THE SKERMAN FAMILY 1860 - 1935

Percival James Skerman

OUR FAMILY HISTORY

In memory of my Wife and my Mother.

"The sands of time are sinking;
The dawn of Heaven breaks;
The summer morn I've sighed for,
The fair, sweet morn awakes.
Dark, Dark has been the midnight,
But dayspring is at hand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

O, Christ! He is the fountain,
The deep sweet well of love;
The streams on Earth I've tasted
More deep I'll drink above:
There to an ocean fullness
His mercy doth expand.
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

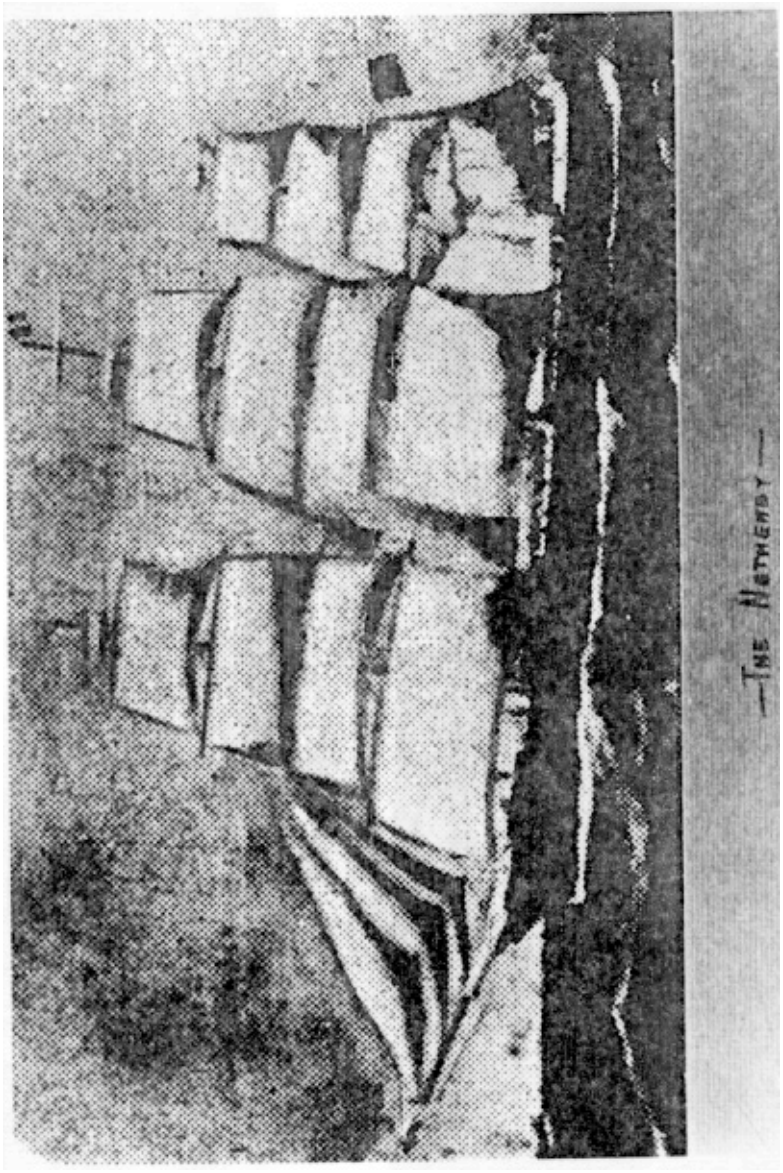
With mercy and with judgement
My web of time He wove
And aye the dews of sorrow
Were lustred by His love;
I'll bless the hand that guided
I'll bless the heart that planned,
When throned where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

I've wrestled on toward heaven,
'Gainst storm and wind and tide;
Now, like a weary traveller
That leaneth on his guide,
Amid the shades of evening,
While sinks life's lingering sand,
I hail the glory dawning
In Immanuel's land."

Loved ones have asked me to leave some record of the hallowed memories which I, perhaps more than any other, have stored in my mind and heart and soul. To this end, to the greater glory of God, my pen has, midst failing health and dimming eyesight hastened to set down the following history. If the record it contains helps any reader into whose hands it falls, particularly among those of our kith and kin, to take Jesus as Saviour and make him Lord, the labour and the love, not only of the writing, but of all those lives who "wrestled on toward Heaven" shall not have been in vain.

P. J. Kerman.

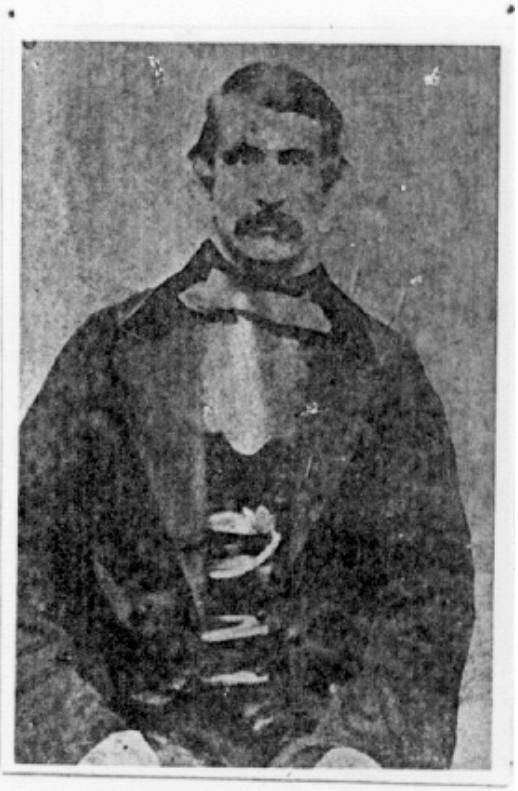
On my Eightieth Birthday,
"Waverley".
March 21st, 1953.


—The Heathenry—

MRS. HAYES
My Great-Grandmother

MR. HAYES
My Great-Grandfather

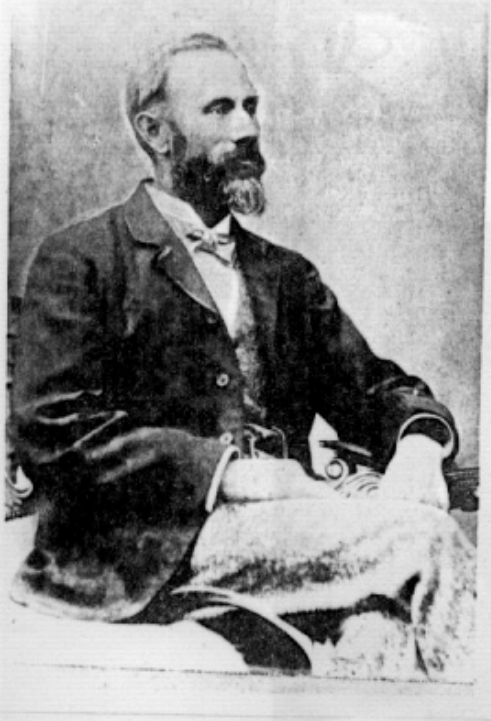
ELLEN DARLINGTON
(nee Hayes)
My Grandmother



JAMES DARLINGTON
My Grandfather

MARIA SKERMAN
(nee Chesher)
My Grandmother

JOHN SKERMAN
My Grandfather born 18

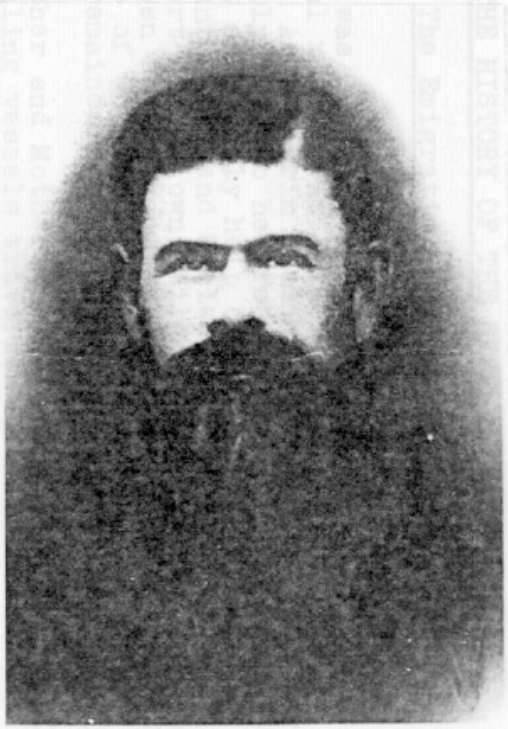


WILLIAM SKERMAN
My Uncle

WALTER SKERMAN
My Uncle

ALICE SKERMAN
(nee Darlington)
My Mother

ALICE CAROLINE
My Sister



FREDERICK JOHN SKERMAN
My Father

THE HISTORY OF THE SKERMAN FAMILY

The Emigration in the Year 1866.

It was August 7th 1890 when my father passed to his eternal rest. At Father's death Mother was frustrated. As the grim reality forced itself on her, she steadfastly rose to her responsibility and with the encouragement and kindly help of my Uncles and Aunts, especially Aunt Annie and Uncle Walter and other friends and the comfort of her own children whom Father and she had always been so diligent to provide for and train in the knowledge of God and His son, Jesus Christ, she passed on through the remainder of her life in comfort and happiness.

Father and Mother migrated from England in the days when sailing vessels traversed the sea. Steam propulsion was not common at the time. Voyages were long and hazardous and the time of their arrival was always uncertain. There were no weather charts then. The peculiar circumstances which transpired and controlled our people's movements then cut them off very considerably from their ancestry and has made it difficult at this time, eighty three years later, to gather reliable information concerning the blood line from which we sprang.

As far as we know, we are Anglo-Saxons, but a friend from the Shetland Islands, North of Scotland claims that there are several Skermans there and is of the opinion that we have a lot of Scotch blood in us and probably Norwegian.

My Father, Frederick John Skerman, was born in Middlesex, England, on January 19th, 1842. Mother was born in Lancashire, England on July 22nd, 1847. Her Maiden Name was Alice Darlington. The Following are their children:

Alice Caroline, born in Enfield, Middlesex, England on January 16th 1866.

Amy Constance Chesher, born in Humpybong, Scarborough, Queensland, on September 22nd, 1868

George Stansall, born at Rockangle, via Harrison's Pocket, Queensland, on December 11th, 1869. A twin sister was born with George, but died at birth.

Frederick John, born at Rockangle on May 15th, 1871.

Percival James, (The narrator of this History), born at Rockangle, March 21st, 1873.

Ellen, born at Rockangle on September 12th, 1874.

John Hope, born at Rockangle on October 27, 1875.

Maria, born at Rockangle on April 23rd, 1977.

Alfred William, born at Rockangle on October 8th 1878.

Lucy, born at Rockangle, May 30th 1880

Bertha, born at Rockangle on October 1st, 1881

Ernest Thomas, born at Rockangle on March 13th, 1883.

Mary May, born in Brisbane on May 17th, 1885.

Florence, born at Rockangle, March 18th, 1887.

Joseph Darlington, born at Rockangle, June 1st, 1890.

The date on which I write this is April 11th, 1950. Looking back over the Family advent it is most impressive to note that Mother gave birth to this large Family, born in Queensland with the exception of Alice, without the aid of a doctor or a qualified nurse. Ordinary country women were the only help available. Nevertheless, the family is a strong and virile one. The eldest is now eighty-four years of age and the youngest is sixty-one. Between these and including them, twelve are still alive. Maria died on December 17, 1901, Alfred William on May 3rd, 1923 and Amy Constance Chesher on February 8th, 1950.

The Branch of the Skerman Family from which we sprang were mechanics. My Great-Grandfather and his son, John Skerman, (my Grandfather), who brought his family to Queensland owned a foundry and made farm machinery, and other things, including clocks. The Town Hall clock at Hertford, capital of Hertfordshire was made by them and was still going strong before the German Blitz in World War II and may still be operating now. Father's eldest brother, my Uncle Joseph, worked with them when young and when he married, went to live at Enfield Lock and entered the Enfield small arms factory and gradually worked his way up to Principal Foreman, and eventually to Chief of the Inspector Department. When he retired, the Government presented him with the long service Medal and a beautiful watch, inscribed with his name and also a pension of ten pounds per week which he had to collect at the War Office in London, once a month. His son, my cousin Oscar, went into the position afterwards. In his early days at the factory, he organised the factory band and was band-master for many years. He could play almost any instrument. He was Sidesman (main elder) at the Highway

Parish Church till May 16th' 1916, when he died. His wife, nee Dedman, died in 1905. Father and my Uncle William played in this band. Father played the bombardon and Uncle Will played the cornet. This band was honoured by playing before Queen Victoria on a number of occasions.

Uncle Joseph's Family distinguished themselves. His eldest son Ernest, was attached to the Waltham Abbey gunpowder during the World War I. They were good singers and joined the choral society for local benefits for charity in connection with their church. Olive O'Keefe, mother of the wife of my nephew Fred Bryant, was active in local war work. Fred's wife gave me particulars of the English Branch of the Skerman Family. Her father was in charge of the special presses for cordite and other explosives. Albert was in charge of the barrel room at the Enfield Factory. Charlie was a head schoolmaster and was also skilled in ornamental woodwork. Oscar took my Uncle Joe's position after he retired and filled the position so worthily that the Queen awarded him with the O.B.E. So quietly did he work in philanthropic benefits that dozens would testify of his unostentatious help in times of need. He was Vicar's Warden and was entrusted with the distribution and supervision of money and goods, which the wealthy parishioners bequeathed to the needy. Horace, the youngest of Uncle Joe's Family, was retired from the Lock factory and sent to America by the Government during World War I to inspect all American ammunition before accepting it as a lot of their first consignment was not up to standard. He had also to inspect all rifles and other equipment before shipment. For a while he had a very rough time as much had to be rejected and the Americans became cross. They eventually quietened down and he enjoyed his experience.

