



CHAPTER 13

"A hideous pandemonium"



THE use of exotic gifts to win favour among strangers of another culture was a common practice during the age of exploration of the Earth's surface. Often, the motive was commercial: the donors would hope that the gifts would serve as product samples, leading to lucrative trading arrangements. In other cases, gifts were meant to be examples of a weird but obviously superior culture. Coupled with promises of more to come, they could establish sufficient goodwill to guarantee safe passage through otherwise hostile territory. By 1841, it was a ploy well developed by Port Phillip's Chief Protector of Aborigines. While preparing for his first trip into the Western District of his domain since his arrival more than two years earlier, Robinson took great care to procure what he believed would be an impressive range of gifts. In doing so, he would dig deep into the fund allocated for the "contingent expenses" of his department, access to which he'd only very sparingly allowed his assistants.

Among the items Robinson bought in Melbourne for the trip were a quantity of squibs, Catherine wheels and other fireworks, four kaleidoscopes, and 204 rows of coloured beads. There were also 110 metres of ribbon, to make pendants of 372 medals -- some struck to mark Queen Victoria's marriage to her German-born first cousin the previous year, the rest to mark her coronation in 1837. Other gifts would be of varying practical use to their intended recipients: 100 blankets, 60 cotton shawls, 50 print dresses, 204 cotton handkerchiefs, 50 tomahawks, 200 pocket knives, 576 tobacco pipes, 300 fish hooks, 12 fishing lines, six hanks of twine, and quantities of cotton and needles.¹ With La Trobe's permission, he intended supplementing these gifts with food purchased whenever practical along the way.²

The day in March 1841 on which Robinson finally set out on his journey, Sievwright sat down at Keilambete almost 200 kilometres away to write a reply to the letter he'd just received from the Chief Protector demanding an explanation why the site had been chosen for his district's reserve. Again, he pointed out that it had been first recommended to him by the Jarcoort Kirrae people -- and that his own experience had since confirmed the wisdom of the selection. The site was in the middle of the district, and near the edge of an extensive and thickly-timbered forest that comprised its "principal hunting ground". The Jarcoort blacks had originally asked him to live with them on the fresh water

lake, Terang, about three kilometres away. However, he'd decided to set up his homestead on the salt lake because his overseer had advised that a marsh next to it -- once properly drained -- was the best spot in the area for cultivation. As well, the limits of the reserve with Keilambete at its centre would only require John Thomson to give up *part* of the land he'd been using for grazing. If the reserve was centred at Terang, Thomson and four other squatters would have to be disturbed.³

The Chief Protector would receive Sievwright's letter on his arrival in Geelong two days later. That same morning, Thomson would meet him in the town and



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A group of Aboriginal women and children in bushland. When Robinson left Melbourne in March 1841 for his tour of the Western District, 100 blankets would be among the items he took to give away.

hand him a note from Fyans stating that the Crown Lands Commissioner presumed Sievwright had been authorised to occupy the squatter's run. When Thomson added that he was about to ride to Melbourne to make another complaint to La Trobe, Robinson not only explicitly denied having authorised Sievwright's actions, but also suggested that the squatter pursue the matter further with Fyans. Overjoyed, Thomson lost no time in asking the Commissioner to take the necessary proceedings under the Squatting Act to evict Sievwright from his run. Fyans, however, would tell Robinson he felt "a delicacy in interfering with a gentleman in the Public Service". Urging the Chief Protector to make Sievwright move, he pointed out that if Sievwright was allowed to take

over the run, it would be to Thomson's ruin. Besides, Fyans advised, it was also unnecessary in "a country abounding in all the requisites" for which Sievwright could wish.⁴

When Robinson arrived in Geelong, the Barrabool tribe had quit the neighbourhood -- having just witnessed Mumbowran being taken away. Except for one black youth on horseback who was living with a squatter near the town, Robinson had not yet seen any Aborigines since leaving Melbourne. Eager to get on with his journey and meet some, he soon headed off with replenished food, forage and other supplies. The first day after leaving Geelong, he was disappointed to find that the Wesleyan mission to the south-west was also temporarily without any Aboriginal residents. The next day, he passed the low range of hills on the east side of Lake Colac used privately by Fyans as a cattle run, before arriving at the station of Hugh Murray. Camped there, he found about 40 Colijon people who "appeared quite at home" and who were "highly amused" by a fireworks display he put on for their benefit. Visiting the Colijon tribe was one of the few remaining Jarcoort warriors. Eurodap, aged about 23, had survived being hit seven times by buckshot or slugs fired from British guns. Nevertheless, he had continued to associate with some whites, who'd named him Tom Brown, and who'd taught him some English. He understood that Robinson intended visiting his country, and agreed to accompany him there. The Chief Protector would also pick up another escort: waiting for him at Murray's to volunteer for the task was John Thomson.⁵

