

## THE M.J.FERGUSON STORY.

This is taken from notes made in an Embassy exercise book during the 1950's before she passed away at "Kelvin" Palmers Oakey 22-2-1959.

She was born in Ireland in 1875. Matilda Josephine Deasey and her memories are as follows:-

### IRELAND.

The land of my birth, I remember really very little about it as I was too young when I left, so really depend on hearsay.

I was born in Kinmare County Kerry in 1875 of Irish parents ; fathers antecedents were true Irish , but mothers had years before came from Hanover with George 1st; both parents were born in Ireland, father in Mayo & mother in Cork. I heard that fathers father was a missionary in his later days, mothers was a school teacher, one of fathers uncles fought at the Battle of Trafalgar (1805) under Nelson.

Ireland in those days was full of superstition , fairies , hobgoblins , banshees , wishing wells etc.etc & I believe is to the present day to a certain extent, & education was very expensive & hard to get , so my people must have had means , as both father & mother were teachers , both were reared on farms. Mother used to tell us how they grew everything that they needed , wheat for flour , flax & wool for clothing , all had spinning wheels & were adept at spinning . My parents told us of the potato famine (1845) & the plague after it , when thousands starved to death until help came , long pits were dug & the dead thrown in., no time for burial.

Both parents were teaching when they married in 1854 ; mother taught until the family got too numerous.

The schools in those days were under the Clergy , & they were very bigoted , father could not stand this , so after a disagreement with the parson of the parish he resigned , & took up a billet as book keeper on Lord Sandowes estate , quite a number of young gentlemen studied under him , he was allowed a large house to live in , which he needed as the family had increased to over a dozen , it was there that I was born, (14th child) . Fathers only brother had migrated to Australia some years before , & he wrote glowing accounts of the New Land , & what opportunities there were for young men , if father sent two of his boys out he would look after them & see that they got work , so when I was about a fortnight old they left , they were ship wrecked twice but arrived at last in Victoria where uncle was , he had joined the Police force & was actively rising in the ranks , the eldest went teaching & the other uncle put on the land.

Father had quite a billet where he was , he was inspector of fisheries on the Estate , all waters were private , but poaching often took place among the peasants , they used a weed which they put in the water , & it "doped" the fish so they came to the top of the water & they were easy to haul in with "gaff" (a large hook affair). Father & the Bailiff were told once that a raid was to take place , but by the time they got there the fish were floating on the top , they captured one of the ring leaders but not before he made a swipe at father with the "gaff" which fortunately struck a book in his breast pocket & so saved him from injury , of course the poor fellow was sentenced , whether transported or not I do not know

The young gents & father often went fishing to the Lakes of Killarney , he told us on one occasion they ran out of food so called at an Inn , for dinner, "mine host" was very affable, showed them in to the dining room where a huge fire of peat was blazing & after a time glasses , decanter , & a huge roast of beef were placed on the table , they were very hungry & attacked the roast with gusto to find that it was only half cooked , nothing daunted one carved while the others toasted the meat in front of the fire on their forks & very little of the joint was left when they were finished.

There seemed very little prospect of things getting any better in Ireland & it took a great deal to keep the family , the elder boys at home found some little work to do , my eldest sister (18) went teaching , so that Father decided to emigrate to Australia & find a home for us & then send for us which he did , he went to Victoria for a while & stayed with Uncle. That was the time the notorious Kelly gang was operating , Uncle (then a Sergeant) was sent to go after them , word came that a robbery had taken place not far away, so after putting all his private affairs in fathers hands he went , but like a lot of other rumours it turned out to be false , the gang had crossed the border & were in N S W by that time.

Father then came to Sydney where he got into the Education Dept, then he sent for us.

We embarked at Plymouth on the sailing vessel "La Hogue" a staunch old craft , I heard it was her nineteenth voyage to Australia.

We arrived in Sydney on Oct 1880 , Father came out with the Pilot to meet us he was teaching in Sussex St at that time. The boys soon got something to do, the two brothers from Victoria came to meet us, so there was a big reunion thirteen children & Father & Mother. It had taken 83 days to come out I believe it was a fast trip then, we did not meet with bad weather. We were a healthy family, we had good healthy Christian parents, the greatest blessing that humans can have with the love of the Lord.

It was about six months after we arrived that Father was appointed to a school in the upper reaches of the Hawkesbury River ( Central McDonald) & it was really there my childhood days were spent. Six children accompanied our parents there.

It was a lovely place, beautiful scenery, of course we children were not old enough at the time to enjoy it but we did afterward.

Mother was delighted with it all, so free & open, fruit in abundance along the road everywhere peaches , oranges, passion fruit, no one owned free for all comers. Our supplies came mostly by water a flat bottomed boat used to ply up & down the river, the nearest towns were five miles each side of us.

