

PART II

FROM DRAY TO MODEL T

1

Dear Mum,

There were a lot of people at Rocky River - must still be getting some gold.

In Uralla there was a train stopped at the station. I think the line was blocked or something. I wanted to see inside real bad so we bought tickets to go on the platform. That train would be in Sydney that night.

I know why some people call the dunny the W.C. because W.C. stands for water closet and in the train you can just pull the chain and water washes everything away. There is a notice which says that you must not do that when the train is in the station.

I am already missing you and Dad and all the kids a lot. It was late at night when we got here, its a big house. I've got a little room of my own and a soft bed with sheets.

2

The Boss is a real toffy sort, wears a necktie all the time. I don't see much of him. I have to call him "sir". I thought you had to be knighted by the Queen before you got called sir!

I dunno about the missus yet. She has a funny way of talking. She is going to teach me to use the sewing machine. I'm to be paid each month which is real good - they ought to pay Dad and Jack each month then you wouldn't have to run up a bill at the store. They should give you a docket from the store and you would know just how much you owe, I think some of the bills are wrong.

I think you should get this letter in about a week. Please write to me soon. Ask Jack if he has shot any horses lately?

The little kids here are all right they've got real nice clothes. They took me to church on Sunday to look after the kids. I didn't do it real well, they bawled and played up. I wore my best dress and the bonnet and polished my shoes as best I could. Its a good thing the dress is long and nobody sees these old wool stockings. The missus has real nice ones.

There were a lot of people at church and although it is big it was full. There are big benches with backs rest on and an organ. I wish I knew music. I met a girl called Kate she comes from Kings Gap.

I wish you'd write to me.

3.

Been here a month now, got my first pay. I'm going to buy some scented soap, a new brush and comb, some stuff to make underthings and some to make pillowcases and some new shoes.

We go to church most Sundays. I sit in the back of the carriage with the kids. They are not too bad. Kate is struck on a bloke called Ted. He has a mate

called Charlie who can't speak English. Ted has a big brown moustache. I think he puts wax on it! Kate says he can tie it behind his head but I don't believe her. I think he is a bit flash. Has Tom had any more busters? I wish you'd write.

4.

Got your letter, I've read it lots of times. I'd love to nurse Maud. Sorry your back is so bad-- try not filling the buckets so full. It was a good fish Tom caught. We don't get any fish but we had some boiled eels once. I don't like it much, I would much rather cod. I've spent all my money, got some new shoes, the sort with a black buckle, some calico and buttons and thread, some postage stamps and writing paper. Notice how I folded the letter? That way you don't need an envelope?

Ted's brother Jim was at church, he's got a Martini Henry rifle and a Greener shotgun. You should see his saddle. It's decorated with silver horseshoes and stars. Jims got a red beard. I don't like his mate Bishop, he seems pretty rough. Jims got two horses that were brumbys. He got them by "creasing" them with his big rifle, and then had a lot of work to break them in. This was when he was working on "Kunderang" in the falls country.

The kids were good in Church on Sunday. The sermon was awful long and I didn't know what the parson was talking about and I started thinking about all the poetry I've read lately. There are lots of books and papers at the homestead and I am allowed to read at night if I don't stay up too late.

The fire has to be lit and a pot of tea made by daylight. Anyway I looked at the people in Church and they mostly looked pretty sad and I made up this bit of poetry.

The Song

I sat in the old church pew dear,
With my book upon my knee
In the church where I first met you
And you were fair to see.
You played some strange sweet music
To the listening eager thong
And your clear young voice came floating
Like the strains of an angels song
Now we will meet no more dear,
My heart is sad with pain
And somewhere in heaven you're singing
That beautiful sweet refrain.

5.

Walcha 1890

Dear Mum,

The mail is getting better, your letter came back real quick. I'm sure my last letter wasn't all about "this Jim" as you called him. I did send you my piece of poetry. Anyway I haven't seen Jim since. Ted wrote to Kate and she tells me that Jim and Ted, Bishop and Charlie are working a claim together at Niangla. I don't think it is a very good claim but they won't leave it unattended.

They have to do work for other people to pay for things so they are not getting much gold.

It's a long ride from Niangla even with good horses. The roof of this place is tin and we have three big tanks and a pipe and tap into the kitchen and one outside in the wash house where there is a big copper with its own chimney. Sometimes they cook big pieces of corn beef or a ham in the copper. The calico I got bleached up nice and white. I left it on the line for a week. I've made pillow cases and am working some flowers and leaves on them. The sewing machine is real easy to use.

I wish you had a tin roof and a tank so your drinking water was better.

I rode over to Kates on Sunday evening. I rode bareback on one of the kids horses. Some people there were shocked and said I should ride side-saddle. I didn't know what to say. I haven't got a saddle and the missus would never lend me hers.

Tell Jack that I'm sure a Martini Henry rifle is better than a Winchester even if the Winchester is a repeater. After all Jim did crease his hoses with the Martini Henry. Kate says Ted says Jim is a real good shot.

[When Jim told the story of "creasing" horses to his sons many years later some thought it was just another tall "Kunderang" story but his youngest son wrote this poem.]

"CREASED"

The silver threads of moonlight
Flow through the cyprus trees,
Theres a softly muted clatter
Borne on the evening breeze.
It's the muffled sound of hoofbeats
Of wild horses on their way,
To their spring of Mountain water
At the close of freedom's day.

They have no man to call them master,
Their's the freedom of the hills.
They have never known a bridle
Or shared with men their skills.
But for one the idyl's over,
For there hides beside the stream,
A young Australian bushman,
With every stockman's dream.

Its to tame that mountain stallion,
To control and to command
The power of those muscles
With a firm and guiding hand.
He is about to "crease" the stallion
With a shot behind the ear
Where a shocked nerve knocked him senseless
Before he has time to fear.
But there is no room for error,
Half an inch too low - he's dead.
Not those mighty rippling muscles

Just - horsemeat there instead.
The horses pause a moment
Before they stoop to drink,
They sniff the air with caution
There is danger there, they think.
The bushmans aim is steady
And the rifle bullet true,
It has creased the target muscle
And sped on its way through.
There's a clatter and a thunder
Of a hundred hooves in flight
The stallion lies in silence
His mob gone into the night.
The bushman's eyes are gleaming.
"You Beaut - Yes you're the one",
But he knows, there is no doubting
The job has just begun
There will be weeks of patient training
And of action hard and fast,
Ere that proud mountain stallion
Is a station hack at last.

6.