The party would pass within a short distance of Keilambete two days later -- and Thomson would go there for the night -- but Robinson was in no hurry to visit his assistant. First, he would go to Boloke -- a salt lake more than 50 kilometres to the north which abounded in eels, and home territory of the Bolagher section of the Kirrae people. Lake Boloke was a favoured spot for settlers in the area to collect slabs of thick salt from its banks, used for curing meat. While loading about half a tonne of salt onto his cart for this purpose, Robinson would hear that a nearby station on the Hopkins River, managed by Henry Gibb, had been robbed by some Kirrae blacks of guns and other items for the second time in 10 days. According to the report, passed on by the Manifold brothers, a shepherd was feared to have been killed. Robinson, still accompanied by Thomson, went to investigate. The Chief Protector found that the robberies had taken place, but not the reported murder. However, he was told that a hutkeeper employed by Gibb had been struck on the head while setting some fishing lines in the river. Although the man had been severely beaten, his life was in no danger. "I am inclined to think that the attacks on Gibb were occasioned by revenge for the outrages committed on the natives by this individual, as reported upon by Sievwright," Robinson wrote in his journal. He would also later record that

Gibb and two of Fyans' police had responded by attacking a group of Elangamite people who'd had nothing to do with the robberies. Burmudgerlong, described by Robinson as the Elangamite chief, had received gunshot wounds to his head and body. Other members of the group had also been wounded.⁶

From Gibb's station, Robinson proceeded over several rainy and windy days towards Keilambete. On the way, he would stop for a meal at the station of Niel Black, who handed him a note from Sievwright giving directions to his camp. Sievwright's convict servant, who was at Black's to purchase supplies from the squatter, added that he was willing to come to meet Robinson if required. The Chief Protector was offended. "This whole proceedings of Sievwright was most strange and quite out of character of a subordinate," he wrote. "It was his place to have come to me and tendered his services." As he arrived at Keilambete that night, Robinson would run into Thomson, who'd ridden on ahead of him. Over refreshments in the squatter's slab hut, they discussed his claim that 28 of his sheep had gone missing, believed stolen by the blacks. Thomson also made yet another complaint about Sievwright's behaviour before the Chief Protector walked over to the nearby camp to finally make his first visit to his assistant in the field, and to meet the 136 blacks there: 42 men, 33 women, and 61 children. "I shook hands with them and, if I was to judge their inward feeling by their outward acts, I believe they were highly gratified to see me," he recorded. Robinson was particularly touched by the welcome he received from Burguidningang, who showed "great glee" to see him and extolled him "in the greatest manner".⁷

The pleasure Robinson derived from the blacks' reception was soon tempered, however, by his tense relations with Sievwright. The strains were immediately exacerbated when Robinson told his assistant he doubted if Keilambete would be sanctioned as a reserve. The constant complaints he'd received from Thomson over the previous two weeks were not given as the reason. Rather, he told Sievwright, he believed that the site was too close to the Wesleyan mission station -- which was already catering for the needs of the Colijon and Jarcoort people. Sievwright rejected the claim, saying his operations were independent of those of the missionaries. Certainly, it had been the Jarcoort Aborigines who'd recommended the site. But they were only one section of the Kirrae tribe. And Keilambete was obviously acceptable to more than just the Jarcoort blacks. Even the combined strength of the Jarcoort and Colijon people was less than the number of Aborigines who'd already registered at the site -- and he believed the Barrabool tribe was due to arrive any day. Sievwright told Robinson he was ready to fight any suggestion that the Protectorate capitulate to Thomson's demand that he shift. He would also not quietly submit to La Trobe's censure over his actions. Sievwright read Robinson the draft of a letter he was about to

formally write to him, further defending himself against La Trobe's claim of "informality and impropriety" in the way in which he'd moved to Keilambete.⁸

