



IF IT LIVES...

a play in two acts

STUART ROBERTS



IF IT LIVES...

Written by Stuart Roberts

“When you’re up to your arse in alligators, it’s hard to remember that your original intention was to drain the swamp.”

ORIGINAL CAST & CREW

<i>Jack Bonham.....</i>	David Clapham
<i>Thomas Austin.....</i>	Jonathan Thomsen
<i>Governor Charles Henry Darling.....</i>	Dan Jobson
<i>Alice Kendall.....</i>	Tain Stangret
<i>Waiter.....</i>	Murray Clapham
<i>Lawrence.....</i>	Nick McCorriston
<i>Producer.....</i>	David Finnigan
<i>Director.....</i>	David Clapham
<i>Technical Operations.....</i>	Nick McCorriston

Created by The Masters of Space and Time

*Original production performed as part of the International Year of Biodiversity
as commissioned by the Australian Museum, Sydney Australia.*

*Performed by The Masters of Space and Time
on the 16th-18th November 2010*

A darkened stage with a multimedia screen in the background, upon which flashes:

“Slide: 1950s, Borneo”

VOICE-OVER- 1950s, Borneo: the people are plagued by malaria carrying mosquitoes. The World Health Organisation steps to handle the problem with liberal amounts of pesticides.

The slide shows images of the flow of consequences, each with an arrow pointing from one to the other – human to insect, insect to lizard, lizard to cat, cat to rat, rat to human, human to house and finally an arrow down on the roof of the house when the roof collapses.

VO- The humans poisoned the insects, the insects poisoned the geckoes, the geckoes poisoned the cats, the cats couldn't eat the rats, the rats infected the humans and the humans took to their homes, which, since the pesticide also killed the predator of a thatch-eating caterpillar, promptly collapsed.

VO- To the World Health Organisation, the answer to the problem they themselves had caused, was simple -

Shot of the several cats, each with its own individual parachute, slowly floating down from the sky. Behind them, written with a Victorian-age flourish, fades in the title: “The LAW OF UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES (or how the universe is just a big machine for turning good intentions into bad outcomes).”¹

VO- The path from pesticide to parachutes illustrates the law from which there is no exception- the law of unintended consequences. Simply put, the consequences of actions performed in complex systems such as society, economics and the environment cannot be predicted, let alone controlled. Actions often result in the opposite of their intentions.

VO- Actions like introducing a cane toad (*slide: Australia, 1935*) to eradicate a bothersome cane beetle. The toads did not have the cover, the altitude

or the inclination to take on the target. What they did have, however, was a short gestation period, poisonous glands, no native predators, a gay proclivity to procreate and the ability to fertilise 30,000 eggs in a puddle. The toad introduced to eliminate a pest soon became a pest itself.²

VO-Actions like introducing the Endangered Species Act (*slide: America 1973*) which banned timber-barons from harvesting pine trees when the red-cockaded woodpecker inhabited them. The barons responded by felling the trees the second it looked like the birds might nest or killing the birds themselves, and the act destroyed more endangered animals than it helped.

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The consequences start to get quicker, the slides overlapping over each other. In the process, the pictures starting to become more like 19th century drawings, the light behind them is becoming less strong, as if the slides are held in front of flickering candle light.

VO- Actions like a bounty on rats leading people to breed the rodents for profit.⁴

VO- Like a pledge to abstain from alcohol leading to a massive increase in nation-wide ether consumption.

VO- Like dolphin safe tuna farming significantly reducing the numbers of endangered animals of the sea.⁵

VO- Like the rabbit, which can be blamed for the destruction of up to 1.5 million acres of land and up to 70% of native species, which was in fact introduced to Australia-

Cut from the voiceover to Jack Bonhom⁶ talking, voice full of pride and envy. Behind him, polishing a gun and hacking into a bottle of whiskey is Thomas Austin. They have been crammed into a small room next to the kitchen, where Jack is practicing his speech to give to the Society in the room next door. There is one door to the kitchen, one of to the great hall. Above him hangs a banner reading

IF IT LIVES... 2

"If It Lives, We Want It", before him on the table is a wooden box, large enough to fit a medium sized dog.

JB- To beautify the landscape and improve the diversity of the Australian bush.

-the slide switches to Melbourne, 1866, but Bonhom takes no notice of it

TA- And to provide some damn good hunting.

JB- And to provide some good hunting.

TA- Damn good.

JB- Slide. *(Australian bush goes up on the slide)* But we here in the Victorian Acclimatisation Society have had our own successes – they're not all for talented amateurs like Mr Austin here.⁷ Gesture. Clap. Pause. Slide.

A waiter comes through with a covered salver. JB dodges and carries on the speech, looking somewhat harried. Slide: a blackberry.

JB- Waiter, apparently.

TA- *(to waiter)* Hey

JB- The delicate blackberry⁸, slide – the Indian Myna⁹ slide- the sparrow, slide- the starling slide¹⁰- and the noble carp¹¹ slide. All have been successfully introduced by the Victorian Acclimatisation Society into the beautiful but barbaric Australian landscape.¹² This all by the sweat of our own brow and the money of own generous patron the Governor. Gentlemen.

TA- And ladies

JB- And ladies

TA- For some reason.

JB- It's in the bylaws¹³- Australia is quaint place, its inferior yet adorable creatures –the humble marsupials, the quasi-reptilian monotremes¹⁴- forced from the north by their placental cousins.¹⁵ So now is the time to introduce the more advanced creatures into this long forgotten corner of Eden.

Waiter comes by again.

TA- Hey.

JB- And should every man

TA- Woman

JB- (*snapping*) Woman!

TA- Bylaws.

JB- Do his duty, and give back to the land that has given so much to him and his family, then who is to say what the future will hold. Slide through them all monkeys, tortoises, ostriches, buffalo¹⁶ etc...

Slides of monkeys, raccoons, lemurs, tortoises, angora goats, ostriches, alpacas-

JB- Turn to the crowd-. We will do wonderful things and I trill when I think of walking through English elms listening to English song-birds as I watch the sunset in the antipodean sky. And as I stand here in this august old building

The lights flicker, Austin, without looking up, smashes a part of the wall with his fist: the lights come back up. The waiter comes in with a salver and during the next exchange Austin takes it off him and starts eating the meat arrayed beneath it.

