coaches run between this place; Parramatta and Liverpool, (two Towns more in the Interior; and when travelling from hence to the former place, the Vehicle the Turnpikes , the Inn upon the road where the Coach stops to change Horses, and where the Coachman takes his Glass forcibly remind one of a Turnpike road in England, and even the Country

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around, and the several Gentlemen's residences upon the road increase the deception.

Strange and horrible tales of Men known by the name of Bushrangers have frequently appeared in the English Newspapers when alluding to these Colonies; these no doubt you have seen, and I am sorry to say; they have not been exaggerated. -

Bushrangers are runaway convicts, who live in the woods, supporting life by robbery and murder. In New South Wales from one to two hundred of these Men are now at large, and in Van Diemen's Land these stretches are the terror of the inland Settler. - Murder and every crime is committed by them with aggravating circumstances: and the confessions of fourteen who were hung in Hobart Town, (V.D.Land) a few Weeks since are truly horrifying. When I inform you that these men have murdered their own companions and have existed upon their flesh for days, carrying parts of the body about them, you may imagine the remainder. -

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From the above description, I think you will be enabled to form some idea of "Men and Manners" in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land; and I shall for the present, leave you to your reflections; when you have digested the contents of the foregoing, I shall with much pleasure, continue my narrative; till then and ever believe me

Your sincere friend

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Sydney _____ 1826

I shall now, my dear _____ draw your attention to the different Camps or Towns which have been erected in this country.

The principal inland Towns are Parramatta, Liverpool and Windsor, the first is situated about fifteen miles to the North West of Sydney, and is remarkable for the Factory in which the female convicts reside; These Women are employed in the Manufacture of Cloth, and the Inhabitants of New South Wales are furnished with female servants from amongst them upon application: for the want of others Housekeepers are necessitated to admit them into their families. – The Governor usually resides at Parramatta some part of the year. -Windsor, which is a small Town lies about twenty Miles beyond Parramatta. – The situation of Liverpool from Sydney is nearly West, bearing a point or two to the South, its distance twenty

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Miles; it is the smallest Town of the three, and the only thing worthy of notice there is a fine Hospital which is nearly completed.

Newcastle, which is at present a small but rapidly increasing settlement, situated seventy Miles to the North of Sydney (by water) has a good Harbour, and a regular weekly Packet is established between these places. -

Newcastle takes its name from Newcastle – upon Tyne; some extensive Coal Mines have been discovered there, and worked with success to the depth of two hundred and fifty feet. –

The numerous gangs of Convicts working in Irons upon the roads, excite feelings of compassion to one unaccustomed to such scenes, but I am informed that time and custom will effectually eradicate such feelings and that I shall hereafter look with apathy and unconcern upon these miserable and unfortunate beings but I trust this assertion may prove incorrect, and that I shall never become callous to scenes of misery and

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distress, nor look with coolness upon the poverty and wretchedness of my fellow Creatures. –

This Country differs in some respect from my ideas of it formed from representations made in England. it has not in general that picturesque and romantic Scenery so much boasted of at home.

A very small portion of land has hitherto been cleared, comparatively speaking, and a traveller has to ride many miles in a wood, even in the located districts without seeing any traces of a human habitation.

When he approaches a Settlers place, he sees a house composed of logs of wood, and a few straggling buildings in the centre of fifty or one hundred acres of cleared, or more generally of partially cleared, land, surrounded by an interminable wood, where the Settler is buried to the World. - Occasionally Houses of a more important consideration are met with, encompassed by farm and other buildings as at home but few of these are to be found more than twenty Miles

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from Sydney. Brush Wood is seldom to be seen – where the soil is good, the land is lightly timbered, resembling a Gentleman’s park occasionally, but the traveller is torn obliged to lose this idea by finding no Mansion at the end of the scene; - He journeys on, as it were, from Park to Park all day, and lies down at night with his Horse tethered beside him, near some Pool of water. - He then strikes a light, kindles a fire, boils his Kettle and fries his bacon. – It he can afford a Tent with a Pack horse, he will of course have one; if not, a blanket and the hard ground are his bed and covering: if it rain, he strips off as sheet of bark from the nearest tree, and lies securely under it; should he get wet, he scarcely ever takes cold, or experiences any other than a momentary inconvenience on awaking in the morning. –

Could we get rid of two annoyances, and introduce two European enjoyments in their place, this would be the most agreeable climate in the World;

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The Exportation would be the Musquetas (Mosquito) and the Locusts; the latter infest in the trees in swarms, and make the most disagreeable ringing noise to a stranger, imaginable during summer. – The Importation would be your singing birds and purling streams. Birds are numerous here, but few are songsters, and the great deficiency of rivers and lesser streams in the Interior, are the greatest drawbacks to Australia. –

I have seen a succession of the Seasons in this Country, and in drawing a comparison between them and those in England, the Climate of New South Wales far surpasses that of my native Country in most respects. –

The summer is a little too warm, but the heat is not so oppressive as in England; it continues longer in this Country certainly, but you are sooner cool after exertion, and not liable to take cold. – In Autumn the Temperature of the Atmosphere

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is delightful, but the Winter is sometimes sufficiently cold to remind you that a fire is necessary for your comfort. The sun rises and sets two days out of three upon a cloudless sky, the Atmosphere being generally clear. The last winter was more severe than any proceeding it for some years, and ice, a very uncommon thing was seen in Sydney. - The Spring too, as in England is a most delightful season, and although the winters are so mild, still verdure seems to revive as in colder regions : Animals lose their long coats; Flowers in Fields and Gardens spring up: Birds begin to sing more generally and the Trees, although evergreens change their somewhat faded hue for the more refreshing green of spring. –

In the summer months hot winds blow from the Northward and Westward, and frequently after continuation of warm weather, the Atmosphere is cooled by heavy falls of rain accompanied by peals of thunder. –

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The indigenous fruits of New South Wales are few; I have heard of only one; this is a kind of cherry, which grown with its stone outside the fruit, and is consequently esteemed a curiosity. The forests present trees more lofty than found in England, but the foliage will bear no comparison. The great superiority in point of beauty which the spreading oak, with its thick foliage possesses over the straight Iron Bark or Blue Gum of this Country must be acknowledged: Had Virgil flourished in Australia, he must have travelled many a dreary Mile ere Fityres could have been so situated for him to exclaim in the word of Melitous

“Fityre, tu patula reculiu sub tegmina fagi “_te (Def. Under the cover of a tree; (also more generally) in the shade of a tree.)

Few trees are to be found here whose branches throw around them an extended shade, and the poor cattle grazing upon the half porched land scarcely find shelter beneath their foliage from the scorching heat of a meridian sun.-

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The mildness of the winter is evinced by the quantities of violets and other flowers with which the Hills even at that Season are bespangled, and the Woods every where abound with delicate flowers, though generally destitute of smell. -

The soil and climate of the Country are capable of producing most of the European, as well as Tropical fruits and vegetables, its amazing extent presenting such variety of each. -

Our summer months are January, February and March, the other seasons follow in succession; our relative situation on the globe with regard to England produces a difference in our time of ten hours and a quarter. During my voyage to this Country I beguiled a tedious hour in forming an universal clock which enables on to ascertain the time in all quarters of the globe at the same moment. - Not the costliness of a present but the esteem for the down constitutes its value, and flattering myself, I possess some portion

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of your regard I shall enclose it with this Epistle.-

The researches of Geologists have hitherto been attended with little success, but there is no doubt, that this extensive Country contains valuable Mines, the future discoveries of which will be sources of Wealth to after generations. -

You are probably anxious to receive some account of the Aboriginal Natives of this country; they will form the subject of a future letter, when I have made myself acquainted with such particulars respecting them, interesting to an Absentee; and I expect shortly to be enabled to gratify this inclination; for a few Weeks only will elapse in I shall be resident amongst their Tribes.- Few Natives are seen in Sydney. King Bungaree, the Chief of the Blacks about this Harbour is frequently here; he, his two wives and about six attendants are permitted to row about the Cove unmolested, and a Vessel no sooner anchors, than she is visited by his sable Majesty, who forgets the

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dignity of Royalty, by bowing obsequiously to all on board, and soliciting either for an old Coat, Trousers, or other articles of dress: and always concludes his speech by begging permission, "to have the honor of drinking the Captain's health". - But I am exceeding the limits of a letter, I shall therefore grant you an respite and [?]

Your sincere friend.

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Sydney _____ 1826

My last treated principally of the Seasons climate and vegetable productions of the Country This Epistle will furnish you with some account of animated nature. There are perhaps few Countries possessing so few quadrupeds as this.

The Wild Dog, which is a kind of small Wolf is the largest carnivorous Animal known in Australia; it is however more of the Dog than the Wolf; this has been ascertained by the breed burning intermixed in some instances with the European Dogs that generally accompany the Natives in the words. He is a great enemy to sheep sucking the blood of old ones, and carrying away lambs whenever opportunity offers.

