

Kylie Tennant's *Tiburon*: her response to critics.

Kylie Tennant wrote the following piece for inclusion in *The Brighton Chronicle*, the school magazine of Brighton College, Manly, (issue dated December 1935). Her first novel, **Tiburon**, about Depression conditions in the (thinly-disguised) town of Canowindra where the author lived, was published earlier that year, and had drawn criticism from locals who were upset with the portrayal of their town.

Captain Cook discovered the South Sea Islands, wrote about them, went back and was speared by the indignant native, who, I am inclined to think, had been reading his book. Recently I discovered a town not on any map, named it "Tiburon", and wrote about it unwisely and not too well. That is why I send this article to point out to would be writers-about-country-towns the wisdom of living in the city ever afterwards.

When you realise that Tiburon is famous only for diphtheria, dust, and dog-fights it is a wonder any town should claim the doubtful honour of being Tiburon. Among those that do, is, naturally enough, the town in which I am living (Canowindra), where the inhabitants are unreasonably upset about it. The best citizens point out that it is wrong to make fun of even mythical best citizens. The worst citizens angrily claim they resemble the inhabitants of Tiburon who drank too much. All agree that I wrote from the point of view of a "traveller".

"Travellers" or "bagmen" are worse off than the local unemployed who are allowed to mend the roads in return for just enough to keep them alive. The traveller has no home but a tent of bags, no clothes but what he can beg. The police refuse to let travellers stay in any town because they say there are too many unemployed there already, and they move them on from one town to the next. In the worst weather, hail, rain, and storm, there are hundreds of men, women, and children sleeping out in the open, under bridges, in sheds, in any shelter they can find. Mention it to a farmer and he is likely to say in surprise: "But, they're only travellers."

Many of the travellers are my friends, but among the citizens of Canowindra there is rumour, at the moment, of a subscription to raise me a really good funeral or some other costly and elaborate misery. Should any Old Girl wish to contribute I trust their offering will take the form of a modest headstone which should rightly read:-

"KYLIE TENNANT. Once a student of Brighton College."

"Unwisely wrote Tiburon and was speared by the natives of a town that does not exist."