Dear Ettie,

Walcha 1890

This should reach you in time for your birthday. I wish you a happy birthday. You should be reading real well now after being to the house school a bit. Can you do your sums all right? If you can you might be able to get a job in a shop in Walcha. The lady who looks after the part where they sell material and sewing things wants a girl to help.

The last girl got her board and a bit of pay and some help with her clothes. If you would like to come over and work here ask Mum and Dad and writ back real quick. I bought a whole lot of nice material -- lawn and stuff from an Indian hawker who came around in a van. It was pretty cheap. Mrs bought a lot more than me and so did the other women. I've got some of it made up-- the things I made are lovely.

Our friends from Niangla were here on Saturday and Sunday and I met them when Mr & Mrs took us to the school dance. Kate danced with Ted all night They were all pretty rowdy doing the Lancers. I like the waltz best. There were a lot more men than girls and I was pretty tired. We had to be home by 12 because it was Saturday night. The three boys were all at Church on Sunday and we had a picnic lunch together.

I'm trying to teach Charlie English. He is a real gentleman but not as nice as Jim. You should see Jim's saddle! It's got big silver horseshoes and stars on it-- anyway they look like silver--Kate says they are only nickel--but they are solid, not plated.

After the picnic the boys all came back here with us and we were allowed to give them a meal in the kitchen. I played an awful-trick on Charlie. Charlies name is Eckert-- he is a German. When the kettle needed filling Charlie said "Will I make water in the kettle Marion?" I said "No thanks I'll get it out of the tank" Everyone laughed and when Ted explained what he had said poor Charlie was awful upset.

Ted wanted to play cards but we don't play cards on Sunday so we just talked for awhile. They saw Kate home and went back to Niangla that night. I don't know if they will ever come back. They started to tell funny stories. Well they were not THAT funny but we girls started to giggle and couldn't stop. I'm sure they thought we were silly. After they left I wrote this bit of poetry. It's not good verse but you will remember how you and I used to giggle together.

Giggling

The people are all tittering
It really is too bad
They grin at everything
The silly folk are mad.
Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh-----
I've gone and caught the thing
I feel as if I want to shout
And yet I want to sing
Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh-----
My eyes are full of water
My face is all awry
A nasty pain in my inside
It really makes me cry.
I surely will keep giggling
Till something makes me dumb
The crowd is off again
I feel as if I want to laugh
And yet be calm again.
Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh-----
I don't know if I want to shout
Or if I want to sing
But I can tell you the giggling
Is a very catching thing.

Write soon and let me know if Mum and Dad will let you come to work in Walcha.

Love Marion

7.

Walcha 1890

Dear Mum,

I suppose it is better for Ettie to work closer to home but I was hoping you would let her come. Maybe you will in a couple of months. It has been awful cold but I've made a good thick Wagga. It's real easy when you have a machine, takes a lot of cotton though.

They are building a big woolshed here, its all iron--the sides as well as the roof. It doesn't seem fair as most of the houses only have bark or shingle roofs and some have bark walls. They are putting in machinery to shear the sheep instead of shears. The engine is here already. It is nearly as big as the Megathon at Clerkness.

You don't have to worry about the blokes from Niangla. They are real gentlemen.

I'm getting a nice lot of things made for my Box, They shear the ration sheep before they are killed and the Boss lets me have some skins. I've tanned them the way Dad does and am going to make the kids some toys for Christmas. I got some patterns out of a magazine.

Love to all
Marion

8.

Dear Ettie,

I'm glad you like the job. I'm still hoping you will come somewhere near here. Mr Roberson came to see me and gave me all the news.

Wasn't it nice of him to give Mum his old Cobb & Co coach horn? Did you know Cobb & Co had the contract to build the railway north from Glen Innes to Queensland? No wonder they don't run their coaches anymore. The boys from Niangla have left their claim. It was a duffer, or nearly so. The gold ran out. They have been breaking in horses and Kate and I are excited because they are coming up here to work on the station for the shearing.

There is a lot of trouble with the shearers. I think its all over the country. It's hard work and they don't get paid much.

Love Marion

9.

Walcha, 1890

Dear Mum,

I've been making clothes for the kids here. Mrs treats me real well and is real pleased with my sewing. I wish you had a sewing machine you could make things so much quicker. I've got a few toys made, Elephants and a kind of bear. I dyed some of the skins brown with Condys Crystles. It only takes a tiny bit to get a good brown colour.

They are real busy here with the shearing. Sometimes after tea some of the boys come over and we talk for awhile. One afternoon the ladies were allowed to go to the big new shed to watch the shearing--we all got dressed up for the occasion. I don't think the men liked us being there. It was awful noisy and not the quiet click, click we have been used to. Most of the men are a long way from home and may not get home for months. I wondered what they were thinking and that night I wrote this poem.

What Shearers Think

The sound of the engine is heard all day,
The white wool falls like foam
Some men laugh and some men pray
They hide their thoughts in a different way
But all of them think of home
The sweat falls down in a running stream
While faster grows the pace

As there comes a dream, a golden dream
Dear home and a womans face
Thus the shearers think of the time to come,
And the friends that wait for them
As the work goes on with a merry hum
Their hearts sing love tho their lips are dumb
And home is the joyful theme.

Do you remember Roy? who came with us on a few picnics? Well he came over one night after tea with the boys from Niangla. Betty the governess and Mrs Brown the homestead cook were here. I think Roy had been drinking because he got all sentimental about picking flannel flowers with us. He was real goofy so that night I wrote this poem.

Flannel Daisies

Come have this dance with me dear,
I loved you well you know
When we gathered Flannel Daises,
In the happy long ago.
You pinned a flannel daisy
On the lapel of my coat
And I hung a string of the beauties
Around your fair young throat
When the flannel flowers bloomed dear,
And you and I were free,
Oh the beautiful flannel daises
What dreams they bring to me.
But false friends came between us
I thought that you were dead,
Like the daises that we wore that day
And so we were never wed.
Now another claims your hand dear
And we have met by chance
While we dream of flannel flowers
Let us dance this last sad dance.
When the flannel flowers bloomed dear,
And you and I were free
Oh the beautiful flannel daises
What dreams they bring to me.

There is real bad trouble in the shearing shed.
The boss sacked the boss of the board and took over himself-- he "raddled" a lot of shorn sheep-- said they were not shorn properly and he wouldn't pay the shearers for shearing them. We know there has always been a lot of this but to day the shearers are wild and someone has ridden off to get the Amalgamated Shearers Union man.

I think they will go on strike like the blokes on the ships and wharfs that we read about. They say there is real bad trouble in Queensland and the soldiers are rounding up shearers. Some of these blokes will take some rounding up!

