

## HEART SPEAKS TO HEART

*Introduction: Caroline Chisholm established the female emigrants' home in Sydney at the end of 1841. The home assisted female emigrants to the Colony of New South Wales, particularly new arrivals and young women, firstly with secure accommodation and then with suitable employment, but single and married men were also placed in employment. Not unexpectedly, some local men hoping for a wife sought Mrs Chisholm's help. While the home was not a matrimonial agency, later misconceptions of her work notwithstanding, marriage was often the indirect result of employment engagements organised by Mrs Chisholm in country areas. In the following extract from Female Immigration, she explains why she acted somewhat more directly for one honest bushman.*

The same day [sometime in 1842], I received a letter from a man who wanted a wife. I found he was well known to several persons as a man of integrity. It would be a serious thing to visit Sydney for a wife: first, a loss of time; second, money; and, after all, perhaps not be suited. His letter, too, interested me, and I determined on trying to serve him; I give his letter that the reader may judge:

Reverend madam, I heard you are the best to send to for a servant, and I heard our police magistrate say, it was best to leave all to you; and so I'll just do the same, as his honour says it's the best. I had a wife once, and she was too good for me by the far, and it was God's will, ma'am; but I has a child, ma'am, that I wouldn't see a straw touch for the world; the boy's only four years old: and I has a snug fifty-acre farm and a town 'lotment, and I has no debts in the world, and one team and four bullocks; and I've ten head oh cattle, and a share on eight hundred sheep, so I as a rite to a desent servant, that can wash and cook and make the place decant; and I don't mind what religion she bey, if she is sober and good, only I've a Protestant myself; and the boy I have, I promised the mother on her death bed, should be a Catholic, and I wont, anyhow, have any interference in this here matter.

That I do like in writing nothing else, I wouldn't, mam, on any account in the world, be bound to marry; but I don't wish it altogether to be left out. I'll ge her fourteen wages, and if she don't like me, and I don't like her, I'll pay her back to Sydney. I want nothing in the world but what is honest, so make the agreement as you like, and I'll bide by it. I sends you all the papers, and you'l now I'm a man wot's to be trusted. I sends you five pounds; she may get wages first, for I know some of the gals, and the best on um, to, are not heavy we boxes; and supposing anything should happen, I would not like it to be said she come here in rags.

I wants', also, a man and his wife; he must be willing to learn to plough, if he don't now how, and do a good fair day's work at any thing; his wife must be a milker, and ah dustrious woman; I'll give them as much as they can eat and drink of tea and milk, and, whatever wages you set my name down for, I'll be bound to pay it.

With all the honer in the world I've bound to remain your servant till death."

There was something in the character of this honest bushman to admire; he had gained his freedom\*, sent home money to his parents, and, during a long and tedious illness of twenty months, he had tended his sick wife with patient care. Who would not get up an hour earlier to serve such a man? – I did, for I knew that early in the morning

is the *best* time to choose a wife. I went first into the governess-room – all asleep; I unlocked the Home-door – some dressed, others half-dressed, some too very cross: I have often remarked, that early in the day is the best time to judge of a woman’s temper; but I wish this to be kept a secret. I remained half-an-hour in the Home; I then went through the tents, could not suit myself, and returned. At the Home-door, I found a girl at the wash-tub; she was at work with spirit; she was rather good looking, very neat and tidy. I went into my office, and ascertained that, on board ship, her character was good. I desired the matron never to lose sight of her conduct, and report the same to me.

Day after day passed, and I was at last fully determined to place her within reach, that is, in a respectable family, in his near neighbourhood; but I was able to arrange better, for I found that, amongst the families, there was one related to her. I immediately engaged them as his servants; they were a respectable couple; the man was a very prudent person. I told them to take the girl with them, and get her service near them, and on no account allow her to live with a bachelor. I gave the girl three letters to respectable ladies, and she was engaged by one the fourth day after her arrival at\_\_\_\_\_.

About a fortnight after, the bushman wrote to thank me, for sending him the married couple; and concluded by saying, “With regard to that *other* matter, upon my word, you have suited me exactly; and, as soon as the month is up, we is to be married.”

\*The reference to the honest bushman having “gained his freedom” indicates he had been transported to the Colony as a convict but was later freed by the Governor, either at the expiry of his term of transportation or given his freedom before the term had been fully served because of good behaviour.