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THE ABORIGINES' FRIENDS' ASSOCIATION

AND

THE NGARRINDJERI PEOPLE

by

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THE ABORIGINES' FRIENDS' ASSOCIATION AND THE NGARRINDJERI PEOPLE.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Graham Keith Jenkin B.A. Dip.T.

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SYNOPSIS

One of the major problems facing the student of Aboriginal history lies in the fact that most of the source material has been written by people who are not Aborigines; and quite a lot of it comprises the records of Europeans who had very little knowledge of Aborigines, or were antagonistic towards them, or both. The scholar is thus compelled to do more 'reading between the lines' and interpretation in this field than in most others. I have attempted to overcome the problem in several ways — for instance by compiling a series of tape-recorded interviews, mainly with elderly people. But even the oldest memories do not go back much beyond the Great War — and that is where this particular thesis ends.

The Ngarrindjeri are distinctive in many ways, and one of the distinctive features of their modern history is the relationship which developed between their nation and the Aborigines' Friends' Association. It is this relationship which enables the historian to study the Ngarrindjeri in much greater depth and detail, over a longer period of time than is possible in the case of any other South Australian Aborigines. The Ngarrindjeri were practically the sole concern of the A.F.A. for nearly sixty years, and over this period of time, the records of the Association provide a wealth of information regarding the people that it originally set out to help. These records do not overcome the basic problem previously mentioned: that is, that the information is mostly from non-Aboriginal sources. Yet it seems to me to be a very useful second-best. It is pointless bemoaning the fact that a start was not made fifty years ago in collecting the Ngarrindjeri side of the

story (as a number of people have told me I should have done!). We can only work with the material which we have to hand. And by combining the A.F.A. records with other sources, such as newspapers, government records, books, and various archival documents, as well as the small amount of truly Ngarrindjeri material which has survived, it is possible to piece together at least a part of the jig-saw of modern Ngarrindjeri history.

The central figure in the thesis is not a Ngarrindjeri man, but the first and most outstanding missionary agent of the A.F.A.: namely, George Taplin. There are two reasons why this should be so. Firstly, it is regrettable but true, that when a group of people are dispossessed, rendered poverty-stricken, and are completely at the mercy of another group, the most important people in their lives are not their own leaders, but those representatives of their conquerors who are put in command over them. It was thus that Taplin, by reason of the power that was vested in him, played the leading role in Ngarrindjeri history for two decades: despite the fact that it was during this period that some of the most brilliant Ngarrindjeri leaders arose. The situation is parallel to that of a prisoner-of-war camp: their own leaders may be quite influential in affecting the well-being of the prisoners — but not nearly as influential as the commandant.

The second reason why George Taplin must occupy such a prominent place in modern Ngarrindjeri history, is that he has told us much more about the Ngarrindjeri than all other writers put together; and paradoxical though it may be, the best way to study the Ngarrindjeri during the period 1859-1879 is by studying Taplin: no other source gives us anything like the insights contained in Taplin's

Journals and other writings.

Although Ngarrindjeri history is quite different from that of any other group of Aborigines, its study nevertheless provides ample evidence upon which to base some conclusions regarding Aborigines in general. One of these is that it is apparently not difficult for a highly cultured people to appreciate and to master the high culture of another civilization, if they so desire — no matter how different the two cultures may be. Just as certain members of the Indian aristocracy seemed to experience no difficulty in embracing British high-culture, and fitted in quite felicitously at English universities etc., so too, in the early days of European settlement, when the Ngarrindjeri were still a highly cultivated people, those who wished to master English, and to enter into the culture of the Europeans, seemed to do so with ease. The step across from one high culture to another is obviously small compared with the steps needed to be taken by those people in more recent times who have inherited none, or very little, of the old culture, but who find themselves at the very bottom of the European social and cultural ladder.

Ngarrindjeri history also demonstrates clearly the paradox caused by the growth of racism throughout the nineteenth century. As the Ngarrindjeri became increasingly Europeanized, both culturally and racially, the prejudice against Aborigines also increased; so that even when, by the close of the century, there were a number of Ngarrindjeri people who towered above the majority of Europeans in the various fields of European culture, they were still not accepted into the mainstream of Euro-Australian society. The assimilationist philosophy of the early European administrators and missionaries was based upon the belief that European civilization was superior, but

that people were basically the same. Assimilation simply would not make sense if this were not held as a basic assumption. Yet seventy years later, when most of the Ngarrindjeri were more European than Aboriginal, doubts were being cast as to whether they could even be classed as human beings. Thus we find that the modern history of the Ngarrindjeri traces a parabola, as the people become increasingly European-cultivated until the apogee is reached in the 1890's and the first years of the present century. Unfortunately for the Ngarrindjeri, this high-point coincided with the nadir reached by the graph of white-racism; and it became apparent to many of the people that their position was a hopeless one. Non-acceptance and increasing discrimination must have led even the most fervent optimist to believe that the only path from then on, was a downwards one.

This Thesis is principally concerned with the relationship between the A.F.A. and the Ngarrindjeri: it is by studying this relationship that we are enabled to observe the ascent of the Europeanized Ngarrindjeri, and the beginning of the decline.

INTRODUCTION

Of the thirty to forty 'tribes' which owned what is now called South Australia, only one has survived the European invasion with its traditional cultural and governmental structure still more or less intact: this is the Pitjantjatjara tribe of the North West. But the Aboriginal people who played the dominant historical role throughout the first century of European occupation of this State were undoubtedly the people of the Lower Murray Lakes — the confederated nation of the Ngarrindjeri.

In many ways, the modern history of the Ngarrindjeri (i.e. since 1820) has been one of those glorious defeats with which Australian history in general seems to be studded: of people trying to do the impossible and miraculously very nearly succeeding. It is redolent of Eureka, Glenrowan and Gallipoli. The nation, which probably numbered only slightly in excess of three thousand people at the time of the invasion, was bound to be destroyed: it was, after all, opposed by the British Empire at the height of its power. Yet, in going down, it recorded so many remarkable achievements that the modern history of the Ngarrindjeri is not entirely a tragic one, and it is certainly a history of which the present-day descendants of the Ngarrindjeri can feel justly proud.

As can be seen by reference to the accompanying map, the Ngarrindjeri owned a great triangle of land, the northern border of which ran from Cape Jervis to Swanport, with the eastern border running from Swanport to Kingston, and the south-western boundary being the Southern Ocean. This is a truly magnificent stretch of country: some of it being rich and fertile, some of it less so, but all of it

is beautiful in differing ways, and none of it is far from substantial stretches of water. Accordingly, the way of life of the Ngarrindjeri was appreciably different from the manner in which many other South Australian people lived in pre-European times.

Physically, the Ngarrindjeri were also quite distinctive. Scientists assure us that there is a remarkable homogeneity among the people throughout the continent, and that any regional differences are so slight that they can be discounted.[1] Yet the photographs show that the Ngarrindjeri were discernibly different from, say, the desert people of the North West, even though fundamentally they may have been very similar. The minor characteristic of hairiness can be adduced here to show that there were indeed differences within the race. Aborigines as a whole are much less hirsute than Europeans, who are amongst the hairiest of races.[2] Yet the Ngarrindjeri appear to have been just as hirsute as the Europeans, if not more so: and whereas amongst some northern people the men have so little bodily and facial hair that any hairs that do grow on the chest, are fastidiously plucked out, yet amongst the Ngarrindjeri, even the women, on reaching the age of menopause, grew fine sets of whiskers. The relative hirsuteness of the people is, of course, of no real consequence in itself, but the point is raised to show that in fact, the Ngarrindjeri were distinct physically — even if only slightly — from the northerners.

The Ngarrindjeri were also a discrete cultural entity: their language was one of the (approximately) 250 separate Australian languages used in the various regions prior to the European invasion: and whilst there were dialectic differences amongst the Ngarrindjeri themselves, their language would not have had one word in common with,

say, the Kaurna, who owned the Adelaide Plains and who were their northern neighbours. Thus, the Ngarrindjeri can and should be treated historically as an entity, being as they were, a nation with their own country, language, way of life, culture and physical characteristics.

To discuss the modern history of the Ngarrindjeri fully it is necessary to deal with certain events that have affected all South Australian Aborigines. The 1834 Foundation Act, for instance, affected all South Australian Aborigines more or less equally by not mentioning any of them. Such aspects of history cannot be overlooked simply because non-Ngarrindjeri people were also involved. On the other hand, there is much that is peculiar to the Ngarrindjeri, and because of this, and because of the special role that the Ngarrindjeri played during the first century after the European invasion, it is proper that this people should be the subject of a separate historical study. Most of what we know about the Ngarrindjeri we have derived from one source — the pioneer anthropological, ethnological and linguistic writings of the Rev George Taplin, who lived and worked among the Ngarrindjeri for over twenty years. Taplin kept an accurate and fascinating record of events as they took place, and even more importantly he studied and noted the structure and vocabulary of the language and closely observed the way of life and ancient culture of the people.

The anthropological information which follows is almost entirely taken from Taplin, and it can only be stated that while there is no way now of obtaining any incontestable proof that Taplin's information is correct, I personally feel that this assumption can be made with complete confidence. Where there is reliable evidence from

alternative sources, it invariably supports Taplin's assertions. Furthermore, he lived among the Ngarrindjeri for two decades and grew to know the people intimately. He had no particular 'barrow to push' as an anthropologist: on the other hand, he was dedicated to the truth, and although we may not agree with some of his interpretations and opinions, his observations and statements of fact may be accepted as being both honest and accurate.

Government: The nation of the Ngarrindjeri was divided into eighteen lakalinyerar (or tribes). Each lakalinyeri had its own closely defined territory and its own government called the Tendi. The various territories are now known only approximately — as they appear on the accompanying map — but they were certainly not approximate in pre-invasion times. Tindale, conducting his research in the 1930's, could only find traces of six of these lakalinyerar, and on his definitive 'tribal map of Australia' first published in 1940, only these six are shown: there is no reference at all to the nation itself. However, there is no reason to doubt that the writings of the earlier anthropologist are correct in placing the original number at eighteen, for when Taplin first went among the people in the late 1850's there were still many people who were able to describe to him exactly how the nation was constituted in the pre-invasion times which they remembered well. The Tendi of each lakalinyeri was also its high court and was thus the dispenser of justice as well as the

Government: (Cont.)

parliament. Men were elected democratically to sit on the Tendi, and the president, or rupulle, was in turn elected by that body. The Ngarrindjeri possessed a purely democratic form of government antedating the evolution of European democracy probably by thousands of years.

To discuss and settle matters which affected the nation as a whole (such as disagreements between two lakalinyerar) there was a grand or combined Tendi — a body which surprisingly enough, was still functioning in the 1870's. But the maximum amount of independence seems to have been allowed to the individual lakalinyeri, and Taplin's description of the nation as being a confederacy would appear to be an accurate one.

Livelihood: The Ngarrindjeri possessed a magnificent country which enabled them to settle in semi-permanent villages and to populate their area very densely for a hunting people. The dominant feature of their country was the Lower Murray and its lakes: and although they exploited the hinterland to the full, it was this great stretch of water that afforded them security in the form of food, clothing and other necessities of life. Even in times of severest drought, the Murray never dried up, and there were always fish in the lakes, and birds around their shores. Some of the lakalinyerar, such as the Ramindjeri, had the additional food sources of the sea

Livelihood: (Cont.)

which they also exploited. Perhaps the best illustration of the wealth and variety of the Ngarrindjeri food supply lies in the fact that twenty types of food were forbidden to young men, and thirteen types were forbidden to boys. This was because these particular animals, fish and birds were considered relatively easy to obtain, so were reserved for older less vigorous people. The law was also of conservationist intent, as it insured the perpetuation of the species. But it is indicative of the kind of resources that the Ngarrindjeri had at their disposal, that any such rule could exist which eliminated so many items from the diet of a substantial sector of the population. The Ngarrindjeri considered their young men and boys to be a sector of the utmost importance in the community — so we can be certain that there was plenty of other food for them. Nets were used extensively by the Ngarrindjeri for fishing and also for catching birds and certain animals. In addition the Ngarrindjeri employed lines, snares and various types of spears, boomerangs and clubs for specialized purposes. They were apparently excellent cooks, and Dr Ramsay Smith almost certainly had the Ngarrindjeri in mind when he wrote:

> He is more of an epicure than a gourmand.... One is struck by the very extensive knowledge displayed by the Aboriginal in the methods of preparing and cooking food. Cooking is certainly a fine art.[3]

Perhaps their most distinctive cooking operation was

Livelihood: (Cont.)

steaming — a process they were enabled to carry out because of their abundant water supplies. Taplin and other Europeans comment on the excellence of their culinary ability and I can personally attest to the efficacy of the Ngarrindjeri steaming oven in the preparation of meat and vegetables.

Clothes and Housing: The Ngarrindjeri built large, permanent (or semi-permanent) dwellings, some of which were capable of housing several families. They were soundly constructed of heavy, close-set logs rendered waterproof with grass and clay. George French Angas noted the superior quality of the Ngarrindjeri housing[4] which, when he visited the Colony in the early eighteen forties, was more substantial than many European habitations. At about the same time, Matthew Moorhouse gave some idea of the size of the Ngarrindjeri dwellings when he recorded that he came upon a little village of thirty or forty people living in three such structures.[5]

The clothing of the Ngarrindjeri was also of a superior nature, as the photographs show. The beautiful cloaks they wore were traditionally made of many small squares of possum skins, skilfully softened and then sewn together with kangaroo-tail sinews. Some groups also wove cloaks from certain types of seaweed.

Artefacts and Trade: The Ngarrindjeri were outstanding craftsmen in wood and leather, but their forte, as Taplin points out,

Artefacts and Trade: (Cont.)

was their basketry, netting and matting. The photograph on page 391 gives some idea of how highly developed these crafts were among the Ngarrindjeri: and indeed to this day, some highly Europeanized people of Ngarrindjeri descent still delight in producing mats and baskets using the ancient skills handed down over thousands of years. According to Taplin, the fish-nets of the Ngarrindjeri were superior to those made by Europeans at that time. The Ngarrindjeri manufactured canoes in the traditional River Murray pattern — out of sheets of bark hewn from the Eucalyptus camaldulensis (River Red Gum) tree. The canoes were a vital part in the economy of all River Murray peoples — and they also played a significant role culturally.

The two most lethal weapons of the Ngarrindjeri were the kaike and the yarnde. These were spears made with hardwood points about two feet long inserted into either the hollow stem of a yacca (in the case of the yarnde) or a reed (in the case of the kaike). The resulting weapon, when hurled from a taralye (or spear-thrower) was heavy enough in the head to be a most deadly missile, yet light enough in the shaft to enable it to be thrown over a considerable distance. Taplin once saw a man killed by such a spear at a distance of ninety yards — after the spear had already passed through the man's shield. From the point of view both of accuracy over a distance and rapidity of fire, the kaike and the yarnde were superior to

Artefacts and Trade: (Cont.)

the Brown Bess muskets used by the British in the 1830's: although with the development of better guns and rifles during the nineteenth century, this early superiority was short-lived.

Within the confederacy there was continual trading, as each lakalinyeri tended to concentrate on producing items which its natural resources best fitted it to make. But like all groups throughout the continent, the Ngarrindjeri also traded with other peoples. The River Murray itself was one of the several great trade routes that traversed the continent from coast to coast in pre-invasion days. Perhaps the most important item purchased by the Ngarrindjeri was the long, solid, hardwood spear (the wunde) which was imported from the Upper Murray. It was made from the myall tree which did not grow in their own country. And naturally enough, the cloaks, basketware and netting for which the Ngarrindjeri were famous, were the principal items of trade which they themselves had to offer.

Trading, like so many other aspects of Ngarrindjeri life, was conducted along highly regulated lines. Within the confederacy there was a custom called ngia-ngiampe, whereby two parents arranged that their children (each from a different lakalinyeri) would be trading partners. This in turn meant that they would be ngia-ngiampe for the rest of their days, and may not on any account speak to each other. The purpose of this was to enable the two

Artefacts and Trade: (Cont.)

lads, when they became adults, to conduct trade between their respective lakalinyerar. Because they had to conduct all their business through a third person, they were unable to arrange any shady deals with each other, to the detriment of the lakalinyeri as a whole. Like so many of the old Ngarrindjeri traditions, this custom was a highly practical one, and one that accepted human frailty for what it is.

Religion and Law: Although possibly not as steeped in spiritualism as certain desert peoples, the lives of the Ngarrindjeri were nevertheless dominated by religion. Only an unquestioning belief in the power of the supernatural could ensure the smooth-running and perpetuation of a society such as the Ngarrindjeri had evolved over the centuries: and this was the practical function of their religious dogma. The practice of ngia-ngiampe for instance, would not have worked if the two agents had not felt bound by religious principles to obey the law regarding their mutual estrangement, because there was no law-enforcement agency to make them keep the law. Thus we find on examination that most, if not all of the laws of the Ngarrindjeri, have a very practical and logical purpose, but that they are incorporated into the religion of the people. Parallels can be found for this elsewhere, such as in the Judaic and Islamic religions: and Dr Ramsay Smith illustrates the point by comparing the Mosaic Laws with the Aboriginal Laws (which he considers

superior) regarding systems of sanitation. These two series of laws both constitute highly practical hygiene measures, but are given religious rather than functional sanction in their respective cultures.[6] There is sound reasoning behind this. Firstly, the brilliant minds that developed such wise decrees in ancient times were aware of the fact that ordinary people could scarcely be expected to understand the logic and the experience acquired over centuries that went into the framing of each law. And secondly, with no physical way of enforcing the various regulations, it was essential that each person should feel obliged to carry them out at all times, no matter where he might be, for fear of the supernatural punishment he would suffer if the laws were disobeyed. This was really a much more effective way of ensuring that laws were adhered to than the modern European law enforcement method which relies on the physical presence of police, who obviously cannot be everywhere any of the time: the supernatural spirits are everywhere all the time. The Ngarrindjeri system apparently worked very well, for Taplin stated that they were originally a most law-abiding people — in fact the missionary felt that their lives were too highly organized by the ancient laws and regulations to which they adhered.

To ensure that sheer physical strength did not prevail over wisdom and justice, the Ngarrindjeri had also developed a system of sorcery which effectively kept the

nation's power in the hands of the elders. The young men, who were naturally the strongest and best fighters, were never likely to overthrow the government or to commit crimes with impunity or to take the law into their own hands, while the older, physically weaker men were deemed to have power over life and death by the use of specialized forms of sorcery such as millin, neilyeri and ngadhungi. Once again there is the clear link between religion and practical concern for an orderly and peaceful society: the Tendi and the elders as a whole were held in great respect, and the traditional way of life of the Ngarrindjeri does appear to have been a secure and relatively happy one.

Closely connected with maintaining the power of the elders and the use of sorcery, were the funeral rites of the Ngarrindjeri. These were complicated, and in some ways, rather repulsive: the bodies were raised on platforms — quite often in the huts where the people lived — and there they were basted over fires until the scarf skin could be removed and kept. Human excrement was daubed on the mourners, and the combination of this and the effluvium from the cooking bodies, produced a vile odour and probably a good deal of sickness. This practice was repugnant even to many of the younger Ngarrindjeri, and it is not surprising that it was among the first of the rites to be abandoned by the post-invasion generations. However distasteful funeral cere-

monies may appear from this point of time, they must nevertheless be seen in their proper perspective: They were the symbolic acknowledgement of the immortality of the soul and the ascendancy of spiritual power over physical power. The funeral rites were thus the ultimate link in the chain of practices which assured the authority and respect of the elders. Incidentally, this distinctive Ngarrindjeri custom of removing the scarf skin prior to the burial of a body gave rise to the term grinkari being used quite widely in South Australia as a pejorative for 'European'. Grinkari literally means a corpse with the scarf-skin removed, and since such corpses were pink — the same colour as Europeans — the Ngarrindjeri applied the term to the usurpers of their land.

The other most important ceremony performed by the Ngarrindjeri was the making of young men (or narumbar). The Ngarrindjeri were non-circumcising people (as distinct from most South Australian tribes, including their northern neighbours, the Kaurna) and in many ways the rites of passage to manhood were not as physically, emotionally and spiritually demanding as those of the more calvinistic people of the interior. A nice illustration of this difference is to be found in the comparison between the sexual restraints placed on the Ngarrindjeri and the Pitjantjatjara novices. Amongst the Pitjantjatjara, the young men (njinkas) must remain

<u>Religion and Law</u>: (Cont.)

strictly celibate, and in fact, eschew female contact altogether: on the other hand, the narumbar of the Ngarrindjeri were allowed and encouraged to commit what Taplin called 'unlimited whoredom' among the young women of their own lakalinyeri, during their noviciate. The period of Narumbe must nevertheless have been a most challenging time for the young Ngarrindjeri men undergoing it, even though they did not have to face circumcision, tooth avulsion and other mutilations, as practised elsewhere in the continent. Amongst other physical trials they had to survive were the ripping out of facial and cranial hair: remaining naked out in the bush for many weeks: and being deprived of food and water for lengthy periods. This was the time when the spoilt and carefree child 'died' and the new disciplined and responsible man was born: it was the beginning of the long hard road of adult social, spiritual and cultural education. The proper intitiation and training of the young men was of the utmost importance to the Ngarrindjeri, as the narumbar were the future backbone of the nation. So it is understandable that any interference with this educational process by a European was bound to cause a great deal of trouble: and it did.

<u>The Role of Women</u>: The Tendi, and in fact the whole structure of Ngarrindjeri civilization, is rightly described as <u>democratic</u>: but there is a qualification needed to the

effect that women were not enfranchised and had no direct say in the government. Yet it should be remembered that South Australia as a whole did not grant voting rights to women until 1894 — and this province's government was one of the first to do so anywhere in the world. By 1894 the nation of the Ngarrindjeri had been destroyed. In addition it should be observed that the Ngarrindjeri women did possess both economic and cultural independence: two fundamental freedoms which women's movements today are still striving to attain.

Unlike the intricate kinship systems common in the north and centre of the continent, the Ngarrindjeri practised a simple exogamous marriage system. The one basic rule was that a girl must marry outside her own lakalinyeri (but of course within the nation). From a woman's point of view this meant that she had to leave her own country and her own kinfolk and childhood friends, but the system had distinct advantages; two obvious ones being the avoidance of in-breeding, and the promotion of harmony between the various lakalinyerar. Just after parturition, and during the period of menstruation, men and boys were supposed to avoid women and even to refrain from eating from the same source of food as a woman who was kruwalde (menstruating). Taplin assumed that this custom was related to the Judaic concept of the 'uncleanness' of women, but later anthropological research shows that this was almost certainly incorrect. There

The Role of Women: (Cont.)

was no thought of any supposed 'uncleanness': on the contrary, the Aborigines deemed the parturition and menstrual blood to possess powerful spiritual qualities, and it was to be avoided for that reason.

Other Cultural Aspects: Much of what has already been discussed has impinged upon the culture of the Ngarrindjeri, for the whole existence of the people was religiously and culturally orientated. Of the more purely cultural activities, their dancing and singing should be mentioned. The Ngarrindjeri term for the combined opera and ballet was ringbalin — a typically onomatopoeic word from a poetic language. The chief instruments used were the tartengk (tap-sticks) and the plangge (a possum skin drum) and apparently a full performance of a ringbalin, involving male and female dancers and choirs, was a magnificent and moving spectacle. The beautiful singing of the Ngarrindjeri was noted early by the Europeans, and their love of music was carried over into their new culture in later years, when their adult and children's choirs gave performances in Adelaide and elsewhere in the State. As late as 1916, a visitor wrote of the Ngarrindjeri children:

> Their writing and drawing were particularly good. But it is in music they excel. — Their interpretation was perfect. — One may teach English children to sing softly, but the witchery of the native interpretation would be wanting.[7]

The Ngarrindjeri also loved sport, and played various

Other Cultural Aspects: (Cont.)

traditional games, including a brand of football, besides enjoying sporting aspects of the hunter's life.

As with singing, the changeover to European sports was a very simple one, and the Ngarrindjeri soon became competent footballers and cricketers.

Language and Manners: The Ngarrindjeri were proud of their beautiful language and most meticulous in its use. It would appear that other Aboriginal groups were also proud of their languages in much the same way, for T.G.H. Strehlow pointed out that the Arunta were fastidious in the usage of the Arunta tongue: and that they never abused the language or made grammatical mistakes (despite its complexity) as so many speakers of English do.[8]

Taplin wrote of the Ngarrindjeri:

> They possess a language which is remarkable for the complexity of its structure, the number of its inflections, and the precision with which it can be used.[9]

He went on to point out that the language possessed cases, inflexions and 'niceties of expression' which were not to be found in English.

The concern of the Ngarrindjeri for correct articulation and grammatical construction in language usage was paralleled by their strict adherence to a detailed code of ethics and etiquette. Taplin observed:

> Amongst themselves there is a great deal of a sort of courtesy. They live in their camps without much disagreement. Custom is rigidly observed, and this contributes to maintain peace amongst members of the tribe.[10]

The foregoing is an epitome of the way of life of the Ngarrindjeri, prior to the European invasion. Its sole purpose is to enable the reader to gain a better understanding of the people about whom the following history revolves. It should also help to explain why certain events took place and why people reacted to certain situations in the way they did.

One thing that has impressed itself most forcefully on my mind during my study of Ngarrindjeri anthropology (as distinct from their history) is that Australians today have a great deal to learn from this small nation which once owned and occupied one of the finest corners of the continent. The most outstanding example of their genius lies in their ability to live so richly and harmoniously with each other and with their land.

They were a truly classless society and had reached the apogee as far as refined egalitarian socialism is concerned. Yet if they had to be placed in any European class scale, their mode of life could only be compared with that of the old aristocracy. Their dedication to cultural pursuits — the ballet, music, opera and art: their enjoyment of pomp and ceremony: their strong adherence to ancient codes of chivalry and etiquette: the pleasure they derived from sports and hunting: their great personal courage, pride and independence: their insistence on the right of an initiated man to bear arms and for honour to be honourably defended: their epicurean approach to food: their honest acceptance of human passions and lack of hypocrisy regarding them. These and other aspects of Ngarrindjeri life find distinct parallels in the outlook and way of life of the European aristocracy. The great difference lay in the fact that in Ngarrindjeri society, <u>everyone</u> was an aristocrat. The Ngarrindjeri

showed the world that it was possible for socialism and the aristocratic life-style to be married harmoniously, and for life to be a rich cultural and creative experience — without servants; and without masters.

INTRODUCTION FOOTNOTES

[1]Cotton, B.D. (ed): Aboriginal Man in South and Central Australia Adelaide, S.A.Govt, 1966 pp.9,10.

[2]Ibid. p.23.

[3]Smith W. Ramsay: The Aborigines of Australia Reprinted from the Official Year Book of the Commonwealth No 3 1909 pp.10,11.

[4]Worsnop, Thomas: The Aborigines of Australia Adelaide, S.A. Govt, 1897 p.77.

[5]S.A.A. GRG 24/1 18 December 1840 Moorhouse to Hall.

[6]Smith p.16.

[7]Article by F.T. Lake in The Australian Christian Commonwealth 9 June 1916 p.13.

[8]Advertiser 2 May 1936 and 9 May 1936.

[9]Taplin, George: The Narrinyeri 1873 Reprinted in Natives Tribes of South Australia Adelaide, E.S. Wigg, 1879 p.119.

[10]Ibid. p.9.

Note: Most of the anthropological information included in the introduction is taken from The Narrinyeri: the other major source being: Taplin, George: Folklore, Manners, Customs and Languages of the South Australian Aborigines. Adelaide, S.A. Govt, 1879.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

A few Ngarrindjeri words have been used throughout this thesis, in cases where there is no precise English equivalent, or where the Ngarrindjeri has seemed more appropriate. In these cases, I have also employed the Ngarrindjeri suffixes to denote plurals, e.g. lakalinyeri (singular) lakalinyerar (plural). The meanings of these few words are as follows:

grinkari: European.

kaingani: (see narumbe)

lakalinyeri: a large clan or small tribe. All members of a lakalinyeri considered themselves to be as of one family: e.g. all men behaved as a father would to all children: all children were deemed to be as brothers and sisters: all adults considered themselves as brothers and sisters within the lakalinyeri.

nape: (pronounced narpay): spouse.

narumbe: the sacred period in a young man's life when he undertakes the rites of passage to manhood. A novice was called a narumbe or kaingani.

millin: a type of sorcery in which the victim was also hit with a special club — the plongge (usually very gently, but not always.)

ringbalin: an opera-cum-ballet.

rupulle: an elected leader and president of the tendi.

tendi: a democratically elected body which governed each lakalinyeri. There was also a grand tendi which governed the nation as a whole. The tendi combined the powers of a parliament with those of a high court. The word tendi was also used metaphorically to mean judgment.

Some Ngarrindjeri words have been Anglicized and where this has been done, I have normally adopted the use of the original. The most obvious example of this is the name of the nation itself. By the time Taplin came among the people, the English, who had difficulty in coping with certain consonants — particularly the Ng sound — were

calling the nation and language Narrinyeri, and on occasion writing it as such. Taplin went along with this practice, but since the people today are adamant that this is incorrect, and much prefer the proper spelling and pronunciation, I have adhered to the original except when quoting Taplin.

Europeans have also Anglicized a number of Ngarrindjeri names of places and people. Their commonest error is to stress the second rather than the first syllable in words: thus Towadjeri has become Tawicherie: Kropindjeri has become Kropinyeri and so on, just as Ngarrindjeri became Narrinyeri. One such name which appears frequently in the following pages is Ngunaitponi. This was Anglicized in Taplin's time to Unaipon, but Taplin himself uses both forms. Thus, in quotations from Taplin, either spelling may appear, but in the body of the thesis, I have employed only the original. In an article printed in the Daily Herald of 1 June 1914, David Ngunaitponi (James Ngunaitponi's son) stated that the name should be spelt with the initial Ng (although he seems not to have insisted upon this, and signed his name in the Anglicized way): and his nephew, Telford, the last surviving descendant to bear the family surname, also advised me in 1973 that the name ought to be spelt in its original, correct form. Accordingly I have used that spelling throughout the thesis except where direct quotations include the corrupted form.

THE MILMENRURA (or Milmenroora)

It will be noticed that this group of people, who played an important role in the early days of the European invasion of South Australia, are not mentioned on the map. Taplin does not list the Milmenrura as being among the lakalinyerar of the Ngarrindjeri, and gives the following explanation on page 34 of Folklore:

> The Coorong clans of the Narrinyeri were called in the early days of the colony the "Milmenroora Tribe". The writer recently inquired of some Coorong blacks if they bore this name: they replied that many years ago the clan dwelling on the Coorong near McGrath's Flat was called "Milmenroora" but that now they were called "Milmenyeriam". This is an instance of change of name. The natives seemed much astonished when the name "Milmenroora" was uttered: they regarded it as a sort of resurrection of an old name.

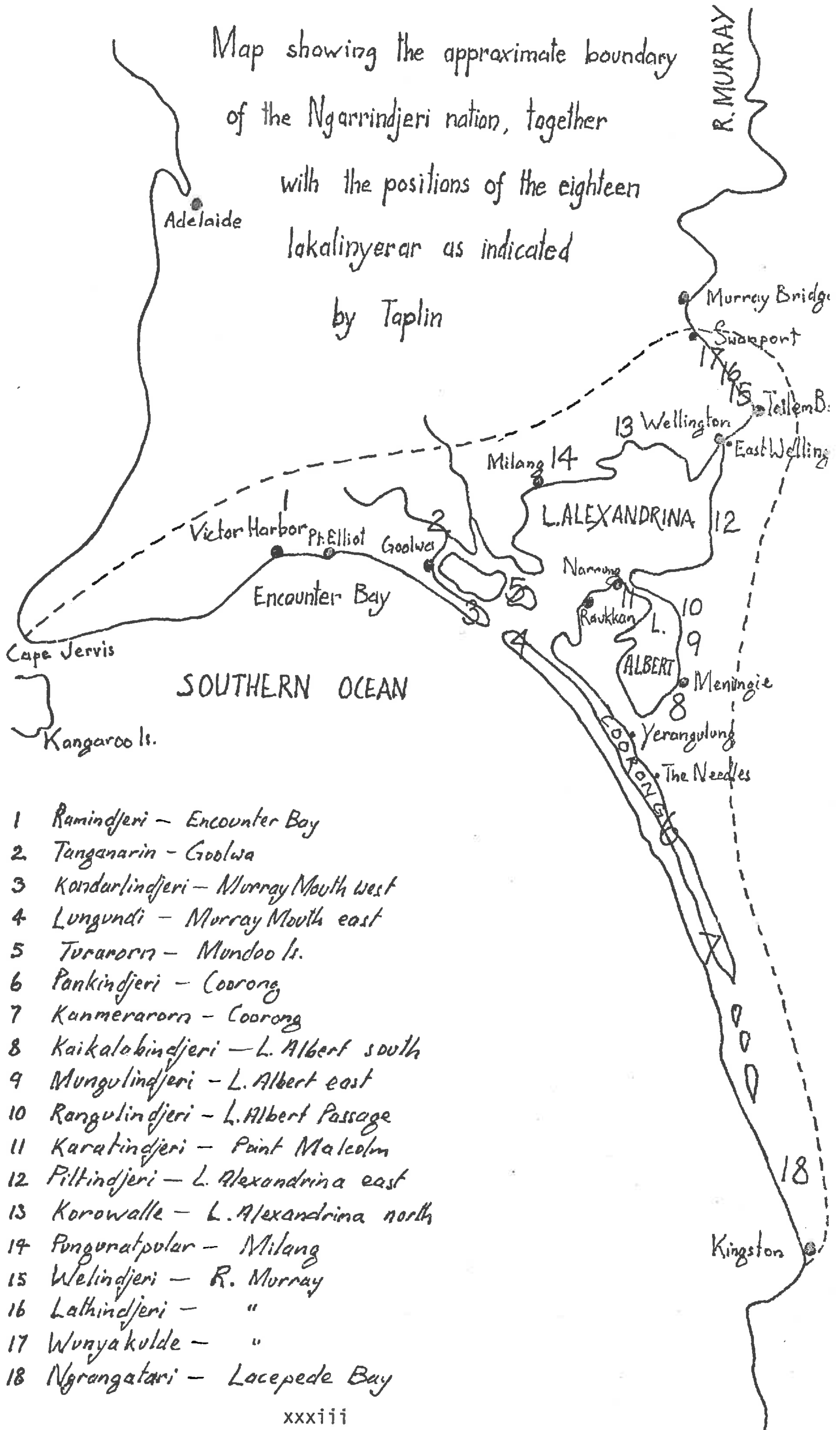
But this is not a satisfactory explanation, for Taplin does not include the Milmenyeriam in his list of lakalinyerar: the two Coorong groups which he mentions are: the Pankindjeri and the Kanmerarorn. One possible explanation is that these two lakalinyerar, plus the Ngrangatari of Lacepede Bay, all went under the loose title of the Milmenroora, as they had a geographical area and a dialect of Ngarrindjeri in common. There was at least one other major dialect of the Ngarrindjeri language, called Potauwallin, which was spoken by the lakalinyerar such as the Piltindjeri who lived north of Lake Alexandrina and along the Murray. In the early days of the colony these people were referred to by Gawler and others as a 'tribe', just as they referred to the Milmenroora as a 'tribe'. The explanation that suggests itself to me is that the term 'Milmenroora' was used by the Ramindjeri (with whom the Europeans were in close touch) to describe the people of the three Coorong lakalinyerar, and the dialect of Ngarrindjeri which these people spoke. When the Ramindjeri 'disappeared' — and there were hardly any left by the time Taplin was

The Milmenrura (or Miomenroora) Cont.

writing — the term 'Milmenroora' vanished with them.

CONVENTION

Throughout the thesis I have adopted the convention of spelling Aborigines with a capital A, in accordance with current accepted practice.


Map showing the approximate boundary of the Ngarrindjeri nation, together with the positions of the eighteen lakalinyerar as indicated by Taplin
R. MURRAY
Adelaide
Murray Bridg
Swanport
Tailem B.
13 Wellington
East Welling
Milang 14
L.ALEXANDRINA
12
1
Victor Harbor
Pt. Elliot
Goolwa
2
Encounter Bay
3
4
5
Narrung
Raukkan
11
L.
ALBERT
10
9
Meningie
8
Cape Jervis
SOUTHERN OCEAN
Kangaroo Is.
COORONG
Yerangulung
The Needles
6
7
17
16
15
18
Kingston
1 Ramindjeri – Encounter Bay
2 Tanganarin – Goolwa
3 Kondarlindjeri – Murray Mouth west
4 Lungundi – Murray Mouth east
5 Turarorn – Mundoo Is.
6 Pankindjeri – Coorong
7 Kanmerarorn – Coorong
8 Kaikalabindjeri – L. Albert south
9 Mungulindjeri – L. Albert east
10 Rangulindjeri – L. Albert Passage
11 Karatindjeri – Point Malcolm
12 Piltindjeri – L. Alexandrina east
13 Korowalle – L. Alexandrina north
14 Punguratpular – Milang
15 Welindjeri – R. Murray
16 Lathindjeri – "
17 Wunyakulde – "
18 Ngrangatari – Lacepede Bay

PREFACE

The European invasion of South Australia officially began in 1836, but the Ngarrindjeri had been in contact with certain Europeans for about twenty years previously. This contact was with sealers and escaped convicts, who established themselves on Kangaroo Island, and was of a decidedly unfriendly nature[1]. Other visitors to their lands included the explorers Charles Sturt, in 1830, and Collet Barker, the following year[2]. Sturt had been most impressed with the waterways and the country of the Ngarrindjeri[3], and his favourable reports were instrumental in convincing a group of English capitalists that a scheme to colonize South Australia presented attractive prospects for investment.

Concurrent with Sturt's epic voyage down the Murray, the first of the devastating effects of the European migration to this continent was also wending its way down that ancient trade route. This was in the form of a smallpox pandemic which, when it reached the country of the Ngarrindjeri, swept the people off by hundreds, and ensured that by the time the official invasion began about six years later, the nation was very seriously depleted in numbers[4].

The Act for the establishment of South Australia was passed by the British Government in 1834; but, due to various delays (including the concern of the Colonial Secretary for Aboriginal land rights), the first colonists did not leave England until 1836. The Colonial Secretary, Lord Glenelg, was justified in his concern for the Aborigines of South Australia, but his efforts to afford them some protection, by stating their rights to the land in the Letters Patent, proved completely ineffectual. The Foundation Act of 1834 did not mention Aborigines, but declared that all South Australian

land was 'waste and unoccupied'[5]: and it was the Act, rather than the Letters Patent, which was the superior document[6]. By passing the Foundation Act in 1834, the British Government expropriated the lands of the Ngarrindjeri and all other South Australian Aborigines; and abrogated the laws which had governed the people since time immemorial.

It was the Ramindjeri — the people who owned the country around Encounter Bay — who bore the brunt of the European invasion as far as the Ngarrindjeri were concerned. They adapted very quickly to the new regime thrust upon them; and they participated competently in whaling operations, in farming, and in pastoral pursuits[7]. Unfortunately, they also suffered grieviously from diseases introduced by Europeans (particularly venereal diseases); and in the course of a few years, they were practically annihilated[8]. The other lakalinyerar were affected in differing degrees, depending upon the closeness of their relationship with Europeans, but they were all on the same disastrous path by the late eighteen fifties. The shootings, hangings and poisonings which they suffered at the hands of the Europeans[9] were of minor importance when compared with the destructive effects of the expropriation of land, and the introduction of exotic diseases[10].

Most Europeans in contact with Aborigines were concerned principally with exploiting them — sexually, economically, or in some other way — but the Ngarrindjeri nevertheless acquired a few valuable European friends during the early years of colonization. Dr Richard Penny, for instance, had established himself at Encounter Bay by 1840, and worked hard for the restoration of the people's health until he was retrenched by Governor Grey's economic pruning in the following year[11]. H.E.A. Meyer (one of the four Dresden

missionaries who arrived in 1838 and 1840) commenced his efforts to establish a school at Encounter Bay in 1841[12]. Meyer worked among the Ramindjeri for the next seven years, until he too was forced to leave for economic reasons[13]. But Meyer and Penny were exceptions: most Europeans were too busy accumulating money or acquiring property to be concerned about the fate of the people they had dispossessed.

By the eighteen fifties, the policy of assimilating the Aborigines, which had been espoused by the first governors, the Dresden missionaries and the first permanent Protector, had proved to be substantially a failure: the ancient civilization had shown greater resilience than had been anticipated. Matthew Moorhouse, the Protector, was disillusioned with the whole approach[14], and in 1850, he supported Archdeacon Hale's proposal to establish Poonindie Mission (near Port Lincoln) on segregationist principles[15]. A mere twenty years after the European invasion began, the Aboriginal people throughout the entire temperate area of the colony had been so reduced in numbers that, with Moorhouse's approval, the Government abolished his position.[16] It was assumed that the extinction of the race was inevitable, and that the only thing open to question was how soon this would eventuate.

By abandoning the Protectorate in 1856, the Government practically abnegated its responsibilities to the original owners of the colony. But it was at this stage that a few European consciences were stirred by the suffering and rapid decline of this once proud people. And in the following year, a body to be known as the Aborigines' Friends' Association was formed in Adelaide: this body was to effect the lives of the Ngarrindjeri throughout the following century.

FOOTNOTES

1. Moore, N.P. 'Notes of the Early Settlers in South Australia Prior to 1836'. Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australia (S.A. Branch). 1923. pp.81-135.

2. Price, A. Grenfell: The Foundation and Settlement of South Australia 1829-1845. Adelaide; F.W. Preece, 1924. p.18.

3. Fitzpatrick, Kathleen (ed) Australian Explorers. London; Oxford University Press, 1958. pp.120-125.

4. Stirling, E.C. Preliminary Report on the Discovery of Native Remains at Swanport, River Murray. Reprinted from Transactions of the Royal Society of S.A. vol xxxv, 1911.

