Following the example of the celebrated Lily House built at Chatsworth in 1839, public glass-houses filled with exotic plants became a sure crowd-pleaser in late 19th-century England and had many imitations in the colonies. Queensland was not alone in its use of conservatories at exhibitions, for several British colonies had conservatories at London in 1886 and more conservatories appeared at Melbourne in 1888-89. New South Wales, Victoria and New Zealand all had conservatories (or 'ferneries') at both the London and Melbourne exhibitions. But Queensland's conservatories stood alone for the 'gaudy magnificence' of their tropical plants, arguably the most spectacular of all.

The limitations of Queensland's displays are further shown by the more advanced display techniques of sister colonies. Victoria's court at Paris in 1878 was dominated by a monumental trophy with figures of gold miners, stockdrivers and Aboriginal people (Fig. 32). Later at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition both Victoria and South Australia had amazingly 'realistic' Aboriginal dioramas with skilfully modelled figures, while Victoria and Western Australia had large panoramas (Fig. 33). At the Launceston exhibition of 1891-92 New South Wales triumphed with a cyclorama of Broken Hill, described as 'one of the pieces de resistance' of the whole event. However, Australia's most
FIG. 34. The huge tableau of Captain Cook’s landing shown by New South Wales at the Melbourne exhibition of 1888-89. The figures were modelled by James White, while the backdrop was painted by the equally noted scenic artist, Carl Frederick Vennemark. (La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria)

adventurous displays of the 19th century were shown at Melbourne’s centennial exhibition of 1888-89 where New South Wales, 'the mother colony' (whose centenary was being celebrated), won due attention with its spectacular exhibits. Here the New South Wales court gave visitors the thrill of walking into a replica of the Jenolan Caves created in painted cork and plaster and enlarged by an 'ingenious arrangement of mirrors'. The highlight of the court was a huge tableau of Captain Cook’s landing at Botany Bay, with 22 life-sized wax figures modelled by the noted Australian sculptor James White, an Aboriginal gunyah, bush vegetation and a panoramic backdrop, all mounted on a stage with a proscenium (Fig. 34). Significantly, this tableau was supervised by the exhibition organiser Jules Joubert (later the General Manager of the Queensland International Exhibition), and South Australia’s ‘bush’ diorama shown at Melbourne in 1880-81, mentioned above, was the work of Twopeny.

Without the skills of professionals like these, Queensland’s displays were comparatively amateurish. There were no such people among its government-appointed exhibition commissioners and officials, and local artists were rarely engaged for exhibition work. A recommendation to engage the Brisbane artist Joseph Augustus Clarke to design Queensland’s trophies for Philadelphia was rejected by the government and the local artist-taxidermist Anthony Alder was engaged only for less important work mounting animal specimens and replicating gold nuggets, fruit and fish. Alder had trained in London and was well capable of creating competent dioramas, as he later did for the Queensland Museum. (He was appointed to the museum staff in 1907.) Moreover, the local sculptor James Laurence Watts, who modelled the much-admired Champion’s vinegar and Colman’s mustard trophies for the merchants’ displays in the Queensland International Exhibition (Fig. 35), was never
FIG. 35 The Champion's vinegar trophy by James Laurence Watts at the Queensland International Exhibition of 1897. The life-sized equestrian figure was commissioned by the Brisbane merchants Webster and Company, who also commissioned the Colman's mustard trophy at the exhibition. (Queenslander, 19 June 1897)

engaged for government exhibition work. So Queensland's most adventurous exhibiting took place later, early this century, when the Chief Protector of Aborigines showed tableaux vivants (an advance on static dioramas) at Brisbane's annual agricultural exhibitions to promote the government's segregationist policy.

Though generally unadventurous in its display techniques, Queensland was willing on occasion to 'play the showman' with sensational exhibits. Aboriginal mummies, live lungfish and gigantic logs and reptile skins appealed to a fascination with the ugly and curious, while such 'working exhibits' as gold batteries and mercury fountains satisfied a demand for stunts (and attested to technological progress). Indeed the 'absolutely unique' mercury fountain first shown in 1899 at the Greater Britain Exhibition (Figs 79, 83) is Queensland's contribution to the assortment of 'novelties' devised especially for exhibitions, the best known of which are Spain's house of bottles (Paris, 1878), France's Eiffel Tower (Paris, 1889) and America's Ferris wheel (Chicago, 1893). At the Colonial and Indian Exhibition Queensland boasted another 'novelty' in the form of a live dingo. Besides its official exhibits, Queensland also offered performances by 'wild' Aboriginal people among exhibition amusements. I return to these sensational exhibits in later chapters.

Only once did Queensland market food at exhibitions. Along with its sister colonies, Queensland took part in the Australian Wine Bar and the Colonial Market at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. At this market Queensland sold about 30,000 pounds of tinned meat, and smaller quantities of frozen meat, preserved fruit, wine, turtle and bêche-de-mer soups and even potted dugong. Queensland also sent fresh fruit to the Sydney and Melbourne events, and frozen meat and dairy produce to the cold storage chamber at the Greater Britain Exhibition, but these were intended to be admired rather than sold. Other Australian colonies were more active marketers of food at exhibitions, particularly of wine and fruit, but none opened a café until at the Wembley exhibition, where an Australian café proved very popular.

The handling of exhibits was often clumsy, again reflecting Queensland's lack of professional expertise. Defective packing caused serious damages to exhibits consigned to Vienna in 1873 and Paris in 1878, and returned from Melbourne in 1881 and 1889 and London in 1899. At both Vienna and Paris, many exhibits were damaged enough to necessitate their withdrawal from display. Nehemiah Bartley later complained of the 'annihilation' of some of his minerals collection lent for the Paris exhibition. Among the damaged exhibits returned from Melbourne in 1881 were shells and mounted birds lent by the Brisbane naturalist Elizabeth Coxen (widow of the former exhibition commissioner Charles Coxen) and material lent by the Queensland Museum. In addition, some show cases returned from Melbourne smashed beyond repair. In 1889 the Imperial Institute in London complained that Queensland's mineral collection lent for the recent Melbourne exhibition had been repacked in such a 'careless and imperfect manner' that many specimens were now 'useless'.
Reports of damage suggest that heavy objects, such as minerals, were left loose in cases during transit instead of being individually packed and secured, causing breakages of glass and more fragile objects. In August 1888 shipping agents reported that the cases of excess exhibits arrived back from the Melbourne exhibition with their 'contents jingling'. In 1900 the Brisbane artist Oscar Fristrom complained that one of his pastel drawings returned from the Greater Britain Exhibition 'seriously damaged' due to 'careless' repacking. Worse still, the Brisbane tanner Ludwig Schoenheimer complained that his leather exhibits had not returned at all, nor had any proceeds from their sale.

Most of these damages and losses were caused in Melbourne and London even though custodians from the colony were present to supervise repacking. But these custodians had little experience in exhibitions, apart from James Brand who was an attendant on four occasions from 1879 to 1889, and Harry Courtenay Luck who was secretary to the commissioners in 1886 and 1888-89 and Assistant Representative in charge of the agricultural exhibitors in 1899 (see Appendix 2). Luck's applications for involvement in other exhibitions were politely turned down, as were applications by a professional British exhibition organiser, H.B. Hardt. After his involvement as a British agent in exhibitions at Paris and Philadelphia, Hardt supervised New South Wales' court at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, represented British firms at the Adelaide exhibition of 1887-88, and in early 1888 organised Sydney's so-called Centenary Universal Exhibition (its answer to Melbourne's much larger centennial event). He might have been a most useful asset to Queensland.

Here I have shown that Queensland's displays at exhibitions were dominated by economic concerns rather than a desire to represent colonial life more comprehensively. Exhibition commissioners, the selectors of exhibits, were drawn from the colony's ruling economic elite and their exhibits reflected the varying needs for British investment. The lack of professional expertise among exhibition commissioners and officials made the presentation and handling of exhibits unadventurous and clumsy by world or even Australian standards. But Queensland's exhibits, whether arranged neatly in cases or piled in 'bulk', were always distinctive and never dull or 'shoppy'. The 'progressive' young colony could be relied upon to put on 'a good show'. And in the annals of world exhibiting Queensland will be remembered for its pioneering use of photography and for adding the mercury fountain to the 'novelties' devised especially for exhibitions.

CHAPTER 3

'THE BOUNTIES OF NATURE'

Queensland was represented at exhibitions as a resource-rich frontier, a place where nature had 'bestowed her gifts' most bountifully. Surveying Queensland's court at Sydney in 1879-80 the Sydney Morning Herald reporter concluded: 'A stranger might be forgiven if he left with the impression that that favoured land was blest with nearly everything, and everything of the best'. Queensland could boast not only a 'harvest-field' of land resources, but also a wondrous off-shore resource in the Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest system of coral reefs. In this chapter I focus on the flora and fauna exhibits which so greatly contributed to the image of a 'resourceful' colony. Underpinning these exhibits were the notions that natural resources were 'inexhaustible' and that colonists had a right and a duty to exploit them. Indeed the ability to mobilise the earth's resources and transform its environment was central to the 19th-century gauge of human progress and was used to justify European colonisation. This exploitative view of nature was part of a Christian inheritance which taught that God, having created man, gave him dominion over all living things. In his study of the 'taming' of the Australian environment Geoffrey Bolton has portrayed the devastation wrought by European settlement, by which natural resources were ruthlessly exploited for economic gain. Queensland was no exception to this pattern of settlement, only the devastation occurred later than in the southern colonies and some would argue that it continues.

Queensland's flora and fauna exhibits also reflect the interest in natural history so keen in the 19th century. Darwin's On the Origin of Species published in 1859 — the same year that Queensland became a separate colony — brought evolutionary theory to the forefront of scientific debate and heralded the beginning of the golden age of taxonomy (the scientific naming of plants and animals). Australia, long isolated from other continents, offered an intriguing and unique array of plants and animals, some related to species long extinct elsewhere. Queensland, with its vast territory still not fully 'explored', was a rich field
Interest in natural history was not slow to develop in the colony. The year 1859 also marked the foundation of its first scientific society, the Queensland Philosophical Society, which in turn led to the establishment of the Queensland Museum in 1862 and an herbarium (originally part of the museum) in 1874. In addition to these major collecting institutions, the colony could boast a series of schools of arts and naturalists' clubs, some of which had natural history collections. Many of the colonists who contributed to these public collections also contributed to exhibitions.

Exhibits of flora formed the 'bulk' of Queensland's early contributions to exhibitions. At London's Great Exhibition of 1851 the Moreton Bay district was represented by 'a log of wood from the interior of Wide Bay', sent by the local land commissioner. For the Paris event of 1855 Charles Moore, the Director of Sydney's Botanic Gardens, was commissioned to collect timber from the Moreton and Wide Bay districts. Later Moore reported that he had 'scarcely even penetrated' the dense rainforests of the north to find his 92 samples. Queensland's timber resources were better known by the time of the London exhibition of 1862 where timber took up 'nearly half' of Queensland's exhibition funds and filled a whole side of its court. Most prominent were 130 samples of timber collected and catalogued by Walter Hill (Fig. 36), the Director of Brisbane's Botanic Gardens and Government Botanist, and an exhibition commissioner. Hill also collected native barks, gums, canes and fibres suited to such 'useful ends' as tanning agents, dyes, medicines, walking sticks, paper and rope. Similar exhibits were collected from the Rockhampton district by the French emigré Anthelme Thozet of Muellerville, North Rockhampton, an experimental gardener and a botanical collector for Ferdinand Mueller of Victoria. Hill and Thozet again sent large botanical collections to the Paris exhibition of 1867 (where, as I have noted in Chapter 1, Thozet's exhibits were confused with Hill's), while the exhibition commissioner Matthew Henry Marsh sent two logs of myall wood. Here at Paris, where timber filled both sides of Queensland's court, visitors were assured that the colony's timber wealth was 'scarcely to be estimated'. Already the forests of southern Queensland were being rapidly cleared, opening new land for pastoral and agricultural settlement and providing for the colony's growing needs for timber. By 1867 timber exports to the southern colonies were also growing, having increased sevenfold since separation.

Among the numerous timber exhibits shown at the London exhibitions of 1871-74 were 72 samples from the Rockhampton district collected by another experimental gardener and collector for Mueller, the Irish-born Patrick Adams O'Shanesy of the Dawson Road. This collection was, wrote O'Shanesy, only a fraction of Rockhampton's 'inexhaustible' supply of about 200 species of timber 'available for every purpose'. Also shown at these events was an 'extraordinary' collection of Queensland gums and a series of drugs made from ironbark gum by the...
Brisbane medical practitioner and naturalist Dr Joseph Bancroft (best known for his research on filariasis). For the London exhibition of 1873 Walter Hill, again an exhibition commissioner, sent another 224 bulk samples of timber (trunks and limbs of trees) which were stacked on shelves at the entrance to Queensland's annexe while polished samples were stacked inside. Commenting on the timber shown at Vienna the same year, Hill claimed that Queensland had more timber species than any other Australian colony and 'perhaps more than could be found within a similar extent of country in any other part of the world'. Hence, he lamented, good timber was being 'neglected or used only as firewood'. Hill added a plea for a forest conservancy system in Queensland, for 'indiscriminate destruction' had already made some species of forest trees 'almost ... extinct'. Hill's plea was probably one of the sections of Queensland's catalogue which the government found 'objectionable', contributing to the growing friction between the government and the outspoken Hill. His plea went unheeded, as did the findings of a parliamentary committee appointed in 1875 to report on the colony's forests.