The inhabitants were descendants of convicts mostly, a lovely homely lot always there to help when needed. A river the McDonald ran at the back of the house & we children had the time of our lives swimming fishing & there were any amount of fish of all kinds. Father & my younger brother used to go of a Saturday morning (in the boat , it was used to bring the children from the other side ) they would leave about 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning & be back home for 8 o'clock breakfast with a tub full of fish. We children used to anchor the boat in midstream & fish

for garfish with cotton thread lines & bent pins for a hook & we would catch dozens.

The maize crops were lovely,

"With its long & shining tresses

With its garments green & yellow

With its long & glossy plumage"

There were pumpkins & melons planted amongst it was the only crop of importance.

By this time some of our brothers & sisters got married & most of them lived in the city, so we rarely saw them. One sister died at the age of 22 from typhoid fever, mother was very grieved naturally, I was about seven or eight at the time & of course we all cried seeing mother so distressed but we did not realise it really.

The river used to rise very rapidly after rain & we had two floods while we were there, quite thrilling for the younger fry, we imagined ourselves "Robinson Crusoes" & looked around for the niggers footprints in the sand, we were marooned & had to have our stores brought to us by boat for a fortnight or so.

One daring young man whose father had been a ships carpenter, made a canoe & would carry it miles upstream before he embarked, then came speeding down the river at a terrific rate. I suppose he enjoyed the experience.

Magnificent flowers grew on the mountains & in the gullies. One Sunday we thought we would go exploring on the ranges, picked all sorts of flowers running from one place to the other, until we found we did not know where we were & that it was getting late, we were sure we were lost, the flowers were thrown away, lips trembled, tears came, looked down the hill & saw Wisemans Ferry a town five miles from home. The eldest sister with us knew her way after that & we joyfully turned our steps home, the home people were getting anxious about us & decided to send a search party out so were very much relieved when we got back. I had many a nightmare after waking up in a fright of being lost.

One day poor mother was startled by one of the school girls coming to her out of breath, eyes staring out of her head, exclaiming " Oh, Oh, it was awful." whatever is wrong mother asked, " Oh I saw a wheel running away with a man " The first bicycle the poor child saw.

There was a small church about a mile from home " St Jude ", a clergyman ( C E ) used to come about once a month, father used to preach Sunday school, of course we children used to attend, & coming home we always climbed the mulberry trees belonging to a neighbour ( we got liberty ) & helped ourselves, making our clothes in a fearful shape never thinking of the trouble we were making for our dear mother, thoughtless children.

We always found plenty to amuse us after school, a swim, Father taught us to swim by tying a rope under our arms & taking us out then letting us paddle our way back, he was a great swimmer, mother could not swim, but used to enjoy a dip.

One of my brothers mates had a billy goat, so they made a cart out of a box, & put a tick over it, we each had a ride in turns, on my last ride the goat bolted, tossed me out & went like the wind they had a job to catch him. I was not hurt just gravel rashed but the cart was in splinters.

We used to be delighted to help to shell corn ( no corn shellers in those days all by hand ). One day we were in the barn helping or hindering I do not know which when I looked up, on the bean overhead & saw a huge snake as thick as my leg (diamond) its head swaying about. I let a yell out of me, the neighbour calmly said " that my rat catcher". I went home.

Mother as she was washing one day broke a sewing needle that was fastened in the clothes somehow, it went right under the nail, the head of the needle with a bit of black tread in it, she had a frightful hand & arm from it, she could not make the bread, so the eldest girl had to with the help of my brother Jim, his arms were stronger than mine to kneed it, we made good bread to, baked in a camp oven, we used corn cobs for fuel. A short time after a neighbour managed to get the needle out by shaving the nail down to the quick & putting the point of a needle in the eye, pulled it out, a great relief.

Father used to row to Wisemans Ferry sometimes, a distance of ten miles by water, our dog used to swim after the boat for miles, he was a faithful animal when were out anywhere he always went ahead & warned us if a snake were near, one thing he had a set on, a pig, he could not stand the look of them, he would swim the river if he saw one on the other side & chase it, often tearing a strip off of it.

One Sunday an old resident came to see father, & during the conversation told him of the early days, what he had been sent to the country for, some trivial offence, then he showed him his back. where he was flogged, & his legs from the irons. Father was deeply moved " Mans inhumanity to man makes countless nations moan ".

Father was a wonderful teacher & could impart knowledge in a wonderful way, when my younger brother was thirteen he passed the junior university exam. Mother took him to the City to sit for it, we were very proud of him, Mother told us about seeing fire in a bottle, the electricity, so common now.

