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Dark deeds in a sunny land: or Blacks and whites in North-West Australia

J. B. Gribble

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Dark Deeds

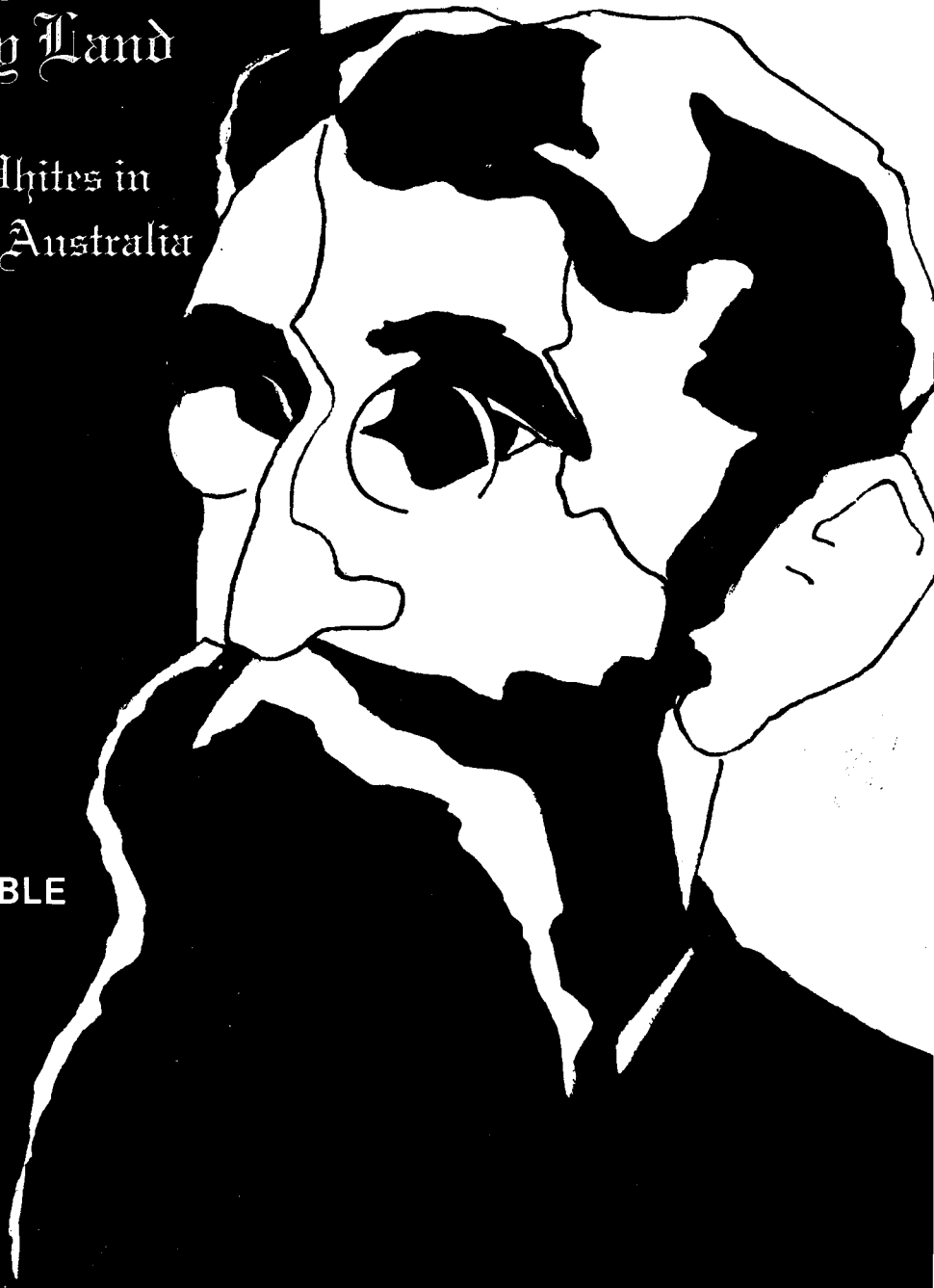
in a Sunny Land

or

Blacks and Whites in
North-West Australia

REV. J. B. GRIBBLE

Introduction by
Bob Tonkinson





Dark Deeds in a Sunny Land

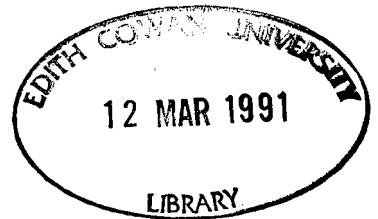
or

Blacks and Whites in North-West Australia

By the
Rev. J. B. GRIBBLE
Missionary to the Natives



Republished 1987
with Introduction by Bob Tonkinson



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Foreword



The contact history of European settlement in Western Australia has tended to be concerned only with the impact of the invasion in the South-West. Here few 'new' settlers were publicly pro-Aboriginal, ready to speak up against any inhumane treatment against the 'original' inhabitants. The tragic story of Yagan and the infamous Battle of Pinjarra are reminders that the plight of Aborigines was one where we were traumatically short-changed.

However, Reverend John Gribble's firm stand against the horrors of mistreatment that pastoralists handed out to Aborigines in the isolated Gascoyne district—(my country) is a leading light that we must not see snuffed out. His perseverance, exceptional courage and singular Christian conscience in those early years also helped to balance the negative Missionary impact which some Aborigines express today.

John Gribble's reward for standing up to the West Australian establishment—media, law courts and pastoral industry—was verbal and physical abuse, public humiliation, court action and bankruptcy. He left the State a broken man and died soon after.

It is now more than 100 years since the original publication of *Dark Deeds in a Sunny Land*. While Australia generally celebrates its bicentenary we Aboriginal people of Western Australia are glad to celebrate and carry on the commitment of John Gribble for basic justice. It seems many people fear the past, but I believe we can gain a better understanding of the present through an honest appraisal of our history.

So it gives me great pleasure to recommend John Gribble's book. It deserves a wide audience. Therefore the Institute of Applied Aboriginal Studies, together with the University of Western Australia Press, has de-

cided to republish John Gribble's story together with Professor Bob Tonkinson's introduction and Ms Su-Jane Hunt's commentary.

NORM HARRIS
Deputy Chairperson
Institute of Applied Aboriginal Studies

Editor's Note

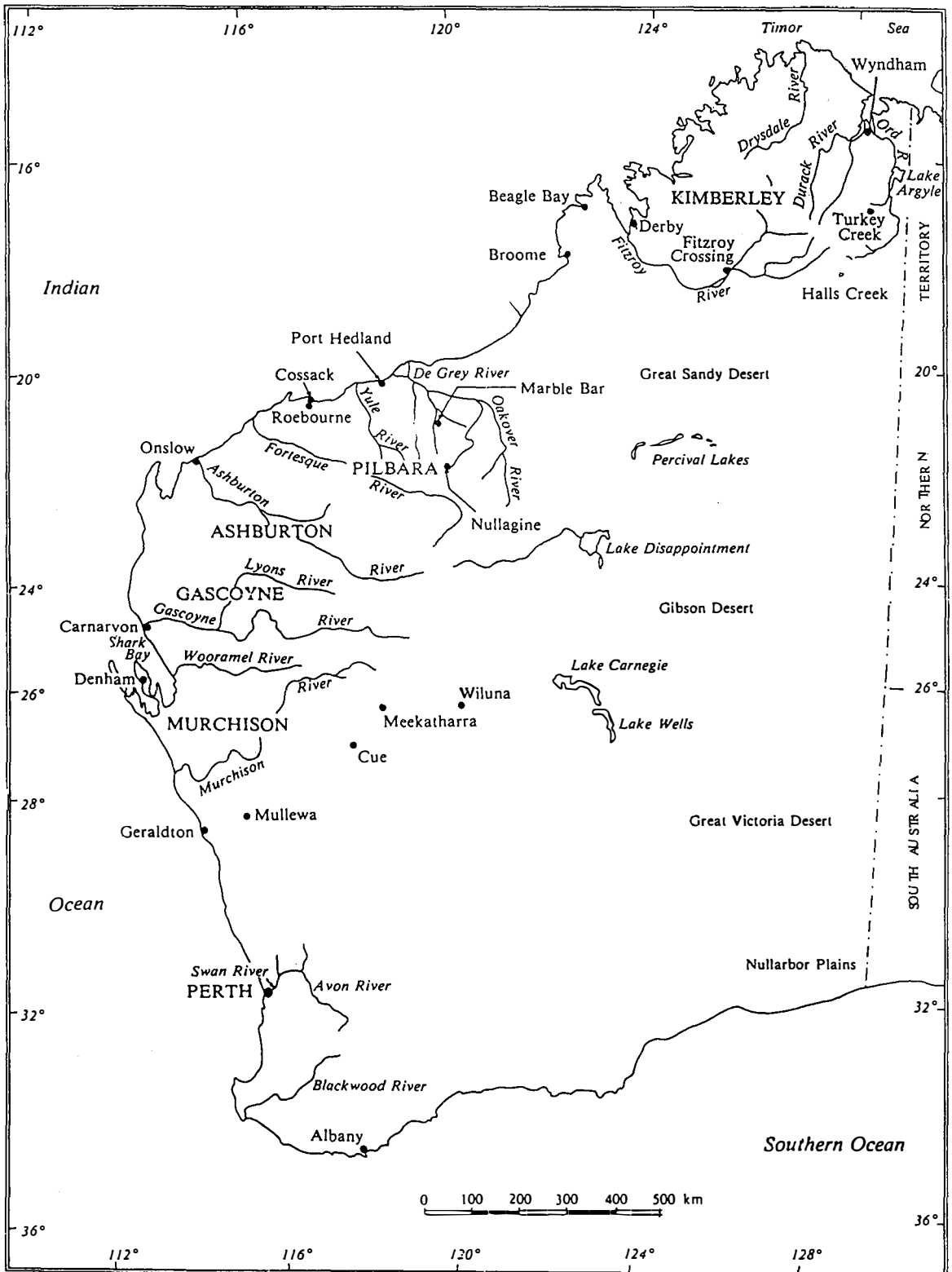
The text of this book by the Reverend John Gribble has been taken from a 1905 edition of *Dark Deeds in a Sunny Land*, or, *Black and White in North-West Australia*, 'republished by the proprietors of the *Daily News*, Perth, W.A.'

There were a number of printing mistakes in this edition and wherever possible these have been corrected, although apparent errors, such as Mr Gribble's reference to 'houseless' just a line or two from a comment about homes has been left, along with other contradictions. The lengthy paragraphs and extended sentences, the style of the time, also remain, but the punctuation has been altered in places to assist comprehension.

The decision to remove, retain or explain has been the subject of much debate within the Institute of Applied Aboriginal Studies. Was this curious sentence the error of a careless typesetter, or the turbulent thoughts of a harassed author denied access to a competent proof-reader?

The final editing decisions were an attempt to eliminate the obvious mistakes while retaining the spirit and tone of Mr Gribble's courageous work. Inevitably these decisions are subjective and open to criticism.

DUNCAN GRAHAM
June 1987



Introduction



The frontier of European settlement in the colony of Western Australia a hundred years ago stretched way beyond the south-western corner to the far north, and pastoralists were pushing steadily inland wherever the countryside offered promise of a living to be gained. Only the presence of Aborigines stood between them and the land they sought. On a frontier as far from the colonial capital as this where governmental representatives were few or absent, the newcomers were largely free to deal with the Aboriginal presence in their own way. Whether relations between the original inhabitants and the invaders were mostly peaceful or conflicting depended on a host of factors, such as the tenor of initial encounters, the expectations the Europeans had of the Aborigines, whether or not Aboriginal sacred sites or objects were violated, and so on. What was certain, however, in the absence of convict labour, was the vital need for an Aboriginal labour force if the fledgling industry was to survive in the more remote areas of the colony.

This recognition of the indigenous inhabitants as a source of much needed labour no doubt influenced the pastoralists in their approaches to the Aborigines into whose homelands they were moving with their stock. Once this Aboriginal labour force was recruited, by whatever means, and properties were established, the actual treatment of its members, who were virtual captives, depended largely on the personality and whim of the Europeans who managed the operation. What then happened to the 'wild blacks' or 'bush myalls', those Aborigines who still remained outside the control of the pastoralists, would have largely been a function of their perceived potential as labour or, conversely, their nuisance value as alleged stock-killers. Much frontier violence was directed against those Aborigines unfortunate enough

to be labelled 'bush myalls' when attacks on whites or their stock occurred anywhere in a district.

In the areas well to the north of Perth, then, the frontier was a raw one, and the presence of European women was the exception rather than the rule. In addition to the often harsh treatment of Aboriginal servants, there was considerable sexual use of Aboriginal women by white men on station properties. This aspect of the frontier provided an additional reason for any servant of the church, such as the Reverend Gribble, to regard the situation as sinful and decidedly un-Christian. In 1885, when he arrived in the Gascoyne district to establish the first mission to the Aborigines, he soon came face to face with the hard facts of the frontier and the consequences of publicly protesting about them.

John Brown Gribble's book is, as its provocative title suggests, an exposé, but what it reveals is much more than European exploitation and oppression of Aborigines in the Gascoyne just one hundred years ago. This feisty clergyman had the temerity to publicise what he had witnessed not long after he established his mission in Carnarvon. His message to the local pastoralists, who relied very heavily on Aboriginal labour, was that the Aborigines were not slaves, but free subjects of the Queen. This saying of the unsayable set the scene for angry confrontations, physical attacks, and a campaign of vilification that shook the colony to its foundations. What transpired at the highest governmental, legal and political levels in Perth (and beyond, to the British Home Office) is a fascinating power struggle that saw Gribble outmanoeuvred and ultimately defeated by a conservative élite. This group included pastoralists, whose interests were poorly served by the well-publicised and persistent attack on them mounted by Gribble. The grave injustices that followed are an eloquent testimony to the amorality of much of the Australian frontier since the European invasion, and they broke Gribble's fighting spirit. He died at the age of forty-five while labouring in the field among the Aborigines at Yarrabah, the mission he founded in North Queensland.

This book is Gribble's major legacy, and its resurrection from a long-forgotten past is timely, since 1988 for Aborigines marks the two-hundredth anniversary of the invasion of their homeland, and many of the horrors that followed have for too long remained hidden from all Australians. In his eloquent Boyer Lectures (1968), the eminent anthropologist Professor Stanner, describing the European invasion and its aftermath for Aborigines, spoke of the 'great Australian silence' that replaced an earlier, lively interest in the indigenous inhabitants of the continent. At a time when the frontier was still expanding, and Aboriginal groups, experiencing the invaders for the first

time, were desperately trying to cope with the largely disruptive and distressing aftermath, they were already fading from European-Australian consciousness. Later, when Darwin's ideas were being widely applied to human societies, the notion of the soon to be extinct Aboriginal race came to dominate, and this must have hastened the disappearance of the Aborigines from the minds of the colonists—or at the very least provided a convenient justification for ignoring or neglecting them.

The proof of this 'unremembering', as Stanner calls it, lies in Australian historical writings, which until very recently were conspicuous for the absence of the original Australians from the chronicles of pioneering, settlement, exploitation and expansion. The story of how the continent was 'tamed' and rendered more suitable for civilised living was progressively rewritten, until the Aborigines, if mentioned at all, became a mere footnote to history, accorded a status little better than that of natural vegetation or fauna, and with about as much effect on the colonisation process. A notable example occurred in Queensland, home of the largest Aboriginal population, and a colony whose first half century had featured in some areas prolonged Aboriginal resistance, but also the violent deaths of many thousands of Aborigines. The book commissioned to commemorate the colony's first half-century made not one mention of Aborigines! (See Reynolds, 1972.) Examples of this exclusion can still be found today.

It is only in the last two decades that the momentous task of writing Aborigines back into Australian history has been addressed, and today a whole new generation of scholars is hard at work dredging up and synthesising a large body of data—much more than was anticipated, in view of the length of the period of 'unremembering', and the lamentable fact that the Aborigines who were witnesses to so much could not speak to us from 'the other side of the frontier', except indirectly and incompletely. The histories that are now appearing are in the main immensely informative. Their revelations are overturning a number of widely accepted stereotypic 'truths' concerning the aftermath of the European invasion, e.g. that the Aborigines offered no concerted resistance, or that they were incapable of becoming agriculturalists. In the same way that anthropological writings have revealed the richness and complexity of Aboriginal cultures, historians are highlighting the diversity and ingenuity of Aboriginal reactions to the invaders and their adaptations to a powerful alien culture. More and more, they are also documenting the presence and persistence of Aboriginal resistance as a major theme in the unfolding of events since the invasion. Once direct physical resistance became untenable, it was in many cases replaced with a more subtle but nevertheless equally determined resistance to domination.

As the task of giving Aborigines their rightful place in Australian history continues (the dominance of the Aborigines in Australian prehistory is unchallenged), a larger and more difficult goal must be pursued: that of restoring what has happened to the Aboriginal people to our national consciousness. There is a pressing need to eliminate the 'unremembering' and end the great silence and give every Australian a much fuller understanding of what really went on in this country. Everyone ought to know how it was that the original inhabitants were decimated, oppressed, marginalised and pauperised, and how they were progressively reduced to the status of powerless outcasts.

Why is this consciousness-raising so vital? Today, in a time of economic downturn and uncertainty, the tide of public sentiment has turned against the Aboriginal people, and the spurious cry of 'equal treatment for all, regardless of creed or colour' rings out loudly from many different quarters. I say 'spurious' because it suggests that Aborigines as a group are better off than whites, and are getting more of their share of the national wealth that they deserve, etc. The fact that many white Australians could possibly believe that Aborigines are in front, rather than very far behind, in the equality stakes, is eloquent proof of the critical need for details of a sordid past to be made known to members of the society at large.

Today, the dominant attitude towards Aborigines as a group is the well-known one of 'blaming the victims': Aborigines are harshly judged for alleged shortcomings, when what needs to be understood are the historical processes that gave rise to their present marginalised situation. Drinking, family traumas, violence (mostly directed against other Aborigines), suicide, conspicuous consumption patterns, etc. are commonly judged as 'proofs' of Aboriginal unworthiness and failure, rather than as outcomes of historical processes in combination with contemporary conditions (not the least of which is Aborigines' acute awareness and frequent experience of widespread racism and hostility directed against them). Some white Australians have felt compelled to make public statements dissociating themselves from history, and saying, 'Why should I feel guilty? I didn't do anything to any Aborigines—all that was well before my time, so I don't see why I should accept any responsibility for it.' The message that needs to reach such people is that they are not being asked to feel guilt, but to try to understand how things came to be as they are today, and to take responsibility as the main beneficiaries of the past action of whites. The revelations of history would undoubtedly shock most white Australians, and it might also therefore lead to a greater understanding and tolerance of the situation of Aborigines in Australian society today.

Against this background, *Dark Deeds in a Sunny Land* deserves to be widely read and reflected upon by Australians for its accounts of the labour system of the Gascoyne area, and for its startling accounts of Aboriginal mistreatment and death at the hands of certain settlers and police officers. His account of the trial and acquittal of a white man charged with the killing of a Gascoyne Aboriginal, Thackabiddy, illustrates clearly some of the dimensions of European inhumanity towards the indigenous people of this country. The most chilling aspect of cruelty, and one which historians are increasingly bringing out in their writings, is the fact that many frontier whites were able so quickly to distance themselves from the Aborigines, dehumanising them in order to justify the many shocking acts of cruelty committed by supposedly respectable, upright, Christian citizens.