5. 4 & 5 William IV Cap 95 (1834) — preamble.

6. Letter to the author from Professor A.C. Castles, 25 Nov., 1974.

7. S.A.A. GRG 24/1 1842/65.
S.A.A. GRG 24/1 1841/363.
See also: Hassell, Kathleen: The Relations Between the Settlers and Aborigines in South Australia 1836-1860. Adelaide; Libraries Board of S.A., 1966. p.135. and: S.A.A. /1291 Conigrave, Sarah: 'Reminiscences of Mrs. John Fairfax Conigrave' Chapter entitled 'The Blacks'.

8. Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, South Australian Branch. Volume xxii. Session 1920-21. Presidential Address.

9. Appendices I & III give some idea of the violence of the times and the vulnerability of Aboriginal people. See also: Papers Relative to South Australia. pp.267-309.
S.A.A. GRG 24/1 1845/116
Hassell, pp.101-114
Hodder, E. The History of South Australia. London; Sampson, Low & Marston, 1893. p.153.

10. Wilkinson, G.B. South Australia, its advantages and resources, being a description of the colony and a manual of information for immigrants. London; John Murray, 1848. p.322.

11. Hodge, C.R. Encounter Bay — The Miniature Naples of Australia. Adelaide: 1932. p.50.

12. S.A.A. GRG 24/1 1841/688 Moorhouse to Colonial Secretary, Letter dated 25 September 1841.

13. Meyer produced the first two books written about the Ngarrindjeri:
Vocabulary of the language spoken by the Aborigines of the southern and eastern portions of South Australia, preceded by a grammar. Published in 1843, and:
Manners and customs of the Aborigines of the Encounter Bay tribe: South Australia. Published in 1846.
Both of these works are slight, but they were a useful starting point.

14. As early as 1841, Moorhouse had pointed out the inherent iniquities in the assimilationist approach of treating Aborigines as 'equal' British subjects. See Appendix II.

15. C.S.O. 1346/1850.

16. Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council upon the Aborigines. S.A.P.P. No 165 1860 p.94.

    Hassell Kathleen The Relations Between the Settlers and Aborigines in South Australia 1836-1860 Adelaide Libraries Board of South Australia 1966. pp.156-157.

CHAPTER I. ENTER THE A.F.A.

The preliminary meetings in 1857 which led to the formation of the Aborigines' Friends' Association, were dominated by Protestant clergymen; and throughout its long history, the religious factor has been of the utmost importance in determining its attitudes and its courses of action. Even today its meetings begin with prayer and Bible readings, and much of its concern is with the propagation of the Gospel amongst Aboriginal people.

Nevertheless, the motivation behind these first meetings was humanitarian as well as religious, and this was to set the pattern through the ensuing decades. The first resolution ever passed by the nascent group was to the effect:

> That in the opinion of this meeting, some further efforts should be made with a view to ameliorate the physical and spiritual welfare of the Aboriginal inhabitants of this colony.[1]

And although this resolution was passed before the A.F.A. was officially founded, it expresses the aims which the Association was to attempt to implement for the next hundred years.

No doubt many of those who actively participated in the foundation of the A.F.A. were concerned by the Government's apparent abnegation of its responsibilities to the Aborigines, evinced by the abolition of the protectorate in the previous year. Although it was still subsidizing Poonindie Mission at this stage, and maintaining two sub-protectors, this seemed to be the limit of Government aid to Aborigines by mid 1857, apart from issuing a very meagre supply of rations and blankets to some of those in the settled areas. One of the first actions that the A.F.A. took was to remind the Government of its responsibilities; and here again a pattern was set, for the

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Association was to become a pressure group of some significance with influence over both state and national governments, in subsequent years.

After a private preliminary meeting at Trinity School Room, an advertisement was placed in the Register advising the public of a meeting to be held in the same place at three o'clock on the 28 July 1857, and requesting the attendance of 'Persons interested in the Welfare of the Aborigines.'[2] The time set for this meeting naturally excluded a great many people, and the composition of the first committee is scarcely surprising. It included the Bishop, the Dean and the Archdeacon plus nine other clergymen, in a committee of twenty one.[3] This group called itself The Aborigines Amelioration Committee.

At least one person who attended this first historically important meeting disapproved of the private nature of the gathering, as well as its venue. A Mr Moulden, after attacking the inefficient and supine efforts made thus far for the Aborigines, went on to say that:

> he felt that it was a subject in which every Christian colonist was morally bound to feel an interest, and that every man of whatever denomination, whether rich or poor, should have had the opportunity of being present at such a meeting.[4]

It was pointed out to Mr Moulden that Trinity School Room was used simply because it was free, and to show that the meeting was not an Anglican conspiracy, Bishop Short stepped down from the chair to allow Hon George Fife Angas to take his place.[5] In a way this was a symbolic act, for although the Church of England never lost interest in The A.F.A., and some of the Association's leading figures have

been of that denomination, yet the controlling power has, for most of the time, been held by 'non-comformist' clergymen. A further indication of things to come was given at the meeting when Mr S. Goode read a letter from his son who lived at Goolwa and who described the condition of the Aborigines there: from the very first meeting, the attention of the founders of the Association was thus drawn to the particular needs of some of the Ngarrindjeri.

The Aborigines Amelioration Committee appointed at this meeting was given the task of enquiring into 'the present condition of the Aborigines', and to this effect they prepared and printed a questionnaire, which they circulated to certain selected settlers in various parts of the Colony. The Committee sought information in the areas of population, employment and remuneration; availability of food, clothing and grog; and educational opportunities, medical care, and fairness of treatment.[6]

The Committee met regularly — at least once a month — in the South Australian Company's Offices. At the second meeting, in September 1857, a letter from Mr George Taplin was read and received, but no further reference was made to it in the minutes. Also at that meeting, a sub-committee was appointed to prepare a memorial to be presented to the newly-established House of Assembly.[7] Mr Hanson, a member of the House, was voted onto the Committee and was asked to present the memorial. However, at his suggestion, a letter was presented to the Chief Secretary by a special deputation sent for that purpose on 14 December 1857. The principles incorporated in this letter were; firstly, that there should be itinerating agencies among the Aborigines; secondly, that the agents should be responsible for

both spiritual and temporal welfare; and thirdly, that the agents should be responsible to a Board.

It is surprising to see how much traditional A.F.A. policy was established in these early days by the A.A.C., and to realize how consistent the Association has been in maintaining so many of its ideals over the years. This third principle, for instance, remained one of its major aims; and the A.F.A. kept pressing for its adoption, until it was finally successful — eighty years later!

On 14 December 1857, a deputation from the Aboriginies Amelioration Committee comprising Bishop Short, Mr C.B. Young (the honorary secretary) and four others, waited upon the Chief Secretary with their letter. They had to wait until February of the following year to receive a reply, which came from the Commissioner of Crown Lands. But when it came, the A.A.C. were sufficiently encouraged to have extracts from it reprinted in the Observer on six separate occasions. These paragraphs were to the effect that the Crown Lands Department (which was entrusted with the welfare of Aborigines) was prepared to reimburse any settlers who issued flour or blankets to Aborigines 'in those districts which may lie too remote to be served from the Government depots...', and was also willing to remunerate medicos 'for their attendance on natives seriously sick.'[8] Other moves taken by the A.A.C. at this time included attempts to have The Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments translated into various Aboriginal languages; an effort to obtain a private report on the functioning of Poonindie; and enquiries to ascertain the number of Aboriginal children likely to attend a school at Goolwa.[9]

Mr George Allen of Goolwa was appointed the A.A.C.'s agent

in that district, and his principle role was to 'relieve distress' amongst the Aborigines, by distributing rations and blankets to those in 'extreme destitution'. Under the terms of the Commissioner of Crown Lands' letter, the Government was prepared to reimburse the A.A.C. for all such gifts to necessitous Aborigines,[10] so that members were not in any way being put out of pocket. Nevertheless, by carrying out the actual distribution of food and blankets to those in dire need, the Committee was achieving what the Government apparently could not be bothered undertaking.

The Rev A.R. Russell, who played a prominent role in the A.A.C., made his own inspection of the situation at Goolwa, and reported that the Ngarrindjeri there were in a 'miserable' state.[11] A deputation to the Commissioner of Crown Lands was therefore organized, and an assurance was obtained from the Commissioner 'that a medical man would be communicated with on the subject of some assistance being rendered to the sick.'[12] The Commissioner also told the deputation that 'ample supplies either had been, or were about to be forwarded to different parts of the Colony.[13]

It will thus be seen that if it did nothing else, the A.A.C. awoke the Government to the plight of the Aborigines, and particularly to the desperate situation in which the Ngarrindjeri near Goolwa found themselves to be. But the next move was of a very different nature. At the Committee meeting of 5 August 1858 it was resolved that since reports indicated that there were between thirty and forty children of school-going age in the neighbourhood of the Goolwa, a move should be made to establish a school in that vicinity for Aboriginal children. The public was to be appealed to for a

capital sum of five hundred pounds to build the school and hire a teacher, and the Government was to be approached to provide food and clothing for the intended scholars.[14]

In order to involve the public to the extent of raising five hundred pounds, it was decided:

> That a Public meeting of the friends of the Aborigines be called to receive the Report of the Committee and to consider their future course of procedure relative to the natives.[15]

A new society was to be formed, and as might have been expected, the general public were to be given notice of the first meeting through the church pulpits.[16]

During the previous month, it had been decided that the committee should 'assume the title of The Aborigines' Friends' Association'.[17] This made no difference at all to the functioning of the A.A.C., and the reason for the change is not stated in the minutes. But the new body to be formed was to adopt this more positive title from the beginning. The inaugural meeting of the new society was held on 31 August 1858 at Green's Exchange, 65 King William Street, under the chairmanship of the Governor, Sir Richard Graves MacDonnell; who also agreed to become the patron. It was resolved:

> That a society be now formed, to be called the Aborigines' Friends' Association, whose object shall be the moral, spiritual and physical well-being of the natives of this Province.[18]

This aim differs very little from that espoused by the then disbanded A.A.C. And the newly elected A.F.A. Committee, apart from a healthy boost in the proportion of laymen, also closely resembled the old Aborigines Amelioration Committee.

Thus it will be seen that the strategy adopted by the A.A.C.

was successful. By forming the new society, they had given themselves a wider, more public base which could call upon all kindly disposed citizens for support: yet at the same time, the Committee — the decision-making body with the power — was still more or less in the same clerical hands.

The new Committee apparently carried on exactly as before. C.B. Young was still the secretary (pro tem) and George Allen was still the agent in the Goolwa district — although both were to resign not long after the changeover.

One of the first things the A.F.A. Committee did was to present a memorial to the Government requesting that funds which were held for the purpose of assisting Aborigines, should be made available to the A.F.A. to enable it to implement its programme. In particular, the A.F.A. wished to have Government support for its plan to build a mission and school in the vicinity of the Goolwa.[19] For this purpose the Committee hoped that Parliament would grant them five hundred pounds.

A deputation was sent to Goolwa in search of a suitable site for the proposed institution, but apparently their report was unsatisfactory, for it was resolved at the Committee meeting of 24 January 1859 that a Missionary Agent should be appointed 'with a view to fixing upon the best site for the proposed Native institution.'[20] Advertisements were issued calling for applications for the post, and at the next monthly meeting — that of 1 March 1859 — the sub-committee entrusted with the task of selection recommended Mr George Taplin of Pt. Elliot.[21] Taplin was duly appointed at a salary of £200 p.a., which included payment for his wife's services

when required.[22] This was quite a reasonable sum for those days.

George Taplin commenced his twenty years of service to the A.F.A. and the Ngarrindjeri in 4 April 1859, by setting out on the horse supplied for his use by the Association, to look for a suitable site for the proposed mission.[23]

Of all the Europeans who have influenced the course of Ngarrindjeri history since the 1820's, there is none that can even be compared with George Taplin when the effect of their work is assessed. This is not to belittle the very considerable achievements of men like Ambrose Redman in later years: but it is a fact that had there been no George Taplin in the 1860's there would probably have been no Mission and very few Ngarrindjeri survivors left for Redman to work with at the turn of the century. Today there are hundreds of people in various districts through out the State who are descended from the Ngarrindjeri and who are proud of it. This is a very singular circumstance, for almost all other such nations and tribes who inhabited what came to be closely settled districts, were annihilated many years ago. Some of the factors contributing to the remarkable survival of the Ngarrindjeri have been previously discussed, but the role played by George Taplin in this regard can scarcely be over-estimated. It is therefore appropriate that we should at this stage have a brief look at the man himself and his own history up to the time of his employment by the A.F.A. in 1859.

George Taplin was born at Kingston on Thames, Surrey, England on 14 August 1831. At the age of twelve he was sent to live with his maternal Grandfather in Andover, Hampshire, and was educated there in a private school. His father died when he was

fourteen. When he was sixteen, he entered a solicitor's office at Andover, as a clerk; and two years later Taplin left England for South Australia, departing from London in June 1849.

He was brought up as a congregationalist, and from a very early age, George Taplin was a committed Christian. He joined a congregation in Andover at the age of fifteen, and even at this stage he had a desire to become an overseas missionary. His religious convictions were to be the major driving and sustaining force throughout his life.

Taplin arrived in Adelaide in October 1849, and after working as a labourer for a few months, he obtained a position in a lawyer's office — again as a clerk. In June 1851, however, he was offered a chance to study for the ministry by the Rev T.Q. Stow — Adelaide's leading Congregational minister of the day. Taplin accepted this opportunity, and went to live in the Stow household, studying by night, and working in Stow's garden by day in lieu of payment for board and lodging. He did not, however, reach ordination at this stage.

Mr. Stow had a servant called Martha Burnell — a girl who was also filled with missionary zeal. On 18 February 1853, Taplin and Martha Burnell were married by Stow, and in October of that year they left Adelaide, first to live for a short time at Currency Creek, and later to settle at Port Elliot, where, in February 1854, Taplin opened a school. When the Board of Education took over, Taplin remained as their teacher and held that post until appointed Missionary Agent of the A.F.A. in 1859. Throughout his years at Port Elliot, Taplin was a very active preacher in the district, and

he also took a keen interest in the Ngarrindjeri people who lived in that area.[24]

It is clear that George Taplin had a great concern for Aborigines, and particularly their spiritual welfare, from the time that he landed in Australia. His application to become the A.F.A.'s missionary agent was certainly not made on a whim, and neither did Taplin develop a sudden interest in Aborigines to take advantage of the offer made by the A.F.A. Rather, the advertisement in the papers must have seemed to Taplin more like the opening to serve both God and man, for which he had been preparing himself all his adult life.

The earliest Taplin document still extant is a letter dated 18 February 1851, written from Hindmarsh to his 'dearly Beloved Teacher' in England.[25] The entire letter of some three thousand words is devoted to a description of the first 'Public Meeting of the South Australian Native Missionary Society' held at the Hindmarsh Independent Chapel on the previous day. The subject was the need for missionary work among the Aborigines, and Taplin was greatly inspired and impressed by the proceedings. Young Aborigines read passages from the Bible, and answered questions. Matthew Moorhouse spoke and moved a resolution to the effect that the Church should do all in its power to 'disseminate the knowledge of the gospel', and young George Taplin could not have agreed more completely. The South Australian Native Missionary Society seems to have become defunct not long after it was formed, but there can be no doubting that its ideals and its enthusiasm were to remain with Taplin to the end of his days. He was particularly delighted by the way in which

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the ten Aboriginal children conducted themselves and spoke about the Bible, and he expressed the opinion that English children had much to learn from them. On the other hand, Taplin was very disappointed that only two ministers bothered to attend.

> How awful to think that even Christians can coldly look on their wretched conditions and say it is no use to spend our time and money on these black fellows. They can never learn. No. No! I do think that we who by the Providence of God are placed among them, and have any means of doing good to them, will be accountable to a great measure for their blood.[26]

Thus it can be seen that Taplin, at the age of nineteen, was already keenly aware of the role that Christians ought to have been playing in respect to the original inhabitants; and the foundation of the A.F.A. eight years later was to become the means by which he was enabled to put his long-held principles into practice.

By far the most important resolution passed by the A.F.A. Committee at its meeting of 16 March 1859 was the first one, which appointed George Taplin (then aged twenty seven) as the Missionary Agent. But from an historian's viewpoint, the fourth resolution passed at that meeting was also of great significance, for it instructed Taplin 'to keep a daily journal of his proceedings, forwarding a copy of it occasionally to the Committee.'[27] Taplin was to keep this journal faithfully for over twenty years, and it is now a document of immense value in the study of Ngarrindjeri history. It begins:

> 4 April 1859. This day I began my mission to the Aborigines. Was occupied the greater part of the day in making preparations to enable me to take a journey to the Lower Murray and Lakes. I bought my horse today of Mr John Higgins of Encounter Bay. Price £15.[28]

And there, quietly enough, begins what were to be twenty years of

ceaseless struggle, hard work, disappointment — and remarkable achievement.

Taplin's first task was to select a site for the proposed mission, and in making this vital decision, he had the benefit of the advice of George Mason, who was the sub-protector at Wellington — also in the country of the Ngarrindjeri. Taplin and Mason were two very different men, whose approaches to the Ngarrindjeri were in many ways diametrically opposed. But Mason always appears to have been willing to assist Taplin, and it was he who first recommended the traditional camp-site of Raukkan ('the ancient way'), on the shores of Lake Alexandrina, as being ideal for the establishment of a mission. This area was known to Europeans as Point McLeay.[29]

On inspecting the site, Taplin agreed with Mason:

> ...I examined the place narrowly; I found the land was good, with plenty of limestone and sand, and good water. The landing place is good. In fact I find that this place possesses every requisite for the institution. The only question is whether there is a better. I do not think so. If we go nearer the Coorong, we shall be out of reach of Mason's blacks. This is near the boundary of the tribes: is easily accessible, and is much frequented by the natives.[30]

There is a story sometimes recounted by Europeans today, that Taplin met with hostility from some of the Ngarrindjeri when he stepped ashore at Raukkan and began to select his site. But this, along with the legend that a spear went through his hat, is quite apocryphal, and probably arose from confusion over some later minor incidents in Taplin's life. On the contrary, the only opposition to the establishment of the Point McLeay Mission came from Europeans who felt their vested interests to be threatened. Those of the Ngarrindjeri who took any notice at all, seemed to welcome the move

by this unassuming grinkari to offer them assistance. Since 1847, when Meyer's school for the Ngarrindjeri at Encounter Bay had closed,[31] they had virtually been deprived of the opportunity to become literate, yet it is clear that many realized how valuable the acquisition of this skill could be, in the new order which had been forced upon them.

News of the proposed new institution must have spread very rapidly. The Journal entry for 5 & 6 April 1859 includes the following passage:

> A native met me in the township today, and asked me if it was true that I was going to have a native school. I answered "Yes" and asked him if he could read. He replied that he knew his letters and expressed a very earnest desire to learn more. I found during a long conversation I had with him, that he walked from Yankalilla, a distance of 20 miles, apparently for the purpose of obtaining information about the school. He speaks excellent English.[32]

So much for Ngarrindjeri opposition. Later on there was to be disagreement and conflict caused by profound religious and moral differences inherent in the two cultures. Even at this early stage, it is clear that there is a distinct divergence of motivation; for Taplin saw schooling as simply a means to an end — that end being conversion to Christianity — while the Ngarrindjeri viewed literacy as the keystone supporting the whole arch of European civilization. But though the aims of teacher and potential learner were not identical (and is this ever the case?) it is nevertheless true that the proposal to establish a school was welcomed by the Ngarrindjeri.

It is necessary to bear in mind that at this stage (1859) there was a wide variety of conditions in which various groups and individual members of the Ngarrindjeri found themselves to be. The

Ramindjeri, for instance, were by this time almost completely 'de-tribalised,' and many of them (such as the 'Larry' just mentioned) were adopting European culture and language. On the other hand, there were many whose country had been less closely settled by Europeans, and who were able to maintain the old traditions, government, culture and language fairly well intact. The older people, wherever they were situated, seemed to have been steadfastly defending the ancient culture, while the younger were attracted to some aspects of the new. There was also considerable diversity in material well-being amongst the Ngarrindjeri at the time when Taplin was establishing Point McLeay, and this too was principally influenced by the differing patterns of European settlement. At Goolwa, the remnants of the Tanganarin lakalinyeri were in such a chronic state of destitution that it was they who first attracted the attention of the A.F.A. to the Ngarrindjeri country. But others, such as the Piltindjeri who had owned the country around Wellington, seemed to be entering quite profitably into the spirit of capitalism, and were making a comfortable living from fishing and bird catching.[33]

However, an overall picture of the nation of the Ngarrindjeri at this time must be a gloomy one. Describing their situation a few years later, Taplin says:

> Their country has been occupied, and the game nearly exterminated. The reeds of which they used to build their houses, and the grass on which they used to sleep, have in many cases been made useless to them. The skins with which they used to make rugs, and the bark with which they made canoes, have been almost destroyed. Their present condition, therefore, is not to be taken as a fair representation of what they were in their natural state; and we must not expect to find amongst their broken and scattered tribes many of those good qualities which they used to possess as savages.[34]

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This description was written in 1873, but it would have applied accurately to the condition of most of the lakalinyerar in 1859, when Taplin began his work amongst the Ngarrindjeri.

Naturally, it was the groups of Ngarrindjeri whose property was situated near to Raukkan, with whom Taplin first came into close contact, and who came to constitute the nucleus of the stable population of the Mission. These people seem to have been somewhere near the mean point, both in geographical terms and in relation to the amount they had been affected by Europeans. They were neither as unaffected as the Coorong people, nor as Europeanized as the Ramindjeri: they were not in a state of abject destitution like the Goolwa lakalinyeri, but neither were they financially independent as the Wellington people appear to have been. Their country had been acquired by pastoral interests, which meant that although their traditional food, clothing, housing and medical supplies would have been significantly depleted, they were not nearly so drastically affected as those groups of the Ngarrindjeri whose land had been expropriated for farming purposes. Taplin mentions several large-scale conconbah (or kangaroo hunts) in the early journals, but usually the results were disappointing:[35] clearly the lessees of the cattle runs had reduced the numbers of these valuable animals considerably. Nevertheless, because the Ngarrindjeri had such a rich variety of foods in their country, the loss of one or even several of their major sources of sustenance did not constitute a total disaster, as indeed it would have for most South Australian Aborigines. No other tribes lived in country so well endowed that they could debar all young men from eating no less than twenty different

types of nourishing game, on the grounds that they were too easily procurable and should be reserved for those people less capable of strenuous physical exertion.[36] The consummate skill as fishermen for which (amongst other things) the Ngarrindjeri were renowned, also ensured that they should not starve during the fishing seasons, excepting where the Europeans had already over-exploited this natural resource. Thus, the position of the people in the vicinity of Raukkan could most accurately be described as being much reduced, but still strong enough to allow them to survive independently.

Throughout Taplin's ministry to the Ngarrindjeri, he encountered a multitude of problems, all of which he faced with courage and faith, and many of which he overcame. But there were two great obstacles in the early years which proved to be all but insuperable: one was the determined adherence to the ancient traditions — pursued particularly by the older members of the Ngarrindjeri; and the other was the profound lack of Christian principles exhibited by a substantial proportion of the Europeans with whom Taplin and his flock came in contact.

Taplin's first concerns while camped at Raukkan were to get to know the local people, and to master their language; and at the same time to make arrangements for a mission house to be built so that his wife and family could join him. The A.F.A. Committee approved the tender of a builder from Goolwa called Barton, but he proved to be an untrustworthy contractor, and, amongst other manoeuvres, he stopped his masons from continuing in an attempt to force the Committee to agree to a higher contract price.[37] Taplin, brimming with enthusiasm, and desperately anxious to begin 'saving souls',

was bitterly frustrated by what he saw as contemptible avarice, and he cried through his journal: 'Why is the rich man, the wicked man, allowed to stop Thy work, O Lord?'[38] But after several similar delays and frustrations, the house was finally completed in time for Taplin to move in with his wife and family on 4 October 1859[39] — some months after the original expected date of completion.

Meanwhile, however, Taplin was having to cope with another, much more threatening European obstruction than the inconveniences caused by a dishonest building contractor. The Narrung Peninsula, bounded by the waters of the Coorong, Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert, had been occupied by pastoralists (both sheep and cattle) since 1843.[40] When Taplin arrived, the ownership of the properties was still in a state of flux, but the process occurring was that the whole peninsula was being acquired by two large and wealthy estates — John Baker's Narrung Estate in the north, and Neill Malcolm's Campbell Park Estate in the south. In 1860 the peninsula was appropriately proclaimed as the Hundred of Baker.[41] The site which Taplin selected for the Mission — an area of only two hundred and sixty eight acres — was an unsold piece of Crown Land. The young missionary could scarcely have been expected, therefore, to forsee that its acquisition would meet with any objection — but it certainly did. On 21 July 1859, Taplin received advice from the A.F.A. Committee that a protest had been lodged with the Government to the effect that 'the situation of the building would be prejudicial to Mr Baker's interests.'[42] The missionary records this information without comment, for he was not to know then that Baker's complaint was to lead on to the first full scale parliamentary inquiry into

South Australian Aborigines, since the foundation of the colony.

Having decided on Raukkan as the site for the new Mission, Taplin was determined to stay there, and he wrote back to the Committee accordingly. They, in turn, supported him, and at the meeting of 2 August 1859, resolved:

> That while this Committee are desirous so far as possible of meeting Mr Baker's wishes, they yet deem it inexpedient and unnecessary that the site of their institution should be changed.[43]

Baker himself left the country shortly after this on a visit to England, but ensured that the fight was carried on, both at Raukkan and in Adelaide, during his absence. The manager of Baker's station refused to sell meat to Taplin — thus breaking one of the oldest unwritten laws of the bush, and putting the nascent Mission in further difficulties.[44] It was not until the last day of December 1859 that the manager finally relented on this point.[45]

At the second Annual General Meeting of the A.F.A., held on 11 November 1859, a letter from Samuel Tomkinson, was read to the disappointingly small gathering. Tomkinson, who was the manager of the Bank of Australasia, was acting as Baker's attorney during the squatter's absence. Amongst other things, he claimed that:

> ...if the living of a poor man had been so interfered with, the whole country would have rung with a cry of indignation, and with a demand for redress.[46]

It would be nice to think that this would in fact have been the case — but the situation is difficult to imagine. As it was, the members of the A.F.A. were singularly unimpressed. The Chairman pointed out that the Government had investigated the complaint and there was not 'the slightest cause for bringing a charge against the Association.'[47] Other speakers, including Rev J. Gardiner and

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Bishop Short, pointed out that the letter writer was in fact putting the welfare of cattle above that of people; and the Bishop added that: 'it should not be forgotten that the natives of this land [are] also British subjects.'[48]

Tomkinson's letter ended on an ominous note:

> I cannot within the limits of a letter, enter fully into the merits of the case, but an opportunity of so doing will, I doubt not, be afforded me before a Committee of the Legislature, when I shall be able to prove that the complaint rests upon a solid foundation.[49]

The banker was correct in his adumbrations on a committee of inquiry, but he himself was not called upon to address it because, in the meantime, Baker had returned. In August 1860, Taplin recorded: 'The Hon John Baker called on the 10th. Had a long discussion with him about the natives.'[50] It is clear from the tone of his entry that Taplin was entirely unsuspecting at this stage, and he seems to have had no idea that he was the subject of an insidious attack. Later in the same month, the purpose of Baker's 'friendly' visit became clearer, but even then Taplin's ingenuous mind did not suspect his neighbour, until he was told of Baker's duplicity by the A.F.A. secretary. On 28 August 1859 Taplin records:

> [Police Trooper] Rickaby came in the evening. He said he was under orders from Major Warburton to inspect and report the number of natives and their condition at this station. He was also instructed to tell no one the reason of his visit. Someone is suspicious evidently. But I have nothing to conceal, and have never concealed anything. They cannot tell more than I have told myself.[51]

That night Taplin was very ill, no doubt because of the mental anguish brought on by the realization that he was being metaphorically stabbed in the back by an unknown assailant. The next day, Rickaby's inspection continued, still without explanation, but the mystery was

resolved when the mail arrived later that day. The journal entry for 30 August 1860 includes the following passage:

> Received letters in the evening from Mr Monk, which show that Mr Baker has been telling lies in Adelaide which have caused this trouble. However, the knowledge that it was only the assault of a wicked man relieved me. God cannot be for him. He is for us. Blessed be his name, I retain the confidence of the Committee.[52]

On 4 September 1860, the Legislative Council passed the amendment of a motion, originally proposed by John Baker, which set up a Select Committee to enquire into and report upon the whole state of Aboriginal welfare and administration within the Province. The Committee was composed of Messrs Baker, Davenport, Angas, Waterhouse and Hall (the Chairman).[53] These gentlemen were apparently undaunted by the enormous and difficult task they had been set, and they began work the following day. To their credit, the Committee did not allow the enquiry to degenerate into a vindictive assault on Taplin, the A.F.A., and Point McLeay, although there can be little doubt that this is really what the originator of the move had in mind. But Taplin was nevertheless put under a great deal of pressure; and to be called to Adelaide to face a barrage of searching questions, when his work was really only just getting under way, must have been a most trying experience for the young missionary.

Taplin's concern is not revealed in the Journal, where he simply records that he received the call to Adelaide on 20 September, and that he appeared before the Select Committee on the 26th and 27th of that month, for two and three quarter hours and two and a quarter hours, respectively. There is no mention of any ordeal other than that caused by having to cross the Lake in a tempest en route. The minutes of the A.F.A.

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Committee are also devoid of comment on the proceedings, apart from recording that the secretary appeared before the Select Committee and had been asked to furnish it with Taplin's reports. But the Report of the Select Committee, and the minutes of the evidence which it heard offer a veritable wealth of information on the current situation, on current attitudes towards Aborigines, and on the characters of some of the Europeans involved in Aboriginal welfare. The 1860 Report is the first of the three major historical documents relating to Aborigines, which have been produced by the South Australian Parliament,[54] and as such, it is worthy of detailed consideration. In this study it is of particular relevance because, like the 1913-16 Royal Commission, the 1860 Inquiry was brought about by issues relating to the Ngarrindjeri. In both instances, other groups of Aborigines were involved, but it was the Ngarrindjeri who were the initial and the chief concern.

Naturally, Baker's attack on Taplin and the A.F.A. took up a significant proportion of the Select Committee's time, but the questions asked by the members of the Select Committee, and the Report which they submitted to the Parliament, show that their overall concern was much larger than the selfish vested interests of one of their number.

One of the major concerns of the Select Committee was the decline in population of the Aborigines due to the effects of the European invasion. Various theories were put forward by the witnesses examined as to what was the actual cause of this decline. Bishop Short was of the opinion that it was caused by a 'disproportion of the sexes',[55] and he went on to assert that '...whenever the

males outnumber the females, the ruin of that race may be calculated to a day.'[56] Matthew Moorhouse (now no longer occupying the post of Protector) claimed that the decline was caused by so many Aboriginal women becoming prostitutes, after which they 'would not breed'.[57] According to Davenport (who was a member of the Select Committee) Count Strzleckyki was of the opinion that 'after a native woman has had intercourse with a white man, she could not bear to a black man.'[58] But Minchin, who had been in close contact with the Aborigines for ten years,said that this was not so.[59] J.B. Hack, who owned a property in the Ngarrindjeri country, claimed that: 'The Coorong tribe have been very largely reduced in numbers during the last ten or fifteen years.'[60] And he attributed this rapid reduction in population to partial adoption by the Coorong people of European clothing in place of the possum skin cloaks of old. Hack claimed that the wearing of European clothes — particularly when wet — led to the pulmonary complaints which were chiefly responsible for Aboriginal deaths.[61] On the other hand, Taplin pointed out that,at Raukkan, there was actually an increase of births over deaths, although most of the children being born were not of the full descent.[62] But if the Point McLeay people were increasing, it appears that they were exceptions amongst the Ngarrindjeri, for Police Trooper Rickaby and Sub Protector Mason (who were also stationed in Ngarrindjeri country) both claimed that there had been a dramatic decrease in numbers generally in recent years.[63] The old pioneer colonist, Charles Bonney, confirmed their opinion — particularly as regards the previously dense populations on the Murray and the shores of Lake Albert.[64]

Taken as a body, this evidence certainly could not be used

as an indictment of the new Mission — rather the reverse in fact, for Point McLeay seemed to be the one place anywhere in the settled areas where the native population was holding its own. But overall, the picture was a bleak one.

Linked with its concern over the declining population, was the Select Committee's enquiry into the general health of the Aboriginal people. The picture which emerges is a shocking one, evincing a blatant disregard by the Government for the suffering of human beings, and it would appear that had it not been for the work of Dr Blue of Strathalbyn, the Ngarrindjeri would have had only amateur assistance even in the direst circumstances. Mason pointed out that each winter, about a third fell ill,[65] and he also observed that the people were in great need of a qualified medical man.[66] Dr Wyatt told the Select Committee that the Aborigines were in good physical condition at the beginning of colonization, but that their health had been declining ever since that time.[67] The reasons for this were obvious and have been dealt with in previous chapters. However, some of the causes which came clearly before the Select Committee included: the introduction of Venereal Disease; the destruction of sources of food and medicine, and the failure to compensate for this; the substitution of European cast-off clothing for the original and much more hygienic skin cloaks; and generally, the complete disregard of the chronic suffering of the people by the Government. The Report puts the position succinctly and accurately:

> The almost entire absence of any system for the protection and support of the Aborigines precludes the Committee from commenting upon its inefficiency.[68]

But, for some of the speakers at the inquiry, the physical

well-being of the Aborigines was not of primary importance — the most imperative need in their opinion was the spiritual salvation of the race. This line of thinking was nicely expressed by the Bishop, when he said:

> I do not think it unadvisable to Christianize them; for I would rather they died as Christians than drag out a miserable existence as heathens. I believe that the race will disappear either way.[69]

There was some expression of doubt as to whether it was possible to Christianize such a 'superstitious' and 'barbaric' people in any case; but the churchmen remained firm and positive on this point, and Taplin was unshakeable in his optimistic convictions as far as the Ngarrindjeri were concerned.[70]

A point closely related to the question of the Christianization of the Aborigines, was their educability. A.F.A. representatives, Monk and Cox, claimed that, on this score, the Ngarrindjeri were certainly the equal of Europeans,[71] while Taplin reported that they were better.[72] The disturbing feature, however, was that the educational scheme which was accorded most support was that based on the principle of separating the children from their parents. This proposal was far from novel: it had been strongly mooted in Governor Grey's term of office,[73] and was fundamental to the philosophy upon which Poonindie was built. On humanitarian grounds, Taplin was strongly opposed to this method of treating the children, and even the Bishop had to admit that Aboriginal parents were extremely fond of their children.[74] Nevertheless, a proposal to adopt a system of separation was endorsed by the Select Committee in the following terms:

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> The Committee, however, submit, as their strong conviction, that permanent benefit, to any appreciable extent, from attempts to Christianize the natives can only be expected by separation of children from their parents and evil influences of the tribe to which they belong. However harshly this recommendation may grate on the feelings of psuedo-philanthropists, it would in reality be a work of mercy to the rising generation of Aborigines.[75]

Taplin was no psuedo-philanthropist, although it is abundantly clear at whom the jibe was directed. Taplin was keen to get the children on their own,certainly, for he too saw them as the hope for the future, but he did not believe that he or anybody else had the right to separate parents and children against their will. Thus, the approach adopted at Raukkan was to build dormitories for the children to live in while they attended school, but the dormitories were to be situated on the ancient camping ground itself, so parents could see their children every day if they wished. And in any case, no child was accepted into the dormitories unless his or her parents desired it. This was far removed from the philosophy of 'separation'; and proof of this is to be found in the fact that the Ngarrindjeri have always been strongly opposed to anything which threatened to come between them and their children, while they have, at the same time, been consistent and ardent supporters of the now defunct dormitory system which Taplin established at Raukkan over a hundred years ago.

Despite the inherent cruelty of such a proposal, the legalized abduction of Aboriginal children still has its European advocates today. Their position is much less excusable than that of the 1860 Select Committee, because that group of politicians had no way of knowing, at the time, that 'separation' has never worked satisfac-

torily and, indeed, never could. On the other hand, some Pitjantjatjara elders, at the end of 1974, put forward a proposal for the establishment of dormitories in their country, along very similar lines to the old Raukkan dormitories, of which, naturally enough, they had never heard.[76] This, in itself, constitutes substantial vindication for the policies adopted by Taplin and the A.F.A.

One of the features common to all three major South Australian inquiries, is the attempt made by the members to publicly dispel their own ignorance regarding Aborigines. Here again, the men of 1860 may be excused since, to a degree, they were pioneers, but it is certainly surprising to see their successors asking the same, often inane questions, in 1899 and 1913. One characteristic, for instance, which received considerable attention, was the imagined "viciousness" of part Europeans. Taplin, Farrell and Mason all assured the Select Committee that part Europeans were no more 'vicious' than any other children,[77] and no witness said anything to the contrary. But apparently the myth was unshaken, for the Royal Commissioners were still anxious concerning this point over half a century later. The question of Aboriginal intelligence has long been a popular topic for non-Aborigines to enquire into and to pronounce upon, but bearing in mind the previously mentioned evidence regarding the educability of Aboriginal children, the statements made in this regard during the inquiry seem sound enough. Mason's evidence makes it clear that he regarded the Ngarrindjeri as an extremely humane and highly intelligent people,[78] while the whole tenor of the evidence given by F.W. Howell, the Superintendent of Convicts, tends to show that, as far as prisoners were concerned, the Aborigines

seemed to evince a definite superiority in intelligence.[79] One Aborigine was actually employed to instruct European prisoners at the Stockade.[80]

Howell's whole approach to Aboriginal prisoners appears to be quite remarkable when compared with their treatment in more recent times. He instituted a special education programme for the Aborigines to teach them how to read and write; and his treatment of the Nauo and Pangkalla prisoners from the West Coast seems to have been most enlightened. Howell told the Select Committee:

> ...they have to be indulged a little at first, but it is soon over with them. They get depressed and we let them have their native habits. They have a fire to sit round and so on, until they get accustomed to the diet.[81]

This is scarcely the type of treatment which Aboriginal prisoners could have expected in later years.

Howell claimed that once this introductory period was over, and the Aborigines adapted to the new diet and to prison life, they were as capable of undertaking and maintaining hard labour as were the Europeans.[82] The myth of inherent Aboriginal 'laziness' is one of the most idiotic untruths still propagated by Europeans today, yet it takes little knowledge or intelligence to realize that in the old culture, there could be no such person as a lazy Aborigine — a lazy man would be a dead man. But this question was being raised in 1860 as it has been raised so often since; and then, as in 1913, the real answer lay in the lack of opportunity to work, and the lack of reasonable reward for work done. Howell was convinced that, given proper conditions, they were in no way inferior to Europeans as workers, and Taplin also maintained that the Ngarrindjeri were cap-

able of sustained 'civilized labour', despite pressure put on him by Davenport to admit the contrary.[83] (However Taplin did agree that one of his major problems was finding employment for the Ngarrindjeri who were based at Raukkan.)[84] A further indication of both the attitude and the ability of the Ngarrindjeri as workers, was given by J.B. Hack, a squatter who owned a station in their country. Hack told the Select Committee: '...they are always eager to obtain work; indeed black labour is the only sort of labour which I employ.'[85]

This desire for employment had very little to do with the so-called 'Protestant Ethic' — the Ngarrindjeri did not see work as a religious rite nor as an end in itself: it was a simple matter of economics and survival. Most of the hunting grounds had long since been destroyed or severely depleted of game, and their livelihood had been threatened or taken from them in a variety of ways. Many were even deprived of the opportunity to fish, as the following two questions directed at Mason clearly indicate:

> [Q.] Do you think that the natives about the lakes have now the means they once possessed of forming canoes?
> [A.] No; decidedly not. The land is all purchased round the lake, and the owners won't allow them to go in to cut the bark off the gum trees.
> [Q.] Canoes are sometimes necessary, are they not, for them to procure food on the lake?
> [A.] They cannot procure food without them.[86]

Finally, in this analysis of the 1860 enquiry, it is necessary to consider the real reason behind the institution of the proceedings in the first instance: that is, the clash of European interests, and the clash of European personalities. Because the Select Committee comprised five men who were not, by any means, the tools of John Baker, and some of whom, like George Fife Angas, had

already evinced a genuine concern for the welfare of the indigenous people, the committee stuck faithfully to its task of studying the whole situation pertaining to the Aborigines in South Australia, and, at the end, they produced a very valuable document. Especially must this be said in regard to the information produced concerning the Ngarrindjeri. However, throughout the evidence runs a strong undercurrent — sometimes deep and indiscernable, sometimes seething close to the surface, and sometimes erupting into a blatant verbal onslaught. This is the attack by John Baker on the A.F.A. as a body, and on George Taplin in particular.

