NAMESAKES:

The reference in the October Bulletin, in the extract from Major Weston’s reminiscences, to the Major’s encounter with a bushranger on the Appin Road recalls an earlier practitioner in the same locality. Alexander Stewart says:

“In 1829 there was a bushranger who used to frequent the Bulli mountains, and who went by the name of Bulli Jack. His name was Bourke. He had been about the Bulli mountain before I came down here, but he had not been apprehended. He used to go between Little Bulli (Gibbons’ place) [Stanwell Park—Ed.] and Appin, where he was harboured. He used to hide beside the tracks, and then come out from his hiding place and tackle lone men. He would take everything from them—even rations and tucker. Men going from here to the Liverpool Hospital he would pounce upon, and would take from them rations and clothes, or whatever they were carrying. He was a very mean robber. I think he was apprehended in 1830 by, I think, some mounted police. He was tried for robbery and sentenced to be hanged. He was the first man Governor Bourke hanged after coming to the colony, and it was curious that he should be a namesake.”

Sir Richard Bourke showed less regard for ties of presumed kinship than Bulli Jack himself. A recent visitor to the Museum, Mr. Moriarty, a descendant of Edmund Bourke whose forty-acre grant included the upper end of Crown Street, told us that according to a family tradition Edmund was once on his way to Appin when he saw Bulli Jack lurking beside a large rock at the roadside. Advancing with outstretched hand, Edmund said, “How are you, namesake? I’m going to Appin to get my grain ground. Can I leave you some flour on the way back?” Bulli Jack agreed, and Edmund honoured his undertaking on his return.

So Bulli Jack was at any rate not mean to his own. As the Pirate King remarked,

“Although our dark career
Sometimes involves the crime of stealing,
We rather think that we’re
Not altogether void of feeling.”

[Some particulars of Edmund Bourke’s grant were given by the late Mr. A. P. Fleming in “The Wollongong Rest Park.” Edmund’s will, a remarkable document which included the magnificently Hibernian direction, written into the will itself, “this will is not to be opened for twelve months,” was reprinted in the September 1966 Bulletin.—Ed.]