I had a trip to the city when I was about ten, a married sister was home & took me back with her, I saw a train for the first time & other wonders, went to Dulwich Hill school while I was there & I was put into the highest class. I did not like the City I missed my sisters & brothers, mother came for me & I was so glad to get home, & was surprised that I was behind my class mates in many subjects but soon picked up.

Some distance, may be half way to Wisemans Ferry was a place called "Shephards Gully", There was what they called a Triangle where they flogged the convicts, I never saw it, nature in all her beauty, tree ferns gigantic lilies, waratahs, flannel flowers, with maiden hair fern nestling among the rocks, & where all that beauty was, men went through hell, what suffering. I am sure it must be haunted with the whips of the lash & the moans of the victims, thank God all that is done away with.

On the road to St Albans where we used to go for supplies, go partly by water the rest by road, we would take a short cut over a hill, were there were some huge sandstone rocks on which were drawn aboriginal drawings of different animals, human hands, some with only fingers, baby hands, etc, they used to interest us very much. I expect the government have had them protected before this.

Mother had a sewing machine for the first time in her life, however she had managed without one, was a miracle, yet we were clad, all by hand it was done, a wonderful woman. When she got the machine she used to do some sewing for the neighbours, machines were rare in these days.

There was a new school built, the old one had seen its days, but we did not enjoy the new one for long as Father got an appointment to another school, we were about nine years there. We heard that a big flood afterwards took the buildings all away but the school (new) & nearly demolished that.

Of course we children were excited to be on the move to see new places.

We went by boat to Sydney a flat bottomed paddle box affair the "Alma", the cabin was newly painted, we all got seasick going through Broken Bay, but we reached Sydney in good time.

Father went & saw the Educational Department, & they altered his destination when they found he had a family ( they paid travelling expenses. ) he was sent to a school closer in the Bathurst district.

We saw nearly all the rest of the family while we were in the City.

How delighted we young people were when we went up the "Zig Zag" we had read of it, what a wonderful piece of engineering it was & never an accident on it. Reached the end of our train journey in the evening then we had to coach it for sixteen miles to Oberon, that was three miles from the school Father was to preside over. The teacher of that school had not taken his departure so we had to wait about three days before we could move in. It was a brick school with residence attached, there Father spent nearly fourteen years. There was very little senary about this place. The people were very nice & friendly. Some of the children used to come five miles to the school.

There were about twenty, maybe forty acres attached to the school for the use of the children's horses, that had cane a distance, so we could keep a cow or two & mother was delighted that she could make her own butter again & lovely it was, we also kept fowls, & mother and myself went as far as having a few hives of bees. There was a Post Office attached so we could hear how the outside part of the world was progressing.

We had to walk to Church a distance of three miles, sometimes we would get a lift with a neighbour.

My brother Jim had passed his pupil teacher examination & was awaiting a call, while waiting he done some tutoring, some children were too small to walk the distance to school, the rest of us three girls had not finished school. Not too long before he got his appointment as pupil teacher in Newtown school ( City ) we missed him very much, he came home for holidays. One of the elder brothers & his wife came on a visit to us, they had four children, twin babies, the wife was Matron of Bourke Hospital at the time, & he was nurse & dispenser, & a sister was also teaching there, they took me back with them thinking I may like to be a nurse. They broke their journey at Young, Young at that time ( 1890 or there about ) was one of the first towns to have electric light.

Bourke was a very thirsty place, there were 24 public houses there, the River Darling was a chain of water holes. I believe there was a flood a few years before I was there. The town was all under water, the hospital was about the highest place, they had to remove all the patients, one was too ill to be removed so they improvised a tent on the roof of the wash house, & my brother stayed with him there & nursed him & he pulled through. Camel trains would come there from the further west, with the wool clip, poor patient animals with their Afghan drivers. There was a village of Afghans at the railway station, they seemed to understand the camels better than the European. Bourke was very hot, I would take a small niece to school ( convent ) of a morning & go myself to learn music & French ( but forgot it all by now ).

I got "Sandy Blight" a distressing thing nearly blind for a fortnight, shut in a dark room, but I got over it. After six months Father came up & took me home, you may depend I was delighted to get home again & the cool climate.

We had had some heavy falls of snow there, a beautiful sight when falling but nice to have a fire to go to.

I had a boy friend in Bourke, a warder in the hospital, he came to see us after I went home, we corresponded for about two years, I was not heartbroken when it ceased.

My first & only experience of a public hall, Father took a ticket ( a R C affair I think ) & it was decided I was to accompany him, a married sister was at home & all helped to adorn me for the occasion, ribbons & lace, hair frizzed etc. There was a big attendance but I could not dance, some of the young men took me on the floor, but soon tired of it. I was indeed thankful when Father decided to go home after midnight. I never did learn to dance.