The Kangaroo, Opossum, Bandicoot and other species of those Animals from the remainder of known quadrupeds. - The hunting of the Kangaroo is a favorite diversion among the Settlers. -

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Birds are innumerable, but we cannot produce such songsters as the Nightingale and Blackbird, We have the thrush, the Magpie and the Crow very similar to those at home. The Magpie is the most constant singer, or rather whistler of an agreeable nature. Parrots, Parroquets, black and white Cockatoos. Rose Hills, Macquaries and Blue Mountain Birds are very numerous, and of beautiful plumage. –

The game amongst the feathered tribe consist of Quails in abundance and the Emu. Wild fowl, such as Duck Teal to are found in parts of the Colony, and the Black Swan is by no means a, “ rara avis” in this quarter of the globe. Venomous Reptiles are also numerous; The black, the yellow and the diamond Snake are common, Adders are generated here whose bite is certain death; some species of the snake generally retreat upon the approach of Man; but others more vicious always attack him. –

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A variety of insects are produced here, a detail of which cannot be interesting.-

The Harbours abound with fish, including Lobsters, Crabs and Oysters. The Rivers finish Perch, Eels and other fish, both delicate and pleasing to the taste. –

As my future correspondence will be more of a personal nature, I shall now enter upon another subject as a prelude to it. - You are aware, that previously to my leaving England I joined the Australian Agricultural company; Their object is cultivation of Fine Wool, the Olive, Tobacco, the Vine to in this Country, where they have a Grant from Government of One Million Acres of Land; their operations commenced by sending hither, some hundreds of Merino Sheep, a few blood Horses, different breeds of Cattle, and from twenty to thirty families in their service. The Settlers behold the Company with a jealous eye, fearing a Monopoly, and they are by no

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means popular amongst the Inhabitants generally;

Mr Dawson the Agent has selected part of the Grant at Port Stephens, about 90 Miles North from hence by Water, and by the present tract about 200 by Land. Hopes are entertained that a shorter rout may be discovered, but I think the distance cannot be diminished above thirty or forty Miles. - It is here, (Port Stephens) where the Company’s Establishment reside and where effective measures are being taken for the erection of a new Town, or Village; some time must necessarily elapse before much progress can be made. –

The Harbour, I understand, is very beautiful and Capacious; there is sufficient Water to admit Vessels of the largest tonnage. -

From the entrance to the spot where the settlement is formed, the distance is about eleven Miles. Two Rivers flow into the Harbour, the Karuer and the Myall neither of which are navigable by Vessels beyond a few Miles, but boats can proceed considerably farther. –

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I have every reason to believe that this undertaking will be a flourishing one, for there are no individuals in the colony who have not succeeded in the same line, where their affairs have been conducted with common prudence. it is useless for settlers, whose grants are situated far in the interior to look to cultivation for independence the great expense incurred by clearing land exhaust their Capital, this with a Market overstocked, and the competition with other settlers, who are enabled to undersell them, their farms being in the vicinity of Sydney, and the expenses of land carriage consequently trifling reduce them by degrees. -

The Settler must look to exportable commodities from his Domain, and these will not be found either in timber or grain. - Fine Wool must engage his attention, and his Hicks in time will bring him riches without expense.

In my opinion, the Settler is never free from care, sometimes he is threatened by the Natives, at others his convict Servants cause (?) : he is debarred the

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pleasures of Society; is thus rendered a solitary being, and is frequently without the comforts, conveniences and indeed necessaries of life. - Many a dull and dreary day does he experience, and probably often wishes the name of New South Wales had never sounded in his Ear. - Were my opinion asked, I should certainly recommend a friend to stay at home, Independent of its climate, Australia has little or nothing to recommend it, and that most assuredly cannot be an object of sufficient importance to induce an Englishman to resign the comforts and delights of his native Country. -

There are opportunities for Merchants of some Capital and good connexions at home to make a rapid fortune in this Country, but I believe a person must not be too punctilious, if he wishes to succeed here, he will have many rogues to deal with, and I have heard it oft remarked that a Man may come to New South Wales with honorable and honest principles, but

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but if he enter into business as a Merchant, he must become a rogue. -

In conclusion; I consider, Comforts in England to be preferable to Luxuries in New South Wales! -

I beg to subscribe myself with every sentiment of regard and affection.

Yours truly,

P.S. I have just received a rough pencilled Sketch, or rather Bird's eye view of Port Stephens Harbour, and have taken you a speedy copy, which I enclose: - You must not consider it as an exact representation of the Harbour, for I have had information to the contrary; In the absence of means to take a more correct view, it was merely forwarded to Sydney to give us some idea of its appearance, and the nature of the surrounding

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country.- I expect shortly to obtain a perfect sketch, should I not be disappointed, my leisure hours shall be devoted to the execution of a Copy for my esteemed friend and former Companion -----

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Port Stephens _____ 1826

My dear _____

A short time since I dictated you an Epistle, in which I gave a concise statement of the intentions and proceedings of the Australian Agricultural Company, with other general information respecting their Colony and Settlers; the present will be more of a personal nature. Self is a theme upon which all are more or less eloquent, I trust however to avoid the errors of some, whilst penning such a subject, and that this Epistle may not be totally destitute of interest to my esteemed friend.

Had anyone told me a twelve month since, that another year would not elapse, are Horse stealers Pickpockets, Housebreakers and other villainous characters would be my companions, and that I should deem it sound policy to make myself familiar with them, I should probably have been, not only astonished, but indignant at such an insinuation;

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this has however actually been the case, to the particulars of which, I now draw your attention.

Having delivered over charge of the Company's concerns in Sydney to the Secretary, I awaited a conveyance to this place, (Port Stephens, where my own accounts were getting into arrear, and whither my duties called me. Mr Dawson had been settled here with the Establishment above two Months, and was anxiously expecting me. –

As I observed in a former letter, a Packet sails from Sydney to Newcastle weekly; had I gone by her, I must have travelled about forty Miles over a sandy Beach, and through a thick Wood from thence to my destination, accompanied only by a black, as a guide – One night must have been passed upon the dreary waste and melancholy accounts at that time reaching Sydney of the Murder of some white People by the Natives in the Interior, it is not wonderful, that I should not have been particularly anxious to place myself in their power

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in a desert, far from any human being who could render me assistance; I therefore waited till a Schooner should sail direct to this Port.

Convicts are consigned to the Settlers as Servants, who supply them with clothes and provisions for their labour, the A.A. Company of course have a considerable number: unexpectedly eleven Men were apportioned to Mr Dawson, and as speedily a small Vessel of about twenty Tons was hired to convey them to the settlement. – Without consideration I prepared to accompany them; but a few hours previously to sailing, a Gentleman to whom I mentioned my hasty departure, expressed much astonishment that I should trust myself with the Prisoners without a guard, adding that ten to one they would seize the vessel, which had often occurred in similar instances, probably destroy the Captain, myself, his two Men and a boy, their numbers being so greatly superior to ours; and advised me to remain

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behind; this information was by no means pleasing, it was however too late; the Men had left the Barracks, and my trunks being on board, I determined to run all hazards. The Captain and myself kept our pistols loaded and we sailed from the Harbour, not without serious apprehensions. The voyage with a fair wind, can be performed in one day, and the idea that 24 hours would probably land me here proved a further inducement to risk it.-

Unfortunately the Wind blew directly against us; we were blown out to Sea, and I had the misfortune to pass a whole week, one night excepted, in this miserable manner. – During this time, I distributed sugar and Tobacco amongst the convicts, and conducted myself towards them as existing circumstances alone compelled me. – They attempted no violence, and on my arrival here I did not forget to speak highly in their favor to Mr Dawson. -This coast is remarkable for boisterous Weather, and during this voyage we experienced a heavy Gale. You may

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imagine my situation was none of the most enviable; imprisoned in a Vessel not much larger than a good long boat; bed and cabin horribly dirty; spiders cockroaches and other vermin crawling about at night; seas washing over us; the bottom of the Vessel covered with barnacles an inch thick; and with nothing I could eat but biscuit, my provisions having been expended ~~expended~~ the second day, the Captain having partaken of them with me. The convicts luckily had rations for a Week. -

On the seventh day we entered Port Stephens; the beauty of the scenery and calmness of the Water were delightful after the tossing and rolling I had so lately experienced. – The Heads are formed by two Rocks rising majestically from the Sea; -The southern shores of the Harbour presented a variety of conical Hills, thickly wooded, and which produced a pleasing Contrast to the flat country on the opposite Coast; - before us rose extensive and highly elevated Hills, rendered more beautiful by the different tints

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of Green and brown, with which they were decorated to their summits. – fast as we entered the inner harbour it became dark; and the wind falling, we were obliged to anchor about two miles from land; -

The fires on the Shores conducted us, and five entered the boat to go ashore; which leaked so fast, that we could scarcely keep her above Water, and to conclude this eventful voyage we struck upon the rocks; Our people with their Torches guided us to the Landing plain and much delighted, I once again placed my foot upon terra firma.

