that time. As a tribute to Henrietta and as an attempt to reflect back some of
the limelight Bill Bayley took away from her, the forthcoming issues of the Bulletin
will reprint the ten pages of her reminiscences.

Joseph Davis

PICTURES OF AUSTRALIAN LIFE 1843-1844
BY HENRIETTA HEATHORNE (MRS THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY)

Shortly before Christmas 1843, my mother, my half-sister, and myself arrived
at Sydney, New South Wales, in one of Messrs. Green's ships, the Ellenborough,
after a voyage of four and a-half months. Think of it, ye steam-wafted passengers
of 1911!
The sail up the harbour was a revelation of beauty. Its fairy-like bays, their
low-lying shores sloping to the water's edge, that allured us to explore them, the
glorious golden sunshine, the bluest of skies reflected in another heaven in the
transparent sea, made up a scene of enchanting beauty beyond all I had ever
imagined of loveliness.

My father met us on landing, and at once took us to his friends, Mr. Sea,
manager of the Union Bank, Sydney, and his sister, who received us with Colonial
warmth. But our Christmas was spent with other English friends of my father's,
the Kirkes, who lived on the North Shore, in a picturesque house at the head of
one of the harbour's innumerable little bays.
The Kirkes, a delightful elderly couple, had a grown-up family of sons and
daughters - frank, warm-hearted, and genial - who, it being holiday-time, were all
gathered together in the parent home.
The morning after our arrival I was taken, at 5 a.m., by two of the girls to the
bathing-place, a retired and lonely cove, surrounded by yellow-flowering wattles
and myrtles with glistening sheen of dark-green leaves. This kind of myrtle showed
flower and fruit at the same time. The latter consisted of white wax-like oval
berries, with patches of rich red upon them, growing side by side with the delicate
white sprays of blossom.

Never before had I seen such beautiful trees, such brilliant sunshine and sapphire
sea - so clear the, at thirty feet below, the bed of white sand was visible.
The sharks that infested the harbour did not come up as far as this spot, so
in safety we girls disported in the warm rippling waters that broke into thousands
of diamond-points under the great light of an Australian summer. Stepping out
of the water we were almost instantly dried by the hot sunshine, even at that
early hour. What a paradise seemed this new land to me, long penned up in London
streets! Mentally I floated in a heaven of delight.

By nine o'clock the heat was so intense that we girls assembles in a large,
uncarpeted room, whose windows to the ground were darkened by closed venetian
blinds. Putting on cool white dressing-gowns, we lay about, by preference on the
bare floor, and talked and laughed as only girlhood, light-hearted and irresponsible,
can do.

On Christmas Day the heat became insufferable, for a hot wind flew - a brickfielder,
so called because the wind passed over certain old brickfields, filling every
house with fine red dust in spite of closed windows. Well-soaked blankets were
hung up against the venetian blinds inside the spacious verandah: the evaporation
from them somewhat helped to cool the baked air.
To the verandah every one migrated after dinner, sat in low wicker chairs, and ate our dessert of various fruits. One of them was quite strange to me: the loquat, yellow in colour with brown spots, and overflowing with juice, with medium-sized, black, shiny stones like magnified laburnum-seeds. Bananas were also new to me. Apricots, ripened under a burning sun, were more luscious than English ones. Peaches were so plentiful that they were given in abundance to the pigs.

Surely I had come to an earthly Paradise - but it was holiday time and all the hard work of life was hidden from my view.

After this delightful visit we returned to Mr. Sea and his sister, who lived in large rooms above the Union Bank. We were very much surprised at the fine shops in George Street and Pitt Street, where French silks and Parisian millinery we found to be far cheaper than they were in London.

A military band played every afternoon in the Domain, the beautiful public garden of the city, exquisitely kept. It was full of magnificent trees and shrubs, native and imported. Here, about four in the afternoon, were gathered together the elite of Sydney, many of them in carriages to which were harnessed the finest of horses, incomparably groomed. Pedestrians would come up and chat with friends in the carriages, arrange picnics or riding parties, and exchange local English news.

A fortnight's enjoyment of our friends' hospitality, and, after they had made us promise to revisit them at some future time, we said good-bye and began our novel and fatiguing journey to our new home.