Hill's exhibits were shown again at Philadelphia in 1876 and Paris in 1878, along with a large collection of native fibres from the Brisbane experimental gardener Alexander Macpherson. Macpherson's collection included Queensland hemp (Sida retusa), a 'much despised' weed that could be used for making paper and textiles. Also shown at Philadelphia was a fine collection of botanical specimens prepared by the Brisbane botanist Frederick Manson Bailey (Fig. 37), the keeper of Queensland's herbarium and later to be the colony's leading botanical exhibitor. At Paris in 1878 the Brisbane pharmacist Lachlan Carmichael contributed a collection of essential oils and tinctures to mark the 'experimental' beginnings of Queensland's eucalyptus oil industry, for already colonists were recognising the household uses of the eucalyptus.

More extensive exhibits of flora were shown at the Sydney and Melbourne exhibitions of 1879-81, reflecting the push to turn nature's riches to profit regardless of environmental costs. Walter Hill showed 260 samples of timber and collections of barks and gums, again with a plea for forest conservancy. To illustrate the 'endless variety' and beauty of Queensland timbers the government sent two ornamental stands containing 275 turned and polished egg cups and drops and a timber trophy (or 'tree'), an octagonal structure of polished panels crowned by a bird's nest fern. The government also sent much larger exhibits: a double saloon railway carriage, 33 feet 6 inches long, made at the Ipswich Railway Workshops (Fig. 55), and a Whitechapel cart made by the Brisbane agricultural implement maker and coachbuilder, Alexander McLean. These, reported Executive Commissioner Gresley Lukin, were admired for their 'excellent workmanship' as much as for their timbers, and the railway carriage was sought out by weary exhibition-goers anxious to test its seats of purple morocco. Regrettably, the carriage, unlike the other exhibits, was shown only at the Sydney exhibition.

Besides these government exhibits, some fine examples of local furniture were collected to highlight Queensland timbers, including an inlaid table and jewel case, a desk, bookcase and two chests of drawers from the well-known Brisbane cabinetmaker Peter Thomle. His rival firms of T.P. Hardy and J. and J. Hislop supplied whole suites of furniture, while John W. Carey supplied a trophy of curtain rods and fretwork and also display cases. In addition, the Rockhampton
district sent two collections of local timbers and the Brisbane sawmiller William Pettigrew sent mantelpieces and a trophy of mouldings — so completing the finest collection of joinery and furniture ever shown by the colony and contributing to the allegations of Executive Commissioner Lukin's extravagance as most of the collection was commissioned (initially for the Sydney exhibition) at considerable expense. A huge log of a kauri pine from Noosa was also shown, proof of the district's 'great storehouse' of softwoods now being exported to the south in 'large' quantities. Despite the clearances of recent years, exhibition propaganda asserted that the softwood forests of southern Queensland were still 'far from exhausted'.

The exhibits at Sydney and Melbourne in 1879-81 were not only timber. F.M. Bailey sent his so-called Herbarium of Queensland of some 700 species of plants mounted in four bound volumes. Illustrating the pastoral capabilities of the colony was an enormous collection of native pasture grasses, grass seeds and fodder plants from the Queensland Acclimatisation Society, the Brisbane Botanic Gardens and Alexander Macpherson. This collection also included 55 varieties grown by Edward Way, the Director of Queen's Park, Toowoomba, where the government was undertaking experiments to combat the already alarming extinction of native grasses on the Darling Downs due to overstocking. More fibres and oils were shown by Macpherson and Carmichael (Fig. 38), and the Government Analyst Karl Theodor Staiger (who had taken up Dr Bancroft's pioneering experiments in native medicines) showed a collection of medicinal barks and oils. Further, the indefatigable Walter Hill and the Acclimatisation Society kept up a supply of live plants for Queensland's courts and for the horticultural shows held during the two exhibitions (see also Chapter 6). At Sydney they filled the balcony outside Queensland's court with greenery (Fig. 39), while at Melbourne they supplied the pineapples, staghorn and elkhorn ferns and macrozamia plants used to decorate the

FIG. 38. From the transept in front of Queensland's court at the Sydney exhibition of 1879-80. The diverse group of trophies are (left to right): cereals, fibres (in the shape of a Chinese pagoda), wool, tin (foreground), pearl-shell, timber, sugar and copper. (Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales)
court (Fig. 21). But Hill and the Acclimatisation Society were hardly rewarded for their pains, for Hill was forced to retire from his post in 1881 and the society lost its government grant in 1879, in a bid to silence critics of the colony’s uncontrolled timber destruction.

At the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 Queensland boasted the largest and most varied timber collection yet shown by an Australian colony, declared ‘remarkably important’ by the exhibition’s experts. This collection was brought from all over the colony under the direction of F.M. Bailey, now the Colonial Botanist and an exhibition commissioner. Prepared by the joiner Carl Madsen of the Brisbane sawmillers Pettigrew and Son, the collection comprised 427 samples of native timbers, each shown in the form of rough planks, polished book-shaped blocks and veneers. Exhibition propaganda claimed that these samples, representing only a third of the known timbers of the colony, were proof of ‘great future commercial results’. Native timbers were used for the ‘handsome’ furniture and fittings in Queensland’s court and to disguise its office as a timber stand. Also in the court were an obelisk of 2,000 pieces of timber assembled by the Mackay cabinetmaker John Brown and two huge logs of cedar cut from the Blackall Range by the local farmer Isaac Burgess (Fig. 53). These logs, reported the British Australasian newspaper, were ‘one of the sights of the Exhibition’. They certainly impressed a group of Yorkshire farm labourers who were marched through Queensland’s court just before embarking for the colony as immigrants. ‘The soil that grow them fellows will grow something for us’, one of the men remarked.

Collections from previous exhibitors were also shown: fibres and oils from Macpherson and Staiger, and gums, barks, grasses and dried ferns from Bancroft and Bailey. Describing the commercial uses of these exhibits were Bancroft’s A Contribution to Pharmacy from Queensland and Bailey’s The Flora of Queensland, published in 1886 especially for the exhibition. More of nature’s riches were shown in the mineral water tapped from the Helidon natural springs by the newly-established Helidon Spa Water Company, henceforth one of the colony’s keenest exhibitors. Most popular with exhibition-goers, however, was Queensland’s ‘very pretty’ conservatory which occupied the entire eastern side of its court (Fig. 40). Filled with live plants obtained from the colony and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the conservatory was a tropical wonderland. Among its ‘artistically arranged’ contents were orchids, palms, tree ferns, staghorn ferns, bird’s-nest ferns and ‘grotesquely shaped’ elk-horn ferns.

Timber exhibits crowded Queensland’s court at Melbourne in 1888-89, reflecting its growing timber exports to the southern colonies. Again an exhibition commissioner, Bailey expanded his 1886 collection to 538 samples, again prepared by Pettigrew’s sawmill and shown as planks, book-shaped blocks and veneers. This, reported the most varied and valuable timber collection yet shown by a British colony, was accompanied by a ‘full descriptive’ catalogue compiled by Bailey, again an exhibition commissioner. But the impact of Bailey’s collection was limited by the lack of space in Queensland’s court, which necessitated showing the veneers high on the south wall where, complained the
Argus reporter, they could hardly be seen without opera glasses. The fittings of the court were of bunya pine, as was a table made by John Hucker of Ipswich from a 14-year-old tree, showing the rapid growth of this the most 'useful' of Queensland's softwood timbers. Timber from the tablelands behind Cairns was also shown, proof of an 'inexhaustible source of revenue' only waiting to be tapped by the Cairns-Herberton railway then under construction. The Cairns exhibits included a log of cedar which had come over the Barron Falls in recent floods. This was a lucky survivor of Queensland's 'biggest [timber] scandal' when, before the opening of the railway, millions of feet of cedar were 'freshed' over the falls to be smashed to matchwood below. (It is estimated that over 10 million feet of cedar were lost in this appalling speculation by Burns, Philp and Company.)

Also crammed into the court were samples of joinery and fretwork from sawmillers all over the colony, and more collections of native oils, barks, gums and grasses. Prepared and catalogued by Bailey, the grasses comprised 162 kinds, a number never before equalled at an Australian exhibition. In addition there were more fibres from Macpherson and 20 paintings of Queensland flora by the noted Melbourne artist Ellis Rowan, resulting from her recent visit to the north (Figs 17, 41). But Queensland's 'trump card' at the exhibition was its well-attended conservatory (Fig. 42), located in a courtyard between the main building and the annexes and occupying 2,000 square feet. The conservatory was a triumph for its organiser, F.M. Bailey, who prepared and catalogued its contents, with the assistance of the Brisbane Botanic Gardens and the Acclimatisation Society, and personally supervised its installation. Here visitors could see the largest and most varied collection of economic and ornamental plants, both native and exotic, yet shown by the colony, all 'festooned and beautified' with its abundant ferns. Not surprisingly, Queensland won gold medals.
for its spectacular show in the conservatory, and for its timbers, oils, gums and grasses, and Ellis Rowan won a gold medal for her paintings.

Though Queensland did not participate officially in the Chicago exhibition of 1893, the Rockhampton pharmacist Thomas Ingham sent his own exhibit, to be shown in the British section (Fig. 43). This was a trophy from his Queensland Eucalyptus Oil Company established in 1891 to extract oils from the citron-scented *Eucalyptus citriodora* native to central Queensland. The trophy well showed how the forests could be ‘useful’, for already the company was operating two distilleries: one at Inghamstown which consumed 3 tons of leaves a day and another at Wallaroo which depended on some 300 Aboriginal people to maintain its supply of leaves (proving that the ‘dusky sons of the forest’ too could be ‘useful’). The centrepiece of the trophy was a large excrescence found growing on a eucalyptus tree, around which were arranged ‘characteristic Australian’ animals, including: a cassowary, an emu, kangaroos, wallabies, koalas, possums, gliders and even a snake. Also part of the trophy were 60 gallons of eucalyptus oil, transformed by a fountain into a fragrant spray. Ingham visited the exhibition and in August 1893 represented the Pharmaceutical Society of Queensland at Chicago’s International Congress of Pharmacists. Ingham’s trophy was not the only Queensland exhibit at Chicago. In the New South Wales pavilion Ellis Rowan showed another collection of paintings of Queensland flora, resulting from her more recent visits to the north in 1891 and 1892, and won another gold medal.

At the Queensland International Exhibition of 1897 the botanical exhibits shown in the agricultural court mostly came from F.M. Bailey’s Museum of Economic Botany in Brisbane (established in 1890 from his exhibition collections). Now his timber collection was expanded to some 600 samples, acquainting Queenslanders with the ‘vast range’ of ornamental timbers lying at their ‘very door’. Bailey also showed more economic plants, and on a revolving screen were more native grasses grown in his own experimental plot in the nearby Acclimatisation Society’s gardens (Fig. 89). Other exhibits included (the now deceased) Macpherson’s fibres, supplemented with new samples from the Kamerunga State Nursery, more oils, barks and gums. Collections of timbers from the Cairns and Herberton districts foretold the destruction of Australia’s last untouched domain of the red cedar. Among the Cairns Chamber of Commerce’s exhibits was a 6-ton log of red cedar cut from a tree that had produced 80 feet of ‘marketable’ logs (Fig. 44). This log, too large to fit into the agricultural court, had to be shown in the exhibition’s machinery section.

More spectacular was the large bush-house which connected the main Exhibition Building to the annexes (Fig. 45). Filled with live plants from the Acclimatisation Society’s gardens, the bush-house was laid out by the society’s curator William Soutter, who also laid out the exhibition’s gardens. The *Queenslander* reporter declared the bush-house ‘one of the most charming spots in Queensland’:

... a perfect dream of greenery, an enchanted bower of ferns, palms and orchids, so artistically arranged, so tastefully interwoven, that one can hardly credit that it was erected by human hands.

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**FIG. 42.** Queensland’s conservatory at the Melbourne exhibition of 1888-89. Its display of tropical plants included spectacular tree ferns from the Hambledon Plantation of Cairns and (reaching the roof) a pawpaw tree. (National Library of Australia)
FIG. 43. The Queensland Eucalyptus Oil Company's trophy for the Chicago exhibition of 1893, which included a coat of arms, a cassowary, an emu, two kangaroos, a koala with baby, two possums and two gliders. Also sent to Chicago as part of this trophy were two rock wallabies, a black swan, a snake, birds, Aboriginal artefacts and 60 gallons of eucalyptus oil.

