

C H A P T E R   F I V E

Frederick Fisher at Campbell Town

June, 1822 was noteworthy in the life of Frederick Fisher because a mood to unburden himself to his parents took hold of him.<sup>1</sup>

Honored Parents [he wrote] -- My duty together with the desire of communicating the satisfaction I feel in receiving a Letter from my Parents, or indeed from others who are disposed by putting themselves to the trouble and expense of writing, to show they consider me not altogether unworthy, their correspondence compels me to send this return for your favour per Mr. Geo. Shelley's son, but as I cannot at present with truth render you a favorable account of my own progress, I shall make my letter short.<sup>2</sup>

I feel grateful to our Omnipotent Creator for the restoration of my mother and hope in his Mercy we may see each other enjoy a more agreeable portion of life than the past. The disadvantages of my bondage have exposed me to numerous pecuniary embarrassments which are now arranged and have left me a very trifling sum to act with as my own and with that little I intend endeavouring to work my way into a business or a farm and if sufficiently successful to send for my two sisters (Harriett and Maria) with yourselves if you are inclined to quit the land of freedom for the land of bondage.<sup>3</sup>

I presume it to be more from defect of memory than want of feeling that you are so silent in respect of Betsey (whose welfare is at least as dear to me as my own). I shall hope that you will prevail on her to write me a very long letter not to contain less than six sheets to be cramm'd full of intelligence respecting occurrence(s) to herself and my child, since their separation from me, not that I presume to expect to see her [Betsey] again, but it will be a great relief to my mind if I can be certain of her being comfortably settled. Until then, I cannot consistent with my own Idea of our Engagement to feel at liberty to settle myself, even if I was entirely Emancipated

from my bondage and had a good opportunity of improving my finances.

I also hope you will recollect I have not yet been apprized to the contrary of my being the Parent of a Living child, altho' fate has separated her from the tears I am just giving vent to.

I trust you will remove the necessity of my complaining by communicating an exact description [of] how she is situated, and do your best with some of my relations to see her educated.

Still, it will be more pleasant if her mother has the means and disposition to provide for it until in my power to do my duty. I purpose writing you a long letter when my circumstances improve.

Betsey no doubt has given up the thought of following me. If so, I shall feel obliged by your informing me in your next letter if my cousin Jane<sup>c</sup> Hollis continues a spinster, and if propriety does not forbid it, to endeavour to ascertain if she has any objection to accompany my sisters and yourselves (in case of your being inclined) to this land, when it may be convenient to make the necessary arrangements with the Master of some vessell . . .<sup>4</sup> I also wish it to be ascertained if she is disengaged and agreeable to unite her interest with mine . . . If Betsey had followed me as I expected, it is likely I should have been as the generality of others who were imported under the same circumstances. Many of them that arrived long after myself with scarce a shilling are now worth a few thousand pounds. The same quantity of real property that was generally purchased about four or five years ago for a net sum of £70 -- and would have repaid the purchase by two years weekly rent -- is now become worth at least one hundred pounds annually. Real property is in general estimated to be worth the amount of five years rent (I judge from the latest purchases) . . . (DG)

Frederick had started to write his 'short' letter in a steady, well-formed hand, as though anticipating ample leisure to complete so unambitious a essay as he had in mind. But after the first foolscap sheet had been filled, the writing degenerated into a racing scrawl, suggesting some reason for great haste had arisen. Whatever it was, he did not intend to allow himself to be diverted from liberating his unaccustomed loquacity. The letter rushed onwards as though in spite of its writer, whose aspirations, disappointments, yearning and conceits poured out. Yet, as he passed from topic to topic, he could not forbear from re-echoing the matter dearest to his heart:

. . . I beg again to remind you of my anxiety for information respecting Betsey and my child . . . Be so kind as to get the Enclosed letter delivered to Betsey.

NOTE: Please address me as follows, -- "Mr. Frederick Fisher (In the care of Mr. William Wilkins, Cryer to the Governor's Court, Sydney, New South Wales)"<sup>5</sup>

What circumstances prevented the letter from being sent may be conjectured. Perhaps the hoped for courier failed to arrive for it. The letter certainly would have <sup>been</sup> ready with its enclosure. Did Fisher suddenly realise the great danger lying in his entrusting to another hand a document full of criticism of public men of the colony, and the courier arriving was sent away empty-handed?