There is even talk of burning down the new shed. The boss has three men with guns camped in the shed tonight. I can't post this yet so I'll write some more tomorrow.

It's awful. The shearers are fighting among themselves - hardly any shearing today. Thousands of sheep around the shed - some of them flyblown and hardly any feed.

The boss and overseer carry their guns everywhere
The shearers are on strike--or most of them. They tried to stop anyone from shearing but three policeman came and a few sheep are being shorn.

Most of the men have left the station and are camped down on the creek. They are very angry and are giving the men who are working a bad time. They call them "scabs"
Most of the strikers do not even have a horse they just carry their swag.

I can't imagine a Howard without a horse. The boss says it is a bad thing for a working man to own a horse because he can then leave his job anytime he likes!. Please say a prayer for us here it's real nasty.

Love Marion

10.

Walcha 1890

Dear Ettie,

I guess Mum told you about the shearers strike. It's not just here but everywhere, you are lucky getting the shearing over first.

I reckon they were mad to get these new machines--the boss says they get an extra half pound of wool and when I said "That would only be for the first year" He said " Shut up you silly girl, what do you know?"

Jim says they are real good for crutching but he thinks a lot of sheep will die from cold.

There has been an awful row between the boys from Niangla, Jim and Charlie say they won't stop shearing while there are flyblown sheep needing attention but Ted and Bishop said that was "scabbing" rolled their swags, caught their horses and went back to Niangla to work in the mines.

They all said some nasty things from what Jim told me.
I'm not sure what is right but the Boss has turned real nasty--He owes the fellows who left a lot of money but won't pay them.

Jim has got a revolver from somewhere and is carrying it to work.

I was hoping to get home for Christmas but now I'm not sure. I haven't been to Church or anywhere since the trouble started .

Write soon and give me all the news.

Love Marion

11.

Dear Mum,

Thanks for your long letter. The travellers delivered it the next day. The trouble might be over by the time they need shearers down there.

It's the sheep I feel sorry for. The feed is still awful short and a lot of sheep are dying and the flies are dreadful.

My friends from Niangla have all gone. They had a row over the strike and have all gone back to Niangla. Charlie Eckert and Jim Parsons stayed on to try to shear the flyblown sheep but they got a bad time both from the strikers and the Boss.

Jim has some good horses and a dray and reckons he can get all the work he wants carting pay dirt and wood at the mines at contract rates.

Did I tell you Jim is the eldest of a family of seven? the father is dead and a half brother much older than he is overseer for Whites at "Saumarez. The mother has married Mr. Browning and they live on "Spring Farm" on the Great Northern Road between Uralla and "Saumarez

Jim would like to meet you and Dad and the rest of the family some time.

12.

Dear Ettie,

It's very quiet here now. There is some shearing going on--I think it will go on all the year round.

Someone pinned this note on the door of the shearers hut.

SCABS ARE WORSE THAN BOSSES.

May the Lord above send down a dove
With wings as sharp as razors
To cut the throats of bloody scabs
Who cut down poor mens wages

This was torn down and the next day this appeared

We'll make the tyrant feel the sting
O'er those that they would throttle,
They needn't say the fault was ours
If Blood should stain the Wattle

The Boss brought this one to the house-and read it out in a very loud voice - saying " There will be blood n the wattle-- and guts too! I liked the next bit which was tacked on the hut door.

I don't know if the cause be wrong,
Or if the cause be right.
I've had my day and said my say
And fought the bitter fight.
In truth at times I cannot tell
What the men are driving at
But I've done my bit for many years
And I'm too old to rat.

Love Marion

13.

Dear Kate,

I hope you like the job in town. I suppose you are all dressed up everyday. They are awful quiet here. I think they have lost a lot of stock.

I had a letter from Jim, the first one. His handwriting is big and bold. I read that means a strong character. There is plenty of work for him with the horse and dray but horse feed is dear. Charlie has a claim at Swamp Oak which is somewhere near Niangla. They had been playing cards with Ted and Bishop so they must have got over the row about the strike. Jim says he is never going to work for wages again as long as he lives.

Jim says Charlie has a lady friend who is real pretty. Does Ted ever tell you are pretty? I wish I was tall like you and not just five feet. At least my hair is long even if it is straight. If I let it down I can sit on it.

14.

Dear Mum,

I just can't put up with it here any longer. The Boss is impossible since the trouble with the shearing and they owe me wages which they won't pay but the missus bought a new ball gown and things which must have cost a fortune.

I can start with Mrs --- in the New Year, looking after the kids and doing some sewing and spinning. So I gave them two weeks notice. There was an awful row but he has been swearing at me and I won't stand it.

Jim came to see me and we went for a drive in his new sulky. Tom Thumb is real smart Jim is training him for the high jump. Jim is taking a week off and will take most of my things over to Mrs--- I seem to have gathered a lot of stuff-- Then we will visit Jim's Mother for Saturday and Sunday and get home on Monday.

Jim has asked me to marry him but I told him he has to ask Dad first. I think he will but doesn't like the job.

Love Marion

15.

Stony Batter
Bundarra
December 1890

Dear Kate

I've left the station. I'm going to Mrs--- in the New Year.

Jim has brought me home--we are having a wonderful time. We are engaged to be married! Friday we went up to Jim's Mother's at "Spring Farm". She has this beautiful wavy red hair streaked with grey.-- Mr Browning calls her "Suzie" all the time. We took some ducks Jim shot at the lagoon and we had a dinner baked in the stove.

On Sunday we went to Church at Saumarez Ponds with the Baptists. They don't have a minister at the moment and Jim's half brother Edwin preached. I thought he was good at Church but we came back to their place for dinner and he kept on preaching, especially to Jim.

He says Jim should be shearing to help break the shearers strike. Also Jim is in bad company at the mine, playing cards with foreigners (he means Charlie) and people like Bishop. I thought Jim would do his block but he didn't say much.

Jim has a bay horse harnessed in tandem with Tom Thumb and although we have a big load they trot along very smartly. Edwin would not believe that Jim had "creased" the bay horse until he was shown the scar on his neck. He did not say much after that he is leaving his job at Saumarez and taking over his farm at Guyra in a few months time.

It was a lovely drive from "Spring Farm" to home, "Tom Thumb" and the bay trotted along as if we were no load and there are only a few little hills.

Jim gets on real well with everybody. They are out handling young horses now. Jim had a long talk with Dad the first night and we are officially engaged. The ring is a wide one with rubies. Jim had it with him all the time and somehow he managed to get the right size. We haven't set a date for the wedding yet but Ettie will be bridesmaid and Ted will be Best Man.

