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## Letters from *Lufra* (c.1900)

### Peter MacFie

Originally called *Lufra House*, the old guest house was owned and apparently built by an Englishman, Dr Heber D. Ellis in 1899, and was in operation by 1900. From 1900 until 1905 Miss Rose E. Dorman was manageress, later running another guest house at the Neck. Little is known about Dr Ellis, who appears to have spent half the year in Tasmania, and the remainder in his home country.

Charles (Chokey) Nuroo became the owner of *Lufra* after 1905, running the boarding house with the help of his family until the property was sold to Mr W. Taylor in 1923. Apparently of Indian background, Nuroo had worked aboard ship, arriving in Tasmania during the 1890s, marrying Alice Brown on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1897. The four children, Leah, Alice, Phillip and Ulwar helped their parents with the girls. The girls wrote many letters to the editor of the "Children's Corner" of the *Tasmanian Mail* during World War 1 (see Chronicle No.1), reflecting rather lonely lives and somewhat strong personalities. Phillip and Ulwar showed great bravery in rescuing Leah from the surf at the Neck in 1917.

#### **"Letters from *Lufra*" by Dorothy.**

Printed in London by W.P. Griffiths, printers. A small publication by an unknown authoress describes an excursionist's holiday at *Lufra*. The attempted sophistication of the description reflects the type of genteel clientele attracted to the guest house.

#### **A Letter**

Our sea voyage was most interesting. Leaving Hobart at nine o'clock, we sped down the Estuary of the Derwent in smooth water, to the rock on which the Iron Pot Lighthouse is situated. There the ocean roll became a little too perceptible to be quite acceptable to bad sailors. Frank was really awfully kind – he fetched us rugs and things and began to say something about champagne, but before we had time to feel ill, a change in the direction of the boat brought us under the lee of Betsy Island, and so into smooth water. Later we opened up the ocean again, and again soon found shelter, this time to last till the end of the passage.

We stopped at several interesting places – Salt Water River, Impression Bay, Cascades, and Taranna – all these with histories of days long past, when, instead of groups of prosperous-looking men and bright-faced girls, the sallow, gloomy countenances of convicts and stern-faced warders alone met the traveller's gaze. At Impression Bay we went ashore for a few minutes, and visited a neglected graveyard full of memorials of an evil past. But you will be tired of me and my voyagings if I dwell on such gloomy themes.

So behold the good ship *Nubeena* steaming up the river-like Eagle Hawk Bay to the jetty, where we disembark for *Lufra*. The wind blew strongly up the inlet and over Eagle Hawk Neck, which divides it from the ocean, but we had hardly left the jetty before we were in a land of halcyon calm.

As we walked up the quaint old tram line which runs to *Lufra House*, we were sheltered by the high wooded hills which rose on our left, while on our right was the limitless deep blue ocean, where line upon line of snow-white surf foamed over the far-reaching sandy shore of Pirates Bay. We were enchanted by the utter beauty of the scene.

Nora whispered something about "What are the wild waves saying." And Frank wondered what they said by moonlight, and referred to the beauty of the lunar effects on a silver strand, etc. Boys will be boys, you know! While we were chatting the trolley came up with our baggage, and on this we mounted and had a sporting ride to the house. The running was not unlike that of certain other trams we wot of, only more so, yet we arrived at our destination safe, and almost sound.

But in view of a visit you will want to know something of *Lufra House*. Imagine, quite in the wilds, where for aught I know, the Tasmanian Devil, or Tiger, or both of those evil beasts, may roam unmolested; where the kangaroo, wild deer, and wallaby disport themselves on the surrounding hills, - imagine yourself stepping into a house which, in its structure and appointments would do credit to a Swiss health resort. The hall is spacious, ornamented with handsome bronzes and Kandian brass work, while on the staircase are tapestry hangings from French seventeenth century designs. In the drawing room we noticed a finely-designed piece of tapestry over the mantle-piece; also some rare porcelain and quaint Japanese furniture. Other things there were not less attractive, but we forgot these when our attention was invited to an excellent afternoon tea.

Just then Mother and Mabel, who, you may remember, travelled overland, joined us, and we compared notes as to our experiences. Each party contended that their own had been the most enjoyable.

You should have seen the magnificent view from the top of the hill," said Mother; "And the splendid ferns and giant trees," remarked Mabel. "We have been thinking what a glorious walk we might have over the beach by moonlight tonight," said I, slyly glancing at Frank.

Whether mother guessed I don't know, but she said at once, "Suppose we see our rooms, dear."

Here a fresh pleasure awaited us. The windows overlooked not only the ocean but lovely mountain scenery. Truly, Pirates Bay has a magnificent setting. The reflected light of the setting sun lit up the ocean with glowing colours, and touching the fleecy clouds resting lightly on the mountain tops, transmuted them into a halo of golden light. After a short stroll about the grounds we were summoned by a sweet-toned gong to a dinner not unworthy of the place. Later Frank reverted to his proposition of the afternoon, but I really couldn't, dear, much too tired. Shortly afterwards Nora and I retired and soon were in the land of dreams.

Yours affectionately,

DOROTHY.

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