First my mother, my half-sister, and myself drove in a rough cross-benched cart, yclept 'Her Majesty's Mail,' to the small town of Wollongong, where we changed to a bullock-dray. My father was on horseback from our Sydney start. Most of our luggage and cabin furniture had been sent on by other drays. Into this rough vehicle we clambered, and seated ourselves upon sacks well stuffed with maize husks. Slowly the patient beasts drew us along the seeming lengthening way. From Wollongong to Jamberoo the road was a mere dray-track through a forest of tropical foliage; gum-trees two hundred feet or more in height, gigantic indiarubber trees with broad, shiny, dark-green leaves, lofty cabbage-palms, and many another kind of tree towered above us, so that their tops made a twilight canopy impenetrable to the sunlight, save for an infrequent clearing in the forest made by the settler's axe. Huge lianas, some as thick as a man's arm, hung down snake-like from the trees. Magnificent ferns, clinging to the fork of trunk and branches, were pointed out to me by my father, as affording water in their sponge-like forms during times of drought or thirsty wayfarers.

All was fairyland to me. In my delight I even made fun of the jolting dray, but my poor mother and my sister, the latter weakened by months of sea-sickness, were sorely tried by the rough journey, the former lamenting with tears the day she had ever left England.

From a slope we were descending at the edge of the forest the valley of our future home burst upon our view. Before us lay a wide clear space. The smoke of a steam-engine, the whirr of machinery, and a cluster of wooden buildings welcomed us to an active but primitive life.

We alighted, our limbs stiff with the long journey, and entered our new home, whose rooms were all on the ground floor. It was weather-boarded and shingled, and I think the verandah was painted white. It was a deep latticed verandah, with jalousies to open and shut, that ran the whole front of the house, stopped by
a projecting room at each end. A pleasant-faced, rosy-checked, black-eyed Irish girl came forward to show us the way to our rooms. Supper and rest were grateful.

It was several weeks before our other trunks and belongings arrived, amongst them my sister’s piano. For some time my mother was very miserable at confronting new conditions of existence. ‘Don’t fret, Mamma,’ I said as she wept; ‘it will be such fun!’ So speaks youth to age.

By degrees we settled down; my mother grew more reconciled to her surroundings. She amused herself by rearing turkeys and chickens, in which she proved most successful, finding out by experience what was good or bad for them. For instance, she never let the turkeys out of their coops till the dew was off the grass, and before sunset they were again housed. It was not until years afterwards, when I was translating some German papers on ‘Intestinal Worms’ for a scientific journal, that I discovered the reason for my mother’s treatment of the turkeys. All she knew was that unless kept off the grass till the dew had dried they got ‘the staggers’ and died.

Life was now a joy to me. How pleasant it was to enter the long shed of the saw-mills close by, where the vertical or circular saws in quick movement made a lively whirring noise, as they cut up long trunks of all sorts of trees that had been felled in the bush and dragged higher by the slow, patient oxen. To my fancy these prone trees, cleared of their green boughs, seemed like prisoners suspended in chains who were being slowly drawn up to the place of doom beneath the fateful and relentless teeth of the saw. How delicious and invigorating was the scent of the fresh falling sawdust, in which that of gums and cedars overruled the tenderer perfume of other trees! It filled the warm, gently moving air with half-pungent aromatic odours from the heart of the woods.

In the evening we often ascended the hill by the dray-truck, when a cabbage-palm would be felled. Sitting round it, we would eat the white heart of its crown with salt which we had brought with us. Fancy cutting down that fine column of a cabbage-palm for the sake of its heart! What a splendour of waste!

From sheer necessity I learnt to make my own and my mother’s dresses and her caps, since Sydney, the nearest place where such things could be made, was ninety miles off. The way I set about the business was to buy a piece of stuff at the stores attached to the mills. Then I would unpick a dress brought out from England - which went to my heart, as I had afterwards to put it together again. Each piece I laid upon a linen lining and pricked the shape off with a pin; upon this the new material was placed, tacked and joined to it, and fitted on myself till it satisfied me. The dress completed, never was anyone prouder of a great achievement than I was of my humble one.

Moreover, I papered a small room and made a carpet. When my sister’s piano arrived it struck me that one of the little end rooms of the verandah was the very place for it. What a trial was the papering of the walls! for the paper, when pasted for hanging, often parted in my inexperienced hands, and then a fresh length had to be cut and pasted; but patience and determination carried the day, and Norah, the maid, was a most efficient helper. At the store I bought carpeting for the room, rather gay-coloured, but the least flaunting one to be had. I cut it into lengths, sewed it together with strong thread, ironed the seams, and with Norah’s help nailed it down. The whole effect of paper and carpet was a success, and great was my satisfaction and pride in it.

(to be continued)