It was often the fate of letters to fall into hostile hands, and Frederick could have envisaged at the last moment what peril to himself could spring from what he had written, it being notorious that the contents of letters became known to interested parties before delivery at their destination. Then, too, there had been possibility of harming his parents, for he had stated:

. . . I have not encouraged any correspondence with my brother Henry since the 3rd. week after his landing, but I happened to hear about him two months ago when I was on business 170 miles in the Interior. I was informed that he holds a situation in charge of cattle over the

Blue Mountains and that by his Industry and Handyness he had saved upwards of £30.

I shall always make it my business when writing to inform you respecting his situation, or to convey any letters of his that may come under my knowledge into a channel to be delivered to him. But I have to beg of you never to mention his name or allude to him again in your letters to me. It will be injustice if you suffer yourselves for a moment to suppose I harbour the least particle of ill-will towards him. Quite otherwise; I could feel the greatest pleasure in promoting his real welfare, if I could do it without his knowing me to be concerned. But as I wish to forget the cause of my displeasure towards his conduct I again particularly and strenuously beg you will be careful to omit all allusions to him in your letters to me . . .<sup>8</sup>

Did Frederick feel a sudden qualm in denying to his younger brother the unfailing charity and forgiveness which their parents had shown to himself -- he who had made such great difficulties for them by his indiscretion? Still the letter wound on:

. . . I had almost omitted to inform you of the demise of Thomas Wylde, Esq. the late Clerk of the Peace for this Territory, in the month of November or December last, owing to an Inflammation in the stomach. His property is in the hands of his son John.<sup>9</sup>

With Mr. Wylde died my prospects of liberty. I was at one time weak enough to think the Judge Advocate [John Wylde] intended to procure my absolute Emancipation from his expressing he hoped I would not put it out of his power to restore me to wife and children (I having first stated I had such).<sup>10</sup> But he is what the Black-man calls "All Gammon".<sup>11</sup> I am inclined to believe from particular observation of his Ambition to be considered humane and powerful, that if you was to send him a handsome letter

stating the Decease of a relative or other person who had left me a large sum of money that w'd be paid to no one but myself and get a pressing request address'd to him to procure my Pardon [.] signed by some of his relations and countersigned by one or more of his intimate acquaintances in England, then procure an interview with the Master of a vessell bound to Port Jackson and get him to deliver the letter to His Honor -- any of them will be proud to take it for [in order to obtain?] an Introduction -- at the same time send a message or letter left open directed to me, desiring that I send a voucher to prove myself restored to freedom, to some Respectable House that you may think best suited to name [.] who will on receiving such voucher make immediate arrangement for my passage to Europe (there is no fear of my annoying ----- + to be named with my vouchers) [;] that on the Judge perusing the Letter to be delivered to him by the master of a vessell and hearing from the Master the Message sent by him to me, he w'd be stimulated to Exercise his usual Artificial Sympathy for the purpose of sending me to England to Publish his humanity and Great Power.

I shall not attempt to palliate the disception other than to state I feel confident if once free from tyranny that I co'd soon accumulate a competency . . .

Whether Frederick was seriously putting forward a scheme to engineer his repatriation to London or merely expressing in a flight of imagination a hypothetical situation to describe his detestation of the Judge Advocate, as probably one of those who let him down in the paper mill subscription, the danger of the letter's falling

into unfriendly hands was grave. A moment's reflection would have told him his parents would be little likely to countenance participation in a conspiracy, and they would be quick to construe it as such.

The irrepressible longing to be united with Betsey and his daughter seems to have overturned his prudence for the moment. Having scanned what he had written he could be aghast at the challenges his outpouring had offered to Fate.