We went for a trip to the Jenolan Caves, got a neighbour to take us, they are magnificent beyond description, like fairyland, a person would need a week then some to see them.

The school Inspector told Father there would be exams for teachers for small schools before too long, in the meantime I went minding the Drs children, two little boys. I would leave home in the morning about 7-30 AM & walk three miles & back in the evening, five days a week, for which I was getting 3/- a month.

A cousin came to see us from Victoria, a clergyman rector of St Pauls Bendigo, they came to Australia after we did, he had just lost his mother ( Aunt Lizzie mothers sister ) I do not know how he got our address, we had a letter from him to say he was coming but was not sure what day, when he came someone drove him out, the front door was open & mother was sitting on the rocking chair in the room he made a few quick steps & took mother in his arms, Oh Aunt Margaret he said, you are like mother. You may depend Mother was delighted to see him. He stayed a few days, preached in the C,E Church on the Sunday, coming home ( we had a horse & buggy by this ) Father was driving & he was sitting in the front with him, he was really quite for a while, then the question " do you smoke uncle " Father said "yes, but not when I am driving", he put his hand in his pocket & pulled out a well seasoned pipe " Oh I have been dying for a smoke" he said to Father, "you know the clergy are not supposed to smoke" & told him about two bishops who stayed at the same hotel, they got separate rooms. One thought he would go to the other before he retired, when he went to his room he found him with his head up the chimney puffing a cloud of smoke, so he went back to his own room & did like wise. He was Bishop of Nelson N Z in after years & died there.

An epidemic of " flue " struck the locality, Father got bronchitis & mother pleurisy, they were very sick, it was really a trying time for us girls, but we managed. The school was closed. I took on the night part of the nursing, sisters managed during the day, parents had to be poulticed every 2 hours. I had learned how to make a poultice when at the hospital, neighbour were very kind but Father liked his own Dr used to come nearly every day, in about a fortnights time they started to improve, & it seemed no time before they were up & about again. Father let his beard grow, never shaved after. One of the school boys were sent to get their mail & he saw Father on the verandah, he did not know him with the beard, so ran home again & told his father " he was not going to school anymore there was a strange teacher there ", his father came & had a great laugh over it.

My youngest sister & self went to Bathurst & sat for exams as teachers, we both passed, but had to wait for some time for our appointments. Mine came first, by telegram, so had to go to town to answer. I had arranged to meet a boy friend that day, so I got my sister G to go for me, she saw him & told him. My first appointment was out West near Condoblin. The boy friend took me to the Railway station, I said good buy to him & told him I would write ( I did for a short time. I had to wait until 2-30 am for the train, it went through Orange to Parks

, then the line branched one going to Forbes & the other to Condoblin . When it got to Bogan Gate a constable met the train , he had received word from the Sergeant at Oberon to meet me there & put me on the right track , he took me to the barracks where his wife had a nice dinner waiting , but I was really too tired to enjoy it , back on the train again , he told the guard where I was going & to look after me & off we went . It was only a single line from that on & very slow , the whistle blew very often to drive sheep off the track , but in a short time the same sheep were on again , such a dreary country , flat with dead trees each side of the line , their arms raised as if asking vengeance on the monster that denuded them of their foliage , there was not a vestige of green verdure , a little stunted scrub here & there . Chug , chug , on goes the train it seemed awfully slow , at last it reached the siding where I was to get out , thank goodness , the end of that nightmare of a train journey , I had over twelve hours of it . The guard got my luggage out & spoke to some of the people that had come for their mail , told them who I was & to have someone come for me . I had to wait nearly an hour before they came . We drove for about three miles & then through a gate , & I rubbed my eyes thinking I was seeing things , but no , in front of us was what seemed to me an oasis , green trees , a vegetable garden & lovely flowers with the house nestling amongst it , oh was I not thankful to get out .

There was a nice lunch ready but I was too weary to enjoy food .

The people were a selector , wife & seven children ( there were two other children , a girl & boy , the girl was married & the boy away working ) , they were very nice people & soon made me at home . The selector had a market garden , he took his vegetables to Condoblin the weekend for sale , they were really extra special , they were three children of school age & two were too young .

Being Sunday next day I had a look round , the school house was in reality just a shed that stored feed for Cobb & Co in the years gone by , the school furniture was all there , it had an iron roof & was dry . I started to teach the next day , there were only three permanent families in the locality , about seven or nine children , the other children were from tents or whatever shelter fettlers had , & they were moved from one place to another so it was a hard matter to keep up the average attendance of children , however we got on very well .

