

I Remember

Recently, I was talking with Mrs Liza Foster of La Perouse. She is 81 years of age and remarkably alert, with a rich, rolling laugh which you hear often, when talking to her. Like most people of her age, she wonders about conditions today. Perhaps her memories and comments may stimulate other people in the country areas to send in their stories and memories for the enjoyment of our Aboriginal readers.

“In the early days, when I was a girl in the bush near Forster, we knew everybody. But we were afraid of strange white men. In the bush we had heard so many stories of murders in Sydney. One day, when I had just come to Sydney—La Perouse—I saw one coming towards me. I nearly died, that’s the truth, I was so frightened. But then I saw two big Aborigines coming out of the bush and then I felt better. I knew they would help me, if I sung out.

“In those days, the dark people used to all go to church. Now they’ve got too much into the white people’s ways—drinking, smoking, gambling. It ruins them, same as it ruined so many white people. In the bush, we never knew about cards and things. Our people were very strict. They’d soon fix anybody who did something wrong. They had a good, clean law. My Dad was put through the Rules. I think their old law was the closest to Christianity. It was always clean. You couldn’t marry relatives. Now even close relations marry—just like the whites do. If this happened in the old times, they’d take them out and kill them. They were clean-living people all right. Outside of the drink, there’s nothing wrong with them now. They’re good people, kind, and they’re nice people. Been poked down though, like clothes in a copper and too much done for them. They don’t do terrible things like the white people though. Look at what’s going on overseas—it’s terrible, they don’t seem to be human.

“You must be educated now, to stand up to the way the world goes. My little boy wouldn’t go to school—the last one I had. Belting him did no good. One day he said to me: ‘I wish Captain Cook had never found Australia.’ I told his teacher what he’d said. He laughed. He told me that *his* little boy wouldn’t go to school, either. Only his little boy had said: ‘I wish Adam and Eve hadn’t eaten the apple!’

“The younger ones are good. They try to do their best. We musn’t criticize them. We’ve got to show them an example they can follow. Their short dresses make me laugh. The first time we

saw one in a church—we had to laugh. Not at her, but at the parson’s face! What could he say? He couldn’t turn her out. I remember the time when I wouldn’t show anyone my ankle! Now you can see their bloomers . . . just like a little toddling girl running along!

“Before the Aborigine was taught shame, many wore nothing. I remember years ago in the bush . . . a white man had to go into the bush to get a cow for his boss. A stark naked dark woman came out of the bush. He didn’t wait. Put the spurs into the horse and off! Told the boss that if he wanted the cow he’d have to get it himself! He said ‘I’m not going up there thank you!’ He was frightened he’d be speared. We haven’t had such a good laugh since then—his face!”

Mrs Liza Foster of La Perouse