My Grandfather, John Skerman, continued with his father in their Foundry until the latter died. My father had been engaged in a telegraph office. He lived with an aged Aunt and used to read to her aloud, an art at which he was an expert and by which he entertained his own children around the table at night many years afterward. He then gave up this work and joined the Enfield Staff with Uncle Will. He married Alice Darlington in 1864. Trade was slack at the time, owing to the following conditions. Piecework was the method of employment. Father made the mainspring of the lock of the gun. Uncle Will made the ramrod. The Schneider muzzle-loading gun, or rifle, was the foremost small arm. It was not long after our people left England that it was superseded by the Lee-Enfield breach-loading rifle. By piecework the Factory hands found it difficult to make a living. Each man was liable to be searched on leaving the factory when it closed for the day, but many took the risk of taking pieces home with them to work on at night to earn more. Father was searched once when he had a few lock springs concealed in his

clothing, but the officer did not notice them. Some men took he risk of taking parts at different times and assembling whole guns for themselves and got away with it, but the risk was very great and no doubt many were caught. However, trade was very slack and finance was very low and, owing to the depression, many people began to ponder migrating to other countries and amongst these were my grandfather and his sons and daughters.

The Depression: Queen Victoria was on the Throne and Palmerston and Gladstone, Premiers, respectively. The Depression was due to several causes. The Crimean War was raging (1854-1856). My father was born in 1842 and mother in 1947. Father was 14 years old when the War ended. During this War, the British Cavalry won renown as indicated by Tennyson's verses in honour of The Light Brigade- the six hundred at Balaclava. In the same battle at Inkerman, the British Infantry threw the Russians back to Sebastopol by one to five. Amongst all this slaughter, troops were underfed and many were dying. This spectacle touched the hearts of Florence Nightingale who left for the Crimea with a staff of trained nurses to tend to the suffering soldiers.

Only a year after this War- 1857- the Indian Mutiny arose owing to the ingress of the East India Company, which was confiscating territory from Indian Princes. When this mutiny was subdued by the arms of the British Government, the East India Company was dissolved and Lord Canning, who was commissioned Governor-General, took control.

The third cause of the Depression was due to the American Civil War (1860-1865). Abraham Lincoln was President and was opposed to the slave trade. The Northern States waged war against the South and won. Slavery was abolished. These slaves had been engaged in the culture and harvesting of cotton. During the five years of conflict, its production was practically stopped. This created a cotton famine and, as Britain was a heavy importer of raw cotton, many mills were closed and a lot of workmen thrown out of work. Amongst these were the Darlington family. Crowds marched south singing:-

"We're all turned out,
We've got the gout,
We've got no work to do".

Mother was very dexterous with her fingers and arms. Working at Oldham, Lancashire, at the looms and spinning wheels and associated jobs made her nimble in this way, a trait which continued until her death at 88 years. She knitted, sewed, darned, meshed curtains, made patchwork quilts, doilies, bed covers and

whatnot. She knitted hundreds of socks for the soldiers in World War I, but she was an invalid and had to be helped by her daughters to get out of bed and dress. They then placed her in a wheel chair, which she could move about the house herself. She was very heavy and continued for many years like this. Her complaint was of the rheumatic type and many of her children have developed a similar disability. The complaint started with her when she was 45-50 years of age and never left her until her death at 88 years.

The Darlington Family

James Darlington (Grandfather) was born on June 4th. 1821 and Ellen Darlington (his wife nee Hayes) on June 9th, 1821. Their family consisted of:-Thomas, born on October 10th, 1841.

Joseph, born on October 11th, 1943.

Alfred William, born on March 18th, 1845.

Alice (my mother), born on July 22nd, 1847.

Catherine, (Mrs Bryer), born January 2nd, 1850.

James, born on April 13th, 1852.

Eliza Ellen, (Mrs Ride), born on March 14th, 1854

Phoebe Ann, (Mrs Thygeson), born on May 4th 1856

Uncle Thomas Darlington married Aunt Sarah, father's sister. These two and Uncle Joseph Skerman were the only ones who remained in England.

With conditions prevailing as set out in the foregoing pages and with prospects of setting up a new home in the dominions, the idea of migrating struck the imagination of Grandfather and his family. At that time, the Queensland Government was inviting people from the British Isles to migrate and settle in their State. Grandfather and family decided to leave England for Australia and to embark on the "Netherby" which was due to sail in about a fortnight. The "Netherby" was a first class Ship, British built, of 944 tons register. She was one of the Black Ball Line of Clipper Packets. She left East Indian Dock, London, on the 31st March, 1866, bound for Moreton Bay, Queensland under Captain Owen Owens and having on board 303 passengers under the Surgeon-Superintendent, M.H. Webster. In the evening of the same day, she anchored off Gravesend to undergo a final Government inspection. On the 3rd of April, she left Gravesend at 6 p.m. in tow of the Steamer "City of London"

making the best of her way to Plymouth at which Port, she was to call to make up the full complement of her passengers. On the 4th April, at 4 p.m., being off Dungerness, the Steamer left her and after a pleasant run down The Channel, she dropped anchor in Plymouth Sound at 9 a.m. on the 6th of April, 1866.

Amongst the passengers who boarded the "Netherby" at Plymouth were my Grandfather, Grandmother (nee Chesher), my Aunts Caroline and Annie, my Uncles William and Walter and my Father and Mother and their little daughter, Alice Caroline, then only three months old. Mr. And Mrs. Hope Martin (my Aunt Maria) and Uncle Alf Darlington also came. This made thirteen in all who prepared to take the voyage. When the momentous decision had been made, the party set to work to pack their possessions. All the foundry equipment was lifted out and taken aboard. All their clothing and personal effects and as much as their allotted space would allow was stowed away. Father did not forget his flute and bombardon, nor Uncle Walter his cornet.

The ship slipped out of Plymouth Sound on the 13th April with the Black Ball flag fluttering from her main truck. The ship's course was around the Cape of Good Hope and then round Tasmania and up the East Coast of Australia to Moreton Bay. I turn you over now to extracts from the ships Log which describe the events that followed.

"At the commencement we encountered adverse winds and heavy cross seas in the Bay of Biscay. Passed Lizard 15th and Scilly Isles same day, passing to the north of them. Winds and squalls from 16th April to 3rd May.

April 20th, 1866. Set all studding sails, passed one of the Canary Islands distance of 8 miles. It was a beautiful bright morning, the houses in the different towns and hamlets set on eminences were distinguished with the naked eye. The majestic Teneriffe could also be seen towering in its splendour with its snow capped head above the clouds over the Island of Canaria. Passengers amused themselves, some by playing at quoits, others by pinning pieces of paper on each other with the words "For sale, Cheap, only 6d." which later caused a great deal of laughter. The brass band enlivened us with many sweet airs in the evenings after many days silence. Two flocks of birds were seen flying in Indian file , which gave the appearance of kites with long streaming tails.

April 22nd, 1866. Lucy, daughter of Father's cousin, Mr and Mrs William Skerman died from convulsions. Aged 4 years.

April 30th, 1866. Latitude 27.25N- Longitude 15.10 W. Experiencing so much adverse weather in the commencement of the passage is rather discouraging, but I trust that prosperous gales are at our heels after a salutary exercise of our patience. Adopting the old adage, "never despair

May 10th,1866. Sultry weather, winds unsteady from the Eastwards. The ship, being very steady, the ladies of the Saloon were persuaded to take some exercise in the way of dancing and their being an equal number of men to form a full set of quadrilles, the services of our small band, consisting of a bombardon, cornet and drum- the first performed upon by Frederick Skerman, the second by William Skerman and the third by John Evans, all from Enfield, were called into requisition. Dancing continued till 9.30 p.m. Latitude 10.44 N. Longitude 25.26 W.

May 11th, 1866. Sultry weather. Wind E. to E.N.E. smooth water; boxing carried on in different parts of the ship. Lat. 8.27 N. Long. 24.39 W.

May 13th, 1866. Squally from the Eastwards with frequent showers of rain. Divine Service held in the Poop, both morning and evening. Very poorly attended.
Lat. 5.5 N. Long 24.52 W.

May 14th, 1866. Variable light airs and calm. Sighted several ships, one bound to the northwards distance 5 miles The port lifeboat was lowered to exercise the crew. When the boat returned, some of the passengers went in it to have a row and a swim. During her absence, the Captain and Doctor decided to send the starboard lifeboat with letters to the ship bound to the northwards. This decision caused great consternation on board and all set busy bringing their letters to a close. The boat had just started on her mission when the port lifeboat returned and, as the letters of those on board her were left behind, they were determined to overtake the mail Boat, little thinking of the task they were undertaking as the sun shone powerfully and they had forgotten to take water with them. On the return of both boats, we learnt that the mail bag had been placed on board the Dutch barque "Cornelia Adolphine" from Batavia bound for Amsterdam.

May 15th, 1866. Light variable winds and frequent calms with occasional showers. Signalled the barque "West Wind" from Liverpool to Madagascar out 35 days. A shark was caught. Lat. 2.0 N. Long. 20. W.

On Thursday evening, the 17th of May at 8 p.m., King Neptune's Barge was seen approaching by a sailor on the lookout in the main top, which was hailed in due form and when she was supposed to be alongside, a gun was fired

in honour of His Majesty. Shortly after, His Majesty's barber, and an attendant, most fantastically dressed for the occasion, came up to the poop and announced to the Captain that his Oceanic Majesty, being indisposed from the circumstance of one of the ribs of a Whale having stuck in his gizzard the day before, could not come himself, but had sent a deputation in to inform the Captain that he would honour the ship with a visit the following day to see if there were any on board who had not crossed his Domain before. At 2 o'clock on the 18th instant, His Majesty, accompanied by his Queen arrived under the usual salute, and, having entered their carriage, drawn by six horses, proceeded from the forecastle to the poop, headed by a band of Musicians playing the grand march of "See the Conquering Hero Comes". The carriage was followed by his Majesty's barber and attendant, Then came a strong Police Force, and last of all, those who had not crossed his Domains before. As soon as the procession reached the ladder, His Majesty and Queen descended from the state carriage and, accompanied by his retinue, marched upon the poop, passing the leeside, proceeded by his standard Bearers, having the royal standard with the words, " Neptune, King of the Sea", inscribed thereon, suspended on two poles. Next, His Majesty and royal Consort, dressed in the fantastical robes, peculiar to His Oceanic Majesty and Court, The King, wearing a long beard, which quite concealed his face, so the a particular description of his phiz could not be given. Next in order came the barber and attendant, the former carrying a ponderous razor on his shoulder of exquisite workmanship and the latter, a leather brush of equal proportion, which shewed that they were in earnest about having their work effectively performed. Next in order came His Majesty's bodyguard, who were marshalled on the weather side of the poop and presented a formidable appearance. Without much ceremony, the King announced his intention of shaving and scrubbing those who had not passed before through his dominion, and to exact the tribute he was entitled to from time immemorial. The Captain addressed His Majesty in suitable words, congratulating him on His happy recovery after undergoing the operation of having the whale bone extracted from his gizzard and offered His Majesty some refreshment, which His Majesty politely declined as he already had swallowed a shark since the morning. His Majesty, Queen, and suite, after bowing to the Captain returned in the same order to the State carriage and proceeded to the forecastle. The royal vehicle was halted on the fore part of the main deck, when His Majesty could overlook the proceedings and satisfy himself that his barber and assistants performed their duty in accordance with the prescribed rules. The first victim was the ship's butcher. He was laid hold of by two of His Majesty's suite and brought to the barber and attendant, who stood

on an eminence. He was then lathered with the yellow liquid, composed principally of peas. Questions were put to him during the operation and on opening his mouth to answer, the yellow liquid was poured in. He was afterward shaved and then handed over to two others who stood a little lower. These, before he knew where he was, these tumbled him heels over head into a large sail, containing a quantity of sea water, and there, thoroughly dipped, scrubbed and washed by two others who were there to receive him. Thus ended the operation. Twenty more were served in the same way.

It is extraordinary the wonderful effect the process had on the appearance of some of them. The ship's butcher, the following morning whilst attending to the fowls and ducks, was accosted by the Captain who asked why he was acting for the butcher. He answered, laughing, " I am the butcher, Sir!" He looked so clean, he was not recognisable. At 8 p.m., King Neptune and the suite took their farewell of all on board after having granted permission to the Captain to continue his course to the Southward and wishing us a pleasant voyage, descended into his barge under the usual salute.

May 17th, 1866. First part light breezes from the eastward, gradually drawing to the E.S.E. Latter part, steady breezes from the S.S.E. Braced sharp up. We have now entered into the S.E. Trades after experiencing variable winds for 3 days only between parallels of 5.0 and 3.30 N. Latitude 2.28 N. Longitude 20.30 W.

May 18th, 1866. Moderate breezes from S. by E. all sails set. One of the passengers who slept on the poop, on awakening in the morning and looking into his mirror, discovered he was another person, for, when he went to bed he had a white face and now a black one. Some jokers had blackened his face during the night. Lat. 0.35 Long. 22.18 W.

May 19th 1866. Fresh breezes from S.E. to E.S.E. Heavy swell from the Southward. Divine service was held on the poop, morning and evening, the chanting and singing very good and the attendance fair. Lat 7.21 S. Long 24.43 W.

May 21st 1866. Fresh breezes from the Southward; continued heavy swell. The ship rolling considerably. Many of the passengers sea-sick. At 8pm, the "Netherby" minstrels gave their first concert on the poop which went off very satisfactorily. Lat 11.24 S. Long. 25.6 W.

May 22nd, 1866. Fresh breezes with a clear sky; smooth water; the evening was most delightful; the moon shining bright and the air much cooler than we have had it for some time. Lat. 15.11 S. Long. 25.46 W.

July 13th, 1866. Dark gloomy weather; moderate breezes N. to N.N.E.; all sails set. Moon, cloudy; no observation. Lat. 40,48 S. Long.139.24 E.