JB- With its original gas mains¹⁷, and look out into your faces, now do I feel we can echo more than ever the words of our great founder Mr Wilson- IF

IT LIVES... WE WANT IT¹⁸ (*indicates the large banner behind him*) and gentlemen,

JB & TA- The latest specimen, is before you

Gestures to a solid wooden crate in front of them TA looks at it in mid-chew

TA- Doesn't move very much does it.

JB- Tired from the trip.

TA- All the way from merry old England, what

JB- What?

Thomas forces a brandy glass into his hand

TA- A drop of mercury if your drink.

JB- Ah, forestall the effects of the night air.¹⁹

TA- To our beloved founder.

JB- To Wilson

They swill.

TA- Pity he can't be here.

JB- He's not?

TA- I'm afraid a newspaper is a demanding mistress.

JB- True

TA- While I understand his real mistress is quite obliging.

TA goes to the door and looks out.

JB- True. But she's hardly news.

TA- Hardly.

TA- Still the Governor's here. That should get you some good press. If he ever finishes this speech.

JB- You know I was writing in my memoirs today Thomas. I keep memoirs, not a diary, it inspires me to live a life worth reading. A journal is meant for oneself, a memoir is meant for the public.

TA- I wouldn't know, if I'm meant to read something I usually don't.

JB- And I was thinking, this is my legacy, this is me, I will wane and die but if this animal spreads across the land, they will always look at me, as they do at you, and all that is around them and say, he, he was the one who did this. My family name would be restored.

TA- My family name came out here after being caught stealing beehives.

JB- But then you introduced the rabbit.

TA- They're not all you think. God the speech is going on a bit.

JB- The Governor. Is he almost done.

TA- If he's not the audience definitely is. The head can't hold more than the buttocks can stand.

JB- Will he like the animal?

TA- He likes boas.

JB- What?

TA- He likes boa constrictors.²⁰ They're large, angry, smothering man eating serpents.

JB- And what of that does he like?

TA- Who can account for his tastes? Look at his wife there, a lone soldier in the war against fashion.

JB- You invited her.

TA- Etiquette dictates you invite a lady and etiquette dictates that she declines.

JB- She loves nature.

TA- Nature doesn't love her. Look at that face. A charitable inclusion to the count of any blind man's blessings.

JB- Well he seems happy enough with the animals under display.

TA- *(taking a bite of the meat under the salver)* Mmm.

JB- And he did seem to like the wombat.

TA- It is a bit gamey. Much prefer bandicoot. Like suckling pig.²¹

JB- He must be almost done... How does one steal a beehive?

TA- Quickly I expect.

JB- Do you fancy we have a chance Thomas?

TA- A chance, we have something more than a chance and something greater than a shot. The Governor will finish his speech, sweep into here, have his photo taken with it, as is tradition.

On cue, a bright photo flash is let off and becomes a display on screen. It is clear, but too dark.

TA- Bit more flash powder next time, Lawrence.

JB- God you can taste the sulphur can't you.²²

TA- And ahead of all the other animals on display, he will sweep it up, and with a clamorous chorus of aye from the society, will take it out into the public, into the Intercolonial exhibition itself²³, and from there, walking proudly down the street with introduce it into the wild, and from there into the history books. And do you know why, Mr Bonhom?

JB- Why Mr Austin?

TA- Because this is an animal of empire, Mr Bonhom.

JB- Oh.

TA- The English Badger: stout, ferocious English as the lion.

JB- England doesn't have any lions Thomas.²⁴

TA- Finally an animal in this country worth hunting. Have you ever tried to hunt a kangaroo Mr Bonhom? A thoroughly disappointing event for both parties. They just stand up and look at you with moist accusing eyes, and then they scratch themselves for a minute or two and then you shoot them. Hardly sporting.

JB- You had the rabbit.

TA- The rabbit? I had to kill every hawk, every eagle, every bloody native cat on the property to give the blighters a fighting chance.²⁵ Besides what honour is there in killing a rabbit? What child's going to sing my praises? Shoot thousands of the bastards, I'm still just known as the bunny man. What I need is good, strong, powerful energetic stock, a hardy fighting breed, yes sir, with a badger nothing can go wrong (*lights die, he hits the wall to bring them back on*)...Now let's have a look at it.

JB- the Governor gets first look, dear boy.

TA- Well, he'll be here in a second, if I'm giving this thing my endorsement, let the cat see the pigeons.

JB- well it's not as big as you might think.

TA- It's a long trip, a gentlemen accounts for shrinkage of cargo.

JB- In fact the poor creature –

TA- You are a member of the Victorian Acclimatisation Society, Mr Bonhom, you can call it an English badger as God intended.

JB- I'm not totally sure I can... Would you like to sit down?

TA- No.

JB- Would you like to put the gun away?

TA- No.

JB- Would you like to listen to what I have to say.

TA- I don't know. Would I?

JB- I flatter myself you will. You see, when I was a young man, I tired of the old unpleasantness of home and sought new unpleasantness abroad, and in my travels I came across the ideal creature- dark, wonderful, unique. And I decided once the money came in from the Society that I would bring this animal out and introduce it to the bush.

TA- From where?

JB- Somewhere slightly exotic

TA- Wales?

JB- Slightly more.

TA- South Wales.

JB- Do they let you have bullets for that thing.

TA- Not after last time.

JB- It's an agouti.

TA- I'm sorry?

JB- An agouti.

TA- ...a Midlands agouti.

JB- It's Brazilian –

TA- Brazilian good God it's probably festering with disease.

JB- And the rabbits weren't?

TA- Rabbits are British man, British since the dawn of time. They're ours

JB- They're from Normandy.

TA- That's ours too

JB- It's the perfect creature

TA- It's a wog, man.

JB- It's long lived, golden-haired,

TA- Probably carrying cholera

JB- Readily domesticated, good eating.

TA- No, no, my endorsements off-

JB- It's dangerous.

TA- Dangerous?

JB- Fearsome, hunter-killers, they're legendary in South America. El negro diablo.

TA-... yes?

JB- One look at you and they go straight for the throat. When the time comes to prove their manhood, boys from Brazil will go off in search of an agouti to slay. Frequently they don't come back

TA- Yes that's all very well for boys-

JB- Why do you think I don't want to show it to you now – because if this thing got out who can tell what sort of damage it would do. It's savage, merciless, this one won't just have a scratch when you've got a warm gun in your hand.²⁶

TA- Hmm.

JB- Sharp claws and teeth for stripping bark, strong leathery skin-

TA- Teeth.

JB- Sharp as knives, terror of the hen houses.

TA- Sharp enough to break through wood.