Jim and the boys were "mooning" possums last night as there was a bright moon. Mum didn't want them to go as the fur is no good this time of year but Dad said they were taking the bit of fruit we have and it was all right to shoot them close to the orchard.

The river is only a string of water-holes and the fish are not biting

Jim will post this in Uralla on his way back to Niangla.

Love Marion

16.

Walcha April 1891

Dear Mum

Jim won the high jump with "Tom Thumb." Jim shows him the jump first and if he can reach the top bar with his nose he will jump it. If he can't do that he won't even try.

He is a magnificent pony. Jim put him in the sulky and won this beautiful set of harness. The blinkers and backsaddle, crupper and breastplate are all heavily decorated with nickel. Jim says it is only good for show but it will be good for our wedding day.

My dress is finished and Etties nearly so. She came over on Sunday for a fitting and it is all right. She has settled down all right but misses you all.

Jim and I have been talking to Rev. Mr. Moberly and Dad will have to sign to give his permission but he can do that on the day. We will stay in Walcha at the hotel and go down to Niangla early the next day.

I hope everyone can come.

Love Marion.

17.

Swamp Oak
June 1891.

Dear Mum,

I hope you got home all right. You couldn't have given us anything better than the sewing machine. Especially as it is a table one. We would not have had room to carry a treadle machine.

I suppose you know the gold in the sapphire brooch Jim gave me came from Niangla? He had it specially made by the jeweller in Armidale. And the pewter teapot from Jims Mum. It is really extra special.

The night at the hotel was not real good. There were a lot of rowdys about and about nine oclock Jim went down to smoke his pipe for a bit and I went out on the balcony. I overheard what the men were saying on the verandah underneath -- it was awful. There was never any swearing at home and even on the station at Walcha there was nothing like I heard that night -- The things they said -- I was real upset.

The calico house is going to be real nice. It is a framework of poles with calico stretched over and a calico "fly" above but not touching just like a bush tent but much bigger and higher.

There is a good iron bed with a spring mattress and a tick filled with corn husks and three feather pillows. I'm using my pillow cases with the fancy work. The table is a fixture on posts in the ground and we have boxes and blocks for seats.

There is a bark galley closed on three sides where I can cook and water is no problem because Jim has 100 gallon tank on a slide and draws water from the creek with the horse.

He is working early and late but we have some nice neighbours and there are several nice women among the miners wives.

Jim shot a bush turkey and asked Ted, Charlie and Bishop over, we had a big feed. Charlie helped wash up. I like Bishop a bit better, he is not as bad as I thought.

The men played euchre until late using the slush lamp. We don't waste kerosene. Jim is determined to save enough money to get a farm of his own. Maybe I shouldn't tell you but he doesn't trust Banks and does not use them. Ted does and they argue about it a lot, Charlie doesn't argue -- I think his claim is yielding some gold.

Bishop talks a lot. Mrs--- whose husband died a few months ago is very nice to Bishop but he is acting scared.

Charlie is in love with a Roman Catholic girl and she wants him to change his religion, but Charlie says he will not give up eating meat on Friday for anything, "A man can't work without meat". He says he is going to talk to the R.C. Bishop about it. (Not Bishop, HE, is not a BISHOP, far from it.) Some of the men make a joke about Bishop and Parsons being friends

18.

Swamp Oak

Dear Kate,

Married life is great-- we are real happy but Jim is away all day.

There is an Indian Hawker who comes around selling all sorts of things. He sells things to married women he won't sell to single girls. He carries medicines and ointments, cloth and all sort of things. He will sell you something to make you have babies and something to stop you having babies or so he says. I bought some candles and stuff for a dress. Mrs-- the widow who is keen on Bishop bought a love potion and at a dance in Niangla she put some in his tea.

The boys thought it a great joke because he saddled his horse and galloped off to visit another "lady".

Love Marion

19.

Swamp Oak

Dear Mum,

There has been trouble here on the diggings. A family who live up at the head of Swamp Oak Creek went away for the day leaving their 14 year old daughter with the little kids.

A bloke they know quite well came and attacked her and did some terrible things -- she is quite badly hurt.

Charlie and Ted came here last night and got Jim. I persuaded him to leave his gun behind but after he left I discovered that one of the feather pillows was missing. I wanted them to tell the police but they reckon the police would do nothing-- none of the men like the "traps".

I couldn't sleep and it was nearly daylight when about a dozen men rode up. Charlie, Ted and Bishop stayed for awhile and had a feed. It seems they stripped this fellow, rubbed him all over with tar and turps and then stuck the feathers to him--They then burned his hut and all his clothes.

They may as well have shot him, he can't survive in the bush and I don't think anyone will help him.

I don't think I am ever going to have a baby. There must be something wrong with me. I've prayed about it and promised God that I'd give the child as a missionary when he grows up. I'm not sure I can do that but Hannah in the Bible did something like that didn't she?.

We are real glad we've got Jims savings in a safe place. Ted can't get his out of the bank and anyone who doesn't have a bit of gold is in bad trouble. How are you getting on? Credit at the store I suppose.

Love Marion

20.

East View
Armidale
May 94

Dear Kate

Well so much has happened since I saw you. WE are sharefarming here, it is rich black soil close to Armidale and things grow real well. Jim has done real well with peas. He sends them to Sydney on the train. He grows all the feed for the horses and we have milking cows.

Jessie is walking everywhere and little William (after his Grandfather Parsons) is a month old. My Glory Box makes a real good crib for the babies.

All Jims work is close to the house and the only time he is away is when he takes stuff to the railway station.

I've got the walls all papered with newspapers and have made some rag

mats.

Jim's got an old vinegar cask for the corn meat.
We've got two pigs in a sty to use waste vegetables and scraps.

I'm glad Ted has got some of his money out of the bank -- When are you two going to get married?

Do you read much? I am busy but like reading The Town and Country Journal. They have always stated that they are "The Universal upholders of knowledge Instruction and Entertainment".

I like their magazines the best but we usually get the newspapers and some of the Bulletins.

21.

Kia Ora
Kellys Plains
1895

Dear Mum,

Although Jim say he doesn't like banks he has borrowed enough money for us to get the farm. He has sold some horses and saved a bit. I don't think he told the banks how much savings he had. "Kia Ora" means "good luck" in Maori.

This house is a lot better, all the rooms have good board floors and the front room has linoleum. I've got a cast iron stove in the kitchen.