July 14th, 1866. Moderate breezes N.to N.N.E.; overcast sky; at 7 p.m. wind shifted to West; 9 p.m. South to S.E., with rain. Latter part light southerly wind, small rain, smooth water, no observation. Lat. 40.5 S. Long. 142.32 E. Noon. First part light wind from S. to S.W. thick with small rain; steered N.E. by E. until 4 p.m. altered to N.E. ½ E; slight passing showers. At 7:15 p.m. while seated at the tea table, the Chief Officer who had the watch, was heard to say, "hard Up". The Captain immediately started up and on his way to ascertain what was the matter, saw the Chief Officer on the companion ladder, calling out for him to go on deck. On the Captain reaching the deck, it was discovered that land was close to, a little on the Starboard Bow. Orders were then given to square the main and cross jack yards, the ship paying off from.N.E. to ½ E. to N. by W. ½ W. when she took the ground on a rocky bottom, with a reef stretching out to the west close under the bow. The ship was wrecked. The port lifeboat was then lowered to ascertain if a place could be found to land passengers as the ship was bumping severely and the surf striking on her stern and port quarter. Three attempts were made, but no safe landing could be seen in the darkness; the surf breaking over the rocks in all directions; We had therefore to wait until daybreak approached in the greatest fear that the ship would break up through the night as she heeled over to the port bilging heavily, the sea breaking over the port or seaward side. By 8.30 p.m. the ship began to leak; the passengers manned the pumps and worked perseveringly, but to no avail, for before long, the lee side between decks was under water, the purser with assistance, endeavouring to save as much provision out of the hold. The women and children collected in the fore cabin and saloon, behaved themselves uncommonly well, awaiting the fate destined for them with the utmost patience. During the night, a pinnace, a large lifeboat with a sail at each end, was attempted to be got off the skids and put overboard on the lee, or sea side over the port quarter, but she was stove against the ship's side and torn adrift, the men that were in her barely escaping with their lives. At daybreak, the lifeboat was sent to make another attempt to find a landing place and carry a line out to the shore under the command of Mr. Jones, Chief Officer, which was with difficulty performed as the sea was breaking fearfully over the rocks. A line was eventually made fast to one

of the rocks where the sea broke with the least violence and, about 8 a.m., a commencement was made to land the passengers, women and children first. The debarkation of the passengers was superintended by Captain and Doctor, who were in attendance by the gangway from first to last to regulate the number of passengers who were to go in each boat and to keep back a rush which was from time to time made to get into the boats. The two lifeboats were employed for that purpose, the one commanded by Mr Jones, Chief Officer and the other by Mr. Parry, Second Officer. Many of the passengers had to be dragged through water up the rocks, after which they had to make a circuit, wading through some inlets of the sea and over rocks again before they could set their feet on terra firma. The landing of all the passengers was finally accomplished by 3 p.m. The first male passengers who landed went around to see if any fresh water was procurable, and to our great delight, heard that at a distance of about a mile from where we landed, a spring was discovered, affording a plentiful supply of delicious water. As soon as they landed, the passengers cut away the bushes to make a resting place for the night, and fires were kindled all round to warm themselves, as all were drenched to the skin. The Captain, Officers and crew then turned their attention to the landing of provisions, after which, at about 5.30. p.m., as it was considered running a great risk to remain aboard during the night, the officers came on shore in the gig as the two lifeboats, having got broadside onto the landing rocks sustained damage which rendered them unseaworthy thus losing the last lot of provisions placed in them. Before leaving the ship, it was deemed advisable to relieve the ship as much as passible of bilging too heavily, to cut away the masts. That night, Sunday night, all were looking around to find some place to shelter themselves from the inclemency of the weather. The chopping of trees and the crackling of green wood and smaller scrub in the fires, which were kindled, resounded on all sides. Occasional showers of rain added to the misery of all, for none had dry clothing to change into. These occurrences occupied 36 hours on the Western side of King's Island on which The Netherby was wrecked, Lat. 39-53 S.

July 16th, 1866. At 8 a.m. a party of six passengers volunteered to walk to the Lighthouse situated on the Northern part of King's Island, under the command of Mr. Parry, second Officer and started for that purpose, having a letter from the Surgeon Superintendent to the Colonial Secretary of Melbourne and two from the Captain, one for the Officer in charge of the Lighthouse and the other for the agents of the ship in Melbourne. The Captain, Carpenter and Crew did their utmost to land as much provision, baggage etc. as possible. Provisions served out this day were ¼ lb. flour to each adult, women

and children having a small portion of biscuit allowed then in addition.

July 17th, 1866. After affecting some repairs to one lifeboat, the other being abandoned, the Captain with the Crew, assisted by some passengers, succeeded in saving some more provisions and passenger's luggage as many of the passengers were in a state of destitution.

July 18th, 1866. The lifeboat being much damaged, the gig was used for the purpose of saving provisions. The Captain succeeded in making only two trips. The remainder of the day having been given to the sailers who were exceedingly fatigued and wet to recoup themselves. This evening it was proposed by the Captain that, as the success of Mr. Parry's party was still dubious, he would have the lifeboat put in a seaworthy state and start for the lighthouse, situated on the North Point of the island, to see what means could be adopted to communicate with some place where assistance could be procured. Some provisions and passenger's luggage was landed this day.

July 19th, 1866. The Captain continued to do his utmost to save provisions and luggage, the gig being used for that purpose.

July 20th, 1866. At 9.45 a.m., the Captain left us in a lifeboat manned by the sail maker and four sailors and proceeded on his mission to the north part of the Island where the lighthouse is situated. Mr. Jones, Chief officer, carpenter and crew did their utmost to save as much provision and luggage as possible.

July 21st, 1866. Mr. Jones, carpenter and crew were employed in saving. At 2 p.m., Mr Hickmott arrived here from the lighthouse, bringing a letter from Captain Owens which informed us that he arrived at the lighthouse at 6 p.m. yesterday. The party under Mr. Parry had reached the lighthouse some hours previous and four of the party had already proceeded in a boat belonging to the lighthouse to Melbourne. The consternation in our camp when they heard that succour was at hand was indescribable. Mr Hickmott performed the trip in 15 hours. At 9 p.m. a light was seen in the offing and shortly afterwards a blue light, supposed to be Captain Owens returning. The Crew, followed by some passengers hurrahing, went to the landing rock and at 9.30 p.m., Captain Owens landed and walked up to the Camp, where he was received by the whole community with three hearty Cheers and one more.

July 22nd, 1866. The boat the Captain went in was so leaky the whole way to the lighthouse that it required two men to constantly bailing to keep her free. On

his arrival at the lighthouse, she was hauled up to have some temporary stoppage to the leak affected by soaping the seams, but before she got out of the surf, on the return trip, the soap was washed off and she was again in the hands of the Carpenter. A preparation was made by carrying a kedge and line to the offing in anticipation of a steamer coming. Prayers were appointed to be read this morning and a general thanksgiving rendered to the Father of Mercies for our deliverance, but so many destitute women and children came to our hut for articles of clothing, shoes etc., that the Doctor was fully occupied in clothing the naked in the forenoon. It was then intended to have a meeting in the evening, but heavy rain prevented this intention, though, no doubt, many returned thanks privately for our miraculous preservation, as this Coast is strewn in all directions to a distance with sunken rocks. Had the ship struck one of these rocks. Not a soul would have been saved.

July 23 rd.1866. Mr. Hickmott left this morning with 117 single passengers for the Lighthouse as they were well provisioned there and we were on very short allowance here, being ½ lb. flour or oatmeal for each adult. An hour after the departure of Mr. Hickmott, a steamer as seen to the southward. As soon as she was near enough, Captain Owens went off in our lifeboat and acquainted the Commander of H.M.S. Steamer, Victoria with the localities. At 11 a.m., she anchored about ¾ of a mile from the reck. Two boats were lowered immediately and a commencement made to embark the passengers, women and children first. When the women were embarked, the men followed. During the day, another Steamer hove in sight and anchored shortly after, outside the Victoria. Some of the saloon passengers had sent some of their things to the rocks, but there being no person to be found to assist in taking off the rest, they could not proceed. The embarkation continued until 4 p.m. and just before dark, the two steamers got under way, leaving behind, Captain Owens, six saloon passengers, six second class passengers, two Officers, the sail maker, the carpenter and six of the crew, in all 23 persons, five of whom were ladies.

Our lifeboat acted as a kind of bridge during the embarkation of passengers between rocks and Victoria boats and required to be constantly bailed out. The men in her were completely exhausted in keeping her from sinking.

After the last boat left for the Victoria, she was hauled up, assisted by every male on the Island and put bottom up on the rocks very much shattered. The Victorian Government very humanely sent provisions to the Island and the Commander of the Victoria informed the Captain that he had more to place at our disposal if required.

What a change! Last night we had about 445 souls in our Camp comprising a circumference of perhaps a mile, distributed in about 40 or 50 huts, some constructed of brushwood or scrub and covered with the some material, some covered with canvas washed ashore from the ship, others again with sheets etc., all hastily and hurriedly run up as a shelter from rain and wind. Forty or fifty fires blazed in all directions during the whole of night to keep the cold out; in one direction children were heard crying, in another bigger ones discussing passing events in their own quaint way at the tops of their voices; in another, men disagreeing; and occasionally the soft voiced accents of dear devoted women endeavouring to pacify the angry parties; and in another, concertinas playing lively airs. For the purpose of keeping a strict watch over the provisions, a regular watch was kept by the saloon passengers and a bell struck every half hour, echoed by two others in opposite directions; and tonight, the community is reduced to 23 individuals, peace and quietness reigning around, not a voice to be heard, no music, no songs and the half hour bell ceased to tell us the half hours which were passing away. The saloon passengers bore up cheerfully with their altered position and the saloon ladies, young, delicate and nursed in the lap of luxury, were seen chopping and cutting fire-wood and carrying water for culinary purposes with happy bright faces, and laughing under all their misfortunes, heavy losses and discomforts.

July 24th, 1866. Heavy surf breaking over the rocks and landing places and heavy breakers over the reefs in the offing. Shortly after daylight, the ship was observed bilging and twisting with the force of the heavy breakers, giving evident signs that she could not hold out much longer.

She gradually began to heel over to seaward and at 1 p.m., a heavy breaker passed over her; with a sudden surge, she was observed to part in two. Shortly after the fore part disappeared and by 5 p.m., nothing appeared of the after part but a few straggling timbers. Everything in her hold then broke loose and boxes, cases and packages of merchandise, together with planks, timbers and beams were seen scattered far and wide on the rocks. What a great good fortune to us that the ship did not break up whilst the mass of passengers and sailors were amongst us.

The quantity of drinkables scattered along the rocks for a distance of about six miles would have acted as a magnet to some of the single men and we should have seen drunken men perambulating the camp, stirring up strife and fomenting quarrels which may have ended up in bloodshed if not murder.

Last Sunday showed us a small scale what mischief the free use of spirits can cause, for a few of the single men passengers went on board the wreck, ostensibly to look out for their things, but they found cases of ardent spirits and malt liquors, which they broke open and made use of to such an extent as to prepare them for committing deeds which they possibly would be ashamed of if sober. They landed from the ship in a shameful state and joined by some of the sailors who were also intoxicated, began to fight and quarrel in the camp. Blows were exchanged, blood was shed and women ran between them imploring them to be quiet until after a great deal of trouble, the Captain and Doctor managed to send each to his own hut.

July 25th 1866. At 11 a.m. H.M.S. Victoria appeared in sight and had some difficulty in finding where we were located as no wreck was visible and we were stupid enough not to light fires. As soon as she was near enough, Captain Owens went off in our lifeboat and shortly after she anchored, sent her boats in to rescue us from our direful position.

There was a high surf by 6 p.m. the last boat with the passengers and luggage, all more or less drenched through, reached the Victoria and she got under way. We cannot speak too highly in praise of the kindness shown by Captain Norman to one and all of us – especially the ladies, placing his own cabin and everything that could be of use to them at their disposal.

To some who were thoroughly drenched, he lent his own clothing. For all he had kind words and sympathy, and his example was followed by all his Officers, and by every man on board H.M.S. Victoria.

The steamers Victoria and Pharis were sent to the assistance of the passengers.

The foregoing is the description of the voyage and wreck of the “Netherby” as described in the ship’s log-book. I now append an unabridged copy of a letter which I received from someone whose name I have forgotten, which sets out the events of the wrick as told by an eye-witness from the Island, by the name of Hitchmott.

The Wreck of the "Netherby" on King Island

(By one who was there).

I have always been fond of an open-air life so while most colonials forty years ago were pushing their way into regions I elected to go even further from the haunts of men. My fate brought me to King Island, a wild place it was too in 1861, not because there were savage beasts there nor anything to hurt a man except snakes, but because it was a solitary place. Ships were still being wrecked on the west coast and had it not been for a few hunters I might have been a Robinson Crusoe. There was, however, a lighthouse at the northern end of my domain at Cape Wickham and the day came when I gave up hunting and became one of the light keepers. The great temptation in the way of us chaps was the hunting. My word, but there were kangaroos and wallabies in plenty. My best day's taking was fifty-one. It was a common thing for me to get twenty-five or thirty and many a time I have camped for the night in one of the gunyas left standing by the two black women who used to hunt for old David Howie. Three of these I found at the lagoons, and the last of them was still standing 1863.

Well, our boss at the Lighthouse had orders given to him to parade us men half and hour before sunset in the lighthouse grounds every day to make sure we were not miles away getting skins. Of course, in spite of this, we did very will in the time at our disposal. One day, it was in 1866, I was some little distance from the shore when suddenly three men came down carrying guns under their arm and ammunition belts showing out under their coats. They said they wanted to send for help and relief to 500 shipwrecked people, 'Can you help us?'. 'Come along', I said, 'we'll make for the light and lose no time'. As we trudged along, the fellows said they had been unable for three weeks to take observations and had no idea where in the world they were. They thought it must be the coast of Australia and expected to meet with natives and possibly have to defend the women who had all come ashore. They had been four days in the bush. Not knowing were they were they had not dared to go inland but had followed the coast all round. That you know is no joke on our western side, for you have to go in and out of dozens of bays. Well, we got to the light and Captain Spong he was just about excited – five hundred people to be fed most of 'em women, and we were four families with rations which came only twice a year. The rest of the succour party came and had a good substantial meal.

Captain Spong decided to equip the whale boat with water, provisions and everything necessary for a run across to the Victorian coast. About noon or soon after

away went the boat in charge of Mr. Parry second mate of the wricked ship, who was in reality head of the succour party. He took only four with him, the remaining five being too knocked up. At sundown from the lighthouse we could discern the boat about fifteen or twenty miles on her course by aid of a powerful telescope kept there. The wind was light and favourable and having provided her plentifully with rations, cooked wallaby etc., gave us no concern for their safety.

All of a sudden we espied something from the direction of the wreck. It was Captain Owen, commander of the "Netherby" and a few sailors accompanying him. Captain Owen had become anxious regarding the ship's position.