The scene which now presented itself as new and engaged my attention for some minutes. – We advanced about two hundred Yards into a thick Wood, then suddenly I observed a group of savages who were standing round a blazing fire. Two bark hut were erected with a shed near to the fire; and the whole excited feelings not easily described. - One of our Men was habited in a Cap and Waistcoat made from

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the skin of a Kangaroo, and his carrying a Musket on his shoulder forcibly reminded me of Alexander Selkirk, otherwise, Robinson Crusoe; and one of the blacks could easily be substituted for his Man Friday. – At first the appearance of the natives was rather terrifying, but their great good humour soon expelled every unpleasant idea, and I entered into conversation with one of them. – Mr Dawsons Tents were pitched about two miles through the Wood. -“Massa” says one, “You come tag, (stay) Port Stephens?” “Yes”, said I; “Dat “murry budgere”, (that’s very good) he replied. “You go “tee (see) Corbon Massa fore nangry?” (You go to see great Master, meaning Mr Dawson, before you go to bed), “Yes, and you must light me through the wood with a Torch.” I answered. “O murry goot, I toon ready you know, I get it bark, I make torch, I go Farlee mid you.” which may be thus anglicised. O very good, I shall soon be ready you know, I will get some bark, make a torch and accompany you to Tarlee; where the Tents are pitched.

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He thus continued; “You come in Corbon (great) Ship” “Massa; you bring plenty Cornmeal, Baaku (Tobacco) and “murry taus and sings (many thousand things) for black” “Pellow?” – “Yes,” I replied, “plenty for all black fellow” – He and his companions set up a shout of pleasure, and I entered the Hut in which one of our Women had prepared the some Tea, whilst a little black girl was roasting me a fish upon the fire. –

Whilst enjoying this refreshment, the surgeon of the establishment, who came to visit a patient, entered, and as he would return to the Tents, I of course settled to accompany him, and dispensed with the services of the Black. – He would not carry a torch, saying it dazzled more than assisted, and we started in the dark. - As we passed along, winding through the trees, a black would occasionally dart across our way with a lighted torch, imparting to the whole a dreary wild and savage appearance; several fires surrounded by troupes of natives lay along our path. – We lost our

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way, and wandered around, now stumbling over rugged stones, then wading through reeds and long grass above our head, again grouping through thick plantations; quite exhausted, we at length distinguished fires through the forest, which guided us to the Village consisting of a few Bark Huts. from thence we proceeded towards Tarlee, and arrived without farther accident, much to the satisfaction of myself, and surprize of Mr D. at seeing one in propria persona.

The fleeting hours passed on when we separated for the night, and each retired to his Mansion or His Tent – All around me being hushed in the Arms of Morpheus, and the midnight hour adding to the gloom, I surveyed the scene around me. – The lofty trees, rising in thick clusters, nearly shut the heavens from my view, and prevented the eye from penetrating far into the dark perspective. The dying embers of three large fires threw then feeble light into the distant shade. – Not a breeze murmured amongst

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the trees and all was calm. The Tents, the back Huts and the appearance of then or a dozen Natives lying asleep around a fire, intermingled with our Dogs formed a curious and interesting scene - If practicable I will enclose you a sketch of the spot taken after the trees had been cleared, which has dispelled the gloominess of the scene, and opened a fine prospect of land and Water. –

Reflecting upon the different objects with which I was surrounded, I retired to my Hut, but the melancholy Howl of the Native Dog, which then commenced, and the newness of my situation kept me on the watch; - At length, however, fatigue overpowered me, and sleep relieved me from every care and doubts.

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Port Stephens _____ 1826

The following morning I rode about the Wood with Mr Dawson who pointed out the various alterations and improvements he had effected during the preceding two Months. – A good Storehouse of Logs of Wood, and thatched with seeds was erected on the shore, and the village, called Carribean, consisted of two rows of huts tenanted by the free people; more in the interior were a group of huts occupied by the Convicts. These are erected until more permanent buildings can be constructed; they are very comfortable in this climate and no one ever complains of a good bark Huts. A three stalled stable, and a large Dog Kennel were completed, and the Convict Servants were busily engaged falling trees, burning off, and clearing the land. – Two lime Kilns were burning, to which about thirty Natives, Men and Women, were conveying

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oyster shells, and a party of white Men were fencing in a portion of ground for a Garden. Three Miles distant a farm had been established, where the like proceedings were going on. –

The Blacks who work when inclination prompts them, receive Tobacco and Corn Meal for their Labour. – they are extravagantly fond of the former: they are very partial to biscuit, bread or flour, with the latter they knead and bake cakes in the ashes after the manner of our White people. – Their favorite food is boiled Meal, made of ground Indian Corn, and next to it the Corn roasted in the ashes as Chestnuts; they are also inordinately fond of Sugar: it is a great treat to give them an Indian bag in which sugar has been packed, this they cut into pieces and boil in water; they sometimes drink this liquor till they become intoxicated, are fairly blown out like an ox in clever, and are unable longer to enjoy this delightful beverage. –

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Some of their customs and manners will form the subject of a future epistle, at present I shall confine myself to the circumstances which have given rise to the warfare that has existed in many parts between the Aborigines and Europeans. A residence among the natives for some time has afforded me opportunities of forming some idea of their character in this part of the Colony. They are naturally a mild and harmless race of savages, and whenever any mischief has been done by them, I believe the cause has generally arisen from the ill treatment of their white neighbours.

We have always endeavoured to give them an interest in cultivating our friendship by every kindness on our part. - They have commonly been treated in different parts of the Country as though they had been dogs, and shot in discriminately by convict Servants. - More of this has perhaps occurred here, and on the Banks of the Rivers running

Transcription of page 44

into this Harbour, than in any other parts of the Colony, and it has arisen from these circumstances,

Speculators in Timber formerly obtained licenses from the Governor to cut Cedar and Blue Gum for exportation upon land not located; these valuable species of timber generally grow upon the Banks of Rivers, and a large quantity having been discovered in this quarter, parties of Sawyers and Fallers were employed to procure it. These are generally desperadoes Emancipists as they are called, and not unfrequently Convicts accompany them, the whole superintended by an overseer, who is generally selected as a fit leader for this kind of banditti. - These people were the first who came in contact with the Natives; they contrived the conciliate them whilst they could make them useful as guides, or in procuring them Kangaroo and other game; but they were sure to give the Natives some cause for offence here long either by shooting, striking them, or taking away their Gins

Transcription of page 45

(Wives), and the consequences were what would naturally have been expected. These wild Men lay in ambush, and spread their oppressors whenever they could, and in return the Sawyers were obliged, for their own protection to shoot them on all occasions that presented themselves. 'till at length the blacks obliged them in many instances to abandon their stations; they then went in search of others, where they again created the same kind of evils, which were followed by similar results.-

Port Stephens was nearly cleared of all its cedar and most valuable Wood by these devastating parties. -

When the settlement was first formed, the Natives showed our people many Orphans whose parents, they said, had been shot by white Men, and on one occasion, they pointed out a white Man, who came to beg provisions for his party who were employed up the River Karuer, who they said, had shot then; The wretch did not deny it, but replied, that he

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would kill them whenever he could; - for his brutality he obtained no provisions from us. -

It is possible, although I think improbable that circumstances may occur to interrupt the good understanding which at present exists between us and the natives for the latter are savages in the common acceptance of the term, although they exhibit stronger traits of natural good feeling towards each other, than people under that denomination are generally found to do. -

A few days after my arrival here, the Blacks informed us that they intended to corrobory in the evening, and invited us all to the entertainment. - A corrobory is the Native dance; it was held about a Mile from our station, at the native camp; - Shortly after we arrived at the place of rendezvous, the dancers appeared; they had painted different parts of their bodies with pipe clay in a very curious and even handsome manner. - They had chalked

Transcription of page 47

straight lines from the ankle up the outside of the leg which made them appear by fine light as though they had Hussar pantaloons on ; Their faces had been rubbed with red earth like ochre and their breasts chalked with serpentine lines interspersed with dots [?], and they began shortly to corrobory or dance. -

A Man and a Woman act as Musicians by striking two sticks together, and singing or bawling a song which I cannot describe; it is chiefly in half tones, extending sometimes very high and loud, and then alternately descending to low as almost to sink to nothing. - Should you have read Baron Field's narrative of New South Wales you have of course seen the song set to music;

I shall however enclose you a copy of it, in case his publication may not have been honored by your perusal. -

The dance is exceedingly pretty and amusing

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but the kind of motion with their limbs is such that no European could perform. It is more like the limbs of and Harlequin with a string, which is sold at fairs to children, than any thing else I can think of. The number of drums were about twenty: they sometimes change places from apparently indiscriminate positions, then fill of in pairs, returning with increased ardour in a (?) of four or five deep, keeping up the kind of harlequin like motion together in the best time possible, and making a noise with their lips like proo, proo, which changes successively to grunting like the Kangaroo, of which it is an imitation, and not unlike the grunting of a pig; They are fond of praise, and their eyes were all turned towards us, and when we laughed, appeared much pleased, and clapped our hands in token of applause, they quickened their motion in phalanx, and raised the grunting in proportion 'till they were tired, and in an instant they turned their back, and

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disunited with a loud shout, gradually subsiding into a hearty laugh. – One of the Natives then addressed us:

“Dat very good, you like it, Massa” “dat belonging to Kangaroo; You like him black

“fellow Massa, You gint (give) him Corn Meal, Moak, “(smoak, meaning Tobacco. Tomahawk, and murry

“tausand tings you know. Dat (I) bring Massa “pish (fish) when Urokah jump up. (when the sun

“rises). Dat belonging to Massa now, all black fellow “belonging Massa, now you know.” –

During the Corrobery we observed the Gins, (Women or Wives) standing in a circle by themselves, practising a curious dance peculiar to the female portion of the Tribe. On enquiring why they did not corrobery with the Men, we could get no answer farther thru that they never did. - On these occasions, their painted bodies, white teeth, shock heads of hair, their wild and savage appearance, with the reflection of the fire in a dark night, would

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would form a terrific spectacle to a person coming suddenly and unawares upon them.