JB- Wood, fences, walls,

TA- Boxes.

JB- Boxes, crates, hutches... *(pause, turns around to look at the box)* it is being rather quiet, isn't it.

He opens the box.

TA- Is there anything in there.

JB- Aside from the hole?

TA- Hell's teeth man you've lost the bloody thing?

JB- I'm fairly certain it's still in the vicinity.

TA- Comforting, considering the vicinity includes some of the most learned men in the city, Mr Wilson's newspaper men, a room full of restless animals and the bloody Governor of Victoria.

Governor Darling's voice can be heard from the other side of the door.

GD- *(off)* Hello in there.

TA- Who as I've often suspected does appear when you speak his name.
(Yelling to the Governor) Just a minute!

JB- We'll have to lure it back.

TA- With what?

JB- With bait.

TA- In my haste to leave the house this morning I neglected to bring along a pre-pubescent Brazilian male.

JB- Fruit, the sound of dropping fruit always attracts them.²⁷

TA- That's it?

JB- That and the squeezing of a male Agouti's anal scent glands.

TA- ... let's try the fruit first.

GD- May I come in?

TA- Bother, bother, quick, find something to replace it.

JB- For instance?

GD- (*coming in*) Come on gentlemen, we've a lot to get through today.

TA- There's dozens of animals on display out there, he's got bad eyes, all we need are 4 paws, eyes and an-

Darling enters just as Bonhom takes off. Mr Bonhom looks through the items on the hat rack and eventually comes up with a fur stole which he comes back to stuff into the box. Turns to the Governor

TA- Hello. Darling.

GD- (*not terribly happy to see him*) Bunny. You truanted my speech, sir.

TA- Just the ending sir, which I grant you is unusual given the endings are the parts of your speeches I like the most.

GD- Still after those rabbits? You know we thought you were mad, what five, six years ago you introduced just 24 of the blighters and expected any sport. But look at them now, how many did you shoot on the property last year- 100, 200?

TA- 14,000.

GD- Marvelous, and not a care for your own safety. Tell me, when you mount the head do you keep them at ankle height to recreate the thrill of the hunt, or do you mount their fleeing bottoms instead.

TA- I've shot many other things this year-

GD- Yes I've read your statistics Mr. Austin.

TA- 448 hawks, 23 eagles, 622 native cats,

GD- And 32 tame ones.²⁸

TA- Well they're a curious creature.

GD- I often tell my wife you're a brave man, Mr Austin.

TA- I too often tell your wife you're a brave man, Mr Darling.

GD- Are you implying something, sir.

TA- Merely returning a compliment.

GD- You may keep it, sir. Where is this animal of yours?

TA- In repose. Perhaps it would delight you to take the photo with this one last.

GD- It's an agouti isn't it?

TA- Is it?

GD- This is a society sir, build on the pull of habit, the firm thrust of tradition, alphabetical order man, that's the way it's always been done.

TA- Oh bollocks.

GD- Did you speak sir?

TA- Merely bewailing the absence of aardvarks in this country sir.

GD- Ah yes, a small, defenceless ant-eating pig, that does sound like something up your path Austin.

Bonhom enters with a package or whatever and gives a nod to Austin. He then goes to put it in the box. We don't see what it is.

TA- *(taking the slight badly)* Actually sir, I think you'll find our latest animal a real brute.

GD- Really?

TA- Oh savage, merciless, strong strong teeth, the terror of the Amazon. A ferocious trip-wire of rage and sinew Darling.

GD- Governor Darling.

TA- I give you the agati.

Pause. They all look into the box. The Governor reaches in and pulls out a stole with the paws and head still attached. It should look as real as possible.

GD- Terror of the Ama- Austin I'd heard the rumours, but stiffen up man.

TA- What- no, no it's a killer sir.

JB- What?

GD- Doesn't move much.

TA- Nocturnal sir. If this was night time it'll have your hand off.

GD drops it hurriedly

JB- What?

GD- Will it?

JB- Will it what?

GD- What is dead sir and pardon has taken his place.

TA- It's got cholera.²⁹

GD- What?

JB- Pardon.

GD- It has cholera?

JB- What?

TA- Ever hunted something with cholera before?

JB- It hasn't got cholera.

TA- It might have cholera.

JB- You don't even know what cholera is.

TA- I know I don't want it.

JB- Thomas isn't there something else you should be doing. Something attractive.

Thomas is stunned for a little, then realises where he is going and busies himself dropping fruit (from a nearby bowl) to attract the agouti.

JB- I apologise for my friend.

GD- Don't apologise, the fault lies with the mother. No Mr Bonhom, you are aware of the bylaws.

Thomas drops an apple behind them. Pause, look. Back to it-

Indeed the very raison d'être of our august society is to ensure that only innoxious animals enter this country. The sporting fox, the noble steed, Mr Austin's gentle rabbit – *(Mr Austin is not happy with the epithet- drops the fruit- Governor turns to him again)*

TA- Sorry sir – Queensland fruit, you've got to soften the skin first.

GD- We do not introduce dangerous animals to the bush.

JB- It's hardly dangerous sir.

TA- It is.

JB- It's not.

TA- Go for the throat given half the chance.

GD- I really don't think we want a throat-goer Mr Bonham, considering so many of our society have brought theirs along for the evening.

At the latest fruit drop there is some rattling around the room. TA is on the case and even JB looks up, tries to distract the Governor.

JB- Let me ask you, have you ever know Mr Austin to exaggerate, to embellish, to overstretch?

GD- Only when his mouth is moving.

JB- And is his bravery somewhat in question?

GD- I do not question those things which don't exist. I have no talent for metaphysics.³⁰

JB- So to mountain this molehill he would naturally exaggerate the savagery of a creature a braver gentlemen such as yourself would find naturally gentle.

GD- You may have something Mr Bonhom.

JB- I mean look at the poor thing, out in the bush it'll be as harmless as a pussy-cat.³¹ Does he look like he could savage anything?

GD- No, by God no, it looks decidedly placid.

Picks it up

GD- My God, it's hardly got any dimensions at all.

JB- Yes, that's why the tribesman call it the Brazilian flat rat.³²

GD- Hardly feels like it's got any bones at all.

JB- Well, there you've hit it sir, that's what make it such a treat to the boa.

GD- Pardon?

JB- The boa constrictor sir, don't know if you've heard of them- eats them whole.³³

GD- Heard of them- God man I've one in the next room. Inspired Mr Bonhom, bravo. I shall certainly be giving this tasty fellow my endorsement-Lawrence, quickly, a photograph.

