

## Some Old Stations.

By A. J. M'CONNEL.

No. III.

### Colinton.

**A**FTER Cressbrook and Kilcoy, Colinton was one of the first runs occupied on the Upper Brisbane River, and it was taken up by the firm of Balfour and Irving in 1841. Not much seems to be on record about the latter, but the Balfours came from Colinton, near Edinburgh, and were uncles of R. L. Stevenson. There were three brothers, John, Charles, and Robert. Little is known about Charles, but Robert died at Colinton in March, 1844. In a letter written by the late Mr. Henry Mort, he tells of Robert Balfour's death. Balfour was taken ill, and a messenger was sent to Ipswich to summon the resident doctor. This person refused to go to Colinton unless his services were paid for beforehand. The messenger could not do this, and returned to Colinton. Dr. Simpson, the Commissioner of Crown Lands, then living at Woogaroo, who had been a surgeon in the 14th Light Dragoons, hearing of this, volunteered to go, and set off at once, unfortunately arriving too late, for Mr. Balfour had died some hours before. Possibly the cause was appendicitis. He was buried in the old cemetery at Paddington, Brisbane. Mr. Mort writes that the Ipswich doctor's action caused great indignation throughout the district. Mr. John Balfour remained at Colinton as managing partner till 1862, when he returned to Scotland with his family, a wife and one daughter, Nina, who afterwards married some titled man. Mr. Balfour did not return to Australia.

John Balfour, though not of Burleigh, was a big and burly man, and was one of the first to be nominated to the Legislative Council in Queensland after Separation. I remember, on one occasion, when Sir George Bowen visited the Upper Brisbane, and was staying at Cressbrook, the Balfours were asked over to lunch, and as it had been very wet previously, the conversation turned on waterproof coats. Mr. Balfour informed the company that, "in his opinion, the human skin was waterproof." The Governor afterwards went to Colinton, and was taken out scrub shooting. A scrub turkey was flushed and flew into a tree. The black "shikaree" tried to point out the bird to Sir George, who could not see him. At last the boy lost patience, and said, "You milbong (blind) or only b-fool?" Colinton was an ideal cattle run. It had a double frontage to the Brisbane River from its head to the junction of Ivory's Creek, and extended a good distance back on either side of the river. The country was intersected by numerous creeks, most of them permanently watered. There were nice flats on these creeks, and the ridges were lightly timbered and well grassed, and warm in winter.

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### Early Pastoralists.

**MOUNT STANLEY**, on the head of the river, was in later years the principal sheep station, and the sheep manager lived there. Cattle were kept on the lower country till the sheep were got rid of, when they ran on the Mount Stanley country also. Before Mr. John Balfour left for Scotland he took into partnership Mr. George Forbes, who was interested in the place till the 'seventies. A Mr. Borthwick was sheep overseer for Mr. Forbes, and when the latter sold out, left and conducted a business in Ipswich. A Mr. J. T. Borthwick first owned Tarong. Mr. Donald Tuart Mackenzie, who afterwards owned Conondale, was sheep overseer till 1855, and probably Borthwick succeeded him. The areas of the leased country in most cases was comparatively small when first applied for, as the squatter picked out a choice portion of the country and secured it. The less attractive country was passed by, so the land was used without paying for it. In the case of Colinton the land leased was in six blocks. These were Colinton East, Colinton West, Mount Stanley East, and Mount Stanley West, and Diaper Altyre, and a total area of 336,000 acres. In 1862 the lease was in the name of G. E. Forbes. In 1875 Mr. Forbes took the late Mr. Alexander Raff, of Brisbane, into partnership, and left for Scotland, where he subsequently lived, and at a later date sold his share to Mr. Raff, who, in 1883, sold to Messrs. John and William Moore, formerly of Burrendilla, who subsequently subdivided the freehold and disposed of it by auction.