The Corrobery being concluded, we returned home, and although we had not experienced the Graces of an Italian Opera, we left the (?) entertainment, satisfied and pleased with the exertions of our (sable ?) friend, who had earnestly endeavoured to amuse us. –

Transcription of page 51

Port Stephens _____ 1826

My dear _____

I fear my long detail of a Native Corrobery has been tedious, but should it prove irksome you are not necessitated to peruse the whole; my intention is to amuse, not to tire you; but probably whilst I endeavour to excite your interest, I may mercy you with my dull epistles; I shall now enter upon a new subject. –

The Country around Port Stephens is bold and interesting. Numerous islands diversify the inner harbour, and the Karuer River winding its course amid alternate Hills and Dales, present a constant change of scenery at every turn. –

The hills are every where clothed with wood, with constant verdure beneath it, unaccompanied by any Bush or Underwood, so that one is often forcibly reminded of Gentlemen's pleasure ground in the distance, on the Banks of a River, in England.

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but we look in vain for the Porter's lodge as we approach the solitary domain; Ah! here's the sad deficiency! What is fine scenery, what are all the beauties, do I sometimes exclaim with a sigh, which to lovely forests present, when tarnished from society, when deprived of relatives and friends; - of those who are so dear to me?

Rapid advances are being made in preparing materials for our permanent residences; large quantities of lime have been prepared for building and agricultural purposes; Many thousand bricks are made, a stone quarry is opened, one stone house commenced, and Places for a Village are laid out
To give you some idea of the kind of buildings are intend to erect of brick and stone, I enclose you a ground plan and the outline of a front elevation of a house to be inhabited by overseers, the principal Mechanics and others of the Establishment. –

A hundred acres of forest have been converted

Transcription of page 53

into arable land; Our Sawyers have prepared sufficient boards to erect several houses, which are roofed in this country with strips of Wood called shingles; they have much the appearance of slate. Many thousands of these are ready: A boat has been converted into a neat Schooner, and great progress has been made in other departments connected with the Establishment. - To effect all this, many hands were requisite. - There are at present about 250 Souls upon the Settlement, composed of Free People, Emancipists, Men with Tickets of leave, and convicts. – Emancipists, are Men, who were formerly Convicts, but who have served their term of transportation; Ticked of leave Men, are those who are still Prisoners, but allowed by Government, from good Conduct to be at large within the Colony. and to work on their own account; should they behave themselves ill, their Ticket is cancelled, and they are again sent to the prisoners barracks. –

Transcription of page 54

Amongst this mixture, of course many villainous Characters are found, and Mr D's Tent often becomes a court of Justice. The Magistrate has power to punish the minor offences of a convict by a flogging but an Emancipist must be committed to the nearest prison, to take his trial before a Jury. – On one occasion, three Men were examined on a charge of Murder committed on the body of a black boy up the River Myall; - they were committed to take their trial for the offence. –

The Tailor of the Company is an Irish Convict. and the Shoemaker a Ticket of Leave man; both of whom are settled in their work shops, constructed of bark and timber .-

My situation here gives me perhaps an opportunity of becoming more acquainted with my own species, than any other. Surrounded by the dregs of civilized society from the most civilized quarter of the globe, with a race of beings not civilized at all,

Transcription of page 55

together with the respectable portion of Man kind who accompanied me from England give ample scope for reflections upon human nature, and whilst drawing comparisons between the Actions of the Natives and those of my own Countrymen, I am often obliged to form decisions prejudicial to the latter, and at the same time illustrative of the natural good feelings and gentleness of the former. –

This spot, which at present is little more than a Desert, will be converted shortly into a pretty village, thence to a Town, and hereafter it must form one of the most important Sea Ports of Australia. –

An Establishment like this, is not, like the private Settler, liable to privations; a stock of every necessary being always kept in store. – Shops must shortly be established, for it is a laborious task to supply even 250 persons weekly with every thing they may require, in food, liquids, habiliments ect., and as the population will rapidly increase, this

Transcription of page 56

duty must devolve upon different persons. –

At a distance from the World, this Establishment form a Society amongst themselves. We have not our (society ?) , our balls or plays; still we find a variety of entertainment. - An excursion up the River Karuer, winding its course through a picturesque and romantic Country, or a sail around the Bays and Islands of the Harbour is delightful, The Black Swan, the Pelican, the Curlew and other birds float upon the unruffled surface, whilst Duck and other wild fowl abound, affording amusement to the Sportsman; - Hunting the Kangaroo is an excellent diversion;- Fishing serves to be quite an hour; - and the Corrobery and mock fights between the Natives engage us frequently of an evening; whilst the early chattering of the feathered tribe, remind us of the dawn of day; and call us to que daily avocations.

Amidst all these employments and amusements we are not unmindful of our truest interests. The

Transcription of page 57

Sabbath is remembered. The Village Bell calls the Establishment together at an appointed place, and the duties of the day are exercised in the open air; A delightful spot has been selected for the erection of a Church, but until that be accomplished, we must be content to offer our devotions under the Canopy of Heaven; Knowing that the disposition of the heart, and not the place will render our prayers acceptable to the Dirty. -

The tribe of natives belonging to Port Stephens amount to nearly two hundred men, women and children. On the first arrival of Mr Dawson, they were found particularly useful in procuring Bark for the erection of Huts, and without their assistance, I know not what would have been done. – When treated well nothing is to be feared from them, but cruelty and oppression on the part of Europeans meet with its reward from the. I have sometimes been detained at the village ‘till late at night, and in

Transcription of page 58

the way to my abode. I had to pass the Black Camp on these occasions I generally walked into the midst of them; conversed sometime, shook hands with many and then proceeded on. – Were they inclined to injure me nothing could have prevented them, for had I called no person was within the distance of half a Mile. – The Aboriginal Camp has a strange appearance during night; You are encompassed by twenty or thirty fires, each of which is attended by four or more Natives, according to the number of the family. – The blaze of some, reflecting upon the savages within their influence present a wild and terrific sight, whilst others, by the feeble light emitted by their dying embers partially illumine the surrounding objects; and the midnight intruder steals cautiously along fearing at each step, he may trample upon the extended body of a black, either mistaking it for a decayed tree, or prevented by the deep shade from distinguishing it on the ground. –

Transcription of page 59

Several natives attend us regularly; our Boat’s Crew consist of six most excellent fellows, Seaman; others are employed as Messengers; some attend at table; in short we find them useful in every department. - One little black Girl is an excellent Washer, and our Laundress is a great gainer by her services. - The Natives who are constantly about us are clothed, the females in Plaid Gowns, the Men and boys with Plaid Jackets and Trousers, some have Caps of the same Material, which imparts quite a martial appearance to the Wearers. –

One of the highest honors that can be conferred on them, is to make them constables, provided they have a staff. That the honor may not be too cheap three only have been advanced to this station.

His ridiculous beyond measure to see the consequence they assume over their own people, and they never appear but with their staff of office under their arm.

Transcription of page 60

I shall conclude my epistle, by relating a conversation which took place some time since between Mr Dawson and one of the sable Constables – “Massa (he began) ‘pose black pellow crammer, (steal).

“den I catch it (him) you know, ‘pose dat go in Bush, “(Word) I look out, I find it, I bring it back, I
“murry cooler (very angry) I gib it Waddy (Club), “I put it in Watch house, you know; I make it know
“what he ‘bout; Dat no crammer ‘gain Massa, Bael “I (I don’t) like anoder black Pellow; I tit (sit) down
“here always’ dis my place, you my Massa, you “Know; I make black pellow work; I make it work;
“he no gammon me, Massa”. –

As Constables they are very vigilant; shortly after the above, one of our Gentlemen was going from our Camp to the Village, which is distant about a Mile and a half. it was nearly dark, and Hippiie the Black Constable, called out in a thundering tone of voice. “Who go dere (there)?” “A friend”

Transcription of page 61

was the reply.

