

....As Resident Magistrate of the Murray District, I may almost say, that for the last three years I have lived with the natives. My duties have frequently taken me to very great distances up the Murray or the Darling rivers, when I was generally accompanied only by a single European, or at most two, and where, if attacked, there was no possibility of my receiving any human aid. I have gone almost alone among hordes of those fierce and blood-thirsty savages, as they were then considered, and have stood singly amongst them in the remote and trackless wilds, when hundreds were congregated around, without ever receiving the least injury or insult.

In my first visits to the more distant tribes I found them shy, alarmed, and suspicious, but soon learning that I had no wish to injure them, they

met me with readiness and confidence. My wishes became their law ; they conceded points to me that they would not have done to their own people, and on many occasions cheerfully underwent hunger, thirst, and fatigue to serve me.

Former habits and prejudices in some respects gave way to the influence I acquired. Tribes that never met or heard of one another before were brought to mingle in friendly intercourse. Single individuals traversed over immense distances and through many intervening tribes, which formerly they never could have attempted to pass, and in accomplishing this the white man's name alone was the talisman that proved their safe-guard and protection.

During the whole of the three years I was Resident at Moorunde, not a single case of serious injury or aggression ever took place on the part of the natives against the Europeans ; and a district, once considered the wildest and most dangerous, was, when I left it in November 1844, looked upon as one of the most peaceable and orderly in the province. X

Independently of my own personal experience, on the subject of the Aborigines, I have much pleasure in acknowledging the obligations I am under to M. Moorhouse, Esq. Protector of Aborigines in Adelaide, for his valuable assistance, in comparing and discussing the results of our respective observations, on matters connected with the natives, and for the

It is true that occasionally many crimes have been committed by them, and robberies and murders have too often occurred; but who can tell what were the provocations which led to, what the feelings which impelled such deeds? Neither have they been the only or the first aggressors, nor has their race escaped unscathed in the contest. Could blood answer blood, perhaps for every drop of European's shed by natives, a torrent of theirs, by European hands, would crimson the earth.*

* "The whites were generally the aggressors. He had been informed that a petition had been presented to the Governor, containing a list of nineteen murders committed by the blacks. He could, if it were necessary, make out a list of five hundred blacks who had been slaughtered by the whites, and that within a short time."—Extract from speech of Mr. Threlkeld to the Auxiliary Aborigines' Protection Society in New South Wales.

Abstract of a "Return of the number of homicides committed respectively by blacks and whites, within the limits of the north-western district (of Port Phillip), since its first occupation by settlers—

"Total number of white people killed by Aborigines . . .	8
" ————— Aborigines killed by white people . . .	43."

This is only in one district, and only embraces such cases as

Let us now inquire a little, upon whose side right and justice are arrayed in palliation (if any such there can be) of deeds of violence or aggression on the part of either.

It is an undeniable fact, that wherever European colonies have been established in Australia, the native races in that neighbourhood are rapidly decreasing, and already in some of the elder settlements, have totally disappeared. It is equally indisputable that the presence of the white man has been the sole agent in producing so lamentable an effect; that the evil is still going on, increased in a ratio proportioned to the number of new settlements formed, or the rapidity with which the settlers overrun new districts. The natural, the inevitable, but the no less melancholy result must be, that in the course of a few years more, if nothing be done to check it, the whole of the aboriginal tribes of Australia will be swept away from the face of the earth. A people who, by their numbers, have spread around the whole of this immense continent, and have probably penetrated into and occupied its inmost recesses, will become quite extinct, their name forgotten, their very existence but a record of history. ✕

It is a popular, but an unfair and unwarranted assumption, that these consequences are the result

came to the knowledge of Mr. Protector Parker. For particulars vide *Papers on Aborigines of Australian Colonies*, printed for the House of Commons, August 1844, p. 318.

of the natural course of events; that they are ordained by Providence, unavoidable, and not to be impeded. Let us at least ascertain how far they are chargeable upon ourselves.