The Diaper block had been sold by Mr. Forbes in 1879 to Mr. James Swanson, of Yabba. Before the completion of the railway to Esk the owners of Colinton travelled to it from Brisbane by way of Kilcoy and Durundur, and till the Gympie railway was constructed as far as Caboolture all goods for these three stations were taken to Caboolture by cutter, or in later years by Messrs. Pettigrew's steamer, the *Tadornah Rajah*, and loading, such as station produce and red cedar, was

carried on the return journey. When Mr. George Raff's Morayfield and Captain Whish's sugar cane plantations were in operation there was a fair amount of river traffic on the Caboolture, which continued for some years while the cedar supply from the Stanley country existed.

### The M'Connels.

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UPON their marriage, joined their wives' churches, the Church of England in each case, save in that of David, whose wife was staunch Presbyterian. However, if my father visited a town in which was a Unitarian Church he attended service in it. Both my father and Uncle David were religious men, and conducted morning family prayers, and every day of his life my father read a portion of the Bible. They were men who had a high sense of honour and integrity. I never heard of my father telling a lie or swearing. They were even-tempered, and were good husbands. Both were very temperate in their habits, and rarely drank spirits. Neither did they smoke; and were methodical in their actions. They both were respected by their contemporaries. They were men of medium height, but David was the more robust of the two. Both were afflicted with deafness, and when they had a private talk on personal matters were quite unaware that they could be heard one hundred yards away. They had reddish hair, blue eyes, and shaved clean, except for a small side whisker. In his young days my father was fond of dancing and music, and had a fair voice. Both were of active temperament, and liked exercise, and David was fond of shooting, being a very good game shot. My father took a long walk every day when possible. He was a lightweight—about 10 stone—and he had plenty of choice of horseflesh. So he invariably rode good horses, which he expected to carry him at a good pace, and when travelling he rode at a canter except when big hills or creeks had to be crossed. This was all right for his horse, for he was always well fed. He had a favourite named Doctor, which had been bred by Dr. Simpson, of Woogaroo, which he rode for a long time, but the grassfed horse of the blackboy who generally accompanied him found it different. Though fond of stock, and a good judge of them, he never did any outside work, confining himself to the office and about the head station. His early friends in England considered him a good business man. Both brothers were disciplinarians, and expected their orders to be obeyed. And they agreed with Solomon as to the use of the rod. My cousins were more lucky than I, for there were many of them to share it, but I had a full allowance. I still have a vivid memory of an unhappy occasion on which Solomon's theory was tested. It was at Sandgate in the early 'sixties. A surveyor had been marking trees in the neighbourhood. Those notches took my fancy, and as I had a new tomahawk I thought a couple of notches in a new sawn gate post would add to its beauty. My father came home late that night, and intended leaving early next morning for Brisbane. On his way to the stable he saw the post, and said to me, "Did you do that?" The answer was in the affirmative, and he got in two cuts with his riding whip, which went well home, before I could get away. I have never notched a gate post since.

### Good Masters.

**T**HE brothers seemed good masters, for many of the hands remained with them for years, and at Cressbrook there are still descendants of the old hands employed. In the early

brook there are still descendants of the old hands employed. In the early days among those who were working at Cressbrook were the MacPherson family. The father, I think, was a ploughman, and after leaving Cressbrook settled on the Bald Hills, and had a good farm there. The eldest son, Donald, was stockman at Durundur for a long time. He was fond of reading light literature, and using French phrases which he did not know the meaning of, and much amused those who heard him who had greater knowledge of meanings than himself.

My father was nominated to the Legislative Council in the first Queensland Parliament, and remained a member for a number of years, when he resigned on account of his deafness. In those days the party feelings were not as acute as they are at present between the "ins" and "outs." He was a "Conservative" by birth, but had no strong political feelings. On one occasion I remember he told me he had "plumped" for Mr. Pring. The voting system then, I think, allowed an elector three votes. Like his brothers, my father disliked public speaking, and avoided it when possible. David McConnell had no inclination towards a political life; but was an active member of several agricultural societies.