What is remarkable is that the whites did not risk the loss of respectability and social standing by their inhumane treatment or killing of Aborigines.

The unselfconscious racism and calm acceptance of the atrocities that had been committed against Thackabiddy, on the part of several of the witnesses in the trial, indicates that such sentiments and behaviours were considered at that time perfectly acceptable and normal, as long as the victims were Aborigines and not Europeans. The amazing verdict, dismissing even the less serious charge of manslaughter in the face of the overwhelming evidence of Thackabiddy's monstrously cruel and slow death at the hands of the defendant, demonstrates even more powerfully the low valuation placed on Aboriginal lives in frontier regions, even by the 'upholders' of the law. Some scholars, and virtually all Aborigines, would argue that even today, the administration of justice in Australia continues to operate in such a way as to discriminate against Aborigines and therefore to accord them a lower valuation in the scale of human worth than that accorded to the majority of the population.

Some of the major implications of 'the Gribble affair' are described in the excellent paper by Su-Jane Hunt, which is included in this book and puts Gribble's story into its proper historical perspective. I will not therefore go into detail concerning the background to *Dark Deeds*, but a few comments on what happened are warranted. The Reverend Gribble was no doubt somewhat brash and dogmatic, and in modern parlance would be a 'stirrer' of the first order. His presence at Carnarvon upset the region's status quo, because he toured the pastoral properties and there saw clear evidence of the virtual enslavement of local Aborigines; they were clearly regarded as chattles, who had no rights at all and belonged wholly to their employers.

Gribble's 'sin' was that he took his Christian mission seriously, rather than turn a blind eye to conditions among his Aboriginal 'flock'. He felt

compelled therefore to protest publicly about this, and then, when local opposition quickly crystallised against him, to seek a wider audience for his complaints. Gribble aired them first in the colony's press, but not all the Perth newspapers lent him a sympathetic ear. The *West Australian*, mouth-piece of the conservative establishment, led the campaign to discredit and silence the man. When his attempts to secure justice were perverted by the colony's power-brokers, and his own church had turned against him, he resorted to an appeal to higher authorities in Britain. Nothing, however was resolved in his favour, and he left Western Australia after his libel suit against the *West Australian* failed.

As Su-Jane Hunt notes, this trial highlighted the tensions that existed between the colony's liberal and conservative camps, but it also exposed the highly incriminating nature of the depositions of Gascoyne pastoralists and north-west pearlers, whose casual acceptance of inhumane treatment of Aborigines reveals the same kind of distancing and dehumanising process discernible in the contents and outcome of the Thackabiddy trial.

It is clear from Gribble's own story, and from Su-Jane Hunt's account of the Gribble affair, that many people in the colony thought that there was much truth in his allegations. Despite this, Gribble lost his battle, because the cards of power were clearly stacked against the liberals, who were no match for the 'six ancient families', the *West Australian*, the Anglican élite and the Governor. The Aborigines of Western Australia were the main losers, of course, since none of Gribble's protests led to any amelioration of the situation in the Gascoyne or elsewhere in the colony.

The basic problem of Aboriginal powerlessness has persisted, and the continued exclusion of Aborigines in most of Australia from access to significant resources ensures that they will remain marginalised. They constitute only about 1.5% of the total population in this country, and although their voices have increasingly been heard in recent times, the great need persists for the devastating impact and aftermath of the European invasion—the widespread brutal oppression and economic exploitation—to become ingrained in the Australian psyche. This is not aimed at inducing guilt and self-flagellation, since Australians are not much given to either, but an enlightened understanding. Any tellings of Aboriginal history that can contribute to this much needed awakening of consciousness are to be welcomed, and it is hoped that the Reverend Gribble's story finds the wide audience it deserves.

BOB TONKINSON
 Professor of Anthropology
 University of Western Australia.
 June 1987

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Prefatory Note

That dark deeds, dark, not only because they were done in the dark, for some men only perform their deeds oppression and cruelty under the shadow of darkness, and as the Great Teacher has said: 'Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil', but that which chiefly constitutes the darkness of certain deeds, is that their nature is directly opposed to the principles of right, justice and humanity, which may be justly compared to rays of purest light, coming straight down from the Great Sun of Righteousness, and before such light alone can real works of darkness be made manifest. Because 'that which maketh manifest is light'.

Among the darkest deeds ever performed by mortals, must be classed those acts of 'inhumanity to man' which, as a certain poet has truly said, 'makes countless thousands mourn'.

As evidence of this we have only to look at Africa's long and sad catalogue of woes, woes inflicted on poor, defenceless blacks, inhumanity, of the vilest description, practised by the white-skinned Christian on his black-skinned brother.

Capture, chains, long marches, whipping, exhaustion, death on the roadside, or if surviving all these, a far more terrible fate in the shape of a living death! Packed like herrings in the slave-dhow; sold like brutes of the field to the highest bidder, on some foreign shore, and then dark, dark, finale, a life, longer or shorter, according to the powers of endurance—of what? Heaven only knows!

Let Mrs Harriet Beecher Stowe, with her graphic pen, sketch the revolting picture to our minds.

Deeds of darkness have been committed not only in Africa and America,

in connection with the slave trade—a trade which, thank God (through the holy exertions of such men as Wilberforce, Fowell-Buxton, Lord Brougham, Abraham Lincoln, John Woolman, and others whose names might be mentioned) has been brought within very limited bounds, and can never again show itself openly—but in India also in connection with the horrible proceedings of the great Mutiny, deeds of the grossest darkness were done.

Who can think of the Black Hole of Calcutta, with its agonising mass of human victims, men, women, and children, of our own nationality, writhing in all the tortures of a living death, without a thrill at the heart-strings, and the deepest abhorrence of soul, not only at the condition of the sufferers, but also at the infernal ferocity of the perpetrators.

Again, in the days of fierce persecution in Madagascar, what a dark blood stain of cruelty marked its pages, and more recently still, and far nearer home, what horrible deeds were performed in connection with the system of 'black birding', so called, carried on by such human monsters as Mount and Morris, of South Sea notoriety!

But that Australia itself, professedly the new home of liberty and light, should also have become the theatre of the dark deeds of oppression and cruelty; that a land not only blessed by the Great God, with cloudless skies and wide-spread prosperity and happiness to those who have been privileged to make it their home, and moreover a land which professes to reflect the noble institutions of Great Britain, those godly and philanthropic fabrics, which are not only England's glory and boast, but the envy of all the world beside; that a land so circumstanced and blessed by Divine Providence, should have become the nursing mother of oppression and injustice, and that deeds of infamy should find toleration therein, is not only a cause for the greatest astonishment, but in itself constitutes the foulest blot that could possibly rest upon the escutcheon of Australia's fame.

But the question may be asked by some, 'Is it really so; are deeds of darkness, in the sense of injustice and inhumanity practised in this land of light and blessing?' That such is the case will be clearly shown in the following pages.

The events which have occurred in this colony, during the past ten months, in relation to the native question, leave no room for an apology for the publication of this pamphlet. The circumstances of the times demand it.

As regards the re-appearance of my now notorious journal and article on the native labor system, I have allowed them to go forth in the precise form in which they first appeared in the *Inquirer* and *Daily News*, for the simple reason that the world at large may be able to form an opinion of the state of things obtaining on the Gascoyne, when I settled there as a Missionary.

I would, however, have it to be distinctly understood that my journal and articles were published after, and not before, all the barbarous tactics of the settlers to get rid of me. It is a fact that none can contradict, that for five months I endured every kind of cruelty at the hands of the Gascoyners, without publishing a thing against them, either in this colony or in any other, and it was only when they hounded me down at the second public meeting in Carnarvon, that I resolved to adopt the only course open to me, viz: the columns of a free press: and there is another important fact in connection with the matter, which is not generally known—the Bishop of the diocese gave his emphatic sanction to the publication, as he stated to the editor of the *Inquirer* and *Daily News* personally, only the day previous to the publication, that he saw no reason why they should not appear in print. And yet, strange to say, after they did appear, my conduct in making public the state of things on the Gascoyne was denounced by the Mission Committee, of which the Bishop himself was the presiding head. Further comment is needless.

As to the case of the poor victim of civilised barbarism, Thackabiddy, I have given it in full, as reported by the *Inquirer*, so that people beyond Western Australia may see for themselves how justice is administered in these parts, and then draw their own conclusions, respecting 'dark deeds in this sunny land'.

In conclusion, I may just state that the profits, if any, accruing from the sale of this pamphlet will be devoted to the Native Mission in the North-West of Australia; in connection with which I hope (D.V.) to labor long in bestowing the benefits of the Glorious Gospel of the Blessed God upon those to whom we owe so much, but for whom we have done so little.

JOHN B. GRIBBLE
Perth, Western Australia
29 May 1886.

My First Three Months on the Gascoyne

From the ever-flowing Murrumbidgee, in the interior of New South Wales, where for nearly seven years I had laboured to ameliorate the condition of the native tribes, I was called by the Church in the West, to organise similar work, amongst the numerously represented tribes on the Gascoyne (which, by the way, very seldom flows).

Accordingly, sailing from Sydney, after a protracted voyage, I reached Fremantle and went on by rail to Perth, where, after arranging necessary matters with the Bishop of the diocese, and having been most courteously received by His Excellency the Governor and several members of the Government, who assured me of their sympathy and readiness to assist in the work in which I was about to engage, I took my passage for Carnarvon, six hundred miles north of Fremantle, in the *Otway*.

On the way up I learned from the representatives of pearling and settlement, who were amongst my fellow passengers, what kind of material I would have to deal with on the white side of the question.

In due time the ship anchored off Port Gascoyne, which is simply a shallow creek, or minor mouth of the river. After a delay of several hours in consequence of boats of the lightest draught being unable to leave the shore until the tide was sufficiently high, the police boat came alongside, in which I was safely taken to the landing place.

Nothing, I suppose, in the shape of a township, could be more unprepossessing to a stranger than Carnarvon—low shores, treeless, houseless; giving one, at first sight, the impression he was in a squatting country; background, made up of ridges of raw sand bearing stunted scrubs, the same thing being alive with natives, in a state of nature; number of houses, includ-

ing two hotels and three stores, twelve. The white population may of course be judged by the number of houses. Such was Carnarvon, as I first saw it. With natives as guides and porters, I made my way to the professedly most aristocratic of the two hotels—the Carnarvon—where a room had been engaged for me by the Resident Magistrate, which I must say was all that could be desired, clean and comfortable.

I subsequently reported myself to the Resident Magistrate, whom I soon judged to be a gentleman, in the true sense of the word—an opinion, I may say, I have had no reason to change from that day to this.

My first duty was one connected with my functions as a clergyman, when I was called away to visit a dying lad. After which, with a native police guide, I rode about two and a half miles up the river and inspected a site, which had been recommended by Mr Foss, as one most suitable for a native home and school, and so ended my first day's experience in Carnarvon.

The next day being Saturday, assisted by Mr. Rushton, I arranged for the conduct of Divine Service on Sunday, and found the people, as a rule, favorable to any effort for their moral welfare.

The Sunday service was well attended, and apparently appreciated. With Monday began real missionary enterprise.

Having obtained the use of a police horse and cart, I got my luggage and materials to a pool, some little distance from the town, where, with the help of a native, who, though willing and intelligent, had the drawback of the loss of a foot, from a spear wound, I pitched one of the military tents so obligingly lent me by Colonel Angelo, of Perth, and there erected a small corrugated-iron hut, in which to keep my boxes safely.

After such preparatory work, and having secured three horses—two by purchase and one by loan—and also the services of a so-called highly-civilised native, named Bullocky, I set out on my journey into the interior, my object being to inspect the Mission reserves, at the Kennedy Range and Mount Dalgetty, respectively. At night we halted at _____ Station, on the south bank of the Gascoyne. The approach of our little procession caused no little stir in the neighborhood of the rear premises; quite a number of rough-looking men ran off, as I pulled up and inquired for the manager. The strange manner of these men, so unlike what I had been accustomed to on the far-away Murrumbidgee, caused me to wonder; but I was not long in ascertaining the cause. Having been so strangely deserted, I made my way to the front of the house, which, as an exception to the rule, is a very good one. There I discovered, in the principal room, a congregation of men, some of whom I had recently seen at the back, and all being more or less under the influence of spirits, hurriedly clearing away bottles and pannikins from the

table and depositing the same under the roughly constructed bunks. My presence upon the scene rather disconcerted the actors, but on saying, 'Well, men, I see what you have been doing; now, don't be dishonest, make a clean breast of it, and don't hide any more grog', they seemed to regain their wits, and then, without saying anything further upon the subject, I explained who I was, and that I wanted to see the manager. One said he was away on the run, and another said he was round the corner. On going outside, and round the corner of the house, I met the said manager, who received me kindly, at the same time apologising for the disorderly state of domestic affairs, on the ground that he had no cook. On signifying my wish to remain over night, he said he thought I had better go on and shake down at the woolshed hut, three miles distant. But on my complaining of fatigue, he said I could stay, but he expected every visitor to provide his own blankets. Having assured him I could do that, the horses were all turned out, and I turned in, to this, the first squatting homestead I had seen on the celebrated Gascoyne. To my surprise, in the course of the evening, three of the young men (indeed two of them were in appearance mere lads) came to me and said they had recently been making asses of themselves, and would I give them the total abstainer's pledge. I should be only too happy so to do, I replied, and the result was that six took the pledge, some for a year and some for six months: but all, with the understanding that it was not to commence till 12 o'clock at night, so that they might finish up the supply they had on hand. During the evening I read an account from the 'Leisure Hour' of my own adventures with the notorious Kelly gang, and gave them a short address, which I hoped might not be in vain. At the conclusion of the proceedings, the manager said that although some of them had been led to think the parson a stuck-up kind of fellow, he was glad to find that he was not so, and that he was glad that he had stayed for the night. I made myself as comfortable as circumstances would allow, my greatest discomfort being the sounds of revelry, coming from the adjoining room, for as soon as my address was finished they hurried away with the avowed intention of draining the bottles before midnight—which I think they managed to do. As a grand finale, some rolled on the floor with significant heaviness.

Next day, after receiving unmistakable kindness from the manager, I proceeded on my way a considerable distance, and late in the evening came to a small hut, which constituted a homestead of _____ Station. Here I found the manager, a fine-looking specimen of humanity, in the midst of his shearers, who were seated round the camp fire, enjoying a quiet smoke after the rough bush meal. Though the house was small and inconveniently packed with supplies, the good man did all in his power to make the way-

far from missionary comfortable, giving up to my use his own bed, while he slept on the sandy floor, and on leaving next morning he compelled me to replenish my stock of provisions from his own supply, and would not hear of payment. Such hospitality, coming especially from one of another persuasion, struck me very forcibly with the generosity of the man's heart. The next place of call, only a very short time, was the camp, which really professes to be the homestead of C_____ Station. It consisted of a small grass hut without walls, six or seven nude natives, male and female, and a young lad, far too young to be in such a position—in charge. At the camp fire I noticed a very young native girl, lying apparently ill; but, on asking the lad in charge what was wrong with her, with cold indifference he said, 'Oh! she's right enough.' The next day, being Sunday, I rested till Monday at _____ Station, where I found a young man, the owner, I believe, superintending shearing matters. For two years this young squatter had been content to pass his existence in a very contracted hut, quite incompatible both for his position in society and his calling as a squatter. It surprised me at first, to find men with professed Christian instincts living in such disorder, and dirt, as I found some of them living in. But, before I had completed my 400 miles of travel, I found my surprise changed into pity, for that enlightened human nature, which could so soon enter upon the high road to barbarism, when left to itself. But to return, the young stockowner now under review had recently, it would seem, bethought himself of civilised environments and had risen and built, what should have been a good bush house. But, alas! like many other things in this uncertain world, 'it was spoilt in the making', and I could not wonder at that, when I was told by one who ought to know, that the only tool the enterprising squatter could furnish the workmen for the construction of the roof and verandah, was a tomahawk! I formed a favourable opinion of the capabilities of this run, and I doubt not that, when the young owner has acquired more knowledge of his business, and the best method to prevent his natives from running away, he will have his sails set to a fair breeze towards success. Quite a number of natives, females predominating, were owned by Mr. _____. On Sunday I conducted a short service, several natives, a China man, and the owner being present. The nature of the hospitality of which I partook during my stay here was so strangely exceptional, that I must ere I pass on, refer to it. The meals were served up on two grocery cases which served for a table, by a Chinese cook, whose shirt, if boiled down, would certainly have yielded a good supply of cart-grease. On asking him why he did not wash his greasy shirt, he replied, 'No soap'. Only one fork could be mustered, and John was sent out to cut a forked stick, which, when he returned, he was told to hand

me. I may add that when night came on my host pointed to the dusty earthen floor and a sheet of corrugated iron, and remarked I might shake down there, and shake down I did, on my bed of ridges and grooves, wondering whether I was really in a civilised country or where. For a little tea, sugar, and flour which I asked to be obliged with on the Monday morning previous to my resuming the journey, I was charged with the modest sum of seven shillings—a fact which I should never think of mentioning, had it not been for another fact—that all the other settlers, without exception, were really hospitable, and would not hear of payment, though in each case it was tendered by me.

The country hitherto from the Port had been monotonously flat and covered with scrub, which in places was very thickly intergrown: good grass abounded: the sheep I saw, though as regards breed they would count for little in New South Wales or Victoria, were decidedly fat, at once showing the fattening properties of both grass and scrub.

My next stage of 30 miles, to the Kennedy, lay through untraversed bush, the character being sand-ridges and clay-pans, covered and surrounded respectively by bewildering scrub. Right glad was I, therefore, when at night the native guide, pointing to the foot of a large gum-tree, said, 'Ba ba!'—meaning water. Early next morning I was awake, and while my native was hunting up the horses I took my field glasses and ascended one of the high peaks, at the foot of which I had camped, and from my exalted position, I had surveyed as far as my glasses would allow me, the vast extent of ironstone upland, with its thousand peaks and cones, and deep, impenetrable gorges, the favourite haunts of a tribe of natives said to be ferocious and blood-thirsty cannibals. The view I obtained was certainly a grand one, but the prospect of forming a Mission is such a place of apparent unproductiveness, was most forbidding. For twenty-five miles over ironstone surface nearly all the way, the poor horses toiled; sometimes I was hemmed in by barriers of mighty rocks, and my only way out was the narrow foot-tracks of the wild natives, which gave the impression that the natives in the Kennedy Ranges must be numerous. In one place I came upon an immense battle-ground, where, my native told me, many a great fight had taken place. Having reached the great rent in the mountain-side called 'Shipka Pass', I was obliged to follow it down to the Gascoyne, and camping at night on the river-bank, was up betimes in the morning, and journeyed on to the station, near the junction of the Lyons with the Gascoyne. This station, as regards the homestead, is, I must honestly say, for order and cleanliness, the best appointed I saw during my travels. The house, though small, was well built, and was internally the picture of neatness, and I was more than sur-

prised to learn that it was not only kept in such a state of home-like attractiveness within by the bachelor manager, but that he had with his own hands, assisted of course by his natives, built the very substantial and compact little house in which I spent the most comfortable night on the Gascoyne.