Without entering upon the abstract question concerning the right of one race of people to wrest from another their possessions, simply because they happen to be more powerful than the original inhabitants, or because they imagine that they can, by their superior skill or acquirements, enable the soil to support a denser population, I think it will be conceded by every candid and right-thinking mind, that no one can justly take that which is not his own, without giving some equivalent in return, or deprive a people of their ordinary means of support, and not provide them with any other instead. Yet such is exactly the position we are in with regard to the inhabitants of Australia.*

Without laying claim to this country by right of conquest, without pleading even the mockery of

* "The invasion of those ancient rights (of the natives) by survey and land appropriations of any kind, is justifiable only on the ground, that we should at the same time reserve for the natives an *ample sufficiency* for their *present* and future use and comfort, under the new style of things into which they are thrown; a state in which we hope they will be led to live in greater comfort, on a small space, than they enjoyed before it occurred, on their extensive original possessions."—Reply of His Excellency Colonel Gawler, to the gentlemen who objected to sections of land being appropriated for the natives, before the public were allowed to select.

cession, or the cheatery of sale, we have unhesitatingly entered upon, occupied, and disposed of its lands, spreading forth a new population over its surface, and driving before us the original inhabitants.

To sanction this aggression, we have not, in the abstract, the slightest shadow of either right or justice—we have not even the extenuation of endeavouring to compensate those we have injured, or the merit of attempting to mitigate the sufferings our presence inflicts.

It is often argued, that we merely have taken what the natives did not require, or were making no use of; that we have no wish to interfere with them if they do not interfere with us, but rather that we are disposed to treat them with kindness and conciliation, if they are willing to be friends with us. What, however, are the actual facts of the case; and what is the position of a tribe of natives, when their country is first taken possession of by Europeans.

It is true that they do not cultivate the ground; but have they, therefore, no interest in its productions? Does it not supply grass for the sustenance of the wild animals upon which in a great measure they are dependent for their subsistence?—does it not afford roots and vegetables to appease their hunger?—water to satisfy their thirst, and wood to make their fire?—or are these necessaries left to them by the white man when he comes to take possession of their soil? Alas, it is not so! all are in turn taken away from the original possessors. The

game of the wilds that the European does not destroy for his amusement are driven away by his flocks and herds.* The waters are occupied and

* "But directly an European settles down in the country, his constant residence in one spot soon sends the animals away from it, and although he may in no other way interfere with the natives, the mere circumstance of his residing there, does the man on whose land he settles the injury of depriving him of his ordinary means of subsistence."—*Grey's Travels*, vol. ii. p. 298.

"The great question was, were we to give them no equivalent for that which we had taken from them? Had we deprived them of nothing? Was it nothing that they were driven from the lands where their fathers lived, where they were born and which were endeared to them by associations equally strong with the associations of more civilised people? He believed that their affections were as warm as the Europeans." "Perhaps he obtained his subsistence by fishing, and occupied a slip of land on the banks of a river or the margin of a lake. Was he to be turned off as soon as the land was required, without any consideration whatever?" "Had any proper attempt been made for their civilization? They had not yet had fair play—they had been courted by the missionaries with the Bible on the one hand, and had at the sametime been driven away and destroyed by the stock-keepers on the other. He thought that they might be reclaimed if the proper course was adopted."—*Extracts from the Speech of Sydney Stephen, Esq., at a meeting on behalf of the Aborigines in Sydney, October 19, 1838.*

I have myself repeatedly seen the natives driven off private lands in the vicinity of Adelaide, and their huts burned, even in cold wet weather. The records of the Police Office will shew that they have been driven off the Park lands, or those belonging to Government, or at least that they have been brought up and punished for cutting wood from the trees there. What are they to do, when there is not a stick or a tree within miles of Adelaide that they can legally take?

enclosed, and access to them is frequently forbidden. The fields are fenced in, and the natives are no longer at liberty to dig up roots—the white man claims the timber, and the very firewood itself is occasionally denied to them. Do they pass by the habitation of the intruder, they are probably chased away or bitten by his dogs, and for this they can get no redress.* Have they dogs of their own, they are unhesitatingly shot or worried because they are an annoyance to the domestic animals of the Europeans. Daily and hourly do their wrongs multiply upon them. The more numerous the white population becomes, and the more advanced the stage of civilization to which the settlement progresses, the greater are the hardships that fall to their lot and the more completely are they cut off from the privileges of their birthright. All that they have is in succes-