As if his more personal problems had not been sufficient to drain his resentment, he had felt some fancy to tilt at the 'fair sex in Australasia':

. . . Our white native ladies [born in the colony] are in general tall, well-made, good looking, lively and susceptible of great improvement in their understanding. The Daughters of those Parents (Rich or Poor) who take pains in cultivating their children's morals invariably get comfortably settled. Wives of this description are entirely monopolised by the wealthy and most respectable . . . By far the greater proportion of good-looking females . . . disgrace themselves by becoming the contemptable dupes of the Red-coated officers, and when discharged by the military they become the mistresses of the Masters of vessels, after which they gradually sink until pity'd or despised, these charming creatures who are imported with a sentence attending them, if well behaved are not long without obtaining a respectable match (colonially speaking).

Many of the more proficient from Fleet street and like harbours become wealthy, and it is not uncommon for ~~some~~ some of the shortsighted of the other sex to marry them for their cash, and home. Few of these afterwards become what is here called decent members of society. But alas! by far the greatest proportion fetter themselves with that remorse which so materially augments the miseries of mortality.

I sh'd not have ventured my Biography if I did not feel well secured by the seas from a Roasting . . . (DG)

If Ann Fisher in due time had felt disposed to express her disapproval at what Frederick was conscious of being in dubious taste by the family standards, a possible 'roasting' would have been trifling beside the repercussions from his remarks becoming known to some of the sensitive citizens of the colony. On a conservative estimate, his letter offered affront to perhaps half of the populace, could they but know it. Nor had Frederick's garrulity dried up. Suddenly it took new direction:

. . . Give my Duty and Sincere Respects to my Grandmother, my Uncle Robert and all my relatives and accept them as my feelings towards yourselves. Give my love to my brothers and sisters, and my advice to Harriett and Maria to wait patiently with a steady adherence to that propriety of conduct which alone can make them respected by the wise and well-meaning, and which may be the means of making us all happy, and to be always on their guard against temptation that may be the means of sending the Parents with misery to the grave and blasting all my hopes.

This I earnestly desire of them to persevere in until Providence grants me the means of arranging for their passage and gratifying my anxiety for the society of two Virtuous Sisters. I sincerely hope that the whole of my sisters may so far respect virtue as to avoid tainting it . . .

Either the foregoing passage smacked too much of Uncle Joseph's sermons for sale to lazy clerics, or Frederick reflected uneasily that his own affair with the elusive Betsey did not commend him to his sisters as a suitable advocate of feminine virtue. However deeply he may have repented his past deeds, this bit of sermonising was indiscreet.

From beginning to end the letter was ill-judged, as though some malignant power sought to invoke, regardless of time, a train of misfortune with it. History records only that Fisher put the letter away among his private papers, as though he was reluctant to destroy so much that he had permitted to escape from his secretive and passionate soul. And in doing so he laid up unwittingly for a more evil day lines that would bring travail and deprivation to those he loved.<sup>12</sup>

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By 1823, following the investing trend, Frederick had acquired one or two small farms, probably at bargain prices. Another, of thirty acres, he purchased from his former employer, Daniel Cooper, for about £250, to be paid in instalments. The last-named property was situated in the district of Airds, immediately adjacent to the site chosen by Lachlan Macquarie in December, 1820 for the settlement of Campbell Town.

As yet, the township, comprising approximately 175 acres was insignificant. The church, St. Peter's, erected at Macquarie's order and opened for worship in 1823, was not yet completely furnished. Its first incumbent, Reverend Thomas Reddall, would find himself still furnishing it for another two years as the changing regimes became increasingly parsimonious. From Fisher's new farm, lying in lower ground off the government road forming the western boundary of the town,<sup>13</sup> the church with its low square tower must have looked comparatively imposing on its elevated site with a sprinkling of bark and daub huts around it.

Acquisition of land may have dimmed Fisher's enthusiasm for the fatiguing and onerous duties of collecting Quit Rents. Possibly, also, the arduous travelling and continual discomfort of the open road, with the ever-present danger of encountering aboriginals who had no reason to like the white invaders of their ancient territory, or of running foul of absconders from convict road parties, made the prospect of a peaceful farming life more attractive. Besides,

Campbell Town was increasing in importance as a wheatgrowing area when there was barely enough food for the swelling numbers being poured out of England.

For the first three-quarters of 1823, Frederick continued his routine, already apparently comfortably supplied with money earned in commissions, as well as profits on deals by the way. Some of his time was spent at Campbell Town in his eagerness to bringing his acres into production.