Mr. _____, manager for a company, I was given to understand, is certainly, in my opinion, a true gentleman. His address and manner bespoke good antecedents, and I should, from conversation, take him to be a person well adapted for the post he fills. So far as I could see and judge, natives on this station are treated with true humanity—quite a relief to one after being brought into contact with an opposite state of things elsewhere. The next halt was at—what shall I call it? I really don't know—a something representing the headquarters of a station. All that was to be noted were three features—a flock of sheep on the sandy bed of the river, two white men, and two young native women. The Dalgetty Mount was now my object to reach, and in order to do so I must call at certain homesteads along the route. The first of these, though of long standing, is far from what it should be in every respect, considering the facilities for management which it possesses. Here I saw sheep shamefully tortured by white shearers; but there was no help for it, the owner told me — he was quite in the hands of these uncouth fellows. The sheep on this run were in splendid condition, but the fleeces as they were shorn showed plainly the futility of open country feeding, on the soil such as that fringing the Gascoyne. My opinion is that pastoral pursuits in this district will never pay until the runs are fenced, and back-block water supply secured. I thought had Riverina enterprise taken this country in hand, by this time a great area of frontage land would have been securely paddocked.

Though much about this station could only be defined as rough, I received much kindness from the owner. This gentleman, though courteous in his manner, seemed to think that the 'niggers' were best as they were, without any interference on the part of Exeter Hall representatives. But as I saw the said 'niggers' on this station, I should say that a deal more was needed for their bodies, leaving their souls out of the question.

Still up the Gascoyne I pursued my way, and by-and-by came to a station founded and owned by a Mr. _____, whom I found possessing the manners of a gentleman, and had it not been for the misfortune of bush isolation, which, I dare say, has rubbed off much of his native polish, he would shine as a true diamond. The homestead was antiquated in appearance, consisting of a well-built house, yards, and certain sheds required for the working of the run. Here I found natives shearing, and them only, and doing their work

well, but slowly. I could not help but admire the patient toil of these blackmen as hour after hour they stuck to their task, notwithstanding their suffering from the effects of a severe cold, which at the time was prevailing throughout the district; and I thought what a pity it was that those who reap such benefit from their toil should not treat them in a manner commensurate with such benefit. But there, alas! comes in the difficulty.

I forgot to say that at one station where I called, and where I found a large number of natives in the ownership of the manager, I drew attention to the neglected appearance of certain of the natives, and that if the blacks were unkindly treated they would certainly run away. I was told in reply that the treatment was quite good enough for the 'niggers', and that it was absurd to think that they should have tea, sugar, etc. And mark—these same natives I found were saving this very station hundreds of pounds per annum. Truly justice—where?

In this upper region of the Gascoyne the only two white women on the river are to be found, one of whom I had the pleasure of meeting, and found her to be a lady in education and manners, but notwithstanding such, she was not above putting her hand to rough work in the busy time of shearing, and, as I contemplated, the sacred influence of woman's presence and example as here seen, I could not help regretting that every man (white man, I mean), in the district was not married. May it soon be so.

Having reached the distant Dalgetty Reserve, I spent two days and nights thereon, and formed a most favourable opinion of its resources. Its position commands a vast area of country, in which the natives are numerous, although during my stay I did not see one bushman; the reason assigned by neighboring settlers being a police party scouring the country in search of 'niggers' who had stolen sheep on a station higher up the river. Completing my inspection of the country I returned by much the same route as that by which I journeyed up.

At the Junction Police Station, where I stayed a day and night, I found several unfortunate natives chained like so many dogs to each other round the neck, and then the main chain connecting with a tree, and as though that was not sufficient to prevent their escape, some of them were coupled at the ankles, and in such condition these poor things sat hour after hour, and day after day, and week after week, awaiting the coming of the Police Magistrate from Carnarvon before they could be tried. They were quite nude, yet I noticed that when driven into the cell at night there was nothing in the shape of a blanket, and they were chained and fettered just in the same way as in the open air. If ever I pitied poor creatures in my life I did these unfortunates, and on asking the constable in charge why they were chained by the

ankles in the cell he told me it was necessary. But I could not see the necessity at all. It was unnecessary punishment inflicted on human beings who had not yet been found guilty of crime. Indeed, one of the group, a poor old man, was afterwards set free.

Here I also found two young native women, the reputed wives of two black-trackers attached to the station. I was told by the young constable in charge, who, by the way, showed me every kindness in his power, that one of these young native women had just buried her half-caste child, and that she was in great grief at its loss. On going to the camp the officer asked the one who had lost the child who the father of it was, and she gave the name of a young man who is now in a Government office in Perth. This information was made intelligible to me by the young police officer. I asked the young man whether what I had heard at the Port respecting half-caste children being killed and eaten was true. He said he believed it was, and cited a case in point as an illustration.

From the Junction Police Station I proceeded towards the coast, with nothing to engage my attention, with the exception of an occasional wool team with its inevitable native girl or woman attached. Conversing with several of the drivers, I asked them why they had females always with them? Some replied they preferred them to boys, and others did not blush to admit that they had them for immoral purposes. The last night of my downward journey I spent at an outcamp of a station, where I found a young white man in charge, and seated at the fire I saw two young native women, one with a half-caste babe on her breast. On drawing the attention of the young man to the fact, I asked him did he know who the father was, and to my astonishment he said he believed he was. I talked seriously and kindly to him, showing him the sinfulness of such intercourse, and begged of him to turn over a new leaf. He replied, 'You see, sir, she has got the child now, and I can't turn her adrift.' A young native woman, only a few miles from this very spot, told me, on my asking her whether she was married, that she had only a white-fellow's yamba (child), and she gave me the name of the father—the manager of a certain station.

With feelings far from bright and satisfactory as regards my social environment, I arrived safely at my Carnarvon camp, and at once set about making arrangements for the execution of real Mission work.

Having received authority from headquarters, I removed my effects to the Galilie Baba, which is about two miles and a half from the Port, on the north side of the sandy bed of the Gascoyne—a position which had been strongly recommended to me by the Resident Magistrate—where I began the erection of a house, consisting of three rooms and verandah, my assistants

being two natives, one of whom, as before stated, had lost a foot, and the other had lost the sight of an eye. I completed this task, and then being short of building material, I sank a well, and found a great supply of fresh water; being a great convenience, both as regards domestic purposes and the proposed Mission garden. After sinking and securing the well I conceived the idea of building a comfortable hut for my worthy natives, although some people said the natives would never sleep inside a house. In due course the hut was finished, and I had the satisfaction of seeing the native females attached to the Mission home, in possession of their own dwelling. This hut, I might say, is constructed entirely of material from the river. Having no dray, everything had to be carried on the shoulders or heads of the natives and myself. The next effort was in the direction of a school-house, but the posts were so heavy, and the distance so great, that, after conveying and placing a few in position, I was compelled to postpone the task until material should arrive from Perth. But being wretched if not fully employed, I set to work enclosing a garden area, which work is still progressing. As soon as I began the work of erecting the Mission premises natives began to gather round, and they were anxious to learn all and sundry as to my object, and several desired to make their home with me. At the present time I have eight, consisting of the wife and child of a native who is engaged on the police boat at Sharks' Bay, and who especially requested me to take charge of them during his absence; four native men, one a kindly loan from a settler up the river, and another assigned to Mr. Rushton, the schoolmaster at Carnarvon; but now, strange to say, claimed by a Mr. C_____, although Mr. Rushton's was a prior engagement, another being a runaway from the same Mr C_____, on the ground of ill-usage, and who, although Mr. C_____ has been here and ordered him away, stoutly declares that he will not return, though the police may lock him up. My only native man, therefore, is the one without a foot. The other two are a young woman, near her confinement, and a girl about ten years old. With the females came a young woman in a state of real wretchedness, as regards appearance, at any rate, who complained of having been flogged by a Mr. _____, because she would not walk when he told her to do so; she desired, in company with another, to remain for protection at the Mission. I allowed her to do so, providing she went before a J.P. at Carnarvon to state that she was not assigned to anyone. Not long after coming to the Mission she was set upon by two so-called civilised natives from a white man's camp, as, in company with another woman, she was crossing the sandy bed of the river.

Hearing a native woman's cries and shrieks, two of my native men and I ran in the direction from which they came, and found two terrified creatures

just emerging from the river bank, and on inquiring what was the matter, the poor injured creatures signified what had taken place, and showed the wounds, which plainly indicated that great violence had been used; the other woman showing me at the same time how she had been thrown down and then held by both arms and legs. I must say that at the sight of the signs of the outrage my very blood boiled, and though dark as it was I hurried away alone, after dressing the poor creature's wounds, to the said white man's camp, and informed him of what had taken place. He said he was very sorry, and in my presence severely reprimanded the cruel monsters, who had by this time returned to the camp; he earnestly requested me not to give the case in the hands of the police, as I said I should do. The man being a most respectable person, I agreed to stay proceedings. Shortly after this occurrence Champion informed me that he and the same woman wanted to live together, and that he would protect her from any further injury. He subsequently told me he was going that night to her camp; I told him that as members of a Christian Mission home I could not allow my natives anything of the kind, and that they must come before me for explanation and sanction, which they did; everything was made plain to the man as regards family relationship, etc. He well understood my meaning and what I said to the woman, and they still signifying their intention to live together, in the simplest manner compatible with the requirements of the case I gave them my sanction as their friend and guardian, and they regarded themselves doubtless as man and wife, and in thus acting I did as I had done to many native couples in New South Wales, and certainly thought that in so doing I was protecting an injured and unprotected human being. But what was the sequel? After several weeks had elapsed, during my absence at a Sunday afternoon service in Carnarvon, the white man who she said had flogged her rode up and ordered her to walk to his station. Next day I hastened away and had an interview with this man, telling him of the circumstances connected with the woman's going to the Mission, and that so far as her going back to fulfil the term of engagement (if such engagement really existed) I had not the least objection. But there was the man who had regarded the woman as his wife—he should be consulted. Producing an agreement signed by another settler, both master and witness being single men, I learned he observed, that whether natives were assigned or not, they belonged to the owners of the runs on which they were found, and that the Mission had no right whatever to any but the old and crippled; at the same time asking me what I intended to do with the natives. I said in reply, 'The future will show.' I said, 'The woman belongs to a man of the Mission, and certainly his claims should be considered, and whether he is willing for her to fulfil the term of

engagement.' The result was that my native Champion signified his willingness, and a paper explaining all this was sent to Mr. _____, the settler, in charge of the native man concerned, who, on his return informed me that the white man had greatly frightened him, and made him say that he did not want the woman any more, and that he should never have her again. The day after the woman's going away, I was informed by two different parties, that they had heard that the reason why Mr. _____ was particularly interested over this case was that the very woman was his own 'kept woman'.

Having received instructions from the Bishop to furnish an estimate for the maintenance of those native children likely to be gathered to the Mission school, in company with a police officer, and guided by a list of all Carnarvon natives assigned, I recently set out in search of native children of school age. Several were found in the camps, whose names were taken, and their friends were instructed to take them to the Resident Magistrate to get the matter of attending school explained to them.

On passing a white man's house, some two miles from Carnarvon, we saw a native girl and asked her name, having previously discovered that she was not assigned.

While this was taking place a white man approached, and, speaking a few words to her in *Ingarra*, she suddenly ran round the house and entered by the back door. The said white man entered the premises, and shortly afterwards came out to us saying, with a laugh. 'They have put her under the bed from you.' From all these events and circumstances, together with the fact that a so-called public meeting, notified at 3 o'clock p.m. was to take place at 8 p.m. of the same date, and of which no chance whatever was given to the Missionary to attend, although both he and his work were to be severely dealt with, has just been held at Carnarvon, and at which a resolution condemning Missionary effort in the Gascoyne district was carried, and is to be sent to the Government, will give people generally an idea of the moral tone of society in this part of Western Australia.

The following, then, is the three months' summary of my work: Travelled 400 miles in the interior, built Mission house and native hut, commenced school house, fenced part of garden block, sunk well, small community of natives gathered by their own free will. Church services for whites organised and regularly maintained: and last, but not least, got the whole district (I will not say town of Carnarvon) against me—Why?

Subsequent Experiences



TO THE EDITOR OF THE *INQUIRER*

Dear Sir,—As so much is being said and written in opposition to the Gascoyne Native Mission, you will, I feel confident, allow me the privilege of throwing a little light upon the subject from the position occupied by the Missionary himself.

Five months ago I came to the district for the purpose of founding a Christian Mission to the natives, and everywhere, during my first three weeks' travel in the interior, I gave the settlers plainly to understand that I came as a friend of all and the enemy of none, that I had no intention nor desire to interfere with their interests, seeing that my first object was to impart Christian instruction to the natives in the way which I might find to be most suitable to the circumstances of the blacks; and that if it was found to be impracticable to deal directly with those natives in the employment of the settlers, I should find sufficient scope outside in which to operate. But judge of my surprise on hearing one settler say that he thought the natives would be far better without such efforts, and to find another quite prepared with statistics, newspaper articles, and extracts, and a set cut-and-dried speech to show the failures of Missionary enterprise in general, and the New Norcia Mission and Warangesda in particular! And my utter astonishment may be better imagined than described when, after three months' hard work, in company with two natives, I discovered that concerted action had been taken by the Gascoyne settlers to crush the Mission at its very inception.

A so-called public meeting was convened, of which I had not the slightest knowledge till the following day, and at which my person and work were

thoroughly denounced, and a petition praying for my immediate withdrawal was prepared and signed. But why were such measures adopted? Because they found that I was not a suitable man for them. I had while up-country, seen wrongs and abuses to which I had conscientiously drawn their attention. I feared not to 'call a spade a spade'. I simply said that certain things ought not so to be; and because of my honesty of speech, I found three months subsequently that the whole district was confederate against me. The only course open to me, seeing that my mouth was stopped in Carnarvon, and a petition for my removal being forwarded to my Bishop, was to proceed to Perth, and there plead my own and the Mission's cause. And because I did that what any other man worthy of the name of a man would have done, no matter whether in secular or spiritual trust—what has followed? On my return, I found that my enemies were enraged against me. A proposal was made to charter the lighters so as to prevent the landing of my building material, while the recognised agent of the opposition at Carnarvon went boldly to the storekeeper from whom I got my supplies, and told him that I was 'boycotted', and that all who sympathised with me or helped me would be 'boycotted' too. And this was not a mere threat. 'Boycotting' has been really resorted to. Those who had supplied me with mutton wrote to say I should have no more; and then, when it was known that I was obtaining a limited supply a kindly-disposed person ordered a larger supply, so that I might obtain a little through him, but that person's supply was at once cut down; therefore, being driven to telegraph to the Bishop that I could obtain no meat, his lordship had an interview with Alex. Forrest, Esq., and that gentleman kindly and promptly telegraphed to say that I could get a supply of killing sheep from his station—which I did. But Mr. Forrest's manager (Mr. A. Hancock) informed me on Sunday last that the other settlers had threatened to 'boycott' him for letting me have the sheep.

Another meeting had been held, at which my Perth lecture was utterly denounced, and at which I tried to defend my position against their cruel attacks. But from the beginning to the end of my attempted address I was assailed with abuses and threats—one gentleman going so far as to challenge me to fight, while another declared that he was prepared to do anything, to kick me out of the district.

The natives who were in the habit of frequenting the Mission have now disappeared, for it seems that one of the objects sought by my opponents is to prevent the natives from settling down at the Mission. That this is the case I have learned from a young native man, who recently came down the river, and who expressed to me a strong desire to settle at the Mission; but on two subsequent occasions he called and stated that a Mr. _____, of Carnarvon,

would not let him come to the Mission. And this interference, it must be borne in mind, was with a free and unassigned native.

The last great effort of the enemies of a Christian Mission in these parts has been to prepare a second petition to my Bishop, and this petition has been hawked about from house to house, and from individual to individual, for signatures, some of which have been obtained through misrepresentations, as the following, which is a verbatim copy of a letter received by me recently, will go to show:

To the Rev. Mr. Gribble.

Dear Mr. Gribble,—The petition that went forward to his lordship the Bishop of Perth for your removal we signed, and we signed the same on certain conditions—that the whole of the residents of Carnarvon were in favour of your removal. We have since found that this is a falsehood, and we at once offer our sincere apology for signing the same. It was done more on the impulse of the moment, and since signing, same we have found that we erred on the side of the majority. We trust that you will take this in a true, manly light, and overlook whatever false step we must have made as business men.—We remain, your obedient servants,

GEORGE BASTON, Jun.
THOMAS BIRD

P.S.—You may make whatever use you think fit of the above.

The gentlemen whose signatures are attached to this letter, telegraphed to the Bishop to erase their names from the petition, as also did a Mr. Carroll, who told me he felt as though he could cut off his hand for having signed such a document: but, poor man, his conscientiousness has resulted in his being 'boycotted', along with other friends and supporters of the Mission. A large placard was posted in the township the other day bearing the following words:—'Down with Gribble and all his supporters, and confusion to all sneaks'; and only last Sunday, when, as usual, I went to the schoolhouse to conduct Divine worship. I found posted on both doors the following announcement:

Old Parry sent a parson here,
His name is J. B. Gribble;
Poor silly wretch he damned himself
To save the Lord the trouble.

I simply give these facts so that the people of Australia may have both sides of the question presented: and I think from what I have stated in this letter all honest persons will readily admit that missionary enterprise is a

thing most repugnant to the feelings of the majority of the settlers of the Gascoyne. There are worthy exceptions, not only in Carnarvon, but in the interior: but, as a rule, they according to their own showing, have one desire—and that is to deal with the natives in their own way. They want to be 'a law unto themselves', and, consequently, they cannot tolerate the advent of one who comes with the Gospel of 'Peace and goodwill' to the poor blackman.

By making room for the above in the columns of your valuable paper, you will greatly oblige and help yours truly,

JOHN B. GRIBBLE

Galilie Native Mission, Gascoyne River,
January 25, 1886.

A second petition had been drawn up praying the Bishop to remove me, on the ground of my interference with the native labor system. I was again obliged to take steamer for Perth, and while on the voyage down the coast, the outrage described in the following sworn statement, was perpetrated upon me.