* I have known repeated instances of natives in Adelaide being bitten severely by savage dogs rushing out at them from the yards of their owners, as they were peaceably passing along the street. On the other hand I have known a native imprisoned for throwing his waddy at, and injuring a pig, which was eating a melon he had laid down for a moment in the street, and when the pig ought not to have been in the street at all. In February 1842, a dog belonging to a native was shot by order of Mr. Gouger, the then Colonial Secretary, and the owner as soon as he became aware of the circumstance, speared his wife for not taking better care of it, although she could not possibly have helped the occurrence. If natives then revenge so severely such apparently trivial offences among themselves, can we wonder that they should sometimes retaliate upon us for more aggravated ones.

sion taken away from them—their amusements, their enjoyments, their possessions, their freedom—and all that they receive in return is obloquy, and contempt, and degradation, and oppression.*

What are they to do under such circumstances, or how support a life so bereft of its wonted sup-

* The following are extracts from an address to a jury, when trying some aboriginal natives, by Judge Willis. They at least shew some of the *blessings* the Aborigines experience from being made British subjects, and placed under British laws :—

“I have, on a recent occasion, stated my opinion, which I still entertain, that the proprietor of a run, or, in other words, one who holds a lease or license from the Crown to depasture certain Crown lands, may take all lawful means to prevent either natives or others from entering or remaining upon it.”

“The aboriginals of Van Diemen’s Land were strictly commanded, by Governor Arthur’s proclamation of the 15th of April 1828 (a proclamation of which His Majesty King George the Fourth, through the Right honourable the then Secretary of State, by a dispatch of the 2nd of February, 1829, under the circumstances, signified his approval,) “to retire and depart from, and for no reason, and no pretence, save as therein provided, (viz. travelling annually to the sea coast in quest of shell-fish, under certain regulations,) to re-enter the settled districts of Van Diemen’s Land, or any portions of land cultivated and occupied by any person whomsoever, under the authority of Her Majesty’s Government, on pain of forcible expulsion therefrom, and such consequences as might be necessarily attendant on it, and all magistrates and other persons by them authorized and deputed, were required to conform themselves to the directions and instructions of this proclamation, in effecting the retirement and expulsion of the Aborigines from the settled districts of that territory.”

plies? Can we wonder that they should still remain the same low abject and degraded creatures that they are, loitering about the white man's house, and cringing, and pandering to the lowest menial for that food they can no longer procure for themselves? or that wandering in misery through a country, now no longer their own, their lives should be curtailed by want, exposure, or disease? If, on the other hand, upon the first appearance of Europeans, the natives become alarmed, and retire from their presence, they must give up all the haunts they had been accustomed to frequent, and must either live in a starving condition, in the back country, ill supplied with game, and often wanting water, or they must trespass upon the territory of another tribe, in a district perhaps little calculated to support an additional population, even should they be fortunate enough to escape being forced into one belonging to an enemy.

Under any circumstances, however, they have but little respite from inconvenience and want. The white man rapidly spreads himself over the country, and without the power of retiring any further, they are overtaken, and beset by all the evils from which they had previously fled.

Such are some of the blessings held out to the savage by civilization, and they are only some of them. The picture is neither fanciful nor overdrawn; there is no trait in it that I have not personally witnessed, or that might not have been

enlarged upon ; and there are often other circumstances of greater injury and aggression, which, if dwelt upon, would have cast a still darker shade upon the prospects and condition of the native.

Enough has, however, perhaps been said to indicate the degree of injury our presence unavoidably inflicts. I would hope, also, to point out the justice, as well as the expediency of appropriating a considerable portion of the money obtained, by the sales of land, towards alleviating the miseries our occupation of their country has occasioned to the original owners.*

* "That it appears to memorialists that the original occupants of the soil have an irresistible claim on the Government of this country for support, inasmuch as the presence of the colonists, abridges their means of subsistence, whilst it furnishes to the public treasury a large revenue in the shape of fees for licences and assessments on stock, together with the very large sums paid for land seized by the Crown, and alienated to private individuals.