Three months earlier, Sievwright pointed out, he and Robinson had held several conversations in Melbourne about the selection of a site for his reserve. Robinson had then provided the means and authority for him to go to Keilambete, erect the necessary buildings, and commence agricultural operations without delay. He'd also been instructed to convey provisions to the site which would be used as payment for the blacks' labour. In line with another instruction from the Chief Protector, he'd provided details as soon as possible of the exact location chosen for the homestead in consultation with the overseer. As a matter of courtesy, Thomson had been given early notice of what he was likely to hear formally from Fyans about the need to give up some of the land he'd been using. The squatter had also been requested to move about two tonnes of flour being stored in a shady spot a few hundred metres from his hut because a large number of blacks were coming to the site who'd had little interaction with the whites, and over whom Sievwright could not expect to have control for some time.

In light of the fact that he'd been acting according to Robinson's orders, he could not understand why -- on the basis of Thomson's ex-parte statement -- La Trobe had censured his actions, which were solely connected with a public and urgent duty. It had also been unfair for the Superintendent to have suggested that his actions may have been biased by his previous dispute with Thomson over the taking of statements in relation to Thomas Hayes' murder. He could prove that he'd recommended Keilambete directly to La Trobe in February 1840, months before the squatter's arrival. His later recommendation to Robinson had been made before he'd ever met Thomson -- and two months before their confrontation. Finally, Sievwright yet again expressed satisfaction with the selection of Keilambete. The area of his district in which it was located was "closely occupied" by white settlers, and to his knowledge there was no other suitable location which would require only one squatter to move. About 250 blacks had so far come to the site, some of whom had been daily employed in clearing the land and ploughing in preparation for crop planting. In the hope that another planting season would not be lost, he would endeavour to continue this work unless he received an order to the contrary.⁹

The order would come the following day, after Thomson complained to Robinson that the blacks had again raided his flocks, stealing 12 sheep. The Chief Protector told Sievwright to suspend agricultural work, and to confine his operations to the erection of a store and temporary huts. It was to be a memorable day for Sievwright in other ways as well. After a fireworks display by Robinson, the blacks at the camp decided to hold a corroboree. However, before

it could get underway, a general fight broke out over members of another tribe allegedly interfering with the Elangamite women. Robinson and Sievwright managed to separate the combatants, but not before the elderly Elangamite, Burmudgerlong, and others were wounded with blows from clubs and other heavy wooden weapons. An angry Burmudgerlong urged the whites to shoot the Elangamite opponents. Instead, Sievwright confiscated his spears and on Robinson's instructions took him away to give him tea and damper while he calmed down. Later, the Chief Protector ordered that all the blacks be given a feast of mutton, potatoes and tea. It was not enough for some, however. That night, a group attempted to steal some more of Thomson's sheep. They fled when the squatter's overseer caught them in the act, and opened fire.¹⁰

The following morning, Sievwright, Burmudgerlong and a Jarcoort elder arrived at Robinson's tent with four blacks who'd admitted being involved in the attempted robbery. Robinson strongly reprehended them before ordering them to leave the camp. It was an unsatisfactory means of punishment, he recorded, but they seemed relieved to submit to it. If they had not been banished, he believed, their fellow Aborigines would have inflicted their own punishment, which would have served no good purpose. Thomson was happy enough with Robinson's decision, inviting him to roast chicken dinner. As they dined, confusion reigned among the blacks in the camp over the suspension of agricultural work -- and the subsequent absence of food payments. Sievwright wrote to Robinson, outlining what he believed would be the consequences. It would be a bad precedent to set, he argued, to continue issuing food without exacting any labour from his charges. But if they were deprived of food at the camp, they would obviously have to go elsewhere to obtain it. "Since they are here in such a body and others are hourly expected, the nearest settlers are likely in this case to suffer from their visits," he wrote. The government would also miss the opportunity to make substantial savings by the Aborigines being taught to grow some of their own food.