The district was in the throes of a drought , had no rain for over twelve months , water was scarce , & no feed , sheep had to be fed by hand . Trucks of fodder used to come by train , but being only a one track line , if the trucks were not unloaded the same day they were shunted back to the next station that had the double line , the people had been agitating for a small branch line , to run the fodder trucks off the line , but the government were deaf to their pleas .

When the summer came the heat was intense worse really than Bourke , all water had to be boiled before use , the dams & Creek were putrid with dead rabbits & sheep , people would hardly believe it if I told them I never had a drink of water for nearly six months unless I went to town , the tea was more like Castor oil , but we survived it . I never saw so many rabbits all colours all sizes . The boys of the house made what they called pit traps , the other side of the wire nett fence round the vegetable garden , they put a balance board on top of the pit , & the rabbit went down . As many as two hundred they get in one night , skins were not worth selling .

I went home Xmas time for the holidays , such a change from the heat , the holidays were all too short . Back again to the task .

One of the boys of the house had failed in an exam for teachers about twelve months before I went there , so I told him if he would like to try again I would give him all the help I could , so I used to coach him of an evening .

The Federation of the States of Australia ( 1901 ) Royalty in the person of the Duke of York came out to open the first Parliament .

The boys of the house brought home word that there was great work going on at the Siding (Derriwong ) making a line to shunt the Royal train off the line , as His Royal Highness the "Dook" was coming on a shooting trip to "Borambil" station then owned by the N Z L Company , what a secret but they found out the date , so we all made up our minds we must see this great personage . The day arrived , the first week in June , a very frost that morning , you could see the glimmer of little fires here & there , it was about 7 a.m , the cry passed along "she's coming, she's coming" , along the train came , a delay the carriages were shunted off , then on she went Curiosity , one had a peep into the carriages then another , we heard the ends & outs of the proceedings " they are having breakfast , that fellow is shaving " , etc, etc. In about an hours time men emerged from the carriages & went towards the road where a carriage was waiting with four magnificent chestnut horses , prancing & champing at their bits , they were beautiful creatures , you could see yourself in their skins All eyes were eagerly watching for the Duke to come along , one lone figure walked slowly towards the carriage , he wore a grey suit & a grey hat , was helped into the carriage & it drove off , very few people recognised his royal highness , not a cheer was given . he wanted it quite & he got it quite. Next day the rain came , not ordinary rain , but buckets of rain as if the windows of heaven were opened & it was poured out , the noise was terrific on the iron roof . About midday some poor bedraggled humans made their appearance at the door of the school , the door was open so they came in gladly . I had a big fire on , so the attendants soon were busy , gents coats off , guns dried , a great " how de doo " , they had provisions with them , & soon bottles & glasses appeared , they kindly asked me to partake but I declined , but said I would dismiss the children so I would not have to give them lessons in strong drink , the rain had ceased partly . I had some arithmetic on the board that I had been giving the young fellow I was coaching . One of the gents said to another " Jack do you think you could manage that ".pointing to the sum on the board , " Bah Jove I do not think I could ". He said " do you have pupils that can do that work " , "certainly " I said . There was a reporter amongst them taking everything in. One of them , I believe the Dukes valet gave me a piece of cake , which he said was part of the Dukes birthday cake ( birthday 3rd June ) I thanked him & said I was highly honoured , said good day to them & took my departure . ( The Duke & others had gone on to the train ). Next day when I opened the safe where I kept the books , slates etc, I found biscuits , fruit , sweets etc which the youngsters enjoyed . The rain continued & there was a flood ,royal party departed The ground being flat there was water everywhere & all manner of water foul made their appearance , even the pelican .

What a blessing it was to the poor parched land , but man did not think there would ever be another drought , everything was left as it was , treading that was used to hold feed for the sheep , hogheads of molasses , nothing removed & to top it all the small branch line was removed , hard to understood officialism .

The earth took on a new aspect , in a very short time , it was covered with a green carpet , herbage seemed to grow in a night. The rabbits were in great numbers everywhere , the boys used to make pit traps , in which they caught hundreds . Just outside the wire net of the garden was what they called a " Gilgi " , a depression in the ground that got filled with water , & near to it was a rabbit warren , so they decided to flood it out . I went with them , they filled all the holes but a few & dug channels from the " Gilgi " to the warren , it took tons & tons of water before it was full , as we sat at the open holes we heard " blub " , " blub " , " blub " up came a half drowned rabbit , they got 50 out of that warren , but it seemed hopeless , they bred so quickly.