The roof is iron and we've got a good big water tank, Jim has planted a lot of potatoes and corn. Some of this farm is red soil and has some funny stones on it. Some people say they are meteorites but I don't think so. They are shaped like half an egg, reddish and rough outside with a red chalky centre. I scratch it out and use it as red ochre to paint the fireplace instead of whitewash. Some of the stones are the size of apples and some as big as a small melon..

The little ones are real good. Billy is walking & Jessie running everywhere. The new baby will arrive in about a month. I'm pretty uncomfortable.

Love to you all.
Marion

22.

Kia Ora
1896

Dear Mum,

I feel as we all do about losing little Blanch -- just remember she is in Gods care.

With the three litle ones and the animals on the farm it is just not possible for us to go far away. Jim's brother Willoughby (Bill) married Annie Frazer from "Everton Vale" which is quite close to us, a few miles over the Great Northern Road - so we were able to go. It was a Baptist Wedding at Annies home. A Mr Hobson is the Baptist parson. The Kellys Plains railway siding is quite close to us-- we can watch the trains go by and the kids love that. It's also very handy for Jim to put stuff on the train, We have had some rain so the crop is not bad.

Love Marion

23.

Kia Ora
Kellys Plains

Dear Kate,

I'm so sorry we won't be able to come to your wedding in Tamworth. The kids and the farm animals keep us tied down.

I think Bill and Annie are going. I'm not sure who else, maybe Fred and Christina. They are getting married next year.

Charlie and his wife came to see us. Do you remember the problem he had about becoming a Roman Catholic and not being able to eat meat on Friday? Well he said " I asked the Bishop to give me permission to eat meat on Fridays as long as I live" The Bishop replied " I'm not allowed to do that, however I will give you permission to eat meat on Friday as long as I live".

They seem to be doing very well in these hard times. Charlies claim was evidently a gold mine not a dirt mine like the one Jim had.

We wish you every happiness and expect to see you very soon.

Love Marion

24.

Kia-Ora
Kellys Plains
1900

Dear Ettie

You seem very serious about Widgery. I hope he is as nice as you say. Jims only sister married Bob Cooke last year. He is a Pom.

What do you think about Federation? I am quite excited about it I would like to have some part in the celebration but with four kids under six and the things that have to be done on the farm it's just too hard. Jim has been cross breeding potatoes, he cross pollinates the flowers and sows the seed from the berry. One of his new kind of potatoes is better than any we have seen -- he only has a few hills but next year there should be a row or two. We have named the new potato "Parsons Seedling"

Les came to see me before he went to South Africa. He looked very smart in his uniform. He has written once since he got over there. I think Mum has had a letter too.

I wish he had enlisted as Les Howard. It is wrong he should represent the Boss' family even tho they have promised him a job for life when or if he comes home. He was real cranky because the Pommy officer took his slouch hat and made him wear a pith helmet.

They said the Australians looked too much like Boers!
Write soon and tell me more about Widgery.

Love Marion

25.

Kia Ora
Kellys Plains
1902

Dear Dad,

I hope you are looking after yourself. I know you miss Mum even more than the rest of us. Maud and Carrie can stay with us as long as they like. Carrie is a lot of help and Maud is going to school.

I still can't believe it about Mum, I thought you two would go on forever. Everything is all right here. Jims' special potato is going to make us some money.

Love Marion

26.

West End Armidale
1908

Dear Ettie,

I'm taking some time off to tell you our troubles. They are plenty. We sold "Kia Ora" for a good price and Jim has bought a block on the Falls Road. There is no house or building on it so Jim got a builder to build the house and we moved into this awful place on the western edge of town. Just after we got here baby Alan was born. That makes 3 boys and 4 girls.

Then everybody got sick, real sick and they are all in hospital except baby Alan and me. The Doctor says Jim may not live and Grace is real bad, she is only 8. They took Jim to Hospital on a stretcher on two bicycle wheels. The Doctor says it is a typhoid from the water in this rotten well.

I can't do anything to help them. I just look after the baby and the stock. I boil the water for everything even for washing. I just thank God the baby and I haven't got the disease.

Some of the neighbours have been real good and bring messsages from the hospital. Then we had a fire and we lost some stuff.

Jim is delirious and raves on about his shotgun reloading outfit. Now everyone will know that is where he keeps his valuables. I have hidden it as best I can.

Don't forget to pray for us. Things may be better by the time you get this.

Love Marion.

27.

"Lincoln" 1910

Dear Ettie,

I'm glad things are going well for you, there are a lot of troubles about. This house is new weatherboard and lined with Richmond River Pine with a nice kitchen joined with a covered walkway.

We have called the place "Lincoln" because Jim has a Lincoln sheep stud. Jim is pretty hard to get along with since every one had the typhoid. His feet have gone right out of shape and he has trouble walking behind the plough all day. He bought a good Jersey bull and there are now some good looking young heifers. The "Parsons' Seedling" potato is very popular and we can sell all we can spare for seed.

Les spent a few days with us, he is drinking too much. I guess the war drove him to it. Or it might just be bad company. His wife has left him. I made a special trip to see her but came away very sad and wrote the poem I put in with this letter. We knew that family so well.

Love Marion.

After the Separation

The leaflets are falling
The bellbirds are calling
The Heavens are blue
A lonely man strolling
Your beauty extolling
I'm seeking for you
The Zephyr are sighing
The birds they are flying
To lovers and love.

The daybreak is dawning
The glories of morning
Decend from above
Oh darling I languish
In sorrow and anguish
The world is so sad
And cursed be the story
That ended our glory
And drove me mad.
For sleeping or working
My poor heart is breaking
In sorrow I pine
Through sunshine and gladness
Come banish my sadness
And once more be mine.

28.

Lincoln
Falls Rroad
Armidale
1912

Dear Kate

It was good to have you all here for a visit. We won't see much of you after you go to "Oakdene" at Bundarra. I know Ted liked the young cows. The cattle are a lot better than the old breed. Jim is still not able to do much since the plough hit a stump and broke all those ribs so Bill is doing a lot of the work also Jessie and the rest of the bigger kids before and after school. I was trying to dig out the stump that caused Jim to break his ribs. The baby was in a basket close by and Harry is nine now and a good help.

Anyway the pick slipped off the stump and went right through my foot, took a piece of stocking with it. When we got back to the house I put some turpentine on it and bandaged it but it is pretty painful. Les called and told us his divorce was on. He was a bit tipsy and wanted Jim to drink but Jim told him to go away and come back sober.