Until now, Sievwright added, he'd believed that the government had sanctioned Keilambete as the site for his reserve. His recommendation of the site had been before the government for many months. "I am consequently induced to believe that had any objection to its permanent occupancy been contemplated, that a notice to this effect would have been issued previous to my being directed to come here," he pointedly remarked. Furthermore, the Protectorate had gained some "moral influence" over the blacks of the district by informing them that a certain area had been allotted for their exclusive use. If he was now forced to move, and this influence forfeited, the chances of success of any future civilisation efforts would be highly questionable.¹¹ What Sievwright did not know was that La Trobe had been awaiting a report from Robinson on the suitability of

Keilambete ever since the Assistant Protector had recommended it six months earlier. La Trobe was not prepared to seek final approval of the site as a reserve from Gipps until Robinson had used his "experience and judgement" to endorse the recommendation.¹² And after a week at the site, Robinson was not convinced Sievwright had made a good selection. In fact, after dining with Thomson again, Robinson decided to write to La Trobe stating that he could not decide on the matter until he'd further explored the district.¹³

The discovery the following morning of the spot nearby where a dozen of Thomson's sheep had been disembowelled would lead to a caustic exchange between Sievwright and Robinson. The Chief Protector believed his assistant had heard that the robbery of the sheep was about to take place the previous week -- and knew who'd committed it. "Siewwright, with his usual finesse when spoken to, said he should leave it to me and requested me to tell him what to do," Robinson recorded. "I said I was not going to do his work and if he thought so he was mistaken. He knew well nothing could be done excepting apprehending them for their conduct. Had he, when the circumstances were first reported to him, made an investigation it might have been avoided." Sievwright, Robinson wrote, treated the matter with levity. Some other heated words were swapped, then a silence of ten minutes, before Sievwright stated he regarded Robinson as a "dangerous man" against whom he would be on guard. "I desired him, if he was not disposed to assist, not to disturb me," Robinson continued. "He walked off and said if I wanted him I might send for him."¹⁴

On one earlier occasion, Robinson had recorded in his journal that Sievwright was "officious and interfering". Yet another outburst had followed Sievwright's explanation that he could not lead the blacks in worship on Sundays until he had a prayer book and a structure of some kind to serve as a chapel. "With such a man it is not possible to affect any good," the Chief Protector had written. "He is evasive and orders are, by him, kept in abeyance and he has not the ability to execute them." But the clash that followed the discovery of the sheep remains turned the rift between them into a chasm. "It is time I was away from this man, for it is now impossible that I can regard him as faithful or assistant...," Robinson wrote. If he was to remain at Keilambete any longer, the blacks would be sure to become aware of their differences, and take advantage of the situation -- as he believed they'd done with Sievwright's differences with Thomson. One black had explained: "Plenty good Mr Sievwright, no growl, black fellow steal sheep and turnips and parsnips."¹⁵

Before Robinson was ready to leave Keilambete, the blacks would make another raid on Thomson's sheep. Around sunset on a wet and windy evening, a group of about 20 men approached the sheep-fold and hoisted several of the animals over the hurdles that enclosed it. The robbers fled when one of Thomson's shep-

herds opened fire on them. Sievwright sent his overseer and constable to investigate while he quickly went around the camp to see if all the blacks were in their huts. Some blacks were missing from four huts, he found, but when he checked again a few minutes later they'd returned -- claiming merely to have been at the other end of the camp. Reporting to Robinson on the incident, Sievwright wrote: "Although you have already declined allowing me the benefit of your assistance and advice relative to the measures that ought to be adopted towards the natives for the purpose of checking the reported attacks, I deem it my duty again to apply for those orders on the subject which you may think fit to give."¹⁶

The Chief Protector blamed his assistant for the raids. "Siewwright did wrong to bring the natives here until the question of the reserve was settled," he recorded. "Moreover, had it been settled it was wrong for him to collect the natives until he had a season in advance, so as to ensure a constant supply of flour, potatoes etc. He ought to have placed his overseer in charge, to have carried on the improvements, and gone himself among the natives, itinerating with the tribes. He would then have gained useful information and saved me the necessity of doing it for him. And the natives would, moreover, have regarded him with more confidence." Thomson's employees had also informed Robinson that Sievwright was declining to act on complaints about the blacks' behaviour while his superior was present. When Thomson's overseer had reported the theft of all his turnips, Sievwright had laughed in his face. And when a bullock driver employed by the squatter had told Sievwright that the blacks in the camp had insolently pointed their spears at him, the Assistant Protector had replied "with a haughty air and a contemptuous look" that the matter should be raised with Robinson because he knew so much about the Aborigines.¹⁷

