

THEME 1 MIN.

It was a pretty, ~~rose~~ satiny bit of colour in a dark grey period of British history when Australia was hardly more than a nasty gleam in the eyes of criminal court judges.

It lay in a roll on a back hall table of the fashionable house, and it caught the eye of Martha, the cook, as she passed through in the early morning on her way to the kitchen. Somehow suddenly it was in her apron pocket. A simple aberration; nothing to take too seriously. (If the mistress notices it has gone and starts

a hue and cry it can turn up again as suddenly; But why should she miss a little roll of ribbon from all the finery she has?) ~~BRIEF BURST OF MUSIC~~

And indeed apparently the Mistress didn't miss it, for nothing was said for days, and Martha eventually slipped it away into the little secret box where she hoarded the few ornaments of her life.

And then one day she wanted something as a little gift, to show her gratitude to Margaret, ^{the} good-natured, helpful new housemaid; ^{Margaret, the} conscientious, innocent, ^{earnest girl} ^{came from the} country. (The cook picked

it to Margaret, Margaret was delighted. She used some of it to trim her Sunday bonnet. But on her way to church next

day Margaret met her mistress, who recognized the ~~rose~~ satin ribbon and demanded to know where the girl had found it. Margaret explained. They confronted the cook. The cook denied any ^{knowledge} Margaret was charged with theft, arrested, ^{knowledge of the ribbon.}

Committed for trial, found guilty. Margaret, friendless in London, was sentenced — to death. For six weeks she lay in the condemned cell expecting, hour to hour, to be led out to the gallows. **BRIEF PAUSE**

[This was not, however, a universally popular sentence. Some people — reformers, humanitarians, trouble-makers (you know the type) — worked & pleaded on her behalf and finally had the sentence commuted to transportation for life. So Margaret took the hideous voyage to Australia. **MUSIC**

[In Sydney she was put in the custody of James Norton ^{Esq.} solicitor. She worked as a housemaid in his residence in Elizabeth Street, just round the corner from St. James' Church. Among Mr. Norton's clients was ^{Mr.} John Farley, a quiet and respectable businessman from Campbelltown: a farmer, carrier, & Government contractor for the supply of grain. John Farley was looking for a wife. Mr. Norton wanted to help Margaret. A meeting was arranged. A marriage was arranged, and Margaret, Mrs. ^{John} Farley, moved out into the farming community of Campbelltown. [She met the neighbours, most of them ex-convicts like herself, though sometimes they looked the part rather too convincingly. A motley community, ^{mainly male, mainly} + - o - l men: there was George ^{Novel}, an ugly-looking customer; Nathaniel Boon, as trustworthy as an eel; Frederick Fisher, the most successful of all the local ex-convicts, rumored to have stacked up some £20,000 from his successful deals since emancipation.

[Frederick George James Fisher was in fact too successful. On the evening of June the 17th, 1826, he left the convivial bar-room of a Campbelltown Hotel in the company of some

nocturnal friends and was never seen again — alive.

[John and Margaret Farley used to discuss his disappearance in the following weeks. Worrell, the unsavoury one, was spreading rumours. Frederick Fisher had been lodging temporarily in Worrell's cottage at the time of his disappearance, and Worrell now was attempting to establish a claim over Fisher's property. He whispered that Fisher had forged ^{Nathaniel Boone's name on an agreement}, that he had fled the country to avoid prosecution, that he was on the water to England. John and Margaret Farley, like most other neighbours, were inclined to believe the story until, one evening nearly four months after the disappearance, John was returning home on the road past Fisher's farm. There was a culvert near the south-eastern corner of the property. The dusty ^{white} earth road widened at this spot, and the post-and-rail fence ran parallel with the track some 20 feet back. Now John Farley, normally an implacable fellow, froze at what he saw on the fence. Sitting on the sliprails was the figure of Frederick Fisher, or rather the image of Frederick Fisher, in his old fustian coat with the brass buttons and corduroy waistcoat and trousers and a red silk bandannah handkerchief tied around his neck. He was sitting silent and still, looking ^{at} and apparently indicating, with an arm part-resting on the fence-post, a spot in the marshy paddock a hundred yards or so inside the fence.

BRIEF MUSIC

[John fled for home, ~~not at first~~ intending to tell anyone of his vision. But he could not conceal his terror from Margaret. He told her, and she urged him to report the apparition.