The papers are full of the sinking of the Titanic.
I have to sit around so I've written more poetry.
Love Marion

Divorced

I saw you in my dream last night
You looked so fair and sweet
As o'er the floor so smooth and bright
You danced with nimble feet
Your golden hair in ringlets hung,
Your eyes like diamonds shon
Your silver voice to others sung
While I stood out alone!
And with a smile your lips replied
To those who taunted you.
I woke and in my sorrow cried
"Alas can this be true?"
You have no heart, you never had,
Your beauty is a spell
A thing that's made to drive men mad
And send their souls to hell.
You flout the vows you made to me
When you became my wife
And now a judges stern decree
Has parted us for life.
Yet there is naught I would not do
To save you from the throng,
To prove that you were good and true
And all I thought was wrong

Another poem from this time. Jim and I have fights but this is my solution.

The Power of Love

We quarrelled, yes it is true
We have done so many a day
Since we clasped hands and vowed
To love each other for ever and aye.
He angered me with a silly taunt
And it filled my heart with pain
As the wild blood left my heart
And leaped through every vein.
I said what I thought in an angry way
While my eyes with tears grew dim
Though I was right I was still to blame
For I am not calm like him.
I said to myself "The dream is past
For I shall never love again"
My heart grew calm at the very thought
And helped me to hide my pain
Moments passed, his hand touched mine,
But it was only a mere mistake.
He would not yield, though his heart might break.
But at that touch my heart beat wild,

Forgot was the grief and pain,
The time rolled back full twenty years
And I was a girl once again
And my love, I swear was just as strong
As when a shy and youthful bride
I thought the world held naught so dear
As the young man by my side.
I do not care what the world may say
That love's just a passing theme,
The young girl's snare, the old mans curse,
The young mans' idle dream,
But this I know, that honest love
Will ever cure the cares of life,
Will bridge the wrongs, dark and deep
That are made by the rills of strife
And ever I pray, if the time should come
When I cannot feel loves thrill
My life blood shall cease its weary flow
My heart be forever still.

29.

Lincoln
Falls Road
1913

Dear Ettie,

Fancy you making hats for David Jones! I'm sure you are very good at it.

Maud has been with us for a while. I worry about being responsible for her. I suppose she is just a normal young girl. Little Hector is a lovely little chap, his hair is real curly.

The farm is doing real well. The girls do most of the dairy work and the cows are real prize winners. Jim took the two best cows to the Sydney Show this year. Bob Cooke went with him. They travelled on the same train as the cows. I think they had a pretty good time. Jim got one prize and sold the cows for a good price.

We had a busy week the kids liked it with their father away. He asks a lot of them. There has been real bad trouble at the school here. It is a nice new building but out of the classroom the kids are right out of hand. The teacher says what happens outside of school is not his responsibility.

One of the boys (not mine) was mutilated and will never live a normal life. Those boys had seen too many cattle branded.

A lot of families refuse to send their kids to school. They have been playing war games and playing the most filthy jokes but this is tragedy not a joke.

Jim has got these wretched racing greyhounds. I'm sure they cost a lot more than he is likely to win and the wretched animals keep coming in the house - we have had a few arguments about them. Its a real cruel sport. They are talking about getting a mechanical hare which might be better. I wish they had mechanical dogs?

The cockatoo is a real nuisance. It cut the seat right out of Jim's saddle. It can't be repaired. Although he hardly ever rides now. It was beautiful saddle. He has hung two of the nickel horseshoes over the mantleshef.

He has brought a wheeled disc plough so that he can ride. His feet give him a lot of trouble.

*My foot has healed all right where I stuck the pick through it but still aches a bit.

I never understood about farming before we moved to "East View". It is different to the life we lived as kids on the river, and different again to mining. I hope you won't be rude when our farmer friends visit you in Sydney. These are my latest verses.

THE FARMER.

Onward they go with a cheerful hand
In the bitter sleet and rain
Or perhaps where drought has hardened the land
They take to their toil again.

Year in year out with a grit that proves.
Australians will never yield,
In spite of the ruin, distress or loss.
They bravely face the field.

They may toil and slave and crops may grow
And ripen* to their hearts desire,
Then just as they think their trouble o'er
Their lands are swept by fire.

On perhaps they may hope and pray
For the rain that passes them by,
And comes too late to save the crop
While they watch it wither , die

On again the sheaves stand in the field
And the rain in torrents fall,
So instead of gathering a goodly crop
They scarce get any at all.

Any yet with a heart as large as their will
They turn again to their toil
For nought seems able their courage to damp.
Our farmers who till the toil.
And thought you may toss your dainty head
When a farmer his hat may doff,
Remember young lady a galant heart
Needs kinder returns than your scoff.
For there is many a dainty you would miss
That seems but a trifle now
If the horny hand that lifted that hat
Refused to handle the plough.

You have told me so much of Sundays in the Domain. I have not been there and probably never will be but your description inspired me to write the following lines.

In the Domain

Within the swagmans wide domain
The sound of music fell
Upon the weary sleepers there
It was the Christmas bell.

An old man rose upon his bed
And as he heaved a sigh
He saw again his childhood home
The river running by.

In happy England far away
With friends and comrades dear
He sang again the Christmas hymn
In accents sweet and clear

He knew not he spoke the words
He noticed not the crowd,
As through the weary rough domain
The notes fell clear and loud.

As once again a sinless boy
Forgot was all his woe
The song of peace, goodwill to men
As Saints sang long ago.

One moments space, a silence fell
On all the people there
Then some in rude derision laughed,
While others knelt in prayer.

But still the joyful notes rang out
Till hushed was every tongue
And on the songsters every word
The rugged audience hung.

And when the old mans song was done
Surprised was he to see
That everyone within that crowd
Knelt there on bended knee.

For little dreamed he that his song
Had brought them back again
Unto their childhood happy home
Far from that rude domain.

Lincoln
1914

Dear Kate,

I'm glad things are going well for you at "Oakdene". Everyone here is talking about the war and a lot of young men have enlisted already. Bill wants to go but his father won't hear of it. They are fighting a lot. Jim expects Bill to work on the farm for practically nothing and he can better get work all around. He is good with farm machinery and Jim isn't. Jim should have been veterinary surgeon. He is very good with sick or injured stock and helps out all around the district. He has some instruments and gets called to do all the colts that need gelding.

Bill has a camera and a lot of developing and printing gear and can also do enlargements.

The girls are running the dairy. The cows are real good. They won all the top ribbons at the show. The three eldest girls are running the dairy they work real hard. Jessie has a boy friend. Joe is a few months younger than her.

The papers are printing some of my poetry.
Here is the first war piece.