It was no longer possible, Robinson decided, for Sievwright to remain at Keilambete. A curt note to his assistant read: "I feel it my duty in consequence of the repeated attacks made by the Aboriginal Natives upon the property of Mr John Thomson to request that your encampment be removed (for the present) to a locality removed from Mr Thomson's station and until the pleasure of the Governor be known in reference to the reserve." It was an oddly-worded instruction, given that Robinson had only just written to La Trobe saying he was not convinced that the site was the best available -- and could not yet recommend it for the Governor's approval. Verbally, Robinson added that Sievwright should move to Terang, the fresh water lake nearby, and with great reluctance he agreed to comply.¹⁸

Robinson, Sievwright, his brother John, and one of two Jarcoort men the Chief Protector had taken on as guides -- known to the whites as Charley -- then set off for an inspection of Burguidningnang's home territory to the south-east. On the way, they came across an unoccupied Elangamite camp, where they found

several native baskets -- the contents of which were of great interest to Robinson. They included sharpened kangaroo bones used as needles, pieces of iron hoop and broken glass, lumps of clay and lava, sticks for stripping bark, and even some European clothing. In one basket there was also a walnut-sized piece of what Robinson thought was either the fat or bone of an enemy warrior, designed to be worn as an amulet. It was wrapped in possum skin, tied with sinews, and suspended on a cord of possum fur. Charley wanted to take it away, so Robinson left in its place a new cotton handkerchief. He also left a handkerchief for a lead pencil found in another basket, believing it would be of more use to himself than the Aborigine who had somehow acquired it.¹⁹

It would be another two days before Sievwright moved his camp to Terang, prompting a complaint from Thomson's neighbour, Neil Black, that he would no longer be able to use the lake to water his cattle. Threatening to send a letter of objection direct to London, Black requested a written assurance that Sievwright would be at Terang no longer than three months. The Chief Protector rejected the request, but told the squatter that if Keilambete did not become a permanent Aboriginal reserve, neither would Terang.²⁰ Unaware that the camp had been moved, Thomson would meet La Trobe in Melbourne the following day to complain again about Sievwright's actions at Keilambete. After his previous complaint, he'd believed Robinson would force his assistant to shift. But, he told La Trobe, Sievwright had continued to fell all the trees close to his hut, plough the ground in front of his door, and collect blacks at the station without any supplies for their support. As a result, he was sustaining "serious loss in sheep and other minor pilferings every day". Robinson had declared his inability to make Sievwright move, referring him again to Fyans as "the proper officer" to assist him. Fyans, the squatter complained, was still declining to act without instructions from La Trobe.²¹

The Superintendent acted quickly, handing Thomson a letter to deliver to Sievwright condemning his behaviour. La Trobe reiterated in the letter that he was fully prepared to ensure that the interests of the Aborigines did not succumb to the comparatively petty interests of the squatters. "I cannot nevertheless consider the step you have taken, otherwise than improper and unadvised," he wrote. The difficulties involved in the selection of reserves for the other Assistant Protectors, La Trobe told Sievwright, had made him realise that "the utmost caution and circumspection" would be needed in choosing one for him. Robinson had been distinctly and repeatedly told that without "a decided assurance of the eligibility of the situation" from the Chief Protector, no location would be recommended to Gipps. So far, all he'd received from Robinson was the letter saying it would be premature for him to make a judgement about Keilambete -- and a copy of the note he'd sent to Thomson stating that

Sievwright had not been authorised to take over the squatter's run.

"Whatever degree of encouragement you may have received from the Head of your Department to presume that your choice of a locality had been officially brought under my notice and sanctioned by His Excellency, and that you were at liberty to go at once and without ceremony and displace the occupier of the land," La Trobe wrote, "I cannot bring my mind to sanction a proceeding which entails the infliction of an act of positive injustice upon a settler -- a proceeding which in my opinion is as uncalled for as it is against established rule." Not realising that Robinson had already issued the same order, La Trobe instructed that Sievwright should suspend his operations, and move his camp from the immediate vicinity of Thomson's homestead. "I should exceedingly regret if the step were productive of inconvenience to you, loss to the Government, or of any real injury to the interests of the Natives, but for any such consequence, I hold that the Department is alone accountable," he concluded.²² In an accompanying letter, La Trobe told Thomson that his criticism of Sievwright did not preclude Keilambete being required by the government. If Robinson endorsed his assistant's selection, the squatter would still be required to move. La Trobe also outlined the developments to Gipps, who would agree "entirely" with the steps the Superintendent had taken.²³