The fact that Fisher was not an experienced agriculturalist probably brought him difficulties. His working life had been largely sedentary, his frame slight. But the evidence is that he overcame these drawbacks by persistence and will to succeed. Few implements were available for the working of the land, and main force was a prime requisite against the tough and stubborn soil of the district.

Whether or not he had completed the annual Quit Rent collection, Frederick appears to have definitely made Campbell Town his place of residence, at this time, although his being there could have arisen from the dictates of economy. There was little point in renting lodgings when he was proprietor of a farmhouse amid gently undulating hills reminiscent of what little of rural England he knew.

In addition, it was Spring, and late enough to make the sowing of useful crops for summer maturing a trifle risky. Winter wheat was in good growth wherever he turned. Meanwhile he could profitably run some livestock - horned cattle, pigs and the valuable asset of horses. Experience with these animals during his collecting inclined him to favour them as the power basis of his farming.

On September 6th the Assistant Surveyor wrote to Fisher at Campbell Town requesting him to oblige the Surveyor General by delivering up his books, documents and moneys to the office in Sydney 'without loss of time' so that the Quit Rent accounts might be closed. (SA)

The demands upon his time and energies made by the farm deafened Frederick to the official appeal. The following January 7th., the Assistant Surveyor addressed himself a little more stiffly to the so

far silent Frederick:

Sir, -- Mr. Oxley directs me to request that you will immediately repair to Sydney for the purpose of finally settling the Quit Rent Accounts, likewise that you will return the Government horse which he (Mr. Oxley) is exceedingly surprised to find had for this length of time been used for other than your own purposes. (SA)

From that time there do not seem to be any indications that Fisher exercised the functions of Quit Rents Collector. The tone of the foregoing command from Oxley could have signified that official displeasure against his transgression of the rules brought Frederick's services to an end.<sup>+</sup> Oxley was never enamoured of extending favours or opportunities to convicts so it is unlikely he would have failed to visit his wrath where a clear and well-founded reason existed. At all events, a situation was to arise in the future when Fisher would choose to be silent about his employment as Collector which normally it would have advantaged him to use it as a recommendation.

Thereafter, Fisher began to follow the life of farmer with all possible vigour. Aside from its unceasing laboriousness, the occupation suited him. The irksomeness of his bondage, which plagued him owing to his extreme pride, or vanity, was no doubt eased by the demands upon his attention of unfamiliar problems, as well as opportunities to engage his enterprising temperament.

There is little or no evidence that Frederick informed his parents about his farming activities, although his brother Henry would have done so, at least until he felt secure enough in material prosperity to make good his plea for the family to join him. At what level of prosperity he would persuade himself there were enough assets to provide a tolerable living for sisters and parents, and a prospective wife, may only be guessed. He certainly seems to have gradually become fired with a great hunger for possessions.

Perhaps Frederick Fisher, as he began to succeed in a new and challenging field of endeavour, was afraid to fail. He had

+ The position was abolished in the following year.

tasted that bitter fruit and deepened his sense of insecurity. He may well be confident of his own talents and appetite for work; but the treachery of people had so deeply marked him as to intensify his insularity. He had to rely upon himself and guard against the incursions of others to despoil him of his gains. He preferred even to deny himself modest comforts in a bid to amass wealth. By degrees his preoccupation with obtaining goods and money by the keenness of his deals, earned him a reputation for personal penuriousness.

Toughened mentally and physically by the Quit Rents stint, he was conditioned for success in dogged farm drudgery and dealing just where there seemed to be abundant opportunity.

The Campbell Town of 1824 presented a picture very different from the environment in which Fisher had grown to manhood. But he had long since become accustomed to the makeshift settlements of the raw country in which he had been planted so inauspiciously. Campbell Town, at least did not compare unfavourably with other infant towns of its age. Beside St. Peter's Church there was little that had any appearance of permanence. William Bradbury, the convict who had obtained absolute pardon from Macquarie as a reward for the unstinted use of his horse and cart in a road-making project, and had then ~~then~~ forged ahead acquiring tracts of land and cattle herds, was the proud owner of a two-storey brick house on an elevated site within the town boundaries, and had opened it to the public as an inn.