While the second mate, Mr. Parry, was on his way from the lighthouse to Melbourne to report the wreck and arrange rescue, Captain Owen left the shipwrecked people in the charge of the ship's doctor, and with a few men struck out for the lighthouse where he would gain information regarding his whereabouts. He had been two days ashore with his unfortunate people and were "still in the bush". There was not much chance of good discipline with hundreds of women no longer under control. Then there were the sailors and male passengers all camped our together in the scrub. This was bad enough, and the natives, he thought, might come down upon them. Every time the boat went to the wreck it was impossible to prevent liquors from being brought ashore. We pitied the Captain for it was a pretty mixed state of things. He was anxious too about the tucker. All had been put on an allowance of one panican of flour and one packet of cocoa, but if no more could be obtained the prospects were not bright.

Of course, we chaps could not leave the Island and the light except under great necessity. Captain Sprong had ordered that I should start at once for the wreck as I knew the Island best and the Captain of The Netherby added "all right and if you can get there in twenty-four hours, I'll give you a couple of sovereigns". Now, the difficulty was to know where the wrecked ship lay. The men who had come by land could give no information and Captain Owen knew but little better. I said to him, "Captain, I can't tell you how long I shall be getting there, for I don't know where your ship is, but I can promise you I can walk for twenty-four hours if I can find the ship in that time, but I don't want your sovereigns".

It took some time to make all straight at home, but at last at a quarter to eleven that night I started. My word, it was a dark night. I couldn't tell whether I was coming to a hillock or a hole and often went sprawling on my face. Of course, I went clothed as lightly

as I could and put on an old thin shirt and a pair of trousers and that was all. I knew I had to travel however and meant to refit at the wreck. I took four scones and some meat and also took some food for mothers and babies. Mosquitoes almost drove me mad, but I held on and when it became light, I found that I had reached what is known as the Arrow Beach. I knew I mustn't stop, so I pushed on and by mid-day, I reached Currie Harbour without having seen anything of the wreck; nor was I acquainted with this part of the country. When I got under the shelter of the bluff where the lighthouse is now built, I thought the time had come to have a spell, for I did not know how much further I should have to walk.

As I was eating my food, I saw three chaps fishing. "Hello" I said. "Good morning". "Good morning", they replied and naturally enough they took me for one of their own party. There were so many of them that they might be doubtful; but when I told them who I was and asked where the wreck was, they flew upon me, piled on the questions and hardly waited for the answers. I went down with them at once and in a few minutes, I met six more, then ten more and then fifty others. Of course, they all asked questions and clustered around me and accompanied me. Presently, I came in sight of the ship. She lay a short distance from the shore, a line being fast from her to a rock. Her back was broken, but perfectly quiet, being evidently fast on the reef and there was the camp out of which came all the women all wild with excitement; everyone was talking and it was a difficult thing to walk among them. Of course, they asked me my name, but did not seem to get their tongues round it, so among all the gathering and excitement I heard them shouting out to Mr Lighthouse or Mr. Stranger. Presently they brought me to the surgeon who had charge of the immigrants and the camp. After he discovered who I was and what the captain had done and that it seemed certain that they would soon be able to take leave of The Island, thought the best way to let everyone know was to stand me on a cask. He then asked questions in a loud voice, I shouting back to let the crowd hear my answers. It was the rummiest sight I had set my eyes upon. When we had finished, the Doctor proposed that all the ladies should kiss their gallant preserver. Now, I am a modest man and pointed out that my attire and appearance forbade it, so I escaped the honour and I hope I did it gracefully.

The Tea-tree scrub was very dense on the shore and they had cut passages through it like streets. Then they had made square openings like the cabins in the ship. A few of the passengers were located under canvass and sails, mostly first class passengers. Some of them were most handsomely furnished; they had got horse cushions and mattresses and boxes and all they needed and had made

themselves at home. There were some very remarkable people about. I noticed one gentleman who was living in one of these tents with his two daughters (very pretty girls they were} and two sons and a governess. He came out to me looking anxious and said he had a thousand sovereigns. The people knew he had this and it was temptation to some of the rougher ones. At present he had put it into the ground under the mattress in his tent. They never left it unguarded night and day; either he, or one of his sons or one of his daughters sat on that mattress, but he was getting sick of the thing. Would I carry that money for him to the Lighthouse? I didn't like the job, first because money weighs heavy and it's a responsibility to go through the bush with so much treasure. If had come to grief and lost the money, that gentleman would never have believed me. After all, I didn't take the money. The owner stood by it till the steamer came. I heard that he afterwards went to Queensland, is alive at this present day, and holds a high position and one of his sons is head of the Police at Bundaberg in north Queensland, and his family are there still I believe. (The wreck was in July 1866).

I hadn't been long there before the surgeon called me up and said he had made up his mind to start me back to the lighthouse taking rations that were made in the camp. "I can't", he said, "leave this woman I am looking after without help, no the man Jack, and some of the sailors must stay who will be needed when relief comes. Some sailors and the younger male passengers unmarried will parade in the morning, receive two days rations, and start with Mr. "Lighthouse" for "Wickham". The boss quietly added that it would be of no use for anyone to turn back for he would get no food served; all that was left was for the women.

You must understand that the beach was strewn with cargo and the clothing was in profusion. Silk shirts and coats of every sort, boots, hats, I helped myself to what I wanted. How many sets of underclothing I wore on that return tramp I forget, but I would have warranted for the polar regions, and as for my headpiece, t'would have done credit to Collins Street. Next morning one hundred and seventeen single males paraded before the surgeon, each of them had been served with his rations namely two pannicans of flour and two packets of cocoa, and had been told to cook his food in preparation for a two days walk.

I have seen some funny crowds in my time, but this one beats them all. You'd suppose that men who had been half starved and had done no tramping for some four months would have started in light marching order. Bless you! not a bit of it. Do you suppose they were going

to leave their goods and chattels behind 'em, things they had brought all the way from the old country? It was no manner of use to tell 'em it was hard walking. They expected no more than a stroll through English woods. I suppose those one hundred and seventeen men toed the line carrying sacks and bundlefuls of everything they could stuff into them. One man's load towered above his head, the next was big enough to weigh him almost double. Wearing apparel, carpenters tools, spare boots. One party of two had nothing but a zinc cylinder out of the life boat full of sherry with a pole through it; they soon lightened their load. One fellow had a brand new saddle on his back. But though they would not give up their property some of them did not mind lightening themselves by almost finishing the liquor. They started on port common for weak minded and inviled men. They reckoned I was as hard as nails and know I could walk the distance without turning a hair. I mustn't forget to tell you that the coat I had chosen must evidently have been intended for a sporting gentleman according to English dodges. It had a bi pocket all round the tails, large enough to hold a couple of hares. In one of these I hid away the only thing I begged of the Doctor. I looked at the crowd I had to lead and then I said "Sir, I hope you will allow me a bottle of brandy, it looks as if some of the party may want a little tonic before they reach Wickham". Well we started at length, the funniest crew King Island ever saw before or since. One poor chap put on a new pair of Napoleon boots and could have hardly done worse for himself. Every mile or two someone sang out for a rest (a spell we call it) and I have them five minutes. Of course I couldn't keep 'em together, and we struggled on keeping to the beaches as far as we could. That night we reached Bass River, and distance of sixteen miles. Of course I lighted fires and tried to make them comfortable. Next morning we were off again and I noticed one thing, that they were foot sore already and their loads were smaller. Every time we had a spell the day before some of the poor chaps used to overhaul their bundles and throw away something they must part with, sometimes a big hammer or a piece of clothing. They began to feel the distance of course. I speedily pitied one chap with club feet; they called him "Deer-foot" after a pedestrian of that name. What in the world they meant by sending him out to the colonies I don't know.

Now my regiment became a greater burden to me than ever, "I say", sang out one of them, "how far is it to the Lighthouse?" "Oh. Just a mile or two and you will see it". It was hardly true, but what was I to do? The crowd hobbled along expectedly hoping every hour to come in sight of the light. But instead of the lighthouse, we saw a few men coming towards us. It was the Captain who had started out with a small band of men to meet the

company of unmarried men which I was leading. "Hullo", he said, "Where is Hitchmott?". "Here Sir", I said. The boss looked me over and nearly laughed but only said "Humph! I didn't know you in that rig." I expect he didn't. I was twice as big as when I started, and King Island up to that time had never seen such a rig out. The next thing was to distribute the biscuits. "I'll get them into line, Sir", I said, "and you can serve the biscuits equally all round." He acted on my suggestion, but those emigrants had learnt a thing or two in the Old Country. You'd hardly believe the trouble I had in keeping them from dodging round and getting a double ration. I fancy I fixed them pretty well and each man got a biscuit and a half and we resumed our tramp for Wickham, now distant ten miles. I think it was the funniest sight I ever saw, for there were one hundred and seventeen besides myself tramping along the white beach, partly in bunches and partly in pairs and singly, still bending under the remnants of their loads. I've nearly come to the end of my yarn. By sundown we had come to one of those grassy hollows a mile or two from Wickham. Here I collected my flock, or as many as I could muster, and about ten o'clock' we got to the light, but stragglers were coming in till four a.m. It was a wonder how they escaped death crawling round the dangerous places on the coast for they had lost my track. However, next morning my one hundred and seventeen answered to their names, and so I finished one of the hardest and yet one of the most comical jobs I ever had to tackle.

However the work was not over for our leading folk. Each of us chaps had fifty men chartered on him and had to make the best of it for a day or two. It was not long, however, after we arrived that we saw the wake of a steamer. It proved to be H.M.S. Victoria on her way to the wreck. It was Wednesday 25th July, 1866. Mr. Parry with two passengers in the whale boat crossed the straits and made the Australian coast near Mr. Roadknight's station at 6 p.m. on Friday, and a horse being provided, Mr. Parry reached Queenscliffe on Saturday evening and communicated through the electric telegraph with the harbour master at Williamstown who was the Government representative there. Mr. Parry mounted his horse again and hurried to Geelong, twenty miles distant. On Sunday morning they roused the Premier and other ministers who got the two steamers, H.M.S. Victoria and Pharis, fitted with scratch crews so as to waste no time. You must know that the Victorian Government had got into trouble over the loss of "Admelta". Such sudden reports have to be met with expedition, but with care. I don't know the rights of it, but they say it is quite true that it was delay which prevented the coming of a steamer in time to save a number of shipwrecked sailors.

At any rate, there was no time lost in anchoring

the rescuing vessels and lowering their beats, and in time, the women first and then the men, were taken aboard. But the finish of my business was not over yet. You remember the risk I had on the way to the wreck, well that was good enough; but you don't suppose I forgot what those poor chaps threw away on the tramp to Wickham. My word, how many a ride I had afterwards to pick up all sorts of things. I was kept in clothes for years after that.

M. Hickmott.

I now leave The History of the Wreck and take up Mother's reminiscences. H.M.S. Victoria and Pharis transported the ship's wrecked company to Williamstown where the conveyances were ready to take them on to Melbourne Exhibition Buildings for refuge. There, the Victorian Government provided food and at a benefit concert £1000 was subscribed. This provided a change of clothes and a pair of blankets for each family. At this juncture, the vessel "City of Melbourne" was fitted up to take the passengers on to Brisbane, Queensland.

Mr. & Mrs. William Skerman and Willie Skerman stayed behind. The former took up work as a boot maker and the latter as a factory hand. When Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh arrived, Uncle Will went on board and joined his band for he was a leading cornet player, thus gaining a trip round the world. He, however, did not get on with the Bandmaster and quitted the ship and went "bush" when he arrived back in Australia. Search parties were sent out to arrest him and bring him back, but were not successful. He narrowly escaped them on one occasion. He was hidden under his sister's bed in her house when they searched it, but did not look there.

The others of the party went to Queensland arriving on the 6th and were accommodated at the depot near Victoria Bridge for one week. The Queensland Government gave John Skerman, F.J. Skerman and Uncle Hope Martin work on the road to Toowoong Cemetary at fifteen shillings per week without rations and Uncle Alf Darlington was sent to construction work on the Brisbane-Toowoomba railway near Gatton at sixpence per day and keep. The navvies went on strike at this. They went to Brisbane and a riot was instigated. The Government then sent them back giving them one pound a week without rations. Uncle Alf had a few pounds by him, so he quitted the job and went to Sydney.

The remaining party lived near Toowong Church of England in a hut they built of saplings, tacking

blankets and bags around for walls. This semi-exposure brought on the colonial fever and John, Frederick John and Walter were laid up with it. Mrs. Skerman (mother) then took in sewing to bring in a little money. Mrs. Drew, hearing of this, offered them her house, rent free, but which they had to keep in repair. Captain Hamilton came about three months later and rented this house from Mrs. Drew and our people had to leave, but Mrs. Drew then let them into her own house.

The sickness lasted two months and Mother did Captain Hamilton's washing at 2/6 per day. After the fever had passed, Father went to Oxley for a fortnight and pulled corn for 2/6 a week. Then Mrs. Drew employed him at 8/- a week. My Grandfather and Uncle Walter went stumping in the Toowong Cemetery for 15/- a week without rations. Hope Martin, when he saw the fever developing, went to Sydney in September of that year. Later, Captain Hamilton made his home at Scarborough, via Redcliffe and employed Grandfather in repairing harness, boots, boot making and odd jobbing for 10/- a week, and Frederick and Walter Skerman at 2/6 per week and rations. They were still weak after the fever. Mother continued the washing for the Captain and also took in the ship's washing and ironing as well for five weeks at 2/6 a day, then went once a fortnight for two days' washing at the same rate. In May, 1868, Grandmother, Mrs. John Skerman, died, two years after leaving England. She was not a strong woman and the rough passage out from England and the severe experiences during the wreck and afterwards hastened her end. Grandfather sadly laid her to rest and faced a new experience in a New World.

Now a great change was to take place. When the "Netherby" sank, all our people's possessions sank with her. My Grandfather and with his sons intended to set up their foundry and equipment in Brisbane and at that time, there was a good opening for them to establish themselves, but their plant was now under the waters of Bass Strait. They left the Old Country when she was in straightened circumstances and, arriving in Brisbane, they found similar conditions prevailing there. Governor Bowen was in office and by my parent's report, Queensland's finances were in a state of insolvency. They awaited the arrival of the "Netherby" with its cargo of railway lines and other valuables, goods and additional people with a thrill of hope, but instead of being an asset, it became a liability. All these people had to be provided for and placed; and the foregoing relief work and wages paid shows how very little money was in circulation. The next year, 1967, Mr. Nash discovered the Gympie gold mines which were called the "Saviour of the Colony". This discovery infused new life into the State.