"That it appears to memorialists that the interests at once of the natives and the colonists would be most effectually promoted by the government reserving suitable portions of land within the territorial limits of the respective tribes, with the view of weaning them from their erratic habits, forming thereon depôts for supplying them with provisions and clothing, under the charge of individuals of exemplary moral character, taking at the same time an interest in their welfare, and who would endeavour to instruct them in agricultural and other useful arts."—
Extract from Memorial of the Settlers of the County of Grant, in the district of Port Phillip, to His Excellency Sir G. Gipps, in 1849.



Painted by G. Hamilton

The Murray River at Moorooduc

the natives would rob and murder them, and if otherwise, that they would commit wholesale butchery upon the natives. It was to remedy this melancholy state of affairs, that the Government station at Moorunde was established, and his Excellency the Governor, did me the honour to confide to my management the carrying out the objects proposed.

The instructions I received, and the principles upon which I attempted to carry out those instructions, were exclusively those of conciliation and kindness. I made it my duty to go personally amongst the most distant and hostile tribes, to explain to them that the white man wished to live with them, upon terms of amity, and that instead of injuring, he was most anxious to hold out the olive branch of peace.

By the liberality of the Government, I had it in my power once every month, to assemble all the natives who chose to collect, whether from near or more distant tribes, and to give to each a sufficiency of flour to last for about two days, and once in the year, at the commencement of winter, to bestow upon some few of the most deserving, blankets as a protection against the cold.

How far success attended the system that was adopted, or the exertions that were made, it is scarcely perhaps becoming in me to say: where the object, however, is simply and solely to try to benefit the Aborigines, and by contrasting the

effects of different systems, that have been adopted towards them, to endeavour to recommend the best, I must, even at the risk of being deemed egotistical, point out some of the important and beneficial results that accrued at Moorunde.

In the first place, I may state that the dread of settling upon the Murray, has so far given place to confidence, that from Wellington (near the Lake), to beyond the Great South Bend, a distance of more than 100 miles, the whole line of river is now settled and occupied by stock, where, in 1841, there was not a single European, a herd of cattle, or a flock of sheep; nay, the very natives who were so much feared then, are looked upon now as an additional inducement to locate, since the services of the boys or young men, save in great measure the expense of European servants. There are few residents on the Murray, who do not employ one or more of these people, and at many stations, I have known the sheep or cattle, partially, and in some instances, wholly attended to by them.

For three years I was resident at Moorunde, and during the whole of that time, up to November, 1844, not a single case of serious aggression, either on the persons or property of Europeans had ever occurred, and but very few offences even of a minor character. The only crime of any importance that was committed in my neighbourhood, was at a sheep station, about 25 miles to the westward, where some few sheep were stolen, by a tribe of natives during the absence

or neglect of the men attending them. By a want of proper care and precaution, temptation was thrown in the way of the natives, but even then, it was only some few of the young men who were guilty of the offence; none of the elder or more influential members of the tribe, having had any thing to do with it. Neither did the tribe belong to the Murray river, although they occasionally came down there upon visits. There was no evidence to prove that the natives had stolen the sheep at all; the only fact which could be borne witness to, was that so many sheep were missing, and it was supposed the natives had taken them. As soon as I was made acquainted with the circumstances, I made every inquiry among the tribe suspected, and it was *at once admitted* by the elder men that the youths had been guilty of the offence. At my earnest solicitations, and representations of the policy of so doing, the culprits, five in number, *were brought in and delivered up by their tribe.* No evidence could be procured against them, and after remanding them from time to time as a punishment, I was obliged to discharge them.

I may now remark, that upon inquiry into the case, and in examining witnesses against the natives, it came out in evidence, that at the same station, and not long before, a native *had been fired at*, (with what effect did not appear,) simply because he *seemed* to be going towards the sheep-folds, which were a long way from the hut, and were directly in the line of route of any one either passing towards

Adelaide, or to any of the more northern stations. Another case occurred about the same time, and at the same station, where an intelligent and well-conducted native, belonging to Moorunde, was sent by a gentleman at the Murray to a surgeon, living about sixty miles off, with a letter, and for medicines. The native upon reaching this station, which he had to pass, was *assaulted and opposed by a man, armed with a musket*, and if not fired at, (which he said he was,) was at least intimidated, and driven back, and *prevented from going for the medicines for the individual who was ill*. I myself knew the native who was sent, to be one of the most orderly and well-conducted men we had at the Murray; in fact he had frequently, at different times, been living with me as an attaché to the police force.