(Queensland State Archives, PRE/137, 1892/13109, reproduced courtesy of the Dept of the Premier and Cabinet)

in the space of a few short weeks. It is Nature made perfect. Here, claimed the exhibition guide, Queenslanders could gain 'a more vivid idea than ever before' of the 'unequalled luxuriance' of their scrubs. 210 Covering the walls and pillars of the bush-house were more than 3,000 staghorn, bird's-nest and elkhorn ferns collected from the Blackall Range, while filling its rockeries were some 9,550 potted plants and 'many thousands' of other plants. Located in a corner of the bush-house was the 'octagon' (or 'bark hut'), an octagonal structure designed by the exhibition's architect Leslie Gordon Corrie to show the beauty and versatility of native barks and timbers. The bush-house won a gold medal at the exhibition and was generally acclaimed as one of its best attractions.

Botanical exhibits were overwhelmed by minerals in Queensland's court at the Greater Britain Exhibition of 1899. At one end of the court, however, was the previously-shown log of red cedar from Cairns, giving Londoners 'a faint idea' of the colony's timber resources. Beside this log were carvings by Thomas Blumson and William Edward Ockelford of Brisbane, showing how these resources could be 'worked up' into fine furniture. 211 Illustrating the pastoral capabilities of the colony was another collection of 153 native grasses prepared by F.M. Bailey and described in a catalogue published especially for the exhibition. 212 This collection won Bailey a gold medal. More of nature's riches were shown by Hugh Byard's eucalyptus oil exhibit. Regrettably, a plan to make Queensland's offices at the exhibition from colonial cedar had to be abandoned for want of time and the Imperial Institute declined to lend its collection of Queensland timbers.

Timber was better represented at the Glasgow exhibition of 1901, but here, again, Queensland's court was mostly a display of minerals. About 500 samples of timber were shown, along with some 'splendid' paintings of the Queensland bush by the Brisbane artists Richard Randall and Walter Jenner. By now it was apparent that Queensland's timber resources were not so 'inexhaustible', for softwoods already had to be imported and the cedar industry was virtually defunct. Moreover, the 'barren wilderness of rock and sand' where forests once stood told of serious environmental degradation. 213
situation did not begin to reverse until 1905 when Queensland’s first Director of Forests was appointed. But government land policy continued to favour agricultural and pastoral settlement over forest preservation, and it was not until the 1930s that timber licensing and re-afforestation were better administered in Queensland.

Besides the exhibits of flora described above, the exhibits of fauna provide further evidence of destruction. As early as the Paris event of 1855, Queensland’s dugong (or sea cow) was featured at exhibitions. Prized for its oil (a ‘superior’ medicine to cod liver oil), its flesh (for bacon and lard), its skin (for glue and ‘tough leather’) and even its bones and tusks (for ‘good second-rate ivory’), colonists soon found that ‘every part’ of the dugong could be turned to profit. So intensively was the dugong ‘fished’ off southern Queensland that by the early 1860s its fate was already ‘sealed’. Queensland’s pioneer exhibitor of dugong oil was the Brisbane medical practitioner Dr William Hobbs, proprietor of the St Helena dugong oil factory and a commissioner for the exhibitions of 1862 and 1867. At the succeeding Philadelphia and Paris events John Lionel Ching of the Hervey Bay fishery showed not only dozens of bottles of dugong oil but also dugong skeletons, skulls, tusks, teeth, leather and a dugong calf in spirits. Later whole mounted dugongs, up to nine feet long, became ‘conspicuous’ among Queensland’s exhibits (Fig. 53), until the Melbourne exhibition of 1888-89. Already by then the dugong had become too scarce in the south to maintain its commercial profitability, though it was still ‘fished’ into the 1890s further north at Repulse Bay, near Mackay.

More tempting to 19th-century epicures were Queensland’s bêche-de-mer and turtles. From as early as the 1820s the bêche-de-mer (or trepang) was collected in north Queensland waters for export to China where it was regarded as a delicacy. The dried bêche-de-mer so prized by the Chinese won little favour at exhibitions, being likened to ‘mouldy over-kept bananas’. On the other hand Queensland’s bêche-de-mer and turtle soup exhibits were highly acclaimed and, as
noted in Chapter 2, secured sales at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. Later Queensland’s turtle soup exhibits at the Greater Britain Exhibition won instant acclaim when they were all consumed at a banquet for the opening of its court! Queensland’s main exhibitor of béche-de-mer and turtle soups was its best known supplier of preserved delicacies, Brainard Skinner of Brisbane, and, following his death in 1896, his widow Catherine Skinner. Turtles were also featured at exhibitions as tortoise-shell, tinned ‘jelly’ (recommended for invalids) and as mounted specimens. Mounted turtles were shown at Sydney and Melbourne in 1879-81 and at London in 1886 (Fig. 87), while two live turtles were shown at the Melbourne exhibition of 1888-89, one in the aquarium and the other in the western lake. The harvesting of the green turtle continued until 1950 when turtles became totally protected in Queensland waters.

Countless exhibits of shells, corals and sponges also record the harvesting of the sea’s riches. Most valuable was the pearl-shell to be found in the waters of the Torres Strait, promising ‘a veritable jeweller’s shop’ of wealth. From the 1860s pearl-shell was harvested for export to London for button manufacture and ‘divers artistic uses’. At the Sydney and Melbourne exhibitions of 1879-81 Queensland showed trophies of 2 tons of pearl-shells (Fig. 21) and admonished visitors to dismiss any ‘tales’ of the exhaustibility of its shell stocks. These ‘tales’ had some substance, however, for soon afterwards the Pearl-shell and Béche-de-mer Fisheries Act of 1881 was passed to regulate the rapidly growing pearl-shell industry. The value of shell exports had reached almost £70,000 annually by 1886 when Queensland showed its next pearl-shell trophy at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition (Fig. 46). This kiosk-type trophy was covered in crimson plush decorated with hundreds of pearl-shells, while inside the kiosk was a case containing pearls, painted pearl-shells and pearl-shells made into ‘novel’ table ornaments.

FIG. 46. Queensland’s pearl-shell trophy at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886. Beyond are the wool exhibits. (John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland)

FIG. 47. Queensland’s pearl-shell trophy at the Glasgow exhibition of 1901. The trophy looked its best under the coloured electric lamps that illuminated the Queensland court. (British Australasian, 8 Aug. 1901)
Most conspicuous of Queensland’s trophies at the Melbourne exhibition of 1888-89 was a ‘marine’ trophy from Burns, Philp and Company of Thursday Island, the colony’s largest exporter of pearl-shell. This trophy, made of 6 tons of pearl-shells piled nearly 20 feet high on a base of clams and corals, won a silver medal. More intensive harvesting by the schooner system (of large fleets with a mother schooner) led to such rapid decline in shell stocks that Queensland’s ‘Pearl King’ James Clark had to move his fleet north to the Dutch-controlled waters of Aru in 1905.

Meanwhile at the Queensland International Exhibition Clark put on a show of ‘priceless’ pearls (Fig. 94) and a ‘grotto’ made of 4 tons of pearl-shells. Finally at Glasgow in 1901 Queensland showed its grandest-ever pearl-shell trophy (Fig. 47), another kiosk festooned with white nautilus and green-tipped snail shells as well as gleaming pearl-shells, all illuminated in rainbow colours. ‘No illustration can satisfactorily convey an idea of the scene’, raved the Scots Pictorial. Of course, exhibition-goers were unaware that Queensland’s pearl-shell stocks were now so depleted that the trochus shell would soon become the mainstay of its shell exports.

Other shells and corals were collected, but more for decoration than export. In 1893 William Saville-Kent, Queensland’s first Commissioner of Fisheries, wrote that ‘large quantities’ of shells and corals from the Great Barrier Reef were ‘orthodox adornment’ for Australia’s ‘innumerable’ oyster saloons and that many of the more ornamental varieties found a ready market for household decoration. Clam-shells (Tridacna gigas) were used to decorate the floor of Queensland’s court at Melbourne in 1880-81. Giant clams were used later at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition to ‘guard’ the entrance to Queensland’s court and to make a spectacular fountain in its conservatory (Fig. 40). More of these fountains were built in the adjoining water-basin (Fig. 48). Made from 375 pairs of ‘monster’ shells (each pair weighing up to 700 pounds) collected off Cooktown and shipped to London at great effort and expense, these fountains were a sensation with the London public. As a Queensland official reported:

To see these clam-shells set out virtually by the hundred, in the basin adjoining the court, was a veritable revelation to visitors. Their fitness for garden decoration was at once recognised.

On his visit to Queensland’s court the Prince of Wales was so impressed by the clams that he took off ‘a few’ for around his fish ponds at Sandringham.

Queensland’s corals could also impress, like its ‘fair show’ of red and white corals at London in 1872 (Fig. 8). Queensland’s main exhibitor of corals was the Bowen coral dealer Eliza Heron, who won awards at the Sydney and Melbourne exhibitions. Fish exhibits were not so impressive, except for the flowers and glass shades made of barramundi scales shown by Lucy Isabel de Jersey of Brisbane from 1879 until her death in 1890. For the fisheries court at Melbourne in 1888-89 the Queensland Museum supplied an award-winning collection of 88 ‘food’ fish. For the Greater Britain and Glasgow exhibitions the Brisbane artist-taxidermist Anthony Alder supplied coloured casts of Queensland fish.

Likewise the vast quantities of marsupial skins (often ‘furred’) shown at exhibitions record the harvesting of the land fauna. Colonists saw native marsupials as destructive ‘vermin’ to be exterminated so grasses could be saved for stock. Moreover, marsupials could be ‘useful’ for their skins, for eating and for the popular Australian ‘sport’ of kangaroo hunting. A ‘great attraction’ of Queensland’s court at Philadelphia were the skins of 12 kangaroos, 22 wallabies and 5 wallaroos, all from T.B. Stephens’ Ekbin Tannery. Possum rugs also made fine exhibits, as at Vienna in 1873 where both emu and possum rugs were...
'capitally displayed'. At Sydney and Melbourne in 1879-81 whole screens were draped with marsupial skins and rugs (Fig. 85), proof of the efficacy of Queensland's Marsupials Destruction Act of 1877 which encouraged unprecedented slaughter of native animals by the payment of government bounties for their scalps.

At the Colonial and Indian Exhibition Queensland had so many skins that most had to be shown outside its court, hung on the walls of the exhibition's electric lighting shed. In the court itself were a fur trophy crowned by a mounted kangaroo (Fig. 49) and a collection of 'useful articles' prepared by the Brisbane furrier and taxidermist Louis Wittgenstein. These included possum muffs and foot-warmers (with possum heads attached), possum and wallaby rugs and mats (with both heads and claws attached) and possum capes, coats, caps and gloves — which won scant praise for they were no longer fashionable in London. Also at this event the South Toolburra selector George Wickham showed kangaroo sinews 'applicable as sutures in surgical operations'. Later at the Melbourne exhibition of 1888-89 Wittgenstein showed more furs and skins as part of his exhibit of his new 'lightning' process of fellmongering, wool-scouring and tanning. Here, also, the Queensland Museum showed a mounted kangaroo and a series of rare mammals from the north-eastern coast, including the recently-discovered tree kangaroo. By 1899, when marsupial skins were shown again at the Greater Britain Exhibition, the government had paid bounties on over 12 million scalps in the 20 years since the passing of the Marsupials Destruction Act. The destruction of marsupials continued even after a comprehensive Animals and Birds Act was passed in 1921.

Most hated of all fauna was the dingo, the enemy of both man and beast. No encouragement was needed for its slaughter, indeed the
"wholesale destruction" of the dingo was sometimes blamed for an over-population of marsupials. The dingo was shown at exhibitions mostly as skins, proving how a ‘destructive animal’ could be ‘utilised in a most acceptable way to the settler’. In addition, mounted dingoes were shown at the Colonial and Indian and Queensland International exhibitions. At the former Queensland also had its live dingo mentioned in Chapter 2, presumably one of the live animals from the colonies kept in a special section of the exhibition’s grounds. Hated reptiles could also be ‘useful’ to the colonist, and what better proof than the goanna oil ‘used by the bushmen for sprains, etc.’ shown at London in 1862.

Some animals were shown more as curiosities than as useful or profitable commodities. Queensland had its ‘fair share’ of Australia’s animal curiosities, wrote the exhibition propagandist Price Fletcher. In Queensland, he continued:

The immigrant, whether he be a scientific scholar or simply an observer, will find a constant book of novelty open for inspection. It is this charm of novelty which makes this Austral land such a paradise to the lover of nature.

First of these curiosities to be shown at exhibitions were the ‘quaint’ mounted echidna and platypus sent to London in 1862 by the Warwick pastoralist J. Wildash. Other curiosities sent later to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition included a ‘formidable’ swordfish from Moreton Bay (Fig. 50), the skin of a crocodile ‘with skull and jaw intact’ from Mackay, and the skin of a 21-foot ‘carpet snake’, the largest yet found in the colony, from Cooktown. Also at this event Queensland’s infamous crocodiles (then mistakenly called ‘alligators’) were celebrated in music in The Pioneer Schottische or the Alligator Hop, composed by Heweton Burne of Queensland and performed by the band of the Grenadier Guards (Fig. 51). Another crocodile from Mackay, this time mounted, was sent to Melbourne in 1888-89.