“O murry goot”, says Mr Hippiie, “Pose date black fellow, I said, Dable, what he
“do dere? Why he leabe, (leave) black Camp when “dark tit, (sit) down? Den I put It in Watch-house
“you know, and take it to Massa when Urokah “jump up.”- “That’s very right Hippiie,” was the
reply, with a hearty laugh at the end of it. –

You may probably wonder at our making Constables, of the Natives, but we are guided by policy. Were our own people to exercise Authority over the Natives. they would probably desert us, and then we should be deprived of their valuable services. But by investing on of their own Tribe with a little Authority, they become Task Masters over their black brethren, who will attend to their commands, whilst they would not more scarcely by the promises and

[?] of an European –

Were I to relate all the anecdotes connected with the Natives, they would fill a volume, but I have

Transcription of page 62

exceeded the limits of a letter. I am about to take a journey into the Bush, in my next I intend giving you a description of it, till then

Farewell, -
And believe me,
Your attached Friend

Transcription of page 63

Travelling in the Bush is exceeding by pleasant and interesting in fine Weather, provided you carry a Tent to sleep under during night; and I wish, my dear _____ your company had enlivened my lately Journey: - on these occasions when an expedition of some importance is undertaken, and where difficulties are anticipated from Rivers, creeks and Rocky Mountains, the Retinue of the Company consist of six or eight pack – an equal number of saddle Horses, eight or ten Men, and few natives as guides and interpreters. In my late excursion I was accompanied by Mr Dawson and Mr Armstrong, the Surveyor. Three pack and three riding Horses, the former loaded with a Tent and our provisions were dispatched to a point of the Karuer River, called Buribruon, whilst Misters D. A. and myself attended by two Native boys, called Korriba and Worrimurra

Transcription of page 64

as guides, were rowed up the River by our Native Crew. – Our route laying upon the opposite side of the river, our horses were unloaded, swum across, and then reloaded; We were here joined by two white Servants; who led the Packhorses, and every thing being ready, about ten o'clock A. M. we commenced our Journey. – The first day we travelled through a flat uninteresting Country, thickly studded with trees; and we occasionally entered thick brushes through which, with difficulty we forced our way. – Passing a large swamp, we disturbed a solitary black Woman, who started up with visible terror and astonishment at seeing us: our Guides spoke to her, dispelled her fears and she approached near; after inviting her to Port Stephens, we presented her with some Tobacco, and pursued our course. – At the approach of night we encamped near a pool of Water, tethered our Horses to the Neighbouring trees, pitched our Tent and prepared for dinner.

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Fires were quickly kindled, and the Tea Kettle boiled – a dish of Steaks frizzled in the Pan – The Tea was made – a sack spread upon the ground formed our Cloth and table, and the keenness of our appetites contributed to our enjoyment of the rustic meal. - Our Horses then received their Corn, wood was heaped upon the fires, (it being the Winter season) and wrapping ourselves in our blankets we slept soundly during the night. - the following Morning we rose, breakfasted, struck our Tent, reloaded our Horses, and proceeded on. – The country gradually became more interesting; Hills and Vallies formed a pleasing change; herds of Kangaroo were bounding on before, and intense interest was excited in the expectation of discovering something new at every turn. – As our Cavalcade slowly descended the steep declivity, wound along the deep ravines beneath, and advanced towards the

Transcription of page 66

Summits of the adjoining heights, I was forcibly reminded of scenes described in romantic Writings, but no monastic portal grated upon its hinges, as the fat porter drew back the [crecking?] bolt, no priory appeared in which we could be sheltered for the night, but buried in extensive forests, far from human habitation, we reclined upon the ground; and invoking the protection of that being who beheld us amidst the dreary waste: we sought a temporary relief from cane and Foil in refreshing slumbers beneath the Canopy of our Tent. –

The second evening we encamped upon the Banks of Williams's River, a branch of the River Hunter which runs into the Harbour of Newcastle. Several Settlers have selected grants in this direction for the convenience of Water carriage, and on the opposite shore stood two Houses, with the inhabitants of whom we had no communication. - The following morning we directed our course towards the

Transcription of page 67

heads of the River, but after entangling ourselves in the Mazes of thick brushes, we were obliged to return, and we continued our route in the opposite direction; In the evening we pitched our Tent in a delightful valley. - The beautiful plumage of the Birds, and the various Notes of the different species imparted the idea of its being a second paradise; had there been an Eve we should have lingered on the spot, for even without that attraction, we left it with regret.

The termination of the fourth day brought us to the conflux of the Rivers Hunters and Williams. – A Settler had selected his grant upon the spot, and during the excursion we saw nothing equal to it in beauty – His Land had the appearance of a Gentleman's Estate and Park in England, a winding road lead over a gentle acclivity to the Mansion, at the sight of which all pleasing ideas immediately disappeared. - A miserable log Hut, with a few outhouses of the same construction were the only buildings. - The Master

Transcription of page 68

and Mistress of the Estate were both from home ; We rested here one night, and leaving the Surveyor, who proceeded on to Newcastle, Mr. D. and myself turned towards home. –

I shall detain you a Moment to give you some idea, how wretchedly many of the Settlers live in this Country. – In a subsequent Journey I made in the Bush attended only by a Black and a White Servant I called upon this Settler, who had often visited us at Port Stephens. – He apologized for not having any thing to offer me but a Cup of Tea. I of course expressed myself perfectly satisfied. I had a small quantity of Hollands, a tongue, and pack of a loaf of Bread with me. He offered me some bread made of Indian Corn, which, in my opinion, ate much like Sawdust. – We however regaled ourselves with my provisions, and the evening flew swiftly past, lost in the “tales of other days” of what our youth had witnessed how fortune had smiled and frowned alternately upon

Transcription of page 69

our younger days, and whilst the midnight hour was gliding by, concluded our te'te a te'te, by contrasting the happiness of other times with our present melancholy and dreary aspect. My host had been unfortunate; his mind was stored with general knowledge, and he still possessed the acquirements requisite to form an agreeable companion. – He spread a Mattrass for me before the fire, on which I passed the night. – His Wife was on a visit to his son in Law. – The following day after I had departed, my white companion, asked me how I fared the preceding evening. I thought the question rather strange, and requested to know the reason of the enquiry. When he informed me, that he had supplied the settler, whom we had just left, with tea and sugar The fact was, this poor Man with those at his Hut. had nothing to eat but bread, of Indian Corn, and their only beverage was water, thus was he actually starving in the possession of fifteen hundred acres of excellent land. – Generosity, I believe was his characteristic

Transcription of page 70

but he required the means to gratify it, and whilst my heart felt for his misfortunes, the sympathetic tear glistened in my eye, and mentally did I regret my inability to lessen the severity of his lot!

But to return to my Journey. We proceeded towards Port Stephens; but had not advanced many Miles, before we were stopped by a range of mountains, at the foot of which a swamp extended to a considerable distance; We wound our course along the vales for some hours, when we headed and crossed the swam; we reached the flats beyond the Hills by a defile of the Mountain, from hence to our Journey's end the Country assumed an uninteresting and monotonous appearance.

This day afforded us an opportunity of ascertaining the speed of the Emu; We saw several, whilst traversing this flat, and following them at a full gallop we could scarcely keep pace with these surprising birds. –

During this excursion we saw no blacks, [inspecting ?] the old woman 'till the last day, when we passed a group

Transcription of page 71

of three Women and two children; they appeared most wretched objects, and jumping on an old tree, to see us more advantageously they had much the resemblance of the Baboon Species. They were eating fern root, which they call Bungwall, they roast it in the ashes and pound it between two stones; this forms a paste of which they are exceedingly fond. One Woman accompanied us many Miles, and remained all night with us; we regaled her with Cornmeal and Tobacco, with which she was much delighted. –

We arrived safely on the Banks of the Karuer River, where we found a Boat waiting to convey us home. – delivering our Horses to the care of our Attendants, we embarked, and after a pleasant row down the River, we landed near our Tents. – This was my first expedition in the Bush, which afforded me a fund of pleasure and

amusement. – The Weather was delightful throughout. -
disagreeable,

In rainy weather these journeys would be extremely

Transcription of page 72

to be confined in the middle of a Wood within a Tent, with every thing wet, and no prospect of a cessation to the rain. – The idea is quite sufficient

Having seen me through my Journey safely; and heard my arrival home, you must allow me to bid you farewell for the present, upon a promise that e're long I will send you an amount of the customs and of the Tribes of Natives around this Harbour, and with this assurance, believe me to be

Your best wishes

Transcription of page 73

Port Stephens _____1826

To become acquainted with the manners and the customs of a barbarous and savage people, a residence of some duration amongst their tribes is requisite. - It affords opportunities of forming correct notions of their character, and prevents our entertaining the erroneous ideas, which a more cursory acquaintance is liable to impart.

– Since my residence here

I have had constant intercourse with some of the native tribes, and this epistle will give you an idea of their peculiarities and customs, but this must not be considered as the character of all the Tribes of so extensive a Territory as New Holland; for I understand they vary greatly and that in the more northerly parts, they assume a more ferocious and barbarous aspect. –

The conduct of our own Tribes has

Transcription of page 74

convinced us, that when well used, they will become faithful and attached to their European Masters but, that on the contrary, injuries will not be endured by them with impunity.

The Natives about this Harbour, have two peculiar customs; shortly after the birth of a female child, if the parents intend it for a fishingwoman, one joint of the left hand little finger is amputated, and when grown up She ever follows that occupation. When boys approach to Manhood, they are admitted as one of the tribe of Warriors; on these occasions a kind of fete is held amongst them and the new member undergoes the operation of having a front toot knocked out.

They are excellent Marksmen, and we often lend them a Musket to shoot Kangaroo, this they always return in good order, and generally present with it one of those animals, or a Wallaby, which is a smaller species of Kangaroo.