The gold fever however, did not deter the determination of my grandfather and his sons from going onto the land. Being robbed by a ruthless sea of all

their possessions, they had to set out in a very primitive way and the results were not very encouraging for a number of years. In 1869, my Grandfather took up 120 acres of land on the North Pine River, via Harrison's Pocket and with Uncle Walter, he built a home and Aunt Annie was with them to take charge of the domestic doings. Uncle Walter was then about fifteen years old. They named the farm "Woodlands" being heavily timbered throughout, but there was not much alluvial land on the river banks. My father took the farm adjoining lower the river, containing 68 acres, the land being very similar, and he built his home of slab walls and bark from the stringy bark trees which made quite a good roof. This farm Grandfather named "Rockangle", which was shortened from "Rocky-angle". This name suggested itself by the distinct right angle turn in the river, which was very Rocky. The river formed the north boundary of each property and was about 25 chains from Father's house. All water for domestic use had to be carried from there until horses were bought and then a barrel was used for conveying it drawn on a sledge. An easy method for carrying heavy weights was used. A piece of cedar, or any light wood, about 6" x 2 ½" and 3' long would be hollowed out, canoe like and made to fit comfortably over a person's shoulders, a piece being taken out of one side about half way across at the centre to allow room for the neck. The timber would then be tapered down from the shoulders along the sides to about two inches diameter at the ends. Two inches from the ends, a small hole would be bored to tread a light rope through. Hooks would be attached to these to grasp the handles of buckets. Kerosene tins were the handiest vessels. Four gallons of water each side could easily be carried long distances in this way. When the yoke was comfortably fitted, it would be pared down to make it as light as possible, compatible with strength.

After selecting the land, Grandfather, Uncle Walter and Father worked on equal shares. While the two older men worked on the farms cropping, Uncle Walter went to work for Tom Covington for 10/- a week to bring cash to buy rations for the company. Father felled 20 acres of heavy scrub and planted maize, but the 1872 flood (the highest known) washed it away when half grown. He then planted potatoes amongst green timber, but all went to top- no tubers worth while. The following year, they got a crop of corn and sold it for 1/6 a bushel and paid sixpence a bushel for cartage. This corn was shelled by rubbing the cobs or spiked boards (like brushes), or by the cobs being placed in bags and flailed with sticks or mallets. Cotton was then planted which bolled well and had no grubs or pests to hinder it, but it had to be sold at a penny half penny a pound. This not paying, arrowroot

was planted and Grandfather made a grinding mill to pulp the bulbs. This machine was placed by the water's edge at the River and tubs were used for washing the ground arrowroot. The good arrowroot settled to the bottom and the debris, being lighter, was skimmed off the top. This process was repeated three or more times until the arrowroot was clean enough for market. It was then laid out on sheets in the sun to dry and packed for sale. It too was very low in price and brought only a penny farthing a pound so no more was grown. Funds were low because cash returns were so small, so the party had to subsist chiefly on pumpkins and potatoes (sweet and English) with other vegetables and any game procurable. Two little pigs were bought but were taken out of the sty by dingoes. Fowls were bought and couped but native cats contrived to kill them by sucking away their blood.

At this time the three Skermans dissolved partnership, Grandfather, Uncle Walter and Aunt Annie working "Woodlands" and Father and Mother "Rockangle". Each now bought their own implements and live stock. When sister Maria was about one year old she was very sick with teething and Ally went daily to Mrs, Jayne, a Roman Catholic, about one and a half miles away for a bottle of milk (gratis). Father then ventured to buy a cow called Browny and then started dairying, in the year 1878. He bought more from Mr. Tom Petrie (the "North Pine" railway station was renamed "Petrie" after him). He followed on by buying from Mr. Michael (senior), Pansy, Beautie and Sally, and from Mr. Fogg, Sally, Nellie, and Lucie and started making butter for sale. Before the cream separator was invented the milk was set in large shallow dishes about sixteen inches in diameter and allowed to rest until all the cream had risen to the top. This took over a day at times so quite a lot of dishes were kept on hand, being placed on long shelves made for the purpose and thus necessitating a commodious floor. In summer time, the milk would often coagulate before all the cream was risen, thus causing loss. Great care had to be taken to keep the milk liquid as long as possible. Cleanliness was achieved by sterilisation of milk utensils in boiling water. A dash churn was used. This is high vessel with a collar inside about one third from the top on which rested the lid with an inch hole through the centre through which the handle of the dash was worked. The dash was a cross piece of wood fitted on the bottom of the handle and just free enough inside the cistern to allow the dash to work up and down freely. The cream could thus be well agitated and it was not usually a long job to cause the cream to "break", the butter and buttermilk thus being separated. The butter was then gathered together with pats, washed, salted, and worked as required to squeeze all the buttermilk out.

Later these churns were superseded by a cubical vessel swung and turned from the centre on a frame turned by hands and having dash boards fitted inside to interrupt the cream as it hit the boards thus causing it to "break".

In those days the population of the towns was small and the demand for butter limited. Farmers either took their produce to the storekeepers or sent it to them by others. Co-operation was not then practised and there was no uniformity of quality. Each farmer had to find his own place to sell and deal as best he could. This left it open to storekeepers to pay any price they liked and many producers were subjected to low payments. At this time from fourpence a pound to a shilling was paid according to the supply which was controlled by the weather and time of the year.

The Skermans lived twenty miles from Brisbane and, with horses and dray, they took their produce there each week or fortnight. They kept their horses in a stall or small paddock over night and got up about 2.30 a.m. to feed them. By the time they had eaten heir own breakfast, the horses were finished theirs and were yoked and away, to return as soon as business was finished. They rarely got back before dark and often it would be 10 p.m. They always made the trip in one day. They had heavy loads at times. The roads were only bush tracks and when they got bogged, the bags of produce would be dumped off, the vehicle pulled out and the produce carried back and replaced- heavy work indeed in the mud. Farmers further up were worse off and had to make a two day trip.

These business trips had their recreative value. Friday and Saturday were the usual days for going to the city. You would see farmers standing on the pavement in groups discussing the season, the weather, the crops and politics and I've seen bobbies come and move them along. Some of them would have a "blow-out" while the opportunity was present. They sometimes became so full and stupid that they did not know their way home. I have had them follow me home and then I had to take them home, returning any time in the night or morning. One afternoon, I saw one man driving "four-in-hand" in a german wagon, lying on his back, dead drunk with the reins tied to the rails and the horses taking to road up hill and down without any breaks or control, full gallop down hill as the wagon pushed them on. This wagon was smashed up against an embankment at the foot of a long hill within one mile from his own home. Teetotallers are often held in derision, but I have always considered myself and all my Father's family much blessed by his abstinence and noble example. Not one of his sons or daughters indulged in the habit.

Grandfather (John Skerman) died in 1875 at the age of sixty-eight years. They laid him to rest beside Grandmother in the Toowong cemetery, Brisbane, where Uncle Will and brother Alf also rest. The passing on of anyone creates a change to those who remain. Not long after, Uncle Walter married Miss Hay and Aunt Annie went to live with Aunt Carrie at Cabbagetree Creek. William Skerman having passed on, Aunt Carrie married Archibald McCallum and Aunt Annie went housekeeping for Mr White. From there she married Frederick Michael and they went to Rush Creek to live and from there to Samson Vale, where they raised a family and from whence they were laid to rest, Uncle first, and then Auntie later, in the Samson Vale Cemetery

In 1877, Father bought the Farm of 40 acres next to him down the river from Mr. Ned Austin. This was heavy scrub land which had to be cleared, but it was the best quality alluvial soil. He gave five pounds an acre to be paid off in ten years at 10% interest. There was a slab building on the property which Father used as a barn.

In 1879 Uncle Joe Darlington (Mother's brother) came from England bringing with him his four sons and one daughter. His wife, nee Mary King, died leaving him a widower, and he decided to bring his family out to Queensland. When he came, he stayed with Father and Mother for about twelve months and then took his family to Brisbane where he found work and housing. While with mother in our small home, she had sixteen at the table each meal and all were accommodated in our small slab house with the bark roof and ground floor with open fire place. Mother then did her cooking in a camp oven. The building was about 25 x 10 feet. While with Father, my Uncle Joe helped with Farm work, growing vegetables and stumping and clearing. Father's family was increasing in numbers, there now being eight. More accommodation was urgently needed, so he built a new house on the new farm he bought. It was about twenty chains lower down the hill from the old one. The walls, partitions and floor were of split and dressed slabs and the roof of split shingles. We thought this was a fine house and so it was at that time.

Every few years floods would rise in the River. "Rockangle" farm was about thirty feet above water level where flooded waters began to overflow it, but half a mile further down the water backed round, covering almost all the flat of about fifty acres (including part of two other farms) before it overflowed its bank at the higher point. This backwater contributed to the fertility of the land by deposits, but it also left behind noxious weed seeds to contend with later. On one occasion we had a number of pigs grazing on lucerne on this flat when

a flood arose. We did not want to shift them until we were sure they were in danger and waited until the water broke over the high bank and was running about three feet deep. We then had to act and swam over to where the pigs were still above water level and forced them into the stream to swim. They seemed to understand they were in danger of the water closing in around them and swam as gracefully as a dog to safety. These floods caused a pleasant diversion to us young folk. Many small ones occurred, but did little damage except to fences, but a high one overflowed the farm about 1880-82 and submerged everything, causing a total loss. Lucerne will not survive if under water more than twenty-four hours, neither will potatoes nor maize in cob. This flood lingered on owing to continuing rain. As soon as the showers became intermittent, we children would run out paddling in the water, watching logs, pumpkins, melons etc. and sometimes an animal floating down the river. We would swim the rivulets running into the main stream and gather mushrooms which came up like magic and made tasty meals. Great fun we would think, but alas for our parents. The flood rains had risen to about three chains from the house. Father was walking the verandah, carrying Lucy looking out over his Farm, contemplating what it meant to him and Mother with their family of nine. Some of us would run to him every now and again and say how high the river was now. His answer was, "Yes, children, it is fun to you to see this wonderful sight, but this flood means a loss to us of all our work during the past six or eight months". But beyond this he did not complain or fret. He had a quiet trust in his ever watchful Father that all would be well.

From the time our people came to Queensland, they came in contact with the aboriginal blacks. These, however, were chiefly those who had come under the influence of white people. They fished in the River and brought some of their catch to Mother to barter for bread, sugar, tea, tobacco etc., but father did not smoke, so did not pander to this enslaving evil. Johnny Campbell, a Black Bushranger, roamed the district about 1877 and would suddenly appear from the scrub and cause great anxiety to the farmer's wives when their husbands were away. On one occasion when Uncle Fred Michael and Aunt Annie were establishing their home at the foot of Mount Samson, Johnny appeared and entered the door. Uncle was just over the brow of the hill fencing, but Johnny evidently didn't notice this. He grabbed Auntie in his arms, but she cooeed exasperatingly over his shoulder to Uncle. Johnny looked around to see if anyone was coming and Auntie grabbed the gun standing by the door. He took fright at this and decamped hurriedly. Uncle had heard and rushed home, but Johnny was gone. He was caught later. An old black came to me one day (after Father's time), tapping his stomach and pointing to the sweet

potato patch on the Farm- his way of asking me for some. I said "All right" and waved my arm in approval and the poor fellow went over and took what he wanted. At another time, a black wanted to go to the north side of the River, (we were on the south) and we boys went down to watch him swim it. It was then in flood. He went down to the narrowest point where the rush of the water was concentrated and running ten or twelve feet deep in flood. He plunged in and took the opposite bank in about three or four powerful strokes diagonally down the stream. The water was about forty feet wide there. Father got on well with the blacks. He had a quiet nature, but jovial and exhilarating in his manner. Walking along solitary bush tracks, if they twigged him coming, they would slip behind a tree or bush and spring out in front of him with their gymnastics to give him a fright, but he would greet them similarly.

Bush fires took their turn amongst the setbacks of those days. Being heavily timbered country, their progress was retarded somewhat; the wind did not get a clear sweep behind them, but the timber had a hand in carrying it forward. The stringy bark trees were the chief offenders. This tree sheds its bark in long shreds and there is always loose bark hanging from the trunk which is particularly inflammable. The fire would run up to the top of these trees, some hundred feet high and the blazing bark would be thrown sometimes half a mile ahead by wind to lead the main flames onward. Many a fight we had, lasting well into morning and renewed again about 9 a.m. again the next day and so on until it was conquered. All the neighbours would turn out to help and many an exhausted body would take a sound sleep when the danger was passed.

Schooling: Our parents were fortunate in this matter. The neighbourhood was opened to selection by the Government about the same time, in small areas which were selected generally by young couples, with the result families soon increased and children were available to hold the school together. Country Schools were at that time, called "Provisional", which meant that the Government provided the teacher on a small salary and the parents were supposed to make contributions in kind or cash to bring their income up to a living standard. The parents had also to provide the building which was usually of slab timbers for the walls and floor and split shingles for the roofing. School requisites were provided partly by the Government and partly by parents. It was a rough life and most of the teachers had no academic training. However they taught the rudimentary necessities- reading, writing and arithmetic, also English and geography. Later on, the slab buildings were abandoned and neat cosy sawn wood buildings provided, still by the assistance of parents and friends by way of placing the building materials on the

grounds. Teachers were also secured who had a higher training and many who had graduated from pupil teacher-ship, also others being influenced to migrate from other lands for the purpose.

Another feature of vital importance was not overlooked by these early settlers. In the Old Country, parents had been attentive to instructing and training their children in the way of righteousness, truthfulness, chastity, courtesy, chivalry and other associate virtues. There was no church in the locality. These are usually forthcoming with other public buildings when new districts are opened to closer settlement. Our people took an active part in this work. The Presbytery of Brisbane offered to make "Supply" available if the people supplied the building. The Presbyterian Church thus took the lead in the district and although our people were adherents of the Church of England, they joined with the Presbyterians. Mr Charles Hay and Father were ordained Elders. The work of church building then began. A convenient site was chosen for the saw-pit and the logs were drawn there by a bullock team owned by Mr. C. Hay and, after it was sawn it was taken to the church site about one and a half miles away. Uncle Will and Uncle Walter took on the pitsawing (by hand), cutting the framework, the weather-boards and the flooring-boards. The roof was of split shingles.