The first A.F.A. supporter to come under fire was the first witness examined: the Bishop of Adelaide. When the Bishop made his pointed remarks about Europeans who put the welfare of their cattle above the welfare of Aborigines (at the first Annual Meeting of the A.F.A.),[87] he was scarcely able to foresee that he would, within twelve months, be legally bound to answer questions put by the man at whom those remarks were principally directed. Naturally, Baker did not miss this opportunity (which he had created for himself) to launch a counter attack. And to a certain extent he was successful, for he trapped the Bishop into handling the truth a little less delicately than might be expected from a leading clergyman. His Lordship's immediate reaction was to deny that he had made the statement, but in the same answer he admitted that he had in fact made it 'in the heat of debate'.[88]

The main A.F.A. witnesses — Monk and Cox — remained loyal to their cause and to Taplin. Although pressure was put on them to make a contrary judgement of the man and his work, both had nothing

but praise for his achievements. Taplin was not always to enjoy the loyal support of A.F.A. officers, but had he been let down by the organization at this critical early stage, he would have been placed in an extremely difficult position. The Rev Cox, when asked if the A.F.A. was satisfied with Taplin, replied:

> Very much so, I was surprised to see the great power that he exercised over the natives, and the confidence they appear to place in him — the considerable amount of deference they show him. He has made some efforts towards acquiring the language; and they have, it seems to me, the most perfect confidence in him, and in the establishment.[89]

Such support, however, did not deter Baker, who after a lapse of about eighty questions came back to this point made by Cox. He claimed that any European who distributed flour, blankets etc., as did Taplin, would enjoy the confidence of the Aborigines and come to exercise power over them.[90] This was a little inconsistent with the tenor of Baker's other attacks, which were mostly directed at Taplin's alleged failure to provide adequately for the physical welfare of the Ngarrindjeri. Amongst other things, Baker attempted to show that Taplin had deliberately and maliciously usurped his land,[91] and that it was, in any case, a fundamental mistake to congregate a large number of Aborigines in a small area such as Point McLeay, since there was no employment for them.[92] He also tried to prove that the winter quarters Taplin made available at Raukkan were totally inadequate — especially when compared with Mason's at Wellington.[93] Again, Baker attempted to show that Taplin was allowing the Raukkan Aborigines to starve, and that the old and sick people there were suffering much through Taplin's lack of concern for their physical needs.[94] It would appear that the huts at Raukkan were not as

elaborate or as substantial as those at Wellington. But bearing in mind the recency of Taplin's arrival on the scene (Mason had been at Wellington for twenty one years),[95] and the fact that Taplin did not consider the building of wurlies to be one of his major duties, Baker's argument is very thin. Perhaps Baker scores a point when he attacks Taplin over three old people whom he noticed on one of his visits to Raukkan, and whom he claimed were extremely hungry. He had on that occasion sent over ten pounds of flour for these people, which Taplin had accepted for them. But it is difficult to reach any conclusion other than that this was a deliberate attempt to 'set up' Taplin, who, at the time, was still completely unaware of Baker's ulterior motives.[96]

On a more personal note, Baker attempted to show that Taplin had taken the position with the A.F.A., chiefly in order to advance his own salary and status, and that his prime concern was with his own comfort and personal gain.[97] He attempted to show that Taplin and his cousin were profiteering by gaining control of the Ngarrindjeri fish trade;[98] that Taplin bribed the Ngarrindjeri to go to church;[99] and finally that Taplin was lazy, and not properly earning his salary.[100] All of these accusations were patently false, and Taplin had little difficulty in disproving them. But had he not been a man of complete integrity and honesty, the constant probing attack and pressure under which he was placed must, surely have found a flaw eventually. Even when Baker tried to make Taplin appear almost as a traitor, Taplin did not budge from his firmly held principles, and although few today would be in sympathy with the missionary's attitude toward a fairly innocent pastime, one cannot but ad-

mire his courage and resolution:

> [Q.] Do you allow card playing?
> [A.] I have taught them it is wicked and fallacious.
> [Q.] Supposing that a native is so taught that it is wicked and fallacious, and that card-playing is held to be wickedness amongst Christians, has it come to your knowledge that the Governor and others in the community are in the habit of card-playing, would it not lead to the conclusion that your teaching is erroneous, or that the persons indulging in the practice are wicked persons?
> [A.] I could not help that. If I thought it the truth I should tell them so; if I thought that the practice was wicked, not withstanding that the Governor was addicted to it, I should say it was wrong — it would make no difference to me as to whom it inculpated.[101]

Taplin was similarly unshakeable in his opposition to Sabbath-breaking — a custom which he had observed frequently to occur on Baker's own station, in the form of cattle-droving on Sundays.[102] Owing to the fact that cattle themselves do not appreciate the finer points of Judaic law, Taplin would have found that Sabbath-breaking is really an essential part of life on every cattle station in Australia at,various times. Possibly he was aware of this, but thought that it should not be carried to excess.

It should not be inferred that the clashes which give added drama to this fascinating enquiry, simply show a noble and unblemished missionary being attacked by a selfish and rather evil squatter. In many ways Taplin was indeed noble, but he was much too complex and interesting a person to be unblemished. Baker, too, displays facets which, in fairness, ought to be recorded in his favour. He was obviously far from unconcerned by the plight of the Aborigines as a whole, for he had taken the trouble to address a Committee of the House of Commons on the subject, a decade earlier. The plan for the advancement and protection of the Aborigines which he had

propounded to that Committee, and which he again explained for the benefit of the 1860 enquiry, had much to commend it. The scheme would have had little relevance to the situation in South Australia today, but for those times, when most of the tribes were still functioning properly, Baker's proposals seem practicable, humane and enlightened. In part they include: the immediate determination by the Government of the tribal boundaries; the appointment of an ambassador-cum-protector to each individual tribe (or nation); the allocation of areas of their own land to each tribe; and instruction on the efficient use of the land by modern means of cultivation.[103] At the time, South Australia did not have even one protector, let alone a number of Europeans appointed on a ratio of one to each tribal government. And as the Hon J.T. Bagot clearly demonstrated by his profound ignorance of anything to do with Aborigines, the current practice of giving the oversight of Aborigines to a politician was ludicrous. Thus, Baker's plan was certainly far in advance of what was actually being done for Aborigines at that time, and it can only be regretted that something along the lines of his proposal was not at least tried.

If notice must be taken of Baker's redeeming points, so too must attention be drawn to an incident which shows Taplin's character in a slightly less attractive light. As observed previously, the approaches and the attitudes of Taplin and Mason (the sub-protector at Wellington) were very different indeed. Mason emerges as a likeable character who must have been a staunch friend to the Ngarrindjeri over the twenty one years of his work amongst them. But he did have at least one significant weakness which appalled

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Taplin, and this was his predilection for grog. It would have been surprising had Taplin not objected strenuously to this, but his method of objection seems uncharitable and offensive, for he lodged a written complaint with Bagot (the Minister responsible for Aborigines) which could well have cost the sub-protector his job.[104] Fortunately for Mason, Bagot had been advised that he was extremely knowledgeable regarding the Aborigines, and Bagot was at that time considering putting the whole of the Murray under his jurisdiction. Nevertheless, Taplin's allegations (which he repeated during the inquiry)[105] caused Mason to undergo some rather torrid questioning when it came his turn to face the Select Committee.[106] To his credit, Mason offered no criticism at all of Taplin in return for the attack he suffered, but instead gave him support wherever possible.[107]

On the other hand, Trooper Rickaby, whom Taplin trusted as a family friend,[108] gave evidence which was almost entirely hostile to Taplin, and was a severe indictment of the whole establishment at Point McLeay.[109] In fact there are clear indications of collusion between Baker and Rickaby, the latter apparently putting favour with the powerful, before friendship with the vulnerable.

The final evidence was presented to the Select Committee by two Aboriginal men (whose names were not recorded) and a woman named Parako, but they were not particularly communicative, and so the enquiry itself was concluded. A week later, on 16 October 1860, the Report of the Select Committee was presented to the Legislative Council with the Proceedings, and ordered to be printed. The whole enquiry had taken about six weeks.

As with the other two major South Australian enquiries into

the Aborigines, the chief interest lies in the evidence rather than the actual report. Nevertheless the report makes some valid observations, even though very little substantial benefit to the Aborigines was to accrue from it. Perhaps its most significant statement is that:

> All the evidence goes to prove that they [the Aborigines] have lost much, and gained little or nothing, by their contact with Europeans; and hence it becomes a question how far it is in our power, or what is the best possible means of compensating them for the injuries they have sustained, or of mitigating the evils to which, so far as they are concerned, our occupation of the country has led — or awarding compensation for injuries sustained by them consequent on the forced occupation of their country.[110]

This is a clear acceptance of responsibility for the invasion of the country and usurpation of the land, but unfortunately, appropriate action was not to follow. The Report strongly criticizes the practice of hand-cuffing, chaining and imprisoning Aboriginal witnesses not even charged with a crime; but its suggestion to obviate the evil by appointing a Protector to try Aboriginal cases on the spot, seems scarcely an improvement in the administration of justice. This proposal, like most others put forward by the Select Committee, was not adopted.

The two Europeans most closely connected with the Ngarrindjeri came in for some sharp criticism — Mason for 'laxity in the performance of his duties',[111] and Taplin for his whole approach:

> The zeal of Mr Taplin in the cause of the conversion of the natives is not doubted, but the Committee are of the opinion that his system must be greatly modified before this object can reasonably be expected to be obtained.[112]

This was yet a further suggestion of the Select Committee which was

not acted upon, for Taplin had his own ideas and his own principles; and both he and the A.F.A. committee were well satisfied with progress made at Raukkan in the short time the missionary had so far had to implement his plans. So Taplin rode back to Goolwa, possibly a little stung by the viciousness of the attacks made upon him, but no doubt reassured by the loyalty of the A.F.A., and strengthened by the fact that he had come through the ordeal, if not unscathed, then certainly not at all injured in the encounter. If he became a little less trusting of his fellow Europeans, and even more determined to assist the Ngarrindjeri, then the experience could have done him no harm.

As for the A.F.A., this body had also come in for some trenchant criticism — such as Baker's rhetorical outburst at Cox:

> And is the health, comfort and lives of these poor wretches to depend on the irresponsible efforts of a Committee who appear scarcely to know what is done in reference to them?[113]

But the A.F.A. Committee, like Taplin, remained confident of the rightness of its course, and at the meeting immediately following the hearings of the Select Committee, the following resolutions were passed:

> Ist. That this Committee desire to record their high sense of their Secretary's valuable services by his able defence of this Association's working and principles in his recent reply to the statements of the Honbl. John Baker.
>
> 2nd. That the thanks of this Meeting are tendered to Mr Taplin for the zeal and earnestness displayed in the discharge of his onerous duties as Superintendent of the Society's Station at Point McLeay, and their unabated confidence in his management of the location there.[114]

CHAPTER I. FOOTNOTES

[1]Aborigines' Friends' Association Minute Book I 28 May 1857 (my emphasis).

[2]Ibid. second page.

[3]Ibid. first page.

[4]Register 1 August 1857.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Minute Book I, 8 August 1857.

[7]Ibid. 5 September 1857.

[8]Observer 5 June 1858.

[9]Minute Book I, 16 April 1858.

[10]Ibid. 18 June, 25 June, 2 July 1858.

[11]Ibid. 29 July 1858.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid. 5 August 1858.

[15]Ibid. 19 August 1858.

[16]Ibid. 26 August 1858.

[17]Ibid. 12 July 1858.

[18]Observer 4 September 1858.

[19]Minute Book I, 16 September 1858.

[20]Ibid. 24 January 1859.

[21]Ibid. 1 March 1859.

[22]Ibid. 16 March 1859.

[23]Taplin, George: Journal I p.1. 4 April 1859.

[24]The source of most of this information on Taplin's early years is a biographical note by his widow. It appears as an appendix to Volume V of the Journal as typed out by Mrs Beaumont — one of George Taplin's grand daughters. This M.S. is held in the S.A.A.

[25]A copy of this letter is also in the appendix of Volume V of the Journal. S.A.A.

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[26]Ibid. (Taplin's underlining).

[27]Minute Book I, 16 March 1859.

[28]Journal I, p.1. 4 April 1859.

[29]Journal I, p.3. 14 April 1859.

[30]Journal I, p.5. 18 April 1859.

[31]S.A.A. GRG 24/6 225; & 674/1848.

[32]Journal I, p.1. 5 April 1859.

[33]Ibid. p.3. 14 April 1859.

[34]Taplin George The Narrinyeri p.16.

[35]eg Journal I. pp.27 & 154.

[36]Taplin George The Narrinyeri p.16.

[37]Journal I, pp.18,19,20.

[38]Ibid. p.16 22 July 1859.

[39]Ibid. p.24 4 October 1859.

[40]Bartlett, C.E.: A Brief History of the Point McLeady Reserve & District. Adelaide, Aborigines' Freinds' Association, 1959 p.5.

[41]Ibid. p.9.

[42]Journal p.16 21 July 1859.

[43]Minute Book I, 2 August 1859.

[44]Journal I p.42 6 November 1859.

[45]Ibid. p.48 31 December 1859.

[46]Observer 19 November 1857.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Journal I p.82 10 August 1860.

[51]Ibid. p.83 28 August 1860.

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[52]Ibid. p.83 30 August 1860.

[53]Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council upon The Aborigines S.A.P.P. No.165 1860 : preface.

[54]The other major historical Parliamentary documents are: (1) The Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines Bill (S.A.P.P. 77 & 77A of 1899). (2) The Progress and Final Reports of the Royal Commission on the Aborigines. (S.A.P.P. 26 of 1913 & 21 of 1916.)

[55]1860 Report question 107.

[56]Ibid. question 107.

[57]Ibid. question 2405.

[58]Ibid. question 378.

[59]Ibid. question 378.

[60]Ibid. question 2450.

[61]Ibid. question 2451.

[62]Ibid. questions 1650-1 & 1753.

[63]Ibid. questions 1843, 1976, 1998-9 & 2155.

[64]Ibid. questions 922-5.

[65]Ibid. question 2111.

[66]Ibid. question 2041.

[67]Ibid. questions 571 & 592.

[68]Ibid. Report p.1.

[69]Ibid. question 98.

[70]Ibid. questions 1271 & 1446.

[71]Ibid. questions 471 & 776.

[72]Ibid. question 1168.

[73]Ibid. question 1786.

[74]Ibid. question 127.

[75]Ibid. Report p.6.

[76]Personal communication from Mr. R. Sheridan, Principal of Ernabella School.

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[77]1860 Report questions 1654,1826 and 2012.

[78]Ibid. questions 2152-4.

[79]See for example Ibid. question 2348.

[80]Ibid. question 2306.

[81]Ibid. question 2329.

[82]Ibid. questions 2291-2 & 2340.

[83]Ibid. questions 1689-93.

[84]Ibid. question 1669.

[85]Ibid. question 2440.

[86]Ibid. questions 2272 & 2277.

[87]Observer 19 November 1859.

[88]1860 Report question 130.

[89]Ibid. question 790. See also Monk's reply to a similar question, Ibid. question 448.

[90]Ibid. question 871.

[91]Ibid. questions 1538-77.

[92]Ibid. questions 823-31.

[93]Ibid. questions 1324-37.

[94]Ibid. questions 1340-62.

[95]Ibid. question 1974.

[96]Ibid. questions 1340-62.

[97]Ibid. questions 1306-20 & 1521-34.

[98]Ibid. questions 1379-92.

[99]Ibid. questions 1396-1402.

[100]Ibid. questions 1483-4.

[101]Ibid. questions 1437-8.

[102]Ibid. questions 1472-5.

[103]Ibid. questions 753-4.

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[104] Ibid. questions 1118-20.

[105] Ibid. questions 1365-74.

[106] Ibid. questions 2239-49,

[107] Ibid. questions 2122-4, 2215 & 2226-9.

[108] Ibid. question 1736.

[109] Ibid. questions 1891-1940 & 1961-70.

[110] Ibid. Report p.1.

[111] Ibid. Report p.6.

[112] Ibid. Report p.6.

[113] Ibid. question 895.

[114] Minute Book I, 27 September 1860.

CHAPTER II. GEORGE TAPLIN'S EARLY YEARS.

Throughout the critical years 1859-79 when George Taplin worked amongst the Ngarrindjeri, he faced many problems, but in many ways the most disheartening of them involved Europeans who either attacked him, as Baker had done from the beginning; or else who let him down, as his son Fred seems to have done towards the end. He also had to contend with that contemptible type of European found wherever there are Aborigines, whose prime aim is to exploit them — sexually, financially, or in any other way possible.

One of Taplin's earliest hopes for establishing the new mission on a sound economic basis lay in the nascent fishing industry (nascent as a cash-crop, that is, for the Ngarrindjeri had been accomplished fishermen for thousands of years). But he had many difficulties in those pre-refrigeration days of obtaining a reasonable price on behalf of the Ngarrindjeri from the 'middle men' who took the fish to market. In the early stages he noted with some pleasure that he had been able to get 3/- per hundred weight (ie just over a farthing per pound!) for fish caught by the Ngarrindjeri.[1] Even allowing for today's highly inflated prices, this is very cheap fish — especially considering the high quality of the fish caught in those days in the Lower Murray Lakes. Taplin was naturally keen to control the fish trade himself — not, as Baker had insinuated, in order to reap the profits, but simply to ensure that all the profit possible went to the Ngarrindjeri who had done the fishing. In order to accomplish this, he enlisted the aid of his cousin, who was to take the fish across the Lake for sale; but this young man did not live up to Taplin's expectations, the plan fell through, and the cousin left the district. Taplin persisted in his efforts, but

the problem of a fair deal for Ngarrindjeri fishermen seems never to have been resolved. After a typical incident in which the Ngarrindjeri were forced to take an unfair payment because they needed the money, Taplin records his own sentiments with some force:

> I cannot help feeling something very like contempt when I see white men who are not poor cheat the natives. I will have nothing more to do with K. It is better for the natives to catch no fish than to catch them and be cheated out of them.[2]

There were also more brazen robbers to deal with than the avaricious middle-men. The Ngarrindjeri had been accustomed to building pounds on the shores of the Lakes, and in these they kept netted fish alive and fresh until they were needed for eating. These pounds proved to be very useful when they started selling fish, because the fish could be kept for a considerable period awaiting the arrival of a buyer. Unfortunately the pounds proved to be too much of a temptation for the Europeans, and Taplin records a number of robberies. Their first capture was quite a dramatic little affair, with the whites attempting to flee in their boat; but apparently they were no match for the Ngarrindjeri whale-boat crew, who 'swept down on them' and took away the chief offender to be handed over to the police.[3] But unfortunately the capture of a culprit was the exception rather than the rule, and as early as 10 January 1860 Taplin had to record: 'This is the fourth time the blacks have suffered an extensive robbery of their pounds. It is most discouraging to them.'[4] There seemed to be no lengths to which the Europeans would not go in order to cheat the Ngarrindjeri — even to paying for fish with bogus 'coins'.[5] And when the police — the upholders of law and justice — also behaved towards

them with deceit and treachery,[6] it must have confirmed in the minds of the people, the very low opinion which they already had of their European conquerors.

From the point of view of religion, Taplin had a problem to deal with that most missionaries in other parts of the world were not embarrassed by — and that was the irreligious behaviour of so many of his own compatriots. He found that this factor tended to undermine his position from the beginning, but there was, of course, very little that he could do about it. On 1 April 1860 he wrote:

> I often think that it is an awful thing that the neighbourhood of a Christian community should be a curse to these natives. I say to them that religion should be the chief concern, and hundreds of my countrymen affirm by their conduct that I speak falsely.[7]

Sexual exploitation is one of the first prices that any conquered or poverty-stricken people must pay, and the Ngarrindjeri at this time were both. They had a long record of sexual exploitation going back to the days of the Kangaroo Island sealers, and had in fact come to accept it as inevitable. Taplin naturally deplored the situation,[8] and from this point in time it does seem to be one of the tragedies of Ngarrindjeri history, that such a distinctively handsome and vital race should have been so sadly diluted.

One of the paradoxes of Western civilization is that it has attempted to retain its Christianity while at the same time embracing capitalism. Yet the capitalist ethic and the Christian ethic are fundamentally in direct opposition to each other: the former being motivated by acquisition and self-interest; the latter by charity toward others and self-denial. The manner in which Europeans have attempted to reconcile these inimical forces is by creat-

ing a small class of professional Christians, who are free to concentrate on Christian ideals while the majority pursue their own selfish ends in good conscience. As a professional Christian however, Taplin should not have been surprised that whereas his own attitude to the Ngarrindjeri was: 'How can I best serve these people?' yet the attitude of most others when confronted with the Ngarrindjeri was: 'How can I exploit these people?' After all, this is what capitalism is all about, and the profit motive is indoctrinated into Westerners from childhood. Although Taplin should have understood this, it is natural that the Ngarrindjeri should have been somewhat confused by it all, since their own culture was so beautifully harmonious — their moral laws being consonant with their whole way of life in theory and in practice.

Since most Europeans looked on the Ngarrindjeri as they looked on everything else — that is, something for themselves to profit from if possible — it should have come as no surprise to Taplin, that in times of labour shortage the settlers should attempt to lure away the older boys from his school, in order to get them to work; and even to bribe the boys' friends to lure them away to the farms and stations.[9] A favourite weapon of the Europeans was rumour, and they found it relatively easy to start rumours amongst the Ngarrindjeri, who naturally still had much to learn about the new civilization brought half way around the world and foisted on them. For instance, it was not in the best interests of the local stock-keepers that Raukkan should run its own little herd of cows, so Taplin discovered rumours emanating from that source, that the milk he was giving the school children was injurious to their health![10]

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Other types of rumour were deliberately fostered by vested European interests throughout the Ngarrindjeri country, from Wellington to Goolwa, and Taplin must have envied at times those missionaries who were able to work, or who deliberately chose to work, in isolation from their own race. In exasperation, he turned to his journal to write:

> May God turn the hearts of our opponents and grant me meekness and forbearance, for I feel that it is a hard thing to be thus injured by my own countrymen. I say with confidence, and God knows it is true, that these natives are perishing through the evil influence of wicked white people standing in the way of their salvation.[11]

But if the wicked white people were Taplin's greatest worry, then some of the Ngarrindjeri themselves ran a close second — particularly the older people who, not surprisingly, were loath to part with customs and culture handed down over thousands of years, and which in many ways seemed superior to the new culture being imposed. Taplin's own attitude to some of these customs was modified over the years, but in the beginning he seems to have been too ready to attack them, without attempting to understand them properly. For instance, even before he had established the Mission, he made a note in the Journal criticising the exogamous marriage system of the Ngarrindjeri. Marriage and kinship systems vary greatly throughout the continent: in some central areas being of a highly complex nature. But for the Ngarrindjeri, living as they did, a nation of eighteen tribes, the simple exogamous system was ideal, and had various attributes to commend it. Nevertheless, Taplin wrote, without giving his contention any valid support: 'But I think this custom of marrying from other tribes is a bad one and must be overthrown.[12]

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There were three major groups of customs to which Taplin was particularly opposed, and they were all vital pillars of the intricately constructed pattern of Ngarrindjeri life. The first of these was the least attractive; and in fact many of the younger Ngarrindjeri found it disgusting, as Taplin himself certainly did: this was the treatment of the dead. The brilliant minds which, over the centuries, had worked out the structure of the society, were aware of the fact that one way to ensure respect for life is to foster respect for the dead. In a society without any formal law enforcement agency it would be comparatively easy for justice, morality, and the common good, to suffer at the hands of the unscrupulous and strong; and for wisdom and peace to be overthrown by the brashness of youth. But if the physically strong are taught to fear the spiritual powers of the old and the wise, then this acts as an effective check in lieu of physical constraint. If the elders have these powers even after they are dead, then this ensures that they will be accorded due respect when they are alive. To this end, elaborate ceremonies were evolved to mourn for the dead and to dispose of their bodies in such a way as to appease and satisfy their spirits. By the time of the European invasion, these mourning ceremonies might be said to have reached an extreme beyond which it was not possible to go much further. Their most distinctive feature lay in the drying of the bodies over slow fires, and the daubing of the mourners with the effluvium which dripped from the basting bodies. Taplin reports that in some of the big communal wurlies there would be up to fifteen or even twenty bodies cooking in this way at one time — and this was where the people slept, ate and played![13]

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Taplin writes:

> ...the stench from them is indescribable. How horrible it is too to see a mother or a father basting with oil and red ochre an infant's corpse as it is squat up on a sort of bier or stage. And then the mourners will be daubed (that is the women) with human ordure and consequently stink till you cannot approach them. I have known people to die through the stench of the dead, and yet the poor souls keep on the practice. The young men and women, would, I believe, fain do away with it, and would be glad if the civil power compelled them to bury their dead. And then, most of the witchcraft depends on the practice.[14]

Taplin found the mourning practices particularly trying in the days before his church was built and he held services in his home, for mourners would fill his house with the stench of the excrement with which they were besmeared whenever they attended. He can hardly be blamed for evincing disgust, and Taplin must have been most concerned for the health of his own young family. But the practices need to be seen today in their full perspective for what they really were: that is, part of a highly organized method of maintaining law and order, and perpetuating both society and culture. It is not surprising either, that this was one of the first customs to be abandoned by the Ngarrindjeri during Taplin's years amongst them.

Closely connected with the ceremonies for the burial of the dead was the practice of sorcery. In his book entitled The Narrinyeri, Taplin describes the various kinds of sorcery used, particularly by the older men,[15] and the names and details concerning the different types are quite well known by a number of the older Ngarrindjeri descendants to this day.[16] This in itself is significant, for it is clear that their own elders (say, in the early nineteen hundreds) attempted to instil in them when they were children, a belief in the power of the old sorcerers; and in some cases they

appear to have been partly successful. For here again we find clever methods being used by the wise (but not so physically strong) older men to exercise control over society. Taplin had much more difficulty combating this sorcery than he did in opposing the funeral rites, for it could be performed much more secretively than the disposal of the dead, and the older men saw it as the last bastion of their authority.

The third major custom opposed by Taplin was the making of young men (or narumbar). This custom was linked with the other two, for amongst other things, the practice ensured that the youths, who through childhood were more or less given complete freedom, now came entirely under the authority and influence of the older men. Unfortunately for the narumbar, Taplin and the elders both saw the youths of the Ngarrindjeri as the hope for the future — each in a very different direction — and they tended to become the 'meat in the sandwich'. The Journals proliferate with tragic stories of splendid young fellows — intelligent and strong: the budding flowers of Ngarrindjeri manhood — being ruined by the irreconcilable forces with which they had to contend. In the end it so often happened that neither Taplin nor the elders were successful in their quest for the bodies and souls of the narumbar, who broke down under the continual physical, moral and intellectual strain to which they were subjected, and not infrequently died. Taplin was aware of the consequences of his efforts in this regard, and being a man of great compassion, was appalled by them. But he was also a man of unshakeable faith in the Scriptures, and he would have been less than true to his own devoutly held principles had he not persevered with his

work. As time went on and several of his brightest hopes died, Taplin observed in his Journal:

> It is a singular but undoubted fact to me that as soon as the natives become pious and cast off their old superstitions, they begin to suffer in health and sometimes die. It is very strange and inexplicable, but it has been true in every instance I have seen. The bad health always succeeds the desire for religious knowledge and the manifesting of pious feelings. The only reason for this which is at all probable is the dread of witchcraft which preys on the mind, although the sufferer tries to hide his fear even from himself. This fact is the terrible proof of the power of the enemy of souls over the body. But Christ can save.[17]

The Ngarrindjeri had a traditional game in which two sides vied vigorously for the ball, and at times the young men must have felt very much akin to that particular object, for they were bound to suffer, which ever side won. There was a certain inducement to refuse to become a kainyani, because it was a painful process. But on the other hand, it had its compensations: and furthermore those who disobeyed the elders and became young 'Taplin men' were in fairly constant physical danger. On occasion they were forced to carry guns to protect themselves,[18] and in other instances, they were attacked with severe violence.[19] The major cause of the threat to the young men was that the elders were incensed by the fact that, at Taplin's instigation, the boys were breaking the old customs and openly scoffing at the supposed power of magic.[20] Taplin looked on this as a real indication of success. He wrote:

> My boys are glorying in the fact that they have done several things in defiance of native superstition and have received no harm.[21]

These superstitions were vital to the proper conduct of society, and it was essential that the young should believe in them if law and order were to be maintained — there was simply no other way of

keeping control. For instance, as previously stated, the Ngarrindjeri had worked out an excellent and practicable method of ensuring that there was an equitable distribution of food among the people — young and old: male and female. One of the important features of this system was the list of foods forbidden to young men and boys. By precluding from the diet of these energetic young hunters the types of food deemed to be fairly easy prey, the law in practice helped to provide for those less able to hunt for themselves, as well as ensuring the conservation of the various species. But any law must have teeth, and the bite in the Ngarrindjeri law lay not in the physical control of police, but in personal self-control reinforced by deliberately maintained superstitions. When Taplin's boys ate Wallaby in defiance of the law, they found to their delight that they did not turn grey as superstition decreed they would.[22] But this only meant that the superstition was not correct: it in no way invalidated the law, which, like so many others, was a wise and good one.

Taplin did not fully approve of some of the other customs of the Ngarrindjeri (such as the ceremonial and traditional fighting, in which people were occasionally badly injured) but on the whole, those customs which had no spiritual or religious significance, did not concern him greatly, and so produced few problems for him. It is just as well, for he had a plethora of problems already. Besides his two major sources of worry — wicked whites and intransigent Ngarrindjeri — he had a number of lesser, but disconcerting and, at times, dangerous contingencies and circumstances with which to deal.

GEORGE TAPLIN'S EARLY YEARS.

As a family man, Taplin was greatly troubled, especially in the early years, by the menace of the venomous snakes which proliferated in the area. He killed a great many of these reptiles near his house, and at least one under its floor.[23] After one incident in which his little three year old boy, Charlie, was nearly bitten, Taplin wrote:

> I do feel most devoutly thankful to my Heavenly Father Who thus preserved my little son from a horrible death. Never was a narrower escape.[24]

Every year in September (ie spring) the snake season would begin and Taplin's worries would increase even more as a consequence. The Ngarrindjeri themselves were vulnerable to attack, especially when engaged in hunting in swamps etc. near the lakes, and even in their wurleys they were not safe. Taplin records two instances of snakes crawling inside wurleys and into rugs in which men were sleeping at the time.[25] As an honorary physician, Taplin was frequently called upon to treat snake-bite, and with the adults at any rate, seems to have been successful in most cases. One method he tried of cutting down on the number of dangerous reptiles around the house area, was to offer half a stick of tobacco for each dead snake. Taplin consequently acquired a large collection of dead snakes, but there is no evidence to show that numbers of live snakes proportionately decreased.[26]

Besides snakes, there were several other hazards to the health of Taplin's family, not the least of which was the very poor state of health amongst the Ngarrindjeri on the Mission: imminent death seems to have been an ever present threat and possibility to all — young and old, healthy and ill. The health of the people had

been undermined by the destruction of much of their way of life, and many of the raw materials that in pre-European times had ensured their physical well-being. But they had not yet reaped the benefits of European advances conducive to good health. The isolation of the Mission — situated on the shore of a vicissitudinous lake — meant that medical assistance was often difficult to obtain. For instance, on one occasion when Mrs Taplin was confined and dangerously ill, the distraught missionary was unable to send his boat to fetch a physician from Wellington because of a gale. Finally, when the boat did get through, the medico himself was ill in bed and could not come. But in the event, all ended happily enough, for as Taplin wrote:

> Last night my dear wife was in great peril but the Lord in mercy appeared for us in extremity. She was delivered of a daughter and is now doing as well as she can. My heart overflows with gratitude. O that I might serve this gracious Lord more and better.[27]

Yet on another occasion, the lake was in an entirely different mood when Taplin needed medical assistance himself, but a similar delay was affected. His Journal entry is instructive in showing also the type of medical treatment which was available to those who sought it:

> On the evening of the 25th my head became so bad that I was obliged to go to Dr Maslin's for advice in De la Haye's boat. It is 14 miles there. There was scarcely any wind so it was daylight on the morning of the 26th before I got there. The Doctor said there were symptoms of approaching inflammation of the lungs, and prescribed certain remedies, and entire cessation from labour. He says I have overworked myself. Got home on 26th at 1 pm. Went to bed and submitted myself to the operation of <u>leeches</u>, blister, mercury etc. Today (30th) I am a little better but still very weak.[28]

Taplin's own health was constantly threatened by the amount of work

he did, coupled with his many anxieties. In those early days in particular, Taplin's tasks seem to have been colossal. He was teacher, missionary, amateur physician, builder, farmer, boatman, storeman, linguist, and anthropologist. Taplin had to occupy all of these roles until, at last, when the hardest period was over, the A.F.A. found its way clear to appoint assistants to help him with the school and the farm. The weather around Raúkkan is very changeable, and although the temperature often reaches the century, there are also times, even in summer, when biting winds from the Southern Ocean bring rain and icy temperatures and pounding seas. So Taplin, working part-time in the school, part-time in the Lake or on the farm, and likely to be called at any hour of day or night to a wurley or encampment, was susceptible to colds and other such ailments. He also suffered severely from asthma and hepatitis.[29] But never-ending work and worry was the worst enemy of Taplin's health. At one stage, ill-health (diagnosed as 'inflammation of the brain') forced him to take three months leave of absence, but when he was able to return again to the fray, he faced even more problems than when he left.[30]

Throughout the Journals, the environment of the Ngarrindjeri country itself plays a significant role, and Lake Alexandrina in particular seems to dominate the lives of those who inhabited her shores. The Lake constituted the main means of communication with Goolwa, Milang, Wellington and Adelaide; it was an important provider of food and finance (firstly through fishing and later woolwashing); and its moods, which ranged from beautiful serenity to savage fury, affected the well-being and safety of all those depen-

dent on it. One of Taplin's first acquisitions on behalf of the A.F.A. was a small boat,[31] and although he was more than satisfied with its performance, that first crossing from Goolwa to Raukkan was a hazardous one. After it, he wrote: 'Many times did I, and I doubt not did the others, supplicate the assistance of the Divine Mercy in our peril.'[32] There were to be many such dangerous journeys for Taplin, although as time went on, the A.F.A. purchased larger boats, and from October 1867 Raukkan was to be serviced regularly by the big River Murray mail steamers linking the river and lakes towns to Adelaide via Goolwa and Milang. But this was all in the future; during those tough and critical years, the young missionary maintained his lines of communication and supply with much flimsier and more perilous means.

Alexandrina's waves, while reaching prodigious heights during a storm, seem to be appreciably steeper and closer together than ocean waves of the same height, thus giving a boat less chance to recover from one before she is hit by the next, or to 'ride' over their crests without being swamped.[33] Even the redoubtable Alexander Tolmer, who seems to have had the same appetite for danger as the normal child has for ice-cream, accorded the Lake some measure of respect. Writing his auto biography he said:

> No-one, unless experienced, can form any idea on such occasions of the dangerous "cross-sea" met with on this lake when blowing strong from the southwest, which would swamp any boat unless decked and well-handled.[34]

Taplin's first boats were not decked, and being an inexperienced sailor, he had to learn to handle them well as he went along. A typical post-storm Journal entry is this one, dated 20 October 1862:

> Boat returned from Milang this evening, with about a third of the bulwarks of one side broken away and the bowsprit broken and an oar lost.[35]

Five days earlier the mast had broken off in the middle of the Lake during a previous storm. Just how dependent Taplin was on boat transport across the Lake, is indicated by a series of Journal entries written after another storm had stove in his boat while she lay at anchor off Raukkan:

> 19 Today the [European] fishermen all went off without calling for my letters or offering me any assistance in my disabled state without a boat to get to the other side.
> 20 Yesterday and this morning we tried hard to make the boat fit to go to Milang but it was all in vain, she cannot go. Her injuries are too serious. It would not be safe to go in her.
> 21 In a state of great anxiety to get means to cross the Lake. I have none and I do not know how to get any, as the boat is so much broken. These perplexities are trying. May they work patience.[36]

The man with whom Taplin seems to have been in greatest empathy, was eventually to lose his life in an Alexandrina storm. This was the Rev James Reid, missionary to the Aborigines, who arrived from Scotland in 1861. He established his permanent base at Wellington, but since the Government had its one sub-protector (George Mason) running a depot for the Aborigines there, he was freed from the many duties and responsibilities which kept Taplin tied down in a permanent position. This enabled Reid to spend a great deal of his time sailing in a little two-masted open boat from point to point throughout the Lakes, attempting to proselytize the Ngarrindjeri in their various encampments. He first visited Raukkan on 14 February 1861, and Taplin recorded that he was 'greatly cheered' by the event.[37] For the following two and a half years Reid worked diligently amongst the people, many of whom became quite

endeared to him, although not necessarily in the way he might have hoped for. Reid had the same complete dedication to his religion and to the Aborigines that Taplin possessed, but he seems to have lacked the latter's depth of human understanding, and complexity of character. Tolmer, who happened to be doing a brief stint as a cutter skipper on the lakes at the time, was later to recall:

> Of all the guileless creatures I have ever met, I think he was the most; and as the natives thoroughly understood him, it was amazing to hear the tales they used to relate of his attempts to Christianize and instruct them on religious subjects..[38]

The anecdote which Tolmer then goes on to recount is indicative both of Reid's naivete and of the delightful sense of humour — shrewd, yet kindly — possessed by the Ngarrindjeri. Reid caused Taplin and his wife a considerable amount of anxiety from time to time, due to his apparent nonchalance towards the dangers inherent in the Lake. Because of the unreliable and tenuous lines of communication, it was often very difficult to find out where he was or whether he had reached his stated destination.[39]

Reid's untimely end seems, in retrospect, to have been almost inevitable: indeed, it may be wondered at that he lasted so long. Tolmer says:

> Although I repeatedly warned him of the danger he incurred, he seemed to have no fear, fully relying, he said, on the Almighty to protect him from danger....[40]

James Reid was last seen alive on Mundoo Island by a Ngarrindjeri man who bailed his boat out for him, attempted to dissuade him from setting out in a storm, and then watched him leave for his home at Wellington. This occurred on Friday 24 July 1863.[41] An extensive search got under way when Reid's wife grew alarmed at

his non-arrival, and Taplin used both the Mission boats to help. But Reid's upturned boat was not located until 5 September and his body remained unfound for a further week. Naturally, this was a most harrowing period for Taplin, as the likelihood of his ever seeing his friend and co-worker again, became more and more remote. The Journal entry simply states:

> Today Puttere Bob found Mr Reid's body floating in deep water near Point Malcolm — a little beyond. He put it in his canoe, covered it with a blanket, and brought it up here. I had it lifted on an iron stretcher and covered over with blankets and rugs and put in the lateen boat, which I sent up to Wellington, as directed by the police to do in this event.[42]

This was the last Taplin saw of his closest ally, but the work which Reid had done in his brief stay among the Ngarrindjeri was of assistance to Taplin, and in recognition of this work, Taplin later named the little village that grew up at the Mission, 'Reid Town'. The term has fallen into desuetude today because most Europeans used the same term for the town as they used for the Mission — that is, Point McLeay — and naturally the Ngarrindjeri themselves had no intention of calling Raukkan by any other name than that which had been used since time immemorial.

The second major building to be constructed at Raukkan was the school, although Taplin began teaching day-school some months before the construction of the school house was commenced. The missionary, together with his Ngarrindjeri workmen, began raising stone for this important building in October 1859.[43] His eldest son, Fred, laid the first stone on 9 May 1860,[44] and the contractor's masons completed their work on 2 July 1860.[45] Over the years this initial stone school house was much modified and added to, the first

additional room being commenced in 1863.[46] Eventually it was replaced altogether, but the school has remained in continuous operation since 1860 and remains as one of the State's oldest and most historic educational institutions still in existence.