Transcription of page 75

When away from this Establishment they appear to have no settled place of residence, although they have a certain district of Country they call their own, and in some parts of which they are always to be found; they have ceremonies common to all the tribes, and meet in large bodies to inflict punishment on Members who offend against established rules, but I cannot discover the authority by which they are convened to determine the measure of punishment, nor who is the regulative of the ceremonies. - I have heard but of one punishment, and that I believe is inflicted for all offences, that of the culprits standing for a certain period to defend himself against the spears which any of the assembled multitude think proper to hurl at him. – He has a small shield of an oval form, about two feet and a half in

length, and fifteen inches in breadth. The offender protects himself so dexterously by it, as seldom to receive any injury;

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Instances have occurred of persons being killed, but very rarely; their limbs and muscles are so pliable, that they perfectly cover themselves with this shield. –

When one tribe of Natives receive any injury from another, hostilities are commenced, immediately; A challenge is conveyed to the tribe from whom the insult has been received; and they meet on an appointed day to decide their differences by a battle. – Much parley takes place in tones of stem defiance; they menace each other by brandishing their spears, flourishing their clubs, stamping with their feet, and using every aggravating means to excite the anger of their opponents: At length they approach pushing each other violently about; tones of defiance becoming more vehement, 'till at length, they are worked up to a stake of fury, and look more like demons. Than like Men: bawling out wor, wor, wor (buzzing and dwelling upon them.) They then fall to with their

Transcription of page 77

heavy Waddies, (Clubs) upon each other's heads, dealing out blows, that would fell an Ox, 'till some fall and are disabled, which occasions a terrific shout or yell from the conquerors, in token of the Victory : this they continue until quite exhausted, when they disperse with their heads broken and bleeding. They seldom kill each other, which must be attributed to the thickness of their skulls. Their spears are not used on these occasions, although they carry them to the fight, and manoeuvre with them. Their skulls are found to be much thicker than Europeans; were not this the case they would be crushed in by the first blow from such a Weapon as their Waddy; The Iron Bark Wood of which they are generally made is exceedingly hard, and nearly the weight of Iron.

The Wives of the blacks are called Gins When a poor Gin offends her sable Lord, he taps her over the head with this weapon in no very

Transcription of page 78

gentle manner. On our first coming to the Settlement this was a common practice amongst them, but being given to understand that this treatment of their Gins was displeasing to white Men, and would not be permitted, I am happy to say, the practice has become nearly obsolete amongst them – One blow from this Weapon as they give it, would lay an European low never to rise again; When the woman perceives the blow descending, she holds her head to receive it, much like punch and his Wife in the Puppet shows; in this manner they then fight and he who has the hardest and thickest skull of course holds out the longest and becomes the victor. –

The quickness of the Men is truly astonishing; they throw their spears at the distance of forty yards with the greatest precision, and commonly kill birds by throwing stones from the hand. They run up the tallest and largest trees with great

Transcription of page 79

rapidity, with a Tomahawk in one hand they cut notches as they ascend: this they do to cut opossums, a small animal, the size of a rabbit, out of them, and also to procure wild honey, which is deposited there by a small bee, not larger than a common fly.-

The women are very ingenious; they form fishhooks from the oyster shell, and make string from bark with great facility, equally as good as can be purchased in England; they twist and roll the bark in a curious manner with the palm of the hand upon the leg; with this string they form nets of curious workmanship. In some the Meshes are very small and neat, and the whole is knit without a knot, excepting at its completion; these nets are slung by a

string round their forehead, and hang behind them; They are used like workbags or reticules, containing all the articles they convey with them from place to place, such as their

Transcription of page 80

Fishing hooks, prepared Bark for string; gum for gluing their spears, and sometimes oysters or Fish, when they move from the shore to the Interior; in addition to this net, they generally have a child across their shoulders, and thus burdened, they march off with the men. –

As amongst all rude and savage people, the women are considered by the Men as inferior beings. and made to do all the drudgery; to carry the wood for fires, and convey from place to place, every thing with which they move about, the Implements of War alone excepted, which are always carried by the Men. –

Their food consists of fish when near the coast, but in the woods of opossums, Bandicoots, and any other animal they may spear or catch, also of a kind of grub, found in decayed wood. Should they per chance spear a Kangaroo, they have a regular feast; they are by no means particular in their diet, for they devour, when half roasted in the ashes,

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the whole of an animal, fish, or bird, the bones alone excepted. –

The Nations are remarkably fond of their children; and orphans are adopted by unnamed Men and Women, who take equally as much care of them, as though they were their own offspring. –

They are generally kind to each other, although their Gins are used as slaves, at the Will of their Husbands. – If any thing be given to a Native he divides it with his gin, and those around him.

They sleep before their fires frequently in a circle with their heads upon each others hips, without any covering during summer, but in winter or rainy Weather they cut large sheets of Bark, creep under them, and thus are sheltered from the cold and wet. So long as the Natives continue wandering from place to place, this is the most simple plan they could adopt; they are very sparing of their labour, and appear to have no idea of erecting any thing

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as a permanent residence. Their Canoes are of the roughest Workmanship, being nothing but a sheet of Bark pressed and tied together at either end; yet they venture miles from land when fishing and manage them with great dexterity. –

When any of their relations die, the Women show respect to their memories by plastering their heads and faces with a substance resembling pipeclay which remains 'till it casually falls off. – They also sear the thigh severely and bind a portion of their back round the wound, this operation renders them lame for many Weeks, and this is putting themselves in mourning; We put on black, they white, so that it is black and white in either case. When any near and dear connexion dies, they plaster themselves over the body as far as the hip bones, which renders them most hideous and wretched looking beings; whenever a black dies, we know it immediately for the whole tribe commence howling most piteously, which may be heard

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two Miles distant from their Camp.-

Should any one, who is unwell, be asked, what ails him. the answer is invariable. "O Det Dable Dable". which means that the Devil or some evil spirit had visited them. –

I cannot learn or whether they worship any god or not. They think highly of the Moon, for at its changes they always hold their Corrobery or dance, they fancy the woods are inhabited by an evil Spirit who appears to them occasionally, and is always seen upon the death of one of the tribe; this of course is imagination. - They

appear to have some confused notions of a resurrection, but they are not sufficiently acquainted with our language to illustrate them;

They have no idea of numbers beyond five, which are reckoned by the fingers; when they wish to express a number not exceeding five, they hold up so many fingers; but more are expressed by, "murry tausand" – many thousand. -

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The Aborigines are exceedingly fond of white Mens cloths, and dressing themselves in any old thing they may have given them, they render themselves such grotesque looking objects, as often to excite our visible faculties. –

I think it would be an arduous task to civilize them, they are so partial to a wandering life, that were any restraint placed upon them, they would disappear, and seek amongst the Woods their usual course of existence. –

To conclude, the Natives about as are a good Natured class of people, possessing, in my opinion, many excellent traits of character; generous to each other; apparently grateful and attached to their benefactors, and if they entertain some vicious inclinations, allowances must be made from the consideration that they are savages: Let us look around the civilized portion of the globe, and rather wonder that vile propensities should exist

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amongst Men, bearing the names of Christians, than permit ourselves to feel surprise, that the passions of the uneducated Native of so newly a discovered Country should sometimes lead him into crimes and errors, probably daily practised amongst his civilized brethen! –

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Port Stephens 1826

My esteemed _____

You may probably remember my mentioning in a former letter the circumstances of three Men being examined before Mr Dawson on a charge of Murder: - the crime was committed on the Banks of the Myall, about fifty Miles from the Mouth of the River. - At this spot, a Settler had established a cedar cutting party; three of whom were the culprits; and the overseer having informed Mr Dawson, that a Man was stationed there whose evidence would be important. Mr D. decided upon visiting the place, not only to take the examination but also to ascertain the nature of the Country along the River; and he solicited me to accompany him. –

Having arranged to proceed on our Journey we were rowed up the River by five Natives; the remainder of our party consisted of Mr Dawson

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the overseer above named, myself and a convict Servant. - We left the Settlement about 4. P.M. and steered across the Harbour, about 10 Miles towards the Mouth of the Myall, the entrance of which extended from shore to shore about a Mile. - The sun was far advanced beneath the horizon 'ere we reached the river, still we continued to advance and proceeded about two Miles from the Harbour, the river decreasing in its width, as we glided through its channel. - The scene was quite enchanting: -

The Moon shone faintly upon the distant Hills; - thousands of glittering orbs spangled o'er the blue expanse; As we lay upon our oars, nature seemed ushered; - not a sound struck upon the ear: - the breeze was lulled: - not a ripple disturbed the unruffled surface of the Lake; and delighted with the scene, we determined to encamp upon the neighbouring banks. – Whilst looking for a pleasant spot, our Blacks observed a distant light.

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“Black pellow pire, Massa,” exclaimed one, “Let us
“go there,” was the reply. “Bacl (I won't) we go
“dere; they no good, Massa,” he answered.

The Myall and Port Stephens blacks are generally at variance, and our boats crew concluded they were enemies; the tribes up this river are represented as most savage and ferocious; spearing Europeans whenever opportunities occurred; these accounts were certainly exaggerated; we saw many during the excursion up the River, none of whom attempted to molest us.

During the above conversation, we approached nearer the fire upon the shore, when our Men discovered by the Tones of the distant voices that they were friends.