The opening day came and ministers from Brisbane officiated. The church was overcrowded and we little ones had to sit in a row on the floor under the pulpit. Mr. Hay was Superintendent of the Sunday School, Miss Jean Gordon one of the teachers and also Father. Some time later, Mr C.Hay and Miss Jean Gordon were married and left the district and Father took on the oversight with the help of others. Church was held every fortnight but Sunday School every week. Father never failed to take all his children old enough and some of his neighbours in the dray every Sunday. Later he bought a wagon drawn by two horses. He could trot with this and do the journey of three miles quicker. The pulpit was suppled chiefly by students from Brisbane who were training for the Ministry- Messers Southey, Patterson, Crookstone, Cox, Gillespie and others took their turn. A "Band of Hope" was also arranged for the young folk to keep the principle of temperance before them and for the development of their talents in singing, reciting, the use of musical instruments etc. and many a happy gathering was enjoyed. This was held once a month and on moon-light nights, outdoor games were played after the meeting. This following kindly act I must record. Mr. Gordon (Senior), came regularly to the services and always carried a shiny tin Billy of clear water for the pulpit and for the little children after the services. He lived over a mile away and walked with his wife and

some of his family and always had a cheery word for us when he gave us a drink.

Children grow. It was not long before there was quite a number of boys and girls. The State School roll went up to forty-six. The Provisional school had been displaced by a sawn wood building and a Teacher's House and was called "The Harrison's Pocket State School". It was built on the north side of the river and in flood times, the south side children could not go. When the river fell to a crossable depth for horses, we would be taken to the other side that way on their backs, or in a dray and we would meet again when school was over.

On the 23rd of November, 1887, a teacher direct from England was in charge. He did not realise what tropical thunderstorms could develop into. About 3 p.m. that afternoon, a storm developed on the horizon in the South-East. The sky gradually became blacker and blacker till it presented a seething blue-black angry appearance. The teacher became very concerned. He walked to the verandah and looked out, came in and then went out again and became quite agitated. He did not know whether to send us home or keep us in. If he kept us and heavy rain set in, what was he to do with us over night? We were one and a half miles from the School and others up to three or four miles away. He decided he would send us all home. We scooted for our lives; we had experience and sensed the danger. We had just crossed the river when heavy hail began to pelt down and in a few minutes it hailed and blew. Great stones hurtled down, the average being about the size of an egg and many up to three inches in diameter. We all rushed for shelter under bushes, large logs, behind large trees, but did not escape a terrific pelting. When the storm abated, we made for home all bleeding and battered. Some of us carry scars from these hailstones till this day. Intuition had prepared Mother to be prepared for us. She had made a great fire and put on a lot of water to boil. When we appeared (Father had come to met us) she was startled by our appearance, all red with blood. She prepared hot water baths in tubs, bathed us and put us straight into bed and then brought in a plate of hot gruel for each. I was about fourteen then; never before or since have I seen a hail storm like it. Father had oaten hay in stooks on the Farm on Woodlands and he and Fred were carting it in. After the storm there were no stooks left; all had been swept away out of sight. Some cattle were killed, wallabies, fowls and birds too. Gum trees had their bark bruised on the storm side and each year after as they shed their bark, the new bark showed the scars, making it evident that the stones had penetrated to the sap under the bark. This effect remained on the trees for years to come. All of the children had similar experiences and one boy was found unconscious lying on a log. The surface of the land was covered inches deep with

hailstones and looked as white as milk. Father measured some of the stones next morning about 9 a.m. and found them up to two and a half inches in diameter and two feet deep against the walls. Trees were stripped of their leaves and small branches, large branches also being torn off and many uprooted by the force of the wind. Grass was also battered with the hail and frostbitten by the thawing ice. Standing crops were ruined. Maize with cobs half developed was shredded and the landscape bore the appearance of desolation. The cattle for a week or two had a lean time owing to the pounding the grass and vegetation had received. The school teacher was nonplussed. The storm struck the school and school house with full force (they were close together on the top of a hill). The storm terrified them and no wonder. They got under the table for protection, for thirty-two panes of glass had been smashed to pieces and both buildings were flooded within. The galvanised iron roofs were punctured and many sheets perforated and rendered useless. George was ploughing. He could see there was no time to take the horses home, so he unyoked them where they stood and let them go to protect themselves.

The old folk did not forget the young regarding amusement. School concerts and picnics were arranged. A cricket team was formed for Saturday afternoons play for the boys, tennis and croquet for the girls, elders also joining in. Excursions were also arranged and Mt. Samson and other peaks scaled by parties. Boating parties rowed down the river to the sea. Wagons full of young folk would be taken to the seaside at Sandgate and Redcliffe for bathing and although we were confined for want of such fast transport as is available to-day, many trips helped to brighten our young lives, with imaginations also of what lay beyond. Family Christmas gatherings were a feature never forgotten by the Skermans and their associates. Each year a picnic was arranged amongst them and each home took it in turn to be host, the chief places being at Cobble Creek (Uncle Wills). Uplands (Uncle Walters), Samsonvale (Uncle Freds) and Rockangle(Father). As dairying was part of the farm activities, two or three young folk would ride home about 3:30 p.m., rush the milking through and return to continue the merry making in the evening. We would then rest there overnight in barns amongst hay or corn husks and return early in the morning for the milking, the elder folk and the little ones arriving later in the day. There was good fishing in the River and on moonlight nights we would go in parties to angle them. Wallabies swarmed the scrubs and also bandicoots and kangaroo rats. These were agricultural pests which wasted labour to control them. Picket fences and log fences had to be erected. Kangaroos and dingoes roamed over wider areas. Cockatoos and parrots molested the grain crops in the field causing much loss. To boys however, they provided a diversion from the ordinary work;

we would go shooting by day and night to protect the crops from their ravages.

Husking maize cobs provided much fun at night time also. The husking and thrashing machine had not come to light then. Maize growing made a lot of work. When ripe, it had to be pulled cob by cob, thrown into vehicles and carted to the barn and stacked. For about six weeks it was fresh and tough and would usually be left till it had "sweated" out and dried. Then threshing and husking started which was generally done on wet days or at night. Parties would go to the barn and sit on the stack throwing the cobs into a heap ready for thrashing. A few grains would be rubbed off and went flying around the barn to find a target in somebody's face, thus keeping an exhilarating spirit burning. It was a warm job though in winter. The husks soon formed a blanket round the worker. When these heaped they had to be carried out. The cattle were fond of them. While husking was going on two or three would start thrashing the cobs (by hand machine now) and would sift the grain and bag it. At about 10 p.m. we would stop work and have a cup of tea and hot toast and off to bed. Thus some of our evenings would be spent pleasantly and profitably in an atmosphere of comradeship accompanied and accentuated by singing and joking and the spirit of goodwill. On winter nights also young men and boys would go out burning off logs and stumps to clear the paddocks. Some of the logs would drop heaps of red hot embers. These we would rake together and place sweet potatoes under them covering them with white ashes. When cooked which did not take long, they were hot and delicious and enjoyed by young fellows who always seemed to be hungry.

Hollow dead trees light at night create a beautiful sight. Light at the bottom the fire gradually creeps up inside and bursts out at knots and branches on the way up. Some of these trees are high and large and very dry with age, and the fire throws flames and sparks all around. Parts of the tree begin to fall off still showering larger sprays of sparks until it consumes in a great heap of live ashes all around the stump.

Native animals were numerous in those days. The native bear (Koala) usually nested on the butts of the limbs of trees which form a fork, chiefly gum trees but sometimes in hollow trees. Opossums, flying squirrels, iguanas, lizards and snakes domicile in hollow timber, also kookaburras, parrots, cockatoos, owls, magpies, bats and other winged creatures preferred hollow limbs of trees to nestle in. When a lighted hollow tree began to burn the smoke fumes would drive these inhabitants out. The opossums, iguanas and lizards would make a dexterous descent by means of their sharp claws on the

outside of the tree. The flying squirrel would open its furry webbed membrane and glide to safety and the birds would make a similar exit to escape the fire so useful and also so destructive to life. In the last few decades, these native animals have met a subtle enemy in the fox which has almost exterminated them in places.

Moonlight nights were chosen for shooting nocturnal animals or birds. The electric torch was unknown then. For high shooting into trees the second- third quarters of the moon were preferred; it was then when it was reaching an overhead position. Manoeuvres would be made to bring their prey between the gun and the moon where it could be plainly seen. Opossums were the chief offenders in night plundering. Cat-like, at the slightest ominous sound, they would rush to a tree for safety, but alas for them, they entered into the focus of the hunter by doing so. For low shooting, a lantern would be carried. A moving light at night attracts attention. The victims would stop and watch the light and unwittingly it was reflected from their eyes, which showed their position clearly. Dingoes, wild cats, wallabies, kangaroo rats and any destructive land animal could be shot this way.

Flying foxes were also numerous and were a real nightmare for fruit growers. They slept during the day hanging on to limbs of trees, head downward, others below hanging on to them, and also others below hanging onto those, and so on, net like and chattering between themselves. One could discover their camps by this and the odious smell they created. They stuck to the same camping ground for a long time and would outwit the most fastidious sanitary inspector. When dusk set in there was a great chattering and commotion amongst the branches of the trees as they took off in a body in flight, darkening the sky on their way to fruit orchards for their nightly meal. They were not interesting game for the shooter because of their obnoxious smell and their uselessness for food. It was difficult to drive them from their camp. Some people poisoned them by creating fumes under the trees or by making continuous smoke fires under them to drive them away. To shoot them needed a very hard and unsympathetic heart. It was difficult to drop them, for even when dead, they hung onto their mates above by their gripping claws.

Bushmen were always on the lookout for bees nests and when one was “spotted” in a tree arrangements were made to rob the nest. About March was the best time in the year when summer storage of honey was about completed. This job was often done at night time when the bees were somewhat confused. Smoke fires or a smoke bellows helped keep them quiet. The tree

would be chopped down and the timber over the nest removed with an axe. The honey comb would be placed in a receptacle, taken home, placed in a porous cloth and the honey thus left to drip into another vessel.

Establishing their homesteads and clearing and working the soil was an arduous undertaking for those pioneers. The coastal lands were almost all timbered with what was called scrub and forest. Scrub land was richer for general crops. Later when markets became available semi-scrub and forest land proved valuable for fruit, sweet potatoes and other vegetables. The land best suited for different crops had to be discovered and proved by experience. Each type of timbered country was hard to clear, and all was subject to re-growth either by suckers springing up from butts of fallen timber or by seedlings arising to take the places of their parents. The scrubs on alluvial flats were very dense with heavy timber. Great gum trees up to eight feet in diameter at the base and a hundred feet high to the first limb grew principally on the outskirts of the scrub and also large bloodwoods, turpentine, tallowwood, box, stringybarks, red ironbark, grey gum etc. In the real scrub softer timber grew, also large in size. There were great spreading fig-trees with huge flanges about six inches thick which, if cut off and laid down would cover a fair size kitchen table. The sap from this tree has a chewing quality which we valued as boys and which, I think, forms the basis of the chewing gum which folk chew to-day in the form of a flavoured lolly. Other trees were the hickory, also with large flanges, beech, bean, currajong, cedar, pine, crows-ash, beef wood etc., interspersed with smaller timbers and laced together with strong vines of different kinds and the valuable though tough prickly lawyer vine, so useful for wicker work. This latter we were told was so named because once a vine stuck to your skin it would not let go until it had taken a piece out and drawn blood with its cat-like claws. These heavy scrubs had to be felled. In coastal scrubs, the undergrowth was usually cut first with a slashing hook and then the axe would follow, cutting down the heavy timber. These trees were not always felled singly.

A large tree would be reserved and an area it would influence would be nicked- cut into slightly on the side facing the large tree to weaken its back. When they were ready, the large reserved tree would be felled. The scrub was thick. The large tree when it was “off” would lean against those which were nicked and its pressure would gradually force them to give way at the nick and, each driving those before it, would lay the area low. The nicked trees would often split up many feet high before the top fell over. Much

chopping was saved this way. In later years men ventured many feet up the trunk by means of a spring board, cutting notches to accommodate its clip on the way up, till the desired place was reached where the trunk was much thinner. They would then stand on the board and fell the tree, but in our people's time this practice had not developed. After the scrub was felled the branches standing high would be lopped to make the mass compact, thus ensuring a good burn. Scrubs on drier inland areas did not require so much work; the timber would be felled over the underbrush without it being cut.

In the forest country trees were not so plentiful and were usually killed by ring-barking after which, however, many suckers and seedlings had to be kept down. After scrubs were burnt off crops were planted in the ashes and many good yields were reaped in this way. This land had to be stumped and cleared for the plough. There were no bulldozers in those days, no powerful machinery to lift these out. The method was to dig right round the stump with the pick and shovel and remove the earth eighteen inches deep and two feet from it. The logs were cut into short lengths with cross-cut saws six or seven feet long. These logs were rolled into the hole against the stumps, kindling wood placed between them and a fire lighted. As these burned partly away, more logs would be rolled up to keep the fires going. Some of the stumps took a lot of burning, particularly the bean, before the tap was charred deep enough for the plough. Heavy surface roots had then to be followed with pick and shovel and chopped off where they penetrated deep enough for the plough to pass over. Even these were found to have tap roots anchoring them which had to be found and cut before the root would yield to a heavy lever and fulcrum. Stump-jump ploughs were not known then.

When burning stumps was going on the pioneer would go and stoke his fires after tea before he went to bed, to keep them "in" till morning. Forty hour week? These were the men and women who established Australia and proved its worth as a producing country. When the land was cleared ready for the plough, two or three horses were yoked to draw it. This was followed by a set of harrows and then a roller to break the clods.