(Some men are born to see ghosts, but, ^{not} John Farley. He was the other sort: sober, conscientious, a respected special constable and solid citizen. ~~And his obvious~~ terror and sincerity convinced the magistrate. But he was terrified

[Next day

John fled for home. ^{4A} When and shaking, he gasped out the story to Margaret. Knowing her husband and ~~matter of fact~~ ~~ways she is a~~ ~~color, respected special constable~~ With her encouragement he reported the vision to the magistrate. His obvious terror convinced the authorities.

On October the 25th, ^{1825,} Troopers turned out with a black tracker. They started at the slip-rails where John had seen the apparition. Here were signs of blood. They followed in the direction the figure had been pointing, and in a swampy place, three feet under the surface, its clothes ^{almost} rotted away, its face beaten out of recognition, they found the body of Frederick Fisher.

MUSIC
[This is the story of Fisher's Ghost, one of the world's famous ghost stories, and one of the few documented ones in Australia's history, told and retold a hundred times with the apparition appearing in a dozen guises, sometimes pointing to his temporary grave, sometimes walking and leading those he haunted. The first Australian-born novelist, John George Lang, who was ten years old when Fisher died, retold the story in 'Botany Bay', published in London in 1859. It was a dirty night, as he reconstructed it, and there were three men passing in an old cart. "Look here! What is that?" said the driver. "It is a man - but how odd." They dismounted and approached to the specter's side. ^{they could see the slip rails through its well dressed body. They addressed it.} "How came you by that gash in your forehead? Are you dead or alive?" But Fisher's ghost, as always, remained silent, pointing. "There has been foul play," said one of the men, astutely. "And by Heaven it shall be brought to light."

[In fact it was brought to light quickly. Suspicion turned

to Fisher's circle of friends⁵ and quickly narrowed to George Worrall, Fisher's unpleasant landlord. ^{During the inquest} John and Margaret Farley began to piece the story together.

Worrall and Nathaniel Boon had conspired to murder Fisher for his money. Worrall, ^{illiterate, was to} perform the act. Boon's ^{part} was to spread the story that Fisher had defrauded him, ^{by forging} and had fled on being discovered. Worrall was to make sure that Fisher's body was unrecognisable, ^{even if it were discovered.} Boon was to produce a document with his own signature purporting to be a forgery by Fisher. ^{But everything went according to plan - until} the appearance of Fisher's ghost.

[Now Worrall was charged with murder, removed to Sydney and tried in the Supreme Court. Nathaniel Boon was the only witness for the defence. He told his hollow story about dealings with Fisher, his discovery of Fisher's forgery, and how Fisher had fled for "home" rather than face his accuser. But Boon was not very bright, nor a born actor. Under cross-examination he confessed he had no evidence of Fisher's leaving the country except what the accused had told him. Finally he was reduced to confusion by the prosecutor. He admitted that the body he had seen at the inquest was Fisher's. The case was over. Worrall was convicted, and sentenced to death.

[Until the moment of his sentence, Margaret Farley had been convinced of Worrall's guilt and watched the course of justice without qualm. But an unexpected change overcame Worrall's demeanour from that moment on. He is described by Lang as becoming calm and submissive,

relieved - it seemed - to have the strain over. From the day he murdered Fisher, Lang suggested, Worrell had been haunted by the ghost on the slip-rail and life had become a burden. ^{CROWD NOISE} And Margaret, and other tender-hearted observers who had once been close to the gallows themselves, turned suddenly to sympathy. The cries of "Hang him" changed to mumbles of discontent. There were rumours that the witnesses were all perjured, complaints that the jury was a parcel of fools, the Governor a hard-hearted and cruel man for refusing a reprieve. But for Worrell already the fight was over. In gaol he made a full confession.

Just before eight o'clock on the hot, bright morning of February the 6th, 1827, early Colonial justice came to George Worrell. After struggling for half a minute and hanging for one hour his remains were lowered to the open coffin below, ^{as was the custom!} taken to the last resting place of all criminals: Slaughter House Point, to a grave filled with quick-lime.

CROWD NOISE > MUSIC

As for John and Margaret Farley, things went well for them. John bought town properties and his resources grew with the colony. He engaged in hotel businesses and on his death (in 1841) left his ~~own~~ wife the management of a thriving business. Margaret lived on into the richer, quieter second half of the nineteenth century, a prosperous Colonial lady with a particular penchant for expensive ribbons.

BRIEF MUSIC

Till the day she died she was convinced that Fisher returned from the grave to avenge his murder. Certainly John Farley had not been hoaxing. He was not drunk, or delirious. But