Day school had begun at Raukkan on 2 January 1860,[47] but from May to October of that year, when Taplin's time was largely spent in organizing the raising of stone, the burning of lime for the masons, and in carpentering after they had left, the day school was temporarily suspended.[48] Taplin was very pleased with the enthusiasm and intelligence of the Ngarrindjeri children who came to him during those first five months, and was able to report to the Select Committee of the Legislative Council that they made: 'Quite as good progress as white children, and even better; and they attended school in a most exemplary manner.'[49] From its inception, the new school was a boarding institution, with two dormitories — one for the boys and one for the girls — in addition to the teaching room. It began its operations on 8 October 1860.[50] For Taplin, this meant an even greater burden of duties and responsibilities, and he recorded in his Journal, the fourteen-hour daily timetable which he adhered to at that stage:

> Mrs Taplin and myself find ourselves completely occupied by the arrangements which we have to make. I rise and ring the bell at 6 am. School children get up and wash. 7 am Morning Prayer and school breakfast. 7.35 own breakfast. Family worship. 9. School. 12. Dinner. 12.30 own dinner. 2 pm Girls' sewing class until 4 pm. During the afternoon I occupy myself at writing the language, or at the wurleys. 6 pm Supper. Evening prayer after. 6.30 evening school. 8 pm Bed.[51]

In the new schoolroom, the capabilities of the children continued to impress their teacher, who wrote during the following week: 'I find

the boys are very quick at reckoning, adding together numbers mentally with great exactness...,'[52] and a couple of months later: '...the boys' reading, writing and arithmetic and the girls' sewing are excellent.'[53] These observations coming from a competent and experienced professional teacher are of some significance, especially when it is remembered that these children were learning in a foreign tongue, or at best in a second language. There was a small section of the Ngarrindjeri (mostly comprising older men) who were not entirely in favour of the school and its teachings, because they realized that much of what was taught would tend to undermine their own authority and further destroy their culture.[54] But taken overall, the Ngarrindjeri wholeheartedly supported the institution; clearly accepting the fact that the Europeans were here to stay, that they were in complete control, and that to survive in the new order it was essential for the young people to become both literate and numerate. This awareness of the need for European education is evidenced, for instance, by the fact that one of the first boys to learn to read and write fluently, was Nipper, the son of Pullum, last rupulle of the Point Malcolm lakalinyeri, and president of the combined Tendi.[55]

Taplin realized from the beginning that, both for teaching purposes and for his proselytizing work, a mastery of the vernacular was essential. He began to study Ngarrindjeri before he arrived to settle permanently at Raukkan[56] — no doubt gaining a little help from the brief notes on the language compiled by Meyer during his sojourn at Encounter Bay. On beginning his work at Raukkan, Taplin made the acquisition of the tongue one of his chief concerns. Late

in 1859 he wrote:

> Words cannot express the anxiety I feel to master the native language. I thank God I am daily making progress and the natives begin to recognise it.[57]

The older people seemed to enjoy teaching him and conversing with him in the Ngarrindjeri, while the missionary took the opportunity (he never wasted one) to talk about the Gospel during these vernacular conversations in the wurleys.[58] By March 1860 Taplin had commenced translating school reading books into the Ngarrindjeri,[59] and shortly he began his very valuable work of translating Biblical tracts, prayers and hymns into the ancient tongue. This was no mean feat, for not only was there an extensive vocabulary to master, but the whole structure of the language was, like most Australian languages, complex, highly inflected and requiring precision and thorough grammatical understanding in its usuage. It is indicative of Taplin's undoubted ability as a linguist that the Ngarrindjeri approved of his work, since their unique language was one of their proudest possessions. An early Journal entry reads:

> I find my translations pretty correct. The old people like me to sit in the wurley and let them correct them. They never seem to weary of telling me.[60]

By the end of 1860, the missionary had completed translating the first class Sunday School book into the Ngarrindjeri[61] and was well advanced with his work on religious tracts. In the following year, he was able to offer prayers in the vernacular, and on 6 October 1861, he recorded a significant achievement in his Journal:

> For the last two Sabbaths I have preached in native extempore. The old people told the shepherd's wife that they liked it very much.[62]

The excellent response which Taplin's linguistic efforts evoked from

the Ngarrindjeri — young and old — was a great encouragement to him, especially since discouragements and disappointments abounded in those early days. He continued his work, and in August 1862, Taplin received copies of the first pieces of his translations to be published. They were school tracts, and not surprisingly, the children were thrilled to get them.[63] The first major Biblical tract to be translated was the Sermon on the Mount, completed in October 1862,[64] and salient chapters of the Book of Exodus were translated a year later.[65] There followed hymns and other religious passages, all of which proved to be popular with the children and adults alike.[66] Amongst the few non-religious translations executed by Taplin in the early years was an address which the Ngarrindjeri sent to Queen Victoria to mark the marriage of the Prince of Wales in 1863. The presentation included both the original composition in Ngarrindjeri, signed on behalf of the various lakalinyerar, and Taplin's translation in English — a rare reversal of his normal translating procedure.[67]

Taplin left a record of his translating system, which is very helpful for anyone wishing to study the vocabulary and structure of the Ngarrindjeri language from his publications:

> In making translations of the scriptures I endeavour to abide by the following rules: 1. I translate from the Authorized version. 2. I adopt the marginal rendering when it is more consonant with native idiom. 3. I first of all try to give a rendering of a passage word for word in native, failing to do this I— 4. Try to adopt some word of a similar signification to that word which prevents a strict rendering, and use it instead of that word. 5. But, if I find that the literal rendering of a passage would be nonsense in native, I endeavour to find out the literal and obvious meaning and express it in native as best I can. 6. Where two gg's come together in spelling native, I always give them two distinct sounds. 7. I use native terminals to express the case of names which are

> not native. 8. All words which have no equivalent in native I express in English.[68]

This approach seems to have been a sound one, and even with a very limited knowledge of the Ngarrindjeri language it is possible for a scholar to follow a text of Taplin's translation, provided he has access to the English original. Since it would be safe to say that there is not one fluent speaker of Ngarrindjeri alive today, this makes the translations invaluable sources of information when used in conjunction with Taplin's other writings on the grammar and construction of the language.

Two interesting points which Taplin observes are these: firstly, that translation of the Bible into the Ngarrindjeri (and into the hundreds of other languages) is greatly facilitated by the fact that it is almost entirely written in what he calls the 'Oriental' style — that is, extensive use is made of parable and allegory to demonstrate the arguments, in preference to more abstract reasoning, which would tax the powers of any linguist.[69] Secondly, he observed that:

> The language and imagery of the Bible is taken from a state of society where different ranks exist. It is therefore difficult to adapt its language to a people where there is perfect equality....[70]

Which seems to be an admission that in one respect this group of 'heathen' had developed a society more consonant with the spirit of the New Testament, than were the societies from which the testament and the missionaries had come.

It is a singular fact that Ngarrindjeri stands as one of the very few Australian languages available in any kind of publication today, even though the people have been in contact with Europeans

for over a hundred and fifty years, and have had their own English-speaking school for well over a century. Taplin's translations from Genesis, Exodus, Matthew and John were first published in 1864 under the title Tungarar Jehovald (The Words of God) and reprinted as recently as 1926. While others of his translations are no longer in print, this particular one can still be purchased from the Bible House in Adelaide. This fact is indicative of the tenacity with which the Ngarrindjeri clung to their language while at the same time mastering English for its obvious practical benefits. This point is illustrated too by the octogenerian, Mr Edgar Lampard, who pointed out that although, as children, they were encouraged to learn English at school, he and his siblings were nevertheless not allowed to speak anything but Ngarrindjeri in the home.[71]

If Taplin had achieved nothing else in his lifetime, his work as a linguist would still have meant that his contribution to Ngarrindjeri culture was unsurpassed by that of any other European. At first his sole concern with the language was to master an invaluable teaching and preaching tool. Later on, although he never admits to this, it is clear that the beauty of the language, with its mellifluous sounds and intricate yet logical structure,began to fascinate him, and he wrote about it with respect and deep interest.

Throughout Taplin's adult life, the paramountcy of his religious convictions was never in doubt. All else was subservient to his personal commitment to God, and in particular, he was determined to obey the New Testament injunction to carry the Gospel to all the people on the earth. In Taplin's case, of course, this meant to the Ngarrindjeri. Thus, the Journals are permeated throughout with ref-

erences to Taplin's successes, his failures, and his activities as a missionary and preacher of the Gospel. From the missionary's point of view there were all too few successes, and far too many disappointments; yet though he was at times driven near to it, he never gave way to despair. No doubt it was a mistake to expect a significant number of the people to wish to adopt his own rigid moral code, especially seeing that so few Europeans were able to do so. But as time went on, Taplin gathered about him a strong little group of Ngarrindjeri converts, some of whom were as imbued with missionary zeal as was their pastor: and it was these young men and women who were to constitute the nucleus of the Church at Raukkan.

One of Taplin's major problems in building a solid core of Church members was the high mortality rate amongst the converts. An all too typical comment in the journal was written the day after the death of David — a promising young lad who was one of the sons of Pullum, the rupulle.[72]

> Last night David died. I trust he is now with the Lord. It is strange but true that all those natives who have exhibited the most hopeful signs of piety have died. And yet is it not wonderful that in a dying race like this, many should be found who in the general sinking into death, should grasp the cross of Jesus when offered to them.[73]

It is disappointing to see that as early as mid-1865, Taplin has accepted the common view (which he had earlier contested) that the disappearance of the race was inevitable.

A further problem faced by Taplin regarding his purely missionary function, was of a personal nature. Since he was not an ordained minister of religion, his powers were, to a certain extent, limited, and this fact must have caused him more than a little re-

gret, and at times embarrassment. The Ngarrindjeri congregation would have been quick to notice that Taplin never administered the sacraments, solemnized marriages etc, as did the ministers who visited the station from time to time. The problem came to a head when Taplin's first little group of true converts were ready to be baptized. He wrote in his Journal:

> And now I very humbly wish to lay the question of Baptism before my Lord and Christ. Is it right for me to baptize these? O Lord I pray for guidance.[74]

In the event, he decided that it was right to conduct the baptisms of William Kropinyeri, Jean Parry and James Jackson for the following stated reasons:

> 1. Christ commands us to go and teach all nations and baptize them, therefore the teacher and baptizer are the same. Christ has sent me to teach these natives and should I waive my right to baptize I should lessen my authority as a preacher in their eyes.
> 2. I have narrowly watched these whom I have baptized for three months past, during which time their conduct has been consistent with Christianity.
> 3. I do not find in the New Testament that a long period of probation was required of catechumens before baptism, but young converts were allowed all the strength which the decisiveness of this ordinance can give.[75]

James Jackson, who had already suffered for his faith, was to be dead within a month, but William Kropinyeri and his wife, Jean Parry, lived on to become pillars of the church and founders of a large and important family.

Taplin also wished to be able to solemnize Christian marriages amongst the Ngarrindjeri, but the Committee decided at its meeting of March 1866 that it was not 'practicable' at that time, but that Taplin 'might apply to the nearest Minister to perform any such services.'[76] This was of no help to the missionary, who was

naturally anxious not to appear to be of inferior status in European society. The Committee does not seem to have given their missionary agent the support he needed and deserved over this issue, and were questioning his right to baptize even in 1868 — over three years after he began to do this.[77] Taplin stated bluntly to the Committee that he would not give up baptizing the Ngarrindjeri, and pointed out to the members that in the past he had kept them informed of his work in this regard, and that they had indicated their approval by publisning his proceedings in the Annual Report.[78] As Taplin observed, his position was indeed an anomalous one, and it was likely to become more so, since the Church was growing in numbers and since it was soon to acquire a proper church building. A special meeting of members of the Committee who were clergymen was convened to discuss the issue, but no-one besides F.W. Cox, the convenor, bothered to attend.[79] Cox tried again, and eventually Taplin was called to Adelaide and ordained an 'Evangelist to the Aborigines' on 4 November 1868. He wrote in the Journal:

> This day I was solemnly ordained to the office of the Christian ministry in Hindmarsh Square Church, Adelaide. May God give me grace to be faithful to this solemn trust, now for the first time publicly recognised in me.[80]

The rather graceless consenting by the Committee to Taplin's ordination, seems little enough recognition for a decade of selfless devotion to the cause, ceaseless hard work, and outstanding achievement. But for Taplin himself, this must have been one of the greatest moments of his life and the fulfilment of his most cherished personal desire.

From the outset, employment was a major problem at the Mis-

sion, and it still is today. The property itself, even when it was enlarged in later years, remained at about the size of an average farm for the district, yet at times there have been over three hundred people living there. Consequently, the farm itself had no hope of providing adequate employment, and unlike Poonindie and the later established Point Pearce, both of which were endowed with sizeable tracts of land, Point McLeay was never to pay its own way, from 1859 to the present day.

Sections of the Ngarrindjeri had long since been accustomed to working at both pastoral and agricultural occupations, particularly as seasonal workers. At the time, it was not particularly difficult for a European to acquire a block of land and to become a small-scale farmer, so that most Europeans capable of farm work were more inclined to take up their own farms rather than to work for others. Hence there was a definite demand for Ngarrindjeri labour at certain times of the year. At a later stage of the development of the area, when European farmers began to produce large families, this labour market was to diminish drastically, but for several decades after the establishment of the Mission, the Ngarrindjeri did not find seasonal employment difficult to obtain. The two obvious disadvantages were: firstly, that they had to travel substantial distances from their homes at Raukkan, to reach the stations and farms; and secondly, that even when the demand was greatest, it was still only for a relatively short period of the year, and wages accruing from this work could not be made to spread over the remaining months.

The shearing and woolwashing season normally began early in

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September, and lasted until November. During this period, the numbers at Raukkan would be seriously depleted, as whole families would leave for the station sheds around the lakes and up the Murray.[81] Then, in late November and December, the farmers on the other side of Lake Alexandrina would commence harvesting their grain crops, and there would be another exodus. This seasonal migration was forced on the Ngarrindjeri, as it was practically their only means of gaining employment, and hence their only method of survival; but with the introduction of mechanical harvesting, and with more Europeans willing to take on jobs such as shearing, these opportunities for employment were to diminish rapidly as the century progressed. In any case, the arrangement had distinct disadvantages for the people, especially as the settlement at Raukkan became increasingly permanent, and it certainly added to Taplin's difficulties as a teacher and missionary.

It is understandable therefore, that there was strong support for a start to be made in establishing a farm on the little area which the Government had put at the A.F.A.'s disposal at Raukkan. Although Taplin was as anxious as the Ngarrindjeri were to get the farm going,[82] it was not on the top of his list of priorities, and it is not surprising that even by 1864 there were only twenty acres under crop. In that year, a new survey was commenced over the whole of the peninsula by G.E. Strangways.[83] It was completed early the following year, and in accordance with an application for additional land previously lodged by the A.F.A. Committee,[84] the Mission was granted the use of a further two hundred acres of land.[85] The total area, which was now declared to be an Aboriginal Reserve,[86]

was slightly in excess of four hundred and fifty acres. This was still a small acreage — even for one farmer, but more significant was the fact that the A.F.A. still did not have tenure over the property.

None of the early avenues for employment seemed to offer as much hope for the future as did the fishing industry. It had the advantage that it was already a Ngarrindjeri occupation and one in which they had developed great skill and knowledge over many centuries. It had the additional attraction of allowing the population to be stabilized. Taplin quite rightly recognised the potential which the industry had, and he did his best to develop it. But his early hopes were not fulfilled. The difficulty of getting the fish fresh to market was a perennial one which was not really resolved until the recent introduction of refrigerated freight vans.[87] The problem mentioned earlier of finding a reliable agent to sell the fish was also a threat to the nascent industry from its inception. And the fact that the fishing grounds which had once been the exclusive domain of the Ngarrindjeri, were now open to exploitation and over-exploitation by anyone at all, meant that the constancy of supply could not now be regulated.

The first of these difficulties was not overcome, but it was at least circumvented by curing the fish before despatching them to market. The second was, for a time, solved by the arrival in the area of a Negro named Campbell, who was prepared to pay a reasonable price to the Ngarrindjeri fishermen. Not only was he prepared to pay an honest price for the fish, but he was also a practising Christian, and for both these reasons he appealed to Taplin. However, he too

encountered difficulties, as the following consecutive Journal entries show:

> 3rd. Today the negro fisherman discovered that a large number of his fish were spoilt by flies. Poor fellow, he has had most severe disappointments, but he has borne them with Christian patience. I am glad of his example to the blacks. He is a true child of God.
> 4th. An exceptionally wet day. Campbell started for Goolwa with fresh fish. He had not been gone three hours before the shed where his salt fish were hung to dry, gave way and fell to the ground, and all the fish with it. As it was so wet, nothing could be done with them today.[88]

Taplin attempted to interest the Government in the industry,[89] and he threw himself enthusiastically behind a scheme whereby Captain Cadell's steamer, the *Moolgewanke*, was to take delivery of Murray Cod caught by the Ngarrindjeri at Raukkan.[90] But still the industry failed to burgeon, and although many of the Ngarrindjeri were to gain subsistence from fishing over the ensuing years, and a few more were to become commercially successful fishermen, the fishing industry itself was never to realize the potential that Taplin thought it possessed when the Mission was in its infancy.

CHAPTER II. FOOTNOTES.

[1]Journal I p.22 21 September 1859.

[2]Ibid. p.67 27 March 1860.

[3]Ibid. p.31 9 November 1859.

[4]Ibid. p.53 10 January 1860.

[5]Journal II p.207 13 September 1864.

[6]Journal I pp.70-1 23 April 1860. See also Chapter VI of this thesis.

[7]Journal I p.68 1 April 1860.

[8]Ibid. p.75 18 May 1860 and p.86 12 September 1860.

[9]Ibid. p.151 22 April 1862.

[10]Journal II p.198 2 June 1864.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Journal I p.8 28 May 1859.

[13]Journal II p.201 5 July 1864.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Taplin The Narrinyeri Chapter III pp.23-31.

[16]For example see taped interview with the late Mr Percy Rigney.

[17]Journal II p.213 22 October 1864.

[18]Ibid. p.235 7 April 1865.

[19]Journal I p.155 9 June 1862.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Journal II p.167 4 December 1864.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Journal I p.62 28 February 1860.

[24]Ibid. p.89 5 November 1860.

[25]Journal II p.163 19 December 1862 and p.193 10 December 1863.

[26]Ibid. p.160 20 September 1862.

CHAPTER II. FOOTNOTES.

[27]Journal I p.149 31 March 1862.

[28]Journal I p.98 26-30 March 1861.

[29]Journal I p.114 10 August 1861 and Journal II p.173 17-21 March 1863, p.180 13 July 1863, pp.184-5 12-22 August 1863.

[30]Journal II p.197 January-June 1864.

[31]Journal I p.12 19-22 June 1859.

[32]Journal I p.12 22 June 1859.

[33]I speak here from experience.

[34]Tolmer Alexander: Reminiscences London, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington. 1882 Vol II p.251.

[35]Journal II p.161 20 October 1862.

[36]Journal II p.208 19-21 September 1864.

[37]Journal I p.94 14 February 1861.

[38]Tolmer Vol II p.251.

[39]For example Journal I p.120 6 September 1861.

[40]Tolmer Vol II p.251.

[41]Journal II p.182 31 August 1863.

[42]Journal II p.184 11 September 1863.

[43]Journal I p.25 18 October 1859 and 1860 Report, questions 1291-1305.

[44]Journal I p.74 9 May 1860.

[45]Ibid. p.81 2 July 1860.

[46]Journal II p.190 7 November 1863.

[47]Ibid. p.48 2 January 1860.

[48]1860 Report, questions 1162-1166.

[49]Ibid. question 1168.

[50] Journal I p.87 8 October 1860.

[51]Ibid. p.87 10-13 October 1860.

[52]Ibid. 15 October 1860.

CHAPTER II. FOOTNOTES.

[53]Ibid. p.91 9-16 December 1860.

[54]Ibid. p.28 2 October 1859, and p.50 4 January 1860.

[55]Journal I p.141 1 January 1862.

[56]Ibid. p.11 4-7 June 1859.

[57]Ibid. p.42 1 December 1859.

[58]Ibid. p.42 7 December 1859.

[59]Ibid. p.67 26 March 1859.

[60]Ibid. p.67 29 March 1859.

[61]Ibid. p.92 1 January 1861.

[62]Ibid. p.124 6 October 1861.

[63]Journal II p.158 27 August 1862.

[64]Ibid. p.162 30 October 1862.

[65]Ibid. p.186 1 October 1863.

[66]Ibid. p.225 10 February 1865.

[67]Ibid. p.178 16 June 1863.

[68]Ibid. p.188 24 October 1863.

[69]Journal I p.120 9 September 1861.

[70]Ibid. p.69 7 April 1860.

[71]Interview with Mr Edgar Lampard, 1973.

[72] See photograph of David with Taplin on page 390.

[73]Journal II p.245 1 August 1865.

[74]Journal II p.223 31 January 1865.

[75]Ibid. p.227 26 February 1865.

[76]Minute Book I March meeting 1866 (n.d.)

[77]Ibid. 3 August 1868.

[78]Ibid. 7 September 1868.

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[79] Ibid. 5 October 1868.

[80] Journal III p.332 19 October 1868.

[81] Journal I p.85, Journal II pp.185, 190, 210.

[82] Journal I p.144 22 February 1862.

[83] Journal II p.217 17 November 1864.

[84] Minute Book I 2 August 1864.

[85] Journal II p.222A 12 January 1865.

[86] Ibid. p.224 6 February 1865 and p.228 3 March 1865.

[87] Noye, John The Coorong Adelaide, Department of Adult Education, University of Adelaide, 1974. pp.98-9.

[88] Journal I p.68 3 and 4 April 1860.

[89] Ibid. p.62 1 March 1860.

[90] Journal II p.165 24-29 November 1862.

CHAPTER III. GEORGE TAPLIN : SUPERINTENDENT.

The pattern of life established in the early years of the Mission was to remain throughout the Taplin era. It was to be continually and at times significantly modified, but the basic issues, the fundamental relationships, were to remain consistent.

Throughout most of his twenty year sojourn as missionary to the Ngarrindjeri, Taplin enjoyed the support of the A.F.A. Committee which constituted his employer. There were times when, due to its own limitations, this support was not worth a great deal, yet in his vulnerable position, it was vital for Taplin to retain the full support of at least this group of Europeans. There were only three notable instances of disharmony in the Taplin-A.F.A. relationship. The first of these was caused by the action of the second secretary of the A.F.A., the Rev J. Gardner, who accused Taplin of misappropriation. The Journal entry for 17 July 1863 reads:

> I have been very busy yesterday and today writing in my own defence against some annoying charges brought by our secretary, Rev J. Gardner.[1]

A sub-committee of the A.F.A. comprising Neville Blyth and C.B. Young was formed to investigate the charges brought by Gardner against Taplin. The sub-committee completely exonerated the missionary, their report saying in part:

> Your committee are of the opinion that the returns and explanations given by Mr Taplin are entirely satisfactory, and that the Committee of the Association may feel assured that Mr Taplin is faithfully discharging his duty in the distribution of rations entrusted to his care.[2]

In addition, Taplin had the satisfaction of seeing Gardner resign over the issue,[3] but nevertheless the whole incident was a most distressing one for him.

A second disagreement with the Committee arose, as mentioned

previously, over Taplin's determination to baptize his converts. The behaviour of the A.F.A. in connection with this issue was, to say the least, inconsistent. Having allowed him to baptize for over three years, and published reports of his achievements in this regard, it was hardly right for the Committee to suddenly reverse its attitude as it appeared to do. In actual fact, the resolution passed by the Committee was not nearly as definite on the subject as the secretary's letter to Taplin must have been, the relevant passage in the Minute Book reading:

> Resolved that this Committee be called to give special consideration to the position of Mr Taplin as Baptizer of the blacks.[4]

But Secretary Cox (who was usually a strong supporter of Taplin) must have decided that until the position was considered by the Committee, the missionary should refrain from conducting any further baptisms: five days later, Taplin's Journal entry includes the following statement:

> Yesterday I received a letter from the Rev F.W. Cox requiring me in cases of baptism to call in a recognised minister. <u>This I shall not comply with.</u>[5]

This was not the only occasion when Taplin absolutely refused to obey the injunction of his employers; and it is yet another indication of the courage of the man, and his resolute adherence to principles and courses of action which he deemed to be correct. Once again, Taplin emerged victorious from the clash, and furthermore, his strong stand when under attack over baptism had the effect of raising the issue which led to his ordination.

The third major difference of opinion arose in 1873 when Edward Simpson was secretary. The early history of the A.F.A. is

one of almost continual financial struggle, but during certain periods, the fiscal position became even more acute than was usual. Simpson attempted to tackle the problem by 'tightening up' at Raukkan — a fairly painless process from his point of view, and his distance from the scene. But at Raukkan, where there was already considerable suffering because of the Government's parsimony, the reduction of rations still further, made the plight of many of the people extremely serious. On 12 March 1873 Taplin recorded that he was: 'Very much upset and amazed by a letter from the Hon. Secretary.'[6] And on 20 May 1873: 'Busy at accounts and returns called for by our teasing Hon. Secretary Mr Simpson.'[7] The outcome of Simpson's investigation was that he was enabled to inform the Committee that Taplin was employing more Ngarrindjeri workmen than was strictly necessary, and that he was giving out more rations than he should have been, on the basis of one ration for one day's work. Simpson's actual computation was that '544 must have been given for no value received' in the month of February 1873.[8] Accordingly, the Committee passed the following resolutions:

> That the issue of Rations to unemployed Natives, or of whole rations to the partially employed man is not in accordance with the objects of this Association.
> That Rations for the day be issued only for a day's work performed.[9]

The effects of such a policy could have been foreseen, especially in a situation where the economy was already precariously balanced, and where at the time, there was scarcely any outside employment to be had. Before the results of the policy became manifest, Simpson had resigned, but this in no way lessened the suffering of the Ngarrindjeri, or Taplin's annoyance at having to imple-

ment such an uncharitable decision. The immediate effects are recorded in the Journal:

> A large number of the able bodied blacks finding we have no work to give them and that no one else has, and that there is therefore little food to be obtained, have gone off to Adelaide. I am sorry for this as only evil can come of it. But it is the result of the policy pursued by our late Hon. Secretary.[10]

In all fairness to the Committee of the A.F.A., it must be stated that they were faced in the early years with an almost impossible task because of an acute lack of funds. Raising money was a continual battle for the members, and at times it must have been a most frustrating one, particularly when paucity of finance prevented them from exploiting an avenue of profitable enterprise. As early as November 1859, the secretary had to order Taplin to desist from raising stone for the first buildings — because there was not enough money to pay for the labour.[11] And this pattern was to be continually repeated over the years. Taplin was very keen to stock the station with sheep, to take advantage of the abundant grass which went to waste each year.[12] But there was not enough capital to buy the sheep in the first place, so a valuable source of revenue was lost. Eventually, in 1866, Messrs Peacock, Goode and C.B. Young banded together and purchased three hundred and sixty four sheep, by providing their own backing as a loan.[13] This was no new experience for William Peacock, who had on several occasions lent the Association sums of fifty pounds, to enable it to meet its most urgent commitments — such as Taplin's overdue salary.[14] Thus the Association's poverty became, to a certain extent, self-perpetuating. Buildings and equipment needed for proper efficiency could not be

procured, and much of what was on hand could not be maintained properly: all because of the paucity of funds. If it was frustrating for the Committee, it was infinitely more so for Taplin, whose work would have been extremely difficult, even with a plethora of money and a highly efficient property and organization.

The A.F.A. was not without its friends in Parliament — men like Angas, Peacock and Erskine — but unfortunately there were not enough of them to substantially alter the amount voted to the A.F.A. each year. There were also various country branches — such as those at Mt Barker, Kapunda, Kooringa, Clare, Auburn and Gawler — whose principle function was to raise money; but the amounts raised were comparatively small — even though Taplin often got 'good collections' when he was called upon to spend his valuable time visiting country areas on lecture tours.[15] The other two major sources of finance were the members' annual subscriptions (which always proved difficult to get in) and major public appeals through the press and the pulpit.

None of these methods of raising money, nor the farm itself, proved adequate to the task in hand. Thus we find that year after year the Association was in financial difficulties, with little hope of extricating itself. It is to their credit that, under such circumstances, a loyal little group of members kept trying, but many were naturally discouraged and fell away, and a number of meetings were cancelled because of failure to raise a quorum. For instance, in early 1868, when the situation was particularly gloomy after a crop failure at Raukkan, no quorum could be obtained at the consecutive meetings in February, March and April. In desperation, with

a deficit of three hundred and fifty pounds, a special public appeal was made after an extraordinary meeting in May, and the debt was reduced to a hundred and fifty six pounds.[16] The adverse publicity attracted by the financial problems further damaged a cause which had little attraction for most South Australians, and provided a good excuse for luke-warm Government support.

The continual injunctions for Taplin to exercise the strictest economies must have taxed even his apparently inexhaustible Christian charity and patience, for he was doing all, and more, than could possibly be expected of him. After his early hopes for the fishing industry were not realized, Taplin turned more to the farm itself as the major source of revenue, and being only too aware of its completely inadequate size, he did all he could to gain more land for the Association. In this the Committee gave him full support. Taplin was also willing to try anything in the way of new crops etc. which could possibly enhance the farm's earning capacity. So, in addition to the standard wheat, barley, oats, sheep and cattle, Taplin tried growing flax,[17] olives, fruit-trees[18] and wattles;[19] and had finance been available, he would also have tried growing grape vines.[20] Taplin early realized the potential in harvesting salt from the lagoons on the property, and he estimated that there was enough there to 'salt all the cattle in South Australia.'[21]

But no amount of effort on such a limited area could return enough finance to support a community of two hundred people, and by 1876 — when the Mission had been operating for seventeen years, the treasurer estimated the loss over the period to have averaged about three hundred and fifty pounds per annum. By this time the two

other major Aboriginal institutions in the Province — Poonindie and the recently established Point Pearce Mission — were progressing quite well. Poonindie, at one stage, was even able to make a gift of fifty pounds to the perpetually struggling A.F.A.[22] Both of these stations had the advantage of a much greater area of good land. In 1874, the same year in which the Committee received Poonindie's generous gift, West Erskine managed to persuade Parliament to grant the A.F.A. seven hundred pounds, over and above the annual vote of five hundred pounds, and the treasurer was able to report in December of that year that the Committee was at last out of debt.[23] However, in less than twelve months the deficit had again reached three hundred and thirty eight pounds[24] and was growing rapidly.

The history of the Ngarrindjeri exemplifies Mark Twain's well-known dictum on Australian history: it is rich in incredible stories, many of them much stranger than fiction, yet all of them true.[25] One of the most amazing of the stories interwoven with the history of the A.F.A. and the Ngarrindjeri, is that of Lady Henrietta Smith — a Scotswoman who never actually came to Australia, but who attempted to help the Aborigines of South Australia in the only way she could — by providing a permanent source of revenue for their spiritual and material advancement. Mrs Smith (as she preferred to be called) founded a source of income which came to be known as the Smith of Dunesk Fund — a legacy which rocked the Presbyterian Church in Australia in the 1940's, and which was still able to raise a stormy public controversy in South Australia in 1972.

Mrs Smith was widowed when the colony was in its infancy, and the first thing she did with her money, that she was then able

to use as she wished, was to attempt to purchase land to be set aside for the benefit of the South Australian Aborigines. Writing of Mrs Smith's attempt to get the land, her sister, Miss Jemima Russell, said:

> The history of these Land Orders is more like a romance than reality, three times they were sent to Australia and always came back — once she was told to give up all thought of them that the ship and them had gone to the bottom of the sea. But instead of being discouraged she went and got Duplicates and continued.[26]

Her efforts began in 1839, but it was not until 1851 and 1852 that Mrs Smith finally obtained six sections totalling four hundred and eighty acres in the Hundreds of South Rhine and Nuriootpa[27] — at a cost of one pound per acre.

At this stage Mrs Smith must have felt that her desire to help the Aborigines of South Australia was about to be fulfilled, and in 1853 she approached the Colonial Committee of the Free Church of Scotland with the request that that body should become trustees of the land, and administer the gift according to her wishes. This, the Colonial Committee consented to do. Unfortunately, however, in the fourteen years that had elapsed since Mrs Smith began her efforts on behalf of the South Australian Aborigines, the Kaurna tribe had been almost annihilated, and other groups were also decreasing rapidly; and Mrs Smith was advised that soon there would be no Aborigines left.[28] Thus, if she made the deed over to the Aborigines entirely as she had intended, the bequest could soon be rendered useless. Mrs Smith was eventually persuaded to sign a Deed of Gift drawn up by the Church's lawyers, but she did so with considerable reluctance, because it made no mention of the Aborigines at all. So

to ensure that the real purpose of the gift might not be forgotten, Mrs Smith wrote an accompanying letter, a copy of which she asked to have recorded in the Colonial Committee's Minutes. This letter, dated 28 November 1853, reads in part:

> With reference to the gift of certain lands in South Australia recently made by me to the Free Church of Scotland, I beg to state that my original design in purchasing from the Government, 14 years ago, six sections of land in that Colony of 80 acres each, was that the annual proceeds of them might be entirely devoted to the education and evangelization of the Aborigines of South Australia.[29]

Mrs Smith went on to say that because of the changed circumstances she had agreed to:

> ...convey it over to the Free Church of Scotland, trusting and believing that they will not lose sight of the welfare of the natives for whom it was first intended.[30]

Thus, by the Deed, the money could be used for any Christian work within the borders of South Australia, but the letter specifically states that the Aborigines were to be the primary concern. There is a distinct parallel to be discerned between the Smith of Dunesk Deed of Gift with its attendant letter, and the 1834 Foundation Act with its Letters Patent. Both allowed unscrupulous men to interpret and to implement them in a manner completely opposed to the spirit of the concomitant documents.

In 1858, two South Australians, Messrs Thomas Elder and George Young, were given power of attorney over the Smith of Dunesk property and fund,[31] and it is an extraordinary fact that although George Young was linked in the early days with the A.F.A. and even served for a time on its Finance sub-committee,[32] he does not seem to have notified the A.F.A. Committee that an excellent source of finance was available to them. (This G. Young should not be con-

fused with Mr C.B. Young, who was one of the strongest true supporters the A.F.A. ever had.) It would have been reprehensible enough just to have held the money that was accumulating from the land, knowing its intended purpose, and knowing too that hundreds of South Australian Aborigines were suffering severe hardship. But the attorneys seem to have gone further and to have attempted to divert the Fund to other purposes: they even tried to use it to insure colonial clergymen for the benefit of their families![33] In 1866, a year of severe financial hardship at Raukkan, Thomas Elder and George Young transferred the Power of Attorney to Mr J.S. Ogilvy of Melbourne, and handed over no less than six hundred pounds in accumulated capital[34] — an appreciable sum in those days, and one that could have been of considerable benefit to the Aborigines of South Australia if it had been properly applied. It is probable that Young and Elder lost their power of attorney at the insistence of Mrs Smith, when she found out what was happening to her bequest.

In the last few years of her life, Mrs Smith evinced a renewed concern for the administration of her Fund, and the principle reason for this was her vicarious contact with the Ngarrindjeri. It is difficult to ascertain at this point of time, just what Mrs Smith's relationship was with the Rev James Reid of Wellington — whether he was sent amongst the Ngarrindjeri by Mrs Smith, or whether, having decided to work amongst them, he then applied to his benevolent compatriot for financial support. Jemima Russell refers in one instance to Mr Reid and says that he was 'her' (ie Mrs Smith's) missionary:[35] and although Miss Russell employs the possessive case fairly loosely at times, the letter nevertheless shows that Reid was

closely associated with Mrs Smith and was receiving financial backing from her. It was thus that Mrs Smith would have learned that the South Australian Aborigines were far from being practically extinct, as she had been previously assured, and that at least some of them were adapting extremely well to the new order. And on the other hand, it is almost certain that it would have been from his friend, James Reid, that George Taplin would first have heard of Mrs Smith of Dunesk.

Although some of the Ngarrindjeri delighted in amusing themselves at James Reid's expense, there were some others who took the man and his message seriously: particularly was this the case with some of the Piltindjeri, whose country encompassed Reid's base at Wellington. The first and most outstanding of Reid's converts — a man who was to prove to be an intellectual and spiritual giant, was James Ngunaitponi, a man of great and diverse ability. Taplin had heard of James Ngunaitponi from Reid, and after the latter was drowned, it occurred to Taplin that Ngunaitponi could be very helpful to him as an assistant missionary.[36] James consented to go to Raukkan, arriving there by boat on 3 September 1864.[37] More will be written of James Ngunaitponi later. At this stage it need only be recorded that he did become a missionary among his own people, and that by 1867 had begun a correspondence with his old minister's financial supporter — Mrs Smith of Dunesk. James's correspondence with Mrs Smith in turn led to Taplin himself becoming a correspondent of that (by now) elderly lady. The Journal entry of 29 May 1867 reads in part:

> James got his registered letter on arrival and found it was

> from Mrs Smith of Dunesk, Scotland, who is a warm friend of the Aborigines of this land. The letter, however, contains some very glaring mistakes and misapprehensions which I shall take care to write to Mrs Smith about and set the matter right.[38]

It is not difficult to conjecture as to what some of these 'misapprehensions' might have been, but with George Taplin advising her of the true state of the Aborigines in South Australia, and with James Ngunaitponi — a literate Ngarrindjeri Christian — backing him up, it is little wonder that Mrs Smith, despite her advanced age, decided to take up the fight to have her bequest properly administered. In fact, she became so interested and excited by the work at Raukkan, that she decided to direct the bulk of the revenue to the support of Taplin's Mission, and the Ngarrindjeri. The first beneficiary was James Ngunaitponi himself who, together with another early Ngarrindjeri convert, Allan Jamblyn, received a grant to build a cottage for himself.[39] Mrs Smith must have written straight back after receiving Taplin's first letter, for the Journal entry of 15 November 1867 states:

> Today I received letters of a cheering character from Mrs Smith, Lasswade, Scotland. She offers to build houses for James and Allan or supply money to do so. I got a letter on this subject from Mr Irving of the Free Church of Scotland.[40]

The following year, one hundred pounds arrived for the purpose of building cottages (a sizable grant considering that, at the time, the average cost per dwelling was sixteen pounds). And on top of that there was fifty pounds to be put towards a building very dear to Taplin's heart — the projected chapel: in fact it was Mrs Smith's contribution which enabled the building of the chapel to get under way early in 1869.[41] From that time until her death less than

three years later, Mrs Smith's life seems to have been devoted to ensuring that Taplin and the Ngarrindjeri would become the principal beneficiaries of her bequest. The kind old lady must have felt that after thirty years her dream was coming true — and Taplin, too, after a decade of financial struggle, must have experienced a similar feeling. Jemima Russell exhorted him to:

> Lay it before the Lord and plead that Mrs Smith's fund may go for what she devoted it to. Satan seems determined to rob the Blacks, but it was given to God for them. We wish you had told us sooner, but trust it is not too late.[42]

In writing urgently to the Colonial Committee of the Free Church, Mrs Smith could scarcely have been more specific or more definite. She had Miss Russell write to the Colonial Committee to tell them, inter alia, that:

> Unless Mr Taplin's mission which is hers gets £150 a year she will cancel every sum that she has left in her will to the Free Church and give them to those who will do as she wishes.[43]

Later in the same year she was to go further and suggest that the whole of the proceeds be devoted to the Point McLeay Mission.[44] Mrs Smith pointed out that in any case she would look upon it as robbery if one farthing was spent outside South Australia or on anyone else but the Aborigines.[45] And being aware by this time of just how unscrupulous and cunning were some of the people with whom she was dealing, she forestalled the use of a possible loophole, by saying:

> Allow me to add that to invest any portion of the money is inconsistent with the purpose for which it was given. Whatever is done for the Australian Natives must be done now, or it may very soon be too late.[46]

(These letters warrant a thorough examination, and three are printed in full in the Appendix.)

GEORGE TAPLIN : SUPERINTENDENT.

Finally, Rev Peter Hope, the Secretary of the Colonial Committee of the Free Church of Scotland, replied to Mrs Smith assuring her that her wishes would be obeyed. On 21 April 1871 he wrote:

> I have now to state that by the instruction of the Committee, I have written to Mr Ogilvy of Melbourne who holds from us a power of attorney, informing him of your expressed wishes, and your special regard for the Mission at Point McLeay, and intimating the desire of the Committee that the fund may be disposed of in accordance therewith.[47]

Mrs Smith wrote a deeply grateful reply to Hope — glad to feel certain that at long last her bequest was to reach its proper recipients[48] — and in this happy belief she died on 8 July 1871, at the age of eighty nine.[49] Perhaps it is as well that she did, for as the lady herself observed, Satan had maintained a strong hold on the money for over thirty years. And as far as he was concerned, the fight was far from over.

Shortly after Mrs Smith's demise, Ogilvy, the Melbourne attorney who was now beginning to implement her wishes, died also, and the administration of the Fund devolved upon other members of the Melbourne Presbytery. These gentlemen seem to have been determined to frustrate the efforts of the A.F.A. to ensure that Mrs Smith's wishes were obeyed. Instead of the minimum of a hundred and fifty pounds per year plus another hundred pounds for cottages, which the donor had directed that the A.F.A. Mission should receive, the Presbytery offered one hundred and eleven pounds, twelve shillings and sixpence to be divided between Point McLeay and Point Pearce.[50] In an effort to tidy up the whole unsatisfactory arrangement, the A.F.A. strongly urged the Colonial Committee in Edinburgh to appoint as their attorney a resident of South Australia.[51] This

the Colonial Committee agreed to do, and a man named Barlow of Adelaide was appointed to administer the Fund in the way he thought best.[52] But despite the fact that Barlow had for his guidance a copy of Mrs Smith's clearly expressed wishes,[53] he reached the extraordinary conclusion that although it would not be inconsistent to give the Fund in its entirety to the Aborigines, yet he felt 'at perfect liberty to give it to any object in the cause of Christ', and would not promise to give any amount at all to the Point McLeay Mission![54]

For a short time then, Barlow administered the Fund as the local Presbyterian faction wished him to do, rather than as the donor had stipulated — a situation which Taplin naturally deplored. Bitterly he observed:

> It seems that the more we labour for the health and salvation of the natives the more do the colonists baulk and hinder us. I need now means to employ the natives, and the Presbyterian Church of this colony hold the Smith Fund and won't give us a penny of it. How will they answer for this robbery to Christ? Do they believe in the last verses of Matthew 25?[55]

But Taplin was never one to give up easily, and with Miss Russell continuing the fight in Edinburgh, and the A.F.A. in Adelaide, eventually a fairly satisfactory arrangement was reached with the Colonial Committee in 1874, by which all monies accruing from the Fund were to be devoted to South Australian Aborigines, with a third going to Point Pearce, and two thirds to Point McLeay.[56] Even then, the South Australian Presbyterians did not adhere to this agreement: they simply allotted a fixed sum each year (for Raukkan it was one hundred pounds), and so a considerable surplus amount began to accumulate. Although this procedure was far from that envisaged by Mrs

Smith, it was acceptable, in that it was much better than any previous arrangement, and it guaranteed a fixed and dependable income each year from this source — that is, until Satan reared his head again in 1892.

But the one hundred pounds Smith of Dunesk grant was less than ten per cent of the annual budget at Raukkan, so whilst it was appreciated, it could only marginally decrease the growing yearly debt. The major turning point, as far as finance was concerned, came in June 1876, when the Government finally acceded to a long-standing A.F.A. request, and doubled their annual vote from five hundred pounds to one thousand pounds. In the same letter that bore these good tidings, the Commissioner of Crown Lands (who was also the Minister responsible for Aboriginal welfare) advised the Committee that a block of land a mile wide and with a three mile frontage on the Coorong, was to be set aside for the Association's use.[57] In the following January, the Committee received notice that a Mr John Caldwell had left them a legacy of a hundred and forty one pounds,[58] so that with the Smith Fund grant of a hundred pounds, and the London Missionary Society making a further donation, the year 1877 actually produced a balance of two hundred and twenty five pounds in the credit column.[59] In the following year this amount was doubled. From a financial point of view, everything seemed to come right simultaneously, and after nearly twenty years floundering in a sea of debt, the A.F.A. was finally emerging with its head high. Sadly enough from George Taplin's point of view, however, the new era of relative prosperity was only just beginning when he died in 1879.