Down to Austin on the ground with his bum up front.

Best side to the camera Thomas.

Shot. The photo shows up on the screen, a little dark.

GD- No no Lawrence, up the flash powder dear boy, much too dark. You need a real explosion. Try again later.

There's a knocking at the door. At some pointing the following exchange, the stole is returned to the box.

GD- Oh bloody hell, it's the journalist.

TA- *(straightens up)* Journalist?

GD- Following me about. Come here chaps quickly.

They huddle

GD- I'm afraid certain people have claimed certain financial indiscretions on my behalf, bosh all out it, but it's reached the mother country and my re-appointment this year is far from confirmed. There's whispers of turning this society, of which I've sunk so much money into an association of zoo-keepers.³⁴

JB- Zoo-keepers?

TA- Have you ever tried to shoot an animal behind bars, hardly sporting. They just stand there –

GD- (*going straight over the top of him*) We need to put our best faces on this. I've invited this journalist along to our very elite little gathering to show the way things are. With the Intercolonial Exhibition in town and all eyes on us, our future is in her hands.

JB- Her?

TA- She's a woman?

GD- Yes, Mr Austin a woman. Women may have influence and importance, or have you not noticed that the very head of this empire is also a woman.

TA- No, has she been trying to draw attention to the fact?³⁵

JB- Why the concern, surely she's on *The Argus's* payroll.

GD- She doesn't work for Mr Wilson's newspaper. She needed to be independent, we couldn't have here in the pay of one of the members. So what we'll do is introduce her to the more placid animals, so if you can hold your composure together Mr Austin, we'll show her the agouti, feed her a cucumber sandwich and get her out of here. What do you think?

TA- Ahh.

GD- Good chance to get your names known.

JB- We'll do it.

GD- Grand!

He leaves the huddle, leaving the two of them facing each other.

TA- So it's true the insane never know they're insane.

JB- Oh come man, we'll just give her a glance. And while she's in there, you can be out here trying to find the real animal.

Austin leaves just as Alice Kendell³⁶ comes- she appears prim and proper, not terribly given to humour. The Governor takes Bonhom aside.

GD- Now listen, Mr Bonhom, I have to counsel you to be particularly nice to this woman - turn on the charm, take an interest in women's issues, be attentive you know.

JB- Certainly sir.

JB takes his position next to the box, holding it confidently open.

GD- Ahh my dear Miss Kendell, please come in. we have a delightful treat for you if you'd step over this way. May I assume you're enjoying the festivities.

AK- You may assume all you like, Governor. The rooms are tragically filthy, the specimens look like they'll kill me the first chance they get, the food looks roughly the same, the speeches are interminably dreary –

GD- Yes they can be a little confusing to the uneducated.

AK- When not condescending. And on top of everything –

GD- Well we've put together a little surprise for you.

AK- On top of everything –

GD- Mr Bonhom, if you'd please.

AK- Someone's run off with my stole.

Bonhom slams the box shut, so that both GD and AK, who have been leaning in, are whooshed back. Pause.

JB- I'm not sure Ms Kendell is in the right state to see this animal.

AK- I'm sorry?

GD- I'm sorry.

JB- I wonder if you're in the right state.

GD- Well who in Victoria hasn't thought that at some time. Ha ha. I can say that I'm the Governor –

AK- If this is on account of my perceived fragile femininity.

JB- It is not madam, but it is gender specific.

GD- Come Mr Bonhom, what's the delay, let's have it out.

JB- That's precisely what I'm worried about. Like many forms of bears, this is an animal who is known to respond to women of a particular inclination.

AK- And do I give the distemper of one who is inclined?

JB- No, but I put that down to breeding and cervical corsetry

GD- Ah corsetry what what. (*Not getting it*) Our Mr Bonhom is a great follower of women's issues.

AK- My issues. Is that what's of interest Mr Bonhom?

GD- Oh he's interested in all manner of lady's business.

JB- It is if you're impure, Miss Kendell.

GD- Some would say to a fault.

AK- If my flowers are in.

GD- Sorry?

JB- If there's fleas under your petticoat.

GD- they can be attracted to flowers –

AK- If Aunt Flo's in town

GD- ... was it her stole?

AK- Mr Bonhom is most distinctly not asking me if I'm pregnant.

GD- Ah splendid. (*Finally gets it*). Good God he's not is he?

AK- You were right, Governor it is somewhat of a surprise.

GD- Good God man, I meant talk about embroidery.

JB- I have to check sir, it's incredibly dangerous.

GD- Well every man thinks that, we hide the sharp silverware, we cope.

JB- I mean with the agouti.

AK- Dangerous?

GD- Dangerous? You were just telling me it was as meek as lamb.

JB- Not unless provoked.

GD- Provoked?

JB- Then it's an animal transformed- straight for the throat.

GD- The throat?

JB- This is why the natives don't take women out hunting in the Amazon. Often an entire hunting party has been wiped out due to a few tears from a thwarted uterus.

Thomas Austin comes in and grabs an apple from the fruit platter.

TA- Forgot to grab me one of these.

GD- Why?

TA- No reason at all sir. (*nodding to the thing*) Have you had it out yet.

GD- No.

TA- No?

JB- We can't.

TA- Why not?

GD- She's thwarting

TA- She's what?

AK- I'm not.

TA- Not what?

AK- A lady never tells.

TA- A gentlemen never cares. Have a look and off you pop. I'm almost certain that thing we lost Mr Bonhom is in this room.

AK- You've lost something too?

JB- What a coincidence Mr Austin, Miss Kendell has also lost something. A stole of hers.

TA- (*not getting it*) Pfft. (*getting it*) Oh.

JB- I don't think it's in here, can you let us know if you find it outside.

TA- Certainly, certainly.

GD- I think I might come along Austin, a lot of other animals to get through today. Madam?

AK- This one has my interest. Thank you Governor.

TA- (to GD) Bring the fruit.

GD- (offering to AK)- Fruit before I go?

AK- Please.

GD picks up an apple and before she can reach it he drops it to the floor.

GD- They're from Queensland.

TA and GD depart.

AK- You may leave your box Mr Bonhom, that's not the animal I'm interested in anyway.

JB- If it's boas there'll be a line.

AK- The animal I'm interested in most Mr Bonhom, is man.

JB- Man?

AK- Yes, never should have brought them to this country. Too late now, they're everywhere. And they're bringing God knows what in.