“Dat good Massa,” they called out, “we go dere, we
“get it fire tick (we will get a fire brand) to make
“fire, when we nangry (sleep).” They accordingly rowed towards the spot, and as we approached t he sandy beach, we saw a group of Men, women and

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children, squatted before a blazing fire, wasting fish, which formed a curious and terrific spectacle by night. –

Perceiving our approach, they called to us, and reacquiring the voices of our Crew, the Men ran into the Water, and drew the boat ashore. – We did not land, but when they discovered who we were, they raised a shout of joy. - Some of them had partaken of our Corn Meal at the Settlement, and knew as upon this occasion. – We greeted them in return, gave them some Tobacco, which seemed, as usual to possess an almost supernatural charm with them; - They promised to visit our Camp the following Morning on the opposite Bank, where our Crew proposed to pass the night; they also promised to bring some Fish for our breakfast. – We then rowed off, and landing upon the opposite side, pitched our Tent, and having sapped retired to rest: - We were awoke at day break by the chattering of the Natives, who had fulfilled their promise,

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and who presented us with a quantity of Fish; In return we treated them with Corn Meal for their breakfast: - they sat, or rather squatted before our fire and appeared delighted with the attention we bestowed upon them. –

After breakfast we exhibited their faces to them in a looking glass. – It is impossible to describe the effect this has upon them; they were astonished and at first suddenly drew back their head, then looked again, 'till they were satisfied it was themselves, upon which they gave loud screams of laughter, passing it from on to the other, and appeared as much amused at the surprise and grimaces of each other as we were at then. - On showing an old Woman her image in the glass upon a former occasion, she burst into tears, but I could not discover the idea that occasioned a feeling so different from all others I had seen. –

Having struck our Tent we proceeded up the River, and were rowed this day about 25 Miles by

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our Native Crew; The Country about the River was flat and uninteresting, and our view was bounded by the numerous trees upon its Banks. – Nothing occurred during the day worth mentioning; our boats crew were in good

spirits, and rowed to admiration. – this evening we spent upon the banks of the River, and the following Morning pursued our Course. - Emerging from the River, an extensive Lake and the distant Country opened to our view. Whilst upon the lake, we perceived several canoes of Savages issuing from the rushes upon its banks; we rowed towards them, gave them some biscuit and tobacco, and in return they presented us with their fish; bidding them advice, our Men plied well their ours, and we shortly entered the River on the opposite side. – We had not proceeded far, when we observed a native peeping through the rushes, we hailed him and as he appeared friendly, took him into our boat, and conveyed him to the Huts of which

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we had come in search. I mention this circumstance as I shall have occasion to speak of him hereafter. –

On the third day after leaving home we arrived at our destination. - Two miserable huts were erected on the banks, in one of which resided three cedar cutters. They appeared dreadfully alarmed, and one presented a horrid spectacle; He was laying on the ground before the fire wrapped in a blanket; his face was pale and ghostly, increased probably by the contrast of a long black beard: He had been hewn almost to pieces by an axe, and was nearly exhausted through fear and loss of blood. - He informed us that a few days previously, the uncle of the murdered Boy, whose fate had brought us to the spot, availing himself of the absence of the other Whites, attacked him suddenly with an Axe, and he lamented, that he should suffer for the crimes of others. - I will spare you the description of his wounds: - we did what little

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we could for the unfortunate Man; he was however too ill to be removed, and I have since heard that he died shortly afterwards.

The situation of these Men was truly wretched with a Cask of Beef and flour, and a small quantity of Tea and Sugar, they drag on a miserable and solitary existence. They had not a bit of Candle, and I wrote the deposition of the Witness, whilst kneeling on one Knee before the fire, and supporting my paper on a board upon the other. –

We saw the spot where the murder had been committed and also where the body of the poor black boy was deposited. –

We learned that the wretches who had been cutting cedar there for some years previously had slaughtered the Natives indiscriminately and left their bodies to be devoured, and which were actually eaten by their Dogs. – they had been accustomed to fire at them from a swivel, and at one shot had destroyed

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five or six of these poor creatures. - Who then could wonder at the revenge which the Natives seek [?] – I believe they have generally been quietly disposed, when well treated, and I know they are proud beyond measure of the friendly notice of Europeans, and consider them as superior beings. –

We encamped one night near this station, and the following morning divided our Boats crew, Mr Dawson and myself determining to proceed home by land, to ascertain the Character of the Country between that and Port Stephens. – We selected for our party two of the boat's Crew, the strange black, whom we had taken into the boat on the Banks of the River, and our convict servant; whilst the Cedar cutters overseer, who is a respectable, but reduced Settler of some Years standing in the Colony proceeded down the River in the Boat with three remaining blacks;

Having no packhorses, we sent home our Tent by the boat, trusting to an Axe, to cut as much back

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as would shelter us, with the assistance of our blankets from the cold during the night, which at this season of the year, (June) is not to be laughed at –

Our sable friends were unacquainted with the Country, we however trusted to their seqacity (there being no path) to lead us home in two days, the distance being about forty Miles. –

The remainder of the Journey being of a different description to that related. I shall detain you whilst we are arranging the loads for our several attendants, and shall conclude the expedition in my next, 'till then believe me,

???

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Every thing being ready, we commenced our journey; Our two blacks from the Boat carried our blankets and other articles, and the strange black had charge of our provisions; the convict servant was the bearer of some culinary utensils and Mr Dawson took charge of a double barrellled fowling piece, with which we had shot wild Duck up the River and two Horse Pistols were apportioned to me.

We had not proceeded above 6 Miles, when, on a sudden, I missed the strange Native; I stopped our party: Our sable guides cooed and cooed again, in their usual tone of calling to each other at a distance; but no answer; he was gone and our provisions with him; I looked at Mr Dawson, and he staired at me with an air of great concern for a moment: but the trick played by the fellow was so neatly done, and our situation so truly rediculous, that

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we simultaneously burst into a loud laugh at each other. We then dispatched our two faithful guides and the white servant after the runaway, but the accounts we had heard of the Myall blacks, and fearing a party might rush upon and spear us, we shouted, and they returned, without success. – We then examined the various articles in the charge of our Attendants with a view of ascertaining, whether we had any provisions left - The White Man had two Biscuits in his Pocked, and fortunately had baked a small cake in the morning in the ashes, which he had in his saucepan, he had also a cold tongue, and a small piece of Pork, and by accident I had packed a Keg with a pint of Hollands with my blankets. Although this was a scanty store we determined to proceed –

Our blacks frequently expressed great (?) at the crammering (thieving) rascal, and proposed as a punishment to steak his Gin, and bring him to be flogged another time. – He had carried off, a

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quantity of Potatoes, Flour, Corn Meal, Biscuit, Pork, tea and sugar, Plates, Knives, Forks, Spoons etc , and no doubt, he regaled himself and friends in style.

About mid day we divided a biscuit between the five and each received a slice of tongue, with a small quantity of Hollands and Water. – This refreshed us and we travelled on 'till Night. When we stopped to sleep, our black companions lamented the loss of their flour and cornmeal - They liked neither Pork nor tongue, and our bread, of which they were exceedingly fond, was in quantity too scanty to afford much to their or any one's share -

Whilst complaining of hunger a Crow perched upon a tree; they espied it though it was nearly dark, and pointing it out, I luckily brought it to the ground. It was instantly on the fire, and when about half cooked, they devoured it all, except the bones: - they then laid themselves down before the fire, and in a few minutes were fast asleep.

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“But how shall we sleep” said Mr Dawson myself.

“Our Axe has disappeared with our provisions; we can “cut no bark to shelter us from the cold and heavy

“dew; how must we contrive”! Necessity is the Mother of invention: We collected a quantity of dried Wood and Kindled two tremendous fires; between them we placed some sticks supporting each other at different angles, forming a hood something like that of a one horse charlie - With our hands we tore some bark from the nearest trees, with which, and with long grass we contrived a place under which we crept, and wrapped ourselves in our blankets during the night - On awaking in the morning, we had a hearty laugh, occasioned by my asking Mr D. whether or no, we might be taken for the babes in the Wood!