Emu eggs were another colonial curiosity, both in their natural form or crafted by silversmiths into curious ornaments and utilities. Among Queensland’s most admired exhibits at the London exhibition of 1872 were a series of emu eggs mounted in silver as ‘beautiful table ornaments’: a claret jug, cup, mug, sugar basin, goblet and inkstand. At Melbourne in 1888-89 Queensland had emu eggs mounted ‘in an endless variety of ways’ while at the Greater Britain Exhibition O.J. Parker of London (possibly a former colonist) showed a prize-winning platypus rug. Fortunately for the platypus, the weight of such rugs made them less desirable than possum rugs.
Also curious were the animal groups commissioned for exhibitions from skilled taxidermists and reflecting the Victorian taste for melodrama. For the Sydney and Melbourne events of 1879-81 the versatile Alder prepared a series of groups which the *Argus* reporter found 'serio-comic in a high degree'. These were: *No Laughing Matter* depicting a death struggle between three 'laughing' kookaburras and a carpet snake; *In Extremis* and *The Successful Piscator* depicting more struggles between a koala, a fish and eagles; and *A Surprise at the Mid-day Camp* depicting some startled wallabies. So disappointed was Alder when his masterwork *No Laughing Matter* failed to win a First Order of Merit at the Sydney exhibition that he lodged an official complaint. For an anonymous correspondent to the *Brisbane Courier* Alder's groups were 'unsurpassed for taste and effect by the performance of any taxidermist whatever':

To arrange a group of showily-coloured birds in a glass case is within the capacity of any taxidermist, but ... to bring vividly before the dwellers in cities glimpses of wild suffering and enjoyment, as Mr Alder has done, is to elevate a mechanical acquirement into a fine art.

Alder showed more of his artistry at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, in groups of a dingo standing 'ferociously triumphant' over a young kangaroo (Fig. 52) and of an eagle killing a wallaby. Also for this event the famous London taxidermist and wildlife publisher Rowland Ward prepared a whole 'forest scene' of Queensland fauna (Fig. 53), depicting a tree snake and other reptiles 'glaring unpleasantly' at a choice assortment of birds. Also included in this the grandest of Queensland's animal groups were an emu, a cassowary, a platypus (said to be the 'last link' between mammal and bird), an echidna and a series of marsupials. The 'grotesqueness' and 'curious shapes' of these animals made Queensland's group an object of great curiosity. Some observers judged it 'not a mean rival' to Ward's better known Indian jungle scene also prepared for this exhibition and shown again at London's Empire of India Exhibition of 1895-96.

Most curious of all was Queensland's lungfish (*Neoceratodus forsteri*) found in the Mary and Burnett rivers. First described in 1870, the lungfish aroused much interest in the scientific world as the sole survivor of a Mesozoic order of animals thought to be intermediate between the fish and the lizard and previously known only from fossil teeth. The lungfish also aroused popular interest as a curious 'amphibian' for, in addition to its fish-like gills, it has a lung which enables it to breathe air. The lungfish made its exhibition debut in Queensland's courts at Paris in 1878 and at Sydney and Melbourne in 1879-81. At Sydney it was shown first as a preserved specimen from the Queensland Museum, complete with 'preserved lung and contents of stomach'. Then in October 1879, soon after the exhibition opened, two live specimens were shipped south by George W. Roebuck, the government sheep inspector at Maryborough, at the urging of Queensland's commissioners. These fish were shown in a tank of water beside which was placed a patch of grass so they could demonstrate the efficiency of their lungs, making for an exhibit of 'entirely unique interest'. It seems the fish did not survive, for only the preserved specimen was sent on to Melbourne in 1880. More live specimens were shown at Melbourne's later event of 1888-89. The lungfish reappeared at the Queensland International and Glasgow exhibitions as plaster casts made by Anthony Alder, who also made casts for the British Museum and for Queensland's court at the Imperial Institute.

Some animals were shown for their decorative qualities. Mounted birds of rich and varied plumage were an attraction of Queensland's courts from 1862 when the British zoologist E. Ward wrote that its 'numerous' bird collection (including six lyrebirds) called for much 'admiration'. For the Paris exhibition of 1867 the local committee at Bowen sent no less than 55 birds and a collection of local insects. For London's event of 1872 Richard Daintree planned to 'work up' some of the more richly-plumaged birds into the 'bird jewellery' then fashionable in England.
Though bird plumage became increasingly fashionable throughout the Western world in later years, Queensland made no more gestures to the plumage trade at exhibitions. In Queensland, it seems, birds were more 'useful' for shooting, eating and exhibiting than for their plumage. So active was the shooting that the Native Birds Protection Act of 1877 was passed to control the slaughter of birds in the settled areas of the colony, but the act did not attempt to control shooting for museum and other exhibits. For the Sydney and Melbourne exhibitions of 1879-81 the telegraph worker Tom A. Gulliver of Thornborough sent 95 birds from the Norman River, and the Brisbane naturalist Elizabeth Coxen sent a fine series of rifle birds, bower birds and regent birds, some mounted by her late husband, the ornithologist (and former exhibition commissioner and Queensland Museum founder) Charles Coxen (Fig. 54). At the Colonial and Indian Exhibition Queensland could boast a whole aviary of about 60 live birds and at least 200 dead specimens. These were surpassed by its aviary of about 250 live birds at Melbourne in 1888-89, and its many mounted specimens which included an emu and a cassowary. Another 'fine specimen' of a cassowary was shown in the Cairns district exhibit at the Queensland International Exhibition.

Equally decorative were the collections of butterflies, moths and beetles which showed the 'truly multitudinous' variety of insect life in the colony. Some 'gorgeous' butterflies added colour to Queensland's annexe at London in 1873. At the Sydney and Melbourne exhibitions of 1879-81 the well-known Brisbane naturalist and pioneer entomologist, Silvester Diggles, showed prize-winning collections of butterflies and beetles. Here also the Rockhampton school teacher G.L. Pilcher, a member of the Rockhampton School of Arts, contributed six cases of entomological specimens from central Queensland. At London in 1886 the Cooktown
FIG. 54. Mounted specimens in Queensland's court at the Sydney exhibition of 1879-80. Most of the birds were from Elizabeth Coxen, while the 'wild animals' above were from the Queensland Museum. (Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales)

agent James C. Baird showed a case of specimens from the north.

Here I have shown how Queensland's natural resources were recklessly exploited for economic gain and other 'useful ends', on the premise that they were both 'inexhaustible' and exploitable. By the turn of the century it was apparent that these resources were not so inexhaustible, though effective conservation action was not taken in Queensland until well into this century. Some of the flora and fauna exhibits, such as timber and pearl-shells, signified considerable export profits, but the flora exhibits signified more than just profits. Since in the 19th century luxuriant forests were (mistakenly) thought to indicate highly fertile soils, Queensland's timber exhibits were seen as proof of its great potential for agricultural production. Likewise its native grass exhibits were proof of its great pastoral capabilities. By contrast many of Queensland's fauna exhibits had no purpose other than to excite interest in its 'grotesque' and 'curious' forms of animal life. In all, the flora and fauna exhibits conveyed an image of a 'progressive' colony capable of exploiting its vast natural resources to the full.

CHAPTER 4

'FINE SPECIMENS' OF ABORIGINES

International exhibitions surveyed the world's civilisation and pointed to the future of mankind in an era of imperial expansion. By presenting visitors with material evidence of human progress, exhibitions facilitated comparison of nations and races, giving visible reality to prevailing theory about race, culture and the evolution of mankind. Exhibits were presented so as to emphasise the 'great differences' between races - their 'degrees of barbarism' and of 'civilisation'. From the late 1880s, exhibits came to include live people, adding a new dimension of 'living ethnology' which soon became indistinguishable from 'freak shows' and circus entertainment. In this chapter I examine how
Queensland represented its indigenous people at exhibitions, both in official exhibits and in amusements. I show that these people were used in exhibitions as hapless players in a game of power, politics, greed and indifference. This reflected a world view, endorsed at the highest level in the colony, that Australian Aboriginal people were one of the most, if not the most primitive race of mankind.

As I have previously noted, the racial underpinnings of overseas exhibitions have been well documented. Indeed notions of racial superiority and inferiority were so entrenched in early 20th-century exhibitions that even the layout and colour scheme of Buffalo’s Pan-American Exposition (1901) signified the onward march of — white — American civilisation. Mackenzie has pointed to the tendency of British exhibitions to seek out recently conquered peoples in order to make their appearance topical: ‘Yesterday’s enemies, the perpetrators of yesterday’s “barbarism”, became today’s exhibits ... but now set on the path to civilisation’.

Prevailing scientific theory provided exhibitions with a framework for classifying the world’s races on an evolutionary scale, a task that preoccupied the new discipline of anthropology in the late 19th century. It was inevitable that Darwin’s theory of natural selection should be linked to the theme of progress. In 1850 Herbert Spencer had built on the Malthusian doctrine of human progress through struggle to coin the phrase ‘survival of the fittest’. Also in 1850, the Scottish anatomist Robert Knox had published *The Races of Man* which claimed race as the sole determinant of human history. The concept of evolutionary struggle was seized on by white imperialists to justify the conquest and supplanting of indigenous peoples. Science lent authority to this new ideology of race, which asserted that moral and intellectual traits were biologically determined, and confused culture and physical characteristics. ‘Race’ acquired an all-inclusive meaning and became, as Douglas Lorimer puts it, ‘the most significant determinant of men’s past, present and future’. By the 1860s, ‘anthropology and racial determinism had become almost synonyms’. Marvin Harris continues: ‘Within anthropology, the only issue was whether the “inferior” races could legitimately aspire to improvement’. In the ensuing discourse of race, anthropologists used language, anthropometry, material culture, social structure or ritual to classify races on a scale which confirmed the power relations of colonist and colonised. In 1870 Max Müller in the *Anthropological Review* proposed a sevenfold classification which left little doubt about the losers and winners in the ‘struggle for survival’: the Australian Aborigine was placed on the bottom; with the New Guinea native, Melanesian and Polynesian on the next two levels above; and the European type at the top of the scale. Conflicting racial theories based on Biblical interpretation agreed with the evolutionary theories on one point: that the Australian Aborigine was in a state of degradation or ‘decay’, as proposed in a pamphlet written for the Chicago exhibition, and hence was doomed to perish.

In deconstructing the assumptions of the past, scholars have argued that the ‘primitive society’ defined by 19th-century theorists is more a reflection of Victorian mores than of empirical observation — a voyeuristic world of cannibalism, fetishism and sexual deviance stereotyped as the other end of the scale from Christian civilisation. Savagery unknown to ‘civilisation’ became a familiar catchcry for ethnological displays at exhibitions, where the dividing line between science and entertainment was as thin as the conflation of cultural and biological concepts. Since 19th-century theorists came from the respectable ranks of society, their perceptions of race were shaped by the values of their mainly upper middle-class background, which also distanced them from the lower orders of their own society. From this position of cultural dominance, ‘inferior’ races were objectified and analysed: ‘What is often called the black soul is a white man’s artefact’, writes Fanon. The artefacts produced by ‘primitive society’ became ‘curios’ or ‘curiosities’ and were generally displayed in a decontextualised jumble, except at the Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford, where an evolutionary display and classification system drew parallels between Australian Aboriginal culture and that of prehistoric Britons.

Nineteenth-century theorists saw the decline of coloured races before the advance of European colonists as evidence of the application of Darwinian principles to mankind, and as justification for aggressive collecting by imperial museums. The view that Australian Aboriginal people represented the lowest type of humanity and, in the evolutionary scheme, were doomed to perish, made them and their artefacts objects of great curiosity. Queensland’s remote frontiers, where these people could be found in their ‘uncivilised’
state, became a hunting-ground for collectors of exhibits for circuses, exhibitions and museums. By 1852, even before Darwinian theory was applied to humans, an Aboriginal man from Queensland had appeared in a circus in Europe and Aboriginal performers became common in Australian circuses. Robert Bogdan and others have shown how 'natives' were publicly exhibited throughout the 19th century along with other culturally strange people such as freaks and monsters, and how oddity and savagery were exaggerated in the quest for the exotic.

Implicit in this ethnocentric view of Australian Aboriginal people was the assumption that they were 'deformed' and 'ugly', not the 'Noble Savages' seen by 18th-century travellers. This aversion often took on the character of a moral judgement. The artist Ellis Rowan 'shivered' with excitement as she observed instances of 'cannibalism', superstition, mutilation, brutality and genocide among the 'wild' people of north Queensland. To Rowan, they were 'a wretched-looking, misshapen and repulsive race'. In 'To a Black Gin', published in 1890, the Queensland poet Brunton Stephens wrote:

Thou art not beautiful, I tell thee plainly,
Oh! thou ungainliest of things ungainly;
Who thinks thee less than hideous dotes insanely...
Thy skull development mine eye displeases;
Thy facial angle forty-five degrees is ...
Eve's daughter! With that skull! and that complexion?
What principle of 'Natural Selection'
Gave thee with Eve the remotest connection?