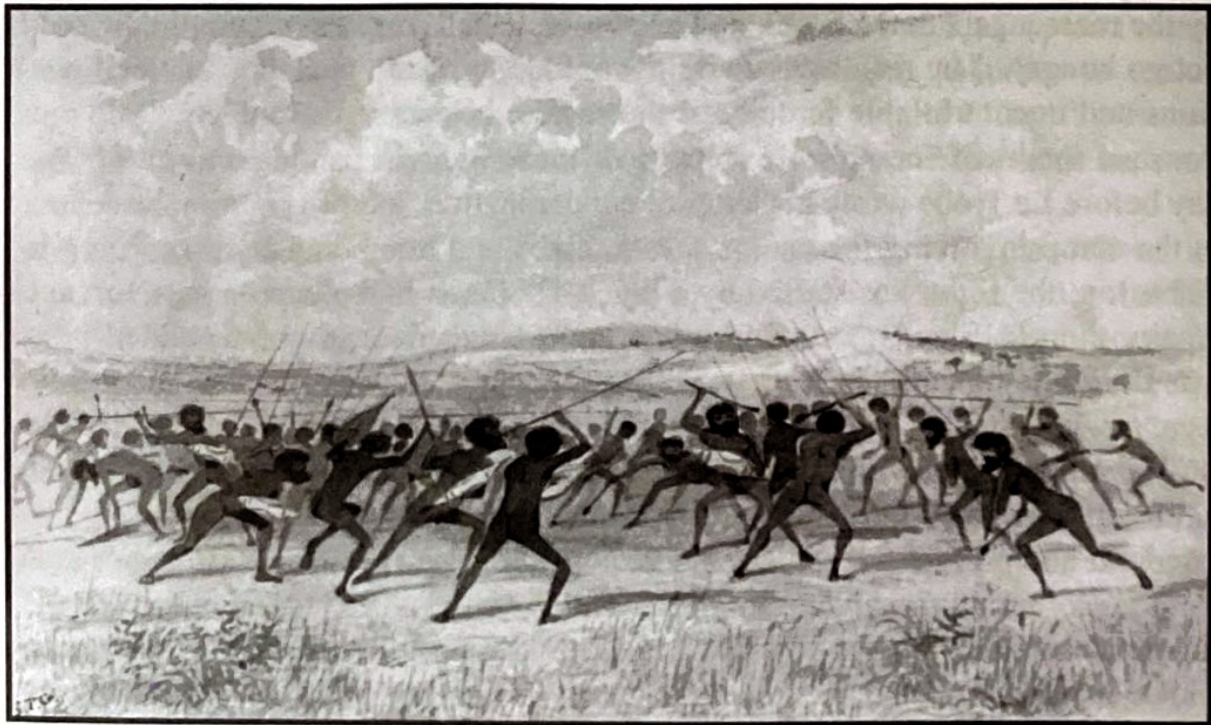
Unrest soon became prevalent in the Terang camp, following the suspension of agricultural operations and the subsequent loss of food payments. And more Aborigines were arriving on the basis of what had become a false promise borne by the messengers that a haven had been established for them where they would not go hungry. The result, Sievwright would later recall, was that "the evil passions and uncontrollable ferocity of the savage became apparent", and the picturesque shores of Terang were converted "into a hideous pandemonium".²⁴ The day before La Trobe wrote his letter of condemnation, intense fighting broke out in the camp involving the use of spears, clubs and boomerangs. According to Robinson, the fight was started by a black Thomson had taken on as a servant. Again, the old Elangamite, Burmudgerlong, was among those wounded -- as was Burguidningnang. In further fighting a few hours later, a woman and a child were severely beaten. But the most serious clash in the camp so far would occur early the next Sunday morning, after Robinson had resumed his journey to the west with what he regarded as a "burlesque" farewell from his assistant.²⁵

Around 2 a.m., Sievwright was awoken by shouting from some Bolagher huts erected close to his tent. Jumping up from his mattress, he looked out to see the fully-armed Bolagher men rushing towards the Jarcoort section of the camp about 50 metres away. Fierce hand-to-hand fighting immediately broke out between what seemed like more than 100 warriors. As he hurriedly lit a lamp, some Jarcoort people burst into Sievwright's tent pleading for prote

were quickly followed by some Bolagher women who earnestly beckoned him to one of their huts. There he found a 13-year-old girl, Worangaer, unconscious and blood pouring from two deep spear wounds in one side of her face. As he frantically tried to stop the bleeding, hundreds of spears, boomerangs and other weapons were being exchanged outside in the dark.