My sister had been sent to a school " Coolaman " way , of course drought there too & rabbits , she got typhoid fever from the water , there was no hospital near , my sister G went up to her , of course hotels & board houses would not accommodate fever , so the coach driver sent his family away , & gave them his house ( God bless him ) , father went out , & they sent to Sydney for a trained nurse , there was a Dr, there , another sister came & stayed with mother while father was away , he stayed until after the crisis , but sister stayed on until she was well enough to travel , they then came home .

My eldest brother who had been a teacher , had thrown the teaching up , & had developed the wander lust , we had not heard of him for years before this , when one day Father got a telegram , asking him was he so , so etc , from the wandering one & he came on a visit just as my sister who had been so ill came home , so everyone was pleased to see him . I was home on holidays but he did not stay long , he was off again & we heard no more for him for years .

As soon as sister was well enough she went to teach near Cowra . I went back to school again , the young fellow I was coaching sat for his exam & passed with flying colours & were not his parents delighted , of course they gave me the credit of it all , he was appointed to Mnt Hope ( there were four of the boys took up teaching .) I used to go to town of a Saturday , when the gardener used to take in his vegetables , the horses needed no shoes there it was almost a level road 14 miles , sometimes we would strike a sandstorm , we would stop the horses , he would put bags over the horses eyes & we would crawl under the coach . The sand stung you like so many needles , the storm could last for nearly an hour when we would crawl out sand, sand everywhere . A kind of weed called "roly poly " very little root & the wind would roll it along to the wire fence & the sand would stack up , it cost a fortune to keep the fences clear , impossible to keep rabbits out.

We saw a strange sight one day coming home , in a clump of scrub near the road we saw two eagles rise up , thinking it may be something dead there ( maybe a human ) we went over to see , there was an eagle , a huge naked bird not a feather on him , hiding the other eagles had been feeding him , & another time , a young couple had been married that morning in Condoblin , & started off with a horse & sulky to go on their honeymoon , the horse was just skin & bone & soon dropped dead , & the last we saw of the couple was the bride sitting up in the sulky with her umbrella up , & the groom in the shafts trotting along the road , how far they got I never heard.

All belonged to the Good Templar Lodge so I joined up & once a month , we would go in & have a nights pleasure.

I heard that one of the boys who was with his father selling vegetables called at one of the hotels with a supply that had been ordered , two men well under the influence got hold of him , one held him while the other tried to pour a glass of spirits down his throat , when the hotel keeper saw them he jumped over the bar & floored both of them ( he had been a pug ) saying , you ----- don't ever show your faces in my pub again or it will be the worst for you , & he kept his word .

There were two Salvation lasses who used to come out of town about every three month , & hold a service at the neighbours place & we used to go , we crossed the creek on a suspension bridge , saplings tied together with wire , it answered the purpose well , & when floods came rose with the water , the girls were very sincere in their belief .

I was three years at that school when I got an appointment to one near Wang , I was sorry to leave the people ( but not the heat ) .

I found books in the new school in a terrible muddle , the teacher had been suspended , so I had my work cut out to get things right , I was only a few months there when I was sent to Kelso & was only there a short time when I was sent to P O . where I married & stayed.

Some friend of fathers sent him a cutting from a paper ( I think it was the Stock & Station journal ) giving an account of the Royal visit to the West , & how some of the gents sought refuge in the little bush school & also how the teacher showed those gents ( Oxford & Cambridge men ) what bush education meant , Father was thrilled over it all & more so when I gave him the true account , told him how annoyed my inspector was that I did not get them to put their names in the visitors book , but I told him they were not visitors but were refugees .

### **Palmers Oakey.**

Arrived here on Jan 15th 1904 , Father had retired the year before ( 1903 ) & went to the City to live , nearly all the family were living there. He was presented with a lovely present an illuminated address & a silver coffee service

The school here had a very fair attendance but I can not say the children were very bright . This was part of the Turon Gold fields , & most of the people were miners , fossickers really , finding a little gold , & living on their miners lease , each had a few cattle , horses , some goats , there was a common where they could run their animals to a certain number.

The people were very homely , & used to amuse themselves with an occasional dance , picnic etc, I was not a dancer & I visited very little . There was a Union church about two miles away , I used to go occasionally to service there , a preacher would come about once a month . The woman of the house in which I boarded was full of life & loved nothing better than dances & parties she was really the life of the place.

I went to the City the Easter after I came here & stayed with father & mother & sister ( that never left home ) my sister that was teaching near Cowra came home too.

Father had bought a nice little house near the water & had it furnished very nicely , the first home he bought , for a teacher was moved about too much to have a permanent home , he had been teaching over 50 years .