Towards the close of Taplin's life, his relationships with

the European settlers in the surrounding district was, on the whole, harmonious, but he continued to regard Europeans as the great enemy of his chosen people — as of course they were: nations are not conquered, dispossessed and extirpated by their friends. The Ngarrindjeri continued to be cheated in every form of private enterprise they entered, whether it was the fishing industry, or harvesting and selling moomoorookie (a delicious edible flag root).[60] The only kind of employment in which they were fairly safe from discriminatory exploitation was shearing, since that profession has traditionally been basically piece-work. They were certainly discriminated against in the sheds but not, it would appear, financially. Examples of Europeans defrauding the Ngarrindjeri abound in Taplin's Journal. One incident indicative of the situation as a whole, occurred in April 1866. A European came to offer an apparently reasonable price for fish, but before the Ngarrindjeri fishermen could sell him any, he was viciously attacked — knocked down and kicked — by Searles and Jones, the Europeans who claimed the sole rights of exploitation. Taplin notes:

> The blacks are thus prevented from selling their fish except to Searles and Jones, who cheat them very badly, and people are intimidated from coming to buy them by these miscreants.[61]

Another example is recorded by J.A. Ophel during a period when Taplin was absent through illness. Napolean Bonney, one of the Ngarrindjeri men who began farming on their own account, lost his recently purchased horse not long after he courageously began operations.
Ophel says:

> This will be a great loss to him, poor fellow. His horse cost him £13-0-0 a short time ago. I can't tell what the

> immediate cause of death was. The primary cause was old age and hard work. The horse was worn out and yet that horse was sold to him for a good substantial horse. It is a shame for anyone to take a poor blackfellow in that way.[62]

As could be expected, vicious whites continued to take advantage of the necessitous circumstances in which many Ngarrindjeri women had to live, and for their own purposes, they attempted to undermine the moral teaching emanating from Raukkan.[63] But those of the Ngarrindjeri who embraced Christianity were also open to verbal attack by the most 'respectable' section of the local European community. The trouble here arose because equality before God is one of the basic tenets of the religion, and one that Taplin still adhered to, even though European society as a whole had vitiated it centuries before. If the Aborigines were in fact equal, then the whole argument for sequestering their land, and exploiting their labour was invalidated. The missionary observed:

> It is thus that godless white people either attempt to seduce from the paths of righteousness natives who profess religion or else slander them when seductions fail.[64]

Taplin's original and most powerful verbal assailant, John Baker, appears never to have given up the fight, although after the Legislative Council Enquiry he seems to have been restricted to niggling attacks and attempts to traduce his neighbour in the eyes of the A.F.A. Committee — none of which achieved any success. Taplin's own attitude is clearly shown by the Journal entry of 6 February 1865:

> Today Messrs Goyder and Baker called. The former to see me about the Aborigines' Reserve here, the latter to annoy me with his criticisms. But the Lord helped me.[65]

Baker died in 1872, and his property was acquired by Walter Watson

Hughes,[66] who installed a new manager called Richman. The Mission farm soon suffered several major stock losses, including one in which Taplin and the Committee vainly attempted to get back thirty five sheep from Richman;[67] and on a subsequent occasion, about a hundred sheep were duffed by another neighbour.[68] After this incident, moves were made to acquire a registered sheep brand for the Mission.

Grog peddlers were a constant source of annoyance to Taplin, but one which he could do little about, although the law prohibited Aborigines from drinking ardent spirits, and Europeans from supplying them. When the young men visited Adelaide, they seem to have behaved in much the same way that the majority of high-spirited bushmen behaved in those days when they 'hit the big smoke'. Over-indulgence in strong drink was the accepted practice on such occasions, and the visitors from Raukkan seem to have adopted the tradition quite readily.[69] The greatest concern, however, was caused by the local suppliers — those who promoted drunkenness for the purpose of prostituting the women, and also those who set up in business in order to make profits. Taplin's erstwhile friend — the ex-trooper Rickaby (who had supported Baker in his attacks on the missionary at the 1860 Enquiry) — was now settled in the district and was recognised amongst the Ngarrindjeri as a regular supplier — indeed, they told Taplin that he used to sell them grog while he was still a member of the police force.[70] Alcohol was readily available at Meningie once that little township acquired a public house,[71] and one Robert Turner set up in a regular way in 1870, as a seller of 'colonial wine'. No doubt members of the Ngarrindjeri became some

of the first connoisseurs of the excellent vintages produced across the Lake in the Langhorne's Creek district.[72] The A.F.A. Committee fully supported Taplin in his efforts to have the grog-sellers convicted,[73] and the missionary's attacks seem to have at least reduced the open sale of alcohol to the Ngarrindjeri, for the Sub-Protector in his 1873 Report stated that:

> The evils which existed until lately from the natives becoming possessed of colonial wine have abated, owing to the removal of the person who is supposed to have supplied them from the neighbourhood.[74]

But Sub-Protector Biggs was being rather optimistic if he thought that Turner's departure would have any substantial and lasting effect on the consumption of alcohol amongst the Ngarrindjeri, for grog has continued to the present day as a major cause of mental and physical ill-health, and of domestic and juridical strife. This can also be said respecting the Australian populace as a whole, but with the Ngarrindjeri, the situation has been exacerbated by their position within the Australian community as a dispossessed and poverty-stricken people. Oppressed people the world over turn to nepenthes of various kinds, and with the effluxion of time, the use of alcohol for this purpose has increased proportionately to the corporate misery of this small and once-proud nation. The discriminatory regulation which aimed at preventing Aborigines from obtaining grog was, in itself, a provocation to drink, as well as being a legalised insult which benefited no-one except European racketeers and debauchers of women. It is nevertheless understandable that Taplin, as a strict teetotaller, and being in a position to see the amount of suffering caused by excess consumption of alcohol, should

have been anxious to have the regulation enforced. It should be noted too, that Taplin was anxious to bring action against the peddlers of grog — not the Ngarrindjeri drinkers themselves. For these he employed more positive methods, and he attempted to get them to exercise their own self-control and to abstain of their own volition. From December 1873, Temperance Meetings were held and many were persuaded to 'sign the pledge'.[75] Taplin would have liked to have made church membership contingent upon total abstinence, but since Raukkan's church was the only one in the entire district, there were a handful of grinkari settlers in the congregation, and this circumstance prevented him from doing so. Taplin's frustration is expressed forcefully in the Journal:

> O this drink, what a curse it is and how it stands in our way. We shall have to make some stringent rule somehow. The difficulty is the white members of the Church. Of course they cannot be bound.[76]

And only a week later, after a prominent Ngarrindjeri Church member had been reported drunk in Meningie, the missionary wrote:

> When shall we overcome this horrid drink? It is the colonial wine which is the greatest curse. It seems in vain to try and stop the people from selling to the blacks.[77]

It will be appreciated then that Taplin's success in his battle against grog was mixed, for even his strongest supporters were susceptible to human lapses. But it is also worthy of note that on those occasions when the employment was full, and Raukkan's economy moved out of its normally depressed state, drunkenness seems to have decreased proportionately.[78]

Over the twenty year period, the total population numbers seem to have remained fairly stable, with the decrease of the num-

ber of people of the full descent being partly compensated for by an increase in the number of part-Europeans. Taplin was very concerned about the rate of infant mortality, which he assessed as being as high as seventy five per cent at times — an appalling figure even for the mid-nineteenth century.[79] He linked the decline closely to wurley life and to the morality of parents — particularly of mothers. In June 1867 Taplin said:

> I can account for this state of things partly from drink, partly prostitution. The former leads to the latter. The tidy virtuous women have as many children as formerly. The falling off is in the bad characters.[80]

But Taplin's observations led him to describe the current talk of sterility among Aboriginal women as nonsense.[81] Taplin also observed the harm which was caused to babies by their mothers smoking during pregnancy or nursing. The effect of immoderate use of tobacco, he said, was almost always fatal in this regard.[82] (Medical science appears to have caught up with Taplin some decades later.) When the protectorate was re-established in 1861, the man appointed was Dr John Walker, who seems to have taken a genuine interest in the health of the children. Taplin first mentions him arriving to vaccinate the children in September 1863,[83] and from that time on, vaccination of children and adults became a regular practice. In the early years, the injections were given by Dr Walker or other medical men, such as Dr Blue from Strathalbyn, but later on Taplin carried out the vaccinations himself.[84] He records on several occasions that the Ngarrindjeri were keen on the concept of vaccination, as it was entirely in accord with their own thinking on disease and its prevention.[85] But despite the improved provision for health care,

such as the erection of a small infirmary in 1871,[86] the Journal entries continued to be studded with records of illnesses and epidemics of various kinds, infant mortality and premature adult deaths. Whooping Cough, Influenza and Lake Fever seem to have afflicted the people throughout the winter months of almost every year. These ailments — many of them introduced — had a much more deleterious effect upon the Ngarrindjeri of the full descent than they did upon the part-Europeans — the obvious assumption to be drawn being that with the European parentage, the latter children inherited some immunity to European diseases. In the posthumously published Folklore, Taplin says:

> The pure blacks are not so healthy as the half-castes. Always the children of half-castes will be healthier and stronger than either the children of blacks, or the children of a black and a half-caste. When a half-caste man and woman marry, they generally have a large and vigorous family: I could point to half a dozen such.[87]

On Taplin's estimates, the numbers of the Ngarrindjeri had stablized in the late seventies at about the six hundred mark,[88] and although this represents a tragic decline from the three thousand estimate of the 1840's, it nevertheless showed that, largely through his own efforts, the missionary could claim that the slide into oblivion had been arrested. He was able to say in his book about the nation, published in 1873 and revised in 1878:

> The Narrinyeri exhibit no signs of becoming extinct just yet. There are plenty of children amongst them; and the tendency of Christian civilization, when adopted in its entirety, is to make them more vigorous and long-lived.[89]

This latter point was to find support from leaders amongst the Ngarrindjeri both at that time, and in later years. They were fully aware of the fact that both styles of living were healthy in

their different ways — the old way of life had been so healthy that artificial means were needed to keep the population in check; and the European style was also conducive to long life and large families. It was the mixture of the two that was the killer. When the people lived in permanent wurlies, poorly made because the traditional materials had been destroyed; when they ate the poorest of European foods — without their own traditional protein and vitamin rich diet to support them; when they wore European cast-off clothing and blankets without European facilities to wash them — these were the dangerous years, and such conditions were bound to lead to ill-health and short life-expectancy. For this reason, a great many of the Ngarrindjeri saw that in changing to a European life-style, they must go all the way — they must acquire well built cottages, proper clothing for the whole family, regular sources of income and so on. This appreciation of the situation led in turn to a rapid growth in the size of the little village which was growing up around the Mission.

Finance was certainly a problem for the Ngarrindjeri cottage-builders, although it was far from being insuperable. The major stumbling block was the Government's meanness and short-sightedness in not granting land tenure. At the Committee meeting of 1 June 1866, a letter was tabled from Taplin, reporting the desire of young men to build their own houses.[90] The missionary himself was naturally in full support of the request, and the A.F.A. Committee also gave it their backing. A sub-committee was appointed to wait on the Commissioner of Crown Lands in order to:

> ...obtain a freehold of a small portion of the native re-

> serve at Point McLeay for the purpose of residences for the civilized natives.[91]

This would appear to have been a reasonable enough request, for the amount of land required for a handful of cottages would have been but a tiny fraction of the whole reserve, which, in turn, was a diminutive portion of the country originally taken from the Ngarrindjeri. But the Government could not bring itself to accede to the request, and the sub-committee reported back that:

> The Commissioner was of the opinion that the object in view might be best attained by a letter being granted to individual natives from the Government assuring them of possession of such residences for habitations for themselves and for their children.[92]

The Committee were happy with this assurance from the Government, but the young men were rather more astute, having no illusions about European trustworthiness at this stage, and they continued the attempt to obtain freehold. These 'letters of occupation' would no doubt have been about as binding on the Government as were the Letters Patent of 1836.

Financial assistance for building the first Ngarrindjeri cottages at Raukkan was being provided for by funds from Mrs Smith of Dunesk, and the lack of tenure was used as a convenient excuse by the attorneys in Melbourne for refusing to comply with her wishes.[93] This seems to have spurred the Committee to new efforts, for the Government, in April 1868, added two more sections (sections 24 & 25) to the Reserve at Raukkan, and granted a twenty one year lease on a peppercorn rental.[94] The new arrangement appears to have satisfied Ogilvy in Melbourne, but it could hardly be expected to have satisfied the young Ngarrindjeri home-builders. Few other

people would have been keen to build a house on a lease held by someone else — especially if that lease was due to expire in twenty one years. Mrs Smith desired that a large proportion of the grant should go directly to Ngarrindjeri men (such as James Ngunaitponi and Allan Jamblyn) to be used at their discretion for cottage building; and it is notable that deeply religious though she was, the first substantial sum to reach Raukkan from the Fund was in the proportion of fifty pounds for the chapel, and one hundred pounds for houses.[95] However, the Committee did not concur with Mrs Smith on this point, believing that the Ngarrindjeri men should pay for and build their own houses.[96] Thus, when the annual grant from the Fund was finally settled after Mrs Smith's death, the A.F.A. used the money for general purposes, and the Ngarrindjeri were placed in the unenviable position of having to finance the building of houses on property over which they had no tenure or control. In fact this problem was never satisfactorily resolved. In 1877 F.W. Cox reported after one of his visits to Raukkan:

> One of the cottages was built by John Laelinyeri and paid for out of his own money. I have reason to believe that this plan would have been more frequently followed had the natives been quite sure about their title (or rather our title) to the land. It would seem strange that such a question should be raised by an Aboriginal about his title to the land on which he had built a house, but so it is, and these men are shrewd enough to discuss the question with Mr Taplin. Most of these cottages are neatly kept, the shelves containing crockery and books, and the walls decorated with pictures from the illustrated papers.[97]

The time had clearly been reached for a start to be made in transforming Raukkan into a self-supporting village — owned and controlled by its inhabitants. It would have cost the Government nothing to have commenced this process, and without a doubt it would

have been a signal success, for Ngarrindjeri men and women of high purpose and proven ability were there in abundance — ready and willing to give the scheme their full support. Such optimum periods must be recognised and the opportunities grasped, since they seldom present themselves again. Yet, despite the lack of cooperation from the Government in this regard, the little village at Raukkan was quite an impressive place when Taplin died. Beside the school, the chapel, three staff houses, a smithy, store, barn, stable etc., there were already sixteen cottages (of the type described by Cox) which were occupied by Ngarrindjeri families.[98]

Throughout the latter years of the Taplin era, there were three main avenues of employment open to the Ngarrindjeri. One of these — the seasonal work of shearing, harvesting etc. in the surrounding districts — had been exploited by the Ngarrindjeri for many years before Taplin's arrival, and it remained as the mainstay of the people's economy until long after he died. Harvesting work diminished with the growing mechanization, but shearing tended to employ more, rather than fewer, Ngarrindjeri men as time went on, and in 1868 it was returning each shearer an average of about twenty four shillings per week during the spring.[99] The major fault with such work was the brevity of the season. The Government continued to supply canoes and dinghies at a rate of four or five per year, and these helped the Ngarrindjeri men to maintain their fishing activities, as earlier described. At a big regatta conducted by the Ngarrindjeri at Raukkan not long before Taplin's death, they raced sixteen boats — an indication of the high rate of boat ownership at that time.[100]

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A further source of employment was that arranged by Taplin for lads, in particular, but also for some girls, by which the young people were sent to private homes in Adelaide and elsewhere as servants or apprentices. Earlier, the Committee had been looking for a tradesman of some kind who would have been prepared to instruct the boys,[101] but this scheme was not to get under way until after Taplin's death. Then, in 1863 and 1864, suggestions were mooted regarding the hiring out of selected boys and girls.[102] Later in 1864, the first boy (Johnny Bulpuminne) went to the employ of a man called Hodgkiss, at a rate of five shillings per week.[103] The arrangement was not an unqualified success, and on one occasion the Committee were considering having him arrested under the Masters and Servants Act, in order to get him back to his employer.[104] Others sent out under a similar agreement also met with trouble, so that within less than two years after the scheme began, Taplin determined to put an end to it. The Journal entry for 24 March 1866 reads in part:

> Boat returned from Milang bringing Pompey who has been discharged from his place for dishonesty. It appears he stole some money, and so he is sent back here to be reformed. The lad has been in Adelaide in white service 17 months. He went from here an honest and truthful boy, he returns here with the character of a thief. .... I will send no more lads among the whites for domestic service. They had better stay here. They cannot be worse. In each case, Pompey, Wullumme and Bulpuminne, the lads have sustained serious moral injury.[105]

But the scheme was never completely dispensed with, and after Taplin died it was revived, and at least in some instances, produced worthwhile results.

The third major source of employment was created by the

establishment of the farm at Raukkan, and of the village itself. Opportunities became available not only for farm work, but for employment such as carpentry, saddlery, stone masonry, black-smithing, baking, domestic work (in the boarding school) and even teaching and missionary work. All of these trades and professions were undertaken by the Ngarrindjeri with conspicuous success. Taplin was always aware of the inadequacy of the size of the farm at Raukkan, especially as the settlement grew larger and more permanent. Even when, in 1872, the size of the holding was increased to one thousand seven hundred acres, this was really no more than a good-sized farm of the type owned and run by a single family. The four square miles of Coorong Land allotted by the Commissioner of Crown Lands in 1876[106] was much appreciated by the missionary, but he justifiably pressed for more.[107] Even on a comparative basis, the claim for more land could be supported, for both Point Pearce and Poonindie had much more good land than the Ngarrindjeri did, and both had smaller populations. The Committee supported Taplin by putting fairly constant pressure on the Government to increase the size of the Reserve, and as has been shown, they were moderately successful. In 1872, the A.F.A. was confronted with opposition to their acquisition of land. The Commissioner of Crown Lands suddenly found that he was not empowered to grant any more land to the Association. This puzzled the Committee, as the Commissioner had experienced no difficulty in doing so in the past, and the secretary was asked to enquire as to the reason for the abrupt change.[108] The reason however, was to be found in the Lakes District, as is indicated by the following Journal entries for April 1872:

> 29. I hear that the white people are getting up a memorial to the Government to oppose the allotment of any more land to the natives. The movement originates with the Hon J. Baker who wants the land we have applied for as a run for his cattle.
> 30. Held a meeting of the young men of the natives who adopted a petition to His Excellency the Governor praying for the land which the Committee has applied for.[109]

This was almost certainly the first time that any South Australian Aborigines had petitioned the Government. It was not to be the last; and neither was it the last time that Europeans were to attempt to prevent the Ngarrindjeri from repossessing a small portion of their own land. However, on this occasion the Europeans were unsuccessful (possibly because of Baker's death that year), and the new land was, in fact, granted.[110]

After the original twenty one year lease of seven hundred and fifty acres was granted in 1868, the Committee also attempted to obtain a more permanent settlement with the Government, and in 1876 there was a combined effort by the major South Australian missions to get at least a fifty year lease on the land they occupied.[111] But by the time of Taplin's death in 1879, this long term tenure had still not been obtained. Instead, the sections of land over which the A.F.A. was given oversight, were simply gazetted as 'Aboriginal Reserves'. There was considerable discussion at Committee Meetings regarding the leasing of the land under clause 115 of the 1877 Land Act, and a sub-committee was appointed to deal with the matter:[112] but it was put off until after the incorporation of the Association in 1879,[113] and thereafter it seems to have lapsed.

While the A.F.A. was striving to acquire more land and to gain tenure of what it had, several young Ngarrindjeri men were also

doing battle on their own account. In June 1868, John Sumner applied to the Government for a lease on Section number twenty four, near Teringi;[114] and on 2 September of that year he returned from Adelaide, after completing the necessary papers, to become (as far as can be ascertained) the first Ngarrindjeri farmer on his own block.[115] John Sumner must have been a very proud and happy man that day, as he and Taplin strolled over the new farm inspecting the soil and vegetation, and discussing plans for crops and flocks, and for building a homestead. Each section was about 140 acres in area, and Taplin estimated that there were about seventy acres of 'good' land on this one.[116] But regrettably, John Sumner was to be dogged with ill-luck from the out-set, and on such a tiny block as he acquired there was no margin allowed for misfortune. In his first year of farming, the entire colony was gripped in such a severe drought that in Adelaide and elsewhere special church services were held to pray for rain, and by September it seemed that the crops were doomed to failure. Understandably, Sumner played a leading role in the supplications held in the newly-built chapel at Raukkan, and Taplin records the dramatic results:

> Today we had two special services of humiliation and supplication for rain. In the morning there were 22 adults, afternoon 28 adults 26 children. In the morning we had a prayer meeting, when, after prayer by myself, Messrs John Abbott, Ophel, John Sumner and Joseph Koolmatere prayed. I read and shortly expounded Isaiah 58. As the meeting went on, the rain of which we had a light shower or two in the night, began to pour down, and when we came out, many of the congregation had to wait half an hour or more before going home.[117]

The afternoon meeting produced a similar felicitous effect, and Raukkan's crop and John Sumner's crop were saved.

But for John Sumner, it proved to be only a temporary res-

pite, for just before the crop was due to be reaped, Taplin recorded a distressing mishap:

> Yesterday the shepherd Wullume let the sheep get into Sumner's crop. He laid down and went to sleep and let the flock go where they liked. .... It is almost ruin to poor Sumner. A large portion of his barley is almost totally ruined.[118]

After such a disastrous beginning as this, the young farmer may have thought that things could only get better — but this was not to be the case, for three years later, Taplin wrote:

> Had a long conversation with Sumner. His crop has come to nothing. The poor fellow is much discouraged. This is the third crop of his which has not paid him. I think he will give up farming.[119]

And worse was to follow, for in attempting to carry on, despite the crippling losses, John Sumner had incurred debts that he now had no hope of liquidating. The final comment on this first brave attempt at private farming is thus inevitably a sad one. Taplin says:

> ...I had a long talk to Sumner about his affairs. He wept bitterly. He will have to be suspended from Church fellowship. I advised him to give up everything to his creditors, and work out the debt.[120]

The end result of John Sumner's three years of hard work was to be suspended from Church fellowship for four months for incurring debts,[121] and to lose everything for which he had laboured.

Meanwhile two other old scholars of the school at Raukkan — William MacHughes and Pompey Jackson — had written to the A.F.A. Committee asking for help in obtaining their own sections to farm. The meeting of September 1870 agreed to take up the matter with the Commissioner of Crown Lands,[122] and one month later the secretary was able to report that the request had been granted.[123] A rather terse note in Taplin's Journal says:

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> Went with MacHughes and P. Jackson to see some land given to them by the Government. Found MacHughes' land good, the other worthless.[124]

The following year, Napoleon Bonney applied for, and was also granted, a block of land[125] about four miles from Raukkan.[126] And in 1872, yet another Ngarrindjeri man — Henry Lambert — took up farming on his own account.[127] To start with all seemed to go well, and Taplin made such observations as:

> Went round some twelve miles to see the land cleared and cultivated by Lambert and Bonney. Was very satisfied with what I saw.[128]

By September 1872, Henry Lambert and William MacHughes had gone into partnership together. Between them they purchased four hundred sheep from a Wellington farmer,[129] and in the following February they netted fifty four pounds for the sale of their wheat — no mean sum in those days.[130] However, Taplin felt constrained to point out that although Lambert would keep his share, William MacHughes would lose most of his in discharging debts incurred through his generosity to others.[131] In fact it was this Ngarrindjeri trait of egalitarian sharing that Taplin felt was partly to blame for John Sumner's failure; and it caused him to exclaim: 'The system of giving natives sections is a failure. They get eaten out of house and home by other natives.'[132]

Taplin's opinion of the system was much too pessimistic, and he was to be proven wrong, not only by men like William MacHughes and Napoleon Bonney, but by a number of other Ngarrindjeri families who took up sections during the ensuing years, and whose descendants still run farms to this day. The Journal never gives the impression that its author was really keen on the idea of the Ngarrindjeri

striking out on their own in this fashion, and it is interesting to recall that Taplin similarly dismissed the scheme for sending out older boys and girls to work in selected private homes. One inference is that he did not want the people to get too far from the influence of the Mission — particularly when they were young: or he may have felt that the interests of the people as a whole were best served if the potential leaders such as William MacHughes stayed with the rest of the people. This is not to say that Taplin would not have given the new farmers every encouragement, or that he would not have rejoiced when they were successful — as for instance William MacHughes and Napoleon Bonney obviously were. In 1873-4 Bonney cleared about thirty five pounds on his wheat crop alone, after taking out enough seed wheat, flour etc. for his own annual requirements.[133] William MacHughes (who was a stonemason by trade) was completing his house in May of 1874, and Napoleon Bonney had ordered doors and windows preparatory to making a start on a homestead for his section.[134] Taplin could scarcely fail to be pleased with their growing prosperity, and their success would certainly have justified the Government's going ahead with a full-scale land settlement scheme — had it been truly interested in the welfare of the Ngarrindjeri.

The acquisition by the A.F.A. of the Needles block on the Coorong, was a significant step taken in the closing stages of Taplin's life, and the achievements at the new block meant a great deal to him. Although it was in June 1876 that the Government agreed to grant the A.F.A. control of the block,[135] the financial difficulties which beset the society at that time prevented a start

from being made towards exploiting it until December of the following year. On 4 December 1877 Taplin inspected the reserve, had a well sunk, and determined the site of the house and yards.[136] From that day on, he was to spend a great deal of time organizing the establishment of this outstation with its buildings, its sheep and its fencing and other farm equipment. An old European named Whitehead, who had for years been a member of the Church at Raukkan, was appointed as the first shepherd,[137] but the wells were sunk by Ngarrindjeri workmen from Raukkan, and the yards, out-buildings and houses, were all erected by Ngarrindjeri tradesmen sent there by Taplin to do the job. Whitehead took over his new position on 15 March 1878 and the Ngarrindjeri builders returned to Raukkan the same day, having completed their task so well that today, almost a century later, much of what they built still stands. The house, for instance, is still in good condition, and is occupied by two Ngarrindjeri women who now run the farm. Describing this house for the annual A.F.A. report of 1878, Taplin says:

> We have had a three-roomed stone house built there. This was erected entirely by natives, with only my own personal superintendence. It is built with dressings of cut stone — quoins, sills, and lintels. I feel justified in saying that the building is a credit to the natives, and that we should not be ashamed to place it alongside the work of English workmen. Of these buildings, the doors and windows were the only parts done by white men; but a young native has taken to the carpentering and is getting on with it so well that we hope in future to have the whole work done by natives. I have aimed at this result for a long time, and I am gratified to have the prospect of gaining it so soon. At this time one of our native masons is building a three-roomed home for himself at his own expense and intends to have it roofed with iron and gradually fitted up with all the furniture of a comfortable dwelling for one in his station of life.[138]

The outstation at The Needles was not built solely as an

added source of revenue and employment, but also as: 'a depot for the relief of the aged, the infirm and the necessitous.'[139] Although, by this time, Raukkan had long been the centre and refuge for the Ngarrindjeri, there were still some who were too proud to go there; and who preferred to live under conditions of extreme hardship in the country of their own lakalinyeri rather than to submit to a way of life imposed upon them by grinkaris. The Needles was the base camp for one such group, and of them, the missionary wrote: 'The natives there have long had my sympathy. They have always seemed to me to be in a state of great wretchedness.'[140] And it was partly to ameliorate the physical suffering of these people that the outstation was established. It also turned out to be an excellent aid to the Raukkan people when they took their annual summer holiday to the Coorong, as is shown by the following Journal entry for January 1879:

> 21-22-23-24 Nothing particular happened. Nearly all the natives are at The Needles. I have to stay here as caretaker.[141]

Taplin did, however, find time to make frequent visits to the new outstation, in order to attend to the needs of the original Needles population.

At the March 1862 meeting of the Committee, mention was made of the fact that 'a young man' was anxious to help Taplin in his work at Raukkan.[142] And on 2 May 1862 a young man named Alfred Stapely arrived at the Mission to commence work as assistant teacher.[143] His salary was £1-5-0 per week.[144] Stapely stayed for a little over four years, and at the beginning, seems to have acquitted himself very well, and to have assisted Taplin far beyond the terms of his

appointment as a teacher. Taplin appraised the Committee of his worth,[145] and later, when the missionary was on sick leave, the Rev John Roberts (who was temporarily in charge at Raukkan) wrote most eulogistically about Stapley's services.[146] It comes, therefore, as a surprise to find Taplin writing to the Committee in April 1866, complaining of Stapely's incompetence, and to learn that that body promptly gave him a month's notice.[147] Again it is odd (yet it throws light on the complex character of George Taplin) to find that later on Stapely revisited Raukkan, on at least one occasion, as a friend of the missionary,[148] and that the two men continued to correspond as friends.[149]

In the meantime, the first farm overseer, James Farneyhough, had taken up his position in August 1865.[150] He had been found to be most unsatisfactory, and had been discharged in November of the same year.[151] Farneyhough's place was taken by John Moulden,[152] who seems to have been competent enough with the farm work, and who lasted over three years, before resigning of his own accord in February 1869.[153] However, like a number of assistants at Raukkan, Moulden was to incur the disapprobation of Taplin for his inability to understand and work harmoniously with the Ngarrindjeri farm labourers.[154] When trouble flared up between Taplin's assistants, and the Ngarrindjeri (as it did on and off throughout the era), it placed a great deal of pressure on the missionary, as it was always he who had to sort things out and calm frayed tempers. Since he owed loyalty both to his staff and to the Ngarrindjeri, it must have been an onerous task; and often the only possible outcome in settling the matter was that he reaped odium from both sides.

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Taplin must have regretted his action in having Stapely removed, for there was difficulty in finding a replacement, and this meant that Taplin had to carry on single-handed for a time. Then, when the Committee did appoint one Henry Mason to the post,[155] it turned out to be a most infelicitous and short-lived appointment, with Mason writing insidious letters complaining about Taplin to the Committee, months after his appointment was terminated.[156] The Committee were not impressed. Fortunately however, the next assistant teacher to be appointed (in December 1866) was a man destined to be still teaching at Raukkan when Taplin died. This was John Ophel, who, like Taplin, had been a teacher at Port Elliot He was known to the missionary, and had in fact, been recommended by him for the position,[157] so that the Committee probably felt that if this appointment proved to be an unsatisfactory one, Taplin had only himself to blame. In the event however, Ophel proved to be a loyal servant of the A.F.A., and a faithful friend and subordinate for Taplin. After three years as assistant, Ophel was to be able to take over the position of Head Teacher in 1869, thus relieving Taplin of the post he had held for over a decade, and freeing him to concentrate more on his missionary and administrative work.[158] Taplin had,in fact,wished to give up teaching in the school as long ago as 1865.[159]

J.A. Ophel entered into the spirit of the work at Raukkan so well that in November 1871, when Taplin was forced to take three month's sick leave, it was Ophel who ran the Mission for a quarter of a year. And the Journal entries show that although he approached his new task with diffidence and humility, he nevertheless must have

carried it out both to his employer's satisfaction, and to the satisfaction of the Ngarrindjeri.[160] But in 1874, an Inspector Dewhirst, of the Education Department, paid Raukkan a surprise visit and lodged a distinctly unfavourable report on Ophel and his school. Taplin hastened to support his assistant, and the crisis was weathered, but Ophel became dispirited and eventually resigned in September of that year.

This caused another disastrous appointment. James Gellert arrived at Raukkan on 23 December 1874. Taplin wrote in his Journal on that day:

> Mr Gellert is to be my assistant. The Lord grant that we may work lovingly together and never have cause to regret being united in our work.[161]

Looking back over his diary, this entry must have brought a wry grin to Taplin's face, for the fact is that they never were united. The most important dictum that Taplin attempted to instil into all of his assistants was the necessity of understanding and accepting the culture and distinctive characteristics of the Ngarrindjeri, and their way of life. Particularly was it essential to exercise gentleness towards the sensitive and unrepressed children, who needed a different approach from the normal methods of teaching European children. The children were highly intelligent and keen to learn — but not to be bullied: and Gellert seems to have misunderstood the nature of his task. On 2 March 1875 Taplin felt compelled to intervene when four boys were refused dinner as a disciplinary measure. He wrote in the Journal:

> It is very disagreeable to have to interpose thus. In the evening Mr Gellert attacked me about it and blew me up in a very unpleasant way. He utterly denied my right to in-

> terfere with the exercise of his authority over the children. Said I was not his master &c. &c. &c. It was very painful. It is evident that this man is utterly unfit for the position which he holds. His violent, passionate temper, his want of feeling for the children, his constant resort to punishment, always to force and never to moral suasion without severe threats of punishment, all make me think he is not the right man for us.[162]

Despite Taplin's attempts at reconciliation, the situation worsened every day, until the missionary went to Adelaide to discuss the position with the secretary and one or two members of the Committee.[163] The minutes of the March 1875 meeting read, in part:

> The Secretary reported that a misunderstanding had occurred between the Superintendent and Teacher, the result of which was a large batch of correspondence. The Rev Mr Cox and he had advised reconciliation, and this had been affected.[164]

This was far from the reality of the position, although no doubt the secretary and Cox would have wished it to be so. In fact it would appear that, at the time, Gellert was doing everything in his power to promote dissension at Raukkan, by attempting to turn the people against their missionary.[165] Eventually Taplin had to write again to the Committee pointing out Gellert's unsuitability for the position, and Gellert also wrote resigning his post. The resignation was immediately accepted.[166] However, until his resignation took effect, Gellert continued his attempts to harm the missionary, and to a considerable extent, his efforts were crowned with success.

At the meeting following the one at which his resignation was accepted, Gellert attended (while Taplin ran the school for him) and did his best to damn the missionary in the Committee's eyes.[167] As a consequence, Taplin was to be made to suffer, and when Gellert returned to serve out the last few weeks of his term, he apparently brought back an unpleasant dispatch for Taplin from the Committee.

The Journal for that day reads:

> Very much discouraged at the treatment of the Committee. May the Lord help me to trust in Him. The Committee are going to make me do the best I can without an assistant. May the Lord help me and vindicate my cause. May He give me grace to stand by the natives even if I am illtreated. He only is my strength. Without Him I am perfect weakness and very vile.[168]

The bitterest blow however, was yet to come, for the missionary was to discover that Gellert had persuaded four of Taplin's oldest Ngarrindjeri friends — all deacons of the Church — to write to the Committee asking that Gellert be allowed to withdraw his resignation.[169]

While all this was going on, the missionary still had to maintain the hectic pace at which he had to work, in order to perform his manifold and often exacting duties. On one occasion, he recorded in detail the round of an ordinary day:

> In the morning I sent Mr Blackwell to work. Attended and gave receipts to boatmen. Went to the steamer to fetch some things. Visited a sick woman. Prepared medicine. Dressed Dick Bull's crushed finger. Prepared linament for rhuematic old woman's back. Made out agricultural returns for the Government, also school return. Attended to a woman in labour and assisted at the delivery of her child. Had service and Church meeting in the evening: I preached. And many other little matters beside. Now this is not a very extraordinary day. I have many like it in the year. Dick Bull smashed his finger yesterday in the crane at Milang. I sent John Sumner off to the doctor. He seems dropsical. Preetpul Jackson was delivered of a son. In enumerating the day's work I forgot that I drew two teeth for the daughter of a settler about noon. The teeth had remained in the jaw after the new teeth had come up and were beginning to pain her and were very unsightly. They were abominably fixed in the jaw and very difficult to extract. .... After service and Church meeting in the evening, Mrs Walton, the wife of a settler who lives three miles off, came with her little boy who had been thrown from his horse and broken both the bones of the right forearm — both ulna and radius. I got Mr Blackwell to make me a couple of splints and I set the limb. This finished up the day's work.[170]

Every day brought different problems in different fields, so that

with so much to do, and with his own physical and mental health in jeopardy, Taplin needed the most enthusiastic support from his assistants — certainly not the opposite. Yet when the Gellert affair was at its height, one of the things the missionary found time to do was to cut the glass windows for Gellert's new house![171] (J.A. Ophel had battled on for all those years living in an old converted barn.) Such was the nature of this remarkable man.

Despite the fact that Taplin now had the duties of Head Teacher added to his already enormous burden, he nevertheless breathed a deep sigh of relief when he saw the last of Gellert. The Journal entry for 25 May 1875 reads:

> Today to my intense satisfaction and joy Mr Gellert and his family left. I am thankful that I have parted from this bad man, this Hypocrite.[172]

Taplin continued to run the school until September of that year, when J.A. Ophel who had been offered the job in August (on the proviso that he attend the Model School for a short time)[173] returned to take up his old position as Head Teacher. He was very welcome, as the Journal entry shows:

> Mr J.A. Ophel and family arrived. Mr Ophel returns to be my assistant. I am very glad to see my dear brother again. The Lord bless his coming to us and make it productive of peace and true prosperity.[174]

J.A. Ophel was to remain in his position as Head Teacher until Taplin died, and for about five years after that event. He may not have been among the most brilliant and advanced teachers in the colony, but he was the kind of loyal, diligent and upright man that Taplin needed, and who could always be relied upon. The Ngarrindjeri appreciated his worth too, and demonstrated this by

raising seven pounds for him when he left on the first occasion, in 1874.[175]

Meanwhile, the position of farm overseer was also having its alternations. David Powell was appointed in Moulden's place in March 1869,[176] but he proved to be so incompetent that Taplin had to hire another man (David Blackwell) to conduct the reaping, in order to prevent serious loss.[177] Powell was fired at the end of the year.[178] For the next three years Blackwell (who later married one of Taplin's daughters) filled the position until, at the end of 1872, he left to accept a more remunerative position in his trade as mechanic.[179] His position was taken by the missionary's son, Frederick William Taplin, who ran the farm until August 1876.[180] These two competent young men took a great deal of the worry of farm management from Taplin's shoulders for a total of seven consecutive years. Both were later to return for a second term as farm overseer, and both were subsequently to become the Superintendent of the Mission.

When Frederick left to recommence farming on his own account, his place was taken by a man named John Howiss, whose most notable achievement was that he suffered a severe compound fracture of a leg when a bag of barley fell on him.[181] He was an efficient and amiable young man, of whom Taplin was quite fond. However, he became addicted to drink, and Taplin found it necessary to dispense with his services when he found his overseer drunk on the job.[182] On the day Howiss left, Taplin wrote:

> I am very sorry for this man. He is a well-meaning man with some ability but no moral firmness. I had got to like him and am sorry to part. Poor fellow.[183]

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Howiss's replacement, Dunnicliff, had recently arrived from England, and was practically useless. On 17 January 1878, Taplin wrote:

> Dunnicliff is a poor hand. He does not know what to do next. I have to be constantly telling him and yet he is self-sufficient. It is a great mistake to send a man here with no moral or religious character, and quite new to the colony.[184]

And on the following day the Journal entry reads:

> Another day of bother and trouble with the machine. If I had not got some natives clever enough to do what the overseer ought to do, I should be in a fix. Howiss was worth three of this man Dunnicliff.[185]

Taplin's comment here raises the question of why it was, that with so many capable Ngarrindjeri workers from which to choose, a farm overseer had not long ago been selected from among their own ranks. A man like William MacHughes, for instance, would appear to have been perfectly suited to the position: amongst his other qualifications, he was a deacon of the Church, a competent and sucsussful farmer, a highly skilled stone-mason, and a man of strong moral principles. Very few of the European officers appointed to Raukkan during a century of A.F.A. and Government control could even be compared with a man such as this — and there were a number of Ngarrindjeri men who could have served equally as well. One possible answer is to be found in Taplin's essay Ethnology of the Australian Aborigines.[186] In discussing the strictly egalitarian nature of Aboriginal society he says:

> This aversion to acknowledge superiority is a great evil when the Aborigines come in contact with the colonists. They will never permit one of their own people to be placed over them as ganger or overseer; they always resent the payment of superior wages to one man because he is a better workman than another, and never will allow that he is more worthy of it than themselves.[187]

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Such may well have been the case at the time of first contact, but by the 1870's this argument was not tenable in respect of the Ngarrindjeri. By this time they had already accepted religious leaders in the form of Church deacons; there were Ngarrindjeri missionaries and teachers; and there were the people who had become private farmers. It is difficult to see why, if the Ngarrindjeri were prepared to accept the fact that James Ngúnaitponi should be empowered to administer the sacraments, that they should not also be prepared to accept Napoleon Bonney or John Sumner administering the reaping or the shearing. Furthermore, Taplin's own anthropological writings show that from ancient times, there had been clearly established lines of authority and leadership, descending from the rupulle and the Tendi.[188] Possibly Taplin once tried putting a young Ngarrindjeri man in charge of others, and the experiment failed: if so, he omitted to mention the fact in his Journal. But in any case, it would have been necessary to bear in mind that the leadership which the Ngarrindjeri were used to was purely democratic — the members of the Tendi were elected to their positions, not appointed from above; and the rupulle in turn was selected by the Tendi. Perhaps this method of selecting leaders, proven as it was over thousands of years, and fully accepted by the people, might have been applied with equal facility and success to the election of farm overseers and other administrative personnel. It should be stated, however, that had Taplin done this, given the climate of opinion and social milieu of the times, it would have been a radical step to have taken. His achievements as they stand are monumental, and he can scarcely be criticised for not putting into effect an

idea that only gained general acceptance about a century later. In addition, it must be remembered that Taplin himself was not an entirely autonomous agent: he was answerable both to the Committee of the A.F.A. and to the Government, which supplied the bulk of the finance.