The significance of this virulent poem becomes apparent when one considers that at the time Stephens was a senior clerk in the Colonial Secretary's Office, the government agency charged with the oversight of the colony's indigenous people. Hence it is not surprising that they were either overlooked at exhibitions or used to reaffirm an unquestioning faith in white superiority.

Since Aboriginal people signified the very antithesis of progress, they were stereotyped in exhibitions as a foil to 'Australian progress', measured by how much colonists were transforming a land once roamed by primitives incapable of exploiting its resources. In 1879 visitors to Sydney's exhibition witnessed the coming of age of 'a vast continent only reclaimed from desolation, solitude and barbarism within the memories of our fathers', while an exhibition guide described our Aboriginal 'predecessors' as having 'no history worth mentioning' and being 'much nicer to read of than to see'. Exhibits, rhetoric and, occasionally, amusements, drew stark contrasts between 'the shudd'ring savage' and the 'progressive' colonist, and between 'the primeval forest' and the burgeoning Australian cities. South Australia's 'bush scene' at the Melbourne exhibition of 1880-81 showed the 'progress' brought by the colonist to 'the desert of civilisation', while its Aboriginal diorama at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition confirmed that 'no progress could have been made in a thousand years, without the advent of the colonist'. Queensland's commissioners for this event planned to illustrate the progressive development of their colony by showing an Aboriginal mia-mia and a colonist's bark hut side-by-side with photographs of the 'more pretentious private and public edifices'. The mia-mia was eventually shown only in miniature, in Blackman's model of a stockyard, but it served the same purpose:

It [the model] consists of three portions — a stockyard with all necessary adjuncts, to denote civilised life; a bark humpy, with its rather primitive surroundings, representing semi-civilised life; and a completely equipped blacks' camp, to furnish the idea of the uncivilised.

Aboriginal people were edited out of Melbourne's exhibitions of 1880-81 and 1888-89. The latter, which aimed to forge 'an Australian character' from the centennial celebrations, provides an insight into the emerging national ethos. The official exhibition rhetoric made no reference to Australia's convict origins and dismissed Aboriginal culture as 'barbarism' unworthy of recognition. By contrast, Maoris were accorded an official place in New Zealand events. The report of the New Zealand Exhibition of 1865 insisted that its exhibits 'would have been incomplete' without a large section on Maori culture. Most Australian exhibitions, including the Queensland International Exhibition, did not include a special section or even a class for Aboriginal artefacts, which meant that — if shown at all — they were generally subsumed by their European counterparts in such classes as 'Weapons', 'Basketry' or 'Education and science'. Aboriginal people fared no better in overseas events for which Queensland's commissioners were able to devise their own classification systems for their exhibits (usually predetermined by host countries): at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition Aboriginal artefacts were linked with natural history in a joint category of exotica,
while at the Greater Britain Exhibition artefacts were simply eliminated.

Aboriginal people were not a prominent feature of Queensland’s courts until the Sydney exhibition. Private collectors had sent small numbers of Aboriginal ‘curios’ to earlier events, but their minor role is explained by Angus Mackay in an essay written for Queensland’s display at Paris in 1878: ‘The native weapons are sent as matters of curiosity only, neither the natives nor their weapons being of much moment to the colonists’. Queensland’s displays at London, Vienna and Philadelphia in the 1870s had life-sized photographs of Aboriginal people, which were said to present ‘a picture of the lowest surviving human race’. By the time of Philadelphia, the Queensland Aborigine was already reported to be ‘fast sharing the fate of the American Indian’ and in 1885 the commissioners for the Colonial and Indian exhibition complained that artefacts had become difficult to obtain. These are the only passing references in exhibition propaganda to the extermination brought by violence, disease, opium, alcohol and neglect which reduced the colony’s Aboriginal population from a conservatively estimated 100,000 to 200,000 at the time of the first European contact to some 25,000 by the end of the century, a more rapid decline than occurred in other sparsely-settled Australian colonies.

The Sydney exhibition of 1879-80 was exceptional among Australian exhibitions in including an ethnological court (Fig. 55) among its official exhibits and also Fijian ‘cannibal’ dancers and ‘strangely-attired’ Maoris among its amusements. The impetus for the court seems to have come from the Australian Museum, Sydney, and from Dr (later Sir) James Hector, the Executive Commissioner of New Zealand and Director of the Colonial Museum of New Zealand, Wellington. The court had a shaky beginning, for when Hector arrived from New Zealand in August 1879 with his ethnological collection, he was advised that ‘the scheme for their exhibition had been abandoned’. With undertakings of loans from other colonies and the Australian Museum, the court proceeded and eventually opened on the Prince of Wales’ Birthday holiday on 10 November, almost two months after the start of the exhibition. Billed as the most comprehensive collection of South Pacific ethnology yet assembled, the 5,200 exhibits grouped by race provided ample ‘points of comparison’ between the region’s indigenous peoples. The exhibits included skulls and skeletons, poisoned spears and arrows, the charred remains of a cannibal feast, and ‘grotesque’ carvings. The official conclusion drawn from such comparison fitted the racial theory of the day: the Maori was ‘in every way superior’, the virile and warlike New Guinea native was next in progression, the Australian Aborigine was headed for extinction. Aborigi-

nal, New Guinea and Polynesian artefacts were loaned to the ethnological court by the Queensland Museum and the Colonial Secretary, A.H. Palmer, both later awarded bronze medals for their contributions. The court appealed to a macabre fascination for objects never before seen by ‘civilised’ eyes and, in the case of the Aborigi-

ne, fast disappearing. The obvious popularity of this court, located in the eastern transept directly above the Queensland court, no doubt provided inspiration for the additions made to the latter in the exhibition’s final months.

In January 1880 a pair of mummified figures from Stephen Island in the Torres Strait were put on prominent display in the Queensland court. These were on loan from Colonial Secretary Palmer and had recently been shown in his Brisbane office, having been taken in December 1879 by the government schooner, the Pearl, during patrol duties in the north. Mockingly dubbed ‘distinguished Queenslanders’ when they arrived in Sydney, these mummies were said to present ‘a striking contrast to the products of art and industry by which they are surrounded’. A report from the Sydney Morning Herald continues:

The ‘posthumous man’ has a mate of the softer, frailer, weaker — or whatever adjective may best suit mortality in this desiccated condition — let us say, more diminutive sex, and the two stood erect, side by side ... They are not, however, very exhilarating spectacles, and struck us as rather a painful satire on humanity ... Happily, embalming is not a custom of our race ... Better, surely, to resolve into primal elements than to stand grinning through future cycles for the edification of the curious.

In February 1880 a third mummified figure, ‘the Aboriginal Cheops’, was added to Queensland’s court, on loan from another private collector, Ferdinand Sachs, a Townsville banker and pastoralist. This mummy was reputedly the remains of Naada, a so-called ‘King’ of the Trinity Bay tribes of north Queensland, who were reported to be still ‘much distressed’ by the theft which had occurred in August 1876 at the hands of an exploring expedition led by Sachs. Accounts of the expedition show
that the mummy had been taken from a tree platform, which was only an initial stage in a mourning process before its burial.\textsuperscript{267} Hence removal of the mummy denied the spirit of the dead its passage to the ancestral world, constituting a brutal cultural affront to the Trinity Bay people who were yet to be taught the benefits of 'civilisation'.

Along with other Aboriginal and New Guinea 'curios' and 'curiosities', all three mummies were sent on to the Melbourne exhibition of 1880-81, where the grisly spectacle proved a cultural affront to Europeans. The \textit{Argus} reported:

\begin{quote}
... these specimens are decidedly more curious than pleasing. The dried-up flesh of a dingy red colour, the open staring eyes, the desiccated rigidity of the limbs and bodies ... form a picture that fills one with vague awe, and brings strange and remote ideas and associations into the mind ...
\end{quote}

Melbourne's \textit{Age} confirmed that these 'curious looking creatures' were 'one of the sights of the Exhibition'.\textsuperscript{268} Aboriginal exhibits were not a prominent feature of Queensland's courts thereafter.

At later exhibitions, when Queensland could boast a new attraction, a neighbouring colony,\textsuperscript{269} attention shifted to New Guinea and the productions of its indigenous people. Their higher place on the racial scale allowed them to escape the derision directed at Australian Aboriginal people in exhibitions. New Guinea artefacts, admittedly 'rude' by Western standards, were conceded to have 'a certain amount of barbarous, artistic taste in their manufacture'.\textsuperscript{270} A large collection of New Guinea ethnology, including models of native villages and boats, filled a section of Queensland's court at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition (Fig. 56). The level of civilisation represented here was of topical interest in London.
while the Australian colonies urged Britain to establish sovereignty over southern New Guinea and argued over the sharing of administrative costs. The *Times* reporter commented that native artefacts were all New Guinea had to show and that ‘it remains to be seen whether the country will ever get beyond this stage’ of backwardness. At Melbourne’s event of 1888–89 the New Guinea exhibits were shown in a separate minor court, due to the lack of space in Queensland’s court. Here the artefacts were supplemented by photographs taken by the well-known Melbourne photographer John William Lindt on an expedition to new Guinea in 1885. The New Guinea Commissioner, John Douglas, and the Queensland Museum were later awarded gold medals for their New Guinea exhibits.

Significantly, Queensland’s substantial population of Melanesians were never featured at exhibitions. Their presence in increasing numbers as indentured labourers from 1863 prompted humanitarians in Britain and Australia to question whether Queensland was perpetuating ‘a system of slavery’ already morally and economically moribund in ‘enlightened’ Western society. Hence the Melanesian question got no airing at exhibitions, though it was a burning issue for the northern separationists who tried to publicise their cause at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition.

Attention again focussed on Aboriginal people during the 1890s when Queensland established a reputation throughout Australia, and beyond, for exhibiting live specimens. The catalyst for this move into the sphere of popular entertainment, modelled on the American circus and stage, was the Chicago exhibition, which received world-wide publicity from 1891. Chicago’s ethnological displays were to surpass the native encampments at Paris in 1889, which had popularised ‘living ethnology’ at international exhibitions. The Chicago officials canvassed all quarters of the globe for exhibits, live and otherwise, to form a hierarchy of races underpinned, as
Robert Rydell has shown, by the same theory evident in Sydney's ethnological court and likewise supported by government officials and museums. New South Wales assembled a large collection of Aboriginal and Pacific Island artefacts for display in the Anthropological Building, which was to house 'Anthropological Laboratories' where skulls, skeletons and preserved and dissected brains of the world's races would trace the 'advances from savagery to civilisation'. In November 1892 the Queensland Government declined to cooperate in a proposal to send Aboriginal people as part of a Pacific contingent. But this, and the fact that Queensland had already withdrawn from official participation at Chicago, did not stop private entrepreneurs from attempting to send live exhibits from the colony.

In July 1892 a troupe of eight Aboriginal people (probably six men and two women) sailed from Townsville for Chicago in the 'especial care' of a showman and agent for the American Barnum and Bailey Circus, Robert Alexander Cunningham. The Townsville chemist Joseph George Atkinson agreed to pay a bond of £500 to the government to guarantee the safe return of the people within three years. Given Cunningham's notoriety, the government's trust was misplaced. Earlier, in 1883, he had 'with much difficulty' taken another troupe of nine Aboriginal people from north Queensland to tour North America and Europe, and only three were alive when he had abandoned them later in New York. According to Archibald Meston, a competitor in the showman stakes, Cunningham's 1892 troupe were 'ordinary tame town blacks' and were poorly equipped with the boomerangs, etc. needed for their performances. Meston stated that he himself would not have bothered with such poor specimens. The troupe travelled to the southern colonies and New Zealand on the way to Chicago, where they performed on the Midway Plaisance, the exhibition's popular amusement area, alongside other 'exotic' peoples and Carl Hagenbeck's Wild Animals.

That was only the beginning of an extensive tour which took the troupe through circuses, theatres and museums. They were part of Barnum and Bailey's 'Great Ethnological Congress of Savage and Barbarous Tribes', the feature of the circus' 1893-95 season. Four of the troupe died and another left before they departed America. The remainder reportedly went to Germany and Sweden under contract to two other showmen after Cunningham had 'left' them. The Queensland Government had quite forgotten about the troupe by May 1896 when an Ingham grazier, James Cassady, inquired after them (some had come from his Mungalla property). By then the guarantor Atkinson had just died and Cunningham could not be contacted. In September 1898 two of the troupe, the sole survivors, landed at the London Docks, having absconded from their last employer in Germany. They 'spoke in anything but kindly terms' of Cunningham whom, they said, was living in grand style in America having made 'plenty of money ... at their expense'. The Agent-General and former Colonial Secretary, Sir Horace Tozer, arranged their repatriation to Queensland and they landed at Townsville in late November.