The Alleged Affray On Board the S.S. *Natal*

TO THE EDITOR OF THE *INQUIRER*

Dear Sir,—The statement which follows was submitted by me to his Lordship the Bishop of the diocese for the consideration of the Missions Committee, who, after due consideration thereof, passed a resolution of sympathy, and 'recommended me to take legal steps to bring the offenders to justice'. Those steps I endeavoured to take by leaving my statement with a solicitor recommended by my committee on Saturday last, stating to the clerk that I could call on Monday for advice; but noticing in the evening papers that the S.S. *Natal* was advertised to sail on Monday, and knowing that my principal witnesses were connected with that ship, I deemed it necessary, in the interests of justice to secure their detention; thereupon I went to the private residence of the said solicitor, and sent in my card, with the statement that I desired an interview on the most urgent legal business, but such interview was twice refused. On Monday morning, at the appointed time, I called again at the office, and was met at the door by the clerk, who stated that the solicitor was in the next room, but that he had not opened my statement and would not undertake my business. I subsequently called at the office of another solicitor, but found that he was out of town. The chance, therefore, of securing that evidence which I depended upon having been lost, the only thing I can do is to publish my statement, after having sworn the same in the presence of a qualified person.—I am, yours, etc.,

JOHN B. GRIBBLE

Perth, Western Australia,
February 9, 1886,

My Dear Lord Bishop,—It is my painful duty to acquaint you with the circumstances of an outrage committed on myself on board the S.S. *Natal*, when lying at anchor in Champion Bay, on Saturday night last. Before the ship anchored, when lying under my rug near the wheel on the quarterdeck, I observed three men take up a position near me, and one of them, who was the nearest to me, I heard say to the others, 'It would be a good job if we could get rid of him'. After what I had seen of the manifestation of the strong feeling against me previously from Port Gascoyne, this remark caused me to think that perhaps they intended personal violence, and I felt rather alarmed, but said nothing, a little demonstration took place, and the man at the wheel told them to go away. One of the party said to him, 'Go to h_____', and they then walked forward. When the steamer anchored, a large number of passengers went ashore, and thinking I was safe I fell asleep. About a quarter past one o'clock I was aroused by voices near me, and I saw a number of men standing at my side and conversing in an undertone. A man, who I afterwards recognised as Mr. _____, from the Gascoyne, seized the man who was standing nearest to me and threw him violently forward upon me. This man, whom I afterwards discovered to be from the Nor'-West, closed with me, and I struggled with him, and during the struggle I asked him what he was doing. He said, 'The ship is rolling'. I said, 'You know that is false, as the ship is at anchor. Why can't you let me alone?' By this time I had regained my feet, and, wrenching myself from him, I walked across to the side-rail, where I saw the man who had begun the assault standing. Recognising him, I called him by name, and said, 'What, is it you, Mr. _____?'. He replied, 'Yes'. I said, 'Thank you for the compliment,' I was then seized again by Mr. _____, and struggled with him to the port side, at the same time calling aloud to the captain and officers of the watch. I tried to make my escape along the port side to the companion stairs, but a Mr. _____, who was aroused by the screams, said, 'Don't come this way, sir, my wife and children are lying across the deck,' or words to that effect. I said to him, 'These men are ill-treating me; where is the officer of the watch?' He said, 'I don't know, I have only just awoke.' I was then obliged to beat a retreat through my assailants, Mr. _____ seizing me as I re-passed the wheel, and with him I struggled the whole length of the quarterdeck to the companion stairs, on the starboard side. I repeatedly asked my tormentor what did he want to do with me, and what had I done to him, seeing he was a perfect stranger to me; and all the time of the struggle I continued calling

for help. But the only person I could see, there being no light on the deck, was a Malay, and to him I made signs to bring assistance; but he did not seem to understand me. At the companion stairs Mr. _____ tried hard to prevent my descent, but by keeping a firm hold of the hand-rail, I resisted his force, and finally wrenched myself from his grasp and descended into the Saloon, on entering which I met the stewardess, to whom I related what had occurred. I said, 'I want the captain, or the officer of the watch; where are they?' She said, 'They are all ashore, sir,' Seeing a passenger along the passage I ran to him, saying, 'What shall I do, they have been trying to drag me limb from limb on the deck; where are the officers?' He said he did not know. I then heard a voice from an inner cabin call out and say, 'What is the matter, Gribble?' Recognising the voice as that of Mr. Hastie, the ship's purser, I said, 'Come, Mr. Hastie, I have been assaulted.' He came to me, and I told him all that had occurred. He said, 'I will show you to a cabin, and if you remain there you will be quite safe.' I went into the cabin and Mr. Hastie left. I did not think it necessary to close the door of the cabin. About ten minutes after entering the cabin, two men, one of whom I recognised as the man who said it would be well to get rid of me, came into the passage, and one of them went into the opposite cabin. The man to whom I have just referred, remained in the passage with his back to my cabin door. I heard my name mentioned, and immediately after the man standing near my cabin door turned round, and was just crossing the threshold when I sprang out of my bunk and said, 'What right have you in my cabin?' He said, 'I was not in your cabin.' I said, 'You were.' I then called for the purser, who came upon the scene, and I related the circumstance, saying that my life was in danger, and that the man who was entering my cabin had said in my hearing that it would be a good job if they could get rid of me. He then said, 'You are not in danger, go into the cabin and close the door, and nobody will molest you.' He also remarked that there was a great noise on board, and that my voice had been heard all over the ship. I again entered my cabin and shut the door, but in about five minutes it was thrown violently open, and springing out of my bunk to close it I saw Mr. _____ outside. I then felt that serious mischief was intended, and that I must defend myself against any further attack. Accordingly, I barricaded the door of the cabin with every moveable thing I could find, and I then sat up on the barricade with my back to the door and my feet to the washstand. No sooner was this precaution taken than I heard the sounds as of a crowd outside, and the cabin was besieged for about an hour and a half. The besiegers tried hard to force the door. At one time the barricade nearly gave way, and a man got his hand and head partly through, but on my saying, 'I shall be obliged to take the law into my own

hands at the entrance of the first man into this cabin,' he withdrew, saying, 'he may have a shooter'.

Thereupon they all tried to force the door, and the cabin window was tried, as I could see their hands at work from the light without. About a quarter past 3 o'clock I heard a woman's voice (I think that of the stewardess) begging my assailants for the sake of the ladies, whose cabin was immediately opposite to that of which I was in possession, and as a lady-passenger had but recently been confined, to desist and go away. Taking advantage of this circumstance, I said to the rioters, 'If you are men, or if you have a particle of manhood remaining, go away for the sake of the women.' They then desisted from their acts of violence, and after a little conference they departed.

During the period of the siege I received the most violent threats; they said if they could only get me for ten minutes they would 'do for me'; and one man said he would shoot Gribble, the 'devil', and they taunted me by saying that I had come from New South Wales to interfere with their natives, but they would not let me live to reach Fremantle. They also said that I had thought they were ashore, but they had me at their mercy. Language was also used which was too disgusting to repeat, as to their intentions.

Being your Missioner, my Lord, I submit this statement to the consideration of your Lordship and the Mission Committee, that you may secure to me that protection and justice which are my due. I remain, your Lordship's humble servant,

JOHN. B. GRIBBLE

The Lord Bishop of Perth.
(Sworn before me as true and correct),

A. H. HELMICH J.P.

February 16.

[We have purposely left blank the names of the persons given in the above statement. (Ed.)]

The publication of my journal, etc., caused great excitement amongst the friends and supporters of my opponents in the North, some of whom were members of the Mission Committee. An influential deputation waited upon the Bishop for the purpose of denouncing both the editor of the Church paper, the *Standard*, and the obnoxious missionary. Forthwith a meeting of the committee was held, and the following resolutions were carried, and the resolutions, together with my reply, will be sufficient proof that from that

particular juncture my governing body began to yield to the popular outcry against missionary effort, and I was henceforth virtually persecuted 'In the house of my friends'.

* * *

Copy of resolutions carried at the last meeting of the C. Committee of the Board of Missions. Perth, January 25, 1886:—

(1) Moved by Archdeacon Brown:—

That the following minutes be entered in the minute-book, and that a copy be forwarded to the Rev. J. B. Gribble, Mission Chaplain at the Gascoyne.

During the short period that has elapsed since Mr. Gribble's settlement in the Gascoyne District, the committee have viewed with much interest and solicitude the important events that have transpired in the formation of the Mission. With thankfulness they regarded his favourable reception, and the gratifying report made by him of the welcome which the Resident and other leading settlers gave him, and of the readiness with which they promised pecuniary support to the clergyman's stipend. With deep regret they learned the hostile measures taken by many influential settlers immediately after Mr. Gribble's return from his journey to the Kennedy and Dalgetty Reserves, and especially as this hospitality was manifested by their endeavor to procure his dismissal through the Bishop, without any distinct charges being brought against him, or any evidence volunteered; through a similar endeavor to extinguish the Mission by an appeal to the Governor; through the circulation by the press of a resolution condemning the Mission; and last of all by the threat to prevent him landing upon his return from Perth. All these proceedings seem to the committee to have been so discourteous, so unjust in mode of procedure, and so unconstitutional, regarded in a civil point of view, that they can only attribute them to the influence of temporarily excited feeling. They wish to assure Mr. Gribble of the deep sorrow such treatment produced in the minds of the committee, and their sympathy with him.

On the other hand, the committee deeply regret the course which Mr. Gribble has since adopted, ostensibly in self-defence. They lament greatly the language which he was reported to have used at a public meeting on his return: and which (if correctly reported they conceive should be withdrawn with deep regret; but they especially deplore the publication in the various newspapers of a journal of his three months' residence, which has already

done much to alienate the public outside the Gascoyne District from the Mission, and which must prove extremely detrimental, if not fatal, to the success of this ministry among the white population, who are equally with the aborigines committed to his ministerial care.

The action of the Rev. J. B. Gribble in publishing the articles referred to in the *Daily News* and *Inquirer* meets with (and we deeply regret so to express it), the unqualified condemnation of this committee.

The resolution was carried. The Bishop, with the Rev. J. Allen, objecting to the term 'unqualified condemnation'.

(2) The committee think it is necessary, in the interests of the Gascoyne Mission, and in recognition of the statement made on behalf of the settlers by Mr. Maitland Brown, that the resolutions passed at the first meeting were passed under the influence of strong excitement, and did not represent the true feeling of the settlers, that Mr. Gribble should write a letter to the Bishop for publication in the same newspaper in which his journal appears, expressing his regret that he should have taken the course which he did in publishing to the world, after so short an acquaintance with the district, the details of the domestic life and faults of the settlers therein committed to his pastoral care.

(3) That Mr. Gribble be instructed to send all reports of his work for the future to the Bishop, or in his absence, to the Chairman of the Missions Committee, and not to the newspapers of the colony, leaving it to the Bishop or the committee to publish such particulars as they deem advisable: the work which he has undertaken being so undertaken on behalf of the diocese, and not as his own independent work.

H.H., PERTH

REPLY TO RESOLUTIONS

Perth, Feb, 1886

My Dear Lord Bishop,—

In reply to yours bearing date Feb. 11th, 1886, I have to say that I cannot, after all the unwarrantable opposition and persecution which I have received at the hands of the Gascoyne settlers, consent to take the action which the Missions Committee request me to take in the resolutions passed by them at their meeting of the 25th January.

My reasons are the following:—(1) All I stated was true, and I must stick to truth, let the consequences be what they may.

The work of the Mission must be prosecuted on the line of truth, in opposition to falsehood and wrong, or it will be a failure.

The words I used at the Carnarvon meeting, and complained of by the deputation, were as follow: 'My future work will be in the Gascoyne district; do you hear that?' A voice said 'Yes.' 'Then', I continued, 'go home and dream over it.'

I say, my lord, there is nothing in the words themselves that might reasonably be complained of, and shows plainly the weak cause of my opponents when they can press such a statement, and which, after all, was made after the greatest provocation and threats to 'kick' me out of the district. Under such circumstances, how could I withdraw such a statement with deep regret?

I would respectfully point out to your Lordship that the settlers themselves, according to their own showing, were in the first instance the aggressors, and that they, after the shortest acquaintance with me, passed resolutions at a public meeting held at Carnarvon, condemning me and my work, both to your Lordship and the Governor of the colony, and moreover, petitioned for my immediate removal. Therefore a public apology is due to me from the Gascoyne settlers and until such is forthcoming I cannot, in justice to myself, apologise for anything I have done, or retract anything I have written, seeing that my so doing, unconditionally, would seriously compromise my position as a missionary to the heathen of the land and materially damage the Gascoyne Mission.

(2) As to the 'unqualified condemnation' of the publication of my journal by the Mission Committee, I am not deserving of such denunciation at the hands of my governing body, inasmuch as your Lordship saw the manuscript and I crossed out those things which you thought objectionable, and you, further more, desired me to leave the manuscript in your Lordship's care for future use before I returned to the Gascoyne. And when after the greatest provocation at the second Carnarvon meeting I decided to send the manuscript (which you had seen and corrected) for publication, I wrote by the same mail informing you that I had done so, and your Lordship withdrew the manuscript sent to the *West Australian*, and also interviewed the editor of the *Inquirer* and *Daily News*, and desired to see the manuscript sent to him, and he informed me that you plainly told him that you could see nothing objectionable to the publication thereof, and you left the said manuscript in his hands, knowing that it was to appear in print the next day.

After all this, why should the committee give their 'unqualified condem-

nation' to my conduct, and request me to write a letter expressive of my regret to be published in the same papers in which my journal appeared?

(3) I am, in the 3rd resolution, requested to send all reports of my work for the future to the Bishop, or in his absence to the Chairman of the Missions Committee, and not to the newspapers of the colony.

Although I was never before asked to tie myself hand and foot as regards reporting my work to the newspapers, I am quite willing to send reports to my Bishop or Chairman in his absence. But to say I will submit to send all reports and communications first to the said parties, I positively refuse. For by my so doing I should cast away my own Christian self-respect, and commit myself to a system which would be damaging to the extreme to the work which I have at heart.

If the committee cannot trust me as their Missionary to report publicly facts which come under my notice, simply because they may interfere with the feeling or pockets of interested parties, how, I ask, can wrongs be redressed, and a real Christian Mission be carried on?

And then to promise that I would not write directly to newspapers in self-defence would mean the wrapping up of the instincts of true Christian manhood, and then committing them to the perpetual safe-keeping of ecclesiastical superiors. Shall I do that? My own conscience says distinctly, 'No'.

I know full well that your Lordship will be shocked at these expressions of my principles, and be inclined to refer me to the teachings and example of Christ, my Master, 'Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again,' and Who said 'Love your enemies, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you,' etc. But then I am distinctly taught both by the words and acts of the same Master that I am not to condone sin, nor be afraid to expose evil-doers, be they who they may. Christ said to the evil-doers in his day, 'Woe unto you, Pharisees, hypocrites, how shall ye escape the condemnation of hell?' 'A wicked and adulterous generation.' 'Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye shut up the kingdom of Heaven against men, for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.' The Pharisees said unto Him, 'Get Thee out and depart hence, for Herod will kill Thee.' And he said unto them, 'Go ye, and tell that fox, "Behold I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected".'

My Lord Bishop, there is no more difficult service for Christian men than to be stern rebukers of sin. Stephen and Paul, as well as our Lord, knew that denunciation was as holy at times as silence was at others. Great wisdom is, I know necessary, but also great fidelity.

I shall be exceedingly sorry to have to sever my connection with the Mis-

sions Committee of your Lordship's Diocese; but, if I am to continue working as their Missionary, it must be on lines of justice and right to the aborigines of this land, in opposition to the injustice and wrong-doing of interested and unprincipled white men. This is my decision, and by it I stand or fall. In conclusion, I must say that I regard the recent proceedings of the Missions Committee as very unfair, to say the very least.

For they passed condemnatory resolutions without waiting for a single word of explanation from me, their missionary. And your lordship, as Chairman, telegraphed to my opponents at Carnarvon, informing them that the Committee had strongly condemned my conduct in publishing my journal while I was left in perfect ignorance as to anything of their procedure.

I remain,
Your Lordship's
Humble servant,
JOHN B. GRIBBLE.

The Lord Bishop of Perth.
Chairman of Missions Committee.

* * *

The following, which is a copy of the letter sent by me to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, will clearly show how I have been treated in relation to the *Natal* outrage, and will also serve as a connecting link between my very earliest experiences and the present position of affairs in relation to the North-West Mission. I may here state that the firm attitude which I have been compelled to assume in relation to H.E. the Governor, with whom alone the blame rests so far as the miscarriage of justice is concerned, has brought down upon me not only civil, but even ecclesiastical vengeance. H.E., to whom I made my complaint both *verbally* and in writing, instead of promptly adjusting the crooked matter, kept me without a reply for five days, during which period he referred a matter of simple injustice (which my Committee had no right to adjudicate upon) to that body, which being composed of the poor creatures of circumstances, and the mere satellites of viceregal patronage, as might be expected, yielded to such pressure, and requested me to beg H.E.'s pardon and withdraw my complaint, which thing, while I have a heart to feel, and a tongue to speak out against iniquities in high places, I can never think of doing. The result is that I am now interdicted by the Dean of Perth, and practically deserted by the Mission Committee.

Truly this colony 'is filled with violence, the priests prophesy smooth things, and the people desire to have it so.'

Perth, W.A.,
May, 1886,

The Right Honorable
The Secretary of State
For the Colonies.

Your Lordship, —

I am painfully compelled through force of circumstances to lodge a complaint against His Excellency the Governor of the Colony on the ground of what is, in my opinion, unpardonable miscarriage of justice.

The facts of the case are as follow:—On the 16th of August, 1885, I arrived in this Colony as an accredited Missionary of the Church of England, from the Colony of New South Wales, where for several years I had laboured amongst its native tribes.

My mission in this Colony is to teach and preach amongst the tribes of the North-West coast.

Soon after my first landing at Port Gascoyne, I made an extensive tour in the interior, during which I saw and heard things in relation to the treatment of the natives by the white settlers which caused me much pain and disgust. And I plainly spoke out against such abuses.

One case in particular, in which I saw a young native girl being debauched by a white man, on the ground. As he informed me, of the girl having been assigned to him by the police, I reported direct to His Excellency the Governor.

On my return to the coast I began the establishment of a mission station, and proceeded with the work of building for three months, without making any public disclosure of the abuses which I knew to exist. But at that juncture, without being apprised of their intentions, the settlers convened a meeting, at which my work was emphatically denounced, and a petition was drawn up and sent to the Bishop of the Diocese praying for my immediate removal from the district. And a complaint was sent to the Governor, on the ground that I had interfered with the native labor system.

Owing to such action I went to Perth and defended myself against these unfounded charges, the result being that both Governor and Bishop assured me of their confidence and support, and I returned to the scene of my labors. But on reaching Port Gascoyne, an effort was made to prevent the landing of my building material and supplies, but being foiled in this respect, they

(the settlers) forthwith 'boycotted' me, and went even so far as to 'boycott' those who showed me any sympathy or rendered me any help.

After two months of such tactics, a second meeting was held for the purpose of again petitioning for my removal. I attended, and after patiently listening to all that my opponents had to say against me and my work, I requested a hearing, but for an hour and a half I was subjected to annoyance and interruption, until at last I was hounded down by abuse and threats. I then informed them that if they would not hear me directly, they should hear me indirectly.

I accordingly wrote out an account of my experiences, and sent it to the Perth press, and I was again compelled to sail to Perth by the steamship *Natal*. But while on the voyage I was one night, lying asleep near the wheel on the quarterdeck, cruelly assaulted by a number of North-West pearl-ers and settlers. And not only was I ill-treated on the deck, but after getting to my cabin it was entered by a man whom I heard say, while on deck, that it would be well if they could get rid of me. Having ordered him out of my cabin, there being no lock on the door, I barricaded it with everything movable, and then seated myself on such barricade with my back to the door and my feet to the washstand. While I was thus defending my position the cabin was besieged by a number of men, and from about half-past one o'clock in the morning till after three o'clock they endeavored to force an entrance.