Along with St. Peter's Church, Bradbury's establishment proclaimed the superiority of brick among so many bark-covered dwellings. Previously, Bradbury had farmed the thirty acres adjoining Frederick's farm, and on it had built a substantial single storey house, which the surviving evidence proclaims to have been of stone and brick.

Hardly within eye range, to the north somewhat, John Warby's coachhouse, barn and dwelling rose massive in convict-reared stonework, and brought to the locality that English manorial appearance of having been built to last forever. All these, in so ample an area were little enough to banish the primitiveness

accented by the rough shelters of the smaller settlers. There was, however, a relatively commodious schoolhouse, about 35 feet long and 16 feet wide, comprising three rooms. It served as a court house when required, and below were gaol cells which did not lack for tenants. The building was already too small. The elementary school had an attendance of about forty children, and was conducted by Thomas Leathwick Robinson, a convict, who employed the 'Madras' system of instruction which carried the pupils to the stage of writing and 'cyphering'.<sup>14</sup> The population of Campbell Town was made up of approximately 500 men and about 200 women, many of whom were convicts assigned to free settlers with substantial land holdings. There was a heavy proportion of Irish folk.

The countryside in which Campbell Town had been marked out was a beautiful region of low hills which flattened toward the north, where George's River drained a large territory through its many meandering tributaries and creeks to wind its way eventually to Botany Bay. One tributary of George's River passed Campbell Town close on the western side, and in the main was known as Bunbury Curran Creek. This creek was itself feeble and ran an erratic course. From it -- or into it -- drained an even feebler stream which ran behind and formed the rear boundary of both Bradbury's and Fisher's farms. In dry weather it was little better than a chain of mudholes, and depended upon the slopes of Campbell Town in times of rain to gather enough flow to legitimize the description of creek. In fact, in crossing Bradbury's old farm, it was so inconsequential that it was possible to plough the faint depression in which it straggled and grow wheat there.

The presence of these watercourses conferred only limited benefit upon Campbell Town. The heavy mineral content of the water rendered it useless for most purposes. For that reason, and because there was no other stream of importance in or near the town, Standish Harris, Government Architect, ~~was~~ reported in 1823:

. . . This place . . . is so ill supplied with water  
that it would not be advisable to recommend more buildings.

Fisher's farm, however, was exceptionally favoured in so far as a trickle of potable water emerged from the slopes of the town, crossed the government road which separated the town from the district of Airds, and flowed into his front paddock. The precious water sufficed for the house and farm usage. Such an asset was to be guarded with care. Accordingly, its course across the public road was protected, most probably by a covering of hewn logs against the traffic of carts and herds being driven to the newly-opened country of Illawarra. It cannot be doubted that the previous owners of what became Fisher's farm were responsible for conserving the trickle of water, and not surprisingly the log crossing, extending to the farm fence, came to be referred to as a 'bridge'.

Several inns existed in Campbell Town, and were merely structures of bush timbers covered with sheets of bark - which if inelegant, were rugged and good insulation against extremes of heat and cold. Moreover, the bark was thick and durable and harmonised with the rural scene. One special appeal it had for the intending builder -- it was cheap material obtainable in abundance from surrounding forests.

The traffic to Illawarra, via the hamlet of Appin a few miles south, was too profitable to go unexploited, so that many commercial makeshifts came into being. The inns were the only social amenities available to the populace -- aside from the church. It was soon notorious that Campbell Town had too many inns. But sober judgment in official quarters went to concede that the inns filled a need and at the same time returned to an impecunious government an appreciable revenue in licence fees. These amounted to as high as £30 annually for the sale of spirits and beer in the same premises. The appeal of rum was superior to that of beer.

Reverend Thomas Reddall, who had been present as a member of Macquarie's party when the Governor named the town in

honour of his wife's family, was still endeavouring to have the burial ground of approximately four acres cleared and enclosed. His efforts to have his own residence, Glen Alpine, built, and the spacious glebe cleared and sown with grain, were hampered by lack of labour of the right competence, as well as by government disinclination to pay fair prices to contractors.