A Chant of Hate

You loudly chant your song of hate
In which you pray for Britons fate
But oh your prayers are madmans prate
And your Prussians chant is wrong.
Compare the churl of whom you sing
With that great man, brave Belgium king.
Your foolish pride will then take wing.
And you'll admire the strong.

Think how he strove to shield from shame
Fair Belgiums loved and honoured name.
When devils to his kingdom came
Just think, you fiends and fear
Sure as the British race doth seek
To free a race in numbers weak
Vengeance on Belgiums foe they'll wreak
And behold the hour is near.

Then Allied swords shall sweep like sand
The foemen from that tortured land
And many a cruel German hand
Shall shake in very fear.
Then you may think of children slain,
Of maids and mothers in their pain,
Who prayed for mercy, prayed in vain,
As you yourself may pray.
You'll hate the German Kaiser then
You'll scan the lines of Lissay's pen
That made such brutes of kindly men
You'll bitterly curse "The Day"

Christmas 1916

Dear Ettie,

Oh what a year it has been. Little Marjorie Jean was born in January. She only lived three weeks. I have a silver locket with a tiny picture of her and on either side the threepenny pieces we used to close her dear little eyes.

I am still writing verse but I just couldn't write about her. She was too close to my heart.

In October we got the news about Jack shooting himself. I still don't know how or why.

Bill was determined to go into the army and his father bitterly opposed it. The war has meant that we can sell all that the farm can produce, especially horse feed. Bill waited until Jessie and Joe Lockyer were married and he enlisted three days later. Jim told him not to come back. It sometimes seems he thinks more of the greyhounds than his family and his country.

Ted and Kate came to see us. Ted has bought this huge motor car. It belonged to one of the squatters at Bundarra. It's got a lot of polished brass and big carbide headlights. Ted wants Jim to sell out and go to Bundarra. It would be nice to be living near a river again. You are so lucky to have your place on the lake, some compensation for living in the city.

Love Marion.

32.

"Kia Ora"
Barraba Road
Bundarra
February 1918

Dear Ettie

This is my long overdue Christmas letter. Notice the address, it is not the place on the river I dreamed about but right on top of the Nandewar range in the granite country. We sold "Lincoln" to *F. Manuel* for what seemed a lot of money. They also bought the dairy cattle and the sheep stud.

Jim spent a few weeks looking for another place. He travelled around with Ted and the agent and finally bought this place. We changed the name to "Kia Ora", we did so well on the other "Kia Ora". There are 2000 acres and Jim reckons there is a good chance of buying more. He plans to run cattle and may be plant an orchard.

When we left Lincoln Jess and Joe and baby Clara came with us. Joe has a wagon and he does a bit of carrying. He reckoned there should be plenty of carrying here but it didn't work out. They stayed with us for a year but now he has a job with Ern Coventry at "Glen Accron" and they are living about three miles away in Coventry's old home.

It was quite a trip coming down here. There was Joe with the wagon

loaded up with furniture and farming implements. Jessie driving their buggy with her little baby and the two little boys who kept changing from one vehicle to another. I drove the sulky with "Star the best of the walers that are left. Grace drove the dray with old Bonny the Suffok Punch. That dray! I thought it would fall to pieces before we arrived. Jim soaked the wheels in the dam before we left but as they dried out it was real rickety. We covered the wheels with wet bags each night and it finally got here in one piece. Nell who is eighteen handled the spider really well with Jinny the white pony. Agnes who is ten mostly rode with her.

Jim, Harry and Alan drove the cattle and spare horses. Although Alan is only nine he rode most of the way. Jim kept on telling us how he rode alone to Abington from Saumarez and led two horses when he was seven. The reason was that they reckoned "Thunderbolt" would not rob a child. The trip to "Kia Ora" took four days but the last day Jim and I went on ahead and also the girls in the spider sulky. The last few miles is a steep climb up the range, very slow in the dray and wagon.

Joe made a second trip to "Lincoln" to get the rest of the farming machinery. When he got in the middle of the Emu Crossing he got stuck and had to unhook his team, leave the wagon in the middle of the river and ride into Bundarra and hire a second team to help pull the wagon out.

The house is everything that Jim said it was, the front part new and high off the ground with magnificent cement steps leading up to the front verandah. The rooms are big with high pressed wonderlich ceilings and wide cedar skirting boards and picture rails. We have a "Glory Light" in the dining room and parlor it runs on benzine from a tank we pump up. All the rooms are ceild except the kitchen which is big and part of the house but older and built of slab with a big stove with two ovens, great for baking big batches of bread. We needed a lot of bread when there were 12 people in the house. All the rooms have nice wallpaper except the kitchen which is papered with newspaper and a bedroom lined with tin with small corrugations. We camped on the river two nights. It was a real dissapointment, most of the big holes are silted up and a lot of the trees and bushes are gone. We hear that there have been no fish caught for years. We havn't tried, the river is 12 miles away and there are only a few slimeys in the Saveall creek at the back of this place. The first winter was pretty hard but we didn't lose many cattle.. There is a big flower garden but the soil is not very good and quite shallow. The only water we have at the house is the rainwater tanks but there is a lovely well about 200 yards away.

Bill is still in France. I pray God the war will soon be over.

Remember Aunt Sarah who married Sam Frost? Two of her sons have properties here. Jack is at "Iventure" down closer to Barraba. And Ben at "Blue Spec" at the foot of the mountain.

Hope this has not bored you too much,
Love Marion.

Kia Ora
Bundarra
1919

Dear Ettie,

Just a few lines to wish you and yours a merry Christmas. Ted and Kate spent last Christmas with us and we were going to stay with them this year but the drought is so bad I don't think we will.

I suppose you will spend your holidays at your place on Tuggerah lakes. Jim has sent most of the cattle away on agistment. Some are on Ted's place "OAKDENE". We are hand feeding some but it costs a lot. There is usually plenty of feed in the summer but this year is bad. We are better off than most because we have a beautiful well of soft water only 200 yards from the house and we have a 200 gallon tank on a slide(sled) and the boys (Alan Bert & Hec) harness up old Bonny and they fill the tank with buckets.

I am afraid that one of them will fall in the well as they have to draw water for the cows and horses nearly every day and Jim isn't there very often. They are only eight, nine and eleven.

I have tried to keep some garden going with water from the baths and the washing but it seems pretty hopeless. I have got a couple of lemon trees started. With no fresh vegetables or fruit I am afraid of Barcoo Rot. Do you remember how bad Dad was once? Jim already has sores that won't heal.