During the siege they made the most terrible threats, to the effect that if they could only get me for ten minutes they would murder me, either by hanging, drowning, or shooting. The reason they assigned being that I had come from New South Wales to interfere with their natives, but they would not let me live to reach Fremantle.

The next day I reported the matter to the captain, who I was told was on shore during the occurrence, the ship being at anchor in Champion Bay. He expressed his sorrow and protected me against further violence.

On reaching Perth I at once reported the case to my Bishop, who convened a meeting of the Mission Committee, by which a resolution was passed, recommending me to take legal steps to bring the offenders to justice. Such steps I took. But at the very inception of the proceedings I was hindered.

A legal gentleman, Mr. S. Burt, who is the present Acting Attorney General, and, as I heard subsequently, one of the largest pastoral leaseholders, would not entertain my case. And then, when I attended at the police court to obtain summonses served on the officials of the *Natal*, whom I required to obtain as witnesses, I could not find any person to issue such summonses, although I applied for them within prescribed office hours.

The next morning early the *Natal* sailed for Singapore, and I then secured

the services of another gentleman, Mr. R. S. Haynes, and, in his company, applied to the Police Magistrate at Fremantle for warrants or summonses against the accused. But that official, strange to say, refused them, saying that before he could do so he would have to consult the Crown Law Officers on the subject. A day or two afterwards I swore the information in the presence of a local Justice of the Peace, thinking the matter would at once be proceeded with. But it was not so.

The case was passed by the Police Magistrate to the Crown Law Officers, and the Attorney-General (the Hon. A. P. Hensman), promptly referred it back to the magistrate for him to deal with it in the ordinary manner. (If this had been done I should not have had my present cause of complaint.)

During this strange course of procedure, by special invitation, I waited on the Governor and talked the matter over with His Excellency, and left his presence with a distinct assurance that the law should at once take its own course in relation to the matter.

Arrangements were forthwith made by my solicitor for the return of the summonses on or about the 17th inst., about the same time of the second return of the S.S. *Otway* from the north, and with the fullest confidence in such arrangement I returned to my station.

I then made a hurried Journey of 400 miles into the interior, so as to get back to the coast in time to catch the ship.

On the 11th of May instant I reached Perth, and was astonished beyond measure to find that nothing had been done to further the ends of justice. The summonses had not been issued. And more than that, I learned from my solicitor that he did not know that they had not been Issued till the 5th inst, when it was too late to prevent my sailing from the North-West. And he further informed me that the clerk of the court had instructed him to communicate with the Colonial Secretary with reference to the issue of the summonses.

I may here observe that I found that during my absence from Perth the Attorney-General (the Hon. A. P. Hensman) had been forbidden his duties, and that Mr. S. Burt, the gentleman who had previously refused to deal with my case, had been appointed as Acting Attorney-General.

In the face of this, to my mind unpardonable tampering with the administration of justice, I decided to wait upon the Governor, which I did, and laid the whole matter before him. And I asked H.E., plainly why justice had been denied me, and why my case had not been dealt with, as it doubtless would have been if poor and uninfluential men had been the offenders.

His Excellency pleaded that neither he nor the Colonial Secretary had anything to do with the case, as it rested entirely with the magistrates.

I then desired to know why, in the first instance, did the magistrate not deal with the case.

I further gave H.E. to understand that practically the case had lapsed, for I could not return again for the hearing. And I should be compelled to adopt another and more effective course, viz., that of referring the case to Your Lordship, as Secretary of State for the Colonies.

His Excellency requested me to make my complaint in writing, which I did, on the 12th inst, and in such complaint I assured H.E. that the cruelty and injustice to which I had been subject in this Colony would compel me to make known to the world the iniquities obtaining under the British Flag in Western Australia.

I may state further, that soon after my letter was sent to the Governor a paragraph appeared in the *West Australian*—which supports the Government to the effect that summonses had been issued, returnable on the 5th of July—just six months after the occurrence, and in the very face of the fact that, on the 10th inst., my solicitor endeavoured to stop the issue. (The date of issue being the 15th) as I had decided, on his advice, to refer the matter to the Imperial authorities.

Not only, my Lord, have I been subjected to ill-treatment at the hands of unscrupulous and designing settlers and pearlers, with whose interests I have in the cause of suffering humanity come into collision, but at the hands of the Governor of this Colony, for I cannot close my eyes to the distinct promise he made me. I am not only subjected to pecuniary loss and professional indignity, but, worse than all, I am denied that liberty and justice which I claim to be my birthright as an Englishman and as a subject of a throne which rests upon that 'righteousness which exalteth a nation'.

Trusting that I shall receive from the Imperial authorities, through Your Lordship, that justice which is my due, but which had been denied me in this Colony,

I have the honour to be,
Your Lordship's Obedient Servant
JOHN B. GRIBBLE

May 25, 1886.

The Right Honorable the
Secretary of the State for the Colonies.

* * *

I have the honor to transmit here with, for Your Lordship's perusal, the opinion given by my counsel, wherein I am advised not to prosecute the case further for reasons therein set forth.

The Native Labor System on the Gascoyne



After the running narrative of my first three months' doings and experiences on the Gascoyne, I am now free to give my impressions, based upon personal observation, of an object which is directly connected with the development of this district, so far as settlement is concerned. I refer to the native labor system, or what I prefer to define as a system of bondservice bordering on slavery. I shall be allowed great latitude in dealing with this subject, inasmuch as I was not permitted to take part in the proceedings of the recent meeting held at Carnarvon, where I should have been able, had I been present, to ventilate the subject from the standpoint of the natives. As it was, all that was said was on the side of the owners of the natives depending upon the said owners: and it was not at all likely that they would say or do anything contrary to their own interests, be they what they may. Some things adduced as illustrations of points being discussed may appear passing strange; but then it must be remembered that 'facts are sometimes stranger than fiction'.

As regards the treatment of the natives at Carnarvon, I can say honestly that they are, as a rule, well treated; the only reason I have had to complain of has been in the case of young native girls hanging about the hotels, where they are, to say the least, in danger of contamination. It would be well for the sake of the white children attending the Government school if those natives who are not employed by the whites, and who are, as a rule, very lightly attired, were compelled to camp at a respectable distance from the town; and for decency sake some provision should be made for their being sufficiently covered. That is all I have to say respecting the natives at the Port—with the exception that they are far better treated than the general run

of aboriginal natives in the interior. Indeed, all the way up the river I heard the Carnarvon natives spoken of as being 'far too civilised', 'knowing too much', 'spoilt', etc., etc.

To prove my statement that the native labor system in this district is one bordering on slavery, I must first deal with the way in which they are secured. I do not say that no natives do come voluntarily and offer their services to the owners of stations; but this I do say—that in some cases the native laborers are recruited in a way which does not give the native the least freedom of will.

They are compelled to touch the pen to an assignment paper which it is impossible for them to understand, and, as regards the witnessing of such assignment, the parties so acting are doubtless interested, so that in such case the poor natives becomes a bondservant by force. But there is an advanced phase of this side of the question which must be disclosed. At times the wild natives are really run down and captured and taken to the stations, and then the assignment as above described takes place; and then, if they run away (which they are almost certain to do), a warrant is issued for their arrest, and then the police are set in motion, and if run down or ferreted out they are taken to the Junction Police Station and there chained up for a few weeks. Some may think this is only the dream of a disordered brain; but here is a case in point, unasked by me. A certain person directly connected with one of the principal stations on the Upper Gascoyne informed me that at times they were obliged to go out in search of the bush natives to bring them in to work, and that one day a party so engaged under the personal direction of a Mr. _____, the managing partner, came upon a little group of bushmen in the river-bed, who on seeing the white horsemen at once ran away. Chase was given, and several escaped, but one man in particular, who was pursued by the leader of the white party, suddenly vanished, and after a diligent search the poor fellow was found concealed in a native well seven feet deep, from which he was dragged and compelled to go into bond service. My informant, pointing towards a certain slave, said, 'That's the native—there'. What, I ask in the name of humanity and British freedom, is such a system as that? Is it voluntary serving, or is it slavery? A young man from a distant station on the Manilia told me that there also they had to run in the wild natives to get them to work. What, I ask, is 'running in'—is it voluntary service to the white man, or is it the opposite?

On my remarking to a settler that it was strange that I did not see a single wild native in all my travels on the Kennedy and Dalgetty, although I plainly saw their numerous tracks he explained it by saying that the 'niggers' saw me, but that they were afraid, thinking I was after them. Now, I ask

again, what does all this go to prove? Most certainly that in some cases at any rate the natives are not consulted in the matter of engagement, but are by compulsion made the bondservants of the whites. Then again, their continuous servitude without a chance of leaving is another reason for my saying that they are bondservants, and not free laborers. The law in the respect is openly violated. The 'Masters and Servants Act' distinctly says that a certificate of discharge must be given at the close of the term of engagement, if required. Is not this part of the Act—that very Act under which the natives are said to be engaged—totally ignored by many of the settlers? If a native desires to go away when he has faithfully fulfilled the conditions of his engagement is he then discharged to enter the service of another, if he feels disposed? The truth is—No; he is not! The poor fellow is given to understand in a way he does not like, that once assigned he is for ever a slave in effect. Is it not a fact that some who have been for years in the same bond-service run away repeatedly? And why do they run away? Simply because they know they cannot release themselves in any other way. When I spoke of six months as being, as I was given to understand, the period of a native's agreement, the wife of a certain settler told me that her husband said 'he could keep his natives as long as he liked'. That is just the fact of the matter—they are kept as long as their owners like. I know there are worthy exceptions to this state of things, but these exceptional persons are laughed at for their honesty in the treatment of their natives, as one of them told me himself. I ask again, what does this go to prove?—verily that a species of slavery does exist in this part of the Queen's dominions.

As to treatment in other respects, I have only to say that everywhere I saw the natives sufficiently fed with but one exception; but as regards clothing, what I saw in some instances did not give me the impression that the clothing conditions of the legal agreement had been fulfilled on the part of the owners. On the Upper Gascoyne, especially at the time of my visit, many of the natives were laid up from work in consequence of a severe cold which was prevailing; but though they were ill, and the nights chilly, they, in some cases, had not even a shirt or a sign of a blanket, so far as I could see. On drawing the attention of one of the settlers to the naked condition of his sick natives, he said, 'I'll give them something after shearing'. On another station I saw a native woman watering the garden, and trying in vain to hide her nakedness from white beholders with the half-shirt she possessed, while her master, standing by, observed. 'Your shirt is rather too short, old woman!' I am not so unreasonable as to argue that a native on the Gascoyne should be fully attired in European costume; but I do maintain that common decency says they should be sufficiently covered, and the

terms of the agreement say plainly that they must; and if they are not, then all I have to say on this point is that they are not treated as free laborers, but as slaves—subject only to the will and caprice of others.

But yet another reason for my defining the native labor system as a species of slavery is the sad fact of the assignment of native women and girls to white men, the great majority of whom are single. This, to my mind, is the most sad association of the whole native labor question. On every station women and girls are engaged, principally as shepherds, and these creatures are entirely in the hands of the owners; I say owners, because certain settlers have told me that they owned all the natives on their respective runs, and these natives women and girls are, when away in the bush with their flocks, placed under the care of young white men, who camp out with them, their duty being to go from flock to flock to see that the natives are watching the sheep. I was informed that some of the females had their native husbands with them. One of the settlers told me he had hard work to get husbands for all the women. Many of these native shepherds are mere girls. Doubtless some of these females are voluntary servants; but I got to know of one case in which the poor creature was not, and because she ran away she was in the 'black book' of her owner, and I afterwards found her at the camp of a young man to whom she had been lent because his girls had run away; and these same girls I discovered at another station, and they had run away, they said, because they could not get enough damper. I also found that women and girls were fully assigned to teamsters. It is quite a common thing to see them even in Carnarvon with such. Upon asking some of these men why they had girls and not boys attached to their teams, some said they 'preferred them'; others said they were 'better than boys', and that 'boys always run away', but others frankly admitted that they had them for immoral purposes. And although this is bad enough, I have in my possession facts which are so exceedingly repulsive in their character as to be unfit for the columns of a family newspaper. I ask every right-thinking person whether such a feature of bondservice is not shocking to contemplate, especially when professed Christian men are connected there with? Assignment of native females against their will for purposes of immorality is a sign of slavery.

The last proof that the native labor system is a species of slavery, to which I shall refer, is the persecution of those whose object is to ameliorate the condition of a subject race. That such proof if not wanting on the Gascoyne has, I think, already been shown. But I will just give an illustration or two of this very point. Not long since a native man, clothed only in the rags of a shirt and waistcoat, came to the Mission. On asking him in *Ingarra* who he was

and where he came from, he said he had come from the homestead of a certain settler not far from Carnarvon, and that his time was up, that his master had torn up 'paper talk' (agreement), that he would give him no clothes, no money, and that his son had punished him. I rode to the settler's homestead and told him of the occurrence, and that I had told the native to return, and that he said he would not. On hearing this the settler said, 'I'll see if he'll not come back; I'll get him locked up; he has only been with me for about two months.' And then he said that I had influenced the man to run away—a charge which I stoutly denied. Late on the same day this man, in company with two other settlers, rode up to my door and said he had come for his native. I said he could have him, pointing at the same time to where the native was. But to my surprise he not only told the man whom he claimed to walk, but also ordered away a young man who had entered the Mission camp a day or two after my arrival at Carnarvon, and to whom he had no claim whatever. I protested against such proceedings, saying the blacks were free subjects of the Queen, and that they were not slaves. He was then joined by one of his friends, and they both charged me with inciting the natives to run away from their owners, and threatened me with prosecution on this ground, and because I had said when up the river that the native women should not be dealt with immorally. The latter charge I candidly admitted, stating my reason. They then rode off, and said they would see what authority I had to interfere with the natives. I had, of course, none, neither had I exercised any. At the time of writing the man ordered away is still at the Mission, although I have told him repeatedly that the police would be after him. But he seems to prefer going to gaol than to return to _____. The other illustration of this point is the recent meeting held at Carnarvon, and previously referred to, at which the following resolution was put and carried—not unanimously, I am glad to learn, for the sake of our Australian Christianity. The secretary who took the minutes, informed me that there was one in the room who protested, while several left previous to its being put to the vote. Resolution:—'That this meeting protest against the Government assisting or continuing the establishment of Mission stations to deal with aboriginals in this district.' This resolution was moved by a Mr. _____, whose station is far inland, and who has a large number of natives in his ownership, but whose country adjoins our Mission Reserve.

If persecution is a sign of slavery, truly it is not wanting on the Gascoyne. But then, one cannot be astonished at such proceedings when he remembers he has settled amongst a people whose sentiments in relation to the natives have already been made known to the world (see *Government Gazette*,

December the 5th, 1882, re Mr. R. Fairbairn's report. A Mr. G_____ is reported to have said, 'I think the presence of police will do good; but at the same time I think If the Government would shut their eyes for six months, and let the settlers deal with the natives in their own way it would stop the depredations effectually'. 'I remarked' (says Mr. Fairburn) 'that the Government would look upon him as a bloodthirsty man. On comparing Mr. W_____ 's, letter with his statement as taken down by me, I find it generally correct enough, but as regards his complaint that 'my report conveys the idea that he is in favor of shooting natives, when he distinctly and plainly told me that he was not,' I must beg to put before him his own words. 'I think if the Government would allow the settlers to give the natives a good dressing, as was done at the De Grey a few years ago, and as was done at Champion Bay some years since, it would effectually put a stop to it. In the early days of Champion Bay the natives were shot down right and left for sheep and cattle stealing. Unless the police sent up are good men they will do no good.'

Further comment is quite needless. The conclusion of the whole matter is that the settlers in this district are afraid of the improvement of the natives by Missionary agency, and therefore they are striving by all the means in their power to crush the work at its very inception.

A Chapter of Horrors

THACKABIDDY

SUPREME COURT—WESTERN AUSTRALIA

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9, 1884

(Before His Honor Mr Justice Stone)

The court was reopened at five minutes past ten o'clock, when the first case taken was that of alleged

MANSLAUGHTER.

Charles Clifford was charged with having, on the 29th May last, unlawfully killed an aboriginal native at the Gascoyne known as Thackabiddy. The prisoner, who pleaded 'not guilty', was defended by Mr. S. H. Parker, and a jury was sworn in after the learned counsel for the defence had challenged three of the proposed jurors.

The Attorney-General, in opening the case to the jury, explained that this case had been sent down to the Supreme Court for trial by the Chairman of the Geraldton Quarter Sessions. He, the learned counsel, confessed that he could not understand why, such had been done, inasmuch as in his opinion the case ought to have been tried upon the nearest available spot to the scene of commission of the alleged offence. Still he felt bound to observe that the Chairman of the Quarter Sessions had acted within his strict legal rights in thus remitting the case to Perth. However, a great deal of extraneous feeling had been imported into the case by the local organ of the press having

endeavoured to show that the Government had brought pressure to bear upon the Chairman of the Local Quarter Sessions to induce him to send the prisoner to Perth for trial, and he seized the opportunity of publicly giving a flat, unqualified, and most emphatic denial to what had been published in the newspaper in question. He could distinctly assure both the jury and the public that there was not a single word of truth in the assertions which had been made about the case. Having reviewed the whole of the circumstances of the case at considerable length, the learned counsel proceeded to call the following witnesses in support of the case as put forward by the Crown.

George Joseph Gooch deposed: I am a sheep farmer, residing on the Manilia River, about 130 miles from Carnarvon. In May last the prisoner was in the service of my partner and myself. On the evening of the 24th I was at home on our station, when in consequence of what Keen told me I rode out to a sheep-camp where the sheep were in the prisoner's charge. I saw a native there named Thackabiddy, standing about 200 or 300 yards from the sheep. The native had a spear, two kylies, and a throwing-board. The native was not doing anything, but I gave him into Keen's charge and at once galloped off. I rode out of sight of Keen and his prisoner, but was away only a few minutes. While I was away I heard Keen shout, and then I heard the report of a revolver being fired three times. When I returned I found Keen on his horse holding the native's spear, while the native was standing about five yards in front of the horse's head. I told the native to throw down his weapons. I saw that he was wounded in the throat. The native then threw a kylie at me, but it flew over my head; he attempted to throw another, but I dismounted and seized him, he striking me with his throwing-board on the shoulder when I laid hold of him. I then put a line round his neck and led him off to the camp; the native went quietly enough. The next morning I started to deliver the prisoner over to the police at Carnarvon. The party consisted of the native, the prisoner, and myself; we had, I think, four horses. The prisoner was chained to a horse, a chain was fastened round the native's neck, and then put around the horse's neck. The native complained to me that one of the revolver bullets was still in his neck, but I did not examine the wound. He walked along pretty well, and ate and drank; he gave us no trouble beyond that of watching him. While I was with him I never dragged him any part of the way; he picked up a stick once, but I took it and threw it away. On the 28th May, at about eleven o'clock, Mr. Gale and a boy named Roach joined us, and on the same afternoon Mr Gale and I rode off to Carnarvon, leaving the prisoner and the boy Roach with the native. When I last saw the native he was chained to a tree; the chain was comfortable round his neck, I mean that it was quite good enough for him.