All cereal crops were cut with a scythe by hand. An acre a day was the area a man was supposed to cut. Men were expert with the scythe. Taking about three feet in a swath they would lay the crop in a neat row. The swaths would then be bundled when partly dry. The men would stoop and gather the hay together keeping the butts straight. To do this the hay was pressed against his shin then he would take a handful of the hay and bind it. Some would prefer to take a rake and bump the butts of

hay along they had enough then tie it in the same way. The bundles would then be stooked to dry. Lucerne was cut with a scythe the same way, but ties were made by taking a small handful and winding it along the swath. With practice a long tie would thus be made like a piece of rope to tie the bundles, but usually lucerne would be gathered with a rake and hay fork and tossed into stooks and when dry enough, carted to shed or stack

Cutting chaff was an arduous task by hand, but a neat sample was made this way for the farmer kept his cutter knives keen to make the sample good. Mowing machines had not then been acquired, nor internal combustion power engines invented to supplant man power. These came years later in the form of oil and petrol engines and mobile tractors, bulldozers etc. which have superceded the horse eliminating much flesh power for man and beast.

As mentioned before, Grandfather's and Uncle Walter's farm "Woodlands" did not contain much alluvial soil for agriculture, so Uncle Walter decided to sell it in 1884. It was in 1869 that Grandfather and he selected it from the Government, so Uncle had worked it for about fifteen years. He resolved to go further up the North Pine River and worked in conjunction with Mr. Charles Hay his brother-in-law on an area of scrub land containing much milling timber. This land they bought and Uncle Walter named his new holding "Uplands", for it was hilly. The milling timber was felled and barked and Mr. Hay snigged the logs out of the scrub with his bullock team and Uncle Walter and Mr. William Morris took them to a place down the North Pine River with their horse team to where the tide rose high enough to float them downstream. The waggons were there and loaded on the bank of the River. When sufficient logs were landed there, they were rolled into the water side by side. Chains were thrown across them and spikes- called "dogs"- driven into each log to keep them together. The rafts were thus formed and guided down the river by men who rode upon them with long poles to keep them in deep water. They were thus floated many miles down stream to a tug or large vessel which towed them to the sawmill by sea.

Father bought "Woodlands" to add to his farm for he had a rising family to work it, and also to retain the original homestead of their father John Skerman. My youngest brother, Joseph, now owns all the original selections and for sentimental reasons it is hoped that this property will remain in the Skerman's name perpetually, for it is also a first class coastal farm.

Having acquired this additional property Father arranged for more cows to be milked and more land tilled for cropping to provide feed for them. Father then

bought a horse-gear, that is, a machine with a horizontal cog-wheel about two feet six inches in diameter with an upright steel shaft (spindle) running up through the centre from a bearing at its base and through a metal bridge above it. To this was fitted a casting to take a wooden pole about six inches by four and. say nine feet long. A swingletree was attached to the end, to which a horse was yoked. A light rod was fastened to the centre and from thence to the horse's bit to keep him walking in a circle turning the big cog wheel round which revolved a cog on the end of the shaft which was connected to the machine to be driven at the other end. Horse power was thus brought to the rescue of man power making the work lighter for him.

In those days there was, to my mind, a deeper spiritual devotion to active Christian life than today. The reality of Christ as a living and continuing daily companion, friend, and guide was more profound. There is an inward conviction in every soul of a "Living Power" perfect in righteousness and purity, which supersedes the highest attainments of man in holiness and correct and righteous living. For this higher spiritual attainment his soul yearns, then the convincing answer comes to him, "Ye must be born again". Born of the Spirit of Jesus Christ which constrained Him to lay down his life in service to his fellow men and submit to death even to death on the Cross that they may also die unto sin and rise with him from its death to newness of life by taking up their cross and following his example of selfdenial in service and love of their fellow men. In consideration for their children's instruction and guidance in Christian life, it was a daily custom with Father, Uncles Will and Walter to observe family worship by reading a portion of scripture followed by prayer brief but sincere as they were seated round the table after the meal was finished morning or evening. These three were the vanguard of spiritual work in their respective localities. They lived in distance seven to ten miles apart and attended their local churches in Samson Vale, Cobble Creek and Upper North Pine. As recorded earlier "Shortcut" church was the first built for the convenience of the new settlers. This was situated east of Rockangle three miles and west of North Pine township four miles. About 1885, the Brisbane Presbytery launched further afield by providing the Samson Vale and Upper North Pine people with "Supply". A church was built at Samson Vale and Upper North Pine Services was held in the Orange Hall until the present church was erected. The Shortcut Church building was used as a school by the Department of Public Instruction for several years and then removed. The area at North Pine and Bald Hills continued as a "charge" and the newly founded charge was named "Upper North Pine". To the Samson Vale section Father transferred his activities it being more convenient than the North Pine Church. By this unavoidable action,

he, Mother and family, were separated from very dear old friends with whom they had been associated in ordinary Sunday services. But the active work of the Church is ever advancing. The Samson Vale and Cobble Creek residents made preliminary arrangements helping with the foundation work, then the building of the church was given to Mr. Ketchner by contract. Mr. Joyner, Mr. Henry Gold and Father were Elders, Mrs. Joiner organist and Uncle Will Choir Conductor. Uncle Will was Head Teacher in the State School and was a devoted spiritual teacher taking the services in the Church when ministers were not available.

For the opening of the Church, a teameeting was held. Ministers from the Brisbane Presbytery of which Rev. D.F.Mitchell was one, officiated at the service. Father and Mother were present with several of the family. I was one. The Pulpit was supplied from Brisbane until Mr. W.Dale, a missionary from Scotland, was placed in charge. Our youngest brother, Joseph, is a ruling Elder there at present. The establishment of a new Church brings with it increased activity to maintain it and its Minister, both of which however are a great pleasure to sincere Christians whose desire is that the Word of God be ever kept before the people in sincerity and truth in its fulness and purity. Sacred concerts were arranged and items rendered by many in solos, duets, quartets, anthems, recitations, short readings etc. Most members of Father's family were musical and in number enough to take the four parts- soprano, alto, tenor and bass. Much practising was done in our home for this purpose, Father joining in with his flute and Alice with the harmonium in the lead. On Sunday evenings we would sing hymns and sacred songs with the accompaniment of the instruments and in association with many friends who came for the evening. We were a happy family protected as we were from worldly vices and questionable pleasures. Father and Mother were staunch abstainers from both smoking habits and alcoholic beverages. All their family both boys and girls followed their example. Pleasures of any kind which were leavened by the gambling or licentious habits were avoided.

Alice married and Amy and Nell became Mother's main stays. George when fourteen left school to stand by Father on the farm. All produce was low in value. All that could be got for butter was 4 ½d. at that time and cheese 3d. per pound. Finding that farming was not as lucrative as it ought to be, it was a problem which men on the land had to face regarding the future of their sons and daughters. Fred followed George. Father was unselfish. He had a big job before him, but was not making enough to keep all the family at home. His returns were not enough to pay his boys and girls wages.

Being mechanically minded, he arranged for Fred to learn the blacksmithing trade and he was apprenticed to a capable tradesman. I came next and when I reached fourteen (school leaving age), I stayed home to help on the farm. I was hoeing potatoes one day and found it backbreaking work and told Father I thought I would rather go schoolteaching like Uncle Will, so he arranged through our schoolteacher to have my application lodged with the Department of Public Instruction to study as a Pupil Teacher. Our school teacher coached me and I sat for the examination, but failed to obtain a full pass. Nevertheless this did not prevent me from going on for the teacher had arranged to take me on as his Pupil Teacher and he expected that to take place soon. It cost Father quite a bit of time to make this arrangement. He rode on horse-back on Bessie to Woodford to consult my former teacher, who was stationed there, to obtain his advice and help. Awaiting the appointment I continued at work on the farm, studying at night. Alice was a most energetic help to Father after she left school but late in 1889 she married and naturally Father missed her, but the other sisters stepped into her place. These girls, as was the common thing with farmers' daughters, took part in the common work. The milking was done chiefly by them and the younger boys, while the men attended to the harder rougher work. They helped in pulling, carting and husking maize, planting and harvesting potatoes and cheese and butter making etc and other light work.

The eighteen eighties had passed forever with the foregoing events and we were now in 1890. This year was destined to bring the greatest disaster of life to Mother. She had weathered the storms of life with Father since they were married in 1864. Their experiences had been hard and bitter in many instances. They had worked hand in hand most devotedly with the one aim to provide for the comfort and welfare of their children physically, mentally and spiritually. They had traversed the way of integrity themselves and realised that the scriptural teachings formed the clear highway to an honourable life. It cannot be otherwise; "My Word will never pass away". Father was a hard working man. The responsibility of a large young family urged him to duty. He was ever ready also to deny himself of amenities he should have enjoyed in order that his children and others should not want. One day, he received a letter from a man of near acquaintance telling him that his wife was seriously ill and that he had no money to relieve her. Father knew him well! This man treated himself with the usual drink and pipe to the neglect of his wife and family. Father knew also that money sent to him may partly be spent on himself. However, he never mentioned this, but next morning I saw him quietly place two pounds in an envelope addressed to the man, and, I have no doubt, a kindly letter enclosed of Christian advice.

The close of the 1890 winter was at hand. Father caught a cold which developed into influenza. It treated him severely but he recovered. Anxious about the work he started too soon and he took a relapse. Mother sent me to Sandgate for Dr. Paul, about seventeen miles away. When I gave him the note and explained further to him, he seemed anxious about Father's condition and said he would come and see him straight away. When he examined Father he said he was very bad and gave Mother directions and medicine and told her he would return the next day. Mother sent for Uncle Walter and Aunt Annie. Father's condition was growing worse and Mother sent me next morning to ask the doctor to come as soon as possible. I met him on the way when he was coming. He pulled in his horse expecting I had news that Father had passed, but when I assured him he was still living, his face lit up and he pressed on. On examination he said Father was very low and that the crisis would come about three or four o'clock. If he rallied we were to let him know as soon as possible and he would come again and give further instructions. Anxious were those hours to all of us; deep emotional supplication heaved in Mother's bosom. She had nursed him day and night with the greatest anxiety and care. How would she manage without him? The "Highest" tolled the Bell, the Call had come. Father's last words to Mother were, "You have been a good wifie. Let us meet around the table of The Lord". Mother, Aunt Annie, Uncle Walter and members of the family stood at his bedside and Auntie closed his eyes in death. Mother stood there silent and composed. "Thy will be done". It was about three to four o'clock in the afternoon of August 7th, 1890.

A new era had dawned for Mother and her family. Both Uncle and Auntie counselled with Mother. Uncle said to me, "Perce, George will not be able to manage alone. Fred has been four years at his trade and as he will complete his apprenticeship in one year, I think you had better give up the thought of school teaching and stay with George to help mother". I had not been very well either. Mother asked the doctor to examine me also and he prescribed. Witnessing Father departing was like the end of life to me; all seemed void. I was standing beside Mother and Auntie and said if in despair, "Auntie, I wish I had died instead of Father". Auntie put her hand gently on my shoulder and looked into my eyes from her sweet and kindly face and said, "Percy don't say that. You are now to take your Father's place and care for Mother". Deep and profound were those words to my young mind and heart. They settled there never to be removed until I had completed that mission. I remained with Mother until Joe, then one year and two months old, was eighteen years old.

Father's body was laid to rest high up on the bank of the North Pine river above the rocky angle from

which the name of the farm "Rockangle" was derived. The burial ceremony was conducted by the Rev. W. Dale. At night alone after the service, I stole back to the grave-side and communed in heart with our Heavenly Father who had blessed us with so faithful a progenitor, to that invisible but ever present power which moves the soul of man to higher and better motives than simply satisfying his own desires. Strength and Grace were sorely needed at this hour.

George was the oldest son and had helped Father with the Farm work since leaving school at fourteen. He now had a greater responsibility, for attention to the general business and finance had been given to him by mother. She, however, was encumbered with a large young family, so George had the outside responsibility. He and I got along very well together. We felled a twenty acre scrub of second growth southward to the farm and got a light crop of maize. In February 1893 we planted potatoes but heavy rain fell and flooded the river and submerged them. When the land dried we replanted but the river again rose and swamped these. We had to wait after each flood for the land to dry. This same field we planted the third time with the last of our seed, but up came the river and the last of our seed perished. This 1893 flood or succession of floods is ever remembered as one of the worst the river valley had experienced.

During this wet weather I was seized with an illness which developed into Typhoid fever. Mother called the doctor who showed much concern. He told her that the gravest care had to be taken in this case. I had to be isolated as far as possible from the family and my diet carefully supervised. I became delirious for a time. Doctor told Mother I was seriously ill and it was a case of life or death which limited time would reveal. However, the crisis passed and as I became normal I ate and ate and never seemed to be satisfied. I had much strength to recoup. The following season we had a good potato crop which strengthened our finances. George and I decided we would add to Mother's comfort and that of the family by building a new house out of sawn wood timber and turn the slab house into a barn which was needed. George was mechanically gifted. When he had completed building a new dairy, the timber for the new house was bought and he undertook its erection on higher ground close by, which Father had chosen as the site of Mother's and his permanent home. This undertaking was one which would occupy much time, so he handed over the farm and business management to me in order that his work would not be interrupted. This was the first house he had built and it stands there to-day as a testimony of his good workmanship.

It was on July 26th 1892 that Amy was married to Adam Pringle who took his bride to Bundaberg and entered

the Sugar Industry with Uncle Christie Thygeson who was the husband of Aunt Phoebe, Mother's youngest sister. Fred went with them. John Hope (Jack) when he left school, went for a short time to Tom Bryant and Allie. Fred's time of apprenticeship was about to expire and Jack followed him in the same capacity for a term of five years to learn the Trade. They were both good tradesmen. When Jack was through, Fred and he joined in company and bought a Smith and Wheelright business in Dayboro, a very good centre for that business.

About the time George completed the building of Rockangle house he was keeping company with Miss Emma Bryant. Old Mr. George Bryant was sadly bereft of his wife when Emma was born. In order that she should get efficient maternal care, he placed her in adoption with Mrs. Neilson, and Emma was known as Miss Neilson. Mr. And Mrs. Neilson owned a farm at Moooolah, North Coast Line. Mr Neilson was accidentally killed, I understand and Mrs. Neilson and Emma carried on the farm. George and Emma decided to marry. This being the case, Mrs. Neilson made arrangements for George and Emma to take over the farm, so he established his home there carrying on dairying and fruit culture and also an apiary.