South from Campbell Town, yet quite close, extended the three-thousand acre property worked by William Howe. This man with his family achieved wonders in farming since his arrival on the ship Atlas, which had on the same voyage brought Frederick Fisher. With a troupe of servants and assigned convicts numbering 12 and about 50 respectively, Howe by 1823 had raised a large house and established hedges about his paddocks with wild lemon and quinces. Howe, as a former military officer was a natural choice for the maintenance of order in a district troubled not a little by the high spirits of its Celtic residents plus a number of incorrigibles of other kinds.

The District of Airds had been settled since at least 1811 and recalcitrant types were well entrenched in local society. Howe's appointment as Superintendent of Police for the area was followed by benefits. Formation of a voluntary police brigade consisting of William Bradbury, John Farley, Nathaniel Boon, Thomas Hammond and John Patrick called forth the appreciation of Rev. Reddall, who was magistrate. The brigade's influence was marked among the rougher elements of the community, and by the time Frederick Fisher took up residence in Campbell Town disturbances were infrequent.

Fisher and William Howe were on friendly terms, perhaps initially from their having arrived at Port Jackson by the same vessel; and possibly also through their attendance at the church each sabbath, when Frederick (as a prisoner of the Crown) would be compelled to attend. On those occasions the genial squire would lead in his family of nine followed by an entourage of servants and farm labourers -- a total of seventy persons! This was quite

a press of humanity for so small a church.

Just beyond the southwest extent of Glenlee was the Cowpastures domain of John Macarthur, the clever and acquisitive sheep-raising politico, and one of the most dynamic figures in the colony. Cheek by jowl, as it were, lived the extremes of colonial society as measured in terms of land and cattle. In Campbell Town itself or on its fringes settlers who were former convicts or had come free, with those who were descended from First and Second Fleet arrivals, combined farming with some other trade either by force or necessity, or because in shaping the rough land every skill was called upon.

Thus, Charles Beales, a butcher by trade before his transportation, picked out local seams of clay and fired beautiful red bricks, for which a fashion had been set by Bradbury and St. Peter's Church. Stone was scarce in the locality. When not firing bricks, Beales farmed a modest acreage to ensure continuity of income. Jonathan Brooker who had arrived free in the early days of the settlement - and thus amounted to an aristocrat -- established himself at Bunbury Curran, where Daniel Cooper bred horses at a property called Eagle Farm. William Brooker, son of Johnathan, born in the colony, farmed and followed the trade of carpenter too. The local constables likewise followed various trades and performed their police duties as called upon.

In the same fashion, William Howe farmed, producing various crops including tobacco, the local market for which the British Government tried to stifle because of its other colonial sources. Howe was also police superintendent and magistrate for Upper Minto.<sup>17</sup> At Bunbury Curran, Dr. Robert Townson several years earlier built *still existent* Varro Ville and farmed. He was a philosopher and author of travel books.

Except for the more affluent who could achieve a degree of domestic comfort comparable with the level existing at a corresponding prosperity in England, life was usually hard. The tough soil

defied the labourer to keep it in productive tilth. A man was esteemed likely to succeed as a farmer if he owned as his minimal equipment a spade, a 'shovell', some felling axes and reaping hooks. Pigs were worth £2 each, cattle £6; but horses were especially valuable at £30 to £40 a head. Wheat in crop was worth £5 an acre, and the yield in grain generally could be expected to sell at the Commissariat Stores for around 5/6d the bushel. Maize brought £2 an acre of standing crop.<sup>18</sup> Iron ploughs were just beginning to make their appearance and of course were ~~quite~~ few in number. Some of the earliest ploughs to break the Campbell Town soil were fashioned almost entirely of wood.

During his first year as a farmer, Frederick Fisher followed the mode of the day for ambitious property owners and became proprietor of a public inn, The Horse & Jockey.<sup>19</sup> It stood on a town site opposite the church. At this time also he owned other buildings distinct from those on his farm, which he was careful to identify as being in the District of Airds, adjacent to the township.

Although he was prospering, Fisher seems to have been extending his resources in an endeavour to seize numerous opportunities to make profit. He was not able to maintain all his activities unaided and had to employ labour. Among the innkeepers with whom he had to compete in the near vicinity were Thomas Hammond, a law clerk by profession, and Charles Rennett, owner of the Harrow inn close to Fisher's northern boundary. John Patrick too, was in the field for the sale of alcoholic stimulants. Of these, Patrick and Hammond were certainly well-known to Fisher. All in all, there were no personal rivalries, merely the fact of their all being in the same line of business.