On the third June I saw the spot where the native had died, I did not see the body there, as it had been removed. I saw certain marks on the ground; they were such as to lead me to believe that they had been made by dragging the native along the ground. I stepped the track for about a quarter of a mile, but then gave it up, but I saw the track at intervals afterwards until I came to the place where the dragging apparently first began. There were trees along the track, to which the native might have been secured with perfect safety. When I left the native with the prisoner we had travelled more than 100 miles to Carnarvon.

Cross-examined: I rode up to the natives to see if they were stealing sheep. The natives made a practice of doing so there. I told Keen to look after Thackabiddy while I went off to see if I could see any more natives. Thackabiddy was a ring-leader in sheep-stealing. When I told Keen to look after the native I was under the impression that there was a warrant out against him. Thackabiddy was a powerfully-built native, about six feet in height.

To the Jury: When the native was arrested he bled a little from the wound in the neck, but not at all afterwards while on the journey up to the time I left him.

Richard Gale said: I am a Justice of the Peace for the Colony. On the 28th May last I was travelling from the Manilia River to Carnarvon with a boy named Roach. At about 11 a.m. I overtook Mr Gooch the prisoner, and the deceased native. The native walked well and easily. I did not look at his wounds; I travelled alongside the native for four or five miles, and he did not stop once. After dinner Mr. Gooch and I went on in advance, leaving the native with Roach and the prisoner. The native was then resting.

Cross-examined: The prisoner was not arrested immediately after the inquest which was held on the deceased at Carnarvon. I have never seen the bush natives wear clothing. There was no rain during our journey down; the days were hot, but the nights were rather cool.

Re-examined: It was just then the beginning of the cold season. In the cold weather the natives light fires at night.

Edward Roach deposed: I am in the service of Messrs. Gooch and Wheelock, but in May last I was in the service of Mr. Gale. On 28th May last I was travelling with my master towards Carnarvon, when we met Mr Gooch, the prisoner, and Thackabiddy. My mate and Mr. Gooch went on and left me with the native and the prisoner. We stayed there for about three hours, and moved on. The native seemed to travel all right; he was chained to the horse the prisoner was riding. We camped that night, and started the next day before daylight. I went after the horses, which had strayed back a lot towards water during the night, when I was away I heard Clifford shout;

I got the horses and then returned, when the prisoner said something to me. We then saddled up and went on our journey. Clifford was then riding, having the native still chained to the horse. When we started I was riding; we had five horses with us, and we drove the other horses before us.

When we had gone about a mile one of the horses turned back, and I had to go after it: I went back out of sight of Clifford and the native; when I was away I heard the prisoner shout out my name. When I got back I saw the native holding Clifford on the ground; they were struggling together under the horse's neck. The native was still chained to the horse, which was standing still. The native had a stirrup iron in his hand. Clifford told me that the native had pulled him off his horse. I shouted to the native to let the prisoner go, and as he would not do so I fired over his head to frighten him, and as that had no effect I shot the native in the leg. The native was a good tall native, a little bigger than Clifford. When I fired at the native I aimed at him below the knee. The native then got up, walked off a few yards, and then chucked himself down. I found that my ball had hit him in the ankle. Clifford showed me a mark on his forehead, where he said Thackabiddy had struck him with the stirrup-iron. Clifford then got on his horse and said he would drag the native to the first tree he might come to. He then dragged him along the ground. I pointed out a tree, but Clifford said he would go on to a better one. Altogether he was dragged for about a mile (sensation). Once the native sat up while he was being dragged, but he never stood up or walked. The native was dragged sometimes on his shoulder, sometimes on his back, and sometimes on his belly. We passed a good many trees, while the native was being dragged along, and he could have been secured to any one of them all right. I do not think that the native was able to walk. He held on to the chain with both hands above his head, otherwise he would have been dragged along by his neck. After having dragged the native for about a mile Clifford chained him up to a tree and then called to me to help him to fasten his hands behind him with a handkerchief and a strap; while I was doing so I noticed that the skin was chafed off his shoulder. When he was chained up, he was allowed about two feet slack of chain. I then wanted Clifford to stop with the native and let me go for the police, but he said he was frightened to stay with the native alone, so he went on with me. Clifford had a loaded revolver, the native no weapon at all; Clifford was free, but the native was chained up to the tree with his hands tied behind his back. Clifford rode off without leaving the native either food or water, but he left a small fire burning about two yards from the native. I rode off with Clifford. It was cold weather that night. The fire was such a small one that it would only last about an hour. Clifford left the native chained up early in the

morning. When I last saw the native alive he was trying to stand upright, but he could only get half upright, because he was chained so short down to the bottom of the tree.

If any food had been left for him he would not be able to lay hold of it. When Clifford went on to Carnarvon I went after the horses that had run away. I returned to the native about dinner time to pick up the tracks; he was then in a stooping position. I chucked him a couple of bits of damper; he scraped one piece towards him with a stick, managed to pick it up and take one bite, he could not get another bite, as his hands were tied too far back. I then left him and rode away.

To the Jury: When Clifford was struggling with the native, the native was still chained to the horse's neck. When the native was struggling with the prisoner he had either a stick or a stirrup-iron in his hand; I cannot swear which of the two it was.

Cross-examined: The story I have told today is the same as the one I told the Magistrate at Carnarvon in all but one particular; that was about Clifford getting on his horse at once. At Carnarvon I swore that the prisoner led his horse while the dragging went on, because the prisoner had asked me to say so. I don't feel in any fear about this case for firing at the native. At Geraldton P.C. Turner and another constable went through my deposition with me. (At this stage, Mr. Parker put in the witness's deposition which he made before Mr. Foss at Carnarvon, and read it aloud; after doing so the learned counsel subjected the witness to a long and searching cross-examination of nearly an hour's duration, but failed to shake the witness's evidence upon any material point.)

William Turner deposed: I am a police-constable, and during last May I was stationed at Carnarvon. I accompanied the prisoner and another person to the spot where the native had died on the Manilia-road; the spot is, so far as I can calculate, about 28 miles from Carnarvon. The tracks of the dragging which I saw proved to me that the native must at times have been dragged on his back, hands and feet, shoulders, and stomach. There was no marks of any person walking there though horse tracks were plainly visible. From actual measurement, I found that the distance the native was dragged was 74 chains 61 feet, or nearly a mile. I followed the tracks on till I came to the deceased native. I found the body lying on its left side, with its back to the tree. The elbows were tied tightly as possible behind the back with a police strap. There was a chain fastened round the neck, which was then passed round the tree, and the end of the chain was brought round and padlocked to the chain round the neck. It was utterly impossible that the man could have stood upright, or that he could have used his hands.

I examined the body, upon which I found the following wounds:—One through the chin and into the neck, one across the arm, a bruise on the face, a bullet hole right through one of his ankles, and a raw patch on each shoulder, which appeared to have been produced by dragging. I found two bits of damper near him, but he could not have used his hands to eat them; there was no water near him; there were the remains of a small bramble fire about 7 or 8 yards away from the body, but it could not have afforded the native any comfort or warmth. The prisoner showed me a small scratch on his forehead. There were plenty of trees equally as good all along the road, one of which stood only a chain or a chain and a half from where the body was first dragged. I found a stick near the spot where the dragging commenced; on the stick I saw two or three hairs, and also some clotted sand of a reddish colour, but I could not say whether it was blood or not. There was no warrant in existence at this time for the arrest of Thackabiddy.

Cross-examined: The stick I produce is the one I found, there is still one hair sticking to it; I am certain it is not 'possum hair, for there are no 'possums about there; neither do I think it is a wallaby's hair. I thought that the native must have died from the wound in the neck; in fact I told Clifford so. I took the body into Carnarvon, where it was buried with the chain around the neck. Clifford was not arrested for more than six weeks after the inquest had been held, that would be about the beginning of July last, and he has been in prison ever since. When we were carrying the dead body into Carnarvon a large quantity of blood flowed from the mouth.

Re-examined: On the road into Carnarvon the prisoner told me that the wounds on the shoulders of the deceased were caused by his having been trampled on by the horse when they were struggling together. The chain used was an ordinary full-length trace chain.

That was the case for the Crown.

Mr. Parker for the defence then called Edward Scott, who deposed: I am a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, England. I have heard the greater part of Mr. Gooch's evidence, as well as that of Mr. Gale, young Roach, and P.C. Turner, and from what I have heard I can only surmise the cause of death, which I suppose was caused by secondary haemorrhage, which generally occurs four, five, or six days after the wound has been inflicted. I should not think that the dragging had any material effect upon the cause of death.

To the Jury: A person suffering from a gunshot wound certainly ought to be kept as quiet as possible. If he had struggled to free himself from the chains, that, in my opinion, would have done him far more harm than his being dragged along for a mile or so.

Cross-examined: For one of my own patients suffering from a gunshot wound, I certainly would not think that his being dragged along a road for a mile with the chain round his neck would be conducive to his recovery. I certainly would not prescribe such a course of treatment myself. I think it is perhaps possible that the rough handling the deceased received may have done him harm. To tie a man up to a tree, with his arms pinioned closely behind him, might do him harm; and I would not adopt such a method of treatment myself.

Mr. Parker then addressed the jury on behalf of his client, contending that, according to Dr. Scott's evidence, the brutal treatment the deceased native received at the hands of his client could not have either caused or accelerated his death.

The Attorney-General replied on behalf of the Crown in an eloquent address, during the course of which he insisted, upon the inalienable and incontrovertible right of the black man to obtain the same amount of legal protection and justice as that accorded to one possessed of a skin of a lighter hue, since both were subjects of Her Royal and Imperial Majesty, and therefore stood on level ground before the majesty of the law. He concluded a most impassioned speech, by calling upon the jury to decide the case upon its merits, just as if the wretched victim had been one of their own colour, kindred, and race.

His Honor, in charging the jury, expressed his firm conviction that the prisoner at the bar should have been indicted for murder, instead of manslaughter, and expressed his opinion that it was fortunate for the prisoner that the Crown had elected to indict him upon the minor charge. After carefully reviewing the evidence in the most impartial manner.

The jury, after twenty minutes' consideration, returned a verdict of 'not guilty'. The verdict was simply received with stupefaction by all present; and after a pause, His Honor, addressing the man in the dock, said: You have been acquitted by the jury, but I have a caution to give you. I hope that you will amend your ways, and that you will behave with more discretion in the future. Otherwise you will most assuredly find yourself placed in a far more awkward position than that which you have so lately occupied.

The prisoner was then discharged.

Blood-Curdling Cruelty

Sensational articles appear from time to time in our Wednesday contemporary, bearing upon the ill-treatment of our aboriginal natives. In another leading article in Wednesday's issue, reference is made to the case of William Thomas, an ex-policeman, and a parallel drawn between the treatment by the bench, and that of a settler residing some miles from Roebourne. It is said that this man had two boys in his employ, the eldest being about 13 years old, both speaking English. They ran away after being flogged, were pursued, and were driven back with a stockwhip a distance of 30 miles. Arrived at the station, the elder boy was stripped, lashed to a fence in a 'crucified' position, and then flogged until he had fainted. The second boy was treated in a similar manner, and after having worn out one lash, the man began to put on another, when the boy, in his agony screamed out, 'Oh, master! If you want to kill me, cut my throat, but don't cut me to pieces.' The brute, unmoved, continued flogging, until the second lash was worn out. News of the horrible deed reached Roebourne, and when the boys were brought in, the inhuman monster admitted that he had not flogged the first boy as he had the second, because he could bear it, adding that he had 'lost his temper'. The magistrate inflicted a fine of £1 for the flogging of the weaker boy, and £5 for the assault upon the boy who could bear it. If these facts are true, and we are bound to give credence to them, we scarcely know which is most deserving of condemnation, the conduct of the inhuman monster who flogged the children, or the magistrate who permitted such blood-curdling brutality to be indulged in at the cost of a paltry fine. We have in mind a similar case, where two missionaries were sentenced to penal servitude for flogging natives in Africa; yet in Western Australia, where so

much is said of the humane treatment of our aboriginals, the conduct of the settler and the magistrate are not inquired into.

We consider this a public question, involving the character of the colony. It has either been grossly libelled, or a state of affairs is permitted to exist in regard to the treatment of our Aborigines that demands strict inquiry. If our magistrates can regard so lightly such severe treatment, it is time they were at once removed from their position, and their names struck off the roll of Justices of the Peace. We trust the Government will at once clear up the matter. The colony should be purged of such a foul disgrace, if true, by the public condemnation of the culprits, or, if untrue, by the prosecution of the journal which has promulgated the hideous story, a story equal in atrocity and horror to any told of the worst days of American slavery. — *Herald* (Fremantle, W.A.).

How Native Witnesses are Treated

When the alleged native murders of the late Isaac Doust were arrested, an aboriginal was brought in as a witness. This man had to travel chained just as the accused was. Upon his arrival at Roebourne he was thrust in a cell like the prisoners, and kept there over ten months. The only exercise he had during that time was being marched to and fro between the gaol and the Courthouse when his evidence was wanted. From the confinement he nearly lost the use of his limbs, and could only walk with great difficulty. He soon became very ill; and, upon the release of the alleged murderers, he was turned out of goal. By that time, however, he had become so bad that he could not move, and so he was put back into the cell again, where he died in great agony within the course of a week. No medical attendance was offered him, and he was allowed only the food with which native prisoners are supplied.

On the authority of Mr. D. Carly, of Perth I present the following catalogue of horrors:—

He says—'On my first arrival at Barrow Island in April 1872, a boat put off from shore and H. M'K_____ came on board the Hampton and made a statement to the effect that he and J. S. _____ had been in charge of 40 natives, and that S. had shot himself. In company with several white men I viewed the body, and afterwards stated to the Government Resident at Roebourne that it was impossible for the man to have shot himself, judging from the position of the several wounds. The man, in my opinion, had been murdered. That was the first time I saw kidnapped natives.

It is very well known by all old hands about Nickol Bay, and the 'Flying

Foam Passage' that in one day there were quite sixty natives, men, women, and children, shot dead. The natives themselves have shown me the skulls of fifteen who were shot. Three of the skulls were those of children, and two of these small skulls had bullet holes through them. I have seen many natives shot in the back for no other cause than that of running away from their cruel slave masters.

For many years past the Government have employed in the police force of this Colony men who have been convicted in the Supreme Court for killing men, both black and white, and others who have been tried, but not convicted, for want of evidence, and some of these men are still in the employment of the Government. I have reported two cases of bribery on the part of the police at Roebourne. In the one case, two constables were bribed with pearls to condone the murder of a native boy.

I saw at 'Flying Foam Passage' no less than 24 natives handcuffed together, and then conveyed to Delambre Island, and there detained until they were required for pearl diving, their only food being a little flour.

During my early experience at Roebourne, a man, whose name I might give, criminally assaulted a native woman who was within a few days of her confinement; she died the same night from the effect of the outrage. The case was tried in the Supreme Court, Perth, and the man was discharged.

On one occasion I was standing near the Police Court at Roebourne when I saw two natives brought from the cells. They were chained to each other round the neck. I noticed that one of the natives had been shot in the arm, the limb being shattered to pieces; and there was not the least covering on it. The shattered arm he tried as best he could to hold up with his sound hand. Thousands of flies were tormenting him, but he could not drive them away. In this state he was taken to the Police Court to be tried. A few days afterwards I saw him brought into Cossack chained round the neck, and to a horse. He was put on board ship and died.

I have seen in Roebourne a policeman knock a native down with a piece of wood as though he had been shot. I have seen the same policeman strike a native on the back with a shovel, and leave a wound four inches long.

I have also seen constables lock up in the cells numbers of kidnapped natives. And a man named _____ was in the habit of standing guard over kidnapped natives who were chained together in a workshop, and that within sight of the Government Residence at Roebourne.

In September, 1878, I was inside my house at Cossack, when I heard a native woman call out to me to save her boy from a man who was kidnapping him. I went out and saw the woman struggling with a white man for her boy. I did not interfere, as it was useless, knowing that the man's brother

was a J.P., who I had seen sign away numbers of kidnapped natives. The man tore the boy from his mother, and took him to a store close by and got him assigned. The next day the boy was put on board a cutter in spite of the screams and struggles of his poor mother. I drew the attention of a constable to the case, and he said he could not interfere. I have seen hundreds of children brought into Cossack who have been torn away from their mothers, and yet it is said that where the British flag flies slavery cannot exist.

In October, 1880, two white men came to Cossack, having on board their cutter ten kidnapped natives; they were sold to _____ for £20 cash, and a debt of £35. I saw the money paid. In September, 1880 I saw at Roebourne, a police constable pass on his way to Cossack. He had in charge a native man who had a chain locked around his waist, and then attached to the saddle of his horse; soon after I started for Cossack myself, and when about five miles along the road I saw the constable cantering his horse, and the native was running to keep up. I saw him fall down from sheer exhaustion and he was then dragged along the ground for a considerable distance. I galloped up and said to the constable, 'I have seen what you have done, and I know that it is no use reporting you, but I warn you not to do it again.' Soon after I reached Cossack the trooper and the native arrived; the unfortunate being could scarcely crawl, and he had a terrible blood-stain right round his waist, caused by the friction of the chain, and blood was flowing from both of his shoulders.

A friend of mine, as he beheld the sight, exclaimed. 'What would they say in England if they knew this?'

In the year 1874 when at Cossack, I saw two dead native women, they had died from eating poisoned flour which they got from a station near the George River, and I was told by the natives that three others had died from the same cause. The owner of that self-same station afterwards poisoned himself, as commonly reported.

In May, 1883, three men well armed and mounted left Cossack for the purpose of kidnapping on the Fitzroy River. I reported the circumstance to the authorities, and was told to mind my own business.

In October of the same year these men returned to Cossack with twenty natives; some of them made their escape, but they were pursued and re-captured.

I may state that during my sojourn in the North-West it was quite a common practice to sell cutters for a considerable sum over their real value, because of the numbers of natives they had attached to them. I have been sworn in Perth to this fact, and it has been allowed to die out, in order, I suppose, to prevent exposure.

In the same year I saw for several days in succession large numbers of natives who had been recently returned from the pearling grounds assigned as general servants by a drunken J.P. in a public house at Cossack. Some of the natives told me that they did not want to sign, but they were forced to do so.

I have seen numbers of natives brought in from the interior, and some of them had never before seen the face of a white man, and they were compelled to put their hand to a pen and make a cross which they never could understand, and having done this they were then slaves for life, or as long as they were good for pearl diving. Their rations consist only of a little flour when they are engaged in pearling.

I have known numbers of natives to be killed by alligators and sharks while engaged in their dangerous employment.

In the same year, two constables at Roebourne were compelled to resign from the force, because they had attempted a criminal assault on two native girls in the lock-up.

In 1878 a young man was tried at Roebourne on the charge of killing a native by striking him on the head with a paddle. He was discharged.

In 1883 a white man reported to the authorities at Roebourne that he had killed two natives by striking them on the head with the butt-end of his gun. No inquiry was made into the matter.

In 1883 I met the Bishop of Perth at Cossack, and told him of the slavery and cruelty existing. I pointed out to his lordship several native children not more than eight years old whom I was then protecting, and who I had good reason to believe had been criminally abused by white men. And I said, pointing to the police station. 'That house is no better than a b_____, and the authorities will not give the natives justice.' His lordship said in reply, 'I am sure that Mr. _____ will give everybody justice.' I said, 'My lord, I am sure he will not, bring me to the test, and I will prove it.'