JB- I'm not sure I –

AK- Your founder, Edward Wilson, is a journalist and the owner of the Melbourne Argus newspaper, yes?

JB- If we're just going to list his bad qualities.

AK- He stated that he hopes that your efforts create a competition between all men to zoologically civilise the Australian landscape –

JB- Which has given so much for us.

AK- Essentially inviting men to deluge this country with as many exotic animals as they can as a point of male pride. It rests the ecological future of this country on the egos of men.

JB- Can you think of anything larger to rest it on?

AK- Do you have any training in science?

JB- Oh my God, this again. Must we put it on such a pedestal, remove it from the common man. Is life not a thousand times too short, and science not a thousand times too important to leave to some elitist, pie-in-the-sky cadre of holier than thou ideologues?

AK- ... Scientists?

JB- Yes. Bastards.

AK- So, you're not a scientist.

JB- No.

AK- Zoologist, botanist.

JB- I'm a keen naturalist.

AK- I'm not interested in your clothing habits.³⁷ You sir, much like the company you keep, seem wildly under qualified and overly domesticated to be an acclimatiser.

JB- I suppose you'd see me as zoo-keeper.

AK- Hardly, at least a zoo-keeper keeps control of his animals. You just release them into the wild and walk away, with no thought for what they may or may not –

JB- Miss Kendell, I don't know what vaudeville stage you think you've stumbled across, though bravo on dressing appropriately, but this is a society of the most learned and considered men in the entire country. Perhaps not men of science but men of breeding- breeding madam that trait which stops us from marrying our cousins and kicking elderly women in the face. Men of honour, integrity and forthrightness, keenly aware of what we are doing and at all times what our animals are up to –

Waiter opens the door with the agouti and a bottle of champagne in an ice bucket..

W- Is this your rat?

Without missing a beat Bonhom hits the wall and the lights go down.

AK- did he say a rat?

L- Oh we ready for the shot?

Bang

W- Ow!

AK- Are you all right?

JB- He's fine, he's foreign.

W- Did you hit me?

AK- Wait, I've nurse training.

JB- No, just stay where you are.

AK- But he's- wait what's this down here?

JB- What?

AK- Oh, I think I've just found my stole.

JB- No wait!

AK- Ow. Something scratched me!

JB- You swine! (*Smashing sound*)

W- Oww!

JB- Hands off our women, Frenchy!

CAMERMAN takes a shot, momentarily illuminating the scene and taken a picture of mayhem, with Bonhom striking the waiter, Alice being attacked by her own stole.

AK- Wait a minute- something's not quite right –

JB- What's the matter –

AK- Oh my God it's alive, it's alive! My stole is –

The light suddenly comes back on- the waiter is nursing his head, the smashed remains of the champagne bottle upended in the ice bucket. Bonhom is over the other side of the room (fist by the wall, box open) and Alice has her actual stole in her hands. She looks down at it slightly stunned for a few minutes, checks its claws.

AK- Must remember to get these clipped.

Bonham flips the box shut, startling Alice.

JB- Apologies, apologies, gas is a bit dodgy in these old buildings. Are you all right?

AK- (*looking at the stole's feet*) Exquisite, thank you.

There's a scuffling sound from somewhere within the room.

AK- What was that?

JB- Nothing- look, you're cut, why doesn't Frenchy here take you to get cleaned up and we can reconvene a little later.

AK- To be continued, Mr Bonhom.

Alice and the waiter leave, Bonhom rushes for the bag just as the Governor charges in.

GD- God in heaven man, what the deuce is going on here. Was that screaming that I heard?

JB- No sir, no, that's the mating sound that it makes sir. Sounds for all the world like a woman in pain, it's a miracle the species keeps procreating really.

GD- That sounds plausible.

JB- Does it? That was lucky.

GD- Where is Miss Kendell?

JB- Quick divergence to the water closet sir, the sensuous sounds of the agouti left her quite flushed.

GD- Right, well let's get the photo out of the way then.

JB- But Miss Kendell.

GD- Miss Kendell's indisposed, man. We can get a quick shot without a whiff of womanly primer in place. Ready Lawrence?

JB- No sir, I must protest!

GD- Just take it the second you see it, we don't want to give the little blighter too long in the open air.

L- Sir.

JB- But wait sir, I ah-

Darling flicks back the box lid, just as Bonhom reaches the bag, but can't find the agouti in there. Pause.

GD- Mr Bonhom.

JB- Yes Governor.

GD- There's slightly less box than I anticipated.

JB- Ah.

GD- An absence not wholly compensated by there being far more space.

JB- I'm sorry?

GD- It's not in here.

JB- (*feigned*) what?!

GD- What is dead sir.

JB- Pardon?

GD- Where is your animal, Mr Bonhom?

JB- It may have gone for a wander sir.

GD- A wander!?

JB- A brief turn of the rooms. Quite harmless –

GD grabbing the salver lid and forcing him back against the wall with it.

JB- and refreshing.

GD- Look you glib little turd, I don't know what is going on with this animal of yours. At one point it appears to be implacably rabid and the next second virtually cataleptic.

JB- Natural state sir.

GD- With no more life than a woman's fur accoutrement-

At this point, Austin comes in, having only heard the woman's fur accoutrement line. Apple in one hand, gun in the other.

TA- Fur accoutrement sir, what bosh. Why that animal is one of the most wild and vital creature I've ever seen.

GD- Pardon?

JB- Thomas.

TA- (*gesturing to the box*) It may seem a little placid now, but before you came in it was scratching at the box, gnashing at us, roaring to get out.

GD- It was?

JB- Thomas.

TA- Foaming at the bit. A mad dog killer, yes sir.

JB- Thomas!

TA- Hell's teeth if it ever got out of that box.

GD- It's not in the box.

TA- Sorry?

JB- It's not in the box, Thomas.

Thomas walks slowly over to the box, throws back the lid, peers in. turns around, drops the apple.

GD- And will you desist with the bloody fruit!

JB- There's nothing to worry about sir.

GD- Nothing to worry – it's a mad dog killer.

TA- And with none of us being a mad dog, I see no need to panic.

JB- It's a very timid animal sir.

GD- Unless provoked.

JB- Well.

GD- So we've got a dozen wild animals out there!

JB- Yes.

GD- We've got Kendell walking around in the womanly way.

JB- Yes.

GD- What we don't have, is your bloody animal.

At this point Alice comes in, wearing the stole around her neck.

AK- Sooo.

JB- Oh.