Father inadvertently made a very regrettable omission. He did not make a "Will". Mother said that she had asked him to do this, but he told her that he would do so when he acquired the Title Deed of the last land he bought; he would then have something to "Will". His life closed unexpectedly and he died intestate. Our Uncles, especially Uncle Fred Michael, advised Mother to place the administration of the Estate in the hands of the Queensland Trustees. This was done and it was found that the property could not be sold or distributed until the youngest child then living was twenty-one years. Joseph survived that age, so twenty years passed before Father's affairs were finalised.

The loss of George meant much to Mother. She had a large family to maintain and could not pay wages. George had stood by her faithfully for six years. All that could be, must be done for him. Mother gave him what cash she could and a number of dairy cattle of different ages etc. Being capable, he made a new dray and other articles for himself. He took his possessions in the dray by road to Mooloolah- 47 miles. When he had all in order, he married Emma Bryant on May 4th, 1896. We sent out livestock by train as soon as he was ready for them. George was now twenty-seven years old, I twenty-three, Alf eighteen and Ernest thirteen.

From the first, when George took charge, it was understood that he would remain on Rockangle and eventually become the owner. I had not thought of being left in

charge and was awaiting the time when I could be spared from home by my younger brothers taking my place. But this was controlled by what some call Fate. This is an indefinite statement which a Christian believer should not accept. I longed for a higher education. This was denied me by the same Power. Father's death to me was the beginning of a new life within my heart. His life was full of care and ended having obtained but little earthly reward, but instead, a great reward by the spiritual influence he engendered in the hearts of more than can be named. His life's example gave me a deep longing to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and in my spare time and evenings, I gave myself to study the practical work and the spirit of our Master.

A very grievous experience took place very shortly after Father's departure which I think may have been averted had his humble, gracious and charitable personality been still present to hold the peace. Contention in the Church broke out between the secular and spiritually minded members. Eventually, the Church was closed for six months or more. I was conducting Sunday School there but this was ended. Later, I opened a Sunday School in Samson Vale proper- further out. The only public body operating was the Salvation Army during this Church recess. I worked in conjunction with them and also other Christians and in our home area we held cottage meetings in association with the Methodists, attendants taking it in turn to lead. Thus we were still engaged in the work of the Gospel and we were strengthened in the faith. The Church stood closed as a building but not for long. The Brisbane Presbytery decided to give the work a new start. The Rev, D.F. Mitchell came out to an arranged service as peacemaker and Mr. W. Laurie was appointed Home Missionary to take the Charge in hand. He had a difficult task but the old faithful adherents stood by him and gradually the church work was restored. My experience had been that if Church people compromise with the world to maintain its work, there will be unkindly contention which will quench the Spirit. Christians are enjoined to come out from the world and be separate, for no man can serve two masters and Jesus in his prayer pleaded, " Father I pray not that Thou should'st take them out of the world, but that Thou should'st keep them from the evil".

Such were the influences at work when George left home. I was in duty an honour bound to take his place as Mother's chief adviser and manager. Her past stormy experience was placing its mark upon her. She was attacked by sciatica and she was corpulent and heavy. She found it difficult to walk and used a stick. We cut blocks from logs and set them at distances out-doors where she would rest a while and then walk on again to the next. Her daughters would assist her and

Aunties and friends came to brighten her life when they could.

Alf was now my helper, being eighteen. Rumours of war in South Africa stirred our Governments and there was much activity amongst young men to join the Light Horse; this Alf did and Ernest later on. Wider areas were engaging in cricket and matches were arranged between different localities. I was fond of cricket as a boy, but Father's passing laid a restricting hand on pleasures for me. I found that my duties gave but little time to be absent from them, but Alf was freer from this care and he and Ernest, taking little Joe, about eight, joined in Saturday afternoon sport with the young men of the district. We built a tennis court close below the house where our sisters could join with companion in recreation and Mother could watch the games.

Large areas of undergrowth had to be kept down and fencing done. George and Charles Heibner did the most of this for Mother and gave good value for their pay. The cattle tick made its appearance at this time and had to be kept in check. We built a cage dip at Rockangle for this purpose. The cattle had to be dipped in a poisoned bath once a fortnight or three weeks. The mixture was of water diluted with arsenic in set proportions. The cattle had to be put through this once a fortnight or three weeks to kill the young ticks before they developed. The ticks persisted in breeding constantly, slackening off a little in the winter but resuming vigorously again in the spring. Their poisonous incisions brought on a fever called "Redwater". This was hard to check and many fatalities occurred throughout the district.

At this time also we built a large hay shed with paling walls, iron roof and part cement floor. We also bought a two horse gear and a three knifed chaff-cutter. At a convenient distance from this cutter we sank a hole to accommodate a chaff bale (size of a wool bale). In this bale, one man would stand and pack the chaff with his feet. When full, a hook was inserted at each corner, and by a pulley conveniently arranged was lifted from the hole by one of the horses on the gear. This hole had a double door or lid which would be closed when chaff was required on the surface. This was needed, for we chaffed both green and dry fodder each day for the milking cows. We also erected a milking shed to accommodate twenty-four cows. The floor we cemented. This was fitted with a double row of feed boxes between which a trolley on lines ran, conveying chaff to the cows. Into this trolley the chaff was elevated direct from the chaff cutter. The same shed trolley and chaff cutter with renovations are

in use today. About this time, sister Nell left home to be a companion and help to Allie. I was deeply moved, for Nell was the sister next to me in the family. She had a cheerful disposition and was a ready and willing worker and we got on well together.

The first decade in the nineties was now passed. Maria when a babe was somewhat delicate and needed special attention. Nevertheless, she outgrew this and helped Nell in domestic work and dairy work for mother. We were then cheese making. These sisters went sometimes to other members of the family in time of need. For this reason, Maria went to Amy and Adam at Woombye, then on to Emma and George at Mooloolah. While she was away she became very ill. She was taken to Brisbane for treatment, suffering some feminine ailment. It was some time before she recovered. Mother then arranged for her homecoming, but she took a relapse and passed on to her rest on December 17th, 1901. She was a lovely character. With deep sorrow, we laid her body to Rest in the Lawnton Cemetery, via North Pine. She had departed to be forever with The Lord.

Another perplexity was troubling Mother. Well she knew that her hand could not stay the propensities and ambition of youth. We were now passing through the great drought of 1902. Adult cattle had to be agisted abroad and Ernest was sent to attend to them on a cane farm near Adam Pringle, Woombye, with whom he lodged. Very little was being made on the farm and cash was needed, so I undertook to build a dip in Maleny with which George helped me. While there I was much impressed with the richness of the soil but it was covered with dense and heavy scrub. Most of it was held privately by timber getters. The most valuable of the timber such as cedar, beech pine which was large and first class had been taken out and the owners were offering the land for sale. After completing my work, I went home and described this land to the household. Either Alf or I had to move on and Alf was keen to have a look at it. When I took charge of Rockangle, there was too much work to allow me to study much. I dropped my activities considerably in this respect to concentrate more fully on farm work. I put the question to Mother about me leaving but she would not hear of it. Uncle Walter and Aunt Lina got to know my thoughts in this matter and sent me a special message not to leave Mother for she sorely needed me. She had became more disabled by now. I was conscious of this and felt if I left against her will I would not be happy about it for she needed age to assist her with her affairs. I was now twenty-nine years old. Alf and Ernest inspected the land and were keen to buy a block. This needed finance, so I arranged with a friend to lend me the amount needed and they bought. Jack was also interested in this move and bought also, financing himself for he was free from

the family care. The money borrowed for Alf and Ernest Mother gave to them for their assistance on her farm. Mother gave them also some cattle and they bought more and with other requisites they took their departure to Maleny. Other buyers established themselves there and there was enough feed to start dairying. Jack having a knowledge of factory management, moved to form a Co-Operative Dairy Company and was appointed Manager. They started in a small way, but soon reached an important output.

Mother still had with her Lucy, Bertha, May and Florence. In June 1903 Joseph reached his fourteenth year and left school to help me on the farm. Instead of going to Brisbane each week myself Joe took the butter to our storekeeper there and all heavier produce we sent by rail. We were making butter now and this had to be delivered as often and as fresh as possible. This arrangement gave me more time on the farm. It was lighter work for Joe and gave him an early training in the art of conducting business. Primary schooling was now at an end for Mother's large family. The youngest had left school and started to work.

When Alf and Ern left home, I found I had to relinquish my Sunday School work at Samson Vale; I was now busier than ever. Miss W. McDowell Mitchell, daughter of the Rev. D.F. Mitchell of Park Church, South Brisbane, was appointed state school teacher in Samson Vale. She offered to take over the Sunday School for me thus relieving me of this work. I had ridden regularly to this school for thirteen years, a distance of about nine miles. There seemingly were no prospects of me leaving home now, for Joe was not old enough to take my place. Mother offered to "will" her share of the estate to me if I continued with her. We worked on; Joe was becoming more and more useful and efficient. My acquaintance with Miss Mitchell grew and subsequently we were engaged. On October 12th, 1906 we were married.

A year later we had a heavy loss in our dairy herd. Up till now through regular dipping we had kept our cattle free from the ticks. The river divided our property from that of our neighbour who used his paddock for running his dry stock on. He had a milk run in Brisbane These cattle were but rarely dipped owing to his absence. Freshes arose in the river; when this happened the boundary fences were washed away. Our cattle and his got mixed and ticks were transferred with the result ours caught the "redwater". Being clean this fever was very virulent with them and seventeen of our milkers died in a fortnight and the rest of the herd left sickly and more died later. This cut off our income suddenly and presented a difficulty which had to be faced. Lucy went into employment and then took up

nursing which she studied and won her certificate and later on Bertha did the same, and when she obtained her certificate joined in company with Lucy, bought "Rushton" in Toowoomba and ran it as a Private Hospital for many years. But for the time being Bertha went to Maleny to keep house for Alf and Ernest.

I concluded that it would be better for me to leave home and let Joe take over the farm. It was not large enough for two to establish themselves on. Jimbour Estate in the Dalby District was advertised to be open for closer settlement. My wife was now in Brisbane and Marjorie was born on February 11th, 1908. I went out to inspect this land on March 9th, drew a block of 130 acres at £4/15/-per acre, paying a deposit of £52. I returned home and made all arrangements with Mother about our departure. I had worked at home since I was a boy and was now thirty –five years old. Providing for and helping in turn members of her family she was not able to pay me wages. In common with the others I was supplied with necessary needs as the years came and went. Mother could only give me in kind and cash about £200 worth out of which I paid £52 for the deposit on the land. Joe and I had the farm in good order with crops coming on, some maturing, and still were dairying but with less cattle. As Joe was now to take care of Mother she transferred her "Will" from me to him.

Our neighbours arranged a surprise party and presented us with a marble clock and other articles and their good wishes for the future which we much appreciated. I engaged a boy and left my wife at Rockangle for about six months until I had a cottage built for her. This work I gave to carpenters for speedy erection for I had so much other work to do. When this was ready I wrote my wife to come along and I met her with the sulky late in the evening at Squaretop. I had brought my two horses, sulky, dray, tools etc., with me. The holding was part of the Jimbour Estate - one large open paddock. Everything had to be done, including boundary fences, clearing, sinking a well for water, subdividing, building stockyards etc. Part of the expense of the cottage had to be met by time payment and expenses in buildings etc. also. I bought forty head of dairy cattle, about half of them milking and others springing. Half of the cream cheque each month plus interest at 7% had to be paid to meet the money due. To square up some of my debts I went out to work for some time leaving my wife and a boy, Bob Scott, to carry on. As soon as I could, however, I stayed at home to work my own farm and made steady progress. It was not necessary for me to go out working again.

Now I return to Rockangle affairs as a conclusion to this narrative. After John Skerman (My Grandfather) his wife and portion of his family left

England, the story shows that his eldest son Joseph and daughter did very well. Had the "Netherby" not met with disaster no doubt, Grandfather would have established his family in Brisbane and we would have been mechanically engaged in his foundry instead of being rural workers. However, members of his family which have increased are scattered over Queensland and other States of Australia and are engaged in several different callings. As far as we know all Skermans in Australia belong to this original family.

Joseph, Mary May and Florence continued with Mother until her death on June 2nd, 1935 at the age of 88 years. All the family who could assembled at her burial. The Service was conducted by Rev. J. Sweet and Rev. Harvey, I think, and was most impressive. Mother's Favourite Hymn was:

"Shall we Gather at the River".

No doubt this Hymn ever presented itself to her memory for many a time after Father had read and prayed after breakfast with the family around the table she would lead in singing a verse and chorus of this beautiful hymn. Father's favourite hymn was:

"Arise, my soul arise,
Shake off thy guilty fears,
The bleeding Sacrifice
On thy behalf appears.
With confidence I now draw nigh
And Father, Abba Father, cry."

We laid her body to rest beside Father and a neat memorial has been erected over their graves in sacred memory of them. Their experience in Queensland had been arduous in the physical sense, but Mother's joy was complete in the consciousness that her family had behaved creditably in response to the righteous principles Father and she had endeavoured to establish in them. Father's departure was a great loss to his wife and family. Just as their children were reaching the age when they needed his counsel the most he was removed from them. We can be sure that in his last conscious moments he committed all his care to our Heavenly Father Who careth for all His Children. His last words "Let us meet around the table of the Lord" indicate this, and expressed the tranquillity of his soul.

Mother has departed. Her "Will" concerning the estate had to be administered. This was attended to and the property became Joseph's. In keeping with his consideration for Mother's request and my promise to her, I visited Rockangle and conferred with May, Florence and Joseph, going carefully into the value of

property and the share each was to take. This agreement was written up legally and Mother's wish honoured.

On September 12th, 1936, Joe married Alice Prothero, the grand-daughter of one of Father's oldest neighbours, who was contemporary with him in the early settlement of the district. May and Florrie took up dressmaking in Dickson Street, Wooloowin via Brisbane, where their faithful work soon found them more than they could do.

In commencing this narrative I set out to record all I knew and could gather from others concerning the family, its origin, and its history as far back as I could gather. It is an outline of the most important things, and is a true record without exaggeration. I have traced the movements of each member of the family who came from England until they launched out into their own spheres where I could not follow their movements. I have laid the foundation as far as I know it and each can follow on with their own records.