In the second place, I may state, that during the time I have held office at Moorunde, I have frequently visited on the most friendly terms, and almost alone, the most distant and hostile tribes, where so short a time before even large and well-armed bodies of Europeans could not pass uninterrupted or in safety. Many of those very natives, who had been concerned in affrays or aggressions, have since travelled hundreds of miles and encountered hunger and thirst and fatigue, to visit a white man's station in peace, and on friendly terms.

Thirdly, I may observe, that ever since I went to the Murray, instead of shewing signs of enmity or hostility, the natives have acted in the most kind

and considerate manner, and have upon all occasions, when I have been travelling in less known and more remote districts, willingly accompanied me as guides and interpreters, introducing me from one tribe to another, and explaining the amicable relations I wished to establish. In one case, a native, whom I met by himself, accompanied me at once, without even saying good-bye to his wife and family, who were a mile or two away, and whom, as he was going to a distance of one hundred and fifty miles and back, he was not likely to see for a great length of time. He was quite content to send a message by the first native he met, to say where he was going. In my intercourse with the Aborigines I have always noticed that they would willingly do any thing for a person whom they were attached to. I have found that an influence, amounting almost to authority, is produced by a system of kindness; and that in cases where their own feelings and wishes were in opposition to the particular object for which this influence might be exercised, that the latter would almost invariably prevail. Thus, upon one occasion in Adelaide, where a very large body of the Murray natives were collected to fight those from Encounter Bay, I was directed by the Government to use my influence to prevent the affray. Upon going to their encampment late at night, I explained the object of my visit to them, and requested them to leave town in the morning, and return to their own district,

(90 miles away.) In the morning I again went to the native camp, and found them all ready, and an hour afterwards there was not one in Adelaide. Another strong instance of the power that may be acquired over the natives occurred at Moorunde, in 1844 :— Several tribes were assembled in the neighbourhood, and were, as I was told, going to fight. I walked down towards their huts to see if this was the case, but upon arriving at the native camps I found them deserted, and all the natives about a quarter of a mile away, on the opposite side of a broad deep sheet of water caused by the floods. As I reached the edge of the water I saw the opposing parties closing, and heard the cry of battle as the affray commenced ; raising my voice to the utmost, I called out to them, and was heard, even above the din of combat. In a moment all was as still as the grave, a canoe was brought for me to cross, and I found the assembled tribes fully painted and armed, and anxiously waiting to know what I was going to do. It was by this time nearly dark, and although I had no fears of their renewing the fight again for the night, I knew they would do so early in the morning ; I accordingly directed them to separate, and remove their encampments. One party I sent up the river, a second down it, a third remained where they were, and two others I made recross the water, and go up to encamp near my own residence. All this was accomplished solely by the influence I had acquired over them, for I was alone and unarmed among

300 natives, whose angry passions were inflamed, and who were bent upon shedding each others' blood.

By the assistance of the natives, I was enabled in December 1843, to ascend the Darling river as far as Laidley's Ponds (above 300 miles from Moorunde) when accompanied only by two other Europeans, and should have probably been enabled to reach Mount Lyell (100 miles further) but that a severe attack of illness compelled me to return. My journey up the Darling had, however, this good effect, that it opened a friendly communication with natives who had never before come in contact with the white man, except in enmity or in contest, and paved the way for a passage upon friendly terms of any expedition that might be sent by that route to explore the continent. Little did I anticipate at the time, how soon such an expedition was to be undertaken, and how strongly and how successfully the good results I so confidently hoped for were to be fully tested.

In August 1844, Captain Sturt passed up the Murray to explore the country north-west of the Darling, and whilst at Moorunde, on his route, was supplied with a Moorunde boy to accompany his party to track stock, and also with a native of the Rufus named Nad-buck, to go as guide and interpreter to the Darling. The latter native had accompanied me to Laidley's Ponds in December 1843, and had come down to Moorunde, according to a promise he then made me, to visit me in the winter,