Previous to this circumstance I had reported to Captain Smith, the head of the Police Department, that a certain constable had, whilst drunk, dragged a native girl named Fanny to the lock-up, the girl crying out while being so dragged that she was being locked up for carnal purposes. I received no reply to this report.

I was present at the trial of a settler who was charged with having branded a native; he was discharged, I have several times seen branded natives.

I may also state that the accused settler is in a high position in Western Australia to-day.

(signed), DAVID CARLY.

In addition to this hideous list of dark deeds I must briefly state a few facts which have occurred since I arrived in this colony, some of which have come under my own observation.

On a certain station several native men declared aloud in the presence of their owner that a young native girl about 15 years of age was their master's wife. On hearing this unexpected bit of information the settler adroitly smuggled the girl out of sight and hearing, and I saw her no more. At the same station I was informed by a white overseer that in certain places the choicest bit of hospitality that could be tendered to a visitor was the finest-looking black girl.

At another station when retiring one night I stumbled over a white man in the act of debauching a native girl, and that, too, on the very verandah of the master's house; the vile offender was not ashamed to acknowledge his conduct, and in excuse he said, 'The masters do it and why can't we?' I told the master of the shocking circumstance, and with a laugh he said, 'I don't see much harm in that kind of thing.'

On reaching a police station I reported the case, and a constable told me that the man to whom I referred was well known to the police, that stealing native girls for carnal purpose was his favorite game, and that he had stolen the girl he then possessed when she was in charge of a flock of sheep, the property of a neighboring settler. This case I reported directly to the Governor.

The Resident Magistrate of Carnarvon told me previous to my first journey in the interior that half-caste children were freely killed and eaten by the natives, and this statement was subsequently confirmed by the police up country.

The Clerk of the Court at Carnarvon told me he knew that little native girls, only seven or eight years old were the victims of white men.

Early this year it was reported that five natives had been shot dead by white men near Mount Clare, and about the same time two more were shot by a party somewhere in the direction of Mount Labouchere.

In January of this year I saw between 30 and 40 natives chained together and enclosed within the narrow bounds of a corrugated iron enclosure not more than 30 feet square, and there they lay day after day and week after week under the rays of an almost vertical sun, while the perspiration poured from their naked bodies as though they had just been sluiced with bucketsful of water. These natives, most of whom had been brought down from the Peedong country, more than 300 miles, were accused of having speared cattle. I was present when, on the evidence of a very young white man, they were sentenced to two years' banishment on Rottnest Island. But the strange

part of the tale is yet to be told. One of the troopers in charge told me that some of these unfortunate beings had never seen a white man until the day they were captured and chained. Now the question arises here, were they individually guilty, and who could say they were? There was not one to speak of their side of the question.

My son and I were up the Gascoyne in April last, when about 130 miles from the coast, we halted over the Sunday. Late in the afternoon a party of white men camped on the opposite side of the river, and while we were lying on the rocks reading, we heard the sharp snap of a rifle, and instantly a ball passed close to our heads; we sprang to our feet, but had no sooner done so than a second report was heard, and a ball passed very close to us the other side. I then stated to my son that evil was without doubt intended, and that we had better run for our lives. We accordingly ran towards some Cajaput trees for shelter, and while we were running two more shots were fired. After recovering ourselves somewhat I desired my son to accompany me to the opposite camp, but as he appeared to me to be rather timid, I ventured forth with my native, and showing myself openly I made my way to the camp. As I drew near I saw several rough-looking men sneaking away and concealing themselves. To a man who maintained his position, and whom I fully recognised, I reported our narrow escape; without making the least excuse he replied to the effect that such conduct was too bad. These without any exaggerations are the simple facts connected with the episode.

During our return journey to the Coast, when about 22 miles from the Mission Station we halted at a sheep camp, and the white man in charge gave me the following particulars. A white man from a station up the river had sent a native lad to his camp during his absence, to get a young native girl, whose friends were on this particular station. But as the girl would not go he gave her a great beating, and then rode away. But about a week after, just on the Sunday previous to my call, he came again bringing with him a rope, and the girl still refusing to comply with his request, he deliberately tied the rope round her neck, and fastened the other end to his horse. He then mounted, and rode away, dragging the poor creature along the ground. When she was nearly choked by this brutal treatment he stopped, and having untied the rope, he gave her a sound thrashing and then rode away. His pretence was that the girl had been promised to him, but the girl declared that he had no claim on her, and that what he had done to her was at the instance of the white man who required her for carnal purposes. The girl was brought into my presence, and she related her sad story, and a Malay who witnessed the outrage confirmed the girl's statement. The white man, my informant, stated that when he returned in the evening after the

occurrence, he plainly saw the track along the ground caused by the dragging.

On reaching the Mission Station, I reported the case to the police at Carnarvon, but I have heard nothing more of it.

In May, 1886 two young men were fully committed for trial on the charge of having killed a native at York. In the same month a man named P_____ was arrested at Roebourne at the instance of the authorities in Perth for having murdered a native in the North-West. P_____ had been previously discharged by the local bench on the same charge.

In the preceding pages quite sufficient has been adduced to show unmistakably that even in Australia, under its sunny skies, deeds, the most dark and horrible in their nature, have been committed, and are still being practised, and that, too, not only under the British flag, but even in the face, so to speak, of the representative of the greatest Sovereign the world has ever seen, and who emphatically declared that the justice and righteousness of the Word of the Living God constituted 'The Secret of England's greatness'.

The Native Question

FROM THE PERTH (W.A.) *INQUIRER*

FROM A LADY'S STANDPOINT

Dear Sir,—It has been reported that the Rev. J. B. Gribble has attacked the character of the ladies of Perth; at least, this is the unmanly thrust some of the settlers have lately given him, having nought to accuse him of.

His simple denial is sufficient for us. In our conscious innocence we know, to quote Marcus Auerelius, 'A wellbred man will never insult us, and no other can.'

We are all well assured Mr. Gribble will say nothing unworthy of a Christian and a gentleman.

It is the truth that cuts, not falsehood; and the Gascoyne settlers are living examples of this.

If Mr. Gribble has made false statements about them, why not treat him with cool contempt and show by their actions that he is wrong?

A beautiful lady would laugh with unutterable scorn if she were told she was as ugly as an old negress; and just so, morality will bear with unshrinking front any charge of impurity.

Mr. Gribble has right on his side: and, though even his own side (the Church) are pusillanimous and chicken-hearted to an extreme, God will not desert him. Truth and right must conquer. The activity of good is ever shown by its conflict with evil. With a true soldier of Christ there must be war to the knife—no quarter: and the way the mud has been stirred up in

this matter, and all the filth come to the surface, shows in an unequivocal manner that Mr. Gribble is no milk-sop, no namby-pamby Christian (and there are many about), but a man willing to lay down his life in the cause. He has been persecuted in the cruelest manner by men who dare not plant themselves on his side because interests are so mingled. The settlers have growled at him like a dog, because he wants to interfere with their bone—i. e., the native; and good folk in Perth, even the dignitaries of the Church, tremble at the rage of the dog.

No indignation meetings have been held where the rev. gentleman could express himself, but he is sedulously instructed to keep in the background and do anything for peace and quietness. Mr Gribble is an accredited missionary, not a greenhorn, and has gone about his work in a manly way, single-handed, and in the teeth of the most determined opposition. But the vices of some settlers have not been condoned, and their interests are endangered. If missionary work goes on they may have no black paramours, and the aboriginal will probably demand regular wages for his labor! The whole thing lies in a nutshell. There is so much of the world in the Church, and little of the Church in the world, that ecclesiastics derive half of their funds from men whose lives they must wink at. There is no doubt the Roman Catholics will smile at the efforts of so-called Christian settlers to expel the first missionary of their own faith who has set foot in the land. We deserve their taunts, and I for one blush for the effigy of Religion that has been set up in our midst. Truly the feet are of clay.

I am, Sir, yours truly,
AN ENGLISH LADY.

Perth, February 27, 1886.

The Rev. J. B. Gribble and His Opponents

TO THE EDITOR OF THE *INQUIRER*

Dear Sir,—As an illustration of what may happen to a Christian missionary in Western Australia I ask you to be so kind as to publish the so-called report of a meeting held at Carnarvon during my previous visit to Perth, as well as the disclaimers handed to me personally by the gentlemen who are reported to have made statements the most injurious to my reputation and character. Seeing that the statements themselves have been emphatically disclaimed, the intended injury falls, not upon the obnoxious missionary, but upon respectable residents of Carnarvon; therefore, after due reflection, I have decided to allow them to vindicate their own honor against a journal which professes to be the advocate of all things true and honorable, contenting myself with the hope of having my own grievances redressed at a tribunal before which mere party influence and questionable interests will have but little show of success, and where, at any rate, the wronged native and his persecuted benefactor will most certainly have true British justice meted out.

I remain, yours, etc.,
JOHN B. GRIBBLE.

Perth, May 17, 1886.

Church of England at Carnarvon

PUBLIC MEETING

From the *Western Mail*, May 1st, 1886.

A meeting of the Church Committee took place at the residence of Messrs. Cleveland Bros. at 8 o'clock p.m. on the 15th ult.

Mr. G. Lefroy occupied the chair.

Mr. Foss first rose to resign as member of the Church Committee. He made a very short but eloquent speech in the course of which he said that he had long since lost all confidence in Mr. Gribble as a minister of the gospel, and in consequence of the misstatements which that gentleman had been guilty of making, he wished to have nothing further to do with the Church as long as Mr. Gribble remained. Mr Foss said that he hoped his resignation would not make any difference in the minds of the others, as he did not wish to influence them in any way whatever, but he could not help remarking that in his opinion Mr. Gribble was not a suitable man for pastor in that district, and that he could not support the Church in any way while it was under his charge. He would be most happy to contribute £10 per annum towards any suitable clergyman.

Mr. Cleveland rose, and in a very few words strongly condemned Mr. Gribble's conduct since his arrival in the district, and stated that he begged also to resign his place on the committee and to withdraw his support.

Mr. George Baston was the next to resign, and in the course of a strong speech he stated that he never did consider Mr. Gribble a proper person to be their clergyman. He also declared that he would never have supported

him but that a certain settler had in an overbearing manner tried to force him into opposing Mr. Gribble. For that reason he had hitherto supported that reverend gentleman.

Some further discussion ensued, and the meeting terminated with the usual vote of thanks to the Chairman.

The Disclaimers

Carnarvon, May 6, 1886.

My dear Mr. Gribble,—

The report of the Church Committee as published in the *Western Mail* of the 1st instant is incorrect as far as refers to what I said at that meeting. The said meeting was not a public meeting. It consisted of four members of the late Church Committee, and no one else was present. I sent no report of the meeting in question, but do not know whether any other member sent one.—Yours faithfully,

C. D. V. FOSS,
Police Magistrate.

* * *

Carnarvon, May 6, 1886.

To the Rev. J. B. Gribble,

In reference to the report in the *Western Mail* as to the resigning of the Carnarvon Church Committee.

The said report is incorrect. I said the chief cause of resigning was in reference to the misstatements in regard to the marriage between the two natives at the Gallilee Mission.

It was moved and passed at the meeting that I, as the late secretary, should explain by letter to the Bishop that this meeting had nothing whatever to do with the quarrel between Mr. Gribble and the settlers.

REGINALD CLEVELAND,
Late Secretary,

Carnarvon Church Committee.
Carnarvon, May 6, 1886.

Dear Mr. Gribble,

What I am reported to have said at a Church Committee at Carnarvon in the *Western Mail* of May 1st, 1886, is incorrect. They were not the words I used at all. I said that I had no reason to resign as a committeeman, but that as all the committee were resigning I could only follow their example, and that I had nothing whatever personally against the Rev. J. B. Gribble.—

Yours faithfully,

GEORGE BASTON, Jun.

The Wandering Black



Where is the Australian black to-night,
The child of God's tender care,
Why turn from him and shun his sight?
Nay, kneel for thy brother in prayer.

Chorus—

Oh! where is the native to-night?
Oh! where is the native to-night?
My heart o'erflows, for God loves him and knows,
Oh! where is the native to-night?

Once he was free as a bird of air,
He roamed the bush so wide,
Now whites possess his country fair,
And few are on his side.

Chorus—Oh! where, etc.

Oh! could I see him now the black,
And speak of Jesus' love,
Teach him the Bible's precious lore,
And raise his hopes above.

Chorus—Oh! where, etc.

Go search for the wandering black to-night,
Go look for him where you will,
But bring him to Christ with all his blight.
And tell him he loves him still.

Chorus—Oh! where, etc.

APPENDIX

The Gribble Affair: A Study in Colonial Politics*

SU-JANE HUNT

In 1885 an Anglican churchman arrived in the colony of Western Australia to perform missionary work amongst the Aborigines of the settlement's northern districts. Within six months this missionary, the Reverend John Brown Gribble, had caused a furore in the colony. In a booklet, *Dark Deeds in a Sunny Land*, published in 1886, he alleged that a system of slavery existed in the north:

... that Australia itself, professedly the new home of liberty and light, should have become the theatre of dark deeds of oppression and cruelty; that a land not only blessed by the Great God, with cloudless skies and widespread prosperity and happiness to those who have been privileged to make it their home, and moreover a land which professes to reflect the noble institution of Great Britain, whose godly and philanthropic fabrics, which are not only England's glory and boast, but the envy of the world beside; that a land so circumstanced and blessed by Divine Providence should have become the nursing mother of oppression and injustice, and that deeds of infamy should find toleration therein, is not only a cause for the greatest astonishment, but in itself constitutes the foulest blot that could possibly rest upon the escutcheon of Australia's fame.¹

The context and ramifications of Gribble's allegations comprise a complicated story of nineteenth-century missionary righteousness and fervour, the strong-arm tactics of a frontier squattocracy, and the intrigue and politicking of a conservative colonial élite.

* This paper first appeared in *Colonial Politics in European-Aboriginal Relations in Western Australian History*, Bob Reece and Tom Stannage (eds), Perth, U.W.A., December, 1984.

Gribble's passionate exposé of the ill-treatment of Aboriginal people filled the press, not only of Western Australia but of the east as well; and it caught the attention of the British government. For a short time, Australia's 'Cinderella colony'² was the focus of conflict and dissent.

In the 1860s a number of settlers leased land in the newly-opened northern districts, attracted by Government lease compensations for land settlements.³ Within a few years the newly-arrived settlers also became aware of the enormous wealth to be acquired in pearlshell fishing, and settlers founded joint ventures as pastoral lease-holders and owners of pearling luggers. Yet the settlers of the north, many of them from southern families, were again faced with the question of who was to work their properties and dive for shell on their luggers? The use of convict labour was prohibited by the British government in any region north of the 26th latitude. The tropical heat was considered unsuitable even for criminals of the working classes of England and Ireland. Nor was it possible to attract European immigrants to work vast properties. Settlers immediately looked to the region's indigenous people as a potential source of labour.

The Church of England Diocesan Missions' Committee which employed John Gribble in 1885, should perhaps have been aware that the arrival of a missionary in the north would cause some friction within the conservative-dominated community.⁴ A northern Legislative Council member, Charles Crowther, opposed the establishment of a mission in Western Australia as early as September 1885, believing that 'no good result would be attained by any endeavour to civilise and christianise these northern natives by missionaries.'⁵ The *West Australian*, in announcing Gribble's arrival in the north, also clearly set the scene for potential conflict:

in the Gascoyne district the livelihood of the settlers depends on their employment of native service. Of this the squatters spare little. Even now the supply of the more intelligent and trustworthy class of natives is hardly equal to the demand . . . Tact . . . will be required and a practical and unprejudiced and sympathetic understanding of the relative positions of the whites and the blacks in the district which he proposes to minister.⁶

In appointing Gribble to this delicate task, the Missions' Committee was impressed by his extensive missionary experience and his fame as a spokesman for Aboriginal people. They were also impressed by his apparent enthusiasm at the prospect of working in a remote and isolated region.⁷ When Gribble returned from a lecture tour of Britain in 1885 where he raised money for the missionary cause, he wrote to the Bishop of Perth:

I feel more than ever convinced that it is God's will that I should go to Western Australia in order that I may in an enlarged sphere carry on the work upon which my heart is set.⁸

Gribble's other missionary experience had been in New South Wales, where he worked as a lay preacher and an Anglican missionary at Rutherglen, Wahgunyah, Jerilderie and Darling Point.⁹ Gribble had also written two books, a pamphlet entitled *A Plea for the Aborigines of New South Wales* and a larger book, *Black But Comely*. Gribble's approach to Aboriginal people can be placed firmly within the post abolitionist movement of Britain. He believed that it was the white man's task to missionise Aborigines in order to redeem himself as well as the unfortunate heathens. This is evident in the report of a sermon he later delivered to a Perth congregation:

[He] admitted that the Aborigines of Australia were about at the bottom of the human scale . . . The evil influences of contact with white civilization upon their nature, which was almost entirely animalism, had resulted in their being sent wholesale into eternity.¹⁰

Gribble was better known for his bravado in his encounter with the bush-ranger, Ned Kelly. When Kelly and his gang held up the entire township of Jerilderie, Gribble approached Ned Kelly and demanded that his stolen watch be returned. Manning Clark writes of this meeting:

For a brief moment two brave men confronted each other in a dustbowl town on the Riverina before they went on their separate paths to the great ordeals of their lives.¹¹

It can perhaps be said, then, that Gribble's personal temperament was closely tied to his commitment as a missionary. He was a colourful and dogmatic man, filled with religious zeal. His missionary experience in New South Wales, however, did not prepare him for a situation where Aboriginal labour was central to the settlers' economy. In New South Wales, Gribble was accustomed to working with Aborigines he viewed as a 'broken-down remnant', people stricken by alcohol, disease and prostitution. In the northern settlement of Carnarvon where Gribble went to establish a mission in September 1885, however Aborigines were closely guarded and valued as workers.¹²

Gribble's very presence in the Gascoyne region would be considered by the settlers to be 'tampering with their servants',¹³ and his keen sense of justice was shaken when confronted with the harsh forced labour system. When an Aboriginal run-away servant sought refuge at his mission, Gribble

lectured the stunned pastoralists who came in pursuit that 'blacks were free subjects of the Queen and that they were not slaves'.¹⁴ The pastoralists quickly realised that Gribble would not be content to conduct weekly services and tend the sick and elderly discarded Aboriginal servants. By November 1885, they were locked in battle with him.