Frederick became keen to be rid of the responsibilities of his inn, and on February 3, 1825, advertised in the Sydney Gazette his willingness to let the Horse & Jockey premises with early possession,

adding that the inn was opposite the church and courthouse and in the midst of 'an extensive population'.

The advertisement did not attract at least a suitable applicant, and on the usual licensing day, March 19, Fisher renewed his licence ~~along with~~ <sup>as did</sup> Rennett and Hammond. The latter sold only beer.

Rennett and Fisher having become closely associated, planned to form a partnership. Already, Frederick was dealing in general merchandise, so it is likely that disposal of the Horse & Jockey tenancy was designed to raise more capital for the dealing part of his activities or for the envisaged partnership.

On April 7 the government advertised in the Sydney Gazette listing Fisher among those who had failed to fulfil contracts to supply wheat grain to the Commissariat Stores, Liverpool. His obligation was for 400 bushels at 5/5d per bushel (by tender), and delivery was required during the following quarter.

In the same issue, Frederick repeated his advertisement for letting the Horse & Jockey, again without ~~result~~ <sup>success</sup>.

For some time he had been engaged in erecting on his farm two permanent structures. Whereas buildings on town sites were required to be of two storeys, those on farms were exempt from the ordinance. Fisher's farm buildings comprised a three-storey brick building, apparently intended as a trading store, with nearby a more massive stone-based structure which did not progress beyond completion of a high foundation and the floor timbers. These activities could have been planned for the partnership with Rennett.

The governorship of Sir Thomas Brisbane was near its close and the effects of the investigation by Commissioner Bigge during the Macquarie regime were soon to manifest. Some whisper concerning the character and temperament of Brisbane's successor may have penetrated to New South Wales to spread like a searing breath of Hell throughout the sensitive convict population.

The anti-emancipists, the Exclusives, with a common deep hatred of successful ex-convicts and Ticket-of-Leave men were tremulous at the nearness of their hour of triumph. Their Messiah was approaching and righteous wrath would destroy those who with sweat and frugality, allied with intelligence and initiative dared raise their material prosperity and take on the mantle of respectability with which it was equated. What were things coming to, what with the French Revolution and then the revolt in America! If the rumours flying about which came ahead of the paragon, there would be changes indeed.

In the light of later developments, the moves of Fisher and of Rennett -- who offered his Harrow inn for sale at £500 in the December preceding <sup>Sir Ralph</sup> Darling's stepping ashore, seemed prescient. Frederick, plaything of Fate, however, could not free himself so easily as the cloud over the colony began to deepen.

In the course of his building operations, Fisher had employed William Brooker to carry out carpentering. A dispute arose between them over payment for work done. Brooker, a dark, fiery and excitable man about the same age as Frederick -- 33 years -- sued in the nearest court with the proper jurisdiction, at Liverpool where, incidentally as a native born Australian he was entitled to sit as a juror at Assizes, and obtained a verdict in his favour. Fisher was angry and resentful of the course taken by Brooker, and whatever the merits of the case (unknown now) Frederick's feelings towards young Brooker were hostile.

Fate drew together the threads of her weaving about the two men through the agency of Charles Rennett who had been embroiled with Brooker in a different way. Rennett had hired a number of cattle from Brooker, and although far from being impecunious, had fallen into arrears of payment.

On June 25th, Brooker, the worse for liquor, went to the Horse & Jockey where Rennett then was and demanded restitution of his beasts or payment of the money due to him. An argument developed in which Fisher became involved, ending with Brooker fleeing the inn pursued by Fisher with a pocket knife. Brooker stumbled and

PORTRAIT of WILLIAM BROOKER as an old man

fell. The infuriated Fisher jabbed him with the pocket knife. The assailant walked away a few steps and then, still in the grip of an ungovernable rage returned and jabbed Brooker again.