Thus, when Dunnicliff's predictably brief stay at Raukkan was concluded, it was another grinkari — Taplin's oldest son Frederick — who was appointed as the farm overseer, for the second time.[189] Frederick arrived from his farm in the South East on 16 April 1878.[190] In a way this was to prove to be, from Taplin's viewpoint, the most disastrous appointment of all, for there can be little doubt that its consequences were instrumental in bringing about his untimely death a little over a year later.

This last year of Taplin's life was even busier and more hectic than those preceding it. Yet, with the farm in a healthy state, the financial problems solved, the village flourishing like never before, the Church strong and vigorous; and with two loyal assistants in Ophel and Frederick to rely on, Taplin seems to have been happier and more confident than he had ever been. His relationship with the grinkari settlers in the district was blossoming, and his renown as a missionary and anthropologist was by now world wide. The Journal entries become increasingly brief, but they are the entries of a man who is achieving what he wants to achieve, and who is in a hurry to do even more. Then suddenly, his whole world seemed to collapse about him. The last six entries speak for themselves:

> 11.12.13. Usual work. A terribly painful affair arose today, (13th) so painful I can't write about it. I only say a diabolically false charge was brought against my son

Frederick.
14. A painful day. Discord with the Natives.
15 Sabbath. Morning 30 adults 47 children.
Evening 30 adults 20 children.
16. A painful and anxious day. Police Trooper Glendennin came yesterday and went off this morning.
18. I went to Milang and returned. Fred went with me to consult friends.
19. Busy at accounts. Service in the evening.[191]

George Taplin wrote no more in the Journal he had faithfully kept for over twenty years. He died five days later on 24 June 1879.

CHAPTER III. FOOTNOTES.

[1]Journal II p.181 17 July 1863 and 15 July 1863.

[2]Minute Book I 7 September 1863.

[3]Ibid. 3 August 1863.

[4]Ibid. 3 August 1863.

[5]Journal III p.328 8 August 1868. (My emphasis.)

[6]Journal IV p.439 12 March 1873.

[7]Ibid. p.446 20 May 1873.

[8]Minute Book II 29 April 1873.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Journal IV p.447 29 May 1873.

[11]Minute Book I 14 November 1859.

[12]Ibid. 2 February 1864.

[13]Ibid. March 1866 and Journal III p.264 8 March 1866.

[14]Minute Book I 4 August 1862 and 20 April 1863.

[15]Journal III p.254 20-24 November 1865.

[16]Minute Book I 15 June 1868.

[17]Minute Book I 12 December 1870 and Minute Book II 29 May 1871 and Ibid. 27 July 1871.

[18]Minute Book II 7 June 1875.

[19]Ibid. 20 January 1879 and 26 March 1879. The wattles were harvested commercially for use in leather tanning.

[20]Ibid. 29 May 1871.

[21]Journal I p.54 13 January 1860 and Minute Book II 20 January 1879.

[22]Ibid. 23 February 1874.

[23]Ibid. 17 August 1874 and 3 December 1874.

[24]Ibid. 18 October 1875.

[25]Twain, Mark Mark Twain in Australia & New Zealand Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973 p.169.

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[26]'Copy of portions of a letter from Miss Jemima Russell, of Meadowbank Cottage, Loanhead near Edinburgh to Rev George Taplin Point McLeay, South Australia, dated 20 December 1871.' — copied into Minute Book II.

[27]'Copy of letter from G.F. Angas Esq to the Revd J.S. Parsons' dated 23 August 1871 — copied into Minute Book II.

[28]Jemima Russell 20 December 1871.

[29]Quoted by Dr Chas. Duguid in the Minutes of Proceedings of the South Australian State Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia Held in Adelaide, March 1942.

[30]Ibid.

[31]G.F. Angas to J.S. Parsons 23 August 1871.

[32]Mintue Book I 9 December 1861.

[33]Mrs H. Smith to Rev G. Divorty, Free Church Colonial Secretary, 6 February 1871.

[34]Minute Book II 27 November 1871.

[35]Mrs Smith to Rev G. Divorty 6 February 1871.

[36]Minute Book I 5 July 1864 and 2 August 1864.

[37]Journal II p.206 3 September 1864.

[38]Journal III p.296 29 May 1867.

[39]Minute Book I 21 January 1868.

[40]Journal III p.313 15 November 1867.

[41]Ibid. p.335 9 December 1868.

[42]Jemima Russell to George Taplin (undated).

[43]Mrs Smith to Rev G. Divorty 6 February 1871.

[44]Mrs Smith to the Convenor of the Colonial Committee 25 March 1871.

[45]Mrs Smith to Rev Peter Hope, Secretary of the Colonial Committee 30 March 1871.

[46]Mrs Smith to the Convenor of the Colonial Committee 25 March 1871.

[47]Rev Peter Hope to Mrs Smith 21 April 1871.

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[48] Mrs Smith to Rev Hope 28 April 1871.

[49] Minute Book II 2 October 1871.

[50] Ibid. 27 November 1871.

[51] Ibid. 7 February 1872.

[52] Ibid. 11 February 1873.

[53] Ibid. 29 April 1873.

[54] Ibid. 9 June 1873.

[55] Journal IV p.447 1 June 1873.

[56] Abstracts from letters: Rev George Taplin to Miss Russell, 26 March 1874 and 17 June 1874. Reprinted in Pamphlet entitled The A.F.A. Inc. & The Property of the Late Mrs Smith of Dunesk.

[57] Minute Book II 19 June 1876.

[58] Ibid. 27 January 1877.

[59] Ibid. 1 June 1877.

[60] Journal I p.151 23 April 1862.

[61] Journal III p.271 26 April 1866.

[62] Journal IV p.408 21 December 1871.

[63] Journal III p.292 9 March 1867.

[64] Ibid. p.309 29 October 1867.

[65] Journal II p.224 6 February 1865.

[66] A.F.A. notes on the history of the Hundred of Baker.

[67] Minute Book II 22 March 1875 and 26 April 1875.

[68] Journal V pp.555-6 21,22 and 29 October 1878.

[69] Journal III p.374 6-7 July 1870.

[70] Ibid. p.270 21 April 1866.

[71] Minute Book I 3 January 1869 and Journal III p.357 19 November 1869.

[72] Journal IV p.385A 24 December 1870 and p.417 20 March 1872.

[73] Minute Book II 25 November 1872.

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[74]Extract from Sub Protector of Aborigines Report. Reprinted in the Annual Report of the A.F.A. 1873-4.

[75]Journal IV p.464 30 December 1873.

[76]Journal IV p.428 11 November 1872.

[77]Journal IV p.428 18 November 1872.

[78]Journal IV p.484 6 November 1874.

[79]Journal III p.325 16 May 1868.

[80]Journal III p.297 5 June 1867.

[81]Journal IV p.398 22 July 1871.

[82]Taplin, George Folklore pp.47-8.

[83]Journal I p.186 30 September 1863.

[84]Journal IV p.455 24 September 1873.

[85]eg Journal II p.187 8 October 1863 and Journal III p.307 9 October 1867.

[86]Minute Book I 17 April 1871.

[87]Taplin, George Folklore p.48.

[88]Taplin, George The Narrinyeri p.9 footnote.

[89]Ibid. p.9.

[90]Minute Book I 1 June 1866.

[91]Ibid.

[92]Minute Book I 19 June 1866.

[93]Ibid. 6 July 1868.

[94]Ibid. 14 April 1868.

[95]Journal III p.335 9 December 1868.

[96]Minute Book I 4 June 1867.

[97]A.F.A. Annual Report 1877.

[98]A.F.A. Annual Report 1879.

[99]Journal III p.330 21 September 1868.

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[100]Journal V p.565 3 May 1879.

[101]Minute Book I 2 November 1863.

[102]Ibid. 18 November 1863 and 7 June 1864.

[103]Ibid. 2 August 1874.

[104]Ibid. 4 October 1864 and 1 November 1864.

[105]Journal III p.266 24 March 1866.

[106]Minute Book II 19 June 1876.

[107]Ibid. 20 March 1878.

[108]Minute Book II 8 April 1872 and 6 May 1872.

[109]Journal IV p.418 29-30 April 1872.

[110]Minute Book II 29 July 1872 and 25 March 1873.

[111]Ibid. 25 August 1876.

[112]Ibid. 1 June 1877, 7 September 1877, 14 February 1878, 20 March 1878.

[113]Ibid. 26 March 1879.

[114]Journal III p.325 4 June 1868.

[115]Ibid. p.329 2 September 1868.

[116]Ibid.

[117]Ibid. p.350 7 September 1869.

[118]Ibid. p.358 24-25 November 1869.

[119]Journal IV p.429 2 December 1872.

[120]Ibid. p.439 11 March 1873.

[121]Ibid. p.443 2 April 1873.

[122]Minute Book I 19 September 1870.

[123]Ibid. 17 October 1870.

[124]Journal IV p.382 10 October 1870.

[125]Minute Book I 30 January 1871 and 20 February 1871.

[126]Border Watch 19 October 1974.

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[127] Journal IV p.423 23 July 1872.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Ibid. p.425 14 September 1872.

[130] Ibid. p.434 11 February 1873.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Ibid. p.439 10 March 1873.

[133] Journal IV p.475 27 May 1874.

[134] Ibid.

[135] Minute Book II 19 June 1876.

[136] Journal V p.538 4 December 1877.

[137] Ibid. p.540 7 January 1878.

[138] A.F.A. Annual Report 1878.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Journal V p.560 24 January 1879.

[142] Minute Book I 11 March 1862.

[143] Journal I pp.152-3 2 May 1862.

[144] Minute Book I 6 October 1862.

[145] Ibid. 2 March 1863.

[146] Ibid. 3 May 1864.

[147] Ibid. 17 April 1866.

[148] Journal III p.317 7 January 1868.

[149] Ibid. p.324 11 May 1868.

[150] Minute Book I 1 August 1865, 5 September 1865 and Journal III p.247 22 August 1865.

[151] Journal III p.252 9 November 1865.

[152] Journal III p.256 19 December 1865 and Minute Book I 8 December 1865.

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[153]Minute Book I 8 February 1869.

[154]Journal III p.336 22 December 1868 and 7 January 1869.

[155]Minute Book I 14 August 1866.

[156]Ibid. 7 May 1867.

[157]Ibid. 2 October 1866, 1 November 1866, 4 December 1866.

[158]Chronological list of A.F.A. officers, (1859-1966) held in A.F.A. office.

[159]Minute Book I 5 September 1865.

[160]Journal IV pp.404-14 9 November 1871 to 7 February 1872.

[161]Journal IV p.488 23 December 1874.

[162]Ibid. p.493 2 March 1875.

[163]Ibid. p.494 5-6 March 1875.

[164]Minute Book II 22 March 1875.

[165]Journal IV p.495 14 April 1875 and pp.496-7 10 May 1875 and 11 May 1875.

[166]Minute Book II 26 April 1875.

[167]Ibid. 5 May 1875.

[168]Journal IV p.496 7 May 1875.

[169]Ibid p.496 10 May 1875 and p.497 24 May 1875.

[170]Ibid. p.436 26 February 1873.

[171]Ibid. p.494 15 March 1875.

[172]Ibid. p.497 25 May 1875.

[173]Minute Book II 10 August 1875.

[174]Journal IV p.501 8 September 1875.

[175]Minute Book II 22 March 1875.

[176]Minute Book I 17 March 1869 and Journal III pp.340-1 10-27 March 1869.

[177]Journal III p.358 1 December 1869 and p.360 30 December 1869.

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[178]Ibid. p.362 6 January 1870 and Minute Book I 13 December 1869.

[179]Journal IV p.426 24 October 1872 and Minute Book II 14 October 1872.

[180]Minute Book II 5 August 1876.

[181]Journal V p.520 1 February 1877.

[182]Ibid. p.539 19 December 1877.

[183]Ibid. p.540 16 January 1878.

[184]Ibid. p.541 17 January 1878.

[185]Ibid. p.541 18 January 1878.

[186]Reprinted in Taplin, George Folklore pp.8-16.

[187]Taplin, George Folklore p.12.

[188]Taplin, George The Narrinyeri pp.32, 34 and 136.

[189]Minute Book II 20 March 1878.

[190]Journal V p.546 16 April 1878.

[191]Journal V p.567 11-19 June 1879.

CHAPTER IV. GEORGE TAPLIN : MISSIONARY AND WRITER.

Throughout Taplin's twenty year term as Superintendent of the Point McLeay Mission, his primary concern never shifted from being that of serving God and propagating the Gospel. Although this work was attended with many disappointments (as missionary activity must surely be, no matter where in the world it is carried out) yet overall, Taplin ought to have felt well pleased with his achievements in this regard. When he died he left two congregations of committed Christians — one at Raukkan and the other at Meningie — both with their own chapels, which he had been instrumental in having built. In addition, regular services were conducted at The Needles, and (at appropriate times) at the station shearing sheds and other places where people gathered, throughout the entire district. As far as missionary outreach was concerned, the job could scarcely have been carried out more thoroughly.

In the 1876 Annual Report, Taplin complained of the slackening of religious ardour amongst the Ngarrindjeri, due to the relatively prosperous times:

> ...the question has evidently arisen; why should I be more particular than many professedly Christian white people? I soon began to see it was probable that only in a few instances would native Christianity rise above the average of the community around....[1]

But to complain that the Ngarrindjeri were not much better Christians than their grinkari neighbours was, in effect, to point to a remarkable achievement; especially when it is recalled that in 1860 one of the questions occupying the minds of the Select Committee (and a lot of other people) was whether or not Aborigines were capable of apprehending religious principles at all! This was never an issue with Taplin of course, for he was aware of the fact

that the Ngarrindjeri were traditionally a far more religious people than were their conquerors.[2] But to change a majority of the people from one religion to another in two decades was no mean feat — even if only a few adherents did rise far above the average in dedication. In his major work on the people, Taplin wrote: 'Those of the natives who have taken hold of the gospel have done so heartily, with faith and devotion.'[3] And it is these few to whom a great deal of the success of the missionary work is really owed.

Soon after returning from the three months sick leave which he was forced to take early in 1864, Taplin began to take steps to enlist the help of an Aboriginal assistant missionary. He advised the A.F.A. Committee in July of that year that he was hoping to train 'James Reid' for missionary work amongst the Ngarrindjeri.[4] This 'James Reid' was, in fact, James Ngunaitponi, who at that time was still referred to by the name he had adopted in honour of the man who baptised him. The Committee fully supported the proposal. However, before James Ngunaitponi arrived from Wellington to begin his work, the Mission received a visit from a very interesting and impressive young man from Poonindie. This was James Wanganeen, who, whilst on a visit to Adelaide, took the time to make the journey down to Raukkan, accompanied by Rev B.T. Craig.[5] Owing to the fact that most of the members of the Poonindie institution were migrants from Adelaide, or the River Murray, or from southern Western Australia, it is difficult to ascertain where Wanganeen originated from. But he was certainly not a man of the Ngarrindjeri. On 31 July, which was a Sunday, Craig preached the sermon and Wanganeen read the lesson at an afternoon service; and on the following day, Taplin

recorded the effect that this had produced on the Ngarrindjeri who witnessed it:

> I learn that J. Wanganeen taking part in the service yesterday afternoon made a very favourable impression on the natives here. Wanganeen is a very nice fellow, and I think a Christian. He is very intelligent and good tempered, and reads well. May the Lord raise him up and be a blessing to his people.[6]

Taplin realized the potential that rested with an educated Christian Aborigine like Wanganeen, and accordingly he asked the Committee to approach the Anglican authorities to see if Wanganeen could be released for missionary work at Raukkan.[7] The Bishop fully supported the idea, and even suggested that Poonindie should finance Wanganeen while he worked with Taplin for three months.[8] Apparently Wanganeen himself also approved of the scheme, for on 18 February 1865, he and his wife, Mary Jane, arrived at Raukkan on the Wasp from Milang.[9] By this time James Ngunaitponi had arrived from Wellington, and Taplin was able to set the two Jameses to work together — Ngunaitponi on the extension of his knowledge of Engligh reading and writing; and Wanganeen on the acquisition of a working knowledge of Ngarrindjeri — a language of which he was entirely ignorant.[10] The two Jameses got on very well together, and on 27 February 1865 they began work teaching a class of young men how to read.[11] On the following Saturday Taplin took pleasure in recording their first missionary journey:

> Today an expedition to the Coorong was undertaken. James Unaipon and Wanganeen go there to conduct worship tomorrow and William Kropinyeri and Harry Tripp accompany them. It appears there is a good number of natives at Towadjeri, and I think Unaipon suggested that they should go and get them to worship on the Sabbath. This expedition is entirely of their own suggesting. I waited to see what might be brought forth spontaneously and this has been undertaken.[12]

The trip was a complete success.

Unfortunately, while James Wanganeen was busy carrying out his missionary duties, his wife, Mary Jane, was doing her best to upset the equanimity of the establishment, and while the missionaries were away on their second expedition, Taplin recorded:

> We are having a great deal of trouble with Mary Jane Wanganeen. She is a bad girl. She refuses to do any work and acts in a most immodest and imprudent manner. She will persist in going to the wurleys in the absence of her husband.[13]

Six days later, Taplin was forced to send her away to Adelaide in the company of her husband, who never returned.[14] Perhaps this was the result that Mrs Wanganeen wished for, and if so, her actions could scarcely have been more efficacious. But they deprived Taplin of an ally whose potential to influence the Ngarrindjeri was obviously considerable, and whom he was no doubt loath to lose.

But the work of the Aboriginal itinerating mission which James Wanganeen had pioneered, continued to expand, as James Ngunaitponi pressed on, sometimes alone, and sometimes with companions to help him. William Kropinyeri, who had accompanied the two missionaries on their first trips to the Coorong and Lake Albert, became James Ngunaitponi's assistant on his next journeys to Wommeran and McGrath Flat in March 1865.[15] In these early days the itinerating Ngarrindjeri missionaries needed physical as well as moral courage, for they were vulnerable where they went — far away from the Mission itself — and they were already suffering persecution because of their apostacy.

On 11 April 1865 Ngunaitponi set out to work for a fortnight or so amongst his own lakalinyeri at Wellington.[16] This was

to prove to be the first of a number of such missionary journeys to the country of the Piltindjeri, and was eventually to lead to a request from the people at Wellington, that either James Ngunaitponi or William Kropinyeri might be stationed there permanently. However, Taplin was not agreeable to the suggestion, and wrote in his Journal:

> I see difficulties in the way of such a scheme. James or William could scarcely have stamina enough to stand alone among a godless population of blacks and whites.[17]

It is true that they would have been open to much ridicule and abuse from the grinkaris, and it is also true that they would have faced persecution from the more conservative elements among the Ngarrindjeri. Yet they had both repeatedly faced these trials, and had in fact chosen an even tougher path through life than Taplin had; and so far, although they had both taken an occasional fall, they had evinced extraordinary stamina and resolution. Particularly must this be said of James Ngunaitponi. Looking back from this point of time, it seems a pity that Ngarrindjeri initiatives of this type were not fostered and given every encouragement, but it appears that when the Ngarrindjeri did adopt a European concept (such as farming or Christianity) they did so with an enthusiasm and commitment that tended to outstrip what the Europeans had envisaged for them. Thus, it was envisaged that the Ngarrindjeri might adopt farming — but only at the peasant level, with tiny blocks of land, or else as labourers for European farmers: it was never envisaged that they should become prosperous and independent yeomen themselves. Similarly, most of those Europeans who were desirous of seeing the Ngarrindjeri converted to Christianity, saw them in a

passive role, learning to obey the ten commandments of Moses, rather than as active emissaries of Christ. Even in the 1930's, after the Ngarrindjeri had been preached at for over seventy years, and had long since forgotten the last vestiges of their old religion, the clergyman in charge of the Church at Raukkan was still called a 'missioner' rather than a minister; and a hundred years after the founding of Point McLeay, it was still designated a 'mission'. It is clear that, on the whole, Europeans have refused to accept the fact that the Ngarrindjeri might have become equal co-religionists, just as they refused to accept the fact that they might be equal socially, economically or politically. This is not a criticism of Taplin. On the contrary, he did infinitely more for the Ngarrindjeri in this regard than any other European before or since — after all, the whole idea of the itinerating work was his, and it was he who was to appoint the first Ngarrindjeri deacons at a later date. It is simply observed, however, that on this occasion, Taplin appears to have been a little tardy in encouraging the momentum which some of his leading Ngarrindjeri supporters had generated at that particular time.

A couple of months after Taplin had refused the request of the Piltindjeri for a permanent teacher, another Ngarrindjeri man presented himself as a potential itinerating missionary. This was William MacHughes — a part European, who, despite his tender years, had already been severely tested as a Christian Aborigine, and found to be courageous and strong in his faith. William was a much younger man than James Ngunaitponi and William Kropinyeri, and had, in fact, attended the school at Raukkan as a child. He was only

eighteen when Taplin recorded on 2 January 1868:

> Last evening William MacHughes came to me and said that the rest of the young men would like him to learn to be a preacher to the natives, and had offered to give a shilling a week each to pay for his support while he was studying. William has been for some time anxious to engage in this work and I think this is an indication that God intends him for it. My plan would be when he is prepared to put him on horseback and send him out as an open-air itinerant preacher to the natives.[18]

To their credit, the Committee agreed to pay William MacHughes a salary of twenty pounds per annum[19] — not a princely sum even for those times (Taplin and Ophel, for instance received three hundred pounds between them); but it was certainly enough for a young single man to survive on, and it enabled William to devote all his time to studying and teaching. He commenced his studies in April 1868,[20] and later that year he wrote to the secretary of the A.F.A. requesting the Committee's further support. In part his letter reads:

> James and I want to go out and read the Bible to the blacks round the Lakes. Mr Taplin has been teaching me all the winter, and now it is summer. I should like to go and read about Jesus to the blacks up the Murray, and for me and James to go together. But we want a canoe to go in like one of the government canoes. And please sir, will you see if you can get us one — it will cost six pounds.[21]

However, the Committee failed to accede to his request quickly enough, so in January 1869 William and James bought their own boat — a second-hand dinghy complete with sails, mast etc., Taplin assisted them with the purchase, and then started them off on their first missionary journey together.[22] They returned on 5 February, having gone as far as Mannum — a town well beyond the borders of the Ngarrindjeri country.[23] A month later, they set off again up the river.[24] However, Taplin was far from happy with their per-

formance on this occasion, and on the strength of the results of two journeys, he took the extraordinary step of abandoning the whole project. It comes as something of a shock to read the entry for 10 May 1869:

> I find the Scripture Readership is a failure. William and James are not fit for it. They can get no influence on account of the aversion of the blacks to the assumption of superiority by one of themselves. It also spoils the agents, puffing them up with ridiculous pride and injuring them. So I have let William engage as labourer to Messrs M. and J. Abbott, Masons.[25]

This decision must have come as a bitter disappointment to both men, especially as they had entered on the missionary work with such dedication and enthusiasm. But for William, it was to prove a blessing, although he doubtless would not have thought so at the time. It so happened that the masons had just completed the new Church, and were at that time engaged in erecting some more cottages (through the benevolence of Henrietta Smith). William began labouring for them, and by this means he was eventually to become a skilful mason himself, and a highly regarded tradesman in the district. On the other hand, Taplin's dropping of the scheme must have been a severe blow to James Ngunaitponi. In 1869 James was thirty five years of age. He had long since decided to dedicate his life to the service of his people and his God; and to have had the metaphorical carpet pulled from under his feet in this way must have been a profoundly distressing experience for him. He left Raukkan for the land of his forefathers, and the state of his dejection can be judged by the fact that shortly afterwards, reports began reaching Taplin that this man of great moral strength, lofty ideals and disciplined power, had been drinking heavily.[26]

Taplin wrote to James, imploring him to return, but although he sent his wife, Nymbulda, back in August 1869,[27] James himself did not return until December of that year. By this time, Taplin had discovered that reports of James's 'fall' were somewhat exaggerated, but the significant point is that James was personally appalled by his own conduct and readily accepted a month's suspension from Church membership — the normal punishment for such alleged misdemeanors.[28] With a nice irony (which possibly escaped Taplin) James was appointed shepherd of the four-legged flock at Raukkan, in place of Wullume Nambalare — recently dismissed for allowing the sheep to trample John Sumner's crop.[29] Soon James Ngunaitponi was again leading his people — preaching to them, praying with them, and converting them. During the shearing season he went to the sheds to talk and worship with the shearers; and at other times he went wherever the Ngarrindjeri people foregathered. On one occasion, just after he was released from hospital, he journeyed one hundred and forty miles on foot, going from camp to camp with his message of hope and comfort.[30] There seem to be few attributes that this extraordinary man did not possess — in fact it is reassuring to know that on at least one occasion he had allowed himself to become intoxicated during his period of deepest despondency. Although he was superbly built, handsome and physically powerful, his greatest strengths lay in the nobility of his spirit, the power of his intellect and his great human compassion — examples of which are to be found recorded quite dispassionately throughout the later volumes of Taplin's Journal.

The chapel itself was completed in 1869, and opened on 2 May

that year.[31] A Church Book was commenced on the first day of the following year, and its first entry shows that James Ngunaitponi was readmitted by the unanimous vote of Church members.[32] Eighteen months later he was unanimously elected the first Ngarrindjeri deacon of the Church. (Taplin pointed out that it was 'understood' that the Head Teacher — Ophel — was the 'White Deacon' of the Church.)[33] James was formally inducted into the position on 31 May 1871.[34]

The formation and conduct of the Church Council at Raukkan stands as one of the outstanding combined achievements of Taplin and the Ngarrindjeri. It would have been considered remarkable enough a century later, and during some of the intervening dismal decades it would have been thought impossible — or at least too much of a threat to 'White Authority' to be countenanced. Like most such bodies, it could not have been called truly democratic — the Pastor had too much authority for the Council to warrant that description. But it conducted its business along the lines of similar bodies — whether church, school, hospital or sporting etc. — with motions being proposed, seconded, spoken to, and voted upon in the accepted manner. At the time, the Church at Raukkan was the only established place of worship in the entire district, so that in its early years, twenty per cent of the congregation were grinkaris.[35] Accordingly, both the Church itself and the Council of members were organizations in which to a great extent racial equality was practised. Both European and Aboriginal members accepted the sacraments from Taplin and his assistant — James Ngunaitponi.[36] Both Europeans and Aborigines accepted the deliberations and decisions of the Council — a body

which comprised both Europeans and Ngarrindjeri, speaking and voting as equals. This was a reflection of the times, for the history of the Ngarrindjeri shows that the vicious prejudice of Europeans was a thing that grew over the years, and was much worse early in this century than it was in the 1860's and 70's. Such was the case throughout the continent.

In a way, this growing inequality is reflected in the Church Book. For instance, in 1870, John Moulden (who had at one time been farm overseer, but who had since settled in the district) was suspended for drunkenness.[37] His sentence was for three months — just as any Ngarrindjeri person's would have been. Moulden committed this offence so often that in 1872 he was eventually expelled — the ultimate punishment.[38] This case has very little to distinguish it from other such cases involving Ngarrindjeri men. However, by 1876, a considerable difference is discernible in the approach to European and Ngarrindjeri Church members. When a charge was brought against a Ngarrindjeri member, a little committee of inquiry was normally constituted to investigate it. On receiving the report, the Council, under Taplin, would then pronounce the sentence — bluntly and without apology. The new orders for Church government introduced by Taplin December 1875 include the following two regulations:

> No 5 — That members of the Church who know of facts which shew unfitness should report to one of the elders in order that enquiry may be made.
> No 6 — That cases of discipline be considered by the council of elders and reported on to the Church.[39]

The Ngarrindjeri members had always submitted themselves to such rules and investigations, and had abided by the decisions of the Council. However, when Taplin was forced to notice the behaviour of

two local Europeans, less than a year after these regulations were promulgated, his approach was very different, and not in accord with his own legislation. Taplin's entry in the Church Book for 1 November 1876 reads:

> ...this church has heard with great pain many reports of the inconsistencies of Mr & Mrs Frederick Yelland and are very sorry to be obliged in the interests of religion to notice them. That this church does not think it would be prudent in a small community like this to enter upon a formal enquiry into the truth of all which they have heard; but they feel that Mr & Mrs Frederick Yelland do not bear such a character for Christian consistency as to allow this church to permit them any longer to continue to be its members.[40]

Nowhere else is such extreme delicacy found to be necessary: a typical and commensurate case may be taken from the same year:

> Pompey Jackson was reported by the pastor and elders as having been guilty of many inconsistencies, drinking, card-playing, non attendance at Divine Worship. He was therefore cut off from the church.[41]

This was the normal blunt statement, and it is clear that Taplin was, in the case of the Yellands, protecting European interests and 'authority' in the district. It would not have done for a meeting of Church members (ninety per cent of whom were by this time Ngarrindjeri people)[42] to have sat in judgement on two Europeans. Therefore the offenders were gently removed with the minimum of publicity.

Taplin deliberately made several inroads into the democracy and unity of the admirable Church government structure which he himself had erected. In March 1871 he brought down the peculiar injunction that nothing should be discussed at a church meeting over which there might be a difference of opinion![43] During the following year he instituted separate Church meetings 'for the consideration of na-

tive matters and exhortation by the pastor there upon.'[44] These meetings were attended only by the Ngarrindjeri Church members, who were, of course, entitled to attend the main meetings as well. The move could thus be interpreted as discriminating against Europeans; but in reality it was to save grinkari members from being lectured to by the Pastor in the manner in which he 'exhorted' the Aboriginal members. Such a division was not calculated to enhance true Christian fraternity.

The action most destructive of Church democracy was taken in December 1875, when Taplin promulgated the new regulations. The position had already been weakened in July of that year, when Taplin announced that henceforth deacons must retire at the end of each year, although they were able to be re-elected.[45] In December however, under the new structure, the name 'deacon' ceased to be used at all. Instead, Taplin instituted a Council of Elders, consisting of Taplin, Ophel, and Taplin's son, Fred. There were two 'non-official' elders, and even these were not to be elected, but appointed each year by the Pastor![46] In other words, the Church government had by now lost all semblance of democratic involvement of members. The first two non-official elders appointed by Taplin were William Martin and William MacHughes, whereas the two Ngarrindjeri deacons had been James Ngunaitponi and John Laelinyeri. This fact tends to support the impression given by the August decision (to force the deacons to retire) that Taplin was attempting to remove Ngunaitponi and Laelinyeri from office. Both men were used to developing ideas and opinions of their own, and were capable of expressing them forcefully and well. As leaders among the Ngarrindjeri they were inheri-

tors of the ancient democratic tradition of the Tendi, and neither of them would have been hesitant about standing up and letting people know what his opinions were. John was a younger man than James, but he was the son of Pullum, the rupulle, and was a man of considerable influence. Oddly enough, in 1878, John Laelinyeri was again made a 'deacon' to replace William Martin when the latter died, so it would appear that Taplin had been unable to remove the term (or the man) as he had wished to do.[47]

The ultimate abandonment of Church rules and government came at the end of Taplin's life, when charges of adultery were brought against his son, Fred. No doubt the Ngarrindjeri members had not enjoyed having their private lives investigated by Church sub-committees, when charges were brought against them, but they nevertheless faced up to the fact that this must be the Christian way of going about things, and there is no record of any Ngarrindjeri member of the Church not accepting the Church's ruling. They were entitled, therefore, to expect that officers of the station and the Church would be prepared to stand by the rules and undergo the same kind of investigation in the same spirit of Christian humility. No one alive today can say whether Fred was guilty of adultery with a Ngarrindjeri girl or not, and in any case, it is of little concern one way or the other. But it is obvious that he should have abided by the clearly expressed rules of the Church of which he was an official. It is equally obvious that the Pastor, his father, should have insisted on this, as he did when Ngarrindjeri Church members were charged with the same offence. It would be difficult to blame Taplin for wanting to protect his son from a public scandal that

would have wrecked his career, and (to a certain extent) his life; but Frederick's position is really indefensible. Since he had no intention of allowing himself to be judged, he should not have accepted a post in which he was obliged to judge others. If the Ngarrindjeri still had any illusions about equality and brotherhood within the Christian Church, they were certainly dispelled by this final sad episode in Taplin's life.

Despite this last incident, Taplin's later years were, on the whole, years of triumph and achievement. The name of the Mission which he founded in 1859 was now known in many parts of the world, and in South Australia it was looked upon as the major Aboriginal centre in the colony. By 1879 it was a well established tourist centre and had begun to develop as such since the steamers began calling regularly with the mail in October 1867.[48] Perhaps the most distinguished guest to call in Taplin's day was Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, who crossed the Lake by steamer on 11 November 1867. He was presented with an address of welcome prepared by the young men, signed by about twenty four of them, and read by one of their number called George Pantuni.[49] The Duke wrote a gracious reply in the Point McLeay visitors book, which, however, would not have been entirely approved of by Taplin, since the final sentence reads:

> May the children who are now in your schools grow up to be good Christians, and may the aptitude you, of the present generation, shew to assume the manners and customs of the Colonists, be well marked in your successors.[50]

The emulation of the sinful ways of the colonists was exactly what Taplin was trying to avoid!

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On Christmas Day 1871, several hundred tourists arrived by steamer from Milang and Goolwa,[51] and this seems to have been the beginning of a tradition that lasted until the second World War, of treating Raukkan as a special kind of zoo. On the positive side, Raukkan became an attraction for professional photographers, and some of the superb shots by camera men, such as Captain Sweet, constitute an invaluable contribution to the record of the traditional way of life and the modern history of the Ngarrindjeri.

Nothing in this record, however, can compare with the contribution made by the writings of George Taplin himself. His work on the language and his translations were, by 1871, gaining recognition overseas. The Governor wrote in April of that year, stating his appreciation of Taplin's linguistic research, and advising that Professor Max Muller was convinced of its 'great value to the science of Ethnology.'[52] Taplin's paper entitled Notes on a Comparative Table of Australian Languages was published the following year.[53] During 1873, Taplin worked on the manuscript of the first of his two major books, its title being: The Narrinyeri. This was a splendid piece of pioneering anthropology — coloured certainly by the author's own subjectivity; but giving an insight into the traditional life of the Ngarrindjeri, and ranging from a description of initiation rites, to an excellent analysis of the language and its structure. As a study of an Aboriginal people and culture, The Narrinyeri evinces a breadth, depth and sympathetic perception which was without parallel at the time in South Australia. The A.F.A. had the book published, but generously granted the proceeds to Taplin.[54] Rev F.W. Cox — still active on the Committee after many years —

acted as Taplin's editor and agent in Adelaide, and possibly this could explain some of the discrepancies that crept in when the book purported to be quoting from Taplin's Journal, as it does quite extensively.

Taplin might well have laid himself open to criticism in this regard, for the Journal entries published in The Narrinyeri have clearly been edited for the purpose of publication, and it was not strictly honest to imply that these were direct quotations from the original source. Perhaps the most glaring example of deliberate falsification is to be found in the account of the arrest of Baapulare and Pelican in 1860. The original makes interesting and revealing reading: it shows Taplin caught in an extremely awkward position — a situation which could well have ruined his chances at this early stage, of ever gaining the confidence of the Ngarrindjeri. Trooper Morgan had attempted to arrest the young lad, Baalpulare, for allegedly robbing a shepherd's hut, but the youth had been protected by some of the men — particularly by Pelican, who at one stage levelled his gun at the policeman. Unfortunately, Taplin felt bound to side with Morgan and to assist him in exercising his duty. The Journal continues:

> It was evident we had been on the eve of terrible bloodshed, of which there seemed to be extreme peril. We decided to get all the assistance which we could, and take the robber and Pelican for resisting the police. So we went and got three fishermen and sent for Mr McBeath and his son. When these assembled we went up and the natives laughed at us, supposing we only came for Baalpulare, who had escaped, but they soon changed their tune when the Policeman arrested Pelican, but they saw it was no use to resist so they gave in. Mr Morgan then told them an abominable lie and said that if they would give up Baalpulare he would give back Pelican. After a little they brought Baalpulare. And then

> he said he would not let Pelican go. I cannot justify this. I felt excessively annoyed at it, especially as I had unwittingly assisted to make the blacks believe his promise. Pelican's nape and boy cried pitifully.[55]

Apparently the Ngarrindjeri forgave Taplin for his involvement in this shameful affair, and he certainly learned a lesson from it. However, the published version of the incident has been distorted almost beyond recognition, and reads as follows:

> It was decided to get all the help we could and then try again, so the trooper sent for two stock-keepers and three white fishermen, who were within a few miles. They arrived in the afternoon. Thus reinforced, we went again to the camps, but found that Baalpulare had fled. Then Morgan arrested Pelican for pointing the gun at them. The natives were very much surprised at this, and showed great concern, as he is a leading man. However, he was marched off in handcuffs to my house. In the evening his friends brought Baalpulare, and gave him up in hopes of having Pelican released; but of course it could not be. Pelican's wife and son wept bitterly.[56]

The most significant point (ie the treachery of the white police) has been omitted, in what is a blatant prostitution of the truth. In defence of Taplin, it must be observed that this passage is not his style of writing, and it can only be assumed that his editor, Cox, decided that a European official should not be shown to have acted improperly towards the Ngarrindjeri: he thus compounded the crime.

The Narrinyeri was reprinted in 1878 as a part of a larger work, The Native Tribes of South Australia. This book incorporated other significant writings on South Australian Aborigines, such as those prepared by the Dresden Missionaries in the early years of the colony. Rev J.D. Wood wrote an introduction for The Native Tribes, and thereby incurred the strong disapprobation of the author of its most important section. It is indeed a poor introduc-

tion, showing scant regard for historical accuracy and little knowledge of the Aborigines it arrogantly presumes to discuss. Taplin was moved to write a letter of protest to the Register, regretting that he should be connected with a publication which commenced with such a statement as that contributed by Wood. Taplin objected to Wood's dismissal of efforts which were being made, and which had been made, by some Europeans on behalf of the Aborigines; and amongst other things, he made the following mordant observation:

> There are some people who think that because they have done nothing in a certain direction themselves that no-one else has done anything either. I fear that Mr J.D. Wood belongs to this class.[57]

The book for which Taplin gained most aclaim is the one he completed just prior to his death: Folklore, Manners, Customs and Languages of the South Australian Aborigines. This contains a very substantial section on the Ngarrindjeri, but also includes material of a general nature, and information gathered on fourteen other tribal groups. Taplin gathered this information by sending questionnaires, comprising forty eight questions, to European officials (police officers etc.) in various parts of the colony. Some of the returns he received show, in the light of modern anthropological research, an extraordinary ignorance and lack of perception on the part of the European informants. And while a few respondents made quite useful contributions, the general standard of observation and level of understanding simply throws Taplin's own outstanding scholarship into deeper relief. He finished checking the proofs of this major contribution to Aboriginal anthropology less than a month before he died,[58] and the book was published subsequent to his death.

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It should be recorded at this point, that James Ngunaitponi played such a significant role in assisting Taplin in his work on the Ngarrindjeri, that some mention might justifiably have been made in the books to this effect. Over a period of six years, James explained the social structure, recounted legends, taught the language, corrected translations, and recalled the recent history of the Ngarrindjeri. The Journals from 1873 onwards show clearly how great a part James Ngunaitponi played in recording his own rich cultural and linguistic heritage. It was James, for instance, who first told Taplin about the Tendi and enabled him to see it in action. But no acknowledgement of this fact is given in The Narrinyeri.[59]

Quite apart from his work as a missionary and general worker and fighter for the Ngarrindjeri people, the effects of which are simply immeasurable, Taplin's achievements as a writer are themselves almost monumental. He has left the descendants of the Ngarrindjeri a detailed and lucid account of their ancient culture and language, observed closely over twenty years of life amongst them. He showed the Europeans living in South Australia at the time that many of their current beliefs concerning Aborigines were quite incorrect. They learnt that the Ngarrindjeri were not dying out at that stage, even though other groups (such as the Kaurna) may have practically disappeared. They learnt, amongst other things, that the Ngarrindjeri had a complex and beautiful language, a well regulated social system, a democratic government, and arts and crafts of a high order. Many of the barbaric actions of the Europeans in early times may be attributed partly to their failure to understand Aboriginal culture and people. But from the time of Taplin's publi-

cations, there was no excuse for the perpetuation of ignorance or false beliefs.

If Taplin's published works are of major ethnological and anthropological significance, his unpublished Journals are of no less value from the point of view of the historian and the Ngarrindjeri people themselves. Like all good diaries they throw light on the complex character of their author; but even more importantly, they give a close-up and perceptive (if highly subjective) view of a great many Ngarrindjeri people living at the time. The Journals are like a stage, across which a continuous procession of Ngarrindjeri characters move without pausing for twenty years. Some people make their entrance early in the play and are still there at the end: others enter early, die and are seen no more: yet another group enters late, and still occupies the stage when the final curtain falls. We see characters developing or degenerating, we see their triumphs and their failures — the comedy and tragedy of Ngarrindjeri life during this most critical period in the modern history of the nation. At no other time are we given anything like the insight into the Ngarrindjeri people and life that Taplin presents in these fascinating records; and so, quite apart from the dramatic changes that took place during the years 1859-79, the period is by far the most interesting and important to the student of Ngarrindjeri history, because it is the most accurately and closely documented.