TA- No.

GD- There it is!

L- Got it.

AK- What?

JB- What is dead!

GD- Going for the throat!

He picks up the salver top and smashes Alice in the face with it. The Camera goes off exactly at that moment, capturing the incriminating shot. In the corner of the shot, which the screen now zooms in on, is the real agouti. While the action below is going on, it crawls over to the wombat tray (now uncovered) and starts to chew.

Alice is currently down on the ground with the stole still being smashed by the Governor. Bonhom and Austin watch on.

TA- Well this will be one for memoirs, Jack.

GD- (puffing heavily) I think I might decide not to endorse your animal, Mr Bonhom.

He looks at the boys as he says this, not looking at the tray as he replaces the lid. Up on the screen, the lid has been put over the agouti. X-ray vision, we can see the little thing trapped under the cover.

GD- Now if there is nothing else, I think we should all get on with enjoying the banquet. *(He holds up the stole)* Especially the boa. *(Looks at Kendell)* If she comes to tell her I saved her life. The things you have to do for good press.

He grabs the salver and heads out. Up on the screen the Governor becomes a silhouette, walking the salver out to the table, where it is surrounded by a dozen different salvers. As the following conversation between JB and TA becomes more heated, the salver starts to shake more and more and more, until it is virtually vibrating like a bell on an old alarm clock.

TA- We've got to kill it.

JB- No.

TA- Got to kill it Jack.

JB- We can't.

TA- The Governor currently think he's feeding it to his snake, dear boy. It needs to disappear. A sack, a brick and all the water it can drink.

JB- it's rather poor sport Thomas.

TA- I agree. But what if it gets loose into the society? That's bad enough, what if it gets out of this building and into the exhibition? What if he attacks someone?

JB- They're rumoured to be more scared of us than we are of them.

TA- We can't rely on it having heard that rumour.

JB- They're timid. They respond badly to loud noises.

The screen cut between picture of the ever more vibrating salver, and people cheering, glasses being tapped etc...

JB- Vibrations

...and the table being thumped by glasses and fists...

JB- In fact, at the first sign of trouble, the thing springs six feet in the air³⁸ and –

The salver comes flying over the back wall and bongs a few times on the floor. Scream from beyond. Up on the screen the consequences start to bleed out.

JB- Can you make it painless?

TA- Never tried. *(Tapping the gun)* Just leave it to me and Bessie.

JB- I thought they took your bullets.

TA- I know where Lawrence keeps his flash powder. Just add a fistful more sulphur to that, bang, instant gunpowder.

JB- You've thought about this haven't you?

TA- Yes I have.

AK on the ground starts to groan.

TA- You keep her there, we can keep everyone in the society quiet, but if she gets out.

He takes off.

JB- Are you all right?

AK- I seem to have mislaid my stole, again. Have you seen it?

JB- I don't think you're going to want it back.³⁹

AK- What just happened?

JB- You took a blow to the head. Out there. The revels are really starting to heat up. *(This is evidenced in bashings and shakings coming from around the place)*

AK- Always like this?

JB- This is my first.

AK- Enjoying yourself?

JB- Not planning on a second.

AK- Well, I should get out there.

JB- No, wait, stay- you wanted to talk about man.

AK- I beg your pardon.

JB- you wanted to speak about men. Incompetent men.

AK- Yes.

JB- Well here I am, a superior example of the sub-average.

AK- ... You're the one with the agouti.

JB- I believe that's how it will read in the court transcript, yes.

AK- The agouti. Breeds like mad, eats anything, can break through any fence or wooden edifice.

JB- You would've come in very useful a little while back.

AK- You think it's safe to release an animal like that. Do you gentlemen ever consider the consequences of your actions?

JB- I like to think we do.

AK- You know there's a zebu bull⁴⁰ out there.

A hell of a commotion and beating against the walls. JB keeps completely deadpan till it stops.

Beat.

JB- Yes I do.

AK- Would you release it into a china shop?

JB- Nonsense and tosh, the Australian bush is not so gentle. The land will weed them out –

AK- The land teeters on a knife edge. It's a very delicate cooperative world, and you're bringing in as many competitive animals as you can.⁴¹ What about the rabbit? They're everywhere.

JB- They are randy.

AK- In fifty years it'll be at the other coast.⁴²

JB- Tosh, in 800 years in Britain it's barely hit Scotland.⁴³

AK- This is not Britain.

JB- It would be if it could be.⁴⁴

AK- This is a delicate machine and you're throwing anything you like into it to see what sounds and sparks throw up. You don't know what consequences will happen and you're either 1,000 miles away or six feet under before the consequences catch you.

At this last statement, the WAITER has come inside, grabbed a sand-filled "FIRE" bucket, and rushes back out.

JB- Not true.

AK- But the consequences are getting faster.

JB- You think so?

AK- I should, I'm one of them. I'm guessing the Governor doesn't want his precious society, and their revels, reported on.

JB- I can guarantee it.

AK- Nevertheless, I will have to write it up. But say I was employed but someone who didn't particularly want it published, someone who founded the society.

JB- And who runs the Argus newspaper. You're looking for a job.

AK- And you're looking for a favourable report. What a happy coincidence.

JB- And will that do the trick?

AK- It's a start. I understand the society regularly funds its members' exotic voyages to find new animals.

JB- Indeed we do. And we're looking for more women. Bylaws.

AK- I've got a good feeling about Hawaii. What does Hawaii have?

JB- I don't know – toads? Bring back a toad.⁴⁵

AK- Fine, a job, Hawaii and all my expenses met.

JB- You're a tough negotiator.

AK- I'm not negotiating.

JB- I'm sure we can come to some arrangement.

GD strides in

GD- Bonhom, what the devil's going on?

JB- Just playful revels sir. How goes the carousing?

GD- I'll give you carousing! I was feeding this to my boa.

He holds up the stole

AK- Wait a minute where did you get that.

GD- From your exposed neck madam- no need to thank me.

AK- For knocking me out and taking my clothes.

GD- It's an agouti.

AK- It's not an agouti it's a stolen stole.

GD- Bonhom, tell her man.

JB- Heh-

At this stage the cover has again peeled back from the consequences above to show they have become incredibly complex,

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and end with the agouti racing through the crawlspace and with Austin coming through the door.

TA- Ah ha-

Austin races into the room, slips on the fur they've left behind shoots up in to the roof where the agouti is walking. This knocks a portion of the roof out that the agouti was walking along sending it tumbling down, to be collected by the banner and caught by Bonhom. The screen stays on the roof cavity as Austin has nicked the gas main (which will be labeled gas main) and that is spewing forth gas into the room.