I still depend on Dr Chas book in times of sickness and prepared for the arrival of little Keith in the usual way. After ten you know what to expect. He arrived on the fifth of January. We gave him Brazier for a second name because that was Jims' mothers maiden name.

I had made arrangements with Nurse Lennen, the midwife to help, so when I knew the baby was due I telephoned her and Jim dashed in with the sulky and got her. She is a nice person but like all nurses a bit bossy. She insisted that Agnes and the boys be sent away so Grace and Nell packed them some tucker and sent them off to The Springs for the day. This is about a mile away and there are some boggy patches where stock sometimes get stuck.

They were told to let no stock go near the bog and not to come back until it was dark. I think they had a great time chasing rabbits and getting them out of hollow logs.

They all seem surprised to see the baby but were more interested in the big hot meal that Grace and Nell had prepared.

Nurse Lennan stayed for a week. She is a good friend and I visit her whenever I go to town. I don't go very often as the store dray comes out every month to bring feed and stuff. We can get small things on the mail which is by sulky three times a week but that is a bit expensive.

Bill got back from the War in August. He came to see us but didn't stay long. He doesn't get on with his father. He was in the army for two years and 214 days. He has gone back to Armidale.

I think there is a girl in the picture. He had been hit in the shoulder with shrapnel and subjected to gas and all the traumas of battle but I thank

God he is not the physical and mental wreck that so many of the returned boys are. We must make sure that such terrible people never get in power again.

Harry is working at Iventure for Jack Frost(our cousin). I don't think he is coming back to live here. I miss him but understand that he wants the same independence that is so important to Jim. Jim however wants him HERE.

Once more wishing you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year

Love from your sister Marion

34.

Kia Ora
Bundarra
1922

Dear Ettie,

I'm so glad you were able to get over to Watsons Bay to see Dad before he died. It wasn't possible for any of us to get to Tamworth for the funeral. We are very isolated here even with the telephone.

There are nine parties on the line which is one wire strung from tree to tree and you have to wait your turn and it takes a couple of hours to get through to Tamworth. Dad was always so good to us even when we played up and I never once heard him swear but Les said he did sometimes.

Les looks well and smart but is still drinking too much. It is so long since I wrote to you. I will try to bring you up to date.

Although the house here is big and comfortable the move from "Lincoln" was not a good one. There is no school here so I have had to get correspondence lessons for the kids, that meant teaching the four youngest and some of the subjects are difficult. Grace and Nell could do it better but they preferred to cook or do housework. They did the milking too but its not like when they were running the dairy at "Lincoln".

The worst thing is it is so lonely here they never meet any people their own age. That is the main reason Nell left home as soon as she was twenty one. Jim objected but she has gone back to work for Cordinglys'. She writes often and seems quite happy and has a lot of friends.

Harry got a job with the Frosts when he was seventeen and left home. Jim blamed Jack for taking him away and there was a ding dong row. I think it was the right thing for Harry to do, we can't expect him to work for nothing.

The '19 drought hit us badly. Jim sent most of the cattle away on adjistment until the bill was worth as much as the cattle, so we lost most of them. Now we have mostly sheep and grow a bit of winter feed. The rabbits are here in thousands. Jim has put paling fences around about twenty acres and the boys set traps all the time.

Jim bought a poison cart in shares with Ern Coventry and Walter Brown at "Barlow" and they spread pollard baits with S.A.P. (Phosphorous poison). It kills a lot of rabbits, and other things too. It is an awful poison. It burns their inside out and there is no antidote if a dog eats a poisoned rabbit.

The boys take Jims greyhounds chasing kangaroos. They think it is

great sport. Some of the old roos put up a fight when they are caught and some of the dogs have been ripped. "Skipper" a whippet who is a favourite of Jims was ripped so badly that her liver was hanging out.

She came straight home and went straight in and laid by the fire. Jim bathed the wound and stitched it up and she is all right. He really should have been a vet.

Bill has settled down and is working at "Eversleigh". He and Nell Cooke are being married early next year. Nell is the eldest daughter of Jim's sister Mary and Bob Cooke. They have a farm called "Junction View" just east of Armidale.

I close with my latest poem.

HIS BIRTHDAY.

This morning at breakfast I heard a deep sigh
From a dear little boy with a tear in his eye
"Oh what is it darling?" I kindly said
As close to my shoulder I presses his dear head.
"Oh Mother its awful", I heard him complain
"Today is my birthday and its going to rain"
"My darling" I said as I kissed his fair face
"I'm sure a wet birthday is no sad disgrace
See the calves and lambs dance, the birds sing with joy,
And no one is sad but my own little boy.
The flowers on the trees, the grass on the plain
Are all smiling bright at the beautiful rain."
He looked in my face a moment, then smiled
And naught seemed as bright as the face of my child
As he said "If the rain makes the pretty flowers grow
I only cried Mother 'cause I didn't know."
As off from my side he trotted away
I am sure that the rain did not spoil his birthday.

35.

Dear Ettie,

I'm sorry things have not gone so well for your personal affairs. I know how hard it is to make the right decision. Like you I have often felt that there are no options - we must just do our best and trust to The Lord.

Things are better for us. Wool prices have been better and Jim made a couple of good deals. I have let Bert and Hector stop their lessons and with Alan, Jim has three wild little jackaroos; and he is making full use of them.

The girls are doing the cooking and housework so I can put in my time in the garden, or spin, or write, or make rugs, look after the bees; even walk in the bush sometimes.

It is a relief not to have to keep regular school hours, but I will have to start Keith next year.

Jim has bought more land and nearly doubled the size of the place. He has always kept a few sovereigns for an "emergency". I thought we had had plenty of emergencies! but when the colony went off the Gold Standard and he found that the sovereigns were worth a lot more than a pound he cashed them and with a good wool cheque and some borrowed money bought another 1700 acres and would you believe it, a car!

It is a red Model-T Ford a Special whatever that means. It cost us 200 pounds. We get the petrol in wooden cases which hold 2 x 4 gallon tins. Petrol costs five shillings a gallon so it costs us about seven and six to go to Bundarra. We have been to Glen Innes to see Bill and Annie and up to Armidale twice and have stayed with Bob and Tina at "Invervanie".

We have re papered the dining room and put new lino there and the hall, the old stuff was worn through. It is the good inlaid stuff and should see us out.

Jim is now talking about building a shearing shed. We have always done our shearing at Coventry's which is about a mile away and it has worked very well but Jim thinks it is time we had our own shed.

I hope you feel better after your holiday at Lake Tuggerah.

Love Marion.