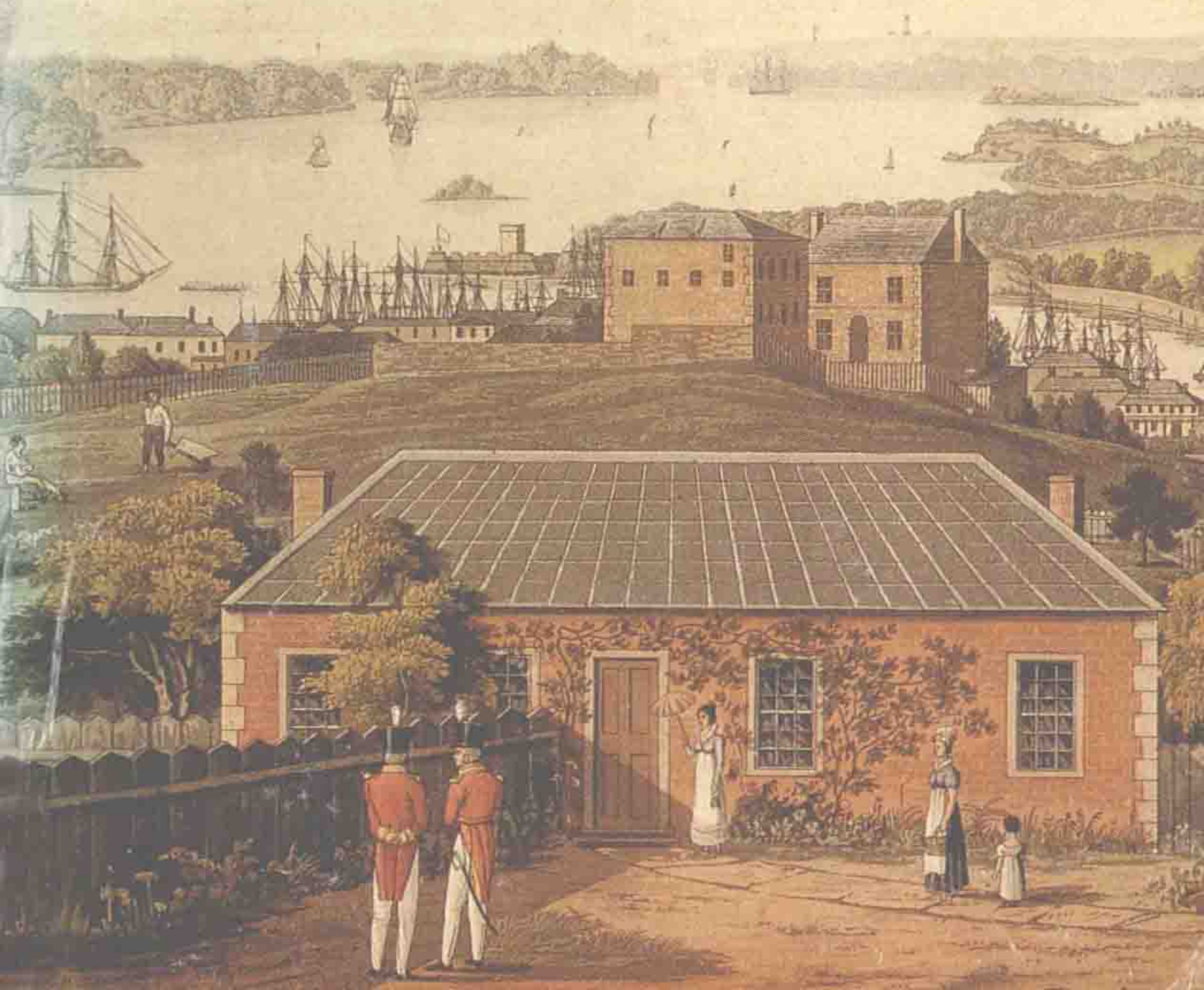


THE TIMELESS LAND

Eleanor Dark



ELEANOR DARK

The Timeless Land



**FOR MY SON
MICHAEL DARK**

COLLINS PUBLISHERS AUSTRALIA

First published in 1941 by William Collins Pty Ltd,
55 Clarence Street, Sydney NSW 2000
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Major Taylor
The entrance of Port Jackson, and part of the town
of Sydney, 1823
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The Timeless Land

Eleanor Dark was born and educated in Sydney, Australia, and since her marriage to Dr Eric Dark, has lived in Katoomba, the principal town of the Blue Mountains. She has two sons.

She is the daughter of the late Dowell O'Reilly, a well-known Australian writer and a former Member of Parliament, who introduced the first bill for Women's Suffrage into the New South Wales Legislative Assembly.

