

# I WANTED TO FIND MY PEOPLE!

## The Story Of Florrie Munro

Living in a neat little Commission cottage at Bass Hill, near Sydney, is Mrs. Florrie Munro, an elderly grey-haired aboriginal woman, who has a very loyal pride in her people.

Mrs. Munro, who has reared a large family and now has twenty-six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren, has two main interests these days—tending her garden, and helping as many of her people in as many ways as she can.

As a child Mrs. Munro was brought up in the small country town of Barraba, 300 miles from Sydney.

In her own words she says, "I was fortunate enough to have a fair education, and the credit for this must go to my grandmother who was a half-caste. She was a laundress.

"I can well remember going up each week to collect our rations, but at the time I did not know who was responsible for these food gifts.

"Many's the time when Gran wasn't looking I would get a handful of brown sugar and scoot out the back to enjoy it.

"As the years went on I realised I had to get out and earn a living.

### A Sense of Independence

"I had a deep sense of independence and loved to dress nicely just like the ordinary working girl.

"There was also a desire to find my own people, and to learn more about them."

"Up to the time of my young womanhood," said Mrs. Munro, "I had no knowledge of my own people, and in fact had hardly ever seen any of them, as we were practically the only dark people in the town. So I had grown up with white ways.

"Then as the years went on, I drifted away, my Grandmother having gone on to be with the Lord, and I started working for my living at the age of 12.

"We people are noted for our roaming, and I was no exception. I wanted to get where I could settle down with my own people. So I started to work on a station only a few miles away from a settlement.

"It was here that I met the man who was to be my husband."

Mrs. Munro went on to say how anxious she was to learn her own native language and how she had approached the Queen of the tribe.

"I was friendly with the dear old Queen of the New England tribe, although at first she wasn't too keen on me," said Mrs. Munro.

"One day I told her I wanted to learn about my own people and to learn to speak our own language, but the old Queen only laughed and said it would be too hard, and I would never learn."

But the old Queen was to get a big surprise for as the months went by, Mrs. Munro gradually picked up the dialect and could soon speak it quite well. She had by this time quite settled down, and it was not long before she married into the New England tribe.



"There's not much now that I don't understand about my own folk," said Mrs. Munro, resuming her story.

"Even though I enjoy the comfort of a nice home I do love to gather my children and grandchildren round me, and tell them of the hardships and struggles we had as children.

### Times Have Changed

"How the times have changed! Now my people are no longer regarded as undesirable people but as good and proper citizens.

"It often makes me happy to see my grandson arm-in-arm with some of his white school mates. There's no distinction and no colour prejudice.

"I have never applied for Citizen rights. Why should I?"

"If I could get a home on a reserve, where I could do some work among my own people, that's where I would be.

"I play, sing, and have a little medical knowledge, and nothing would suit me better than living among my own people."

Commencing in our next issue of *Dawn*, Mrs. Munro will tell the life story of the old Queen of the New England tribe—a woman who won the admiration and respect, not only of her own people but of the white community as well.