AK- It's the agouti!

L- Photo coming.

GD- This is the agouti?

They get ready for the photo. Bonhom leans into Austin.

L- Everybody ready- going to be brighter this time.

AK- They smell like gas.

JB- You did tell him that you upped his flash powder as well didn't you?

TA- He's sensitive about such things.

GD- What's that smell?

JB- Anal scent glands, sir. (To AK) And those consequences?

AK- Miles away.

GD- Are they meant to smell like gas?

JB- Gas?

L- Smile!

JB- Smile?

Bright flash, explosion. The picture is taken and slowly falls apart and tumbles down, and the final image is the agouti slowly parachuting down, wrapped up in the banner, looking very familiar to the parachuting cat from the original slide show.

1 - This story is true, and is often used to depict the cascading cause-and-effect of the Law of Unintended Consequences. However, it is usually told with 1000s of squalling felines carpet-bombed across the country, when it was most likely just a few dozen dropped to unreachable coastal village. Additionally, it is theorised that the existing cats died out due to licking the pesticide-laced walls of villages, rather than eating geckoes. Nevertheless, the story points out the problems with only addressing one aspect of a problem, rather than considering it as part of a system, and it features sky-diving cats. Which are cool.

2 - Again, a true story. Cane toads have become arguably the most prominent example of the dangers of introduced species in Australia, possibly the world. Part of this is justified, as they are spreading steadily across Australia's north end (the south being too cold). However, there is actually little evidence (at least so far) that the toad has significantly impacted biodiversity, even though it has proven poisonous to most predators (many of whom were found dead with toads still in their mouths). It is actually the cuter, cuddly mammals such as the rabbit, fox, cat and (stretching the definition of cute) camel who have done the most damage to biodiversity.

3 - As you've probably guessed by now, this is also true, but it goes farther than woodpeckers. The Endangered Species Act imposed restrictions on any land where listed endangered species were found to live. At this time, approximately 90% of endangered species were found on privately owned land (farms, timber forests, land marked for development). For the land owners there were usually three options- comply and lose money, destroy

the land to make it unsuitable for habitation, or quietly dispose of the animals before the government declared the land protected. In effect, putting an animal on the endangered species list wasn't dissimilar to putting it on an environmental hit-list.

4 - In an Australian twist on the story, the owner of a Cairns hotel offered a beer-for-toads bounty in 2007. Though news reports don't say if any one bred toads for beer, the fact that one mother toad can breed 30,000 young in one go would suggest that a few enterprising drinkers didn't have to pay for their beer for some time.

5 - Non-dolphin safe fishing involved following around dolphins (who inexplicably hung around large schools of tuna) and then netting the tuna, the dolphins sometimes getting in the way. Dolphin-safe fishing involves using floating buoys to attract the tuna, which the dolphin ignores but many other fish do not. So while the non-endangered dolphin is safe, many endangered species are one step closer to extinction.

6 - Jack Bonham is a fictional creation.

7 - Thomas Austin, meanwhile, is very real, and is recognised as the man who introduced the rabbit to Australia. Bored of the sub-standard hunting in

his property near Geelong in Victoria, he had his brother send two dozen rabbits from England. He intended to have a few hunting parties, maybe bring back a little atmosphere of home. It is doubtful that he intended that the rabbit, now able to get busy all year round in the warm climate, protected from the heat by the sandy soil and untroubled by the lack of native predators, would go from 24 in 1859 to approximately 800 million in 1945. Austin was a member of the Victorian Acclimatisation Society, but he introduced the rabbit before the Society was even formed, so this cannot be put upon them, although they were initially greatly in favour of it. Later, not so much.

8 - The blackberry was introduced by the society, who encouraged as many people as possible to cultivate the plant for its fruit and its attractive nature. It is, however, very invasive, and quickly permeated farm and grazing land, waterways, even urban properties. In 2010, it was estimated to have invaded 8.8 million hectares of Australia.

9 - Introduced to Victoria and Queensland to keep down insects, the Myna took eagerly to gum tress in both rural and urban areas. Taking hollow nesting spaces and food from native species, they also spread disease and preyed on the young of native birds and small mammals. It is now ranked one of the world's 100 most invasive species by the World Conservation Union.

10 - Like the Myna (which belongs to the same family) the starling aggressively takes away nesting spots from native species. In addition, because they also congregate in large flocks (up to 150,000 birds) they can easily strip and destroy the trees they nest in and befoul wetlands and waterways with their droppings.

11 - To be fair, the introduction of carp in the 1800s met with limited success. It wasn't until they were released into the Murray-Darling basin in 1964 that they became widespread. Carp have become the most prevalent freshwater fish in the Murray-Darling Basin, reaching densities of one fish per square metre, taking resources away from and reducing the numbers of native fish.

12 - In fairness to the Society, they did successfully introduce one animal of lasting value to Australia and its inhabitants – the trout. However, there doesn't seem to be much evidence that they gave this animal any more consideration than the others, and so it could easily have proven as disastrous as there other efforts. It must be noted that some introduced species are of use to their adopted lands. Sometimes they are added by luck, but more often they are the result of careful, painstaking research over years if not decades. Intelligent introduction involves consideration of all elements and impacts to minimise the law of unintended consequences. Just as Australia is an example of some of the worst introductions, it is also home to one of the best- the dung beetle. Native beetles, used to the pellet-like droppings of marsupials, could not break down the sheer, brown tonnage of waste deposited on fields by introduced cattle. Fields were

becoming unusable, flies were everywhere, but over decades and many different candidates, the ideal species was found and was a great success. Needless to say, it had nothing to do with the Victorian Acclimatisation Society.

13 - Though initially barred, ladies were allowed to join the Society three years after its inception. Many male members were reportedly unhappy with this, considering them an invasive species all their own.

14 - Australia is home to the only monotremes (egg-laying mammals) on the planet, namely the echidna and platypus. Early discoverers were so shocked by the sight of mammals laying eggs they suspected the animals must be in some way reptilian.