Eleanor Dark began writing as soon as she left school and had her first story published when she was nineteen. *The Timeless Land* is the first volume of her trilogy about the early years of Australian settlement. The second and third volumes are *Storm of Time* and *No Barrier*.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My main sources of information have been the published journals of members of the First Fleet, and the historical records of N.S.W. For my descriptions of aboriginal life and customs I have found material in the works of Professor A. P. Elkin, Dr Phyllis Kaberry, Dame Mary Gilmore, Dr Herbert Basedow, Mrs Daisy Bates, C.B.E., and others. My grateful acknowledgments are also due to the Trustees of the Mitchell Library, Sydney, for permission to quote from the journal of Lieut. Ralph Clark, and from a letter of the Rev. Richard Johnson.

P R E F A C E

This book has borrowed so much from history that it seems advisable to remind readers that it is fiction. My aim has been to give a picture of the first settlement of Sydney, which is always true in broad outline, and often in detail, but I make no claim to strict historical accuracy either in my dealings with the white men or the black. With regard to the latter, strict accuracy would be hardly possible. There are many accounts of these people in the journals of those who came to Australia with the First Fleet; but as was inevitable between races unacquainted with each other's customs, there were constant misunderstandings, and in the light of research which has been made in more recent years, one is bound to regard some of their statements with suspicion. That they recorded faithfully what they saw cannot be questioned; that they placed the correct interpretation upon it is not so certain. The aborigines, too, have a strongly developed sense of humour, and one cannot help suspecting that the early colonists had their legs frequently and diligently pulled.

Of the tribes which lived on the shores of Port Jackson at the time of the white men's arrival, less is known than of almost any other tribes, for the obvious reason that, being the first to mingle with the invaders, they were the first to disintegrate, and die out. Therefore, where I have wanted to introduce songs, words, legends, customs, for which I have been able to find no record for these particular groups, I have borrowed shamelessly from other tribes, often far distant. The result, from an ethnologist's point of view, must be quite horrible; but I am not really very repentant. These people were all of one race, and it is the quality of the race which I have tried to suggest, without regard to minor tribal differences. The important thing has seemed

to me to be that these were the *kind* of songs they sang, the *kind* of legends they loved, the *kind* of customs and beliefs by which they ordered their lives.

A great deal of research has been done among them, and many books have been written to describe their way of life. What I have read has only served to make me increasingly conscious of my abysmal ignorance, and I must emphatically insist that my portrayal is not intended to be taken too literally. Many intensely important aspects of tribal life have been touched upon lightly, or left out altogether. The question of native 'religion,' in particular, has been here enormously over-simplified; to treat it fully (even if I felt myself qualified to do so) would have left no room in the book for anything else. The belief in the existence of a Supreme Being is vouched for by many authorities, as is also the belief that after death the spirit passes to the sky – but these are mere fragments of a huge and complicated structure of spiritual belief, embracing the mythology which is, in a sense, the history-book of the aborigine, keeping him in touch with the 'eternal dream-time,' the unseen world from which he came, and to which he hopes to return.

Certain mistakes made by the colonists when they were first learning the meanings of aboriginal words have been ignored, as they would only be confusing here. In some cases I have deliberately used an incorrect word simply because it has become the familiar one – as, for instance, 'birralee,' and 'kangaroo.' Kangaroo was a word quite unknown to the Port Jackson natives, being one which Captain Cook had learned from the Queensland tribes, and they naturally assumed it was a white man's word. Indeed, Tench records that one of them, upon first seeing cattle, inquired whether these were kangaroos?

The beautiful lament which I have borrowed for the occasion of Barangaroo's death belongs by right, I believe, to a Western Australian tribe.

Among the native characters many are historical, Bennilong being, of course, the best known of them; the eastern point of Sydney Cove, upon which Governor Phillip built him his hut in 1790, is still called Bennilong Point. It will be obvious that my account of his life before the arrival of the First Fleet must be purely imaginary; after its arrival I have stuck

to facts, but interpreted them freely. Booron, Nanbarree, Colbee, Caruey, Arabanoo, Barangaroo, Ballederry, Gooroo-barooboolo, and several others are historical figures. Tirrawuul, Wunbula, and Cunnembeillee are imaginary.

The Australian Aboriginal had great virtues; in a fairly extensive reading I have been able to discover no vices save those which they learned from the white invaders of their land. Some of their customs seemed cruel to us. Some of ours, such as flogging, horrified them. The race is nearly gone, and with it will go something which the 'civilised' world has scorned too easily. I do not want to be taken for a 'back-to-nature' advocate, nor for one who, in these disillusioned times, regards our own civilisation as inevitably doomed; but I do believe that we, nine-tenths of whose 'progress' has been a mere elaboration and improvement of the technique, as opposed to the art of living, might have learned much from a people who, whatever they may have lacked in technique, had developed that art to a very high degree. 'Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness' – to us a wistful phrase, describing a far-away goal – sums up what was, to them, a taken-for-granted condition of their existence.

