

Port Lincoln, March 22, 1842

M. Moorhouse Esqu.
Protector of the natives.

Dear Sir, the fears of the residents of Port Lincoln regarding the natives of the district have recently been confirmed to an unexpected extent.

At the beginning of this month, Mr. Brown, a sheep farmer who lived about 10 miles from the city, was found murdered by natives, and his housekeeper was also missing. He had more than half a dozen spear wounds in his left side, and his face and skull were horribly injured and broken. The housekeeper was found two or three days later, lying dead in the dry riverbed near the hut. I could make out a spear wound under his right arm, but saw no other signs of violence, as the body was already badly decomposed.

The shepherd, who was with the sheep when this terrible disaster began, stated that Mr. Brown came to him two or three times a day to check if the herd was okay and then went back to protect his property in the hut with the housekeeper. On the day of the murder, he left the shepherd around noon and was found dead at least 300 meters away from the housekeeper. It was assumed that the natives did not encounter them together, but killed them separately. This assumption is confirmed by the testimony of two friendly natives, Kungka and Ngulga, who came to the city a few days after the murder. They said that the housekeeper was first tied up by a man named Wordalta to rob the hut. And that Mr. Brown was then tied up because he had beaten up a guy named Ngarbi, exactly the one from whom he had recently recovered a lot of flour that the native wanted to steal, and hit him repeatedly with the back of his gun. However, he recovered quickly enough to be taken away. I am therefore inclined to believe that Mr. Brown died in retaliation or in defense of his housekeeper's life.

With the exception of one or two, whom I personally know, the men described by the aforementioned natives correspond to the murderers. They belong to the same mob that also committed the devastations at the station in the bush. They form a sub-division of the Parnkalla or Eastern tribe and are generally referred to as Battara Gurarri, i.e. rubber tree men, because they mainly live in the inland hills and valleys where the rubber trees end, and where our natives call themselves Wambirri Gurarri, i.e. coastal men.

Two local prisoners, who belong to the former class, are going to Adelaide, charged with arson, robbery, and attempted murder, but I hope the latter charge will not be proven against them. The jury has clearly cleared them of the suspicion of being involved in the murder, although they don't care about their fates.

I think it's necessary to count the lootings committed by the aforementioned gang of natives over the past six weeks, but it seems very obvious to me from their unchecked success in robbery and the fact that they continue to move around in a large community, as well as from the easy access to our friendly natives, that they are ready to cause outrage to achieve their goal if the guilty individuals do not receive the punishment they deserve.

If I had to give my opinion on this matter, I would say that it would be quite appropriate to apprehend the murderers of Mr. Brown with the help of our local friends, as they offered to go with a search party, but there might be a difficulty in convicting them as long as the evidence provided by the locals is kept from the natives in court.

The white population has shown more leniency towards the natives than I had expected since this sad incident. However, a native came to me with a complaint that a white man had shot at him, but that he had managed to dodge the shot by leaning to one side. Although I couldn't help but think that the man had fired a warning shot to scare the native, I still felt it was my duty to take him to the magistrate and file his complaint, as he couldn't do it himself. The man, whom I understand, admits that he fired his weapon, but says that he wasn't aiming at the native.

The day before yesterday, a new robbery was committed at a station four miles away from the city (incidentally, the same station from which the native said he had been shot at). Two men were present when the natives approached, but they were already so alarmed that they took their weapons and left. It is assumed that this robbery was carried out by the Nauo or Coffin Bay tribe.

At present, the whites are naturally very agitated and excessively frightened; their trust in friendly natives, who often stay in the city for weeks, seems to be quite shaken, but I hope that it will be restored if the natives refrain from further acts of violence.

I have the honor, most esteemed sir, to be your most obedient servant.

C.W.S.