We finished our provisions at breakfast, and started once more towards home. - We proceeded over a hilly and indeed mountainous track of country, lamenting very much the absence

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of our bread and tea, which at that time would have been most acceptable to us - We travelled 'till late in the afternoon through Ravines ; now over high rocky ranges, then descending into plains or vales of long grass above our knees; - sometimes forcing our way through thick brushes, at others crossing wide creeks, that obstructed our passage, by means of single trees, accidentally fallen headlong across, and which reminded us in the difficulty of balancing the body over them, of tight rope dancing at a village fair; We were at length nearly worn out before our guides could recognize in the distance their native Hills at Port Stephens; at length they descried them, when they capered and sing, and their joy was excessive; and you may be assured we were by no means sorry; they called out, “Come on Massa, toon tee (soon see) all “black pellow ‘gain, murry little way now; torn patter “(eat) dinner now; Corn Meal, Baaker (Tobacco) toon

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“come again”. We had yet several heights to ascend, and we found a material difference in traversing over Hills from six to eight hundred feet perpendicular, and walking upon a level turnpike road. On the summit of the last hill we lay down perfectly exhausted, and had there been another, we must have remained in the Bush another night for we were too weak to ascend it; - proceeding through an extensive flat, we arrived at a station, where we had established a sawing party, about a mile and a half distant from our farm and four and a half from Harbour. –

These Sawyers informed us, that two of the Wives of our Imported Servants had eloped during our absence with two Emancipists: that their husbands accompanied by a constable had searched in vain for them, and that in returning home with some Natives who assisted in the search, the Constable had either accidentally or designedly shot the principal black of

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the tribes about this settlement, and one, whom on our first arrival had been called the King, and presented by Mr D. with a brass plate, as a badge of honor-

The sawyers were dreadfully alarmed, and expecting vengeance would be taken, requested Fire Arms, but which Mr Dawson refused; believing that no danger need be anticipated, and fearing these Men would make an improper use of such Weapons. –

Our two Natives stood Mute on hearing the catastrophe, their features betrayed no unusual emotion and they said nothing 'till we had taken our departure for the farm, where, as it was so much nearer than Port Stephens, we resolved to dine, and send for Horses to convey us home in the evening. –

We first commenced by lamenting the death of Tony, adding that we liked Toney and all black pellow, and that we had sent three men to be hanged for killing little Tommy up the Myall. They replied by asking, why the constable killed him, observing that

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he was a bad fellow, that Toney had not injured him, and begged us to send him off handcuffed like the other white Men to prevent his hurting or shooting a black fellow again. –

We arrived at the farm but the cheerfulness of our guides had fled; they sat down by the fireside sad and pensive, expressed no desire to eat, although they had previously wished for their dinner, and seemed deeply to lament the death of their friend.-

In a short time two other Natives who had been made constables entered with sorrowful countenances; they had come by water with a boat load of provisions for the farm which they had often done before, and although unaccompanied by any white Man, had never betrayed their trust; nor touched an atom of the provisions. –

Having condoled with them 'till our Horses arrived we proceeded to the Settlement: On our arrival we learned all the particulars of the transactions. A warrant was accordingly issued for the Constable to be

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brought up the following day handcuffed, and in the custody of two armed soldiers, Mr D wishing to make as much display as possible, to show the Natives we intended to protect them. He was accordingly conducted in the morning to our Tent and was committed upon the evidence of his White Companion to take his trial for shooting a black man; it is difficult to determine, whether he shot the native intentionally, or in a fit of temporary derangement; from his general appearance previously, and the incoherency of his Manner after the act, I should conclude the latter. - When he was gone, the few Natives who were there left upon the Settlement, and who had ranged themselves round the Tent, appeared more cheerful and contented, and they soon recovered their usual life and spirits. –

Judging you may be interested in the Narrative, I shall address you once more on the subject, detailing the effects this melancholy occurrence produced amongst the Natives, which will for the present conclude

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my remarks upon them, but should I hereafter learn any thing interesting to an absentee I shall again introduce the Aborigines to your Notice - Interim

I subscribe myself

Yours sincerely

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Port Stephens _____ 1826

When the death of Toney was known, the whole multitude of blacks proceeded to the Spot: They tied a handkerchief over the wounds of the deceased's head, which had been shattered to pieces, and carried him off, supported on the shoulders of two blacks, and followed by a train of mourners crying and howling most piteously. They were moving on in this way in the most regular manner possible, when the surgeon of the Establishment, and Mr D's Nephew approached in order to examine the body in the absence of a coroner. The Natives have a great objection to expose their dead bodies, and would not at first allow an examination to be made, but after some explanation they placed the body down; but poured forth some plaintive expressions, whilst the surgeon ascertained that the wound had occasioned the black's death. – they left the procession as quickly as possible, not

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wishing to offend their prejudices upon so critical an occasion. –

Before Mr D and myself had returned from the Myall expedition, the whole fraternity of blacks had left the Settlement excepting our Native domestics. - Upon expressing to them our surprise that their friends should leave their Camps, they replied. "Bael dat,"

“(not so) Massa; they come back again by and bye’ they
“go udder, (the other) side Harbour put on Pipe Clay, den
“come back.” –

The value of these poor Natives was never so highly esteemed, as when absent: Our people could get no Water carried from the springs; A fish could be obtained; the procuring of the bark too, for erecting huts was at a stand, and their return to the settlement was hailed as a benefit restored to the Establishment at large. – One Native on this occasion was absent from his office of Hutkeeper to one of the Emancipists, and who had actually filled the situation

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with the greatest fidelity to his employer, in preventing the Convicts, who consider themselves as greatly superior to the Natives, from robbing their Neighbours, a practice of daily occurrence at their stations. –

Our storekeeper, Cowell, informed us that two blacks, named Crosby and Myall Tom, when returning from the burial of their friend, passed by the Storehouse with a rapid pace towards Byron’s (the Constable’s) Hut, with their bodies painted red; their frizzled hair hanging about their shoulders in an unusual manner, and armed with their clubs and war spears: Cowell, conjecturing they were going to be revenged on Byron, hastened after them and brought them back, but not before they had searched the hut. – Fortunately, the Constable had, a very short time before gone out to collect the Prisoners on the Settlement, or his life most probably, would have paid the forfeit of his conduct the previous day. - Cowell

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reasoned with them upon what they were about to do, and invited them to his Hut to take Corn Meal, Tobacco and some Tea, all of which they surlily refused, saying, “Bael we want patter “ (We don’t want to eat). They quashed their teeth, their eyes struck fire, as it were, and their appearance altogether in these their first feelings, as he describes it, must have been wild and savage in the extreme; they paced backwards and forwards for some time, using violent language and gestures; but at length they yielded to the storekeeper’s solicitations, and upon a full understanding that Byron should be sent off to Gaol, when we returned, they became more calm, accepted of some flour to make a cake, and sat down quietly for the evening. Cowell very prudently sent them in the Boat, early the following morning to the farm, where they met us on our return from the Interior, as I related in my last letter.

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opposite side of the Harbour. The Women were plaited over the head face and Neck with pipe clay and those nearly related to the deceased, had covered their bodies to the Hip bones, and severely burned the right thigh; their appearance was frightful, and represented the extreme of wretchedness and despair.

The Mother of Toney, who was, previously to the accident, a fine tall stout woman, appeared a truly forlorn spectacle, apparently wasted away by sorrowing for her son; tears bedewed her whitewashed cheeks, and she seemed inconsolable for the loss of a beloved child; she was treated by all with kindness – a Blanket was presented her, with plenty to eat, and a stock of Tobacco with a pipe. -

The deceased’s Wife, with her little Son about one year and a half old are still absent from the Settlement; the Natives inform us that she will return “bye and bye, but not yet;” saying, she is gone to the Bungwall ground to patter (eat) Bungwall, and to

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mourn. - Bungwall, which I believe I informed you some time since, is Fernroot. –

In conclusion to my narrative, I will relate on circumstance, illustrative of their fidelity and honesty when entrusted with any thing, they are willing to undertake.

When the bustle, caused by the death of Toney had subsided, a young Man, one of our boat's crew called Wickhi, proposed to us to go in search of the fellow who had run away with our provisions, whilst travelling in the Bush. He said, he would undertake to find the spoons, plates etc, would we lend him a Musket and ammunition.

His request was instantly complied with, and he started in company with another black who knew the Country and the quarter in which the runaway usually resided. At the end of four days, they returned with the Plates spoons etc etc, and delivered them safely with the Musket. - But where is the Thief, [?]

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said one of the Party; he must be flogged for stealing from White fellow. White fellow is always punished for hurting black fellos: "Bael dat (he never) come

"near me Massa, " he replied. "Dat murry farrah" (he

"was afraid). I got musket you know, dat run away

"all about, and I make it leabe (leave). plate behind

"you know; Never mind, Masse, I look out, I pind

"(find) it one day, I catch it." - I suspect however our sable friend could have brought the thief with him, had he wished it, but it was more than new could expect, for it might have been inconsistent with their laws and policy, expect they had been at variance with their tribe. -

One ought never to forget that they are the untutored Children of Nature, wild from habit and accustomed only to a certain train of ideas peculiar to themselves. - We bear in mind, that they have not been brought up to labour, and that if too much be expected and exacted, their

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friendship may soon cease for us, and we may be wholly deprived of their valuable services -

I have been very minute in my narrative of the Natives, wishing to redeem them from the Character which many of my Countrymen have given them of stupidity, and a want of the common feelings belonging to their species. - They may be accused of possessing a revengeful disposition. - There are of course totally unacquainted with law and justice, and their only remedy, in case of injury, is personally to resent their grievances. - They were naturally indignant upon hearing the tragical death of one of their most intimate friends and companions; and in the heat of fury sought summary justice upon his destroyer, but being assured that he should be punished for the offence, they were satisfied, and their revengeful feelings immediately subsided. -

The above circumstances will enable you to form some opinion of the Aboriginal Natives on the

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South East Coast of New South Wales; I fear I have been tedious, but trust tot you goodness for an excuse. -

You will find enclosed a Map of Port Stephens, correctly drawn, which I promised you some time since; having fulfilled my promise and given you every information connected with the Settlement, which is now perfectly tranquil and on equally as good terms with the Natives as ever, I bid you a temporary farewell, and assure yourself, my dear _____

of the firm attachment

of your's sincerely