With regard to the white men and their doings there has been little need to embroider. The difficulty has been, rather, to choose and eliminate from the *embarras de richesse* which is available in the early records of the colony. The characters of many of the officers are to be discovered between the lines of their journals and letters; I have tried to portray them as I found them there, realising that another student of those same documents might find quite different men. It is not easy to catch more than a glimpse here and there of Arthur Phillip the man in the voluminous dispatches and correspondence of Arthur Phillip the Governor. The comments of his contemporaries shed a little light – his actions and the results of his actions more still. Certain qualities appear too obviously to be questioned – physical courage and endurance, moral fortitude, a struggling humanitarianism, and a streak of illogical faith. Upon these qualities I have built what must be regarded merely as my own conception of the founder of Australia.

Where letters have been used they are quotations from genuine documents. The Prentice family and the Mannion

family are entirely imaginary.

ELEANOR DARK.

Katoomba,

July 29th, 1940

GLOSSARY

OF ABORIGINAL WORDS

AND PHRASES

<i>Bado</i>	Water.
<i>Be-anga</i>	Father; also leader or responsible person.
<i>Bereewolgal</i>	Name given by the natives to the white men. Lit. 'men come from afar.'
<i>Ben-ga-dee</i>	Ornament.
<i>Bee-all</i>	No.
<i>Berai-Berai</i>	Orion.
<i>Biningung bado</i>	Give me some water.
<i>Birrahlee</i>	Child.
<i>Birrong</i>	Star.
<i>Bo-ee</i>	Dead.
<i>Boodjerree</i>	Good.
<i>Bulla murray dyin</i>	Two big women.
<i>Burul winungai lun miai-miai</i>	Much desirous of young women.
<i>Cardalung</i>	Hot.
<i>Coo-ee!</i>	Come here! Come to me!
<i>Coolamon</i>	Wooden vessel for drinking, or for carrying food or water.
<i>Corroboree</i>	A dramatic dance, performed with appropriate words.
<i>Duggeri-gai</i>	White men.
<i>Dulka</i>	The sky.
<i>Dyin</i>	Woman.
<i>Ela-bearal</i>	Exclamation of wonder or astonishment.

<i>Gan-to bon bunkulla tetti kulwun?</i>	Who killed him?
<i>Gan-umba noa unni yinal?</i>	Whose son is this?
<i>Gatoa bon tura</i>	It is I who speared him.
<i>Gooroobera</i>	Musket. Lit. 'stick of fire.'
<i>Gourgourgahgah</i>	The Kookaburra.
<i>Guioa!</i>	Good-bye!
<i>Gwee-un</i>	Fire.
<i>Kabo bag kanun England-ka</i>	Soon I shall be at England.
<i>Kai kai karakai!</i>	Come, make haste!
<i>Kamai</i>	A spear.
<i>Keawaran wal bi uwa-nun!</i>	You shall not go!
<i>Kia?</i>	What do you say?
<i>Kuji</i>	The bee.
<i>Kurru</i>	Clouds.
<i>Kuurang</i>	The tiger snake.
<i>Magra</i>	Fish.
<i>Mia-mia</i>	A bark shelter.
<i>Mirrabooka</i>	The Southern Cross.
<i>Morungle</i>	Thunder.
<i>Moo-la-ly</i>	Ill, indisposed.
<i>Murrai</i>	Big.
<i>Murri</i>	The men.
<i>Murruwulung</i>	Small.
<i>Naa-moro</i>	Compass. Lit. 'to see the way.'
<i>Na-lau-ra</i>	Sit down, as a guest.
<i>N'ga!</i>	Here!
<i>N'gai-ri!</i>	Bring it here!
<i>N'gai n'gai pindwagung bado</i>	I will bring you some water.
<i>Ngindigindoer</i>	Venus. Lit. 'you are laugh- ing.'
<i>Nowee</i>	Boat.
<i>Parrebuga</i>	To-morrow.
<i>Teeri-yeetchbeem</i>	Red-headed one.
<i>Thirringnunna</i>	Hide-and-seek. Lit. 'where are we?'

Towri

Unijerunbi minku?
Waita koa bag; mimai
yikora!

Waw . . . ?

Weeree

Werowey

Whurra, whutta!

Wi! Wi!

Wirri

Wongerra

Wommerah

Woram-woram buna;
worambil moium
Wutta?

Yagoona

Yapallun!

Yen-ou?

Youara-gurrugin

Yuroo

'Dinga dinga burula,
Murringa dibura!'

'Burran, burin, bilar bundi,

Murala berar karni!'

Tribal territory.

What do you want?
I must go; do not detain
me!

Where is . . . ?

Bad, or wrong.

Girl.

Begone, begone!

Exclamation of aversion.

The sun.

Boy.

Throwing stick for spear; also
used for other purposes
as implement.

Go to sleep, sleepy little
one.

Where to?

To-day.

Alas!

Shall I go?

Maker of corroboree songs.

Hungry.

'Plenty of wild dogs,
The black men are spearing
them!'

'Shield of buree, spear and
club,

Throwing stick of berar
bring!'