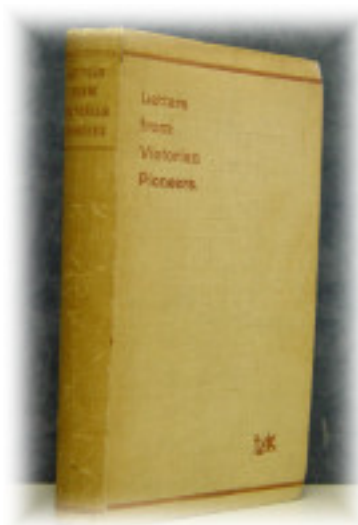




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LETTERS FROM VICTORIAN PIONEERS:

BEING

A SERIES OF PAPERS ON THE EARLY OCCUPATION OF THE
COLONY, THE ABORIGINES, ETC.,

Addressed by Victorian Pioneers

TO HIS EXCELLENCY CHARLES JOSEPH LA TROBE, ESQ.,
LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR OF THE COLONY OF VICTORIA.

Edited for the Trustees of the Public Library

By THOMAS FRANCIS BRIDE, LL.D.,

During his period of office as

LIBRARIAN OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF VICTORIA.

Published for the Trustees of the Public Library,

BY ROBT. S. BRAIN, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURNE.

—
1898.

P R E F A C E.

ON the 29th July 1853 His Excellency Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe addressed a circular letter to a number of early settlers, nearly all of whom have now passed away, requesting information as to the time and circumstances of the first occupation of various parts of the colony.

At least 58 letters or papers, detailing the personal experiences of the pioneers of Victoria, appear to have been placed at the service of Mr. La Trobe, who at the time contemplated writing a history of the Colony.

These papers remained in the possession of His Excellency until 1872, when, writing, on the 19th March, to the Honorable James Graham, M.L.C., he said—

“I have this day addressed a small parcel of some interest to be forwarded to you when occasion offers. As I am in the prospect of a move, as you know, in the course of the autumn, so taking time by the forelock, and attempting to put my house in order, I have collected a number of documents, addressed to me in 1854, by old colonists, to whom I applied for information respecting the early occupation and settlement of our Colony. I intended to have made a certain use of this information myself, but, from circumstances, was prevented doing so. The day may come, however, when it may be considered of too great interest to be lost, and I therefore propose that the parcel should be deposited somewhere where it will be accessible when that day comes, say the Public Library or other public archives. On this point perhaps you will consult those who ought to be consulted. I think it may be a little early to make unrestricted use of the contents of these letters. In sending them to you, however, I am securing their being deposited where they ought to go.”

These documents, Mr. Graham, in the judicious exercise of his discretion, in due course presented to this institution, and they are now, by direction of the Trustees, given to the public in the present volume.

The letters record events which will recall to many persons still living old Victorian memories, and will have a great value for the future historian of Victoria, as narrating the experiences of actual movers in the early scenes of our colonisation, while they will also possess interest as incidental contributions to the biographies of the men who half a century ago began to encounter the hardships and perils which beset the pioneer in every part of this continent. These papers also contain interesting contributions to our knowledge of the aborigines—their languages, customs, and conflicts with the white men; and although some of the incidents narrated have found their way into print before, they are now for the first time given in their entirety to the public. It cannot be claimed for these papers that they are infallible records of our early history in every point, but they do contain the first impressions of those who had ample opportunities of learning at the fountain head what could be learnt amid the hardships of early colonial days.

The short paper contributed by Mrs. F. A. Davenport, of Hobart, was presented to the Trustees on the 21st May 1884, and will not be uninteresting as coming from the pen of a lady who had special facilities for studying the aboriginal language so far back as 1842.

T. F. BRIDE,
Librarian.

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Letters from Victorian Pioneers.

No. 1.

DEAR SIR,

Tahara, August 18th 1853.

In answer to yours of the 29th of July, only just received, I send you the following information, which I hope may be what you require.

I landed on Indented Head from V. D. Land with sheep in July 1837. In September I went with a party to explore. We went round Lakes Colac and Korangamite; we were the first who went round the latter. The farthest out station at that time was Mr Ricketts's, on the River Barwon, 40 miles from Geelong; he had only been there about three weeks; the blacks had robbed him, and were constantly driving his shepherds in with their flocks. As we came along the banks of Lake Korangamite a great many parties of natives ran off into the stony rise, leaving everything behind them. They were on the mouths of small creeks which run into the lake, fishing. The stony, scrubby rises come so close to the lake, they could not see us; we were within a few yards of them; we were stopped by the Pirron Yalloak. At night we could not find a ford, so we camped in the centre of a small plain, tethering our horses close around us, and kept a watch about all night—there were seven of us. The natives were talking close to us the whole night, within 100 yards. At daylight two men came to us, when we made signs that we would not harm them. They came to ask for the black boy—Billy Clarke. As it was about three weeks after Dr. Clarke had taken him, they wished to know if we had eaten him, and said his mother was very sorry and cried very much.

In October I took up my station on the River Moorabool (Borhoneyghurk), 35 miles from Geelong. Mr. George Russell then lived on the Moorabool, 12 miles from Geelong, but had an

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NOTE.—Abbreviations used, *m.*, mount; *r.*, river; *st.*, station; *L.*, lake.

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