Another commercial venture to send live exhibits to the Chicago exhibition was more ambitious and extensively planned and claimed...
scientific credibility. The organisers were Archibald Meston (Fig. 57), a self-appointed specialist in Australian ethnology, and Brabazon Harry Purcell, a Brisbane financial and stock and station agent. Following an agreement made on 16 November 1891, the partners borrowed money ‘all over the place’ and travelled throughout Queensland to recruit ‘wild’ Aboriginal people and collect artefacts, Meston concentrating on the Russell River area and the coast north to Cooktown and Purcell undertaking a nine-month expedition in the west and north-west and over the border into the Northern Territory. The rounding-up and drilling of their show exhibits raised the wider question of the ‘improvement’ and ‘preservation’ of a pitiful and vulnerable race. Meston saw an opportunity for aggrandisement in a life-long career as the colony’s Aboriginal ‘expert’. From this time, he challenged the government to address the degraded condition of the people he saw on his travels, and had lost patience by September 1893 when he wrote to Colonial Secretary Tozer:

This question of the aboriginals is not to be indefinitely postponed. If you decide to do nothing, it will come before the colony in a shape that will not be pleasant for Queenslanders to contemplate ... Hesitation in the face of a work that has been crying to Heaven for half a century seems a fatal kind of weakness.

On 14 November 1892, following his exhibit-hunting expedition, Purcell also challenged Tozer to extend ‘a helping hand’ to the colony’s Aboriginal people:

Should things be allowed to go on as they are five years will wipe out the whole of the blacks in Western Queensland ... I am certain you cannot possibly conceive the frightful condition of these people. 281

Ironically, while expressing their humanitarian concerns, Meston and Purcell were discredited by their unscrupulous dealings with the Aboriginal people. Meston, who had boasted publicly on more than one occasion that each notch on his rifle signified ‘a dead nigger’, was soon regarded with suspicion in the north. John T. Embley, a government surveyor from the Gulf country, reported:

When men like Meston come amongst the blacks they do a great deal of harm by taking their weapons and giving little or nothing in exchange ... I have lately seen a number of natives with whom Meston had come in contact. Their general ... opinion was ‘He no good’. 285

In July 1892 Purcell’s activities in the Georgina River district brought allegations of brutality and forcible abduction from the police magistrate at Boulia. As well as rounding up 32 people (26 men and 6 women), the partners collected over 3,000 artefacts for their Chicago troupe. Adopting the scientific jargon of the time, they claimed to be recording the vanishing culture of ‘a doomed race’, but they were careful to select only spectacular exhibits: fine specimens over 6 feet tall, some ‘darkies of rank’, and representatives of tribes noted for ‘cannibalism’, narcotism or strange sexual rites. In the western desert Purcell captured some Wahkis, the tribe who practised sub-incision of males (known as ‘Sturt’s Terrible Rite’ or ‘Micka-making’); and in the Cloncurry area he captured some Kalkadoons reputed as fierce ‘cannibals’ and the ‘strangest of all the races of the earth’. Purcell also managed to abduct five Prince of Wales Islanders, including ‘a sable King and Queen’ and their child. The troupe were to be hawked around scientific societies besides places of public entertainment. Meston, a member of the Royal Society of Queensland, lectured to the society on 10 September 1892 on ‘Native Weapons’, while on the following 11 November his partner Purcell lectured on ‘Pituri and Pituri Blacks’ of the Georgina River area.

Meston’s Wild Australia Show, as it was billed, opened at Her Majesty’s Opera House, Brisbane, on 5 December 1892 as the premiere of an Australasian and world tour, including the Chicago exhibition, to dispel the world’s ignorance about Queensland. In the show Meston illustrated his ethnological lectures with his live exhibits who performed ‘every phase of savage life ... such as seen when white men first entered the colony’, against a backdrop of the Bellenden-Ker mountains (a reminder of Meston’s well-known expedition to the mountains in 1889) painted by the scenic artist Carl Frederick Venmemark. After a week the show moved to the Breakfast Creek Sportsgrounds and later to the Exhibition Grounds, where the corroborees and boomerangs and spear throwing could be seen to better effect and more tableaux vivants and ‘pyrotechnic effects’ were added. By popular demand, the show continued in Brisbane until 21 December. Two days later the troupe left for Sydney, without any bond or agreement being settled with the government, Meston declaring just as they sailed from Brisbane: ‘The Government won’t interfere with me as I know too much
about the way they have treated the blacks of this country'.

The first Sydney season of the Wild Australia Show was from 26 December at the Bondi Aquarium and later at the Sydney School of Arts. By now the troupe were reduced to 27 people and equipped with fewer artefacts. Sydney audiences were not so enthusiastic and the Daily Telegraph panned the show as 'merely an indiscriminate assortment of blackfellows ... having no proper supervision, and run purely as a speculation'.

The subsequent Melbourne season from 26 January 1893 was under contract to the Australian Natives' Association, who broke the contract on 29 January on the grounds of having been misled by Meston as to the scale of the show. Realising that the venture would no longer return the profits he expected, Meston then withdrew and 'bolted' northwards, leaving Purcell with the outstanding debts and the care and sustenance of the troupe. Purcell accused Meston of callous contempt while Meston accused Purcell of 'misappropriating' the remaining artefacts and scenery. At short notice, Purcell stood in for Meston to lecture on Queensland ethnology to the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia's Victorian branch on 3 and 15 February, illustrating his lectures with live exhibits and highlighting the 'bora' initiation he had supposedly endured on his travels in Queensland. In late February the Victorian police reported that the troupe were left destitute in Fitzroy. Later Purcell and the troupe embarked on a tour of Victoria before returning to Sydney by June to perform at Her Majesty's Theatre. Early in June Purcell lectured on Aboriginal rites and customs to the Royal Geographical Society's New South Wales branch, again describing the brutal sexual rites he had observed in Queensland. On 21 June he directed a performance by the troupe in Sydney's Domain for the edification of the New South Wales Governor. By 1 July the troupe had run out of engagements and Purcell was no longer able to sustain them.

It was only then that he abandoned all hopes of reaching Chicago and cabled the Queensland Government for help. The Colonial Secretary, Horace Tozer, agreed to repatriate the troupe at government expense, but declined to act on Meston's demands that Purcell be charged with larceny and brutality. Tozer hoped that the fate of this troupe would be 'an object lesson' for future attempts to abduct Aboriginal people from Queensland. One of the abducted Prince of Wales Islands, Tarbucket, also learnt his lesson, for he stalked Meston when he next came north, protesting: '... I don't think he much good, that fellow owe me fifteen pounds, no pay it'. Purcell seems to have left Brisbane at this stage and died in obscurity in 1904. Meston, despite press...
publicity about the stranding of the troupe and the tabling of relevant correspondence in Parliament, emerged unscathed and his status as an Aboriginal 'expert' enhanced. George Hislop, a respected colonist from Wyalla on the Bloomfield River, later reminded readers of the Queenslander about the Wild Australia fiasco, but Meston retorted that 'public interest has long since vanished'.

Meston's experiment in abducting and drilling show exhibits can be seen as a rehearsal of his future scenario for Queensland's Aboriginal people. This was shaped, William Thorpe argues, by an amalgam of authoritarianism, a 'worship of force', agrarianism and phobias about racial intermixing. Just before the Wild Australia Show premiered in Brisbane, the Courier remarked:

'It was not to be supposed that savages gathered as these have been from districts separated by many hundreds of miles, speaking dialects and practising customs which rendered them as strange to each other as they are to the white man, could be brought at once to act in concert. They are now well acquainted with each other and what is required of them ...'

Meston later revealed that the drilling process had taken three months. The success of the drilling must have given Meston, renowned for his own physical strength, substance for his theory that 'physical power' appealed to Aboriginal people 'as to other savage races'. The troupe were drilled to perform stereotyped acts of 'barbarism' which confirmed their cultural distance from Western civilisation. They enacted their losing struggle with the colonist in tableaux vivants of Australian pioneer life, which included attacks on a swagman's camp ('Realistic and bloody deeds!'), the massacre of the innocent victim ('A Terrible Death'), the tracking of the savage murderer ('The Black Tracker and his use!') and the resultant punishment ('Dispersion' and what it means!). The Sydney Daily Telegraph reported that in the tableaux the troupe 'showed quite a histrionic aptitude' and that the episode of the massacred swagman 'was worthy of the best efforts of the melodramatic school'. Meston, already proclaiming that removing Aboriginal people from the evils of civilisation was the only means of arresting the extermination process, used his troupe to demonstrate the superiority of tribal people over semi-civilised town-dwellers: 'There are no tame demoralised blacks in Meston's party. They are all healthy athletic true Myalls ...'. The Wild Australia Show embodied the notions of control and racial purity and the arrogant disregard for tribal culture that would underscore his future proposals to solve the 'Aboriginal problem'.

FIG. 59. From Meston's photographs, probably the Wild Australia troupe. (Queensland Museum)

FIG. 60. Canando from western Queensland, possibly one of the Wild Australia troupe. (Queensland Museum)
Though bizarre by today’s standards, Meston’s show would have been readily acceptable among the ‘ethnological’ entertainments at its intended destination, the Chicago exhibition. At its premiere, the show was likened to the Wild West shows that had toured Australia in the wake of ‘Buffalo Bill’ Cody’s famous re-enactments of the American frontier. In 1890-91 a former partner of Cody’s, ‘Dr’ Frank Carver, had toured the southern colonies with his Wild America troupe of buckjump riders, lassoes and American Indian dancers. Meston and Purcell could have seen Wild West shows in Brisbane in 1891, the year they planned their show: Harmston’s American and Continental Circus came in February, and Wirth’s Wild West Show and Hippodrome in February and June-July. The lasso throwing and riding stunts that were central to these shows could have inspired the feats performed by Meston’s troupe, and they also featured tableaux of frontier violence, though the losers were Indians who attacked stage coaches instead of swagmen’s camps. In April 1892, possibly when Meston and his partner were on their exhibit-hunting expeditions, Brisbane was visited by Sells Bros’ Circus, a much grander spectacle from America, which would have left a lasting impression. Among its troupe of 295 persons were freaks and ‘exotics’, including Japanese jugglers and Arab warriors who ‘gave a remarkable entertainment not unlike a wild corroboree’ and staged mock battles.

More familiar throughout Queensland were American-based black minstrel shows, which reached the height of their popularity in Australia in the late 19th century and set a derogatory stereotype for black performers. The well-known Charles B. Hicks’ American Coloured Minstrels played in Brisbane in 1890-91. Minstrel shows undoubtedly gave Meston’s show its burlesque and comic features and could have influenced his own role as an interlocutor figure. Perhaps more crucial in stirring his dreams of Chicago was the visit to Brisbane in December 1891 of Henry M. Stanley, ‘The Man who Found Livingstone’, who gave a series of lectures on his ‘hair-breadth escapades’ in Central Africa. An explorer and adventurer, bringer of civilisation, writer, now world celebrity — here was a man to inspire Meston!
In 1894, within recent memory of the Wild Australia fiasco, Colonial Secretary Tozer commissioned Meston to advise the government on the future of Queensland’s Aboriginal people, and was soon to oversee ‘abductions’ on a scale unprecedented in Australia. Meston’s reports of 1895 and 1896 became the basis of the Aborigines Protection Act of 1897 which established a series of reserves where Aboriginal people would be removed eventually en masse from all over the colony to protect them, it was claimed, from the evils of civilisation. Whereas earlier historiography accepted that this segregation process was motivated by white ‘humanitarian’ concern, Raymond Evans argues that the reserve system was a mechanism for keeping Aboriginal people at a safe distance from whites, unless they could be pressed into cheap labour, and for exerting rigorous control. Evans proves that widespread fears of contamination, both hygienic and eugenic, prompted Meston’s brutal abductions to these reserves.

Meston, while touring the colony in his advisory role, continued to lecture on ethnology and exhibit Aboriginal people, for his ambitions as a showman were not squashed by his unsuccessful bid to perform at Chicago. His powerful physique, measured gait and proud bearing made him a picturesque figure; as a contemporary observed: ‘he has the heart of a frog hidden under the plumage of a peacock’. Meston also had a keen sense of the histrionic; he was, indeed, a born showman. His finest hour in the business came on 9 April 1896 when, resplendent as a Scottish chieftain (he was proud of his Scottish ancestry), he rode on horseback at the head of a ‘stalwart’ band of Aboriginal men who welcomed the new Governor, Lord Lamington, to Brisbane (Fig. 61). This was the prelude to more performances a year later at the Queensland International Exhibition.