The fighting continued for about an hour before dying down, and the Bolagher men returned to their part of the camp to see if the mysterious contents of Sievwright's medicine chest contained sufficient magical powers to save Worangaer. When it became apparent that his efforts were in vain, the Bolagher men prepared to renew the combat. Just before dawn, they again attacked. Kinship obligations required the Elangamite men and a small party of Warrnambool Kirrae men in the camp to join the Jarcoort men in the battle, which would leave few of the fighters without fractures or spear wounds. Although outnumbered, the Bolagher men fought hard, and after about two hours, managed to force their opponents to flee to a spot several kilometres away where their women and children had already fled. The Bolagher fighters gave chase, and selected a 17-year-old Jarcoort girl named Mootenewharnong for their revenge. She was felled by about 20 spears. Satisfied, the Bolagher men returned to the camp as the wailing Jarcoort people made a fire to burn her body to ashes.

Back at the camp, the Bolagher blacks gathered around Worangaer's hut, waiting silently and solemnly for her death. When this occurred, they expressed "the



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"Native Fight" by S. T. Gill.

most violent and extravagant grief", throwing themselves on the ground, weeping and screaming loudly. With sharp stones, they lacerated their bodies, and inflicted wounds on their heads with their clubs. About an hour later, Worangaer's father and brother lifted her body and carried it off a few hundred metres into the bush. The rest of the Bolagher people came behind in single file, surrounded the body again, and lit a fire. Sievwright, who'd also followed, was asked "rather sternly, and by impatient signs" to return to his tent. However, he indicated that he'd like to stay, and sat down on a log laying close by. Worangaer's father walked up to him and pointed his finger to his mouth, and then to the body. As the Bolagher blacks intensely watched his reaction, Sievwright signified his intention to remain, and with as much indifference as he could feign, stretched out on the log to watch what followed.

With a sharp flint, an old man made a small incision on one of Worangaer's tiny breasts -- prompting "the same scenes of violent grief" that had already taken place in the camp. After a short pause, the incisor continued the operation, and in a few minutes had disembowled the body. Then, to Sievwright's fascinated horror and disgust, he witnessed "the most fearful scene of ferocious cannibalism". As the old man began to portion out the entire contents of Worangaer's viscera, there was "a general scramble" by some of the women for her liver. It was snatched in pieces and eagerly devoured. Next, the women avidly tore up and ate Worangaer's kidneys and heart, as the old man cupped his hands and quaffed the blood and serum that had collected in her chest cavity. The flesh was then cut from Worangaer's ribs and back, and her arms and legs were twisted and wrenched from her shoulder and hip joints. Teeth were used to sever difficult tendons. The arms and legs were bent and stuffed in baskets, while a portion of the flesh was put on the fire to cook.

Suddenly, it seemed to Sievwright, the Bolagher people remembered his presence. Something was said to one of the women, who went to her basket and extracted one of Worangaer's legs, cut off the foot, and offered it to him. Sievwright thought it prudent to accept it, wrapping it carefully in his handkerchief. He then pointed towards his tent, and when the blacks nodded assent, gladly walked off. Soon afterwards, the funeral party disbanded. Impressed that Sievwright had apparently agreed to participate in their ritual feast, the Bolagher people tried to involve the other whites in the camp as well -- including Sievwright's two young sons -- but they declined offers of some half-picked bones and other parts of Worangaer's body. At the end of the day, Sievwright rode off to secretly bury Worangaer's foot, passing on the way the tree hollow where her severed head had been placed between some stones heated in the fire, and was undergoing a process of baking.

Reporting the series of events to Robinson and La Trobe, Sievwright stated that

on the testimony of about 100 Aborigines, a Jarcoort man named Warawil had been identified as the one who'd murdered Worangaer. It was imperative that something be done to eradicate such "wretched and most savage actions". If necessary, a special law should be introduced to overcome the legal inability of the Aborigines to give evidence in the white men's courts. There was no point, he argued, in apprehending Warawil for the murder, only to discharge him without trial because there was no white witness. The effect would be "to create with the Aboriginal community a hostile feeling, and unsatisfactory opinion of our administration of justice, without any beneficial result accruing to them, or to us, by so partial and an imperfect interference in their polity".²⁶