15 - This was a common theory. Broadly speaking, mammals can be split into three groups: placentals, whose young develop in their mother's uterus, nourished by a placenta (dingoes, rabbits, foxes, humans); marsupials, whose young for the most part develop in a pouch (kangaroos, wombats, possums); monotremes, who lay eggs (platypus, echidnas). Australia has most of the marsupials in the world and all of the monotremes, while the rest of the world abounds with placentals. The feeling therefore was the Australian animals must have been kicked out of everywhere else, and worked their way to Australia via land bridges. An inane theory, but one supported by the fact that introduced placental mammals quickly out-rivaled

the native animals. By the way, introduced marsupials can be as noxious as the placentals - just ask any New Zealander about the possum (another great idea by the Acclimatisation society).

16 - Yes, at one time or another the Acclimatisation societies around Australia did try to introduce these animals. We should be very grateful they were not very good at it.

17 - Gas lighting was first introduced to Melbourne in 1857. Pumped directly into houses, factories and public buildings, it provided a brightness 20 times brighter than candle- lighting. However, the untended gas taps and rupture prone pipes also made it a danger, and flares and fires were not uncommon.

18 - This was indeed the Society's motto, nicely encapsulating their "let's shove everything in and see what happens" mentality.

19 - It was believed that mercury (which is toxic) would prevent the negative effects of the night air (which isn't). This is included in the play to show the scientific reasoning of the period, and how often things believed to be beneficial were actually harmful, and vice versa.

20 - Governor Darling, who is a real historical figure, did like the boa, considered it a civilised and much misunderstood creature. He was greatly let down when one specimen died on its way to Australia. As far as I can tell, he was the only one.

21 - Yes, the Society did eat our native animals, stating that wombat was a great treat, possum was good in curries and bandicoot did taste like suckling pig. It is appropriate that Austin like to devour the bandicoot as it was his introduction, the rabbit, which made it endangered.

22 - Before flashbulbs were developed in 1927, photographers used combustible magnesium powder to get a well-lit shot. The flash powder, essentially the same material used in fireworks and stun grenades, would be layered in an open tray and ignited. Yes, it's as dangerous as it sounds.

23 - At this time in Melbourne, the Intercolonial Exhibition was on. This was essentially an expo of all the colonies in the British Empire had to offer and people came from around the world to see it. Its presence here gives greater need for this night not to go the way it does.

24 - While the English has adopted the lion as its own (particular Henry I, Henry II and Richard I) the contemporary species of lion never lived in the British Isles (too cold). Evidence of the prehistoric cave lion, which wasn't dissimilar to the modern lion, have been found in England but are long extinct.

25 - Most of the time, invasive species weren't just left to roam free and their successful introduction left to chance- humans definitely gave them a leg-up. Austin killed all native predators for the rabbit on his property and even asked for legislation to protect them from poachers. Similarly, the government made it illegal to kill deer during the first few years of their introduction. Many introduced species could only get a foothold in this country because we got rid of the original animals first.

26 - As you can probably tell, this is all fabricated. By all account the agouti is a delightful rodent, handsome to look at, shy of humans, and quite tasty. That said, temperament and flavour have never been a guarantee that an animal won't wreak havoc on an ecosystem unprepared to limit their numbers. While Australia has seen some success in restrained rabbits with wooden walls and fences (some very long fences) the agouti, with teeth and claws so powerful it can tear open Brazil nuts, would not have been stopped. The NSW Acclimatisation Society did have two agouti but met with little success in introducing them; the Victorian Society, with only one agouti, had obviously much less success.

27 - This is true. Agouti, rather than being hunter-killers, mostly eat fruit and nuts, and have their sense so attuned they can hear fruit dropping in the rainforest.

28 - These are figure taken from Austin's own hunting diaries for 1867. Native cats most likely meant the Australian quoll, whereas tame ones may have meant introduced cats rather than domesticated ones. Either way it doesn't seem particularly sporting.

29 - No it hasn't. Cholera is a bacterial infection of the small intestine, spread by contaminated food and water, and found only in humans, shellfish and plankton.

30 - A branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of reality, including the existence of God and the external world.

31 - A statement which history will prove ironic- the feral cat is one of the greatest invasive pests in Australia, and indeed the only pest which cover the entire are of Australia, a feat not even accomplished by the rabbit, fox or toad.

32 - They don't.

33 - It doesn't.

34 - Actually, it is as zoo-keepers that the Victorian Acclimatisation Society redeems itself. Once it lost funding for acclimatisation activities, it was instrumental in establishing Melbourne Zoo. Ironically, this was completely against their intention in forming the Society, which, to paraphrase one member, was to throw open all the cages so that no animal lived in captivity.

35 - Queen Victoria, while a much respected monarch, did not go to much trouble to emphasise her femininity, spending the last 40 years of her life in mourning clothes after the death of her husband Albert.

36 - Alice is also fictional.

37 - Alice is mistaking naturalist (someone who studies natural history) with naturist (someone who likes running around without any clothes on).

38 - Not an exaggeration. The agouti, when startled, has been known to spring six feet up in the air, turn, land facing the opposite direction and take off running.

39 - She really won't. Boas constrict their prey before consuming it whole. Their teeth force the animal down through its throat while muscles in the neck propel it towards the stomach. Digestion can take up to six days.

40 - Yes, they tried to introduce this as well.

41 - Due to the harsh nature of Australia, it, more than other ecosystems, is more cooperative, with animals contributing towards each others' survival, rather than the competitive war for scarce resources that can happen in other countries. One of the reasons that Australia has been such easy prey for invasive species is because these species have evolved to be competitive, and upon introduction to this country, expand at a frightening rate, and the actions that were in the past required merely to survive, thrive in this more harsh, more delicate system.

42 - This prediction is not far off. From being introduced in 1866, the rabbit was sighted in NSW in 1881, Queensland in 1887, the Northern Territory in 1894 and by 1900 had reached Western Australia.

43 - This is true, and an example of how animals can have different effects on different ecosystems. In England, rabbits were introduced by Norman conquerors in the 11th century, 900 years later, they had spread barely 500 kms north. In Australia, the rabbit spread 5000 kilometres in less than 50 years.

44 - Probably more than any other line, this sums up the 'cultural imperialism' of the Society. To its members, the Australian landscape was a savage, uncivilised place, and the reason that most of them took an interest in acclimatisation was either to diminish their own homesickness by giving them familiar animals, or because they actually felt that Australia would benefit from the superior European stock. Then, of course, there were those who just threw whatever they liked in just to see what would happen.

45 - A reference to the Cane Toad, imported from Hawaii, where it was apparently successful in keeping down the cane beetle, perhaps because there wasn't much else to subsist on. In Australia, however, we discovered it doesn't like to eat the beetle when there is anything else to eat.