Some individual histories are quite easy to trace through the Journals — others require a little more concentrated research, owing to the fact that Taplin never intended that his diaries should

be published, and he did not bother to mention such essential pieces of information as name changes. For example, a prominent youth named Nipper inexplicably fades from the scene, and concurrently a young man named John Laelinyeri begins to emerge. Both are the sons of Pullum, the rupulle, and whereas Nipper was about to be baptised before his unexplained disappearance, the mysterious John Laelinyeri, without undergoing the normal introductory programme leading up to baptism is, in effect, baptised in Nipper's stead.[60] This is a fairly obvious case of change of name, and there can be no doubt that Nipper and John Laelinyeri were the same person, (although the case is slightly complicated by the fact that there is another young man named Nipper mentioned, without any distinguishing comment).[61] Other cases cannot be pronounced upon with such certainty. For instance, the evidence suggests that Baalpulare, Weellee, Wullume, and William Nambalare were all one person. Certainly the last two were, but in reporting William (or Wullume) Nambalare's death less than a year after George Taplin's demise, Frederick Taplin stated:

> He remained conscious to the end, and fell asleep in perfect peace, a triumph of redeeming grace. About eighteen years ago that man, with several others, defied my late father and two troopers, who were attempting to arrest a robber, and it was only by the troopers drawing their revolvers and showing a determined front that a serious affray was prevented.[62]

No incident mentioned in the Journals bears any resemblance to this except the fracas described earlier involving Pelican and Baalpulare; and since Pelican was long since dead, there is good reason to infer that the youth, Baalpulare, became the man, Wullume Nambalare. Part of the confusion is caused by the Ngarrindjeri tradition of avoiding mention of the recent dead, by changing namesakes' names. But in

any case, different names were used at different stages of a person's life.[63] Taplin himself did the Ngarrindjeri a fine service by preserving many of the fine old names as surnames when he baptised people. Many squatters, missionaries and other Europeans have bestowed ridiculous, or at least meaningless, European names on Aboriginal people; and they have done so even in quite recent times. Yet the Ngarrindjeri, after a century and a half of European contact, still retain those proud old surnames like Kropinyeri, Karpany, and Koolmateri, which leave no doubt as to the nation from which they are descended. Taplin's was a remarkably enlightened approach for those times (and would have been even in the 1960's), but the determination of the Ngarrindjeri to retain their distinctive nomenclature must have been equally significant in achieving its partial preservation. Some Ngarrindjeri people (especially those whose country was closely settled by Europeans in the colony's early days) had already adopted European names, and there is no record of any attempt to abandon these in favour of Ngarrindjeri names. But in at least one case, Taplin cooperated in altering one of those ridiculous European-imposed names from which many Aborigines have suffered over the years. 'Napolean Bonaparte' must have realized that the people who named him were indulging in a sick joke at his expense, and he wished to alter his surname. Accordingly, in the Journals, his name changed to 'N. Bonny', and eventually it became 'Charles Bonney' — a modification which is appreciated by Bonney's descendants today.[64] The Journals cover the period during which these surnames were being established and settled, and it is therefore understandable that some confusion should arise at times. But in any

case, instances in which there is doubt constitute only a small minority of cases.

The two outstanding figures of Taplin's early years at Raukkan were Teenminnie, (the wife of Pelican) and Tooreetparne (also referred to as 'Captain Jack'). Teenminnie was the first real friend that Taplin acquired amongst the Ngarrindjeri, and was among his first converts. Her influence among the women at Raukkan must have been considerable, although such a factor is naturally impossible to assess empirically. She was a woman of high repute within the community, both on her own account and also as the wife of one of the accepted leaders. And to have such a woman providing a constant example of faith in practice, could scarcely have failed to influence those about her. Like most of the early converts, she suffered for her convictions,[65] but they remained unshaken, so that even those who never abandoned the old religion (such as her husband) eventually came to respect her even more. Unfortunately, like the young men, such as Isaac Waukerri, James Jackson and Allan Jamblyn, who followed her in embracing Christianity, she also suffered in health, and followed them to an early grave. Teenminnie's declining health was a constant concern of Taplin's, and at times he refers to her almost daily in the Journal. About two years before she died he wrote:

> Poor Teenminnie is very ill. I am quite at a loss what to do for her. I sent to the Government to request medical assistance but could get no satisfactory reply. I can only commend her in earnest prayer to the healing power of the Great Physician, who has promised that the prayer of faith shall save the sick. O that he would spare her life, if he sees fit, and restore her to health. Her life seems precious to her children, precious to our little church, and precious to our Mission. The Lord knows we all love her.[66]

Eventually Taplin prevailed upon her to go to Adelaide Hospital,[67] but she found the atmosphere so oppressive there, amongst other sick and dying people, that she discharged herself and caught the first available coach back to Milang. By this time, Taplin had resigned himself to her imminent death, for he wrote:

> Several people gave her money and so the Lord's poor lame dark servant got back here to her home. Poor soul, I think she is incurable, so that it does not much matter.[68]

Teenminnie was never daunted by her continual pain or approaching death, and throughout all her affliction Taplin observed her great faith and cheerful courage. Yet, although she was an unshakably devout Christian, she never ceased to be anything but a complete and proud Ngarrindjeri woman: preferring to die in the wurley than to linger on in a sick room;[69] and requesting that Scripture be read to her in the Ngarrindjeri rather than in English.[70] Finally, in September 1869, the end came, and Taplin's report reads:

> Today at 3 o'clock my dear friend Teenminnie departed to her everlasting rest. She was a little light-headed this morning, but that passed off, but deafness came on and the restlessness which precedes dissolution. I went and prayed with her, but she heard very little. Her husband was very attentive to her until the last. She went off at last very suddenly. She was my first friend among the natives and was a truly excellent woman, kind-hearted, intelligent and faithful. I feel that we have lost a dear friend, but our loss is her gain.[71]

She was buried at Raukkan, alongside the two young Christians, James Jackson and Allan Jamblyn, who had predeceased her,[72] and Taplin himself built a fence around her grave.[73]

The other outstanding personality of the Mission's early days was Tooreetparne, a man known to the Europeans as 'Captain Jack'. Tooreetparne never became a Christian — in fact, in many respects, he was the leader of the opposition. But despite this,

Taplin could scarcely fail to admire him, for he was the embodiment of all that was best in the old culture's lofty code of chivalry. Powerful, brave, honourable and cultured, Tooreetparne appears to have had no doubts as to the superiority of his own culture over that of the Europeans, or of his own people over the invading race. He wielded a great deal of influence amongst the Ngarrindjeri, and Taplin was fully aware of how puissant an ally Tooreetparne would have been if he had become a convert. The missionary however, soon perceived that this would never happen, and instead, Tooreetparne became a friend. This friendship was extremely valuable to Taplin, at a time when he was discovering how perfidious Europeans could be, and although, no doubt, the older man often had occasion to humour the ardent young missionary, yet the attachment was essentially between equals, as any true friendship must be. The admiration which Taplin had for Tooreetparne, and the relationship between the two men, is as fascinating, in its own way, as the Platonic love relationship that existed between Taplin and Teenminnie.

Through the Journals we can see the interaction of two sensitive and highly intelligent minds, drawn to each other by mutual respect and fellow feeling, yet at the same time warring because of their equally stubborn adherence to two divergent traditional beliefs. Tooreetparne showed considerable early interest in the new religion, and Taplin mentioned several of the conversations which the two friends had together over religious matters.[74] But despite Taplin's sanguine hopes, this interest never manifested itself in any glimmer of apostacy, and consequently, such conversations eventually ceased. However, the friendship did not, and some idea of

its strength can be gained from the record of events which took place on 7 and 9 November 1859. On the seventh, Tooreetparne happened to be away, and Taplin unwisely attempted to stop an inter-clan fight by walking in amongst the combatants. He nearly stopped a spear in the process, and he learned an essential lesson. The entry for that date states in part:

> In the afternoon Captain Jack came back and I was never so glad to see a blackfellow as I was to see my dark friend. The Lord knows I do not lean on an arm of the flesh but on Him alone, but yet I am thankful for his instrument. The old captain was very angry when he heard of the fight, and he said there should be no more fighting here. If they wanted to fight let them go "by another water" that was his expression. He also highly approved of my taking care of his sister. He would have been in a great way if they had taken her. He is much attached to his relations. O that the Lord would convert his soul. I do earnestly pray for him.[75]

Tooreetparne loved a good clean fight, and the edict which he promulgated, banning such activities in the vicinity of Raukkan, out of respect for Taplin's wishes, is quite remarkable. Two days later he showed outstanding forbearance and control, when a party of visiting Ngarrindjeri men from Mundoo Island attempted to abduct his sister-in-law, Nourailinyeri. Tooreetparne rescued her single-handed, and Taplin, who witnessed the dangerous incident, observed:

> I could not help admiring Captain Jack's behaviour on this occasion. He has been a great warrior, and the occasion was one to rouse him, but he sat down and declared that there should be no fighting at my place. He did not even take a weapon in his hand, but when he saw the affair was likely to be serious, he went and broke all the spears he could lay his hands on. I do thank God who has endued him with such a spirit. O that he were a Christian.[76]

This friendship was not without its stormy passages, and the two men were likely to find themselves in opposing camps whenever Tooreetparne felt that Ngarrindjeri traditions were in any way en-

dangered by Taplin's activities. The missionary's attitude towards the making of narumbar was bound to cause a confrontation, for instance, because this practice was vital to the continuance of the culture, and was the most important of all the ceremonies.[77] Sometimes too, the different temperaments of the two friends became obvious, as when Tooreetparne's passions got the better of him,[78] or when Taplin deliberately produced some European coolness.[79] But these blemishes are incidental. The relationship is more accurately illustrated by scenes such as Tooreetparne coming to bid farewell to Taplin, when setting out on a journey; by Taplin welcoming him home again on his return; by Taplin building a house for his friend, with Tooreetparne assisting;[80] by the two men walking for miles together along the shores of Lake Alexandrina,[81] or sailing together in the whaleboat.[82]

Perhaps one of the best illustrations Taplin gives of Tooreetparne's character appears in The Narrinyeri. Taplin uses the incident to show how faithfully the Ngarrindjeri adhered to their own legal code, but it also throws light on Tooreetparne and the relationship between the two. During the night of 23 February 1862 Tooreetparne was involved in a scuffle, during which another man suffered a severely wounded lip.[83] Taplin says:

> I dressed the wound as well as I could. Next morning I was going to the camp when I met Captain Jack. I began talking to him about hurting Kilkildariipiri. He replied, "Taplin, don't you talk; I have just had four blows with a waddy on my head for it." The tribe had assembled and sentenced him to this punishment, and he had yielded, although a man whom none would have liked to have attacked when he had weapons in his hand; but he felt it right to submit to the law.[84]

Such a man was Tooreetparne. Even in the delirium which

preceded his death, Taplin observed the intrepidity of his spirit and nobility of mind. In one last grand gesture of defiance he sat up from his death-bed and called for his spear and shield; and his little son had to be prevented from giving the weapons to him.[85] On 2 November 1864, Taplin reported his death in an entry which gives little hint of the former warmth which existed between these two stubborn protagonists:

> Last night Captain Jack died. In him his tribe loses its most intrepid and skilful warrior. The man with more like military genius than anyone I ever saw among the natives. .... Alas, he died a heathen, and I feel that really he is an obstacle removed from my path in my efforts to save this people by preaching Jesus. His influence was against us. But I am indeed distressed by his fate, for he was a superior man intellectually. I never knew him afraid.[86]

The situation in which the elders were placed in the early days of the Mission was an awkward one. They were dedicated to the preservation of their own culture, but being learned and perceptive men, tney had been aware for some years that the Ngarrindjeri needed to acquire some of the technical skills of the Europeans in order to survive. They were keenly appreciative of the power which literacy bestowed on those who learned to read and write, and for this reason Taplin's school was never short of pupils, but on the contrary was often short of space. Even Tooreetparne — the proudest of all the Ngarrindjeri conservatives — was desirous that eventually all the Ngarrindjeri should be fully literate.[87] The major problem, however, was that for Taplin the basic reason for teaching literacy was to enable young people to read the Scriptures, and the most important aspect of schooling, whether day-school or Sunday-school, was the study of the Christian religion. In the contest which was the in-

evitable outcome of such a situation, there were no winners, but the people who lost most heavily were the young men caught in the cross-fire. The stories of a number of the survivors of this (at times) violent culture-conflict, bear testimony to the amount of suffering and sacrifice entailed.

William, the son of Kropinyeri, was older than most of the young men attracted to Taplin's teaching, being about nineteen years of age when Point McLeay Mission was established. When he first acquainted Taplin with his determination to become a Christian, he was twenty six and already had two wives. One of these wives was Jean Parry, a religious woman — kind, devout and morally strong — who must have been a great steadying force in William's life, and an excellent mother to her talented children. The other wife was Tina, a young girl whom William had recently married. Taplin told William that if he wished to become a Christian, he would have to give up Tina (amongst other things), and this William agreed to do.[88] But he was to find the intention much easier to declare than to implement. For one thing, it appears that Tina was not devoid of charm; but more serious than William's struggles within himself, was the opprobrium he received from Tina's family, who felt duty bound to protect her honour. Fortunately, William could look after himself, and despite well organized attempts to injure him, he managed to survive.[89] Revenge was therefore taken out on old Kropinyeri, his father, who was millined[90] nearly to the point of death.[91]

Thus the trials of the young converts in those days included going in constant fear of violent and murderous attacks; and they

required a moral, physical and emotional fortitude far above the average to persevere. William Kroponyeri's history has many vicissitudes, and in many ways, he and his wife, Jean, personify the tragedy and triumph of the Ngarrindjeri fight to reconcile in a lifetime, two vastly different cultures.

Philip Henry Rigney was a native of Western Australia, and was almost certainly sent to South Australia by Bishop Hale, who sent several Aborigines from his western diocese to the mission which he had founded at Poonindie in 1850. Possibly because Poonindie was becoming over-populated at the time, the trustees wrote to the A.F.A. before Rigney arrived, and asked if he could be redirected to Point McLeay. Taplin was not keen to take him, but the Committee insisted that he should,[92] and it was thus that the founder of one of Raukkan's largest families arrived at the Mission in March 1872.[93]

To start with, Taplin considered Philip Rigney a nuisance, but by 1874, he had become a practising member of the Church,[94] and apart from a short period of what Taplin refers to as 'backsliding',[95] he seems to have remained one of the missionary's most dependable supporters.

In April of 1877 the Committee learned that Isabella Mutyuli, who had left Raukkan twelve years previously, was now destitute and abandoned, and was living with her two children in a hollow tree near Melrose in the mid-north.[96] The Committee decided to arrange for her to return to Raukkan, and on 2 May 1877, she and her two little boys arrived back at her childhood home. Taplin says:

Isabella's case is very sad. Twelve years ago she went to

> live with a Mr McKirdy. She grew up in his family. When she arrived at womanhood she was seduced by a man named Benjamin Challenger. He became the father of first one and then the other of her two children, Benjamin and Edward. She now returns to me as a ruined woman. She is about 21 years of age.[97]

The kind of emotional cruelty that this young woman had suffered can only be imagined; but in any system which allows a little girl of nine to be sent out to service with a foreign family, suffering must surely be expected.

Yet despite her tribulations, Isabella Mutyuli was neither a ruined nor an embittered woman. One of the first duties which she undertook at Raukkan was nursing poor Charlie Peake, the northern Aborigine who had saved Major Warburton's life during his desert explorations, and who was now abandoned by that gentleman to die of injuries received while in his service.[98] Charlie was understandably soured by his current situation and his fast approaching death; and he made himself most objectionable to his long-suffering Ngarrindjeri hosts.[99] But two people never ceased to care for him in every way they could — putting up with sleepless nights, and Charlie's abuse and foul habits with extraordinary patience and compassion. These were Isabella Mutyuli and the young Western Australian bachelor, Philip Rigney.[100] Not long after Charlie died, Isabella and Philip were married.[101] And in the A.F.A. Annual Report for 1877 Philip Rigney was moved from the 'bachelor' listing to the 'families' list; and immediately acquired two sons — Benjamin Rigney, aged three, and Edward Rigney, aged one.[102] Fifteen months later, Isabella bore Philip another son, and the establishment of this now extensive family had commenced.[103] The last mention of Philip Rigney in the Journal shows him as a deacon,

conducting the church service at The Needles in place of Taplin, who was ill at the time.[104] Bishop Hale would no doubt have been very pleased.

Covering, as they do, a period of twenty action-packed years, the Journals are rich in drama; and stories of love and hatred, compassion and cruelty, cowardice and heroism, are there in abundance. But striding across the stage of time like some Greek hero, the monumental figure of James Ngunaitponi dominates the play. From the time he arrived at Raukkan in September 1864, only Taplin himself played as vital a role in affecting the destiny of the Ngarrindjeri people, as did this truly remarkable man. He combined the complete Christian dedication of Teenminnie or Jean Parry with the dynamic power of Tooreetparne; the pride and mental acuity of George Pantuni or John Laelinyeri, with the gentleness and kindness of Isabella Mutyuli. There seems to have been no known limit to his talents.

Understandably, such a man did not escape a certain amount of persectuion, motivated by jealousy and the fact that he was not a member of the local lakalinyeri. His position was, if anything, exacerbated by Taplin, who observed not long after James's arrival:

> The principal cause of all the unpleasantness lately is, I believe the fact of my shewing such kindness and favour to James Unaipon. .... I saw it the very next day after James came, and I believe they secretly and thoroughly hate him.[105]

When he did forge family ties with the Karatindjeri by marrying Nymbulda, the daughter of Pullum, the rupulle, James only invited more persecution because he married her in the Christian, rather than in the traditional fashion.[106]

Apart from studying for his proposed ministry, James under-

took avarious other jobs at the Mission, just as Taplin had laboured for T.W. Stow, when he too was undertaking clerical studies. Amongst other occupations that James undertook at Taplin's request were those of cook for the boarding school,[107] head boatman,[108] and assistant teacher.[109]

On completion of his studies under Taplin's guidance, James was freed to a large extent from physical labour, so that he was enabled to devote all of his energies to teaching and itinerating as a missionary among his people. Taplin alludes to his achievements in The Narrinyeri where he writes of James:

> He has maintained his Christian profession in the face of many difficulties and persecutions. His coming was most advantageous for us; it gave me what I had long needed — a steady Christian adult native, who would always take the side of truth and righteousness. He became also a nucleus around which those who were impressed by divine truth could rally.[110]

The A.F.A. was not unaware of his excellent work as a missionary, and in April 1872 raised his salary by four shillings per week, at Taplin's suggestion.[111] (There is no record of what his salary was at the time, but it was probably £20 p.a. — the same as William MacHughes's.) Whether Taplin always appreciated it or not is open to doubt, but James tended to use his own initiative to a considerable extent. Amongst other things, he organized a collection when Taplin was seriously ill, and presented him with the substantial sum of twenty nine pounds;[112] he organized and conducted prayer meetings amongst the people;[113] and when a second Ngarrindjeri deacon was required, he conducted a ballot amongst the Church members — an election which was redolent of the old democratic tradition of the Tendi.[114]

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As the years passed, the animosity which James had stoically endured when he first settled at Raukkan, faded, and he became a leader for the people as a whole — not just for the young Christians. Because of this, he succeeded in converting even some of the old conservatives to Christianity. The process was facilitated by the realization by the older people that their control over the rising generation was diminishing rapidly, and that the ancient religion of their fathers had been effectively destroyed.

Taplin never wrote in an exaggerated or eulogistic way about James Ngunaitponi (or about anyone else); and a comparison of The Narrinyeri and the Journals reveals a palpable understating of James's contribution. Nevertheless, the picture that emerges over the sixteen year period in which James is regularly mentioned in the Journals, is that of a man who towered far above the ordinary: a man who could have been an outstanding figure at any time, in any nation. It is tempting (but pointless) to conjecture on what might have been his achievements had he belonged to the dominant rather than the subject race.

Taplin's relationship with the Ngarrindjeri changed gradually but perceptibly over the years. In many ways (and quite understandably) he mellowed: the forty seven year old pastor who died at Raukkan in 1879, had rather more tolerant views than the zealous school teacher who established the Mission there at the age of twenty seven. For instance, Taplin stated before he had been at Raukkan for two months, that the exogamous marriage system had to be overthrown.[115] Yet in discussing the system in 1867 he had to admit that it did, in fact, work. He says: '...certainly the blacks have

good reason for it. Some tribes would die out if it were not practised.'[116] There were other very good reasons for it too, not the least of them being the avoidance of inbreeding; and it is to his credit that Taplin came to accept such aspects of the Ngarrindjeri social structure, and to appreciate their logic and their value. He even came to support the practice of girls marrying at a tender age. In 1872 Taplin wrote:

> ...we find it best for the girls to marry young. Girls of 18 and 19 are sure to be bad. And decent fellows never like to marry such, as they know what they probably are. It saves the girls from snares and temptations of all sorts to marry young.[117]

Like all assimilationists from 1836 to the present era, Taplin had approached his work with the intention of concentrating on the young and of undermining the power and influence of the older people. To some extent, he retained this attitude, and was successful for instance, in his assault on the traditional funeral rites. A special correspondent for the Register pointed out that in 1879, many of the younger people at Raukkan had never seen the Ngarrindjeri funeral rites performed until a body was dried in that year. The correspondent stated that some of the children had:

> ...returned to the school filled with disgust at the whole process which they had never seen before, and nearly poisoned by the effluvia which they had been forced to inhale. It was a long time since any other body was dried, and Mr Taplin thinks this will be the last.[118]

In other matters however, Taplin's attitude altered considerably. He learnt of the functioning of the Tendi too late; but after James Ngunaitponi had introduced him to the Tendi, far from wishing to destroy it, Taplin lamented:

> I am rather sorry that the tendi is not so potent as it used

> to be among the natives. It is still resorted to as an excellent means of discussing and disposing of difficulties, but its penalties cannot always be carried out. I have no doubt that the men of the Narrinyeri have suffered imprisonment at the hands of the whites for carrying out the sentence of the tendi in cases where it awarded substantial justice against offenders.[119]

Other Ngarrindjeri customs and traditions were accepted by Taplin according to how felicitously they could co-exist with Christianity. For instance, he supported the practice of men and boys strictly avoiding contact with women and girls who were menstruating: even though this custom caused much inconvenience in the boarding school, when any of the girls were 'kruwalde'. Taplin was annoyed when he returned from sick leave on one occasion and found that his policy in this regard had not been followed during his illness. He wrote in the Journal:

> I find that during my absence Mr Roberts and Mr Stapely have disregarded the native customs with reference to the uncleanness of women. These I have always observed and respected, as I think they are decent in their mode of life. The natives have in consequence been much exasperated at Mr Roberts and Mr Stapely. They attribute some sickness to their conduct I believe.[120]

In other instances, where customs may have been anathema from a Christian point of view, Taplin adopted a very moderate approach — particularly for those times. He stated that his aim was a positive one — namely, the propagation of the Gospel, and he felt that there was no need to actively set out to destroy Ngarrindjeri 'superstitions' as the people themselves would, he thought, abandon 'unchristian' practices as soon as they embraced Christianity.[121] Even the tradition of allowing the narumbar the right to practise 'unlimited whoredom' among the girls of their own lakalinyeri, was approached by Taplin in a relatively enlightened way. Once again, it

may be observed that his attitude compares more than favourably with missionaries operating a century later, as well as contemporaries such as his friend, Rev James Reid. Regarding this traditional licence, Taplin wrote:

> Mr Reid is much annoyed at all this, and talks of invoking the civil power, but I think this would be imprudent. The civil power will never change hearts given to such practices. Of course I would protect girls who asked for protection, but we can do no further except by moral suasion.[122]

As we have seen, Taplin did launch a discouraging attack on traditional funeral rites, yet in later years we find him actually enjoying the blending of Ngarrindjeri custom with the Christian burial services that he himself was conducting. In March 1873 he wrote:

> At the funeral today I could not help noticing the artistic way in which the wail was raised. First old King John and Wincappe raised a keen wail on a high note. This was joined in by the women. Then the rest of the men uttered a low sort of groaning wail. As that died away the keen wail of the women broke in: as that rose the groan of the men rolled in. As an expression of grief by sound, it was perfect.[123]

This was not written by a narrow religious bigot, but by a sensitive humanitarian who was able to appreciate the riches and beauties of another, very different, culture; and to recognise the universality of the fundamental human experience.

From the earliest years, Taplin had arrived at the conclusion that the people amongst whom he had chosen to work were a superior race of Aborigines. And this opinion was confirmed with the effluxion of time. In the Folklore Taplin proudly states:

> They possess greater vitality than any other tribe that we know of. There is also amongst them indications of a form of organized society, law, and government, of a higher character than is usually found amongst Australian Aborigines.[124]

And the missionary did not hesitate to compare other tribes unfavourably with the Ngarrindjeri, when the opportunity presented itself.[125] Indeed Taplin became a veritable surrogate snob on their behalf. The depth of his feeling for the Ngarrindjeri was revealed on the occasion when chronic illness forced him to resign, in May 1872. Less than a month later he wrote:

> Last week I was led to send in to the Committee a request that I might be allowed to withdraw my resignation. We being anxious that the Committee should comply with that request held a special prayer meeting this morning to supplicate that God would incline the hearts of the Committee (if it were the best for us) to grant the request and allow me to remain with the people I love so well. O, Lord, Thou knowest it is in my heart to die and live with them, to spend and be spent for them.[126]

In the event, Taplin's request was granted[127] and he was enabled to battle on for the people he loved for a further seven years.

Taplin's compassion was of a truly Christian nature. On the two or three occasions that he was violently attacked during his twenty year ministry, he forgave his attackers immediately, although he must have still been suffering considerably as he did so.[128] And his sympathy for the older people never faded, despite the fact that very few of them ever truly embraced Christianity. Admittedly, he did not evince much sorrow when old patriots like 'Long Billy' died.[129] These proud conservatives actively fought Christianity, as they quite rightly perceived that the introduction of the new religion was hastening the demise of their own. But normally Taplin felt more sympathy for the old non-Christians than he did for the converts; and this was entirely in keeping with the tenets of his faith. By the early seventies it had become apparent that the old religion had been routed, and Taplin's warmth of feeling toward the old people

became even stronger. A fine example of this growing warmth is given by Taplin's altered relationship with Teenminnie's husband, Pelican. In 1859, when writing of Teenminnie, Taplin said:

> ...she is a kind hearted creature, and if she had a better husband would be better than she is. Old Pelican, her nape, is a thorough savage.[130]

Pelican did not change: he remained a consistent Ngarrindjeri non-Christian to the end of his days — just as Tooreetparne had done. Yet in 1871, as Pelican's life was drawing to a close, the missionary wrote: 'Went and saw Pelican. He is still very ill — dying I think. Poor old man, old friend. Alas, alas!'[131] Such expressions of grief are rare in the Journals, for so powerful and real was Taplin's faith, that when a Christian died, even though the deceased might have been especially dear to him, Taplin rejoiced in the belief that another soul had found eternal happiness in heaven. Such, of course, could not be the case for Pelican, or those like him, who remained loyal to the 'ancient way'.

In many ways, the village at Raukkan was, in itself, a monument to Taplin's kindness and to his sincere love for the people. It will be recalled that those of his assistants with whom Taplin quarreled, were usually the ones who evinced the least gentleness and sensitivity in their relationship with the people. The men who got on best, like Stapely, Howiss, and particularly Ophel, were those who had something of the same compassion and humanity that Taplin exuded himself. Thus, a few months before the missionary died, the Register reporter who visited Raukkan was impressed most of all by the general air of happiness that pervaded the little community. The school reflected the enlightened administration of the whole mis-

sion, and the reporter's description of it shows a marked contrast with the normal joyless authoritarian institutions of the day. He said of the children:

> They are not subjected to drilled taciturnity, nor crushed down to a uniform pattern of behaviour. They laugh, talk, and go in and out during the play hours pretty much as they like, and even during dinner, they look as merry a lot of youngsters as could be found. I could not but admire the commonsense wisdom of this relaxation of discipline with wild children of nature.[132]

One does not have to accept the writer's condescension towards the 'wild children of nature' (a few of whom in any case were European) to accept the accuracy of his observation. In another section of the same article the correspondent stated:

> The inhabitants of the station are there by choice. The natives are encouraged to take up their abode on the reserve, whether in their own wurleys or in civilized cottages. Some of these cottages are the property of the inhabitants and have been built by the blacks. I saw one nearly finished, which is as good a specimen of stonework as could be seen in any similar cottage in Goodwood.[133]

This thriving little township — with its gardens, its stone houses, school and church — constituted a major part of Taplin's contribution to the well being and future prosperity of the Ngarrindjeri people.

The George Taplin who emerges from his own Journals and from other contemporary records, is a man of fascinating complexity, and apparent paradox. His whole life was based upon spiritual faith — it is difficult to conceive of a man more devoted to his God than was Taplin — and yet, on the other hand, we find a man who was much better able to consider things objectively, to take empirical evidence, to dispense with preconceived ideas, than were the great majority of his contemporaries. His medical observations attest to

this, but the most obvious proof that here was a man of intellectual brilliance, was his pioneering anthropological work. While many Australians still thought that Aborigines communicated by a series of grunts, Taplin was painstakingly writing down the cases, declensions and structure of one of their beautiful and intricate languages. While those rough pragmatists who had 'lived amongst the Aborigines all their lives', and who claimed to know all there was to know about them, wallowed on in their conceited, self-deluding ignorance, Taplin was studying the social structure and the culture of the Ngarrindjeri, and admitting that there was much here that was in fact superior. Even by the time of the 1860 enquiry, Taplin's keen and comparatively open mind had taught him more than some of the bigots had learnt in a lifetime.

Another apparent paradox is that Taplin was a man of rigid and uncompromising principle with regard to morals: and yet at the same time he was a genuine humanitarian who could forgive any breach of morals — no matter how outrageous — by others. Taplin was the antithesis of the unbending and unforgiving Puritan. He had the Puritan's belief in personal discipline in his own life, but his religion was based squarely on love and compassion, and on the brotherhood of man. In this he was a true follower of Christ's teaching: he certainly hated sin, but like his master, he loved the sinners.

Looking back from this point of time, it is easy to see where Taplin might have made mistakes. But it would be wrong indeed to sit arrogantly at the academic desk a century later, and basing the judgement largely on the man's own writings, launch out on a

criticism of what he did, and to point out what he should have done. A young man of twenty seven, with very little experience behind him, took on the job of trying to save the souls, minds and bodies of a dispossessed nation. The task was so enormous that he scarcely had time to think; and yet because of his manifold talents, his complete and unfaltering faith, and his devotion to the people he set out to serve, his achievements have also been enormous. I might observe that it is a pity that Taplin did not worry a little less about the souls of the people and a little more about their nation. But then, so might Taplin observe this, if he had been born in the nineteen thirties rather than in the eighteen thirties. In any case he would point out that the nation as a viable entity was, to a large extent, destroyed by the time he reached it.

Taplin saw people as individuals to be loved on earth and saved for heaven — not as members of a nation that needed saving or restoring. It is arguable that had he been more of a Ngarrindjeri nationalist, his achievements, as far as the people were concerned, would have been proportionately greater. But Taplin was true to his faith, and the winning of individual souls was his first priority: the nation also benefited from his work, but more often than not, this benefit was received incidentally. However, had Taplin not been first and foremost a Christian with a desire to proselytize, the A.F.A. would never have employed him; and he would not even have been able to make a start. Considered in this light, it is difficult to see how any one European could have done more for the Ngarrindjeri — past, present and future — than George Taplin actually did. Certainly, no-one ever has.

CHAPTER IV. FOOTNOTES.

[1] Annual Report 1876.

[2] Taplin, George The Narrinyeri pp.149-50.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Minute Book I 5 July 1864.

[5] Journal II p.203 28 July 1864.

[6] Ibid. p.203 1 August 1864.

[7] Minute Book I 1 November 1864.

[8] Ibid. 12 December 1864 and 6 February 1865.

[9] Journal II p.226 18 February 1865.

[10] Ibid. p.226 20 February 1865.

[11] Ibid. p.227 23 and 27 February 1865.

[12] Ibid. p.228 4 March 1865.

[13] Ibid. p.229 10 March 1865.

[14] Ibid. p.230 16 March 1865.

[15] Ibid. p.231 20 March 1865 and p.232 21 and 25 March 1865.

[16] Ibid. p.236 11 April 1865.

[17] Journal III p.313 15 November 1867.

[18] Ibid. p.317 2 January 1868.

[19] Minute Book I 21 January 1868 and 14 April 1868.

[20] Journal III p.323 23 April 1868.

[21] A.F.A. Annual Report 1869.

[22] Journal III p.337 18-20 January 1869.

[23] Ibid. p.338 5 February 1869.

[24] Ibid. p.341 6 April 1869.

[25] Ibid. p.343 10 May 1869.

[26] Ibid. p.345 6 June 1869.

[27] Ibid. p.347 7 August 1869.

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[28]Ibid. p.359 2 December 1869.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Journal IV p.427 6 November 1872.

[31]Journal III p.342 2 May 1869.

[32]Church Book 1 January 1870.

[33]Ibid. 3 May 1871.

[34]Ibid. 31 May 1871.

[35]Journal IV p.430 15 December 1872.

[36]Ibid. p.399 6 August 1871.

[37]Church Book 30 November 1870.

[38]Ibid. 3 April 1872.

[39]Ibid. 1 December 1875.

[40]Ibid. 1 November 1876. (my emphasis)

[41]Ibid. 4 February 1876.

[42]Journal IV p.430 15 December 1872.

[43]Church Book 31 March 1871.

[44]Ibid. 26 April 1872.

[45]Ibid. 28 July 1875.

[46]Ibid. 1 December 1875.

[47]Ibid. 28 February 1878.

[48]Journal III p.307 6 September 1867.

[49]Ibid. p.309 11 November 1867.

[50]Visitors Book I 11 November 1867.

[51]Journal IV p.408 25 December 1871.

[52]Minute Book I 3 April 1871.

[53]Houston Carol <u>A Selected Regional Bibliography of the Aboriginals of South Australia</u>. 1974 S.A. Museum. Adelaide.

[54]Minute Book II 22 March 1875.

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[55]Journal I pp.70-1 23 April 1860.

[56]Taplin, George The Narrinyeri pp.83-4.

[57]Register 31 March 1879.

[58]Journal V p.566 26 May 1879.

[59]Journal IV pp.477-9 21 July 1874 and Taplin, George The Narrinyeri pp.34-6.

[60]Journal III p.268 11 April 1866 and p.273 13 May 1866.

[61]Journal II p.160 19 September 1862 and Journal III p.339 19 February 1869.

[62]Annual Report 1880 p.6.

[63]Taplin, George The Narrinyeri p.51.

[64]Journal IV pp.389-390 25 January 1871 and p.392 31 March 1871. And taped interview with Mr Tom Bonney October 1975.

[65]Journal II p.181 24 July 1863.

[66]Journal III p.304 9 September 1867.

[67]Ibid. p.343 14 May 1869.

[68]Ibid. p.344 29 May 1869.

[69]Journal II p.163 9-10 November 1862.

[70]Journal III p.351 18 September 1869.

[71]Ibid. p.352 21 September 1869.

[72]Ibid. p.352 23 September 1869.

[73]Journal III p.353 30 September 1869.

[74]eg See Journal I p.26 20 October 1859, p.56 22 January 1860, p.77 11 June 1860.

[75]Journal I p.30 7 November 1859.

[76]Ibid. p.31 9 November 1859.

[77]Journal I p.50 4 January 1860.

[78]Ibid. p.84 2 September 1860.

[79]Ibid. p.40 26 November 1859.

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[80]Ibid. p.63 6 March 1860 and p.72 27 April 1860.

[81]Ibid. p.54 13 January 1860.

[82]Ibid. p.54 13 January 1860.

[83]Ibid. p.145 23-24 February 1862.

[84]Taplin, George The Narrinyeri p.137.

[85]Journal II p.214 1 November 1864.

[86]Ibid. p.214 2 November 1864.

[87]Journal I p.46 20 December 1859.

[88]Journal II p.223 31 January 1865.

[89]Ibid. p.235 6 April 1865.

[90]See Introduction.

[91]Journal II p.237 22 April 1865.

[92]Minute Book II 6 March 1872.

[93]Ibid. 8 April 1872.

[94]Ibid. 12 January 1874 and Journal IV p.460 a December 1873.

[95]Journal IV p.507 31 January 1876.

[96]Minute Book II 11 April 1877.

[97]Journal V p.527 2 May 1877.

[98]Ibid. p.530 8 June 1877.

[99]Ibid. p.531 14 June 1877.

[100]Ibid. p.530 13 June 1877 and p.531 16 June 1877.

[101]Ibid. p.531 25 June 1877.

[102]Annual Report 1877.

[103]Journal V p.554 7 October 1878.

[104]Ibid. p.561 2 March 1879.

[105]Journal II p.210 30 September 1864.

[106]Journal III p.278 30 August 1866 and 2 September 1866.

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[107]Journal II p.218 30 December 1864.

[108]Journal III p.247 21 August 1865.

[109]Journal IV p.451 15 July 1873.

[110]Taplin, George The Narrinyeri p.420.

[111]Minute Book II 8 April 1872.

[112]Journal IV p.406 16 November 1871.

[113]Ibid. p.402 5 September 1871.

[114]Ibid. p.464 1 January 1874.

[115]Journal I p.8 28 May 1859.

[116]Journal III p.313 19 November 1867.

[117]Journal IV p.430 17 December 1872.

[118]Register 20 March 1879.

[119]Taplin, George The Narrinyeri p.36.

[120]Journal II p.199 14 June 1864.

[121]Ibid. p.162 29 October 1862.

[122]Journal I p.100 6 May 1861.

[123]Journal IV p.438 7 March 1873.

[124]Taplin, George Folklore p.33.

[125]Ibid. p.104.

[126]Journal IV p.420 24 June 1872.

[127]Minute Book II 24 June 1872.

[128]For example see: Journal IV p.431 26 December 1872 and Journal II p.209 24 September 1864.

[129]Journal III p.371 23 May 1870.

[130]Journal I p.42 8 November 1859.

[131]Journal IV p.400 17 August 1871.

[132]Register 20 March 1879.

[133]Ibid.

CHAPTER V. RAUKKAN UNDER FREDERICK TAPLIN (1879-89).

By 1879, the position of the Ngarrindjeri was complex and confusing; but it was far from hopeless. Down in the wild country of what is known now as Younghusband Peninsula, a few families were still attempting to live more or less as their forebears had lived for thousands of years. Not far from Raukkan some plucky Ngarrindjeri farmers were attempting to do the impossible on their 140 acre farms — and surviving. Here and there were tiny groups of people camped near a town or on a station trying to live partly by hunting and fishing, and partly by gaining whatever employment the Europeans offered. But even for these few people, some of whom might have visited Raukkan only two or three times a year, the fact that Raukkan existed must have been of great reassurance and conducive to peace of mind. In times of hardship or ill-health or persecution, Raukkan was a safe, reliable and friendly place of refuge. When children were ready to be educated, they could be left there to be looked after in the dormitory — fed, clothed, attended to medically — and taught to be literate and numerate as well. Here, also, was the only significant body of Ngarrindjeri people, including most of the remaining old traditional leaders — men like Pullum, the rupulle — who, in their declining years, had built their wurlies at Raukkan in order to be near a regular source of sustenance and help. Paradoxically then, the only place where some surviving aspects of the old culture could operate, was here at a mission built to propagate a different culture. Only here were there sufficient numbers of knowledgeable people to allow such cultural activities to function.

But the most influential sector of the Ngarrindjeri popula-

tion was that portion which lived in the little village of Raukkan itself: people like James Ngunaitponi, John Sumner, William MacHughes, John Laelinyeri, and the migrant, Philip Rigney. These men, their wives, and some of their children, lived in the little one-roomed cottages, which (apart from the first few) had been constructed by their occupants. Conditions must have been cramped for those with several children living at home, although the dormitories for school children and single young men and women relieved some of the pressure on the little homes. In 1879 there were sixteen such cottages,[1] and many more were needed to cater for the families who wished to occupy them, but who were forced to live in wurlies until more houses could be built. The process of Europeanization was, by this time, gathering increasing momentum.

For the Ngarrindjeri everywhere, the prospects looked reasonably hopeful. The younger generation had acquired few of the ancient skills of bushcraft that their fathers had been taught, and even fewer of the cultural accomplishments that were once essential in the training of all youths. Instead, they were fluent speakers and writers of English, they were numerate, and had a more complete training in Christianity, besides having mastery of European skills and trades. There could be no going back for these young people, many of whom were racially just as much European as Ngarrindjeri in any case. The road ahead was clearly directed towards assimilation. Among the Ngarrindjeri youth was a growing disrespect for the culture of their ancestors. By now it had been clearly shown that the earthly sanctions of the old religion were not supported by empirical evidence. Consequently the old laws lost their teeth, and were

disobeyed with impunity and ridiculed by the young, who failed to appreciate their sound practical basis. In actual fact, the new religion would have been hard pressed to find empirical support too, but it didn't stick its neck out to the extent of threatening boys that they would automatically turn grey if they ate wallaby etc. There was no way in which the new religion could actually be 'disproved', while there were many ways of showing, once the scepticism had taken root, that the punitive clauses in the old dogma were simply not operative.

There is no way of ascertaining this, but the number of young men being made narumbe at this stage must have been declining rapidly. Certainly the sons of the new leaders of the people — the middle-aged Christians who lived in the village — were not being made narumbe, and this meant that very little of the ancient culture and religion could properly be passed on to the group of young people, like David Ngunaitponi, Mark Wilson and Matthew Kropinyeri, who were to become the most dynamic and influentital Ngarrindjeri leaders and spokesmen by the turn of the century. In later years these scholarly men, in turning back to record some of their cultural heritage, were to regret that so much had been lost or wilfully destroyed, and that they had, to a certain extent, turned their backs on their most valuable possession.