The injuries were slight, but the attack was serious under the prevailing law. Sentence of death or penal servitude for life were meted out to those guilty of such offences. With sudden horror Frederick realised his terrible position. He could expect no quarter from the arrogant carpenter, if only on account of their recent dispute in the court.

Without loss of time, Brooker had Frederick arrested and arrangements were quickly made for his transportation to Sydney Town where, it was supposed, the Quarter Sessions would still be sitting.

Campbell Town officials, appreciating Frederick's dilemma, considered in haste what might be done to protect his property against a now problematic future. Henry Fisher, <sup>Frederick's brother,</sup> they knew was miles away in the Windsor district, and even though the brothers were now reconciled after their early quarrel, there was no time to obtain his services if the Sessions were to be reached in time. The inn could easily be put under care; but the farm with its crops and livestock created a problem. Anyone could measure out tots of rum, but who was available to perform competently and conscientiously the tasks of the farm - to sow, reap, thresh, market, slaughter and fence?

The solution was provided on the basis of geographical convenience for one thing. The presence of George Worrall, <sup>convict,</sup> on the adjoining farm could not be overlooked. Replacement of a panel of fixed fencing with a sliprail in the common <sup>dividing</sup> fence would make access from Worrall's side simple, and the two farms could operate as one. Worrall, although he does not seem to have been well known to Fisher, was a sturdy and industrious fellow, and into the bargain employed labourers. His tenure of his own acres was by rental from <sup>William</sup> Bradbury. Then too, Fisher's horses would

*who had originally farmed them.*

lighten the burden of the extra work, for Worrall did not own any draught beasts.

Frederick had no choice but to accept when he knew Worrall was willing to caretake the farm, and formal (if undocumented) arrangement was completed, no doubt under the watchful approval of both William Howe and Rev. Thomas Reddall. Neither of those men would suffer Fisher to lose unnecessarily from his sudden folly. The details finalised, Frederick was escorted to Sydney.

NOTES

1. This is certainly the letter responsible for bringing about the long delays which gave opportunity for Frederick's estate to be frittered away, if not to be plundered.
2. Frederick was inclined, on the indications, to 'cry a poor mouth.' Circumstances may have intensified a natural trait.
3. Possibly intentional sarcasm.
4. The letter has been sectionalised and paragraphed for clearer presentation of the topics, which in the original are broken up by digressions.
5. Ibid.
6. Unlikely Fisher would make a draft of so personal a letter, even to the point of adding postscripts which would have been better incorporated in the letter actually to be sent. Prudence would have even precluded him from retaining a letter too dangerous to send.
7. The modern envelope with gummed flap was unknown. Sealing wax was inconvenient and extravagant except for officials and the wealthy. Letters were folded and carried by either an obliging traveller or by the Captain of a ship at a fee.
8. Same letter.
9. Frederick's retailing of this information strongly suggests special interest by the Fisher family in the affairs of the Wylde -- even that the families were closely acquainted in London and the Wylde's friends known to them also.
10. Fisher seems to have romantically thought of Betsey as his wife.
11. Aboriginal pidgin expression meaning idle or hypocritical talk. In later years Governor Bourke sought the Home Government to recall John Wylde whom he considered treacherous.

12. Fisher's insistence upon being supplied with information about his child was an embarrassment to his mother who feared legal repercussions against him.
13. What was in Fisher's time outside the town boundaries, the two farms which are subject of this history and then within the District of Airds are now the business heart of the modern satellite of the Sydney metropolis.
14. From a statistical report on the Church Establishment in NSW as at June, 1825, by Archdeacon Scott. (ML)
15. Correspondence, 1822-23, Colonial Secretary from Rev. T. Reddall. (SA)
16. William Howe letter, Nov.10,1823, to Rev. Reddall asks for seats in St. Peter's Church to be reserved for his family, servants and workers, and seeks permission to alter or add to the seats allotted, at his own expense. (SA)
17. In 1800 a region south of Campbell Town was called Upper Minto, a name not now used. The former Lower Minto, north of Campbell Town, is now known as Minto.
18. From an application for grant of land made by William Tyson, junior, East Bargo (Oct. 28, 1826) sponsored by Daniel Cooper. (SA)
19. Elsewhere incorrectly called Horse & Groom. (See later.)