It was not long before the eldest son of the house & myself started to keep company , he was a very hard working man , had a bullock team , & done a lot of carrying from the Oakey to Bathurst , wattle bark , honey etc. he was really the main stay of his mother , she had a few sheep , his other brother the youngest one done very little , too fond of sport , played the piano , but did not like hard work . his youngest sister lived close , a lovely woman , married with four children all going to school , her husband had an accident in a mine some years before poor fellow , an unexploded charge blew up really a wonder he was not killed , he used to get work around the district , a good worker .

The inspector came to the school , he was an odious man , I had been warned about him when I was teaching at Kelso , so threw no chances away . I got a fair report from him , the children were certainly backwards could not be off it as it had been a Half Time school before I came . I was the first teacher of the full time school , however things went on very well.

The boy friend ( not much of a boy he was 41 ) & my self decided to get married in September . We went to the city & were married in my fathers house , mothers health was not too good . I was the only one of all the children that mother & father at my wedding & they both gave their blessing.

Not three weeks after the wedding my sister Sarah passed away under an unskilful operation , she was full of life at the wedding , she left a husband & three children , one girl & two boys , ( her two boys fell in the first war ) . The following Xmas was Fathers & mothers golden

wedding ( 19th Dec 1854 married ) so I went down , all the family that could come were there , a nice gathering , they got some nice presents . My house was built & finished when I got back . My sister that was teaching near Cowra came here to teach , it was nice to have her , she was good company . My husbands youngest sister , never a strong woman died of pneumonia on 26th January , & his mother a short time after it was a terrible blow to all, the sisters children of course had to be parted the two girls went to their aunt , & my husband & I took her two boys , they were with their father for a time but he passed away the following March .

Then my sister ( teacher ) got ill & I took her to the City poor girl developed T B she never taught again , it was the galloping kind she just faded away & died the following year (3rd Oct 1906 ) I had my first baby by that time , I went down & saw her two days before she passed away . It was a great sorrow for us all , but life goes on just the same , & I found plenty of work to do , no town near so had to bake bread , milk cows , make butter , jam , soap , candles , in fact everything was made & grown on the place , except clothes , flour , sugar & tea . I made so much butter my husband used to grease his waggon . There were always men employed , the elder boy that was with us went to Cobar to an Uncle , the younger one used to go to school & as he grew older became of use to his Uncle who was away from home a lot with his team , or in the bush mustering sheep .

Wool was not much of price in those days , but we kept ourselves out of debt & managed to put a little by . Duncan loved his bullock team , he ( Duncan ) often told me tales of the Oakey , about the wild horses (brumbies) , he was a good horseman & he & others used to build yards & trap the brumbies some were good animals , but others were not much , on one occasion he said , one beautiful animal got out of the yard , & took to the hills , going after him down one hill full gallop , he found himself sitting in the saddle in the fork of a tree , the horse he was riding had jumped through & left him there , he was uninjured.

There were also wild cattle , but things like that do not last long too many people after them.

A lot of gold was found around the district , at one time there were over two hundred Chinamen on the place , they had their horse races & used to get some of the young fellows to ride for them as they were not good riders themselves , some would bravely try ,Duncan said it was very amusing to watch them holding on for bare life , pigtails flying & chattering all the time

There was a German Co. about four I heard , they made a race to carry the water to their sluicing , it was about ten miles from start to finish I believe it paid them well .

In the early days there was a public house on the Oakey my husbands people kept it for a time , the miners used to gather there play cards , & I suppose some gambling games , they used match boxes ( round ones ) full of gold dust for the stakes , it was there Duncan was born , his people afterwards took up ground where the sheep station "Warrie" now stands . There was a fair lot of cattle "duffing" as it was called in the old days & sly grog selling . One story Duncan told me was , " a bullock was stolen during the night from out of yard , the police were notified , & tracked it to a certain house , but the person that took the animal heard that they were coming , met the police , invited them inside to have dinner , while they were inside the girls of the house took the animals skin , weighed it down with stones & sank it in the dam close by , so the only skin the police found belonged to an old milking cow they had killed .

One story of sly grog selling . A woman was under suspicion , so one of the police called on her , & pretended he had cramps very bad & asked her if she had any sprits in the house to give him some to relief him , she gave him a glass of sprits the real thing , he thanked her & asked if she would be kind enough to put some in a bottle for him for fear he would get them again on his way home , & she did , he paid her for it . So got on his horse & started off , as he was going he turned round with the bottle in his hand & said , "I have you now " . Of course she was summoned to court , & the case was called , the bottle was opened & found to contain only tea , of course the case was dismissed & that constable left the district

In August 1907 my little girl was born , a sweet little darling , the nurse just a sarah I amp ( no training ) came & took charge of everything while I was in bed , no doctor . I was rather weakly after her birth . I broke a nerve in my left hand & had a bad arm , could not do anything , it was very painful . I went to the City for a month after seeing a Dr. Both children got the chicken pox while I was in the City , both were better by the time I came home , & again took up the housekeeping , milking etc..

