

THE 'BLACK PRINCE'

The story of the Black Prince [below] was taken from Jake Pollard [ed] *Birds of Paradise: birdlife in New Zealand and Australia*: [1967]. It is one of the many tales that in total add up to make the Grammar School so interesting and individualistic in character.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the story below is that a man with Headmaster Hodges' background could become so close to a bird such as the pet cassowary. Educated at Oxford University where he graduated with First Class Honours and having had a distinguished teaching career at two very prominent English Public Schools in Radley College and Rugby School, he was also the author of a text on arithmetic. On leaving Townsville Grammar in 1900 he had a distinguished career as the Head of Sydney Church of England Grammar School [Shore]. Photographs of Mr Hodges show a distinguished gentleman, always immaculately dressed in a three piece suit. It must have been a wonderful sight to see Mr Hodges and The Black Prince wondering around the School grounds.

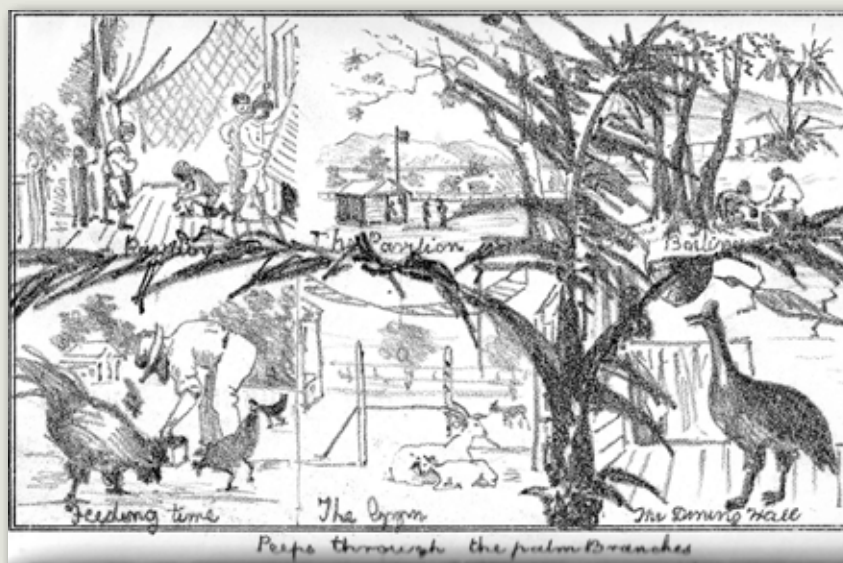
The sketch that appears below the tale of The Black Prince was taken from the School Magazine, December 1900, Volume 1, Number 8. The artist of the sketch is unknown but in researching similar sketches in other magazines it can be said, but without much certainty, that the sketch may have been drawn by the then Headmaster, Mr C.H. Hodges. The sketch depicts a day in the life of the School at that time with the Black Prince taking centre stage. Goats were also prevalent in the area at that time and there are stories of boarders combing Castle Hill on weekends looking for goats. The chickens mentioned in the story are also on display as are some of the minor School buildings at that time.

Black Prince of Townsville Grammar D. Le Souef

THE CASSOWARY IS too expensive and too uncertain in temper to be frequently kept as a pet. Mr C. H. Hodges, then Headmaster of the Townsville Grammar School, however, kept one for two years. Black Prince, as he was called, had been caught young, and, though he grew to stand over five feet without his stockings, he did not show any malice in his disposition, even to strangers. He would stroll about the grounds with his master's arm around his neck, and merely take the opportunity to poke his head into his master's pocket where he expected, not without warrant, to find something to his advantage.

For a sleeping-place a cage was provided in a corner of the shrubbery, but he was allowed to ramble about at his own free will. The house was raised some three feet above the ground, and his delight was to creep under it, and to watch a hen which resorted to the same quarters, and, as soon as she had laid an egg, he would take and eat it. His appetite was a healthy one. At first he would only eat banana, of which he consumed some ten shillings' worth in a week. The feeding operation resembled nothing so much as the posting of letters in a pillar-box, unlimited bananas disappearing one by one into the dark cavity without producing any apparent effect. Later on he learned to feed on potatoes and bread. Hunger was in fact a constant trait, and he was ever on the look-out for something tasty. One lady had skinned a bird; he approached, saw, seized and promptly swallowed the skin. Another lady's bonnet attracted him; with a dart he pecked it off, but this, dainty as it was, proved too difficult an object for the pillar-box. This Cassowary drew the line at missionaries; he never attempted to swallow one.

Black Prince made great friends with a cockatoo. In their game Cocky soon discovered the weakness of Achilles. A timely nip in the heel was always sufficient to make his large and otherwise invulnerable friend leap high into the air as a first step in his retreat. The Cassowary was not so friendly with some tame kangaroos which shared the shrubbery with him. He would kick them from him, with the force of a horse, always kicking forwards. This power, alas, proved to be too dangerous as the bird increased in size and strength, and, in order to prevent accidents, it became necessary to remove him, greatly to the sorrow of his master.



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