The conflict between the missionary and the settlers initially took the form of impassioned public meetings, attacking Gribble and drawing up petitions to the Church Missions Committee calling for his withdrawal from the region. In November and December 1885 the settlers of Carnarvon held three public meetings and in reply Gribble gave a public address to a Perth congregation complaining of the Gascoyne settlers' treatment of Aboriginal people. When he returned to Carnarvon, Gribble found that supplies to build his mission had been boycotted by the settlers while notices had been posted all over the town:

Down with Gribble and all his supporters and confusion to all Sneaks.¹⁵

Another, which was posted on the church door, proclaimed:

Old Parry sent a Parson Here
His Name is J. B. Gribble.
Poor Silly Wretch he damned himself
To Save the Lord the Trouble.¹⁶

Despite pleas by the Perth press to bury 'misunderstandings and grievances in the fathomless depths of charitable oblivion', the tensions continued.¹⁷ At a public meeting in Carnarvon on December 28, Gribble was again called upon to resign. He took the floor, stating that he would 'never cease the fight for the downtrodden natives'. Someone in the crowd heckled Gribble, 'He is no Britisher—he must be of some foreign extraction!'¹⁸

Gribble made his way out of the meeting unscathed but incensed. Apparently to answer the criticism he was receiving in Carnarvon, and no doubt retaliation for the treatment he received, he wrote to all the Perth newspapers. With his letters he enclosed a diary account of his three months in Carnarvon and the Gascoyne, naming and criticising individual settlers for their ill-treatment of their Aboriginal workers. The more liberal paper, *Inquirer*, warned Gribble to 'mind his business' and 'to devote his time to wild blacks instead of settlers'.¹⁹ The conservative *West Australian*, owned by Anglicans, proclaimed:

We have fairly done with Mr Gribble and his so-called Gascoyne mission, and warn the authorities of the Anglican Church that they can expect no support of

any kind from us in keeping that person in the district . . . [Gribble] has revealed a state of things in a far away pioneer district, only just beginning to be claimed from absolute savagedom, which would compare more than favourably—we say it without fear of contradiction—with any district in the same stage of development on the continent of Australia.²⁰

Despite their condemnation of Gribble, both newspapers published the diary in full, in exciting serialised form. Its publication caused a furore in Perth and marked the movement of the dispute from the Gascoyne into the Perth community. Travelling from Carnarvon to Perth via steamer in January 1886, Gribble was sleeping on the open deck of the S.S. *Natal* when he was awoken by a group of men, one of whom he recognised as a prominent land-holder in the Gascoyne. He claimed that he was pushed and jostled by the men until he escaped to a cabin below deck:

I barricaded the door of the cabin with every movable thing I could find, and then I sat upon the barricade with my back to the door and my feet to the washstand. No sooner was this precaution taken, than I heard the sounds as of a crowd outside, and the cabin was besieged for about an hour and a half. The besiegers tried hard to force the door . . . during the period of the siege I received the most violent threats; they said if they could get me for ten minutes they would 'do for me'; and one man said he would shoot Gribble 'the devil' . . .²¹

In Perth Gribble attempted to lay charges against these men but was faced with many difficulties in filing complaints against them. Initially, he could not find a solicitor to accept his case, so he publicised the incident in the *Inquirer* and the *Daily News*. Finally a newly-arrived solicitor, Richard Haynes, agreed somewhat half-heartedly to take on the case. In late February the warrants were apparently issued. By May no action had been taken, although the papers had unprecedentedly passed over the desks of the colony's Attorney General, the Acting Colonial Secretary and the Governor himself.²² The colonial officials were reluctant to see the case taken to court. In late May, Gribble claimed that he had been forced to drop the case because the period of time which had elapsed had exceeded the legal limit.²³ He wrote an angry letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London, the first of many such communications:

I am obliged to abandon this case through the force of circumstances, [and] I shall most certainly lay the blame at the door of the Government of this colony and I shall be prepared to act accordingly. I shall not keep anything back from the sister colonies, nor from the authorities, Civil and Ecclesiastical in England. I shall make it my mission to reveal to the Christian world the wrongs and injustices, and the cruelly obtaining under the British flag in the colony of Western Australia.²⁴

Gribble sent copies of his letter to the Governor in Perth, the Colonial Secretary, the Dean of Perth and the Missions Committee.

The Missions Committee and the Church of England more generally were balking at the growing conflict surrounding Gribble. His most influential supporter in the Church, Bishop Parry, was out of the colony. Parry's position on the Missions Committee was filled by two men who strongly opposed Gribble's stand. Both of these men owned pastoral properties in the north and one was a co-editor of the *West Australian*.²⁵ In mid-February, the Committee forbade Gribble from preaching in the Carnarvon township and restricted him to the Dalgetty reserve, which was desert land some 200 miles from the coast.²⁶ Other officials in the Church sought for Gribble's resignation. Joseph Gegg, in the Bishop's Commissary, wrote to Governor Broome:

I conceive that his remaining in the colony will only frustrate the efforts being made to further the Mission cause in Western Australia.²⁷

In June, Gribble was refused permission to preach at the Cathedral in Perth and the Dean also banned him from preaching elsewhere in the Perth parish.²⁸ Instead, Gribble addressed a crowd at the 'Working Men's Hall' in a special 'missionary service'. The hall was overflowing and Gribble was inundated with supporters for his cause against the Perth establishment. Special Gribble support committees were formed.²⁹ The colonial liberals, backed by the *Inquirer*, took up the cause. The *Inquirer* wrote of the Missions Committee's treatment of Gribble:

of whom is this committee composed? Mainly of men who, however, honest they may wish to be, have their interests bound up with the settlers—men some of whom would feel keenly in a pecuniary sense the defection of influential members of their church.³⁰

Encouraged by the support he was receiving and keen to vindicate himself, Gribble persuaded the *Inquirer*. In late June, the newspaper published Gribble's booklet, *Dark Deeds in a Sunny Land or Blacks and Whites in North-West Australia*. Soon afterwards the missionary departed for the eastern colonies to rally further support for his cause and to plead his case with Church officials there. Four days later, on 1 July 1886, the Bishop's Commissary withdrew Gribble's missionary license and closed the Gascoyne mission.

Dark Deeds in a Sunny Land was received with a tone bordering on hysteria by the Perth community. In the Legislative Council, Charles Crowther, who had become Gribble's most bitter opponent, told the House

that Gribble was simply seeking notoriety and that he was only keen 'to catch the ear and to tickle the fancy of Exeter Hall',³¹ the centre of humanitarian societies in London. In Sydney, however, the Church of England Primate issued Gribble with a general preaching license and employed him to lecture for three months all throughout the colony. The Melbourne *Daily Telegraph* published some particularly condemnatory articles about Western Australian society and published extracts from *Dark Deeds in a Sunny Land*. This further enraged West Australian gentry opinion. In a leading article in August 1886, the editors of the *West Australian* wrote:

We must apologise to our readers for giving them so much Gribbliana of late, but the papers of the eastern colonies have been full of articles upon the assertions of one whom without exaggeration, we might designate as a lying, canting humbug.³²

It was these three words, 'lying, canting humbug', which prompted Gribble to take action. Confident in and encouraged by the support he felt he had in Melbourne and Sydney, Gribble had his solicitor serve the *West Australian* with a libel writ claiming damages of £10,000.

The libel suit of J. B. Gribble versus Harper and Hackett, the editors of the *West Australian*, lasted for twenty full days and Gribble was in the witness stand for the first eight days. Almost every day the court gallery was packed with spectators and full transcripts of the case appeared in both local daily newspapers. It was clearly adopted by the liberals of the colony as their opportunity to test the powers of the conservatives. From the trial's first day, the colonial civil establishment was split into camps. Harper and Hackett alleged that the Chief Justice, who was trying the case with Justice Stone, was one of Gribble's 'warmest sympathisers' and should step down from the bench. Chief Justice Onslow refused, and the defendants subpoenaed a number of letters which had passed between him and Gribble. These letters did in fact reflect some sympathy for Gribble's cause. In one, Onslow wrote, 'you have right and justice on your side'.³³ Yet the letters are more telling in what they reflect about Onslow's perspective on the way the colony was ruled. Of the incident on board the *Natal*, Onslow differed from the other colonial officials. He did not believe that a special case should be made because one of Gribble's alleged assailants was an influential citizen. He told Gribble:

I cannot see why any difference should be made between such a case and one in which the parties happened to belong to a class amongst whom such an assault would be more likely to occur.³⁴

In another letter which urged Gribble to accept a post in New South Wales, Onslow clearly identified the conservative colonial element and their effort to deter Gribble. He wrote that if Gribble would take the alternative position he

should not be harassed and thwarted at every turn—as in all probability you would be here—even by your own clergymen. It is painful and humiliating to see how persistently they attack you in the columns of their paper.³⁵

The transcript of the trial, too, although concerned with depositions relating to the treatment of Aboriginal workers, contains a strong underlying tension. The statements by Gascoyne pastoralists and pearlers reveal a powerful belief that their class and status necessarily assured them of special privileges. Many of their depositions were highly incriminating, yet they appeared to view the situation which they described as simply 'the natural order of things'. For example, George Bush, an important Gascoyne pastoralist and member of the Anglican Church, told the court:

There are about 100 natives on my run; about 40 of whom are in my service. The others are uncivilised natives. I have tamed my 40 natives more or less. . . I have heard of natives out of my own (property) being run down and unlawfully taken and I believed they were chained up. . . I have heard that nigger hunting in the northern parts of the colony has been a profitable employment.³⁶

Bush also admitted that he sent Aboriginal women out to sleep with his white stockmen:

I have sent the women off to the white men myself. The probable consequences of such is that the women will be used as the white man wishes.³⁷

The trial revealed of cases where workers were literally bought and sold with cargo on pearling luggers. In this light, it is probable that in the eight days that it took Justices Onslow and Stone to come to their decision after the completion of the trial, there was some pressure on them to vindicate the colony's name. It was also vital that for the settlers to keep face within their own society, a decision should be found for the defendants. If the *West Australian* was found guilty of libelling Gribble, then the conservative elite position which the newspaper represented, and the Governor who had aligned himself closely with the settlers, were seriously threatened. In June 1887, Justices Stone and Onslow decided in favour of the *West Australian*. The newspaper was deemed just and correct in calling Gribble a 'lying, canting humbug'. The *Inquirer* described the scene at the court:

the galleries as well as the ground floor of the Supreme Court were densely thronged by the leading citizens of Perth and prominent townsmen of Fremantle all anxious to hear the result.³⁸

The *West Australian* proclaimed exultantly at the result:

every genuine son of Western Australia will rejoice that his foul career of slander has at least been effectively barred by the unanswerable command of the Supreme Court.³⁹

The *Inquirer* maintained its sympathies with Gribble. In its first edition after the trial's completion, a series of articles proclaimed that the missionary had been a victim of 'Might versus Right'. The editors wrote that despite the adverse judgment:

we believe the public at large will regard the Rev. J. B. Gribble as neither a liar or a canting humbug. This trial will not be the first instance in which the decision of the Court of law is not endorsed by public opinion, nor will it be the last . . . Let the Squattocracy say the colony is cleared! But of what? Not of anything Mr Gribble has said respecting their cruelties towards 'niggers', but cleared of a Missionary effort that would have made the colony what a vigorous Church and good Government should strive to make it . . .⁴⁰

Gribble, penniless and unable to pay the legal costs, quickly left Western Australia for the east. He was there treated as somewhat a martyr for the Aboriginal cause and employed for some time by the Aboriginal Protection Society of New South Wales. In 1888 he was sent to work in the parish at Temora, where he built the first church in the district.⁴¹ In 1889 Gribble and his family moved to the district of Burke and established a mission station on the Darling River near Brewarrina.⁴² He and his wife and eight children next moved to Northern Queensland where they established the Yarrabah Mission at Cape Grafton.⁴³ It was a remote and isolated place, far from the tension of colonial politics and the squattocracy. According to Gribble's eldest son, Ernest, Gribble was broken and desolate after his time in Western Australia. In 1893 John Gribble died at the age of forty-five. On his gravestone were engraved the words 'Black Fellow's Friend'.⁴⁴

In Western Australia, Gribble's departure by no means eased the tension within the colony. The conservative Governor, Frederick Broome, publicly accused Chief Justice Onslow of sympathising with Gribble's cause. In another court case at which Onslow sat on the bench, Broome claimed that he was taking a strong and deliberate stand against him. The Governor compiled a series of statements criticising Onslow and sent a letter of complaint to the Secretary of State.⁴⁵ Onslow responded with a public statement to the press:

I protest against the manner in which the Governor persists in harassing me, as being calculated to lower and insult myself and my office and to degrade the administration of justice in this colony.⁴⁶

The Governor indicted Onslow for refusing to retract the statement and soon after the Executive Council suspended the Chief Justice. The colony's liberals, soured by injustices of Gribble's trial, saw Onslow as their scape-goat of the conservatives and the 'Six Ancient Families'. Public protest meetings were reported in the colony's major towns. In Perth a torch procession was led through the city's street by the liberal leaders, among them Hensman, Traylen and Courthope. An effigy of Governor Broome was burnt in the streets.⁴⁷

In May 1888 John Horgan, a liberal critic of the Governor, was elected by a close margin to the Legislative Council. At a major political meeting at the Perth Town Hall, Horgan took a vocal stand against the conservatives, calling the *West Australian* a 'reptile sheet' and an 'embodiment of lies, distortion, snobbery and low journalism'. Alfred Hensman told the crowd that if the *West Australian* ever mentioned him favourably, then 'he would have thought he had been making a fool of himself'.⁴⁸ In the *West's* account of the Perth meeting, Hensman and Horgan were represented as irresponsible people. Hensman presented the editors of the *West Australian* with a writ for libel, and another lengthy and bitter court case ensued.

Following an appeal to the British Privy Council, Onslow had been reinstated as Chief Justice and he was principal judge in the Hensman case. The *West Australian* was bitter about Onslow's reinstatement. The editors wrote:

the Chief Justice of the colony was virtually made the head of a political party, which holds itself bound to oppose in all respects, the views and actions of the *West Australian*.⁴⁹

Onslow and his fellow judge found the *West Australian* guilty of libel and Hensman was awarded £800 damages by the court.

This lengthy dispute continued with moves and counter-moves by liberals and conservatives. The British Home Office appeared to view it with detached amusement as mere wrangling in the antipodes.⁵⁰ In 1890, however, the British government granted self-government to Western Australia. Governor Broome was replaced by Governor Robinson and political power was now vested in an elected Premier. The first West Australian Premier was John Forrest, a member of an important Perth family, but also considered a moderate and an ally of Chief Justice Onslow.⁵¹ With this move,

much of the colony's overt political wrangling subsided. Chief Justice Onslow returned from an extended leave in 1891 to a relatively settled political scene. He remained as Chief Justice with no further major incidents of disputes until his retirement in 1901.

The Gribble Affair had sharpened the political struggle within the colony. It had also highlighted the nature of conflicts which existed within the social and political structure of Western Australian colonial society. And, in 1889, the British, while granting Western Australia self-government, kept control of Aboriginal affairs.⁵² However, the allegations and testimony of the Gribble trial about the treatment of Aboriginal workers ultimately became secondary in the battle between the colonial conservative élite and the newer more liberal immigrants.⁵³

Nevertheless Gribble's activities bit deep into the memory of the conservative pastoralist politicians of Western Australia. For them he remained a symbol of outside interference and criticism. The issue of their treatment of the Aborigines had for a time been centre-stage. It had been contained, but could it be so contained forever?

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2. This was a popular name to describe the Western Australian colony, particularly after Federation.
3. The Western Australian Government offered land provisions which divided the land into two classes. Land up to two miles from the coast and islands were to be held on annual lease and the remainder of the land was to be held on an eight-year lease. On arrival in the north settlers were offered the land free of payment for twelve months, in which time a selection of up to 10,000 acres could be occupied free of rent for a further three years. This did not mean that settlers with little capital were attracted to northern settlement. On the contrary, there was an enormous outlay necessary to establish a property. One family chartered a ship to transport their stores, sheep, horses, cows and servants, while another purchased a vessel. W. L. Owen, *Cossack Gold* (Sydney, 1933), p. 11; K. de La Rue, *Pearl Shell and Pastures* (Cossack, 1979), p. 12; R. D. Sturkey, *The Growth of the Pastoral Industry in the North-West, 1862-1901*, B.A. hons, University of W. A., 1957, p. 2.
4. See, for example, reports of the Aborigines Protection Board, 1892-1896, Batty Library Acc. 388. See also W. Kloesterboer, *Involuntary Labour Since the End of Slavery* (Netherlands, 1960).
5. *W.A.P.D.*, 18 Sept. 1885.
6. *West Australian*, 30 Oct. 1885.
7. Board of Missions Minute Book, 20 May 1885-30 June 1885.
8. *Western Mail*, 3 July 1886, report of the contact between Gribble and the Missions Committee.
9. *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (1966-), entry for J. B. Gribble.
10. *Inquirer*, 11 Dec. 1885.
11. C. M. Clark, *A History of Australia*, Vol. IV, p. 330.

12. In this context, 'valued' is used guardedly. Aborigines were both severely abused as workers yet highly desired and necessary to maintain settlers' properties.
13. This phrase was used repeatedly by settlers who complained of Gribble's presence in the Gascoyne. For example, eleven prominent Gascoyne pastoralists wrote to Bishop Parry in November 1885: 'It must be clearly understood that we positively refuse to acknowledge the Reverend Mr Gribble, or any other person that will interfere or tamper with our servants; and we respectfully request the immediate removal of the Rev. Mr Gribble from the district.' *West Australian*, 18 Dec. 1885.
14. *Dark Deeds*, p. 12.
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17. *Inquirer*, 23 Dec. 1885.
18. *West Australian*, 5 Jan. 1886.
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33. Published in 'The Administration of Justice in the Supreme Court'.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Inquirer*, 1 June 1887.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Inquirer*, 25 May 1887, transcript from A. Francisco, 23 May 1886; *Inquirer*, 29 June 1887, leading article.
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43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. 'Administration of Justice in the Supreme Court', p. 12.
46. W. B. Kimberley, *A History of Western Australia* (1897), p. 275.
47. *Ibid.*
48. 'Administration of Justice in the Supreme Court', p. 7.
49. *Ibid.*
50. See, for example, the Confidential Colonial Despatches, 1883-1889, Battye Library, Acc. 391, 56.
51. *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (1966-), the entry for Onslow.
52. See the article by Goddard and Stannage in this issue of *Studies*.
53. See Stannage, *People of Perth*, pp. 196-206.

This book is John Brown Gribble's major legacy, and its resurrection from a long-forgotten past is timely, since 1988 for Aborigines marks the two-hundredth anniversary of the invasion of their homeland, and many of the horrors that followed have for too long remained hidden from all Australians.

As its provocative title suggests, it is an exposé, but what it reveals is much more than European exploitation and oppression of Aborigines in the Gascoyne just one hundred years ago. This feisty clergyman had the temerity to publicise what he had witnessed not long after he established his mission in Carnarvon. His message to the local pastoralists, who relied very heavily on Aboriginal labour, was that the Aborigines were not slaves, but free subjects of the Queen. This saying of the unsayable set the scene for angry confrontations, physical attacks, and a campaign of vilification that shook the colony to its foundations. What transpired at the highest governmental, legal and political levels in Perth (and beyond, to the British Home Office) is a fascinating power struggle that saw Gribble outmanoeuvred and ultimately defeated by a conservative elite. This group included pastoralists, whose interests were poorly served by the well-publicised and persistent attack on them mounted by Gribble. The grave injustices that followed are an eloquent testimony to the amorality of much of the Australian frontier since the European invasion, and they broke Gribble's fighting spirit. He died at the age of forty-five while labouring in the field among the Aborigines at Yarrabah, the mission he founded in North Queensland.

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