Meston was the obvious choice to organise Aboriginal amusements for the local exhibition, following a request from its directors to the (now) Home Secretary, Horace Tozer. Meston’s exhibits, ‘Thirty Chosen Warriors’ (men only), performed near the close of the exhibition, from 2 to 7 August 1897 (Fig. 62), providing a ‘most profitable’ attraction and a striking contrast to the imperial pageantry recently seen in Brisbane for Queen Victoria’s diamond jubilee. The warriors began with a march past to show their weapons and ended with a football match ‘to show what these Aboriginals really can do’. Each day they gave demonstrations of boomerang and spear throwing, running and mock combats, and staged corroborees and tableaux vivants: ‘there was some fine posturing and a notable barbaric picturesqueness of effect’. Some of the evening performances had to be moved from the ring into the annexes and concert hall due to the cold weather, for the warriors were clad only in feathers and paint. By this time Meston himself was taking a more active role in the performances, matching his strength against that of his warriors (Fig. 64) for he prided himself on being able to throw a boomerang or a spear with equal skill.
These performances, billed as 'rare and valuable lessons in ethnology' for school children, offered a more specific lesson for exhibition visitors. Most of the warriors were carefully chosen from the Fraser Island Aboriginal Reserve, established in February 1897 by Tozer on Meston's advice as a 'permanent precedent' for the reserves to be sanctioned in December that year under the new legislation. The sight of such 'fine specimens' convinced at least one visitor of the efficacy of the reserves system:

Only five months ago these men were ... in an utterly demoralised and hopeless condition, under the influence of drink and opium. What they are today the public may see by visiting the Exhibition. Sir Horace deserves hearty congratulations on the success of his humanitarian method.\footnote{306}

Visitors were, however, denied access to less impressive specimens who would have provided some insight into the deprivations of the reserves, and just as the exhibition opened Meston ensured that all Aboriginal people 'rambling around Brisbane ... in a more or less demoralised condition' would be despatched to reserves.\footnote{307} Nor were native artefacts represented in the exhibition's displays, apart from the 'magnificent trophies' of New Guinea weapons which decorated the 'octagon'.

Following his appointment in January 1898 as Queensland's Southern Protector of Aborigines, Meston continued to exhibit chosen specimens to enhance his status. By February 1900, when the Fraser Island Reserve was handed over to the Anglican Board of Missions, it was apparent that the reserve system was not arresting the decline of the colony's Aboriginal population. Many of Meston's exhibition warriors were already at rest in 'two very full cemeteries',\footnote{308} the victims of
hookworm infestation, and the remainder would be forcibly transported north to Yarrabah Mission, near Cairns, when the Fraser Island settlement was finally closed in 1904. From 1898 Queensland's Aboriginal reserves functioned more overtly as correctional and custodial institutions, where the regimented and demoralised inmates lacked basic sanitation, medical care and adequate diet. In his recent study of the Barrambah Aboriginal settlement, Thomas Blake has shown that the reserve system accelerated the destruction of Aboriginal society and contributed to higher rates of mortality. The reserves, Raymond Evans concludes, 'removed the drama of destruction to a remote stage, where it might be played out, unadvertised, in virtually closed houses'.

The Queensland Aborigines Protection Act became the model for similar legislation in Western Australia (1905), the Northern Territory (1910), South Australia (1911), and a cornerstone of Queensland Aboriginal welfare almost to the present.

Meston held his position as Southern Protector until December 1903, during which time he organised Aboriginal displays for the Australian federation celebrations. In January 1901, 25 Queensland Aboriginal people took part in a re-enactment of Captain Cook's landing at Botany Bay, Sydney. Later, in May 1901, when the Duke and Duchess of York visited Brisbane, they were greeted by another 'Mestonian triumph', an 'Aboriginal Arch' spanning George Street, with 60 people who 'howled and corroborated ... with all their might' as the royals drove beneath. Meanwhile, on the other side of the globe, Aboriginal people were absent from Queensland's display at the Glasgow exhibition which opened also in May. Here and at the Greater Britain Exhibition, where the main purpose was to attract British mining investment, Aboriginal people were unwanted, though at the latter a series of portraits by the Brisbane artist Oscar Fristrom served as tragic reminders of 'a doomed race' (Fig. 65).

Fristrom had also sent Aboriginal portraits to Melbourne's event of 1888-89. These were the most compassionate representations of Queensland's indigenous people to be seen at international exhibitions.

This chapter has pointed to an assumption of exhibition organisers that 'natives' were to be studied and assessed like other objects on display, while the exhibitions themselves testified to the advanced civilisation of Western man. The latter's superior position on the evolutionary scale was confirmed by his wonderous exhibits. The march of progress was made more apparent by showing striking contrasts between Western civilisation and 'barbarism'. Moreover, glimpses of barbarism added spectacle, amusement and/or profits to exhibitions. My study suggests that Queensland had more to gain by focussing on its Aboriginal inhabitants at Australian events, where visitors could congratulate themselves on their success as colonists and bringers of civilisation. In Europe, and especially Great Britain, derogatory exhibits might have brought moral condemnation, which was to be avoided when Queensland was looking for population and capital. The representation of Aboriginal people at exhibitions provides a telling insight into race relations in colonial Queensland, where a venture to exhibit these people for profit and amusement led to official reform that became a model for institutionalisation at a national level.
CHAPTER 5

'A MOUNTAIN OF GOLD'

Colonial displays at international exhibitions, with their collections of minerals, offered insights into future conquests of science and technology over the natural environment. Minerals suggested new opportunities for exploiting the outposts of empire: 'the Earth holds things yet undiscovered, which may become most useful to man', wrote the mineralogist Robert Hunt in his guide to the industrial exhibits at London's exhibition of 1862. The elements of the earth could be transformed by human ingenuity into the machines and fuels so essential for industry: 'Without our coal and without our iron, where would have been our machinery?', asked Henry Mayhew as he surveyed the machinery at the Great Exhibition. Hence displays of minerals and mining technology ranked next to machinery as evidence of advanced civilisation. The organisers of the Greater Britain Exhibition, in showing the mineral wealth of the colonies and the advanced technology involved in extracting that wealth, pronounced mining 'the most important industry in the world'.

In this chapter I examine how Queensland represented its mineral resources, and particularly its gold wealth, at exhibitions, and offer new insights into the rise of mining as a major export industry and the mainstay of the north. I show that mineral and mining exhibits were dominant from the 1870s, and by the end of the century Queensland's contributions to exhibitions were essentially large collections of minerals. This reflected a growing demand for capital to exploit the colony's quartz reefs once the alluvial gold deposits were quickly worked out, requiring costly machinery and sustained and systematic operations. Moreover, the refractory ores mined on a number of goldfields kept much of the gold 'locked up' unless with the aid of 'high-class chemistry and metallurgical skill'. These conditions favoured the development of a heavily capitalised and company controlled mining industry in Queensland. By contrast, the alluvial gold deposits of the southern colonies were more easily exploited, and less remote.

Also underpinning Queensland's displays of mineral wealth was the notion that gold determined the course of history. Following the rushes to Victoria and New South Wales from 1851, gold was said to be the 'greatest inducement' to populating and developing Australia. So said the editor of the British Australasian in a feature on mining in Queensland:

... as in the case of the other Australian colonies, it was the discovery of gold which gave life and dash to the progress of Queensland, attracted population to its vast areas, and generally made business 'hum'.

For Queensland's exhibition propagandist Alexander Boyd, gold was a 'magic word'. As the historian Geoffrey Blainey adds, in the 19th century gold had a magnetism scarcely imagined today, for winning gold was like 'a gigantic lottery' that offered most people their only chance of riches. Further, gold had an intrinsic attraction to a generation used to handling gold as currency. Hence gold — and 'dummy' gold — had an irresistible attraction at exhibitions.

At the London exhibition of 1862 Queensland's mineral exhibits were 'quite insignificant', according to John George Knight of Victoria. These coal and copper exhibits could not compete with Victoria's gilded obelisk representing its spectacular gold production since 1851, the first of the obelisks (or 'goldometers') that became a standard feature of Australian displays at exhibitions. Attempting to keep up with Victoria at the Paris event of 1867, Queensland spent £589/3/- on gold nuggets from the Canoona, Calliope, Talgai, Star River (Bundekin) and Peak Downs diggings, compared with only £68/14/- on all other exhibits. The gold was consigned in an iron safe and displayed in a casket of colonial woods, which together with insurance cost an additional £92/7/3. Ironically, it was not the gold but a fine block of malachite from the Peak Downs copper mine that attracted attention and received an Honourable Mention. In mid-October 1867, just before the exhibition closed, news broke of Queensland's first major gold strike at Gympie. Henceforth gold was to rule the fortunes of Queensland, just as it had already brightened the prospects of the southern colonies.

The forecast of payable gold in the north prompted the establishment of an organised geological survey of the colony in 1867 when an experienced geologist from Victoria, Richard Daintree, was appointed the first Government Geologist for Northern Queensland. From the outset the survey's emphasis was on the search for gold, and Daintree was despatched to report first on the Cape River goldfields and later on the Gilbert Ranges, Peak Downs and Rockhampton districts. In 1870, while extending his survey to
In November 1870 the government commissioned Daintree to accompany his collections of specimens and photographs to London, to be shown at the forthcoming London exhibition of 1871. An avid and enterprising photographer, Daintree also made a collection of photographs 'illustrative of the geological features' of the colony and of life on its remote mining camps (Fig. 66). William Henry Walsh, the parliamentary member for Maryborough and a firm defender of Daintree and the survey, quickly foresaw the potential of these photographs as a medium for propaganda 'to people at a distance' from Queensland:

Views of the scenes on the goldfields were the right kind of information to practical diggers, to capitalists who invested in mining undertakings — to give them a proper idea of the nature of the goldfield to which it was sought to attract their attention.  

In November 1870 the government commissioned Daintree to accompany his collections of specimens and photographs to London, to be shown at the exhibition of 1871 alongside about 650 ounces (or £2,200 worth) of gold nuggets and auriferous quartz, some on loan from private colonists. Directing that £1,000 be spent on nuggets from Gympie, Walsh, now Minister for Public Works, specified that they be 'extremely showy' so that the 'display of gold ... may be as attractive as possible'. Later as commissioner for Queensland's exhibits in London, Daintree arranged for a night-time security guard to watch over the gold which, he reported in June 1871, 'attracts great attention'. Convinced of Queensland's vast mineral wealth only waiting to be exploited, he added:

Having now completed the arrangements for the exhibits in my charge, it is my intention to draw the attention of English mining capital in our direction...

For Daintree, formerly a partner in a pastoral property in the Kennedy district of the sparsely-settled north, the opening-up of new mining centres offered 'the best inducement' for the pastoral and agricultural industries through the expansion of local markets for their produce. Further, he saw the future of the colony in terms of the capabilities of its varied land formations and predicted a flow of British capital into the colony 'as soon as
the character of her soil and the abundance of her
minerals were understood'. It was logical that
Daintree, as Queensland's Agent-General in
London from 1872, should adopt a strictly 'geo-
logical' arrangement for his more comprehensive
displays of the colony's resources at London's
succeeding exhibitions of 1872-74 and at Vienna
in 1873 and Philadelphia in 1876 (Fig. 67). At
these exhibitions, and also at Paris in 1878,
Queensland's courts were divided into sections
for the different geological formations, each rep-
resented by Daintree's 'geological' photographs
and, in cases beneath the photographs, his min-
eral specimens and also typical products
(Daintree's mineral specimens sank in the wreck
of the Queen of the Thames off South Africa in
1871, but were mostly retrieved and shown in
exhibitions from 1872 to 1878.)

Each year until his early retirement (due to ill
health) in January 1876, Daintree obtained more
negatives from Queensland to make a more com-
prehensive photographic record of its industries
and major towns. These negatives were enlarged
by the autotype process and hand-coloured in oils
in London (one critic found them 'a little too
florid') and at Daintree's instigation were later
circulated around exhibitions and museums in
multiple series. At succeeding events Daintree's
mineral specimens were likewise augmented by
more specimens from the colony to show its more
recent mineral strikes which included: tin at Stan-
thorpe in 1872; and gold at Charters Towers in
1872, the Palmer in 1873 and the Hodgkinson in
1876. The exhibitions from 1872 also showed
Daintree's geological map of Queensland, the first
such map to be attempted, indicating no fewer than
21 goldfields. Daintree received an Honourable
Mention for his map at the Vienna exhibition.

