

Miss Shirley Hillam
Primary School
Illabo

2 Claremonts
99 Dist. Road
Kings Cross

31. 10. 53

* I had to keep a boy on watch in
the door, when he came, for fear an
inspector might appear & say
"get into trouble" school children
But - were hungry for
books -

My dear Shirley, your request - for my
recollections of when I was teaching at
Illabo take me back a long way!

I followed Miss Emma Sawyer, whose brother,
Matt Sawyer, owned Bethunga Station. Miss

Sawyer used a big cane & often, I was
told, & had such trouble with the boys
that they often kicked her when being
caned -

People said, when I went there,
"you will never manage without a cane" -

I never had a cane inside the door, and I
never had trouble with the children. There

were no books among the people at Illabo,
or so, as a reward for a good week (when

I found the children responded to kindness
& understanding) I used to take the last

half-hour of Friday to read to them. I read
"Uncle Tom's Cabin", "Robinson Crusoe" &

rather well-known books in this way.

It was rough country & rough times when
I was there. In the place where I had to

board the wife was a kind woman, but
her husband had an unapproachable temper.

One Sunday he tried to cut his ^{second} step =
daughter's throat, & ~~later~~ later took
his wife & her eldest-daughter by the
hair of the head (hair was worn long then)
& banged their heads ^{up & down} on the kitchen floor.

Another night, some people camped across
the line from where I boarded were
drinking. Suddenly, when I was all in
bed, there was a shot & a woman's
scream. There were seven houses with
seven men (husbands & fathers) in them,
but not one ^{man} stirred out to see if help
was needed. So I rushed to the ^{the} Station,
& got the Night Operator, a boy of sixteen,
to go with me to see if anyone was killed.
Fortunately the woman was only grazed on
the shoulder, & all that ^{the} Camp wanted was
"No Police." So we left them. They packed
up & were gone before daylight next morning.

The nicest boys in the school were of a family
named Black. Years after ~~we~~ I came back
from South America (Paraguay, Argentine &
Patagonia) I edited the Woman's Page of "The Worker".

One day in 192? I received a letter from one
of the Blacks saying he wanted to go into the Railway
Service & would I give him a letter so I had
taught him. I did so I forgot - the next year I was
at Ithaca, Cal. it wd. be about 1885 or near that. If you
get the exact date will you let me know please?
Hoping this will show you what a Teacher's life was
like when Ithaco (originally Ithaca) was young
and sincere. Mary Shull