We had rather a nice orchard attached to the place , so I had plenty of fruit to make jam , never had to buy any . I made bottles & bottles of it & preserved some to.

Every day seemed full of work , had breakfast by candlelight & work while it was light enough to see.

Duncan took up more ground so we could run more sheep.

Shearing time was always a busy time for all hands , of course I done all the cooking , seven meals a day , in those times , so a woman was kept busy.

My last baby was born in March 1911 , & my mother died in May of that year (26th) I could not go to the funeral , did not hear in time , & the children were really too young to stand the journey , however I went to see Father the next year (1912) he missed mother very much . They were 57 yrs married when she died . Fathers brother came over to Sydney to see him , he also had lost his wife a short time before & his daughter a hospital matron came with him , he had retired from the Police force as superintendent . We all gathered at Fathers house to see him , you can just imagine how delighted the brothers were to meet after about thirty years , he was a taller man than Father & was very nice & pleasant , he & the daughter were staying at a hotel in the City but she had to go back to duty so they only stayed a few days. Duncan used to play the violin & concertina & even the Jews harp , so he used to be an asset to all the dances about the place. I never went found plenty to do at home . The children were now growing up & needed attention ,I used to give them lessons whenever I got time a hard mother , as there was so much about the place to take up their attention however we plodded along . My health was not too good not proper treatment when my babies were born & too much lifting , so I had to go under an operation (1916) .

My sister Minnie came & looked after the children & Duncan while I was in hospital ( a month ) I had a trying time but got over it , Minnie stayed a short time after I came home then went back to the City .

My father died July 6th 1916 , I went down but was not in time for the funeral , my sister Grace came back with me , she was broken hearted after Father , but she would not stay long about three weeks . I went down to the City on the Saturday & back on the Monday , rather an upset coming back when we got to Rydal we found the mail man could not take us to Sunny Corner as he had only a sulky , so a young man came from Sunny Corner to meet us late in the day . Duncan had came to Dark Corner , but he went home before we got that far , so we had to stay the night with the neighbours they were extremely kind & gave us of the best even to sleep in the parents bed , the neighbour drove us home the next day .

My little girl ( only 8 ) had the beds made , dishes washed & place swept for me a real little woman . When my sister went back to the City , we decided to send our two eldest to the City to school , we missed them very much but it was the only way they could get education . The first war was still raging , the two lads ( Duncans sisters boys ) had gone , the younger one only 17 put his age on , the eldest one Len went down at Lone Pine , but Barney survived & returned to Australia , poor lad never got over the hardships of it , he got medals & was a sergeant but a grateful country did not do much for him.

The school holidays were a source of delight to the children , picnics very often to the Turon river fishing , we used to catch a lot of slipperies ( a small native trout ) we brought the frying pan with us always , so we had plenty of fried fish , they were really delicious . Afterwards there were trout put in & the slipperies disappeared , the trout must have destroyed the young ones & there are no fish to be caught there now a pity for it is a lovely stream of water .

We had a visit from my wandering brother , he came on two occasions was a great help to me during shearing , he could cook with the best but he did not stay long either time , could not content himself , must be on the tramp , we lost all trace of him afterwards , but we heard he died in the Gunnedah hospital . I wrote there with no success , but he never travelled under his own name , so goodness knows what happened , he was over seventy when we heard last of him .

In 1919 the pneumonia flu arrived in the city , so the children came home , were home for ten months . The eldest boy did not go back , he became so useful to his father , my sister Grace came up with them , they went back when things were safe , we let the youngest go back with them & no one knows how I missed my baby . They used to come home for the holidays the Aunt mostly came with them . We had a car by that time & the Post Office was here for me to look after , it was a convenience but a great tie . I held it for eight years , got 20 pounds a year for looking after it. My sister Grace always came with the children when they came home for holiday , but one Easter she did not come put them on the train & their father was to meet them at "Wang" , the car bailed up , something wrong so he went to Sunny Corner & phoned "Wang" no sign of the children , but they did come & when there was no one to meet them the porter kindly took them home with him & the next day the Uncle went with Duncan . Flora had "phoned" Sunny Corner to find out the delay . You may depend the father was delighted when he found them safe at "Wang" & thanked the porter for his great kindness & you may depend their mother was delighted to see them when they got home , they went back to school until the end of the year ( & then they both stayed home ) , the younger boy was then eleven , & the girl was 14 . I got lessons from the Correspondence School , & finished the boy off , & he did very well .