Other regular exhibits of the 1870s were coal
and coke from the West Moreton coalfield and
copper from Cloncurry, Mount Perry and Peak
Downs, the latter exhibits resulting from a copper
boom that ended in the mid-1870s with a fall in
world copper prices. At Philadelphia in 1876 and
Paris in 1878 the colony showed its first smelted
ingots: copper ingots from the Mount Perry and
Peak Downs mines, and tin ingots from Stan-
thorpe and the Bulimba Tin Smelting Company.
But Queensland's most spectacular exhibits at

Fig. 67. The Queensland court at the Philadelphia exhibition of 1876, with Richard Daintree's photographs
(ranged on the walls) and a gilded obelisk (centre) representing the colony's gold output. (Australasian
Sketcher, 5 Aug. 1876)
Philadelphia and Paris were glittering obelisks. The 22-foot-high obelisk at Philadelphia was designed by the Colonial Architect F.D.G. Stanley to represent Queensland’s gold output since 1867. An exhibition guidebook explained:

If it had been solid, as some wonder-stricken visitors imagined, it would have weighed over 65 tons, and its value would have been more than $35,000,000. But it was only a gilded show.325

Later at Paris a gilded obelisk was the centrepiece of Queensland’s ‘grand’ trophy set up by the engineer W. Henry Ashwell in the western dome of the Palais du Champ-de-Mars. Piled around the base of the obelisk were timbers, bales of wool, copper and tin ingots, and tinned meats ‘as silent witnesses of the colony’s great and increasing industries’.327

A more extensive minerals collection of some 200 items (some being multiple items) was assembled for the Sydney exhibition of 1879-80 with the assistance of local committees in Gympie, Rockhampton and Maytown and of the gold wardens for the Charters Towers, Palmer and Etheridge fields. The collection also comprised loans from the Queensland Museum, including fossils and gemstones, and from the Brisbane mineralogist, Nehemiah Bartley. The pick of Bartley’s large and varied collection from all over the world was his so-called ‘sun chips’ of ‘reef gold in every form of occurrence’. In April 1880 the Queensland Government purchased Bartley’s entire collection to show again at Melbourne,328 along with the other Sydney exhibits which included: tin and copper ingots; ores, quartz and tailings from the Charters Towers, Palmer and Etheridge goldfields; coal from the West Moreton and Burrum coalfields; building stones from the Rockhampton district; and cinnabar from Kilkivan. From its discovery in 1873, cinnabar from Kilkivan was often shown at exhibitions and admired for its deep red colour (Bartley likened it to ‘frozen red currant jelly’), and for the Sydney exhibition a pamphlet was published especially to attract investment to Kilkivan.329 Also shown were valuable gold specimens from Gympie, Charters Towers and the Palmer. The specimens on loan from the Nicholls and London Extended Gold Mining Companies of Gympie were eventually returned ‘mixed up with other stones’ and greatly ‘deficient’ in quantity, resulting in protracted insurance claims by the companies for their losses.330

Again, Queensland’s most spectacular exhibits at Sydney and Melbourne were gilded obelisks, which were not updated for their second showing. The largest was a 33-foot-high obelisk also designed by F.D.G. Stanley, representing the 3,244,777 ounces of gold produced by Queensland to 1879 and supported on a base of 30 tons of quartz from Gympie. The second obelisk, contributed by the residents of Maytown, represented the 946,716 ounces of gold produced by the Palmer to 1879. By this time, however, obelisks were becoming ‘a somewhat stale device’, and the Argus reporter hoped to see ‘no more pyramids and obelisks’ after the Melbourne event331 where Victoria and New Zealand represented their gold production by rhombic dodecahedrons and octahedrons. (Queensland’s grandest obelisks were yet to come.) Queensland received the highest category of award (the First Degree of Merit Special) for its ‘general collection of ores’ at the Sydney exhibition and 25 awards for minerals at the Melbourne exhibition, achieving ‘first place’ among the minerals exhibitors at Melbourne.332

By the mid-1880s Queensland could boast that its leading goldfield, Charters Towers, was second only to Bendigo as a consistent producer of gold, that its latest find, Mount Morgan, held ‘unparalleled’ riches, and that the newly-worked tin and silver lodes of the Herberton district held great promise. Queensland’s mine owners were convinced that an influx of outside capital was now required to increase minerals exploration and production, in particular to fund deep reefing at Charters Towers. So a massive promotional exercise for Queensland’s mining industry was planned for London’s Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, including what was claimed as the finest minerals collection yet shown by an Australian colony.333 Assembled by the mineralogist (and later mineralogical lecturer) Arthur Walter Clarke334 with the assistance of local committees in Charters Towers, Herberton, and Stanthorpe, this collection was intended to show the colony’s vast and varied mineral wealth in ‘imposing ... bulk’. It comprised over 1,407 specimens of ores and quartz, together with their country (or associated) rocks, arranged systematically by districts and then mines. Lending scientific validity to this collection were a Handbook of Queensland Geology by the young Scottish-trained geologist, Robert Logan Jack (Fig. 68), and his first geological map of Queensland, which were published in 1886 especially for the exhibition. Logan Jack, appointed Geologist for Northern Queensland in 1876 and Government Geologist for the whole colony in 1879, had resumed a
systematic geological survey of the colony where Richard Daintree had left off, espousing the principle that 'economic importance' should guide his travels. For two decades Jack's geological reports and maps were the basis of exhibition propaganda for the mining industry and eventually he became the colony's leading exhibitor.

Queensland's court at London was dominated by a gold trophy designed and erected by J.N. Longden, the mining engineer engaged to oversee the gold exhibits (Figs 69, 97). The 21-foot-high trophy was surmounted by the frustum of a pyramid gilded to represent the 4,840,564 ounces of gold so far produced by the colony, yielding an average of over 1½ ounces of gold per ton of stone, the highest average of any gold-producing country in the world. The base of the trophy was divided into compartments containing quartz from the principal goldfields: Charters Towers, Ravenswood, the Palmer, Gympie, Mount Morgan, Norton and the Etheridge. The Charters Towers quartz included the 'handsome specimens' found by Hugh Mosman when he discovered the goldfield in 1872. Close by the gold trophy, in a glass case on a pedestal, was a 'magnificent' cake of retorted gold from the field's richest claim, the Day Dawn Block and Wyndham Mine. This cake, weighing 1,707 ounces, represented a fortnight's yield from the mine. Exhibited by the Bank of Australasia, the cake had been shown in Victoria's court, but was removed to the Queensland court on Agent-General Garrick's application to the bank.

Also among the exhibits from 'go-ahead Charters Towers' were photographs and plans of its mines, and a pamphlet published by the local committee especially for distribution in the court. Local mining magnates, including Thomas Mills, John McDonald and Hugh Mosman, were present in London during the exhibition to promote Charters Towers mines and to relay the latest cabled reports of their rich crushings and dividends. Other attractions of the court included private exhibits of western Queensland opals from Herbert William Bond of Toowoomba, and of tin and silver ores and tin ingots from John Moffat and Company of Irvinebank, developer of the colony's largest tinfields. To add bulk spectacle to the court a block of copper ore weighing almost 2 tons, from the Cloncurry district, was retrieved from the Kelvingrove Museum in Glasgow.

Queensland's most successful exhibit, however, was a full-sized gold battery which during the course of the exhibition crushed and treated some 200 tons of ore sent from the principal fields in the colony (Figs 25, 70). Though Victoria had shown a model working gold battery at the 1862 exhibition, batteries were still a novelty in London in 1885 when the Agent-General, James Garrick, proposed that a battery would be 'a great attraction' for Queensland at the forthcoming exhibition. Recognising that 'machinery in motion ... is very attractive to the public,' Garrick saw an opportunity to show London investors how Queensland could transform its quartz with capital and advanced technology. Once his proposal was 'unanimously affirmed' by Queensland's exhibition commissioners, a five-head stamp battery, including copper plates and a concentrator, was manufactured to government order by John Walker and Company of Maryborough. Determined that its exhibit should be 'unique',

FIG. 68. Robert Logan Jack in 1877, before he became Government Geologist for entire Queensland. (Northmost Australia)
Queensland was unwilling to negotiate an alternative proposal for a joint Australian display of quartz crushing at the exhibition. Here the battery was erected under engineer Longden’s supervision in the South Promenade (at some distance from Queensland’s court) in a pioneer hut supplied with motive power, running water and massive foundations of colonial ironbark. Grinding and amalgamating pans were manufactured in England to Longden’s specifications, and added to the battery along with the necessary counter shafting, pulleys and belting to drive the pans. To complete the battery ‘in every respect’, a cleaning-up table, gold scales, retort with condenser, crucibles, etc. were added. Demonstrating the whole process of crushing bulk quartz to produce glittering bars of gold, Queensland’s exhibit was an immediate sensation, through the noise reportedly ‘caused quite a “scare” among timid people’. Investors took keen interest in the results of the crushings, which yielded a rich average of from 2 to well over 3 ounces of gold to the ton. The Queensland-designed and made battery, the outcome of 30 years’ experience of behalf of the manufacturers and erector, was acclaimed by British engineers for its design and strength. It was run on two occasions for gatherings of London’s Institution of Mechanical Engineers: indeed it was a quintessential symbol of colonial progress.

Visitors who could stand the noise within Queensland’s pioneer hut could also see the old method of alluvial gold washing demonstrated by a ‘practical’ miner from the colony, Henry Aldridge (Fig. 71). His demonstrations were such an attraction that ‘scuffles or mild fights’ frequently broke out at the barrier between visitors jostling for a good view. Official exhibition reports support Garrick’s claim that Queensland’s gold battery and miner were ‘amongst the leading features of the Exhibition’, their only competitor being the Cape Colony’s diamond washing and cutting display, but its machinery and noise level were far less arresting and did not warrant a special enclosure. In all, the exhibition’s experts proclaimed Queensland’s mineral exhibits ‘of a most interesting character’ and ‘a wonderful stimulant to faith’ in the future of the colony.
Unlike the ‘dazzling’ nuggets and ‘gaudy’ triumphal arch shown by Victoria at the exhibition, Queensland’s exhibits represented wealth won by ‘serious’ enterprise, not luck, and were not just gilded replicas. Further, Queensland and its ‘clever’ Agent-General were hailed as singularly ‘astute’ in promoting the mining industry so effectively. These accolades would have been accompanied by many medals had the exhibition made awards.

Before the exhibition closed, Queensland gold mines began to be sold on the London Stock Exchange. In August 1886 Charters Towers’ renowned Day Dawn Block and Wyndham Mine, of which Thomas Mills was the major shareholder, was floated for nearly £500,000. Then followed a Queensland gold mining boom which became ‘the speculative event of the year’ at the hands of professional company promoters and ‘premium-hunters’. But as speculation increased, so did doubts about the integrity of some of the companies being floated. On 28 October Premier Griffith cabled Agent-General Garrick to warn British investors that some companies were ‘not altogether bona fide’. In particular, Griffith was alarmed by the Mount Morgan West Gold Mining Company masquerading in London as the original Mount Morgan Company which, to add to investors’ confusion, had been registered in Brisbane as recently as 1 October 1886. Griffith saw ‘a great danger’ that such ‘bogus speculations’, mere prospecting ventures founded on the performance of neighbouring mines, could destroy confidence in the colony as a field for investment. Though the Premier’s warning caused some indignation in north Queensland, it was generally well received in London.
FIG. 71. Henry Aldridge, an experienced miner from Gympie and Charters Towers, washing gold from alluvial earth by means of a cradle, dipper and puddling tubs at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. (Reminiscences of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition)

Regrettably, it did not stop the Mount Morgan West Company from being formed in late October with capital of £200,000. The company’s prospectus drew on a geological report by Logan Jack postulating that Mount Morgan was a freak of nature — a thermal spring which in tertiary times had deposited rich auriferous material at the apex, but little, if any, in the surrounding overflow area. The prospectus fraudulently implied that the company’s 14-acre property (actually at the north-west base of the mount, at the edge of the overflow) lay within the rich apex deposit which, it added, ‘may be truly called a mountain of gold’. The prospectus went on to claim that specimens of this auriferous deposit, yielding no less than 7 ounces of gold to the ton, were on show in the Queensland court at the exhibition. On 3 November Agent-General Garrick responded publicly that these specimens were from the original Mount Morgan claim (covering the apex deposit), not the company’s property. At this time Garrick suspended engineer Longden for his ‘prominent part’ in the formation of the company as a director.

The company’s prospects dimmed in April 1887 when a shareholder won a legal action for return of his money on the ground of the ‘misrepresentation’ contained in the prospectus. After other shareholders had followed suit, the company was reconstructed in London in August 1887 as the Mount Morgan Extended Gold Mining Company, which likewise failed to meet its shareholders’ expectations for no payable gold was ever found. The ‘Rockhampton swindle’, as the company was called in Queensland, also left Henry Aldridge a broken man. After his successful demonstrations at the exhibition he accepted the management of the Mount Morgan West Mine, only to find that the mine was almost non-existent apart from the costly machinery ordered by a local director, Robert Ballard, in return for ‘a big commission’. Ballard later sacked Aldridge after swindling him on a second mining venture. Despite such unfortunate consequences of the boom that followed the 1886 exhibition, it is estimated that at this time some £6.4 million was subscribed by British investors for mining operations in Queensland (see Chapter 8).

At the Melbourne exhibition of 1888-89 Queensland made another bold show of its ‘practically inexhaustible’ mineral wealth, epitomised by its increased gold production while that of its sister colonies had declined. Besides borrowing back from London the mineral collection shown in 1886 and later stored for the Imperial Institute, Queensland’s commissioners planned to represent the colony’s more recent goldfields, including Croydon and Eidsvold. In January 1888, soon after Queensland’s late decision to participate officially at Melbourne, the mining surveyor Thomas O’Connor was despatched to collect from the northern districts. Local committees in Charters Towers, Gympie and Herberton assisted in amassing a collection of 18,546 exhibits, more than could be displayed in the cramped Queensland court and many remained in their packing cases, unopened. Logan Jack’s pamphlet The Mineral Wealth of Queensland was published for the exhibition to explain not only the exhibits but also the ‘localities where minerals still await the attention of miners and capitalists’. Following the 1886 policy of showing minerals ‘in bulk’, the