The immediate problem facing the Ngarrindjeri leaders after the death of George Taplin, was to convince the A.F.A. Committee that it should not employ his son, Frederick, as the new superintendent. However, provided the leaders were wrong in their accusations, Frederick did appear to be the ideal man for the job: he was an ef-

ficient and practical farmer, and (since the death of his father) the man who probably knew more about the Ngarrindjeri than any other European alive. He seemed to be just the man to get Raukkan functioning efficiently, and by establishing it on a sound economic basis, to relieve the Committee of their perennial financial problems. The easiest conclusion to reach regarding the complaint of the leaders was therefore, that they were wrong. George Taplin prior to his death had emphatically denied that there was any ground whatever for an accusation of immoral conduct to be levelled against his son,[2] and this somewhat unobjective opinion was taken as being a sufficient reason for the Committee to drop the matter altogether, and furthermore, to demand a retraction from the leaders at Raukkan.[3] There is no record of such a retraction ever having been received, and it is highly improbable that the men of high principle who lodged the original complaint would ever have stooped to write it. But Frederick Taplin was duly appointed permanently to the position of superintendent on 19 October 1879, after serving a three months trial period.[4] Other applications were not called for.

The appointment of Frederick Taplin to this most influential position heralded a new era in so many ways for the Ngarrindjeri. Firstly, it was a sharp slap in the face for the Ngarrindjeri, that the firmly stated opinion of the leaders of the people and the deacons of the Church should be accounted to be of no significance whatever; and that these people should be ordered to apologise for having such an opinion. Clearly the A.F.A. Committee had no intention of treating the Ngarrindjeri with any kind of respect, or of recognising them as equal human beings. The growing white racism

pervaded all sectors of society.

Frederick Taplin typified the new type of people with whom, from now on, the Ngarrindjeri would have to cope. He was a man of the new native-born breed — tall, strong, independent and resourceful: he was entirely at home in the saddle and in the bush where he had been born and raised: he had the keen mind of the nineteenth century bushman, and he was proud of the fact that he was native born. This new breed, personified by Frederick, was so impressive that many overseas visitors were convinced that a new master race had emerged in Australia — a race that would be the foundation of the ultimate world society. Indeed, they were a remarkable race, these Australian bushmen, as the world was to discover in the years 1915-19; but they were not without fault, and their most serious fault was that they too had no doubt about their racial superiority.

Such a growth of racist opinion could only be disastrous from a Ngarrindjeri point of view. The original English settlers were convinced of the superiority of their own civilization, and wished to spread it far and wide: they also declared war on the Aborigines and perpetrated violence against them: but they had respected them as people. And really, the whole assimilationist approach which they held from the beginning, despite its impracticability, was nevertheless founded on the principle of racial equality: it was the European civilization that was supposed to have been superior, not the European race. Thus, in the early days, the opinion was held that as soon as the Aborigines adopted Western civilization, they would become a fully integrated part of society, and men were even encouraged (by offers of land as a reward) to marry Aboriginal

women.[5] By the turn of the century, and even well into the twentieth century, there were few left who considered that Aborigines should be treated as equals, and many grinkaris thought that they were not even homo sapiens. For such people, Europeans who cohabited with Aborigines were not committing a sin because of the resultant misery, degradation and racial dilution caused to the Aborigines; but because their actions were tantamount to buggery. Frederick Taplin proved fairly conclusively from time to time that he did not concur with this contention, and in a racist society, it must be conceded that Frederick was much less prejudiced than most of his fellows. But it is in comparison with his father that we see how much Frederick was a man of his times. He has none of the scholarly and respectful approach to language and culture which was one of George Taplin's outstanding features. He has little or no missionary ardour. He lacks the altruism, the breadth of vision, the spiritual dedication, and the depth of human compassion that his father had. Instead we find an efficient, practical farmer, willing and anxious to get Raukkan onto a sound financial footing. The decade of Frederick Taplin's superintendency was predictably one of considerable unrest at Raukkan, of religious marking time; and of appreciable industrial growth.

The incident which hastened George Taplin's death and which brought his oldest son to power at Raukkan, was not to remain a solitary one: possibly the Ngarrindjeri might have been able to forget it had it remained so. Seven days after the confirmation of Frederick Taplin's permanent appointment to the position of superintendent, a complaint about his misconduct was tabled at a meeting of

the Committee. This time the complaint came from his neighbour, Richman, and some other grinkaris in the district.[6] No action was taken. The following year a Ngarrindjeri girl called Esther Butler stated that she had had sexual intercourse with the superintendent.[7] This time, a deputation consisting of the Revs. Cox and Fletcher was sent to investigate, but they found that the charge was not proved.[8] The Committee found it necessary to reaffirm its confidence in Frederick Taplin at the Annual General Meeting of that year (1880), although doubtless at least some of the members must have been thinking that the Ngarrindjeri leaders had been right to object to the appointment in the first place.

Frederick Taplin was still experiencing the same problems seven years later. On 8 June 1887 a special meeting of the Committee was convened to hear a charge brought by the Destitute Board against the A.F.A.'s mission superintendent.[9] The Destitute Board alleged that Frederick Taplin was the father of a child born in April of that year to Susan Broad, a Ngarrindjeri girl who was currently in their care. As with all such cases, it was practically impossible to adduce conclusive proof, and the Board eventually decided not to press its charges. However, the Destitute Board and its executive officer must have been convinced of the veracity of the accusations before lodging such a serious complaint with the A.F.A.. Once again the Committee reaffirmed its confidence in their agent.

Eventually the situation reached a head on 19 March 1889, when a special meeting of the Committee was convened to receive a deputation from Raukkan which had come to Adelaide to again request

the removal of Frederick Taplin from his post. This deputation consisted of most of the leading Ngarrindjeri churchmen, namely: William MacHughes, John Sumner, Matthew Kropinyeri, John Wilson, Bertie Tripp, Albert Karloan and I. Lambert. They presented a petition and spoke to the Committee in front of Frederick Taplin, who had been brought to Adelaide to hear the case against him.[10] After the superintendent had replied to the accusations of the deputation, the meeting was adjourned until the next day, when further discussion took place.

Exactly what happened during the course of this enquiry will probably never be known, for although minutes were taken, they were not entered in the minute book of the Association, and were almost certainly destoryed shortly after having been taken, for Federick Taplin was killed in a fire on the following night — the night of 21-22 March 1889. Frederick Taplin's alleged immorality was responsible for his father's death, and ironically, it was also to prove the cause of his own.

The nature of Frederick Taplin's death is shrouded in mystery, just as certain aspects of his life had been. After the meeting of the 19-20 March, he was free to return to Raukkan the following day, but according to the Register, he overslept, and missed the Milang train.[11] Thus, he stayed another night in Adelaide at his usual lodgings when in town — the Hindley Street Coffee Palace. It was on this following night that the Coffee Palace mysteriously caught fire and Frederick Taplin was killed. Amongst other peculiarities of the case was the fact that Taplin's was the only death in the blaze — despite the fact that he knew the place intimately

whereas many other lodgers didn't: his bed and other articles in his room were untouched by smoke or flame: and in any case there was a flat roof just outside his window, onto which he could easily have stepped and been quite safe.[12] Friends of the dead man hastened to put forward the theory that he had died trying to save others, and although none of the other lodgers reported having been 'saved' by Taplin, this became the accepted story, so that three years later, an article in the Christian Colonist could proudly state that he had gone up to Heaven ' in a chariot of fire'![13]

Even the real reason for Frederick Taplin's being in Adelaide was hidden from the public, and the Register reported that:

> Mr Taplin left the station last Friday upon a visit to Adelaide with the special objects of discussing with his committee the business concerns of the station, and of giving a lecture before the Australian Natives' Association upon "Our Aboriginals — their Manners and Customs; or A Native Fifty Years Ago."[14]

It is true that on the Monday preceding the enquiry, Frederick Taplin had given a lecture to the A.N.A., of which he was a member (there is a report of it in the Register of 19 March 1889), but to say that he was in Adelaide to discuss 'with his committee the business concerns of the station' is rather distorting the facts of the matter. There are many constructions that can be placed on the manner and time of Frederick's death — including that it was all just as people preferred to believe it to be — a series of unfortunate coincidences. But for the Ngarrindjeri it must have seemed very much like poetic justice.

Frederick Taplin was not a religious man as his father had been, and for this reason alone, his appointment as 'missionary' to

a highly religious people appears to have been unwise. Meetings of the Church Council (ie, the deacons) were supposed to be held monthly, but it was not until 23 March 1882 that Frederick Taplin convened the first official Church Meeting since the death of his father: thus there was a period of just over two and a half years during which there were no Church Meetings.[15] One reason for the failure to call a meeting could have been Frederick Taplin's lack of interest. But a stronger motivation lay in the fact that a properly conducted Church Meeting would have provided an ideal opportunity for the deacons to officially arraign the pastor, and for them to pass a judgement on him. Meetings were undoubtedly held for this very purpose, but without the official sanction of the pastor they could not apparently be recognised as Church Meetings, and minutes of them do not appear in the Church Book, which, in any case would have been in Taplin's hands.

When a Church meeting was finally held — possibly at the insistence of the members of the Committee — Frederick Taplin did away with any semblance of democratic congregational government which might have remained. After waiting for thirty three months he brought in a new system which effectively placed all authority in the hands of the European officials. A committee of five was instituted comprising the pastor, the teacher and the farm overseer, plus John Sumner and John Laelinyeri. There was no election, and the two appointed Ngarrindjeri members were able to be outvoted on any issue. The Church, as a religious body, was not likely to make any advances under these conditions. From March 1884 to October 1886 there is a further gap in the Church Book, indicating another two and a half year

period when church business came to a halt.

As could have been expected, the Ngarrindjeri religious fervour was not suppressed by the poor leadership of the pastor, even though it may have been a little dampened. They had their own preachers and church leaders who conducted services both at Raukkan and in the shearing camps, when the Ngarrindjeri shearers went out to the sheds in spring. On the stations, the Ngarrindjeri services were attended also by some of the grinkari station folk and shearers, who no doubt appreciated having Christianity brought to them by such sincere and able orators as Joseph Koolmateri and William MacHughes.[16]

Clearly, it was the Ngarrindjeri themselves who were keeping the Christian religion alive in the district during these years. The man whose principal duty and role was to act as spiritual leader and teacher seems to have had little interest in the matter. On one occasion, the Committee felt obliged to point out that he had completely omitted any reference at all to the spiritual work at Raukkan in his annual report to them.[17] Even if Frederick Taplin had been religiously concerned, it is difficult to imagine the Ngarrindjeri taking much notice of him, for whether any of the various accusations of sexual immorality made against him were true or not, the fact is that the people believed them to be true, and accordingly, Taplin must have appeared as a liar and a rank hypocrite in their eyes. Nevertheless, Taplin was concerned enough about religion to bother to attack the Salvation Army, whose officers, he claimed, were proselytising in the camps.[18] Since this was what he was being paid to do, the attack sounded somewhat hollow.

RAUKKAN UNDER FREDERICK TAPLIN(1879-89).

One contribution Frederick Taplin did make to religious life at Raukkan was to support the proposal to enlarge the chapel. It is difficult to tell whether or not the plan to enlarge the chapel,by adding a transept, was a Ngarrindjeri initiative with which Taplin concurred, or vice versa. The people certainly gave the scheme their full support and ended up carrying out the enlargement more or less by themselves after Taplin's death, and it seems most likely that the idea was theirs. The motivation was not entirely spiritual, for the planned additions included a room to be used as a dispensary and another to be used as a reading room. Taplin had inherited the role of district doctor from his father, and the dispensary was dear to his heart: thus the project to enlarge the chapel was an area in which the superintendent and the people found a common cause. Taplin had also been advocating for some years that a reading room should be built. As early as 1881, he had pointed out to the Committee that a small library would be of great benefit at Raukkan, for there was little for the people to do at night.[19] Finally, in 1885,his persistence was rewarded,and in the 1886 Annual Report Taplin was able to observe that the new reading room was of real benefit. However, the people lost their newly-won library the following year (1887) when it had to serve as a room for the new matron. Hence the plan was formulated to incorporate a reading room in the proposed enlargements to the Church.

In their special report on affairs at Raukkan, dated 17 August 1888, Messrs Madge and Pengelly told the A.F.A.:

> A very pleasing feature of this enterprise is the great interest taken therein by the natives themselves, and the generous help they are giving. Some of the men are working

> hard, raising limestone in their spare time (free), and others are paying to have stone raised, as they have not time to do the work themselves. The native women are showing their interest therein by making baskets and mats, and are also busy at other work, such as needle-work, making pillows, &c. ...[which] it is their intention to sell at a bazaar shortly to be held in Adelaide.[20]

Frederick Taplin was destined never to see the transept added to the Church, but there were some other developments which did occur during his superintendency, and which deserve to be mentioned here. Perhaps the most important of these was the establishment of the woolwashing industry.

In April 1881, Frederick Taplin suggested to the A.F.A. that the entire clip of Raukkan's wool could well be washed on the station.[21] The two prime requisites were there in abundance: a good water supply (the lake) and ample labour. At its May meeting the Committee decided to implement the scheme, with an eye to catering for neighbouring wool producers in the future, and accordingly the woolshed at Raukkan was enlarged to enable the work to be carried out.[22] The neighbouring squatters did not avail themselves of the facilities offered that year, but in the following year (1882) thirteen bales were washed for T.R. Bowman of Campbell House Station at a penny per pound. This was a pilot scheme conducted in conjunction with Taylor Bros. of Hindmarsh, and apparently it operated to the satisfaction of all concerned.[23]

From this point of time, the woolwashing industry went from strength to strength. Special woolwashing equipment was installed, and an ingenious conveyor belt system was constructed to facilitate unloading the greasy wool from the steamers and reloading it after it had been washed.[24] It should be mentioned at this point that

herein lay Raukkan's third major attribute as far as a woolwashing centre was concerned: it was connected to a large number of sheep stations by the most economical of all transport systems — the river steamers. In fact, it was because of the substantial reduction in weight (and consequent reduction in transport costs) that wool-washing in those days was normally carried out as near as possible to the shearing sheds.

By 1884, it had become clear to the A.F.A. that the wool-washing plan had been an excellent one, for already the industry was providing a partial solution to Raukkan's two major problems: unemployment and lack of finance. During the summer of 1883-84, wool was washed at Raukkan at a cost to the squatters of 1½ pence per pound, and after paying out £82 in wages, the A.F.A. still managed to make £53-1-10½ profit.[25] The figures for both wages and profits were to increase steadily throughout the next decade.

In 1884, the large-scale planting of forest trees commenced. George Taplin had experimented with 'Tasmanian gums' (probably Eucalyptus globulus) and some South Australian gums (probably Eucalyptus cladocalyx) about a decade earlier,[26] when he also tried growing olives and other fruit trees. But this planting consisted of only about twenty five seedlings of each variety. Owing to the recent construction of a storage tank and windmill at Raukkan, it was now possible to proceed with a more ambitious scheme, and accordingly three hundred 'young gums' (probably Eucalyptus cladocalyx again) were planted in 1884.[27] Hundreds more were to be planted during the ensuing years. The installation of the windmill (or 'air motor' as the Committee called it) also enabled vegetable growing to be com-

menced,[28] and this must have been of considerable benefit in the promotion of good health on the station.

The success of the domestic irrigation scheme led the Committee to believe that irrigation as an industry, on a similar scale to the highly successful woolwashing business, might be established at Raukkan. Some other source of income and employment became an urgent need in 1887 when, due to a very poor season, all cultivation had to be abandoned except for fifteen acres.[29] In June 1866, a special meeting of the Committee was held to consider the proposal; and a deputation was arranged to wait on the Commissioner of Crown Lands (the minister in charge of Aboriginal affairs) to seek government assistance in implementing an irrigation scheme.[30] The deputation was successful, for £350 was subsequently placed on the estimates and passed by the Parliament for this purpose.[31] By December 1888, a steam engine and pump, capable of delivering 10,000 gallons per hour at forty feet, had been installed, and one and a half acres of maize had already been planted.[32] David Blackwell, the farm overseer, was sent to Victoria to study the irrigation schemes recently inaugurated in that colony, and his report to the Committee in February 1889 recommended growing pigs, lucerne, mangoes, rape, sorghum, chicory, muscat raisins, oranges and other fruit trees.[33] At this stage, the A.F.A. intended setting aside individual blocks for Ngarrindjeri farmers (at no charge except for water), and the future prospects of Raukkan, as an irrigation settlement, looked bright indeed. But before Blackwell had a chance to implement his ideas (and in doing so to discover that there are other requisites in farming besides water), Frederick Taplin had died, and he himself had been

made superintendent.

One of the ills which blighted farming operations at Raukkan during Frederick Taplin's decade was the rabbit plague sweeping across Australia. At the time, the A.F.A. simply did not have the finance to be able to take the appropriate protective action of erecting vermin proof fences around its properties. The Needles became so chronically infested, that in 1884 T.R. Bowman, a neighbouring squatter (and supporter of the A.F.A.), offered to sublease the property from the Association for seven years, in order to eradicate the pests.[34] Initially, the Committee was not keen to do this, as such action would have been prejudicial to their constant efforts to obtain more land from the Government. Eventually, however, they were forced to accept the fact that there was really no other course open to them, as The Needles country was being devastated by the rabbits, and it would soon have been rendered useless. The Commissioner of Crown Lands agreed to the sub-letting of The Needles in March 1886, and it was accordingly leased to T.R. Bowman of Campbell House Station.[35]

But the Ngarrindjeri men were quick to respond to any opportunity for employment, and took to rabbiting as an alternative source of income. The 1886 Annual Report states that rabbiting had brought prosperity to the Ngarrindjeri, but prosperity is a relative term, and in any case, by 1888 the unemployment situation was as critical as ever:[36] even a rabbit plague could not keep fifty or sixty men employed in the district. The ancient craft of mat and basket making received a new impetus as a market was found for these articles, and some of the older men and women turned to this occupation

in their ceaseless efforts to make enough money to provide for themselves and their families. Yet,as far as employment is concerned, the decade 1879-89 was one of progress, and when Frederick Taplin died,the prospects looked quite good, with woolwashing burgeoning, and the nascent irrigation scheme showing promise of providing another profitable and labour-intensive industry.

Financially, the A.F.A. held their own during the eighties. It will be recalled that in 1876, the Government doubled the annual grant to the A.F.A. from £500 to £1,000. This, it maintained throughout the decade (in fact until 1915), while the Smith of Dunesk grant of £100 per year also provided an income which could be relied upon. With the added source of income from the woolwashing, the Committee had reason to be satisfied with the financial situation by 1890. The population (their major area of expenditure) was increasing during the decade, but not dramatically. According to the Annual Reports, it rose from 128 in 1879-80 to 136 in 1889-90, although there were years in between in which higher numbers were recorded.[37] It was not until the following decade that these figures began to rise rapidly, and to stretch the financial resources beyond their limits.

Frederick Taplin pointed out in his last report to the A.F.A. that Victoria spent an average of £21 per head annually on Aborigines, while South Australia only managed 17/- per head per year.[38] Owing to the fact that there were hundreds of Aborigines in the north of South Australia (which then included the Northern Territory) who were still living undisturbed tribal lives and not needing or receiving a penny from the Government, this comparison is not en-

tirely valid. If, however, the figure of about 250 Ngarrindjeri on and around Raukkan is taken as a fair average for any year in this period (as is indicated by the statistics in the Annual Reports), then the average sum spent on the Ngarrindjeri by the Government, still only amounted to £4 per person annually. This was a tiny amount, but if, as was the case at Poonindie and Point Pearce, a reasonable amount of land had been made available to the Ngarrindjeri, then they would have needed no Government financial assistance at all.

The rations supplied by the Government for distribution to the Ngarrindjeri on Raukkan and in the surrounding district, were minimal. In Frederick Taplin's time the weekly ration for one adult consisted of:

7 pounds of flour
14 ounces of sugar
3 ounces of tea
½ stick of tobacco
½ pound of soap
and sometimes a little rice or sago.[39]

In pre-invasion times, the old and sick people could have expected to be given a wide variety of the choicest and easiest to obtain meats, birds, fish, vegetables and fruit. But on the diet meted out by the Government, the elderly did well to survive at all. The children eating in the school dining room had a more appetising and nourishing fare than that supplied to the old folk,[40] but even they did not enjoy the luxury of milk at this stage.[41]

One of the most interesting acquisitions made during Frederick Taplin's superintendency was the big cutter which the A.F.A. purchased in 1886. She was made necessary by the opening of the

Adelaide to Melbourne railway[42] and the consequent abandonment of the old route which went from Adelaide to Milang by coach from Milang to Meningie (via Point McLeay) by steamer, and from Meningie to Melbourne by coach. With the steamers no longer calling on a frequent and regular basis, it was necessary for the mission to have a vessel of its own capable of transporting sizeable cargoes across the Lake. The big cutter was built especially for the A.F.A. at Goolwa, at a cost of £116.[43] Most appropriately she was called the Teenminnie, and like her namesake, she served the people of Raukkan well. She was an excellent 'workhorse', and the Ngarrindjeri also loved to race her in the various regattas held on the lakes in those days. Nevertheless, Frederick Taplin was not satisfied, since she relied solely on sail power, and in adverse conditions she could take up to twelve hours to cross the lake. He had been asking for a steam launch for six years or more, but although the Committee were sympathetic to this request, their finances did not allow them to purchase one.[44]

During the decade there were two head teachers — J.A. Ophel and Walter Hutley. Ophel continued in the position which he had held (with one break) since 1867, but his remaining years under the superintendency of his old friend's son, were not particularly happy ones. Amongst other things, he suffered severe ill-health,[45] his house was burnt down (in 1882),[46] and he quarrelled with Frederick Taplin. Finally he and his daughter (who was his assistant) resigned, along with Frederick Taplin, in May 1885.[47] Taplin was permitted to withdraw his resignation, but the Committee accepted Ophel's, and although he later applied to take the position again

after Frederick Taplin's death, he was never reappointed.

Walter Hutley, who had been the teacher at Wandearah, replaced Ophel,[48] and he also did not completely agree with Frederick Taplin's policies. The two clashed, for instance, over whether young working men should be allowed to live in the dormitories with the schoolboys: Hutley was opposed to this, but the Committee supported their superintendent's contention that it was the best arrangement.[49] Hutley wanted the school inspected by the Education Department and could see no reason why the school should not be run along the same lines, and teach the same syllabuses as ordinary Government schools.[50] The Committee supported him in this, and accordingly they renewed their request to the Education Department to send an inspector, while in the meantime Hutley went ahead and introduced public school courses with very slight modifications. Under the circumstances it was probably the best policy to adopt. In July 1887, the school was inspected officially for the first time,[51] and Mr Inspector Stanton was very pleased with what he saw.[52]

Hutley somehow became involved (apparently quite innocently) in the events which led to Frederick Taplin's death. He was receiving anonymous letters, probably containing accusations against the superintendent, and considering the whole situation to be an unhealthy one, he resigned a month before Taplin was killed.[53] Because of this event, he was persuaded by the Committee to stay on until April, when his replacement arrived.[54] Walter Hutley retained his interest in Raukkan and the A.F.A. for many years, and served on the Committee when he came to live in Adelaide.

Reports on the school during the eighties are usually full

of promise, and tend to show (though somewhat patronizingly) that the scholarship of the children compared quite favourably with that of other predominantly European schools in country districts. The impression is also conveyed that the teachers (particularly Ophel) ran the school with rather more kindness and child-centredness than was usual during those years. A good description of school life and achievement appears in H. Hammond's report to the Committee, after his inspection of the Mission in September 1882. After the predictable observation that the children compared favourably with white children in town schools, Hammond went on:

> I cannot help expressing my surprise and gratification at the intelligence and earnestness, and the amount of close application evidenced by these children in the answers they made, and the work which I saw them do. Two of the school hymns were very well done, all the children doing their best. I spoke briefly to them, and felt that I had never had more rapt attention from any juvenile audience in all my life.... The girls are all neatly dressed in blue frocks down to the ankles, with large white pinafores tied around the waist; their jet black hair nicely parted and tied with a piece of ribbon. The boys wear white moleskin trousers and neat white jumpers.[55]

These splendid school uniforms (which must have entailed a considerable amount of work in keeping them spotless) were actually manufactured at Raukkan by older girls working under the supervision of the matron.[56]

The role of matron had traditionally been filled by the head teacher's wife or daughter, but when Mrs Hutley resigned from this position in 1887 (most probably because of the strained personal relationships at Raukkan at that time) the position was filled by Miss Adeline Hunter, who was to remain faithfully at her job for over a decade, despite being chronically overworked and underpaid (she be-

gan at £25 per year).[57] It was because of this development that the newly established reading room had to be taken over to provide a room for the matron: which in turn led to the urgent need for a transept to be added to the church.

During the decade there were several general movements discernible among the people. As was to be expected, the old conservatives decreased considerably in number, the most notable death being that of Pullum, who, it transpired, had been destined to be the last rupulle of the Karatindjeri and last president of the Grand Tendi. He had held his position since long before George Taplin arrived at Raukkan in 1858, and when he died in 1888, he was well over eighty years of age. In 1885, Messrs Madge and McEwin, in reporting to the A.F.A. on affairs at Raukkan, said of Pullum: '...though not a professing Christian [he] has a respect for religion, and is an upright and honest man.'[58] And on his death, Frederick Taplin wrote:

> Pullum's kindly disposition and courteous manner early won the regard of my late father at the commencement of his labors, and his patronage of the school in sending his children for instruction, and personal attendance at the mission services, largely influenced the people to regard the missionary as their benefactor and friend.[59]

To many of the Ngarrindjeri, the passing of the rupulle must have seemed a symbolic cutting of the ties with the past. The noble and kindly old leader was a representative of another way of life, another world, almost another people; and with his death, so much of the ancient way was buried forever.

The generation which followed Pullum and which comprised the young men upon whom George Taplin had founded the church at Raukkan was also getting on in years. Some, such as Wullume Nambalare, who

died in 1880, and Pullum's nephew, George Koolmateri, who died in 1886, had predeceased the venerable rupulle. Others, like William MacHughes and John Laelinyeri, had left Raukkan to live by farming or some related occupation. There was probably both push and pull motivation behind this move, for although certain of the Ngarrindjeri had been attracted, since the earliest days of colonization, to the idea of farming, it is obvious that many of the sincere Christian leaders — the old deacons of the church — also found much that was objectionable at Raukkan under Frederick Taplin, and wished to leave for this reason.

In 1888, those who wished to take up farming were given some encouragement by the passing of the Crown Lands Act (No 444). This Act contained a further erosion of the minimal Aboriginal land 'rights', in that Section 126 allowed land dedicated for Aborigines (except the reserves at Poonindie, Point McLeay and Point Pearce) to be resumed and surveyed into twenty acre 'homestead blocks' for general leasing. However, while taking away with one hand, the Act did allow for giving with the other. Section 6 (c) stated that the Governor may:

> Demise to any Aboriginal native, or the descendant of any Aboriginal native, any Crown Lands, not exceeding one hundred and sixty acres in area, for any term of years upon such terms and conditions as he shall think fit.[60]

Bearing in mind the fact that almost every piece of legislation passed concerning Aborigines until the 1960's, was principally designed to take something away from them — their land, their children, their freedom — it should come as no surprise to learn that what was given under Section 6, was not commensurate with what was

taken away under Section 126. In fact, by August 1914, the total unimproved value of Aboriginal lands resumed by the Government was £73,433[61] — an enormous sum seen in the light of the needs of Aborigines at the time. Very little of the land resumed under Section 126 was in Ngarrindjeri country, and similarly, very little land was to be made available to would-be Ngarrindjeri farmers under Section 6 (c). Nevertheless, the latter section did sanction the granting of small blocks of land to Aborigines, and was an encouragement to Ngarrindjeri men who were keen to leave Raukkan and take up farming, to attempt to do so — particularly in the succeeding period.

The departure of such men was a real loss to the people as a whole, but they were caught in a position where there was no really acceptable option open to them: whichever choice they made, it could not be a good one. By leaving Raukkan, William MacHughes was depriving the Ngarrindjeri of one of their most outstanding leaders, but if he had stayed, he would have lived on in an environment that was becoming increasingly stifling for him, and in which opportunities to demonstrate intitiative and to exercise leadership were limited. As the decades passed, this dilemma was to confront many of the most talented Ngarrindjeri people, and as the outside world became more ignorant, prejudiced and hostile with respect to Aborigines, the problem has, if anything, become more difficult to solve. Some of the more strong-willed and self-determining spirits, such as Sewsty (John) Wilson and John Wilkin, did not have to make a decision: they clashed with Frederick Taplin early in his term of office, and were consequently expelled from the station with their wives and children.[62]

RAUKKAN UNDER FREDERICK TAPLIN (1879-89).

Some men, however, were finding suitable opportunities under the A.F.A. administration: at least for the time being. Joseph Koolmateri, an outstanding preacher of the day, was employed as an evangelist and teacher by the Committee, at nine shillings per week, from June 1886.[63] He was stationed on the eastern side of Lake Alexandrina, and besides his pastoral and proselytising activities among the camps, he was expected to fish and hunt to keep himself in food. The Committee reported that they were well satisfied with Joseph Koolmateri's work in 1887, and decided to continue his services for an indefinite period.[64]

At about the same time, Mark Wilson was showing the early promise that later led him to become one of the leading spokesmen for South Australian Aborigines. Although only sixteen years of age, he was appointed assistant teacher at Raukkan in 1886.[65] Described by the A.F.A. as a 'three quarter black', Mark Wilson also received nine shillings per week remuneration.

Another young man, Matthew Kropinyeri (the son of William Kropinyeri and Jean Parry), was appointed a teacher in the following year. Matthew Kropinyeri was also destined to become one of the most outstanding Ngarrindjeri men of modern times. In 1887, when he was appointed (again at nine shillings per week), he was only about twenty one years of age, yet he was sent over to the Coorong on his own, to conduct religious services among the people camped there, and to establish a school for their children.[66] His three months trial period proved to be highly successful, and the A.F.A. decided to continue to employ him in this capacity.[67]

It would appear that the employment of Joseph Koolmateri and

RAUKKAN UNDER FREDERICK TAPLIN (1879-89).

Matthew Kropinyeri ceased in 1888 or shortly afterwards, for no further mention is made of their work in any A.F.A. document after that time. It is probable that they became involved in the protest movement at Raukkan, and were summarily dropped from the payroll, but there is no evidence to show exactly how or when their services were dispensed with. The last reports of their work were favourable. Mark Wilson's period as assistant teacher probably ended in December 1886, as Frederick Taplin was threatening that this would happen in November of that year:[68] Mark Wilson was an outspoken young man. Thus, this promising attempt to exploit and foster Ngarrindjeri leadership potential was allowed to lapse — almost certainly because the men concerned really were leaders, and as such constituted a threat to the Europeans' authority. All three were to leave Raukkan shortly afterwards — and leave it a poorer place for being without them.

The man who had been the most eminent of the Ngarrindjeri during George Taplin's superintendency, inexplicably faded from documentary prominence after his old friend's death. One of the major problems facing the student of Aboriginal history is that he is faced with the formidable task of discovering the truth from documents that have been written almost entirely by grinkaris; which in many cases means that they were written from a viewpoint opposed to that of the Aborigines concerned. Thus, when I say that James Ngunaitponi faded from documentary prominence, the statement does not mean that at Raukkan during the years 1879-89 James Ngunaitponi was not still the most influential figure in the people's eyes. It could well have been that he was the leader in the movement to have

RAUKKAN UNDER FREDERICK TAPLIN (1879-89).

Frederick Taplin removed from office, and that he remained as the real spiritual leader of the Ngarrindjeri — the convener of meetings and the philosopher to whom people looked for guidance in those troubled times. Regrettably we will never know.

In 1885, James's and Nymbulda's oldest daughter, Jemima, who had recently married Mark Polteena, died of consumption. She was fifteen years of age. Naturally her parents were grief-stricken, and the event could well have helped to undermine James's own health, for in 1887, Canon Andrews reported:

> James Unaipon ... still continues consistent in his [Christian] life, though obliged, through infirmity, to relinquish his work of native teacher.[69]

In that year (1887) one of the oldest and most loyal of the European friends of the Ngarrindjeri also visited Raukkan. This was C.B. Young who had been the first secretary of the A.F.A. in 1857, and who had never ceased to give the Association and the people his wholehearted support throughout the intervening thirty years. Reporting on his visit, Young wrote:

> I brought away with me ... a living proof of the excellent training of the children. I only wish the majority of white boys were as bright, intelligent, well-instructed and well-mannered, as the little fellow I am now taking charge of. He is the son of our old friend, James Unaipon.[70]

Clearly, David Ngunaitponi, then aged fifteen, evinced the same qualities as a lad that were later to make him famous as an adult. This is, to my knowledge, the earliest recorded description of the man destined to be widely acclaimed as a genius, a man of manifold talents, and a man who was to become Australia's best-known Aborigine. C.B. Young had taken Wullume Nambalare away as a servant boy some twenty two years previously,[71] and according to George Taplin

the experience had been disastrous for the boy's character.[72] But this was not to be the case with David Ngunaitponi, for in later years he was to look back on the time he stayed at the Young homestead near Kanmantoo as a most significant period in his personal development. No doubt he made full use of Young's collection of books, as he was an avid reader; and it would appear that the cultured accent, which became one of his most distinguishing idiosyncrasies, was acquired while he was attached to the Young household. The little stone hut, at the back of the homestead, which served as his quarters is still standing in 1975.

David Ngunaitponi was to return to Raukkan from time to time throughout his long life, but it is indicative of the trend which was beginning to manifest itself during these years, that the more talented people were leaving the Mission to develop their talents in the wider world, despite the hostility of the European milieu.

While the young, gifted products of Raukkan's school were beginning to look beyond the confines of the Mission, there was a corresponding movement towards Raukkan on the part of the people who had hitherto tried to retain the independence of their old way of life. As the squatters and farmers wiped out more of the old habitat, and the animal, bird and fish life which it had supported, these traditionalists found their situation to be increasingly untenable. During the nineties and the early years of the twentieth century, the movement towards Raukkan as the final refuge became quite marked, but in Frederick Taplin's time the trend was already clearly discernible.[73]

When George Taplin died in 1879, there were sixteen little

cottages at Raukkan, and there was an urgent need for more. The Ngarrindjeri, as observed, were loath to invest money to build more cottages, since they had no tenure whatever, and in fact could be thrown out and right off the reserve at the whim of a grinkari official. However, they mostly preferred to live in cottages, and were prepared to build them themselves, provided that they did not have to find the £16 needed to buy the materials for roofing, windows etc. The A.F.A. accordingly tried to persuade private persons and religious or charitable groups (such as Sunday Schools) to provide the finance required. Yet, despite their efforts, there were still only eighteen cottages in 1887[74] (two having been built in eight years) and twenty two in 1889,[75] making a total of six additional cottages built during the decade. This could scarcely be considered to be satisfactory progress in home-building.

The life-style of the inhabitants of the cottages seems not to have been greatly different from the life-style of thousands of other rural Australians during that period. Even the cottages themselves were not dissimilar to countless others, the remains of which today dot the countryside, and some of which are still occupied by such people as boundary riders. In their 1885 report to the A.F.A., Madge and McEwin stated:

> The station buildings generally presented a neat and clean appearance. The interiors of the native cottages were on the whole creditable, some of them being models of neatness, and not wanting in some of the conveniences of civilized life. There is a sewing machine in nearly every cottage, and as a rule, the native women make most of the clothing worn by their families.[76]

Two years later C.B. Young visited most of the cottages to talk with their occupants, and he reported that they: '...all appeared happy

and comfortable.'[77] There was obvious harmony between the villagers, and amongst other manifestations of this, was their enthusiasm for writing letters to each other when circumstances took some of them away from Raukkan for any period of time.[78]

For those who were not ambitious or particularly talented, or who did not resent the paternalism inherent in the mission system, life at Raukkan must have been happy enough. Surrounded by friends and relatives, living within their own ancient borders, and with a definite feeling of security, the life must have had much that would satisfy ordinary human desires. Wages on the station were low: they began at one shilling per day plus rations for young lads who had just left school, and rose to fifteen shillings a week plus rations for mature and skilled workers.[79] But more remunerative employment, such as shearing, was available seasonally. The village had its own physician in the person of Frederick Taplin, who was highly reputed in this role, and who served the entire district just as his father had done before him.[80]

The alcohol problem, which has beset Australians, both European and Aboriginal, since the arrival of the first fleet, was never completely solved at Raukkan, but the villagers seem to have been more successful than people have been almost anywhere else, in their efforts to eradicate addiction to grog. Canon Andrews was able to report in 1887:

> Abstinence...seems to have rooted itself as a fixed sentiment in the minds of the people of the station. They are not so much restrained, *they restrain themselves*.[81]

In 1882, Matthew Burnett visited Raukkan and established a *Band of Hope*.[82] This popular organization provided an outlet for

talent and self-expression, in addition to its recreational value. The other major pastimes (apart from boating, fishing and hunting) were football and cricket. In the old culture, the Ngarrindjeri had similar types of games and they took very readily to the currently evolving game of football, and the still developing game of cricket. By 1885 they had become so proficient at the former game that the South Australian Cricket Association wanted them to play on the Adelaide Oval.[83] The A.F.A. objected to this proposal, but teams did start coming to town to play football and cricket in later years.

In certain respects, then, the people of Raukkan were as well or better-off than the inhabitants of many other villages of comparable size elsewhere in Australia at that time. There were certainly very few townships that could rival Raukkan's idyllic setting.

Perhaps the most appropriate comment (and in many ways the saddest) with which to close the Frederick Taplin decade, is an excerpt from Canon Andrews' report of 1887:

> What strikes a visitor more, however, is the very small portion of pure natives, and the variable degrees between white and black complexions, which make up the school. A few could hardly be distinguished from the swarthier children in our state schools, and only about as many as these show the unmistakeable features and skin of the Aboriginal. The majority of the children seem to be half-caste. It would be unfair, however, to infer from this that the school is composed mainly of illegitimate children; as I am informed by Mr Taplin that these are quite the exception, and that the reason for the prevalence of the half-caste is that these intermarry, and that the offspring of such unions have more vitality than those of the pure natives. It is evident, therefore, that a new race is being generated, and one which will be much more likely to be engrafted into the community than the Aboriginal could ever be expected to be.[84]

Whatever else was happening, the Ngarrindjeri as a racial group were in a state of rapid decline.

CHAPTER V. FOOTNOTES.

[1]Annual Report 1879.

[2]Minute Book II 2 July 1879.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid. 10 October 1879.

[5]Advertiser 18 August 1867.

[6]Ibid. 17 October 1879.

[7]Ibid. 16 August 1880.

[8]Ibid. 6 September 1880.

[9]Minute Book II 8 June 1887.

[10]Ibid. 19 March 1889.

[11]Register 23 March 1889.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Christian Colonist 1 July 1892.

[14]Register 23 March 1889.

[15]Church Book 23 March 1882.

[16]Annual Report 1886.

[17]Minute Book II 25 November 1881.

[18]Annual Report 1886 and Minute Book II 22 February 1889.

[19]Minute Book II 26 November 1881.

[20]Madge and Pengelly report, published in the Annual Report, 1888.

[21]Minute Book II 5 April 1881.

[22]Ibid. 31 May 1881.

[23]Ibid. 12 October 1882.

[24]Annual Report 1883.

[25]Minute Book II 8 February 1884.

[26]Ibid. 7 June 1875.

[27]Annual Report 1884.

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[28] Annual Report 1886.

[29] Annual Report 1887.

[30] Minute Book II 1 June 1888.

[31] Ibid. 17 August and 12 October 1888.

[32] Ibid. 21 December 1888.

[33] Ibid. 22 February 1884.

[34] Ibid. 8 February 1884.

[35] Ibid. 19 March 1886.

[36] Annual Report 1888.

[37] See figures from Annual Reports 1879-1890.

[38] Annual Report 1888.

[39] Christian Weekly and Methodist Journal 3 September 1886 p.3.

[40] Ibid.

[41] C.B. Young's report to the A.F.A.: 1887.

[42] Annual Report 1886.

[43] Minute Book II 11 June 1886 and Annual Report 1886.

[44] Minute Book II 1 March 1882, 11 July 1882, 12 October 1888, and Annual Report 1888.

[45] Minute Book II 11 July 1882 and 8 August 1883.

[46] Ibid. 2 November 1882.

[47] Ibid. 4 May 1885 and 18 May 1885.

[48] Ibid. 28 May 1885.

[49] Ibid. 11 June 1886.

[50] Ibid. and Annual Report 1886.

[51] Minute Book II 14 July 1887.

[52] Annual Report 1888.

[53] Minute Book II 22 February 1889.

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[54]Ibid. 5 April 1889.

[55]Annual Report 1882.

[56]Some of the results of the efforts of the sewing class are to be seen in the photo of girls with fish baskets, p.409.

[57]Minute Book II 14 July 1887.

[58]Annual Report 1885 (Pullum was known to the Europeans as Old Peter).

[59]Annual Report 1888.

[60]1888 Crown Lands Act No 444, Section 6 (c).

[61]Final Report of the Royal Commission on The Aborigines 1916 Appendix A p.41.

[62]Minute Book II 24 November 1879.

[63]Ibid. 11 June 1886.

[64]Annual Report 1887 and Minute Book II 14 July 1887.

[65]Minute Book II 20 August 1886.

[66]Ibid. 18 March 1887.

[67]Ibid. 14 July 1887.

[68]Ibid. 5 November 1886.

[69]Annual Report 1887.

[70]Ibid.

[71]Journal II p.22 A, 19 January 1865 and Journal III p.303 2 September 1867.

[72]Journal III p.266 23 March 1866.

[73]Minute Book II 11 July 1882.

[74]Annual Report 1887.

[75]Annual Report 1889.

[76]Annual Report 1885.

[77]Annual Report 1887.

[78]Annual Report 1881.

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[79]Annual Report 1882 (Superintendent's Report)

[80]Report of Madge and McEwin published in Annual Report 1885 (my emphasis).

[81]Annual Report 1887 (my emphasis).

[82]Minute Book II 11 July 1882.

[83]Ibid. 18 June 1885.

[84]Annual Report 1887.